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free and away, heading the horse at top speed for the house.

Out of her sea training she was able to appreciate Sheldon's executiveness when she burst in on him with her news. Springing from the steamer chair in which he had been lounging while waiting for breakfast, he clapped his hands for the house boys; and, while listening to her, he was buckling on his cartridge belt and running the mechanism of his automatic pistol.

"Ornari," he snapped out his orders, "you fella ring big fella bell strong fella plenty. You finish 'm bell, you put 'm saddle on horse. Vlaburi, you go quick house belong Seelee he stop, tell 'm plenty black fella run away—ten fella two fella black fella boy." He scribbled a note and handed it to Lalaperu. "Lalaperu, you go quick house belong white fella marster Boucher.

"That will head them back from the coast on both sides," he explained to Joan. "And old Seelee will turn his whole village loose on their track as well."

In response to the summons of the big bell Joan's Tahitians were the first to arrive, by their glistening bodies and panting chests, showing that they had run all the way.

Sheldon proceeded to arm Joan's sailors and deal out ammunition and handcuffs. Adamu Adam, with loaded rifle, he placed on guard over the whaleboats. Noa Noah, aided by Matapuu, was instructed to take charge of the working gangs as fast as they came in, to keep them amused, and to guard against their being stampeded into making a break for themselves. The five other Tahitians were to follow Joan and Sheldon on foot.

"I'm glad we unearthed that arsenal the other day," Sheldon remarked as they rode out of the compound gate.

A hundred yards away they encountered one of the clearing gangs coming in. It was Kwaque's gang, but Sheldon looked in vain for him.

"What name that fella Kwaque he no stop along you?" he demanded.

"Here, you fella Babatani, you talk 'm mouth belong you."

Babatani stepped forward in all the pride of one singled out from among his fellows.

"Gogoomy he finish along Kwaque altogether," was Babatani's explanation. "He take 'm head 'b'long him run like h—"

In brief words and with paucity of imagination he described the murder, and Sheldon and Joan rode on.

A mile farther on, where the runaways' trail led straight toward the



SHE RUSHED THE STARTLED HORSE STRAIGHT AT GOGOOMY.

bush, they encountered the body of Kwaque. The head had been hacked off and was missing, and Sheldon took it on faith that the body was Kwaque's. He had evidently put up a fight, for a bloody trail led away from the body

CHAPTER XIX.

A MESSAGE FROM THE BUSH.

ONCE they were well into the thick bush, the horses had to be abandoned. Papehara was left in charge, while Joan and

Sheldon and the remaining Tahitians pushed ahead on foot. An hour later, following along a wild pig trail, Sheldon suddenly halted. The bloody tracks had ceased. The Tahitians cast out in the bush on either side, and a cry from Utami apprised them of a find. Joan waited till Sheldon came back.

"It's Mauko," he said. "Kwaque did for him, and he crawled in there and died. That's two accounted for. There are ten more."

Crossing one of the quiet jungle spaces, where naught moved but a velvety twelve inch butterfly, they heard the sound of shots.

"Eight, Joan counted. "It was only one gun. It must be Papehara."

They hurried on, but when they reached the spot they were in doubt. The two horses stood quietly tethered, and Papehara, squatted on his hams, was having a peaceful smoke. Advancing toward him, Sheldon tripped on a body that lay in the grass, and as he saved himself from falling his eyes lighted on a second. Joan recognized this one. It was Cosse, one of Gogoomy's tribesmen, the one who had promised to catch at sunset the pig that was to have baited the hook for Satan.

"No luck, missie," was Papehara's greeting, accompanied by a disconsolate shake of the head. "Catch only two boy. I have good shot at Gogoomy, only I miss."

"But you killed them," Joan chided. "You must catch them alive."

The Tahitian smiled.

"How?" he queried. "I am have a smoke. I think about Tahiti, and breadfruit, and jolly good time at Bora-Bora. Quick, just like that, ten boy he run out of bush for me. Each boy have long knife. Gogoomy have long knife one hand and Kwaque's head in other hand. I no stop to catch 'em alive. I shoot like h—. How you catch 'em alive, ten boy, ten long knife and Kwaque's head?"

The scattered paths of the different boys, where they broke back after the disastrous attempt to rush the Tahitian, soon led together. They traced it to the Berande, which the runaways had crossed with the clear intention of burying themselves in the huge mangrove swamp that lay beyond.

"There is no use our going any farther," Sheldon said. "Seelee will turn out his village and hunt them out of that."

Never had runaways from Berande been more zealously hunted. The deeds of Gogoomy and his fellows had been a bad example for the 150 new recruits. One by one the boys were captured. Gogoomy alone remained at large, and, as the pursuit closed in on him, he conquered his fear of the bushmen and headed straight in for the mountainous backbone of the island. Sheldon, with four Tahitians, and Seelee, with thirty of his hunters, followed Gogoomy's trail a dozen miles into the open grass lands, and then Seelee and his people lost heart. He confessed that neither he nor any of his tribe had ever ventured so far inland before, and he narrated for Sheldon's benefit most horrible tales of the bushmen.

"Gogoomy he finish along them fella bushmen," he assured Sheldon. "My word, he finish close up, kai-kai altogether."

So the expedition turned back. Nothing could persuade the coast natives to venture farther, and Sheldon, with his four Tahitians, knew that it was madness to go on alone.

That night, after dinner, Sheldon and Joan were playing billiards when Satan barked in the compound and Lalaperu, sent to see, brought back a tired and travel stained native who wanted to talk with the "big fella white marster." Sheldon went out on the veranda to see him.

"What name you come along house belong me sun he go down?"

"Me Charley," the man muttered apologetically and wearily. "Me stop along Binu."

"Ah, Binu Charley, eh? Well, what name you talk along me? What place big fella marster along white man he stop?"

Joan and Sheldon together listened to the tale Binu Charley had brought. He described Tudor's expedition up the Balesuna, the dragging of the boats up the rapids, the passage up the river where it threaded the grass lands, the innumerable washings of gravel by the white men in search of gold, the first rolling foothills, the man traps of spear staked pits in the jungle trails, the first meeting with the bushmen who had never seen tobacco and knew not the virtues of smoking, their friendliness, the deeper penetration of the interior around the flanks of the Lion's Head, the bush sores and the fevers of the white men, and their madness in trusting the bushmen. One morning Binu Charley noticed that the women and children had disappeared. Tudor, at the time, was lying in a stupor with fever in a late camp five miles away, the main camp having moved on those five miles in order to prospect an outcrop of likely quartz. Binu Charley was midway between the two camps when the absence of the women and children struck him as suspicious.

"My word," he said, "me savvy too much trouble close up. Me run. My word, me run."

Tudor, quite unconscious, was slung across his shoulder and carried a mile down the trail. Here, hiding new trail, Binu Charley had carried him for a quarter of a mile into the heart of the deepest jungle and hidden him in a big banyan tree. Here, and from the direction of the main camp, he had heard two rifle shots. And that was all. He had never seen the white men again.

"There is only one thing to do," Sheldon said to Joan. "I'll start the first thing in the morning."

"We'll start," she corrected. "I can get twice as much out of my Tahitians as you can, and, besides, one white

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