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TRAIL OF THE MONEY BIRD



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TRAIL OF  
THE MONEY BIRD

30,000 MILES OF ADVENTURE  
WITH A NATURALIST

BY

DILLON RIPLEY

ILLUSTRATED



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To C. B. R.



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DILLON RIPLEY

Washington, D.C.

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## INTRODUCTION

When on a chill November afternoon in 1936 that particular letter came, my fate was quickly decided. Post-graduate work at Columbia had never seemed more drab, my future as an ornithologist had never seemed more distant, more unapproachable. At Yale I had done other things. The study of birds had been a hobby. Then after graduation I woke up suddenly, realizing for the first time that I really wanted to go into ornithology. Accordingly I enrolled at Columbia that fall, an ignoramus in matters of zoology, facing the dreary prospect of four or more years of study in alien subjects without any experience or background to give me some perspective, or hope. I was caught up in chemistry and genetics, enmeshed in histology and anatomy, all of which seemed very far away from birds.

As I walked along upper Riverside Drive looking for a bus downtown, the wind blew raw and savage. Overhead the gulls passed with a swoop and a dive to disappear like magic over the cliff, then rise again slowly without moving visibly. They hung there and eyed me and made little rusty-pulley noises of derision. But at home there was tea and the letter waiting.

"We have acquired a 59-foot schooner which we plan to sail out to Dutch New Guinea and spend about a year cruising around the coast and small islands nearby. The Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia is very

interested in the idea and wants us to make bird collections for them. We need a zoologist and wondered if you would care to go. It would be understood that the zoologist would make himself as handy as possible on the boat, taking watches and so on along the way, for we only plan to be seven on board. Of course I have no idea what you are doing now, but we thought we'd make a stab at you anyway, hoping you weren't too tied up. . . ."

No, I certainly wasn't too tied up. Trying to be impartial and deliberate, I hurried to the American Museum of Natural History where my mentors in such things added their encouragement to my longings.

"After all," said Dr. Mayr seriously, "you cannot get to New Guinea every day. Graduate work will still be waiting when you come back and then, too, you will be better prepared for it."

The next month was taken up with busy preparations, buying and checking over equipment, and studying the specimens of New Guinea birds in the American Museum's comprehensive collections. This last was staggering work. When my list of birds that I might meet with was finally completed I found that it included over six hundred species, none of which I had ever encountered before, for the majority of them are confined to this remote island, south of Asia. In contrast to this the whole eastern seaboard of the United States does not have much more than three hundred species of birds as residents.

In Philadelphia I found the Academy to be a very pleasant and stimulating place. Rodolphe de Schauensee, the Curator of Birds, was kindness itself in helping with the last-minute preparations. As a going-away present he gave me the best book to date on the East Indies, Alfred Russel Wallace's *The Malay Archipelago*, published in

1869. (That's how up-to-date the Western Hemisphere is concerning New Guinea.) Finally I met the Crocketts, the kind friends who had written the letter, and on December 1, 1936, we boarded the *Chiva* and set sail for parts unknown.



## CHAPTER I

### ON THE WAY

IT was a very small sink holding perhaps two and a half gallons and it seemed to me needlessly complicated. First there was a brass pump above with a wooden handle. When I pumped this a thin stream of water came from the water tanks. Pump, pump, pump, and with many squeaks and about fifty strokes I could fill the sink. Below there was another handle projecting into the narrow space between the sink and the galley table. This was to empty the sink with, for otherwise sea water might back up and enter it. This one slipped a little on its gears and so it took about sixty strokes to empty the sink.

All of these complications were going on in what seemed like the middle of the night and I was heartily sick and tired of being an ornithologist on an expedition going to Netherlands New Guinea, which at that moment seemed to be twelve thousand miles, and three whole planets, away.

Four hours earlier the *Chiva* had moved serenely out from our pier in Philadelphia. A small crowd of friends, relatives, and well-wishers from the Academy waved from a black hole where a door had been slid back in the covered dock. Across the river on the Camden side smokestacks were belching smoke into the chill, snuff-coloured air, tugs were beetling up and down on the

surface of the *café-au-lait* river, but here all was quiet and eminently respectable as a scientific expedition got under way. Only a few of the disreputable old harbour gulls, disturbed by the panting of our auxiliary motor, rose in a cloud from the roof of the pier and shrieked obscenities at us.

Just as the early December dusk came we had turned out of the river into the Inland Waterway Canal leading south. The current was swift. We swept over one of the channel buoys and came up hard and fast on a mud bank. The situation now was neither serene nor scientific. Miserably we organized ourselves into a kedging crew. I, being completely unnautical at this point, was sent below in a futile effort to lighten the twenty-two-ton bulk of the schooner by pumping fresh water out of the tanks.

It was cold outside and stiflingly warm in the galley. The prospect of sailing all the way to New Guinea from this mud bank receded almost as alarmingly as did that of supper, for Doane, our redoubtable seagoing cook, had been summoned to the deck.

In order to kedge a sixty-foot schooner off a mud bank you must put over a boat (we had a dinghy and a dory nested in each other on the starboard deck) and row out at a sharp angle carrying an anchor attached to the schooner with heavy line, not chain which is too heavy. The anchor is heaved and then, provided it is fast on the bottom, all souls man the anchor winch. The boat keels over a bit with the strain and usually the anchor pulls free. However, if you are lucky, there is a fairly good chance of easing out of the mud that way. We got off about midnight and, tying up alongside of a small dock four hundred feet away, all fell asleep instantly. We might have had a few nightmares if we had been able to

anticipate the fact that we were to stick in the mud five more times in that miserable canal.

Our boat was small but she was sturdy. The *Chiva* was an Alden-designed schooner modelled on the style of the Gloucester fishing boats. She was sixty feet overall, with sixteen feet of beam, and she drew eight and a half or nine feet. Besides the usual complement of mainsail, mizen, staysail, and jib, there was a great spar rigged on the foremast at right angles to the direction of the boat from which depended a large square sail—for use when the trade winds blew from astern of us. When this sail wasn't being used it was lashed all in a tight mass to the foremast. When it was unfurled you simply pulled it out along the yard on runners rather like pulling out a shower curtain.

For present purposes, however, we were forced to carry on with the help of our motor alone. This was an ugly Diesel of a primitive and devilish sort which lay like a fowl beast in a lair under the galley table and spewed out clouds of evil-smelling smoke at us from an exhaust protruding, by some mischance, from the deck amidships. For a few days we putted and stuttered along through the canal, passing under endless bridges all of which raised themselves upon their dignified stumps for us like elephants in the circus, while we, with our tall masts projecting just like the spike that the fair lady uses so the elephant won't squat on top of her too decisively, swept along underneath.

One day we came into Currituck Sound, a pale fog-shrouded expanse. It was marvellous fun standing up in the bow and watching the ricks and ricks of ducks and geese swimming ahead. We would bear down on them suddenly out of the fog and off they would go spattering across the water to get up speed, the coots and canvas-

backs with a staccato beat like hailstones falling in the water, the Canada geese slower, more deliberate, with wild cries, *ah-uck, ah-uck, uck, uck, uck!* Once we saw some swans, a thin white undulating line moving with slow dignified sweeps of their great wings along the horizon. In among the ducks were a few flocks of phalaropes, little grey, sandpiper-sized birds, bobbing about busily with infinitely small insect-like movements.

We had stopped briefly at Norfolk, Virginia, for some extra painting and varnishing, and now again we stopped at Beaufort, North Carolina, for a few hours before heading into the open ocean. It was the last touch of home soil and we lingered a little over our errands. I sent a telegram, bought a pair of rubber boots, and, for some unexplainable reason, went into a café and had a piece of lemon meringue pie and a cup of coffee, all at eleven o'clock in the morning in a fine drizzle of rain.

At last we were ready and cast off from the little white dock with its fringe of dilapidated-looking houses. A few slicker-clad fishermen stared at us and then turned away to get out of the rain. We headed into a choppy jostling sea the colour of lead. There was a strong breeze outside the harbour and the surfaces of the waves were covered with infinite numbers of corrugated wavelets. The wind was strengthening constantly and in no time we were boiling and bouncing along. The motion of the boat was so strong and unpredictable that it was impossible to stand upright unless holding on with both hands. Mostly we skittered about like crabs weighted down in our several thicknesses of wool and oilskins, sitting whenever possible. Supper consisted of porridge and coffee, and I was glad of the pie. Our watches were four hours on and eight off, twelve to four, and four to

eight, with two short "dogwatches" in the morning from eight to ten and ten to twelve. By having these two two-hour watches once a day we were able to rotate the whole system so that those on a twelve-to-four watch one night had an eight-to-twelve the next, and so on. But for these first two nights in this turmoil of rough weather no one got any sleep to speak of at all. We simply lay on deck or lay in our bunks waiting for time to pass. It blew like this for two days while we all wondered how long it was going to keep on. The first day we made 196 miles, so at least we were getting somewhere.

The creakings and groanings of the boat were stupendous. In the extreme afterpart of the boat there was a small stateroom for two persons. Here there were short sharp little squeaking noises. Just forward of this was a companionway in which there were a cupboard or "locker" and a chart table and a little lamp which swayed and shuddered frantically all the time, casting lurid shadows. Off to one side was the "head," or bathroom. From between it and the locker came frightful drawn-out retching noises. These we christened "Aunt Matilda." They sounded incredibly realistic and came only at times of great stress. Then there was the main cabin, which had four bunks in it and the dining-table. Most of its noises were evolved by a bookcase which occupied the forward end of the cabin and whose glass doors were always coming unlatched and banging back and forth. There was also something that lived in a drawer under my bunk that went "awrp, awrp."

Forward of this came the galley and here, of course, there was the stove with its pots and pans that were forever coming down with a great clattering and crashing. In front of this there was a small fo'c'sle with two bunks, but here there were no audible ship noises for your ears

were filled with the roaring gurgle of the sea as it swept past the bow.

Suddenly the second evening the wind faded out as quickly as it had come, leaving us slatting wildly in a still-rough sea. There was nothing for it but to sit it out. It was surprisingly quiet after the shrill noises of the wind in the rigging. Only the yawning creaking noises kept up and there was a good deal of slap, slapping from the empty sails against the rigging. Fred and I, on the eight-to-twelve midnight watch, sat there without speaking in the little circle of light from the binnacle. Around us in the blackness was the falling sea, the unseen agent which was tossing us about so uncomfortably. Suddenly I noticed a speck of light off in the blackness.

"How about giving them a signal, Fred, just to tell them who we are? They might radio it back to New York."

"O.K., let's try it."

I ducked below and got my new five-cell flashlight.

Fred started telling them, in Morse code, who we were and would they relay the news back to New York, please.

After a moment or two a light began to wink at us.

"They don't seem to understand," Fred said, peering at their signals.

Fred tried his signal again; but the liner, for she was a big one, seemed to have made up her mind, and before we realized it had altered her course and turned directly for us.

"My God, they seem to think we're in distress," shouted Fred. "Hey below there, wake up, we're having a caller."

Various toiled heads began to appear from below just as the cruise liner bore down upon us. She came up un-

comfortably close, or so it seemed to us, already used to the emptiness of the ocean. Then she turned broadside to us and hung there, searchlights flashing down on our miserable selves. We felt suddenly rather naked. The orchestra in the main saloon was playing vigorously. We could hear the music but could not quite make out the tune. People in evening clothes who had been strolling the decks began to crowd along the rails, pointing at us and talking and laughing among themselves.

As for us, we could only sit there blankly in our dirty oilskins and dungarees, spreading out our hands and shrugging our shoulders. Really we hadn't meant it at all we shouted, smiling thinly. Finally a rather reproving voice announced through a megaphone that they would be off now, and the liner slid away indignantly into the night.

"Whew," said Fred handing me the flashlight. "Never again."

There were seven of us, all told, on board. Fred and Charis, his wife, who were the owners of the *Chiva*, had had an ambition to sail to New Guinea for a long time. Fred is a photographer and Charis an anthropologist working for the Peabody Museum at Harvard. Some years before, her father had met an Austrian in the Netherlands East Indies who had impressed him tremendously with his accounts of New Guinea and a coconut plantation on two small islands off the coast that he wanted to buy. With Charis's father's backing, Harry Kern had secured the islands and had been living there ever since, waiting expectantly for his American partners to visit him.

These islands had already served our expedition in good stead, for the Dutch government was more willing to give permission to visit and do scientific work in New

Guinea to people whom they knew, people who had a stake in the development of the country.

Didie, a college room-mate of Charis's, had come along to help her take measurements and keep records of her work. As for myself, my job, of course, was to collect birds first of all, but other forms of life as well for the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia.

George was our navigator, a first-rate yachtsman and guitar player. He had been in a bank and had the tidy mind and fussy qualities that so often distinguish people in banks as well as people on sailboats. When he first saw me I was carrying on board, in Philadelphia, a flat piece of wood.

"What is that?" he asked interestedly.

"A board to skin birds on," I replied.

"That's quite unnecessary," said George stiffly. "There will be no bird-skinning on board this boat."

"But, George," Charis put in pleasantly, "that is why Dillon is coming with us."

Evidently I was now irrevocably typed in George's mind.

Charlie, who managed the engine as well as being a first-rate sailor, and Doane, our irrepressible cook, were from that home of all efficient sailormen, Gloucester, Massachusetts.

Various people had hinted before the trip, in the comforting way they have, that any small boat with two women aboard would be doomed to trouble. Some had shaken their heads, smiled sadly, and made insinuating remarks. One or two had even dubbed the *Chiva* in advance, "a love barge." We found, of course, that the effect was quite otherwise, that the presence of two women was decidedly stimulating to peace instead of war. In fact, five men behaved a lot better in front of two

women than they probably would have by themselves. Was Fred grumpy, Charlie surly—were George and I having a tiff? Instead of someone knifing someone else or at least having a fist fight and upsetting the whole trip, the bad tempers quickly blew over when one or the other of the girls appeared.

One more day and we were out of the Atlantic. George knew we were near the Crooked Island Passage of the Bahamas from his noon position, plus dead reckoning. I knew it because I saw my first tropic birds, three white tern-like creatures with foot-long pointed tail feathers winging homeward across our bow with steady flight. Charlie, on the other hand, who had been far too seasick for the last three days to know anything, too weak in fact to move from his huddled position aft of the wheel in the very stern, knew it in another way. The wind had died and we were proceeding under power over the surface of a dead-calm sea. Charlie staggered to his feet clutching the life lines and stood a moment swaying unsteadily. Abeam of us there was a fitful flashing like summer lightning from the Watling Island light-house. Charlie inhaled long and deep.

"I smell geraniums," he announced solemnly and went below.

We landed at Kingston, Jamaica, briefly for stores. It is a beautiful harbour with pelicans perched on the buoys, and wonderful grey-green mountains behind topped with enormous masses of clouds like whipped cream. We were not alone in the harbour, however. Aldous Huxley has called Kingston "the Clapham Junction of the West," and for the moment it was. To be in port at the same time with three monster cruise liners and to have "Boxing Day," the day after Christmas, being celebrated ashore with gallons of Jamaica rum is

no experience for seven souls in from the sea. Having been at sea for a month, we felt rather shy and nervous in the midst of all this gaiety. We fled Jamaica, heading south-west for the Panama Canal.

A month before, at the Academy in Philadelphia, James Bond, Assistant Curator of Ornithology, had suggested that we try to stop at Old Providence, a small island on the route from Jamaica to the Canal. There are a few resident birds on the island, some of which are quite distinct from their relatives on neighbouring islands of the Caribbean and have been described as subspecies of geographical "races" in scientific journals. However, the Academy had never had a collector there, and so lacked specimens of these birds in its collection.

Old Providence was a haunt once upon a time of Morgan the buccaneer. It is about six miles long, high and rocky. Patches of palms and bananas are scattered over its lower slopes, and fields with cattle grazing sweep down to miniature beaches interspersed with occasional cave-pierced rocky cliffs. We anchored in a small open harbour and went ashore in the dinghy, surrounded by a swarm of rough dugout canoes. Old Providence is a tropical island all right and the people do have dugout canoes, but aside from that all is very civilized. The people are black as coal, but they dress in spotless, if somewhat outmoded, clothes. The ones that speak English speak it with a beautiful Oxford accent. We called on the Alcalde, for the island belongs to Colombia, visited the principal store, and waited on the Mayor. The Mayor and the Alcalde took us behind the store where we all sat and had a glass of tepid beer and formally displayed our "dago dazzlers" as they are called, magnificent certificates covered with ribbons and gold seals from the Academy, certifying for all the world to know that we

were *scientificos* and learned men, and that it would be very nice if we were given every courtesy. As a result the Alcalde said in broken English that it would be perfectly all right for me to go about and shoot a bit, but first of all they would all be very pleased and complimented if, instead of flying the Ecuadorian flag from our masthead, we would fly the Colombian. This, of course, was a *faux pas* and so Fred rushed back to the boat and turned the flag the other way round, which seemed to please everybody.

I walked along the little road which circles the island, looking for birds. There were killdeer plover in a ploughed field behaving as if they were really in New England. There were herons in the mangroves along the shore and sombre-coloured pigeons with white foreheads in the spreading trees. There was a yellowish warbler which my guide, Podargo, a solemn wise-looking little boy in a ragged sort of nightshirt, told me was called a "swish-swish" bird. There were also humming-birds—"God birds" he called them—and flycatchers and finches. Except for the warbler and humming-birds, everything seemed very familiar and out of place in this land of dry, spiky hedgerows of cactus and spreading glossy-leaved trees, their trunks covered with small ferns and vines and huge splotched grey-green lichens.

On the way back to the harbour I stopped to rest outside a small black shack. A dignified negro in tattered clericals came out and introduced himself as Mr. Bryan.

"I am, sir," he said proudly, "an 'intinerant' preacher. Will you please come in?"

I thanked him and entered the single room. There was a table with benches round it and nothing else. But the walls were fascinating. They were covered with group photographs. I looked more closely and discovered that

all the groups were of the same sort. In each there was a dead man or woman in frock coat or evening dress lying in an open coffin propped up in a standing position. The corpses stared starkly at the camera while all around were ranged the smiling relatives.

"It is the custom of the country, sir," said Mr. Bryan. "The 'wakes' are great parties for the families. The dead ones don't always like it, however. Sometimes they sit right up in the coffin and groan mightily lifelike." Mr. Bryan evidently did not understand the ways of corpses in hot countries.

Mr. Bryan had apparently come many years before from Jamaica bringing his collection with him. He was very old and certainly batty in the head, but he had the manners of an ambassador. He now suggested that Podargo and I have some of his delicious-looking oranges which were in a basket of fruit on the table. I offered to pay him, but he shook his head firmly.

"It is an agriculturist's privilege," he said. "Have some sweet limes, sir, mighty fine."

We sailed about five in the afternoon, waving to the motley crew that had come to see us off—the Mayor, the Alcalde, Podargo, twenty-five cents richer, Mr. Bryan waving his stovepipe hat. As Old Providence drew off, we sat about in the sunset on deck sipping limeades made from sweet limes "mighty fine."

For two days we swept down towards Colón and the Canal. There were light mild airs and the sun was very hot. Aft over the wheel we rigged a small canvas and lay there watching the boobies flying about. Some were white with darkish tips to their wings and red feet, others rich brown with white bellies. Mostly they flew by in small silent parties, low over the rather milky viscous water. Once or twice we saw them chasing schools of

flying-fish. The booby is a much shorter, stouter bird than the pelican, with long thin wings reminiscent of an albatross. They are wonderful divers and plunge suddenly from great heights at the fish, their wings limp and streaming behind them. Occasionally a bird would go after some of the fish as they leaped into the air, but mostly they sought them under water.

From one end of the squaresail spar where it hung out over the water we rigged a long line with a bos'un's chair at the end, a short plank with two holes bored at its ends for a loop of line. One after another we would all try being swung out from the side in the chair and dipping and dashing into the waves with the motion of the boat. It was marvellous fun to rock back and forth, now high out of the water, now plunging in with a splash. You felt suddenly rather removed from the boat, as if you were coasting along somehow, watching what was going on from outside. The sea was soft and slippery like silk and although it was a dangerous-seeming sport we never tired of it.

The other way to take a bath was to dip water up with a canvas bucket. Someone had brought along a few bars of saltwater soap, but it refused to lather in spite of the hopeful statements printed on its paper wrapping. We could, of course, wash our hands and faces in fresh water in the sink in the head, but gradually we felt ourselves getting greyer and saltier all over for lack of a real bath.

The next morning we were off Colón breakwater. An old slop of a sea tossed us about, the sails slatting fiercely. It was jangling to the nerves to face the prospect of port officials and all the troublesome details of coming into a big harbour. However, a motor launch came out in answer to our signal flag, bringing, wonder of wonders, stacks of mail. The gloom vanished and instead there was

intense concentration punctuated by excited comments.

"Harry's wife's going to have a baby."

"No! How are the Perrys?"

"For goodness sake, my sister's engaged."

Colón is a grim hot little place. At least Cristobal, the Panamanian city across the street, is gayer. We had a sumptuous steak dinner at La Tropic restaurant and went afterwards to the Moulin Rouge to watch the night life. The atmosphere was so completely Hollywood that it seemed as if the proprietor must have copied the set directly from some movie entitled "Panama Nights." There was an aged "Madam" in sequins with red hair glad-handing everybody. There was a bar surely half a mile long. There were mirrors everywhere and endless entertainers, some haggard and hectic, a few rather pretty. The Navy and Marine Corps were well represented and the music came from two blaring discordant bands. I could hardly wait for the scene to shift suddenly to a smoky close-up of a corner alcove with Marlene Dietrich in a tired old feather boa puffing at a long cigarette holder. But no such glamorous interlude befell us. The music blared, the beer was thin and watery, and no *femme fatale* appeared to hand us a code message.

A pilot came aboard bright and early the next morning with four darky rope handlers, and we were off, up the Canal towards the locks. There are three on the Atlantic side raising boats up eighty-seven feet to Gatun Lake. They seem enormous in a small boat, quite Brobdingnagian. Four mooring lines stretch away up to where in the distance small doll-like creatures rush about shuttling little electric engines back and forth. Ahead of us high up, outlined against the sky on the lock gates, a busy little insect with five legs resolved itself into Fred, movie camera on tripod, taking pictures of our progress. At last

we finished our gradual rising and came out on the calm waters of Gatun Lake.

At this point the Diesel, living up to its reputation, decided to refuse to perform. Fortunately a light breeze had sprung up. We upped sail and made off down the lake, to the obvious pleasure of our pilot who said he had never heard of such a thing but hadn't had so much fun in years.

There were birds everywhere. Small flocks of green parrots flew over the boat shrieking. There were duck and gallinules in among the reeds, and little black cormorants perched on dead snags preening themselves with snaky movements of their long necks. We stopped for the night at Barro Colorado, an island in the middle of the lake which is administered as a research laboratory. It is rather high and rounded, covered with magnificent rain forest, all untouched jungle. There are a few small houses for visiting scientists and trails cut through the trees. The trails, however, are by no means reserved for scientists. After landing and greeting Dr. Chapman, the grand old man of American ornithology who happened to be in residence, I went for a walk with Tom Gilliard, who was working as Dr. Chapman's assistant. Both of us were new to the habits of the inhabitants of the rain forest of Central America, and so when a large boar peccary appeared in the trail, advancing towards us with determined gait, we glanced at each other.

"Isn't this the point where one climbs a tree?" I asked.

"I'm not sure," replied Tom, "but we might try it."

Somewhat sheepishly then we both took to two small saplings. The boar advanced until he was right under my tree. Then he looked up, rather waggishly I thought, and proceeded down the trail probably enjoying his triumph.

A few yards farther along the trail there was a sudden outburst of the most violent roars, just like feeding-time at the lion house. I hastily looked about for another tree, but Tom reassured me. They were howler monkeys he explained, and were overhead anyhow, rather than underfoot. We soon caught up with them and stood under the trees in which they were feeding, while they rained down twigs at us in their annoyance. Every few minutes one monkey would let out a roar and that would start off the whole troop of them so that the hills all about the lake seemed to ring with the noise. The howler is an ugly fellow, perhaps three feet tall, coal black, with an extraordinary bony sac below the chin connecting with the larynx. This apparently serves as a resonator for these tremendous, deep, loud notes. After supper we returned to the *Chiva* and slept, somewhat fitfully, for the howlers were in excellent voice.

The following afternoon we left Barro Colorado after a pleasant morning of sightseeing with Dr. Chapman, whose enthusiasm and interests, whether it be José, the tame coati, or a new tanager come to his feeding tray, are never failing.

Coming down through the Pedro Miguel locks at night in the light of brilliant searchlights and flares with dredges and tugs hard at work was a strange mechanized contrast to the deep jungle of Barro Colorado a few miles away. We tried tying up alongside one wall of the lock this time instead of staying out in the middle. Why we did this I don't know, perhaps for variety. In any case it afforded me some excitement. There were not enough canvas bumpers to keep the whole length of the boat from scraping against the concrete wall, and so we brought out all the available boat hooks, poles, and mops which we braced against the lock wall and leaned on. As

the water went out and the boat sank deeper we discovered that there was a good two inches of grey mud coating the wall. At one point I leaned a little too heavily on my mop. The next instant I was hanging head down between the lock wall and the boat, suspended by the heels from the rail. Luckily the boat happened to be fairly well out from the wall so that I did not have to serve as a bumper, but it was nearly a week before I felt that the grey mud and snail shells were really gone from my hair and behind the ears.

Balboa is not as ugly as Colón. For one thing it is bigger. There is a hill with gardens and a view across the bay to the rise of land beyond. We became well acquainted with the view, for it took nearly a month to clear the port. It was all due to that Diesel. Apparently someone had poured salt water through the entire works, for it was a mass of rust in its innards. As a result we had to tie up alongside of U.S. Government Pier 14 while three rather supercilious mechanics deigned to come and look at it for a mere \$2.00 an hour apiece.

Pier 14 was very high for there is an enormous tide in Balboa Harbour. It was also very greasy and dirty, which was not good for a trim little white schooner. Next to us four small black submarines nested together, and beyond there was a flat, comfortable, waddy old submarine tender. The other inhabitants of Pier 14 were black vultures who would mince along the edge, looking down at us hungrily in the early morning where we lay on deck like corpses on our air mattresses.

Few other visitors disturbed us as we sweated of a morning over the engine or the stowing of stores bought at the local Commissary. One particular morning I was away shopping in town with Charis and Didie when Fred

had a caller. He had answered a hail and come on deck clad in shorts, cap, and a coating of grease, to find a plump vision in chiffon and a floppy hat waving from the gangway. She introduced herself with fluttery gestures as Mrs. Barstow from the Tivoli Hotel, and where was Mr. Ripley, please, and she was going to have a cocktail party for him, and which was Mr. Crockett?

"Oh! You are Mr. Crockett." There was a pause and the lady fled dismayed.

When I came back I went over to the foreman's office and called the Tivoli, to an accompaniment of riveters' hammers and acetylene torches.

"Mrs. Barstow, you called? I am Mr. Ripley."

"Bob, darling," she screamed. Of course I should have realized. Once again I was being taken for "Believe it or not" Ripley. Some day I should like to meet him and give him the addresses of all his friends around the world who want to give him cocktail parties.

Poor Mrs. Barstow. She had heard we were bound for New Guinea, which she thought was really Guiana in South America, and she had a husband there who had been lost in a plane, and would we search for him please? We could not go to the cocktail party, but sent George, who turned up later for dinner at the Union Club with reports of very good cocktails.

We had discovered the Union Club. It was at the end of a narrow old-world street in Panama City down which one clatters in an open victoria. The food was splendid, the choice of wines excellent, and the view from the great stone terrace overlooking Panama Harbour with the sunset haze on everything superb. Far out on the bay are low rounded islands which look like floating island pudding. Nearer there are buoys like red cherries, and the thin masts of the fishing fleet stand up in rows

as if the cook had had a delusion and stuck in shavings of chocolate by mistake.

We went to the Union Club nearly every night when we weren't, sitting listening to the band concert in the Plaza, drinking warm beer and watching the crowds go by. We even got rather social at one point and had friends to dinner, Mr. Zetek, who had taken us everywhere to help us buy stores, introducing us as Dr. this and Dr. that all down the line.

"It helps things go more smoothly, you know," he had reassured us. "All *scientificos* must be doctors after all."

Then there was Mr. Evans, in charge of engineering, whose minions were even now sweating over our Diesel. Also there was Dr. Clark of the Gorgas Laboratory, who told us how to avoid malaria in New Guinea and gave us a pet kinkajou, a creature about the size of a large cocker spaniel with thick woolly hair, a long grasping tail, and a face like a bear. The kinkajou turned out to have a disposition quite unlike any cocker, however. It seemed to be entirely willing to bite anyone's hand off on short notice, and proceeded to escape by climbing up the rigging and cavorting about there till night when it leaped off into the water and disappeared, swimming for the opposite shore.

Nothing daunted, Charis announced that she wanted another kinkajou, which we soon found at Dr. Marsh's zoo, a baby one this time. Herma it seemed to me was no more affectionate than the big one had been, but at least she couldn't bite as hard. I, too, secured a pet, a pleasant green Amazon parrot with a yellow spot on the back of his neck. He answered to the name of Lorito and was quite young and ridiculously tame. Fortunately Lorito stayed asleep at night, while Herma, being a nocturnal animal, reached the peak of her activity about

three in the morning. She would gaily spring onto your air mattress, setting up sufficient vibrations to wake you, and then pass on, giving one or two playful nips as she went.

The next morning after Charis bought Herma, Fred looked up sleepy-eyed from his corn flakes to repeat mournfully, "but it all lasted so long."

We sailed February 1, 1937. The bay is like a river mouth, rather long and narrow with soft green grassy banks. Lots of pelicans were sitting solemnly in the water. Others flew about with an air of concentration looking for small fish. Every time a pelican dived for fish, the little white gulls that were also flying past would swoop down and land on the water right next to where the pelican was about to come up. Then as the bigger bird appeared on the surface, the little gulls would swim in close and pick away the fish protruding from its bill. Twice the gulls were bold enough to land squarely on a pelican's back and reach around its head to snatch at a fish tail.

The sun went down that night for the first time in a month behind the sea. The sunset was very brilliant for the haze was strong over the land. Above the haze, behind and to the south, the peaks of the northern Andes stood out, purple and inviting. Sometime I would like to go there, I thought, but in the meantime there is the still very much unfinished business of New Guinea. For often and again we wondered just when we would ever reach that fabulous island. To go the twelve thousand miles to New Guinea is to go every mile personally if one goes in a small boat. On the long night watches, on the long day watches, every wave passed is an accomplishment. It is almost like making a vow in Tibet to go from one holy monastery to another on hands and feet.

No lama ever got to know the grains of sand along the way better than we felt we knew each inch of water.

The breeze is quite fresh off the land in the Gulf of Panama. The sea is calm and gurgles gently past. The Galápagos Islands are a thousand miles away.

## CHAPTER II

### GALÁPAGOS TO MARQUESAS

**T**HERE is nothing so gay and comforting as the play of porpoises about a boat. But it must be a little boat, so that you can really get close to them. If you sit out on the bowsprit you see their sleek shapes coming up at you from under the bow, their little button eyes seem to twinkle at you as they come, and once in a while they whistle in a high squeaky way to one another. Up and up they come with a rush, to break in a smother of foam right ahead of the bowsprit. Sometimes they seem to be possessed with a special exuberance and leap far out to turn and twist, landing on their backs showing their smooth white bellies, or again making a perfect nose dive, to disappear with a last flirt of their broad tails.

At night, too, it is lovely if it is the season of the phosphorescence, when millions of little protozoa are in the water lighting up like fireflies with every disturbance. Then the result is stupendous. The porpoises look like torpedoes shooting up out of the blackness. Behind them they leave a trail like a rocket, dappled silver fading slowly off into the darkness. Sudden shafts of light come charging at you, pass under the keel, and reappear again on the other side. On a flat night there is no sound except occasionally when a porpoise in a column of silver sparks shoots up to break on the surface with a shower of gleaming foam and a faint "whoosh."

Sometimes gulls or terns flew about us at night after a rain when veils of mist hung over the water. As the porpoises played silently in the water, the gulls wheeled very close so that they were lit up by the light from the mast-head and the binnacle. We called them "ghost birds" tritely enough, but it is difficult to think of a better term. They shone eerily in the faint light and sometimes they made complaining little mewling noises as all proper lost souls should.

After leaving the land breezes of the Gulf of Panama we found ourselves in a flat calm for most of the distance to the Galápagos. For us they were *Las Islas Encantadas*, as the Spanish call them, enchanted islands that eluded us, set as they are in the middle of a sea without regular winds and with strong currents sweeping north, northwest. The nights were beautiful and restful, the days dull and listless. It was fun to be able to sleep through most of the twelve-to-four watch on deck, waking occasionally to watch the mast like a pale finger making aimless tracings from star to star. But it was also time-consuming. We should have gone the thousand miles in a week more or less, whereas it took us eighteen days. All of which was most disturbing to our plans to fetch New Guinea by May or June. Perhaps, we thought to ourselves, we may not reach Sorong, the little port near Harry Kern's islands, until July. If, as the detective stories put it, we had only known——

Meanwhile, knowing that we could get no fuel oil in the Galápagos, we drifted along using the motor as little as possible. Through five solid days of steady rain, through other days of broiling sun when the horizon blurred and shimmered in the heat, we pursued our various activities on board. Chæis kept in practice for her work with the Papuans' in New Guinea by taking

complicated measurements of us all nearly every day. There were about ten concerned with the head alone, making up the so-called cranial index. For these she had sharp-pointed steel calipers that she poked at our noses and eyebrows with a determination which, coupled with the occasional jerky movements of the boat, made us tremble for the safety of some of our more valuable appendages.

Didie at the moment was seriously occupied with lessons in navigation from George. She also assisted him in taking the ship's noon and evening positions. George would shout "mark" as he got his sight and Didie would reply "mark" in her best down-East accent as she took the time from her watch wherever she happened to be at the moment, on deck or in her and Charis's stateroom aft. Her accent was so distinctive that Lorito picked it up and was soon shouting "maark" with the best of them, much to the confusion of the navigators. Lorito also had discovered a fondness for Didie's particular brand of cigarettes which he preferred to any other. This was somewhat disquieting, if amusing, because once he found a pack he was not satisfied until he had torn every cigarette in it to pieces. Stimulated by his success he would always display all his tricks in an effort to apologize, turning somersaults on a rope end or climbing up into the rigging and flapping his wings and whistling valiantly.

The rest of us tinkered with our various equipment. Fred worked on his cameras or the radio which we used to get time signals on, hideous blasts of static squawks which always seemed to come in just as I was dropping off preparatory to taking a midnight watch. Sometimes we got radio programmes on it of an evening, but as the Americas receded behind us our interest waned along with the power of the radio to receive broadcasts. Lowell

Thomas, slick and confident, held less interest for us far out in the Pacific than he had at home, as he told us breathlessly of strikes in the motor industry. The news in general seemed remote and uninteresting. Already we were in another time, another space.

Doane was a whiz of a cook. His blueberry muffins melted in the mouth. Four years on a Gloucester fishing trawler going to the Banks had taught him to hold onto the stove with his toes, juggle pots and pans in both hands, and open a box of egg powder with his teeth. Sometimes there would be tragedy. There would come a sudden crescendo of crashes followed by an awful silence and then a torrent of cursing, rich and merry and ripe. When things got really bad, Doane would take to the rigging and swing about for half an hour on end, going from stay to stay, from mast to mast, until even the kinkajou was put to shame. Then he would go down into the galley again, to emerge with such a supper as this: chicken à la king, potatoes, string beans, biscuits, tea, and squash pie. Appetites, of course, are phenomenal on shipboard. Doane would usually have something ready for a mug-up about midnight too. If Charlie and I were on the eight-to-twelve, he would often come on deck bringing coffee and a cherry pie, and we would sit there and swap stories.

When one or another of us wasn't sleeping, Charlie and I occupied ourselves on the calm night watches with an endless tournament of cribbage. Mostly Charlie won, for he had been well trained by the boys at the firehouse back in Gloucester, but the game remained a passion with us always.

There were a few nights of moderate breezes and at these times we had some strange callers. Once there was a slimy thump and a frantic wiggling, and a flying-fish landed in my lap as I sat by the wheel. Often in the

morning as we washed down the decks we would find small fish or squid, dried and stuck to the planking. Another night I was conscious of something black which fluttered down into the cockpit alongside the binnacle. I reached down and grabbed it, to find a stormy petrel nestling in my hand. It was a small bird about the size of a thrush, black with a broad V-shaped patch of white on its rump, and long dangling legs with miniature webbed feet. It had a very characteristic musky smell and black beads of eyes, and seemed withal so delicate and thin and small that we wondered how it ever got about successfully in all that waste of ocean. Several more of the same species flew on board during the time that we were near the Galápagos.

For several days coming out of the Gulf of Panama we passed numbers of floating tree trunks in the water. Some of them were very large with traces of vegetation still on them. The late paleontologist, W. D. Matthew, has written a well-known book, *Climate and Evolution*, in which there is a great deal of discussion about these "land rafts," so-called. Matthew's theory is that truly oceanic islands which have never been connected with the large continents of the world are too small to have evolved their own peculiar animals, and besides in many cases, as for example the Galápagos Islands, the animals which reside on the islands show a very close and obvious relationship to those on the mainland of South and Central America. Therefore, how did the animals manage to reach the islands? The Galápagos are populated by insects, small invertebrates, lizards, giant tortoises, and rodents as well as numbers of species of birds.

Dr. Matthew has proposed that all these forms, except the birds, drifted over to the Galápagos on "land rafts" of floating vegetation, and has even attempted to prove that

it is possible by statistical methods. It is doubtful, however, if he ever saw a "land raft" in action. All those that we passed were covered with boobies, terns, or man-o'-war birds, any of which would have been capable of making an end of a poor lizard or mouse trying to reach the Galápagos.

The man-o'-war birds had first flapped lazily into our lives in Balboa Harbour. They are big black birds with enormous narrow wings, sometimes seven feet from tip to tip. The tail also is long and scissors-shaped, and the bird has a rakish piratical-looking head with a long sharp bill hooked at the tip. These strange loose-jointed creatures, sometimes called frigate pelicans, seem to spend most of their time chasing boobies to get the fish which the poor boobies have caught. From a calm soaring position high overhead, they will suddenly close their wings like a falcon and descend with great speed at a booby, often two or three at one time, to buffet and chase it until it has dropped the fish it was carrying. These birds are so fast that they can then catch the fish before it touches the water. Sometimes they dip up live fish from the surface, reaching down to scoop up a squid without losing a great flapping wingbeat. Again they may land for a few seconds in the water, but only rarely and with great effort in rising again, for their feet are so small that they are no help for anything but perching.

On St. Valentine's Day there was a scurrying about in the stateroom as Didie and Charis composed valentines valiantly. Doane meanwhile instructed me in the making of Boston brownies, which, being the product of a beginner, were very good. In the afternoon we sat about drinking tea laced with rum, eating brownies, and the valentines were presented. Mine was addressed to "S. Darkheart Ripley" and read:

“With malice for all,  
With charity toward none,  
But for charms that never pall,  
“Your black heart’s the only one.”

It was decorated with a black heart held by silver doves on a red field, and was a real work of art. St. Valentine’s Day, I was pleased to discover, is a true sailor’s holiday, for Cowley, the pirate, in his *Voyage Round the World*, describes celebrating the 14th of February, 1684, near Cape Horn on board the *Batchelor’s Delight* with much “drinking of Brandy” and “chusing of Valentines.”

There were more tropic birds about, although of a different species from those we had seen off the Bahamas. These had red bills. Once I saw one of them floating on the water, a feat which many ornithologists have doubted that the bo’sun bird, as the sailors call them, is capable of. Like the frigate bird these long-tailed tern-like creatures have tiny feet which seem quite unable to lift them off the water.

As tropic birds had greeted us near the Bahamas, so now swallow-tailed gulls told us that we were near the Galápagos. We first saw them about four hundred miles from the islands. A pair circled close to us, evidently curious about the boat. They are shaded on the head with grey masks. Their bills are large, dark pea-greenish with a crimson spot. The rest of the bird is white with a rosy tint, a forked tail, and bright pink feet. The effect is very gay and chic as if they belonged in a ballet. Usually these birds fly in a rather effortless manner, the body swaying up and down with the wing beats. Their voice is also a characteristic “mew,” low and plaintive. But this time I noticed that the larger of the pair, perhaps the male, flying aft and slightly above the female, was indulg-

ing in a strange antic. The bird flew stiffly, head raised up and thrust forward, making the breast puffy and the neck thin. All the time it was calling, a low warbling rattle, *uk—uk—uk*, softly but still audible at a good distance. Spring had evidently just arrived in the Galápagos.

We sighted land at dawn. Off Chatham Island, a great rock rises up out of the sea, four hundred feet sheer like the prow of a ghostly ship. At its base there is a black scar which must be a cave. The sea, flat as a billiard table, gathered itself together at intervals and, rising smooth and sleek, hurled itself at the rock. Part went into the scar out of which came a dull booming like a far-away waterfall. The rest broke in white-of-egg streamers of foam, streaking up the sides of the rock. To one side there is a ledge on which an old bull seal lay, weaving back and forth. He plunged finally into the wrack about him, to come up quietly a few yards off. His round head stared at us doe-eyed, the black moustaches dripping.

In and out of the cave small terns and petrels wheeled like bees at a hive. Dusky shearwaters swept by low over the water, flapping steadily on pointed wings. High over the rock with a background of long thin streamers of cloud in a pale clay-coloured sky hung a little cluster of great black man-o'-war birds. As we circled the rock a steep slope covered with scrubby bushes came into view on the farther side. From a distance there seemed to be red spots of colour everywhere like big flowers.

"Do you smell geraniums?" Fred asked Charlie, and we all laughed.

The binoculars revealed a curious sight. The red spots leaped towards us. They were the balloon-like sacs of inflated skin which the male frigate bird puffs up under his chin in the mating season. Some of the birds were

flying about over the nesting place looking as if they had tied toy balloons to themselves, others sat perched uncomfortably on the bushes where small piles of sticks served for nests. Every so often one bird of a pair would land near the other; once a female landed on a male's back, and then all the birds in the vicinity set up a great tootling, raising their bills on end and shaking out their long plume-like necks and back feathers.

The strange stark rock drifted off as we puffed and panted over the still water towards Wreck Bay. The hills of Chatham stood up on our port side, rows of cactus plants dancing over the gaunt slopes in the heat. Without wind the air hung about us thickly like the folds of a damp curtain. There was a ripple in the water. I climbed part way up into the rigging to get a better view. A hammerhead shark hung there just below the surface. As we passed it I estimated it was sixteen feet long, one-third the waterline length of the boat. Far ahead two enormous black fins knifed out of the water in slow motion, heading for Indefatigable Island, a smudge on the starboard horizon.

"Blackfish," Doane said. They moved in the same way that porpoises do, but their huge fins were out of all proportion.

Wreck Bay is the official harbour of the Galápagos. As its name implies, it is not a very suitable port. It is open and exposed to certain winds and the anchorage is none too secure. There is a long shaky pier of manzanilla wood to which boats apparently never tie up, inhabited only by small grey lava gulls. There are three or four tumble-down houses including the port captain's with Ecuadorian flag bravely flying, and off to one side a bust of Darwin on a pedestal. A ramshackle schooner was in from Guayaquil loading cattle. The steers were swimming around

the side of the boat while *vaqueros* in two rowboats went about fitting slings under the bawling animals. A third rowboat meanwhile was making out from shore towards us.

Months before, at lunch at the Harvard Club in New York, I had met a man who had been to the Galápagos on a yacht. It had seemed very dignified and proper when he gave me some letters to friends in the islands. One was addressed to Señor Eduardo Alfredo Garcia, "a particular friend of ours who lives on the beach at Wreck Bay."

The first man out of the rowboat was a little wizened fellow with iron-grey grizzled hair and an eloquent seal-like moustache. He bounced onto the deck in ragged trousers, bare feet, dirty shirt, and a mass of smiles. He pumped our hands up and down and announced that he, no less, was Eduardo Alfredo Garcia. Upon presentation of the letter, he kissed it, pumped my hand up and down some more, hugged himself, waved his arms, skipped up and down, and retired into a corner to read, pronouncing all the words under his breath with little whistling noises.

The Intendente now went over our papers. He read our permit to land from the Ecuadorian Consul upside down, and completely neglected to ask for the notarized documents relating to our health and prison record which each of us had been at some pains to secure in order to be able to land on these precious islands. The Intendente was a good-looking man of perhaps thirty-five with rather broad Indian features. He was dressed in a faded cap and uniform. His first, and rather perplexing, announcement to us was that he came from Quito and was the brother of a famous Mexican movie actor.

In the late afternoon we came back from a day's walk inland. A path leads down towards Mr. Garcia's house.

In the scrubby acacia trees behind the beach mocking-birds flirted their tails up and down and stared at us, heads cocked to one side. A family of Galápagos finches, some in brown, some in black plumage, scabbled in the dust ahead. I cannot understand how these birds can fly right at a cactus bush, land on it at full speed, and then proceed to hop about on the broad thorn-covered leaves of the plant. Any less agile bird would be impaled a dozen times.

In a large feathery bush in the back of Mr. Garcia's house, a vermilion flycatcher, its breast the colour of red ink, sat singing faintly. Mr. Garcia was hard at work cleaning shark skins on a broad bench. The sharks were small, about three feet, and fresh and soft. Long strings of pale insides filled a rusty iron tub. The mocking-birds flew down in little flocks to perch on the quaking mass while they searched for small pieces. Mr. Garcia, all smiles, shook our hands warmly in his oily ones, and ushered us into his house.

There was one large room, ten by twelve feet, containing a toothless grandmother in a faded black nightgown, "Mamacita," a grizzled old father-in-law, and seven children ranging from a tall boy in his teens to a squalling bundle which lay in Mamacita's lap. Mrs. Garcia, fat and laughing, ran in and out bringing sweet pineapples. For furniture there were benches and a table against the wall. A large corner cupboard had a door which swung open regularly against Mamacita's elbow, only to be closed again as regularly by a motion of her arm. In it were bottles of whisky and rum, and underneath on the floor there was a pile of dried shark skins. The walls were made of irregular pieces of smooth driftwood and on them were two wonderful oieographs, one of a nude lady of generous proportions reclining on a seashell-strewn

beach, the other of a party of robust van Dyck cavaliers sitting about a table waving steins and clay pipes. The flies were ubiquitous. They sat on you in masses, never stinging, just quietly resting on hands and faces.

Mrs. Garcia brought in a phonograph of an antique pattern. It had an enormous metal horn coming out of the top. We had presented the Garcias with needles and some new records. Mr. Garcia wound it up and put on a rumba. He was wearing a present of a pair of our castoff rubber boots. Solemnly one after the other he invited Charis and Didie to tread a measure in the middle of the room while we all watched. Mr. Garcia's burro now entered to make the party complete. Everything was a great success. The Garcias' eyes glistened with emotion. Mamacita had gone to sleep and the cupboard door had swung open, shielding her upper half from view and serving as a splendid sounding board for her rhythmic snores. Various small children were asleep underfoot, and the burro had lain down in the back doorway. We picked our way out carefully, receiving presents of seal-skin slippers for which we exchanged soap and cigarettes. Mr. Garcia lurched up to me and thrust a small Galapagos tortoise into my hands. I am to give messages to all his friends in America, all his friends, and *el Presidente*, and to the so nice Señor Monroe and his Doctrine. I thanked him warmly. I will call the tortoise "Eduardo."

In the brilliant moonlight the shapes of the cactus stood up starkly against the horizon. The beach glistened white and cold as we drew out of the harbour. The sea was cold-looking, too, cold and dark. The whole scene was harsh and cold except for the single burning lantern in Mr. Garcia's window. Mr. Garcia stood on the beach waving a rum bottle and from the open doorway came

faintly the sound of a phonograph. It was very warming, even to the scenery, to meet such truly friendly people.

February 27, Saturday. Eighty miles WSW of Albe-marle I., Galápagos, heading towards the Marquesas Ids.

From my diary:

"The south-east trade winds have finally caught up with us. We are beginning to get somewhere at last. About noon the 'man overboard' bell on deck rang. Those of us below hurried up to be greeted by the news that Lorito had fallen out of the rigging into the water. His wings had been clipped by his previous owner so that he couldn't fly. In frantic haste we tried to lower sail and come about, but we were carrying squaresail and rafee as well as all the lowers except the jumbo and the fisherman. When we did come about I saw him first, a little mass of dirty ruffled feathers spread on the water with his yellow head raised up looking at us. But we swept slowly by. We could not quite fetch him where he lay. And so we stood off wasting minutes while we tried to start the engine and raise the jumbo. A second time we came about, but it was too late. Poor Lorito had disappeared. We were all terribly upset, I most of all, of course, for he had been such a friendly brave little thing.

"Note: let this be a warning to us all. I hate to think what might happen if one of us fell overboard."

Although the extra rigging and gear required for the squaresail and its yard on the foremast were bulky and kept us from pointing nearer than about nine degrees into the wind on a tack, the squaresail and the rafee, the triangular sail rigged above it, were invaluable for sailing before the trades. We had not been able to fetch poor Lorito, but we were able to sail great guns before the wind. All the way from the Galápagos to the Mar-

quesas, about three thousand miles, we scooned along without once turning on our sorry Diesel. Every day we made from one hundred and sixty to one hundred and ninety miles. We began to feel that at this rate we might be in New Guinea by June after all.

Every morning we had sail drill. We took down the jumbo and put up the squaresail, raffee, and fisherman. In the late afternoon we reversed the process. For a few days the seas were quite big for the wind was blowing very strong. Sitting about in the cockpit it was a curious sight to look aft over the stern and watch an endless succession of ragged blue combers rise up high and curling behind us. Up and down the wave would tower. Then it would reach its full height and start forward, slipping, sliding down on itself. This one, you would think, surely this one will engulf us. But no, just as it reached the taffrail, it always slid away neatly under the boat, and the whole schooner would stagger forward in its course. Far out on the starboard side the main boom dipped deep into the wave as it raced past. Then it would rise up dripping as the wave went by and then another would be curling over the stern, and on and on.

Below at meal times this giddy pace was somewhat disconcerting to Fred, Charis, and myself. We were the three who sat on the starboard side of the main cabin table. We were geared for the normal slap of the waves and lurch of the boat, but sometimes there would come a seventh wave and the resulting swoop and keeling over was likely to throw almost anything our way. One time it would be spinach in the lap. Another time a Bartlett pear in its juice would spatter the shirt front, or about a gallon of scalding tea would drive us out of our seats altogether.

On Charlie's birthday Doane cooked a marvellous

supper of chicken curry and rice, ending up with a pie covered with an iced coating saying "Happy Birthday." Charlie tried to cut it up into pieces, first politely, then desperately, only to find that it was made of canvas, whereupon Doane produced a delicious genuine mince pie.

Gradually the waves slackened although the wind seemed to keep fresh and strong. We swam often off the bowsprit, lowering ourselves on a bo'sun's chair. It was less exciting than off the square yard, but it had a pleasure all its own. As you sat there the ship seemed to advance towards you, sparkling and gleaming in the sun. The great squaresail and the raffle above billowed out full and white against the turquoise sky. The whole boat dipped and bowed like a motherly grand old dame who has been persuaded to join in a stately dance.

Birds stayed with us nearly every day of the three weeks across this long stretch of open ocean. They did not seem as friendly, however, as the merry porpoises whistling and blowing in chorus about the bow. Gradually we noticed a change in the species of birds. First the swallow-tailed gulls disappeared, then the little black stormy petrel. Instead a new stormy petrel with a white throat appeared, evidently a species with a more westerly range. On looking it up in one of my bird books, Alexander's *Birds of the Ocean*, I found that there is a white-throated stormy petrel known to breed on the Marquesas, Christmas Island, and west all the way to the New Hebrides Islands south-east of New Guinea. Evidently this was the species, but it always seemed amazing that these little birds can have such a thing as a definite range of territory in this great waste of ocean. The same day that the black stormy petrels disappeared, or about two thousand miles east, of the Marquesas, fairy terns

appeared. These delicate graceful little things are definitely Polynesian, not of the Galápagos. They are well called for they are pure gleaming white all over, with large limpid black eyes. They seem to have an uncanny ability to find food on the barren expanse of the ocean. They act as guides for the bonito and tuna fishermen of the Central Pacific. Wherever there is a flock of these birds twisting and diving over the water, there are bound to be vast schools of the small fish which they eat. These in turn have been driven to the surface by bigger fish, bonito perhaps, or even giant tuna or swordfish of one kind or another.

Often we passed these flocks of diving birds, and sometimes we saw a flash of white belly or blue shining back which bespoke a marlin feeding at full speed. Once we saw sailfish leaping into the air in their hunger, shaking their broad foot-high back fins like pennants.

To a navigator there is probably no bigger thrill than a landfall right on the nose after a long voyage. Currents and winds to the contrary, we sighted the Marquesas just where they should have been on the evening of March 17th. There it was, the land, a grey misty mass of something, a bulky solid lump rearing out of the sea where nothing had been for twenty-one days. The sun had gone down behind a great bank of clouds, leaving a murky pinkness everywhere. Small flocks of boobies flew in towards the land after the day's fishing. It was now nearly dark. We had taken in the squaresail and raffee for the night. George came on deck to make a star sight. Vega was clear, and Arcturus. Doane stuck his head up the companionway.

"Grub's on," he called. What would the land be like to-morrow? What would we see at dawn?

Taipivai is the deep bay on Nukahiva where Herman Melville lived before he wrote *Typee*. In those days the valley supported perhaps two thousand people, but small-pox, introduced in the eighteen-sixties, quickly reduced the population to less than five hundred. To-day there are not more than twenty-five or thirty people in all of Taipi. The bay is long and narrow with high bare rock hills standing up on either side that shine reddish-brown in the sun. Gradually as the eye travels downwards the vegetation begins and the colours change, brown to pale grey-green, to yellow-green, to green, to emerald, to the dark fringe, the feather boa, that is the line of coconut palms between the shore and the blue-green sea.

High up in the hills at the head of the valley is a white jet of water, a cascade. The river opens into the bay in a wide swampy estuary above which is a rocky pool where we bathed. Small green fruit pigeons cooed at us in pairs from the bare angular branches of kapok trees. These mild-looking little birds rejoice in a Latin name coined out of the name of the French admiral who took over these islands for France, Admiral du Petithouars. The river is overhung with hibiscus trees which dropped great pinky-white blossoms into the water. Yellowish birds about the size of a mocking-bird, giant reed warblers, sat among the blossoms pealing out lovely ventriloquial notes. A wild cock, descendant of the Indian game fowl first brought into these islands by the migrating Polynesians, crowed from a thicket. Overhead the soft white terns circled silently. They were nesting nearby on the hillside in a grove of pandanus. They are very foolhardy, laying their eggs on a small branch in a crack or crevice that barely supports it. There were many broken eggs on the ground under the trees.

As the sun left the valley the "no-nos," little black

gnats, came out. We repaired to the house of Mrs. Jacopo, a friendly lady who seemed to be the social lion of Nukahiva. She was a strapping creature with flashing eyes, long black shiny hair smelling of coconut oil, and gleaming teeth set in a permanent sun tan. She was from Tahiti, a trained midwife from the hospital at Papeete, sent to the islands to look after the declining birth rate. She told us that the native stock of these islands seemed to be dying out, that there were only two or three hundred pure Polynesians in all the French-controlled islands, Marquesas, Tuamotus, Australs, and Society group. She herself was one-quarter each, Tahitian, French, Swiss, and Hawaiian.

The day before, Mrs. Jacopo had told us that there was a man walking over to the next valley to go to jail; he had been away for the week and on a visit home, and if we wanted we could give him some telegrams to send to America as there was a small Government radio station. Now, sitting on Mrs. Jacopo's front lawn eating pineapples and cheremoyas, there was a shuffling noise and a stranger came down the path from the head of the valley. In his hand there was a bill from the radio station and a small pink envelope for me. It was an answer from the family to my message home.

"*A votre service, m'sieu,*" he said in reply to my thanks, and melted off into the trees, a brown pareu-clad emissary of civilization.

Mrs. Jacopo's house was a shed-like structure of bare boards with a pretty thatched roof of dried pandanus leaves. She came out now with refreshments—sweet white wine, a loaf of French bread baked at the local Chinese store, and watermelon. She had put on her best dress, an incredible thing of sea-green satin, very tight-fitting. There were about ten neighbours also, very jolly-

looking, the women in bright cotton dresses made out of the pareu material from the looms of Birmingham and Manchester, the men in duck trousers and palm-leaf hats.

By now it was fairly dark, there was a fire going, and the teeth of the people shone in the light. We all sat about solemnly eating and drinking and making rather stilted conversation to the two or three who spoke French. Suddenly there was a murmur of excitement as a young man slipped into the circle carrying a guitar. Another whipped a harmonica out of his pocket and the evening was saved. With great dash and vigorous rhythm they began to play, hulas mostly, old hymn tunes, transformed into Polynesian swing. At first there was some singing, the women in a high whining tone, the men lower, a sort of bass accompaniment. There were three songs that we learned. One was "Papio," the song of the moment, which tells in Tahitian all about unprintable doings of a certain old Tahitian lady. Another was "E maururu avau," a song that says "thank you" over and over again, which Prince Hinoe, the consort of the last Queen of Tahiti, composed for the end of his three-day champagne sprees. The last, a pretty little sentiment contrasting San Francisco and Tahiti, goes as follows:

"Les femmes de 'Frisco,  
Sont bien plus jolies,  
Mais pour les avoir,  
Il faut deux dollars.  
Tandisque celles de Tahiti,  
Se vendent pour rien.  
Vive Tahiti, le pays d'amour."

After this the men volunteered to show us a pig dance, an old Marquesan custom. All squatting on their hams, they formed a line, and then without music, to the tune

of their own grunts and "oinks" they proceeded to inch themselves forward in a waving line like a football snake dance. Everybody went into gales of laughter at this, and finally the men themselves broke down and fell over in every direction, gasping with the exertion and laughing at the same time.

At this point we ventured a contribution, George having brought his guitar. Somewhat shakily we all joined in on "Old MacDonald Had a Farm," which was very well received.

As the grand finale Mrs. Jacopo agreed to do a hula. She stood in the centre of the circle, her long hair falling over her shoulders and back. The Tahitian hula is very fast, quite different from the Hawaiian dance. She stood in the same spot, raising her bare feet with delicate pawing motions, her hands making plucking gestures in the air. All the time her hips were gyrating wildly, quite independent of her torso, first rotating in one direction then reversing. The dress, looking as if it would burst, reflected back the firelight, shimmering, twinkling, undulating, all at once. The audience clapped and yelled, and then one of the men jumped up to dance with her. He was very tall and gangling and his arms looked like a monkey's. His bent knees shuttled back and forth, his feet plucked at the ground and his body waved in all directions. He did a stomach roll, standing quite still, while the muscles of his stomach writhed and twisted up and down at will. This brought a great "aue" of appreciation from the audience. As the music reached a frenzied climax he made a bound towards the woman. For a moment they seemed to embrace, then it was over, and both sank panting to the ground. Everybody applauded loudly and Mrs. Jacopo, flushed and pleased, smiled her thanks.

As we rowed out to the schooner from the beach Charlie remarked seriously:

"You know, I think Mrs. Jacopo should have a very stimulating effect in her work here," to which we all solemnly agreed.

### CHAPTER III

## NEARER AND NEARER

**P**APEETE, the capital of Tahiti, is one of the last of the old South Sea towns. The schooners from the outer islands tie up stern first to the green street front. Heavy lush flame of the forest trees hangs over the water's edge. It is always cool along the Quai. The view is superb. The sky is full of trade-wind clouds, heavy billowy pillows, all cut off at the same level above the horizon. Far off the grey-blue island of Moorea rises out of a sea of ultramarine. Nearer, there is the outer reef, a constant line of white surf, then the green of the harbour water with the little feathery palms on the island of Motu Uta in the centre. Still nearer there are the white schooners in a line and the water along the edge of the Quai, clear and full of green and brown coral heads and little fish darting in and out, turquoise with yellow fins.

In the street a few Citroëns and Fords buzz about in front of the white stucco houses and stores, but mostly people are on foot or on bicycles. There goes Fat Lucy on her bicycle, a mountain of a woman in flowing flowered chiffon with a mass of hair floating behind her. Then there is Charlie, an old negro from Dixie who sells pies. There is Jonesy, tall and glowering, standing in a doorway of his curio shop. From the second-floor veranda of the Cercle Bougainville, the "club," come laughter and the click of billiard balls. A sudden outburst of squeals

and squawks means that the schooner for Mangareva is being loaded. All day the patient women have been sitting on the grass near the gangway, waiting for the supercargo to come out of Laury's Bar and announce the sailing time. Now they start up the gangway, tall gaunt women, short fat women in the black Mother Hubbards and black straw hats still worn by the island people although long out of fashion on Tahiti. They carry bundles wrapped in pareu cloth, bundles tied up in palm leaves, bundles in woven pandanus baskets, each larger than the last. They carry tin trunks, and sea chests and children by the score, and pigs, masses of squealing pigs trussed up by the legs. The pigs will be seasick later.

In the midst of this noise, there is a wild blowing of horns from down the street and a gigantic bus comes careening along, swaying like drunken sailors walking three abreast. A Tahitian planter has sold his vanilla bean crop and is celebrating on the proceeds. After all, what use is money to a Tahitian unless it can be spent and enjoyed? The bus driver is a big tough fellow. He swears and curses, scowls one moment, bellows with laughter the next. He is the perfect picture of a bus driver anywhere except for one touch, so incongruous anywhere but in Tahiti, the great *lei* of white frangipani and tiare blossoms round the brim of his big straw hat. The whole bus is in fact a mass of flowers and branches tied to the ends of the seats, the stanchions that support the roof, the fenders, the radiator cap. An orchestra of guitars, harmonicas, and a small wooden drum occupies the back seat playing furiously. The rest of the bus is full of people, girls hanging out of the seats screaming with laughter, men jumping on and off the running board, and little boys and dogs galloping along on each side in the dust. The roof is piled high with food and

surplus people, a laughing couple, an old man, a nursing mother, and a very small child which crawls about and plays, dangling over the edge to look at the orchestra in a way that makes the heart stop.

We had thought that we would stay in Tahiti about a week. We had some letters to people living there, and besides we wanted a rest before the last leg of the trip to the Solomons and New Guinea. In the Galápagos, George, ever efficient, had noticed a rust-like stain along the edge of the stern where the side of the hull met the stern transom. The day after arriving we took the *Chiva* across the harbour to Ikky Walker's shipyard. A little old Tahitian with an enormous chisel nearly as big as himself came out in a dinghy and started hacking away at the wood around the stain. In a few minutes he had knocked a hole in the stern also nearly as big as himself, and the truth became dreadfully apparent. The entire stern of the schooner was soft and pudgy with dry rot. Some of the timbers were so rotted that you could almost stick your finger through them. The inside of that cavernous hole had much the consistency of a blancmange. If the weather had been a little bit worse crossing the Gulf Stream, if that squall after we left the Marquesas had been a little bit sharper, the boat would have probably opened up like a sieve.

The *Chiva* went up onto the ways to have her innards taken out and we sat about drearily in the Cercle Bougainville with our new friends, fingering our wine punches and facing the truth. The worst had happened. It might be months before we could get under way again, it might be never. There were still four thousand miles to go. Every day we hovered about the boat watching the inexorable chisels scraping in deeper and deeper. There was nothing to do but watch. Charis and I looked

up boat lines, but there are no boats to New Guinea from Tahiti, not even a schooner, not even a canoe.

Meanwhile we cast about for things to do. Fred had his appendix taken out, which was practical of him. The rest of us spent our time looking at the boat or relaxing in frequent junketings with friends. In fact, once we set our minds to it, once we realized that we were in Tahiti willy-nilly, we enjoyed ourselves hugely. There were picnics and excursions, week-end house parties, a *bal masque*, a fête given by the Club Radio, and endless extemporaneous parties. The parties were amazing. There are few places in the world where you can find more of a mélange of people than in Tahiti. Take three characters each from Waikiki, the Lido, Miami Beach, Spring Lake, New Jersey, and Newport, and jumble them together, and you have a Tahitian party. There were English remittance men, Tahitian cocottes, an American Consul and his sedate wife, writers, artists, shady politicians, shadier gamblers, and a man whose wife had once been the best-dressed woman in the world. For some reason they all jumbled together very successfully in Tahiti. The place is unique that way.

In the meantime I called on the Governor to ask his permission to collect birds on Tahiti. He lives in a huge white barn of a house full of enormous *salons* with painted wooden walls, screens instead of windows, chandeliers by the score, and little clusters everywhere of badly painted overstuffed Louis XV furniture. I had thought of spending some time at least in serious work, but M. de Géry dashed my hopes. He smiled deprecatingly and shook his head.

"Impossible," he said. "Our Government has issued strict orders. There is to be no more collecting of birds here since an American expedition a few years ago col-

lected so many specimens. We are afraid of exterminating our local species."

In this, I could not but agree with the Governor. After all, islands like Tahiti which are far out in the ocean and have never been connected with any of the continents have, of necessity, what might be called an impoverished fauna. Very few birds and animals have been able to survive the long overseas journey from the Asiatic area. There are only about ten species of birds known from Tahiti, of which one, the wild chicken or jungle fowl, was undoubtedly introduced by the early immigrating Polynesians along with the rat, the pig, and the dog. Recently other birds have been introduced—the mynah bird, a sort of starling, and later, hawks to kill the mynah birds. Little finches were brought in, perhaps to eat the seeds of the lantana vine, another import, which flourishes everywhere. All of these species in one way or another are taking the food out of the mouths of the local birds, and driving them farther and farther back into the mist-shrouded mountain valleys of the interior of the island. I felt like telling M. de Géry that a campaign to get rid of these pests would do far more to help the birds than simply to prohibit an occasional collector from collecting. But the worst of all were the human pests. Every Sunday, the *petit bourgeois* gentlemen of Papeete go out into the country for a ride with picnic lunches and shotguns. It is their custom to shoot at anything on wings, from one of the local pigeons to one of the local kingfishers or reed warblers. They have practically exterminated the little duck that used to be plentiful on the island. All except in one spot on the farther side of the Taravao peninsula.

I spent a morning in a big swamp there where my guide, a young Tahitian boy, told me that we would find many ducks. We crawled through a veritable morass of

quaking mud and sharp projecting roots of the pandanus tree, a sort of palm with a feathery crown of long pointed leaves with spiky edges that scratch you when you're not looking. Finally we came out on a shallow lake, long and narrow, covered with floating plants and logs and rushes, an ideal duckpond. Faara now produced a small pirogue, a tippy little thing into which we could barely squeeze. Then with silent paddle strokes we eased out gently into the water.

It was one of those lazy summer mornings. The sun was just beginning to become hot. There was a slow buzzing in the air as of many sleepy satisfied insects, and far off I could hear a little wild rooster crowing in the underbrush. Suddenly there was a swish and a patter and then a whicker of wings, and ducks began to go up from all around us in the reeds. They marshalled themselves into a flock and flew up into the clear sky, then turned suddenly and came down towards us with a rush and a whistle, only to veer off again and turn out towards the sea. I counted about two hundred as they went off in formation.

At this point there was a louder buzzing and looking up I finally saw a seaplane. It came along steadily until it was quite near us, over Faara's village I discovered later. Then it banked suddenly, vertically, and made a complete circle only to go on again about its business.

"What's that all about?" I asked Faara as we paddled towards the shore.

"Oh that, that must be the Commandant," he replied. "He always makes a circle like that because he has a *poule* here."

My mind being full of wild chickens and ducks, it took me some time to figure out just what sort of a chicken Faara was referring to.

Altogether we stayed in Tahiti nearly three months. We did not get away finally until the 28th of June. And not long before we had thought that we might be in New Guinea by June. Knowing that we would have to be there a long time, we had hoped to miss as much as possible of the north-west monsoon season of rains and squalls which reaches its height in January. Since leaving the Galápagos we had had the benefit of the south-east trades which blow from about early spring until September. We had counted on these winds to blow us most of the way across the Pacific. Now we should really have to hurry to cover the rest of the distance in time.

And hurry we did. Our last days in Tahiti, after the new launching of the *Chiva*, were a welter of varnishing, painting, and motor overhaul, for, of course, we could not expect our sorry Diesel ever to give us any peace of mind. The Tahitian workmen had performed a miracle of surgery on the *Chiva*. She looked spick and span in her new coat of paint. It was impossible to tell where the fresh timbers had been put in.

As part cook's helper, part passenger, we took on John Nash, the aforementioned husband of the best-dressed woman in the world. John's past was somewhat a mystery. How he had drifted to Tahiti with three trunks full of his wardrobe and a portable phonograph containing a complete tool kit and an automatic pistol, was a closed book. We only knew that he had been most co-operative during the varnishing and painting stages and that he had wanted to leave his trunks temporarily behind and come with us at least to Suva.

Poor John. He was much too tall for the foreward bunk, and his grey flannels were much too good for work in the galley. His repertoire consisted of porridge (good), scones (fair), and goat's meat steaks (we had none on

board, unfortunately). As a result he became the dishwasher. Every afternoon we had tea sitting round the cockpit, and then John was at his best, regaling us with numberless stories about the old days in Paris, London, St. Moritz, and even St. Petersburg. During the last war he had shot down eight enemy planes. Afterwards he had been everywhere, done everything. He had raced a Rolls-Royce across the map of Europe. He knew all the great *couturiers*, knew Poiret, Molyneux, and all the others. He knew—but always about this time it was,

“Come, John, we must be seeing about supper now,” and someone would lead him firmly into the galley.

Meanwhile, we parted with Herma, the kinkajou, whose biting had made the *Chiva* seem all too small for her playground. When last seen, she had taken to the night life of Tahiti as readily as a duck to water. Attired in a small dog's harness and leash, she went about to all the bright spots with her new owner, a somewhat shady but kind-hearted gambler, living exclusively, it seemed, on brandy and tiare flowers, the local Tahitian gardenia. Eduardo, the tortoise, made a much more appropriate shipmate.

The south-east trade wind was still with us when we left Papeete. The morning was sparkling and bright, our friends were all on the Quai to say good-bye. We were given *leis* of flowers to throw on the water of the harbour so that we would surely come back. We threw them, and we dipped our flag to the schooner *Zele*, the Tahitian navy. We waved until our arms ached as we nosed out of the harbour, as we crossed the reef, as we picked up the trade wind. There was not one of us who did not vow to come back somehow, sometime, to Tahiti and the outer islands. In the meantime there was work to do, the breeze was with us. We upped the squaresail, upped

the raffee and the jumbo, and it felt grand to be getting somewhere again.

The breeze held with us all the way to American Samoa, which we reached in ten days. We put in briefly for water and stores and treatments for Fred's hand which he had burned while trying to start the Diesel one day. The harbour is lovely, the scenery superb, but we had time to notice little else. I spent a hurried day with a .410 shotgun and managed to secure ten birds. After seven months of travelling this was something at least. Two of the birds were from a chattering flock which had occupied the top of a tree near a village. They were brownish with iridescent streaks and had stout black bills. Later I found out from Philadelphia that these birds were a species of starling confined to Samoa, and that the Academy had only one specimen, a broken bill and a hank of feathers, collected just one hundred years before by Peale on the United States Exploring Expedition. At that rate my collecting wasn't so bad after all.

From Samoa it is not much more than a week's sail to Viti Levu, the largest island of the Fiji group and seat of the capital, Suva. There are 155 islands in the Fiji group as well as several small outliers on the route from Samoa. I had a list from the Academy of one or two which had particularly desirable birds. It was terribly exasperating now to have to sail right past them in our hurry. The chances of ever getting back to some of these places were remote to say the least.

Take Tafahi for instance. It is nearly two hundred miles from Samoa and about five hundred from Suva. Vol. 166 of the United States Hydrographic Office Sailing Directions, the Pacific Islands, eastern groups, gives the following information about Tafahi:

"Tafahi (Boscawen) Island ( $15^{\circ} 51' S.$ ,  $173^{\circ} 44' W.$ , H.O. Chart No. 2021), is a Tongan possession; it was discovered by Le Maire and Schouten on May 11, 1616, and named by them Cocos Island, but was subsequently named Boscawen Island by Wallis in 1767. It is about 2,000 feet in height . . . conical in shape and is wooded to the top of the western side. Tafahi is inhabited by about fifty natives. There is landing on the western side on a gravel beach."

We discovered Tafahi on the early morning of July 16th. At first it was just a vague grey smudge on the horizon, topped with greyish clouds. As the morning waxed brighter details of the island began to come into focus. It changed from grey to green, then to shades of green. By noon we were upon it and could see the whole height of it. It is an even cone rising out of the water high enough to permit of a complete transition from coastal to mountain vegetation taking place in such a little space. First come the casuarina trees, feathery pines, low over the rocks on the shore. Then there is a tall fringe of coconut palms straggling upwards a hundred feet or so on the hillside. Above this there is some scrubby growth, perhaps a rough native garden, and above this we could see that the heavier darker-green trees began. They soon closed in until there was a solid belt of dark olive-green clothing the hillside. This is jungle of a sort, thick and matted. Still farther up, the jungle seems to become lower, denser if possible. We could tell because the shade of green deepened if anything and seemed to have a hint of brown in it betraying the moss forest. Finally on the very top we could make out plainly the foamy lacy crests of the tree ferns confined to the high mountain forest. The sky was clear and blue now, but from the tip of Tafahi little streamers of cloud were

projecting, newly formed, into the wind. The breeze would pick them up and puff them away and roll them into a big solid trade-wind cloud which sailed majestically off to the north-westward. Meanwhile another streamer would suddenly appear, only to be plucked off again, and so on and on. The effect was magical, something out of nothing. We understood then why some of the old sailors thought many of these islands had secret volcanoes on them.

Meanwhile we sailed inexorably past. We were now not more than a mile off and we could see the "gravel landing beach" and the fifty natives all lined up waving at us. Their little village stood a short way up on the western side, round thatched huts surrounded by a garden. We wondered how long it had been since a boat had stopped there. We wondered and longed and sailed on.

"Never mind," said Didie. "They're probably all missionized within an inch of their lives and wear very formal white linen clothes and have completely forgotten how to hula, and their banana, orange, and pineapple crops are just over." All of which was probably quite true. I rather wondered, however, about the birds on Tafahi.

The Fiji Islands mean only Suva to us, so that I am not qualified to pass judgment on them. All is very modern and orderly and clean in Suva. Perhaps if I had to live my whole life in the tropics I should like things to be neat and orderly and sanitary. If Kingston, Jamaica, is the "Clapham Junction of the West," certainly Suva is the "Middletown" of the South Seas. It is no place to go to "get away from it all," but it was a splendid place for us to buy stores, fresh vegetables and milk, wonder of wonders, and to have the *Chisa* drawn out for a new coat of copper paint on her bottom.

There is a splendid museum in Suva, full of a magnificent collection of old Fijian and Solomon Island relics. The Curator, a pleasant bluff old man who had once been a blackbirder, as the Australians called the recruiters of native island labour in the old days, had many a story to tell. I asked him once about the introduction of East Indians into Fiji as native labour on the sugar cane plantations.

"Oh, the Fiji people were too proud to work for the white men," he said, "so they had to get somebody and they got East Indians from South India. There are more Indians now on Fiji than there are Fijians, you know."

"How's that?" I asked.

"Well, the British Government is very benevolent, you know," he said solemnly. "When the Indians were brought here there were very few Indian women, only in the proportion of one to every six men. This was a serious problem. I always thought it was a stroke of genius what the Government did," he paused and winked at me.

"What did they do?"

"Very easy. They simply married off a couple and put five other men as boarders in the same house; solved the problem very neatly, you know."

After our supplies were laid in, we fled Suva as we had fled Jamaica, and headed again out into the open sea.

Beyond the Fijis, the South Seas of palm-fringed shores and languorous brown-skinned maidens ends. There is still another three thousand miles of South Sea islands and there are still palm-fringed shores, but the nut-brown maidens have gone. Instead there are a few old toothless hags sitting about, clad in G-strings and black as the blackest coal; most of them chewing tobacco or smoking short clay pipes. The gay laughing Polynesians have been

replaced by the black Melanesian and Papuan and Negrito races whose domain extends all the way from the Fijis into the Malay Archipelago. The transition is gradual as all human race transitions are, for intermarriage has meant that the Fijians and some of the outlying Solomon Islanders have more or less brown skins and graceful tall figures along with the woolly hair and flat noses characteristic of the Melanesians.

Charis was very interested in these transitional types; so when we left Suva we decided to make a beeline for the Solomon Islands where she could begin her measuring of people, and I my collecting of birds. We sailed from Suva harbour on August 4th, waving to John among others on the dock. He had been great fun along the way and we were sorry to lose his company. From time to time as we went along one or other of us would turn to and undertake various *pièces de résistance* of our own devising. Mine was an apple tart which came out of the oven all crisp and brown, only to fall with a squish on to the floor. Aping Doane's behaviour under similar trying circumstances, I simply popped it back into the oven for a moment. That evening at supper I was complimented on the delicious crumpled crunchy look of my pastry, an effect which one of the great chefs might have been puzzled to reproduce.

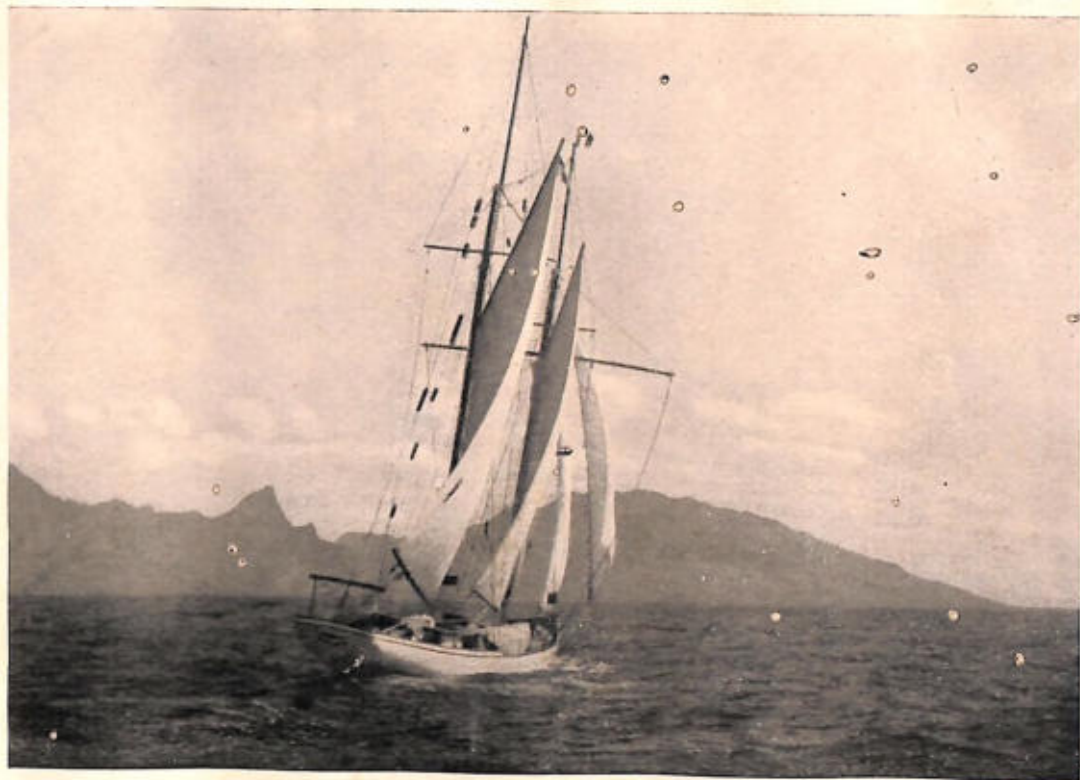
Driving in towards the Solomons we bobbed about on mountainous seas. Under jumbo and fisherman alone we were doing over six knots. A few birds swooped and plunged about us, brown boobies and slim grey terns, attracted by the schools and schools of bonito that broke water all about. We could see their silver bodies flashing even in the high waves. The bonito is a fish of great omen in the Solomons. Bonito fishing is part of the initiation ceremonies for the young men on arriving at man-

hood. We decided that they represented good luck for us. After all we had a new stern which was probably just as well in such rough waters.

The Solomons are about twice as large as the Fiji Islands. They extend in a chain roughly six hundred miles running north-west and south-east, pointing out into the Pacific from New Guinea. There are two rows of big islands rising to nine thousand feet with a narrow sea between, while all around spread a multitude of smaller islets, ranging from fairly large coral islands planted with coconuts, to reefs barely clearing the surface, to a single rock lying in Bougainville Strait which is fifty feet high and entirely covered with white orchids.

As we sailed north towards Tulagi between the islands, the wind was directly astern of us and the moon was full. The moon glinted on the soft small waves, on the white sails spread out wing and wing, and on the glassy surface of the masts. Leaning back at the wheel and looking aloft, the sensation was indescribable. The wind was fairly strong. We glided over the waves almost like skimming on ice. Looking up at the two broad sails, main and mizen, spread out in front, one to starboard, one to port, it seemed as if at any moment we would leave the water altogether and sail off on our great gull wings. Even the ship had little to say for herself. The halyards flapped, the mainsheet tackle creaked, and sometimes a little glinting wave off to one side slapped over. Otherwise there was no sound to break the spell. And as if to add to the enchantment, the moon shone down on the misty blue mountains of the Solomons all about, mountains where a sullen dark people slumbered uneasily, waking perhaps now and again to gaze out at a small white bird gliding low over the water.

Tulagi, the capital of the Solomons, is on a small island



*Fred Crockett*

The "Chiva" looks trim and toylke under way.



In Korrido the houses are still built over the water  
like Swiss lake dwellings of five thousand years ago.



with a high rocky hill covered with official bungalows ranged in strict order of precedence. We came in close to the dock and put out our quarantine flag. After a long wait the Port Doctor came aboard. Almost immediately he flew into a rage. It turned out that we had already entered the Solomons anyway so didn't need his O.K., and besides we'd just interrupted his bridge game. We apologized profusely, realizing that the good doctor evidently had a touch of liver. We dropped cards on His Majesty's Resident Commissioner as all proper visitors should, and were immediately invited to dinner. The combined effort of anchoring in Tulagi harbour—we put out twenty-four fathoms of chain all of which would have to be retrieved later by our antiquated hand windlass—and resurrecting our dinner coats heavily encrusted with mould was almost too much for us. We went up to dinner at the appointed hour feeling rather liverish ourselves.

The sun had gone down and there was a lovely pink haze over everything as we climbed the steep steps to the Residence. It was a smallish bungalow-type house, but it had all the official trimmings, enormous flagpole, and guard of honour. The guard were taking down the flag when we arrived. They were very black, with up-standing shocks of hair dyed red, and they were clothed in a wrap-around kilt-like affair, a bayonet, and a cartridge-belt. One man was vigorously tootling on a bugle and the rest were solemnly standing at attention while the Sergeant, who had stripes on his lap-lap, pulled down the flag.

Mr. Ashley was charming. He had a very neat house full of gadgets from "home," silver cigarette-boxes, silver-framed photographs of pleasant cool-looking women and very Bond Street men everywhere, and a large collection of native assegais, axes, bows, arrows, spears, and so on,

all over the wall. We had some very good sherry—"Pride myself on my sherry, y'know, keeps me much fitter than those damned cocktails"—and went in to dinner.

The dining-room was mostly silver, too, old family silver. Our host went through the whole meal with a nice-looking fellow in lap-lap and bayonet standing behind his chair. "Comes in handy when the roast is tough, y'know," he said smiling at us.

Mr. Ashley explained that the five silent boys who served us were from Sikiana, one of the outlying islands where the population is mostly of Polynesian blood. That explained their finer features and paler brown skins.

"You must excuse 'em," he would say. "Not very well trained, y'know. May drop soup down your neck, but they're a damned sight better-looking than those terribly shiny black fellows. Always gives me indigestion to have to look at those coal-black ones from the main islands when I'm eating."

Charis now brought up the question of our visiting one of the smaller islands to measure the Polynesian-like people, and Mr. Ashley at once suggested that we go to Ontong Java, an outlying coral atoll to the north-east of the main group. These islands off the beaten track are now closed to boats unless the Resident gives his special permission, because the natives on them are very sensitive to the white man's illnesses, particularly chest colds and influenza.

"I'd be glad to give you permission to go to Ontong Java," he said. "There's a trader living there, Laz they call him. Nice chap, should be helpful, y'know, language and all that."

We sat out on the veranda after dinner over our coffee, brandy, and cigars. The moon shone down on the water of the harbour and the *Cniva*, riding lightly at anchor,

her gull wings demurely furled. The distant islands looked rather civilized from this distance except that there were no lights on them. Mr. Ashley made several puns and carried on like the gay dog that he was. He charmed the ladies and they charmed him, and everything was very rosy and beaming as we thanked him and started down the walk. A guard came around the corner and relieved the sentry in front of the sentry box with much stamping of bare feet and clicking of rifle butts on the cement.

"You might drop me a line if Laz is dead or sick or anything, or if there have been any murders up there recently or anything like that, y'know. Our District Officers don't get up there very often."

We assured him we would and went on down the walk. Ontong Java had begun to assume interesting proportions.

## CHAPTER IV

### PORTRAIT OF LAZ

AS our schooner drew in through the pass and the long expanse of lagoon bounded by the inner beach appeared, we saw a small rowboat coming out towards us. In the stern a white man stood up and waved from time to time. The boat drew alongside quickly for there was a strong current making out towards the pass. The heavy rowboat swung around as the wild-haired brown men rowing unshipped their oars clumsily. Then she banged against us and Laz came up over the rail, shy a little and yet eager and smiling all at once.

"It's good to see you," he said in his hearty Cockney-like accents. "Why, you're the first boat has been in here in seven months, dinkum."

We anchored a few hundred feet off the beach in calm water and rowed ashore to survey the island.

Ontong Java is a huge atoll, or coral reef, enclosing a central lagoon thirty-five miles long and about fifteen miles broad. It lies far to the north of the Solomon Islands in a very isolated position. The only boat allowed to visit the island is the one belonging to the copra company which calls twice a year. But already the copra boat was a month overdue.

"You didn't sight her, did you?" asked Laz. "Course Jeff may have an extra load this time. You'll like McGregor. Me and him's chums. We was on the same

schooner once, going to Witu. We got near the place when all of a sudden up pops a regular twister of a storm and the boat goes down. Mac and I gets off in a dinghy together and the damn current sweeps us up to the Hermit Islands."

Laz laughed. "We was hermits and no mistake."

We had heard part of the story from Mr. Ashley at Tulagi. They had been there a month with no stores or fresh water, nothing but coconuts to eat and drink.

"You don't mind it though, dinkum. You get blasé." Laz pronounced it "blaze." It was one of his favourite words.

"Yes, sir, I want you to meet McGregor. He's a bonzer chap."

Our schedule, during the week we were on the island, resolved itself into a regular pattern. Every morning we got up with the sun to go ashore and work. I went off with one or two native guides to shoot, while the others stayed with Laz who in the meantime had rounded up a crowd of the Ontong Javanese. One after another, Charis would measure the male inhabitants sitting stiff and awkward in one of Laz's chairs, as Fred took the photograph of each with his camera. Mostly her measurements were concerned with those of the head making up the so-called cranial index. Later all these individual charts and photographs and notes would have to be gone over in the anthropological department of Charis's museum in order to work out the average of this isolated population. Finally an attempt would be made to correlate the results and try to discover the racial background and identity of these remote people.

I soon discovered that birds on the island were few and far between. There were quite a number of species of sea birds about, terns of three species including the delicate

little all-white ones, sandpipers, plover, and curlews, the latter kinds being on migration. But of native land birds I could find only four species. There was a pretty little blue and brown kingfisher, found throughout the South Seas. Then there was a flycatcher about the size of a phoebe, soft grey and reddish-brown. This was a little-known bird in America and most desirable. I was lucky enough to get two or three specimens for the Academy. Starlings were common in the coconut palms, flying about from tree to tree in chattering flocks. They were blackish with a metallic sheen and had bright yellow eyes.

One of the most curious birds of this part of the world was also on Ontong Java. This is the megapode, a ground-living species about the size of a pheasant with dull brownish-black plumage, short tail, and stout red-brown legs. Far out on the south end of the main islet of Ontong Java there is a megapode hatchery. Nearly every morning just after sunrise, there is great activity here. The surface of the beach is pitted and soft-looking. There are little holes everywhere, out of some of which clouds of sand are coming in short rhythmic bursts. The female megapodes are digging their nest holes. After a time the bird decides that the hole is deep enough, lays its egg, and then emerges and fills in the hole with a few precise strokes of its powerful feet. The hot sun does the rest. After three weeks, the young bird hatches out, digs until it reaches the surface, and then scurries off into the underbrush, quite able to take care of itself.

By eleven we would reunite on the beach for a swim before lunch. Then we would lunch, either at Laz's or on the boat, take an hour for a siesta, and return to work in the late afternoon.

Laz made a good host. He was eager to entertain us, generous with his meagre larder, and he spared no pains

in helping us in our work. We went over our supply of tins and exchanged things with him. We traded American canned peas for Australian mushroom soup, getting, it seemed to us, the best of the bargain. We had also picked up some very heady Australian kippers which we exchanged for fresh papaya melon, and here Laz fancied he had actually cheated us.

The porch of his small frame house was where Laz lived mostly when he wasn't in the little trade store in the back, or in the copra sheds behind the house. It was really his living-room. Like Laz it was neat and well preserved, as simply furnished with everyday homely things as he was. A table stood in the centre flanked by two cane chairs. There were two big canvas deck chairs, and two benches stood on each side of the steps coming up from the beach. One side of the porch was the wall of the house. Against this were two kerosene tins full of earth in which were growing some rather bedraggled anthuriums. That was Laz, the nature-lover.

Over the plants a shelf ran along the wall on which were a few personal treasures, representing the chance accumulations of a nomad. Here was a plate painted with a view of Sydney Harbour. Next to it there was an Edward VIII Coronation mug (last vacation in Australia), and beyond, a coloured ash tray that said Portsea on it. There were some postcards and letters propped behind a bottle of ink. There were some books, too, the usual thing—trade statistics pamphlets, a volume of Kipling, a French dictionary, *Madame Bovary*, a book of Australian verse by "Banjo" Patterson, and, strangely enough, *Tales from a Wayside Inn*. There had been a good many more books, but, as Laz explained, "the cockroaches had the reading of them the last time I was away."

But the dominant objects on the shelf were two carved

wooden figures that Laz had brought from somewhere to the north, along the New Guinea coast. Ancestor spirits he called them. They were about a foot high, made of some dark wood that had taken on a fine patina after years among the smoky rafters of a big tribal club house where the gods and ancestors are stored. They had high cheek bones and curious long noses. Each was carved in a sitting position, holding in front of him a sort of carved screen on which was the design of the earth spirit.

The little figures meant a great deal to Laz. Perhaps they represented something that he had acquired over the years in Ontong Java. They were his philosophy, placid and immutable. In front of each a cigarette lay on the shelf.

"The natives where I got those fellows told me that they always gave them a little tobacco whenever they wanted anything specially," Laz explained. "I just leave those smokes lying there in case they should feel lonely without a present now and then."

It was our habit to gather on the porch before sundown. It was always surprisingly cool there in the shade of the palms. Beyond, the late afternoon glare was intense on the white sand of the beach and the shallow water of the lagoon. Farther out the water became darker and darker-looking. Where the sand was reflected up, the water was yellow and bright, but as it became deeper the colour changed, shifting from pale sea-green to turquoise, to jade green, to indigo.

"Let's have a snifter," Laz used to say. "It must be five o'clock," and he would lean forward in his deck chair looking out over the lagoon.

Laz was a well-preserved man considering his life. He was plain as an old shoe and full of crotchets already, although he could not have been over forty-five. He was

well on the road to becoming what they call in the islands an "identity." Physically he was spare and well built, lacking the fat unhealthiness of so many men in the Solomons and New Guinea. To be sure, there was no malaria on Ontong Java. Laz had brought some of the little gambusia fish with him from his last vacation in Australia. They had multiplied well in the swampy ponds on the island, feeding on the larvæ of the local mosquitoes.

Laz would give a hail and presently Hooya, his house-boy, would drift out with a tin tray on which were cool limeades made from Persian limes which grow everywhere in the islands.

As we sipped our drinks the light would fail quite quickly and unexpectedly. But always just as it became dark on the porch there would come a wheezing noise from the back of the house. The pressure lamp was being pumped up. Then there would be a sputtering. A suffused glow would appear, brighter and brighter, and Laz's wife would come in, lamp in hand. She was no beautiful half-caste feline creature such as one would imagine. Vava was tall and dark chocolate brown in colour, with the close-cropped head characteristic of all married women on the island. Her lap-lap was crisp and clean, a pretty-patterned cotton cloth wrapped around the waist, falling to just below the knees. There were ropes of shells looped over her shoulders and under her breasts, bandolier fashion. A beautiful polished trochus shell bracelet shone on one wrist.

Vava used to stretch up over the table to hang the lamp on a wire that dangled from the ceiling. Sometimes Laz would give her a little pat of approval on the rump. She would smile slightly, shyly, and then pad back into the darkness of the other room.

Laz grinned at us a little self-consciously at first.

"You have got to get a maryl you know, if you stay here long. Course they're not so pretty, but then they're quiet and rather chummy-like and you can teach them things. Vava sews and cooks sometimes when Hooya's away, and of course she's a big girl in the village now."

We had soon met his little daughter. She was a wild thing, seven or eight years old and surprisingly dark. Laz chuckled and guessed it was his Jewish blood coming out. She had come running up the beach out of a big canoe one day. Three big canoes had been off for a week fishing and she with them. Her little lap-lap was done up like a loin cloth, but now, as she saw visitors, she wriggled out of it, let it stream behind her for a moment, and then rewrapped it primly round herself up to the armpits. Laz fondled her dark hair as she snuggled up to him, wide-eyed. He started questioning her in English about the other two canoes. She seemed to understand perfectly, but her reply when it came was in "pidgin."

"Him fella go 'long Tasmans," she said shyly.

"I was just asking about the two canoes that didn't come back," Laz explained. "She says they continued on north to the Tasman Islands to trade. Our men don't often go there. It's about thirty-five miles across open ocean."

"Where does she stay when she's home?" asked Charis.

"Oh, she lives mostly in the village with my wife's parents. All the kids up to an age run about together in big gangs. I figure it's good for her. I want her to grow up a native, no half-caste business like you read in books. She'll be happier a native. There'll be some land coming to her through her mother and money from me, and maybe she'll marry Paipe's son and rule the island one day, or maybe she'll keep this store."

We looked at Laz.

"I mean it. That's the dinkum oil," he nodded. "When I retire some day and go back to Melbourne what would there be for her there? No, no, I've seen too much of that sort of thing. I've figured it all out. Let her just go on being one of God's creatures here."

The trade store business wasn't such a bad business. Laz took the copra, dried coconut meat prepared by the natives, in exchange for his trade goods, cotton cloth, blankets, kerosene, axes, lamps, tinned goods, rice, beads, mirrors, cheap soap, and bottles of scent. When the boat came along every four months or so, he sold the copra at the current price. Sometimes he made quite a lot on the deal. At other times he lost slightly. But Laz was very popular in the village and that was proof that he was considered a fair trader.

Every four or five years Laz went to Melbourne on a holiday. Then he cashed in some of his profits on a radio or some trinkets to bring home for his family or one of his special friends. Mostly he just had a spree. After a while he would get homesick and come back again, somewhat liverish. For the island is his real home. I think he actually hates the idea of retiring and going back to live in some semi-detached villa outside of Melbourne where his only companions would be other retired islanders like himself, his only pleasure the talk of "good old days" and stories about adventures with McGregor and all the rest.

And yet presumably all this life was leading up to the day when Laz would be able to achieve his ambition of retiring to Australia. He would talk about it as they all talked, all the traders and plantation managers.

"Home," they would say, "back home to Melbourne, or Sydney, or Cairns."

On the last afternoon of our stay, Laz and I were alone

on the porch. Charis had a headache. She and Fred had gone back to the boat. I think Laz had been brooding about our imminent departure.

"Bring 'em one bottle gin," my host said, looking encouragingly in my direction as the lemonades appeared. Hooya drifted off, to reappear with a half-empty bottle.

"Not quite dead," remarked Laz, and sloshing a little of the lemonade out of the glasses, he poured two full fingers in each.

"Cheer'o," we said. It was a good drink. The lemon gave it a wonderfully aromatic flavour.

Laz leaned towards me confidently. "I wanted you to know. I've broken out my last bottle of Scotch for tonight, wanted to have a farewell spree you know."

"But you shouldn't have done that," I protested.

"Oh ho, yes, sir, I wanted to give you people a good send-off. Besides don't worry about me. McGregor will be in any day now," and Laz settled back to enjoy his drink.

A dull knocking noise echoed over the lagoon. It was Fred, Charlie, and George rowing in from the schooner. We drained our glasses and started down the steps on to the beach to meet them. Away from the overhanging palms it was brighter and still hot, but much of the colour had gone out of the sky. The clouds had piled up so high that the sun had simply been blotted out. There was hardly a trace of sunset. The breeze had picked up. A few gusts of ripples scattered across the water as if someone was throwing handfuls of sand at it from a great distance. Four terns flew by, darting erratically at the water.

Laz was looking at the pass between the island and the farther reef. There was a faint white rip on the surface of the water where the tide was tearing out of the lagoon. Beyond the sea was clear.

"Now to-morrow, the lagoon will be like that, just clear and empty," he said slowly. "No, sir, there's nothing lonelier than the sea."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Well, now, take a stretch of country and put a house in it. All right, you've got something. Take it away and you've still got the country to look at. Take a ship out of this lagoon and there's nothing there at all. It's awful lonely. See what I mean?"

"I guess so."

"Good'o, let's go and have a drink."

The others had joined us and now we five started back up the beach. The palms hung down so low in front of the house that it was hidden.

"Funny how this beach always reminds me of the one on Malaita," remarked Laz quietly, "just the same stretch of sand and that curve over there, it goes just the same. Course you ought to see the mountains in the back. But then the clouds hang down over them most of the time just like here and now. All you see is the beach and the bush and hear the pounding of the surf on the reef far out."

A little flock of sandpipers flew by and I turned to watch them. But Laz was still talking.

"Yes, sir, it's a bloody job recruiting," he said sleepily. "I'm damn glad I'm shut of it. Did I ever tell you about me and Jack Laycock?"

"No," said Fred.

"We was recruiting then, me and Jack, in the old *Mendana*. A nice enough boat she was too. Those were the good old days. We used to put into the beach, mostly on Malaita because the best plantation boys came from there. Then one of us would go ashore in the longboat while the other stood off and on in the schooner. After

a while the people would come out of the bush to look at what we had, stick tobacco, cloth, mirrors, knives, and axes, they were always partial to axes."

Recruiting in the old days was dangerous work. You could never tell when a boy might have a grudge at some former master, or perhaps a relative of a boy that had died on a plantation might be on hand. Then look out; any white man at all was fair game according to the age-old scheme of an eye for an eye.

"We always used to be very careful coming in to a beach where we hadn't been before," said Laz. "In those days the Malaita fellows were tough."

We came to the palms and started towards the steps.

"I remember once Jack and me put into a place we had never hit before. We knew where we could place twenty men quick on a plantation over near Kira Kira. Well, we put in like I said. Jack went in in the longboat and I stood off with the *Mendana*. He said we ought to keep our guns ready, in case of any trouble, you know. He got out on the beach and put down his boxes and sat on one of them while his boys arranged the stuff, sort of like a store." Laz made gestures as if he was arranging the boxes. Then he went on.

"We all waited for a bit and pretty soon a fair mess of boys came out of the bush, and they were big 'uns too, dinkum, just boys, no marys in the lot. After a bit of a palaver I saw one of them start to sign up. Then they all got into a line and as each one of them came up to Jack he'd give his name, and Jack would give him some tobacco to seal the bargain or a bit of cloth or an axe, whichever he wanted."

Laz sat down in his deck chair, staring out over the darkening lagoon.

"Then I saw one big fellow come up to Jack. Just as

Jack started to sign his name, this fellow stuck out his arm, pointing like, and shouted. Jack, he looked over where the boy was pointing and just in that split second the boy picked up an axe, like lightning he did, and give Jack a good 'un over the head. In five seconds it was all over. We shot at 'em, of course, killed one or two, but when we got to the beach we had to tie him together with a fish line. That was the end of Jack and that was the end of me recruiting."

Laz shook his head sorrowfully.

"The deuce of it was, though," he added slowly as an afterthought, "he was wearing my hat at the time."

We sat silently for a time. Then Laz called and Hooya appeared with a bottle of Scotch.

"Last of the case," said Laz, looking at the bottle affectionately as he proceeded to open it with deft fingers.

Hooya reappeared with plates, knives, and forks.

"Just the five of us," said Fred. "The others are staying on board."

Some soup arrived. It was made out of a megapode that I had shot in the morning. It had been cooked with rice and onion for seasoning and it made a tasty brew.

"Finish that in your glasses and have another," commanded Laz.

Then we had the main course. There were meat balls made out of canned Argentine beef mixed with Australian potatoes. There was rice, and there was a curried green papaya *à la* Ontong Java.

"Have another drink," said Laz.

For dessert we had Bartlett pears.

We topped them off with a drink.

Finally came the savoury, some Dutch cheese melted on tinned water biscuits.

As a liqueur we had another round.

After Hooya had cleared away, Laz got out his phonograph and began to play over some of the records that had been popular in Australia three years before. There were one or two Noel Coward tunes, Bing Crosby singing some pseudo-Hawaiian number, a Gracie Fields, rumbas, waltzes, and so on. Gradually, as the music blared out, faces began to appear in the light by the porch rail. Soon the space of light seemed to be filled with all the young people of Ontong Java, brown faces, shining teeth, and wavy black hair. Some, including Laz's little girl, crept up the steps to the edge of the porch. Vava too stole in to sit apart on one of the benches. She looked straight at the machine, sitting stiff and still. In her way she seemed as remote and stylized-looking as the little wooden ancestor spirits on the shelf. All listened with rapt attention to the precious accents and tinkling piano of Noel Coward.

A few yards down the beach some men were lighting a fire. The dried palm fronds flared up quickly. Soon the whole space up to the house was lit with dull orange light.

"Good'oo, they want to dance," chuckled Laz.

He stopped the phonograph, turned the speed indicator all the way up, and put on a rumba. At the first frantic high-pitched notes of the crazily speeded-up record, there was a wild yell from the beach. Into the bright light near the flames half a dozen of the young men leaped. Their mops of hair seemed to stand straight up on end. Their arms wreathed about wildly in a supple disjointed fashion like snakes. All the time their legs moved in short skating steps, very fast, barely lifting off the sand. In a little team they moved forward, then back, then forward again, always the strange-skating motion to the incredibly fast time of the record. So they moved for a time and then just at the fastest point they stopped

suddenly and walked off, to sink, panting, to the ground.

Another group took their places and then another, always in exactly the same fashion. The phonograph ran down but Laz didn't bother to wind it up. Voices and a drum took up the refrain where the record had left off. One group would stop and always there would be a fresh yell and again the leap into the light and then the steady humming rhythm of the dance.

At the last there was a chorus of high-pitched yells and a little group of girls came out from the opposite side of the circle. They were greeted with a series of hysterical embarrassed whoops from the women in the crowd. Everyone seemed to crane forward to watch them. The dancing of the girls was somewhat slower than that of the men, more like a tremendously jazzed-up hula. The dance of the men was a fast aggressive thing, but this dance was rather seductive and inviting. Some of the men rose up to dance again as the girls approached the centre of the circle. Again the team of weaving, prancing men came into the firelight. As they advanced closer and closer the dancing girls seemed to pause until at last, as the first men nearly touched them, they broke away and ran, screaming with laughter, into the darkness.

It was quite late. The dance had stopped as suddenly as it had begun. All the people drifted away, whispering among themselves. Now it was very quiet. Even the sound of the surf on the reef outside had grown dim and far away.

Laz had been leaning forward intently watching the dance. Now he turned and looked at us very solemnly for a minute and then settled back in his chair. He shook his head.

"Ah, it's beautiful," he said slowly. "I wish it would go on like this always."

"Why not?"

"I didn't tell you, did I?" Laz looked at us again. "Paipe, that's one of the chiefs, I saw him this morning and I'm worried. He's had a dream, about a big storm off the Tasmans. He saw those two canoes. They were being swamped by the swell, and every time the men 'ud jump out in the water to heave on the canoes to slop the water out of 'em, why sharks would get 'em one by one. He said he saw the sharks tearing at 'em, and he was crying, and the devil of it is he's always right."

Fred whistled.

"I told him not to tell anybody, until we're sure. But it's hell, you know, seeing them all so happy here. There will be months and years of mourning ceremonies for some of them, and big feasts they can't afford, and no dances, and little enough fishing, and then the copra falls off and business gets bad," and Laz shook his head again mournfully.

He sat there a while muttering under his breath. Then he looked up at us again and smiled a bit sheepishly.

"Oh well, what the hell," he said.

The bottle being empty, Laz struck a match and dropped it down the neck, a ritual of his. The alcohol flared up brightly with a blue flame. Then it died out with a "whoof."

"You can always tell it's good stuff when it does that," said Laz.

We stood up to go and our host unhooked the lamp to light us down the beach. I took a quick look around the porch. Yes, it went thus and so. I wanted to memorize it.

Vava stood silently in the doorway. Her eyes gleamed a little in the flickering light, but then so too did the bead eyes of the figures looking down their noses at us

from the shelf. There was no expression there at all. I smiled awkwardly at her and turned after the others.

They were easing the dinghy into the water. Laz was kidding, something about his rowboat being better than our dinghy. Charlie asked him a question and at that Laz stopped short a minute and looked thoughtful, a lean hawk-faced man in a singlet and rumpled white twill trousers, standing between two worlds, Melbourne and Ontong Java.

"You know," he said finally, "I never really get tired of it living here. You get lonely sometimes, you wish you could drop around the corner to the pub for a spot with the boys, but the deuce of it is in Melbourne, I always want to be back here again. No, sir, I never really get blasé, dinkum.

"It's queer," he added.

We shook hands and rowed off towards our binnacle light. The lamp on the beach went out, and the island was swallowed up. To-morrow we would be on our way to Rabaul. Ontong Java would be like a dream.

"All that talk about Melbourne," George chuckled.

"Why, he'll stay here till he dies, and after. He'll never retire."

"No, he certainly won't."

The roar of the breakers off the pass seemed to echo agreement.

Six days later we were in Rabaul harbour talking to Roy Smith, one of the Customs officials.

"So you've come from Ontong Java, have you? How's old Laz? He's a particular friend of mine, quite an identity. By the way, knowing him, I know he'll be upset."

"How's that?"

"One of our local schooners came in a few days ago. They'd picked up a ten-man canoe from Ontong Java out at sea. There was one fellow in it, out of his head, poor chap. It was just after a storm. There were only two bodies in with him. Rum thing, too. One of the bodies had both legs torn off."

"Sounds like a shark," said Fred.

## CHAPTER V

### AT LAST NEW GUINEA

ONE afternoon in May the radio had buzzed the news throughout the length and breadth of Papeete that Rabaul, capital of the north-eastern part of New Guinea, had been virtually destroyed by, one report said, an earthquake, another, a tidal wave, a third, a volcanic eruption. Rabaul was on our itinerary. It is the last port along the north coast of New Guinea of any size before you reach the western Dutch half of the island. It would be the last place to stock up on fuel oil, foodstuffs, and above all have the *Chiva's* bottom painted, before the long stay at the Dutch end of the island where there are few of these conveniences.

Even after we finally left Tahiti, we were still uncertain of what had really happened at Rabaul. Indirectly it gave us one reason to be glad that we had had all those repairs in Papeete. If we had kept straight on, we would have arrived in Rabaul just in time to take part in the subterranean celebrations, whatever they had been.

Rabaul is on an island called New Britain, just off the coast of New Guinea. Once German, it is now a Mandated Territory of Australia. The harbour is beautiful. It is at the end of a long narrow fjord between a serrated row of hills, called Blanche Bay. When we first entered the bay, it took us some time to get our bearings. On the right was a volcano emitting great clouds of sul-

phurous smoke in puffs. In the centre right across the water was what appeared to be a wide reef. We were wondering what to do about this, for the *Pilot Book* mentions Blanche Bay as being "largely clear of obstacles," when suddenly we saw the harbourmaster's boat coming towards us from the other side. Without a tremor the launch swept right through the supposed reef, leaving a wide-open lead of water in its wake.

"What the flaming hell?" queried George, giving vent bluntly to our surprise.

We waited until the pilot came aboard, then asked him. The "reef" turned out to be a great sheet of foaming pumice stone from "that damned thing" over on the left.

In the *Pilot Book*, vol. 165, page 569, there is a short description of Volcanø or Vulcan Island, which stands on the left, half-way along the southern shore of Blanche Bay. This island, says the book, is one mile in length by one hundred and more yards in breadth, and rose to its present height of sixty feet at the time of the volcanic eruption and seismic wave of 1878. There is a quarantine station on it, the book continues, and the island is prettily planted with palms.

The editors of vol. 165 ought to see Vulcan Island now. We saw a huge conical thing about 2,500 feet high and three miles or so long, extending out as a promontory of the mainland instead of an island. The harbour water was boiling and steaming at its base, and from the top a great streamer of gas and pumice dust was blowing off to the south-west. There was no trace of the quarantine station. The surrounding mountains along the bay were completely covered with a thick layer of pumice ash. A few trees stood up starkly, but their bark was gone, and the dead wood was burnished and sandpapered from the

flying pumice. Several native villages had disappeared along with four hundred or so of their inhabitants and two white men who had lingered too long near the place.

Rabaul had evidently once been a lovely town. The streets were well planted with heavy mango trees, there were gardens everywhere, and the houses were pleasant little gingerbread affairs of the 'nineties, much like a sleepy country town in Ohio. At the moment there wasn't a whole pane of glass in the houses, or a leaf on the mango trees, and the streets were packed hard with dust raised two feet above the former street level. The place looked rather like a fairground after the fair is over.

We spent nineteen days in Rabaul having the *Chiva* painted and waiting for supplies, including a small kerosene ice box, to arrive by the mail boat from Sydney, Australia. During that time we came to know the town very well, its dilapidated houses, its stores, wharves, clubs, rickety hotel, and outlying neat bungalows, for the outskirts had been out of the direct path of raining mud and ash. The Club was very spruce and modern and well patronized. The consumption of beer *per capita*, probably because of the dust in the air, is the highest in the Empire. There is also a concoction called a "Pondo Snifter" which is consumed on occasions of stress. This creation was the work of a local planter at a moment when his liquor larder was reduced to beer and crème de menthe. It's as simple as that. Take a tall glass and put in three-quarters of an inch of crème de menthe. Then pour in iced beer and you have a "P.S." After having one or two you will have a good idea of the stern stuff that the boys at the New Guinea Club at Rabaul are made of.

Of all the people whom we came to know in this desolate town the most interesting was Mr. Chinnery, whose job it was to control and supervise the work of the

District Patrol Officers. The Australian Government very wisely uses trained anthropologists for the arduous and exacting work of opening up and administering the hinterland of New Guinea, the high mountain valleys and swamps, where the untouched Stone Age civilization of the Papuans still goes on. Mr. Chinnery was widely travelled in the difficult back country, and his advice to Charis, Fred, and myself, who hoped to be in the interior ourselves in the near future, was most welcome. He knew all sorts of things—what to wear, what to eat, how to greet and be greeted by people who had never seen a white man or woman before, what to do about leeches, and other assorted bits of New Guinea woodcraft.

The Chinnerys took us up the hill behind the town one day for tea. The director of the local museum, Mr. Murray, lives here in a bungalow which by some freak of the wind had been spared the devastation of the town below. Mr. Murray was a rather Dickensian type, a pleasant little old man, small and precise, with delicately blue-veined hands and cheeks, watery blue eyes, and a gentle Scotch-burr voice. The trees in his garden still had leaves on them, there was a semblance of lawn, and the beautiful hedge of tall Vanda orchids along the wall of his kitchen garden was in full bloom. To our tired dust-filled eyes the place looked like the Garden of the Hesperides. There were even some birds, lovely soft-grey tree-swifts with long forked tails and big white moustaches, darting about overhead looking for insects.

After tea Mr. Chinnery told Mr. Murray that we would like to hear about their experiences during the eruption. Mr. Murray nodded briefly and understandingly, leaned back in his chair, folded his arms neatly over his small precise paunch, and began.

"It was the lovely afternoon of Saturday the 29th," he

announced calmly. "We had heard that there had been some rumbling under Vulcan Island, and that the Quarantine Officer had departed from the place. Mrs. Chinnery called me up and suggested that we take a picnic tea out in their little pinnace."

Mr. Murray paused, unfolded his arms, and placed the tips of his small fingers carefully together.

"There was a nice breeze and we tacked over towards the island directly, arriving near it in about half an hour." He paused dramatically. "It was then I noticed something."

Mr. Murray looked at all of us with a sweeping glance.

"The coral heads on the bottom had suddenly become visible. Then Mrs. Chinnery screamed out, 'Look, look, Mr. Murray, there's an island rising up at the back of us!' Not wanting to disturb her I replied simply, 'Not at all, Mrs. Chinnery, not at all. It's all an optical illusion,' I said."

Mr. Murray leaned forward towards us as if he was still trying to protect Mrs. Chinnery from the dreadful facts.

"However," he went on in a low voice, "the more times I repeated 'optical illusion,' the more islands she saw rising up all about. The next thing we knew, the little pinnace jolted right over on her side, pitching us out on to the coral in about a foot of water."

The thought of Mr. Murray being jolted about seemed very incongruous. We all were smiling, but fortunately that gentleman was now wrapped up in his narrative.

"We struck out for the shore line which was a good distance away. I can tell you it was hard work. We thrashed about in knee-high water, over coral heads, over stinking mud, until I thought I should faint. All the time there was a terrible grinding noise and subterranean

rumblings. Finally we came to the beach and the Kokopo road. I was never so glad to get anywhere in my life."

Then had come an agonizing progression along the road back towards Rabaul.

"A great pall of smoke came up over Vulcan Island. It began to press down and out, covering the road and creeping towards us. Out from under, along the road, came streams of people, wagons, carts, everything. Finally there were a few cars. We got a lift in one of them just as we thought we were about to be swallowed up by the advancing smoke."

Mr. Murray leaned back for a moment, exhausted by his recital, and then went on to describe the succeeding events. The smoke had finally covered the whole of Rabaul for three days, and when it went away, there was the new mountain, several thousand feet high. As it was composed of pumice, it was continually blowing off. Probably in a few years it will only be a thousand feet or so in height.

In the meantime there had been a tidal wave which had driven all the schooners up on the beach and into the streets. All, that is, except one, the *Induna Star*, which had her motor running at the time. She went up straight through the wall of a big shed, but the captain had presence of mind enough to put the engine full speed astern, and when the backwash came, she ran off again into the harbour as neat as you please.

The Australians had asked the loan of a Dutch volcanologist from the Netherlands Indies government at Batavia. Dr. Stehn had just left Rabaul on his way to Canberra to inform the Commonwealth government of his findings.

"Privately speaking," Mr. Murray said in his low voice, "I'm afraid it's very bad. He loved this place, did

Dr. Stehn, and you know why? Well, I'll tell you. He has found that there are fourteen other perfectly good underground volcanoes just waiting to blow up," and at that Mr. Murray looked decidedly worried.

One possible effect of the eruption which might interest a physicist was that Dr. McLean, the local dentist, was having a bad time with his patients. Most of us went to him, knowing that it would be our last chance for a long time. Whether it was the pumice dust, or the general electricity in the air, no sooner did the good doctor touch my teeth than I got a terrific shock.

"Oh, that's just galvanic action," he said lightly, noticing that I was rearing back like a head-shy colt. "If you want, I'll wear rubber shoes to-morrow."

It may have been my imagination, but I thought that the shocks were even worse the next day. Any ordinary dentist and his drills would seem mild by comparison with the dread Dr. McLean.

The *Chiva* came off the ways with another bright new coat of copper paint as a protection against the marine worms which have such a liking for boring into woodwork. At last our ice box and crates of tinned foodstuffs came in from Sydney, and we were able to get under way. We packed and stowed away our new supplies at high speed and on September 24th recrossed the bar of floating pumice stone and sailed as fast as we could out of the dismal harbour of Rabaul.

Due west, four hundred and fifty-odd miles away, lies New Guinea. The wind was negligible. For four days we idled along in the bright sun. Porpoises played all about us, and a few brown boobies flew by, cocking their heads to look at us, deliberately, without expression. We swam again and again in the bōsūn's chair. In the afternoon we sat about boning up on conversational Malay,

the language which is universally used in the Dutch colonies. At last, ten months nearly to the day from leaving Philadelphia, we sighted land.

"Sept. 28, Tuesday. Sighted the coast of New Guinea this mornin<sup>g</sup>. Far ahead we could see the thin dark line that was the shore all overhung with mist. Above were long rows of sausage-like puffy clouds. Still higher towered the mountains far in the interior. They stood up so clear and black that they seemed to be floating, mirage-like, on top of the clouds. They looked much nearer than the coast below. As we came a bit closer and the early morning clearness evaporated, a haze began. Then new fleecy clouds rolled down from very high up, rolled down and down finally over the mountains. By eleven o'clock they were blotted out, stifled in a great foamy mass."

The coast when we came near it resolved into a long line of casuarina trees with low rolling slopes behind. In places it was quite open like meadows or park land alternating with high woods. The fields we learned later are really tall tunai grass which the people burn over at intervals. It was almost like going along a coast line at home except that every so often there would be a plantation with rows of coconut palms to remind us where we were and what sea this was.

For these are historic waters. This was the coast along which Don Alvaro de Saavedra sailed in 1529 taking spices from the fabulous Moluccas to Mexico. Here Jacques le Maire and Willem Schouten voyaged in 1616 in the *Eendracht*. A short distance off the coast where we sighted it is an island perhaps ten miles long, rising to a great cone over four thousand feet high. It is named for Captain William Dampier, the celebrated buccaneer and amateur naturalist who cruised here in 1700 in the *Roe-buck* and discovered that New Britain was separated from

New Guinea by a channel which also bears his name. Indeed these are the fabled seas and this the unknown land.

The island of New Guinea is nearly fourteen hundred miles long, roughly the distance from Bangor, Maine, to Miami, Florida. With the exception of Greenland, called by some authorities a "continental" island, New Guinea is the largest island in the world. We sailed along the north coast for five days before we came to the boundary line of the western Dutch half of the island. The shore line remained much the same, sometimes receding, sometimes advancing towards us. There are a few small wooded islands off the shore, mostly old volcanic cones. One of them is called by some stroke of fantasy Blupblup.

At the boundary line there are a few concrete markers, but that is all. There are no customs posts or passport stations. From the sea there is certainly nothing to distinguish Dutch from Australian New Guinea. As far as the natives, the Papuans, go, this is also true. However, this boundary line does have an important cultural meaning. Ever since the fifteenth century when the Mohammedan religion spread over the East Indian islands and far out to those most easterly of the East Indies called the Moluccas, the Sultans of Tidore in the Moluccas have called Dutch New Guinea their own. When the Dutch extended their rule over what they called the Spice Islands the Sultan of Tidore became their ally. At first Tidore and Ternate, a neighbouring island also with a Sultan, remained independent; but by 1902 the Dutch had consolidated their control of these remote islands sufficiently to establish a Resident at Ternate and three districts in western New Guinea, each with an Assistant Resident and several Magistrates responsible to the Resident. Later there were many changes in the administra-

tion until finally in 1938 the whole of this part of the Netherlands East Indies, as it is now officially called, was put under the control of a Governor at Makassar, the largest city east of Java.

Thus for centuries the western half of New Guinea has been dominated by the Malays, the ruling race of this part of South Asia and the East Indies. Malay is the lingua franca here instead of pidgin English spoken throughout the Solomons and Australian New Guinea. Trade has existed in Dutch New Guinea for several hundred years, especially along the coast. There have been more contacts, more interchanges, among the coastal peoples. As a result the boundary line running through the centre of the island is a very tangible, if invisible, one. A little later we discovered that this even involves transportation. There is no contact whatsoever between the two halves of the island. If a traveller wanted to go from Australian to Dutch New Guinea, he would have to go first to Sydney, Australia, by boat, catch a plane or a steamer there for Java, tranship, if he was lucky, at Makassar *en route*, and take a final ten-day inter-island steamer back to New Guinea, all of which might take anywhere up to a month and a half. Several months later in Sorong I received a draft of money on a Rabaul bank. It took just four months before the money could be transferred from one end of New Guinea to the other.

Not long after passing Blupblup we went through the delta waters of the Sepik River. This is the biggest stream on the north coast, navigable to ocean steamers for one hundred and eighty miles upstream. Even though we were about five miles off shore we ploughed through a great swirl of muddy water which was rushing out to sea and on over the horizon. A little later we passed through a mass of floating pumice from our old friend Vulcan

Island. In fact there were still traces of pumice in the water a good fifteen hundred miles away from Blanche Bay.

Manokwari is the seat of the district which embraces the whole of the north coast and on to the west including Sorong. We decided to stop there briefly in order to pay our respects to the Assistant Resident in charge.

Dorey Harbour is just as beautiful as when Alfred Russel Wallace stayed there for three months in 1858, the only white man in residence on the whole island of New Guinea. The water is clear and blue and sparkling, surrounded by beaches of white sand alternating with long clumps of polished green mangroves. In the middle there are two small islands covered with tall palms. Their trunks are outlined against the outer harbour and the sea beyond, bending in all directions like a rickety picket fence.

Far off across the harbour rise the peaks of the Arfak Mountains, range on range sweeping off down the coast to the south. Cloud-capped, they stand up blue and cold-looking, remote and unapproachable. These mountains are over eight thousand feet high. Only in two or three places have they been well explored. In Wallace's time the coastal Papuans of Manokwari lived in mortal fear of the people of the Arfaks. He describes how, when he walked out of the town, the little boys followed after him shouting, "Arfaki, Arfaki," to make him turn back. The same thing had happened to Lesson, the French naturalist, who had collected briefly here in 1818. It was with a certain thrill of recognition, therefore, that on the afternoon of our arrival I heard a little band of children shouting at me as I strolled along a rough path out of the town leading south towards the mountains. "Arfaki, Arfaki," they cried; and looking up at the grim mountains where

thunder cracked among the heavy clouds, I felt for the first time the spirit of that older New Guinea which still lives back in from the coast.

In Wallace's time Manokwari looked like a Swiss lake-dwellers' village of three thousand years ago, with long narrow thatched houses built on piles over the water. To-day Manokwari has advanced beyond that. There are neat rows of Chinese trade stores along the main street and small well-cared-for houses belonging to the Malay clerks in the government offices. There are a barracks and a jail, a radio station and a miniature plant for making electricity. There are no cars, but there are small wagons which the convicts wheel about from the pier to the sheds and to the stores. A short way up the hill behind the main street is a row of bungalows for officialdom and a rest house for visitors called a *pasaŋgrahan*. The largest bungalow belongs to the Assistant Resident. It is a square building raised on piles, with enormous ceilings. A steep flight of stairs leads up to a large open-porch living-room with the conventional modern Dutch upholstered chairs, a stiff group of them, placed around a central table overhung with an enormous pink silk lampshade dripping with fringe.

We had arrived about noon and made our call just after lunch. This was of course a mistake as it was siesta hour. We had not realized how seriously the siesta is taken in the Dutch Indies. A little old Javanese cook came out, very trim in her gay sarong and lace-covered jacket, and told us with many gestures, resting her head on one side on her two hands, that Tuan Beets was now asleep. We caught the idea even though with our shaky Malay we could hardly understand her as she rattled along.

Some time later we received a message written in very

good English asking us for drinks at, of all hours, seven-thirty.

"Don't you think there's some mistake?" asked Fred.

But Charis, who remembered her father's tales of travel in the Indies, suddenly explained.

"I remember now," she said. "I remember how they used to have to go to somebody's house in the evening and sit till all hours drinking Bols gin or beer and then go home to supper about midnight."

With this startling thought in mind, we hurriedly prepared ourselves by eating some soup and biscuits, after which we walked solemnly up the hill for cocktails.

Mr. Beets proved to be a most delightful and very helpful person. Before this Charis had had no very definite idea just where her father's island plantations were, except that they were near Sorong, off the western tip end of New Guinea. But Mr. Beets was a great friend of Harry Kern, and had visited the islands many times.

"I was there only last month," he explained, "on an inspection trip. They are called Jeffa and Kamwa and are about a mile apart in a little group called the Schildpad or Turtle Islands, perhaps sixty-five miles south of Sorong. Harry has put up some charming little houses for you to live in, he has very good Malays to work for you, and van der Goot, the magistrate in Sorong, will prove a real friend."

This was tremendously encouraging news. In spite of our hunger and the strange-tasting Dutch gin we felt better already.

Teddy Beets was rather tall and inclined to be plump, but he was not really fat. He had a round moon face, thick-rimmed glasses, and a perpetual smile. His skin was quite swarthy, and we learned afterwards that he had some Malay blood. In the Netherlands, in contrast to

Great Britain, it was expected that the early settlers in the Indies would marry Malays. Their children were treated as equals, as citizens of Holland, and most of the distinguished colonial families as a result have a tendency to dark skin.

We learned later that Teddy, as we soon called him, had had many personal tragedies in his life, including the crash of 1929; but as with some people in times of stress his gaiety and good humour were never failing. After listening to all his phonograph records and drinking all his cocktails we left, exhausted, at eleven-thirty just as his supper was being served.

Early the following morning, Fred, George, and I, who were sleeping on deck on our air mattresses, were wakened suddenly by an unfamiliar sound. First there was a hum, then a drone. Starting up, we gazed out over the harbour towards the heights of the mountains, clear cut against the azure early morning sky. There, high up, sweeping over the most untouched mountains in the world, were four twin-engined Dornier flying-boats. With a roar they turned and swept down over the town, then out to sea. Looking after them we rubbed our eyes. In the entrance to the harbour was silhouetted the long squat shape of a big cruiser. Nearer rose the conning towers of three submarines. In towards us over the waters of the bay churned six longboats manned by white-clad sailors and marines. They drove past us with a rush, making the *Chiva* dip gently in their wake, and surged up to the dock and the beach. Whistles blew and the figures jumped out and ran at the double up the shore with fixed bayonets. Back came the planes, swooping so low that we feared for our tall masts. Back they came with a roar, to swing off again up towards the mountains as if they were confined in this long harbour, like a bat let loose in a crowded room.

The noise echoed back and forth among the hills so that we thought it would never stop.

Mr. Beets came down to the wharf and got into a small launch. He was in uniform, white kepi with the bars of his rank, white coat with high collar buttoned in front with two gold collar buttons, white trousers and shoes. The launch drew off and headed towards us, at which Charis and Didie, who had been watching the sight in their wrappers, scurried below to their stateroom. When the launch came alongside, Teddy stood up and smiled at us.

"How did you like the show?" he asked. "Manœuvres; I couldn't tell you about them last night. The men took Manokwari in twenty-two minutes by my watch. I am going out to see the Commander now. *Au revoir*, and my best regards to Harry Kern."

We sailed a short time later. So far as we could see, there had been no interest on shore in these remarkable and shattering goings-on. A few Malays and Papuans sauntered along the beach, intent on business as usual. It was not till later that we realized how little effect such an incongruous sight can have on the mind of a Papuan. An aeroplane goes over. They may never have seen one before. "Flying ship," they say, and turn away. It is all as simple as that. There is no room for such an incident in their mind, in their experience. Therefore they remain completely untouched. Except for ourselves, the only people interested in the phenomenon were the Japanese crew of a small motor schooner which plies between Manokwari and the islands of the Japanese Mandate four hundred miles to the north. They had been standing out on the deck, quite naked, throwing water over themselves, but now they hurried below. In a few minutes the vessel started out ahead of us at a good speed.

"I suppose they want a closer look," said Fred. However, by the time we were clear of the harbour, all the vessels had completely disappeared.

Beyond Manokwari the western end of New Guinea is called the Vogelkop, the head of the bird. It is a huge peninsula really, almost cut off from the rest of the island by a very deep bay which extends south from Manokwari. As we sailed along the coast I looked up at the rugged expanse of the Tamrau Mountains, an adjoining range to the Arfaks. The Tamraus are supposed to be higher than the Arfaks. They had never been explored. In New York, Dr. Mayr had pointed at them on the map.

"If you get any chance by hook or crook, those are the mountains to go to. No one has ever been there. Perhaps you might find the mysterious yellow-crested bower bird, one of the paradise birds, known only from a single specimen collected for Lord Rothschild in 1895. Who knows what else there might be?"

It was not easy to forget those words. Looking at that long straight highest ridge with the clouds even now beginning to form on it, I wished for a magic carpet.

The next day, beating against adverse winds, we came at long last and unbelievably to Sorong. The town is on a small round island perhaps five hundred yards across, lying half a mile off the mainland. The island is low and formed from coral sand except for a miniature hill on one side, perched on which is a white radio station. The town fringes the water, the houses buried in a row of high old palms. There is a wharf and a shed for copra and near it are several neat white bungalows and a green where we could see some boys playing soccer. As we came nearer, a little ketch ran out towards us, and we saw two men waving. In a few moments she came alongside, manœuvring nicely, and then the two men stepped

aboard. One was very tall with a shock of curly white hair and a round laughing plump face.

"I am Harry Kern," he said, pumping our hands up and down. He was nervous, but no more so than we were. The other man was small and shy and thin.

"This is Mr. Kamma, my friend missionary, the owner of this boat," said Harry.

We all stood about in a daze, making conversation frantically, as the two boats drifted in towards the harbour. Finally we were at the wharf. Everybody jumped to work, all of us helping each other, until we realized that we were getting in each other's way. Fred got ready four mooring lines instead of two. We laced up the sails twice over, ran around patting things into place, and generally behaved as if we had lost our senses.

Then we sat about reading our mail in another frenzy of excitement. Some of it dated back more than six months. Harry, who had been consoled with a glass of beer, was champing at the bit, however. He soon marshalled us into some semblance of order and proceeded to escort us ashore. First we were taken to Mr. van der Goot's, the magistrate's, house. It was much like Mr. Beets's except slightly smaller and newer. But the van der Goots were playing tennis. We proceeded across the soccer green to a nice-looking concrete court where a doubles game was in progress. Mr. van der Goot was short and square and stocky, about thirty years old, fair-haired, with a determined jaw. When he smiled, however, his face crinkled up suddenly and lost its rather grim expression. His wife was much darker, a striking contrast to her husband. She was small and pretty, perhaps twenty-five, and her tennis shorts looked incongruous to us at first. The local doctor was next introduced, a solemn young Chinese, followed by another

Chinese boy, son of the town's Number One citizen, the merchant, Ong Tjoean.

We exchanged greetings and then left to return to our mail. That evening we got our phonograph out and played all the records over for Harry. He had only heard the van der Goots' and so was delighted to hear some new tunes. We asked Harry if he would like a cocktail before supper.

"A cocktail," he said inquiringly. "Oh, yes, I would like one very much."

"What kind would you like?" Fred asked.

"Well, now, let me see." Harry was meditative. "I had a very good cocktail once in a hotel in Sydney; 1913, I think it was. I've always remembered that cocktail. It was delicious. It was called, yes, I think it was a Manhattan."

The next morning we decided to leave immediately for Joffa and Kamwa after Fred, Charis, and I had had a discussion of our plans with Mr. van der Goot. There was a small shed-like office building facing the soccer field. It had a wide porch in front where a little old messenger boy in a heavily patched green uniform and bare feet sat faithfully on the floor outside the main door. He was Papuan certainly, but with a touch of Malay blood somewhere. He had grizzled iron-grey hair, and a vacant expression. His only duty seemed to be to get up and ring an ancient bronze ship's bell at uncertain intervals.

Mr. van der Goot met the three of us at the door, looking very spruce in his white coat with the high collar and gold collar buttons. He ushered us into his long bare office, the walls covered with maps and bookcases full of dusty old volumes of reports. On his desk was a small neatly polished skull. I noticed Charis looking at it with a good deal of anthropological interest.

First van der Goot told us that he had received letters asking him to give us every assistance and so on, which he would be more than delighted to do. There were a good many of these formalities and finally he asked us to explain the type of work that we wanted to do. Charis's plan was to find a village at some distance in the interior. She wanted to live in one place for a good many months, studying the language and the customs of the people and measuring their heads.

"Ordinarily that would be next to impossible," said van der Goot dryly. "You see, in this particular area, the people do not have static village life. They are always on the move from one garden to another. However, we have recently established a village in from the coast called Sainkedoek. We are making an effort to keep the people in this village, as it is near their gardens. There is a native magistrate there who will help you with the language. The people are called the Madic tribe. They have never been in contact with the coast to any extent and so they should be splendid for you to work with."

Perhaps we looked a little impatient at the idea of being shunted around without a chance to say anything about it, for Mr. van der Goot went on.

"You see I have to be very careful where you go. This area of the Vogelkop is technically closed to all Europeans because a German was killed here in September 1936. Sainkedoek is still raw wilderness. But there is a native magistrate there and two policemen. I think it would be allowable to have you go there to live, although it is still dangerous."

We looked a little mollified at that, for van der Goot smiled and turned to me:

"Now, Mr. Ripley, where do you wish to go?"

I replied that I was anxious to collect on some of the

islands off the coast, and that as far as the mainland went, the most important place was the Tamrau Mountains.

"The Tamrau Mountains are still terra incognita for us also," Mr. van der Goot replied seriously. "It was just between there and Sainkedoek that Herr Schacht was killed on a walking trip. The Karoon tribe live in the Tamrau and they are known to be cannibals."

We looked incredulous. Stories about cannibals are so hackneyed nowadays, especially when sitting at home peacefully in America. Mr. van der Goot smiled again.

"I noticed you looking at that skull," he said. "It belonged to a nice old lady who was sentenced to four years in jail right here in this office not so long ago. That is a life sentence, for they always die of homesickness. I had her skull polished and put here as an object lesson. The first day Abu, that old boy sitting outside, saw it and I told him who it was, I knew that in a short time the word would be all over the back country that the old woman's head was here. You see, that's very bad luck for her and a good object lesson for them," and he waved his hand towards the "back country."

"What did she do?" asked Charis.

"So far as we know," replied the magistrate, "she was hungry for a real old-fashioned meal of meat. She lived in the Karoon country with her two sons and two daughters-in-law. They had a garden and I suppose she was tired of the same old stuff, yams, bananas, roots, herbs, nice fat grubs, things like that. So it was all very simple," he went on. "She just told the boys that the girls had put a spell on them, that they were witches. Whether her sons believed her or not I don't know, but in any case they went out where the two wives were working, hit them over the head, brought them home, and everybody had enough to eat for a long time."

There was a pause. Then Fred asked how the news had got to Sorong.

"Well, you know, that is the funny thing about these people," said van der Goot intently. "They are much too primitive to conceal anything or to imagine trouble ahead. When some neighbour came along they may have asked where the women were. Then the old woman or the boys probably said, 'Oh, we ate them last week,' or something like that. The news spread casually at first, then like wildfire when it got to the coast. After that we heard about it, and then naturally we had to do something."

"Naturally."

"I mean it," persisted van der Goot, smiling. "You see, if we don't hear about it, then we don't have to do anything. After all it is very expensive to organize an expedition every time there is some minor thing like that. Of course it's different," he continued seriously, "when there is some big head-hunting raid and the people are all upset. Then we have to go in, of course."

"Well, what did you do?" I asked.

"Oh, I got together my military police and we went in, inquired where these people lived, and went and got them, just as easy as that." He paused. "Later we had the trial and they told us all about it perfectly simply, and so I sentenced them to jail.

"There was only one doubtful point," he added after another pause. "I could not be sure whether the old woman really thought the sons' wives were witches or whether it was just an excuse." He looked up and now he was smiling again. "But in any case that didn't matter very much, did it?"

We got up to go out. Mr. van der Goot reached for his sun helmet.

"I think I'll come with you," he said. "It's eleven o'clock, time to close the office. Are you going to Ong Tjoean's store? Come, we'll have a beer there," and he nodded to Abu as he locked the office door.

We walked along the edge of the soccer field. The heat was terrific in the sun. The water of the harbour was a solid flat sheet stretching off to the mainland, dark green and inviting. A single outrigger canoe drifted towards us, the fisherman in it paddling languidly.

"By the way," said Mr. van der Goot suddenly. "I have been instructed to make a patrol in February. I had planned on the Tamrau. If you want to, you can come along with me then and collect your birds."

## CHAPTER VI

### SEESAW

FROM a distance the Schildpad Islands look like a group of lifeboats that have overturned, floating away over the sea. They are even dark masses of vegetation sloping off neatly at the ends. They seem to move up and down on the choppy water. The waves are the colour of lead—plumbeous, as an ornithologist would say. The sky is paler, french-grey, a solid high bank of ugly clouds. Racing about underneath are smaller dark slate-coloured clouds full of rain. From them hang a whole series of waving grey banners of rain, rather like the moment in an old-fashioned musical comedy when the chorus, enveloped in trailing crêpe de Chine attached to long wands, does a butterfly dance.

This nervous inquietude of the weather had its effect on all of us. After all, our house party was a very extended one. We had our blue Mondays. This particular type was called an "anchor panic." We had caught up to one of the lifeboats at last and it had resolved into Kamwa.

"This is the island where I have built the houses for all of us to stay," said Harry.

Charis, Didie, and I sat about the wheel, our feet dangling in the cockpit. George and Fred stood up forward surveying the offshore waters for an anchorage. Charlie crouched by the anchor which was swung out on a davit. Harry paced nervously forward and aft. He had

already told George where boats were in the habit of anchoring, but the current seemed fast here. Harry came hurrying back to us for sympathy.

"He can't make up his mind," he said over and over. Everybody glowered.

"Drop the anchor," George finally said, having nearly bitten off his moustache in the process.

But we were still moving forward at the time. Our momentum carried us on, dragging the anchor. Astern we exchanged "told you so" glances, while forward there were several sharp words, several "what the flaming hells," and the anchor windlass was manned. Up came the anchor. Again we tried, this time another method. It worked, the anchor caught, and we swung about into the current, moored at last. There was a sullen silence all around, a silence as slate-coloured as the latest squall which raced over the boat, leaving a patter of rain on deck.

Kamwa is nearly circular, a little over fifty acres in extent, with a spit of sand pointing out away from the trade wind. Jessa is exactly the same, a mile and a half away. We went ashore, to find neat rows of coconut palms about twenty-five feet high. Four avenues extend out from a central axis where there are the living-houses. As we walked up the nearest avenue we could see trunks of old forest trees lying among the palms. Like elm wood, they were too heavy to move, too hard to burn. Ahead we saw the main house, thatched roof and neatly painted walls. As we came into the little clearing in front of the house there was a sudden burst of sound. There, lined up to greet us, was a row of children all in white dresses, one or two women, and a schoolmaster in a badly fitting white suit. They were Papuans from a mission school on Misool, a nearby island. Some had flutes, others pipes,

and the schoolmaster directed everything by waving a large bamboo pole on the end of which was a Netherlands flag. They burst into the "Wilhelmus" at which, taking a tip from Harry, we all stood stock-still, while the anthem went on for a long time. It was very solemn. Afterwards we thanked them in our halting Malay and went into the house.

Harry had several Malay boys for us to meet. There was Darek, who ran the plantation, a dour silent man with a mouthful of gold teeth. There was Martin, who was to be Fred's and Charis's boy, rather tall and thin and very serious. And there was Jusup, who was to help me.

"Jusup is forty-three, two years younger than I am," said Harry. "He is a little old certainly, but I know that he can cook well and I am sure that he will learn to prepare bird skins skilfully for you."

Jusup was small but sturdy, with an engaging smile. In fact he smiled most of the time. When he tried to look serious he had to knit his brows together with great concentration.

"I call him 'Windy Head.' Indeed you must always tell him exactly what to do," Harry went on. "He needs direction, but given it he will be faithful."

We asked Harry if he had ever tried to teach them English, knowing of our visit.

"Oh, yes," replied Harry. "I got an English-Malay book. It had evidently been prepared by a madman, an English madman, for he used terms that are quite foreign to Malay. The first lesson began with a little verse:

"Seesaw, Seesaw,

Up and down.

Oh what fun it is to ride on a seesaw.

"When they had learned that lesson by heart, I was laughing so much that it was quite impossible to go on," and Harry repeated it again, mimicking their pronunciation.

Darek, Martin, and Jusup were Malays from Ambon, a town on an island to the west towards Java, which has been civilized for over two hundred years. In fact, they were very much nearer European status in New Guinea than Papuan. Actually they probably all three had some Portuguese blood from the days of the first settlers in Ambon.

The excitement of landing at last on Kamwa was too much for us. Our bad moods had vanished as soon as we stepped ashore. That evening after a supper of rice and fresh dandelion-like vegetables cooked by Martin, we got out the phonograph and played waltzes. Harry danced with Charis and Didie. He took short steps and twirled with great speed.

"I have not had such a *Wiener Walzer* since 1914," he panted happily.

We spent nine days on the island that first time. All day long we unpacked, rearranged, reorganized. There were about ten Papuan labourers on the island besides our three boys. Under the direction of Darek the Papuans would paddle out to the *Chiva* in a big outrigger canoe. There they would receive small trunks, sea bags, stores of food, lamps, kerosene, tent flies, mattresses, everything which needed to be used or gone over and dried in the sun. There were a few problems. Some of the clothes were mouldy and unrecognizable. There isn't much room after all in a fifty-nine-foot boat to air and brush everything at intervals. Again some of the cans had lost their labels. For some reason or other apricots came in the same-size cans as spinach. We never could

plan on getting a meal exactly as ordered, but Harry was used to such combinations. The Dutch have a great fondness for cold fruit served with the meat course.

Every day we would be up with the dawn for a hasty breakfast, then work till nearly lunch-time. Usually we would have a swim off the sandspit before lunch, the big meal of the day. Harry's favourite midday meal consisted of rice and meat balls, or croquettes, made of corned beef mixed with mashed-up potato, made from a potato-like tuber grown locally. For a vegetable there was always green papaya. Then he would have canned fruit or ripe papaya for dessert. We stuck fairly close to this with some variations. Our one desire was fresh food of any kind. That was the most important thing. We were always hungry with that kind of rather gnawing hunger that you feel on rainy days. No one was ever late for a meal.

After lunch would come a siesta varying in length with the dimensions of lunch, then some more work, then tea, then possibly another swim or an odd job or two, then supper. The Dutch usually eat cold what is left over from lunch. This was something we could never get used to, so we mostly had a hot supper.

It is a sign of good health in the tropics to be sleepy. The more you sleep and continue to have a good appetite the more you will be able to stand the climate. This is an axiom worth remembering, for by it a man can judge his ability to live in hot countries. If after the end of a year or so he has lost his appetite and sleeps fitfully, then he had better go back to a temperate climate. Fortunately we all seemed to fit into our new environment, for the work ahead, at least for some of us, would tax all our resources.

Jusup had to be taught as quickly as possible how to

skin birds. After arriving and getting unpacked and settled, my first task was to take him out shooting. I had three guns, all shotguns. These were a 12-bore and two smaller ones, .410-bore. I usually shot the 12-bore, using .410-bore cartridges for small birds. This is possible by inserting "adapters" into the bore of the gun, small brass cylinders made to hold the .410 shell. The shot, as it comes out of the barrel, spreads very fast, with the result that it is possible to secure a bird the size of a wren at a distance of perhaps six feet. This is important because birds in New Guinea tend to be extremely tame. It is sometimes nearly impossible to get far enough away from them. Then again it is an advantage to be near. The underbrush is so thick in places that otherwise the bird would be lost when it fell. Shooting a .410 shotgun at such a range would mean losing everything of the specimen except a feather or two, but at the same time these guns are better for medium-range shooting at fifteen to twenty-five yards.

We walked along the path towards the shore. Jusup walked behind me quite close, apparently watching every move I made and attempting to copy it. He shouldered his gun when I did, unlimbered it when I did, and generally made me feel as if I was about to be shot in the back at any moment. Along the shore beyond the beach there were a few large trees which had been left because the exposed coral rock was too poor for palms. They were a good deal taller than the palms, with large rhododendron-like glossy leaves. Being perennial in foliage, some of the leaves were always dying and being replaced. These leaves were crimson, making bright spots of colour all over the trees.

Scattered over the rocks and sand were a large number of seeds, yellow, about the size of a peach stone. A few

still had part of the fruit attached. The whole affair was as large as a lemon, green and fleshy. Some bird had been eating them.

Jusup plucked at my arm. He was breathing heavily with excitement.

"Tuan, there is a blue cockatoo," and he pointed into the tree overhead.

We spent perhaps ten minutes looking for that bird, Jusup pointing and I straining my eyes. The sun was rather bright and dazzling on the polished leaves. Suddenly I realized that I had become so infected with excitement that I had never thought to tell Jusup to go ahead and shoot by himself. He took long and painful aim and finally fired—at one of the dead red leaves. There was a harsh grating parrot call and a large long-tailed bird with a big crimson bill flew out of the tree. Poor Jusup, he had become so confused that he had aimed at the wrong dead leaf. Later we secured two specimens of this beautiful parrot which is common in the Moluccas and New Guinea. Like many of the birds found on small islands hereabouts, these parrots fly in flocks, migrating from island to island in search of whatever fruit is in season.

Farther along the shore there were some more trees. In one there was a number of big fruit pigeons, fine-looking creatures as large and fat as a duck. They are soft pinky-grey in colour, with iridescent green backs and wings, and we came to depend on them as a variation to our corned beef croquettes. They make a curious call that sounds like a cross between the caw of a crow and the bark of a dog. "Grr-r-r-r-ow!" they say, and at the same time one or more of them will fly up and make a display flight, swooping in a series of graceful arcs with closed wings.

Jusup finally shot a bird. It was a starling which was perched on the top of a papaya, pecking busily at the ripe fruit. It had a rather long tail and bright shiny greenish plumage. We took it back to the house, and I proceeded to skin it, making Jusup do part of the work. He had small nimble fingers and he seemed to understand very well. Preparing birds is an intricate job which takes a definite amount of learning. The skin of a small bird is delicate and easily torn. Rough treatment means that many feathers can be lost. All the innards of a bird are removed except the skull and some of the wing bones. The skin is then padded out with a cotton or excelsior manikin in the shape of the body, a small amount of arsenic powder is dusted in to keep out insects, and the skin is sewed up and wrapped away in cotton to dry. When completed, a museum or study skin looks quite unlikelike, rather as if the bird had just lain down on its back, folding its wings neatly underneath and crossing its legs. A tag is then tied to the legs giving the data of place, date, sex, and so on, and the skin is complete.

"After your lunch," I told Jusup, "you must go out and shoot another of these birds, and make it this time all by yourself."

After my lunch I came back to find Jusup already at work on another starling and doing a very good job. Now, I thought to myself, I'll just lie down for a few minutes in my room and let him go on by himself. Beyond the open door I could hear an occasional noise, the scrape of his chair, a pair of scissors dropping on the floor, a box falling over on its side. Underneath as a sort of running accompaniment, now louder, now softer with his breathing, I could hear Jusup half-singing, half-whispering to himself. With the greatest difficulty it was just

possible to make out what he was repeating over and over. He was saying:

“Seesaw, Seesaw,  
Op an’ don.  
Ohwatfunitistorideona—Seesaw.”

Not far away there is another island of the group called Lophon. All that could be seen from Kamwa was a row of ragged tree-tops which stuck up above the water. Harry told me that there was still a good deal of original forest on it where I might find some of the small birds of these islands, birds which would be likely to have been driven off Kamwa by the solid new planting of coconut trees.

“Lophon is one of the places where the Besarese pirates live,” he said. “But they have not cultivated it to any extent.”

“Pirates?” I asked.

“Yes,” he replied. “They are more or less reformed now of course, run errands for me sometimes. They never were very terrifying pirates, used to steal, or hold up a canoe sometimes, sometimes a Chinese trading schooner.”

“Are they Papuans?”

“Partly. They are related to the Biak island people, you know, from near Manokwari. Great seafarers, can go hundreds of miles over the open ocean in canoes. They are true nomads living always in their boats, always at sea.”

Charlie, Jusup, and I started out one morning early in the dinghy with the outboard motor sputtering and fuming, driving us, “smash, smash, smash,” into the cross-channel chop. By the time we got up to the island the

tide was full and there were no waves, for the current had stopped running. The sea had smoothed out flat and green in the lee of the beach. The island seemed about the same size as Kamwa, but the great jungle trees made it look rather strange and dark and mysterious. We drove in fast towards the beach, expecting to sweep up on one of the little pat-pat waves and ground high up out of water. Instead, just as we got in too far, we suddenly realized that there were real waves here, but now it was too late. Up and up we went, and now down, and there behind us was a great curler coming up out of nothing, out of a placid sea on to what must have been an extremely shelving beach.

"Jumping catfish," Charlie shouted over the roar, and then everything dissolved into a tumble and froth of green water and rolling, rolling sand.

It was all over in a matter of seconds and we were struggling with the dinghy. Nothing was lost, but everything was wet, and Jusup had taken a blow in the side as the dinghy went over. We got the dinghy up finally above the high-water mark, and looked about for our possessions. Everything seemed to be there. Our guns were wet, but at least our waxed cartridges were dry. Fortunately our lunch consisted of fresh water (in canteens) and Bartlett pears (in unopened tins).

We struck out into the underbrush where we could see a series of dim little trails crisscrossing each other. Soon we had found some birds, pretty yellowish warblers called white-eyes, dark brown flycatchers with rusty brown tails, and a lovely red parakeet with a loud whistling call.

The silence had been complete. There had been no noise in that underbrush but our own trampling as we all wandered off in different directions, an occasional

shot, and the songs of the birds. Now as I reached down to retrieve the parakeet, I heard a gentle rustle. The pirates may be sea rovers but they are also excellent woodsmen. As I stood up I saw they were all about me in the undergrowth, small squat Papuans with bandy thin legs. They were dressed only in G-strings, except for one man who wore an old tattered police coat. Their faces told me nothing. We stood there silently for a moment. I could not help noticing their big bush knives. I reached up carefully and pulled two buckshot shells out of the left-hand breast pocket of my shirt where I always kept them. I broke the shotgun, took out the old shells, and put in the new.

"*Tabek*, greetings," I said, feeling better.

"*Tabek*, Tuan," said the man in the police coat, smiling now. "I am the *Kapala*. These are my people."

Bowing and saluting, his face shining with smiles, he came forward and shook hands. There was a thrashing and Jusup and Charlie came along the trail. Then there were more greetings all round. Jusup and the *Kapala* went off into a torrent of Besarese explanations. Besarese, like any of the New Guinea languages, sounds at first to the untrained ear like a series of urgent after-dinner Arabian grunts and belches. Later it grows more usual, more pleasant. It never becomes understandable.

Jusup produced a small package of dirty-looking and dripping Java tobacco. It is the kind that one buys to give as presents to Papuan chiefs or to the coolies after a hard day's march. Now the stuff sagged limply in Jusup's hand. I took some and divided it up as I had seen Harry do, doling it out to the *Kapala*, always using the right hand as etiquette demands. He was delighted and bowed and saluted several more times, talking in a sort of stage whisper to his men who clustered about him,

reaching over each other with great hams of hands to clutch at wisps of tobacco. They were mostly burned very black from the sun. They all had huge chests and bulging arms from lives spent in their canoes. They grinned at us from a variety of faces, flat-nosed, broad-nosed, thick drooping moustaches, monkey-like clean-shaven faces, bald heads, woolly heads, old men and young.

"They would like you to come and see their camp," said Jusup.

The *Kape'a* led the way and Charlie and I followed him, while the rest trailed along grinning and chuckling at Jusup's jokes. Suddenly we came out of the trees into the intense glare of the sun. The sea lapped gently on the coral beach at our feet. Off to the right a long white spit of sand like the one on Kamwa stuck out from the shore line. Here was the movable wandering village of the Besarese. There must have been a dozen canoes drawn up on the sand or anchored by poles just off shore where they swayed gently, drifting back and forth towards the beach. Little black figures toiled busily over the sand or crouched around specks of flame where fires were going.

We walked over to the sandspit while the men behind us shouted and figures came running to greet us, small boys and girls scampering over the beach with the agility of sand fleas. We came to one of the fires and stopped to see what was cooking in a big pot. It had an evil smell, something to do with a turtle. A shell, full of blood, lay close alongside the pot. All the new faces that had been on the beach now clustered close to us. Most of them were chewing betel nut which made them spit frequently, staining the sand with great dark biobs. Women with enormous mops of frizzled hair stood off at a distance, shy and giggling, some nursing children. Most of the canoes

had little thatched cabins built over them amidships, and from these the old people leaned out, old withered men and wrinkled cronès of women. They all stared at us, whispering and chuckling hoarsely to each other.

Over everything hung the bitter pungent smell of the Besarese, aromatic as betel nut, sharp as sweat, and musty as the dried pandanus leaves and fibres they use for weaving.

"Tuan, the *Kapala* thanks you both for the tobacco and for visiting his camp. He would like to do a dance for you, a *chakalele*."

"Fine," we said and sat down in the shade of a pandanus mat that had been strung up to dry.

The *Kapala* shouted out "Chakalele," and at that there was a yell and some of the men dived for their canoes, to reappear a moment later carrying spears, big knives, a brass gong, and two wooden drums, long narrow cylinders of wood covered at one end with lizard skin. Three little naked children, fuzzy-haired, pot-bellied, with legs and arms like sticks, had been huddled together asleep on a mat near a fire. They woke now and started to cry sleepily. The drummers and a boy carrying the gong settled down in the lee of one of the canoes. Suddenly the drums began, low and booming. High over them came the sound of the gong, ringing incredibly fast like an angry hornet; "tap-tap" went the men on the wooden side of the drums. "Bop-bop," said one drum on the lizard skin. "Bum-bum," said the other. All the time the gong was ringing its challenge over the quiet water, "bong-bong-bong-ong-ong-ongggggggggg!"

The *Kapala* now leaped out from behind one of the canoes and began to dance. In one hand he held a long dagger, in the other a shield, a narrow hourglass-shaped piece of wood with an elaborate inlaid pattern of bits of

white shell. He danced very fast, never moving out of one spot. His feet jerked backwards through the sand, throwing it up in spurts like an enraged bull. The blade of his dagger twinkled and shone, darting from side to side in intricate movements. The shield whirled back and forth, now high over his head, now in back, now in front. The sweat ran down his legs. His coat seemed to turn darker, if that were possible.

At last he gave a gasp and flung up the shield and dagger into the air. There was a yell from behind him, and another man jumped up to take his place, catching the shield and dagger with great dexterity. This one danced hard and fast. He was a big man. The sun shone down heavily, sending highlights glancing and slithering over his black skin and the muscles that bulged up from his shoulders and back. As he danced, knees bent and feet jerking, he bared his teeth in an agonized grin, and the men and women burst into shrill yells of excitement.

Finally this one sank back panting into the sand and another leaped to take his place. Then another and another, and on they went until even small boys were dancing, little monkey-like creatures leaping into the air sometimes and shrilling their cries of victory over the water.

The tide had changed. We could see the current beginning to make again out in the channel between the islands. We stood up and shook hands with the *Kapala* and gave him the rest of the tobacco. We also gave him one of the tins of Bartlett pears.

"Wah," he said and his eyes shone. He ran to his canoe and returned with two small woven boxes of betel nut which he handed us. They had coloured strips making an intricate design. Everybody thanked everybody else, the old women cackled with glee, and we walked along

the beach enveloped in a cloud of rosy good will. It was only then that I realized I had forgotten to unload my shotgun. I replaced the buckshot in my left breast pocket.

On the way back to the dinghy we flushed a beautiful pair of thick-knees, giant plover that stand as tall as a chicken. They ran along the beach ahead of us, heads turned so that we could see their great yellow eyes. Then they flew off, making a loud vibrating whistle, circled over the sea, to land out of range behind us again. We searched the island diligently but without success. There were no other species to be found.

The waves had gone down and we launched the dinghy easily, getting back to Kamwa in time for a bath before supper. In the East Indies customs cling on long after they are outmoded. All the way from the Hotel des Indes at Batavia to Harry's house on Kamwa the universal way of taking a bath is to stand up, reach into a tub of water with a dipper, and then splash oneself all over. Perhaps because it is fun, this system is still used in hotels that could well afford hot running water and bath tubs. Instead there is always the dipper and the tub, more elaborate in some places than others, sometimes inlaid with tiles, but otherwise always the same.

Supper over, we strolled out of the house carrying our chairs. Around us as we sat there sipping our coffee was Harry's garden, the orchids whose leaves brushed our shoulders, the bushy hibiscus with scarlet flowers, purple now in this light. Over all rose the young palms stretching away in a solid bank. The moon, shining down out of a dry-looking blue sky, glinted on the polished upper surfaces of the fronds. The tips of the leaves were waving gently in the night breeze, throwing back a thousand winking lights. As they waved they clashed a little, making a kind of soft sighing music.

I had been telling Harry about the Besarese.

"You two were lucky to see that sword dance," he said. "It has now been forbidden in most of the East Indies."

"How come?" asked Charis.

"The chakalele is a specially significant dance, my boy. Usually it means triumph for an enemy killed, or anticipation, a working-up for the warpath. It is considered dangerous because sometimes a dancer will let himself go and run amok."

"Amok?"

"That is the word for temporary madness. It doesn't just happen during a dance. If you have a mood of extreme inferiority, let's say a temporary complex, what do you do? Run about beating your chest maybe, or else sit in a corner and sulk? Those things hit different people different ways. If a Malay on the other hands feels bad, all he does is run amok. He tears off all his clothes, grabs a knife, and runs about through his village, cutting up a few people on the way. It is a form of hysteria and it is very good for blowing off steam. An hour later he can be as placid as a mud turtle."

"Has it happened on Kamwa?" Fred asked.

"Once," replied Harry calmly. "But it was very easy. When the man ran at me foaming and screaming I simply felt very angry that it should be happening on my plantation. I held his eyes with mine and shouted at him as loud as I could to drop the knife."

"What happened then?"

"He dropped it, of course," said Harry a trifle impatiently. "He made a very good workman afterwards. He knew I had something on him."

Martin came out and cleared away the coffee cups.

"It was a cousin of Martin's," finished Harry quietly. We had been talking earlier about our projected trip

to Misool. It is a large island about forty-five miles long by twenty wide, lying to the south ten or fifteen miles from Kamwa. Harry was very anxious to have us go there even if only for a short time.

"It will be a good test for you," he had said. "You will have some idea of what the interior of New Guinea itself is like."

The people on Misool are Arafuras, a group closely related to the Papuans but smaller, more delicate. Charis was anxious to measure them, and I for one wanted to collect a few birds on Misool. Now we had planned to leave within a day or two and spend a week there. Harry hoped that we could get to Tip, an Arafura village in the interior which no one had ever visited.

"We must get the Raja to go with us," he said. "He has great power over the Arafuras. The upstart," he added half under his breath.

"What do you mean, upstart, Harry?" questioned Charis.

"Good gracious," said Harry. "Haven't I told you about these western New Guinea islands, why they are called the Raja Ampat group, the islands of the four Rajas?"

"No," we chorused.

"Well, you know of course that these islands were all under the control of the Sultan of Tidore until Holland took over," he said settling himself back comfortably in his chair.

We all nodded. Overhead the moon shone serenely. Looking down the long tunnel that was the path to the beach, it was just possible to see a small patch of water glinting in the bright light.

"The Sultan set up four Rajas to rule over these islands as his deputies. They had to pay him tribute in

slaves, dammar, a kind of resin from a tree found hereabouts, and bird of paradise plumes. Those are the dull facts. The local Papuan story is much more interesting."

He paused, fumbled in the pocket of his white jacket for a moment, then drew out a cigar and lighted it.

"Long ago on the island of Waigeu north of Sorong there was a poor couple living in the forest. Every day the man went out hunting or fishing and the woman kept their hut clean and gathered fruit or roots or herbs which she cooked.

"One day she was able to find nothing to eat. Her man came home and he too had not been lucky. 'I did find these few eggs,' he said, handing her six large white eggs from the bag that he carried. But the woman would not cook them as he wanted her to do. Instead she hid them, for she was sure they were bewitched. After a time five of them hatched. The sixth egg turned to stone and is still to be seen on Waigeu although it is very bad luck to look at it. Indeed women will become barren if they see it.

"The five eggs hatched into four boys and a girl. They all grew up into wonderful people and in a short time they had gathered many followers around them. The girl disappears out of the story here. She went off to an island near Biak and became the ancestress of all the people there."

Harry puffed on his cigar for a moment.

"After a time, of course, the brothers became rivals for the supreme power on the islands. They quarrelled among themselves and one, the third brother, went away with his people, saying that he would not rest until he had gone so far that he would never be able to see the island of Waigeu again. He set sail to the south and pretty soon they came to Salawati, right across from Sorong. They landed on the beach and the young man asked his fol-

lowers if they could still see Waigeu. As for him he would not turn his head to look. They said they could, and so they got into their canoes again and continued south until they came to Misool. Again he asked and this time they said 'No.' So the young man settled there and became the Raja of Misool.

"The second brother left soon after but was content to settle on Sarawati. He became the Raja there.

"The fourth son went off somewhere near Ambon and was never heard of again.

"The oldest son stayed on Waigeu where he became the Raja.

"Pour me a glass of cold tea, will someone? I'm dry," Harry interrupted himself. There was a pause until a glass was found.

"About a hundred and fifty years ago," he went on, putting down the glass finally, "a total stranger appeared at the Raja of Misool's court and announced that he was the descendant of the long-lost brother. The Raja was very nice to him and gave him half of Misool to rule. In the meantime the most important line, the Rajas of Waigeu, who were entitled to ninety-nine flags when they went out for a procession, they all died out long ago. The Raja of Salawati, who was entitled to eighty-eight flags, well, I remember him. He was an unconscionable old scoundrel. In 1919 he was convicted of slave-trading and sentenced to jail. One of my boys here, Efaat, he was one of a group of little orphan children that the missionary and I rescued from the Raja's house at Samate. The old man died a short time later. He was a thorough rogue." Harry paused meditatively.

"The Raja of Misool, that is, the legitimate one, was entitled to seventy-seven flags. He died, very old, about three years ago, having no heirs. Well, you see," Harry

chuckled, "that leaves the upstart Raja, entitled to only sixty-six flags. He's the last one left. It just goes to show that blood will tell, what?"

Harry puffed at his cigar. The burning end waxed and waned with the regularity of a revolving red signal light.

"Of course, he's quite old and I did hear that his first wife had seen the stone egg on Waigeu, so of course she had no children. However, he's remarried since then, but I have not heard whether successfully or not. In any case we shall soon find out. I look forward to seeing him again, the upstart," and Harry with a violent effort lunged forward and up out of his deep chair.

It was late as we all stood up. We made short work of the jug of cold tea. The moon had gone behind a cloud and a small cold wind had sprung up. The palm fronds rattled now against each other with a definite beat instead of the previous soft clashing. I kept trying to think what seemed so familiar about the rhythm as I climbed into bed. I was very sleepy and it was not until I was nearly off that I realized what it was. "Squeak, squeak," went on the palm leaves, "Seesaw, Seesaw, up and down, Seesaw."

## CHAPTER VII

### • MISOOL

NOW that I have been to Misool and come away I am full of regret for a lost opportunity. After all, it is not an easy place to return to again. What I found out was that in seven days with an open sore on one's heel and insufficient help, it is impossible to do much collecting of birds. I also liked the vanishing Arafuras.

In New York it had never occurred to Dr. Mayr and myself that I might be able to get to Misool. I had no list of the birds of the island or any information as to who had been there before me. Wallace's assistant, Charles Allen, had been there for a time in 1860 until he was starved out by lack of supplies. Guillemard, a rich English amateur of science, had stopped at Misool in 1883, and I had heard that a German collector, Heinrich Kuehn, employed by Lord Rothschild, had been there for a short time around the turn of the century. For all I knew, the birds of Misool were well known as a result of Kuehn's trip. What remained to be collected, and what species would be of interest at home, were two minor mysteries.

Waigama is the seat of the last of the six eggs. Heavy jungle trees hang over the little town. A small muddy river comes out of a hole in the forest and empties into the sea, staining the dying coral with silt. The effect is

sombre and dank. The Malay population of the place hang about languidly and picturesquely in gay sarongs, the men with jaunty black velvet caps. As we came up the steps from the little landing pier they stood about, looking like "wild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters." The sixth egg himself, however, was made of sterner stuff. He stood there at the head of the stairs, a small sturdy man of indeterminate age dressed in a shiny white high-collared suit topped by a large sun helmet made out of what I later discovered to be orchid stems. He smiled graciously.

"*Slamat datang,*" he said, "greetings to your coming."

Then he recognized Harry, whom he had not seen for several years, and his face relaxed into beaming smiles.

"*Tabek, Raja,*" cried Harry, slapping him on the back as they shook hands.

The upstart Raja of Misool turned and led us into the town. As the dreamy-eyed crowd parted on each side, we saw that there were other people on the outskirts, small dark people with mops of fuzzy hair, in G-strings, carrying bows and arrows. These were the Arafuras. They stood looking at us without any expression whatever, the way a deer might look at you in the zoo.

Waigama consists of five or six houses ranged round a small square. On one side there are two of the inevitable Chinese stores, on the other the house of the Raja. It was a fairly large house raised off the ground on a multitude of stakes and beams driven into the soil at all angles. There was a wide sagging veranda all around. The roof was thatched with atap, the familiar palmleaf material used universally. The slant of the underpinnings and the general top-heavy look of the place gave the effect of a house of cards that was just about to tumble down. We tiptoed instinctively up the front steps after the Raja.

The main living-room had no partition on one side, so that it was continuous with the veranda. In the centre were the usual four cane chairs and a round table. Over them hung a large crocheted shade for the kerosene pressure lamp. The walls were bare except for a pair of stag antlers, on the tines of which reposed the Raja's collection of hats, and a large gold-framed photograph of the Raja himself taken at the time of a visit to Ambon.

There was a rustling as we sat down. Soon several heads peeped around the open corners of the veranda. There were five little boys in velvet caps with eager faces and bright button eyes, all of them staring open-mouthed. At first when we looked they scampered away. Soon they became bolder. Several little girls joined them. Now they were almost in the room.

"Eh yah," shouted the Raja, his smile interrupted by a frown. "*Pigi lekas!*" and the whole troop scampered off, squealing with excitement. A few minutes later and they were all peering in again.

There had been some whispering and scuffling at the back. Now a pretty young Malay woman came out with cups of tea. She was wearing a beautifully embroidered sarong and a lace kebaya or jacket fastened rather precariously in front with three gold pins. She smiled modestly as she put down the cups and turned and scurried back for more, tap-tapping in her wooden Chinese clogs.

The Raja announced to Harry proudly that that was his new wife.

"Any children?" asked Harry.

The Raja held up one finger, smiling shyly.

"A boy?"

"Yes, Tuan."

"Splendid," and Harry turned to us. "You know, the

Raja is considerably older than I am. Poor man, he's been trying for years. There have been three wives, but none of the legitimate children have survived, although I daresay he has plenty of heirs on the bar sinister side. Now this will be a great thing if the child lives."

The Raja, in spite of all these desperate nuptial endeavours, seemed to be happy enough and carefree as well.

"Why shouldn't he be?" said Harry. "He's rich and powerful. The Government does well to keep him on a pension. These people adore him. We don't see his riches, of course. They are all buried somewhere and only brought out at weddings."

After polite comments about the wife and child, Harry veered the conversation round to Tip. Could some of us go there? The Raja smiled and nodded. Would the Raja go too? The Raja thought a moment, then relaxed and nodded again. Then came much more talk and finally the arrangements. The Raja and I would go to Tip to-morrow, and perhaps Charis and Fred and Harry would follow in a day or two.

The Raja of Misool is one of the very few Malays I have ever met who could actually contemplate doing something "to-morrow." After hurriedly assembling all my material for a week on shore, clothes, food, shotguns, ammunition, notebooks, skinning equipment, along with Jusup's personal *barang*, I got to bed at last, not too confident of what the morning would bring. But early the next day there the Raja was, actually waiting on shore with ten Arafura carriers, six women and four men. They had huge cornucopia-shaped woven baskets which hung on their backs supported by shoulder straps and a forehead tump line. We had hard work at first stuffing everything into these big baskets. I finally had to leave

behind some ammunition and three or four cans of food, which I was later to regret.

\* At six o'clock it is fairly cool even in a latitude of  $1^{\circ} 50'$  South. Everything was enmeshed in fog. The palm trees along the shore hung their heads and dripped melted fog. Eddies of the stuff floated along the ground or stretched out on the water in wavy smoking lines. The little people coughed as if they were racked with consumption and looked longingly at the houses where fires were being lit. The Raja lined them all up, placed himself in front, bowed to me to walk behind, saw that Jusup was behind me, nodded to everyone, and started off. We walked quickly to the end of the street, turned to the left, and marched straight into the jungle. For perhaps half a mile the trail was fairly wide and muddy with the tracks of many feet in it, large and small. At intervals other trails branched off on either side, leading to scrubby patches of cultivation cleared out of the surrounding forest. Bright-coloured butterflies, emerald green and red, flew up from the filth underfoot as we disturbed them. As we advanced the trail dwindled to a path, then to a track. It became wetter. There were places where sago palm trunks had been thrown into the water to make a sort of bridge. Finally we came to a place where even this had been given up and we slogged along through ankle-high liquid. Looking back I noticed that the carriers were now all wearing warm-brown tennis socks.

As for me, I had my knee-high *bottes sauvages* on, boots of which I was very proud. They are roomy and comfortable, of soft leather, with no lacings, only two straps, one over the instep, the other at the top under the knee. If you tuck the top of your trousers into the boots, then strap them tight, you have a fairly waterproof, leechproof

combination. Unfortunately for me, two things went wrong that day. One was that the soles of my boots were leather; the other, that I wore silk socks under wool ones as I had been told to do in order to let the sweat be absorbed by the wool socks, thus keeping the feet drier.

After an hour or so of mud, we came suddenly to a little limestone ridge up which we proceeded to climb. I can say it now although I did not know it then. Never climb up a wet limestone ridge with leather soles on one's shoes! The wretched stuff was so coated with moss and algae, better known as slime, that it might as well have been ice.

It was at about this point that I began to notice also that there must be a darn in my silk sock on the left foot at about the Achilles tendon just above the heel. At first it was a sensation, then, a dull ache every time I drew my foot forward, then increasing until it reached the quality of a fresh wasp sting. By that time, of course, it was too late. We stopped under an overhanging boulder where some local rustic had playfully constructed a seat of small logs so designed that no matter what position you assumed, sparkling drops of water splashed down upon your neck from the crevices overhead. I took off my boot while the Raja, Jusup, and our six women and four men gravely watched. The blister had long since burst, leaving a round red raw spot the size of a half-dollar. From the same pocket in my shirt where I kept the buck-shot shells, I extracted a small tin box, replete with bandages and iodine bottle. I put on a bandage and threw away the silk sock, which was immediately rescued by Jusup who would probably give it to one of his lady friends. Then we went on.

I would not have minded the walk to Tip so much if it had not been for those limestone ridges. Fortunately

it was not the season for leeches. We failed to encounter a single one. It did not rain any more than usual, none of the *barang* were lost, and no one sustained a serious injury except myself. However, there were the limestone ridges. The irritating thing about them was that they presumably tried to be nice. No sooner had we climbed two or three hundred feet up one than the ridge would seem to decide to call it a day and stop. That then would be the end of that ridge and so we would have to climb down its opposite side. Immediately, along would come another ridge and the process would be repeated again and again *ad nauseam*. Although I had been spending most of my time on shore walking about Kamwa looking for birds, I soon found that I had not yet recuperated from ten months at sea. After fourteen separate and distinct limestone ridges my legs were like jelly.

"If you please," I called to the Raja, "I ask to stay a moment." It was a phrase that I had thought up with care.

The Raja turned, smiled politely, and stopped. We sat down on stones beside the trail.

This jungle was what I came to know as typical lowland jungle in New Guinea and the surrounding islands. The trees are immensely tall and fanlike, making a fairly solid canopy overhead. This original forest, so-called, is ordinarily so thick above that light cannot penetrate with sufficient power to supply most ground-living plants. Thus this type of jungle is fairly open below and makes for easy walking. There is none of this hacking of the underbrush business that one reads of in books. On the other hand, if the soil underfoot is very wet and of poor holding quality it may be that trees will be continually falling down, the forest canopy will be discontinuous, and there will be masses of tangled underbrush in places.

However, most trails and most woodsmen prefer to walk around these obstacles.

One of the most extraordinary trees of the New Guinea original forest is a species of wild fig which starts its career as a simple vine. There was one very big one right behind the Raja's back as he sat facing me. First the vine grows up the tree as any self-respecting vine should, sending out shoots and branches in every direction. After a while the mask is dropped, the play is over, and the now immensely strong vine proceeds to strangle the tree. The central trunk of the host rots and drops away from the bottom, leaving an enormous forest tree supported by a series of small arched branching trunks springing from the ground. The whole thing looks as if somehow the tree had been uprooted and stuck into the ground upside down. This particular one was a giant. There was room enough to drive a 1929 Model A Ford Tudor sedan underneath and park for the night.

The Raja was looking at me slightly reproachfully. He had told me before we started that the trip ought not to take more than five hours. But we had already taken five hours to get this far.

"Before," said the Raja, "I always walked to Tip in four hours," and he shook his head and spat *sirih* juice out on to a large broad leaf, making it turn red like a begonia.

We stood up stiffly and started off. Jusup and the porters were dangling along in the rear. I could hear their talking and laughing coming along now.

So far there had been very few birds. Nearer Waigama I had seen a pair of megapodes sitting in a high bush which looked very unnatural for such ground-haunting birds. Then we had passed one of their mounds made in the jungle. In contrast to the megapode of the

Solomons, which simply digs a hole in the sand, the New Guinea species builds large mounds of leaves and decaying vegetation in which the necessary heat is provided by fermentation.

The only sounds in the jungle here were produced by two species of birds which I came later to know very well. These two sounds are the most characteristic noises of the New Guinea lowland forest, along with the loud whooping call of one of the birds of paradise which is absent from Misool. The softer of the two was the insistent "tock-tock-tock" call of a big stolid kingfisher which sits in the tops of the tallest trees and never goes near the water. The louder noise was the occasional "swish-swish" as a pair of hornbills took wing from overhead and went off grunting hoarsely to each other. These hornbills are about as big as a Rhode Island Red hen, with long stout wings. The flight feathers on the ends of the wings are broad and stout with spaces between them so that in flight the air rushes through these feathers, making them vibrate and sending out the rather harsh swishing noise. On the end of a long scraggy neck there is a large gaunt head with startling china-blue eyes fringed with gummy-looking artificial eyelashes. But most arresting of all, the bird has an enormous bill sometimes nearly a foot long, whitish, with wrinkled corrugations on top. Local lore has it that the *boerong taun* adds a new wrinkle each year, thus showing his age. Young birds, however, are still free from wrinkles long after they are a year old.

About twelve o'clock as we were just clearing the last of the limestone ridges it began to rain. The rain fell quietly, steadily, impersonally. It just wet us all over. If you hold your head back so that it won't go down your neck, it goes down your front. It is always strange how

the last spot of dryness is cherished, with what reluctance the struggle is finally abandoned. There was a place on the small of my back where I kept hoping my sopping shirt wouldn't touch me. For a few yards I walked pigeon-chested, as if I were being held up by a gunman. Finally I took one step too fast, the shirt slopped against me, and now I was wet all over.

Suddenly we came out into an overgrown clearing. At least it seemed to be a clearing, as the tall trees had been cut. It was what the Arafuras hopefully call a garden. There was a small tumbledown shack leaning on itself beside the trail. I sat down on the matting floor while the Raja, putting on a hood of palm leaf which he found in the hut, went out into the downpour again. I watched him nose about among the shrubbery for a time, evidently hoping that an odd fruit or two might have ripened since the last passer-by.

An Arafura garden is not in the least like a European garden. There is just this sort of opening in the jungle showing that the trees have been cut and burned over a few years before. Secondary growth, thick thorny bushes and nettles, then grows up to a height of perhaps twenty feet. At intervals there are trails. Look closely, however, and the products of the garden begin to appear. Here is a banana plant, half choked out by the rank growth around it. Its spindly stalk looks as if it would never support a bunch of fruit. Over there, almost underfoot, are some spiky pineapple leaves. Again a few undistinguished-looking weeds resolve themselves into sugar cane. Farther along there is a dead-seeming corrugated stem. Look up, and surprisingly it is surmounted by a tuft of the big broad leaves which mark it as a papaya. It wears a chokey collar of nubbins of immature green fruit.

This shack was evidently free to any passing villager

who might want to spend the night. Wood was stacked carefully under the eaves. The little raised fireplace was not long cold. Perhaps someone had spent last night here. Beside the fireplace was arranged a pile of sleeping mats. Outside, catching the drip of rain from the palm thatch roof, were a row of hollow bamboo tubes about three feet long in which water was stored and carried. There was even a drum, a long wooden one like those of the Besarese. I picked it up and tapped it, whereupon a thriving family of centipedes fell out of the open end and scuttled away under the matting.

The Raja came back dripping but triumphant, carrying three unpromising-looking pineapples and two stalks of sugar cane. As Jusup and the Arafuras were still dawdling along far behind, this would serve as our lunch. But that was no hardship. The fruit was delicious.

We waited a good half-hour and then went on, I raging that Jusup should keep us waiting so long. Fortunately the limestone was over now. We were back on a fairly good jungle trail.

"This is Tip country," said the Raja. "Those hills were the boundary, those holes by the trail we passed, they were put there by the Tip people with branches over them so that visitors would fall in and be killed."

Tip must have been the centre for the Arafura tribes in the old days. It is even on one of the English Admiralty maps, although no white man so far as I know has ever been there. Indeed in Java to-day I'll wager that less than two per cent of the white population have ever heard of Misool itself, or would know that it is in the Dutch East Indies. And of these two per cent it is also worth wagering that most of them would say that Misool was a wild place full of Arafuras who are cannibals and as savage as any tribe in the world.

Tip, when we came to it, proved to be a small area of cleared ground on the edge of a river bank consisting of one large house about twenty by forty feet, a smaller cook-house, and a tiny shed. That was the entire village; and, as for the inhabitants, we were greeted on our arrival by two frail, shaking men, withered and gnarled with age, a wrinkled old crone, and a young girl. The old men were very thin and shrunken. One of them had a great wen or swelling on the side of his forehead like a Japanese djinn. They bowed and scraped to the Raja although I feared that the effort would be almost too much for them.

I asked the Raja where we would stay. He motioned to the big house. Climbing up a ladder of four rungs, I stooped down and entered the little doorway. The house was made of split bamboos, crudely woven together for support and lashed with rattan to a rickety system of poles, uprights, and crosspieces. The floor was raised about three feet above the ground. When I walked across it, everything dipped and bent in all directions.

All about the walls were little fireplaces, boxes of ashes set into the floor. Above them was piled split kindling wood, and from the slanting roof beams were hanging racks containing supplies of one sort or another. No provision had been made for the smoke to escape. As a result it just hung about under the roof and darkened the supplies of baskets, arrows, bows, coils of rattan, and pig and crocodile jaw trophies which were hanging there. Highest up of all, very old and black, was a single skull. Altogether a rather unsavoury place, I thought, as I slumped down on the floor in the middle of the room and fell fast asleep.

Two hours later I woke up to find myself an object of great interest. The whole town was assembled, as well as

the porters and one or two new arrivals, presumably people who had been out in the gardens earlier. They were discussing me in no uncertain terms, I felt sure. Along with their small stature the Arafuras possess strange little tinkling voices. Where the Besarese tongue had sounded harsh and guttural, this aboriginal language was tuneful, high, and singing. A group of them talking together sounds like someone playing a set of slightly cracked musical glasses.

I sat up suddenly, wondering if I would scare them.

"Wah," said the old crone.

Jusup came in just then with such an opportune cup of boiling-hot tea that I had no heart to scold him.

It was getting dark outside as I clambered creakingly out of the house and hobbled down the steep bank of the river to bathe, armed with a towel, soap, dipper, and some fresh clothes. The stream was a big one forty feet wide, flowing along swiftly without the slightest suspicion of a sound to tell that it was there. Not a ripple broke the black surface. There were no rocks or rapids. Only the water flowed along quickly with the thick viscous look of hot oil.

Where the jungle had been silent under the rain, now it was throbbing with noise. All about rose the myriad screaming song of crickets and other insects which strike up their melodies every afternoon near sunset. Through the hellish din came the regular booming of a big fruit pigeon which I could see silhouetted against the crimson sky on the highest branch of a huge tree across the river. The call was very different from that of the fruit pigeons on Kamwa. By now I was beginning to become used to New Guinea birds. "I'll bet that's *Ducula pinon*," I thought to myself, just as a year before I might have said, "I'll bet that's a chestnut-sided warbler."

I waded in ankle-deep and stood there throwing water over myself. The water was surprisingly cold. It stung on the raw spot above my heel. I wanted to sit down and get it all over me, but perhaps the sight of the trophies in the house above had reminded me of Harry's story of a week or so before. Harry had had a Papuan boy once who had gone bathing, squatting in the water in just such a river when a crocodile coming up behind had seized him by the buttocks and carried him off into deep water. Only the fellow's presence of mind had saved him. He had reached around and stuck his fingers into the crocodile's eyes and it had let go. I seem to have an unfortunate facility for remembering grisly stories like these at just the wrong moments.

In the meantime one or two of the Tip people had appeared at the edge of the bank high above, to gaze down wonderingly at the strange spectacle of someone actually bathing in the river. I always hoped that some of them would take a hint from myself or Jusup or the Raja, for charming as the Arafuras are, they have one bad failing. They dislike intensely the idea of baths of any sort. They might be out in the rain as on the trip up from Waigama, or they might fall into the river by mistake, but both these accidents are poor substitutes for a thorough scrubbing. However, all things considered, I sometimes wonder which came first, soap or a sense of cleanliness.

Refreshed and soothed I climbed up the bank and back into the house, to find my canvas cot set up in the middle of the floor with the mosquito net over it like a cloud. Inside it was pitch dark. I had to use a flashlight to avoid stepping into the worn-out spots in the floor. Jusup had prepared a good supper of soup, rice, tinned peas, tea, toast, and tinned peaches. My gasoline pressure

lamp hung from a thong, illumining the whole interior of the house. Around the walls sat the little Arafuras grinning and blinking in the light, tending their fires, eating bits of boiled sago, and chattering along in their musical voices. On a neat white mattress the Raja sat apart, crisp and neat in a fresh Madras print sarong and white jacket. Instead of his orchid hat he now wore a small turban also of cotton print. Before he turned to his bowl of rice seasoned with peppers, he moved himself to face Mecca and went through some small private devotions. Later he and Jusup had a very chatty dinner together, both sitting cross-legged on their bedding rolls.

Sleep was difficult that night. The Arafuras are like animals in the sense that they sleep for limited periods only. They drop off for a few minutes, only to wake again and continue whatever they were saying in their drowsy tinkling voices. People kept getting up to go outside. Others were constantly lighting their fires. The chinks in the floor were useful for frequent and noisy expectorations of *sirih*, or betel juice, which made everybody, even the Raja, look as if they used lipstick. At intervals the semi-quiet would be punctuated with a dog fight. Each time this happened, everyone had to shout to the dogs. This only excited the animals to further efforts until at last someone had the good sense to throw something which terminated the whole discussion with a last series of shrill yips.

Early the next morning just at dawn the whole village was up and off to work. There were preliminary stirrings at about three which increased in intensity until by dawn the last inhabitants were pretty well up and out. It was an arrangement which would have obviated the necessity of an alarm clock for the heartiest sleeper. Jusup brought in my coffee promptly and I dressed quickly. When it

came to the boots, however, I changed my mind. My left heel was in a shocking condition of suppuration. It looked as if this was going to be a first-rate Solomon sore, as such things are called. I gave the Raja my third gun and asked him to go out for me. He seemed pleased and soon departed with Jusup. Meanwhile I began to douse my foot with potassium permanganate and hope for the best.

Most of the porters seemed to belong to Tip. They had all departed about their business except for one very elegant chap whom I nicknamed "the little dandy." He was a great deal neater than the others and he seemed to take more pride in his personal possessions, his bow of shining ironwood, and his well-made four-foot-long bird arrows. I hobbled outside in bedroom-slippers and sat on a stump, hoping that some birds might come near. The little dandy waited too, I soon heard him murmur, and looking where he pointed saw a small honey-eater in a hibiscus bush. It was too near for the gun. I motioned at the bow and arrows. Proudly then he stood up and let fly. The bird was exceedingly tame. After four misses he finally secured it, he a primitive man from the back of beyond who had to live by his skill in woodcraft. I began to wonder if James Fenimore Cooper's Indian heroes really could "cleave to the mark" every time.

Soon the Raja came in with two birds, a black lory, or small parrot, and a lesser bird of paradise. This was my first bird of paradise, and a magnificent sight it was, a brownish bird with a bright yellow head, about the size of a pigeon but made to look much larger by the long trailing plumes of brilliant yellow extending out from under the wings. I had heard their persistent calls everywhere and once had glimpsed a flutter of yellow high up. Their note is very loud, a ringing *ong-ong-ong* which echoes through the forest.

In 1598 John van Linschoten, writing of these distinctive New Guinea birds which had arrived in Europe from China for the first time, called them *Avis paradiseus*. Traders reported that they lived in the air, always turning towards the sun, and never alighting on the earth till they die. They also said that the female laid her eggs in a hole in the male's back, and that the birds drank dew as it fell. All of this charming folklore was derived from the method of native preservation of skins, which consisted of cutting off the wings and feet, removing the skull and body and drying the skin over a fire on a stick. The result is to accentuate the plumage, leaving the rest of the body so shrunken and distorted that it is difficult to get any idea of what the bird really looks like. Charles Allen secured one specimen of this Misool bird, and Wallace, writing of it, noted that it was "finer" than the species on the mainland. Kuehn missed this bird as it is absent from the coast.

Many months later Dr. Mayr and Rodolphe de Schauensee, studying the pair of specimens that Jusup and I had prepared, found that the Misool birds are indeed "finer," so much so and so different in fact that they evidently belong to a brand-new race which my two friends appropriately named *pulchra*, beautiful.

As I sat outside the house preparing these birds a small but attentive circle of watchers formed. There was the little dandy and an old, old man, who I decided must be his grandfather or great-uncle, who always sat or stood slightly behind him and to the left. He was a sort of Greek chorus. Whenever the little dandy opened his mouth, perhaps to speak to me in broken Malay, or in Arafura to the others, the Greek chorus would favour me with a toothless smile and repeat the words exactly. He had a wondering expression and he seemed to be

came to the boots, however, I changed my mind. My left heel was in a shocking condition of suppuration. It looked as if this was going to be a first-rate Solomon sore, as such things are called. I gave the Raja my third gun and asked him to go out for me. He seemed pleased and soon departed with Jusup. Meanwhile I began to douse my foot with potassium permanganate and hope for the best.

Most of the porters seemed to belong to Tip. They had all departed about their business except for one very elegant chap whom I nicknamed "the little dandy." He was a great deal neater than the others and he seemed to take more pride in his personal possessions, his bow of shining ironwood, and his well-made four-foot-long bird arrows. I hobbled outside in bedroom-slippers and sat on a stump, hoping that some birds might come near. The little dandy waited too, I soon heard him murmur, and looking where he pointed saw a small honey-eater in a hibiscus bush. It was too near for the gun. I motioned at the bow and arrows. Proudly then he stood up and let fly. The bird was exceedingly tame. After four misses he finally secured it, he a primitive man from the back of beyond who had to live by his skill in woodcraft. I began to wonder if James Fenimore Cooper's Indian heroes really could "cleave to the mark" every time.

Soon the Raja came in with two birds, a black lory, or small parrot, and a lesser bird of paradise. This was my first bird of paradise, and a magnificent sight it was, a brownish bird with a bright yellow head, about the size of a pigeon but made to look much larger by the long trailing plumes of brilliant yellow extending out from under the wings. I had heard their persistent calls everywhere and once had glimpsed, a flutter of yellow high up. Their note is very loud, a ringing *ong-ong-ong* which echoes through the forest.

In 1598 John van Linschoten, writing of these distinctive New Guinea birds which had arrived in Europe from China for the first time, called them *Avis paradiseus*. Traders reported that they lived in the air, always turning towards the sun, and never alighting on the earth till they die. They also said that the female laid her eggs in a hole in the male's back, and that the birds drank dew as it fell. All of this charming folklore was derived from the method of native preservation of skins, which consisted of cutting off the wings and feet, removing the skull and body and drying the skin over a fire on a stick. The result is to accentuate the plumage, leaving the rest of the body so shrunken and distorted that it is difficult to get any idea of what the bird really looks like. Charles Allen secured one specimen of this Misool bird, and Wallace, writing of it, noted that it was "finer" than the species on the mainland. Kuehn missed this bird as it is absent from the coast.

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saying, "Gosh, fellow, how did you ever think of that remark!"

Of the others, Tobol was a regular member. He was quite young with a pleasant enough face, but he had some sort of skin disease which made large patches of him a rather startling pink colour with crisp peeling edges. He would prop himself against the house to watch me for a while until the effort of concentration became too much and he fell into a light doze. Usually there were two or three elderly ladies watching, and a small boy who had carried the Raja's suitcase on the way up and who prepared his rice.

Whenever I finished with the body of one of the birds there would be much excitement. They would all gather closer until I had handed it to one of them, upon which with many exclamations, all echoed by the Greek chorus, it was borne off on the instant to be cooked over a fire and eaten.

Jusup didn't come back until almost four o'clock and then with only one bird, a large bluish cockatoo with an enormous bill and bright red cheeks. He seemed to be very upset and when I upbraided him for not getting more birds he confessed that his eyes were going back on him. This was a fine how-de-do. Obviously Jusup was a great help; he skinned well, and he cooked in a satisfactory way. What then was to be done? Evidently the shooting was up to me. But my foot interfered with that. There seemed to be nothing for it but to make the best of things at present, and to attempt to find a shooting boy when we returned to Sorong. If I could find a boy to shoot all the time, to balance Jusup, while I myself combined shooting and skinning, that would be the ideal combination.

In the meantime the Raja and Jusup toiled through

the jungle as best they could. By the second day I could hobble out a short distance from camp myself, but I did not like the look of my foot, which now had a deep greenish-purple crater in the back of it.

During the interval between tea and supper, when skinning and note-writing were over for a time, I practised my Malay on the Raja. One subject about which I was very curious was the fact that by now I had seen nearly a hundred Arafuras and only three children. The Raja nodded his head solemnly.

"The law of the Arafuras is very hard," he said. "There are only a few people and yet they still have many different family clans. There are strict rules about inter-marriage among these clans. As a result sometimes a child must marry a very old man, or the other way around."

"What will come of this?"

"I think they will all die out," the Raja nodded again. "That is a disaster, *chelaka*. I like these people even though they will not work for me. They are independent and rich."

"Rich?"

"Yes, they have many plates buried here," and the Raja went on to tell me about the plates of the Arafuras.

Apparently the Chinese had arrived in these islands to trade about the time of the Ming dynasty. Porcelain was cheap then and they had brought quantities to trade for native products, birds of paradise, gum copal, or dammar, a kind of resin, and sago. The Ming plates were treasured by the Arafuras and handed down from generation to generation as part of the marriage dowries.

But then about twenty years ago, the Raja explained, one of the contemporary Chinese traders on Misool saw a plate, recognized its value, and told all the Arafuras

that he would accept plates as payment for outstanding debts at his store. The Raja flung up his hands.

"*Chelaka* for the Arafuras. No more plates, no more money, no more weddings."

Then a very surprising thing happened. The Raja smiled and his face became, if possible, a trifle sentimental. The local magistrate at the time heard what was going on, reported to Batavia, Java, and in due course the Queen's Government of the Netherlands East Indies, wonderful to relate, passed a decree appropriating money to buy back all the plates for the Arafuras. Thus the wealth of the little people was saved and the fabled Ming plates returned once more to their secret hiding-places in the hills.

"The only trouble is," said the Raja, looking puzzled, "Government says that they cannot sell the plates any more. So although they have all this wealth in plates, they are still very poor really," and he looked questioningly at me. My Malay was still too poor, however, to take up the task of explaining European logic to the Raja of Misool.

After a week my foot was well enough to go into a boot again. Under the bandage I could feel a hole where the fungus which attacks wounds in the tropics had been. But now we had nearly run out of food, and in any case the *Chiva* must be getting impatient. We had only planned on a week. I hated to leave Tip with less than forty specimens to show for the first inland collecting on the island, but there seemed to be no alternative. I despatched one man on ahead with a note about our imminent arrival written on toilet paper attached to a cleft stick, and early the next morning we started off.

A few hours after leaving Tip on another trail, the path came out on an unexpected open stretch of plain

covered with short stubby grass, clumps of Venus's-flytrap plants, and small groves of eucalyptus trees. Little ponds were dotted about. On one of them there was a small grebe sitting quietly like a powderpuff. I took a chance shot and got it. It floated there far out. Jusup shook his head and the Raja. The Arafuras certainly would not go near the water. I took off all my clothes except my dungarees and swam out. It was deliciously cool after the hot walk. I was swimming back comfortably, doing a sort of breast-stroke and feeling like a big floppy retriever dog, when the horrid thought crossed my mind that my only watch was still *in situ*. On inspection it proved to be ruined, with the result that for the remaining eight months of my stay in New Guinea I had to fall in with Jusup's ideas of time. No more could I shout at him, "Here it is half-past one and where's lunch!"

After leaving the plain, the final stretch of jungle down to the coast seemed easy by comparison with the way up. A last stretch of swamp, of mud up to the knees, and there was the shore and the sea again.

A bath and a final cup of tea at the Raja's, and we were rowing out to the schooner once more. The pier was crowded with languid people, the Raja waved as before, and in the background we could just make out one or two small dark figures. Now it all seemed pleasant and familiar, not half so dank and uninviting as when we had arrived. Charis and Harry were happily discussing her success with her measurements, Fred was planning about getting some more fuel oil in Sorong, but I was looking back. I felt sad at the thought of leaving Misool and unfinished business. I felt sad also at the thought of leaving the little Arafuras, the little dandy, Tobol, Gnok, the Greek chorus, and all the rest. They are a friendly and endearing people. There is something about

the fact that they are a dying race which makes them seem infinitely pathetic. Granted, of course, their lack of fondness for baths, their laziness, their wakefulness, they have a certain charm.

And yet they are a dying race. Some day the Arafuras will be extinct and Tip and the gardens will be jungle again, and the buried Ming plates will disappear for ever. The last Arafura will have gone from the face of Misool and the tinkling voices will be stilled. *Chelaka* indeed.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TUAN DOKTOR BOERONG

IN that far-away time when I had studied the birds of New Guinea, there was one island above all others which had seemed inviting to an ornithologist. Biak is a fairly large island sixty-five miles long by twenty broad, lying like a keystone across the mouth of the great bay on which Manokwari is situated. Most New Guinea birds do not migrate. Thus Biak, although only seventy miles from the shores of the bay, was known to have many species and subspecies of birds differing radically from their nearest relatives on the mainland. The birds have been known to science since the late eighties, but few collectors have been there, and their work has been for the most part hurried and scanty.

Fred, Charis, and I had had many discussions about how to budget our time, for it had been agreed that the *Chiva* must leave New Guinea in January as there was no way to paint her hull in Sorong. There are no shipyards, and the tide is too slight to beach a boat with an eight-foot draught. All the small local boats either did not care about teredos, the marine boring worms, or else they had copper-sheeted bottoms. We decided, therefore, to go back along the coast to Bjak, drop me off there for three weeks while the *Chiva* cruised about Geelvink Bay, and then return to Sorong for Christmas.

Another factor sped us on our trip from Misool up to

Sorong. Charlie complained of a pain in his side. Appendicitis is the ugly vision of every long boat trip. We decided to take no chances and in two days were back in Sorong. Our friend the Chinese doctor diagnosed it as a stomach-ache which we felt instinctively was not very sound advice. In the meantime Fred had an inspiration. Two hundred miles to the south-east of Sorong lies Babo, a swamp ten years ago, now an up-to-date outpost of commercial enterprise, the base town for the oil company which is prospecting in Dutch New Guinea. Every month when the mail boat arrived in Sorong, Mr. Meininger, pilot for the company, flew up to meet the boat and deliver mail and parcels. Would he come a little early this time, for the boat was almost due?

Yes indeed, the cordial wireless answer came back, Mr. Meininger would be delighted; and so in a matter of hours Charlie was on his way down to Babo and a trained surgeon. A day later he became the second member of our crew to lose his appendix.

In the meantime we were busy in Sorong. I consulted with Mr. van der Goot about a shooting boy. Did he know of a keen, reliable hunter?

"There is an old man, Sin Hadji, living just across on the mainland from here," van der Goot replied. "He has a son, Saban, who used to shoot fruit bats for the Chinese; they love to eat them, you know. Sin Hadji is a descendant of one of the Prime Ministers who used to control the tribes under the old Rajas and collect tribute for them. I know Saban would like the job, and besides his mother was of the Biak people and so he speaks the language and might have some small authority there."

After a time Saban appeared, a tall dark boy dressed in his best, a suit made out of striped pyjama cloth, and a black velvet Mohammedan hat, only partly concealing

the great thatch of Papuan hair inherited from his mother. He seemed eager to go, especially when van der Goot explained that the salary would be all of ten guilders a month (\$5.50).

"Very well," I said, "but we must test him first."

Jusup was detailed to take him off for the rest of the day to see what they could bag between them.

My day was spent preparing for the trip. Supplies must be bought at Ong Tjoean's store. Biak would have no shops. The people themselves have little enough to eat. I bought a hundred-pound bag of rice, two wooden boxes containing about sixty cans of food, meat, vegetables, fruit, ten gallons of kerosene and five of gasoline for our lamps, salt and tobacco to give as presents to the coolies that I might use, and one or two small knives to give to any of the headmen along the way. All of this, together with my canvas tent fly, guns, ammunition, and my large wooden bird-box, had to be stowed so that it could be readily unloaded at Biak, and yet would still be safe in case we had blowy weather along the way.

Like my bird-skinning board, my bird-box was an object of contempt and irritation to poor George. I had had it made in Rabaul. It had four trays in it for bird skins, and light sides of mosquito netting to keep out bluebottle flies whose maggots would otherwise destroy the skins. There was a canvas cover to go over it, and handles on the sides, and the whole thing could be lashed onto the deck housing forward by the foremast. Of course it was bulky and heavy, but it more than made up for its inconvenience by saving many a skin from an otherwise unfortunate end. This fact, along with, I suppose, my presence on the boat, George could never rationalize in his mind. The important thing to him was the boat of which he thought so much. But of the meaning or pur-

pose of this trip he apparently took little notice. And so the bird-box was always greeted with scowls and gnashing of teeth.

Late that afternoon I saw a prau coming in towards the schooner from the mainland. Amidships sat Jusup and Saban proudly waving nine large birds—herons, ducks, hawks, and a cormorant. The day closed in a torrent of bird-skinning.

Early the following morning we were off with a good breeze towards the north coast and Biak, Harry and the van der Goots waving their good-byes from the jetty at the back of Ong Tjoean's store where we had anchored. Lacking one crew member, we made good use of Jusup, who stood his turn at the wheel in Charlie's place.

Off the Tamrau Mountains there is a promontory, the most northerly in New Guinea, called the Cape of Good Hope. The fresh morning breeze had died down. It was hot and airless. Two little islands swam in a pulsating haze on the horizon looking as if they were floating about quite independent of the sea. The Diesel chugged and puffed and blew smoke in our faces. I went up and sat on the bowsprit and looked for porpoises. Suddenly Saban, crouched behind me, reached out a skinny finger and pointed.

"Tuan. *Boerong!*"

"Where?"

"Over there."

I looked more closely. For a moment I could hardly believe my eyes. It seemed as if perhaps we were all back again in the pale cold stretches on the Inland Waterway. Only it was hot where it had been freezing cold, and a black half-naked boy was leaning over the side pointing. But there were the same little phalaropes, no bigger than thrushes, sitting in a flock on the water, dipping and

nodding and paddling along with their miniature webbed feet. These birds were the same species, the northern phalarope, that I had seen in Albemarle Sound, but presumably they breed in Siberia whereas the others summer in far-northern Canada. It didn't really matter though. The effect was quite as cheering as if they had come straight from home.

"Those birds come from the north, from my country," I said to Saban. "Every year they fly north, make their nests, and then come back here."

Saban's expression did not change. He still looked at me politely. But a sort of filmy haze settled down over his eyes. I realized that there was no point in going on with the conversation. Maybe after he had done a little travelling he would become receptive to such startling facts as bird migration.

Two days later and by dawn we had come to Biak. There ahead, reaching out of a silky sea, was a high range of tumbled green hills. To the south was Jobi, another big island deeper in the bay, darker and greener and topped with clouds. For the rest there was nothing, an emptiness, except that the sea stirred a little from below as if far down in the depths the water was boiling.

And what would this Biak be like? It is surprising how little was known of it even in Sorong. I had read the account of a German collector, A. B. Meyer, who had landed at Korrido, the small town where we were bound, in 1873. He describes how he had been forced to stay near the town because the people were in constant fear of head-hunters from over the hills. Then, too, the villagers were bumptious and rough, and altogether he had been glad to get away. Mr. Kamma, the missionary in Sorong, had mentioned that a classmate of his was on Biak, a Mr. ten Haaft. He remembered being told by

His friend that no white man had been killed on Biak since 1919. But this type of information was not calculated to tell me how much food I should take, or whether there was going to be a *pasangrahan* to live in. Those were the things that seemed more important where bird collecting was concerned.

The hills drew nearer. After breakfast I could make out a large cleared area at the base of the hills, with a few houses huddled under a cluster of palms. An arm of land cased in a low forest of mangroves appeared and moved slowly past and we were in a bay facing Korrido, the high palms, the houses, smoke curling from their roofs, and a single shaky pier which jutted out towards us. The people of Korrido packed every available inch of the pier, come to stare at the strange schooner. Spying a single white figure at the wharf stairs, Fred and I rowed ashore to see if perhaps this was Mr. ten Haaft. And so it proved to be. He was a cheerful, rosy-faced young man, heavily built and solid, a great contrast to his rather ascetic classmate in Sorong.

Way was made for us at imminent danger of everyone's being precipitated from the wharf, and we proceeded to his house.

Korrido is a small place at best, twoscore palm-thatched houses built out over the shallow waters of the bay looking like Wallace's description of the New Guinea of 1858. The head-hunters from over the hills have not disappeared so long ago as to cause the trading and fisher folk of Korrido to give up their ancestral habit of living over the water as a protection against raids. On the shore under the palms and clustered about a small clear river which here enters the sea are a few more houses, the home of the native magistrate, the combined church and school, the Chinaman's house, and finally a framework

which I was told was to be the *pasangrahan* some day. We proceeded along a neat path lined with crotons and straggling hibiscus, through the cleared area which I now saw to be fields laid out for the missionary's cows, and on to ten Haaft's house, a rather oldish, ramshackle frame affair on the slope. We sat on the porch and our host suggested coffee.

Above and behind us towered the jungle, sweeping up in rippling folds to the hills we had seen from the boat. Mrs. ten Haaft came out, equally jolly and cheerful, but our conversation was limited because she didn't speak English. Then came three rolypoly children, and after the introduction the inevitable coffee essence was served.

People who go to the East Indies should be warned of this, for it is highly concentrated. A couple of table-spoonfuls in the bottom of a cup and then hot milk for the rest, is the method. Fred once drank two cups filled to the brim with essence as he would fill it at home, and could hardly sleep for twenty-four hours afterwards.

After some talk it was finally settled that ten Haaft would let me have the spare room in the house of his *guru*, or native teacher. This proved to be a nice enough place with a bed, tables, and chair, and broad windows opening out on the cow pasture. The *guru* and his wife, a delicate, shy-looking couple, Malays from Amboina, received me and my baggage somewhat timidly, but did everything in their power to make me comfortable.

Just as the last of my belongings from the *Chiva* was being installed, and the *guru* and his wife were settling down a bit, there came two violent explosions from behind the house. The missionary jumped, the *guru* turned pale beneath his tan. We all hurried around to the back, to find Jusup grinning broadly, a smoking shotgun in one hand, while with the other he held a pair of greenish-

black tree-starlings with long trailing tails. Here above all was a treasure. There were probably not above six specimens in all the museums of the United States. But my musings were cut short by ten Haaft.

"They were nesting on the roof," he remarked.

We turned to look. In one place a small tornado seemed to have hit the thatch.

Jusup's smile vanished and he began to shift from one foot to the other.

"It's really only a very small hole," he pleaded.

"Well, I'm counting on you to repair it," I said as grimly as I could. "Or no, better still, Tuan ten Haaft will have it repaired, the cost to come out of your salary."

This was a blow. Poor Jusup's expression was bewildered and hurt. But something must be done about our equally troubled hosts.

"I don't think we will have any more shooting of holes in your roof," I promised.

It was no later than that evening, however, that my promise was rudely shattered, and by ten Haaft himself.

Everything for our stay had been brought ashore, and at last the *Chiva* had puffed out of the harbour into a great burst of purplish red and gold sunset. After our first supper in the *guru's* house, Jusup and I settled down to an hour or two over our specimens of the day.

Suddenly there was a panting outside and running footsteps. Into the lamplight burst a small Papuan boy neatly dressed in cotton shirt and drawers.

"Tuan, Tuan, come quickly. There is a big snake at Tuan ten Haaft's house."

Our flashlights lighted up scurrying insects in the path as we sped towards the missionary's house.

He was waiting for us at the door of a small building behind the house.

"I'm glad you came in a hurry. I think it's still here."

"Exactly what is it?" I questioned.

"A python," was the reply, as he turned into the shed, waving his flashlight in front of him.

High up above the rafters, among the thatch, there was a black space which seemed to be a hole in the roof. Below on perches the white forms of the chickens were huddled together, clucking softly. With a start I realized that the space was moving; the black patch of darkness seemed to be shifting against the surface of the thatch. There was a light crackling noise as the thing moved.

"I hope you brought some large shot," said ten Haaft.

For answer, I raised my gun and fired a full charge of buckshot into the blackness. There was a frightful thrashing and the thatch seemed to heave and sway. A huge twisting shape appeared in the light and swung down into space. With a sinewy sort of thump the python landed on the floor, while simultaneously the chickens fled in all directions, shrieking and squawking, rushing past us with wildly flapping wings as they swooped out into the night. The python seemed to be quite dead, although it writhed spasmodically in the manner of dead snakes everywhere.

"That's been getting a lot of my chickens," said ten Haaft. "I'm glad to have you shoot it. I thank you for your kindness."

I looked at Jusup. "I'm afraid it's a little too big to put in alcohol," I said grinning, and Jusup grinned back. "We will leave it for you and your mission boys, Mr. ten Haaft."

"They will probably eat it," he smiled.

We measured the snake. It was a small one, as pythons go, only eleven and a half feet long. A few minutes later

ten Haaft's boys had strung it to a pole and were bearing it away to their cookhouse in triumph.

Jusup and I walked slowly back to the *guru's* house through the darkness. On the way we passed a huge kapok tree, the kind whose seeds are used in the production of artificial cotton. The limbs of the kapok stand out at right angles to the trunk, neatly spaced in a rather artificial way. As we drew nearer I heard a sudden low sighing noise.

"What is that?" I whispered to Jusup.

"That is the ghost bird, Tuan," came the whisper back.

Flashing my light upwards into the tree, the beam caught on what looked like an enormous owl, sitting high up on one of the horizontal branches. But no, the shape was wrong, for it was sitting, not straight up vertically, but down low and flat. Also there was a long swallow-tail stretching out behind. Slowly one of the giant red eyes closed as if to wink at us, and then it made a snapping noise with its bill, which looked, in this light, quite six inches wide. Jusup held the light while I collected the bird. It was a giant frogmouth, an appropriately named relative of our whippoorwill, which looked as if it could hold several frogs in its bill at the same time.

And so our first day on Biak was not entirely unsuccessful.

By the third or fourth day of hunting, I began to wonder why we had seen no crowned pigeons. On Biak and nearby Jobi there is a subspecies of this, the largest pigeon in the world. It is a noble grey bird with an enormous lacy crest running fore and aft over its head, nodding and dancing as it walks. Biak and Jobi birds were described by an English zoologist as differing from those on the mainland principally in shades of colour

and in having the tips of the crest feathers ornamented with small white spots. The year being 1844, this race was properly called after the beautiful young Queen, Victoria.

Jusup suggested that the best way to find these birds would be to go out with the pig hunter and his dogs.

"Jau Kurano, the head man, tells me he sees pigeons on the ground low near the shore in the early morning."

"Good. When is he going hunting again?"

"To-morrow, early in the morning, Tuan."

The morrow dawned chill and misty. In the half-light things looked cool and wet and unattractive. Maybe Jau Kurano had forgotten. I was comforting myself with this thought when I heard a yapping down near the village. Now it was louder. They were coming.

I leaped out of bed, rushed back through the house to the godown where there was a bath-house, threw cold water over myself till I thought I would choke, rushed back to my room, and started piling on clothes, flannel shirt, dungarees, boots.

Jusup came in with coffee, tinned fruit, and toast. The yapping was now a shrill chorus outside the window. I looked out. There were about twelve dogs, big, rangy fellows, well-fed and husky compared to the curs that slunk round the beach under the houses at low tide.

Jau Kurano, the *Kapala* of the village, and three companions stood there, pig spears in hand, waiting a bit impatiently for the sleepy Tuan. One was a very small man in a G-string, with a withered arm and an allover case of ringworm. The others were more dressy, in cotton drawers and singlets.

I gulped the food while Jusup busied himself with the guns. Outside the mist was beginning to burn off the tree-tops. The hills stood out now in a glimmer of sun-

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I leaped out of bed, rushed back through the house to the godown where there was a bath-house, threw cold water over myself till I thought I would choke, rushed back to my room, and started piling on clothes, flannel shirt, dungarees, boots.

Jusup came in with coffee, tinned fruit, and toast. The yapping was now a shrill chorus outside the window. I looked out. There were about twelve dogs, big, rangy fellows, well-fed and husky compared to the curs that slunk round the beach under the houses at low tide.

Jau Kurano, the *Kapala* of the village, and three companions stood there, pig spears in hand, waiting a bit impatiently for the sleepy Tuan. One was a very small man in a G-string, with a withered arm and an all-over case of ringworm. The others were more dressy, in cotton drawers and singlets.

I gulped the food while Jusup busied himself with the guns. Outside the mist was beginning to burn off the tree-tops. The hills stood out now in a glimmer of sun-

light. Far overhead a line of green and red parrots called hoarsely as they swung by from their roosting-tree to the feeding-grounds. A wintering golden plover, invisible in the cow pasture, whistled once, twice. It was time to be off.

I hurried down the steps and out on to the short grass, and we started off, Jau Kurano taking the lead along the path towards the jungle. The dogs, leashed for the moment, swept about the feet of the hunters in a great fawning gambolling mass.

Now we were across the open field and faced with the towering wall of the jungle. It is like diving into the water, this jungle. You plunge in, almost with an effort, to be enveloped all over in greenness. As the sun rose higher the green light became brighter. Shafts of light slanted down at intervals, striking the leaves, the vines, and the dull red-brown trunks of the great gum trees. Other trees shone like sycamores, grey-green with yellow patches; still others were black with rows of knobby thorns. Forest palms reared their heads on every side, and the glossy spiked leaves of the pandanus bent down in clusters like small green waterfalls.

The dogs had separated now and were running silently through the forest on each side, hunting. There was no noise but the sush of our feet, some shod, some bare, through the inch or so of mud track that stretched ahead.

Suddenly, off to our right, came a single shrill yipping bark, followed by a swelling chorus.

"*Babi, babi,*" Jau Kurano shouted and was off through the underbrush, followed by his men and Jusup and Saban. I ran after them, hastily loading buckshot into my 12-bore, but they were too fast for me and I could only hear the shouts coming from far ahead and the wild barking of the dogs. I laboured on as best I could,

running at about half-speed through tangles of vine, projecting roots, alternate pools of mud and dry land covered with a thin green slime on which I skidded and floundered.

The shouting grew louder and the barking more frenzied and excited. I came through a final thicket. There ahead was a solid ring of dogs. They were moving slowly, intent on something in their midst. As I came near, the dogs drew back for a moment and I saw that they were worrying a small boar. It was just a dark spot in the centre of a cluster of black and white bodies and waving tails. There was a frantic chorus of howls and now I could hear the boar squealing with rage as the dogs pricked his flanks. Out of the corner of my eye I could see the hunters closing in. Beside me, suddenly, there was a quick grunt, like a man chopping with an axe, and at that moment a spear whistled through the air and landed in the side of the boar twenty feet away. The boar was done, and the dogs swarmed over him. But before they could tear him to pieces Jau Kurano, who had thrown the spear, was among them, fighting them off with a short stick which I had noticed him carrying. As he did so, one of the others lifted up the dead pig, high out of the reach of the swarming pack. Many were the exclamations of pleasure as we all stood around, weighing and appraising the first kill.

"That is good luck," panted Jusup, in my ear. "A first kill is always good luck."

Jau Kurano slung the pig up to a tree branch with a rattan vine which he had split off with his knife, and we went on, the men smiling now and talking about the kill.

Rattan is most convenient as it grows everywhere in the jungle. It is a long snake-like vine, rather bare of

leaves, about the thickness of the little finger. It can be split easily and almost indefinitely down to a size not much greater than that of heavy wrapping cord. Then it is easily lashed and tied into any desired shape or serviceable binding. I noticed that whenever we came to a place in the jungle where there was much of this rattan growing, one or other of the people would usually cut a length of it, thirty or more feet long, and twisting it into a coil would carry it slung from one shoulder like a bandolier to take home and hang up in the houses to dry. Dried, it made an even more serviceable binding that lasted far longer.

Walking on, we came to a long swampy area bordering the mangroves along the beach. From the mangroves the shore sweeps back, usually a hundred feet, or more, and gradually merges into the higher land of the jungle proper. In this particular area the whole interior of the jungle was like a quiet, stagnated backwater of the sea. Everywhere grew high trees and yet with a scattering of low mangrove bushes which twisted themselves about among the larger growth.

The unpleasant part about walking among mangroves is that their roots send up knees much like those of the southern cypress. The knees are in miniature, not more than six or eight inches high and concealed by the water. Walking through them is about as toe-stubbing a process as can be imagined.

Ten minutes later our halting progress was again broken by shrill yips and yelps from the dogs, far off in the distance. Two or three stumbles and plunges into the evil-smelling water underfoot and I was quite content to progress more slowly, waiting for the men who came back with crestfallen expressions to say that this one had been a false alarm.

On and on we went, until the mangroves ended and we came out on to higher ground. The trees grew gradually smaller. Finally there were nothing but fig trees, thin-leaved spindling saplings twenty or thirty feet high with bunches of small yellowish fruit growing out from their trunks. Underfoot was a pebbly river bed, dry except for occasional pools.

Everywhere were bamboo clumps, stubby saplings, vines, and low bushes. We began to hear numerous bird songs in contrast to the stillness of the high forest behind.

Jau Kurano called in his dogs close in order to beat the thickets. All at once there was a great burst of clapping wings and with much apparent effort a crowned pigeon flew out over the bushes ahead. As he circled around towards the high trees I brought him down, and at the noise at least three more flew up and off.

"Wah," shouted everybody as we clustered around the bird. Jau Kurano fingered his pig spear and smiled appreciatively at my gun.

He turned to Saban and asked something in the Biak language.

"Tuan Doktor Boerong," replied Saban proudly.

"What are you talking about?" I asked.

"Tuan," Saban said, "this man wants to know what title is given to such a hunter who can bring down a bird in the air. I said you were called Mr. Doctor Bird."

"Well, thank you very much. Tell him that I think he's a swell hunter too."

At this point the dogs again gave tongue, and again there was a great galloping and stumbling through, under and over trees and bushes until I felt like a foundered horse. I chased after them as best I could, but they were well ahead of me all the way.

Finally I came up to where Jau Kurano and one

Tomas stood in worried consultation. It turned out that the pig, having a good start on the dogs, had apparently made a bee-line for the limestone mountains, the dogs in hot pursuit. And now the question was how to get the dogs back. They might follow the pig for hours until they were thoroughly lost in the depths and intricate caves of the limestone ridges. Jau Kurano finally gave orders and two of the men went off in search of the dogs. The rest of us proceeded on, with only one dog that had stayed faithfully and come to heel when called. Jau Kurano later admitted that many dogs were lost through chasing the wily boars until they were completely worn out and unable to get home.

After more hunting, involving a search for an elusive white cockatoo who seemed to be trying to play hide-and-seek with us among the upper branches of a high tree, we returned to Korrido about noon. Our limbs were aching, our clothes dripping, but there were cool lemonades and a bath at the *guru's* house. A pause for lunch and then the routine of skinning the day's birds began. Each specimen, of which there were sixteen this morning, was weighed. Then its name and number were put down in duplicate in my notebooks. After that I noted any colours which might fade or be missing for the later examination in a museum, such as the colour of the eyes or bill or feet. Then I gave the bigger birds to Jusup and started in on the smaller specimens myself.

By this time a small ring of visitors had appeared and were watching us intently. Looking up, I saw that one, more bashful than the rest, was being pushed forward by his companions.

"Ja, what is it?" I asked.

The boy didn't speak, but simply opened his hand and there in his grimy palm was a very small bat. Bats were

always grist to my mill. I thanked him, gave him a cent, and announced that I would be very pleased to give ten cents for one of the large fruit bats, the flying foxes so-called.

He went away smiling and nodding, assuring me that in point of fact the flying fox was practically in my alcohol jar right now. As this happened nearly every day I knew that to-morrow he would appear with the inevitable tiny brown house-bat again.

As we worked I turned to Jusup.

"Why did Saban make up that name Tuan Doktor Boerong?"

"Tuan, it is very important here to have a name like that." Jusup looked serious.

"You mean a name to tell people what I do?"

"Yes, Tuan. That last white man who was killed here in 1919, he made a big mistake. He could not speak much Malay and he did not tell the people what he was doing."

"What did he do?"

"He was collecting butterflies, Tuan. He went into a village along the coast one day and the people saw him running around waving his net in the air. Then they saw him stop and tap little pieces of rock with a hammer. So then they knew he was crazy.

"After a while he sat down on a stone and he was hot and thirsty. He wanted to ask for a coconut, a *klapa*, to drink. But when he asked he said *kapala*, head, instead of *klapa*. When they did not understand, he made motions of cutting it off and drinking from it. And so then of course they knew that he was not only crazy but dangerous. He must want to murder somebody, cut their head off, and drink their blood. So before he could hurt anyone, they killed him."

"What happened then?"

"Oh, then they were afraid. They put the body in a canoe, but unfortunately the magistrate's boat sighted it and picked up the remains, and a lot of them went to jail."

I pondered this awhile.

"So then, Jusup, you mean that this name of mine shows people right away that I am not crazy?"

"Why, yes, Tuan. People now understand why you go around with a gun. They will not be afraid of the gun, and of course you speak Malay well enough so that you will not make mistakes like that other man did."

I supposed Jusup was right, but still I could not help worrying every time I called for a green *klapa* to drink.

During the following days I went back often to the spot where we had flushed the crowned pigeons. I was anxious to study their daily movements to see whether it was true, as Jau Kurano had said, that every morning they could be found at such and such a level and that they moved regularly during the day.

The high original forest seemed to be bare of birds. Occasionally some flowering tree would be surrounded with small honey-eaters, but these trees are few and far between. There were only two birds that might be commonly seen in thick forest. One of these was a small dark flycatcher with a rather melodious song. As it sang it would waggle its tail from side to side. The rest of the time it sat very silently, only darting from its perch occasionally to hawk after an insect.

The other bird was a gorgeous one, a racquet-tailed kingfisher, so called because the two central tail feathers are elongated to more than the total length of the bird, narrow and sky-blue with flaring white tips. The bill is orange, the head pale cerulean blue, the breast white,

and the back dark blue. The effect is startling when the bird suddenly comes to life from its motionless perch on a dead twig. Down on to the muddy ground it darts to probe about in the rich soil with its stout bill for grubs. The racquet-tail seems to be a kingfisher that never goes near the water.

By going at different times of the day and studying the terrain carefully, I finally found that I could anticipate quite well where the little colony of crowned pigeons would be. Apparently like most other birds, they tend to have a rather carefully organized life run on a schedule. In the early morning they would fly down from their roosts to the low swampy ground near the sea where there were many bushes and thickets. Their favourite sites seemed to be secondary growth where the people formerly had had gardens. Here they would scratch about on the ground for food, probably small snails and worms and insects. Then as the day advanced they would begin to wander inland, going up a little distance into the foothills, still on the ground. By afternoon they would be in thick original forest, where presumably the feeding was not as profitable. Thus by late afternoon or evening they would be ready to fly up into the trees to roost overnight.

Regular movements such as this are very interesting to observe, for in the tropics of course the resident birds are non-migratory. And yet they often seem to have a set routine of travel from one feeding or roosting-place to another. Perhaps in these small daily or seasonal movements lie the seeds of the larger flights of birds in temperate regions. The parrots that I was later to observe in the Tamrau Mountains, moving back and forth in vast flocks to their feeding-grounds, may be performing migrations in miniature.

. As time passed we found that our collections were increasing far beyond my original hope. Saban was proving himself a master hunter, and Jusup's skinning was daily improving. I was bound that I would try to have at least three hundred specimens by the end of our stay. Already after two weeks we had nearly two hundred birds, as well as multitudes of land snails and a few fish and snakes.

Snakes actually, as elsewhere in New Guinea, seemed to be few and far between. We did see some water snakes, black and yellow, about two feet long, with flattened tails to aid in swimming. They are poisonous, related to our Southern coral snakes. In contrast to most New Guinea people, Saban seemed to have no fear of them. He loved to hold a dead one behind his back and then whip it out suddenly in front of Jusup or the *guru* or one of the Biak people. Jusup would get on his dignity and tell him rather shakily to stop this nonsense, but the others would invariably run off shrieking.

Besides bats, we received a few other things for which we had offered large rewards. One of ten Haaft's boys, Henricus, a reformed son of a head-hunting family on the north coast, turned out to be a skilful trapper. He seemed to be the only man on the island who knew how to set a snare properly. The Biak people are spear people, in contrast to my bow-and-arrow friends on Misool. Ordinarily this means that they should have been good hands at snaring, for in New Guinea things usually work this way. One community uses snares and spears, the next just bows and arrows. However, plentiful sago gardens seem to have driven the idea of snares out of the minds of the people of Korijido.

Henricus fortunately remembered the old skills, and on being offered twenty-five cents Dutch per bird pro-

ceeded to trap three rails for me, birds which are so shy and skulking that they are impossible to find any other way. These proved to have been the first rails collected on Biak, and they were in the very sago swamps off which the Korrido people now live so comfortably. I tried and tried to get one with my patent rat-traps, guaranteed by older and wiser bird collectors to be infallible, but failed to secure anything more than a few dozen hermit crabs.

There were other surprises. One was a large section of bamboo tube, plugged at both ends, which I bought for fifty Dutch cents after the owner assured me that it contained a "coconut mouse." Jusup said that a coconut mouse was very rare. When he tapped the sides of the tube, a muffled rattling noise would come out. A bit later, when there was a let-up from bird-skinning, we opened the tube and shook it. Out of the open end came an irate little animal with a soft silky brown coat and luminous eyes. New Guinea, as well as Australia, is almost entirely populated by marsupials, a primitive group of mammals whose young are born very early in embryonic life and develop in abdominal pouches. These animals have radiated out in all directions into dozens of species, from kangaroos down to miniature marsupial mice and moles. This particular little chap looked just like a flying squirrel, but on inspection turned out to be one of the rare flying phalangers, a true marsupial.

Jusup's way of clearing up the mess of the previous day's collecting was to throw it all into the cow pasture. I was always telling him to take it off somewhere and burn it. This he would promise to do, and then behind my back the stuff would be dumped into the cow pasture again. The following morning he threw the bamboo tube into the cow pasture and was amazed to hear the same rattling noise come out of it when it hit the ground.

Hastily investigating, he found two more of these strange little animals. Why, being nocturnal, they had remained inside all night was a great mystery.

"You see, Tuan. It was very lucky that I did not happen to burn this bamboo along with the rest," Jusup explained.

The last week of our stay on Biak was feverish with activity. Day by day we were getting twenty, sometimes thirty, specimens, until finally we needed only eight more to make three hundred. The last day before the *Chiva* was expected was our most triumphant one. Saban and I, coming back through the forest near the haunts of the crowned pigeons, heard a twittering on one side of the trail. Overnight a vine growing on a big tree had burst into flower. The delicate pink blossoms and glossy green leaves formed a dense sheath around the supporting trunk. Saban sighted a miniature parrot, of which so far we had collected only one specimen, and fired. At the noise there was a great rustling and two small owls, about the size of a screech owl, flew out. I could hardly believe my eyes. Here was one of the least-known birds in New Guinea, a species of owl confined to Biak, and known from only one specimen collected by Beccari in 1875. This was luck indeed. By the end of that walk we had completed our three hundred, with two more for good measure.

Almost the first sound I heard the following morning was the steady put-putting of the *Chiva*. She was in early and on schedule. Most of the day was spent in packing and carrying things to the boat, but Jusup and the *guru's* shy little wife had time nonetheless to prepare a magnificent meal of fresh vegetables and fresh crowned pigeon for Charis and Didie. Practically between mouthfuls Charis somehow was able to measure most of the male

population of Korrido, come to stare at the new white ladies.

By evening the last of our paraphernalia was loaded aboard and we were ready to sail. There were final good-byes with the ten Haafts, who had come down to the pier, once again shakily overburdened with people. There was Jau Kurano, to whom I presented a knife. There was the guru with his wife, and sitting in a dugout canoe was the little man with the withered arm. In all the noise and commotion I realized suddenly that the little man and Jau Kurano and some of the others were singing a song.

"What are they singing about?" I asked Saban.

"Oh, Tuan, that is a song about us and the big hunting. Now it will be a story with them for a long time, over the fires in the evening, along the trail, and in the canoes."

As we upped anchor and started to drift out on a light breeze, I could still hear the men singing. It is a strange, high, cracked sort of singing. Bits of it sound almost like yodelling, and it carries for a great distance over the water. Lots of the words have "o" or "ay" endings. I could hear them sing "Sabanay," then "Jusupo" at the end of another verse. Finally I heard them singing something that sounded rather familiar. Yes, there it was again, "Tuan Doktor Boerongay." The light faded quickly, but for a long time we could still hear the sound of their voices floating over the water.

## CHAPTER IX

### NEW GUINEA CHRISTMAS

**S**ORONG is on a little island called Doom. All about there are other small islands—Ram, Efman, Tsióf, Pam—and farther away the larger ones, Waigeu, Batanta, and Salawati. In the early morning they stand up, dull grey, like mounds of foamy bubbles in the eddy of a stream. Then as the sun grows stronger and the mist is dissolved, the islands appear for a time rather sharp and black. At last the heat becomes too strong. The outlines break down, shimmer, and blur, and so it is for the rest of the day.

Early in the morning when it is calm there are lines of porpoises dappling the surface, rising endlessly in long regular rows like troops of cavalry. Often there are birds too, a few white terns, a circling man-o'-war bird, occasionally a brown-and-white sea eagle soaring grandly in wide circles. Sometimes just at dawn or again in the early evening it is possible to see a number of megapodes flying from the larger islands to one of the small mangrove-covered reefs offshore. They fly like small partridges, in a hurried burst of wingbeats as if they might give out at any moment. In spite of this seeming weakness the ground-loving megapode has succeeded in establishing itself on thousands of similar small islands all the way from the Indian Ocean to the Fijis.

The first noise is the drum at the mosque. It begins

to beat, once, twice, and then a fast rattling boom, summoning the faithful. A few Papuans in their canoes drift out from shore. I had told the fishermen that I would buy anything they brought me, but their catch was skimpy.

"When we catch all the fish from one reef, Tuan, we have to wait a long time before we can go back there again. These waters are dead. There is only place for a few fish."

I often wondered if what they said was true. Perhaps that might be the reason why sea birds are so few and far between in this area.

We had arrived at Sorong the day before after a short but eventful trip from Geelvink Bay. By some mischance Jack had discovered a few tins of the same Australian kippered herring which we had traded with Laz long before. I took one, ate a piece of it, and handed it on to Fred, who happened to be in a ravenous mood and liked kippers anyway.

"Thanks," he muttered between mouthfuls and wolfed it down. It wasn't long before things began to happen. I decided quickly that what I had previously thought to be ptomaine poisoning had been a gentle zephyr compared to which the present attack was a full-blown hurricane. By the time we reached Sorong, Fred and I were two very chastened individuals. Kippers, we decided weakly as we lay in our bunks mulling over recent events, had lost their pristine charm.

However, our appetites were undaunted. Once in Sorong and we were swept into a round of Christmas festivities. Mrs. van der Goot specialized in that most complicated of all meals, the rice tafel. I say meal, because, although it is only one course, it is usually difficult to contemplate eating anything before or after it. Rice

tafel consists of a large soup plate piled high with rice. That is the foundation. Then comes an assortment of curried fish, curried chicken, baked chicken, boiled chicken, fried bananas, peanuts, lamb skewered on bamboo sticks, roast pork (if there are no Mohammedan guests), and several dozen other dishes, mostly vegetables. There are endless spices that go into the making of rice tafel, some of them hotter than others, but nearly all fiery to a degree quite beyond the capacity of our weak and untried palates. Mostly we did without the spices, but every now and then a particularly virulent brand of pepper would creep in by mistake, to be greeted by clappings of hands to mouths, stifled grunts, fanning motions in the air, and diving for glasses of water. In all of this we were joined by Charlie, once more full of spirits, who greeted us on our arrival.

The parties were endless. First the van der Goots had one for us. Then we had one for them in the *pasangrahan* into which Charis, Fred, and I had moved. Then there was a party given by the Chinese merchants in their clubhouse, proceeds to go to the Chinese Red Cross in China. Even the native magistrate, van der Goot's assistant, had a party. Finally there was Ong Tjoean's son's wedding. This was a very grand affair. Ong Tjoean's son was all of eighteen, the apple of his father's eye. Ong Tjoean had married twice, the second wife being the sister of the first, and having been sent out from China when the first wife didn't live up to her part of the marriage agreement. In other words she was barren, a great blow to both families. But now everything was all right. Ong Tjoean's house was full of children and maybe there would soon be grandchildren.

The wedding took two days. On the second day we were all invited to a *bangup* dinner which climaxed the

affair. There were firecrackers and drums and horns as we were led into the main hall of the house, where a huge table had been set up. I understand now what the expression "groaning with food" means. We sat down and proceeded through a dinner of soup, noodles, fish, rice tafel, and so on and on. With everything there were warm champagne and thimbleglasses of Chinese brandy. We all sat rather formally, taking our cue from the van der Goots, who politely nibbled at each course. Every time anyone so much as touched his glass, more champagne was poured in by eager smiling waiters. They always smiled, those waiters. Even one who had gone to sleep in a corner. I began to envy him as well as one or two of the Chinese guests who had quietly slipped under the table.

Afterwards we managed to stagger to our feet and proceed through a hallway, hiccuping politely to show our appreciation of the meal, into a back room where the bridal couple were on display seated formally on the nuptial bed. They both looked ridiculously young and overdressed in their heavy silk robes. I noticed the eyes of Ong Tjoean's son turn ever and again wistfully to his most cherished wedding present, a large shiny bicycle.

But by far the most interesting celebration was Mr. Kamma's Christmas pageant. The Dutch missionaries for the most part are members of the Dutch Reformed Church, a strict Calvinist faith. There are very few Roman Catholic missionaries in the Netherlands East Indies compared to the Protestants, just as the Catholic party in Holland is in a distinct minority. The Dutch missionaries that I have met are all pleasant, capable men, some of them like Kamma, with a very strong spiritual quality. There is no gainsaying the good that these men and their devoted wives do, but at the same

time it is difficult to evaluate the worth of these efforts. Any fair-minded person is bound to feel that a mission is in theory an excellent civilizing influence. All the same it is not easy nowadays to feel confident that our religion should be thrust upon very primitive people. There are missionaries who will say that it does not matter what happens to the people afterwards, that so many souls saved is the important objective. With such men one cannot argue.

The great danger with Papuans is that Christianity will not be an effective substitute for what has been taken away from them. The missionaries condemn dancing and playing drums and making wooden ancestor images as immoral. They hold great ceremonial burnings of the drums and the images—that is, they used to until it was discovered that the carvings could be sold at a good price to collectors of such objects in Europe and America, the profits of course to go to the mission fund. In place of this the Papuans are given religion, strict and moral and fine, but hardly an emotional religion. What emotion there is seems to be one of fear, fear that the missionary will punish them for some infraction of the new rules of life.

Mr. Kamma is an amateur anthropologist. He realizes that Papuan dances are not immoral and he is anxious to identify in some way the Christian ideals in the minds of his converts with their own original ideals. There is an old legend along the coast and among the Biak people about the coming of a prophet called the *mansaréen* who will precede an eventual saviour. Every so often a Papuan will announce that he is a *mansaréen* and set about making himself into a sort of witch doctor. This usually means trouble. One of a witch doctor's prerogatives seems to be a plentiful supply of other men's wives

and worldly goods. Consequently the Dutch are definitely down on *mansaréens* and spare no pains to put them in jail.

"If you come to-night," Mr. Kamma announced, "I can promise that you will see the first Papuan dance ever given at a church Christmas pageant. It is the dance that they do at the coming of a *mansaréen*."

Christmas Eve of that year 1937 was hot and sultry. But down on the beach we could feel a breath of coolness coming in over the sea. We clambered into two outrigger canoes, Charis and Fred in one, Didie, Charlie and myself in the other. There was a crunching and we were off, two men in each canoe paddling us with steady strokes.

On the farther shore, Kamma greeted us, giving Charis and Didie a hand as they jumped down from the prow on to the beach. He had a flashlight, but we stumbled a little until we came up to the church lighted with torches made of flaring, sweet-smelling dammar. Inside, the frame structure was crowded to bursting with people. A few Malays dressed in their starched white best sat on chairs in the front behind the empty row left for us. All about, behind, and even in the rafters, crouched a silent mass of dark expectant Papuans. Some were glistening in fresh white clothes, others in ragged cast-offs. Here an eager-faced woman crowned with a mop of frizzy hair sat clutching her nursing baby; there a gaunt old man, rigid and proud in his faded tunic, leaned against a post.

The pageant began. It was the story of the shepherds seeing the star, and the Three Kings who found the Infant Jesus. Serious-faced black shepherds in sheet-like clothes watched earnestly as Mr. Kamma, offstage, jerkily propelled a large papier-mâché star across the stage on a system of wires. Four thin Roman soldiers in coconut-matting breastplates solemnly paraded across the stage.

Then came a gradually confused assemblage of kings, angels, heralds, slaves, and lesser personages. Offstage, Mr. Kamma sounded a sennet on a small trumpet. Finally there was a scene with a *crèche* and a somewhat fidgety tableau posed around it. The lines were spoken in Malay, and there were hymns in Malay also. At intervals the native *guru* would come out and recite prayers.

I turned around. The sea of dark faces behind us never moved. Their expressions were rapt, enthralled. This was the wonderful ritual of the white man. This was the mystery, inexplicable and fascinating, being performed before their eyes. Perhaps in this lay the key to the infinite superiority of the white people. Were they being let in on something? Poor Mr. Kamma, I am sure he does not think of his mission in that way.

The end came finally with a last prayer. Mr. Kamma, pale and perspiring, walked out from behind the curtain to usher us outside. The moon had come up and with it a slight breeze, ruffling the surface of the water. There was a definite change in the weather. The feeling was crisper, drier. I noted with surprise a flock of white terns, clearly perceptible in the bright light. They were fishing. I could hear their small cries coming faintly along the wind.

The people had formed in a circle on the beach, leaving a wide space around a single torch stuck in the ground. It was the same audience, but completely at ease now, prepared for a performance that they knew all about. Suddenly a drum started outside the circle. The people near it drew to one side. In towards the fire filed a line of shuffling men treading silently and carefully in the rhythm of the drum's muffled tones. All were naked except for bark-cloth breech-clouts. In their hair were twisted bird of paradise plumes. Some wore plaited arm-

bands into which were thrust tufts of cassowary feathers or bright red-splashed croton leaves. The leader was carrying a small hand-drum. When all of them had come in he changed the tempo. The beat came faster and louder now. Arms interlocked, the dancers circled around the fire, moving sideways with a shuffling, limping gait. Their feet pounded the ground, steadily, rhythmically. Monotonously they chanted a phrase over and over. The long ends of their breech clouts swayed back and forth as they skipped and sidestepped.

Suddenly the tempo changed. Now it was still faster, more syncopated. Opening the circle, the men started a weaving sort of snake dance round and round and in and out. There was something impelling and contagious in the beat. With a shout and a chorus of laughter from the audience, three men jumped out and joined the dance in their best store clothes. Faster and faster went the dancers, higher and higher came the beat of the drum and the singing. Now one of the men in white shirt and trousers was leading the dance. With a great shout and a burst of yelling from the others he plucked up the torch and led the whole line out, leaving us in momentary darkness. Once beyond the crowd, and the noise of the dancers stopped instantly. The silence seemed intense. Then somebody giggled, one or two people murmured to each other, and we burst into a round of applause.

The Papuan part of the audience seemed to enjoy the dance as spontaneously and naturally as they would any other part of their lives. It was something taken for granted like going to a weekly movie. The Malays were pleased, but from a superior point of view, rather as if they were ballet authorities at a country square dance. As for Mr. Kamma, he seemed to enjoy it the most of all.

"It is so full of vigour and vitality," he said, and frail

little Mrs. Kamma nodded agreement. "If I could only capture that spirit and translate it in terms of Christian worship."

We walked along the beach to their house. It is a large, gaunt affair of rough planks. We sat down in the living-room on cane chairs, arranged in a circle. There was a harmonium in a corner, Delft plates on a shelf along the wall, and two or three small wistful paintings of Dutch canals and windmills.

Mrs. Kamma brought out delicious meat tarts and coffee with fresh milk from their cows. For a long time we sat there while our host poured out his heart to us on the subject of his work and missions in general. Later, as we walked down to the beach, I found myself looking at him and thinking, here is a truly good and saint-like man. Here is furthermore a practical man who can profit by the mistakes of others. He will not land on a small isolated island and allow his boat crew to mix with the inhabitants, knowing how introduced influenza or head colds can kill off entire populations of people unused to these common ills. He will not save souls at the risk of killing bodies. He knows how to temper zeal with kindness and understanding. These are the elements which go to make a good missionary, along with practical skills, knowledge of carpentry, medicine, running a boat-engine, navigation, and so on. They are not the things that stand out in a crowd. At home, in the divinity school or university, people probably never looked twice at Mr. Kamma. These elements of soul are difficult to analyse in a civilized atmosphere. In a city one lives so much according to pattern that a whole lifetime could go by and there might be no real test of these things. But in Sorong it takes three months to get an answer to a letter asking for advice. In isolation, on a frontier, people sud-

denly seem to stand out quite black or quite white in contrast to the uniform grey of civilized communities.

"A few more Mr. Kaimmas and I'd feel better about our poor Papuans," remarked Charis, as we waved to him standing on the beach. Our canoes seemed to slide over the water like ice, leaving a great trail of shining phosphorescence behind. The moonlight sparkled ahead like ice too, and but for the warm dry breeze it might have been Christmas Eve at home. But this was an outrigger canoe, that was a shining black back bending over a hand-carved paddle, and there ahead were the outlines of the palms of Sorong. My flock of terns had disappeared, but instead there were many splashes in the water. We were evidently passing over a school of small fish, for gars were everywhere, long slim pickerel-like fish, leaping out of the water in short arcs after their prey. Our men suddenly began to paddle with great vigour.

"Two years ago I would have said that the worst thing that could happen to me on Christmas Eve would be to fall off the stepladder while I was decorating the tree," sighed Fred. "Now look at us, running the gauntlet of all these damned garfish, any one of which may take it into his head to jump right over here and cut a piece out of us."

We had recently heard a story of fisherman who had been badly hurt by a leaping gar.

"I wish we were all home right now, just for a day," said Charis.

But the next day Christmas seemed more fun than we had anticipated. The *pasangrahan* had a large front-room and in this we made a tree. It was a banana stalk about seven feet high, smooth and yellow-green. Into notches in the trunk were stuck branches of casuarina, a tree with pine-like needles that grows along the shore. For orna-

ments we had red balls, shiny gourds from a vine which grows on small coral islands. We found some small candles at Ong Tjoean's which we fastened a bit precariously to the branches, as well as presents for Jusup and Saban, for Martin, Fred and Charis's boy, and Darek, Harry's plantation manager, and Efaat, Harry's boy, and Abu Bakar, the little boy who carried pails of water into the bathhouse, and Kaibobo, the boy who was training to be a servant. There were presents for all of us under the tree and presents for the van der Goot family when they came in the afternoon.

Charis and Didie laboured all the morning with Martin over the lunch, which was excellent. In those days we were always hungry and always thinking of food. There was roast duck with several vegetables and apple-sauce, followed by a wonderful plum pudding out of a can, with hard sauce, Didie's *pièce de résistance*. All day there seemed to be a torrent of presents and present-opening and cries of enjoyment. The mail-boat months before had brought several "Don't open until Christmas" packages, and now these were the climax of our excitement. There were new phonograph records and paper books, and some tinned delicacies, and even a few pairs of silk stockings for the girls.

By the time the van der Goots appeared in the late afternoon and presents had been exchanged with them, by the time that little Franz-Peter van der Goot had had his miniature flashlight taken away from him three times by his older brother Hans, and the youngest had eaten two whole bananas before anyone could stop him, then everybody realized that Christmas was indeed just the same all over the world. We could not have been more exhausted and more satiated with good living if we had been right back at home the whole time.

The following days were full of work. The *Chiva* had been in New Guinea waters long enough. Now she would have to be repainted. Charis and Fred, talking it over with all of us, decided that the sensible thing was to send the schooner straight through to Manila and attempt to sell her there. We had heard that this was the best port for such a boat. George and Charlie and Jack could sail her there provided they had one other man to help them. Harry was consulted.

"Darek is the one I can best spare," he said. "He is sensible and strong, and besides, he has not had a vacation since 1922."

Harry was very practical about his boys.

"He can take the mail-boat back and stop at Ambon and pick up that wife that he has been plaguing me about. He's been wanting to marry her for some time."

"Why couldn't he get off before?"

"Well, there never seemed to be time, or money, but then this year things came to rather a head."

"What happened?"

"Why, one of the Papuan boys got married a year ago." Harry's eyes twinkled. "His name was Frederick. He married one of the Besarese pirate ladies, you know, with a mop of frizzy hair. Well, this year the baby was born on Kamwa, and, by heaven, it has straight curly hair just like Darek and is the spitting image of him. So then I thought we'd better get Darek married."

All our gear had to be unloaded and piled in the *pasangrahan*. Didie was staying in New Guinea also, as she wanted to help Harry write his autobiography, a work which was already proceeding apace. As Harry had had a decidedly adventurous life, beginning with the old days in Vienna down to New Guinea, this bade fair to be an exciting book.

Although it seemed to each one of us that we had started off long ago from America with only the most meagre amount of possessions, in New Guinea these same possessions covered the floor of all the rooms in the place. When time came to have a meal, Charis or Didie would have to dive through and under packing-cases to dig out a few slightly battered cans to give to Martin. In the centre of the packing-cases was a dining-room table up to which we would fight our way, pick out a dish with some recognizable fragments of food on it, and scuttle back to our fair of the moment.

Charis, Fred, and I each had ordered some containers to use either on the trip to Sainkedock or, in any case, in the mountains. These were made out of three kerosene tins, cut and resoldered into the shape of a box about two feet wide and high and one foot deep. There were handles on three sides, and the design was such that a coolie could carry one of these comfortably on his back. I had seven all painted blue, into which I hoped to cram my equipment for at least two months' camping. Then there were collapsible canvas bunks which had appeared out of some cranny or other of the *Chiva*, not to mention a tent fly, several small cases of ammunition, guns, lanterns, and cans and cans of food. Last but not least my bird-box and bird-skinning board came ashore, a sight that was greeted with small cries of pleasure by George.

"Now the *Chiva* is beginning to look like a schooner and not a garbage scow," he gritted.

Finally everything was ashore, and the *Chiva* was ready to sail. It was a strange sensation to go aboard her and know that it was only to say good-bye. Everything was clean and shipshape. Except for a lick of paint here or varnish there and the three parakeets on their bamboo

perches amidships, the *Chiva* looked much as if she was about to set off for an afternoon's sail on Long Island Sound. Darek came aft, looking rather pale and nervous, to shake our hands. Then he looked at Jusup, with whom he had had a feud for a long time. For three years, according to Harry, they had not spoken to each other. Suddenly with anguished faces they both embraced each other and burst into floods of Malay.

"If I never see you again, at least let us be friends," said Darek.

"We have no more quarrel," said Jusup, and Harry smiled benignly at them both.

After this there was much handshaking and many Godspeeds all around, and we returned to the shore to watch our home of more than a year slowly up anchor and start put-putting down the channel. The next news we had of her was more than three months later when we heard that she had finally reached Manila and been sold to a Chinese merchant. Now she's probably loading copra up from the Sulu Islands, and they've taken her topmasts off, and ripped out her deck housing; and painted two eyes on her bows, and people from round Long Island Sound would never recognize her. But the *Chiva* (which means goat in Spanish) she'll remain. Her Diesel will still smoke and fume. "Aunt Matilda" will still make those horrible retching noises from abaft the head. The squeaking noises and the "awrp" noises, the pots all falling off the stove at once—all these things will still be the same; and if I ever see her again I know that I will surely recognize her by the set of her jib and the contour of her somewhat squat but lovely posterior.

Afterwards, feeling a bit empty, we went back and continued with our packing. Meanwhile the van der Goots were making their own arrangements. Mrs. van der Goot

was supervising much the same routine of packing for her husband that we were going through. Mr. van der Goot was making endless extracts and memoranda for his second in command.

Although Dutch New Guinea is part of the Netherlands East Indies, it is not entirely administered as such. There is a *Landskaap* government, so called, which administers Dutch New Guinea and the neighbouring islands all the way to Halmahera to the west. These islands are called the Moluccas, and the *Landskaap* government represents the Sultan of Tidore, who once ruled over them. The Dutch pay the Sultan a yearly allowance out of the taxes raised by the *Landskaap*, but that is about the only bodily connection remaining with the old government. Alting, Mr. van der Goot's native magistrate assistant, is the nephew of the old Sultan and will presumably one day be his successor. As a specimen of good colonial government, Alting is certainly a fine example. He is a crack soccer player, a good student, skilful in four or five languages including Dutch, and a first-rate administrator. In a French or British colony he would probably be pensioned off in a palace somewhere with nothing to do. It did seem a most sensible arrangement to allow him to plunge into a job, even though it was in his own government.

Then there were ten soldier-police, *Feldpolitie*, from the Sorong barracks who were to come along with van der Goot on his patrol. For days their wives were washing and darning their uniforms, and the barracks were humming with activity. Guns and boots were being oiled, rations of rice poured into containers and measured, and drilling exercises redoubled in order to get the kinks out of the men's legs. They were all looking forward to a cassowary hunt along the trail.

Two nights before we were to leave I woke up suddenly in the pitch dark. From somewhere far off there seemed to be coming a rumbling noise like heavy trucks passing on a road. Then there were creakings from all around in the room. I shone my flashlight on to the walls and the door. The room was shaking back and forth rhythmically, the tall thin walls vibrating like a house made of cards. Then there came a shouting from the back. By the time I was out of bed, Martin had rushed through screaming, "Tuan, Tuan, look out, the house is falling down."

The five of us, Charis, Didie, Fred, Harry, and myself, raced outside to stand in a little cluster watching the house shake. Particles of thatch rained down from the roof. In the dim moonlight a white figure came out of van der Goot's house and ran down towards the shore. The next day we learned that it was van der Goot himself, anxious to see if there were any signs of a tidal wave in the offing. In the distance we could hear people shouting in the village. After a few moments the rumblings and the shakings stopped and we went back inside, wondering how much sleep we would get. Three times more before morning came the sound of heavy trucks and the shakings, but never as bad as the first time.

Earthquakes in western New Guinea are a commonplace. Sometimes they are much worse of course. Geologically the area is very interesting. New Guinea and Australia are on a common shelf surrounded by comparatively shallow sea. But between this shelf and the Malay Peninsula shelf there are great ocean depths out of which spring the myriad volcanic islands of the East Indies. Most of the islands are arranged in rough rows leading out from the continent of Asia. The geologists call them lines of upthrust. They are apparently subject to constant

rearrangements, one of the main troubles being that they all come bang smack up against the Australian shelf. Thus as internal pressures build up far down, below the sea, there is a good deal of twisting and adjusting to avoid the shelf and the resulting earthquakes are very frequent. Fortunately, in contrast to Rabaul, there are no known volcanoes, although there was a report that an early exploring expedition had sighted one from the sea along the north coast in the Tamrau Mountains. That was something that van der Goot said we would have to look into.

By the next day our packing was finally done. I had enough food for Jusup, Saban, and myself for two months. Ong Tjoean had promised to send an extra month's supply along in one of his schooners in case I should need it. All the cases and packages were loaded on to the *Ursula*, van der Goot's patrol-boat, ready for the morning.

Saban and I got into a canoe and paddled across to the mainland for a few hours' shooting. There was a small river up which we could paddle. A few hundred yards upstream there were two experimental groves of rubber trees where the underbrush had been cleared. There were coucals, giant ground-loving cuckoos, walking about solemnly under the trees. They have stout bills and long tails and, except for their sombre colouring, are reminiscent of magpies. There were mynahs too in the trees, starling-like birds with yellow wattles. The Malays often keep them as pets. They call them "blood birds," for the legend is that they will die at the sight of fresh blood. There are many other stories about these highly intelligent birds. The most common one is that the mynah learns to talk only at night. The Malay story then goes on to describe the trusting husband going away for a

visit. When he comes back, to the consternation of the wife, the mynah glibly repeats out loud what it has learned during the night.

On the way home we stopped near the Kammas' house at a small village where Sin Hadji lived. Saban wanted to say good-bye to his family, and I wanted to see some of my live birds. Mrs. Sin Hadji, Saban's mother, was skilled in taking care of birds, for her husband had been active in the bird of paradise trade before it was officially stopped by the Dutch Government. There were two strings to Sin Hadji's bow. One was to sell bird of paradise skins to the feather dealers. The other was to sell live birds to the occasional collectors working for zoos. Rodolphe de Schauensee had urged me months before to try to bring some birds back alive, and already under Sin Hadji's roof I had quite a flourishing collection. There was a lovely pair of crowned pigeons that the van der Goots had given me. There was a brilliant yellow-plumed bird of a paradise that I had bought in Sorong. There were several lorries, small brush-tongued fruit-eating parakeets. One of these, Susie, was brilliant red with a black cap and green wings. Another, Wilfred, so named because of his uncertain temper, was green all over, with flecks of flamingo colour on the breast, and a purplish-blue face. Then there was Nicolette, a soft white pigeon, gentle and amazingly tame. I had also acquired a beautiful white cockatoo with a sulphur-yellow crest whose conversation was a series of squeaks and squawks, and finally there was Eduardo, the tortoise from the Galápagos, veteran of eight uncertain months aboard the *Chiva* who was now living in the lap of luxury on a steady diet of fresh greens.

Paddling back over the still water towards Sorong, I began to be affected by the old morbid doubts and fears that I used to feel before going back to school. It was that

same sickish feeling, that feeling of weakness in the knees, of loss of appetite. I was possessed with a lowering dread of the future. I walked up to the *pasavighan* in slow motion. On the way I met van der Goot coming out of his office. He seemed to look solemn and thoughtful.

"Strange, I don't feel hungry to-night," he said.

I felt better.

At dinner, Harry and Didie ate and talked with their usual vivacity. Fred, Charis, and I sat glumly in our chairs.

"This is ridiculous," Charis burst out. "Here we've been looking forward to doing our work on the mainland for months and we're as gloomy as three old mummies."

At that we all smiled, but the strange sunken feeling still persisted. I had recently received a cablegram saying that my mother wanted to take a trip to the East and join me for the trip home. I had been wildly excited at the thought of being able to show some one of the family all these strange sights and places that I had been writing about for so long. She would be coming out to Sorong by the March mail-boat from Makassar. After dinner I went up to the little cable office and sent a message. "Off to the Tamrau to-morrow," it read. "See you in April." The feeling of dread was still there. I wondered whether I would see her in April.

I think that none of us slept very well that night. We were to start early, but no one seemed to need alarm clocks. I got up in the dark and dressed. Martin was brewing coffee. I could smell it, and hear the sleepy talk of the boys. There was coffee and there were dispirited sandwiches that had been made the night before. We gulped them down and walked outside.

There was a greyness in the air. Slim eddies of mist

weaved across the green soccer field. The air was cold but not bracing. It sent a chill down my spine. The palms hung their heads, and the boats in the harbour, the canoes and Ong Tjoean's schooners, looked as if they had been painted on to a solid grey backdrop. We walked down to the *Ursula*. She sat there at the end of the little wharf, her forward deck piled high with our gear. Astern the corporal and his nine men lolled on their piles of bedding and bundles, talking in monotones to their wives and families sitting on the wharf. The van der Goots came along, Mr. van der Goot looking very spruce in his khaki and broad-brimmed army hat. Mrs. van der Goot, holding on to the three children, said that she did not like it.

"I wish my husband would be transferred to a post where he does not have to make patrols into those terrible unknown mountains!"

Mr. van der Goot said "Pshaw" or something like it, kissed her and the little boys, and we all filed on to the boat. There was a small upper deck with a comfortable bridge. We waved and van der Goot gave an order, a bell rang out, there was a thrashing churning noise sounding loud in the stillness, and we slipped away. Mrs. van der Goot and Didie and Harry stood on the pier looking smaller and thinner by the moment as they waved, and then we were out in the channel. The boat headed east along the north coast that we had come to know so well. My phalaropes had gone, but there was a big flight of migrating petrels, large grey-brown birds with slim pointed wings.

"We see them every year," Mr. van der Goot said, "at the turn of the monsoon season. Now we should be in for the north-west monsoon. It will rain if we are unlucky."

Ahead there was a monstrous tumble of clouds all pink in the first light. In a few moments there came great streaming rays of pink, lighting up the clouds all about. Finally the light came lower and the greyness seemed to evaporate suddenly. The islands began to stand out clearly now, sharp and black, Waigau, Batanta, and Salawati. The air was crisp and fresh. Mr. van der Goot ran up from below with a big thermos of coffee and some bread and cheese.

"I knew we would all feel hungry as soon as we got going," he said. We looked at each other and laughed. That sunken feeling was gone. We fell to ravenously.

## CHAPTER X

### SAINKEDOEK

LATE in the afternoon we reached Sansapor, a hamlet on the coast from which we were to strike inland. There was a rounded quiet bay, a long beach with a crude jetty, five little palm-thatched houses, and a slightly larger house at the end of a sandy street, the *pasangrahan*. We landed in the *Ursula's* dinghy and walked up the street. The native magistrate had done his work well. The place was crowded with coolies, some eighty or more strong, who had been assembling for three days with their local chiefs. Now these men came forward towards van der Goot, half-bowing, half-saluting in the old fawning style that is a relic of the days when the power of the Sultan hung heavy over the land.

"*Tabek, tabek, Tuan besar,*" they chorused, smiling and bowing, their red betel-stained lips parted showing dirty brown fangs of teeth.

Of the coolies, about fifteen were coastal people related to the Biak Islanders. These were big sturdy men, mostly Christianized, mostly wearing rather superior clothes, dirty shirts or singlets and cotton drawers. Some even had cheap brown straw hats made in imitation of the military. One or two had broken old felt fedoras. They all spoke Malay and were evidently trustworthy.

"These men will go the whole way with us," said van der Goot. "They are good men and if there should ever be a fight they will be on our side."

The rest were what in India are called "junglymen." They were Madic people from the region around Sainkedoek, with a few Mooi, the coastal tribe of which Sabar's father was one of the chiefs. These people were uniformly small and rather delicately made in contrast to the Biakers. They were dark too, not chocolate, almost black, with tight frizzy hair. Some of the men had moustaches. One or two had grown scraggy beards. All wore bark-cloth breech-clouts, and for ornament they had woven bands, armlets and occasional leglets, and necklaces of old Chinese beads. Almost everyone had a tooth, whether crocodile or boar, as the central pendant of their necklaces. All the men carried spears or bows and arrows and coils of rattan over their shoulders from which they would make bindings for our tin cases.

After we landed things began to hum. Canoes were dispatched out to the *Ursula* and soon our cases began to come up the street towards the *pasangrahan*. This building was fairly new, for Sansapor had only been settled about two years before. But the place had never been lived in. Already it looked somewhat decayed. A young palm drooped dispiritedly over the roof. A lime tree seemed to be all thorns and no limes. The concrete floor had begun to give along the edges of the walls and long trails of ants toiled back and forth between the cracks. The ceiling was spotted with geckos, small lizards with suction-pad feet that hang upside down all day and all night wander about in search of insects. At intervals they demonstrate their presence by loud piercing calls or by falling to the floor with a squashy noise. The fall never seems to hurt them. They amble off to the wall and start right back up again.

Until eleven o'clock that night we worked, sorting, arranging, going over all the bundles which were to be

taken the next day. All of van der Goot's and my gear had to be taken, which meant that some of Charis's and Fred's food would have to be left behind. That would be all right, though. They could send down for it later from Sainkedoek. At last it was done and the loads arranged in a row all around the walls of the rooms and the little porch outside. Only our bedding and a few pots and pans for breakfast remained unpacked. We would make an early start.

It is hard to go to sleep when you are tensed and full of plans and expectations. My memory of Sansapor is of lying awake and watching the red flickers of the dying kitchen fire weave across the ceiling. The geckos were all out that night, busy on their rounds. They fell and scuttled and squeaked and fell again. Somewhere far down near the water someone was singing, a low crooning voice repeating a phrase over and over. It was rather uncertain-sounding as is the way of all singing in New Guinea, cracked and wavery with long-drawn-out notes. Over all was the bitter aromatic smell of burning wood, and the stale smell of damp thatch, and the strong sweaty smell that is Papuan. There was no wind at all anywhere and the disconsolate little palm outside the window seemed to hold its breath.

I thought that I was hardly asleep when there were noises again, voices talking in low tones. The flames of the kitchen fire shone brightly on the ceiling now, orange instead of red. They were boiling the coffee. Outside the window the little palm was a darker shadow in a square of blue-grey. Inside our mosquito nets we struggled with our clothes, shaking our boots to make sure that no centipedes or scorpions had taken refuge there during the night.

Already as we swallowed our coffee it was light enough

to see figures coming up the street from the houses at the beach. The headmen were calling and shouting, giving each man his assigned load for the march. From one side came complaints. Here was an argument. Like a storm cloud, van der Goot swept over the men. A stream of words came from his mouth. He had an amazing patter of oaths, sarcastic comments, humorous sallies, and short, sharp commands. They came out in measured sequence, slightly varied to fit an individual case, but always wonderfully effective. To the three of us who had never seen him in this particular role he seemed suddenly rather harsh and brutal. I began to wonder if the next month with him was going to be as much fun as I had anticipated. At the moment it seemed there were not enough men. Saban, being the son of a chief, had brought along a Mooi boy of his own to help Jusup cook and carry Saban's belongings. On him van der Goot turned with a face of flint.

"You," he shouted. "What do you mean by bringing a boy of your own? Do you think you are a Raja? Well, now that he's here, he'll have to work. He can carry this one," and he hefted a large and bulky pack of food over towards the reluctant boy.

My boys looked sullen and resentful, and so, I am afraid, did I for the moment. However, van der Goot was the boss; I realized that and later I was glad that I had curbed myself. In the back country of New Guinea someone has to be the boss and be that way right from the start or lives may be at stake. Malays and Papuans are inclined to be forgetful people. They like to have their thinking done for them. Even Saban and Jusup might forget local customs and, for example, take a stroll alone through one of the gardens at night. But in the Tamrau any moving person at night who does not bear

a light and shout out his identity at intervals is sure to be greeted by a spear first and questions afterwards. And so it was up to van der Goot to order everyone to stay in camp at night, and to be sure that his order would be obeyed.

At last things seemed to be ready. Two of the police shouldered their guns and marched off ahead, and gradually the line of coolies fell in behind. There were eighty-five finally, each man carrying about forty pounds on his back, all for the wage of twelve and a half cents a day. In contrast to Misool, these packs were not carried in large baskets. Instead each man made up his pack to suit himself. That is, he arranged a series of lashings around the tin case, or burlap bag of food tins, or bedding roll, so that two loops went over his shoulders and often one over the forehead. After the loops had been arranged to fit properly, he would sit down on the ground, fit himself into this rattan harness, and then strain to his feet, another coolie giving a push from behind.

By the time the first men had reached the bottom of the street and had turned off to the left into the jungle trail the last few were packing up the kitchen pots and pans. Saban glumly shouldered his own bundle of clothes while his black sambo, Malan, struggled into the shoulder-straps of the food pack. Now they were all going and we too fell in line, van der Goot, Charis, Fred, and myself, followed by the corporal and the remainder of the police. We walked swiftly down the street and to the left at the beach where a path ran along through the sand towards the jungle. The *Ursula* was a smudge on the smooth horizon. No breeze had come up to ruffle the water. The sea stretched calm to the brownish beach where miniature waves lapped the sand. Three pale snuff-coloured crows with chin-blue eyes sat in a kapok

tree and stared at us. Then they flapped up wildly and flew off over Sansapor.

In the jungle the going was fairly easy. High overhead, two or three hundred feet, the treetops rested over everything like a blanket shutting out the sun. It was cool and dark and not so warm that walking was uncomfortable. It was very silent, this jungle, but not gloomy. It seemed more like walking through the nave of a vast cathedral. Occasional shafts of light struck down as if through windows. Arches of tracery resolved themselves into tangles of vines and ferns high up under the roof. There was even a shining lantern hanging on a chain. It was a frond of vine that had broken loose. Hanging down from the end of it was a tangled mass of orchids in flower, bright red against the sombre background. In the silence there came a rustling far off like a party of nuns on their way to devotions. No, it was a cassowary. There was just a glimpse of it and then it was gone.

Cassowaries are fascinating if somewhat dangerous birds. They are similar in general body plan to an ostrich, but smaller. Old males may grow to be a good five feet tall. They are grotesque and awkward birds with huge stout legs, a long scrawny neck, and a head of somewhat infantile proportions topped with a horny casque shaped like the helmet of a Spanish *conquistador*. They have mere vestiges of wings and their sturdy bodies are covered with a thick mat of narrow black hair-like feathers neatly parted down the middle of the back. The effect is somewhat like an old-fashioned lady's cape of monkey fur. In spite of this grotesque appearance, a full-grown cassowary can make a dangerous adversary. Each foot has three toes, the inner one of which is prolonged into a razor-sharp five-inch nail. To defend itself, the cassowary leaps into the air and strikes out with its feet, one, two, like a boxer.

With such armament it is child's play to disembowel a man.

Once unloading birds, a crate with one of my young cassowaries in it was dropped. It broke open and out stepped the bird, unharmed and perfectly tame. One of the handlers foolishly tried to pick it up, whereupon, as soon as its feet left the ground, it exercised its instinctive reaction and kicked, laying open the man's arm from wrist to elbow.

I only saw these birds once or twice in the jungle, and then fleetingly. They can run much faster than a man. Corporal Sahertian was a skilled hunter, and on days when he stayed in camp he would often sally out with his rifle in search of fresh food. I had originally been in hope that I could secure a specimen this way. But in all my time on patrol the good corporal succeeded in shooting only two birds and these were both unskinnable by the time they reached camp. After all a cassowary is a heavy bird. The easiest way for the corporal and his Madic assistants to transport it was to sit down first and have a few pieces for lunch, which served the double purpose of making them stronger and lightening their burden.

We came to a river flowing swiftly down towards the sea. The banks were fairly high and the river bed was much wider than the stream, showing that it came from the mountains from which it carried floods at some seasons. When we climbed down to it we saw that the river was bold and big.

"This is the Mega," said van der Goot. "I believe it drains the western part of the Tamrau range."

"It certainly comes from limestone," shouted Fred above the roar. "Look at that colour."

The water was milky-grey, impenetrable to the eye.

"I expect that crocodiles don't like this water," smiled van der Goot.

We all cut staffs to support ourselves and struggled gingerly across in single file. We stayed close to each other, for the boulders were round and smooth and the current strong. However, there were no accidents except that the water came up over our knees and so Charis and Fred and I, who were wearing boots, all lay on the farther bank on our backs and propped our feet in the air. The results were varying. Those with the tightest boot-tops had the most water run down their pants-legs. Of course van der Goot was wearing only shoes and puttees. He merely sat on a stone and laughed at our anguished antics.

Charis and I found that our boots, so successful before, were giving us a good deal of trouble on the steep slopes. The path was treacherous and slippery after crossing the river. There were two long steep hills up which we had to toil, only to crawl down the farther side. Generations of bare feet, great splayed feet with wide-reaching prehensile toes, had worn these paths until the dirt was hard and slippery like brown ice. We were the only ones with smooth leather soles on our boots. On this surface they were anything but efficient. To add to our misery, the native magistrate, knowing of our coming, had ordered his men out to clean up the paths. As a result every available sapling or branch that might have helped us had been neatly lopped off close to the ground.

"I only hope the path after Sainkedoek won't be as well kept as this one," I panted.

"Don't worry. It will not," and van der Goot smiled back over his shoulder.

From the last hill we could see a big flat valley densely carpeted with trees. Twenty miles away there rose a low range of hills.



An ancestor spirit, crowned with a tuft of the crest feathers  
of a Victoria crowned pigeon. (Biak Island.)



*Penguin Photo*

Cassowaries with their funny wattles and door-mat feathers look silly at first.  
But they can kick with their claws and disembowel a man with ease.

"The Moraid country," van der Groot waved his arm to embrace the ridges, "where I was on patrol last September. We brought back nineteen prisoners, members of a *hong*, a head-hunting party. Sainkedoek lies in the valley. Where the hills begin, that is the boundary between the Madic and the Moraid tribes."

Below the hill there was a swamp and then another river, this time a silent one, flowing blackly in a tunnel of trees. We edged across it gingerly on an enormous log. On the farther side groups of porters were sitting, leaning their packs against tree stumps. Some of them were smoking hand-made cigarettes rolled from a piece of dried palm leaf and a few shreds of reeking Java tobacco. As we passed van der Goot spoke to them, joking and smiling, patting their tin boxes, encouraging them. I could begin to see why he was so popular with the men. His enthusiasm was infectious, an invaluable asset at the close of a long, hard day.

Again the trail was more like that at the coast. High trees arched overhead, cutting out the falling light of afternoon. A final curve in the trail and there ahead was a small reception committee. In front stood the native magistrate of Sainkedoek, a tall, thin, delicate-looking Malay in starched white uniform. Behind him were grouped two or three of the local *Kapalas* of the district and some of their retainers. The committee swept forward, bowing and saluting and smiling all at once. We shook hands and van der Goot introduced Charis and Fred to the magistrate.

"Sahoewat, this is the lady and this is the Tuan who will live in Sainkedoek. How is the *pasangrahan*?"

Sahoewat bowed and smiled and assured us everything was ready. Then he turned and led the way down the trail, his retainers clustering along in our rear in ani-

mated conversation with one or two of the coolies who were close behind.

Sainkedoek is in the middle of the flat valley we had seen from the hill. A piece of timber had been cut down and burned over, leaving an area about a quarter of a mile square. Some of it was still burning. Thin smoke columns rose up at intervals like the ghosts of the trees that once grew there. The ground was all dust and ashes underfoot. It is a typical "made" town. The government simply decided that this was the correct geographical location and began to build it. All the local tribesmen were rounded up at a meeting and told that from now on they would have to pay a poll tax. When they said that they did not have any money, a natural enough state of affairs, they were told that that was quite all right, they could work off their indebtedness to the government by helping to build Sainkedoek.

There can be no arguing with such a system. It is neat and efficient. The local people come to feel pride in keeping their paths to and from these little new villages in first-class shape. They work hard and willingly and for the most part they enjoy it as a diversion. The only fault in the system comes when an occasional native magistrate fails to keep his records very carefully and as a result some of the people work overtime. This can be a real hardship, for gardens must be kept up, even in the way the Papuans keep them up, in order to yield anything at all.

So far Sahoewat had done his job well. There was a magistrate's house and a smaller one for his two policemen. There was the large *pasangrahan* where Fred and Charis would live, and there were four or five houses for the Madic people, although these last had not been much lived in so far. The *pasangrahan* was built like all the

other houses, on piles raised about three feet from the ground. The floor was made of stout saplings, trimmed and laid close together over a framework of strong posts. The walls were of split sage stems, called *gabba gabba* in Sorong, while the roof was of atap, the local palm thatch. A veranda ran all around the house and continued out in a sort of gangway behind connecting with a small cook-house for Martin. In the centre there were four box-like rooms. In the middle of the front veranda, the supporting posts had been continued right up through the floor to form the four legs of a table, the top of which was made of tiny split saplings. In the middle distance two small sheds marked the location of a crude bath-house complete with five-gallon kerosene tin and dipper, and an even cruder w.c.

A number of the carriers had already arrived. More were coming in all the time. There was much to be done sorting out our possessions. A number of coolies were paid off and told to start back to Sansapor next morning to pick up the rest of Charis's and Fred's food. Fred, van der Goot, and I hurried out before it was quite dark to take a bath.

Two hundred yards behind the *pasangrahan* near the edge of the forest there was a small stream.

"Sahoewat told me about this place," said van der Goot. "I don't know why, but this water is tabu to the people here. That makes it very useful of course because we know that they won't go near and pollute it."

It was a small sandy brook gurgling along about its own business and looking not in the least tabu. We threw off our dirty, wet clothes and plunged into the water. It was not very deep and somewhat pebbly, but the sensation of sitting down and letting the cool water flow over and around you was eminently satisfactory.

The air was soft and warm and full of the myriad sunset noises of the jungle. That is the time, just as the sun is glancing off the tops of the trees high above, when all the crickets, katydids, and their numerous relatives start to tune up. Then the sound reaches a steady pitch as of a thousand thousand buzz-saws all cutting through endless pieces of timber. Mingled with this there come other insect noises like the faint whine of distant turbines. Then there are the siren noises of parrots calling as they fly to their roosts, the gong calls of paradise birds, and the insistent "whoop-whoop" of the rifle bird, a metallic black paradise bird. At first it seems deafening. Then after a few minutes it is forgotten and you can talk again in normal tones.

As we dressed I glanced up at a huge tree nearby, one of the few that had been left standing in the open. High up on a bare limb which projected out over the stream stood a pair of ducks, white with chestnut-coloured bands across the breast and neck and back. It was a pair of sheldrakes, of the kind called the Radjah, a rare duck all over its range in the Moluccas and New Guinea. While we speculated on what they could find to their taste in Sainkedoek, they flew off over the village, the larger male flying slightly ahead of his mate. Later Fred collected some of the small fish of this stream on which the sheldrakes possibly fed, only to find that they belonged to a new genus of freshwater fish. Freshwater fish of any sort seem to be rather rare in New Guinea and the islands far away from the continents. Usually they are saltwater forms that have become adapted somehow over a long period of evolution until they are able to survive secondarily in fresh water. That is to say, this is the supposition of the scientists who have studied the matter. They have found that the closest relatives of these rare fresh-

water fish are saltwater dwellers, often along the coasts of the same islands on which the freshwater forms live. It is, therefore, logical to suppose that these fish are related and that one has derived from the other; but here again, as so often in the case of scientific theories, it is only a theory and must so remain until proved.

We picked our way gingerly back to the *pasangrahan*, stumbling a little in the semi-darkness. Martin had lit the pressure-lamps. The welcome glow reflected on the teapot and cups on the table. Someone made the popular suggestion that we have a little rum in our tea to celebrate the installation of Charis and Fred in their new house. As we sat around the table feeling clean and rested in fresh clothes, we all beamed at each other.

"It's not so bad, is it, this Sainkedoek?" queried van der Goot.

"Bad? It's heaven!" exclaimed Charis.

There was a shuffling noise and we sighted a little delegation coming into the circle of light. There were four Madic men walking close together supporting a slightly larger man who moved with evident difficulty. They stopped at the bottom of the four ladder-like stairs and looked at us questioningly. When van der Goot asked them what they wanted they came slowly up the steps. One of the men pointed at the larger man.

"What is it?" asked van der Goot.

For answer they held out his right arm. It was wrapped in a sort of bandage of caked leaves and mud. The men picked at it. Gingerly they began to loosen it from the arm. It came off in rough hunks until finally there was a place where the arm should have been. The sight was chilling. We sucked in our breaths.

"Charis, go and get a basin and some permanganate and warm water," said Fred quietly.

In among the dank leaves was a mass that had once been an arm. There was a great gaping wound out of which came a thin greenish fluid. The whole thing looked rather like a chocolate blancmange.

"How did this happen?"

"*Babi*, Tuan. A big one with sharp tusks."

"So then you are a pig hunter?"

The glazed eyes of the man lit up a little. In a few moments Charis came back with the basin and we had a short council of war. It was decided to bathe the arm at first and then put on a fresh wet bandage. After that we could find whether there was any gangrene. In the meantime Sahoewat had appeared. He confided to Mr. van der Goot that our wounded pig hunter was the principal *Kapala* of the local Madic people. Charis made a sling for the arm, told him to come back to-morrow, and gave him a parting present of three aspirin tablets. We watched the little group slowly descend the front steps and pass out beyond the light.

"If he gets well," remarked van der Goot, looking thoughtful, "you should have no difficulty measuring as many Madic people as you wish and learning all that you want here in Sainkedoek."

"But if he gets worse?"

"Then I think it would be necessary for you to leave quite quickly. You see, now that you have given him some mediciné, it is your responsibility."

Fortunately for Charis and Fred, the permanganate seemed to be the proper treatment, for no gangrene had set in. As a result Charis's researches among the Madic were highly successful, and her supply of aspirin tablets ran out in a week.

That same evening a detachment of our coolies called on van der Goot to tell him that they would not have

enough sago to go into the mountains. Consequently the next day was set apart for sago-collecting. If van der Goot was irritated at the delay, he was too used to Papuan inconsistency to show it. As for me, I was elated at the chance of having a solid day of collecting without being on the move.

In the greyness of early morning Sainkedoek looked bleaker than ever. There was a burned shard of a tree sticking up forty feet into the air in front of the *pasangrahan*. From a hole near the top came a whistle. I could just make out the head of a parrot in the hole. It was a forest parrot, one of a type that I had not seen since Biak. The males have plum-coloured heads, the females brown, on a soft pastel-green body. As the female flew out I could hear a soft chattering noise from inside the hole. One of the Madic people saw me looking at the hole, and rushing up to the tree pushed at it. It gave with a sighing noise and fell over, whereupon he abstracted a young parrot from the hole which was promptly given to Charis. It was a lovely thing, tame and confiding, with large pale staring eyes.

With this good augury for bird-hunting I started down one path with Malan, Saban's boy, and a Madic guide, while Saban and Jusup went off in the opposite direction.

"Try to get any ghost birds (owls) you see, and any paradise birds," I shouted after them.

On the other side of the tabu brook was the path leading into the jungle. The sun was up, shining down into the open space between the trees. The trail was fairly wide, soft bluish-grey mud between spindly stunted trees. Occasionally larger trees had fallen by the trail, their trunks making temporary dry pathways. On one of these there was a happy Madic family group—a man and a woman squatting on their haunches facing each other. They

were evidently on their way to collect sago, for beside the tree trunk rested the large sago baskets which they had been carrying. Alternately one would lower his or her large floppy mop of hair for the inspection of the other. Each of them held in one hand what looked like a short dagger. It was a flattened piece of pale cassowary bone. Using this like a hairpin, one of them would run it through the hair of the other. At intervals they would reach up with the other hand which held a short round piece of shell.

I soon found out what they were doing. The pale surface of bone passed through the hair revealed very well the presence of dark lice. With the other hand they would then squash the louse between the two hard surfaces. The insect usually stuck to the bone, which was then withdrawn from the hair and passed back to the mouth with a swift motion. The woman was faring better than the man, for he was having competition. On her head was sitting a small pet blue and red lory which grabbed for a louse every time the man killed one. I had often wondered why Wilfred, the pet lory I bought in Sorong, used to love to perch on my head and explore all over, preening my hair with delicate motions of his bill. Now I realized that life must be rather empty for a lory brought into American surroundings from such fertile fields as those of a good head of Papuan hair.

Farther on the trail became wetter and wetter. At last we were slogging along through a good eight inches of mud. Birds seemed to be scarce. I collected a few sunbirds round a flowering bush and a single parrot that flew across the trail. The trees began to thin out, to be replaced by large spreading sago palms. There was a sound of chopping off on the left and I followed a branching trail which led in that direction. Finally the trail

widened out and here was a scene of great activity. Three or four of the large palms had been cut down and the Madic people were busy cutting out the sago. Old trunks were floating about and on a pile of these I sought refuge from the now foot-deep water.

Manufacturing edible sago, at least from a Papuan's point of view, is a simple operation. After the palm is cut down, the bark is sliced off the surface away from the ground, revealing an enormous quantity of pure white pith. Actually the living part of the palm is a thin outer shell of bark and growing tissue. The pith is rather tough and fibrous and must be softened with water. Using his axe and a liberal supply of water, the sago harvester now pounds the pith up into a soggy mass of pulp, more or less stringy according to taste. This is now crammed into packages made of leaves and bound around with rattan so that when dried it forms crude cakes which are carried about in big baskets. I understood now why sago cakes always were a dull grey colour. The water used for mashing up the pith was simply the water in which we were all standing. Also the cramming into packages was done by wet hands. During the process the Papuans, who never take baths, could not help becoming somewhat cleaner, while the sago took on its new and characteristic colour. Some of the men were munching the stuff. One of them politely asked Malan if the white Tuan would like some.

"I have eaten," I said, wondering how hungry I would have to be to learn to like sago.

Farther on the swamp seemed to end. Once again the trail wound through fairly dry, fairly open jungle. Ground pigeons here were numerous. I could seldom see them, but always heard them as they flew up. These were small ground pigeons, far smaller than the great

crowned pigeons. They were about the size of a partridge, brown and blue-grey. Their marking was such that it was almost impossible to see them on the ground. When they flew, they went up fast with a clapping of wings which always startled me so that I was too late to hit them. But sometimes I could mark one down and stalk it where it had landed.

Again I was conscious suddenly that there was Papuan activity near. Although I could not put my finger on any one noise and say, "There are Papuans there," yet the whole complex of noises bespoke human activity. I do not know how these things are. Sometimes I would come upon people suddenly in the jungle, never knowing that they were there. At other times I knew ahead of time. And so it is. There are good days and bad days. One day I shot well. The next day I missed. To be a successful jungle-dweller there must be relatively few bad days.

Suddenly there was an incredible smell. It was a smell of powerful proportions. I struggled hard to recollect any smell like it in my experience. First of all it was a decayed smell and a very potent one. Then as it became stronger I suddenly remembered the smell of a cook-house when the hams and bacons are being cured. Yes, there was a distinct smell of cured meat.

"What is it?" I asked Malan.

He shook his head and turned to the Madic guide. They spoke for a time in what I took to be Madic. Madic is evidently a language. At least there are recognizable syllables. But I decided rapidly that Charis was going to have an exceedingly hard time learning any part of it.

"They are smoking a man, Tuan," Malan turned to me.

"What!"

"Yes, Tuan. One of the men has died and some other

people owed him debts. Now his family are smoking him."

"But what for?"

More conversation. Evidently this was not a Mooi custom.

"Tuan. If they smoke him, then his ghost will not stay in his body. Then the other people will be frightened and they will send the debts back to his family."

"What sort of debts?"

"Oh, Tuan, plates, gongs, pigs, fruit, any kind of thing."

We walked on a little distance. The stench was now overpowering. Evidently the family had not been doing a very efficient job. Finally I noticed a thin column of blue smoke winding up between the trees. It was off to one side not far from the trail. Malan whispered at my back.

"Tuan, do not go near the people. They would be afraid if you went there."

Remembering what the people on Biak had done to the visiting entomologist because they had been afraid of him, I decided to take Malan's advice. From the trail as we walked past, it was just possible to see a high platform of sticks with a small smoky fire beneath it on the ground. The platform was about the size of a coffin, covered with palm fronds. There did not seem to be anybody tending the fire. Presumably they did not want to be seen.

We went on down the trail. It was a narrow one, just an indication of a path between tall close trees. After a time there seemed to be no more birds and I decided to turn back. I noticed that our Madic guide soon found us another trail. We did not smell the "smoking" smell again.

At the *pasangrahan* all seemed to be settled and in

order. Already the place looked lived in, twice as comfortable as it had the day before. Fred was full of plans for making a vegetable garden in front of the house. Charis had bought a young cassowary from one of the policemen. It was ensconced under the kitchen, eating a mound of scraps from the lunch prepared by Martin. It was very curious. When people went by it would run out from its shelter, humping its body from side to side as it ran. Some of the people were beginning to come back from the sago garden. One man had a dog with him. When it saw this, the cassowary, young as it was, changed abruptly from playful pet to a demon of purpose. It let out a hissing sort of noise, fluffed up its ridiculous door-mat of body feathers, and ran at the dog, making short exploratory kicks along the way. The dog fled shrieking until the cassowary, conscious that its territory was once more its own, left off the chase and ambled back to resume life once more under the kitchen. Sometimes it would come right up on to the porch, where it would sit beside the table, peeping at intervals like an overgrown baby chick.

"They are smoking a dead man over beyond the sago swamp," I announced during lunch.

"Oh, where? I want to see it," cried Fred.

"Much better not," remarked van der Goot. "Maybe later, they might ask you. Now they would be afraid."

"Afraid?"

"You must always remember not to make these people afraid of you unless you are in a safe position.

"Herr Schacht who went through here in '36 was an example," he continued after a pause. "He was on a walking-trip around the world, going to write a book about it, I think. The magistrate in Sorong before me let him go through here after he signed a paper taking

full responsibility upon himself. He had one combined porter and guide, a Karoon."

"How far did he get?"

"Into the Karoon country, about six days from here. Then his boy ran away one night when they were sleeping in a village. Schacht was left alone for three days with nothing except a few yams he found in one of the houses. Besides he had malaria. Then the boy came back for some reason. And here," van der Goot levelled his finger at us, "was where Schacht made his mistake. He let his temper get the best of him. Everything was all right. The boy had touched nothing. Probably that made Schacht even madder, you know. Then he grabbed for the shotgun which the boy had also taken, to break it and see if any of the shells had been used. That was a bad mistake, for of course the boy was terrified by this time. He thought Schacht was going to shoot him and so he hit him with his knife first."

There was a pause while Martin cleared off the plates.

"What happened then?"

"Apparently Schacht was unconscious only. So then all the people came out from where they had been hiding, and they had a council. At first someone said, 'We had better fix him up and take him down to the coast,' But then somebody else thought that perhaps the government would punish them if they went down to the coast. Then someone suggested that they might as well kill him, and at that a very wise old man put in that they must not eat him, because being a white Tuan he would have a very strong ghost. So, not wanting to have any individual responsibility, they sharpened a stake and all leaned on it until it went through him. And that was the end of Schacht."

"Did the government do anything?"

"Oh yes, they sent in a patrol and the people told them exactly what had happened. After all, in their eyes it was the right thing to do. But of course we had to punish them. However, you must understand, it was all Schacht's mistake to begin with. After all we could not bring him back to life and that was his own fault. In the jungle far away from the coast you cannot become angry and play at being the great white Tuan unless you have ten soldiers behind your back, and not always even then," and van der Goot fell to stuffing tobacco busily into his pipe.

Saban had collected a nice reddish-brown owl and two of the rifle birds that make such loud "whoop" noises. They are paradise birds, black all over with a brilliant metallic greeny-blue shield of feathers on the neck and breast. In size they are about as big as a blue jay except that they have a rather long curved stout bill. There is one in the Bronx Zoo in the bird-house, and whenever I go there and hear that loud ringing call it is so characteristic of the lowland jungle in the Madic and Karoon country that I have to blink twice and pinch myself.

By evening all the birds were skinned, and once again van der Goot and I had to sort out our tins and loads for the coolies. We would need better than fifty men. From the steps van der Goot gave them a great harangue about going into the Tamrau and the Karoon country, and then he wrote down in a book all the names of the men fit and willing to go, and then they were issued their loads.

The next morning was a repetition of that one in Sانسapor. Again I woke up to feel that it was still night; but no, it was morning, and people were stirring, and I could smell coffee. It was cold and my teeth were chattering as I staggered out to the bath-house to douse my face with water. A heavy mist hung over all of Sainkedoek. Figures loomed out of the greyness like ghosts.

But after breakfast it was clear and we were able to line up in a row, sixty-seven men strong, while Fred took pictures of us. Then the two soldier-police shouldered their rifles and were off, along with one of the *Kapalas* who was to guide us to the next village. After them the coolies started, and van der Goot and I were shaking hands with Charis and Fred. We felt rather gruff and brusque.

"Well, so long," we said. "See you in April."

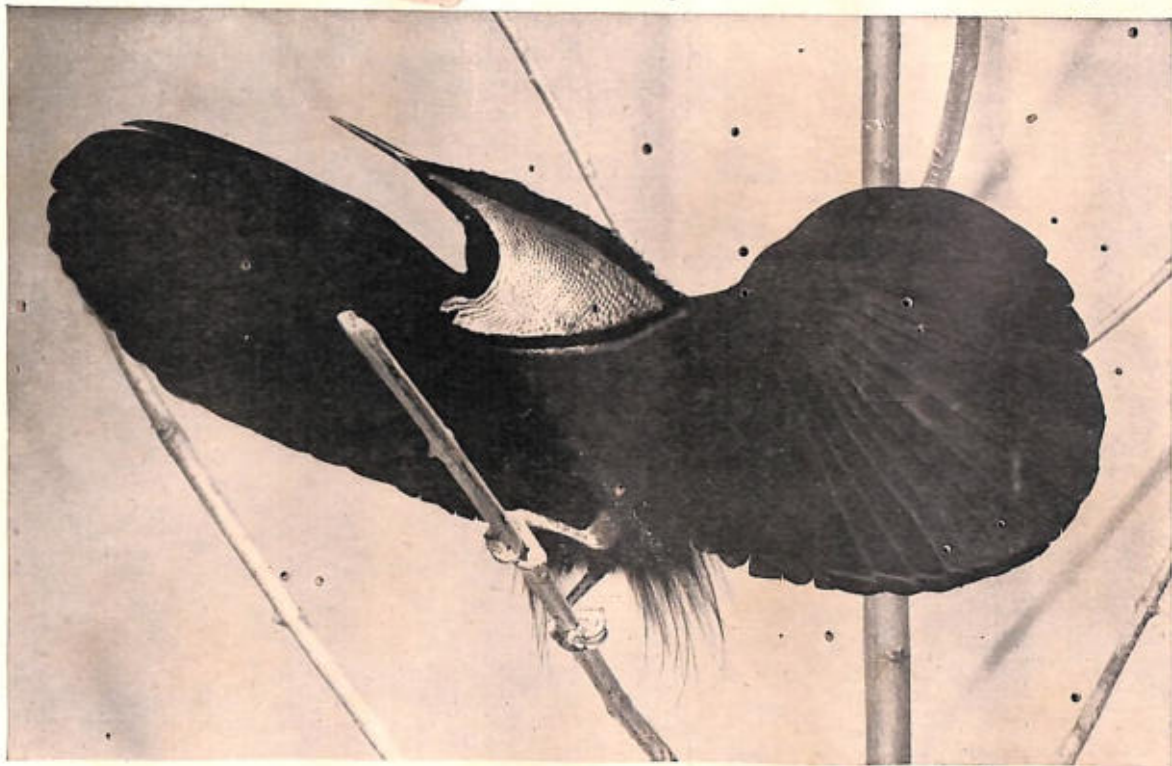
"Take care of yourselves," they said.

We nodded like robots and waved and smiled and walked off all at once, van der Goot in the lead, across the small gurgling stream that was tabu.

## TOWARDS THE TAMRAU

**T**HIS day there was something wrong with the schedule. It began to rain in the early morning. In New Guinea when it rains all other noises are eliminated. At first there is a sound far off coming nearer and nearer. It is a great roaring that gradually fills the ears. The sense of its coming is oppressive and a little nerve-racking at first. You keep hoping that there may be some sort of shelter, anything, a few palm leaves. After a while that feeling goes. When the rain is near, you simply grit your teeth, button up the collar of your shirt, and keep going. At first I carried a jacket with a hood made of rainproof cloth. But the humidity inside this affair, once it is closed up, is stifling. In a few moments it is as wet inside as out. As for van der Goot, he simply strode along through the rain as if it did not exist. The only difference it made in his behaviour was that he kept the bowl of his pipe upside down when it rained, right side up when it was not raining.

The rain came just as we left the last vestiges of a cleared trail leaving Sainkedoek. After that there was only a muddy rut straggling off between the trees. The land seemed to be very flat here, what there was of it. Everything was submerged under a varying amount of water which apparently had found no ready outlet. At intervals we crossed and recrossed an idle little river which mean-



*New York Zoological Society*

The rifle bird displays by putting his head in the air and spreading out two fans of flank feathers on either side. His neck and breast are covered with a brilliant metallic shield of feathers.



Making a bivouac. All the trees are cut down in a square where the tent is to go.



The poles go up for the framework of the tent.

dered about among the trees like a lost soul. At least I suppose it was a river. It was simply a place where you noticed that the water was actually flowing somewhere. Everywhere else the water just lay on the surface of the ground to an average depth of about eight inches. In the places where it was moving we stumbled into a broad ditch which the current had carved out of the ground. The water was uniformly muddy or opaque so that there was no way of telling whether your foot was going down eight inches or three feet except by noting carefully whether or not the water was moving in this particular spot.

At intervals there were large fallen trees along which we could walk. However, at the beginning of the march, the coolies were all ahead of us. Every one of their wet muddy feet had been along the same tree trunk. To walk on one of these slippery logs means creeping along with bowed legs, all the inner thigh muscles taut and tense. At first we watched each other and laughed. But after a few hours of this gait it isn't funny any more. It hurts too much. Why we never fell I don't know. Perhaps the sight of one of the soldiers just in front gave us added caution. He came up out of that stinking mud looking like one of Charlie Chaplin's pursuers who had just fallen flat into a cement-mixing trough. Only this time it wasn't funny at all. We had much too far to go before we would be able to change our clothes.

As if to emphasize once for all what we were in for, the leeches began here. There had been none on Misool. On Biak it was apparently too dry. But here it was good leech weather. These leeches come in two different sizes. I think the worst is the very small one. It is a mere wisp of a waving thing, perhaps three-sixteenths of an inch long. These creatures will hie themselves to the very

outer edge of a leaf and sit there all day long, waving the front end of their bodies in an effort to come in contact with some living thing. They are so small that they are hard to notice. One will travel across a man's face without his noticing and even ensconce itself in his eye. These leeches bite so gently that they are not noticed until they are securely fastened. Then it is too late to pluck them off. It hurts too much in a place like the eye, and besides the bleeding afterwards will be worse. The best thing to do is to carry along a small tin eye-cup and a bottle of weak potassium permanganate solution. That is much pleasanter than the standard New Guinea practice of having a friend spit tobacco juice into your eye. At least I think so. There are even other places these leeches will penetrate. It is better to choose the setting, with some care before relieving oneself.

The other leech is fairly large and consequently relatively innocuous. It simply lands on the neck or arm or trousers-leg, and before there is any consciousness of its presence it has burrowed down through crevices and crannies until it is almost anywhere on the body. Time and again I have felt the sting of a leech withdrawing its teeth after a good meal on my foot or shin or calf. To get there it had to go over the top of my boot, down the leg of my trousers which was tightly tucked into the boot, and then up or through a heavy woollen stocking.

Now in the rain the leeches were all out. We came to a place where there were quite a number of fallen trees. Here the coolies had decided to halt for a rest. They were squatting on their hams on the trunks of the trees like a solemn conclave of monkeys. Each one had a sleeping-mat made of pandanus which could serve as a raincoat. It was double thickness, about four feet long by two feet wide. On two edges it was sewn together, making a kind of

hood which went over the head and hung down the back. They looked quite comfortable under the mats, some of them smoking Jaya tobacco, others busy with their betel nut. One man would crack open a betel, which is about the size of a pecan. Then he would hand it around until two or three of them had a piece. Along with this everyone had a bamboo lime container with a piece of carved stick or cassowary quill. First pass the stick through the mouth to wet it, then dip it in the lime container and it comes out all covered with powder. This is then passed into the mouth and pulled out with a sucking noise of approval. It is incredibly bitter and puckerish to the taste, rather like alum. The Papuans, however, think it nectar, and they hand the lime-sticks around to their friends as the Indians used to pass the ceremonial pipe.

As we went past them van der Goot shouted and joked with his usual good humour and the men smiled back at us from under their hoods. The policemen ahead of us halted now, slipping the straps of their rifles off their shoulders. One of the police pulled out his short sword and cut some fern leaves which he placed in two piles on a log farther along. This was pure affectation, for the water came up through the leaves quite as well as if he had let us sit on the bare log. We both lighted our pipes under the hood of my waterproof jacket.

"How much wetter than this is it possible to be?" I asked, watching a small bird's-nest fern which was filling up with rain and then keeling over to one side and dumping out the water at regular intervals.

"Once, taking a patrol along the Digoel River, there was a flood and we waited on the bank for canoes. We waited all night and most of the next day standing up to our armpits in water," said van der Goot. He turned to scratch his back and I saw a great red stain spreading

all over his shirt. It looked as if he had just been stabbed. "Wait a minute," and while he pulled his shirt open, I got out my iodine bottle and put a drop on the black swollen leech that was crawling over his shoulder. Even in the rain one drop of iodine will shrivel them, up and make them loose their grip.

We occupied ourselves cleaning the leeches off our boots. Even van der Goot's tightly wound puttees were no match for an insistent leech in good training.

The corporal came up from the rear and announced that the last of the stragglers were in.

"There is one man who is not very good," he announced. "I think he is sick."

"Homesick for Sainkedoek now that it's raining?"

"I am not sure, Tuan," and the corporal turned back with a worried face.

After a time van der Goot stood up and put his pipe in his pocket.

"*Djalan*," shouted one of the police, and we were off.

About noon the rain stopped the way it had begun. It just went off somewhere else. We could hear it roaring along through the jungle behind us. All about there were many little noises, sucking, gurgling, and hissing noises as the water ran off in every direction. The earth seemed to pant and sigh like a man who has drunk too much in a hurry and has to catch his breath. There was a great dripping from the leaves. Near us the vine leaves nodded and dipped as drops from above splashed off them. Walking, it was almost as wet as in the rain because every branch, every leaf, had its burden of water to shake off on to the passer-by.

We came to a piece of open, relatively dry ground.

"Rest," called van der Goot, and we halted. Again the

front policeman cut fern leaves for us and we sat down on two small boulders.

Gradually as we waited the coolies came in. They would come along in line, single file, eyes to the trail, and then one after another they would see the man ahead halting and they would look up. Then they would glance about in a satisfied sort of way for something to lean their burden against. Some would squat down in front of a stone or log. Others with lighter loads would slip the rattan loops off their shoulders while still standing. Then they would stretch and yawn and reach for the little woven bags that dangled down under one arm. They would find a piece of sago and fall to chewing on the stuff, dry and hard as it was.

Jusup appeared, and the policeman who was van der Goot's orderly. Each of them carried a small set of enamelled dishes strung one over the other and made tight with a handle on top. In them were our lunches. These were much the same. In the top dish was rice, in the next one down some sauce to go on it, possibly in the third some fried eggs or omelet. Occasionally as a treat the bottom dish contained fruit. Usually it was empty.

I never cared for eggs, and even now, hungry as I invariably was, I never could bear the look of a cold fried egg. But van der Goot ate them with gusto. He also put other things on his rice. His orderly carried a glass jar of salted peanuts which were delicious mixed in with everything else. Then there was another jar of *lombok*, red and white peppers of terrifying strength which I never sampled. Again he would have large, rather dubious-looking sardines in tomato sauce. Remembering the Australian kippers, I did not try the sardines either. Jusup, by now resigned to my pallid tastes, confined him-

self to making me a concoction of rice plus the remains of a pigeon shot along the way, all mixed with an omelet cut into thin strips. To wash our various dishes down, van der Goot and I would have cold tea out of a large kettle which one of the boys carried. To keep the tea from leaking out, a piece of rattan was wound around the top and bottom, and a tuft of green leaves stuck in the spout. I also carried a canteen because I had soon found that short of carrying the tea-kettle myself, there was no practicable method of making sure that it stayed anywhere near us along the trail.

Now we sat facing each other on two of our tin boxes while a third between us served as a table. All about sat or squatted or perched the men, the police, Jusup, Saban, and our guides in one group busily gulping down huge platefuls of rice seasoned with a little salted fish. Near them, on the fringe socially speaking, were grouped the fifteen superior coastal porters, the ones who wore singlets and cotton drawers. Then came the long line of coolies, Madic, one or two Mooi—the rest having turned back at Sainkedoek—and a few Karoon. The Karoon people live in the Tamrau and are feared by the Madic and the coastal tribes. Physically they seemed much the same as the others. I had an impression, probably no more than that, that they were a bit more delicate in build, a bit paler, more brown in complexion. They all seemed to be heavily armed with spears and bows and arrows. The spears for the most part had points made of bamboo, beautifully fashioned, sharp as razors, and notorious for making an ugly wound.

We were just through our lunch when the corporal came up from the rear and saluted.

"Tuan," he said. "That man. He is very bad. I think he is crazy."

"Where is he?"

"Back here," said the corporal, looking tired and hungry, and he turned and led us back to the end of the line.

Whether the man was mad or not, he was certainly giving a good imitation. He lolled back against a stump, his head hanging over to one side. He was drooling, and only the whites of his eyes showed.

I reached down and felt his forehead. He seemed to be burning up.

"He's got a bad fever."

"This man must go back to Sainkedoek," said van der Goot. "Is there anyone else to go back?"

For answer the corporal pointed out two miserable specimens. One man had his foot bandaged. He told us that he had nearly lost a whole toe on a submerged root back at the river. The other didn't look like a man at all. His abdomen was distended straight out in front in the most alarming way. The rest of him was thin, pathetically so, but then there was this vast unmasculine bulge.

"God," cried van der Goot. "Who ever allowed that man to come along?"

"No one, Tuan. He just came."

"You know what that is, Ripley? That is one of the biggest enlarged spleens I have ever seen. That's malaria. You know, if that man was to fall down or be hit in the stomach, he would die straight off. That's all spleen, if you can believe it."

While I was getting out some quinine tablets to give to the men, van der Goot gave them a great harangue. The man with the spleen wanted so much to come along that the only way van der Goot could persuade him to return was to tell him that he must assume responsibility for leading the other two back safely. At that he seemed

to be very pleased and promised to get them back to Sainkedoek.

After about two hours more of marching we began to notice that the valley up which we had been working was closing in. We were beginning to climb ever so gradually. The ground was scattered with boulders. The trees were lower. It was impossible to get a view, but we had a feeling that the hills were closing about us. Pretty soon we would come to the foothills of the Tamrau.

We were walking along a slight ridge when suddenly one of the *Kapalas* who was acting as a guide came back along the trail.

"Tuan, there is water here. This is the place to stay."

We looked about us. The jungle was fairly thick. There was no sign of a level space. It was only three o'clock. Then van der Goot asked about the water. Wasn't there any water farther on? No, there was no water, and the two other guides who had come back now joined the first man in a solemn shaking of heads. As van der Goot shrugged his shoulders, the front policeman called out "Rest, bivouac," and he wandered off the trail to look for a camp site.

It was a miserable place, dank and dark, without a view or a decent spot to put up a tent. We walked about disconsolately until van der Goot decided that one particular piece of ground looked a little bit flatter than the rest. Gradually the men began coming in, and as they put down their packs some started to cut the brush with their knives while others went off into the forest to look for rattan. Then the soldier-police all drew out their short swords, and there were one or two axes for the larger trees, and we began to make a camp. In a very short time all the trees were down in a square where the tent was to go. Then men began to appear with poles. These

had to be chopped and trimmed to fit. Gradually a framework began to take shape. Even as some of the men were putting up a ridgepole in the centre with two smaller, shorter sets of poles along the side, other men were laying down a floor of poles and crosspieces. Everything was lashed expertly together with rattan. From the ridgepole other poles were laid down at an angle to the poles along the sides, making the supporting frame for the tent.

By the end of half an hour a complete framework had been put up and the men were sliding the squares of canvas over it. There were four of these. When lashed together they made a shelter almost forty feet long and twenty wide. More men had come in with long sections of bark which they spread over the framework of poles on the ground. When this bark was spread out flat it made a surprisingly serviceable floor. In no time, it seemed, our bunks were up, water was on the boil for tea, and van der Goot and I were rummaging about in our tin boxes for dry clothes. Meanwhile the rest of the men had been busy cutting brush and clearing the ground for their own shelters. Palm leaves by the hundred were cut and dragged into camp to be draped over a similar framework of poles. The result was a dense thatch roof which, for a few days at least, would be quite as convenient as our canvas fly. A smaller thatch shelter made a cook-house for Jusup and van der Goot's orderly.

About four, after several cups of hot tea, I went out hunting. As guide I took along a young Madic called Serai who was interesting for two reasons. In the first place he was bright and full of curiosity and knew birds. In the second he would have done an anthropologist's eyes good. He was a fine example of a type of Papuan with a strong negroid strain which expressed itself in a pair of very pronounced buttocks, a condition known as

steatopygy. Not far from the camp we came to a clear, gently sloping hillside of light dry jungle. There were a few fallen trees along the slope. The soil was rich with humus.

We crouched down for a time, looking carefully at the fallen trees. Then Serai pointed out a pitta standing stock-still on a tree trunk. Pittas are gorgeous birds about the size of a robin, with practically no tail at all. The head is rather large and the body fat, which makes their three-inch-long legs appear very thin and spindly. They run in bright colours, blues and reds and greens, sometimes with a velvet black cap or a white belly for contrast. Often I heard pittas calling in the jungle, but very seldom are they visible. This particular species was blue and dusty red, and its call was of three notes like that of a bobwhite quail. Pittas love rich humus soil and fallen trees and so too do Papuans. I collected this one and thought I had it marked down where it fell. But as so often in the jungle, a dead bird is as hard to find as a woodcock at home in autumn woods. While Serai and I hunted for the pitta around the trunk of the tree, he did not overlook the fact that this particular tree still had some bark. Eagerly his fingers tore at the bark. He ripped it off and found—what he was looking for—three fat white grubs. Next to a cold fried egg, I think I put a fat white grub. But here again I am afraid I am in the minority. Papuans love them, and before I could say "Pitta," Serai had eaten all three.

In the meantime I had found the pitta, and within a few minutes we collected three more and Serai had found so many grubs that he was beginning to store them, wrapped in leaves, in his woven bag. No wonder the pittas had liked this particular spot. A ground pigeon and a small flycatcher made my quota for the afternoon.

Saban meanwhile had been active. He had collected four birds including a curious black and red parrot. It was a large bird almost as big as a crow, with a nearly naked head and a strongly hooked bill which made it look like a vulture. They are called the vulturine parrot and are unknown in zoos at home. I succeeded later in buying two from a Chinese trader at Sansapor. They were very tame and friendly, belying their appearance. In the forest they stay high up in the tops of the trees in small flocks. They are quite shy then and will fly off long before you can see them. But you always know that they are on the wing because they have a loud distinctive call like a wooden rattle. *Kuk-kuk-kuk-kukukukuk*, they say, and it sounds as if they were indignant at being disturbed.

Back in camp there was a busy evening ahead for us all. Jusup and I had ten birds to skin, and van der Goot was engrossed in his notes. These were most comprehensive. Every time a Dutch magistrate makes a patrol it has to be completely recorded and reported for the benefit of the Colonial Department. The journals of thousands of men all over the Indies repose in those files, journals written in the blood and sweat of endless patrols over all the islands from Sumatra to New Guinea, over the mountains and over the seas, from Sabang to Merauke, from Manado to Timorlaut. Every magistrate in service at one of the more outlying posts is expected to make at least one patrol a year. As a result the unknown areas on the map are shrinking fast.

But not every patrol is successful. There are some unexplored areas in New Guinea that have remained that way because of the force of circumstances and the occasional fallibility of magistrates. Once I asked van der Goot how long it had taken him to get used to eating his meals in close proximity to Papuans. I am not particu-

larly delicate or queasy, but I am sure that my appetite was never at its best when I ate lunch or supper in the centre of a ring of evil-smelling little people eating sago or fat white grubs. Of course one becomes used to such things after a time. To van der Goot it was all natural.

"But you know," he said, "the Papuans are sensitive too. They feel instinctively what you think of them. They know for example that you like them even though you tell me that you think they smell. You must always remember that. Sometimes it makes the difference, the vital difference."

And then he went on to tell of a patrol which had made news all over the Indies five years before. The Mimika is one of the big rivers of southern New Guinea. Its upper reaches are still very little known. The people are a lazy, unattractive lot, crude and really brutal, with vicious faces.

"The assistant resident from Fak Fak made the patrol, along with the local magistrate, a captain of the *Feld-politie*, and two dozen police. They went up-river in a boat like my *Ursula*. They would stop at villages and count the people for the tax, and hold palavers, and tell them about government, and so on. I don't think the assistant liked the job much. He had been told by Batavia to make one patrol before he left that post to go somewhere else. I suppose he thought that this particular patrol would be the most comfortable because he could use the boat.

"Apparently the Mimika people don't like government at all. Outwardly they were merely surly, but inwardly they were in a violent frame of mind.

"One particular day they landed at a village, and after their business they had lunch right there in the village.

They sat according to precedent, the assistant resident on a camp chair, having his lunch. Then came the magistrate, then the captain, and finally about ten of the police all together. They had left their rifles stacked in a little heap by a fire where they had warmed up the lunch. All about stood a great throng of the Mimika people, watching.

"The assistant or the magistrate should have noted that there were no women in the crowd. Apparently they did not, but they had noticed that the men were all unarmed, perhaps as the result of an order from the captain and the police.

"It was very hot there in the sun. The assistant evidently disliked these people, as who would not? It was hot and they were smelly, and he did not like to have them watch him eating. It did not improve his appetite certainly. He asked the captain to tell the police to make the people move back. He apparently waved his hand and looked displeased and disgusted, I suppose, for that was the signal. At that there came a humming noise like angry hornets. That is what the people do when they are in a mob together and they are angry and they are going to kill somebody.

"From everywhere came spears suddenly, over the heads of the men in front. In a twinkling, so quickly that the white men could not even stand up, they were full of spears, the assistant resident, the magistrate, the captain. The police could not reach their rifles. Some of them were killed. Others ran to the dinghy on the bank. A few were picked off in it, but the others reached the patrol-boat. The crew on the boat, which was anchored out in the stream not far from the bank, were so astonished that they did not have time to do anything, even to raise a gun, before it was all over. Of course they fired

off some shots and scared the people away and went ashore, but everyone was dead by that time.

"So you see," van der Goot concluded with a twinkle, "it is wise never to show the Papuans that you think they are evil-smelling."

From anyone else than van der Goot these anecdotes might have seemed a bit like catechizing. If he was self-assured, if he knew all the answers about the mind and psychology of the Papuans, it was not because he was boasting. He really did know his people. I have no doubt that he was one of the best magistrates in the New Guinea service, endowed with a perception and a way of thinking that are truly Papuan. When a man really knows what he is talking about and talks about it, that is something. When he tells you things that admit of no doubt, and when he tells them with enthusiasm, with forthrightness, and with that certain wry but merry twinkle at the end, then you can listen to such a man for a very long time.

About ten o'clock it began to rain again. This time it sounded pleasant and familiar. There was the inexpressible comfort of being able to lie still in bed under the mosquito net like a small room, and hear the rain falling on the tent canyas. The policeman whose turn it was to stand guard came in under the tent and squatted there, talking in low tones to his sleepy companions. Gradually the rain increased in intensity until the sound of it was a steady numbing roar.

The next day's march was a pleasure. It had stopped raining and we were not sorry to leave our bivouac of the night. The slight rise of the previous afternoon turned into a definite series of wooded ridges of the Tamrau range. We were looking at the back of them now, at the opposite side from that which we had seen from the sea.

Fortunately we kept mostly to the small ridge along which we were walking. There was comparatively little of that up-and-down progress which seems to be the rule. During the afternoon I collected two crowned pigeons perched high up in a tree. Saban for his part succeeded in finding a king of paradise birds which the Malays appropriately call the "money bird." They are beautiful little things about the size of a starling. The head and back in the male are bright glossy red, the bill is milky-blue, and underparts are white. From the rump two narrow wirelike feathers are prolonged out over the short tail for four or five inches. At their ends they curl tightly and flare out into two shining disks of metallic green.

The paradise birds are usually characterized by having patches or ranks of feathers that are erectile. These are used in the elaborate courting dances of the males. The king bird too has its special display plumes. These consist of two small sets of greyish feathers tipped with metallic green which are ordinarily concealed under the flanks and wings. When a male is displaying, however, these feathers stand out from the sides like small shields, making the bird appear larger than it really is. The female is a small nun-like creature dressed in sober brown.

Once I saw a male displaying to a female who sat, supremely oblivious, preening her plumage. The male was manœuvring up and down a vine and the trunk of the nearby tree with as much dexterity as a nuthatch or a creeper. From time to time he moved in a series of stiff awkward hops which apparently marked the height of his rendition. At these moments he seemed to go rigid all over in a paroxysm of excitement. At the same time he made a snapping noise with his bill. It was reminiscent of the climax of a turkey gobbler's display when he quivers all over, lets out a little spitting, panting noise,

and runs forward a step or two, dragging his wings stiffly on the ground.

Later, high up in the Tamrau, I saw other species of paradise birds displaying. I was struck by one similarity in all of them, the fact that all seemed to be swept away in a spasm of nervous activity. It is curious that the intensity of these displays seems to be proportional to the wealth of plumage. A sombre-coloured member of the *Paradiseidae*, as they are called, won't have anywhere near as much elaboration or even rigidity in his dance pattern as the brilliantly coloured members of the tribe.

It is interesting to speculate on the origin of these curious dances and displays which are so specific among the different species. It would seem to be likely that these behaviour patterns are instinctive and are inherited. If they are genetic, then they have presumably arisen in the same way that the different plumages have arisen, that is, by a series of mutations or changes in the germ plasm. But why should a bird with brilliant yellow flank plumes perform just those particular steps best calculated to show these off, while another species with a bib of metallic feathers does another little dance which shows that off? Presumably all paradise birds have evolved from a common stock, a common ancestral type. Darwin might have said that those birds which had the misfortune to possess a frontal shield and still did a form of flank feather dance just didn't succeed in finding any mates, and as a result natural selection had its way. A modern geneticist probably would not speculate on these things at all, doubtless considering it bad form. But if he did, he might suggest that the mutations of structure and behaviour were linked, inherited together from generation to generation. Still another school of thought might reason that the heavy weight of dangling flank feathers would perforce

compel a displaying bird to spread them out and they could probably cite laws of physics to prove it. The best thing of all of course would be to keep some paradise birds in an aviary and watch their displays. If a yellow-plumed bird had his feathers clipped off, would he still display in exactly the same way, and so on? Experimental observations might easily lead to a fairly tenable theory in the case of this fascinating behaviour.

By late afternoon we came to a small village called Salem. This settlement marked the boundary of the Madic country. To-morrow we would be entering the territory of the Karoon. There was a pleasant little stream where we bathed gratefully, and a few small houses, one of which we took for our own. In the evening I walked along the bank of the stream for a short distance and collected, to my great surprise, a wagtail. Wagtails to me always convey the scepæ where I first saw them. Behind the University buildings at Cambridge there are the "backs," those pleasant stretches of garden and lawn running down to the River Cam. Along the stream there are rushes sometimes and water plants and then the banks swell up, richly green with that magic tapestry of lawn found only in England. In the summer there are always wagtails running up and down the banks. They are delicate birds about the size of a slim sparrow, with long tails that bob or wag from side to side as they move about. Some are yellow, some pied, greyish-white and black. They nest all over northern Europe and east to Siberia across the tundras. To people in temperate climates they seem like "our" birds, just as the bobolink seems to be something that belongs to New England or Ohio or Illinois. So it is as surprising to find a wagtail in Africa or in New Guinea as it is to see a bobolink in Argentina. And who can say that they *belong* in one place or the

other? Certainly the bobolink spends little enough time with us. Sometimes birdlovers in the United States or England tend to be too possessive about their birds, forgetting that bird students in South America or Africa may have much valuable information about these migrant species.

As I was walking back I saw, at least I think I saw, one of the rarest birds in New Guinea. The light goes so quickly that at one moment it is still light, the next it is dark. It was in that suspended moment between day and night that I saw it. There was a "whish" of wings and a large bird whistled past my head. It seemed to be black and it was travelling very fast. I think it was a bat-hawk. These curious hawks are known to live near caves where there are bats. How they catch the bats, whether on the wing or during the day at their roosts, is not known for certain. They are somewhat akin in size and shape to a falcon, but with a small weak bill like a honey buzzard. There were a few bats out flying over the stream at the moment. Whether the hawk was chasing them or not I did not discover. Afterwards it was dark and I never saw the bird. Indeed I never saw a bat-hawk to be sure of it the whole time that I was in the East Indies. But sometimes when I feel boastful I will say quite readily that I have seen a bat-hawk on the wing. At other times I am not so sure. So far as I know, there is only one specimen of this New Guinea bird in all the museums of the world, and I am inclined to think that the bird is really almost as rare as that figure indicates. Apparently there are very few bat caves in New Guinea.

Salem was not a particularly active or interesting village. There were not above eight people in residence, six of whom were ladies. I was rather surprised to find that here, so far inland, three of the ladies were wearing

sarongs of cotton cloth, while the others wore the usual wrap-around of bark cloth. On questioning them, it appeared that one or two people of the village went down to Sansapor every year with some sago or dammar to trade, and a large list of commissions from all their friends. On their return they brought cloth, tobacco, knives, axes, and sometimes mattocks, as well as occasional trinkets which might be in stock in the Chinese store at the time. Although the ladies themselves had never seen the sea, or so far as I know a white man, they knew all about both these strange concepts and were apparently quite incapable of surprise. Later I noticed that this seemed to be the dominant trait of the women in this part of the world. Perhaps because van der Goot and I were men, the women would never look at us or pretend to notice us. The men, on the other hand, tended to behave very differently. The ordinary Madic man who had probably been down to the coast and who had presumably seen a white man or at least a Chinese, was quiet and matter-of-fact about us. In the Karoon country, on the other hand, we received quite different treatment.

By dawn the next morning we were off again. After leaving Salem we were conscious of a definite physical boundary between the country of the Madic and that of the Karoon. Quite suddenly we left all semblance of valley behind and plunged into real mountain country. The hills rose steeply here. We very soon began to find the going difficult. For a time we would be marching along the knife-like ridge of a steep hill. The trail was rocky and narrow, hardly wider than a man's shoulders. Trees occasionally blocked our way and then we would have to straddle them and edge around carefully, stepping from root to root, until once again we were on the trail.

Around us, breast high, were the feathery heads of giant tree ferns, their brown trunks long and slim, reaching down twenty, sometimes forty, feet. Once or twice we walked around a clump of bamboo, but mostly the trail was lined with groves of wild ginger, a beautiful long-stemmed plant that seems to like exposed and rocky situations. The leaves grow at intervals along the stem rather like those of bamboo except much larger, and there are beautiful solid reddish-pink flowers at the ends of the stems looking like miniature pineapples.

At intervals we would descend one ridge only to climb on to another. It was steep and rough going. Climbing down was often just as hard as climbing up. At least no one had been over the trail before us cutting away the handholds. There were always plenty of convenient twigs and saplings. In fact sometimes there were too many. It is not easy, when you are scuttling down a steep hillside in the semi-darkness of a heavy patch of rain forest, to distinguish just which branch or small tree trunk should be grasped and which should not. My hands were soon scarred with the marks of numerous encounters with thorn trees. I think these trees are allied to the fig family. They are everywhere and their trunks are often covered with thorns ranging from small needle-like affairs to large warty projections which can be seen at some distance. What with the leeches and the thorns, my iodine bottle proved extremely useful. And if I used my iodine and my potassium permanganate it was not because I had hypochondriacal tendencies. The crater-like scar on my heel from Misool was still an angry purple colour after four months. A cut or a small wound invariably will fester in a place like New Guinea. Moreover, the scar tissue tends to stay discoloured and angry-looking as long as you linger in the tropics.

About twelve it began to rain. This was much the more normal procedure. Usually the morning is clear. Then about nine or ten, clouds begin to roll around in the higher valleys. By eleven everything is grey. It becomes increasingly darker and finally you hear the rain coming from far away, the dull monotonous tones of water streaming down over a dam, of water falling in a shower-bath, of water when all the taps are turned on. The rain enveloped us as we walked on. It ran down my trousers and into my boots because I had forgotten to take them out of my boot-tops and I began to make sodden squelchy noises. At least there was very little mud. This up-and-down country has its advantages. There are plenty of small rocky mountain streams that really go somewhere.

A long time later we were walking along the side of a narrow valley with very high trees. Through the steady beat of the rain I suddenly heard a great booming behind us. I thought at first it was an avalanche, but no, it was too steady, rather like deep drums.

"What's that?" I asked van der Goot.

"That means we are getting near the village." He smiled. "The men do that by throwing rocks or beating sticks against a certain kind of tree. It is the kind that has very wide high roots. Then the people at Bamoska-boe will know we are coming."

After a moment or two the men began to sing. It is a deep rhythmic chant rather like when they are dancing. But the time is different. It is not syncopated. The beat is regular in time to their fast, loping walk. It is a shivery noise, I realized suddenly, or maybe I was cold from the rain. No, it is a shivery noise if for one minute you can imagine yourself running like Emperor Jones, running for life with the pursuit hot on you and that song ringing in your ears.

"We must be near," said van der Goot. "They would not be so happy otherwise."

The trees ended suddenly. There was a well-marked path ahead simply leading up into a cloud. On each side going off steeply into nothing we could see a few stalks of sugar cane among burned stumps of trees. This must be the garden of Bamoskaboe, but it was impossible to see more than twenty feet in any direction. We walked out along the path. As soon as we were beyond the shelter of the trees, the rain beat on us with redoubled intensity. Clouds swept past and then the rain petered out. It turned instead into the sticky, clammy wetness of the clouds. My teeth were chattering with the cold. We walked up and up, and then in a moment the clouds swept away as dramatically as if it was curtain-time at a theatre. In that moment we saw that we were climbing up the slope of a small sharp hill, bare of trees. On the very top there were two houses raised on spindly stilts high off the ground. They were silhouetted against the clouds, and there was a man too, running up the path waving a spear. Then there came a great gust of wind and driving cloud and that extraordinary Stone Age vision was blotted out.

"That is Bamoskaboe," panted our guide.

## CHAPTER XII

### PAPAYAS AND PEOPLE

HERE are few things as pleasant as sitting around a fire sipping a warm cup of tea with a dash of rum in it. Fortunately both van der Goot and I had similar inspirations about our medicinal supplies. If and when we finished his bottle of rum there was always mine to fall back on. In order to appreciate fully this pleasure of tea and rum, it is necessary to have been walking steadily for some hours in the rain and to be thoroughly chilled and cold. Then the sensation is heaven.

Bamoskaboe was such a perfect Papuan village as to be almost unbelievable. There were three houses altogether, into one of which van der Goot, myself, Jusup, Saban, and the policemen all crowded. It was a fairly large house perhaps twenty by thirty feet, raised precariously off the ground on a haphazard system of supports which leaned drunkenly in all directions. In front there was a bamboo ladder leading to a square hole, the door. The floor was of strips of bamboo, the walls of sago, *gabba gabba*, as it is called. As on Misool, the fireplaces consisted of boxes of earth and ashes let down into the floor. The smoke simply gathered in the upper reaches of the roof.

When we finally reached the top of the hill in all that swirling mass of clouds, there was a large delegation of Karoon to meet us. The old *Kapala* stood out in front; a big man with wide staring eyes. The men were nervous.

They looked as if they might turn and run, or charge at us. The *Kapala* advanced hesitatingly, but when van der Goot shouted out *tabek* boisterously, they all smiled and shouted back. Then what a shaking of hands and thumping of backs ensued. Their nervousness took the form of over-hearty greetings. We had to shake hands with everyone, while the bolder spirits patted our arms and backs. Some even reached down and squeezed my legs as if they were horse-breeders examining stock.

"We're in luck to-day," said van der Goot. "Sometimes they try to look to see whether you're really a man or not."

After this spate of greetings we had been ushered into the house. Most of the men stood around and looked at us, still with that wide-eyed, rather hectic expression. Meanwhile van der Goot was sitting on the floor near a fire which Jusup had kindled, trying to carry on a conversation with the *Kapala* through one of our guides who spoke Karoon. The *Kapala* said that he had ten or twelve men who would carry for us from here on, for some of our Madic and Mooi people wanted to go home. To them the Karoon country was a foreign land. They were homesick and perhaps a little scared. When van der Goot asked how many people there were in his district, the old *Kapala* was confused. He grunted and switched from one foot to the other. He hitched up his G-string and scratched himself, and a naïve perplexed look came into his eyes. He allowed as how he didn't know and he seemed vague and troubled. But van der Goot tactfully changed the subject.

"Evidently he has never thought of that before," he said. "It is better not to trouble him."

"Have there been any murders recently?" he asked the guide.

The *Kapala's* face brightened when he heard this. It was something that he could understand. He said that there had been one a while ago. A man had killed a woman over a violation of a tribal custom. There had been a question of a tabu of some kind. At this van der Goot launched into a harangue which evidently impressed the *Kapala*. He admitted that the man had gone into hiding when he had heard that Government was coming. At that van der Goot said that he would promise the man a short sentence if he would come out and give himself up. There was more conversation. The *Kapala* looked wise and scratched his big flat nose and said that he thought the man might agree to this. By now our coolies were coming in with their loads, and the citizenry of Bamoskaboe reluctantly filed out to exchange the pleasure of watching the strange white men for that of gossiping with the new arrivals.

After tea there was a sudden lift in the clouds. We hurried outside to see the view. To the north, looking tall and wild, stretched the main range of the Tamrau. It was rather like a Chinese painting. The valley below us was swathed in a shifting sea of mist. Clouds were all about, racing down over the flanks of the mountains. The wind was strong. At one moment the whole range would be revealed. Then at another, half of it would be blotted out.

As we looked across the stretch of clouds towards the mountains there came faintly down the wind a seething sort of noise. It sounded like a great concentration of starlings along the cornices of buildings in a city. At first we heard only the noise. Then I realized that high over the valley at about our level there was a dark patch moving along, changing its shape all the time like a piece of paper blown by the wind. I ran into the house and got

out my binoculars. When I came back the spot was still there, moving in a haphazard way. It was an enormous flock of lorries, those small red, blue, and green parakeets so prized by the Papuans. There must have been well over a thousand birds in the flock, possibly more. To me it was an amazing sight. Lorries occasionally associate together in small groups around flowering trees, but a vast aggregation like this is unheard of. From time to time during the late afternoon I again heard that sound of far-away screams and whistles and, looking out, saw similar flocks, all passing in the same direction from west to east.

What this type of migration can mean is anyone's guess. I think it is possible to hazard the opinion that where there are vast areas of jungle stretching for many thousands of square miles, birds which are gregarious to begin with may tend to flock together in ever larger and larger groups. This great movement of birds which I saw in the Tamrau might have been simply a food migration on an enormous scale.

By now it was nearly dark. The wind began to go down and the rain and the clouds with it. In spite of the adverse weather, Saban and I had made a fairly good showing during the day. There were fourteen birds to prepare.

As we were finishing supper there came a sound of stealthy movements outside the house. Through the chinks of the wall and floor I could see what appeared to be a small fire.

"Now I think they will dance," remarked van der Goot.

Sure enough, after a few minutes, the first quavery voices started singing. There were not very many evidently, and they made only a small shuffling noise as they padded around in a circle.

We lit our pipes and clambered down the steep ladder to survey the scene. The moon had come up. It shone down from a temporarily clear sky. The Tamrau stretched up along the north side of the stage like a backdrop. The mountains were very black and sharp and cold-looking. Immediately above their tips the sky was slightly paler as if there were floodlights behind them, serving to throw out the outlines of the mountains in sharp relief. The valley below our little two-thousand-foot hill was a solid bank of gauzy mist.

In the foreground there was a performance going on that might have inspired Shakespeare for part of the witches' scene in *Macbeth*. There was a small fire on the packed earth between the houses. Round about it were circling the dancers, ten of them now, in a ring with locked arms. There were three women, six men, and one small boy of perhaps eight or nine, although it is impossible to tell ages. The men and the boy clutched bows and arrows in one hand. They went round and round in a curious way with a limping sideways gait, like the people at Kamma's Christmas party. But this time the rhythm was less involved. It seemed to be perfectly steady and monotonous like the slow beat of a metronome. In fact as they hobbled about the circle, their heads all nodded and beat back and forth as if they were imitating the very movement of a metronome. Two more men and a woman crawled out of the door of the other large house and joined in the dance. Another half-hour and there would be thirty in the circle. It was cold and I shivered as I watched them, although I was wearing a flannel shirt and a sweater.

"They look sort of pathetic going round and round like that all shivering," I said. "They look so small and miserable."

"You wouldn't think that if you were in the middle there by the fire, tied up," said van der Goot.

I looked at him. He smiled, but he was quite serious.

We walked over to the open door of the other house. It was about as big as ours, but it seemed smaller. All the fires were going and the air was almost impenetrable. Even at the door it was bad enough so that our eyes smarted and we began to cough. People covered every available inch of the floor. Round each fire there was a great tangle of legs and arms as everyone tried to get some part of his or her anatomy near the warmth. One man was sleeping with his legs dangling into the ashes. He would probably wake up later to find himself well scorched. This habit of sleeping more or less on top of the fire explains the large number of burn scars that cover most inland Papuans. The coughing was constant, uninterrupted. I could see now too why the eyes of most of these Karoon people were so bleary and bloodshot. It is a curious thing, this business of eyes. The Papuan children invariably seem to have bright sparkling eyes with pure whites. But one of the most characteristic things about the eyes of older Papuans is that they have very dirty, discoloured whites, which gives them a dull, muddy look. The intelligence seems to have gone out of them.

"Isn't it a little complicated having all these people sleeping together in a great big pile like that?" I asked as we strolled back.

"Complicated? Oh, I don't think so. In the first place the houses are tabu. Nothing very improper ever goes on there. Then too I think that once they are married, these inland people are pretty faithful. Most Papuan families live by themselves in the gardens, you know. I believe it is only there that they sleep together."

"You mean all these visiting firemen aren't going to be entertained as they probably hope?"

"Well, after all, there are probably some unmarried girls, and besides the gardens aren't so far away."

The dance kept up all night. Even burrowed into my sleeping-bag I could still hear it plainly. The whole house vibrated with the tread of stamping feet. I slept much the way one does on a Pullman, waking every time the train bumps or shunts unusually hard. Of course I got no pity from van der Goot, who slept like a top and snored freely.

But early in the morning we were off inexorably. There were twelve new Karoon porters to replace the others who had gone back. It seemed to me that some of the men looked slightly haggard, but if van der Goot noticed he did not mention it. He shouted and scoffed at them with his usual good humour, and we strode down the hill away from Bamoskaboe. Half-way down there was a path leading off among the burned-over stumps and tangled vines that was the garden. On the edge of the path a little party was lined up consisting of the *Kapala*, some of his henchmen, and a group of Karoon women and girls. We shook hands with the men and the *Kapala* made a little speech of farewell. Afterwards he pointed to two girls standing behind him. One was thin and rather pretty, with delicate features for a Karoon. Her age might have been anywhere from ten to thirteen. She was probably less, if anything. The other was short and very fat and ugly with bloated, almost acromegalic features. She was older, probably fifteen. The guide explained that the *Kapala* wanted us to know that these were his two daughters. Certainly they bore no conceivable resemblance to each other.

"Speaking of gardens," said van der Goot as we marched off with the last *tabeks* ringing in our ears,

"those may be the *Kapala's* two daughters, but I should say he had made a mistake in the dark."

Our march that day was to be a repetition of what we did nearly every day until our final return to Sansapor. Our main objective was to work east as far as we could behind the Tamrau, moving along the low inhabited valleys. Our guides had told van der Goot that there was a possible way out to the coast beyond the main Tamrau range. After crossing high mountains we would come down to the sea at the village of Waibeem. Our plan was to have the *Ursula* meet us there on the 11th of March. But in order to make sure that we were not turned back by untoward events, the *Ursula* was to stop on the way at Sansapor. We left Bamoskaboe on the 15th of February, never thinking that we would come back there soon again.

Nearly every night we spent in a village. It was more convenient than building a bivouac in the heart of the forest. But there were many afternoons when, as the shadows grew long or the sun left the valleys altogether, our guides would halt and converse, then come back and report that there was water here and not beyond. Then we would cast about for a camp site, looking for a level spot with few trees to clear away. If we were on a river bank we had to camp high up, so that we would not be flooded out if it rained during the night. In the work of making the bivouac the corporal and his men proved themselves painstaking and efficient. They soon organized the porters into squads. Everyone knew his job and performed it as soon as the order to bivouac was given. By the time we had made the third or fourth of these temporary encampments the system was so well arranged that the whole camp would be set up and tea on the boil in forty minutes.

Two days beyond Bamoskaboe we struck the Siak River. This was an important stage as it marked the division between the drainage areas south of the Tamrau. The streams in the Madic and part of the Karoon country to the west drain into the Samson, the river near Sainkedoek which flows west to the coast near Sorong. The Siak on the other hand marks the headwaters of the drainage system which flows for more than a hundred miles in an airline directly south to McCluer Gulf, the southern boundary of the Vogelkop. The Siak is a bold, brawling river, crystal-clear and cold, flowing between sloping gravel banks. On the average it seemed to be just under two feet deep. I was forever hoping when we crossed it that at least once I would get across without having the water go over my boot-tops. Each time I would get nearly through and then the last step would be too much and I would be sloshing in water the rest of the march.

The principal village along the Siak was Sedjak. It was a new village, the houses not quite completed. Two years before the people had moved downstream about a mile, presumably to be nearer their gardens, although why this should make any difference to them I could not imagine. Almost every garden we had ever seen, except the one at Bamoskaboe, was miles away from the village. Perhaps there was a new trend in the wind. Maybe the Karoon were going to be practical after all.

It was a lovely setting as we first came on it. We stumbled over the rubble of small boulders and conglomerate rocks to round a corner of the stream, and there it was. There were four houses completed and others building. They nestled at the foot of the huge jungle trees in a clearing on the river bank. With the stumps and the thatched roofs, the smoke rising from the clear-

ing, and the rushing river, the scene might have been far away in time and space. So must have looked the upper reaches of the Ohio when frontiersmen wandered along that river in Audubon's time, in 1805. But then there were passenger pigeons flying across the river. Now there was a chorus of ringing gong-like calls and three male paradise birds flew from wall to wall of the jungle, long yellow plumes shimmering behind.

We crossed the river, once more over my boot-tops, and were in Sedjak. The local *Kapala* appeared and a group of stalwarts. Again there was much shaking of hands and shouts of *tabek*. There were the same wild, nervous glances from staring eyes. I had the feeling that if I had had an umbrella and had opened it suddenly and said "boo," they all would have run for their lives. And why not? Sometimes very simple primitive people seem rather tiresome and silly. Sometimes I got tired of being hearty and still on my guard. Then again these same people would do something very subtle and unexpected, and my flagging interest reawakened.

Most Europeans or Americans, faced with the prospect of a few months in the New Guinea jungle in company with people more than suspected of cannibalism, would be alarmed and heartily uncomfortable at the thought. I remember asking van der Goot about the big .38 revolver that my brother, an experienced big-game hunter, had sent out after me to Sorong. "Shall I take this with us into the Tamrau?" I had asked.

"Of course, if you want to," he had said. "I am compelled to take a small revolver by Government regulations, but," he paused, "I will tell you a secret. I pack it in one of my boxes and it never comes out. You see, I feel that if the Papuans see you with a gun, they say, 'What is that man afraid of?' That is bad psychology.



The tent is going up and van der Goot smiles happily at the thought of tea.



Another bivouac, this time in a half-completed house which had a roof and a floor but no walls.



The men of Bamoskaboe.

No, no, if they want to kill you, you won't have a chance, revolver or no revolver."

The gun had been well packed. It would not rust in its oil-soaked wrappings, and I repacked it. It stayed in Sorong and afterwards I brought it dutifully back to my brother, who remarked on what good care I had taken of it, and everyone was happy.

We pitched the tent in Sedjak because the houses seemed to be small and full of people. Just beyond us was a very small hut built of thatch and wattle. Occasionally smoke came out of it and there were voices to be heard, but for the first day we politely refrained from asking. Then van der Goot asked one of the guides, who made a few discreet inquiries. It appeared that the Karoon have a great dread of rendering themselves or their houses "unclean" by the presence of women during either their regular periods or advanced pregnancy. Hence the miserable little house, containing, we were told, a woman with a newborn infant. We noticed that the men of the village shunned the place, but that women and small children often crawled in and out carrying food.

The morning after our arrival in Sedjak, van der Goot had a good deal of difficulty getting out of bed. I had forgotten that he had fallen on the trail the day before and had limped for some time afterwards. During the night his knee had stiffened up, and now it was really painful. We had already decided on a rest day here, but I could see that van der Goot was worried. "To be sick is to put ideas into people's heads," he said glumly.

The corporal and one of the police built a small table for him out of poles and slats of wood, and a bench also where he could sit and rest his leg out straight in front of him.

I cautioned him to take some exercise, and went off

hunting, leaving him at his new desk surrounded by notebooks, interrogating the *Kapala*. As usual Saban went off in one direction, Malan and I in another. The forest was open and rather light along the banks of the river. Small groups of people passed us, going out to cut sago at van der Goot's orders, for our men were running low on supplies. In one thick patch of vines I heard a great twittering. Malan and I broke into the underbrush to discover a small hawk, an *Accipiter*, related to our Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks, with a flycatcher in his talons. Malan was so excited to see some real game that he shot right over my head, using my spare .410 shotgun. Fortunately he got the bird, although I could hardly hear for some time afterwards.

Another trophy of the morning was a large Cuvier's mound builder. These birds are related to the megapodes which are so common along the coast and on small islands. But this is a much bigger bird, standing as high as a Plymouth Rock rooster. The mound builder's plumage is dark purplish-black with a metallic sheen, and they have stout yellow-orange legs and a small head with few feathers and fleshy wrinkles like a young turkey. In contrast to the megapodes of the Solomons which dig holes in the sand, and those of the islands around Sorong which kick up large piles of sand, the mound builder, as his name implies, kicks and scratches around until he has collected together a huge mound of rotting leaves, twigs, and humus. The assembled pile may be two or three feet high and four feet wide. The heat of the decaying vegetation serves as an excellent incubating factor, just as the heat of the sun warms the sand piles of those birds which lay their eggs in the open. This structure is very similar to that of the Australian brush turkey, a slightly larger bird which is common in zoo collections.

The whole time that I was in New Guinea I was on the lookout for a somewhat similar mound builder known by the distinctive name, *Aepyodius bruijnii*. This bird was one of the great ornithological mysteries. It had been discovered in 1879 by the hunters of a M. Bruijn, a *plumassier* or plume hunter, who lived at Ternate in the Moluccas. His hunters ranged all over the western part of New Guinea and the adjacent islands, collecting paradise birds and occasional oddities that would be of interest to museums. They secured eleven specimens of this ungainly bird which were all sent to Europe at about the same time and all labelled "Waigeu."

Now Waigeu is not such a large island that an intrepid ornithologist could not succeed in finding most of its resident species in a fairly short time. But in the space of nearly sixty years, during which many collectors had been to Waigeu, no one had succeeded in rediscovering the bird known as Bruijn's mound builder. The museum men were now convinced that the hunters had mislabelled their birds as they were often likely to do. In 1879 the competitive spirit was such that a collector would sometimes prefer to keep a monopoly on a rare specimen rather than let out the secret of its locality to his competitors.

As a result I had combed Biak diligently, and had questioned the Raja of Misool. As a last chance I hoped to find *Aepyodius* in the Tamrau. Quite early in my search I came across a fact which may have confused Dr. Stein and others who had looked for the bird on Waigeu. If you ask a Malay hunter for knowledge of a bird, you must be very careful how you phrase your question. His main object is always to please you, not necessarily to tell you the truth. If you ask about a certain bird in such a way as to imply, "You have never heard of this bird, have

you?" he will politely shake his head. On the other hand if you say brightly, "Have you ever seen a bird, such and such a shape, this big, with purple feet and a blue nose?" he will probably recall the creature immediately. In all the time that I was in the Tamrau I asked many men about the mound builder and received many varying answers. One difficulty was that there was already the common Cuvier's mound builder, a much more showy bird. Another was that in the mountains there lives a small cassowary which also has wattles on its head.

I left New Guinea without being able to discover the real range of this rare bird.

After I had gone, however, the Academy agreed to continue to employ Jusup. I gave him instructions where he was to go if he got the chance and told him that if he ever succeeded in getting to Waigeu, he should by all means have a try, just in case, for the "big jungle fowl with no feathers on his head and wattles." Many months later, in the fall of 1939, a package came from Jusup to the Academy in Philadelphia. It contained birds from Waigeu. The last specimen at the bottom of the box, wrapped in many layers of paper, was, wonder of wonders, *Aepyodius bruijnii*. Thus the mystery at long last was solved and the hunters of M. Bruijn, the *plumassier*, were proved to have been perfectly unaware that this particular bird was going to be one of their greatest monopolies.

After the Cuvier's mound builder there were several other birds, notably a small flycatcher with an enormous broad bill like a flat slipper. Curiously enough it was down on the muddy ground, a place where flycatchers ordinarily do not think of going. However, there it was, a good proof, if one was needed, that it is not wise to be too didactic about the habits and distribution of birds.

I soon discovered that what had attracted it was a small band of gnats hovering over the ground in that spot. There must have been thirty of them in a swarm. They boiled about vigorously but did not seem to move. At intervals the flycatcher would peck at the gnats and mouth a few of them while the rest went on perfectly undisturbed like the ten little nigger boys.

On the way back I had another encounter with insects, this one less fortunate. There is a kind of ant, black, and nearly half an inch long. Like the leech it seems to be always on leaves just waiting to be brushed off. This of course is not true, for the ants really are not anxious to be moved, but moved they are none the less. In one place the trail was slippery. I staggered against a vine-covered tree trunk. My shirt was open at the neck. By the end of thirty seconds I had been stung nearly as many times. I must have been a perplexing sight to Malan as I jumped up and down in every direction. Even after I had taken the shirt off and carefully inspected it, there was one ant which hid so successfully that it did not bite me until ten minutes later when I leaned my back against a stone.

When I reached the village I found that Saban too had had a good morning. Among other things he had shot and only slightly wounded a beautiful male king bird of paradise. One wing was fractured. I daubed the wound with iodine and set the bone with matches for splints. From the first it ate well and seemed quite tame. One of the police made a small cage for it out of sticks tied together with rattan. At the same time I acquired another live bird, a very beautiful scarlet parakeet slightly larger than an Australian love-bird. This bird was very tame as it had been kept by one of the gentlemen of Sedjak for some time. In fact he was devoted to it and I had to give him a knife in exchange.

We lunched on the table, the corporal having built another small bench on the other side for me. Just before lunch, van der Goot asked the *Kapala* to line up the thirty five inhabitants of Sedjak and gave them beads and tobacco. Meanwhile he made a flowery speech telling them that they were fine people. In a way it was an informal sort of welcome into Holland's fold. Perhaps in another ten years another magistrate will arrive and by that time the men will be expected to be building paths in lieu of a poll tax.

During lunch an old, old woman appeared from along one of the trails leading out of the jungle. She was very much of a hag, short and scrawny and wrinkled. Her head was shaven and about her lank middle she wore a ragged piece of bark cloth that seemed to be in imminent danger of breaking away from its moorings. She walked directly towards us and then past us as if this had always been her path into the village and she did not mean to change it now. But as she passed our table her hand moved out and deposited on it a large fresh green papaya.

"Presents," I exclaimed. "How wonderful!"

We had not had any fresh fruit since Sansapor.

"But I like Bartlett pears much better," smiled van der Goot. "Besides it's green. We will have to wait a bit."

He gave it without comment to Jusup.

That afternoon I went out shooting again and when I came back van der Goot said that he felt better and that he had decided to go on to a village called Sedjoi to the south-west with six of the police.

"I want to see the place," he said, "but there is no necessity for you to come along. Much better you stay here and you will get more birds that way. By the way, if I am not back in three days I want you to come after me hot and heavy."

The table was a great help. I skinned my birds in good time, and van der Goot was deep in his records. For supper we had hot pigeon soup, fried rice with corned beef, and canned apricots. The papaya, according to Jusup, was too green. That night there was a big dance. The population of Sedjak was in fine spirits and voice. Our coolies apparently were a welcome addition. Fortunately the dance was some distance away from the tent, beyond the houses. In spite of the howling chorus at the other end of the village I could still hear the querulous chatter of some women callers at the maternity ward near by.

About three I woke up feeling slightly feverish. Sedjak was only about five hundred feet above sea level in contrast to Bamoskaboe's sixteen hundred and fifty feet, so that here the nights were balmy rather than cold. A waning moon bathed the clearing in a pale glow. The policeman on guard looked more than a little sleepy as I strolled outside. Below the bank the river slipped along, tumbling from rapid to rapid like molten phosphorus. The noise of the dance had died down to clamorous murmurs interspersed with occasional shrieks of excitement. I strolled along towards the houses. Their outlines were fuzzy and indistinct. Each house seemed to be surrounded with an aura of smoke which was distilling out of every crack and chink. The dancers had gone indoors. From the noise they seemed to be concentrated in one house. Light streamed from the doorway. I peered in, keeping out of the direct light, for I did not want to be greeted with a spear. But I need not have bothered. Everyone was too absorbed. The room was crowded with a ring of people, men and women of Sedjak, porters, one policeman, and Saban and Malan. In the centre blazed a big fire. The stench of fresh Papuan sweat was over-

powering, the smoke nearly blinding. They were all eating roasted maize, but the men seemed to be more interested in popping the kernels at the women's breasts. Every time anyone made a direct hit, there were screams of excitement. The final touch to this pleasantly Rabelaisian scene was provided by one man in a corner who was shaking his head back and forth and droning out a Papuan dirge in a gurgly sort of voice. Then I realized that the bamboo containers being passed around evidently contained something stronger than water.

The next morning most of the men looked distinctly worn. But van der Goot made a good start just the same, taking six of the policemen with him and more than thirty porters. I went as far as the bank of the river and then watched as they crossed and entered the wall of the jungle on the farther side. Coming back I saw Jusup and Saban washing their faces in the water.

"Well, Saban, you look as if you had had a good night's sleep."

Jusup giggled.

"Oh, yes, Tuan, he's had a fine night's sleep," he said, and Saban smiled, though with some effort.

"I saw you last night playing your games," I said, and at that Jusup giggled uproariously.

"Did you see the one, Tuan, where the men cry, 'Give us milk,' and play with the women like Mr. Kamma does with his cows at Sorong?" he said, sniggering now, at which, feeling the white man's burden heavy upon me, I turned away to preserve my dignity.

That day was the first on which I had a malarial chill. It was not a bad one, but it sent me in from collecting much earlier than usual. I felt very weak and slightly nauseated and lay down on my bunk, thinking that I must be getting a touch of influenza.

Just at lunch-time I saw Jusup give the "money bird" and the scarlet parakeet something to eat. About fifteen minutes later as I was finishing lunch I heard a little flurry and, rushing over, found both birds in convulsions. They died in a few seconds. I called Jusup over and we tried to reason out this extraordinary coincidence. The paradise bird might have died from an internal injury, but not with those symptoms. The parakeet might have had a convulsion from a fatty liver, but why at the same time as the king bird? Then I noticed that they had both been eating papaya.

"Is this the papaya the old woman gave us?" I asked. Jusup nodded. • •

"Well, why did you give it to them? You were supposed to be saving that for Tuan van der Goot and myself."

"Tuan van der Goot told me not to let anyone eat it. I thought I would give some to the birds."

I asked Jusup to show me the rest of the fruit, at which he reported, apparently to his own astonishment, that it had disappeared. There were always people hanging around the cooking-fire hoping for scraps. Discreet-inquiries revealed that the old woman also was not to be found. By this time my chill was worse and I went back to bed after taking some quinine tablets.

It was fairly late in the afternoon when I started up suddenly. Just behind the tent I heard a rich warbling song that seemed completely unfamiliar. It was loud enough to overcome the ringing in my ears, and strange enough to bring me to my feet. There was a small tree that had not been cut down about twenty-five feet from the tent. In it were three birds. I saw a flash of grey and yellow among the rich green leaves and in that moment I realized that I would have to secure those birds, malaria

or no malaria. They could only be a very rare shrike-like bird, first discovered far to the south of Sorong along the coast of the Vogelkop. One of them was an easy shot. The other two flew gaily off to the top of an immensely tall tree on the edge of the clearing. I fired a couple of times and one of the pair flew off, but the other stayed. By this time I was wildly excited. Saban came, and he and I took turns firing at the top of the tree. Suddenly I noticed that after each shot, the leaves a full thirty feet below the top were trembling. Trembling myself by now, I loaded my 12-bore with buckshot and, pointing away up into the sunset-tinted sky, fired. The bird tottered and fell—into a crotch of the tree a few feet below. By this time a crowd had gathered. I asked if anyone would volunteer to cut the tree down. I would give a knife. After a pause two little men stepped forward and said they would do it for an axe.

"Done," I cried, and to my surprise they sauntered off in opposite directions into the forest. But soon they were back with poles and rattan. With these they made a platform six feet up the trunk above the tall flaring roots. Then with magnificent deliberation they proceeded to select axes from our store and set about their business. For fifteen minutes they hacked away at that tree. They seemed to be making very little impression on it, and already it was beginning to get dark. I began to think the whole thing was useless. They could never get it down in time for the bird to be saved from the ants which would soon discover it. Apparently the men thought so too, for they took one last chop at opposite sides of the trunk and then solemnly climbed down from their perches.

"What's the matter?" I yelled, and for answer they merely pointed towards the top of the tree. Looking up,

I could see it outlined against the orange sky. Unbelievably it was waving gently back and forth. We backed away. Finally with a sighing noise it waved a little too far. Then it began to go and there were sharp cracks and then a steady roar punctuated with a series of pistol-loud reports as other trees snapped off in its path. With a thunderous crash the whole thing landed, making the ground rock. There was a moment of utter silence and then the cries of startled birds far off. By now it was dark. Saban appeared with a flashlight. I mounted the trunk and measured off sixty paces before I came to the first branches. After that there was a great tangle of vines and branches and bird's-nest ferns. My heart sank. Where in all this welter was my bird? At last I arrived at the particular crotch which I had marked so long before. But there was no sign of the bird. Meanwhile a crowd of villagers had begun to advance along the ground in among the branches. A few of them seemed to be finding grubs which occupied their immediate attention. But suddenly one old man, incredibly wrinkled, with a sweeping black moustache, reached down towards the ground under me. Then he straightened up and handed me something in one massive scabrous hand. It was my bird, completely undamaged, not a feather missing. Malaria or not, I lavished what little taxidermic art I had on those two birds that night.

The next day, the second since van der Goot had gone, there came a message from him. "My knee is worse," he wrote. "We must return via Sansapor, not Waibeem. Join me here." I spent the day in camp resting as much as possible until afternoon, when I went out briefly and secured four birds.

The following day was one of horror. We broke camp early as usual and set off, the guide who had brought the

message leading the way. After an hour's march I began to feel the premonition of a chill. Another hour and I was having a chill, sitting during a rest period on a stone picking leeches out of my socks. I was so cold that my hands turned quite white and all the feeling went out of them. I thought that they were going to drop off. But they didn't. Another hour's march and I was swinging drunkenly along counting the steps. Later I tried to eat, but instead lay over a stone and retched weakly. One of the police too was ill with fever, a man called Reuben. He was lagging far behind. I spent a long time trying to recollect an old song, something like:

"Reuben, Reuben, I've been thinking,  
What a strange world this would be,  
Tum tum tum tum tum tum tum,  
Tum tum bottom of the sea."

That was as far as I could get.

After lunch it began to rain as usual. Shortly afterwards my chills turned to fever and I felt better. It is extraordinary how much better it feels to have a fever after a chill. By the time we reached Sedjoi I had almost forgotten about the extreme dreariness of the morning's march. In spite of his knee, van der Goot seemed to be in excellent shape and spirits. We had an animated exchange of news over tea and rum. He was well pleased with the information he had obtained about local conditions from the *Kapala* of Sedjoi. Then I questioned him about the papaya.

"Why did you tell Jusup that we were not to eat it?" I asked.

His smile disappeared. "Oh, I don't know," he shrugged. "As a matter of fact I never eat presents on patrol."

“Why not? Do you think this was poisoned? I can't understand why the birds died otherwise.”

“Oh, I don't know. Maybe she did not like me. Maybe that skull on my desk in Sorong was her sister. Maybe she thought we were camped too near that women's house. Maybe anything. Now it's finished.”

After that I did not mind Bartlett pears.

The coolies danced all night. When we got up they were still dancing although van der Goot had told them to stop early. But we set off anyway. Instead of reproaching them, van der Goot discovered that some of the men were carrying much lighter loads than others and delivered a royal tongue-lashing. It was a beautifully executed job. Rather than appearing in the middle of the night to tell them to stop dancing and go to bed, a situation where even his authority might have been severely strained, he worked a reprimand for disobeying him into his dissertation on the heinous offence of trying to get away with light loads. But the men understood and were properly ashamed where, if he had succeeded in stopping their dance, they would have been sullen. After that night they did not dance late again.

Two more days and we were at Bamoskaboe. This time we saw the village at some distance, perched on its little bare hill. The *Kapala* and his cohorts greeted us with their familiar friendliness and as usual it rained all day. The next morning we were off in good time and struck north, straight towards the western ridges of the Tamrau. There was a very steep descent into the valley of the Mega River which we had crossed much farther west on our way to Sainkedoek. Then we climbed a plateau to a small place called Baoen. We bivouacked in a half-completed house which had a roof and a floor but no walls. It was all right until the middle of the

night when the rain came in and we all huddled as nearly in the centre of the floor as possible. In Baoen I saw a man walking on stilts, that most antique of all games. It seems to be a game that stems straight from the earliest consciousness, along with knowledge of fire and the hand axe.

The last day down to Sansapor was the longest of all. We were on the march for more than thirteen hours. Even van der Goot, energetic as he was, looked grey. First we had to climb straight up Mount Bandji, a peak about four thousand feet high, and then we had to climb straight down again. At the top the trees were low and hung with trailing moss. A cold wind blew long scarves of white fog through the trees and everything was dripping to the touch. On the way I collected two immature specimens of a paradise bird which I had not seen at lower altitudes. They had bright china-blue eyes. By mid-afternoon we were coming down on a long narrow ridge covered with high wiry grass. On each side two rivers flowed towards the end of the ridge. Beyond we could see the sea, blue and sunlit. At the base of the ridge the two rivers joined and we had to ford across a welter of smooth, slippery boulders. The water was boisterous and cold. Several of the porters slipped off their packs and bathed, dipping down, then rising up and shaking themselves like dogs.

At long last we came out on the beach to see, miles away, the bay of Sansapor. At first it was all right. We walked and walked and thought that we must be near. Then we would round another small cape, to find that the bay was as far away as ever. I was terribly thirsty and so, I noticed, was van der Goot. We waited until the man with the kettle caught up with us. We could not seem to get enough. The tide was coming in, not that there was very much, but then the beach was narrow. We walked

along for nearly a mile at the base of a high cliff of sandstone. It was tinted a rich orange by the setting sun. Four crows flew round us cawing hoarsely. One of them was in the white phase that occasionally occurs in this species. It is not an albino, for the eyes are normally coloured. I missed it and they all flew off, silently now and hurriedly. When the tide was high we were forced to walk in the shallows left by the waves. The sand gave under our feet and this was very tiring.

Even in the dark we kept on walking along the beach with the knee-high water ebbing and flowing and the shifting sand. Inland there was no place to walk. Sometimes we would come to a short cut across a bank or a clear stretch above the water, but never for long. One of the worst things was the great trees which had fallen into the water here and there. Either we climbed up over them, or else we had to duck down and struggle along, crouching with bent knees while the sea-water splashed up into our faces.

Then a long time later we came to Sansapor. There was the sandy street and there the *pasangrahan*. A few people ran out to see us, but we scarcely noticed them. At last we sank down on the cement floor. Overhead the geckos were chirruping as usual. It was twenty-four days that we had been on patrol. We had covered about one hundred and fifty miles in an air line, although many more in ups and downs. Nobody had been killed or was even very seriously ill, and I had secured two hundred and four specimens. At the moment, however, we were not conscious of all this. Our one consuming idea was tea and more tea. As the corporal saluted and announced that all the men were in, van der Goot called out to his orderly, "Let us have some tea as soon as you can make it. Oh, and bring us that bottle of rum."

## CHAPTER XIII

### BON KOURANGEN

SANSAPOR was definitely a small place, but to us it had all the qualities of a minor resort. Of course, it was not comparable to the magnificence of Sorong, but still it had its pleasures. There was the main street along which we could promenade, the rickety wharf on which we could sit and smoke a pipe and watch the sun set. There were a secluded beach where we could bathe, several trails through dry open jungle, and a good deal of cleared plantation around the village. After being in the Tamrau, it filled us with enormous pleasure to be able to walk in any direction over flat open ground. The jungle makes you feel shut in, confined. Now there was actually a view, a vista across the fields and over the sea.

There was a small store here, a branch of Ong Tjoean's emporium. It was meagrely stocked with trade goods, but I managed to find a few tins of corned beef and some boxes of matches. The proprietor also contracted to secure some sago for my men and a stone jar of salt. The last is a great Papuan delicacy. They will eat it plain by the handful if they can. There is nothing that they like so much after a long day on the trail, except perhaps some tobacco.

The storekeeper was definitely a lover of animals. He was a bland, smiling, middle-aged man with the beginnings of a comfortable Chinese storekeeper's belly. He



*New York Zoological Society*

The lesser bird of paradise displays by waving his wings and ruffling his wonderful golden flank plumes.



The giant echidna is New Guinea's strangest animal. When he moves he looks like a walking pincushion. When he digs he goes straight down like an elevator.

wore loose pyjama-like trousers and clopped about on wooden clogs, toeing out in characteristic style. On one arm and hip straddled his squalling son and heir. On the other perched one of his two pet red and black vulturine parrots. At intervals he would scoop up a handful of rice grains, pop them in his mouth, and then feed them out between his lips, grain by grain, to the attentive bird. The other one would sit on a perch in the back of the shop meanwhile, staring rather darkly at the proceedings until it was given its turn. The man explained that he had raised both birds in this way along with his small son, and that they were all of an age.

Next day when I strolled by on the way to the beach the storekeeper waved to me with one of his temporarily free arms. Inside there was a large wooden box which he proceeded to open with great ceremony. I goggled at what was inside. It was a giant echidna, that most curious of all animals, which lives only in New Guinea. There is a smaller species in Australia, but it is a pallid little thing compared to the New Guinea animal. The giant echidna is about two feet long and nearly one foot broad, a massive animal covered with sparse short hair from amidst which protrude sharp two-inch spines. The effect is rather like a very large hedgehog. But the echidna differs from the hedgehog in many important particulars. For one thing it has a small head tipped with a ten-inch proboscis which looks like a piece of rubber hose. In this structure, which is presumably useful for ferreting out ants, are concealed the nose and mouth. The echidna is supposed to live on ants, although this one would never touch them, much preferring papaya and raw eggs.

But the wonders of the echidna never cease. It has long, sharp claws as well as spines, and on the back of each hind leg there is a spur which is connected with a

poison gland. Consequently the echidna is something to handle with care. The animal's one and only relative is the duck-billed platypus, also of Australia, and like the latter the echidna lays eggs and broods them. Later, to make matters more confusing, the echidna mother suckles her young in a depression on her stomach which distantly resembles the kangaroo's pouch or marsupium. To a biologist there are no more fascinating animals than these two primitive forms which seem to be only half-mammals, clinging as they do to ancestral reptilian characters.

At this moment van der Goot appeared, and after a consultation we asked for a demonstration of what a free echidna would do. The storekeeper willingly complied, and after somewhat of a scuffle succeeded in lifting the creature out of its box.

"I have never seen such a big one," said van der Goot.

It must have weighed fully twenty pounds. When it found itself on the ground, the animal rose up suddenly, rather the way a tortoise does when it begins to walk. There was a good six inches clearance under it as it proceeded along stiffly and deliberately, rather like a walking pincushion. It had its mind made up about where it was going and went there, calmly and with dignity. The street was sandy and fairly soft. There was a post marking the boundary of the Chinaman's front yard. When it arrived at the post, the echidna nuzzled up to it and stopped. Then it sank to the ground and appeared to remain motionless. Suddenly we saw a small ridge of sand rising evenly about the creature. Evidently it was bracing itself against the post and digging straight downwards. If we had belonged to that branch of biology called ecology we probably would have turned to each other and exclaimed, "How stereotropic," or perhaps, "How

positively geotropic." Fortunately instead we simply walked over and picked it out of its hole before it disappeared altogether. This particular echidna dug with its claws directly under the body, simply scrabbling out sand in all directions. What impressed me was the effortlessness with which it began to disappear, rather like a sidewalk freight elevator going down.

After a few blandishments on my part the storekeeper agreed to part with the echidna and the two vulturine parrots.

"Those 'spiny pigs' are very rare," he said. "It will be a long time before I get another."

He seemed to think it was rather unfair of me to buy his echidna. After all, why couldn't I buy one in my country just as well?

During the four days that we waited for the *Ursula*, van der Goot had many consultations with the guides and the local *Kapalas*. Among other things he discussed a good collecting station for me. I wanted to find a mountain at least five thousand feet high which would have a truly montane fauna. At five thousand feet in the tropics the climate and environment are so different from conditions farther down that the bird and animal populations become entirely different. The previous month in the Tamrau had been spent at lower altitudes. Only briefly on Bandji had I had a glimpse of what the higher altitudes would afford in the way of birds.

Fortunately the main ridge of the Tamrau is very close to the coast. I would be able to get up high after only a day or two of marching. I say fortunately, because van der Goot was very strict about what he would allow me to do.

"This month has been a testing period," he said. "I know now that you will get on all right by yourself. But

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"This month has been a testing period," he said. "I know now that you will get on all right by yourself. But

you must remember that the government has closed the Tamrau since Schacht's death. You and I know the place is safe enough provided you follow a few simple rules. But the Governor-General does not know that. Therefore I am allowing you to go on my own responsibility."

At this time we were sitting on the porch of the *pasangrahan*, revelling in the twin luxuries of chairs and fresh lime juice from the lime tree in the yard.

"The *Kapalas* tell me that Bon Kourangen, a mountain along the coast, has all your requirements. Kourangen means paradise bird in the Biak language. It is one of the places that used to be hunted in the old days of the trade. But you must promise me one thing. I do not want you to go down into the valleys on the other side of the mountain."

"O.K., but why?"

"Psychology. Anywhere within close reach of the sea you are safe. But once beyond the mountains a mental barrier has been dropped. Suppose someone gets sick, some Karoon. Obviously this is due to the presence of evil spirits in the vicinity. If you just stay on top of the mountain they would probably not think of you as an evil spirit. But go deeper in, out of reach of the sea, and their subconscious tells them that you are an easy mark. Therefore, given an excuse, you become the evil spirit."

"How do I get there?"

"You can hire a big canoe, one of the *praha kalulis*, and take all your gear in that. Beyond the Cape of Good Hope is another cape, the False Cape, where there is a village, Wejos. We will send a small *prahu* now with a message to the *Kapala* there to get you porters. They tell me that Bon Kourangen is two or three days from Wejos."

So it was settled. In spite of his endless conferences with the *Kapalas* about government matters along the

coast, van der Goot had been at great pains to get the very best information he could for me about sites for bird collecting. Beyond Sansapor, north-east along the coast, the main range of the Tamrau begins. Here the mountains sweep down so close to the coast that in many places the trail is almost impassable. The only way to transport luggage or goods along the coast is by boat.

By the third day after our arrival my preparations were nearly complete. I had enough food for a month for Jusup, Saban, and myself. There was sago for four weeks for about forty men. The *prahu kalulis* appeared and was loaded. It was a bulky boat, twenty-five feet long with a beam of seven feet. There were no outriggers, which made it decidedly tippy, but it was possible to ballast her with coral rocks for she had a narrow, deep bilge. There was a small thatched cabin amidships, a lateen sail which could be rigged on a triangular series of bamboo poles, and seats fore and aft for ten paddlers. The *prahu* was made of broad planks moulded to fit her tapered frame. At bow and stern her keel board projected up into the air like the dragon head and tail of a Viking ship. It gave her somewhat stubby contours a certain grace.

Every day Saban and I combed the nearby jungle for birds. Paradise birds were rare here, but in the groups of flowering trees I found many small flycatchers, honeyeaters, and warblers. One day I even saw a curious flight of goat-suckers so-called, brownish speckled birds with enormous mouths, related to our whippoorwills. There were ten of them flying along a few feet off the ground with a fluttering dipping flight almost like huge moths. There were other night birds too, rather close to our nighthawk in size and shape. There was one that serenaded us at the *pasangrahan*, every evening just after

dark. Except for the big goat-sucker on Biak, it was the only nocturnal bird that I managed to get by night hunting. All my attempts to stalk birds at night in the Tamrau ended in failure.

The next day the *Ursula* arrived, bringing some welcome news from Sorong and letters from home which had arrived on a recent mail-boat. There was a large basket of freshly baked cookies and a cake from Mrs. van der Goot, with a half-dozen bottles of Java beer and some tinned Bartlett pears.

"Don't you agree with me that Bartlett pears are better than papaya?" asked van der Goot, and that time I did.

Our dinner was in the nature of a celebration. We garnished our regular meal with everything that Mrs. van der Goot had sent us. Afterwards van der Goot went on board the *Ursula* with all his equipment so that they would be able to make an early start.

"Well, I'm the lucky one now," he said smiling as he clambered down into the dinghy. "You'll be sitting up there on top of your mountain shivering, and I'll be in nice warm Sorong. I'll drink your health every day at Ong Tjoean's in cold Java beer."

When I got back to the *pasangrahan* I found the rest of van der Goot's medicinal rum and a note of thanks for having relieved the tedium of what might have been a dull patrol. As a result I was able to drink his health every afternoon on top of my mountain and at the same time stop my shivering.

In the morning our bundles were loaded on to the *prahu*. Nine paddlers appeared, and a distinguished-looking old *Kapala* who was to come along as guide and steersman. The *Ursula* had gone long since. Not a cloud or a ripple disturbed the even symmetry of the bay of Sansapor, the sea grey-blue mercury, the sky blue, and soft like

peach down. Already it was hot. The trees along the shore shimmered in the haze. March is the turn of the seasons in New Guinea. The monsoon from the north-west is nearly over. The trade wind from the south-east has hardly begun. It is an uncertain, treacherous time. On the dock the Chinaman stared after us. He would keep my new parrots and the echidna until we came back. With luck we would be back by the 11th of April in time to meet the *Ursula* on her next journey along the coast.

On the *prahu* it was not unpleasant. Mostly I sat on one of the two benches which projected out from the hull in the cabin. It was fairly cool and, when I unrolled my sleeping-bag, fairly comfortable. The floor between the benches was covered with our possessions. On the other bench Jusup and Saban slept in tangled disarray. The gentle motion was very lulling. The paddlers worked easily and without effort. I fell asleep.

All day we continued along the coast. It was bright and hot. We passed two small islands winking and dancing in the heat. The men produced large palm-leaf hats and relaxed along the gunwales, paddling in shifts. By afternoon a strong breeze came up from dead ahead. There was nothing to do but put ashore and wait until it went down. It is impossible to tack in a *prahu kalulis*. But getting ashore was not as easy as it looked from the seaward side. We came in as close as we dared and then surveyed the spectacle of an inviting sandy beach separated from a comparatively smooth sea by an unbroken expanse of thunderous eight-foot combers. As at Lophon in the Schildpads the beach evidently sloped off very steeply. The waves formed just at the beach instead of rolling in from far out. Luck was with us, however. In one place a projecting pile of rocks stretched out beyond the waves. By backing and filling a bit we were

able to manœuvre near enough for most of us to jump ashore. Two of the men stayed in the *prahu*, and drawing off a few yards from the rocks threw overboard their anchor, a large stone made fast with a twisted rattan rope.

There was a spring just behind the beach, and some young coconut palms. Jusup boiled a kettle of water for tea and we drank from the green coconuts, which are indescribably delicious after a thirsty day in a *prahu*. In the late afternoon the men lighted a fire and sat about it chewing sago and scooping out the soft jelly-like meat of young coconuts. Saban and I went out briefly for birds, getting two small ground pigeons and a warbler. Later I fell asleep on the beach.

It must have been nearly midnight when Jusup woke me. For a moment I had the feeling of not knowing where I was. There was a yellow gibbous moon low in the sky surrounded by straggly bits of yellowish cloud. The roar of the surf was in my ears and the low tones of the men standing near the fire. The wind had gone down, the *prahu* was waiting off shore. Down on the rocks now I leaped for the gunwale, slipped, barked my shin, and willing *hands hauled me in* over the thwarts. Once aboard, we set off quickly. The men were rested, and in the cool night air they paddled with a will.

"*Fadi, fadi,*" the steering man shouted, and they all began to paddle with short quick strokes, beating their heart-shaped paddles against the hull at the end of each stroke. The *prahu* swept forward boldly, the rhythmic knocking sound echoing over the water as if we were some old pirate galley. I climbed up on to the thatched roof of the cabin and sat there watching the shore line with its white surf fringe and the darker shadowy mountains behind. All about were the grunts of the men as they paddled, the occasional "*fadi, fadi*" of the steering

man, and the pounding tempo of the paddles. So *prahus* have swept these seas for centuries on long journeys, sometimes three thousand miles or more, trading to Halmahera, to Batjan, to Obi, to Morotai. Boeroe has seen these *prahus*, and Ceram, even the Aru and the Kei Islands. This strain of sea-roving Papuans has sailed all over the seas of the Moluccas, trading paradise plumes, dammar, and pearl shell for iron, beads, porcelain, and cloth. Even in the eighteenth century products of New Guinea, were well known in Europe, and had been for over a hundred years.

Latham, writing in 1782, mentions the wonderful fables that had arisen about the paradise birds which were said "never to touch the ground from their birth to death, . . . living wholly on the dew, . . . being produced without legs, . . . the female laying her eggs on the back of the male, and in hundreds such stories." He describes accurately the method of preparation by the Papuans of the skins, methods which gave rise to the fables.

"The whole trouble they were at on this occasion," he writes, "was merely to skin the bird, and, after pulling off the legs, coarser parts of the wings, etc., thrust a stick down the throat into the body, letting an inch or two hang out of the mouth, beyond the bill: the whole packed in a bamboo casing to protect the plumes. On the birds drying, the skin collapsed about the stick which became fixed and supported the rest. They had then no more to do than to fit this into a socket in the turban or elsewhere." He describes how the grandees of India, China, and Persia ornamented themselves and even their horses with these plumes, and continues, "The Dutch get them chiefly from Banda . . . to which place the natives of Aroo<sup>1</sup> bring them by way of traffic."

<sup>1</sup> The eighteenth-century spelling.

In that perhaps, Latham may have been wrong. The natives were not always from Aru. Some of them were from Sansapor or one of the other villages along the coast of the Tamrau. They probably came to Banda in a *prahu katulis*, bringing plumes for the grandees of India from Bon Kourangen.

After a long time a faint wind came from the west. The men stopped paddling and put up three bamboo poles and then the sail, a rickety piece of matting cut in the shape of a parallelogram. The little boat keeled over a bit feeling the wind. The paddlers draped themselves as comfortably as possible over the thwarts, and I went below to sleep. Only the old steersman, braced against the sternpost, kept a weather eye cocked for the wind.

For three days we lived this dream-like existence. During the day the trade wind came up, driving us into shelter along the shore. At night we would put out again, edging our way along the coast. The breeze at night never seemed to hold for any length of time. We passed one or two villages—Koor, once the centre of the local paradise bird trade; Batoe Putih, two houses perched on top of a great white rock. We spent a day in the lee of the Cape of Good Hope, the most northern promontory of New Guinea, lying within a dozen or so miles of the equator. There was a nice little stream there where I bathed and shaved and missed a kingfisher.

Finally one morning I woke up to hear eager talk. We were very close in to shore. Abeam, over the trees I could see a narrow valley with a bluish mountain inland. The *Kapa'a* gestured towards it.

"Bon Kourangen," he said.

Ahead, projecting out into the sea with breakers smashing at its base, was a huge wall of rock. This must be the False Cape. There was a yell from one of the paddlers.

He stood up on the thwart, balancing his iron-tipped fish spear and threw it out, its rattan line stringing after. The spear swished into the water about thirty-five feet away, a few inches short of its mark, a huge sea turtle basking on the surface. The turtle sounded with a thrashing of flippers and the man hauled back his spear. The old steersman, impatient of this distraction, shouted out "*Fadi, fadi,*" and we were off, sweeping out around the Cape.

"We must hurry before the wind comes up," Jusup said.

In a few minutes we were rounding the rocks, heading into a shallow exposed bay. The wind from the east was up now, but we were safe. Ahead of us was Wejos. There were three smaller bays let into the side of the rocky headland which projected out to make the Cape. Each was protected by rocky arms. Each had its strip of soft, pearly-coloured beach. The first was very small and shallow, evidently uninhabited. The second was somewhat larger, with a beautiful stand of big old coconuts.

"This place has had a village for a long time to have such big palms," I said to Jusup.

"*Ja, Tuan,* this place was one of the old homes of Utusan."

Utusan was a famous character along the coast. He had been prime minister for the last Raja of Saławati, the one who was sentenced to jail for slave-trading.

"Was he put in jail too?"

"No, Tuan, this was one of the places where he hid. He married several wives here and then he went off into the Karoon country, and the people say that he still lives there and some day he will come back and be a king."

"A kind of *mansaréen*, a prophet, eh?"

"*Ja, Tuan,*" and Jusup looked confusedly off into space.

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"*Ja, Tuan,*" and Jusup looked confusedly off into space.

Paddling past the second bay and its headland, we came to the third, which was continuous with the rest of the larger bay but protected by an outlying coral reef. The sea was still calm. The wind so far had come up only enough to stir the water in places with feathery fingers like a harpist running her fingers over the strings. But on the reef it was breaking heavily. We could see no pass. Then the steersman pointed. Ahead was a jumble of projecting rock. To one side of it there seemed to be a stretch of darker colour in the solid green water. As we came near the swell began to catch us and the men backpaddled to keep us steady. We hung there moving up and down, edging steadily closer to the reef.

Finally the steersman, sensing a big swell coming from the bay, gave a shout, and at that the men dug their paddles into the water with every ounce of strength they had. The *prahu* shot forward and then up with a great heave as it rode the swell. Now we were right among the coral rocks. The pass could not have been more than ten feet wide. Clutching masses of brownish coral fell away on each side as we rose up and up. The swell passed over the reef with a booming roar, carrying us just with it and no more. When we sank again in the backwash of the wave the sternpost fitted neatly into the landward side of the pass, as nicely as a blade in a jackknife. Another foot of length to the *prahu* or a little less full water and we should have smashed our stern to smithereens. Now another swell came and lifted us again, and we were surging forward effortlessly over the calm waters of the inner bay.

Beyond was the beach and the village, four houses, a big, old fig tree, and sixteen palms too young to bear. We swept up on to the beach with a crunching of sand, and the nine paddlers leaped out to steady the *prahu*

until men had run down from the houses with boards to prop against her sides. The local *Kapala* stepped forward from the shade of one of the palms. He was attired in the usual G-string, with the addition of a very tattered old khaki coat, mark of authority, and a small Dutch flag which he waved in one hand. But the presence of the flag did not prevent him from bowing and scraping in the old fawning style that was more reminiscent of the days of Utusan than the recent Dutch magistrates. We exchanged "*tabeks*" and shook hands, and then I was led to the largest building which the *Kapala*, who knew some Malay, dignified with the name *rumah post*, or posthouse, a sort of third-rate *pasangrahan*. When I surveyed the interior, the sagging walls and floor, the betel-stained cracks between the slats of bamboo, I felt that the *Kapala* was overdoing himself by calling the place even a *rumah post*.

However, there were other things to do. The *Kapala* of Wejos, the *Kapala* of the *prahu*, and I went into conference. Had the message come through? Yes indeed. Were there enough porters here? At this there was some hesitation. I finally discovered that only fifteen had arrived so far, but that the rest were expected that same evening. This seemed too good to be true. The rest of the day was spent unpacking the *prahu* and preparing our loads for the coolies.

The next day no more men came. As this was more traditional I was less surprised than if they had come. I explored Wejos with Saban. The hills rose up so steeply behind the town that birding was not only difficult but also unprofitable. I lost several specimens in the dark tangles of rocks and vines, got severely bitten by ants, and came back hot and out of temper, to find that Utusan's little beach, the one next to Wejos, was the

most splendid bathing-beach in the world. Late that evening fifteen more men appeared from villages along the coast. I lined them all up, gave them their loads, and took down all the names in my notebook. After each name was a space for every day that I would be on the march. Thus it would be a simple matter at the end of the trip to tally up how many checks followed each man's name indicating the number of days that he had worked for me and the wages that were due to him. That night the *prahu kalulis* started for Sansapor, the *Kapala* promising that it would be back for me by April 2nd. As it was now March 13th, this would give me about three full weeks and a margin of safety in getting back to Sansapor in time for the *Ursula*.

The *rumah post* was made more attractive by the presence of a small flock of chickens which camped for the night among the rafters, and two or three large pigs which ran about grunting underneath. The chickens, whatever else their value, were at least useful as alarm clocks. The old rooster had a purely psychic feeling about the coming of the dawn. He specialized in a full-throated set of crowings in the pitch darkness. At least it served to put us all on the *qui vive*. I don't think I ever made such an early start as that morning in Wejos.

At the last moment one of the porters decided that he was really too sick to travel, and another man complained that his foot was in bad shape. That left us twenty-eight, all of whom, however, seemed to be willing to go. After all the loads were distributed and I had given as good an imitation van der Goot harangue as I could, we started off, the *Kapala* of Wejos in the lead. He was an oldish man. Without his coat of authority he looked drawn and scraggy. His legs were thin and he leaned heavily on his spear. Towards the end of the procession there were

several women carrying the possessions of their menfolk. One of them was the *Kapala's* daughter, a rather delicate-looking creature struggling along under a large load and clutching in one hand her pet puppy.

As we left the village the men burst into the loud chant that I had become so used to on the trail. It was a good augury. But soon we needed all our breath. The ridge of the False Cape is eight hundred feet high straight up. At the crest the old *Kapala* went off the trail a little and vomited. I began to wonder if he would ever guide me up Bon Kourangen, but that was his last sign of weakness. Afterwards he seemed unaffected by any sort of climbing.

The path led down now, into the valley that we had seen from the sea. Along this the trail meandered, now on one side of a swift stream called the Waijeffi, now on the other. At the end of the valley rose Bon Kourangen, showing even at this distance a sharp and precipitous ridge up which we would have to climb. We made a bivouac that afternoon on a flat piece of bank a few feet above the river. I noticed again something that had happened before. There was one very dignified porter called Jemsom. He had the serious face, albeit somewhat rough-hewn as to features, of a middle-aged business man, full of responsibilities and care. The resemblance ended there of course, for he was clothed in the usual bark-cloth ensemble, a bead necklace with a fine crocodile tooth, and his muscular figure was in far better condition than the vast majority of his Occidental contemporaries. Jemsom had brought his son along, a small, thin, rather sickly child, who cried bitterly at intervals. When I first saw the boy in Wejos I thought he was crying because Jemsom was going away, but it soon appeared that he was coming along too, and furthermore that he was sick. For

this Jemsom had his own method of therapy. He would stand squarely in front of his son. With his hands close to his face he would breathe heavily, almost spit on them. Then he would reach down and rub the sides of the boy's head above the ears, rubbing forward with a wiping motion quite hard. After he had done this a few times he would clench his fists and lightly beat the sides of his own head, concluding all this with a violent motion of the fists out from his sides as if he were throwing something away. All of this was done with the most intense and concentrated expression, and each time the child stopped crying immediately.

By the time we reached the bivouac, however, the child was crying again, and I asked Jusup what the matter was.

"He has stomach-ache, Tuan."

"Perhaps he would like some of my pills?"

"No, no, Tuan, don't do that. The father is working his medicine now. If anything happened after you gave him a pill it would be your fault."

Fortunately the next day the child seemed to be better. Shortly after setting out in the early morning we came to a small tributary of the Waijeffi. I happened to be slightly behind, having just shot a parrot. When I came to the bank all the men were standing around waiting, while the four women of the party stood nervously on the bank. Finally four men stepped into the water somewhat gingerly, and each waited until one of the women had clambered up on to him in a pickaback fashion, and then all dashed across to the farther bank while everyone screamed and shouted. As the women had never seemed reluctant before to cross any number of streams, I was very curious. Jusup smiled and looked embarrassed as he always did when he tried to explain something which the white Tuan might think silly.



The Kapala's daughter, a delicate looking creature, clutching her pet puppy.



A sea-going prahu with double  
outriggers and nine paddlers.

"This stream is tabu to the women, Tuan. If they touch the water, no more children."

It was one of the few times that I was ever conscious of a tabu. Sometimes in a Papuan garden there would be a twist of palm leaves tied around a plant or a palm. That meant that it was private property and anyone violating the code of property would presumably be haunted or otherwise penalized. But that was a different type of tabu. In the jungle it was difficult to notice any sort of unusual behaviour, although Saban once told me that the Karoon, as well as his people the Mooi, felt that the trees and rocks were full of good and evil spirits, with the latter apparently in the majority.

About nine hundred feet up we left the Waijeffi and set off straight up an endless bank of sliding shale. The valley had closed in until there was nothing left but the river itself coursing down through a steep ravine. The air was full of mist from the rapids of the river and great banks of fern covered the rocks. I do not know which is worse, an ascent up a muddy trail with no handholds, or a climb up sliding shale. They are both bad. It takes great tension of the leg muscles to hold on and at the same time prepare to slip. And slipping is not wise when there is nothing to fall on to except a rock-filled gorge several hundred feet below. The rock was reddish-coloured and sedimentous. It broke fairly easily and yet the mountains are not worn. We worked up finally on to an amazingly steep ridge, made more precipitous by the avalanches which constantly decrease its width. In a few places two avalanches had coincided, slipping away on directly opposite sides of the ridge, leaving only a knife-like projection of solid rock on to which we lowered ourselves and inched across, our legs hanging down each side into space. In some places moss and roots were still cover-

ing the rocks, which gave a rather false sense of security to our progress. Here every step had to be tested in order to avoid putting too much weight on a place that might turn out to be moss alone.

Standing on the ridge with absolutely nothing to obstruct the view in any direction except forward where the trail reared up ahead, it was wonderful to stop a moment and gaze about. Far down in the valleys on each side I could hear the "whoop-whoop" of the rifle bird. Already we were above his territory. Once I saw two hornbills flying in formation far below, looking like airplanes. Two or three times cockatoos appeared startlingly white against the trees, and once an eagle sailed past quite close, turning his head to stare at us with bright brown eyes. Far behind the sea appeared, flat and a little hazy like a heavy blue woollen blanket.

At three thousand feet the trees were shorter, stubbier. Moss covered everything. I noticed that the branches of the trees seemed to be twisted and writhing as if they suffered from frequent storms. They were hard and tough too, as wiry as the branches of laurel bushes. Clouds had been making up the valleys all morning and now they closed in on us. Soon it was raining and cold. The Papuans began to shiver all over in the most extreme way, rather as if they were doing the shimmy. Even under their palm-leaf mats they shivered. Their teeth chattered and gooseflesh stood out all over them, and I began to wonder how many would die of pneumonia before we returned to Wejos. The rain continued to fall in sheets for long dreary hours as we slogged and slipped along the trail. I was surprised how well used the trail appeared. The *Kapala* later vouchsafed the information that not only did his people come up here occasionally for dammar resin from the big dammar trees on the heights, but

also it was one of the main lines of communication with the valleys behind the Tamrau.

"There is a village, Wedericke, one day down on the other side," he said.

I had no way of telling what time it was when we finally came to a small flat place among thick trees. At least it was not dark, but the rain and heavy clouds made it seem very late. The altitude was four thousand eight hundred feet. There was an abandoned thatch hut where the *Kapala* and I took shelter. The *Kapala* indicated that this was the place to camp. The top of the mountain was not far off, he said, and besides this was the only place to get a good supply of water. In spite of the redundancy of the last observation I realized by now that once it had stopped raining and the water had all run down into the Waijeffi and the other rivers, a mountain top in the jungle could become temporarily as dry as the Sahara.

Gradually the rest of the men straggled in. As soon as they had put down their packs they went off to cut poles for my tent. Two of the men had brought loads of thatch along from farther down, as the good palms for thatching grow at a low altitude. We finally managed to light a small fire which gave at least a visual effect of warmth. I crouched beside it, wondering why wet clothes still feel so clammy after several hours in them. The poles were hard to cut. The trees not only looked tough, they were tough, incredibly so. As the men chopped at the branches with their big knives the branches rang with the flat metallic sound that only very hard wood makes. Finally a few poles began to appear. Other men had cut rattan, which was of a particularly good variety at this altitude, and soon the tent was up. Meanwhile the rest of the camp began to take shape, the cook-house for Jusup and Saban, and the long, low shack for the men.

By evening when the rain had stopped we had a fairly presentable camp. Jusup produced some hot soup, and under the flare of my gasoline pressure-lamp I skinned three wet rags of birds, our total for the day. That night, for the first time since the stormy weather off Cape Hatteras on the *Chiva* more than a year before, I slept in my wool-lined sleeping-bag with the zipper completely zipped on all sides and with a woollen hood tied securely over my head.

As for Jusup and Saban, they had covered themselves with every available article of clothing until they looked like Eskimos muffled in a welter of toques, scarves, socks, and sweaters. They had fixed up a shelf-like bed of poles in the cook-house on which they slept, their feet warmed by a smouldering fire on the ground.

The next days resolved themselves into a regular routine. The mornings were usually clear and bright. We would be up and off early. Most of the porters went back to Wejos the day after arriving, but the *Kapala* and ten men stayed on to clear the trail, make steps in the steep places, and perform other odd jobs around the camp. Some of the women stayed on as well. Every morning I would go off hunting, leaving directions behind about tasks for the day. One job that took the men several days was to cut down some of the larger trees just below the camp in order to give us a view. The larger clearing would, I knew, also serve to attract birds. We finally achieved both purposes. There was a marvellous view down over the valley and out to the sea, and on the third day I collected a big female duck hawk which had come to spy out the land from a dead stub in the clearing.

By the end of a week the place began to have somewhat the look of a village. The *Kapala* had brought up some sugar cane and banana shoots which were planted

where they would get the morning sun so that they might provide a supply for future travellers. Our shacks had been thatched along the sides to provide better protection from the rain, and there was even a little hut a bit down the slope, like the one at Sedjak, which the *Kapala's* daughter and another woman occupied while they were temporarily "unclean."

Several visitors dropped in from time to time, men and women who were going over the trail either to Wejos from parts unknown or in the other direction. Their visits provided a bit of distraction even if it did seem as though they tarried unduly sometimes. I am afraid Jusup was often overgenerous with our supply of sago. But then he tended to be generous anyway with my supplies. I think he felt that it was important to be generous in order to maintain the prestige of his Tuan. I soon found that it was better to dole out tobacco or salt to the men myself rather than let Jusup do it. That way there was some chance of its lasting out the trip.

One day I noticed Jusup giving a tin of my Maggi soup to the old *Kapala*, and a package of my needles to his pretty daughter.

"Ahoy, Jusup," I said later. "This is no time to give presents. Wait until we get back to Wejos. And besides, whose presents are those?"

Jusup looked grieved.

"Incidentally," I went on, "just why were you giving presents to that girl and her father?"

I had specially warned Jusup and Saban beforehand that dalliance with a Karoon maiden would hardly be wise far away from the coast, where local customs might be different. Much too much was at stake to have any unpleasant incidents just now.

"Oh, Tuan," Jusup broke in. "That was just a present,

nothing more. No, no, indeed. Why, as for me," he shook his head, "those women are not so pretty. They would have to give *me* presents before I would go into the garden with them."

I wish I had known the Malay word for hypocrite.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### BIRDS OF FABLE

THE one time that I always felt supremely comfortable was in my sleeping-bag in the early morning. My canvas cot seemed as soft as down, my sleeping-bag as warm as toast, and the surroundings pleasantly familiar. The twelve-foot-square tent fly was not very big when stretched over poles as a roof. As a result, one end of the shelter had been elongated with palm-leaf atap. Atap had been placed along the sides too in the direction of the prevailing winds, for the first night the rain had driven right through from one end to the other. I had a floor to my tent, a somewhat precarious arrangement of poles lashed to a frame. There were none of the good bark trees for flooring at this altitude. In one corner I had a small rough table covered with all my canned food. Underneath it on a low shelf was the reserve supply of sago, salt, and tobacco for the men. I had to do this because Papuans will eat as much as they have in the way of food, with never a thought for the morrow. Everything had to be doled out, exactly so much per day per man.

Indeed, the whole time that we spent in this camp on the summit of Bon Kourangen was a race against time. Our food had to be made to last as long as possible. I doled out the shotgun shells with great care. All the while we worked like fiends, trying to get as much done

as we could in the time that we had, hoping and praying that the weather would hold. March is a bad month in New Guinea. It is a time of transition, a lull between two sets of prevailing winds, the south-east trade and the north-west monsoon. Often in this time the weather is bad, with heavy squalls and high winds. But we were fairly lucky. Only twice were there really bad days when the wind whistled across our little camp, driving scuds of rain before it. The wind was cold then, as bad as November at home, and the rain chilled us to the bone.

But usually when I woke up everything looked friendly and sunny. In the early morning the sun shone brightly through the trees, dappling them with light and sparkling on all the myriad drops of water which were caught in the moss that covered their trunks. It was beautiful moss, grey-green and hoary-looking. There were wonderful lichens too, sprawling and yellow-green. From the ends of the branches dripped another kind of moss, a sort of *Usnea*, long and trailing and grey-yellow like the Spanish moss on the live oaks at home in the south. In the rain this moss streamed down dismally or stretched out in long eddying tufts, away from the wind like clutching skeleton hands. But in the sun its tendrils merely looked ghostly and fascinating. I had noticed Saban collecting it and storing it in an old kerosene tin.

"What's that for, Saban?"

"Oh, Tuan, my mama makes a medicine out of this, a medicine for cuts or wounds."

"It's good, is it?"

"Oh yes, Tuan. These Karoon people use it." He stopped.

"What for?"

He looked uncomfortable. Then it came out in a rush.

• "When they catch a man and want to eat him, and there are not enough people to eat him all at once, why then they cut off an arm or a leg and put this medicine on it, and then he will not die right away, and they can eat the rest of him later on," and Saban went back to his work.

We would get up hurriedly in this first promising bit of sunlight, and breakfast as quickly as possible. Then Saban and I would go off in opposite directions along the trail. Jusup usually stayed in camp in order to put the bird skins out to dry in the sun or oversee the men in some job which I had given them for the day. At my insistence he had brought along a kerosene-tin oven, a bottle of home-made yeast, and some flour. With this amateurish contraption he made very passable bread.

After three hours of walking, we would usually be through. The clouds were full-formed by then, rolling through the trees like a creeping pall. It was always cold and shivery in that mist and we were glad to turn back. Camp was about four hundred feet below the crest of the mountain. It was a welcome change to go down even that short distance. The place seemed warmer and more sheltered, even if it wasn't.

At five thousand feet in the tropics, the bird life changes quite abruptly, along with the trees and the appearance of everything. The birds of Bon Kourangen were quite different from those farther down. Their nearest relatives are found only on other mountain chains along the length and breadth of New Guinea. I was particularly interested to see if there were any bower birds on the mountain. The bower bird is a dull-coloured cousin of the paradise birds. Mostly it looks like a fat brown thrush with stout legs. The males of some species, however, have very tall orange crests which stick straight

up in the air when they display to the females. One of these orange-crested species is known from only two specimens found in a Paris feather-dealer's shop in 1895. It must have come from some mountain range in New Guinea, but so far its home has never been found. Perhaps it lived in the Tamrau range.

On the second day in camp I collected a bower bird. It was dull brown without the crest. That evening when I made up the skin, I discovered that the specimen was a male. So then the mystery is still unsolved, the home of the orange-crested bird still unknown. In a way, however, I was pleased that the Tamrau, like the nearby Arfak Mountains behind Manokwari, was the home of the plain brown bird. For, whether as a compensation or not, it is the dull-coloured bird which makes the finest bower.

During the time that we were on Bon Kourangen, we found nearly a dozen of these curious little houses. The bower bird is certainly one of the most ingenious birds in the world. Its behaviour is so unbirdlike that one would think it had some type of rational intelligence. It seems almost impossible that an inherited pattern of instinctive action could be so complex. And yet even here there is an evolutionary process at work. Other species of bower birds make slightly simpler bowers. If these are carefully studied, it appears that there is a gradual trend from the simple to the complex and that this trend probably marks the phylogenetic relationship of the species comprising the family. The ancestral species probably had a simple little dancing-place on the ground. The next step might have been the erecting of a palisade of twigs around the edges of the spot. Further elaboration would result in the erection of a roof of twigs over this, and so on.

It was the following day, after collecting the first bower

bird, that Saban and I found a bower. We had met along the trail and had gone on together for the distance, until we came to the place where the descent to the forbidden hinterland began. The sun was high overhead, but clouds were beginning to steal in among the trees. I sat down on a log to rest before going back. It was quite chilly in the shade. There was a sudden strange call from a little below us and Saban went off to investigate. I thought vaguely that it might be a tree kangaroo, simply because that was the most unlikely thing that I could think of. Fred and Charis had two pet tree kangaroos and neither of them had ever uttered a sound. The Karoon who was with us said, "*Damdom*." I knew then that it was a bird. The only Karoon I knew was that every bird's name began with the prefix "*Dam*," not because the Karoon people were tired of birds or of me, but simply because that was the custom. There were days of rain and malaria when I was strongly inclined to agree with them.

Then I saw Saban's face. He was peering out at me from the underbrush, and he seemed to be decidedly puzzled.

"Tuan, there is a bird here that makes a house."

He looked apologetic, but I didn't laugh at him, as perhaps he had expected. In a moment we had reached the spot. In one place on the gentle slope the undergrowth had been neatly cleared away from an area four feet square. The place looked as if it had been swept with a broom. At the upper end of this area was the "house." A small sapling had been used as a brace in the centre. Around it had been woven an intricate framework of delicate stalks. They were small orchid stems, thin and yellow and shiny. The whole thing was shaped like a wigwam, about three feet tall and five feet broad at the base. In front was a rounded opening about a foot high, leading

to an inner circular chamber with the solid base of the sapling as a central beam.

This curious structure fronted on the cleared area. The impression of a front lawn was heightened by several small beds of flowers or fruit. Just under the door there was a neat bed of yellow fruit. Farther out on the front lawn there was a bed of blue fruit. At the bottom of the lawn there was a large, squarish bed of pieces of charcoal and small black stones. A few brownish fruits lay here also, some of them rather decayed. Off to one side there were several big mushrooms in a heap, and near them were ten freshly picked pink flowers.

The effect of all this was overwhelming. I had known vaguely that there were such things as bower birds in New Guinea, but I hardly expected to see anything as startling as this. It was much more as if, walking in the Catskills, I had stumbled over the handiwork of some of Rip van Winkle's small friends. How could a bird, unreasoning being that it is, ever contrive such an elaborate playhouse by instinct alone? I struck a match to light my pipe. Then I threw the match into the middle of the cleared ground. Saban and I withdrew a few yards until we were fairly well hidden in the undergrowth. We sat down to watch what would happen. After a short time there was another of those unfamiliar chuckling calls, and I spied one of the brown bower birds in a tree near the house. With a series of rather angular hops the bird sprang from branch to branch until it was on the ground. It looked about, apparently noticing my match, hopped over, picked it up, and with a toss of the head threw it out of the clearing. Then with a flirt of its tail, it leaped into the house and disappeared, making soft growling churring noises all the while. After a minute it came out and flew off again.

• I walked about in the nearby undergrowth for a few minutes collecting flowers. There was a pinkish begonia that was common, and a vine with small yellow flowers. In one place I found a single very pretty red orchid growing on a tree. All of these I brought back and placed in the middle of the bower bird's front lawn. Again we drew off some distance and waited. After a time, a single bird reappeared, whether the male or female I could not be sure. This time it flew directly to the ground and hopped at once over to the pile. The yellow vine went first. Apparently these flowers were not at all acceptable. After some hesitation and a good many nods and looks and flirts of the tail, the begonias went the same way as the yellow vine. All were thrown out with an impatient twist of the head. Last of all, the bower bird picked up the pretty red orchid. This time it seemed to be in two minds. It would hop this way and that from one pile of fruit or flowers to another. Finally, with many darts and flourishes, the orchid was placed on top of the pink flowers. The two colours swore a bit, but under the circumstances it was certainly the best matching job that could be done.

For many days I took every opportunity I could to watch these fascinating birds. I even tried to trap some, knowing how valuable they would be to any zoo or research laboratory which might have facilities for studying their remarkable habits. But all my efforts were in vain. The bower birds, as might be expected, were far too sagacious for my snares. Malan knew how to make the typical Papuan snare, a loop of string attached to a bent stick. They can be very efficient. A well-made snare will spring up in a flash. But each time the bower birds were swifter. The nearest I came to catching one was when the noose slipped off the bird's bill as it rose in the air.

After our first encounter with these strange birds, we found more bowers nearly every day. Ten days after arriving at Bon Kourangen I found the best one of all. It was rather near camp, but off on a steep hillside. I was looking for a ground pigeon which I had shot and lost when I came on the bower. There were several beds of fruit and a big one of charcoal, but in the centre was the most astonishing bed of all. Right in the middle, in the place of honour, were six shiny used .410 shotgun shells. Evidently they had been picked up from all along the trails where Saban and I had gone shooting. They were bright red and had the usual polished brass butt ends, and of course were just the thing for a bower bird's garden. Nevertheless, the shells must have been a considerable burden for so small a bird.

There were several other species of paradise birds on the mountain. Perhaps the most common was the *kourangen* after which the mountain was named. I soon discovered that the birds that I had taken on Bandji with the china-blue eyes were the young of this species which had not yet acquired the beautiful plumes of the adult. The fully developed bird is a splendid creature. Jet black and soft like velvet, the male is about as big as a magpie, with a short tail. On his forehead there is a small triangular patch of silver-white feathers which stand up when he is excited. From behind this extend six wires, perhaps four inches long, with small tufts of feathers at the end. On his breast is a brilliant metallic shield, glinting bronze and green and amber in the sun.

We saw these birds dancing. The sight is strange and wild. In their stiff sidewise hops there is something of the Papuan's dance. At one place on the mountain there was a cleared patch of ground roughly five feet in diameter. A little distance away I cut out some branches

and made a small shelter which would hide me from the birds. Then I watched for a long time. After a while I nearly went to sleep. It was a warm bright morning and the woods were absolutely still. Finally I noticed something moving in a tree over the dancing-floor. It was a coal-black male *kourangen*. He sat quietly for a time and then suddenly let out a harsh croaking call. He made several of these raucous calls, becoming more agitated with every one. Finally he left his perch and flew down to the floor in a series of short flights from branch to branch. He seemed to move with trained precision, as if his course was definitely circumscribed. The last few branches were very close, and on these he hopped, stiffly and with little sidewise flirts of the tail. Once on the ground, he made a quick flurry of movements, darting from side to side so fast that it was almost impossible to follow. Then he flew straight off with one last croak. That was the only dance I saw, but Saban reported seeing one dance again, this time with a female clearly watching from a tree overhead. Evidently these dancing-places are used for a long time. The branches on which the male bird alighted on his prescribed course down to the ground were deeply scored with the marks of the claws of the birds.

When I suggested trying to trap these birds, Saban was very confident.

"Tuan, these people know all about that. Just offer them a good price."

Accordingly, I made a big speech one day when there were a good many people in camp. I offered them five guilders a bird, a phenomenal price, equal to about two and a half dollars. Afterwards there was a hushed silence and then a shout of approval. At least ten men looked about knowingly, smiled and nodded, and then darted

off to pack up their belongings. In fifteen minutes they had all hit the trail, some of them with their wives. To my horror, a half-hour later, seven of them were back again, smiling a bit vaguely.

"What's the matter, Saban? What are they coming back for?"

"Oh, Tuan, these ones don't really know how to trap the birds. They only thought so when they heard you make that big talk. And then they were excited about the money."

Two days later, in the early afternoon, I heard a dreadful series of harsh screams coming nearer and nearer down the trail. Everyone became very excited. Several men rushed up the trail. In a few minutes a small procession appeared. Two of the men who had gone off after *kourangen* appeared, each with a bird in a small netting bag. The third man and his wife trailed along looking visibly disappointed. Now the whole camp, including myself, went into a tremendous uproar. Cages were to be made immediately along one wall of my tent. Men were dispatched to cut lengths of small straight saplings. Other men began to split rattan. In half an hour there were two splendid cages built down on the ground simply by sticking the saplings into the earth like a stockade and lacing them together with rattan. Not until they were ensconced, one to a cage, sitting mournfully on their perches, did the two birds cease their horrible duet. Towards the end, their shrieks became harsh and dry. They drank greedily when I pushed in two halves of a coconut-shell filled with water.

That was the beginning of my paradise bird collection. Altogether, the men trapped five birds. Saban told me later that they got the birds by waiting for a couple of days under a tree, holding one end of a noose. The noose



In front of the cookhouse Jusup and Saban made  
a combination bird-skinning and dining table.

(On Bon Kourangen at 4,800 feet )



In front of the bowerbird's playhouse were arranged several small beds of flowers and fruit

itself was draped over a branch where the birds were in the habit of perching. Then the man waited. If his wife was with him, she would steal up at intervals to give him some food. Why they weren't partially paralysed by the time the bird came along, I couldn't decide. In any case, incredible as it may sound, the system worked.

Two of the birds never learned to eat and soon died. A third benefited by Saban's clumsiness to the extent of getting out of its cage one day. There were two left when I finally went down to Wejos.

But there were other birds to catch alive. There was a large pigeon in the mountain forest, a beautiful creature rather the shape and size of a pheasant. It was smaller than the big crowned pigeons, thinner, more delicate-looking, with bronzy metallic plumage. In the forest they were never seen, but their mournful whistle, a long descending note, was frequently heard. The Karoon caught several for me. They seemed tame enough when they were first brought in. A cage was built and fruit, rice, and seeds put in for them. But they were deceptively tame. They ate nothing, huddling in the farthest corner most of the time. In the early morning they would call softly, that far-away sad whistle. After three days they all died without having eaten anything.

One evening Saban came into my tent.

"Tuan, there is a man here who says he can catch some birds for you, some rails. He wants to use your flashlight."

My malaria had returned. I was not in my best frame of mind.

"I don't believe it. He can't catch rails with a flashlight. Besides, he'll just use up all the batteries."

"But, Tuan, these rails in the mountains sleep at night in little houses. All the people say they do. There is

always a pair, a male and a female, sleeping in a little house made out of leaves."

"I attempted to look as pained as possible. Here, I thought to myself, is the typical example of native folklore, the sort of thing that lingers on into the literature of civilization, like the legend of the salamander that won't burn in a fire. This is the sort of story that some pseudo-scientist might bring back from one of the flea-bitten bars in Rabaul or Port Moresby. Birds that build houses, indeed!

"I suppose you are going to tell me that these birds build houses to get in out of the rain."

"Yes, Tuan."

There was a pause. I handed over the flashlight.

"Tell him to be back in a hurry and not use it too much. Quick! Scat!"

I went back to my bird-skinning under the flaring pressure-lamp, which cast such a hard cold light over everything. It was cold to begin with, cold and raw-feeling. At least the wind wasn't blowing to-night. But my feet were cold. I was stiff from bending over the bird skins. My fingers were cold. My ears were roaring from the quinine, and I swore to myself every time I looked over at the Karoon people asleep, huddled round their warm camp fires. I couldn't wait to get to bed, but there were three more skins to do, and that damn fool was out thrashing around, using up my batteries.

Then there came a rustling noise as three men walked *into the light* from the fires. The first one was carrying something in his hands. The next held the flashlight, gingerly, as if it might explode at any moment. The third one was simply grinning all over. There was a great stir. Nearly everyone woke up and jumped to their feet. There was much excited calling back and forth. The headman

came into the tent and stood there in front of me, holding in both hands a big pile of leaves.

"What is it?"

"It's the rail-house, Tuan," Saban shouted. "There are two rails in it."

And so it had happened. Here was the traveller's yarn to beat them all, happening right in front of me. I took out a big collecting-bag and put the whole mass of leaves into it. As I carefully popped the bag over the man's hands I heard a faint squeak from inside. Everything felt warm and pleasant again.

The next morning I investigated the contents of the bag. There was a pair of rails in it, a male and a female, and a loose pile of dead leaves. The same thing happened every night for three nights, every time a male and a female in a pile of dead leaves. The Karoon people said that they often noticed the leaves piled up like that as they walked in the jungle. Then all they had to do was to come back at night when the birds were inside, pick the whole thing up and carry it off to me. And so that is how I collected six specimens of the rare little red mountain rail. Here is a bird which, defying all precedent, goes about in pairs, making little leaf shelters in which to sleep at night! But perhaps, as a proper zoologist, I should merely say that on the evenings of March 19th, 20th, and 21st, my men brought me three pairs of *Rallidula leucospila* in three small piles of leaves, just like that.

The other species of birds of paradise were slightly more shy and rare. There was one rather small species about the size of a starling, all black, with an enormous bifurcated shield of metallic greeny-blue feathers which arose from the head and swept back over the back. There was another shield of metallic feathers on the breast.

When the male displayed to the female, both shields were erected, standing up about the head so that the face and bill of the bird were in the centre of what resembled a continuous saucer-like ring. The birds even take short flights from tree to tree with their feathers expanded in this way, although the wind resistance must be something to be reckoned with.

But the most spectacular one of all was a bird called the sicklebill. They are big birds of paradise with tails nearly three feet long. They are soft velvety black all over, except for two curious butterfly-wing shields that rise out from each side of the breast. The bill is about three and a half inches long, thin and curved. I saw them only twice. One was a male, sitting very high up on the bare branch of a huge dammar tree. Evidently there was a female near, as it was displaying. The butterfly feathers stood out on each side. The tail was partially spread. Suddenly it gave its call, a loud, penetrating whistle sounding like the syllable "whick." It was a note I had heard often, ringing over the steep valleys in the mountains. Then it turned and made a nosedive down from its perch at lightning speed. Straight down it dived for fully a hundred feet. At the bottom of the dive, it came out with spread wings and sailed back up again to the same branch, so rapidly that it took me an instant to realize that anything had happened at all.

By the end of three weeks we had secured three hundred specimens and our food was running out. The weather had been rainy and colder than ever for the last two days. When the porters turned up on schedule with the old *Kapala* in charge, I decided not to risk staying over any longer and running out of either food or contrary-minded porters. And so we packed up our specimens and prepared to abandon camp. I took a last walk up the

trail the evening before leaving. I wanted to see how our neighbours, the bower birds, were faring. As I came near, I could hear their harsh calls, now long and chattering, now loud, almost like a barking dog. They stopped as I came up to the bower and flew quietly away. Where before there had been six shotgun shells, now there were twenty-nine in a sprawling pile which almost covered the entire front lawn. I came away feeling definitely important. To create a new fashion, a hat for the ladies, or a pattern in ties for men—that is one thing; but I wonder how many people can claim to be responsible for creating a new fashion among birds?

The next morning we started down early. As if to put us to shame, the weather was sunny, the morning mild. I regretted leaving the little clearing among the moss-draped trees, the hopeful shoots of sugar cane, the spindly banana planted for a possible return. A forlorn column of smoke rose from the dying breakfast fire. Up on the ridge, I could hear the gurgling call of a bower bird. In a few moments I would be too low down to hear their calls, to see their bowers, ever again. That first step down the trail was the first step on the long trek homeward to America. After four or five hours we came down to nine hundred feet, and the river. The last part was hot work, sliding down the steep shale slopes. The paradise birds in their rattan travelling-cages screamed harshly every time they were jostled, which was most of the time. I wondered why their voices didn't dry up altogether. At the river, Jusup and Saban threw off their clothes and plunged in, their first real bath in three weeks. Being a dignified Tuan, I would have to wait till evening camp.

A few moments later, I lost both my dignity and my comfort for the next two days. I tripped and fell headlong into a bed of the most potent nettles it has ever been

my ill-fortune to encounter. I sat down for a time on a stone, trying to collect myself and wondering in a dazed fashion at the pain.

Jusup, who had put on his clothes again, tried to be sympathetic.

"Those are called pig nettles, Tuan. They are the worst kind."

In a way, I suppose it was comforting to know that one had fallen in with the "worst kind."

I itched and scratched and itched some more all that day. The worst part was my face. My eyes watered continuously. That night, when I tried to take the long-awaited bath, my troubles began again. Nettle stings do not react kindly to water. Even the next morning, like a fool, I tried to shave and the smarting began again. The afflictions of Job could hardly have been more trying.

On the third day we swung into Wejos, the men shouting out their blood-stirring marching-song. The place was nearly deserted. There was no sign of the *prahu* that was to take us back to Sansapor. But the *rumah post* seemed a palace of comfort, the little beach was as inviting as ever, and there were sweet green coconuts to drink from. It would be a pleasure to rest here for a day or so, until the canoe came.

But we spent eight days in Wejos. Off shore the wind was blowing strong from the east. No *prahu* could make it along the coast. No *prahu* came, and the wind showed no sign of abating. Much of the time passed like a nightmare. My fever started up again and eddied and flowed on its course until I lost track of time. One of the paradise birds died. It drooped in its cage, occasionally letting out a harsh, tortured cry. Finally it vomited up some blood and fell down in a spasm; and that was that. I had saved up two or three paper books for an emergency, but

I read them too fast. They were all gone by the third day, and I was too bored to read them over again. However, these were minor troubles. Fortunately, I had paid off all the men from neighbouring villages. Everyone had left except the people of Wejos. Lacking food of our own, we had to try to get what we could from them, but the Papuan economy is designed only for the needs of the moment. They had no reserves to fall back on.

On the fifth day I went over our food for the fifth time with Jusup. There was no more sugar, milk, vegetables, meat, flour, butter, or tea. There was a little coffee and some rice, enough for two days. There were three green coconuts left—all the others were too young—some green papaya that would do for a vegetable, and some green bananas that Jusup was trying to ripen in a hurry by burying them in the sand. So far as I could see, the Karoon people were in no better condition. I had given the rest of the sago to the old *Kapala* when he had told me that at this season the people were usually at another village over the mountain where the gardens were bearing.

"But it takes ten days to walk there," he said.

I retired to my cot to fend off another chill and to try to think the situation over. I myself had lost most of my appetite, what with malaria and general depression, but the question of eating something still seemed important. I began to realize something of the matter-of-fact attitude behind cannibalism.

"We were hungry, so we ate him or her," as the case may be. It all sounded highly logical.

Saban came in after a day spent hunting cassowaries. No luck, but he had got a pigeon. We were nearly out of shells, too, which made hunting difficult. There was a discreet cough outside. It was the old *Kapala*.

"Tuan, there is only very little to eat," he began. "It is a hard thing, but I think we should kill one of our children."

I could not believe my ears. No, it was all right. He was pointing now at a very large pig which I had noticed rooting about under the houses. The *Kapala* was looking expectantly at me.

"Ja," I said. "I will give tobacco, and there is some salt left."

"That is good," he said, smiling. "The people will dance."

And so, out of nothing, it was decided to have a party. Big pigs are killed very rarely in a village of the poorness of Wejos, and only in times of stress. Pigs are equal in value to people. A mother will suckle her child on one breast, her baby pig on the other. This was going to be a gala occasion.

Outside there was complete quiet. It was noon and sunny and hot. Suddenly there was a great commotion. Squeals and howls rent the air. Jusup came in and explained that they had been stalking the pig. He would have run into the jungle if they had not waited until he fell asleep in the middle of the day.

I got up and went out to the bamboo ladder leading up into the *rumah post*. I could sit here and survey the scene.

The pig had been trussed up to a pole which was slung between two uprights. It lay there in a harness of rattan, its legs hanging down stiffly. It was decorated with flowers, crotons and hibiscus. The *Kapala*, too, was decorated with flowers stuck in his plaited armband and in his hair. He was issuing directions. Now a little troop of boys was sent off into the forest to cut sticks of a certain sort. Some of the older people were kindling a big fire.

There were five young men who were also decorated with flowers.

"Those are the men to be initiated," said Jusup.

Some time later the little boys came back, gambolling and frisking with five long, straight poles. They gave them to the young men, and now the *Kapala* stepped out and made them a speech in a whispering sort of singsong, and daubed lime on their foreheads and arms and legs.

"For them it is the same initiation as when they kill a man," whispered Jusup.

Then he stepped up to the pig and whispered something at it, and the five young men lifted up their poles and swung mightily, once, at the pig and it was all over. The pig died, just like that. A little blood ran out of its mouth, but otherwise there was nothing to show that it had been hurt. The old *Kapala* took some of the blood and daubed it on his men, and they were presumably now tribesmen.

The pig tasted excellent. I didn't eat very much because I was not hungry. Besides, I couldn't get it out of my head that I was eating part of a person. All night long there was a splendid dance. The tobacco and the salt were received with real pleasure. Everyone danced wildly, men and women together, all decorated with flowers.

I slept for a time, but then woke up in the middle of the night and went out to watch. There was a big bonfire beyond the *Kapala's* house. Parts of the pig were still being cooked and eaten. But most of the people were dancing, chanting out their strange dirges and swinging around in a circle, arms locked, eyes glassy, almost hypnotized by their own rhythm. After a time, there would come a new burst of song and a slightly different lilt to the rhythm. That was the signal to break the circle. Then

one man would take the lead and start off, the whole troop following, in a sort of snake dance, round and round and in and out. As they passed me, their faces and their shining, sweating bodies gleamed in the firelight. Their mouths hung open as they panted. Their lips were black from tobacco and betel and they drooled black saliva like blood. Some held bows and arrows and spears. Others waved greasy chunks of flesh or bones. They pounded past, not seeing me or anything else, lost in the surging ecstasy of the dance and the repletion of drum-taut stomachs. It was a good dance, as good a one as I ever hope to see.

The sixth day we had some soup with rice in it. The pig was all gone by then. The seventh day we had some soup. The eighth day we had nothing at all; but it didn't matter, because the wind went down and that night the *prahu* came in. There was food on board and messages, and a long tale of woe from the men. They had been held up in Sansapor more than two weeks by adverse winds. The messages were the best of all. There was a letter from my mother in Sorong. She had arrived on the mail-boat two weeks before and was staying with the van der Goots. After nearly a year and a half away from the family, there would be really satisfying news and lots of good food, too, for she had brought all sorts of canned things from Australia. Now at last it seemed exciting to be going back to Sorong, the metropolis.

The next morning very early, we set off in the *prahu*. Once again Wejos was an outpost of the Queen's Government. The *Kapala*, having completely forgotten the initiation of a few days before, appeared again in his tattered jacket, waving the Dutch flag. The *prahu* swept away and over the reef with hardly a tremor, and we were out of the landlocked bay. We rounded the False Cape with a

sweep, paddles clacking in unison, and there, over the calm water, came the first ghostly fingers of the wind, dispelling the early morning calm. It was the east wind, the one we had been cursing so long, but now it was ten times welcome. The flimsy palm-leaf sail went up on its triangle of bamboo poles and we were off, bucketing along before the mounting breeze.

All that day the wind held. The coastline along which we had crawled so slowly on our way to Wejos flashed past now in a dazzling sparkle of sunlit spray. Gone were the False Cape, Batu Loebang, the Cape of Good Hope, Koor, and all the rest. We barely stopped to eat or drink along the shore. The breeze was too precious to lose. At nightfall we put in for a hasty supper of rice and dried sea-turtle ova from a long smoked oviduct which roasted in a smelly package over my head, and then we were off again. The breeze lessened somewhat, but we could still sail before it. I slept soundly nearly all night, until I woke suddenly when someone screamed. It was Jusup. A centipede had fallen from the thatched roof over our heads and bitten him on the neck. He looked as if he had a bad case of one-sided mumps. It must have been excruciatingly painful. I gave him three aspirins, put some iodine on it, and went back to sleep, throwing a blanket over my head. When I woke up, we were coming in to Sansapor.

Another day in Sansapor, of packing this time instead of unpacking, and I was ready for the *Ursula*. She came in right on schedule, with Harry on board as well as Fred and Charis, who had been picked up a day's march down the coast. We talked incessantly, as people do under such circumstances. I am inclined to think we almost beat whatever record there is of such things. Even at two in the morning, when we had exhausted the stock of beer

that Harry had brought along, we were still talking. We finally all fell asleep before Fred had had time to finish a sentence; but as far as I can recall he completed it immediately on waking the next morning.

That was the day that we came back to Sorong.

## CHAPTER XV.

### SORONG AGAIN

OUTSIDE in the neat sandy path that was the street, it was glaring and bright. A few people moved back and forth in the sun—a Chinese in flapping white pyjamas, clapping in wooden sandals with widespread feet; a Malay woman in crisp white jacket and gay sarong, walking swiftly with downcast eyes; some Papuans just in from the back country. They went past in a group led by a more sophisticated relative in striped pants. The tails of their breech-clouts swung back and forth as they walked on tiptoe with awe. A boy with a tray of sweet cakes, black cap over one ear, shuffled lazily in the dusty gutter.

Inside Ong Tjoean's store it was cool and dark, away from the glare and the pitiless heat. Here, towards the end of the morning, we always congregated, for Ong Tjoean was the only store-keeper to have a kerosene ice-box and cold Java beer. During those last two weeks in Sorong, our mornings resolved themselves into the familiar pattern. We were up with the first light, working, collecting, or packing specimens, drying skins when the sun was bright, getting cases made at the local carpenter's, doing all the errands that had to be done before we would be thoroughly packed for the long voyage home. By eleven or so we were ready to rest a bit.

The company varied with the time of the month. Near

mail-boat time there was usually an oil prospector up from Kassim, gaunt and bearded. Often Kamma was there, and one morning when I came in from collecting, there was a stranger. He was a gentle-looking old man with a shock of white hair and a large gold seal ring. His white suit was carefully pressed and he wore a tie, rather a rarity in Sorong. Mr. van der Goot presented me.

"This is Mr. Ripley from the Museum in America. Mr. Ripley, Mr. van der Veen."

I had heard about van der Veen. He was a remittance man whose wife was a dancing girl from Sumatra. His family were very grand in Holland. They had objected, and for this he lived in exile, receiving a meagre allowance from home on condition that he did not return to the Netherlands.

"Please join us," said Mr. van der Veen. "Did you find any birds this morning, sir?"

The old man lived in imagination in the gay capitals of Europe. He evidently thought anyone who came all the way to New Guinea for birds was quite mad.

That morning I had been up the hill behind the village. It was a fine morning and the great rolling waves of palms glittered green against the pale clear sky. At the crest I came face to face with a large dull-reddish hawk sitting on a drooping palm frond. It looked like a rare one and I fired but missed, I think. He flew off, flapping low among the underbrush on the left side of the path. I started through the head-high growth as rapidly as I could, hoping for a further sight of the bird. But I did not manage to see him again.

After a distance the underbrush ended and I came out on a neat, fenced-off enclosure in the middle of which stood a small shed. The ground was bare inside the fence and I saw the projecting ends of several pipes protruding

from the ground with padlocks dangling from their metal caps. The shed was covered with camouflage paint. I had not known that there was any such system of storage tanks in Sorong, and I decided that I would ask about it at our morning meeting.

In the store it was very quiet. Four whites at one time had driven away the other customers. Ong Tjoean's three relatives who served as clerks had little to do but sit about and watch us or stare out of the windows, picking their teeth. Ong Tjoean sat on a high stool at his cash desk, running up accounts on the abacus, his round-moon face creased with smiles, nodding and winking to himself as he counted up the morning's take.

"I nearly got a hawk," I said, "but it went off so fast that I lost it. By the way, van der Goôt, I saw your gas tanks up on the hill. I didn't realize you had such things here in Sorong, of all places."

"Yes," replied van der Goot, smiling, "our airplane pilots like to have these little reserve depots of fuel scattered about: in case of war, you know."

"Well, *prosit!*" he added, after a pause.

"*Prosit!*" van der Veen and I added, raising our glasses. Kamma raised his glass of lemon squash.

I looked at the others. They all seemed quiet and preoccupied, sipping their drinks.

Mr. van der Veen looked at me curiously. "It is inconceivable to you, isn't it, you who live so safely in America, to be born, to live, to die, as we do now in these days, in fear, yes, in mortal fear of a situation which might occur at any time.

"You know," and he waved his hand, "all this might go to-morrow. And Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Bali would go too, just like that. These Indies of ours and their riches, oil and rubber and tin, they lie in a chain across the sea

like a string of fruit ripe for the picking. Yes, that is what it is to be a Dutchman to-day, to work, to marry, to raise a family. We have a past, a glorious one, a present, a pleasant enough one, but as for the future——” and he sighed and shook his head.

Kamma had been silent, but now he looked up, blinking through his spectacles, and began to speak in his gentle voice.

“Sometimes I say to myself, why should we bother? Why, if we are not powerful enough to hold these colonies for ourselves, should we not hand them over to Japan or whoever else wishes them? After all, the Dutch East India Company fought to get these colonies two and three hundred years ago. We have no right to them beyond that of conquest. Now it is Japan's turn. We are a 'have,' they are a 'have-not.' It is their turn now.”

But then he added, smiling as he noticed the protest on our faces, “I don't really think that for very long. After all, there must be a halt sometime. Because we have acted badly in the past, it is no reason that these twentieth-century aggressors should act badly now.”

My mind wandered away from the talk, and I thought back to four months before when I had been collecting on Biak. The native Malay magistrate at a village south of Korrido had told me of the terrifying appearance of a Japanese sampan in the harbour not long before. The poor man had been unable to control the sailors when they came ashore and demanded food and supplies without giving payment in return. After all, he had only two Papuan policemen with dubious rifles against the little pistol-brandishing Japanese, who swaggered about the town for a day or two, daring him to do anything about it. The incident is typical of these boats which have made their presence felt for years in every part of the islands.



*New York Zoological Society*

The "kourangen" or six-plumed bird of paradise,  
jet black and soft, like velvet.



Augustus was jealous of my pet cockatoo, who was continually being surprised and disgusted by the hornbill's wretched appearance.

If a naval vessel was near, they announced that they were on an innocent fishing expedition and quickly disappeared. The "fishing" was well known to consist of taking soundings with hand lines.

Again there was Momi, a large area of land about fifty miles south of Manokwari, which the Japanese had rented for the experimental production of cotton. Momi was an interesting place, a sort of clinical case. Next to the Dutch oil company, to the south, it was potentially the biggest commercial development in Dutch New Guinea. Hundreds and hundreds of Papuan workers were employed in clearing the jungle and planting cotton. It is hard to say why the Dutch, who lived in such dread of Japanese infiltration, allowed them to take over this concession. Yet it may be, after all, that they were clever in granting it, for the plantation was a failure. Cotton was produced, but not in successful quantity or of good enough quality to make up for the difficulty involved in its production. Perhaps the Dutch hoped in this way to show Japan that New Guinea is not the great rich field of expansion that the Japanese thought it was. The Papuans, too, ordinarily so little given to opinions or prejudices, showed themselves to be unwilling to work for the Japs. This was not strange, considering that many of them died of diseases contracted at the plantation, others were whipped until they ran away, and none of them returned to their villages rich men. This was not merely a matter of rumour, for I have seen the men myself in the hospital at Korrido.

But war, attack, aggression—these words seemed so strange and out-of-place in New Guinea. War in Sorong is thought of in terms of head-hunting raids. Jusup once said to me, "The men of Sorong are afraid of the men of Japan," as if he was speaking of two rival villages. There

- is no question as to whom the Malays like better, Dutch or Japanese. They know too well that the vaunted "Pan-Asia Movement" will be for the sole benefit of the hissing inhabitants of certain small islands to the north.
- I looked about the store. Every available inch, except the table at which we sat, was covered with shelves and display counters which in turn were covered with every imaginable sort of trade goods. One side of the room was for food, and here were tins of Edam cheese, of Bartlett pears, Argentine corned beef, Japanese salmon, Chinese bamboo shoots, grapes, and German brown bread. Long strings of onions from Java vied with sacks of Australian potatoes. Bags of rice were laid along the floor. One shelf was full of tins of Cadbury chocolates, another of the inevitable bottles of Bols gin. There were lovely Chinese ginger jars of all sizes, from the smallest with blue decorations on it, containing spices, to the largest, holding fifty pounds of rock salt. There was a tray of ancient Chinese eggs, dark blue-green and lustrous. There were endless bottles of beer. A smoked ham and a varnished duck hung side by side on hooks from the ceiling.

The other side of the store was for clothes. Here were sarongs of endless varieties, pyjamas made in a rather durable way like suits to be worn on the street by the smartly inclined after the evening bath. There were topis, sun-helmets, made in imitation of the white man's kind, but of a shoddy material that would come apart in the first rain. Tools were scattered about all over the floor, and sacks of tin plates and basins. The display-case nearest to me was full of Papuan trade goods, mirrors, knives, beads, tiny kerosene lamps, and bolts of coarse cotton cloth.

A few of the newly arrived Papuans were looking in the window. One or two, braver than the others, were

standing at the sides of the door, but none had dared to come in. They were living examples of Ong Tjoean's sales ability and the benefits of international trade. Except for their bark-cloth loin cloths, they were dressed exclusively in trade goods. Strings of tubular-shaped yellow beads hung about their necks. In their fuzzy hair a comb was stuck. One or two had earrings of twisted bits of silvery metal. One had a belt, a rather superficial bit of clothing, decorated with stamped squares of silver. From the woven bag hung over one shoulder protruded the ends of each man's knife and mirror. Most of them were chewing tobacco, holding the wad between their front teeth and half-opened lips, giving them an extraordinary pouting appearance like a goldfish.

Mr. van der Goot, noticing my glance, swung around to them with a broad smile, and leaning over the back of his chair called out to them good-naturedly, "Eh-yah, where are you from?" The Papuans answered with grins of embarrassment, twisting from one foot to the other.

Finally one of them ventured, "Moraid."

"Oh, Moraid, are you? If you want cotton cloth for your wives, he will charge too much. What do you say, Ong Tjoean?"

The old man behind his grill grinned and bobbed until I was afraid his face would crack in two.

"No, no," he protested giggling, "no, no."

There was a pause. Everyone emptied their glasses and three of us stood up to go. Mr. van der Veen held out his thin-veined hand.

"I'll stay here," he said. "I am waiting for my wife. We go back to Waigeu in a *prahu* this afternoon." Then he looked up at me solemnly. "When you go back to America, remember us here in the Indies. Remember us and tell your friends about us. We are a small, hard-work-

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"I'll stay here," he said. "I am waiting for my wife. We go back to Waigeu in a *prahu* this afternoon." Then he looked up at me solemnly. "When you go back to America, remember us here in the Indies. Remember us and tell your friends about us. We are a small, hard-work-

ing, harmless people. At this moment, both here and in the *Moederland*, we are working to the utmost, straining to build a fleet and equip an army that are bound at the last to be too small to stand up against the professionally warlike nations. We need your help."

I said good-bye and we walked out into the blinding light. The van der Goots were having mother and me to lunch. It was to be rice tafel.

"Funny old fellow," said van der Goot. "Tends to get a bit excited at times. But I like him."

Those last few days in Sorong passed with lightning rapidity. There was all the packing and arranging to do, of course; and then there was a round of parties. Mr. van der Goot had a birthday, for which the whole town turned out. The Chinese stores contributed several cases of beer. The Malay clerks in his office had organized themselves into a five-piece band led by Alting, the heir-apparent of the Sultan. They played execrable jazz with great endurance and vigour. Then there was a native *menari* orchestra which serenaded us from outside the van der Goots' house. Everyone ate a cold concoction of rice with sauce called *lantani*, and drank beer. At the end we did a polonaise march over to the tennis court, shining white under a full moon, and did figures up and down its length. Then as the time for the boat came near, there were farewell parties for us. Fred, Charis, and Didie, who were in the *pasangrahan*, had a party for us. Then the van der Goots and Harry had one. Then we had one in return. Fortunately, mother really had brought some very interesting and unusual cans of food. These made our teas and suppers a great success.

Every evening mother and I went for a stroll before dark. The light fails very quickly in New Guinea. By six o'clock it is always dark. The day that the mail-boat was

due, we waited about through the forenoon with great impatience. Everything was packed, ready and down at the wharf. My trunks of birds, my cases of live birds, Eduardo, the echidna, mother's luggage, all was ready. Jusup and Saban were both resplendent in new suits of pyjamas as a result of being paid off. They both had received their letters of recommendation and presents which they went about showing to everyone. By afternoon, when the boat had not come, our first initial feeling of leaving, so strange and unexpected in this Sorong of ours, was gone. It was a false alarm after all. We weren't really going. We would take our walk as usual.

We went out along the little street past the houses, the magistrate's house, the postman's house, the policemen's barracks, the little hospital. Beyond there are the Chinese stores with the houses behind them where the store-keepers live, then a few Malay houses, the mosque, and finally the canoes drawn up along the beach. There were always a few new canoes in. Sometimes we would stop and talk to them and occasionally buy something. They made nothing but what they used themselves, but these were very pleasing—hats or betel boxes of pandanus leaf, a bamboo comb, or bracelets made of a big sea-shell, a *Conus*, sometimes a wooden ancestor spirit or *korwar*.

At last there were not even any more canoes. The main street of Sorong was just a small path running along the beach between the rows of palms. In a straggly mangrove bush, a white kingfisher with blue wings sat watching us. At last we came to the outer beach facing into the west. The sun was going down. Across the sea, the islands stood out in bold relief, Batanta, Salawati, Ram, Efman, the islands of the four Rajas. High over each, a billowing mass of clouds had built up like an enormous nightcap. One by one, the layers of clouds turned all the red colours

of the spectrum, from palest yellow through orange to red and then to darkest purple. The water, too, was lit with it, and lit also was the pinkish sand of the beach, with wet white shells gleaming. The only noise was the soft pat-pat of the waves and the faint clashing of the palms as they moved their fronds in a mournful dance.

There is a moment between the light and the dark when all stops, like the moment before the applause in a theatre. It is in that moment, as endless, as all-encompassing as time itself, that my memory is crystallized. It was then that I took leave of New Guinea.

We walked back. There, blazing with light, was the mail-boat. Everyone went on board, and there was a great bustle and commotion of loading. We made a merry party at dinner in the crowded saloon. The captain was a charming, urbane man, evidently serving on the New Guinea run as a penance of some sort. He sported an elaborate Cartier cigarette-case, a run of amusing stories, and a fondness for Bols gin. Even after our recent celebrations in Sorong, we had what seemed like a palatial dinner. Fred, Charis, Didie, the van der Goots, Harry, all were in grand spirits. We laughed and joked and afterwards sat out on the little deck and drank our coffee and watched the lights of Sorong and the constant stream of small boats hurrying back and forth with cargo. It was just what we had done four months before, when the captain had brought some charts from Makassar for the *Chiva*.

Then the whistle sounded and everyone went to the stairs, and with a wrench I realized that we had to shake hands with all these people who had become as familiar a part of my life as the clothes I wore. The van der Goots went down the stairs, and Harry who was going back to Kamwa. Fred and Charis went down the stairs bound for

another few months in Sainkedoek. Then Jusup and Saban were shyly bowing and fingering their caps and grinning.

"*Tabek, Tuan?*" and they are down the stairs. Now they are all just blobs of white in a launch, going back to Sorong. It seems very strange and hard to believe. For a time, this business of going home seems much more like leaving home. The anchor chain is hauling up now. We are turning in the tide? I glanced towards the captain, leaning elegantly against the rail, puffing at his cigar.

"Have you ever been ashore in Sorong, captain?"

"Me? Good God, no. I never go ashore in these filthy places."

From Sorong it takes ten days among the Moluccas to reach Makassar, that thriving port at the southern tip of Celebes. The seas of the Moluccas are almost endlessly calm. The islands of the Moluccas are small, perfect volcanic cones that rise steeply from the pale sea like chicken croquettes rearing out of a congealed cream sauce. The days passed rapidly enough. I had my birds to look after. At almost every small island port where we stopped I managed to pick up something—a brilliant red and green lory at Batjan; four cockatoos at Ambon.

We had good company on board. Didie was on her way back to America via Makassar, where she was to pick up an American freighter. Then there was Teddy Beets, retiring after his service as assistant resident at Manokwari. The captain, of course, was always amusing in a bitter, cynical sort of way. At Tobelo we picked up a new genus and species, the American widow on her way around the world to see life. Mrs. Nicholas was decidedly amusing, one of those people who should always be traveling on boats. She was small, with a face and figure that were undoubtedly the envy and despair of every Dutch

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*Mevrouw* who laid eyes on her. In her first half-hour on board she rocked the ship from stem to stern by having four Bols gins and telling us all the story of her three husbands. It was a wonderful story. It went on and on and succeeded in staying endlessly funny. Then she told us the highlights of her trip so far. She started from the beginning, the thirty simple little travelling-hats she had bought at Bergdorf's, the twelve pairs of travelling-shoes at Abercrombie's, the slips, the girdles—nothing seemed to be left out. Then we had the procession of episodes, all highly romantic, that had followed. There was the "Week" at Taormina, the "Episode" during the fête at Cannes. There was poor Count So-and-so, who had been so madly in love with her in Rome.

"Poor man, a terrible thing happened in Venice. He died!"

We were all too spellbound to put in "And no wonder."

Two salesmen for cigarettes came on at Ternate. They quickly fell under Mrs. Nicholas's spell and monopolized her table on the little deck, much to our relief. Mrs. Nicholas was a good spender. We had difficulty paying for our own drinks. That worried mother.

"I do think she's amusing and all that," she insisted, "but I don't want to be obligated to her."

At Ternate there was a great calamity. The 'tween decks of the ship were full of Chinese merchants who spent all their time on board, going about from island to island, selling their wares to the people who came out to the ship. The mail-boat served partly as a travelling store. My live birds and Eduardo and the echidna were down there too, sandwiched into a corner of the deck space. When I went below to feed the birds the morning that we came into Ternate, there was no sign of the echidna. His box was empty, although the lid was far up above

the reach of such a sluggish animal. So far as I could see, there was no possible way that he could have got himself out. The first mate was very sympathetic, being interested in animals himself. The ship was combed from bow to stern, but the echidna had vanished. No one had seen it, no one had noted its passing. Hot and dishevelled, we repaired to the upper deck about eleven for a glass of beer.

"Found him yet?" asked the captain, strolling over to our table. He was very cool in his silk shirt, shorts, and polished Bond Street shoes.

"No. It seems incredible how he could have disappeared."

"I am afraid that only leaves the Chinese then."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Well, of course, powdered echidna spines are just as good an aphrodisiac as rhinoceros horn and much better than deer horn. It should fetch nearly thirty guilders an ounce."

At such a price, the fate of the echidna seemed obvious.

The next day we came to Buru. The island is locally famous for a powerful and all-pervading distillate of the local pine trees which is reputed to be successful in keeping away mosquitoes. Even at some distance from the main harbour, the strong smell of *kayu putih* is apparent. Mrs. Nicholas had been waiting for an opportunity to celebrate. This evidently was it.

"I want to have a big party and when we can all go ashore and see the local industry and all the quaint inhabitants," she cooed.

The two cigarette salesmen were enthusiastic.

Mrs. Nicholas ordered the lunch. It was as elaborate as the resources of the mail-boat would allow. There was a good deal of champagne. Our hostess appeared in a flowered tea-gown with a parasol and a large floppy hat of

the type that English women wear at charity bazaars. The meal was very pleasant. As time wore on, everyone lost any vague desire that they might have had to go ashore. I, for one, felt decidedly sleepy. However, Mrs. Nicholas herself was adamant. At the end, she said that she was definitely going, even if we were all poor sports, at which one of the cigarette salesmen volunteered to be her escort.

We all crowded to the rail to bid her Godspeed. Laughing and joking, she swept down the stairs, managing her parasol, her dark glasses, and her gloves with practised grace. Even a faint hiccup went unnoticed in the general commotion. At the foot of the stairs, the launch waited, slightly out to one side. Mrs. Nicholas, still laughing, peeping roguishly up at us from under her broad-brimmed hat, kept right on going, straight off the stairs and into the limpid sea. There was a splash and then a period of silence while the charity-bazaar hat went floating gently away. Then the boat boys went into action and rescued Mrs. Nicholas. Everyone was very contrite and full of offers of assistance, but Mrs. Nicholas, gallant to the last, waved us all away with a dreamy smile. She disappeared into the depths of her cabin and was seen no more.

At Makassar there was nothing but hectic rush and confusion. We saw very little of that busy port, the biggest east of Java. We said good-bye to Didie here, for she was bound for California on an American freighter. But mother and I had passage from Java. Our job was to tranship all our boxes and birds for the short haul to Surabaya. Another attack of malaria crept up on me here and only the kind offices of a friend from the Nederland line got me through the infinite dreariness and boredom of the local Customs.

The next afternoon we sailed out of Makassar Harbour on a fine big steamer bound for Surabaya, one step nearer home. The Sorong mail-boat was still there, looking a little seedy in such grand company. After all, she was very small and very old. She had only looked big and splendid with canoes about her, we realized suddenly. A tall figure in pyjamas was strolling on the upper deck. Mother waved, but the captain didn't notice us. The ship's band was playing and crisply dressed people behind us, who had never heard of Sorong or Papuans, were playing bagatelle for drinks.

"I think we only dreamed New Guinea," said mother.

Perhaps, but below decks, the birds were calling for supper.

CHAPTER XVI

FORTY-NINE DAYS TO BOSTON

“HOW many birds does that make altogether?” asked mother. “I figure eighty-seven in forty-two cages,” I replied.

We were on the wharf in Surabaja. Alongside loomed the eight-thousand-ton bulk of the *Talisse*. She looked big, which was comforting, for it might be rough round the Cape of Good Hope.

The customs men came along. They wore starched white suits with white collars, white tops, and there were huge gold watchchains looped from buttonholes to breast pockets. Their faces changed as they saw our pile of boxes.

“Name, please? Ah, Mr. Ripley, you are the zoologist from New Guinea. And now you wish to return to America? Fine,” and the customs men smiled cold, fishy smiles. “You have permits?”

I had reams of permits.

“Ah, yes, you have permission to export birds of paradise, crowned pigeons, parrots, pheasants, and marabout storks. But how about all these other birds? Surely there are other kinds?”

“But I don’t need permits for the others.”

Much shaking of heads and many dubious glances followed. Finally, grudgingly, “And now you also have many specimens in trunks for your museum in America?”

“Yes, yes”—and all the bird specimens had to be examined.

“These live birds, are they the property of the museum also?”

“No, no—these are mine.”

“But how is that?” The customs men looked bewildered.

I sat down. First I had to point out that my museum work was finished; then that I was keen about live birds; that birds from the Dutch East Indies were rare at home; finally, that I had been urged by the museum to import a few in order to eke out my modest salary. After several painful hours there seemed to be nothing more to be said. The customs men—looking visibly disappointed, I thought—allowed us to proceed on board.

Mother bravely anticipated the worst on the *Talisse*. The number of live birds had increased by leaps and bounds, until in Java we had to face the fact that not one of the big steamers would take eighty-seven birds in forty-two cages. And so our tickets on a fast boat were exchanged for two passages on a freighter going round South Africa—forty-nine days to the United States from the tip end of the Dutch East Indies.

The *Talisse* was much like any other ten-year-old freighter. Aft of the fore-castle came a long deck with hatches, then the abrupt white cliff of the bridge, with cabins beneath it. Between the bridge and the cluster of engineers' quarters amidships surrounding the squat black and buff funnel was a small deck with one hatch, No. 3. Astern came more deck and more hatches, and finally on the very stern, like a little wart, rose the sailors' and petty officers' quarters.

Our cabins were below the bridge. Mother's was labelled “Doktor” and was made colourful by being

wedged between the steward's office or "bar"; and the dining-saloon. The Javanese boys who served as stewards spent most of their time squatting in a row outside her door, with the result that her shoes received better attention than they would have had on the *Queen Mary*.

My cabin was labelled "4th Officier." At one of the first meals I asked the captain why.

"Oh, yes, this boat was designed for a big staff, you know. She used to do the Mecca run."

"The Mecca run?"

"Yes, taking Mohammedan pilgrims from Java to Mecca. Ran twice a year. Could ship at least six hundred between decks. That is why No. 3 hatch deck is one deck higher than the others. The others go right through under us, making one common deck. That gives shelter, and then we rigged canvas over the open port as well, so we had space for all of them down there."

"I suppose that explains all those little toilets down there in odd corners."

"Yes, indeed. Saves wear and tear, you know."

We sailed about five. The mass of coolies, shouting and arrogant, who had taken over the ship in port, were gone. Quiet hung over the harbour, glowing dully in the haze of late afternoon. Now a few sleepy-looking Dutch sailors tumbled out of their lairs where they had been lying up during the day. There were bell noises and rumblings below, orders rang out overhead, and to the tune of a few rich, round Rotterdam oaths we were off, threading our way through the varied mass of shipping.

A last cup of tea, and now to the birds.

"*Böosman*," I called.

"*Ja, mein Heer*." The boatswain, short, squat, with red face and grizzled hair, looked as if he had just stepped out of a Bowery bar. Captain Scholl had produced him

with the broad hint that maybe he could be tempted to lend a hand with the endless business of the birds, scraping out cages and washing them, lugging cages here and there, piling them on top of each other or lashing them down before a storm.

"Could you help me now?"

"Now?" The boatswain looked surprised.

"Not now," he said and moved off. I gathered that this hour was sacred to the anchor chain. I did succeed in finding out where the food storeroom was, and extracted a promise from him to help clean out the cages in the morning.

The birds were all in a covered gangway that ran from No. 3 hatch deck aft along the wall of the engine-room. It was a quiet place for them. Only the deserted cabins of the hospital ward opened off it, spotless now since the departure of the last redolent pilgrim.

I found the head steward, who led me to the storeroom, jangling his keys with conscious authority like the prim chatelain that he was. I got out a big papaya melon, some bananas and fish, all under his eagle eye. I had only enough to last to Singapore, as he had told me that that was the cheapest place to lay in my supplies. I was to make out a list and give it to him and he would buy my perishables along with his. It was good of him to unbend like that, I thought, wondering how much his rake-off would be.

Even this first time, as I started down the long line of piled-up cages, I began to wonder about the food. In the dim light of the gangway, the wired fronts of the cages, all sizes and shapes, packed in at all angles, looked like so many gaping mouths down which food must be poured. Would that two-by-four storeroom hold all the bananas, bunches of them, that I should need? Cutting up the

fish for the storks and herons, chopping bananas and melons for the paradise birds, parrots, and fruit-eating pigeons, pouring out the grain for the ducks, pheasants, peacocks, and jungle fowl, I was nagged by my thoughts. I almost grudged the birds the food as I gave it to them.

Some of the cages had sliding doors which had to be lifted ever so little in order to feed or water the birds. At one of these there was a whirr, and a jungle-fowl hen flew out and up to a beam, to teeter there looking down at me. A jungle-fowl hen looks like nothing so much as a barnyard bantam, but by nature she is as shy and unapproachable as the wildest pheasant. Focusing my flashlight on her eyes, I was able to dazzle her just long enough to make a wild jump for her legs as she took wing for the open door. With the jungle fowl back in her box and the birds all fed, I staggered up to change for supper. I was late, of course, but fortunately Captain Scholl had chosen to eat on the bridge that evening.

In the two days of sailing towards Singapore we were able to settle down into a sort of routine with the birds. The boatswain appeared miraculously each morning to wash out the cages for me. The head steward graciously condescended to put my food out for me, for, of course, the keys were sacrosanct. Mother and I found that we could divide up the chore of feeding twice a day quite easily. Mother, brisk and efficient in her work-gloves, would chop reinforcements for me as I moved from cage to cage. We hardly had time to survey the calm, island-bordered seas before we were at anchor again early one morning far out in the Singapore roads. During the breakfast the boatswain appeared.

*"Dat haatlijk bird, she fly overboard!"*

On the deck the Javanese boys goggled over the rail, chattering like monkeys, while below the defiant little

jungle fowl paddled about among the sampan<sup>s</sup>, gathered at the ship's stairs.

Panting, the boatswain sputtered that he had already been out in a sampan with a boat-hook, but she swam too well.

"Boat-hook indeed!" I shouted and swarmed down the stairs into a sampan. At close range, the little hen looked waterlogged as she bobbed up and down in the clear yellowish-green water. Maybe she was tired or the boat-hook hadn't agreed with her, for she was soon caught and whisked back on board.

At last I must surrender my food list to the head steward. I felt as diffident about it as a relief commission. I know now what it is to feed starving Armenians. After all, forty-nine days is an awfully long time. Even the steward was slightly staggered.

"Two thousand bananas. Two thousand bananas?" he repeated.

I nodded firmly.

"One hundred and fifty large melons, two crates of lettuce, eight hundred pounds of assorted grain, two hundred pounds of meat, two hundred of fish, one five-gallon tin of almonds," and he looked up. "Is that all?"

"I can get the rest myself."

The steward raised his hands in resignation, and mother and I hailed a sampan. We felt spruced-up and slightly uncomfortable in our store clothes. Already life on the *Talisse* was beginning to make us feel relaxed. As we moved away from her, she looked rather squat and comfortable, sitting there ringed round with a swarm of barges and small boats—like a mother hen trying to brood an impossibly large number of chicks, I thought, picking up the first birdy metaphor that came to mind.

Singapore Harbour was very large and full of traffic.

The sun shone and the waves danced as we slipped by Dutch K.P.M. boats from Batavia, British coasters running to Penang, a French Messageries Maritimes, the *Scharnhorst* from Bremen, the *Akuno Maru* from Yokohama, and the *Ong Soang* from Hongkong. Most of them were anchored with surrounding swarms of barges, but one or two, like the *Scharnhorst* and a P. & O. liner, the *Chitral*, were passing on their lordly way to the docks. On their decks passengers lolled, staring at us from the rail. A band was blaring out a march.

"I feel like Tugboat Annie," mother said.

At the dock we parted, mother into one rickshaw to look for a hat to wear ashore at Boston, I to search the bird shops. We were to meet at Raffles' Hotel at eleven.

The Singapore bird stores are all in one street, a narrow arcaded place filled with huge red and gold signs and drifting crowds of people. Food vendors patrol up and down, with large decorated food wagons stocked not with ice-cream but rather eels, and varnished, very naked ducks, and hundred-year-old eggs. At intervals in their bargaining the bird-store men and their customers rush out and feast on a curried egg or two.

The stores are narrow corridor-like places lined with cages and crates full of tame chickens and ducks and pigeons. In the first one, I bought several quarts of ants' eggs for my insect-eating birds, and some wild ducks that I saw in a corner because they seemed half-starved. In another, crowded and smelly, I was led up a filthy flight of broken stairs to be shown a whole room full of peacocks. Several gibbons, great white, mournful-eyed monkeys, crowded together in the corners and looked at me reproachfully. I turned away deliberately, realizing that I had no place for them in my menagerie.

The last store, innocent-looking outside, was nearly

my undoing. The proprietor, a little, bald, pot-bellied man in a pair of floppy cotton drawers, ushered me into his emporium. Pigeons to the left, chickens and ducks to the right, and an old cockatoo snarling overhead were the main inhabitants. But he promised more birds behind and led me there with many nods and winks and grimaces. Behind was a sun-filled yard, glaring and hot, leading to a tumble-down shed.

"I have a fine fellow in here," he said, opening a door and ushering me in. After the brightness of the yard I could see nothing. Then there was an ear-splitting roar, and a full-grown tiger appeared hurtling through the air. I waited, paralysed, until he came up against some heavy wire netting with a crash that rocked the shed from end to end. But by this time I was in the air, leaping backwards to land miraculously on my feet on a long wooden crate. As I landed, there was a rending noise and the top gave way. Looking down, I found myself standing on the back of an enormous python which was coiled in the box. All of this was too much for a birdman. I parted hastily with my pot-bellied friend, and retreated to Raffles' in a shaken condition for some much-needed stimulus. Mother returned with Singapore's finest in headgear, and we recuperated through lunch.

In the afternoon, somewhat recovered, we went in search of more birds. This time we visited a very grand establishment run as a zoo, although everything was for sale. The proprietor, a haughty chocolate-coloured gentleman, condescended sufficiently to show us his birds. It was "all very much of a hobby, you know." This seemed only too true, for it was common gossip in Singapore that the gentleman in question really made his money supplying European "governesses"—or so they are called—to the various local sultans.

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Whatever his trade, I was able to relieve him of a king bird of paradise, a brilliant little crimson "money bird," and a pair of Palawan peacock pheasants arrayed in miniature peacock tails and pointed metallic crests. Such treasures as these are still almost unknown in America.

Laden down with our new possessions, we returned to the *Talisse*. She had drawn in to one of the docks in the meantime, and as our taxi bumped on to the pier we saw huge rubber pipes running over her decks and down on to the ground. I shuddered to think of my python, but it was only palm oil, two thousand seven hundred tons of it, being piped aboard for a soap company in Boston.

There were other things going aboard too. Astern the after hatch, No. 6, was open and great bundles of bamboo fishing-poles were being loaded on. There were also some small, heavy packages which proved to be twenty-two tons of tin. All this, together with what had come on in Java, rice, bales of rubber, and boxes of birds, plus two people, made up our cargo. We were too tired to do more than put the new cages in anyhow and stumble through the corridor briefly to make sure that all the birds were fed and contented. At last I was able to drowse off to the squeaky accompaniment of the deck winches and the occasional hum of the coolies far down the deck.

The motion of the boat woke me. I walked out on the lower bridge. There was a pale moon between strings of yellowish-tinted clouds. Little yellow waves lapped at the sides of the boat. An arm of the outer jetty moved past with a winking light on it and that was the last of Singapore, the great roadstead behind us lit up with ten thousand lights. A fresh breeze slapped playfully along the ship. Its salt smell drove over us, sweeping out the stale harbour odours. In forty-nine days, God willing, we should be entering Boston Harbour.

Mother and I relaxed into our routine on shipboard as easily as if we had never been off a freighter. We never got bored, although perhaps it was the birds that saved us. Day in, day out, life went on, punctuated only by meals which were hardly a social function. The captain and a few of the officers would file in with stiff smiles to sit silently through mounds of soup, fish, and meat, interspersed with boiled potatoes. We finally decided that we were spoken to so little because it was taken for granted, that we were just part of the cargo.

From eight-thirty till ten every morning the birds were fed. Their cages had been cleaned by the boatswain before breakfast, as a rule. At three-forty-five the second feeding came. This lasted till tea-time. We had tea, the same as morning coffee, on what we had come to consider our own deck, No. 3 hatch amidships. Here were our cane chairs under an awning. The cages of birds were put out to sun all about us, and often a favoured parrot or perhaps one of the young cassowaries, grotesque ostrich-like birds, would be allowed to have tea with us. The cassowaries would squat down between our chairs and solemnly consume quantities of biscuits.

Many of the birds had grown very tame and were allowed out of their cages to walk about and preen under our watchful eyes. There was Augustus, a young hornbill, a rumped, tawdry bird as big as a small turkey, with an enormous bill and great staring pale eyes. He used to follow us about everywhere on the deck, grunting companionably. He moved in a series of hops, carefully timed to coincide with every fourth step of whomever he was following. In this way he kept at just the right distance, unless you stopped suddenly, when he would catch up and bump into you, only to retire a demi-hop, ruffle his feathers, and look disgruntled. Augustus's favourite food

was banana, of which he devoured as much as he could until he had completely filled a pelican-like sac under his bill. At this point he could always be counted on to subside into a gentle doze.

He never liked the cassowaries, who would occasionally peck at him inquiringly, wondering perhaps if he was edible. He was jealous also of my pet cockatoo, who was continually being surprised and disgusted by Augustus's appearance.

The wilder birds, of course, could never be let out. Once in a while there were accidents. A Bornean crested fireback, a magnificent pheasant with brilliant metallic purple plumage, simply bolted from the cage one day while the boatswain and I were putting water in its cup. The bird went overboard and headed astern with a burst of tremendously strong winging flight. The *boorman* let out a mighty string of "God *verdoemen*" and was inconsolable until a bottle of beer was suggested. It was a day's sail west of Sumatra, and I silently prayed that the bird might reach the coast.

Usually after tea, there was a well-earned interval for reading or writing. We had brought along a hodgepodge of books and read enormously, everything from the latest James Hilton to Boswell's *Tour to the Hebrides*. Mother also caught up on her tapestry, something that she was always too busy to do ashore. I used to watch her on the hatch in her deck chair, so perfectly at home while all around hung and swayed parrots, screaming and chattering on their perches, with ducks quacking contentedly in their box in the sun, and Augustus, stuffed to repletion, squatting at her feet. Now and then she would interrupt her work to give more banana to one or a spray of water over the plumage of another.

The food question was becoming more and more in-

sistent. Fruit began to rot. Some of the bananas that were green to begin with simply turned black and squashy instead of ripening. The melons went mouldy after a time. The last went overboard two weeks out from Singapore. As our supply began to dwindle, we were filled with the haunting fear that we might run short.

By dinnertime the birds had been shut up for the night. After dinner there was often bridge. The captain and mother were the enthusiasts, the chief engineer and I the passive partners. If our two opponents were any criterion, the Dutch are the most cautious players in the world. Even my slow game was apparently too daring for them. One memorable evening, as I was being urged to get a move on by mother, the captain leaned towards her and said gravely, "No, no—don't hurry him," and then deliberated with himself a full two minutes before he made his play, a two-spot.

All this lasted until ten, although we seldom finished a full rubber. Then came a final look at the birds and a stroll about the ship if the moon was out.

One night we saw a moonbow. It was rather hot, and we had walked up forward to watch the phosphorescence in the water as the waves curled away in two even tumbling masses from the knife-like prow. The moon was up, very full and bright, lighting a swaying path across the water. Somewhere off abeam of us there had been a squall, for we suddenly saw the moonbow, a perfect arc of light reaching across the sky to bury itself in the waves. One edge was distinctly green, the other dark, perhaps purple, and the centre paler than all the rest.

Thirteen days out, and we were nearing Madagascar. We knew it because we woke one morning to hear the hatches all being heavily battened down with wooden wedges and extra lengths of line.

"Oh yes," the chief said at breakfast, "we are off Madagascar, you know. It usually blows here." And blow it did.

The wind came in gusts from the south-west. The sea was lashed into an angry series of great grey waves that hurtled at us continually. Water was everywhere, even in the closed-off passage, where it sloshed back and forth drearily among the bird cages. After two days of this, there was a change among the birds. They lost their appetites and sat crouched miserably, heads tucked under wings. It was much colder also, for as we went south in June, we were coming into the southern hemisphere winter. Fortunately, however, the palm oil, the all-important part of the cargo, had to be kept liquid by heating, so that the "auxiliary freight" was able to benefit from warm radiators. In spite of this, a parrot and two pheasants developed pneumonia, an invariably fatal disease among birds. We seemed to spend most of our time now hovering over the others, giving them frequent doses of cod-liver oil.

During the rough weather I saw my first albatross. It was great fun to stand a while at the stern, clinging for dear life to the rail. As the bow plunged head-on into a wave, the stern would be lifted far up above the water until the propeller itself was free and the whole boat vibrating with its racing. Then down with a crash the stern would go, pancaking into a boiling mass of foam which flooded the deck. At one of these moments an enormous wandering albatross came whirling down the trough of a wave. It saw us, lifted effortlessly, and hung there for a time without a visible motion. Its survey completed, the bird planed off in a vertical bank to disappear as we smashed down into the next wave.

Fortunately the third day was calmer. The sun came out briefly and we aired the birds. They seemed to

breathe anew, and that night the paradise birds were actively calling for food. Mother had evolved for them a banana sandwich, a strip of fruit covered with a layer of ants' eggs. For the last two days they had hardly touched this tempting affair, but now, as mother fastidiously buttered the fruit (as if with *pâté*), the birds eyed her greedily and gobbled up the whole mess, banana and all. Even the strange fierce blue-black cockatoos from New Guinea, who ate only almonds, stamped up and down in their cages raising their long crests and calling with rusty-pulley voices for more. The marabou storks, whose long bills were a constant menace to passers-by, jabbed at us through the slats of their cage more fiercely that evening, hoping possibly for a little variation from their fish diet.

Luckily there was plenty of fish and almonds, but the constant drain of rotten bananas was quickly lowering our fruit reserve.

The following day was wonderfully calm. In fact, if we had been able to foresee the rest of the trip, we could have taken off the rope lashings which fastened the cages to the walls then and there. Our progression round the Cape and through the length of the Atlantic was attended with millpond weather. It was just two weeks after losing sight of the Dutch East Indies that we had our first glimpse of the South African coast. We were glad then especially for the weather. We sat out wrapped in blankets and watched the sea birds and Africa, a thin bleak line of sandy cliffs dotted with occasional lighthouses.

Birds were everywhere around the boat. The biggest were the albatrosses. They would sail by calmly on outstretched pinions, twisting their heads to watch us as they passed. There were petrels, too, and gannets, shearwaters, terns, and even a few gulls diving and swooping in our

wake. The commonest of all the birds, however, were the skuas, great, brown pirate gulls whose habit is never to catch fish for themselves, always to steal it from weaker birds.

In the middle of this sudden excitement of birds everywhere, the motor stopped. It was just before lunch. Captain Scholl said it might be several hours before we got started again. This gave me an inspiration. I remembered the boatswain's telling about fishing for albatrosses from a sailing-boat when it was becalmed.

He proved to be very enthusiastic, as was one of the cooks who had an extra supply of fishing-line. Soon the three of us were trolling off the stern, our hooks baited with meat from the galley. I was rather dubious about the hook, but my companions waxed voluble on the subject.

"If de bird swallow de hook, joost cut de line," the *boosman* said solemnly. "Acid in stomach eats up de hook. I know it," and he nodded his head vigorously. "De acid vill eat a hole in a carpet."

The scene was wild and strange. There was a clear blue sky which melted imperceptibly into the clear blue sea. The surface of the water was a polished mirror which heaved in long, even undulations, gently, so that the motion of the boat was like a slow-rocking cradle. Lines of dazzling white gannets flew by with military precision. There were a few seals asleep on their backs, their flippers stuck in the air at an uncomfortable angle. Masses of gulls and terns wheeled about us, so clean-looking, so incongruously waiting for garbage. None of these birds, however, not even the albatrosses, paid any attention to our bait. For this I was secretly glad.

Later, perhaps because there seemed to be no garbage forthcoming, two skuas dipped down to the water,

alighted, and came swimming up to inspect our bait. All at once we were on edge. I didn't mind the thought of catching these fierce creatures. One of them mouthed my bait a little and then suddenly began to shake his head. I pulled tentatively and he swam along. I pulled harder, the cook cheered, and up he came, struggling and shrieking his disapproval. Donning gloves, we seized him, letting him bite one hand so that his head could be held. His wings buffeted us fiercely and with amazing power. Fortunately, the hook was only lightly caught in the corner of his bill. The cook in the meantime had turned back to his line. Now we heard him shout. The other skua had caught one of his feet in the long straggling line. He too was hauled up, and so in a twinkling, I had two ferocious skuas in a pair of empty cages alongside No. 3 hatch.

In a day or so they calmed down and began to eat quantities of my iced fish. To-day these wild Antarctic birds can be seen trotting about calmly in a grassed enclosure in the New York Zoo. They are the first of their kind ever to reach the United States alive.

The skuas had timed their appearance well. We had barely put them in their boxes when the engine started and the *Talisie* was off once more, leaving behind forever that strange, calm spot of ocean with its curious assortment of birds.

Next day we were off the Cape. We could see Table Mountain and the bay where Cape Town was. Leaning over the rail, mother and I found ourselves thinking about bananas rather than the view, wondering if they had good ones in South Africa; but the boat churned on steadily, turning into the South Atlantic, and we never found out.

As the weather became warmer again, our former

routine, interrupted since Madagascar, was renewed. Every day there was the same airing; Augustus would sit in the sun stretching his wings, the cassowaries would gambol awkwardly about us, and the cockatoo perched on my chair would whisper his new word, "hello," over and over into my ear. But every day there were fewer bananas. At last I tried out some canned pears that I had bought in case of emergency. Unfortunately, though, none of the birds, except Augustus the omnivorous, would touch them. It became more important than ever that the bananas should hold out. For a while there was a chance that we might put in at Dakar on the West African coast for water, but as the days passed and we ploughed steadily northwards, we realized that there was nothing for it but to make our dwindling supplies last out.

On we went, past St. Helena with its stark red cliffs, Ascension, a blur on the horizon, and finally a small freighter, wallowing across our wake on the Brazil-Dakar route. We were really getting north. The next evening, for the first time in nearly two years, I saw the Big Dipper right side up, and at that the trip seemed nearly over. But there were a few more excitements in store.

One morning there came a great knocking at my cabin door. It was the boatswain. Again a *haatlijk* bird had escaped, this time an argus pheasant, one of my most valuable birds.

We rushed headlong down the companionway and then to the forward deck. There among the winches and the tackle stood my argus, as unconcerned as if he were in the jungles of Sumatra, carefully preening his gorgeous feathers. He saw us and started forward, carefully picking his way over coils of wire cable. Would he fly? He had all the wide expanse of the Atlantic to choose from. Appar-

ently not. Some fortunate instinct urged him into the inviting black hole of the ship's brig, which stood open under the fore-castle head. We closed in on him then and seized him in a corner. In his struggles, he let off a great shower of feathers, some of the best of which mother carefully preserved and later had made into a hat for herself.

And now as we neared America, in July 1938, we were filled with conflicting thoughts. Looking about us as we had tea on No. 3 hatch, watching Susie, the red lory, taking her bath so vigorously in a tin basin, looking on as the male twelve-wired bird of paradise fed his mate ants' eggs through the bars of her adjoining cage, we began to dread going ashore, and yet we longed for fresh bananas. And now it would be to-morrow.

Near sunset we sighted Cape Cod. There was a cool offshore breeze blowing, through which we distinctly smelt pine trees. The sun set in a red haze which lit up all the clouds in the sky with a suffused pinkness. And then a curious thing happened. As the light on the clouds became dimmer, we saw great shafts of paler light streaking down from the farther side like giant searchlights. A few more minutes, and, as the afterglow died at last, the moon broke through the clouds. It was a stranger sunset by far than any I had ever seen in the Dutch East Indies.

The next day we were in Boston. It was July the 14th, and cold and drizzly. The steward handed me the last bunch of bananas sitting forlornly in a basin. They were black and squashy. I returned them with thanks and went up on deck. Twanging familiar voices issued from the dining-saloon. Yes, there were the quarantine men. They looked at us with surprise and amazement as if wondering how we could travel all this way on a "furrin" freighter, particularly mother, now very smart in her going-ashore clothes.

"How are the bananas in Boston this season?" she asked. The quarantine men looked mutely at each other. Evidently they realized now that we were quite mad.

It was the little jungle fowl's turn to celebrate our arrival at the dock in Boston by flying overboard for the third and last time. One of the ship's apprentices from the engine-room volunteered to jump in after her out of sheer gallantry, and so she was rescued and wrapped in a blanket and fed brandy until she stopped shivering and staggered to her feet again. Now she lives safely in a roomy pen in Florida, busied, I suppose, about her domestic affairs and quite oblivious of her dips in three oceans.

"Bananas!" we cried to the chubby Greek proprietor of a nearby fruit-store, and a whole taxicab full of bright-yellow, firm, luscious fruit was loaded back on the *Talisse*. We were as ecstatic about those bananas as the most ardent advertising man, and so, we noticed, were the birds. They must have smelt Boston and the land at last, for the chorus of voices had reached the proportions of an uproar as we neared the gangway. As we slit open the fruit for the last time on the boat, the parrots did aerial evolutions on their perches, the little bright crimson king bird of paradise leaped from bar to bar of his cage with the speed of a winking light, the ducks pattered up and down in their box, the storks jabbed, the herons stabbed, and even Augustus began croaking happily. We were home at last, and the long, perilous trip was over.

"Except for the bananas, you know," mother said slowly, "I shouldn't mind at all just turning around and sailing somewhere else all over again."

APPENDIX

SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS RESULTING FROM  
THE DENISON-CROCKETT EXPEDITION

MAYR, E., AND DE SCHAUENSEE, R. M., "The Birds of the Island of Biak." Zoological Results of the Denison-Crockett Expedition to the South Pacific for the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, 1937-8, part i. *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia*, vol. xci, 1939.

DUNN, EMMETT REID, "Amphibia and Reptilia." Zoological Results of the Denison-Crockett Expedition, part ii. *Notulae Naturae*, No. 14, 1939.

FOWLER, HENRY W., "The Fishes." Zoological Results of the Denison-Crockett Expedition, part iii. *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia*, vol. xci, 1939.

MAYR AND DE SCHAUENSEE, "Birds from North-west New Guinea." Zoological Results of the Denison-Crockett Expedition, part iv. *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia*, vol. xci, 1939.

MAYR AND DE SCHAUENSEE, "Birds from the Western Papuan Islands." Zoological Results of the Denison-Crockett Expedition, part v. *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia*, vol. xci, 1939.

ULMER, FREDERICK A., JR., "A New Race of the New Guinea Shortheaded Flying Phalanger from Biak

- Island," Zoological Results of the Denison-Crockett Expedition, part vi. *Notulae Naturae*, No. 52, 1940.
- RIPLEY, S. DILLON, "Round About Dutch New Guinea." *Avicultural Magazine*, Fifth Series, vol. iii, 1938, p. 267.
- DE SCHAUENSEE, R. M., "On a Collection of Birds from Waigeu." *Notulae Naturae*, No. 45, 1940.

