

Five-Skull Island

And Other Tales of the Malay Archipelago

Montgomery, Alexander (1847-1922)

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Five-Skull Island and Other Tales of the Malay Archipelago

Five-Skull Island.

IT was in Batavia I met him—at the *Hôtel des Indes*—the leather-visaged, stormy-voiced ruin of a very powerful man. I shall call him Thurston. He laughed when I spoke of Five-Skull Island.

“Where they found the five skeletons?” he said. “I see you've made the Aru voyage. Or was it the Ké? Lived in Ké once myself!”

“Yes! Would he take anything?”

He would, and did—then did again, and expanded.

“You're a young chap to have gone poking down into that out-of-the-way corner. Not trade, I can see! Money to throw away, eh? Or was it Science? Never mind! About this Five-Skull business! People here will tell you I'm the man that sailed a prahu single-handed from Ké to Celebes. Well—I didn't! Six of us left Ké—the others *stopped half-way*—at Five-Skull Island. Don't care if I tell you!”

And here—a little dramatized—is what he *did* tell me.

* * * * *

“The wind at last!” said Thurston, and sat up. “Také!”

Také wasn't beside him. The edge of dawn made that clear enough, and the white man got sleepily to his feet.

“Gone for water, perhaps!” The bamboo-joint jars had been left beside the hole, and there Thurston found them. But he found no Také. With the men, amongst the pandanus, was she? No men were there! Thurston rushed out into the clear again and looked to where the prahu should have been moored. Well-away nor'-westward, a shadow upon the dimness showed him where she was now.

The deserted laughed—a fearful sound in that portentous loneliness—and walked back to look for his rifle, not expecting to find it. He didn't!

Mechanically he lit his pipe. “Tight place this time, Jim Thurston!—unless you can hang it out on water! Water? Why, *they've* got none!” and off he rushed to count the tubes at the hole. All there!—forgotten in the sneaking hurry.

Thurston's teeth snapped together with the significance of this. He glanced at the fierce-faced sun, already peering into a remorselessly cloudless ether. “No rain! They must come back! But, curse it! they've got my Winchester!”

* * * * *

Thurston had come to the Archipelago with theories about the Child of

Nature. Most of these he dropped in Borneo, and the few he carried with him to the Moluccas were fewer still when he started again south-east. Down in Ké, amongst the Papuans, he parted with them all but one—but that one he took away with him. He also took Také. Také *was* the theory—Savage Fidelity, bound in dingy brown.

Také had nursed him, fever-stricken; Také had warned him of the intended raid upon his pearl-shell; and when, for certain guns and gongs, kerchiefs and axes, Také's father would have made her over to a Bali trader, it was under Thurston's wing the mop-headed damsel sheltered herself. The white man's Winchester was an unanswerable argument. The Baliman, *minus* goods and girl, departed, cursing; the Ké-man, *plus* the goods, lay low for the girl—and Thurston. Thurston, warned, took boat and brevet-wife and faded away in the night.

Cohered, throughout, without a shred of metal, and up-ended, fore-and-aft, like the Maori war-canoes—the plank-built prahu of the Kés made steady westing for three days before the east monsoon, but, then, for yet the other three that should have sighted Bonthain, she crawled with sweeps across a poor half-hundred miles of sweltering equatorial ocean, before—somewhere between the Turtles and the Lucapins—this unexpected islet had given water and salvation.

* * * * *

For three intolerable hours the parching runaways toiled back over the half-dozen miles they had run in forty minutes—the two big Papuans grinning hideously as they sweated; the Sassak pulling grim and silent; Sondur jerking his head round every half-minute, with a curse, to measure the distance.

Sondur was a Banda-man—part Portuguese, part Arab; and in Také, too, was Portuguese blood—the rest Malay, with just enough Papuan to crisp her hair and take the brightness out of her brown. And Sondur, while the white man slept, had caught the ear of beauty with a fairy-tale. They would not kill!—unlucky, that, at the beginning of a new voyage. But they would leave this white hog snoring, and with his boat, and pearls, and tortoise-shell, they would sail away north to Banda the beautiful! The rest were “in it”—would she come?

She would, and did—and now, here she was, going back to the “hog” who had believed in her!

Low water now. They tore the sponges from the bottom as they scraped through the passage in the circling reef. The island lay lifeless in the glare, and silent, but for the surf-boom from the windward side. The white man must be sleeping still amongst the screw-pines in the hollow. Quick!

The nutshell of a boat was dropped over, and three men got in—leaving one of the Papuans with the girl. The black man flopped upon his stomach on the deck; Také watched the water-fetchers dodging through the big white boulders, for the island was of coralline limestone—worn away all round into a mushroom edge, that cleared the surface, as the tide was now, by half a fathom.

From beneath this stony canopy slipped noiselessly out the white man. With a dozen strokes he reached the prahu, clambered up by the rudder, jumped inboard, and grabbed his rifle from the top of the after-house; left there because—though Sondur understood well enough a normal musket—the Winchester was for him an awful mystery. The Ké-man sprang up and stood ready for a jump overboard. Také turned, found herself looking into the rifle-barrel—shut her eyes, and waited for execution.

Thurston lowered the piece. “Woman,” he said, “for whom was this? Not for this black beast—nor for the other? Nor for Amil the Sassak? Sondur, was it?”

Také spat at him—the Fidelity by whom he had sworn! “Ay, Sondur! Now shoot!”

The boat came off, deep-loaded now with men and water. Thurston levelled at the Banda-man's head. “Stay in the boat!” he said—“all three! Hand up the bamboos one by one!” Sondur's pea-soup face went lead-colour. Without a word he passed the water-tubes up to the black man.

“Ashore again, now—you three!” The levelled rifle emphasized the order; they paddled to the rock, clambered out, and stood there, gaping, while Thurston and the Papuan got the foresail up. Také crouched upon the deck. “What a fool this man was. He was going to spare her, after all, and take her with him—herself and the black man only!”

The prahu had no anchor down; the big mat foresail canted her head round to seaward, and Thurston steered her for the reef-passage, deepening now with the first of flood. Outside, the breeze came fresher, and Také held the tiller while Thurston and the black man swayed the mainsail up and set the cotton-canvas jib. Then Thurston, laughing a little, came aft, put down his rifle, and took Také suddenly by her plump, brown elbows. His deadly eye told her—she struggled fiercely, but in a moment, with a shift of one hand to her cotton skirt, he had hove her overboard.

“Swim back now to thy Sondur!” he called after her, as he kept the broaching prahu off the wind again. Stooping then for his rifle, he held the tiller with his knees and levelled at the astounded black man.

“Thou, too!” he said. “Jump, dog, jump!”—and the Ké-man jumped.

* * * * *

Said this unblushing buccaneer: "Twas an easy swim, but there was nothing on the place to eat, and those limestone islands never hold surface-water long. There's your five skeletons for you, right enough!"

Swamp-Swallowed.

ACROSS the long perspective of the mangrove flats the sun glared fierce and crimson. From the black mud-banks, white, pestilential vapours rose upon the torpid air. A subtler miasm quivered over the long stretches of mephitic ooze, against the sickly green of which gleamed out the hideous reds and yellows of fantastic crabs that scuttled—as the boat came near—into pools prismatic with stagnation. Beneath the slimy surface the banded water-snakes glanced to and fro; from the reed-beds came in hungry swarms the tiger-mosquitoes; and from the mangrove roots the sword-flies darted out in swift detachments upon the half-nude rowers—sweltering in a bath of vegetable fetor.

Of the white men, one would have fired at the log-like immobility of a crocodile, basking untroubled of that “instinctive terror of man” which is but one of man's own anthropocentric delusions. But the other said, “No!” He was a tan-faced old fellow, with a wide, grim mouth and stiff, white, ape-like whiskers.

“Fire a shot here, and we may as well go back. Curious acoustics, these places have. The report of a gun wanders up and down the swamps and creeks as if it was never going to stop!”

“You've been here before, then?”

“Wouldn't be here now if I hadn't, and if I didn't count myself fever-proof. But as for you, Green——”

Green—young and smooth-faced, but big, brick-red, and square-jawed—cut in, “No more of me, old man! I'll see this thing through! And, anyhow, if *I'm* not fever-proof, I'm pretty well past praying for by this time! See?”

“I see you're good stuff, at any rate! And nothing else will do for this job. Let's sum up—leaving out such trifles as heat and insects. Fever, snakes, sunstroke, poisoned arrows from the Dyaks, treachery from these chaps of our own, and, after all—perhaps nothing at the end of it!”

“I'm game for all but the last. Heavens! Redfern, that *would* be a crusher.”

“Crusher?” Redfern leaned over to the young fellow. “This is it. I'm five-and-sixty; here's my first chance of a pile, and I've staked on it whatever's left me, say 10 or 15 years. It's worth it. But you—you might have lived for 70 years yet.”

“Confound it, man, you talk as if it was all up with me. My chance is as good as yours, at all events.”

The other man said nothing. He had private reasons for being of a different opinion.

* * * * *

Through pallid, steam-like mist—the visible breath of Death—the rising moon made faint light for the two men groping in the stinking mud, and shrinking now and then from the horrid, unnamed things their hands encountered. For half an hour they toiled, till to the knees and elbows they were foul with evil-smelling filth. Then Green gave up.

“This is the place, right enough,” he said—“according to your map. Triangle between three creeks; biggish bluff at one end, three mangroves in the middle. And between them we've searched nearly every inch. If your friend Kussoab wasn't a first-class liar, he was mad! Either way, it's—ugh!” Something was wriggling from the mud between his feet, and, springing smartly from the spot, he slipped and fell backwards.

“It's only a *goocha!*” Redfern kicked the fish-like saurian ten feet away. “What a fool you are! Hullo!—are you hurt?”

For Green lay where he had fallen—not hurt, but thinking hard, One hand, as he came down, had touched a stone, and any stone in that absolutely rockless region must be the stone they sought—the stone which covered the treasure he had till now but half believed in. And with belief came greed and quick resolve. A part!—he would have all! “This old man's day is past! —mine's to come! And what I mean for him, no doubt, is no more than he meant for me!”

All this in the ten seconds before Redfern helped him to his feet. “Let's get back to the boat,” Green said then, “for the present, at any rate. I feel infernally queer.”

Back to the boat they picked their squelching way; the elder man puzzled, but not yet suspicious. It was when they had drunk of the “gunny water,” made of rum and quinine, that a glimmer of the truth came to Redfern, the more readily that he had himself determined, if the find were made, to “lose” his partner in this hellish wet wilderness of Manduka. For thus together do the wits of scoundrels jump.

* * * * *

Thicker still the ghastly fever-fog hung round the shadowy boat, but the moon was in mid-heaven and the light had increased, when Green sat up and looked around the boat—silent but for the snoring of the wearied Malay rowers. Neither was there visible the inevitable cheroot - glow which would have told of Redfern's wakefulness. Green stole from under the awning and over the side.

Redfern, a minute later, raised his head and listened—then took his rifle and slipped also away into the half-illuminated mist, which immediately

thereafter yielded up a dusky figure that got hastily into the boat and woke its fellows; for the Malay crew had, since dark, been one man short—a secret watch upon the doings of the whites. Then, by the light of a little cocoanut lamp, six swarthy faces gloated over a broken kris—the fragment of the blade rust-eaten to a rugged skewer, but the hilt, of damp-defying gold, set thick with stones that sparkled even through the clinging slime.

* * * * *

The frogs forbore their raucous chorus—alarmed by Redfern's strident laughter.

“What a guiltless innocent you take me for! You sneak back here when you think I'm asleep, and you show me a hole that”—with a sneer—“somebody else made! Really, now, young man—which is to say, young scoundrel! young thief!—you might credit me with *some* brains.”

Green stamped up a shower of mud. “Scoundrel yourself! Brains or no brains—there's the hole, and I didn't make it. And, besides, if I found anything, where is it?”

Redfern threw up his rifle. “Exactly!” he said. “That's what I want to know. Where is it?”

Green stooped his head. “Listen!” he said, “there's your answer!”

A hurried sound of oars came faintly through the sluggish air, and both men made off, stumbling and squattering in their haste to reach the main creek.

They were too late! A scornful yell from far away in the fog was all that answered to their shouts.

* * * * *

With the earliest grey of morning Redfern sprang from the mangrove-root on which he had sat silent for hours. “Come!” he said, “let's get away from here, at all events. Getting out of the Manduka's another matter!”

Green slowly raised himself from the mud and lit his pipe. “What chance is there of that?” he asked sullenly.

“About one in a hundred!” Redfern answered, belying his belief, for he was a man of science, not ill-versed in jungle-craft, and he thought the odds were in favour of his own escape—unhampered by a tyro's company.

He eyed his double-rifle as he headed westward through the dreary, dripping mangroves. His cartridges—save the two in the barrels—had gone with the boat. “I could not spare a bullet, even if——” The other called him, and he turned.

Green, up to his ankles in mud, was dragging out each foot in turn—only to sink the other deeper as his weight came on it. And the up-turned stuff—

though the surface was a glossy green—was of a dirty saffron hue. A “porridge-pot,” Redfern knew it for, and, on the instant, turned and made off. This—without his intervention—would rid him of his incumbrance, though to see the poor wretch slowly perish there was no need. But—blindly rushing from the other's cries—a word came to his ear that stopped him.

“The kris!—the kris!—I have it, after all!”

Redfern sped back to where the struggling Green—with wild eyes starting from his fear-blانched face—was clawing frantically at the viscid horror that, by this time, held him to the middle. Testing with his rifle-butt, Redfern swiftly found the limit of the fatal “porridge,” and, flinging himself full length upon the firmer ground, thrust out the barrels to the utmost.

“What did you say about the kris?” he panted, as he lay.

“I have it!” Green gasped, as he got one hand on the muzzles. “If I sink, it sinks with me!”

And as, lying thus for life, he plucked the rifle towards him, the piece, exploding, sent its bullets through his chest. Then Redfern, stretching eagerly to reach Green's inside pocket, was caught himself!

For twenty horrible minutes he fought, and prayed, and swore, and yelled to earless solitudes. And, when the noise had ceased, a monstrous green batrachian—squatting on the double grave—croaked solemnly that all was well!

Live-Man Gardiner.

“BOSH!” shouted a sudden voice out of the shadows.

The two traders started. It was hours since their comptator had fallen ingloriously to the first bottle of “De Kuyper,” and they were by this time well downstairs in the second.

Fleming half-filled a tumbler and took it over to the hammock. “You're supposed to've been killed in the first act, old cock! But, since you've come to life again, just get this down your neck, and explain! What's bosh?”

The gin went down, and Daddy Murchison sat up. “Help me out!” he said, and the ginger-headed giant half-lifted him to the floor. The old man up-ended again the gin-case that had gone down with him, and sat blinking disreputably at the lamp for a minute before he said—“I heard you chaps blatherskitin' about cannibalism. No such thing in Borneo! You settled that all right, didn't you?”

Gardiner foresaw contradiction. “No, Daddy!—no. We want your opinion first, you know!”

“Shows your sense, too! Three years in the 'Pelago, I heard you say you were. And Bullocky Fleming, here—he thinks he knows a lump because he's been about twice as long! But I've been thirty-five years amongst the islands, young man; and I say there's cannibalism—plenty of it—among the Dyaks of the south-east!”

“Bullocky” grinned down at him through the smoke. “Cocksure little animal it is!” he said. “But the question is—what proof have you th' ever was any mancatin' hereaway? That's the talk!”

The old man got up—wild-eyed with sudden horror.

“Proof, man? Why, I've——” He broke off, took a gulp of gin, and sat down again, shaking.

The others—smiling no longer—said not a word. There was some ugly reality behind this!

Daddy Murchison smote his ancient fist upon the table. “I'll tell 'em!” he muttered. “By God! I *must* tell somebody before I die!” He forced a mirthless smile, and lit his pipe. “Oh, you needn't look like that, Bullocky! No more cranky than yourself; though I've a lot more reason to be!”

Puff, puff, for half a minute—then, with the suddenness of a man keeping himself to the scratch—

“There was a chap used to make the round trip with trade—Singapore across to Landak, down to Banjermassin, and away round again by the east coast, up to Shanghai, with trepang and birds' nests and things. 'Bout thirty years ago, it was; before the Dutchies had squared things up much; and,

you bet, it was risky work. How Blinker Johnson—that was the name he went by—managed to escape the *pumpaks*,* I dunno; unless 'twas because he was such an infernally bad lot himself. Runaway mate of an American barque he was; put a bullet through his skipper somewhere up among the Carolines. I was knockin' about. Banjermassin, dead broke, and when Blinker told me he wanted a hand I thought I might as well try my luck up in Chow-land.

“Never got there! I wasn't over-holy then—ain't now, for that matter!—but such a God-forgotten set of wretches as Blinker's crew never came together in one bottom? Good-sized lump of a brig, she was—but manned three times over. Half-a-dozen whites—the rest all sorts and colours, and every man of 'em a bigger scoundrel than the next! Before we commenced our northing I was full of it. In fact, my life wasn't worth a button among 'em, after they guessed what I thought of 'em; and when Blinker plugged a Sunda-man for droppin' a marlin'spike from the main-t'-gallan'-yard, I swore to myself that—sink or swim—I wouldn't round Cape Kamiungun with him.

“A couple of days after that I got a chance. We anchored in the mouth of a middling big river. I forget its name, but there was a Dyak place just above that was a good mark for swallows' nests—the kind the Chinkies eat, you know. I got away all right. Chanced the sharks, I did, and swam ashore in the darkness. Blinker kicked up a devil of a splash, but the Dyaks kept me snug, and he had to make sail without me.

“Well, the Dyaks round there ain't a bad sort, if you don't rub 'em the wrong way. The Orang-Kaya took a great fancy to me, and nothing 'd do him, after a bit, but I must go with 'em on a raid against a village about 20 miles up-river. Same old game, it was—came down on 'em just before day, fired the roofs, and dropped 'em as they bolted. The poor devils didn't have a show, and our fellows got nearly a couple of hundred heads, besides a big haul of women and kids. Half-a-dozen young-men prisoners they had, too, but I didn't know much about Dyaks then, and I saw nothing strange in that.

“When we got back there was a big spread. All the usual stinkin' cookery the Dyaks are so gone upon, and a lot more that I could see was special for the occasion. Plenty of tuak, too, and the women, as usual, eggin' on the men to drink, till three-parts of 'em tumbled off their perches. The chief was a hard old case, though, and when another gorge came on, some time towards morning, he tackled it like a wolf. Peckish, myself, I was; and sober, for I couldn't stomach the darned rot-gut of tuak then as I can now. Reg'lar demon to stuff himself, the Orang was; and, d'ye know, it gave me a queer kind of a shiver to see the look of him into a big brass pot that four

young women put down before him. Some kind of a stew, it smelt like, and a lot of 'em gathered round while the old boy fished out a piece and scoffed it. Then he looked at me and said something, and all the others looked, too, and started laughing.

“The Orang called me over and asked if I would like some. ‘Yes,’ I said, for I understood some of their lingo; and then they all guffawed again. I couldn't make it out; but there couldn't be much harm in the stuff or the old man wouldn't have smacked his lips over it. I took the piece he offered me—about the size of a mutton-chop, it was—and then, seeing how they were all watching me, I thought I'd ask what it was, at all events. The old villain showed all his sharkified teeth. ‘*Orang!*’ says he. Well, he was the Orang himself—the Orang-Kaya; so I supposed it was some special dish of his own, and that he wanted to do me honour. But *orang-kaya* means ‘rich man,’ and as I said the words over to myself, it all came clear to me in a flash. ‘*Orang—man!*’ I pitched the horror away and made for the door as if Satan was after me!”

For half a minute the old man sat silent—recalling the scene; then he reached out his hand—steady now, as was the eye beneath the bushy white brow. Gardiner pushed him the bottle. Fleming got and up cut himself a pipeful, before—like a man who half-dreaded the answer—he asked—“So you got away all right, Daddy?”

Daddy slowly relighted his own pipe, and eclipsed himself with vapour.

“No, Fleming, lad—not that turn! I was collared at the door and brought back to the chief. His face was like the devil's in a picture, with his eyes like a cornered cobra's, and his lips curled clean away from his black, crocodile teeth. He had his parang in his hand, and he lifted it to make a slash at me. I thought I was a goner, and no mistake, but he didn't strike. He says something to one of the women, and she fishes out another chunk of dreadfulness, and holds it out to me. I looked at the chief, and he jabbered something I didn't quite understand. But I understood that he meant business—I had seen that parang at work before! 'Twas”—Daddy put down his pipe and groaned—“'Twas—cannibal—or—dead-un—that's what it was!”

Fleming knocked over the bottle as he jumped to his feet again.

“Good God! old man, you don't mean to say——”

Gardiner sat still. “Of course he does! It's clear it wasn't dead-un, so it must have been——”

“*Cannibal!*” screeched the old man—smashed his pipe on the table, and rushed out into the glimmering dawn.

* * * * *

“Mad?” asked Fleming.

Said Gardiner—“Queer, to begin with—and queerer for the liquor. But that was no madman's yarn!”

The big man shuddered right through his six-feet-three. “Faugh! to think we've been drinking with a man-eater!”

“Rubbish! Drinking with a man who preferred his life to his prejudices, that's all. I don't envy him the fix; but if it had been mine——”

“You'd have done the same?”

“Bet your pretty little boots I would!”

“Bullocky” doubled his historic fist. “You're a better-educated man than me, Mr. William Gardiner—by a jugful! Seen a lot more, too, in some ways. But, by gum! if I thought you meant what you said——”

“You'd get plugged, old man—that's all! Lay a finger on me, Mr. Bullocky Fleming, and I'll blow a hole in you 'fore you can take it off again!”

The giant gasped. “Thought you was a man, Gardiner!”

“Man? Exac'ly! Nine-stone man! Very reason I don't intend to be knocked about by eighteen stone of bull-beef and stupidity! See?”

The Mandhar trader saw. He, too, had a “gun” at his belt, but he wasn't in it at that game with the Californian.

“Don't be an ass, Fleming, as well as a bullock! Man that comes for me gen'lly gets left! Take another ‘wheel-greaser’ and we'll have a look for poor old Fly-by-night. If he's not exac'ly mad, he's not overpoweringly sane, either, and I don't like the way he skedaddled. Hello—what's this?”

“This” was a scribbled scrap of paper, presented by a Dyak boy with the awe due to the mysterious soundless words of white men.

“Dear Gardiner,—Don't bother about me. I've felt for a long time as if I must let out this horror. Don't think I'm mad! The thing's true enough; so true that, now it's out, I'm going to do what I should have done long ago.”

“Make away with himself, eh?” Fleming said, when Gardiner handed him the scrawl. “Best thing he can do, too!”

“Bigger fool than I took him for! Come on, and we'll have a look for him! No use asking young yellowskin anything; primed with his answer!”

* * * * *

The sun had hardly hove his deep-red disc clear of the cold blue jungle line beyond the woolly-misted river—yet all the village was astir with men who ran to swell a throng about the Orang's house—though few had ventured to join the little group upon the platform.

The crowd fell back, right and left, from the ladder-foot as the white men came. Gardiner wondered at the shamefaced greeting of the few whose

eyes met his. "What is it, brothers?" he called out, in Dyak, but only the Orang answered from above.

"Come up, white brother; he is here!"

"Corpse, I suppose!" and Gardiner scrambled up.

Murchison wasn't quite a corpse. His eyes had recognition in them, and he faintly moved a hand. Gardiner stooped—lifted the sarong that lay over the old man's chest—dropped it suddenly, and faced fiercely round upon the Orang.

"Who?" he said.

The Orang pointed down to the dying man. "Hear, first, his words. The time is very short."

The bloodless lips were moving feebly. Gardiner lay down upon the bamboos to bring his ear to the old man's mouth.

"It was Eki, the smith; but I forced him to do it. Spat on him, I did, and *then* he wouldn't; so I struck him in the face, and then——"

"He gave you a slash that would have killed a buffalo! S'pose you know it's a finisher?"

"Yes! They've stopped the bleedin' a bit, but I know it's a case with me—as I meant it to be! New thing in sui——"

Death took the last syllable.

* * * * *

For the killing of Roderick—commonly known as "Daddy"—Murchison, Eki, the smith, was arraigned before a court that combined less "frill" with more expedition than any other upon record.

Gardiner at top of the table in his store; Fleming on his right hand; on his left, Musman, the Orang-Kaya. At bottom, the accused, disarmed and bound; behind him a crowd of gaping Dyaks and a Malay or two from a prahu in the river.

Facts clear enough. Eki was rolling a cigar; white man walked up and "made spittle" in his face. Eki dropped cigar and took hold of parang. Then white man struck, and Eki cut him down.

Mr. Justice Fleming would acquit the prisoner. "It was a devil of a thing to be 'landed' on the nose without warning!"

Mr. Justice Musman concurred. It was evident the white man wanted to be killed. "The prisoner had merely obliged him!"

Chief-Justice Gardiner opined that this was all d——d rubbish! A Dyak had killed a white man! There was severe provocation; but this Court wasn't going to establish the precedent that a Dyak might kill a white man upon *any* provocation! He found prisoner guilty, sentenced him to be shot, and then and there—before anybody could lift a finger—*did* shoot him!

The petrification of amazement rested for a moment on the assemblage—then the Orang headed a stampede for the door, and in half a minute only Gardiner and Fleming were left with the corpse. “Bullocky,” too, got up to go, but at the door he turned.

“Gardiner,” he said—“you can shoot me, if you like!—but I say you're not a man—you're a devil!”

The little man laughed. “Don't want to shoot you, Bullocky!—not worth it! Get away home to Mandhar, and peddle cocoanuts—it's about all you're fit for! As for me, I'm no devil—I'm only Live-man Gardiner!”

* Pirates.

To Oblige Vandorken!

PHYSIOGNOMICALLY, Vandorken was unfortunate. Nature had provided him with the type of head and face which is commonly, and, in the main, correctly, associated with the more promiscuous sort of amateness. But, of the many exceptions, Vandorken was one. His thick, red nape meant nothing more than a large, good-humoured stupidity; the affection in his loose, moist eye was but an affection for the *kirschwasser* which, in long-continued doses, had relaxed his jowl and thickened out his lower lip from beneath the grizzled-ginger moustache. But his brother-planters—knowing that in his freedom from the kindred weakness he stood alone amongst them—had, with humorous accord, conferred upon him the title and the reputation of Don Juan. In which way it came about that one night, at the tail of a symposium *chez* Vandorken, the ebriously facetious Bronker, getting unsteadily to horse, hiccuped forth with incautious loudness:

“Good night, you gay old dog! Good night, my bold Don Juan!—and beware the fate of your namesake!”

Vandorken shook his fist after the departing Bronker. “Idiot!” he muttered. “If my wife hasn't heard you, I'm in luck.”

He wasn't. “And who,” quoth Vrow Vandorken, suddenly, “was he—Don Juan, I mean? And why did that tipsy ass call you by his name? And what *was* his fate?”

Which trinity of questions so confounded the unready Vandorken that, with match in one hand and his final cigar in the other, he merely stood and stared at her with his mouth open.

The lady, lean, acidulous, and older than her mate, closed hers with a snap. “Never mind!” she said, “it's of no consequence!” With which she went to bed, and Vandorken, smoking meditatively amongst the fire-flies, cursed exceedingly the injudicious Bronker, and knew that there was trouble ahead.

* * * * *

In the Netherlands, in Africa, in Guiana, in the Indies—wherever you find the Hollander, you find the most hospitable of men. A casual introduction to Vandorken, in Batavia, and a trifling incidental conversation, made me as welcome to him as the sea-breeze in the morning. None the less so, possibly, that the relations between his vrow and himself were, even to the unaccustomed eye, so palpably “strained” that the stranger within their gates made early resolve to get outside them

again as soon as decency would let him. And hugely was that stranger—myself—astonished at the question sprung upon him by his hostess, almost before the solemn, white-robed *mandoer* had whisked the cover off the soup.

“Did you ever hear, Mynheer Englander, of anybody called Don Juan?”

Mynheer Englander, not without boggling, replied that he certainly had heard of such a person; and, thereafter, being further interrogated, euphemistically explained that the gentleman in question had been credited with unconventionally easy notions of morality.

But I wasn't to escape that way!

“As regards,” said the uncompromising female—“as regards the other sex, I presume?”

“Hang it all!” I thought, “if the old girl's so plain, I don't see why I should shirk it! Yes,” I said, “the legend makes him out one of the most unconscionable rakes and rascals that ever walked the earth.”

And then—by the lady's spite-laden glance at her husband, as by the husband's purple cheeks and swollen eyeballs—I saw that I had “done it”—though how, I hadn't the remotest idea, till in the creeper-clad verandah I sat and smoked with Vandorken at midnight.

“It wasn't your fault,” my host said, ruefully; “how could you know? But the fact is that ever since she got hold of that infernal nickname she's been three times as jealous as before. And that,” added Vandorken, with doleful reminiscence, “is saying a good deal!”

“But, till to-night, she didn't understand the allusion?”

“She suspected, my friend. And, now that she's sure, I won't even be able to look at a woman on the plantation!”

“Perhaps—between men, you know!—perhaps you *have* been looking at some of them a little too freely already? Some of these Javanese girls are very pretty.”

My host's bamboo chair creaked under the energy of his disclaimer.

“*Tuyfel*, man!—not I! I wouldn't care if there wasn't a woman on the face of the earth. The fellows—devil take 'em!—only gave me the name on the what-d'ye-call-it—oh! the *lucus a non* principle. All the heart I've got's in my tobacco—growing, stripping, curing, and turning out the best brand on this side of Jojorka. As for the wenches who work at it—some of 'em pretty enough, as you say—I don't believe I know one from the other.”

“All which,” I told myself, as I drew my mosquito-net for the night, “sounds uncommonly like protesting too much.”

* * * * *

It was a pleasant place, the drying-house; with its grateful shadows

darkened into indigo by sharp intersecting shafts of blinding tropic sunlight; its subtly pungent atmosphere, laden with nicotian aroma, and the chatter of busy, bright-clad girls—some slinging the green tobacco to poles across the shed, some piling the yellowed bundles upon bamboo frames, some pressing and packing the matured brown leaf into mats and boxes. Good-looking girls, many of them, in the somewhat squab-featured Malayan style, and one, at least, an unquestionable beauty, even according to European canons.

“She?” Vandorken answered to my question. “Oh, that's Halmaheira!” And Halmaheira, looking up with a smile, showed us a wide white mouthful of ivory, unstained of the accursed betel.

“Ha, friend Vandorken!” I said, “here's *one* you know from the others, at all events!”

The honest fellow blushed, as far as his normal brick-red would let him. “Well, she—she's a kind of forewoman, you see. That's prime stuff for my own use she's doing up in plantain-leaf. Just go over and have a look at it.”

I went over; but, for once that I looked at the weed, I looked a dozen times at the fair manipulatrix thereof; and she, with laughter in her long black eyes, made good her title to that intermediate status between coquetry and impudence for which the mysterious term “minx” appears to have been invented.

“You're a pretty girl, Halmaheira, with a pretty name,” I said to myself, “but you're a minx, for all that! And perhaps, after all, Mrs. Vandorken—”

A sudden widening of Halmaheira's velvet eyes made me look round. Just within the shed stood Mrs. Vandorken herself, with a white cotton umbrella accentuating the leathery sourness of her face. Vandorken's surprise had stiffened him into a ludicrous suggestion of a soldier at “tention;” five hundred busy fingers had forgotten their function, and a hundred sloeblack eyes spoke blank astonishment; but only of myself did Mrs. Vandorken take the slightest notice—walking straight up to where I stood sheepishly flapping my cheek with a leaf from Halmaheira's table.

“I congratulate you on your taste, mynheer!”—indicating the girl with a lean yellow forefinger. “It is good!—but unfortunately you are not alone in it. I am sure you would not willingly commit a breach of hospitality, so it is but fair to warn you that you are at this moment poaching on your host's preserves!” She waved a hand towards her husband and stalked solemnly away.

Vandorken looked stupidly after her; I looked at Halmaheira; Halmaheira laughed aloud, and round the other girls went the gentle ripple of a smile. Down to the little ten-year-old fly-flapper, there wasn't one of them who

hadn't grasped the situation.

* * * * *

"You'll have to get rid of the fair Halmaheira," I advised. "No peace till you do!"

Vandorken gazed out over the reed-beds for a minute before he answered, disconsolately:

"Exactly; but I'm not sure that she'd go!"

I looked hard at him. Was there anything *sub rosâ*, after all?

"No, no!" he answered to my inquiring eye. "Not that! It's this way: This Halmaheira's a mischievous little animal. She'd stop at nothing to spite my wife, or myself either, after I'd sent her about her business. She'd keep hanging round and turning up at awkward times—making things ten times worse for me, in fact!"

Vandorken mopped his face and groaned; then, with a sudden brightening-up—

"*Hemel!*—I have it! You're going back to Batavia, aren't you?"

"Yes; what's that to do with it?"

"Everything, my friend; you'll take her with you!"

I laughed at him. "Declined, with thanks," I said.

Vandorken chucked away his cigar among the crocodiles, and nearly tumbled me into the tank after it, so eagerly did he clutch me by the arm.

"You don't understand. Here's what I mean: Halmaheira will go with you readily enough; the notion of a white husband would fetch any girl in Java."

"Daresay; but——"

"Wait! Of course you're not going to marry her—needn't even speak to her on the journey. You'll be on horseback, and I'll send her in a *tandoe*; and I'll give you a cheque on De Rinter's for 500 guilders, which you can hand over to her."

"Very tidy *solatium*, too. Well, Vandorken, it's a middling steep business; but you're a good sort, so, if you think the money'll do instead of the man"——

"She'll jump at it, sir! No disparagement to you, but she'll simply jump at the cash."

* * * * *

With Vandorken's parting words in my ears, I was easy enough in mind till I dismounted at the door of Portegra's, and was struck dumb by the appearance of my charge as she emerged from her *tandoe*. I had only hitherto seen her in working trim, for it had been dark when we left, and at

the rest-houses I had carefully avoided her; but now here she was in a gold-embroidered *kabaya* of blue Bugis silk, with a silver skewer through her ebony top-knot, broad gold stripes in her muslin sarong, and big silver butterflies on her little red slippers. It was simply gorgeous, and her eyes were truly very fine and dangerously reproachful. Yet I tried to harden my heart, got her into the hostelry, and made straight for De Rinter's, whence, with the 500 guilders (about £40) at which my damsel was to "jump," I sauntered contentedly back, glad to be done with an unpleasant job.

* * * * *

But Halmaheira didn't "jump"—didn't show the remotest inclination even to skip. In the best Javanese at my command I explained, and explained again; and still, without a word, she kept gazing mournfully from the money to the man and from the man to the money. And still I talked, and felt every moment more and more mixed and mean and idiotic, until I went mentally to pieces as the lady, with a soft smile spreading like the dawn across her puzzled features, pushed back the coin-representing rags, and calmly observed that it was proper for the husband to have charge of the money.

"The husband!" In something not unlike despair I looked around. It was the native section of the hotel, and from the other end of the room a portly old Javanese gentleman was considering us, not unsuspectingly, through gold-rimmed glasses; while, nearer at hand, two women of the upper class—more richly, if less garishly, attired than my incubus—were regarding her askance with all the fine superciliousness proper to that circumstance. For which reason Halmaheira—having, woman-like, observed them without looking—determined, I suppose, to take the wind out of their sails by showing them what the person they despised might, could, and would do with one of the august white race. Up she jumped, at all events, and, before I altogether realized that I had been energetically folded to her blue-silk bosom, I was being kissed upon either cheek with a rapidity and resonance that drove the astounded Javanese ladies to the other end of the room, where one of them, tumbling over the petrified old gentleman, set up a screech that brought, first, half a dozen waiters on the scene—then old Portegra himself, with a couple of grinning Dutch planters from the European side of the house.

"*Verdoemnis!*" said one—"the Englander's doing well. I shouldn't mind being in his place!"

I knew him! It was old Jan Rittaker—whose guest I had been—whose wife and daughters had made much of me! My cup was full, and I fled.

* * * * *

“Oh, no need-a you go!” Portegra said, when, in the mellow dusk, I had stolen back to his place for my traps. “Fine girl, dat, eh?” with a wink of his rascally Portuguese eye. “Peety lose run of her. But she gone! She call you plentee fool—plentee veelain—but she go away at last!”

Fool and villain! Well, to this hour I don't know exactly which of these parts I played—to oblige Vandorken!

A Tight Place!

ALONE—as a white man—on Diné Island! I didn't like it. I was young. I had never taken human life. My Archipelagian experience had lain hitherto amongst the Malayan peoples—reserved and punctilious. This sub-Papuan race, demonstrative and vociferous, I didn't understand, and didn't trust.

It was all very well in Ponderjohn's company. His reputation as a wizard was safeguard enough. But now he was gone—off to Lukol with a Yankee trader who had told him about a strange parrot.

“A new *eclectus*, my boy, if description goes for anything. I shall only be a couple of days away; and, meantime, let nobody near the collection, as you value your life. Those *coleoptera* alone are worth dying for.”

Well, I didn't suppose my life was in much danger over his confounded beetles, but there were other things Tumora might take a fancy to, and about Mr. Tumora's disposition Ponderjohn and myself hadn't agreed. Your ethnologist, as a rule, is a bad general physiognomist. So accustomed is he to look for race-indications that he becomes more or less incapable of individual differentiation.

“Just the average Matabello-islander.” Ponderjohn had said. “No better than the rest of them, and no worse.”

I thought he was a good deal worse; and now, as I saw him sauntering over through the sago trees, I stowed the rifle and one revolver away in a corner, covered over with an atap-mat. The other pistol I loaded and put in my breast-pocket.

Tumora came in—through the roof! Diné houses are *all* roof, and the door is therefore, perforce, in the slope of the thatch. The chief looked all around—at the birds, the snakes, the insect-cases, the taxidermic implements on the little table. These things impressed him; they were the wizard's! But the wizard was away; so Tumora looked next at me, and *wasn't* impressed—a slight five-feet-nine to his burly six-two. He smiled with childish vanity, and straightened himself up in front of me—a portentous figure, with such a mass of muscle upon shoulder and arm as not even a pot-belly could render insignificant. His frizzy hair and beard were Papuan, pure, and, though his skin had hardly more than Malay depth of tint, his big, drop-ended nose again was Papuan. Malay enough to carry a kris, the hardwood club was clearly his accustomed weapon. Nearly four feet long, with a head like a decent-sized pumpkin—I found myself wondering whether I could shoot before it could reach me. The chief followed my look and hove the thing suddenly above his head. To and fro he shook it with one hand—twisted and twirled it this way and that, till his

big biceps stood out nearly in a semicircle, and I realized that I would have about as much chance with him as a fly! But all I said was:

“That is nothing!”

The infantine Papuan nature showed up. With a pettish grin he let the club drop. Then he squatted on the floor and laughed. “Would I give him rum?”

“No, I wouldn't!” Boldly, this—but not without misgivings. “Would I show him my guns?” “My guns were gone with my ‘father’ to Lukol.” That, my visitor frankly observed, was a lie! and as frankly I acknowledged it. Then we both laughed, and things began to look more promising. I offered the giant a quarter-pound cake of such tobacco as I had seen the Ké-men smoke—black as ink and strong as a team of bullocks. He smelt at it in a puzzled kind of way, then stowed it away in his hair. Next, of course, he was hungry; so I gave him sago-cakes and dried turtle—half a dozen of the one and about a pound of the other—and the way it all disappeared made me thankful he hadn't brought with him a “tail” of similar performers. The thought suggested the question—“Why had he come alone?”

“Because”—peering cautiously round and sinking his guttural voice to a whisper—“because he wanted to see the Weather-Spirit.”

“The Weather-Spirit?”

“Ay; the little devil fastened in a box—that tells thy ‘father’ what wind is going to blow, and when the rain cometh!”

“Fastened in a box? Could he mean the aneroid barometer?” I brought it out.

“Yes!”—sheering off to the end of the hut and keeping a watchful eye on the instrument. “That was the box—would I make the Spirit speak?”

“It couldn't speak,” I explained. “It could only point. This was its finger.”

Tumora scratched his head, felt the lump of tobacco in his hair' drew it out, bit off a mouthful, and swallowed the horrible stuff as if it had been gingerbread!

Here was a fresh complication. This sort of thing would poison a rhinoceros! If Tumora died—well, Ponderjohn had described to me a few of the little amenities practised upon unfortunates who were merely suspected of harming a chief. I tried to explain to the animal that tobacco was to be smoked, not eaten, and for answer he grinned and took another mouthful. Then he cautiously approached the barometer—looked hard at the index for a few moments—suddenly swung up his club again and delivered himself in execrable Malay to the effect that I was an unworthy son of my “father,” who spoke always truth! In short, I was a liar of the first water! “The Spirit *could* speak, and if I wouldn't ask it to do so”—the

impending club said the rest!

Should I shoot him, out-of-hand? The time was to come—soon enough—when I would have dropped him without a wink, but I had never yet fired at *Man!* The momentousness of the act held my hand, and I temporized. “I would ask the Spirit to speak,” I said, “But, as Tumora doubtless knew, spirits were occasionally——”

“Go on!” he snarled. “Go on!—make the Spirit say wise words!”

His deep-set eyes began to burn; his teeth gleamed viciously from the gloomy tangle of his beard; but the sweat-beads stood upon his scroll-marked forehead, his breath came in snorts, the brown of his devil's countenance was turning green.

“The tobacco!” I told myself, and, even with the thought, the fated wretch gulped down the remnant of the plug. But he was dangerous still; so, turning towards the barometer, I stretched out an arm over it and recited a verse or two of something—I forget what. Silence, then, for half a minute—broken only by the poisoned man's elephantine gaspings.

“The spirit——” I began—and turned—barely in time to duck beneath the tremendous swing with which the club knocked Ponder-john's choicest beetle-case to flinders, and nearly shook the house down as it landed like a round shot upon one of the marble-wood posts. Eight feet away I jumped, and jerked the pistol out. But it wasn't needed—the effort had finished Tumora. Twisting and groaning, he lay on the floor—wetted already with the sweat that poured from every inch of his agonized carcass.

I made the door fast, pocketed the pistol again, stooped over my enemy, and deliberately wrenched him by the nose—slapped him hard in the face—kicked him energetically in the ribs! Not out of petty revenge, but to make sure that he really was in that state of perfect indifference to contingencies characteristic of narcoto-irritant poisoning. Then I lit my pipe and constituted myself an Executive Council of One. This man had eaten a 4-oz. plug of the strongest tobacco in the world. His death—probable in any case—was certain if he were left to himself. Should I use, on his behalf, what medical knowledge I possessed?

“No!” I decided, as I looked up at the saucer-shaped dent of the club upon the massive house-post. “Better not give him the chance of repeating that little experiment! Let the law—which is to say the tobacco—take its course!”

Voices—many voices—outside. I opened the door. There was a small crowd around it—jabbering and hustling each other as is this people's way. Not all, though. One old man, shorter than the others, and lighter of colour, stood gravely forward as spokesman. He had made the Macassar voyage, wore a kris, and spoke the Bugis Malay intelligibly enough.

“Tumora was lost! The people were afraid! Had the white master seen the great chief whose name was Tumora-Diné?”

The “white master” brought him in, closed the door, and pointed to the deplorable object upon the floor. “Tumora had angered the Weather-Spirit of the white men, and the Spirit had turned his blood into water!”

“*Apai Indai!*” and the old man shrunk away towards the door. “It is even so! Wise are the white men! Great is their Spirit! Let thy servant go, lest he also——”

I threw open the door, and waited while he explained in the Diné tongue. In half a minute there wasn't a mop-head in sight—save one—a nearly black man, who surlily stood his ground. Tattooed from wrist to elbow in brilliant scarlet, he swung carelessly to and fro the short, cauliflower-headed club of the Aru Islands. There were Aru-men in Diné, I knew—fellows with more grit than the Diné-men, or less superstition. This man also I invited inside, and, still sulkily vigilant, he came.

I turned to the old man. “Tell this fellow,” I began—and then came blankness!

* * * * *

“Hit you a short-armed blow on the back of the head as you turned,” Ponderjohn said. “Lucky for you you've got an Irish skull! That tap would have crushed mine like an egg-shell.”

“Thanks! But why didn't the fellow finish me when he had me down?”

“Well, from what I can make out, your pistol exploded as you fell, and he thought it was the spirit that had bewitched Tumora, so he bolted and left the chief here. They've only just taken him away. What in creation did you give the fellow?”

“Tobacco! He ate a quarter-pound of that black Amboyna!”

“Devil he did! Well—listen!”

The infernal din from the village took definite meaning now. The women were howling for the death of a chief.

A Bornean Revenge.

“TIRE not thy tongue, Dusi-Mota! My daughter's word is my word. All good be unto thee, but when everything is said thou art but a Kayan, and the Sea-Dyaks like not to mate with the scratchers of the soil!”

Little Dusi's innumerable brass rings clinked as he struck his hands together above his head, and his answer spluttered fiercely through his file-pointed teeth.

“Glad enough are the Sea-Dyaks to use the Kayan swords! There is not a man among ye, Saghais and Illinoans and all, that could forge such a parang as that at thy side, O father of Sinsha! No better are your own blades than the rotten steel of the white man!”

Muniad turned a fond eye upon his weapon, bedecked with tufts of dyed human hair. “Truth is with thee,” he acknowledged. “From the grave of a Kayan chief came this, and never did a better one cut pig.* But what of that? Cowards may well make weapons for brave men to use!”

The Kayan's yellow face turned green, and his hand went to his side, but brought therefrom only his rattan-knife, with which from the bunch of pendants at his ear he cut away a tiger-cat's tooth, spat thrice upon it, flung it at Muniad's feet, and went.

“Do thy worst, son of a crocodile's uncle!” the Sea-Dyak called after him. “Sinsha laughs at thee, and Sinsha's father fears not thee nor all thy filth-cating tribe!”

* * * * *

The white man sat on the platform of Muniad's house, and talked of many things, while the moon climbed out of the dusky eastern forests and sparkled against the faces of the long rollers marching rhythmically in upon the beach below. The white man asked questions, the brown man answered them, and Sinsha winnowed rice and listened. The broad equatorial moon sent a sheen off her glossy skin, struck fire from the brass wire coiled upon her shapely arms, and deepened the shadows of her long-lashed eyes. “What a pity that another ten years will see her a withered old hag!” thought Medlow. But he might have spared his commiseration on that head.

Talk turned upon the *sumpitan*, and Sinsha, dropping fan and shovel, ran to fetch the instrument. Medlow looked curiously at the eight-foot tube, with its heavy spear-blade, fixed, bayonet-like, outside the line of propulsion, and Muniad laughed to see how respectfully the other handled the sago-thorn darts. No danger with these arrows, explained the Dyak.

The poison was no poison after a few hours' exposure to the air. And then he brought the little bamboo tube into which the potent upas-sap had been trebly sealed with wooden plug, beeswax, and lizard-skin. A "hand of the sun"—about fifteen minutes—a man *might* live, he said, if the poison were fresh upon the arrow that wounded him.

Medlow laughed incredulously. He was but a book-naturalist at that time, and his knowledge of the strychniferous *Astocarpae* was theoretical. "I'll believe it when I see it!" he said; and, for answer, Sinsha clapped a hand to her neck, sprang to her feet, and held out to her father—a *sumpitan*-arrow! "What dog has——" the old man was beginning furiously, when, piff! another of the tiny darts stood in his own shoulder. Then he guessed. "Dusi!" he shouted.

"Ay, Dusi!" said a voice from below, where stood in the moonlight a squat, dark figure, with the deadly tube still levelled at the platform. Medlow whipped out his Dean-and-Adams, but the Kayan went with a ten-foot spring into a rhododendron-clump.

"I see thee, white master!" he cried in Malay; "but thou canst not see me. Therefore shoot not, neither come down hither, unless thy skin is thicker than Muniad's—or Sinsha's!" and the little devil cackled hideously amongst the branches.

But Sinsha was already past hearing, and the old man, swaying as he stood, repeated his slayer's advice. "Why should'st thou die also, and uselessly?" he said. "As for me, I am old, and my daughter goeth with me into the mists."

"Good God!" cried Medlow, "is there nothing to be done?"

"Nothing that thou canst do. Take now thy time-measurer, and wait to see if my words were truth."

Medlow looked at the dying girl and sighed, but then—scientist to the marrow—he took out his watch. The moonlight showed the half-hour after seven. When the hands stood at ten minutes to eight he knew that Muniad was right!

* With a downward stroke of the parang many Dyaks can cut a moderate-sized pig clean in two.

Her Father's Head: A Bornean Nightmare.

“PASA ANTU!” “A spirit hath passed!” and Malita's agate beads rattled to her trembling, as something swift and silent brushed past her little brass-burdened ear. Again it came, a wavering shadow in the moonlight, and now Malita laughed: it was only a big brown goatsucker, after all!

The laugh was low, a mere ripple on the smooth of midnight silence, but Tambat, awake and star-gazing, heard it. Neither poet nor philosopher was Tambat; he was an older institution than either—the *quidnunc*; and, peeping from the window in his nipa-thatch, he saw the dark form gliding from hut-shadow to hut-shadow.

A woman!—young, alone, and making stealthily for the pangarang. Tambat's portentous mouth expanded in a grin that halved his pock-pitted face. Here was the making of a pretty scandal! In the pangarang—the “head-house”—slept the bachelors of Surah: in part to guard that sacred citadel; in part to keep them out of amorous mischief. And here was mischief going to them!—slim young mischief in bedang and bracelets, with shining beads about its graceful neck, and long hair streaming to its slender waist.

Out of his eager way exultant Tambat kicked his slumbering wife, and soon across the moon-strips a second shadow glided after the first. At equal pace, with equal silence, went they, till close before the girl—a black triangle on the moonlit sky—the pangarang reared up its pointed roof.

Into the head-house loft, through many a lifted roof-trap, the moonlight and the night-breeze came together, and made between them a grotesquer horror than ever porksupped artist dreamed of. Around the circle of the roof, in close and curving rows, the grisly trophies hung; dim blots of greater darkness in the shadow, but starting out, in patches where the white light fell, into hideous caricature of humanity, with huge blank orbits where were one time eyes, and shark-mouths grinning to the moon in ghastly travesty of laughter. Among them heads not yet too stale to load the air with fulsome carrion smell; with others, dry and hollow, fantastically nodding to the breeze that frisked where once the brains had worked.

Into this monstrous death-scene came suddenly a warm young life. Malita dropped lightly from the roof, and looked around with staring eyes of fear. The smell was nothing to her jaunty little Dyak nose; the heads her long-lashed Dyak eye regarded no more than so many cocoanuts. Collectively, that is; for there was one particular brain-case she had come to seek—her father's, lopped a month before to “open the mourning” for a

Surah chief. A score of miles, alone and quaking, had she paddled up the *antu*-haunted Dubur, and it was the head-house *antu* now she dreaded, as thus, in the second morning hour, she stood panting, with the grinning dead above her and the murderous enemies of her tribe asleep below.

Not all asleep! Boki's evening meal of rotten eggs and stinking blue-fish had been over-ample. He floundered, snorted, and awoke—awoke to hear upon the floor above a sound too slight for any but a savage ear. Again it came—a faint concussion on the hard bamboo, and up rose Boki, spear in hand, and noiseless as a cat. It might be an *antu*, he thought, or, worse still, a *buau*! But then, again, it might be the Sibis, or the Batsas—stolen in upon them to requite a hundred cruel slaughters of the past. Not as an old woman was Boki going to be jeered at! For himself would he see who was above—or what! So Boki laid down spear, took parang in teeth, and had climbed a dozen notches of the ladder-post, when—clump!—came something on his ugly skull, and down went Boki like a stone!

* * * * *

Malita, climbing like a monkey from cross-piece to cross-piece, had found, ere long, her father's head. In one of the moonlit patches she came on it—half baked, half putrid—but recognizable still; and breathless Malita, incautious in her gladness, dropped hardly feather-like enough upon the floor again with her prize. Into the darkest corner, with the noiseless swiftness of the savage, she sprang, and, cowering, listened. Had they heard? No sound came from below, but that proved nothing, and intently from her corner she watched the black ladder-opening upon the moonlit floor.

Ay, there it came!—a head! “The body must never follow!” thought Malita, as up she sprang, and, with a wild swing of the cord rove through the paternal temples, brought down the dead skull on the living one with a crash that scared the flying-foxes squeaking from the eaves and brought to their feet in an instant the sharp-eared slumberers below. Wondering much, they poked and pushed the flaccid and oblivious Boki, and, wondering more, they heard descend upon the floor above a pounding shower of heads. “The *antu*!” whispered they, and, trembling, turned their eyes away from the trap, down which a couple of the ghastly things had rolled. But then the voice of Tambat, shrieking wildly from above, dissolved the spell.

“Come up!—come up hither, ye men of Surah! Ye are robbed!—robbed, I tell ye!—and by a woman!—sleepy-headed sons of bats that ye are! Come up!—come up!”

They went up, and Tambat told them how he had followed to the head-house a woman of the Sibis, and how he had climbed in at a roof-window

after her; how, missing his hold, he had caught at and broken one of the head-lines; and how, as he picked himself up from amongst the fallen heads, he saw the woman vanish through the roof again.

“A head had she in her hand,” he said, in conclusion. “Therefore, say I, ye are robbed, and heavily will ye have to answer it to the Orang!”

Whereat the playful Tambat chuckled—but not for long. Boki, with many a grunt and growl, had picked up his wits again, and no sooner had he grasped the situation than, with a single word, he brought the injudicious Tambat's mirth to an abrupt conclusion. “Darkness!” was the word—a Dyak equivalent, as Boki used it, for “Dead men tell no tales!” The rest agreed. What skull-and-woman story was this with which to insult the intelligence of the bachelors of Surah? And if, as Tambat said, there was a head missing, his own would just suit its place. It would be nicely baked by the time of next official counting, and no one would be the wiser!

Tambat implored, the head-watchers laughed; he cursed them, they knocked him down with a kris-hilt; he shrieked, they gagged him with a chawat, lugged him out into the jungle, and waited for the sun to rise. With the first red rays they took the chawat off, gave him a valedictory chew of betel, calmly docked him of his head, buried it for the time in a cane-patch, and pitched the carcass to the ever-ready crocodiles.

* * * * *

Came round, in time, the “counting of the heads,” and Molat, the Orang-Kaya, found the tally right. Quoth he:—

“Not for any other three would I lose this head of Dipuk's. He was a great man of the Sibis—on whose tribe be curses! Fresh is it, also, to a wonder. Hardly seemeth it the head of more than a moon and a half!”

Which observation—seeing the head in question had been exactly six weeks parted from the unlucky Tambat's shoulders — betokened upon Molat's part a thorough acquaintance with the subject.

But Dipuk's head, with Argus feathers decked, hung high in Malita's house until she took a husband. *He* threw it to the pigs!

The Knave of Diamonds.

“DOCUMENTS of all kinds altered so as to defy detection. Letters skilfully opened and reclosed. Handwriting imitated to perfection; signatures a speciality. Moderate terms and profound secrecy!”

To some such tune might have run Yee Wung's advertisement, had not that great artist been debarred by an unfortunate prejudice of society from letting his light shine before men. Upon Yee Wung in the flesh no user of his skill had ever yet set eyes, which was why—though most of his clients had come, sooner or later, into disastrous collision with the prejudice aforesaid — the accomplished Yee pursued his peaceful way, as untroubled of the law as of his conscience.

Scarce ten feet square was Yee's skylighted den, be-shelved and pigeon-holed from floor to ceiling, and stuffy with tobacco, tea, and opium. The opium-lamp, in fact, stood ever on the table; nor had 30 years of smoking dulled one whit the subtle intellect of this candle-coloured little man with European-cut, grizzling hair and a long peninsula of thin grey beard.

A scuffle in the ante-room—an unwonted sound of voices—and lo! Yee Wung's professional incognito was broken at last! A woman walked in upon him—tall, closely-veiled, and palpably excited, but none the less determined. Behind her grinned and jabbered Yee's faithful sentinel, taken thus, for the first time, off his guard. But the old man's wits were ready. In an instant he had slipped round the table—thrust the intruder in—the janitor out—locked the door inside and put his back against it. The woman eyed him through her veil, and quailed a little. This little bird-like man—long-clawed and bright-eyed—was dangerous.

“No harm, John!” she said. “Only me wantee you writee me something! That all!”

Yee Wung cackled. “Sit down, madam! If you wish to speak English, speak it!—or Dutch, or Spanish, or Malay!—I am at your service in whichever you please! Did I understand you to say that you want something written for you?”

The astonished woman sat down. “Yes!” she said. “I knew that old idiot outside couldn't be the man I wanted, so I pushed my way in.”

Yee Wung came to the table. “Something in Malay you want, no doubt; or is it in Chinese?”

The woman recovered her arrogance. “Nonsense!” she said. “It's English I want written, in a particular handwriting!—in this!” and she held out a letter.

The Chinaman took it. “The signature?” he asked. “Do you want that

imitated, too?"

"Of course!"

"Forgery, madam!—*forgery!*"

"I know it! But I was told that you—if you were well paid, of course——"

"Would risk 10 or 15 years of the Andamans? You have been grossly imposed upon, madam! Let me wish you good-day—and better advisers!" And Yee Wung unlocked the door.

Mrs. Harrison—the letter had told the Chinaman her name—stared at him for a moment, sprang up, and went, without another word. Yee Wung cackled softly again, took from within the forgotten letter the pencilled draft of another, absorbed its tenor at a glance, replaced it, dropped both on the floor, and told his seneschal to admit the lady when she came back, which would be soon. In three minutes back she came, saw the letter on the floor, snatched it up, and was gone again; where-upon Yee Wung took unto himself a sturdy cane, called in the defaulting Ah Meng, and, having batooned that unlucky servitor with much spirit and satisfaction, kicked him out again, re-locked the door, and mounted upon a step-ladder to search an upper shelf.

Systematic to the ends of his claws, Yee Wung kept stored upon his shelves not only cheque-books of every bank in India, China, and the Peninsula, and special stationery of every leading firm in Singapore and Malacca, but also an indexed multitude of letters, procured per medium of the expertest sneak-thieves in the world—his Singapore compatriots. Ere long Yee found what he wanted—some headed paper of Harrison Bros. and an autograph letter of the senior partner in that great American concern. With these at hand, Yee Wung sat down to commit to paper the words of the pencilled draft he had glanced at.

Gentlemen,—Please to deliver to the bearer—my wife—the diamond bracelet completed last week to my order.—WILBERFORCE F. HARRISON. Messrs. Van Houten and Groot, Jewellers.

Yee Wung lit his pipe and ruminated. Gay dog, Wilberforce Harrison! All Singapore knew that! Bracelet not for his wife! Wife wanted to get hold of it, and thus have a pull upon the faithless one. "Now, wherein could all this be manipulated unto the personal use and benefit of Yee Wung?" asked that ingenious Pagan of himself. Two minutes brought the answer, and then, with several pens and various inks, the expert addressed himself to the production of two documents which were to have important consequences. In half an hour the job was finished, and, solacing himself once more with the "drowsy syrup of the East," Yee Wung descended to his subjacent cubiculum, and there upon his ancient person worked such

wondrous changes that his mother—had that excellent heathen lady been alive—would have repudiated him as of alien race. From dirty quince-colour he changed his face to brightest lemon, shaved his beard, blacked his thin moustache, and conferred upon himself an arching pair of jetty eyebrows. He clipped close his portentous finger-nails, arrayed himself in snowy drill and spotless topee, and, thus equipped, went forth upon the warpath.

* * * * *

Messrs. Van Houten and Groot,—I had intended to call to-day for the bracelet, but, as I have some unexpected business to attend to, I hereby authorize you to deliver over the article to the bearer, Mr. Lathi Tal, my confidential clerk, who will countersign enclosed receipt.—
WILBERFORCE F. HARRISON.

Letter and receipt were on the firm's business-paper; the signatures were beyond dispute; and thus, when to the acknowledgment the irreproachable-looking Bengali gentleman had appended his sign-manual, the jewellers handed him the bracelet without a qualm—the more readily that it was already paid for. But, ten minutes after the smiling Lathi Tal had vanished, like a thunderbolt upon the heads of Van Houten and Groot descended the purport of a document which that confidential person must have accidentally dropped in their shop.

Received from Mrs. W. F. Harrison, upon handing over to her a diamond bracelet obtained by me from Van Houten and Groot, the sum of Rs. 1,000.—LATHI TAL.

“Der skootrel!” spluttered old Van Houten, smiting hard upon his bald Dutch pate. “He moost haf hat der rezeed all retty to gif dat voman, und he never know he tropt it here!”

But Lathi Tal—which is to say, Yee Wung—knew very well where he had dropped it, and had calculated the result of the finding thereof. Which was, that after Lathi Tal had proved undiscoverable—which, considering he didn't exist, was not surprising—the disgusted Harrison, disbelieving utterly his wife's protestations, made no further fuss about the bracelet, although, to soothe his wounded purse and feelings, he sued the jewellers for the price of the undelivered article. “Delivered to his wife through her agent,” contended those level-headed Dutchmen, and thus arose the famous “Bracelet Case,” which, rising by degrees in courts and costs, fizzled out at last in the Privy Council decision that there could be *no* decision, and that each side should pay its by-that-time-prodigious whack of the expenses.

The bracelet, long ere then, was a bracelet no longer. By way of Batavia it had found its way to Amsterdam, from which emporium of diamonds “its

stones were scattered far and wide," to the ultimate satisfactory fattening of Yee Wung's balance with the Bank of Cathay.

The Woman Scorned: A Tragedy of Three.

STUITZEN, pacing to and fro upon his post, peered anxiously through the darkness towards the prison building—a long black blur upon a starless sky. With every minute's delay, that lessened his chance of the reward, the risk he ran appeared to dwindle—the reward itself to swell; but when at last two women's figures, black and noiseless, took sudden shape beside him, the danger reared itself again before his mind in full proportions.

“As silent as death,” he whispered in the taller woman's ear. “Listen!”

From right and left came distinctly through the stillness the rhythmic steps of men—like Stuitzen, water-sentries—but not, like Stuitzen, expectant of 12,000 guilders for contriving the escape of a Sumatran “princess;” which personage—the shorter of the women—made now a gesture of impatience, said something also, in a voice so loud that on the instant the distant pacing ceased.

“Down with her to the boat, quick!” the warder whispered, rapidly, “but touch nothing till I come”—and he resumed his measured tread, until his fellows, judging all was right, did likewise. Then Stuitzen spat contemptuously towards the prison, unfixed his bayonet, slung his rifle, and slid cautiously down the shelving sandbank.

The women were already in the boat, and the man pushed her off with ease, for here, inside the Isle of Graves, there was but little surf. Little wind, either—for the same reason—and slowly they stood over for Chapel Point. Outside, against the sea-wall of the prison cemetery, the waves would make noise enough to drown their voices—but they couldn't weather the point, and unwillingly Stuitzen put the boat about for a short board to south-east—a shift of helm without which this story would never have been written. For the “princess”—understanding only that the boat was heading back towards Padak—sprang up with a scream that cleft the night air for a mile. A red flash answered from the shore—then, with the sharp bark of the rifle, came a fainter flash from further off—a duller report—another, and another—as the alarm circled completely round the island.

“Smother the she-devil!” hissed Stuitzen to his wife; and better would it have been for Mrs. Stuitzen—late female warder in Padak—if she had literally obeyed his order. But only with handkerchief and hand she stopped the other woman's mouth, and held her till the boat, upon her former tack, was standing out to sea. A silent boat, then, for the Sumatran had collapsed in the bows, and the Stuitzens were listening for something. Two minutes, and it came—the cannon-shot that carried far and wide the

news of a prisoner's escape, and loosed upon the startled night a sullen roll of corroborative echoes.

Then, again, silence, and Stuitzen—his disjointed utterance travelling with his slowly-working wits—said, “That—settles it! No use, now—to run for the Tidambang! The *kanonneerboot*—will be there before us! We'll have to make—for the Carabongs, and—keep dark till the fuss is over!”

* * * * *

“Six weeks we have been here!” said Mrs. Stuitzen, answering her husband. “And”—with a significant glance at the Sumatran—“it is high time for us to go!”

The man laughed uneasily. Marital infidelity—conventionally attributed to innate depravity—is just as often due to nothing worse than the craving for variety, and Stuitzen—a moral nondescript, with brutal possibilities—might never, under ordinary circumstances, have discovered even that he wanted a change. But he had his full share of vanity, and the knowledge that Ganga—this buxom brown woman with the splendid eyes—was striving to supplant his wife set him noticing how hard Mrs. Stuitzen's Friesian features were growing—how thin her sandy hair, and how dim her pale-blue eye.

He thought it best to bluster. His wife—he told her with many Dutch expletives—was a jealous idiot! “*Donder en weerlicht!*—did she think he was never going to look at another woman? And, in short, he was a man, and would do as he chose!”

“Not this, Sybrandt!—not this! after all these years!”—and the hollow-eyed woman caught his unwilling hand.

Ganga laughed—the poisoned snigger with which woman stings woman. “He is mine!” the laugh said. “Poor wretch!—you can do nothing with him now!”

Hekla Stuitzen—a woman of the people—had no conventional dignity to sustain; she stepped swiftly across and struck the “princess” on the mouth—a blow that started blood out of the full, insolent lips. Stuitzen's bayonet lay in a corner of the tent, and the Sumatran—a triple murderess already—had it in her hand before the man could interpose. But the Dutchwoman—officially accustomed to emergencies—parried the thrust with one hand, wrested the weapon away with the other, and sent it whirling out over the rollers into deep water.

Stuitzen threw off the mask. Taking Ganga round the waist, he drew her back, kissed the blood from her mouth, and looked round savagely at his wife.

“*Your* place is outside, now!” he said. “See that you stay there!” and,

without a word, she went.

* * * * *

With night came a heavy westerly blow, but the fringing reef took most of the surf, and the tent—well stayed with boatgear—stood the squall. But outside, in the rain and darkness, Mrs. Stuitzen sat and tried the occupants for their lives. Where folk were numerous, she thought—where she might have had a chance of seeming not to know—it might have been more endurable. But here—the only three human beings within a hundred miles—the insolent grossness of the thing was intolerable. “The woman shall die!” she decided—“and perhaps the man also!”

Stuitzen came from the tent and called. Upon the reef the snowy ridges were still thundering in, but, beyond, the sea shone blue again to an unclouded morning sun.

Mrs. Stuitzen went wearily over—a piteous figure, with sodden hair and drenched garments—and her husband, pipe in mouth, let a shadow of compunction steal into his florid, wooden face. He brought out a little metal cup of brandy and held it towards her. She drank it, for she didn't want to throw away her life—yet.

“Well, *vrouw!*”—Stuitzen avoided her eye—“you see what a fool you've been, by this time, I hope. You can come into the tent again, now, if you like?”

“Call me no longer *vrouw!*” she answered quietly. “And, if I ever enter that tent while *she* is in it, I shall be as mean a thing as—as you are!”

Stuitzen dashed his pipe in her face. “*Verdoemnis!*—stay out, then! And, look here!—make yourself useful!” He brought out half a dozen turtle's eggs. “Make a fire and roast these, for *her* breakfast”—pointing back into the tent.

But no such petty malice had power to touch this apathetic woman. She calmly took the eggs and did as she was bidden. Then, while the others ate, she wandered off along the beach till Stuitzen called her back. He was struggling with laughter and a mouthful of egg. “Ganga says,” he began—and broke out into a fresh guffaw.

“Ganga says,” took up the Sumatran rapidly, in Malay, “that if it be thy purpose to drown thyself, better would it be to do it here, that Ganga's eyes may be gladdened with the sight.”

“And this,” said Mrs. Stuitzen, in Dutch, “is what this creature laughs at!—this heartless hog I have so long mistaken for a man!” Then, in Malay—“Myself I will not drown, woman. Drown me, thou, if thou darest!—thou or thy miserable——”

Stuitzen stopped her speech with a well-aimed egg—an act more farcical

than tragic, but an act that sealed *his* fate. The outraged woman made no sign. Submissively she cleared the stuff from her face—submissively endured the other woman's taunting laughter. "He will be going to the hill to look out, presently," Mrs. Stuitzen told herself; "and he will be afraid to leave her here with me!"

She was right. Her husband brought out his rifle and a shotgun. "Better out of your way, these playthings!" he said to the white woman; then to the brown one—"Come thou with me, Ganga! If no sign I see to-day of that accursed *kanonneerboot*, from here will we sail to-morrow! With favourable winds three days should see us in thy river of Tidambang."

"With her?" said Ganga's questioning glance. Stuitzen's shaken head answered "No!"—and Stuitzen's wife, understanding, hardened her heart the more.

* * * * *

She could see them through the trees—black specks upon the low basaltic ridge that made the island's northern end. But they could not see her, she knew.

She went into the tent and brought out a canister of gun-powder, provided by Stuitzen, the methodical, for the service of the shot-gun. Off this she took the lid, and, raking away the embers of the fire, buried the canister so slightly in the sandy soil that its open mouth was barely screened from view. Waiting, then, until the embers were extinct, she gathered them again into place above the hidden powder.

"I will hide! This snake of a woman will have to cook. Then!——"

For twenty hours she had not eaten, but thirst was all she felt, as she stole down into the hollow where the sago-palms were thickest. There was water here, in pools, amongst the stiff, red clay. Mrs. Stuitzen drank, and lay down to wait.

* * * * *

"It may be that she has drowned herself, after all."

"Not she!" the Dutchman answered, angrily. "She may do evil to herself after she has done it to us—not before. She will come back when she is hungry—as I am now. There are more eggs in the tent. Fetch them, my princess, and light the fire. And be careful of these matches; they don't grow on trees hereabouts!"

He kissed the Sumatran as she took the box he held out, but the other—seeing all from her hiding-place—only smiled. "She won't be so kissable in a quarter of an hour—if all goes well!" And the white woman crept a little nearer.

The fire burned slowly up. Ganga put down the eggs to roast, and Stuitzen came over to light his pipe. Carelessly he stooped, resting one hand on the brown shoulder of the kneeling woman; then, suddenly—where both had been—there was only a cumulus of dense, sulphurous smoke, as, with a thump that shook the ground the watcher lay on, the powder exploded! Then shriek on shriek made music to her ear as she ran up and saw rolling on the ground a dreadful hairless object, with its blackened hands pressed to its blasted features. But the Dutchman, with his clothes on fire, lay still enough!

* * * * *

A Banca fishing crew, poking about amongst the less known Carabongs, came one day on a spirit stalking by a lonely shore. They thought it was, at all events, and were getting out their sweeps in a mighty hurry, when the thing cried out to them—in Dutch, one said. “And who,” he wanted to know, “had ever heard of a Dutch *antu*?” He'd swim ashore and speak to it—this daring fellow—if the others were afraid. They were; and he did; and in the end the craft took on board a white woman—gaunt and wild-eyed and ragged—who was Mrs. Stuitzen.

She went with them to Banca, and there—being a wise woman—held her peace until her death was at hand. Then she told.

“My husband never stirred. There was a piece of the canister so firmly fixed in his forehead that I couldn't pull it out. And, badly as he had treated me, I was glad he hadn't to suffer like the other. *She* lived three days—and then I was alone. Sorry? No—it was justice! I would do it again!”

A Lamb to the Slaughter.

SABI wanted a head. That wasn't much. Dyak girls often did want a head from their suitors. But Sabi was a belle—her father was worth many brass cannon* —and the head Sabi wanted was a white man's!

Now, white men were scarce in the south-west, and their heads were dangerous to get, single-handed. So Achang chewed betel over the problem for a full hour, and then, being a man of action, took his weapons and went over to Panda the blacksmith.

Panda was a Kayan—despised as a man, but mightily respected as a sword-maker. Also, he could put two and two together. The price of Sabi's hand he knew, and knew, too, who was the only one of her half-hundred admirers likely to pay it. So when he saw the silk sarong and the leopard-skin jacket his fish-like mouth twisted knowingly up towards his overloaded ear. Silently he received the Dyak dandy's swords. Kris and ihlang he put aside, then took up the latok.

“This wants no help from me,” he said. “Never was a better edge!” and then, with his eye on Achang's, he made a lightning sweep with the sword, and stooped as if to pick up with his left hand some object from the ground. The blood-lust flashed into Achang's inky eyes, and the muscles stiffened up under his saddle-coloured skin, as, for answer, he rubbed his hand rapidly over his cheek and chin.

Panda understood. A beard I—and therefore a white man.

“Good!” he said. “Thou climbest high. Is it Stobsi whose neck is to melt?—Stobsi, the stick-hunter?”

“No! thou Kayan pig! Stobsi is as one of our own people. I would myself take his head who should take Stobsi's! Besides, fool, hath Stobsi a beard? Scrapeth he not his face every day with a little parang till it is smooth as a shark's belly?”

Now Stubbs, the “stick-hunter,” was not loved of Panda. The blacksmith, like many a Kayan, dispensed with a waistcloth because he had a pair of drawers *tattooa* upon his dingy hide—at which thing the little cockney had laughed hugely. But to laugh at a Kayan is to make a deadly enemy, and Panda was ingenuously sorry that Stubbs's was not the head to fall. Now, too, that Achang had called him a pig, he had to get level also with that turmeric-tinted warrior, and, as he blew sullenly at his charcoal, he saw how.

“If it isn't Stobsi,” he told himself, “it must be Bekkul; no other white men within twelve days' journey.” And Bekkul—otherwise Beckley — had a fast friend in Kamsut, the Raja of Rubianak.

Panda dropped his bellows and brought out a jar of *tuak*. Only at set feasts do the Dyaks, as a rule, get drunk. Still, there are exceptions, and Achang was one of them; so the evil-smelling stuff, having gone liberally down his throat, got duly up into his head. Then he babbled, and Panda lay low for him. Bekkul was to be the victim, and Achang, with drunken circumstantiality, set forth his plan of operations. Then, as *tuak*-drinkers will, he fell incontinently fast asleep; whereupon Panda, girding up his loins with an unwonted waistclout, slipped unostentatiously into the jungle and started eastwards.

* * * * *

To Beckley, two days later, there suddenly appeared, as the result of Panda's little excursion, the Raja of Rubianak himself, with a tail of 50 Malays and one unwilling Chinaman.

“Ask no questions, Bekkul, my father,” said Kamsut. “Change now thy garments and give to these men those thou wearest.”

Beckley, who knew his man, obeyed without a word, and wondered much to see his clothes placed upon the no less astonished Chow. The Raja took out one of his watches—he wore three!—then looked at the sinking sun.

“At dusk of every evening, Bekkul, thou drawest water by the reed-bed yonder; but to-night goeth down this yellow dog in thy stead. Why—thou shalt in due time understand!”

Down went the sun, and down went Sun Ling to the water, in Beckley's rig, and with Beckley's jars. At the margin of the reedy wall he put down his vessels, and was stooping to admire the reproduction of his yellow phiz, surmounted by Beckley's topee, when the reeds parted gently beside him, and, plunge!—reflection and reflected came suddenly together, as Sun Ling's shaven sconce—swept clean from his shoulders—flopped sullenly into the green-black water! The slayer threw down his parang, dropped a knee upon the red-spouting neck, and picked out of the water the still fatuously grinning head. Then, as he sprang up astounded, came running from the hut the Raja's men, spreading out to cut him off.

Achang looked, snatched up his parang, threw it down again, and bounded far into the darkening river.

With fifty strokes he bottomed on the further side, and turned to see how many followed him. Not one!—for now from beneath the hollow bank behind him there stole swiftly out a mighty ripple, and a long grey snout came towards the wader with a rush. There was a shriek that scared to wing again a cloud of roosting copper-birds; then Achang's brass-ringed ankles flourished for a second in the air as his body was crushed in the five-foot

jaws that took him under like a frog.

* Brass guns—two and three pounders—constitute a sort of standard of value among the Dyaks.

Below Proof!

ORANG MATU, the Head-Man of Tibak, hadn't been to Singapore and Calcutta for nothing. He let the missionaries pour into him as much doctrine as they pleased. There might be some truth in these things, he said; for had not the Prophet himself spoken approvingly of Jesus Ben-Mariam? But when they came to the weary old corollary that the bringers of the Bible were also everywhere the bringers of moral and social regeneration, the Orang jibbed, and asked certain questions, which have never been answered, and never will be.

One of the missionaries said nothing; the other tried to impose upon an acuter man than himself the time-honored commonplaces of his trade. The Orang smiled and bade him tell all that to the Dyaks. Which was exactly what he did, so that in time he had made Christians by the dozen. They said they were, at all events; and, no doubt, while the guns and axes lasted—and the pictures and the looking-glasses and the scarlet cloth—their Christianity was about as good as the average white article. But they were all Dyaks, and the other gospeller, who had gone a-fishing for the more sophisticated Malay soul, caught nothing.

This, said his reverend brother, was because he was a schismatic and had not the truth in him. So the two dwelt apart, and Morton, the unorthodox, suffered contumely at the hands of the other man's strong-smelling proselytes. One day this culminated. Hankey, the successful soul-catcher, came with half a dozen of his shark-toothed Christians and pulled Morton's hut about his ears.

“You are no better yourself than one of the heathen!” quoth Reverend Hankey. “You had better get back to Sarawak, and leave the good work in the hands which the Lord has so signally marked out for it!”

Morton didn't go to Sarawak; he went to Matu.

“And why comest thou to me, Christ-man?” asked the Orang, when he had heard the story. “What can I do?”

“Thou canst keep these Dyaks in order, Matu. Thee they dare not disobey, if thou wilt give me thy protection for the future.”

“Talk not of the Dyaks—black sons of Sheetan!—they are already but as dead dogs for this! Speak to me rather of this other Christman, who ventures to pull down houses within the shadow of Matu, which is more than Serjam Beruk” (Sir James Brooke)—“the Great White Rajah himself—would dare to do! What shall be done unto him?”

“Nothing, O Matu; do him no evil.”

The Orang looked at Morton intently for a full minute, then rose swiftly

from his leopard-skin and grasped the hilt of his parang-latok; whereupon a white-headed old Sagsi man, crippled with the rheumatism of his native swamps, hobbled eagerly forward, so that when the blow fell the white man's spurting blood might work a cure upon his dingy old carcass. But Matu let go the weapon and spoke with a smile.

"It is in Matu's mind, Christman, that from this faith of yours ye learn, when one cheek is smitten to turn the other to the striker. Say, is it so?"

"It is even so, Matu!"

"A strange teaching, truly!—and one that suits Borneo but ill. Still——" and in the twinkling of an eye the Orang had struck Morton across the face, and had in turn been knocked flat on his back by a drive in the stomach from the white man's fist. Parangs and krisses flashed out by the dozen, but the cat-like Malay was on his feet in an instant.

"Enough, my children!" he cried. "It is good. The white man hath done well—but he is no Christian! He asketh not for vengeance with his mouth, but words are women and deeds are men. See now, O Christ-man—thy religion is naught, but thou art a man, and the friend of Matu. He owes thee a gift. Go now with these men, eat and drink, and in the space of an hour shall Matu's present come to thee."

Then Morton, astonished to find his head still on his shoulders, was taken down the long house and up into the mifaé, and here, when he had eaten and drunken, he smoked Javani tobacco and awaited the Orang's present. Within the hour it came.

It was the head of Hankey!

Four Fools: An International Complication.

FEW Britons are aware that the battle of Waterloo was won by the Netherlanders. In one of the Brussels galleries, at all events, is a picture, symbolic of that decisive struggle, in which the Lion is represented as triumphing over the Eagle. But he isn't the British Lion! He is identical with the emblematic beast which surmounts a tall column on the "Waterloo Plain" of Batavia—a column further ornamented with an inscription severely contradictory of the notion that the British troops were obliged to open their ranks to let the Netherlanders run away. For it was indubitably the latter, saith this veracious legend, who did the work and should receive the glory.

"Hang me!" said Hambleton, "if that doesn't break the record!"

He didn't know that the Russians, upon their own authority, won every fight in the Crimea, or that, according to Danish history, Nelson was well thrashed at Copenhagen. Therefore, this thing, he repeated, broke the record for downright crammers, and, as Staagel's English didn't run to such recondite idioms, Hambleton explained to him in more orthodox phrase that the statement before them was the most outrageous lie ever committed to stone—"or to paper, for that matter!"

The Dutchman's face grew dark, if such a term can apply to a countenance for redness and rotundity like unto the rising sun. He pulled out into martial spikes the ends of his maize-coloured moustache, as it dawned upon him that possibly the insufferable self-conceit of the Englanders might have made them imagine themselves the heroes of that famous day. Therefore he spoke quietly.

"Do I understand you to infer, mynheer, that the honours of the occasion fell principally to your countrymen?"

"Infer? I don't infer! I say it straight out. And not 'principally,' but altogether! D'ye mean to say you don't know that?—even if you *are* a Dutchman!"

Staagel made as low a bow as his circumference would admit of.

"I do not know it, sir. But I do know how remarkable are the English for modesty and—courtesy!"

The Briton—incapable of sarcasm himself—was, by the law of compensation, proof against its shafts. He took out his cigar and stared.

"Pretty well for courtesy," he said. "But I don't know so much about the modesty!"

"The reservation itself is modest, sir! But, tell me—if the Englanders, as you say, played the leading part at Waterloo, what share in the proceedings

fell to the Netherlanders?"

"The—ha! ha!—the discretionary part."

"Pardon me?"

"Discretion!—better part of valour, you know! Live to fight another day, and all that sort of thing!" Hambleton's big white teeth shone out in appreciation of his own wit.

But the Dutchman understood only that he was being laughed at.

"Mynheer," he said, "this may turn out a less amusing matter than you suppose. Where, I repeat, did the Netherlanders come in?—to use á phrase of your own."

Hambleton's loud laugh went up amongst the kanary-trees.

"They didn't come in at all—that's just it! They—hee-haw!—they *went out!* See?"

"Ran away, do you mean?"

"Exactly! And our chaps had to open out to let 'em do it! Haw—haw—hwagh—gh!" Holland was pulling England's nose, whereupon England—proceeding, *secundum artem*, to knock Holland down—was, to its huge astonishment, laid handsomely out with such a rattler on the nose as nobody could have expected from a casky little man of five-feet-nothing.

The redeeming characteristic of the bovine stamp of Englishman showed up as Hambleton got slowly to his feet again.

"By Jove!" he said, "you *can* let out! Who'd have thought it was in you! But come on, and—what's this?" The Dutchman was handing him a card. "Oh, I see!—send a friend to you, and so on! Yes, I suppose you do that sort of thing here. But it's devilish ridiculous, you know; I'd a lot sooner finish it this way."

It was Staagel's turn to laugh now. "Better not, I think—see there!" Some soldiers from the barracks were coming over to investigate a matter about which the rapidly-growing dusk made them uncertain. "I have written my address on the card, and shall expect to hear from you to-morrow." He lifted his hat and went jauntily away.

The Englishman laughed at himself. "You got it properly that time, old man—and no mistake! I'll look up Schwartzberg to-night, for I suppose I'll have to challenge this plucky little spitfire; though, 'pon my soul, it's quite too utterly absurd!"

* * * * *

"Oh, I know Staagel," Dr. Schwartzberg said when he looked at the card. "He's rather what you call a 'fire-eater,' too—been 'out' several times already. Do you know what he does?"

"Hits confoundedly hard, for one thing," Hambleton said, rubbing his

swollen nose.

“*Ecce signum!*” said the German, laughing. “But I mean that he teaches boxing and the *savate* at the *Ecole Gymnastique*.”

“What?—that fat little tub? He can hit like a small Sullivan, as I've reason to know, but I shouldn't think he'd have much more activity than a pound of butter.”

“I think you Englishers are a good deal in error about fat. My experience is that a fat man who will take the necessary exercise is under no athletic disadvantage except that of the extra weight. But, look here—can you do anything with the sword?”

“Not much!”

“So I supposed; and so Staagel will suppose—for which reason he's pretty sure to choose the steel. He'll have the option, you know.”

“Can't be helped! When shall you see him?”

“This afternoon. But you haven't told me what he struck you for; there may be negotiations, you see.”

“Oh, I said—but never mind!—I *won't* apologize, and he *can't*—for this!” Hambleton touched his nose.

“No!—I suppose there's no other way out of it. You're at the *Nederlanden*? Yes! Well, expect me at six.”

Le Chauffeur screwed up his narrow black eyes as he listened.

“*Diantre!*” he said, “but that was excellent! I should have liked to behold the islander when he was—what does their Shake-speare say?—‘hoist with his own’ something. Has he sent anybody yet?”

“Schwartzberg; that big German doctor you've seen at the Gymnasium a few times. He lives in——”

“Oh, I know! I'll see him at once, then.” The professor of fencing took his hat, but turned suddenly at the door. “You've forgotten to tell me why you struck him. I may have to arrange——”

“There can be no arrangement. He said, or insinuated, that we Netherlanders are cowards.”

“*Pouf!*” Monsieur Le Chauffeur hoisted his shoulders to his ears, turned out his palms, and departed whistling “*Malbrook s'en va-t-en guerre!*”

* * * * *

“It is infinitely to be regretted, monsieur,” Dr. Schwartzberg said, “but there is no apology possible from us. You struck us, you see—and struck us hard.”

“Quite so, *monsieur le docteur!* And, unfortunately, it is equally out of the question that any *amende* should come from us. We have been called a coward. Was monsieur not aware?” Le Chauffeur asked, noticing the

other's surprised look.

"No; my principal didn't tell me any more than that he wouldn't apologize."

The Frenchman shook his short-cropped head. "It is very irregular!—the seconds should be possessed of all the facts. However, as we are not in France—let us say Rajassan — the bamboo bridge—six, to-morrow morning—swords!"

"Couldn't you make it pistols?" Schwartzberg said; "your man is a capital shot."

"My man, with my consent, shall throw away no chance. Swords, monsieur—swords—and six in the morning. *Au revoir!*"

* * * * *

"Fo-foo! — fo-foo! — fo-foo!" shrieked the red-crested woodpecker, as the intending combatants took off their coats—the Dutchman cool, because of confidence; the Englishman cooler, because of the want of it.

Schwartzberg, the best-brained man of the four, made a final effort.

"Your principal, Monsieur Le Chauffeur, has suffered the slighter indignity. Will he now, at the last moment, express any regret?"

"Will Mynheer the Englander," said Staagel, when the question had been repeated to him, "acknowledge even that the Netherlanders did as much as the Englanders for the defeat of the French?"

"Of the French!" echoed Le Chauffeur, with a stare of surprise. "How, monsieur? — when? — and where?"

The Dutchman bit his lip. "I forgot your nationality, Le Chauffeur, for the moment! But, since you must know—at Water-loo! The Englander said that the victory was entirely due to his people—said, in fact, that the Netherlanders ran—that is, retreated! You know better than that, don't you?"

The Gaul bristled up in a moment. "But I do *not* know better, Monsieur Staagel. It is very probable they did, when they saw that the irresistible star of Napoleon was to shine with the lustre of yet another triumph!"

"Triumph? Are you mad? Do you call Waterloo a triumph for Napoleon?"

"Practically, monsieur! A virtual triumph, because, if — but, hold! Do you say it was a defeat?"

"Am I an idiot? Of course I say it was a defeat—a crushing defeat!"

"Then, monsieur, I cannot act for you in this matter, since you will have to answer for this insolence to me!"

"As soon as you like!" shouted the equally fiery Dutchman. "Get a sword and come on."

Le Chauffeur became in an instant cool, bowed stiffly, and walked back to the Englishman's second.

"I have the honour to inform you, Dr. Schwartzberg, that, owing to a difference with my principal, I cannot now act as his second. He himself has now to give me satisfaction for an unpardonable insult."

"I profoundly regret to hear it, Monsieur Le Chauffeur," returned the German, with a smile lurking in his russet beard, for he couldn't help having heard what he was not supposed to be officially aware of.

"You are pleased to be amused, monsieur!" returned the Frenchman, instantly. "Perhaps you are also of opinion that Waterloo was a defeat for the French?"

"You surmise correctly, monsieur. It was more than a defeat for them—it was a catastrophe!"

"Enough, sir! enough!" Le Chauffeur stamped on the ground. "If you can induce Monsieur Staagel to act for you, I will request the same favour of your late principal, and the matter can be settled forthwith. Monsieur L'Anglais," he went on, walking up to Hambleton; "your late second has just had the temerity to tell me to my face that Waterloo was a catastrophe for the French. If you will honour me by acting as my second——"

"Scarcely, sir — upon those grounds. My late second, as you call him, was perfectly correct."

"Very good, monsieur! then my quarrel is first with you. Take your sword and let us get to business."

The slow-match of the Englishman's temperament burnt at last into the magazine of his anger. "Hang it all!" he growled—"I don't care whom I fight as long as we make an end of this palaver. Schwartzberg," he added, "just do the needful for me. Our Gallic friend here would have us believe the English didn't thrash him well at Waterloo."

The German stiffened up like a ramrod. "I cannot say that Monsieur Le Chauffeur is very wrong there. If he had denied it of the Prussians, now——"

"The Prussians? Confound it all, man:—you don't mean to say the wooden-headed Prussians won the battle?"

"I am of that opinion, sir! And, if you apply the term 'wooden-headed' to me——"

"You'll want my blood, next, I suppose! Well, come on, then!—you, or anybody else! I'm about sick of this!"

He snatched up a sword, listened for a moment as the woodpecker cried again, then threw the weapon down and burst into a laugh.

"Listen!" he said. "Fo-foo, fo-foo, fo-foo! The bird's right! Four fools, four fools, four fools!"

The ludicrous resemblance finished it. The other three joined, perforce, in the Englishman's laughter; hands were shaken, swords and grievances put up, and the four fools went back four friends.

Two of a Trade.

BECKLEY stared, and Kamsut repeated:

“The panther I gave thee I would have thee lend me again for a space. Art thou dumb?”

“Thou shalt have him, Raja—and willingly. But thou knowest——”

“That thou wouldst send the beast to thine own country! Well, I will harm him not. And I will answer the question thou hast not asked. That Sultan of the Ancients thou didst speak of—he who cast unto wild beasts the founders of the Christian faith?”

“Nero!”

“Ay; Nero. Well I would do with an unbeliever as Nero did. Thou knowest Hafan?”

“Surely, Raja! But Hafan is of thine own faith!”

“A blaspheming dog he is—who revileth the Commander of the Faithful! Yet, since he is in some sort a Muslim, I will not take his head. But with the panther will I shut him up. Let the beast spare him, if it be the will of Alla!”

Now, since in Rubianak the will of Alla meant pretty much the will of Kamsut, further discussion was risky, and Beckley went away, wondering what it all meant. Kamsut — autocratic as Fate — was also just with a fierce justice. The old Persian must have given him some serious offence.

“Persian! Why, that's the clue! The Persians are mostly Shiahs—don't acknowledge the Sultan of Turkey as the Caliph. And Kamsut wants to play Nero!—or is it Henry VIII.?”

Ruminating thus upon the eternal sameness of human nature, the naturalist missed a step of his house-ladder, fell, and sat so long upon the ground that Stubbs came hurriedly down the ladder.

“Anything broke, Mr. Beckley?”

“No bones, Stubbs—only this!”

The “stick-hunter” sniffed at the fragments of glass which the other fished carefully out of his pocket. “Laudanum! Oh, well, sir, you have plenty of that left, at all events!”

Beckley, full of a new idea, went slowly up to the ladder and peeped into his medicine-chest before he answered.

“Yes; and a good deal of the powder, too. Lucky; for I rather think I'm going to give Beelzebub one of the biggest doses on record.”

“Beelzebub? Beelzebub ain't sick!”

“No! the brute's only too well. I want to *make* him sick. Look here, Stubbs—do you know what's the matter between the Raja and Hafan?”

“Yes,” said the wondering stick-hunter. “Some argument about religion they had, and the old fool of a *dukun* (doctor) stuck it out against the Raja till Kamsut got wild and clapped him into limbo.”

“Just so! Well, Kamsut is going to put Persian and panther together; so you and I are first going to put the panther and a thumping dose of opium together! See!”

Stubbs opened his mouth at the greatness of the idea—then shut it with a disappointed snap.

“Best lark I ever heard of, sir!—but it won't work! Can't pour laudanum into Beelzebub as if he was a pet poodle!”

“There need be no laudanum in the matter, any more than there'll be any ‘lark’ in it if Kamsut finds us out. Only for that I'd poison the brute outright! Look here!—this is opium-powder. Strong dose for a man—two grains; so our spotted friend's prescription shall run, ‘Pulv. op.—grains 6.’ ‘*Sine morâ,*’ too, friend Stubbs—‘without delay!’ Get me a lump of pork!”

* * * * *

The Bornean panther, smaller than the Indian, carries probably as much devil to the square inch as any created thing; so, when the Raja's *kaki* brought over a party of bearers to carry the beast away, cage and all, they went to work like men with candles in a powder magazine. But the creature, flattened out, catlike, on the floor, regarded them with such sleepy indifference that they grew foolhardy, and one of them poked a stick into Beelzebub's orange-coloured stomach. Like a flash the brute's lithe fore-arm was through the bars, and the man rolled over with four razor-gashes on his dusky shoulder. The others laughed, and the fellow lay and screeched till the *kaki* kicked him.

“Arise, beast! and let *Bekkul tuan* dress thy wound. As for Hafan, *he* will dress no more wounds if he once goeth inside that cage!”

* * * * *

Kamsut sat beneath the Teak of Judgment, and pointed to the slumbering panther—motionless as an image, but for the scarce seen heaving of the white-margined flanks.

“Look now, Hafan, upon that beast, and ponder well thy words! The Sultan of Turkestan—upon whose name be peace!—he is the Holy Head of Islam—the Caliph of the True Believers! Is it not so?”

Slender, long-gowned, small-featured, and silver-bearded — the Persian physician stood boldly up—the frail environment of an indomitable soul. Calmly he looked upon the sleeping panther, and calmly upon the Raja; then he spat upon the ground.

“Thus do I spit upon the beard of him whom thou ignorantly miscallest the Commander of the Faithful! Do thy worst!—thou and thy fellow-beast!”

“On his head be it!” said Kamsut. “In with him!”

“I suppose the old chap's pretty safe?” Stubbs whispered to Beckley, as the Persian was hauled up on the top of the cage.

“Safe for hours! The opium's got fair hold!”

Breathlessly they watched, for all that, as the unlucky *dukun*—thrust rudely through the roof-trap—fell plump upon the elastic body of the panther. Naught followed but a twitching of the tail. The old man scrambled from his terrible cushion, and Kamsut sprang to his feet.

“A spear!” he shouted. “Bring a spear! and make the lazy brute feel it!”

Prod after prod was given with a Dyak spear, but not till the broad head was plunged half out of sight into the spotted hide did the brute give a smothered snarl and roll lazily over. The wicked green eyes opened for a moment upon the man within reach, a half-delivered sweep of the paw made a long rent in the Persian's robe, then again the huge cat lay motionless as a stone. The Raja walked half-way to the cage—turned then, and fixed a baleful eye on Beckley. Stubbs breathed hard. “Now for it!” Beckley heard him mutter, but the man of many dangers gave look for look, until Kamsut, with a short laugh, went back to his mat and sat down.

“Bring Hafan hither,” he said, and a dozen disappointed hands fished out again the unscathed recalcitrant.

“Hafan,” the Raja said, “thou art a blasphemer and a son of perdition, but thou art a *dukun* of much knowledge. What thinkest thou would make a beast to slumber so that a spear-point should not rouse him?”

“Raja, I do not think — I *know!*”

“Thou knowest! Good! Tell me, then, thy thought, and thee will I forgive—whichever else I may punish.”

“The beast, O Raja! hath been given of *ironut*—the sleep-drug of the Kini” (Chinese). “Come with me to the cage and I will show thee!”

Kamsut stood close to the bars while Hafan clambered into the cage again and coolly dragged one of the panther's eyelids away from the big green iris. “In cats' eyes, as thou knowest, Raja, the pupil is a slit in sunlight. Yet behold how in this creature—which is but a cat—the pupil is now a rounded speck. The Kini-drug doth this to man and beast.”

“Come out!” the Raja said. “Thou art forgiven! And thou, Bekkul, stand forth! No need to ask thee if thou didst this thing. Why?”

“To save, O Raja! if I could, a life.”

“A life? This man's life? By Alla, Bekkul, thou movest me to laughter. Knowest thou not that this Hafan—this rival *dukun*—was jealous of thy

skill?—that but for me he would ere now have poisoned thee or slain thee with the sword of darkness?”

“All this did I know, Raja—and I thank thee!”

Kamsut gazed at the white man—uncomprehending.

“All this thou knewest already!—yet wouldst thou have saved this Hafan's life. Man, thou art mad!”

“Not so, Raja. I do but follow my nature.”

Kamsut took a turn or two in silence—all men watching him. Suddenly then he unbuckled the belt of the Indian tulwar he wore, in place of kris, and put the sword in Beckley's hands.

The white man poised it. “A heavy hilt, Raja,” he said. “Gold?”

“Ay! solid—not gilt! It is thine Bekkul, to remember Kamsut by—for elsewhere must thou go to ‘follow thy nature.’ Such natures live not long in Rubianak!”

No. 154.

THE fat Dutch sentry challenged. A mere matter of form—for it was a number that approached, and a number cannot give a countersign. Nevertheless “154”—huge red figures on a blue cotton blouse—had the outward semblance of a big-boned man, well-featured and not old, but wild-beast-eyed and toil-oppressed. The soldier levelled at the number's head; the number nodded and stood fast. “I came for that!” it said, and the sentry, gaping, dropped his rifle to the “ready.” His orders were explicit. “You will fire instantly upon any convict coming, unaccompanied by an official, within 20 metres of your post.”

But here was a convict within bayonet-thrust. Jan Ruycker had already broken the regulations; but still, perplexed by want of precedent, he hesitated to erase for ever this audacious number at its, own request. For compromise he lowered his bayonet to the “charge.”

“Yes—that way, if you will!” the convict said indifferently. “And here.” He laid a gaunt forefinger on the upper angle of the “4” that made the units of his only designation on Padak Island. But the sentry had known him by another; in Ruycker's brain the precision of the action condensed like magic a misty recollection. He dropped, together, his jaw and his rifle-butt. “My God!” he said—“Dr. Van Kloon!”

On the sodden sand the two men stood, secluded by the blinding rain that shut out all save here and there the ghostly shadow of a coco-palm, and, down at the end of the sandspit, the jetty fading into the dreary mist that hung upon the sullen sea.

Through the white wetness came a four-oared boat, the rowers cooped—like monstrous blue-red parrots—in an iron cage that stopped a few feet short of stem and stern. In the bows a green-coated warder nursed his rifle. A superior official—his verdure relieved by silver-lace—sat aft and steered.

The two men facing each other beside the sentry-box saw nothing of the boat—heard nothing—till the hollow thump of footsteps on the jetty made them start—the soldier to “attention”—the convict like a bullock to the whip. Habit, this, with both; but the soldier's plight, if thus caught convict-parleying, was no whit better than the convict's own, and the sudden realization of the fact spurred Ruycker's jog-trot wits into unwonted gallop. He snatched at the convict's coarse blue sleeve. “Behind the box!” he gasped.

The other shook his shoulders. “What use?” he said. “The new sentry will put a bullet through me, if you won't.”

“It's not the relief, I tell you—it's the Civil-Controller.”

With a spring the convict was behind the box, all but his head.

“Zevenbergen?” he asked, with a savage gladness in his face.

“Ay! curse him! he's always on the prowl. Keep close!” and Ruycker faced about and challenged.

The new-comer answered, and came up till he towered close above the sentry, for Civil-Controller Zevenbergen was a very tall man, whose jolly red face gave a most emphatic lie to his disposition. “All well?” he asked, flinging back his long green overcoat, and appearing to look everywhere but at the sentry.

“All well, sir!”

“You lie, you Walloon scoundrel. I see it in your mutton face!”

Now Private Jan Ruycker was no Walloon. He was as good a Hollander as Zevenbergen, and thus — when from behind the sentry-box a heavy blue something hurled itself suddenly forth upon the green official—the soldier's anger held his hand for a moment. But that moment was enough! The convict's iron-bound shoe had caught the fallen Controller tremendously twice beneath the fat red jaw, and to all appearance it was hanging for ever.

With a contented laugh the convict sat down upon the wet sand. He had finished his tyrant!—what mattered the rest? But the soldier's stimulated mind embraced the situation in a flash. To linger here was death—and, in any case, he was weary of a lot but little better than a convict's. He dragged the apathetic killer to his feet.

“Rouse up!” he said. “The boat's below — let us get away from hell!”

“From hell!” the other echoed, and was half-way to the jetty before a sudden recollection pulled him up. “There are warders in her,” he whispered. “Armed!”

The cold light of desperation came into the soldier's eyes as he changed the cartridge in his wet rifle. “There's only one,” he answered, “and”—a slap on the breech said the rest.

Van Kloon thrust him backwards. “Not so. No murder. “That”—and he pointed—“was an *execution!* Leave this to me.”

Beside the shell-encrusted piles the cage-boat rose and fell, fended off through the bars by the four dejected wretches who watched with envious eyes the glow of the warder's cheroot. Malays and murderers all—there wasn't one of them who wouldn't cheerfully have slit the officer's windpipe for the sake of that little roll of tobacco—the knowledge of which fact but gave the weed a keener zest to the hard-eyed man who peered through the pallid mist for the coming of his chief.

At last, upon the jetty, a form just shaped itself from out the veil of

vapour—stopped at that—waved above its head a shadowy gun. This was curious!—and as the warder stood up in the boat to look, a long blue arm swooped swiftly over the outer gunwale, caught him by the ankle, and flung him heavily over between boat and jetty. When he got his head up again he found himself looking up the barrel of his own rifle, and had no difficulty in understanding that for him the jetty was much healthier than the boat. Upon the steps the soldier passed him with a curse; there was a jabbering of the caged convicts; a word or two from Van Kloon; then straight out into the mist went the boat as fast as oars could drive her.

* * * * *

A certain five numbers, having levanted, became for the nonce men again, with names and histories—to be looked up in the prison records; and long did old Van der Eyde twist his white moustaches over an entry which set forth, in substance, that Julius Van Kloon, chemist and native of Rotterdam, had on a certain date been sentenced at Batavia to ten years' imprisonment for supplying, contrary to law, certain poisons to an insurgent Javani chief.

The Military Controller turned round to his secretary. “That was the Sidi business, wasn't it? Poisoned the water for our troops, the old villain did! But there's something in the matter that puts me in mind of the valuable colleague I am about, alas! to lose.”

The ancient warrior's face belied his tone, and the secretary ventured on a decorous smile. “The connection is this, Excellency: Van Kloon was convicted wholly on the evidence of his partner, one Zevenbergen.”

Colonel Van der Eyde banged his fist on the desk. “That's it!—our esteemed Civil-Controller's son! I remember there was a notion at the time that Zevenbergen had a hand in it himself!”

The secretary looked discreetly to the doors and windows. He knew—who better?—that prison officers are *ex-officio* eavesdroppers, and the Civil-Controller might recover, after all. Then, with bated breath, “There are those who still say, Excellency, that the job was wholly Zevenbergen's, and that his father knows it.”

The colonel, with a mighty military oath, declared that he fully believed it, and that if the Government wanted to catch that poor devil of a Van Kloon, the Government might do it—for he, Van der Eyde, was essentially be-devilled if he'd try!

* * * * *

The Javanese of Moodan were not yet “protected.” So little, indeed, were they in love with the paternal Hollander, that when into one of their coast

villages there crawled a wretched creature in a tattered uniform, the people would have krissed him on the spot, but that close behind him staggered other starvelings in another livery they recognized. Prison-men had reached the Moodan coast before—bitter enemies of the Dutchman and all his works—and this soldier, doubtless, was of their mind. So it was welcome, instead of murder!

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When at last in the Batavian papers it was announced that the Moodanese had gone under, it was mentioned with much flourishing of trumpets that in the midst of this ferocious people two hardy Hollanders had dwelt for years. “Our gallant troops,” quoth editorial rigmarole, “were thunder-struck to receive, in the heart of hostile territory, a welcome from these adventurous pioneers!”

The “pioneers” — a runaway convict and a deserter—kept their own counsel.

Cured: A Legend of Lombok.

UPON a black sand beach, a cinnamon-coloured man, with blue loin-cloth, yellow jacket, scarlet headkerchief. Conspicuous enough, surely; yet of this polychromatic arrangement Morgan saw nothing until it planted itself within two feet of his nose.

The sand was black because it was volcanic; the man was cinnamon because he was a Sassak; and Morgan was preoccupied because he was in an uncommonly “tight” place—figuratively, that is; for literally he was in a notoriously *loose* place—Ampanat, in the island of Lombok. Loose, at least, as regards the “dominant class” — Brahminical and alien; though morally tight enough with the Sassaks—Mahommedan and aboriginal. But the Sassak, no more than anybody else, considers himself bound to undertake the morality of other people; nor did this parti-coloured person's profession differ very violently from that upon which “Sir Pandarus of Troy” has conferred the lustre of his name. With graceful salutations of the Orient, he professed, in deferential accents and the Malay tongue, his consuming eagerness to help the “exalted white master” out of his present difficulty.

Morgan stopped booting the beach and laid a sudden hand upon the yellow cotton jacket. “My difficulty? What *is* my difficulty? If you don't happen to know what you're talking about, my leather-coloured friend, I'll teach you to come messing about Billy Morgan when he's down-by-the-head.”

Ju Somal understood only that he was being threatened. He brought his kris-handle into view, smiled an indulgent smile, and waited till Morgan had repeated himself—*minus* the mination—in Malay.

The Sassak stretched a lanky arm towards where, beyond the snowy surf-ridges, the purple of the Indian Ocean vanished into the dazzle struck up from the inner anchorage by the intolerable sun. “There was your ship this morning. She is gone!—and you are here! No friends! No money! Say I good?”

In ten thousand sailor-men there may be one who doesn't swear. Morgan was that one, but he was sorely tempted. “Good?” he muttered. “It's bad!—d-deplorably bad! Can't say the old man didn't warn me; but I never thought he'd have done it!”

Now, the “old man”—which is to say Sandy Graham, master mariner and part owner of the barque *Jerusalem*—hadn't “done it,” after all. Instead of being on his way to Amoy with his cargo of trepang and sandalwood, the wily Sandy had only stood away for Bali Strait, and was waiting, in a

manner, “round the corner” until the lesson should have well bitten into his truant second mate.

“We'll slip roon' again, the night,” he said to his “first,” as he stumped up and down his little slice of poop. “He'll scarce believe his een when he sees the auld craift at her ainchor again in the mornin'! A'm theenkin' we'll cure the laddie, this turn, o' dilly-dallyin' ashore wi' the lasses when the vassel's hove-short!”

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Ju Somal explained. Simi-Lik had sent him.

“The Chinky girl!” thought Morgan. “Pooh! what can she do?” Which was scarcely fair to the canary-coloured damsel, whose mercantile parent had so hospitably entreated him, and who was the more sorry for his predicament in that she considered her own fascinations as partly the cause thereof. The sailor, at all events, had hardly got out of Pah-Pak-Wak's house before that eminent citizen entered it with the news that the *Jerusalem* had sailed. Simi-Lik, in tribulation, had sought her Sassak handmaiden, who had sought Ju Somal, who had sought—and found—the disconsolate Mr. William Morgan.

“A thankless kind of a beast!” was what the sailor called himself when, by Ju Somal, all this had been duly recounted. “Real good-hearted little girl, it must be; even if it *is* a bit greenery-yallery! Off you go, spindleshanks, and say I'll come!”

“Spindleshanks” understood, and was off, top-speed, to claim the promised dollar. But, as he ran, he ruminated. A dollar? Why, there were two or three dollars in it! Bah! Jankin was rich! He would surely give five dollars to be told of this thing! And to Jankan's house the brown shanks flew.

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Morgan sat under the mangoes and wondered. This was what he had sneered at as the “Chinky girl”—this laughing, lovely, splendid-eyed creature, with a flowery wonder in its glossy hair, and silken miracles about its graceful shape. In Malay—the *lingua franca* of the Archipelago—she chattered gaily to the white man. Her father was very rich and very fond of her. He would do anything to please her. Also, he was fond of white men—and *so was she!* And roguishly she watched Morgan over her gold-and-ebony fan.

He warmed to the idea. There was money in it—lots of money! And the girl was fit for an emperor! But then — a chinky wife! Frightened by a word, he froze, and coarsely told a woman, who — race for race — was

vastly better bred than himself, that he “wasn't on.” The words were Malay, but their value was about the same, and the “woman scorned,” looking him steadily in the eyes, mentally sentenced him to death!

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Pah-Pak-Wak, known to the few Britishers in Lombok as “Papa Quack,” was of a personality inconceivable by those who have seen only the “scrubber” Chinaman of Australia and the States. Six feet and sixteen stone—with strong, sagacious countenance and snowy cone of beard—gold-rimmed glasses sat on his respected nose, a gold-linked white silk blouse enveloped his portentous stomach, blue cashmere trousers cased his substantial legs, and a red silk tuft completed his unspeakable pigtail.

To him quoth Jankan, “Have a care. I can do much with the Raja! He will not see me wronged.”

Pah-Pak put down his chopsticks and smiled—the immemorial Celestial smile. *He*—which is to say, his dollars—could do more with Lombok's ferocious ruler than any other man in the island. But, despising—brains and body—this skinny little Indo-Malay, the man of business wasn't going to argue the question.

“It is of my daughter we speak, not of the Raja. It is but common kindness Simi-Lik has showed this English stranger. But, in any case, she shall please herself. We make not slaves of our women like——”

“Like the men of Lombok!” Jankan swelled his five-feet-nothing to another inch or so, came a step nearer, and slowly drew forth his kris. “Seest thou this?” he said.

Pah-Pak coolly reached out for the weapon, examined the gold-inlaid hilt, passed his finger over the ridgy steel of the blade, and handed it indifferently back. “Pretty fair!” he said, and took up his chopsticks again. “But I don't want to buy.”

Jankan turned green—Malays *do* turn green—at the insulting assumption that he wanted to sell, and his hand trembled till the kris clattered against its wooden scabbard as he sheathed it.

“Dog!” was all his colourless lips could utter.

Pah-Pak—he was eating dragonflies *à l'huile*—carefully fished out one of them, balanced it over the dish upon a chopstick, and looked significantly by turns at the greasy green insect and the venomous little Malay. No words were wanted for his meaning: he dreaded the one about as much as the other:

But, at the bottom of the dragon-flanked steps, Jankan's wrath was changed to jubilation. A moon-faced yellow urchin, dodging through the orange-trees of the court-yard, thrust upon him a silk-tied epistle, and

vanished. Jankan, reading, forgave Pah-Pak, for here was Pah-Pak's daughter herself delivering over the white man to destruction!

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A belated *sumpit-api*, dropping from the roof upon the slumbering Morgan's face, promptly expressed its feelings with its latter end. The sailor's sleep *was* a sailor's, but since, if anything could wake the dead, it would probably be the "fire-ant's" sting, Morgan was on his feet in an instant—and not an instant too soon. Straight at him, from the window, came a noiseless figure—a shadow in the dim lamp-light—but a shadow with a kris! A Chinese house is never short of weapons—jars and vases without end—and from a little bamboo table Morgan swung up a stately piece of porcelain that knocked the stranger one way and his kris another. There were smothered voices outside; Morgan snatched up the kris and rushed into the verandah. A glimmer of dawn showed him a dozen men in the garden. "Too hot!" he said, and bounded across the flower-beds towards the little door standing open in the high mud wall. But a woman, close beside it, thrust it sharply to, and was fumbling with the fastening when Morgan dragged her backwards by the hair—Simi-Lik's hair!—flung her against the legs of the pursuing Jankan, tore the door open, and was off, running light in shirt and trousers.

After him, through the narrow mud-walled streets, he could hear the shuffle of the naked feet; no shouts, for the Malay can't run with a white man, and they wanted all their breath. Instinctively Morgan headed for the beach, till unexpectedly he ran out of a winding lane into sight of the long rollers gleaming to the rapid equatorial sunrise. The hunted man glanced at the crimson segment peering over the sullen sea-line of the east, then at the white-robed pursuers streaming out by another opening upon the black sand.

"My last sunrise, unless I chance the sharks! That Yankee's not more than half a mile out."

He threw away the kris and dashed into the surf, catching faintly the disappointed yell of the human pack as he dived under the first advancing wall of water.

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"Chap a-tryin' to swim off to us, sir!" said the mate of the Yankee brig.

"Can if he likes, I s'pose! 'Muses him an' don't hurt us."

"Guess the sharks 'll hurt him, though, unless he's powerful lucky."

"Thunder!" and the skipper skipped. "I forgot them cattle; I see him! Jump into the whaler, some of ye, and pull like blue blazes! No—hold on!

There's a boat headin' for him already from that barque roundin' Gatchee Point. Jee-rusalem! why that's the chap that went out yesterday. What's he want back again?"

"*Jerusalem*, cap., exactly! that's her name. Cranky old galoot of a Scotch skipper. There—they're a-pickin' the chap up."

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"Weel, Morgan, ma lad!" said the "cranky old galoot," as his recovered second officer dripped his way aft, "have a cured ye?"

Morgan pointed overboard to a couple of black triangles cutting this way and that upon the surface.

"No," he said, "but *they* have!"
