

The Guest of a Cannibal King.

By J. E. MUDDOCK, F.R.G.S.

(A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN THE SOUTH SEAS.)



WHEN it was announced some years ago that the Germans had annexed the large group of islands lying to the north and west of the Solomon Group, and known as the New Britain Group, in the South Pacific, I was enabled to give, through the columns of *The Daily News*, a number of particulars of New Britain and New Ireland, derived from personal experience. At the time some controversy arose as to whether the natives were or were not cannibals. That they *were* cannibals there is not the shadow of a doubt; but what they are now, since they became subjects of the German Fatherland, I know not.

It did not fall to my lot, unhappily, to be able to make any exploratory examination of the islands, but I had an experience on the largest of the group—that is, New Britain—which was perhaps sufficiently interesting and exciting to warrant its being narrated in detail.

If the reader will take a glance at a map of the Pacific Ocean, he can hardly fail to be astonished at the immense number of islands, large and small, that stud that glorious home of the sun, while due north of Australia, and separated by Torres Strait, is New Guinea, which is practically unexplored. To the eastward of this immense island lies the group collectively known as the Solomon Islands, the southern section of which was first discovered by the Spanish navigator, Mendana, in 1567. To the north and west of these, and much nearer to the coast of New Guinea, are situated the two magnificent islands known as New Ireland and New Britain. These were discovered and named by Captain Cook, and ought now to have been in possession of Great Britain. They are situated within ten degrees south of the equator, and are amongst the most beautiful islands of that island-studded sea. The two islands form a roughly shaped horseshoe, the inside of the shoe facing the north-west. The northern end of New Britain is separated by a very narrow passage, known as St. George's Channel, from the southern end of New Ireland. Lying off the north-western extremity of

New Ireland, and separated from it by only a few miles of sea, is a small upheaval covered with dense vegetation, and known as New Hanover. About two hundred miles from this, almost in a direct line, west and by north, is Admiralty Island, which is within two hundred miles of the equator. New Britain is the most extensive of the cluster, and is probably little short of three hundred miles in length, with a maximum breadth of about forty miles. Both it and its sister island are of volcanic origin, and there are still active craters in both of them. Like most tropical islands, and more particularly those of the Southern Pacific, they are marvellously fertile, and clothed with dense and luxuriant jungle. The coast lines are exceedingly bold and rocky, deeply indented with bays and inlets, and protected by the inevitable outer barrier of coral reefs. The climate is intensely hot, almost insupportably so at times by white people. Earthquakes are very common, and cyclones of terrific force frequently sweep over the country. The natives are probably allied to the Papuans. They have very dark brown skins, black woolly hair; but amongst them are to be found men and women with wavy and occasionally straight hair, and this is probably due to Polynesian blood. They are—or were—fierce and savage, and great head hunters. Being divided into tribes scattered over the islands, tribal wars were incessant. The flora and fauna were, at the time of my visit, hardly known to Europeans; but there are some most beautiful fruits and flowers; while ferocious animals abound, together with noxious insects and deadly snakes.

Many years ago I was cruising amongst these glorious islands in a trading vessel. It was in the very hottest season of the year, and for some weeks we had alternated between dead calms, when air and sea seemed to be aflame with heat, and terrific hurricanes that blew themselves out in an hour or two, but necessitated our stripping every rag of canvas from the ship (an ill-found, patched-up barque), in order that we might not lose our sails, of which we only had one suit, and that a very old one; while our stock of new canvas consisted of

about a dozen bolts, which had to be used for patching purposes. Of food, we had a fairly plentiful supply of "salt-horse," that was something more than *high*—it was putrid. But after towing it in the sea for a couple of days, and then boiling it for twelve hours, we managed to eat it and live. Our biscuits harboured live stock to such an extent that it was somewhat difficult to tell which was the live stock and which the biscuit. However, even weevils are fattening and sustaining, and it did not do to be too Epicurean in taste. Then, as to the water, I need only say that, in order to get it down, it was necessary to stifle the nostrils and shut one's eyes. We were a small crew, numbering, all told, seventeen hands, including two boys and a black cook. We were very ill provided with arms. We had half a dozen or so of rusty old cutlasses; three or four Enfield rifles, one of which, I remember, had a broken lock; and one or two smooth-bore guns. There were also a few revolvers amongst us, I myself being the fortunate possessor of two, both of them being Colt's regulation cavalry pistols, which I had picked up in Sydney. Besides

these, we had a brass cannon, for which we had no proper ammunition; but we loaded it to the muzzle with old bolts, nuts, screws, nails, &c., and mounted it on the rail at the break of the poop on a swivel.

Our position was not a very pleasant one, jammed as we were amongst the islands, and unable to sail during the fierce squalls, and lying "as idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean" during the calms. We were, therefore, subject to the powerful currents which flow there, and which drifted us amongst the coral reefs, until we expected

every moment to rip our timbers out. What with this ever-present danger, and the manifest desire of the natives to have our blood, we had rather a lively time of it. We had endeavoured to get on shore at Choiseul (of the Solomon Group) for fresh water and fruit, but the natives opposed our landing, and we deemed it prudent to beat a retreat. Then, as we drifted north, nearly all day long we were surrounded by a fleet of canoes, their occupants armed with arrows, spears, and tomahawks. We tried to barter, but without avail, and it was clear that our black friends were smacking their lips at the prospect of dining off us. A ceaseless vigilance, however, on

our part, together with a rather boastful display of our armoury kept them at a respectful distance. And at last, a light breeze springing up, it carried us clear until we found ourselves at the mouth of St. George's Channel, which cuts New Britain and New Ireland in two nearly in the centre of the horse-shoe. Here we lost the breeze, and once more found ourselves in the midst of a fleet of canoes. Owing to the narrowness of the channel and the absence of wind we were in danger

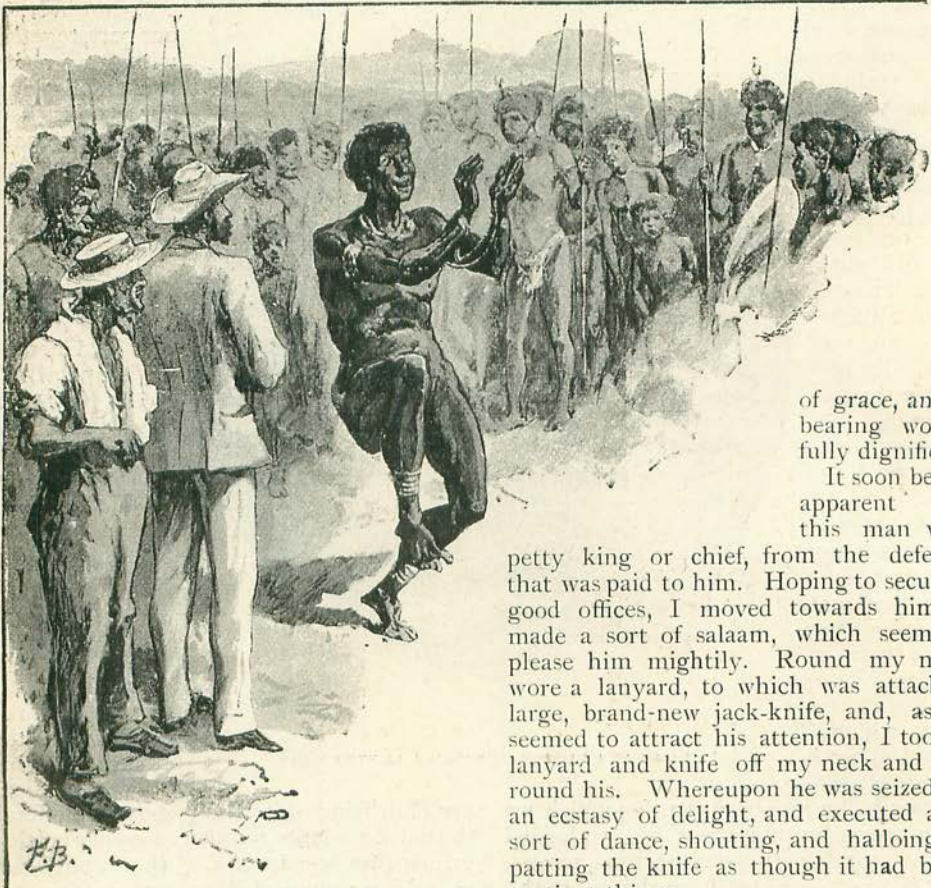
of drifting on to the reefs, so we offered the natives a large number of empty bottles, principally beer bottles, if they would tow us, and we succeeded in getting two big canoes, containing about twenty natives each, hitched on to our bows; and with a wild, fierce, and rythmical chant they plied their paddles vigorously and kept it up for some hours, until on rounding a promontory we found ourselves in a deep bay, with a strong current setting dead inshore; and, as we could see the coral beneath us, we dropped anchor, after taking soundings,



"AS IDLE AS A PAINTED SHIP UPON A PAINTED OCEAN."

in twelve fathoms of water. Fresh canoes now came off filled with natives, for the most part absolutely naked, and all fully armed with spears, poisoned arrows, and tomahawks. As they appeared to be more curious than hostile, however, we decided, after holding a council of war, to go on shore and procure a supply of fresh water and vegetables, or fruit, of which we stood in desperate need. We thereupon got out the lifeboat, loaded her up with empty casks and beakers, and seven of us, including myself, manned the boat. Of course we took with us our revolvers, guns, and

of canoes, and on reaching the land the natives swarmed round us in hundreds. But presently there was a great shouting. The people parted, forming a lane down which marched as superb a specimen of a man it has ever been my lot to see. His physique was simply magnificent, and his broad chest and massive limbs gave evidence of immense strength. His teeth were stained red with betel-nut, and round his neck, arms, and ankles he wore ornaments made of shells, but with these exceptions his costume was that of our first parents before the fall. His movements were the perfection



"AN ECSTASY OF DELIGHT."

cutlasses; but the guns and cutlasses we put into the boat before lowering her from the davits, and covered them up with canvas, as we did not want to provoke a conflict if we could possibly avoid it, though we were all quite prepared to fight hard for our lives.

We were followed to the shore by dozens

of grace, and his bearing wonderfully dignified.

It soon became apparent that this man was a petty king or chief, from the deference that was paid to him. Hoping to secure his good offices, I moved towards him and made a sort of salaam, which seemed to please him mightily. Round my neck I wore a lanyard, to which was attached a large, brand-new jack-knife, and, as this seemed to attract his attention, I took the lanyard and knife off my neck and put it round his. Whereupon he was seized with an ecstasy of delight, and executed a wild sort of dance, shouting, and halloing, and patting the knife as though it had been a sentient thing.

Having thus expressed his delight and thankfulness, he made certain signs which I interpreted as a desire on his part that I and my comrades should follow him. This they resolutely declined to do, but the spirit of adventure had too strong a hold on me for me to say no; and so, against the protests and persuasions of my companions, I signified to him that I would follow. I

had two revolvers at my belt, and I also carried a long, lithe Malacca cane, armed at one end with a formidable knob of lead worked over with string. I considered, therefore, that in a fair stand-up fight I should be able to give a good account of myself. However, there was no hostile appearance on the part of the natives and the chief placed me on his left-hand side, and thus, followed by a yelling rabble, we struck inland. For about four miles we marched through a forest, till we suddenly came to a clearing where there was a village screened by tall palms from the fierce rays of the sun.

My arrival was the signal for a general rush from the huts of crowds of natives—men, women, and children. They pressed forward with eager curiosity, examined me from head to foot, made remarks one to the other, and yelled in a perfectly diabolical manner. But presently the king seemed to get angry, and he uttered a sort of war-whoop, while his suite, with a sweep of the heavy sticks they carried, scattered the crowd and made a passage through them. I was then led to a large shed or hut, which I gathered was the Grand Council Chamber, where weighty social and political matters were discussed and the head-hunting expeditions planned. The roof of this

building was composed of palm leaves and some species of grass dyed various colours. It was supported by stems of young palm-trees, also ornamented with coloured grasses, which had a most pleasing effect. The walls were composed of sticks and flag-leaves, thickly plastered with mud on the



"WE STRUCK INLAND."

outside. The floor was covered with matting, dyed yellow, and worked into a striking pattern by means of different coloured feathers. At the main entrance was a tall bamboo pole crowned with a human head. The head had belonged to a powerful chief who had been killed in battle, and the victors preserved his skull as a trophy. A little later, during an investigation I made, I found, in a heap at the back of the Council House, a large number of skulls and human bones. Many of the skulls were marked with dints of the tomahawk, thus showing how the victims had been slain. That their bodies had also been eaten there can be little doubt. And in this connection I may mention that, in 1882, New Britain was visited officially by Captain C. Bridge, R.N., and he reports that the inhabitants of that island are the only cannibals he knows of who are not ashamed of their taste for human flesh.

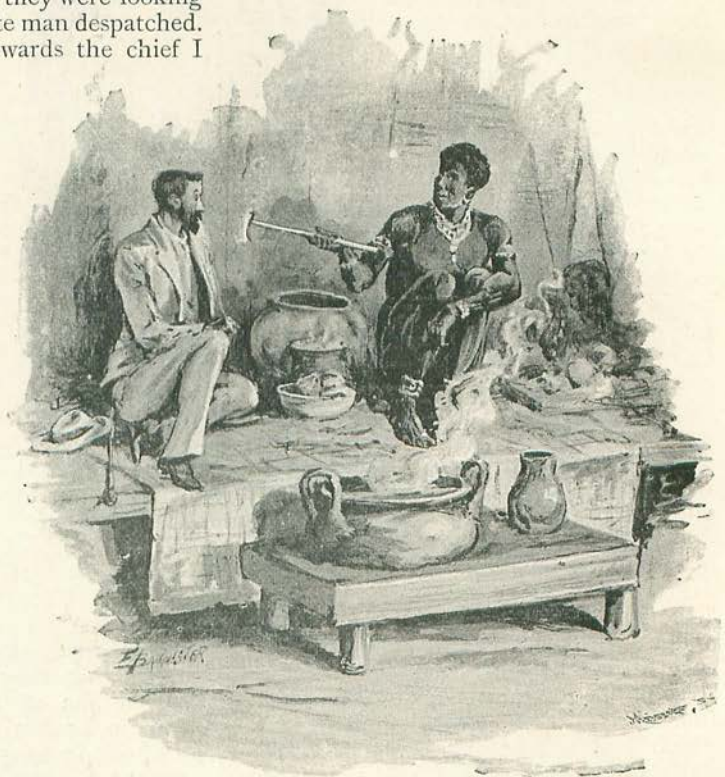
When the king and I and his suite had crossed the portal of the Council Chamber, I was glad to see that a number of men were stationed outside armed with clubs to keep the crowd off. The air was thick with mosquitoes, gnats, sandflies, and other insects. Seeing that they annoyed me, my host ordered one of his attendants to wave over my head a fan made of a palm-leaf attached to a long handle. The chief then squatted on his haunches on a raised platform which ran half-way round the building,

and he invited me to do the same, placing me on his right, which I understood was the position of honour. Then he made a speech, though what it was all about I could form but little idea, but two or three times, from the way his followers eyed me, I thought he was telling them that I was in excellent condition for cooking.

He continued to hold forth for about half an hour, and then it was evident that he gave some orders, for men entered and made preparations for a feast. Having heard so much of their cannibalistic propensities, I confess that my feelings at that moment are not capable of being adequately described; for I thought I was about to have ocular demonstration of their love for human flesh. But suddenly it flashed across my mind that I myself was to provide them with the material for the feast; that is, that I was to be sacrificed in order that they might dine, for they were credited with preferring their meat freshly killed. Through the long slits that served for windows in the bamboo walls I could see the surging crowd of natives, and it seemed to me that all their faces depicted the eagerness with which they were looking forward to seeing the white man despatched. And when I turned towards the chief I fancied I read the same signs in his face, and I blamed myself then for so fatuously allowing myself to be lured into such a trap. The chief still squatted beside me, and I managed to get about a yard further from him; and, with my hand on the stock of one of my revolvers, I waited developments. Indeed I am not ashamed to say that I contemplated making a bolt for liberty and life, and I calculated what my chances would be, if, with a revolver in each hand, I suddenly sprang for the door, and, keeping the rabble at bay, rushed at my topmost speed towards the shore, which was at least four miles away, though all down hill.

But a wiser course immediately suggested itself to me, and that was to remain still until I saw signs of attack, then blaze away, and in the confusion bolt.

But by the time I had revolved these things in my mind four or five natives entered bearing wooden trays on which were roasted yams, breadfruit, young cocoanuts, sugar cane, plantains, roasted wild hog, and some kind of fish baked in leaves. And bringing up the rear was a woman carrying on her head a huge calabash which, as she lowered it to the ground, I saw was filled with crystal water. These things were placed between me and the chief, and by signs he invited me to fall to. When I learned that I was not to be used as the material for a feast but to be feasted instead, my mind was considerably relieved, and I set to work on the good things provided with a very keen appetite. In a few minutes two other women entered, bearing between them suspended from a bamboo, a large earthenware pot, in which was something smoking hot. This pot was set before us, and into it the chief plunged a wooden skewer; bringing up a piece of white round

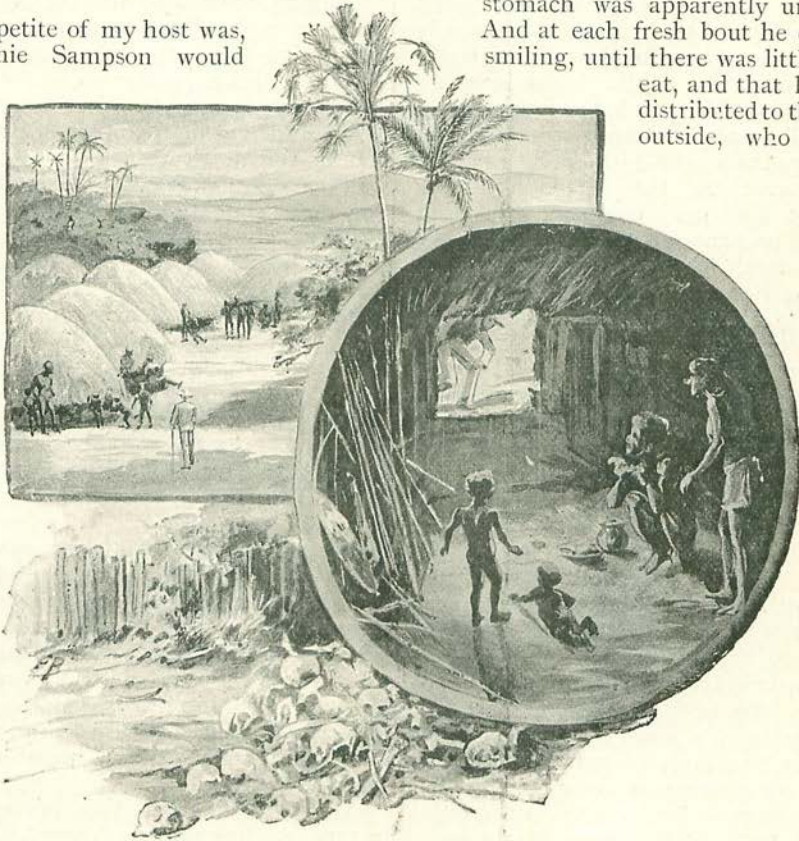


"A PIECE OF WHITE ROUND FLESH."

flesh, dripping with hot oil, and which I took to be part of an eel for the moment, but only for a moment, as I suddenly divined that the steaming pot contained a mess of stewed snakes. The chief handed me the piece he had fished up, and I took it and tasted it, and, finding it palatable in itself, although the grease it had been cooked in was nauseating, I managed to get it down, but respectfully declined a repeat.*

The appetite of my host was, as Dominic Sampson would

have said, prodigious! Having lived for weeks on bad salt junk and rotten biscuit, I was in a condition to do full and ample justice to the good things spread before me. And I am satisfied that I did so; but it was nothing, a mere picking, a mouthful, when compared with what the chief stowed away. He gorged to such an extent that I almost expected to see him roll over in a fit of apoplexy. But the capacity of his stomach was apparently unlimited. And at each fresh bout he came up smiling, until there was little left to eat, and that little was distributed to the crowd outside, who snarled



"I WANDERED ABOUT THE VILLAGE."

* On mentioning this circumstance of the dish of stewed snakes some months later to friends of mine in China, they insisted that I must have been mistaken, as none of the South Sea Islanders were snake-eaters. But that some of the tribes do eat snakes has been amply proved since by Mr. C. M. Woodford, who visited the Solomon Group of Islands several times, and lived for months on some of the smaller islands. It appears that it is only certain tribes who eat the snakes; and they are held in contempt by the other tribes who do not use snakes. After my friends so persistently averred that I was mistaken, I came to that conclusion myself; but now I have no longer a doubt that I partook of boiled snake on that memorable day, and, as far as I remember, I found it a toothsome dish, but I bar the oil it was cooked in. That oil, I believe, was made from the blubber of shark.—THE AUTHOR.

and wrangled for the pieces like angry wolves.

When the important ceremony of dining was over, I rose with a tighter waistband than I had had for weeks; and I gave my entertainer to understand that I should like to see the village. Thereupon he gave some instructions, and led the way outside, and I wandered about the village for some little time. The huts I noted were built in clusters. They were formed by digging a pit that was plastered with wet mud like cement, and allowed to dry in the sun. Then above this pit was reared a roof of sticks and leaves, the top being rounded off

dome fashion. I peeped into some of these dwellings, and saw immense quantities of clubs, spears, and arrows, which might be taken as good evidence of the warlike character of the people. The interior of the huts was astonishingly cool, and it was quite refreshing to step into one out of the fearful heat of the sun.

My host next took me to his own residence, which was larger and superior to the others. There he had several wives and children. One of the women was not only handsome, but, as a model of a perfectly formed figure, she would have sent an artist into ecstasies. Her limbs were adorned with shells, and her raven tresses were relieved by the scarlet feathers of a parrot.

On approaching this island from the south, the first land one sees is a high mountain, probably between four and five thousand feet. It is known as Mount *Beautemps Beaupré*. I was exceedingly anxious to reach this mountain, and if possible ascend it, so as to get a bird's-eye view of the island. I therefore signified my wish to the chief, who, apparently comprehending my meaning, armed himself with a club and spear, and, calling his followers together, we started towards the interior. For some distance our way ran through a jungle of the most luxuriant tropical foliage. There were trees of an enormous girth and height, and they were covered with ferns and orchids; while from tree to tree tendrils stretched in graceful festoons, and hung down in a perfect and all but impenetrable network. Occasionally birds were seen with plumage of perfectly marvellous colours, and I had the good fortune to see two birds of paradise. As we pursued our journey we occasionally disturbed a large snake or two, and on the trunks of some of the trees I saw great green lizards with eyes like saucers. Pecaries, or wild pigs, abounded, and there was a bird that went in flocks, and was not unlike a partridge. Amongst the trees I distinguished breadfruit, cocoa palms, plantains, guavas, mangoes, custard apples. Amongst the undergrowth grew a peculiar fibrous grass of great length, and I learned afterwards that the natives twist this in a primitive fashion and manufacture ropes from it.

We continued our journey for several miles, gradually rising until the road became steep and difficult. After an exhausting climb under a fierce sun, we gained the summit of a hill, when there burst

upon my astonished gaze a panorama of wonderful grandeur. Afar off, inland, was the mountain I had hoped to gain; but its summit was shrouded in light feathery mists that masked its height. Between our standpoint and the mountain dense forests rose up for thousands of feet until they suddenly broke off and gave place to bald volcanic cones and serrated crags, shattered into fantastic outline. I longed to plunge down into the intervening valleys and explore their hidden mysteries, but I had to recognise the impossibility of doing so under the circumstances.

Turning seaward, other islands were visible, floating in dreamy mist; and, looking to the north-west, we beheld the lofty volcanic peaks of New Ireland. After spending some time in studying the marvellous picture, I wished to proceed further inland, but my host and his followers resolutely declined to go another step, and gave me to understand that, if we went on, inland tribes would attack and kill us. In spite of that danger—if it really existed—I should have pushed forward if one or two of the natives had been willing to accompany me. But they would not budge, and reluctantly I was compelled to retrace my steps. We did not, however, return exactly the same way, although there was no difference in the features of the jungle scenery. On passing through one part of the jungle I was much struck by gorgeous flowers that grew in the undergrowth. Their colours were surprisingly rich and brilliant, but on plucking some of them I was amazed to find that they instantly shrivelled up in my hands, like a piece of dried skin, and their wonderful colours faded away as if by magic.

We stopped at another village on our return, and my presence caused intense excitement and curiosity. Men, women, and children gathered round me, yelling and gesticulating, and, as I thought, menacingly. My hand instinctively wandered to my revolver, but I did not draw it, for I recognised at once that they had no arms, and I concluded therefore that they meant no harm, in spite of their seeming fierce looks. Their pressing attentions, however, were far from pleasant, and I was glad when I had got clear of them.

On arriving back at our starting-point, night was closing in. I found that another feast had been prepared in the council chamber, and the chief invited me to partake of it. Amongst other things were vast quanti-

ties of all sorts of fruit, and a huge bowl of kava, which I tasted. The place was lighted by means of torches made of some fibre soaked in oil. These were held by men who squatted on their haunches. The torches flared and sputtered, producing a most intolerable smell and dense fumes, which, however had the good effect of keeping the mosquitoes at bay.

When the feast was ended, the chief made a sign, and twenty young women filed in, taking up their position in the centre of the chamber. They were handsome, well-formed girls, and were ornamented with

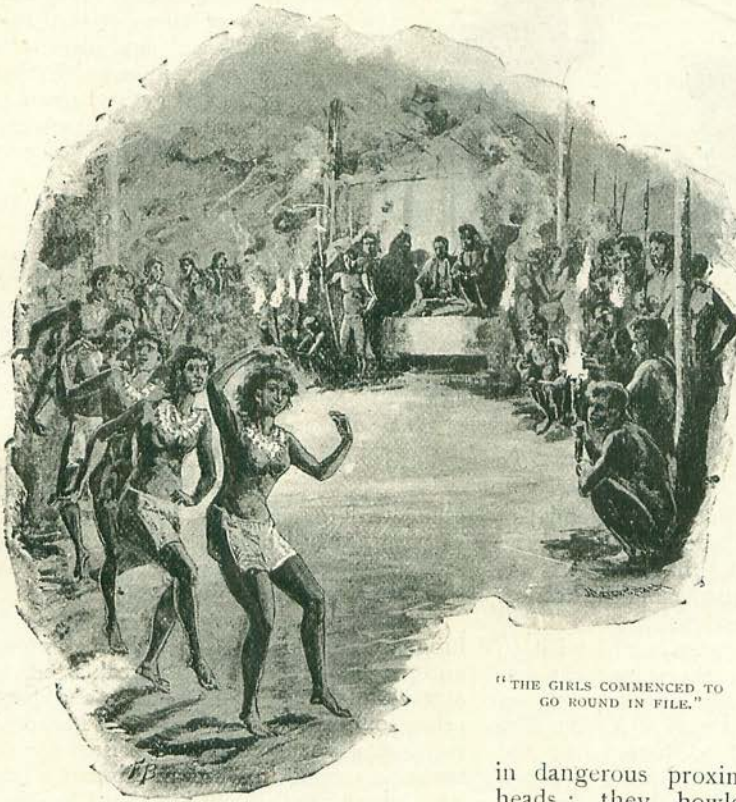
with their hands. Their mats were flung on one side, and their sole costume was a thin fringe of coloured grass tied round the loins.

The chant now swelled into a wild song. The singers grew excited and clapped their hands, making a peculiar sharp sound like that produced by two coconut shells when struck smartly together. The girls became infected with the excitement, and whirled round like humming tops, shrieking in their loudest key. At the end of half an hour the dance ceased. The perspiration was literally pouring off the girls, but apparently

they were not exhausted. Gathering up their mats, they made a profound bow to the chief and retired. I was next favoured with a war-song and dance. In obedience to the orders of the chief, two powerful fellows stepped into the centre armed with spears. They commenced by giving a war-whoop, and then made themselves horrible by facial contortions that would have made a pantomimic clown envious. Next, they threw themselves into every conceivable attitude, their limbs seeming to be as flexible as india-rubber. They brandished their spears

in dangerous proximity to each other's heads; they howled, twisted, jumped, and grimaced in such a hideous manner that I was glad when the performance ended.

Soon after this the natives retired, saluting the chief as they went out. In a few minutes more women entered, and made a bed of palm-leaves, on which they spread the skin of a wild animal. The chief then intimated that it was my sleeping-place, if I chose to remain there, an invitation that I was not slow to accept, and very soon I found myself alone. It was pitch dark at first, but there were



"THE GIRLS COMMENCED TO GO ROUND IN FILE."

necklaces of many rows of shells and sharks' teeth. Their dress consisted of a small kind of pliable mat, held round the hips by a belt of grass. To a low monotonous chant of the assembled natives, the girls commenced to go round in file, beating time with their feet, and swaying their arms about with a graceful rhythmical motion. This lasted for about five minutes. Then the chant quickened, as did also the movements of the dancers, until at last they joined in with the singers, beating time

flashes of pale points of light as the fire-flies flitted about, and from the jungles came a chorus of indescribable sounds. But there was one sound I shall never forget. It was made by a bird, and resembled a plaintive wail, occasionally varied by what resembled a shrill scream of pain. Anything more saddening or melancholy

later on was awakened by some disturbing sound, and where the bars of silver light flecked the floor as the moon rays poured through the slits in the bamboo, I saw crouching figures. An instinct of danger caused me to spring to my feet and draw my revolver. For some time I stood on the defensive, ready to fire, if need be; but the figures remained motionless and still. Preferring certainty to suspense, I cautiously approached them, and to my surprise saw they were women. There were six of them. But they gave no sign, uttered no sound, and, save for their eyes that were turned on me and glowed like jewels, they might have been statues.



"AS FLEXIBLE AS INDIA-RUBBER."

than that wail from out of the depths of the tropical forest in the darkness of the night could not well be imagined. It was suggestive of somebody suffering the keenest agony—the cry of a lost soul.

Presently the moon rose, and I went to the door to gaze out on the scene that was revealed. It seemed almost unearthly in its sublime, weird beauty. A lace-like vapour veil appeared to hang over the landscape, but it served to impart a dreamy, visionary appearance that was fascinating. Indeed, it was like a land of dreams, for in the crystalline light of that tropical moon everything seemed transfigured. Overhead the great stars palpitated with a splendour of brilliancy unknown in temperate latitudes, and the tops of the great trees were clearly and sharply silhouetted against the dark sapphire sky.

Returning to my humble couch, I threw myself down, feeling thoroughly fagged out after the hard day's work. The heat was intense, and the air thick with mosquitoes. Nevertheless I fell asleep, but

Not knowing what the nocturnal visit of these dusky beauties meant, I went back to my corner, determined to keep on the alert, fearing treachery; but tired nature asserted herself, and I fell asleep. When I next awoke it was broad daylight, and the sky was aflame with amethyst and

gold, with great fields of crimson lying between. My lady visitors had gone, and save for the awakening voices of the day that came from the jungles, all was silent.

Not for a full hour after this did the king and his followers put in an appearance, and when we had breakfasted, he accompanied me to the beach, and I was taken off by the ship's boat. My companions were agreeably surprised when I turned up sound in wind and limb, for they had come to the conclusion that I had been served, boiled or roasted, as a dainty dish for his sable majesty.

As the dead calms continued for several days, we remained at anchor. And I strengthened my friendship with the king by presenting him with a small hand saw, with which he was immensely delighted. I also gave him a belt that he took a fancy to, and an india-rubber tobacco pouch, together with a pocket-knife that contained a gimlet, a hook, and a tiny saw: this pleased him more than anything else.

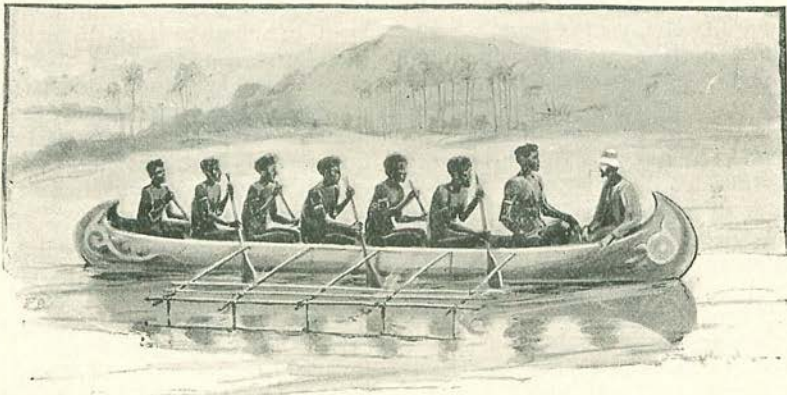
One day I made an excursion with him

in his canoe, and we coasted inside of the coral barrier for a long distance. Everywhere the shore was thickly fringed with cocoanut trees and palms. So clear was the water that the branching coral could be seen many yards below. We landed in a little bay, and proceeded to a friendly village hidden in the jungle. Here I was as much an object of curiosity as I had been in the other places; but it also seemed to me that I was regarded with a certain shyness and reserve, and there was an evident desire that I should not go about and look into the houses. Before one of the largest of the houses I noticed several human heads stuck on bamboos, and as these heads were

statement at the time, but within the last few years it has been amply confirmed, especially by Mr. H. H. Romilly, who paid several visits to the islands. He says that the disgusting decoction is known as *dak-dak*.

I parted from my friendly chief, or king, with regret, and I promised myself that I would return at no distant date, and endeavour to explore the island. Circumstances, however, arose which made the fulfilment of that promise impracticable at the time.

On leaving New Britain we nearly came to grief on a coral reef near the Duke of York Island, which lies off the western end



"WE COASTED INSIDE OF THE CORAL BARRIER."

fresh, it suddenly occurred to me that the villagers had just returned from a head-hunting expedition, and had been dining off human flesh. I therefore determined to keep my eyes open, and very soon I came across unmistakable evidence that I was right, for behind one of the huts in the centre of the village I discovered a very old man and a middle-aged woman busily engaged enveloping portions of human flesh in leaves preparatory to cooking it, which is done in a sort of oven built of loose stones. In another part of the village I saw a heap of human bones, including thigh and leg bones, and an arm to which the flesh still adhered. It was not a very pleasant sight, and I was glad to get away.

I subsequently heard in China that the natives of these islands scrape the inside of the kernels of the young cocoa nuts into a gourd, and, adding pounded sago to it, they mix human brains with the mess, and diluting it with goat's milk, drink the compound. I attached little credence to this

of the larger island. But, having got clear, we coasted along New Ireland in order to get the land breeze. When at the extreme or eastern end of the island, I went with some of the crew into a small bay, where we effected a landing, our object being to replenish some empty water-casks, and obtain fruit and vegetables. With this object in view we made our way towards a village, but were speedily surrounded with natives, who showed such a hostile spirit, and would have attacked us but for our firearms, that we deemed it prudent to return to the shore. The New Irelanders bear the reputation of being much more fierce and savage than their neighbours. In this island there are still several active volcanoes, and hot sulphur springs are numerous. While sailing along the shores of New Ireland, a violent shock of earthquake occurred, and the sea was greatly agitated, causing the ship to roll heavily. Slight shocks are almost of daily occurrence.

The people of all this group of islands are

exceedingly interesting as ethnological studies. They are amongst the most intelligent of the South Sea islanders, and display great ingenuity in ornamenting their spears, clubs, and other weapons, as well as their canoes. These latter are fitted with outriggers, whereas in the Solomon Group, a little further to the south, the outrigger is unknown. The men are finely built, and seem capable of sustaining great fatigue. Many of them whiten their woolly hair by sprinkling powdered seashells on it, having first soaked the hair in grease. The effect of this whitened hair is very remarkable. The women of all the groups are handsome and well formed when young; but, like all natives of tropical countries, they age quickly. They marry very early, often before they are twelve years of age. Some of the tribes, both men and women, go entirely naked.

A very curious custom prevails in the New Britain Group, in compelling a man who has neglected his wife and children to run the gauntlet. Two rows of women extend for a distance of several hundred feet, each woman being armed with a lithe stick. Down the avenue thus formed, the culprit, in a state of absolute nudity, has to make his way; and, as he darts past, the women belabour him savagely, and by the time he reaches the end of the row he is exhausted and covered with blood.

This punishment is greatly dreaded, not so much on account of the physical suffering it entails, as the disgrace that follows, for the man is an outcast afterwards for several weeks. No one of his tribe dare speak to him; he must betake himself to the jungle, where he lives naked, and as best he may, until the expiration of his sentence.

The currency of the islands is small shells, exceedingly delicate and pretty; and as they are only found in small quantities at one particular spot, they have a high value. They are strung on strings made of fibre, and, when anything has to be paid for, a length is measured off. A piece that will stretch across a man's breast

will purchase two or three cocoanuts. At present, the chief trade of the island, I am informed, is in copra, that is, the dried kernels of the cocoanut, which is collected by the traders and despatched to Europe, where it is made into cocoanut oil, while the refuse is used for cakes for fattening cattle. On all these islands sago grows wild, as does also the sugar cane; but so fertile is the soil that tropical productions of every description would flourish amazingly. On New Britain the yam and sweet potato are cultivated extensively, and grow to an immense size.

In building canoes the natives of this part of the Pacific have no equal. The body of the canoe is generally made out of the trunk of a tree, the sides being built up from this body. The planks forming the sides are sewn together with the tough grass I have spoken of, and they are afterwards caulked and made watertight by means of a peculiar cement, which I understand is the kernel of a nut which grows extensively in the forests. The nuts are pounded in a large mortar. The powder is then mixed with boiling water, and in that state is worked into the seams. On drying, it becomes perfectly hard and watertight. The war canoes will carry from forty to sixty men. These are invariably decorated with human heads and carved crocodiles. The crocodile, which abounds in the centre of the islands, is an object of veneration, as is also the shark, which grows to an enormous size in these warm seas, and is most ferocious. The natives navigate their canoes very expertly amongst the coral reefs. From a very early age children of both sexes are accustomed to the water, and they will swim about for hours without showing any signs of fatigue. They seem to have no fear of the sharks that infest the waters. Whether

it is that the sharks do not attack them, I really cannot say. What is certain is that a white man would very soon be gobbled up. Perhaps these South Sea sharks do not like black men.

