

The Jungle Girl

THE STORY OF A PACIFIC PARADISE WHICH CONTAINED
MORE SERPENTS THAN ONE

By Eleanor Gates

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BAINBRIDGE, owner of a rich plantation on the remote island of Siru, is driven out by two unscrupulous rivals, Jennsen and Ogilvie, and his partner, MacFee, is drowned under suspicious circumstances. A year later he returns on the schooner *Laura*, determined to assert his rights with the help of eight companions, who are to share in the expected profits. He is also anxious to discover what has become of Sonsie MacFee, his friend's young daughter.

Captain Norton, skipper of the *Laura*, goes ashore in a boat, intending to ask the native chief, Lautaga, to allow his crew a few days' hunting, on the pretext that the schooner needs fresh meat. The natives, by Jennsen's orders, keep away from the *Laura*'s men; but they disregard this unfriendly reception, and look for a camping place. Philip Norton, the captain's son, who is one of the landing party, gets a glimpse of a golden-haired white girl, who can be none other than Sonsie MacFee; but she flees into the woods before he can speak to her. It appears that for a year she has been hiding in the woods, in terror of Jennsen.

That evening, the landing party having returned to the *Laura*, the sound of paddling is heard in the darkness under the schooner's stern. Captain Norton prepares to receive the unknown visitors with due precautions against a surprise attack.

VII

UNDER the stern of the schooner, a sound of soft paddling had ceased. Out of the blackness, beyond the small circle of light cast by the single lantern, now came a low-spoken greeting:

"You fella! Hallo!"

Taking care to keep himself well screened, Captain Norton reached for the stern light and dropped it overside. What he saw below him looked like a huge ridge of jet on that livid sea.

"Hello!" he answered cautiously. "What fella you?"

That ridge moved, as if it were some lazy, dark-skinned sea monster. From it again came the voice, now scarcely more than a whisper:

"Where cap'n fella? We two fella ride about. We like talk that fella."

A moment, and a small flash light replaced the automatic in the skipper's right hand.

"All right," he returned, and, pointing the flash in the direction of the voice, pressed the button.

Those who were staring down into the

blackness now saw, huddled close in against the schooner, a single outrigger canoe. Seated in it, their dark faces upraised, were two natives. One was a large and fairly young man, in whose hands was the paddle. The other was old. In a wrapping of dark cloth, out of which was thrust a wizened and bewhiskered face, he resembled a timid baboon.

"Let down a ladder," directed Captain Norton.

Having thrust the lantern into the hand of a man next him, he made several quick changes of position, flashing the electric spot here and there, to see if other boats were near the *Laura*. Meanwhile feet pattered and men could be heard breathing hard in the dark, as several of the crew carried out the captain's orders.

The ladder in place, those on the quarter-deck waited in a tense silence. Presently, puffing and grunting, the old native came into sight. He had doffed his calico wrapping for the climb, and, save for a loin cloth, was naked. Upon his thin and wrinkled body could be seen the long, horizontal scars of old cicatrices.

But though he had relieved himself of

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the cotton robe which might have encumbered him in his climb, he had, on the other hand, added something by way of adornment. On his head, instead of the customary square of bright cloth, he wore what appeared to be a gayly patterned fez of paper, held securely in place by the usual string-wound twist of vine. It made him considerably taller, and did not seem incongruous, though it was nothing but a brightly colored lamp shade.

Below the shade was a long, narrow face in which danced a pair of little rimless, glittering eyes. Their brows were so white—and so white, also, was the hair showing above each distended ear, as well as the thin mustache and the scanty beard—that all this hirsute trimming on a swart skin gave an effect of artificiality, as if he had made himself a wig and brows, a mustache and a beard, and had pasted them in place. Through the septum of a wide, flat nose was thrust a bit of reed.

Scarcely had the wide-splayed feet of the old man touched the deck when, with a bound, his companion alighted on the planks at his side, and darted a quick scrutiny at the circle greeting the two. This native, who was about thirty years of age, was an extraordinary-looking individual.

In sharp contrast to the other, he was of the Polynesian type. He was tall and sturdily formed, with a virile carriage. His color was a smooth, dark olive. He had a finely modeled head, a hooked, high-bridged nose, and a firm mouth, which was neither too heavy nor too full. Above his brilliant and expressive eyes his eyebrows formed a straight penthouse. His face was balanced by a well developed chin.

His forehead receded only slightly, but its slope was emphasized by the fact that his short-cut, wavy hair began well back on his head, which he carried with a certain bravado. To either side of the forehead, instead of a parting, there was a deep indentation where no hair grew. In the peak between, and pointing forward, he wore two feathers of the yellow cockatoo.

His dress was a trifle more elaborate than that of the old man, for, in addition to his low-worn cloth girdle, he was plentifully ornamented. The great earrings that hung from his slit ears were of tortoise shell, about his upper arms were wide bands of copper wire, and on his full chest, hanging by intricately braided sennit, was a large, flat, circular slab of stone. As he

moved, the lantern light shone on the rude decoration, causing the mica in it to sparkle.

With a smile that was meant to reassure them, Captain Norton led the two islanders down the companionway from the quarter-deck and into the main cabin. In the room, every porthole of which was closely curtained, Bainbridge was standing. As he caught sight of the visitors, he uttered a low bellow of joy:

"*Lautaga!*"

Blinking in the light, the old chief gaped in astonishment at the big man, knowing the voice, but not yet recognizing the shaven countenance. Then, slowly, Lautaga began to show a few long, tobacco-stained teeth.

"Bainbriki!" he answered.

"*Lautaga!* The very man I wanted to see!" Bainbridge had taken hold of a skinny arm, and was pumping it so hard that the joints all but creaked. "By golly, chief, me glad for look along o' you!"

There was no doubting the happiness of the ruler of Siru. Tears were coursing down his dark cheeks, and his features were puckered with emotion. In his dialect he cackled an excited greeting.

"*Lautaga?*" repeated Captain Norton, almost as if he doubted their good luck.

Bainbridge now had the hand of the chief's attendant.

"Yes, and Yerrah," he replied. "Are they glad I'm back? Well, just look at 'em! Yerrah's the chief's nephew. Thunderation, let's get 'em seated, so we can hear the news!"

By now young Norton was standing beside the short-skirted figure of his mother, and Pollard was with them, leaning on his cane. Lautaga would not sit until he had given these three and the captain a rapt examination, and had not only admired, but fingered, the dining table, the swivel chairs, and even the carpet on the deck.

Then, the door being closed in preparation for the conference, Lautaga curled his withered shanks under him. Yerrah remained standing, straight, firmly poised, like some respectful servitor. In front of the chief squatted Bainbridge, still trembling with excitement. The others waited, curious, but entertained to the full, while, almost nose to nose, the two on the carpet propounded questions to each other in the native jargon, and answered them.

The planter—knowing already that Mac-

Fee's daughter was alive and well, and not mentioning her, lest the chief should guess how anxious he was, and should use that concern to his own benefit—inquired about Jenns.

"What of the misshapen one?" he asked.

"May Kias cut him off!" prayed the old man fervently. "Ah, Bainbrikki, all things come right for Yennso. If he chanced to fall into the sea, as did Makhafee, when again he rose, in either hand he would be holding a fish!"

"And Okeefee?"

Lautaga shrugged.

"That snake-looking one!" he exclaimed. "He is, as ever, the shadow of Yennso; and the shadow of the crooked man, that also is crooked."

"But thou art seeming friends with them?"

"Ai!" answered the chief philosophical. "When the wicked monkey is in power, those who are wise bow to him."

"The two do not help Lautaga?" pressed Bainbridge sympathetically.

"Can a man lean upon a serpent?" asked the chief. Then, bitterly: "Yennso would hew down the same tree which gives him shade!"

With one ear, as it were, constantly strained for any sound coming from outside—where, in the blackness, the men again watched the sea in every direction—Captain Norton now interposed a question:

"Bainbridge, here's one thing I don't understand—if the chief didn't know you were aboard, how does it happen that he came?"

Holding those glittering eyes, the planter bluntly put the query; but he framed it adroitly.

"Did Yennso pay you well for coming so far in the night?"

Lautaga nodded.

"A rich gift of cotton!" he replied with enthusiasm.

At that Bainbridge promptly heaved himself up, disappeared into his cabin for a moment, and came forth with a calico bolt, from which he was tearing the wrapping of heavy paper. Without a word, once more he dropped to sit upon his heels, the bolt on the carpet before him.

Mouths open, and eyes wide, the natives stared at the cloth admiringly. Presently the chief raised his look.

"When has Yennso equaled the Powerful in gifts?" he observed.

The planter understood the comparison. Now was his opportunity for showing the open hand. He took up the calico and laid it upon Lautaga's quickly outstretched hands.

"Speak on," he commanded.

A moment later he was translating for the others: "Yes, they were sent to snoop. They snooped once before, when another schooner showed up, and darned near got shot for their trouble. Jennsen and Ogilvie can't sleep nights, for fear I'll come back, alive or as a haunt. They're smart, though. They had these two come as if coming was against the orders on shore. That's why the canoe reached us from seaward. Lautaga has a story ready to tell Jennsen. He'll say that he saw nobody he knew. The schooner has several white women aboard. We're not traders, but just sailing around for fun. He'll face straight about, you understand—nothing like a gift of calico to fix that! Besides, he really seems almost tickled to death to see me. I tell you, a Kanaka don't cry often. This old boy is downright happy!"

He went on with his questioning of the chief.

"Since Bainbrikki went from Siru," he said, "perhaps matters have not proceeded to thy best liking?"

"When the cat withdraws," Lautaga answered, "then do the mice frisk."

The planter laughed heartily.

"In my country we also have that saying. What evil is it that Yennso commits?"

The old man growled in his throat.

"One word relates it," was the reply; "and that word is of the fermented."

"Ha-a-a-ah!" It was the big man's turn to growl. "So *that's* the best they can do with the coconut groves, eh—make toddy?"

After that, for ten minutes, Lautaga chattered without interruption in his choppy dialect. When he finished, like a man who is satisfied, Bainbridge got up.

"In the first place," he told the captain, "Jennsen has led 'em all to believe that I'm dead, and maybe he honestly thinks so. Anyhow, to go ashore and arrest Jennsen and Ogilvie would be fatal, in spite of the fact that the chief's more'n anxious to dislodge 'em."

"Good!" cried the skipper. "What are our ruler's grievances?"

"Here on Siru," Bainbridge answered,

"it's about the same as in our civilized country—the people are divided on the questions of booze and political power. The chief had an only son. He died a while back—since I left—of blood poisoning. Next in line is Lautaga's grandson, a young limb named Kooyah."

Lautaga, recognizing the name, held up a bony finger.

"He hath a double row of teeth," he informed the planter; "also hair that is the color of the fire tree; and now he is growing his milk beard."

"The chief says the red-headed youngster is getting sassy," Bainbridge continued.

"Jennsen and Ogilvie make up strong to him and his bunch of young bucks. They form, I take it, what we'd call Young Siru. That's the crowd that was strung along this whole side of the island, though the chief ain't said so yet. For the present, I'm keeping off that subject. The conservatives make up the crowd that handed you all the silence this morning when you stepped out of the launch. Well, we don't want to make enemies of either branch of the island's politicians."

Again Lautaga interrupted:

"Okeefee catch 'em blenty riple."

"Hear that?" Bainbridge cried. "Plenty of rifles! No wonder they acted so cocky!"

"Then Jennsen and Ogilvie are actually masters of Siru?" the captain asked.

The chief had not understood the question, his knowledge of English being scant. The planter translated. Then the old man's shining eyes began to dart from one white face to the other, and the light they gave off was red.

"I am yet lord of Siru," he told Bainbridge, his pride plainly outraged. "From old times has this island been the foothold of my father's fathers. All white men are but wayfarers in my house."

"The way I understand the situation is this," the big man told his companions. "The chief is afraid of treachery. He won't live long, but he ain't eager to be put out of the way. He knows I'd never let that happen, and he's thanking the god of the mountain that I'm here, because he sees a way of getting rid of whites who are plain enemies to him, being as they can manage the young heir a good deal better than they can Lautaga. I'm pretty certain that he thinks Kooyah is being backed for the chieftainship."

"What about the hunt?" asked young Norton—with, however, the daughter of MacFee rather than the shooting in mind.

"We're to land as if we don't ask odds of anybody," Bainbridge replied. "Jennsen and Ogilvie won't like it, but what can they do, especially as we're to give every hut some calico and tobacco for every day we go into the jungle? If the natives get their blackmail, they won't care how much our two white friends beef. Of course, not a soul is to know that I'm back—not yet a while. Just put up your camp, and bribe to a fare-you-well, and let matters shape themselves."

"And will you soon be able to ask about a certain person?" ventured Mrs. Norton.

Bainbridge nodded, and put the question instantly. Hearing it, the erect, brown figure behind the chief swayed its weight from foot to foot, and Yerrah's expressive eyes glowed with anger; but Lautaga hung his head.

"Bainbrikki," began the old chief falteringly, "the daughter of Makhafee is dead."

Though the planter had in his breast pocket what could reassure him, he was for a moment startled by the news, fearing that something might have happened to Sonsie MacFee since the return of the launch.

"When?" he demanded.

Chin on breast, Lautaga replied. He saw the Beautiful for the last time when that other schooner weighed anchor before the village. Then the old white head bent so far forward that the lamp shade threatened to fall.

Instantly Bainbridge was on his guard, suspecting that the chief might be lying; also that he might be trying to find out from the planter whether or not the girl had been seen. He imitated Lautaga's attitude of grief, murmuring sorrowfully:

"How came the little one to die?"

The other did not know. He began to chatter so fast that even Bainbridge could not understand him, and begged him to be more calm.

When the planter had heard the whole of the old man's story, a profound change was wrought in him. Breathing hard and staring almost wildly, he broke out into violent exclamations:

"The beast! The bald old beast! The black-hearted rascal, to dare to think of such a thing! That's why he wanted *me* out of the way! Well, I'm glad I know

this to-night! I'll bounce that pair off Siru, if it's the last thing I do on earth! God help me to do it! Why, it's a wonder Andy ain't crawled up out of the sea!"

The old chief got up on his splay-toed feet again and shuffled his way out, in the wake of Miller, to the quarter-deck, where a snack of something tasty had been spread for him and his companion, along with a generous gift of tobacco. Bainbridge, frothing and red-faced, gave those who remained in the cabin an explanation for his own rage.

"That poor little kid!" he raved. "Orphaned, mind you, and not another white woman on the island to stand between her and that fiend! Why, Jennsen ain't got one ounce of decency! He wanted Sonsie to marry him—him, a man almost old enough to be her grandfather! Well, the dear youngster took to the jungle—last year—and hasn't been seen since. *That* explains! Say, for two cents I'd go ashore this minute and shoot him down!"

The big man choked.

"The poor, precious little thing!" Mrs. Norton joined in. "Think of her doing that when, as you say, she's never had a single white woman—an older woman—to teach and advise her! It's wonderful! It shows the instinctive goodness of the child."

Bainbridge softened, losing some of the purple of his wrath.

"Lautaga said of her, 'White as scraped arrowroot!' Kind of pretty, don't you think? And he spoke of her as a blossom, too. He thinks the jungle devils got her. She came to Lautaga about her troubles, and cried. Ah, no wonder that in my sleep I see her crying, and in the jungle, so that I'm chasing the trails to find her! Lautaga says he advised her to marry Jennsen, just to keep things peaceful on Siru. He pointed out that Jennsen is old, and will soon die, when Sonsie could marry a younger man. There's the native for you! Compromise is their middle name! That was the last time he set eyes on her, but he admits she took her traps along, and that ties up, Phil, with what you saw. Say, if we didn't know the glorious *truth*!"

He spread his hands eloquently.

"But we do," Mrs. Norton reminded him; "and we know her worth—her high standards. Even if we didn't have a right to help you get back what's yours, Mr. Bainbridge, we would still have the duty of rescuing that child."

"A year in the jungle!" the planter went on. "If you knew what that means—rain, and mosquitoes, and ants everywhere, not to mention what being alone must mean to that little, young thing! Why, you couldn't induce a native girl to stay out like that! And I'm afraid Mitu-Mitu has told poor Sonsie all the truck about devil-devils, and Kias gods, and the balance of the twaddle."

The captain laughed.

"Well, Bainbridge, she's more afraid of your man, Jennsen, than she is of devils, evidently. Did you tell Lautaga she's alive?"

"Not if I ain't crazy, I didn't! Norton, we mustn't do that! You can't tell what a tip of toddy or a bolt of cotton might do to the old man. No, *sir*! Oh, if only she could know that old Bainbrikki is here! Oh, my stars!"

He was but little calmer when he announced that he was going ashore, where he would make his way into the jungle with a flash light and call her softly as he went. He was for having young Norton along, for they were, first of all, to visit that retreat close to the open space.

"But you two will give her dead away, if you don't look out," the captain declared. "If they watched the shore to-day, they'll watch it twice as close to-night, expecting her to make a break for the first schooner she can get away to. Also you've got to remember that she isn't the only person on the island who'll be listening."

The planter had to confess that his proposal was far from wise.

"Wonder where she's been staying!" he exclaimed. "I don't recall a single hut anywhere away from the beach."

"She'd keep away from a hut," argued the captain. "That's the first place Jennsen would look—also the second, and the one thousandth. No, that tattered little stowaway is hiding where nobody can find her. She'll be here to-day, and somewhere else to-morrow."

"I'll bet our pig shooting is gone by the board," complained young Norton. "They'll never consent to our hunting through the jungle, even if you bribe the chief."

"That sounds probable," the planter admitted glumly. "Well, we can land the launch on the far side of Siru, and come in this way. If you don't favor the idea of calling to her, why, we can do this—write

a lot of notices, saying that old Bainbrikki is back, and where to meet us."

"I'll go around and stick 'em on trees," suggested young Norton, laughing; "like a sort of a South Sea *Orlando*, looking for a South Sea *Atala*."

"I don't know who your friends are that you mention," said the big man, with a rueful grin; "but I know that Jennsen and Ogilvie can read a lot better'n she can—which would put a crimp in *that* plan."

"The simplest way to do the trick," declared Captain Norton, "is to camp where Sonsie can come stealing to our tents. When she sees that we're white folks—"

"When she sees me!" interposed Mrs. Norton. "Oh, you're right, dear! We must land on the beach this very night!"

VIII

At sunrise next morning, when, stretching and yawning, Ogilvie stepped out upon his veranda and looked beachward through the lines of brown-shafted coconuts, which were set with the regularity of telegraph poles, he noted—cursing as he looked—that the Laura was still at anchor.

Then something nearer at hand than the schooner set him to leaning and peering. What caught his eye, and puzzled him, was among the trees close to the water. Had the brown women been hanging up calico? For something was blowing there, grayish white, yet contrasting with the sand.

Then he knew what he was seeing, and he fell to cursing with renewed vigor.

"Tents!" he exclaimed, appalled. "A camp on shore! Without asking permission! Without a word!"

His stream of epithets choked him.

As on the previous morning, he hurried off to Jennsen's. Getting no reply to his halloo from the ground, he hauled himself up by a rickety railing and scratched on the woven door.

"Jennsen!" he bawled. "Listen! The schooner crowd is camped on our beach!"

Again there was no answer. He pushed the door wide and stood on the sill, to look around. Here MacFee had made a home for his motherless little daughter, partitioning the place down the center, but leaving it unceiled.

When Ogilvie's eyes had become accustomed to the gloom of the double room, he saw that, though the hour was so early, the big bed which once had been the Scotsman's

was empty, and evidently had not been occupied during the past night. A little startled, he faced about.

"Queer!" he ejaculated aloud. "Where's he been?"

Struck with the thought that possibly Jennsen might have been taken captive by the schooner's people, he set himself in motion again, lumbered down the ladder, and hastened past his own hut to the house of Lautaga. This stood on an abrupt rise, ten or twelve feet high, made by placing great slabs of rock in successive layers. The work was of ancient date, and a rank verdure helped to hide the fact that the hand of man had devised the terrace.

Stone steps led up to the veranda, which was floored with split bamboo laid upon a framing of large bamboo poles. The skeleton of the structure was of the same giant cylinders, lashed with sennit. The steep roof of thatch came far down.

This being a native habitation, Ogilvie entered the low, narrow, doorless opening without waiting either to call out or to scratch the outer weave of the wall. Toward the rear of the long room within, between parallel poles that rested on the floor and reached from one end of the big hut to the other, a score of people lay sleeping.

Ogilvie waddled to where the old chief was curled, seized a corner of his covering, and dragged at it.

"Up from thy mat, Lautaga!" he ordered peremptorily.

Up jerked the white head from the pole which, smoothed by a century of use, served the dwellers of the hut as a pillow. As the chief raised himself, halfway down the line of quiet bodies another head lifted itself—a round, red head.

"Kias give peace!" scolded Lautaga, his crinkled eyes narrowing resentfully as he saw who stood there, hands on hips, gazing down. "What lost hound is howling?"

The white man did not feel himself rebuked by the chief's question.

"It is Okeefee. Rise!"

But the ruler of Siru only laid his head against the long pillow pole again.

"So the sun lives once more by thy shallow permission," he observed ironically, "and getting up comes by thy most worthy command!"

"Give ear to me!" continued Ogilvie, growing wrathful, and speaking so loud that several of the sleepers were suddenly added to his audience.

"Truly I give ear," added the chief complainingly; "though my head aches extremely of thy foaming. Am I to find coconuts to-day through the pointing of a blind man?"

It was a saying that the hut could enjoy, and there was a burst of laughter, which Ogilvie ignored.

"Yennso is missing from his high bed," he declared, "and the strangers from the fire ship have stood cloth huts within the grove."

A clattering of tongues greeted this exciting news, Lautaga's shrill treble joining in, while he got to his feet with unexpected agility.

"How?" he demanded. "Cloth huts in the grove? *Ai!* White men are ever like the wind, entering at each crevice!"

He wound at his length of calico, making it snug about his body.

"I named these strangers thieves," Ogilvie reminded him. "Was I a blind man then? Now they creep in upon us while yet the island is shaded by night."

The chief addressed his family:

"Nothing could be more bold! Give me the ornaments for my arms! Give me the beautiful topping for my head, and my spear!"

The half shut eyes of the white man showed satisfaction.

"Yennso and Okeefee will not let Siru be robbed!" he boasted.

Lautaga was pushing wide bracelets of wire up his thin old arms.

"I have lived many seasons," he said; "therefore have I seen many disasters; but Okeefee has ever been a friend. He has done great doings for Siru; and of all such kindnesses, greatest is this coming to give warning."

Ogilvie's satisfaction increased, not only because he was being commended, but also because he had succeeded in causing something of an uproar.

"If the cloth buildings do not go at once," he announced, "there will be more to do than warn."

"*A-a-a-ai!*" agreed the old man, fixing those glittering eyes on the speaker. "Strongly said! These intruders should have thought of their going away before they came."

This was another saying. It covertly implied violence.

Once more the bright-patterned lamp shade was set on Lautaga's head, along his

pipe-stem arms were thrust more ornate bandings, and a warrior's amulet was hung about his scrawny neck. With an upward toss of his spear, he summoned Yerrah to him; but it was he of the flaming hair who came shoving forward in the lead.

Kooyah's was not a pleasant countenance. He had handsome brows of glossy black, but the somber eyes under them moved independently, as it were, so that as often as not one turned in upon the other. His double row of teeth, lacking room between his jaws, constantly forced his lips to stay open, lending his face an expression at once cruel and fierce.

Before he could voice an opinion, however, his grandfather paid him a disarming compliment.

"Kooyah, my princeling," he greeted, "in my absence, since prowlers may chance upon the house of the chief, no other but thee shall stay to guard and stand in my stead at its door."

Whereupon he thrust his spear into the hands of the young man.

"The chief goes without Yennso?" asked Ogilvie, in surprise, as the old man hobbled out.

"Yennso is in the forest," Lautaga answered carelessly, as if he had but just recalled it. "Yes—he is gone to search for the daughter of Makhafee. No matter—all will be well; therefore pick up thy chin, Okeefee, for it hangs even upon the bone of thy breast."

Hobbling out, with Yerrah at his caloused heels, he paused only long enough to shade his forehead with a hand that was like a withered leaf.

But on the terrace Ogilvie halted. He had no mind to take another snubbing from Captain Norton, especially in the presence of the sharp-tongued old chief.

"Thou shalt do the squawking, old hawk," he told Lautaga sulkily.

The latter was picking his way down the steps to the path that wound to the beach, keeping up a steady cackle of comments, and taking a nervous glance now and then in the direction of the MacFee house, as one who fears pursuit.

However, during his walk, it was anger which appeared to be mounting in him. When he reached the group of shelters, and found himself face to face with the skipper, those who watched him marveled at the violence with which he dared to speak. They admired his feverish gesticulating and

the wild way in which he shook a spear that he had taken from Yerrah.

"He certainly can act fierce!" remarked the skipper. "This is going off in first-class shape. I believe he'll fool the lot of 'em. Give him his tobacco and calico, Philip, or he'll stamp a hole in our front yard!"

As the chief continued to expostulate heatedly, now and then whirling about upon Yerrah for emphatic confirmation of his words, what the schooner's men did appeared to be by way of a complete capitulation to Lautaga's demands. Hurrying to and fro between the old native and the tents, they fetched enough gifts to make a pile higher than his bent knees.

Yerrah took up the pile, winding his arms about it, and started back toward the long house, with Lautaga tiptoeing and clacking in his wake. About Ogilvie, who was still planted on the terrace, murmurs of admiration concerning the spirit and bravery of the chief now changed to excited cries of expectancy—which caused the white man to curse in two tongues.

Drawing close to home, Lautaga heard Ogilvie's stream of protests.

"I yielded a slow yes to them," he called out; "and they are to chase pig and deer only for three days."

"Bah!" replied Ogilvie, in furious disgust. "You open your own door to robbers! You place their hands upon your own head! Descendant of fools!"

At the white man's audacity, some of his hearers drew their breath sharply, or exchanged amazed looks. No one spoke.

The chief kept his composure.

"Even the foolish must sometimes be right," he replied with dignity. "These strangers wish to hunt, and to buy yams, hens, and green bananas—also coconuts and ripe fruits that will guard against the scurvy. In return for each day's hunting, this much comes from their hands." He pointed to the heap that Yerrah had deposited on the bamboo porch. "Since I am not strong enough to bite those hands, is it not wiser, for the sake of my people, to kiss them?"

Ogilvie answered in English, thumping his own chest:

"Why didn't you ask *me* before you struck a bargain?"

Lautaga understood the gesture, if not the words. His look was both innocent and crafty.

"Did Okeefee, laboring in the earth like a woman, plant the groves which bend round Siru?" he inquired.

"No! Under the counseling of Bainbrikki, driver of slaves, the men of Siru did woman's work in the sun."

The chief waved a hand in a wide half circle.

"Yes, truly," he went on dreamily. "I remember how it was Okeefee who did all this difficult planting, wherefore only Okeefee should bargain for the yield. *A-a-ai*, but it is the devil-devils who have made to grow the smaller trees that reach up to weight and choke the ones that bear."

Ogilvie broke in, not caring to be sneered at longer.

"The men from the ship may not hunt upon Siru unless Yennso agrees," he asserted. "Even conversation was forbidden. Can your memory not reach back to yesterday? And here—here!"

He indicated the heap of gifts.

Lautaga grinned around upon the growing crowd before his door.

"Yennso must agree?" he repeated. "All this was brought out of the cloth huts of the strangers—not from the house of Yennso. When does Lautaga climb Kias looking for fish?"

The shot told. Ogilvie flung up his arms.

"You blamed idiots!" he raged. "You'd sell the whole island for a mouth organ and a cake of scented soap!"

Now the old chief pretended to be at his wit's end.

"*Ai*, the people of Siru!" he mourned. "All are as a nut between two rocks!"

But the next minute, licking his lips, he was sidling around the donation, picking at it inquiringly. He plucked the cover from a pasteboard box. The box was full of colored string, yellow and red and blue. At sight of the bright-hued balls a great shout went up.

"All this for pigs!" triumphed the old man. He picked up bolts of calico, tobacco in tin foil, small mirrors, needles, knives. "What are pigs and deer to us, when the people may have this much each dawn?"

A burst of wild enthusiasm made Ogilvie see that it was not wise to side against a bargain that was so popular.

"This is different," he conceded instantly. "As Lautaga says, for a pig or a deer all this is good exchange."

"I could not find strength in me to say no," explained the old chief, grinning com-

placently. "I could not cheat my people of all these coveted articles!"

Ogilvie made off rapidly. He had caught sight of a heavy, slouching figure which, clothed in blue jeans, was shuffling forward through the palms. Headed toward Jennsen, and advancing briskly, were five men from the tents, each carrying a rifle. Ogilvie hastened to join his partner before the shooting party came up.

"The schooner gang's on shore, bag and baggage," was all he had time to say. He added, whispering: "You ought to see the truck they piled out to Lautaga!"

Jennsen, hurrying back from the direction of Kias, had stopped short, with his long arms at his side. He blew out his breath in an explosion of astonishment and disgust, as Captain Norton and the latter's men halted.

The skipper smiled cheerfully into Jennsen's bloodshot eyes, which were instantly averted.

"Just fixed it up with the chief for a couple of days of jungle sport," he explained blandly. "We've had thousands of miles of sea without enough fresh meat to feed the ship's cat, and as we're bound for Australia, it's necessary for us to get some here."

Jennsen glanced from one to another of the hunters, finding self-control difficult.

"You won't scare up much game," he said at last. "We don't see a pig in a blue moon, and the deer are the original needles in the haystack."

The skipper laughed.

"That's hard luck; but we'll hope for the best, because the men are about famished for a fresh roast. However, if we don't make a kill, we'll have to be satisfied with chickens."

Jerking a nod of farewell, he led his little party on. Ogilvie, having kept in the background during the short dialogue, now began to curse once more.

"I call that cheek!" he vowed. "Not a word to us, but—"

The other man interrupted sharply.

"Drop it! Don't quarrel with Lautaga—with the schooner crowd, either. It's too late to lock any stable now; the horse is gone. Lautaga has permitted them to hunt right in the face of everything I said to him yesterday. He's bold because they're on the ground. Well, maybe they won't always *be* on the ground!"

Jennsen's nod was significant.

"They've been taking green bananas aboard already," he went on. "Boated half a ton out before you were on your pins. That's high-handed for you! Well, I put the best face I could on the whole thing. If I go against the chief, who's going to help us put these guys off? *You?*" he snorted.

Ogilvie turned a dull red.

"We're up against it, that's all," Jennsen continued. "While I was up in the jungle, this crowd has landed, and has started bribing. It puts me in this position—I don't give the natives the fancy stuff they want, and I don't want anybody else to give it to 'em. Now I've got to be careful, or I'll have every Kanaka on Siru down on us!"

"Guess it don't matter much, anyhow," returned Ogilvie, in the tone of one who wishes to mollify. "If that girl was alive, she'd be showing herself before now. It's like I've been saying all along—she's done for."

Jennsen showed his fang in a sneer.

"Yes?" he said.

"I'd stake my share of what we've got put under the—"

"Shut up, you fool!"

"Nobody can hear us," said Ogilvie.

"Nobody can hear us, you old woman," scoffed Jennsen; "but I can tell you something that 'll change your tune. Sonsie's alive, and she's been within fifteen yards of the beach."

"No-o-o!"

"You ain't so cocksure now, are you—not when I can show you where she slept last night? It wasn't anybody else but Sonsie. I found fresh banana skins, and orange peel, and Mitu-Mitu's comb!"

IX

WITH her belongings wrapped up tightly in her mat and swung between her slender shoulders, the young fugitive was by now many times fifteen yards from the beach, and was making farther away from it as fast as those little bare feet could carry her.

The previous afternoon, when she realized that she had been seen, Sonsie was not so much terrified as she was out of temper with herself. Fortunately it was a stranger from the schooner who had discovered her—as was proved by his answering of that far-off hail; but she thought it likely that, on his return to the launch, he

might mention to the natives, or to Jennsen and Ogilvie, that he had seen a white girl in the jungle.

Even the thought made her shudder.

"Then they know I am near by," she mourned. "They will watch the schooner so close that I am not able to swim out there unless they see me. If I don't swim out, the big boat, she will go away and leave me. *Aui!* Well, anyhow, I don't ever go back to my house—no! Out by the ship, if them peoples say they don't take me, I go down in the water to you, daddy. Yes, I make finish of myself!"

But here a new thought intruded itself.

"I guess that's wicked thinking, because the natives, they don't kill themselves. They 'fraid. They say how Kias don't like it, and, daddy, your God, maybe He don't like it neither!"

She waited a few minutes, with the back of one hand laid against her lips, as if to keep them still, while she listened intently. Then, anxious to move her property and herself before the spying stranger could get back with his companions and hunt for her—or, what would be worse, continue on into the coconut grove and tell his news, which would set a whole pack on her trail—she forced herself to steal forward to where she could peer out and see her possessions.

Here she found hanging the square with which she bound her hair. First of all she replaced it, snug and secure. Then, gathering up everything into a bundle, quickly she hunted a deeper covert, taking care not to leave behind her any telltale traces of her passage.

In the hidden spot she drew some ferns over the bundle, crouched with her back resting against a tree upholstered in velvety moss, drew her knees to her chin, covered her feet, and laid across her face a second piece of faded cloth, so that only her eyes remained unscreened.

Thus she waited, not moving.

"If somebody comes, and I know he can find me," she decided, "I can holler hard, and that will bring the men from the ship."

A few minutes later she heard the men from the ship go past along the trail. She recognized them by the tramping of their shod feet. None spoke as he went by. Nevertheless, her heart pounded nervously.

A little later, when she heard the *put, put, put*, of the Laura's launch as it carried the visitors back to the schooner, she felt

utterly forsaken, and under her face cloth the tears made wet paths down her cheeks.

"Maybe the schooner, she goes away now," she whispered. "Oh, when I think like that, I feel awful sick! I hurt inside me, like I got a thorn to cut me!"

Anxious hours of keeping still followed. She could not see the schooner. Every half hour, between the reassuring ringing of the Laura's bell, seemed like half a day.

As she waited, she did not so much as curl and uncurl a toe. Above her the big leaves were so many green punkahs, fanning lazily. Their soft brushing mingled with the soothing hum of an army of insects, and the gentle lapping of the sea. With her chin on her knees, Sonsie slept.

When she awoke, morning was closer at hand than she thought. About her the darkness was so thick that she was able to see her own hands; but when she drew off the face cloth and looked up, she saw no clouds, only a few stars, low and large.

In that utter blackness, against the ground, she felt safe. She rose, finding herself stiff from being so long in one position, and bent herself against the cool, soft growth, limbering her muscles. Then, locating the bundle, she ate and drank.

While she stood, rested and refreshed, turning over in her mind the idea of creeping out to the edge of the jungle and taking a look at the schooner, she heard, coming from somewhere between herself and the Laura, an unmistakable sound.

"Boats!"

Without a thought that she was leaving behind her the evidence of her whereabouts during the night, she gathered her property together as well as she could, and tiptoed toward the trail, seeing with her hands, since her eyes were useless. She did not find the path. Not to be halted, she faced toward the village and, almost inch by inch, penetrated the comparatively narrow tongue of jungle which rose like a hedge between her and the grove.

Presently, herself a shadowy figure, she found the wild growth give place to the open, and saw other figures as shadowy as her own. She witnessed the silent unloading of rowboats and the going up of tents—this last a procedure which overwhelmed her with happiness.

"Oh, they stay for a long time!" she told herself, and could have wept again in her joy.

When the sky slowly brightened, she moved back, and farther back. This cut off her view of the tents; and for some time her ears told her nothing, since the people from the schooner did not speak at all. After a time, however, she heard a man's voice giving a short command. Next, she heard a second voice. This one was different from the other—higher, more musical; and it thrilled her.

"White lady!" she gasped.

She heard it a second time, low and clear. Then her tears came freely.

"A white lady! A white lady!" she whispered to herself, over and over, marveling even as she sobbed. "A white lady comes to Siru! Oh, now all is good for me! All is good—good!"

For now she knew that, without fear, she could ask for her passage on the schooner.

"And how glad I am when I can see that lady!" she pondered. "I hope she will like me—a little. Oh, I be sick if she don't! *Aui*, if only I don't talk so much like native! Because if this is great white lady, she will not like my talk."

Next came a more encouraging thought:

"But soon I learn more better, and also to read out of books, which is more easy to do than other things which please big white lady and gent. Anyhow, I do my best for her. 'You see,' I say to her, 'my daddy, he goes down out of the boat before he have time to tell me how I am to do.'"

Another thought gripped and tempted her almost beyond her strength. Why not now—at once—drop the bundle and run forward to the tents, there to throw herself at the feet of the white lady, as she had seen Jennsen pull frightened natives down to his feet? She could cling to a white hand, and tell her whole story, and implore to be taken away.

Something held her back.

"S'pose I go out and say I like for to go 'way? Maybe Jennsen comes, and tells them I belong on Siru, and not to take me. If they do like he says!"

That thought finally checked her.

"If I get back into my house again," she told herself, "I never go loose again!"

"I wait," she decided at last. "Better time is coming for to go to these ship peoples. Maybe that lady goes to walk close to Kias, and then I talk to her. If she don't come this side, then I swim out to the schooner, and climb up, and hide." Her brown eyes glowed with excitement.

"Jennsen ain't around out there, so they don't say no to me."

Then sudden terror swept over her; for even as Jennsen's name passed her lips, here, coming from the village, she saw his blue-clad figure, his bare, bald head, his long, swinging arms. With a start as swift as a minnow's, she turned and slipped in among the tangled vines, forgetting the white lady, the camp, the schooner—everything. With her bundle pounding her back, she struck for the path, found it, and sped mountainward.

Close to the steep-banked stream she turned sharply at right angles to take a trail which was even more dim than the first. It led directly away from the sea, and parallel with the river.

Behind her, to her right hand, a sound of brushing and breaking told her that Jennsen was pushing his way into the jungle. The fact that he was not trying to keep his movements quiet told her that he was not counting upon cornering her. He was searching for proof that she had been in the neighborhood.

As she trudged on, she took a more leisurely pace. The trail—a runway for wild creatures who came down to a salt lick close to the ocean—bore slightly upward, winding through the jungle like some green, low-roofed tunnel, the walls of which were draped with inextricably woven vines that hung quiet in the motionless air. Along this track the heat was oppressive. Down Sonsie's face, in channels already made by sad and happy tears, the perspiration poured, to drop from her pink chin to the path.

Sometimes, to get on, she had to reach and bend branches out of her way; but she had the assurance that, so far as human enemies were concerned, the trail was safe. In front of her, at almost every step, evidence of its safety showed. No one had passed up the track ahead of her, because across it, at every height, stretched numberless spider webs, intact.

Presently she stopped to breathe, and now she felt what a wrench it was to leave the beach and the schooner's people. She was so far into the forest that she could no longer hear Jennsen. Glancing up out of the green cave in which she had halted, she caught only an occasional bird note, which fell to her from the orchid-dotted roof of the jungle. She recognized a challenge as the screeching of some frightened parakeets.

A hidden cockatoo grumbled at her. She grumbled back:

"Yes, I must stay up in here with you, and the monkeys, and the pigs!"

She clenched her teeth and pushed on, her bundle raking the walls of vine. When the sun stood overhead, she turned from the path and made her way across a stretch of higher ground, which was more or less open. On it grew clumps of tall, coarse, wild hemp, like horses' tails. These were stirring gently in the breeze that was just starting after the noon heat.

This was territory she knew. She circled, and approached from the opposite side a clump of hemp that streamed in the wind before the face of a rock. It, and a low, outspreading shrub, hid an opening into which, with an impatient exclamation, she tossed her load.

She was at home!

Ten yards away, between high, vine-hung walls, the river washed its way around the base of the mountain. If any one were to approach her across that open space, she had only to make a short run and a leap. She had chosen her little cave in the rocks because it was so close to that deep avenue of escape.

She was too weary to go to draw water up in a gourd for the washing of her flushed, sweat-streaked face. Neither did she take time to pick the leaves and bits of twigs from her tumbled hair, which spread itself over her shoulders when she pulled off the calico cap.

Unfolding her mat, she dropped to her knees, sank sidewise, and slept.

X

WITH the afternoon sun standing tiptoe on the summit of Kias, there was a great humming before the long house of the chief—a humming as of a vast swarm of busy and excited bees. The third hunt was over, and three large, mat-wrapped bundles dangled from a beam of the big hut, ready to be swung down and parceled out among the people of Siru. Invited by the astonishingly generous captain of the Laura, the natives were gathering to eat at a mighty feast.

This was not to be merely a feast of island dishes, of which all were tired. In a snow-white cap and apron, with his sleeves rolled up to his armpits, Matt Scanlan, the chef of the expedition, was preparing a spread out of the schooner's supplies.

Pig there was to be, as at all South Sea feasts of the kind; and already two or three carcasses were cooking in the native manner—in a pit lined and roofed with hot stones, over which a heap of sweet-smelling leaves kept out the top layer of soil, steaming, and warm to the touch of the hand. But this fresh pork, stuffed with cooked brown rice, well salted, was intended mainly for the crew of the Laura. For the natives there was to be all the canned "bully beef" they could eat, with sardines by the case, biscuits out of cartons, tinned jams, hard candies, and other strange and much prized delicacies.

For the fetching of so many boxes Yer-rah had brought out a wheelbarrow, a relic of the days of Bainbridge, MacFee & Co. Long since the last bit of paint had disappeared from this antique relic. Its wheel wobbled treacherously, whining and creaking and crying out for oil, and making a snaky track along the path leading from the tents to the picnic ground. A man from the schooner held the handles, while two natives pulled a rope fastened to the axle. Returning empty, sundry small brown boys rode in the barrow, whooping with joy.

Since early afternoon, when the palms made only round shadows, most of Siru's inhabitants had been at the feasting place. They were not the bored, spiritless people whom the white visitors had met first, as was shown by their lively jabbering, the expectant shine and roll of dark eyes, and the drawing in of breath through rows of glistening teeth—this by way of showing satisfaction. Even Kooyah, the red-headed, now and then giving an anxious glance at Jennsen, who was seated on his own veranda, hung at the outskirts of the noisy gathering and forgot to look sulky.

The old men of the island sat with Lau-taga, or on his stone terrace. They wore their brightest calico strips, and some had feathers thrust into their head coverings. They watched the scene soberly, did nothing, and gossiped. The middle-aged men were busy—lacing up the dance drums and making bamboo-flares, with which, later, the feast could be lighted. Squares of yellow, green, red, blue, or purple hid their hair, which was wreathed with flowers.

The matrons—young and old alike—were busiest of all. They laid down the five long pieces of clean canvas which were to serve as tablecloths, strewed them with

blossoms and ferns, and set them with the green leaves which were to be the individual plates, with shining tin pans for the food, and a double line of drinking gourds. For the seating of the guests, they flanked the cloth boards with native mats.

As for the younger folk of the village, they stood about or reclined, laughing, chattering, and making chaplets. In their festive dress they were as gaudy as orchids.

The girls were variously tall and short, heavy and slender. They wore their hair flowing. As with the young men who were their companions, their ankles and knees were circled with fringes of dry pods, which rattled at every move. All of these were to be dancers. Their cheeks were painted such a flaming red that they appeared to have patches of scarlet flannel pressed against the deep olive of their skin.

The children of the island raced about, getting in the way of their elders, handling everything, smelling the cases that tumbled at intervals out of the wheelbarrow, and shouting their excitement hilariously.

Seated together in the shade, Pollard and young Norton watched the lively scene, but talked of other things.

"I can imagine what's in Mr. Bainbridge's mind this afternoon," the latter was saying. "Five years of waiting, and now he's to have back his groves! Then can't you hear him as he goes crashing through the jungle like an elephant, calling for Sonsie MacFee?"

Pollard laughed.

"I've done some crashing myself," he reminded his companion; "and I've found it hard going, in spite of a cane. I'm afraid I'm not going to be of much use during the hunt."

"You're stronger than you think," declared the other; "but that path is all sand, isn't it? Your cane isn't any good. It goes right through."

"That's it. Just the same, I found the place where you saw her. I knew it from the background of your snapshot; and some ferns were broken down where she had walked."

"I'm just as satisfied that she's keeping out of reach until this business is settled," Philip Norton went on. "Things are going as well as anybody could expect. The feast's going to be a whale of a success. Morning will see changes on Siru. Then—"

"Then I can be of some use besides

cumbering the earth," added Pollard. "School will begin promptly every morning, after the usual dip in the ocean!"

Before the house of the chief there was a great hammering and creaking, as wooden cases were broken open and their tops pulled loose from the nails. The brown people massed themselves around the men who were wielding the hatchets, and cried out in delight as they caught sight of the contents of the boxes.

"I wonder what our friend Jennsen thinks of all this!" observed Pollard.

A strange light came into young Norton's blue eyes.

"To-night," he answered quietly, "I'm going to make that gentleman my particular job. He's responsible for that girl's suffering—all of it. He's the murderer of her father, too, and he was ready to do the same for Bainbridge. I'll remember it all, if I get my chance!"

Pollard laid a hand on his companion's arm.

"Don't kill, Philip," he said gently. "I give you my word, it would only be a load on you. You don't believe that now, feeling as you do about this man, but I know it would trouble you later on."

"Trouble me to finish off that bald old devil, or that cross-eyed, sneaking Kooyah? I don't think so, Pollard!"

"Yes—after the strain was over, and the whole thing was settled. I'm sure of it. Don't do anything like that, except as a last resort."

The elder Norton came strolling up, his cigar at a jovial angle.

"Looks like something's going to pop, doesn't it?" he asked, chuckling. "Lautaga's kept his secret in fine shape, and I believe his men are as unsuspecting as their pickaninnies."

His son looked grave.

"But to-morrow, what? I suppose some of those youngsters who are rattling around so lively over there will be scheming how to wipe us out, eh?"

"Can't tell," answered the captain. "That reminds me, Mr. Pollard—you're to take the first boat to the gore—the boat that Mrs. Norton goes in. When you land, keep her away from open ground."

"Count on me, sir!"

As Norton continued his sauntering, Jennsen left his veranda and came down to meet the captain. He showed neither distrust nor resentment.

"This is a first-class feast you're giving everybody to-night," he remarked, baring his fang in what was meant to be a cordial smile.

"Doing my best. We've enjoyed every hour ashore, and it's my chance to return Lautaga's hospitality." The skipper's smile was bland. "Besides, my men don't want to leave Siru without seeing how the young natives dance."

"Fine dancers!" pronounced Jennsen. "But don't be surprised, captain, if there's a little drinking along with the chow. You know natives. They like their toddy."

Captain Norton knit his brows.

"I don't let my men drink," he answered. "Picked 'em on just that test. I'll tell 'em to lay off of the stuff."

"Drinking sailors is why I'm against letting schooners hang around Siru," Jennsen continued. "They generally kick up some rumpus."

"That won't be the case this time," promised the skipper. "My men have got to break camp after the show."

"Likely to be dark," reminded Jennsen, with a sidewise cock of his long head.

"Can't help that," returned the captain. "I planned late work for 'em on purpose. Figured it would keep 'em steady if they knew they'd have something to do. Hope you'll join the party."

"For a while—thanks; but the dancing here is an old story to me."

"Naturally." Then with a careless veering toward the inconsequential: "Been a grand day, hasn't it? Sun just nice."

"Siru gets first-chop weather," Jennsen returned, waxing enthusiastic. "Never hot enough on this island to be what you'd call punkah pleasant."

As the skipper moved on, with a wave of the hand that was half a salute, Pollard looked seaward to hide a smile.

"That was a friendly encounter!" he said humorously.

"As long as he doesn't know that Bainbridge is within five thousand miles of here," returned young Norton, "it strikes me as strange that Jennsen hasn't mentioned the fact that there was a white girl on this island, and that she's missing, or asked us to go out and help locate her—just by way of giving us the gossip, if for nothing else."

"If he could be sure she was dead, he'd mention her quick enough," Pollard argued. "The fact that he's keeping mum about it

is proof to me that he thinks she's alive. Naturally, even though he may feel sure that we're all strangers, he's not going to let us talk with that girl if he can help it, or induce us to fine-comb the island for her. If we found her, and got the truth, he'd lose Siru. No, he's hanging on and playing a waiting game until we go!"

"Go?" repeated Philip Norton. "We're not going! Thank Heaven we can stay and fight him!"

Pollard glanced about him, and shook his head.

"Beauty, and fragrance, and peace," he said; "fullness and laughter, dancing and feasting and singing: but, waiting to have its chance—murder!"

XI

INTO the long, iron-bound, coffinlike gun box that stood at one side of his room, Ogilvie laid the last rifle he had cleaned. He covered the freshly loaded weapons with a couple of old and oil-stained shirts, and shut down the top of the box. When he had padlocked it, he left his hut, and, turning his back on the hum and rattle, the laughter and clatter, which rose almost in front of his own house, waddled over to Jennsen's.

"Guns are all ready," he announced in a low voice.

Jennsen, back on his veranda again, gave a slight lift to his heavy shoulders.

"Fixed for battle, eh?" he returned mockingly. "Well, you'll have your oiling and polishing for nothing!"

Ogilvie seated himself, locking his plump hands about one knee.

"I see you're not of my mind," he said, his tone a trifle sorrowful; "but look at that performance yonder!"

"What else do you think I'm looking at?" demanded Jennsen insolently. "Why, the scamps are opening cans!"

"I mean, can't you see what it's all for?"

"You can, of course." Jennsen was sarcastic. "You always know everything, don't you, Ogilvie? Norton's going to poison the natives, huh? Or maybe the cans are full of explosives!"

He showed all his big teeth in derision.

"I think I've got a good idea of what the schooner's up to," Ogilvie retorted stoutly. "I'm not a fool to get ready for it, either. Look at all the tinware they're giving the natives, not to mention the canned stuff!"

"All right," said Jennsen. "Go ahead and look at it, if you want to. What about it? Or are you going to be as mysterious as usual?"

Ogilvie was not to be laughed down.

"We've never given the natives such a blow-out. It makes us look like a couple of tightwads."

"I should worry!"

"All right! Anyhow, Norton's curried plenty of favor, and it's a good thing you took back your order about not talking to this outfit."

"Yes? Why?"

"Because the natives wouldn't have cared a rap whether you liked it or didn't. No order would have stopped 'em. They're crazy about the skipper."

"What if they are? What good will it do 'em? You're a wild croaker."

"Then you honestly think Norton's going? You believe it's his last night?"

"Of course! Green fruit has been going aboard every day, and fresh water. Don't let that imagination you're so proud of run away with you. They'll be away in the morning, and then I'll have some peace, for a change."

"Sorry I've bothered you!"

"No, you ain't. It's the way you entertain yourself. You get a thing on that brain of yours, and it sticks; so you have to clack and boohoo."

Ogilvie's lids shut down to hide his anger.

"You haven't heard any of 'em say a word about a white woman, have you?"

"No—and I guess she's a lot more afraid of 'em than you are, which is going some. Her old man never let her get a peep at strangers, and now I'm blamed glad he didn't. It's just about saved our skins!"

"I see!"

There was a covert note of amusement in Ogilvie's voice, but Jennsen ignored it.

"If these people knew anything about Sonsie, that captain's wife would probably have stuck in her nose by this time. Glad she ain't done that! I get too much of it as it is."

The inference was plain, but Ogilvie kept his temper.

"Also, maybe the captain's good-looking son might stick in *his* nose!"

Jennsen's chest swelled.

"I could run a knife into that bird," he asserted, "and enjoy doing it. I don't know when anybody's got under my skin the way he has."

He ground his teeth. It was an admission of his instinctive jealousy—of a rivalry that he would have denied hotly. Ogilvie understood his partner, and could not resist a cautious blow.

"Guess it's lucky Sonsie ain't around," he observed.

Jennsen disdained to take the hint.

"She'll never be able to keep away from this dance to-night," he continued. "She'll come sneaking up. Maybe she won't show herself, but she'll try to see what's going on. Kooyah and two or three of the boys are going to be on the lookout for her. If they run into her, I've told 'em to grab her, and to see that she don't yell."

Ogilvie gave a hissing laugh that expressed his scorn of the idea.

"She won't come around here," he declared with irritating sureness.

"What's the reason she won't?" Jennsen fired up. "She's probably not more'n a mile away."

"M-m-m-m!" Ogilvie put up his chin. His manner said that he had a correct solution of the mystery of the girl's whereabouts. "She's just a good half mile from here."

Jennsen became suddenly furious.

"Don't start your grunting!" he growled.

"The trouble with you is that when a man tries to tell you anything, you're such a smart Aleck! Well, get it out of your system. Come ahead!"

Ogilvie straightened up, folding his arms impressively.

"In a case of this kind," he said quietly, "I try to use my imagination—oh, laugh if you want to! I don't just get a likely idea and then hang on to it. I look at all the chances. I—"

"I! I! I!" taunted Jennsen. "Sure! You look at things in a big way! You're a hundred-percenter, ain't you, and so on, and so forth? I've heard it a million times; but what's on your chest to-day? I don't want to hear a lecture about how your grand brain works. I want your half-mile yarn straight out."

His voice trembled with anger. Ogilvie faced him, eyes shut, lips pursed. He fairly shone with importance.

"I believe," he said solemnly, "that Sonsie's on that boat!"

Ogilvie gave a forward nod of his head. For a moment Jennsen stared, wild-eyed.

"What are you talking about?" he cried

—so loud that at the feasting place heads were turned curiously in his direction.

"Sh-h-h! I'm just telling you how things strike me. I think she's on that schooner."

Jennsen seized the other man by a shoulder. "How do you know? Out with it!"

"Don't tear me to pieces!" With both hands, and by twisting his body, Ogilvie freed himself from that iron grip. "For Heaven's sake, Jennsen, keep your temper! Don't go clear crazy! I don't know. I'm giving you my opinion."

Jennsen laughed hoarsely.

"Your opinion!" he sneered.

Ogilvie rubbed his shoulder.

"Yes—Mrs. Norton has been all over the place, and Sonsie has seen her, as like as not. Well, the kid wouldn't be scared of a woman, and if she spoke to her, and told all she can tell, the first thing they'd do would be to put her where she'd be safe from you!"

For some minutes Jennsen pondered the argument.

"I see your point," he admitted presently. "As you say, if Sonsie went to this woman, and complained—say, that's an idea!"

Ogilvie was reassured and emboldened—flattered, too. Jennsen's quick change of attitude was nothing short of a victory. He puffed up noticeably.

"Yes, I thought you'd see it," he added complacently.

"I don't say it's so," put in Jennsen. "If they've got Sonsie out there, why don't Mrs. Norton stay out with her? Also, the second they had her, why didn't they haul up their anchor and get out? Because, if they stayed around here with the youngster aboard, we'd surely find out and make 'em a lot of trouble."

"They're trying to mislead us," Ogilvie argued; "but they don't fool me."

"But listen! Use your brain! If these people had anything to do with Bainbridge, they'd ask after the girl, wouldn't they?"

"Why ask after her if they've got her aboard? And that's where she's been these last two days, I tell you! They can take their time, all the while shipping bananas and oranges and coconuts, and loading up with water, like they don't know a white girl ever was on Siru. It's the best way to pull the wool over our eyes, and it's exactly the way I'd do if I was in their place. Sure, she's out yonder! You saw her

more'n two days ago, didn't you? Where's she been since? Out in the jungle? Bosh!"

Again Jennsen took a little time for thought.

"I'm glad this feast is on," he half whispered. "I'm going to pretend to go to bed early. I'll say good-by to Norton, and so on. Then I'll take a canoe, paddle out to the Laura, and just hang around and listen. Come to think of it, she was probably already on the ship when I found the orange peels."

Jennsen's change of attitude had now warmed Ogilvie to the melting point.

"You're dead right!" he vowed. "She made the swim that very morning. You know her—sharks wouldn't stop her."

"She hates me worse'n she hates sharks," replied Jennsen, and joined in Ogilvie's hearty laugh.

"But, Jennsen, suppose she ain't on deck to-night? They've got her hid where she can't be seen or heard—just bet on that! They won't let you go aboard. If you do, they won't let you hunt for her. They'll say she ain't there—that they haven't even seen her. Then how are you going to manage?"

Jennsen lowered his bald head between his shoulders and fixed his look on the bamboo floor.

"I don't know. I'll have to decide when I see how things fall. If I knew for certain that she was out there, she'd come off to me, or I'd shoot anybody that stood in my way—and her to boot!"

He clamped his big jaws.

"A-a-a-ah!" breathed Ogilvie, nodding approvingly. "Now you're talking! Of course she's there! Jennsen, are you ripe for a big scheme?"

"Another one of those whale ideas of yours?" Jennsen inquired, sarcastic.

But Ogilvie waved a careless hand.

"Don't laugh. I'm thinking in terms of the Pacific. Here we have Siru, and a fortune in copra every year. Now instead of going out, the way we've talked, and putting thousands of dollars into a schooner—tying up all that good money that might be working for us—"

"Well?"

Ogilvie lowered his voice; and now he revealed his cruel depravity, and proved the truth of what Captain Norton had said about him.

"Whether they've got Sonsie out yonder

or not," he declared, "I say let's take the Laura to-night!"

Jennsen guffawed.

"So that's why you been telling me all this stuff!" he exclaimed. "You scare me about Sonsie so's I'll say yes to wiping out this whole crowd!"

"When will we have another chance like this?" Ogilvie demanded. "'Most everybody will be ashore. The majority of 'em'll be drunk. You know what native toddy is with a white man. Anyhow, I've put every gallon where the Kanakas can have it. Jennsen, the way we're fixed, we can take that schooner without a bit of danger to ourselves!"

"But suppose Sonsie never was near 'em?" the other man objected.

"Let's go ahead with the idea that she is. We need a schooner, don't we, Sonsie or no Sonsie?"

"In other words," persisted Jennsen, "what you're advising now is wholesale murder."

"Call it what you want to. When we've got the ones who're ashore, we can fix the balance easy. Any yelling here will go as the natural thing, being as there's a feast—don't you see? And we'll have a first-class boat!"

"Ogilvie," Jennsen began confidentially, "more'n once I've called you an old woman. That's because you're like one—like a bad old woman, ready to bite on the sly!"

"Bah! I hate women!"

"You hate 'em because you understand 'em, white or brown—the bad ones, anyhow; but as sure as death and taxes, along with the little meanness of some old she-devil, you've got the tricks of the lowest men that draw breath!"

Ogilvie's neck stiffened.

"I'm not afraid to go ahead with my idea," he countered.

"Now don't start that kind of talk!" warned Jennsen. Of a sudden he changed. Authority came into his voice. "I don't want any hinting around here. If you think I'm a coward—"

"I didn't say that."

"That's the trouble—you never say anything. You ain't got the nerve. What you've got is a nasty way of coming close to an insult without going so far that I'll knock you down!"

"Now, let's not quarrel, Jennsen! I don't like quarreling."

"I know what you like. You like the soft stuff to a person's face; but when he turns, you can do the rottenest thing that a human being is able to think up!"

"You've certainly got a good opinion of me! What about yourself?"

"You mean MacFee, I suppose; but of course you never can say out what you mean. It's just hint, hint, hint! Well, don't forget, Ogilvie, that you was in on the MacFee job, too. You got your fair half of everything Mac had—and a bonus to let me take the house."

"That's all right. Sure, I got my share; but don't let your voice out so much. You know, sounds carry easy at this time of the day."

"Let's get back to that schooner idea of yours, because I like to talk over your wonderful notions, which are as wide as the Pacific. Suppose we got her—what could we do with her? Put a match to her?"

Ogilvie was astounded.

"Not at all! Not at all! I should say not! We could change her name easily enough, couldn't we? I'll bet there's plenty of paint aboard."

Jennsen wagged his head.

"I love to hear you babble," he declared.

"Cut off, the way I am, from all other kinds of entertainment, what would I do without you?"

"Babble?" repeated Ogilvie, trying to make his tone playful.

"You talk like one awful fool!" said Jennsen bluntly.

Ogilvie reddened.

"What's wrong with the whole idea?" he insisted. "You've killed a man or two in your time. Are you going to hem and haw over putting two or three more out of the way?"

"I'm not going to hem and haw over anything; but can't you see that if we carried out this proposition of yours, the whole village would have the goods on us?"

"That's a funny argument, Jennsen! We never fooled 'em about MacFee."

"Maybe not. The point is, they can't prove that. If they could, any time Lautaga took the notion, he could turn me over, tied up, to some schooner, and be free of me for good."

"Lautaga needn't live forever!" suggested Ogilvie.

Jennsen swore softly.

"There you go again with another fool idea—killing the old man. Don't you real-

ize that these natives ain't idiots? They understand blackmail. If I was in a plot to put the old boy out of the way, I'd be the slave of this bunch of savages the balance of my life, instead of being boss."

"If they're in on it too?" questioned Ogilvie.

Jennsen would not discuss the matter further by pointing out that natives might turn state's evidence, or that Mrs. Norton would prove an obstacle, in case the native women resented her being killed.

"It's a lucky thing for you," he declared, "that you've had me here to keep you going straight since you struck Siru. If you'd been here alone, by now you'd have your neck in a halter!"

Ogilvie felt himself dismissed. He rose. On his tongue was a final sting:

"Well, I feel certain Sonsie's out there, and it ain't likely they'll turn her over to you—at least, not when a fine, strapping young chap's aboard who'll think her mighty pretty!"

It was the kind of thing to make Jennsen writhe with jealousy, but the other man did not speak the words. Instead, he was both diplomatic and pacifying.

"Guess I'm silly to think the kid's on the Laura. I suppose, if we had the schooner, we wouldn't know how to run her, and we couldn't explain where we got her—to Brunei, or the other gang at Pontianak. Also I shouldn't wonder if we won't find Sonsie when the schooner goes. She was always such a shy little thing!"

At his partner's unexpected and complete capitulation, Jennsen was plainly gratified.

"Good boy!" he returned. "Go home now and pound your ear. You pussyfooted around a lot last night, remember; so get some sleep, and enjoy a sweet dream of a nice, juicy murder!"

Ogilvie showed his small teeth in a grin, and went. He had forced himself to put on the best possible face; but he was raw and smarting from abuse and ridicule.

As he made back slowly to his own hut, the keg-shaped dance drums were beginning to beat their accompaniment to the first barbaric song of the feast. Flares were lighting the lively scene, and upward roared the flames of a mammoth bonfire of coconut coir. Ogilvie, however, did not turn his half shut eyes in that direction.

"Trouble is, I got no rights," he complained angrily. "I'm part owner here,

and I can't call my soul my own. Well, it's time there was a change!"

Having failed to send Jennsen on an errand that might get him into serious trouble, now there came to him a second idea, monstrous, yet tempting. Inside his door he halted, his face quivering, to turn it over in his mind.

"Why not?" he whispered. "Why not? I'll have all the cash we got hid away, instead of just half, and I'll be free. Here's my chance, because when will another schooner come this way? The boys all know that Jennsen's sore on the strangers, and they'll be willing to believe anything I tell 'em. He said himself that it's best never to tell natives the low-down about your business. All right! I'll take his advice. I'll go on my own this time, and they won't suspect, because I'll blame the schooner's people. Yes, it's the best thing to do, and I'll do it this very night!"

XII

ON her mat behind the low, outspreading shrub that hid the door of her retreat, Sonsie sat listening. She was not interested in such sounds as were close by—the squeak of a marauding flying fox, the jabbering of some monkey that was perhaps being hunted by a snake, the grunt and rustle of a wild boar, and the cautious call of night birds. She was keeping track of the regular sounding of the Laura's bells.

Suddenly a new sound sought her out where she waited. It was a steady thrumming, like the beat of the heart of the island itself. It set the heart of the white girl to leaping. With a low exclamation, out she crawled, and stood.

"The drums!"

Roo-oo-oom! Roo-oo-oom! Roo-oo-oom! Wave on wave, through the warm, fragrant air, they rolled out their deep music; and like billows of water the rhythmic tones broke against the guttered face of Kias. The mountain repeated them, sending them back in echoes across moss-green Siru, now mantled by the dark.

"What do they drum for?"

But at once she guessed. To those before the long house of Lautaga, the heavy beats meant joy and capering. To Sonsie they carried a different message—one that blanched her face. On a certain occasion, several years before, a schooner about to depart from Siru had been speeded with a feast.

"This ship, she goes away!" she whispered. "And I be left!" The thought was anguishing. At her feet were all her possessions—her mat, the mosquito net, some bits of calico, the photograph of her father, and her food. She caught up only the picture, hastily thrust it under her turban, and made down across the high stretch of hemp-grown ground to the edge of the jungle.

There she halted, troubled and irresolute.

"I must go to that ship!" she told herself. "But—how do I go?"

Though the stars were set thickly in the dome of the sky overhead, giving some light, before her the wall of the jungle was black. Even on a night of bright moonlight, that solidly set belt of growth, as she knew, could not be penetrated—no, not if in either hand she had a torch.

"The path is all gone," she murmured. "I have forget about that!"

She faced toward Kias, and slowly started back to the rock.

"I must not stay here!" she cried out loud. "That ship must not go without me! Oh, ship, *don't* go before I get to you!"

She did not return to the shelter where she had lived so long, but went on toward the stream. Down near its mouth, where it moated the gore, it was wide and silent. Where Sonsie stood, it was a narrow torrent, tossing its way seaward. She knew that its blackness would equal that of the jungle, and there was peril to face before her bare feet would touch it. Nevertheless, as she hurried, she thought of it as a broad, easy road to the schooner.

She came near to it with her hands in front of her, to fend off branches from her face. Soon the voices of the river were louder in her ears, so that they all but drowned the sound of the drums. She approached the brink cautiously, testing her way, first with one foot, then with the other. When she encountered ferns and bamboos, she got down on all fours and felt out a path with her hands.

As she continued to lay her palms flat, she soon found that before her was only air. Now she was kneeling on the very edge of the steep, high bank. Carefully she felt about her, measuring the size of each vine that led downward. She found one of a good thickness, pulled it, and satisfied herself that it was strong and long. Then she grasped it firmly with both hands,

swung around with her back to the inky cañon, slowly lowered herself over the edge, and, one hand following another, began her descent, not failing to use her bare toes.

The vine began to taper. Hanging against the wall of the river, as if in a deep well, she clung by one hand and both feet while she hunted a second vine. To this she transferred her weight. She slipped and slid downward, rested, and traveled again, but only by inches, for she was tiring.

Not once did she glance beneath her, where nothing was to be seen. She was not afraid, for the growing murmur of the tumbling water assured her that she was gradually nearing its surface. Fearing only the lava rocks that were washed by the stream, she combated her impatience, though her hands ached.

When at last one foot touched the water, and she knew that she had come down at a spot where the bank went sheer into the river, with a deep breath of thankfulness she let go of the last vine and changed one element for another.

At this point the stream was deep and swift; but to the island-bred girl the new element was more natural than the first. In it she was like a fish. Keeping her turban dry, she let the current carry her swiftly along.

At first the water was cold, and she felt some discomfort, being warm from her work; but soon she became accustomed to the temperature, and found herself refreshed. Once she came against a bank in the dark, for she had been carried into an eddy. Here she rested for a few moments, her eyes raised to the stars, her face smiling. Then she struck out into mid stream again, and pushed on.

"A-a-a-ah!"

She turned a bend and saw, out in the dark before her, a light that she felt sure was on the schooner. With a gurgle of satisfaction, and with her strength renewed by hope, she swam on more swiftly than before. Soon she passed the fringe of mangroves that marked the river's mouth, and was spluttering at the taste of salt water.

"Ow-ah!" she could not help crying.

Leaving the gorge behind her, the sand spit showed in the starlight at her right hand, marking the tip of the gore. Then this and the mangroves receded into the

background, and all about her was the sea. Putting the photograph between her teeth, so that she could keep it dry, she turned on her back to float.

"No hurry for me now!" she told herself happily.

Stretched upon the quiet sea, she listened to the beat of the drums, the chorused song of the feasters, and the clap, clap, clap, of scores of hands.

"They have a good time this night," she thought. "That makes them all forget about me!"

She knew precisely what she would do, and, with the schooner's people still on shore, she felt that she had plenty of time for the execution of her plan. She had thought of sharks, but even that could not make her resolve to run any chances by waiting near the launch on the beach. As Jennsen had said, she feared him far more than the sharks. She meant, in easy stages, to swim on to where the Laura was anchored and wait for an opportunity to climb aboard.

"If a shark finds me before I do that," she said philosophically, "I can't help it. Anyhow, I don't go back on Siru!"

From thoughts so painful she turned to pleasanter ones, dwelling on her plans for inducing the captain of the schooner to keep her aboard.

"I work for him," she asserted stoutly. "I don't care how hard I have to do, just the same I do it!"

About her, on the smooth sea, the stars were reflected. She smiled up at them confidently. Then, suddenly, the breath was driven from her lungs and she was hurled sidewise on the water—as against her body, in its drenched calico dress, was launched some huge, dark, swift-going thing.

As she caught her breath, she threshed with all her might, and, her mouth now being empty, for the photograph so dear to her was afloat near by, she uttered a piercing scream.

It was Jennsen in an outrigger, and for an instant he was almost as startled as Sonsie; but after that he acted promptly. Once more propelling the canoe against her, with a deep laugh of satisfaction he tore away her turban in an effort to seize her, and then thrust his big fingers into the still dry silk of her hair.

"I thought so!" he chuckled. "Sonsie,

and making for the schooner, eh? Well, I guess not!"

She struggled desperately, beating the water into foam, and trying to cry out. To quiet her, he calmly pushed her under the surface, so that his arm was in the sea to his shoulder.

As he held her head under, up came her white feet, to float against the canoe. Even as he grinned at them, he noted that she was no longer struggling. Instantly he pulled her head into the air.

"Want to drown, dc you?" he demanded angrily. "Rather go down than go back? Well, you're going to live a while yet, young lady!"

Leaning his weight in the opposite direction, to balance hers, he hauled her, limp and choking, into the outrigger, and flung her forward across the thwart. After that, taking time to look about him, but particularly in the direction of the Laura, he began to paddle leisurely, going parallel with the shore.

He even whistled as he worked. After a year of sullen waiting, the runaway was in his hands!

He kept a lookout for the piled-up outriggers on the beach. When he spied them as a dark mass on the lighter background of the sand, he turned his canoe at right angles and made toward them. Close to the shore, he drove the boat with all his might, rode through the gentle surf with a rush, and thrust the prow into the sand. He climbed overside. Standing with the water washing his shoes, he bent and grasped Sonsie about the waist. She was only half conscious; but as if his touch was so hateful to her that it wakened her to life, she instantly lifted herself, found her feet, and tried to throw herself backward into the sea.

"Oh, no, you don't, young lady!" remarked Jennsen.

His long arms caught her up and swung her across his hip, where her body rested, describing a crescent. Then using one hand to hold her, with the other he dragged his boat out of the shallow water and across the sand. While he splashed and hauled, Sonsie, half swooning, gasped out her despairing plea:

"Jennsen! I don't want to live no more! Jennsen, you kill me! Please, Jennsen! I like best for to die!"

Through the ranks of the leaning coco-nuts, from where the bamboo torches flared,

came the loud booming of the drums, the rattling of the pods, the rhythmical thudding of dancing feet, the constant laughter, shouting, and chanting. All this joyous uproar was a perfect screen for Sonsie's voice, and for her captor's.

"Oh, I know you'd like to die!" he told her calmly.

He swung her down, letting her thump against the sand, and held her with one hand. From the canoe he took some short lengths of rope.

Lying exhausted, in a little tumbled heap, with her brine-soaked hair straggling over her face, she began to beg him again:

"Jennsen, don't tie me! You kill me, Jennsen!"

He laughed.

"Awful anxious to die, ain't you?" he scoffed.

"Oh, yes!"

He bound her wrists together, and then her ankles. All the while, her voice trembling pitifully, she entreated:

"Don't! No good for you to tie me, Jennsen! Listen! The first time I can, I kill myself!"

As he knelt beside her, though the light was dim, and she could see only his outline, she knew how he looked—old, bald, ugly, and unshaven.

"Maybe you will," he answered her cheerfully, "and maybe you won't. Don't be so sure!"

"I will! I will!"

"You'll go with me," he declared. "Awful sorry you don't like me, but I guess you'll get over that."

"I hate you!" Sonsie cried. "I hate you!"

"Get up!" he commanded, forgetting that her feet were bound together.

"No! I don't!"

Weak as the girl was, and helpless, she found delight in defying him.

With a wrenching jerk, he brought her upstanding. Then he shook her, and her long hair whipped her face and his.

"I'll learn you whether you'll mind me or not!" he vowed, suddenly enraged, and baring all his big teeth.

Sonsie put the last remnant of her strength into her cry:

"Help! Jennsen's killing me! Help!"

(To be concluded in the October number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)

A WORKING CREED

If we must judge our fellow men,
And through our verdicts find them wanting,
Let us not lose our tempers when
They hint our views a form of vaunting
Ourselves as better or more wise
Than those we choose to criticize.

To earn the right to judge or preach,
We must be brave enough to follow
Beyond a point glib tongues can reach—
To height as well as sheltered hollow—
Or yield to braver men the goal
Visioned by proxy of the soul.

And if, by chance, some one of us
Sees clearer than ten thousand others,
Let him not waste his breath to fuss
Over the fumbling of his brothers,
But learn that quietly to lead
The blind creates a working creed.

Richard Butler Glaenzer