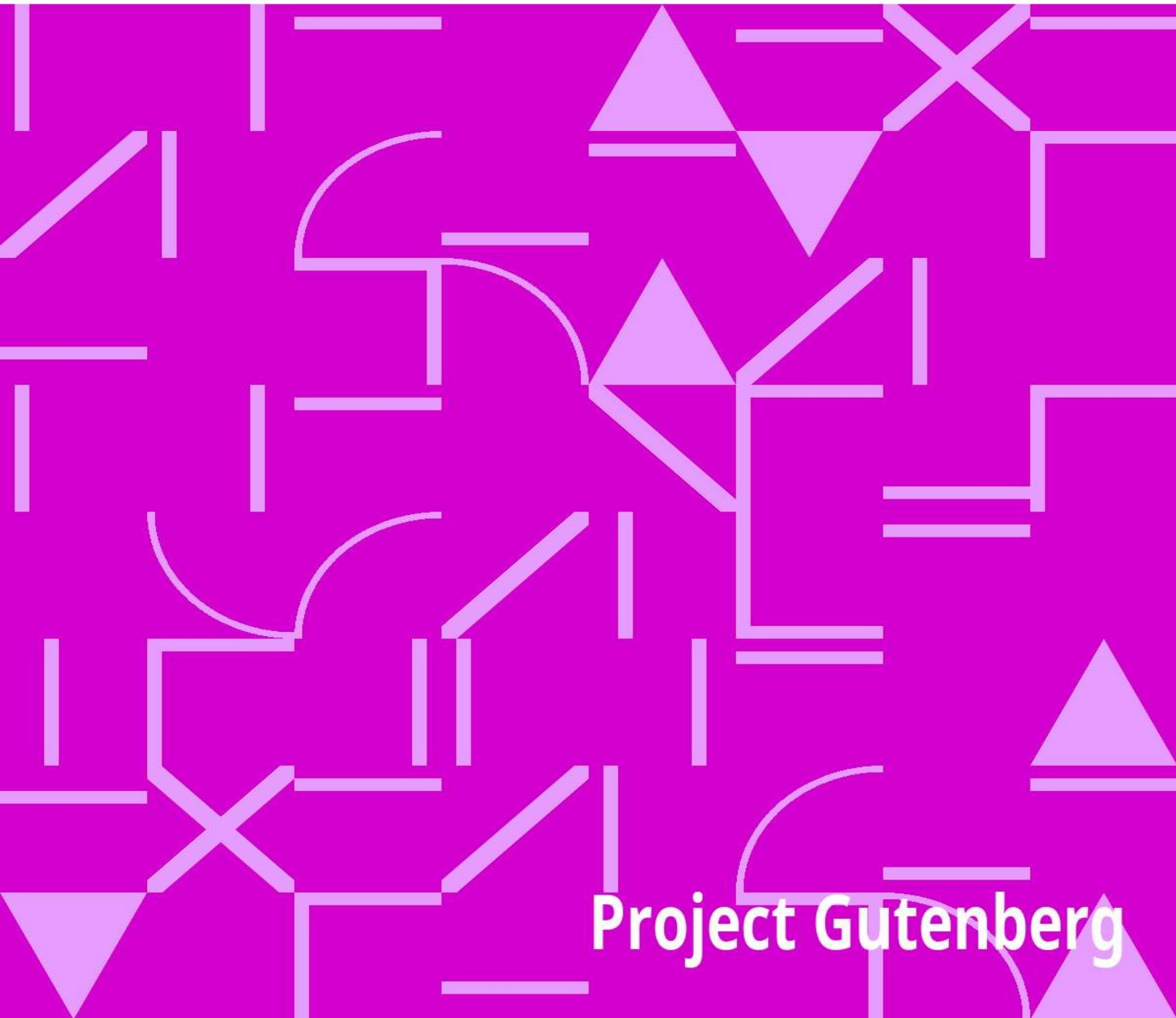
The Adventures of Piang the Moro Jungle Boy

A Book for Young and Old

Florence Partello Stuart



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The Moro Jungle Boy

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A Book for Young and Old

By **Florence Partello Stuart**
Illustrated By **Ellsworth Young**

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To
“Buddy”

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> “Do you know the fragrant stillness of the orchid scented glade,
> Where the blazoned, bird-winged butterflies flap through?”

The Adventures of Piang
The Moro Jungle Boy

Piang is a real boy. Dato Kali Pandapatan is a real Moro chief. The Moro is not a Filipino.

When I returned from my life among the natives of the lower Philippines, I was appalled to find that America was not only ignorant of, but entirely indifferent to our colonies across the seas. The general impression seemed to be that Manila was a delightful Spanish city, and that Manila was the Philippines. That there are several thousand little islands in the Philippine group, each harboring its distinct tribe, each with its own dialect and religion, was entirely unknown. Impressed by the nobility of the Moro in contrast to the other tribes of the archipelago, by his unfortunate treatment and his possibilities for development, I found myself taking up his cause, and was repaid by intense interest wherever I launched forth on my pet subject. I was so successful that gradually I began to idealize the Moro, weaving around him, not the “might have beens,” but the “might be’s.” Hence, “The Adventures of Piang.”

Many of our military heros of other days share the honors with Piang; their exploits and privations are a romance in themselves, and among these pages the army and navy will recognize stories that have long since become history. I am indebted to Dean Worcester for statistics and a great deal of information on the origin and development of the Moro. Indeed some of Piang’s adventures are actual incidents of Dean Worcester’s travels. Robinson and Foreman have given me much material, and I find their books authentic and true chronicles of the Malay people. But most of all I am indebted to that great and wise man, Colonel John P. Finley, United States Army, who during his term as civil governor of the Moro provinces, did more to help a down-trodden people than any Christian who has ever attempted to bring them to the true light.

Anticipating carping criticisms from geographic purists, the author is ready to admit taking liberties with longitudes and latitudes, juggling lakes and mountains to the envy of Atlas, in order to serve the picturesque and romantic purposes of Piang.

Some of the stories in this volume appeared in the juvenile magazines, “St. Nicholas,” “What To Do,” and “Boys’ World,” and are reprinted through the courtesy of the editors.

First Adventure

The Charm Boy

In the warm Celebes Sea, four hundred miles south of Manila, lies the romantic, semi-mysterious island of Mindanao, home of the Moro. For three centuries Spain struggled to subjugate this fierce people, with little or no success, and she turned them over to America with a sigh of relief. Perpetual warfare is the pastime of the Moro; it is his sport, his vocation; and the Mother Jungle hurls a livelihood at his feet. Food, clothing, shelter are his birthright.

One of the most powerful tribes of Moroland is ruled by Dato (chief) Kali Pandapatan. Far up in the hills dwells this powerful clan, arrogant and superior in its power. Piang, the chosen of Allah, dwells among them; haughtily the boy accepts their homage as his due, for he is destined to become their ruler some day. His prowess and bravery are the boast of his people, and the name of Piang is known from one end of Mindanao to the other.

The tribe was assembled for the ceremony. Within the hollow square stood Dato (chief) Kali Pandapatan and old Pandita (priest) Asin. There was a rustle of expectancy among the onlookers; their interest was divided between the two solitary figures, silently waiting, and a hut, much bedecked with gaudy trappings and greens. On all sides the silent jungle closed in around the brilliant throng, seeming to bear witness against mankind; men might force a tiny clearing in its very heart after years of struggle and work, but the virgin forest sang on, undisturbed, watchful.

The grass flaps, forming the door of the hut, moved. Like a soft wind caressing the palm-trees, a murmur rustled through the crowd:

“It is he!”

Children scrambled away from restraining parents to get a better view; dogs,

filled with uneasiness by this strange silence, whined. The stillness was unnatural. Distant cries of a mina-bird floated to this strained audience; the river, muttering its plaints to the listening rushes, sounded like a cataract in their ears.

Into the midst of this crowd walked a stately, graceful youth. The dusky goldenness of his skin was enhanced by his rainbow-hued garments. From waist to ankle he was encased in breeches as tight as any gymnast's pantaloons; they were striped in greens and scarlets and had small gold filigree buttons down the sides. A tight jacket, buttoned to the throat, was fastened with another row of buttons, and around his waist was gracefully tied a crimson sash, the fringed ends heavy with glass beads and seed-pearls. A campilan (two-handled knife, double-edged), and a pearl-handled creese (dagger) were thrust into the sash. With arrogant tread he advanced, the ranks dividing like a wave before an aggressive war-prau. His piercing black eyes expressed utter indifference, and he ignored those gathered to witness his triumph. Only once he seemed to smile when the little slave girl, Papita, timidly touched his arm. The rebuke that fell upon her from the others, brought a frown to the boy's face, but he continued to advance until he stood beside Dato Kali Pandapatan and Pandita Asin. Here, like a sentinel giant, bereft of his nearest kin, one monster tree remained standing. It seemed to whisper to its distant mates, who nodded answer from their ranks at the edge of the clearing. Under this tree Piang paused, gazing fixedly at his beloved chief.

"Piang," said Kali, "the time has come for you to prove that you are the chosen of Allah."

A perceptible rustle followed this.

"On the night of your birth, the panditas announced that the charm boy, who was to lead the tribe to victory, would be born before the stars dimmed. Your cry came first, but there was another, also, fated to come to us that night. The mestizo (half-breed) boy, Sicto, opened his eyes before that same dawn, and you are destined to prove which is the chosen Allah." Anxiously the Moro men and women gazed at their idol, Piang. His manly little head was held high, and the powerful shoulders squared as he listened.

The sun, but lately risen, bathed the multitude in its early light and chased the light filigree of moisture from the foliage. Through the branches of the solitary

tree, wavy sunbeams made their way to flicker and play around Piang, and one bold dart seemed to hesitate and caress the mass of glossy, black hair.

“Sicto!” called Kali. There was another murmur, but very different from the one that had preceded Piang’s coming. From the same hut came forth another boy. A little taller than Piang, was Sicto, lean and lank of limb. His skin was a dirty cream color, more like that of the Mongolian than the warm tinted Mohammedan. His costume was much like Piang’s, but it was not carried with the royal dignity of the other boy’s. Sicto’s head was held a little down; the murky eyes avoided meeting those of his tribesmen, and his whole attitude gave the impression of slinking. The high cheek-bones and slightly tilted eyes bore evidence of the Chinese blood that flowed in his veins, and the tribe shuddered at the thought of Sicto as charm boy. He advanced with a shambling gait.

“Sicto, it is given that you shall have your chance.” Kali Pandapatan spoke loudly, a frown on his brow. “Piang is of our own blood, and we, one and all, wish him to be our charm boy, but there shall be no injustice done. Born under the same star, within the same hour, it is not for me to decide whether you or Piang is the Heaven-sent.” Turning to the pandita, Kali whispered something. The old man nodded and advanced a few steps, saying:

“My people, I shall leave it to you, whether or not I have made a wise decision. There is no way for us to prove the claim of either of these boys, so I am sending them to seek the answer for themselves.” Asin paused, and the crowd moved. “On yonder mountain dwells the wise hermit, Ganassi. He has lived there for many years, apart from man, alone in the jungle with beast and reptile.

There are no trails to his haunt; no man has seen Ganassi for a generation, but that he still lives we know, for he answers our signal fires each year and replies to our questions.” Turning to the two boys, he addressed them directly: “The mountain where he dwells has been named after him, Ganassi Peak, and friends through the hills will direct you toward it. You shall both start at the same time, but by different routes. One leads through the jungle, over the hills; the other follows the river to its head-water, the lake. Old Ganassi will guide the real charm boy to him; he is great; he is ubiquitous. Have no fear of the jungle or its creatures, for he will be with you.”

Amazement and joy were written on Piang’s face. He was to penetrate the jungle

at last, alone! His heart thrilled at the thought of the adventures waiting for him there, and with radiant face he turned toward the inviting forest.

“Piang! Piang!” resounded through the stillness, as the excited Moros watched him.

Sicto stood, head down, wriggling his toes in the sand. He did not like the idea of the lonely jungle, or the thought of the long hard days between him and Ganassi Peak, but he did not speak.

With solemn ceremony the pandita prepared to anoint the boys according to the rites of the tribe. A slave boy ran lightly forward and sank on his knees before the pandita. On his head he bore a basket covered with cool, green leaves. Praying and chanting, the priest uncovered the basket, revealing two beautiful dazzlingly white flowers.

“The champakas!” cried Papita in amazement as the rare flowers were exposed. An admonishing hand was placed over her lips. Slowly Asin raised the flowers, heavy with dew, above the two boys, and the clear, crystal drops fell upon their heads. Across the sky trailed a flock of white rice-birds; as they flitted across the clearing, their shadows leaped from one picturesque Moro to another; a twig snapped, startling a baby, who cried out. The spell was broken.

The chant was taken up by the entire tribe, and slowly at first, they began to revolve around the central figures. As their excitement grew, the pace quickened, until they were whirling and gyrating at a reckless rate. Like a pistol-shot came the command to cease, and quietly all returned to their original places. Kali Pandapatan raised his hand for silence.

“I shall throw my creese into the air. Sicto, you may have first choice. Do you choose the point, or the flat fall?”

Sicto considered:

“If the creese falls without sticking into the ground, I shall choose my route first.”

The crowd instinctively pushed a little closer as Kali tossed the shining blade into the air. A gasp, forced from between some anxious lip, broke the stillness.

Every eye followed the course described by the knife, and when it fell, clean as an arrow, the blade piercing the earth, there was a sigh of relief. Piang was to have first choice.

“Piang, it is given that you shall choose. Will you proceed by the river or take your chances with the jungle? One route is as safe as another, and only the real charm boy can reach Ganassi.”

“I will go by the river,” Piang answered quietly, with great dignity.

It was a beautiful day. To us, the heat would have been stifling, the humidity distressing, but Piang loved it all and joyfully looked forward to the trip up the river.

The trying ceremony over, the two candidates had hurried off to prepare for the long journey. Cumbersome garments were discarded, and Piang was clothed in the easy costume of the jungle traveler; breech-clout, head-cloth, a sarong, flung carelessly over one shoulder, and a *pañuelo* (handkerchief) with a few necessary articles tied securely in it. His weapons were a bolo, a creese, and a bow and arrow. Piang’s bare limbs, bronze and powerful, glistened in the brilliant sunshine, and he was very picturesque as he paddled along the stream, dipping his slim hands into the current, arresting objects that floated by. He had made his *banco* (canoe) himself; had even felled the palma brava alone, and had spent days burning and chopping the center away, until at last he was the proud possessor of one of the swiftest canoes on the river. As on ice-boats, long outriggers of slender poles extended across the banco, and the ends were joined by other bamboo poles, so that the canoe looked like a giant dragon-fly as it skimmed lightly over the water.

Piang stopped at a lily-pad to gather some of the inviting blossoms, but regretted it instantly, as a swarm of mosquitos rose and enveloped him. He thought to escape their vicious attacks by paddling faster, but it was no use; they had come to stay. Trailing after him a long uneven stream, they seemed to take turns in tormenting him, and as the leaders became satiated, they fell back, allowing the rear rankers to buzz forward and renew the attack. Piang longed for a certain kind of moss that grows at the roots of trees, but his keen eyes could not

discover any.

Rising to his feet, spear poised, he waited

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It was almost all he could do, to paddle his banco and fight the pests; his sarong was wrapped tightly around him, but it was no protection against the savage mosquitos, and he was about to drop in the water despite the crocodiles, when he spied some of the moss. With a cry of relief, he headed toward the bank and managed to pull some into the boat. Taking from his bundle a queerly shaped, wooden object, he spun it like a top, rapidly, backward and forward in a pan until smoke appeared at the point of the rod. Powdering some bark, he threw it into the pan, and when it began to blaze, he added some of the damp moss. Gradually a thick, pungent smoke arose. It curled upward, enveloping him and almost choking him with its overwhelming aroma, but it dispelled the mosquitos immediately, and Piang continued his journey unmolested.

He was very happy that morning, for was he not free, honored by his tribe, and engaged in the dearest of pastimes, adventure? The poor little girls have no choice in their occupations, for as soon as they are large enough, their tasks are allotted to them; they must sit all day and weave, or wear out their little backs pounding rice in the big wooden bowls. But the man child is free. The jungle is his task. He must learn to trap game, to find where the fruits abound, and to avoid the many dangers that wait for him. Piang broke into a native chant:

“Ee-ung pee-ang, unk ah-wang!” As it resounded through the forest in his high-pitched, nasal tones, he was answered from the trees, and little, gray monkeys came swinging along to see who their visitor might be. Piang mischievously tossed a piece of the smoking moss to the bank and paused to see the fun. Their almost human coughs, as the smoke was wafted their way, made him laugh. They scampered down, tumbling over each other in their anxiety to be first, and one little fellow, who succeeded in out-distancing the others, stuck its hand into the smoldering embers. Astonished, at first, it nursed the injured member, but gradually becoming infuriated, it finally shrieked and jumped up and down. It began to pelt the smudge madly with stones, chattering excitedly to its companions, as if describing the tragedy. The others had climbed back into the trees, paying no attention to Piang, but keeping a watchful eye on the danger that had been hurled among them.

Piang lazily plied his paddle, laughing to himself at the foolishness of monkeys. He tried to peer through the dense trees that crowded toward the river, hiding the secrets of the jungle. He wanted to know those secrets, wanted to match his strength against the numberless dangers that are always veiled by that twilight, which the sun strives in vain to penetrate, year after year, turning away discouraged. Piang listlessly examined the river, little knowing the perilous adventure that waited for him just beyond the bend.

One lone log, majestic in its solitude, floated down the river, resisting the efforts of tenacious creepers to bind and hold it prisoner. Piang poked it with his paddle. Another was floating in its wake, and he idly tapped this, also. It stirred, turned over, and disappeared under the boat.

"*Boia!*" ("Crocodile!") breathed the startled boy. He had disturbed one of the sleeping monsters! Piang's heart beat very fast, and a shudder passed through him as he felt something bump the bottom of the boat. The crocodile was just beneath him and if it rose suddenly, it would upset him. One, two, three seconds he waited, but they were the longest seconds Piang had ever known. There was a slight movement astern; the boat tipped forward, swerved, and before Piang could right himself, a vicious snort startled him. The crocodile was lashing the water with its tail, and the light shell was pitching and rolling dangerously. Piang scrambled to his knees.

There are only two vulnerable spots on a full-grown crocodile; under the left fore leg, where the heart can be pierced, and the jugular vein, easily reached through the opened jaws. Piang, in the bow of the boat, paused, arm raised, waiting for a favorable opportunity. The canoe was being swept backward, stern first, and the crocodile swam close, nosing it, making it careen perilously. Any moment the merciless jaws might close over the brittle wood, crushing it to splinters. The small, bleary eyes seemed to devour Piang as they tortured him with suspense, but he patiently waited for his chance, knowing that he would only have one. The banco gave a jerk as it bumped into an obstruction, and the impact forced it outward a few feet. The moment had come. As the crocodile plunged forward, Piang thrust his spear into its breast. There was a gurgling sound, a swishing of the water, and the Ugly thing rolled over on its back.

Piang never could remember just how he escaped. From every sheltered cove, from behind innocent-looking snags, appeared the heads of hungry crocodiles,

awakened by the fight. Luckily they were attracted by the blood of Piang's victim, and he skilfully avoided the clumsy animals as they rushed after the fast disappearing meal. One powerful monster succeeded in dragging the body into the rushes, and the noise of the dispute, as they fought over their unfortunate mate, nauseated the boy. His arms were tired and stiff and his head was reeling, but he bravely worked at the paddle until he reached a bend of the river. It had been a narrow escape, and Piang had learned a lesson. Never again would he idly thump logs in a stream!

The boat suddenly came to a standstill. It was turning as if on a pivot. It had been caught in one of the numerous eddies at the mouth of a small tributary stream. Vigorously he strove to gain the channel. He hugged the bank, hoping to free himself from the whirlpool, but his outrigger became entangled in some weeds, and the boat slowly began to tip. Frantically he reached toward the tall nipa-palms, nodding over his head, but their flimsy stalks gave easily, and he was almost thrown out of the boat. The sparkling water, as if laughing at his predicament, caressed the helpless craft, drawing it closer and closer to its bosom. The banco gave a lurch; it was tipping; it shipped a quantity of water. All Piang's weight thrown against the upturned outrigger had no effect. Helplessly, he looked into the green, whirling depths.

There was only one thing to be done. Taking a long breath, he grabbed his creese and dived. Down, down; the current pulled and tugged at him; the rush of sand and mud blinded him, and he was almost swept out into the river. But he managed to catch hold of the roots that were twined about the boat and finally cut the banco free. With a bound it started down the river. The empty shell, at the mercy of the waves, danced and frolicked like a crazy thing, and Piang was almost stunned by a blow from the outrigger as it passed him.

The boat was rushing right back into the midst of the crocodiles, but he bravely struck out after it. There was no chance for him if he failed to reach it. The whispering rushes and feathery palms at the water's edge hid evil-smelling mud, festering with fever, the home of reptiles and crocodiles. Desperately the boy strove to overtake the boat, and just as he was giving up hope, a friendly snag tempted the runaway to pause, and Piang's strong, young hand closed over the outrigger. Then began the task of climbing back. A sudden movement might release the banco, and it would continue its mad flight, which he would be powerless to stop. Keeping his eye on the frail-looking snag, he threw himself on

his back in the water and worked his way along the outrigger as he would climb a tree. Finally his hand touched the body of the boat, and, cautiously turning over, he sat straddling the bamboo frame. It was all he could do to keep from jumping into the boat, but he restrained his impatience and started worming over the side.

Half-way in his heart gave a leap! He could hear the swish-swish of the water on the other side of the banco as something made its way toward him. The eddy was the only thing that saved him, for he could see the dread thing twirling round and round as it tried to reach him. The boy was almost paralyzed with fear. As long as the crocodile was on the other side of the boat, he was safe, but now—the snag creaked, stirred.

Piang made one heroic effort, lifted himself clear of the water, and fell exhausted into the boat. He was not a moment too soon. The crunching sound, as the support began to give under the strain, was a fit accompaniment to the snarling and snapping of the crocodile, which, deprived of its prey, was lashing the water, trying to reach the frail outriggers. Piang thought he had never been swept through the water so rapidly, and that he would never gain control of his boat. Louder and clearer came the sounds of the fighting monsters beyond the bend, and there between him and safety lurked his latest enemy.

An impertinent, ridiculous twitter came from a tiny scarlet-crowned songster, as if it were trying to advise and direct the hard-pressed boy. Its solemn, round eyes stared at him, reproving and admonishing him for his foolhardiness. Piang, on his knees, struggling with the current, was unaware of his audience. Gradually he worked the boat around and headed up-stream, straight for the crocodile. Surprised by this sudden change in tactics, it snorted and opened its repulsive jaws. Piang had hoped to catch it in this position, so, pressing forward as rapidly as possible, he took careful aim and hurled his knife into its mouth. Rising to his feet, spear poised, he waited to see if the knife would be effective. The creature floundered and slashed the water, gave a blood-curdling bellow, and rolled over on its back, dead. A crocodile fights with its last breath to remain on its belly, for if not dead, it drowns as soon as it turns over.

Piang wanted his weapon. The body of the animal was caught by the current and shot rapidly past him down-stream, but the boy, warned by the commotion further down, hesitated to follow it. He realized, however, that his knife was very

valuable to him, and that he was sure to have urgent need of it again, so he started after the ugly body. The sparkling wavelets sported and capered with their grewsome burden, sometimes dashing it against some stray log, again bearing it far across the river as if purposely assisting it to elude its pursuer.

Piang skilfully guided his banco in its wake, and finally succeeded in thrusting his spear into its side, and pulled it toward the bank. The knife was embedded far down in the terrible jaws, and Piang wondered if he dared reach into them. He looked at the tusk-like teeth, the first he had ever seen at close quarters, but he remembered with a shudder the wounds that he had helped care for—wounds made by such poisonous tusks.

Mustering his courage, he slowly extended his hand into its mouth. The big, wet tongue flopped against his hand; the powerful jaws quivered spasmodically, and the hot, fetid steam from the throat sickened him. His knife! He must get it! Desperately he tugged at the handle; it would not loosen its hold. Cold sweat broke out all over Piang. A new sound arrested him. The crocodiles below had already smelled the blood of the second victim and were plunging up-stream to find it. The boy thought the knife would never come out. He worked and twisted, and finally it gave so suddenly, that he lost his balance, and by a quick turn of his body just saved himself from another ducking. It was lucky for Piang that he finished when he did, for around the curve in the river, headed directly toward him, came the crowding, vicious scavengers.

Gathering his wits quickly, he pushed forward. The snorting and fighting grew more and more distant; the peaceful river stretched out before him like a silver road beckoning him to safety, and he offered a prayer of thanksgiving to Allah, the Merciful, that he had been spared that awful death.

It was nearly evening when Piang beached his banco and took up the trail to the village where he was to spend his first night. Confidently he trotted through the jungle, picking his way easily among the gathering shadows. Soon voices became distinguishable, and he heard tom-toms beating the evening serenade. Dogs howled in response, women chattered, boys quarreled. To Piang this represented the usual day’s peaceful ending.

As he trotted into the clearing and paused before the hut of the dato, the curious crowded around him: mothers to see if the stranger’s muscles could compare with their lads’; girls to flaunt their charms; boys to measure him with their eyes. Piang had no interest in anything but the boys, and as soon as the dato condescended to greet him with the customary salutation for guests, he was left in peace to join them at their interrupted game of pelota.

Twilight comes quickly in the tropics. When darkness had fallen, each family was squatting beside its rice pot, and as the night silence deepened, the village slept. Piang had asked for no shelter, and no invitation had been extended, but he silently accepted the hospitality, according to the strange Moro codes.

Slumber claimed the inhabitants of the barrio, but all around the jungle woke to the night. Noxious blooms raised their heads to drink in the deadly moisture; hungry pythons took up their silent vigil at water holes; night prowlers slunk in the gloom to spring on the more defenseless creatures, and over it all the inscrutable jungle kept watch, passing silent judgment on man and beast, in this great scheme of life.

Second Adventure

The Floating Island

Like a mirror framed in soft velvet green, the lake broke upon Piang. In the still noon heat the motionless water scintillated and sparkled and the powerful rays of the sun seemed to penetrate to the very bottom. Dragon-flies and spiders skated merrily about, eluding the ever-watchful fishes lying in wait amid forests of lacy seaweeds and coral. Tall, stately palms, towering above their mates, scorned to seek their reflections in the clear depths, but frivolous bamboo and nipa-palms swayed gently out over the water, rustling and chattering with delight at their mirrored images.

Piang slipped through the mouth of the creek and gazed in amazement at the vast sheet of water. Stories of the lake and its wonderful floating islands had lured him from the more direct route to Ganassi Peak, and he eagerly searched for one of the curiosities. His eyes focused on a dot of green far in the distance. It was moving, turning, and suddenly a whole fleet of dancing, playful islands became distinct. Joyfully Piang started in pursuit. He wanted to see one, to touch it. Swiftly he flew through the water. As if detecting his purpose, the nomad islands eluded him. As soon as he chose one to pursue, it flaunted its charms the more and capered and dodged behind its fellows. Like a giant may-pole, the largest island held several smaller ones in leash, permitting them to revolve around it, interlacing vines and creepers that were rooted on the mother isle. Monkeys and jungle creatures crept fearlessly along these natural ropes, sporting from one island to another. Hablar-birds and aigrets squabbled over bits of rice and wild fruits. Piang caught sight of a civet-cat crouching in a tree on one island. It had probably gone to sleep in that tree while the island was nosing the mainland and had awakened to find itself adrift. Sometimes these floating islands would be held to the shore for years, intertwining liana (climbing plants of tropical forests) and *bajuca* (jungle rope), but sooner or later some wild storm is sure to set them wandering again.

There were weird tales of early Dyak settlers. These Borneo pirates had fled to Mindanao to escape justice, bringing many cruel and terrible customs that were to take root and bear fruit among the tribes of the sultan. A favorite pastime of the Dyaks had been to bind captives to a stray island and lead it slowly and tantalizingly to the mammoth waterfalls, shouting and dancing with glee as it plunged into the abyss.

His hands closed over something

His hands closed over something

The lake was like a fairy-land. Purple lotus flowers surrounded the boat. Piang dipped his hands into the cool water, and pulled them up by long slender roots; lily-pads offered their beauties and soon the banco was a bower of fragrant and brilliant flowers. Playfully Piang caught at a vine, floating in the wake of an island. The natural boat led him gently about, twisting and circling back and forth. He laughed merrily. The islands were too funny! They seemed almost human in their antics. Some had regular routes, and, like mail boats touched the same spot again and again, only to be hurried on as the current caught them. Others with malicious intent strayed in the path of their more systematic brothers, bumping and jarring them with obstinate regularity.

The joy of freedom thrilled Piang; the intimacy with nature and its mysteries stirred within him a desire to know more, feel more, and he gazed at the distant peak where his fortune awaited him, wondering if the old hermit, Ganassi, was in reality watching for his coming.

Toward afternoon Piang became conscious of a heavy steam-like vapor rising from the undergrowth at the edge of the jungle; the atmosphere grew suddenly sticky and sultry. Almost within a moment the brilliant sunshine was blotted out, and a gray twilight settled over the lake. Frightened birds, squawking and screaming, hurried by; a fawn, drinking at the water’s edge, darted off through the jungle. A slight frown rippled across the water; the breeze chilled Piang. Trees in the distance seemed to bend nearly double with no apparent cause, but the rush of wind finally swept the whole valley, and the jungle shuddered and swayed before it. The storm seemed an animate thing, seemed to come upon the peacefulness of the lake like an evil genius, hurling its fury upon nature and her creatures.

Piang had never been alone in a typhoon. In bewilderment he looked about, wondering where he could find shelter. He watched the birds, the animals; his boat brought up against something with a thud. An island had bumped into him, and he realized in dismay what a menace the pretty toys might become in a typhoon. Struggling with the tempest, Piang fought past the islands, reached the shore, turned his banco bottom side up, and crept underneath.

The violent wind began to dash loose objects about, tearing limbs off trees and hurling them aloft as if they were mere splinters. A cocoanut crashed down, striking the ground near Piang; another fell, and yet another. Then the rain came in torrents. It fell unevenly as if poured by mighty giants from huge buckets. The ground beneath Piang was swaying, undulating. A tree crashed to the ground, tearing away vines and ferns. As he began to experience the motion of a boat, Piang became thoroughly alarmed and, dashing aside the banco, sprang to his feet.

Terror flashed into his heart. What was happening? He had landed on the mainland and put his banco under a big tree, and now this tree was pitching and swaying, its branches sweeping the ground. The tree was being uprooted, and the earth at Piang's feet was plowed up as roots tore through the surface. The next tree was being felled in the same manner, and as his eyes darted about, he beheld everywhere the same terrifying picture. These mighty monuments of time, trees older than man, were being torn from their beds and thrown to the ground or left standing against each other for support. It seemed to be only the trees in Piang's vicinity that were doomed to destruction, and, although it was a dangerous thing to attempt, Piang decided to seek another shelter. He took a few difficult steps forward and was almost stunned by the immense fall of water. It dashed into his face, beat upon his head in a stinging, hissing mass; it ran in streams down his arms and legs, making him heavy and clumsy. As he caught at a tree for support, it groaned under his weight and crashed to earth; the ground was giving way, and he felt himself sinking. With a scream, he freed himself, and, jumping to a fallen tree, clung desperately, hoping to escape flying missiles. Just as he gathered himself for another advance his heart gave a jump. Through the mad rage of the typhoon, he could hear quick breathing! The ground tipped and swayed alarmingly, tossing trees about like masts on a ship in distress.

"*Linug!*" ("Earthquake!") moaned Piang. Bravely the boy crept forward, knife in hand. Whatever it was, hiding under that log, Piang must take his chances; if he

remained where he was he would certainly be killed by falling trees. His feet made a sucking sound; a vivid flash of lightning blinded him, and it was all he could do to force his way through the wall of water that was pounding down upon him. With a desperate effort, he pulled himself along by vines, hoping to pass the unknown animal before it could leap; but the branches stirred, and he sprang back with a cry.

"*Babui!*" ("Wild boar!") he gasped. The creature's head shook with fury; its teeth were bared, and the tiny red eyes flamed with anger. The babui had the largest tusks Piang had ever seen, and he grasped his bolo firmly to meet the rush. One second, two seconds—the suspense was fearful, and Piang wondered why the boar did not attack. Strained almost beyond his endurance, he stood, rigid and cold, waiting. The wind sucked at his breath; the torrents of water, dashing in his face, kept him blinking and gasping, and still that wild thing pawed and snorted. Fascinated, Piang gazed into the vicious, bleary eyes, and finally he realized that they were losing some of their fury; the tusks sank into the spongy earth; the head fell lower. The babui was a prisoner, pinioned to the ground by a fallen tree! Relief was Piang's first sensation, but pity for the animal and fear for himself, roused him to the realization of new dangers yet to be faced. He must plunge into the dense jungle; it was only a short distance now. He glanced back to be sure that the babui could not free itself; it was swaying and moaning, unable to move.

As Piang paused to get his directions, the earth gave a tremendous jerk, which threw him on his face. He lay stunned for a few minutes and when he rose to his knees, he had the sensation of floating gently, softly. The jerking and trembling had ceased, and the ground swayed soothingly. Piang turned toward the jungle, to the spot where he had been about to step. Could he believe his eyes? Almost numb with terror, he gazed stupidly into the receding jungle. He was on land, but he was floating. He was sailing away from the jungle! Piang had taken refuge on a floating island.

In despair he gazed about him, trying to penetrate the thickly driving rain. He was on the very edge of the island and he wondered why he had not been swept into the lake. The mass of vegetation, wrenched from its bed, trailed along in the water as the nomad island whirled and danced on the angry waves. A tree, the branches of which were hanging in the water, was pulled from its bed, dragging part of the island with it. One long vine struggled to right itself against the

current, to gain the shelter of the island again. It seemed most lifelike, and suddenly Piang realized with a shudder that it was alive. A python had been knocked from the falling tree and was being dragged along. Only the end of its tail was twined about a log; desperately it strove to work its way back, and Piang watched with dread. Its struggles grew weaker and weaker, and finally its head sank below the waves, and it joined the unresisting creepers that were being dragged along to destruction.

Piang leaned wearily against the only tree that remained standing; the fall of water, tearing down the trunk, cascaded over the jungle boy, and he raised his hand to shield his eyes. What had saved the solitary tree, Piang could not imagine, until he discovered a small diamond-shaped cut in the bark. He drew back with a shudder. Two crossed arrows were carved within the diamond. This was another Dyak custom so hateful to the Mohammedan; the tree was the sarcophagus of some Borneo chief. A century must have passed since the burial, for the incision was almost obliterated, but Piang knew that the mummy of his enemy reposed in savage dignity within the heart of the tree, and that the Dyak belief was that the tree could not fall or decay. He fought his way to the other side of the island. On it sped. Cries of frightened animals came faintly from the mainland; screams of birds, beaten to earth, pierced the din.

A tremor ran through the island. There was a tearing sound as if strong timbers were being forced apart; the whole mass stood still, then came a tremendous crash. It had collided with the fleet that Piang had been sporting with only an hour before. Surely the stray bits of jungle would crush each other to bits. A gray streak flew past Piang, and a frightened monkey, thinking to save itself from the other derelict, nearly landed on the babui. Paying no attention to either the boy or the babui, the monkey shrank against a log and hid its head, whining piteously.

A pale light broke through the gloom, and the rain ceased as suddenly as it had come. Piang’s heart gave a bound as he watched the tempest abate. Suddenly he straightened himself and strained his ears to catch a new sound. What was that deep, distant rumbling? A cry so piteous broke from him, that even the dying babui started. The falls! He could hear them distinctly and realized that he was rushing toward them at a mad pace. Louder and clearer grew the thunder of those falls, and Piang’s staunch little heart rebelled. He would not stand there like a Dyak prisoner! He would do something. He would save himself! A blazing

flash rent the heavens and Piang caught sight of Ganassi Peak frowning and lowering in the clouds. Ganassi! If he only knew! No, it was too late. The falls roared hungrily, and nothing could keep the island from plunging to destruction.

Slowly Piang rose to his full height, and, folding his arms, determined to die bravely. He could see the upper falls now, high above his head, and he pictured the greater falls below him—the falls that were waiting to swallow his island. He tried to remember the prayer for such an occasion, but none came to him.

“There is no God but Allah!” muttered the terrified boy.

The island was pitching again as obstacles caught at it, spinning it around and around. Each thing that it struck on its reckless journey tore portions from it; gradually it became smaller. The light grew steadily clearer, and Piang could see what awaited him. Massive rocks loomed up at the head of the falls, and he calmly wondered if he would be killed before the plunge. The side of the island where he stood began to give way, and, although he was to die in a few minutes, instinct made him move to the other side. He tried to walk, but the ground gave at each step. He crawled along the trunk of a tree and unexpectedly came upon the monkey. The little creature was still huddled against the log and showed no fear of Piang; it whined louder, seeming to sense the rapidly approaching danger.

Suddenly the monkey jumped into the tree, and Piang followed it with his eyes. It seemed to be gathering itself for a greater leap. As Bruce watched the spider, so Piang, fascinated, kept his eyes on the little wild thing. Gradually it dawned on him that the monkey had discovered an avenue of escape! The island had veered off and was fast approaching a monster boulder that would surely break it in two. Growing on it were vines and trees hanging far out over the water.

Piang stumbled along and somehow made his way to the burial tree. A moment he paused, awed by a superstitious fear of the dead, but a violent clap of thunder terrified him into forgetting all but his immediate danger. There were only a few moments left; if he could reach the top of the tree before the island dashed past the vines, he might save himself. His hands tremblingly sought the notches sacred to the dead; he scrambled upward. Thorns pierced his tired limbs; vines and creepers took vicious delight in fastening themselves upon him. The tree shook as the monkey jumped farther out on a limb, and the movement seemed to put new strength in Piang. As he struggled up, a calmness came to him. He

carefully watched the monkey, and when it crouched for the spring, Piang searched the approaching vines for one strong enough to hold him.

In a moment it would all be over. What if he jumped too soon or too late? What if the vine proved too frail? The monkey was crouching for the leap. The branch that Piang was clinging to bent under his weight. The monkey flashed through the air, made a desperate grab, and swung out of sight. In a daze, Piang prepared to follow; breathlessly he watched for his chance. With a prayer on his lips and with a mighty effort, he sprang straight out into space. His hands closed over something small and round. A dizziness came over him.

In dismay he felt the vine give, as if uncoiling itself from a windlass. Down, down he fell until his feet touched the soggy earth of the island. Still the vine uncoiled; the island crashed into the boulder. Desperately Piang tried to climb the vine, but its slackness offered no resistance. Slowly the island began to tip, to slide over the falls, and Piang made one more effort to save himself. As he grasped the vine more firmly, it brought up with a quick jerk, almost breaking his hold.

He felt the vine tighten, heard it creak and groan under his weight, and finally it lifted him clear of the island, swinging him far out over the abyss like a weight at the end of a pendulum.

His island slid from under him, leaving him suspended in mid air; in the second that he hung there, he could see the cruel rocks below, the seething, steaming water. The stately funeral tree gently inclined to the fall, and, with stern dignity, took the plunge. The dying babui, flung far out into space, added its diminutive death-wail to the din. The vine trembled over the chasm. Piang felt a quick rush of air, a sickening feeling, as if he were rapidly falling; with a tremendous impetus the vine swung back, crashed into a tree, and, with the agility of the monkey, Piang climbed to safety.

“There is no God but Allah!” came from the strained lips, and the boy turned his eyes toward the setting sun as it struggled to pierce the gloom.

“*Bulutu!*” (“Rainbow!”) he cried, and a faint smile flitted across his bruised and bleeding face.

Startled by a movement at his side, Piang found the frightened monkey trying to thrust its head under his arm. Taking the trembling little creature up, Piang pillowed it against his breast. And so these strange companions, the timid, wild monkey and the gentle, savage boy crouched in the tree together, watching the typhoon beat out its fury on the helpless things of nature, and ever clearer grew the *bulutu* as it wreathed and crowned Piang's goal, Ganassi Peak.

Third Adventure

The Hermit of Ganassi Peak

The silence was oppressive. Piang stumbled along through the tangle of vines and weeds, tired and foot-sore. Would he never find the path to the peak? And was there really a mysterious old man who had lived up there for over a hundred years? Sicto was somewhere on that mountain, striving to reach the summit too, and the pandita had said that the boy who arrived first, was the real charm boy. They had both started from the *barrio* (village) the same day; Sicto had plunged into the jungle, while Piang had chosen the river and lake. He shuddered at the recollection of his many narrow escapes during the journey. Where was his enemy, Sicto, now? Had he found an easier route, and was he already with old Ganassi, receiving the rites of charm boy?

Unfamiliar with the vegetation on the mountain, Piang was afraid to touch the many strange fruits, so he contented himself with bananas and cocoanuts, and for water he drank dew from the enormous pitcher-plants. The jungle was thick, and it was difficult to decide in what direction to go, so Piang had to climb trees to get his bearings. One day just as he was starting up a tall tree, he was startled by a sound. Something was crashing through the bushes below him. Visions of terrible mountain animals flashed through his head, and he hastily scrambled up the tree. On came the creature, now pausing a moment, now plunging into the mesh of vines, tearing them asunder, always following the path Piang had made. Preparing himself for some strange beast, the boy drew bow and waited. Suddenly he started. A cold chill gripped him. That sound! It was a voice—Sicto's! Crouching against the tree, Piang hoped to escape detection, but just as Sicto passed beneath the tree, Piang's bow slipped and fell to the ground. Sicto jumped aside and looked up:

"Oh, ho, my pretty Piang! So I've got you, have I?" The bully started up the tree.

Like a flash Piang was away. As easily as any monkey he swung himself into the

next tree, and before Sicto realized it, Piang was taunting him from the very top of a far-off tree. More agile and much smaller than Sicto, Piang could easily travel in this way, and after a few unsuccessful attempts to follow, Sicto jumped to the ground. Slyly making his way along on foot, Sicto watched his rival. When Piang thought he had outdistanced his pursuer, he slipped to the ground and started off.

"Lēēēēēē lèlèlèlè ouiiiit!" The war-cry rang through the jungle, and Piang knew that his life depended on his fleet-footedness. Over fallen tree trunks, through dense cogon grass, Piang fled. His feet were pierced by wicked thorns, and everything he touched seemed to throw out a defense against him. Bamboo caught at his clothing and held him prisoner; *bajuca* vines clutched his weapons, hurling him to the ground. Sicto was gaining on him. After poor Piang had made the path through the jungle, it was easy enough for Sicto to follow.

On, up, fled the boy. He came to a clearing through which a mountain stream was bubbling. The sun beat down; the stifling heat rising from rotting vegetation took his breath away, but Piang ran on. What was that black hole yawning in the mountain side? With a gasp, Piang realized he was at the mouth of the haunted cave.

The brook, flowing swiftly down the mountain, plunged into the cave and disappeared, to come to the surface about two miles away. It was the home of the most terrible reptiles and animals, and the souls of wicked people waited there for Judgment Day.

Piang scanned the precipitous cliffs, the impenetrable jungle, in search of an avenue of escape. He was trapped. A gloating cry from Sicto decided him. Sicto was a coward and would be afraid to follow him, so Piang ran toward the cave. Had not the pandita said that Ganassi would be with the real charm boy, and was not Piang sure of that protection? Who but Piang was the charm boy?

Piang's courage began to flag, however, as he caught the cold, damp odor from the cave, but he bravely plunged into the forbidding-looking cavern. Man had probably never set foot in that place before. Creeping along, he peered into the increasing darkness, but could see nothing. A shriek startled him, and the sight that met his eyes made his blood run cold. Sicto had started to follow Piang, but just as he came to the opening, a huge python slipped across the mouth of the

cave, waving its enormous head from side to side. Sicto, trembling with fear, retreated into the jungle, and as Piang saw him disappear, he longed to be out again, fighting Sicto, anything, rather than penned up in the cave with that frightful snake and the unknown horrors. There was no turning back, however, for that sentinel continued to slip and slide across the opening, and Piang bravely faced the two miles that lay between him and the other end of the underground passage.

The air was heavy and moldy; the sides of the cave wet and slippery. Once his hand touched something that moved, and he almost fainted.

“I am the real charm boy,” he whispered, “and nothing will hurt me. Ganassi, the wonder man, is with me. Forward!”

Courageous and determined, the boy pressed on. A muffled cry resounded through the passage. Flattening himself against the slimy wall, Piang listened. He could not imagine what had made the sound, and he unsheathed his knife. At times he followed the bed of the stream, wading ankle-deep in the water, but the slippery stones turned or tripped him, and when he stepped on something that moved, he groaned and jumped to the narrow shelf-like ledge that overhung the water.

A faint light stole through the gloom. Was it the end? But surely not, he had not gone more than a few hundred yards. He hurried forward. Brighter, clearer, it grew. Suddenly the brook made a sharp turn, and he found himself in a high, vaulted chamber, sparkling and shimmering in the light from above. Piang was so glad to see daylight again, faint as it was, that he did not stop to consider new dangers, and eagerly ran forward. He searched the sides for support on which to climb to the crevices, but the rotting vines and moss that lined the walls gave at his touch, and he fell back discouraged. Something crumbled under his body, and he discovered to his horror that he had fallen on a skeleton. A man had been here before him, then? But closer examination proved the bones to be those of a *packda* (ape). Snakes and worms wriggled out of the skeleton, and Piang shrank back in fear. The dread hamadryad leered at him; poisonous toads and lizards scurried for cover. How many more of these creatures would he encounter before escaping from this dungeon? Would Ganassi protect him and lead him safely through? Something seemed to tell the boy that he was safe and with renewed faith, he prepared to continue the journey.

Everywhere the beauty of nature asserted itself. Pale green ferns seemed to hold out beseeching arms toward the light; moss crept upward hopefully, softening the rough ledges with its velvet touch. Great stalagmites and stalactites, smothered in the embrace of lichen and creepers, accepted the homage of the plant life indifferently. Piang was blind to the sublimity of his surroundings, as he hurried on. Carefully he stepped on the ledge; warily he held out his bolo to ward off surprises. A sudden hiss made him leap into the stream, and shuddering, he plunged on, down the black path. Would the stream lead him to the sunlight again? Or was he burrowing into the depths of the earth, never again to breathe the air of life?

Finally, after almost giving up hope, he heard the distant call of a mina-bird. The jungle! Frantically he worked his way forward, wondering if the mate to the sentinel at the other opening would bar his passage. Daylight! Faintly, at the end of the long tunnel, he could see the blessed green of the forest, but his cry of joy was stilled; his hope of safety vanished. Again that mournful cry echoed through the cavern, and he gave himself up for lost. The souls of the wicked were pursuing him, would capture him, and make him pay for intruding upon them! Piang reeled as he heard a splash in the water behind him; he caught at something for support; it writhed out of his hand. Paralyzed with fear, the boy scarcely breathed. On came the pursuer, stealthily, warily. Reaching the end of his endurance, Piang wheeled, and faced the cave. Something paused, whined, and a streak flew past him. The fetid odor of a living creature brought him to his senses, and his anxious eyes discerned the outline of a civet-cat making its way to the opening.

As he struggled through those last few rods, Piang thought he had never worked so hard in his life, but finally he lay in the sunshine, safe, free, and unafraid.

For two days Piang struggled upward. Everything was strange to him; the growths and trees were different from those of the lowlands. Scrub palms, covered with small buds, on which the dread packda feeds, began to appear, and Piang anxiously scanned the trees. There is no creature in the jungle that has the strength of the packda. Only the crocodile and the python are foolish enough to attack it, but the crocodile’s jaws are torn asunder, and the python is clawed to pieces.

“Piang!” The name echoed and vibrated through the forest. Who had called him? Trembling with fear, filled with apprehension, Piang took refuge in a tree. From the branches he scanned the surrounding forest. Was a spirit following him from the haunted cave, or was it the hated Sicto?

“Piang!” It came softly this time, as if from a greater distance. The underbrush moved, and Piang prayed that it might not be a spirit come to destroy him. The bush rustled, cracked, and parted as a dazzling white head made its appearance. Piang shut his eyes, dreading what was to come. Almost swooning, he slipped, lost his hold, and went crashing through the branches. Stunned by the fall, it was sometime before he regained consciousness, but the first thing he was aware of, was a hot breath on his face. Slowly he opened his eyes, wondering if he was dreaming. There, bending over him, was a marvelous white fawn.

Startled and ashamed, Piang looked at the lovely thing. He put out his hand and the animal laid her soft muzzle in his palm, allowing him to caress her. What did she want? Were some of her babies in trouble? With his arm about the fawn’s neck, Piang allowed himself to be led along a well defined path, trodden by many feet.

“Piang!” Again his name was called, but for some reason fear had been banished from his heart, and he advanced without a qualm. Presently they came to one of the numerous jungle clearings. The sun did not burn at this altitude, and Piang took a deep breath of the fresh, crisp air. A flapping of wings startled him, and before he could prevent, a brilliant mina-bird circled his head and gently lighted on his shoulder. A soft white mist was floating around and below him. The clouds! He was in them, “the breath of the wind,” and he thought that this must be fairyland.

“Piang!” This time the voice was near at hand. Both creatures responded to the call, and Piang suffered himself to be led onward. The fawn stopped near a gigantic banian-tree. It was the only tree in the clearing and spread over more than an acre of ground, enticing the surrounding creepers and orchids to its shelter. Piang had seen these trees before, but never such a large one. The banian is like a huge tent; each branch sends shoots to the ground, which take root and become additional trunks, and year after year the tree increases its acreage; hundreds of men can find shelter under these jungle temples.

“Piang!” The voice came from within the tree. Astonished, Piang watched the mina-bird flit through the sunlight and disappear into the banya. The fawn paused, looked gravely into the boy’s eyes, and with stately mien, walked into the tree.

“Thank you, my little friends, for bringing Piang to Ganassi,” said the voice from within.

Ganassi! So this was the haunt! This lovely natural dwelling, the dread Ganassi’s home! Expectantly, Piang waited. Was Ganassi a man, or was he only a voice, the heart of this banian-tree? While he stood gazing at the tree, waiting for the spirit to address him, or the man to appear, he was startled by a black, shiny head, and the loathsome coils of a python, writhing in the branches. The serpent! Piang had heard that it could fascinate animals, keeping them prisoner by its mystic powers, until ready to devour them. Ganassi was, then, an evil spirit in the form of a serpent! Piang uttered a low cry.

“So, my little pet, you have frightened Piang, the charm boy! You must not do that.”

The snake, responding to the voice, stuck its head through the foliage and slipped from sight.

The voice! The voice! It had called him the charm boy! Piang’s fear abated, and he said tremblingly:

“O great Ganassi, will you not show yourself to me, Piang?” Breathlessly the boy listened. The branches swayed, parted, and the mina-bird floated through. The python, head erect, followed, and next came the graceful white form of his first friend. On its neck it supported a weird creature. Bent and wrinkled, was the little old man; a few strands of white hair flowed from his chin, and his eyebrows and lashes had almost disappeared. Toothless, almost hairless as he was, there was that about Ganassi that precluded horror, for his sparkling eyes were kind, and his mouth gently curved into a smile. Piang fell on his knees. The hermit surrounded by his pets, advanced and raised the boy.

“My little Piang! So you have come to Ganassi at last. He has known for many years that you would come. Long before you were born he knew, and his heart is

glad to welcome you."

"Is it true, O wise man, that I am the real charm boy, and that I shall lead Kali Pandapatan's tribe to victory?"

"You have spoken, my son. It was over you, not the impostor, Sicto, that the mystic star hovered on the night of your birth."

At the mention of his enemy's name, Piang quickly scanned the surrounding jungle, but Ganassi's soft chuckle reassured him.

"Have no fear, child. Sicto can never harm you, nor will he ever reach Ganassi. The python would smother him; the mina-bird would peck out his eyes; the gentle fawn would lead him astray."

"How do you know all this, O Ganassi?"

"The question shall be answered, Piang, because you are charm boy, but should other lips utter it, they should never speak again. Enter."

Ganassi held back the slender trunk-roots of the banian. Curiously, the boy looked about. All the wonder of the jungle seemed centered in this sacred spot. A forest of stems and aerial roots greeted his eyes; from overhead the graceful and rare Vanda lowii sent inquisitive blooms to caress his cheek; they mingled with his dark hair, scenting the air with their strange fragrance. From tree-ferns, nestling in the branches, tiny heads peeped out, and little feathered creatures chirruped a welcome. A civet-cat was lazily stroking its face with one paw. Something large and hairy stirred on a nest of dried grass, and sleepily a full-grown packda stretched himself and gazed at Piang. The python approached it, and a hairy paw was extended; his snakeship coiled up beside the ape, and the mina-bird flew to the ape's shoulder.

Piang could scarcely believe his eyes. Here all was at peace, and natural enemies forgot to fight and kill.

"Piang, all these creatures are going to be your friends."

Piang seated himself on the soft turf opposite Ganassi; the fawn nosed her head under Piang's arm and sank by his side.

“The charm that I am about to give you will protect you from tempest, danger, and deceit: no storm can destroy you; no animal can creep upon you unaware, and no man can lie to you. You will become the wise man of Mindanao, the guide of your people, the heart of the island.”

Solemnly the boy followed the words of the old man.

“You shall be taught all the truths of the nation, and you shall pass them along to the generations.”

Piang’s face brightened. At last he was to know the answers to many puzzling questions.

“Ask what you will, boy. I will answer you truthfully and justly, telling you the things as they are, as they have been since the day of creation.”

“Why, O Ganassi, must Mohammedans never eat the flesh of the wild boar? It is forbidden that we touch pork, yet the Christians find it good.” Ganassi’s brow clouded:

“Have you never heard of the Christian’s God? Do you not know that we hate Christians because they believe a Son of God could be killed by man? They call him Christ, but we know that the Almighty is Toohan, omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. Their prophet Isa [Jesus] once visited the great Mahomet, and when Mahomet demanded that he divine what was in the room beyond, Isa refused, saying that he had no wish to show power.

“‘Answer correctly, or you pay for it with your life!’ thundered Mahomet. Isa then replied that he had two strange animals in the room.

“‘Wrong!’ cried Mahomet. ‘You shall now be killed. My two beloved grandchildren are behind those doors!’ but when they were flung open, two filthy boars ran out; Isa had changed the children into pigs! And so, Piang, no true Mohammedan will eat the flesh of the wild boar. Beware, lest you ever let a Christian hear this story; it is not for us to acknowledge that Isa is greater than Mahomet.”

Piang was shocked. No wonder his people abstained from the flesh of the boar.

“Can you tell me what makes the sea rise and fall, and why the tides rush in and flow out again?” asked Piang.

A smile broke over Ganassi’s leathery features.

“In a far distant sea lives a giant crab; when he goes into his hole, the water is pushed out, and when he comes forth for food, the water rushes in.” It was so simple that Piang laughed heartily. The mina-bird, startled, squawked an admonition and fluttered to Piang’s lap.

“Where do we go when we die,” asked the inquisitive boy.

Ganassi scouted the Christian’s belief that heaven is in the clouds. Were they not in the clouds now?

On its neck it supported a weird creature

On its neck it supported a weird creature

“When a child is born, the soul enters the body through the opening left in the skull. This hole soon closes, confining the spirit within. When death comes to a household in Moroland, have you not seen the master of the house mount to the roof and remain there through the night? Well, that is to prevent the evil spirit, Bal-Bal, from entering. This dread creature sails through the air like a flying Lemur (monkey), tears the thatch from the roof with his terrible curved nails, scatters the defenders, and licks up the body with his forked tongue of fire. The soul of this deceased never reaches heaven. Your charm, Piang, will ward him off.” The boy sat, mouth open, eyes staring. “A soul is guided to a cave that leads deep down in the earth, and there, between two gigantic trees, stands Taliakoo, a giant, who tends the eternal fires. Taliakoo inquires of the newcomer what he has to say for himself, and to the surprise of the soul, something within it answers. Conscience, the witness, replies, and according to the decree of this strange arbiter, the fate of the soul is decided. If nothing but ill can be said for it, it is pitched into the fire; if it has been good, it is allowed to pass on to the abode of the blessed. The soul that meets with neither fate, is punished according to its sins: if it has lied, its mouth pains; if it has been a thief, its hands itch and burn, and eventually, after the period of punishment is over, it precedes to heaven, cleansed of its sins.”

The big ape, sleeping soundly, emitted a snore so human, that Piang laughed.

“Why does the packda look so like a man, Ganassi?”

“Because he once *was* a man,” was the startling reply. “He was lazy and, instead of working, climbed trees and hunted minas (monkey-nuts). A companion, becoming vexed, uttered a curse on him and threw a stick at him. These things clung to the lazy man: the stick became a tail, and the curse deprived him of speech. Ashamed of himself, he and his family took to the trees, never to return.”

Many questions were put to the wise old hermit, and his ready answers astonished, but satisfied, Piang. Night came on, and the strange company lay down together under the shelter of the banian and slept.

Piang was very happy. He had reached Ganassi, was proclaimed the real charm boy, and was at last to receive the glorious charm. Some said it was a star tossed to Moroland by the Creator, that it was the emblem of power, and that he who wore it would be filled with a divine understanding. Others believed it to be the great diamond of Borneo, captured many years before from the pirates of that fierce land. Piang did not care which it proved to be, as long as it shone and sparkled with beauty. All agreed that its brilliance dazzled the eye, that its magnificence was unrivaled. Ganassi had waited a hundred years for the charm boy who was destined to wear it, and at last the star had proclaimed Piang to be the lucky boy. Through Piang’s dreams flitted the visions of shimmering jewels of gold, and the happy smile on the boy’s lips made old Ganassi’s heart glad.

“Up, up with you, sleepyhead!” called Ganassi. “The sun will catch you napping if you do not hurry.”

Piang sleepily rubbed his eyes and sat up. Horror and fright seized him as he beheld the body of the python curled up beside him and the packda contemplating him with indifference. From the doorway Ganassi smilingly watched him.

“Come, my subjects are assembling; they will all assist in the ceremony of the sacred charm.” The charm! Piang remembered and jumped to his feet. Creatures

from all over the mountain were answering Ganassi's weird call; the air was full of fluttering birds, and monkeys came swinging toward them. Ganassi gave to each a sweet or a fruit.

"Piang, no dato can boast of a grander court than Ganassi, eh?" chuckled the old man.

It was indeed marvelous. Ganassi seemed to reign among the jungle folk as royally as any king. He chastised, praised, petted, and scolded; and one and all the beasts loved their wizened little master. Solemnly Ganassi went about his task. From his bosom he took a small object, smoothed, and caressed it. Piang trembled with excitement. Ganassi called each animal, and they responded to the beloved voice.

"Piang, my creatures approve my action. This is the sacred charm. One and all the animals have blessed it, and through your life, if you have faith, nothing will harm you." Piang's eyes darted around the strange circle, and, indeed, the animals accepted him as naturally as they did Ganassi.

"The time has come, Piang. The heavens have watched over you from babyhood, and you have proved your worth and bravery many times. I am ready to reward you. Come!"

Trembling, the boy advanced. Kneeling before the hermit, Piang clasped his hands and prayed that he might be worthy of the great honor about to be bestowed upon him. Gently the wise man laid his hands on Piang's head; softly he muttered a few words; then something dropped around the boy's neck.

"You may rise, Piang. You are now invincible!"

Bounding to his feet, Piang clasped the charm.

"I cannot see it, Ganassi. May I unclasp it to behold its beauty and splendor?" Keenly the old man looked into the face of the boy, measuring him, studying him.

"And if it is not beautiful, shiny, and bright, boy, what then?"

"Oh, but it must be, Ganassi! It is the most valuable thing in the world!"

“You may unclasp it, Piang.”

Clumsily the boy fumbled with the fastenings; eagerly his eyes sought the charm. His face went blank; tears sprang to his eyes. He was holding a tiny gourd, no larger than a monkey-nut, suspended from a necklace of polished crocodile teeth. His disappointed eyes met Ganassi’s, still studying him.

“Are you not satisfied, Piang? Are you then unworthy of the great honor bestowed upon you? Do you think that to be of value a thing must sparkle and shine?” Piang gathered himself, hid his disappointment, and bravely answered:

“I am satisfied.”

“Shake the gourd, Piang.”

A hollow rattle came from the immature growth, and Piang’s face brightened.

“Its worth may be inside. Who knows? Only Ganassi, the wonder man, and he will tell no one.” The keen old eyes twinkled as they watched Piang’s face.

The mystery! It was again established, and Piang was happy. Maybe the precious stones were inside and some day would be revealed to him! As if reading his thoughts, Ganassi said:

“The charm must remain intact to wield its spell; if the gourd should ever be broken or stolen, both you and the charm lose the mystic power lately bestowed upon it. Piang, the source of power is faith! Believe, be honest, be true, and the world holds naught but joy for you and Kala Pandapatan’s people.”

A silence fell upon them all. The solemn words had sobered Piang, and he gazed into the eyes of the wise man.

“Begone, boy. The sun rises, and you have many miles to go. To-night I will light the signal fires and tell your tribe that you have come and gone, that Piang is charm boy of Kali Pandapatan’s people forever.”

Fourth Adventure

The Fire Tree

The velvety dusk of the jungle was pierced here and there by the brilliant, crimson buds of the fire-tree. For weeks all Moroland had waited for their coming, the heralds of the combat season. During the harvest time there is a truce in these turbulent islands, but when the crops have been gathered, the natives become restless and long to sally forth to conquer. The myth that victory comes only to the tribe whose fire-tree has bloomed is implicitly believed, and impatiently the Moros await this announcement of the combat season. Paying no heed to their capital city, Manila, these merry little isles revel in intrigue, and there is no sport in Moroland that can compare with the combat. Tribes go forth to conquer and enslave others; the men look forward to it as an opportunity to prove their prowess; the women thrill at the possibility of capture. True, they may become the slaves of some unscrupulous dato, but there is always the romantic chance that they may fall into the hands of the hero of their dreams and become the favorite of his seraglio.

“Where is Piang?” Dato Kali Pandapatan addressed a copper-colored slave who salaamed and replied:

“In the jungle, O most high one, searching for the blooming fire branch.”

“It is well.” Kali Pandapatan, with folded arms, paused in the doorway of his hut, watching expectantly the only opening into the frowning jungle.

“He comes! He comes!” rippled through the barrio.

The eager inhabitants gathered to learn if the time was yet ripe. Into their midst ran a slim, bronze lad, waving above his head a branch, almost bare of green, but aflame with crimson blossoms. There was a hush. Women gathered their children to them; men grasped their weapons more firmly, and the young boys

looked with longing eyes at the fortunate Piang.

"*Ooola!*" exclaimed Piang. Every lip repeated the word; every knee was bent, and the tribe lay prostrate at his feet; only old Kali Pandapatan remained standing, eyeing Piang with satisfaction. For a full two minutes the crowd remained motionless. The palm-trees whispered and crackled above them, and the river sent a soft accompaniment to the jungle music. To and fro above their heads Piang majestically waved the branch, until finally one bold voice demanded:

"*Anting-anting!*" ("The charm, the charm!") Piang defiantly bared his breast, exposing the sacred charm suspended from his necklace of crocodile teeth. There was moaning in the crowd, sobs of excitement, and protests of impatience, but every head remained lowered until the august relic was again covered. Piang began to chant in a high, nasal voice, and the others rose and joined in creating a weird, monotonous drawl. Like a statue stood the boy, holding the branch high above his head while they circled round and round him. Faster, faster they whirled; in a frenzy they shrieked; some fell and others tramped them in their excitement. Suddenly the boy stamped his feet, uttering a sharp cry. Every eye turned toward him.

"To the river!" he cried and lead the way. Two boys hurried forward and were on their knees in a twinkling, hollowing out a place in the sand, dog fashion. With many incantations and prayers, the branch was planted in the hole, the damp sand laid carefully around the base, and the two proud boys left to watch. If the flowers of the fire tree faded before the scorching sun set, it was destined that the tribe would be unsuccessful in its ventures for the season; should the blooms defy the rays of the sun until the dews of evening rested on its petals, old Kali Pandapatan could sally forth unafraid to meet his fierce brothers of the jungle.

Patiently they waited through the long, hot day; many eyes were anxiously turned toward the sacred emblem, but none dared approach. The little Moro boys, in whose care the branch had been left, squatted in silent patience. No butterfly was suffered to light on the delicate petals, no droning bee allowed to gather the honey of its cups. On dragged the sweltering afternoon. Piang and the dato were the only ones allowed to know that the branch was still fresh, but only Piang knew that its flowers had been dipped into a cool stream before it came to the tribe to foretell its victories or defeats.

“Allah, il Allah!” the call rang through the village. Sunset, the hour of prayer! Now, now they would know. Solemnly old Pandita Asin led the chant while the Moros prostrated themselves in supplication, and the dying sun slipped over the mountains, touching every tree and flower with its gold.

There was great feasting and celebration in the barrio that night. Women donned their most brilliant sarongs, tinted their silver-tipped finger nails with henna, and streaked their brows with splotches of white rice paste. The men twisted their hair up in gorgeous head-cloths, and the knot bristled with creeses. Suspended from their many-colored sashes were barongs, campilans or bolos, and tiny bells were fastened into the lobes of their ears. The brilliantly striped breeches seemed likely to burst, so tightly were they drawn over shapely limbs.

The branch had not withered. It had withstood the scorching rays of the sun. Kali Pandapatan was invincible.

“Piang!” called Kali Pandapatan.

The noises of the barrio were hushed. Their dato had spoken. The name was repeated, and gradually the call reached the charm boy, idly dangling his feet in a clear brook, attracting and scattering the curious fish. He sprang to his feet, listened, and darted off. His sleek, well fashioned limbs glistened in the sunlight, and the sarong that was gracefully flung over one shoulder floated out behind like a flame fanned by the wind. Twined in his long black hair was a wreath of scarlet fire flowers; every face brightened as he fled past.

“You have again brought the sign, Piang. When do we fight?” asked Kali Pandapatan.

“Not until we have delivered the *siwaka* (tribute) to the sultan at Cotabato. The fire-tree has not yet bloomed in the enemy’s country, and we may yet pass through safely,” Piang replied.

“You have spoken,” said the dato and laid his palms on the youth’s head.

Though the latent passion of battle stirred in the Moros’ breasts, they were

compelled to heed. Piang had proved a wise charm boy, and the tribe must obey him. Each season the siwaka must be carried over the steep, treacherous trail down to the coast, and those detailed to accompany the slaves who carried the bags of rice and *comoties* (sweet-potatoes), dreaded the trip. Added to the pitfalls of the obscure trail, were hostile territories to be traversed, and if the enemies' fire-tree had bloomed, they would surely be attacked and probably despoiled of their cargo.

"We will need warriors to guard the siwaka, chief," Piang reminded Kali, and the chief nodded and gave a quiet order. Every man disappeared from the streets. When they returned, in place of the gaudy, tight trousers, they were wearing loose, black pantaloons, the garb of battle. The women, true to the feminine nature, wailed and cried aloud, but in their hearts they, too, were glad that the quiet, monotonous days were over, and that before nightfall they might sleep in some strange cota (fort), slave or wife of the victorious dato.

"Piang," murmured a soft voice at the charm boy's elbow, and he turned to find the little slave girl, Papita, timidly looking up at him.

"*Chiquita?*" ("Little one?") he questioned.

"Sicto goes with you. Beware of him, for he would kill you!"

"I am not afraid," proudly answered Piang, "but why would Sicto kill me?"

Solemnly the little girl touched Piang's breast where lay hidden the sacred charm.

"He would kill you so that he might be charm boy of the tribe," whispered the girl. Piang laughed gaily, patted his little friend on the arm, and bounded to the head of the forming column. Nevertheless he noticed Sicto's sly, surly glance as the slaves and warriors bent before him.

Amid beating of tom-toms, wails of women, and howls of dogs, the column, single file, dipped into the jungle and was lost to sight. Anxiously Piang watched for signs of the fire-tree as they slipped along through the enemies' country, but as yet the buds had not stirred, and he was thankful that the warm rains had not come to coax them into glow. That whole day the party toiled silently through

the dense cogon grass that covered the mesa. High above their heads waved the wiry, straw-colored spines. Its sharp edges cut into the flesh, tore through cloths, stinging and paining old wounds. Not a breath of air reached them through the impenetrable mass, and the sun beat down on them mercilessly. For long stretches the path tunneled through the grass, boring deeper into the tangle, and they were almost suffocated by the choking dust that stung their nostrils.

"The boom! We must cut it!"

"The boom! We must cut it!"

"*Iki!*" ("Beware!") called Sicto. Every bolo was out, every savage ready, but the word was passed along the line that the leader, Sicto, had stepped on a snake. Entirely surrounded by the cruel grass the column paused. The heat, increased by the oven-like tunnel grew steadily worse, and those in the rear gasped and fought for breath. They could hear the scuffle as the leaders fought the reptile, and the fetid odor of the dread creature added to their discomfort. Sicto had been swinging along ahead, stepping lightly on the mattress-like turf, when he felt something move under his foot. It was well under the matted grass, but it was wise to despatch the creature if possible. Piang came to his assistance, and the snake, probably gorged with rotting meat, exuded a terrible odor as it was stabbed to death. Kicking the wriggling remains out of the path the column pushed on, wondering if they would ever come to the end of the stifling tunnel.

"Will it rain soon, Piang?" panted Tooloowee, as he toiled along behind the charm boy.

"I cannot tell yet, but by sunset we shall know."

Toward evening the grass thinned perceptibly, and the steaming, aching bodies felt the cool air rustling through the stalks.

"We are near the jungle; soon we shall be cool," sighed Kali Pandapatan. Yes, it was growing cooler; they could breathe again, but Piang knew that before morning they would be shivering with cold, that the rain would come in the night. He smelled it, the rain that would not come to help them through the arduous day.

When it came, there was a shout of joy. Kali looked anxiously at his sweating

tribesmen. After the terrific heat of the day, this rain would chill them, and fever would surely follow; he must keep them on the move. There was a murmur of protest as the order was given to move; they had rested a scant two hours. By nine o'clock they were under way again, struggling with the jungle as they had fought the mesa. The downpour was straight and steady. It burrowed through the thick foliage and ran down the tree trunks in torrents. The footing became uncertain, and Piang warned Kali to look out for broken limbs. For many yards the path lay along fallen tree trunks, slippery with moss and mold. The footing became so treacherous that the order was given to crawl on all fours, and the progress was painfully slow and tedious. Frequently they strayed from the path and were forced to halt. The torches at the head of the column twinkled and flickered fitfully, but they only seemed to make the darkness more visible; they sputtered and flared, but the flames resisted the rain, and to the weary Moros they seemed like good spirits sent to guide them through the terrible jungle night.

Palm leaves, strewn in the path, had long clusters of needle-like spines at their bases that pierced their feet, and the cry "*tinick!*" ("thorns!") rang out frequently through the night. Finally it became necessary to march close up, in solid line, each man with his hand on the shoulder of the man in front. When the leader warned "*Cajui!*" ("Log!"), each repeated it as he stumbled over the obstacle, and if one fell, half the line would be bowled over.

"*Tubig Malakee!*" cried Piang. ("The big water!") Yes, the dull murmur of the river was plainly heard through the dripping rain, and they all quickened their pace in the desire to rid themselves of the jungle. Piang attempted to guide them across, but he walked into the water and sank from sight, and there was a cry of horror, for it seemed that one of the many crocodiles had dragged him under. When he came up sputtering and splashing, none the worse for his dip, he chided them for their little faith and pointed significantly to his charm. He had miscalculated in the blackness of the night and could not locate the ford. A drizzling rain was still falling; great hairy-legged spiders skated over the water, making things grewsome; the large lily-pad leaves moved suspiciously, so Kali gave the orders to camp for the rest of the night.

Silently the Moros prepared their camp. Deftly the ends of low-lying branches were pinioned to the ground with forked sticks; over these supports hemp and banana leaves were strewn to shield the sleepers from the heavy dew and rain.

After many attempts a fire was coaxed into life, much to the dismay of the jungle folk. A beautiful golden fly-catcher, probably mistaking the glare of the fire for dawn, awoke and began to sing at the top of its tiny voice; a parrot screamed lustily. A venerable old monkey, sleepily rubbing its eyes, shook its fist, muttering profanely. Sicto, exasperated at the persistent maledictions, raised his bow.

“Do not kill the monkey, Sicto,” warned Piang. “It is not good to kill in the jungle except for food or self-protection!”

A scowl was the only reply, but the big mestizo lowered his bow and turned over on his bed of leaves.

“Kali, we are no longer safe,” Piang whispered as he crouched over the improvised bed of his chief.

“Sssshhhh,” he warned, finger on lip. “Do not wake the others.” Then he pointed toward a spot where hoards of fireflies clustered around one tree, twinkling and swerving to and fro. It was a beautiful sight, but far from a novel one to these two.

“The fire-tree!” muttered Kali.

“Yes,” answered Piang. “The rain has brought the blooms to the valley, and we will be attacked to-morrow!” Silently they gazed at the strange tree. Fireflies abandon every tree and shrub for the fire-tree the moment it puts forth its buds, and nothing can coax them away until the ominous scarlet blossoms have drooped and fallen to the ground.

“We dare not cross the river now, Kali,” said Piang, “but we can build rafts and float down to Cotabato.”

And so it was decided. Early in the muggy dawn the warriors set to work constructing rafts out of bamboo and ratan (palm), and soon the siwaka was loaded and the journey continued by water.

Arrogantly Piang rode at the head of the procession, his proud little head crowned with a wreath of fire-tree blooms, the corners of his raft decorated with sprigs of the flaming buds. Cautiously they poled down the swift stream,

avoiding treacherous logs and snapping crocodiles. Piang chuckled with delight as they stole along, for the enemy would not discover the ruse until they were far away.

It was some time before Sicto was missed. His name was passed from raft to raft, but none had seen him that morning. At first it was feared that one of the crocodiles had pulled him from a raft, but something seemed to tell Piang that the wily half-breed had stolen away to warn the enemy of Kali's strategy. Once the news of the rich booty to be captured and the prisoners to be taken had reached the valley people, nothing could keep them from pursuing, now that their fire-tree had bloomed. A solemn conclave was held.

The river is almost inaccessible from the jungle except at one point, the Big Bend. This is a favorite camping-ground of the valley people during the combat season; here their sacrifices are offered, their victims thrown to the crocodiles; they exercise full control of the river. If Sicto succeeded in warning the enemy before Kali reached that point there would be little hope of escape. Another force would surely be posted where he had embarked, cutting Kali off from his reinforcements at home. It was too late to attempt a retreat, however, hampered as they were with the cumbersome siwaka. Reach that bend first, they must.

"The charm, Piang," whispered Kali. Springing to his feet, the boy uttered a fierce "Oola." Every head bowed, and the sacred talisman was exposed.

"Forward, brothers!" he cried. "Forward with all your strength!"

The sun came out, and the dripping jungle began to steam. Palm leaves were constructed into hats to guard against sunstroke. Toward sunset they drew near the danger point. What was that monotonous sound dully vibrating through the jungle? Anxiously all eyes turned toward Piang.

"It is well, brothers," bravely comforted the boy. "Yes, that is the tom-tom of your enemy. Sicto has betrayed us, but have no fear. Piang, the charm boy leads you; take courage, and Allah, the Merciful, will give you victory." Piang commenced a murmur of prayer, and the Moros, joining in, filled the fast-settling night with whispered invocations which drifted off through the jungle.

Another council of war was held.

“Piang, if they have had time to lay the boom, what shall we do?”

“Go forward, Kali. Fight your way through the blockade,” answered the charm boy. “I will remain here with a few men to guard to siwaka. Do you hide at the first bend until the moon gives you light, then strike!”

The astonished warriors looked with misgiving from one to the other, but Kali answered firmly:

“It shall be so, Piang.”

The Moros were quickly assembled for the advance, and Kali paused by the side of Piang’s raft:

“If we are driven back, Piang, I will give three calls of the mina-bird. Answer likewise and retreat as quickly as possible.”

“Forward, Kali Pandapatan,” answered Piang with great dignity. “We will not retreat.”

Like ghosts in the night the little handful of men parted from their fellows and courageously faced the river and its dangers. The stream, swerving to the left, flows on to the apex of the Big Bend. As if regretting its departure from the true course, it doubles back and returns to take up its original direction at a point separated from its first departure by only a few rods. Between the two points is a waste of murky soil and sand, covered by dense growths of the jungle’s choicest variety of obstacles. Gloomily Piang contemplated the morass that lay between him and freedom. Long he sat, looking into the distance where he could almost see the river as it completed the curve and swept on to the ocean. What would he not give to be safely on the other side? Suddenly he sat up very straight. Why not? The sand was soft, the current swift. If he could only make a narrow ditch across the flats. Pulling his raft up to the right side of the river, he jumped to the bank, but when he sank ankle-deep in the soft, sticky earth, he climbed hastily back. Poling along he searched for a solid footing, but everywhere the marshy soil gave, and he abandoned his attempts to land. The night grew deeper, blacker.

“Why not, why not?” he whispered again. The others came scurrying up in response to his excited call.

“My brothers, Allah has sent me wisdom,” he announced. “It is your duty to obey me!” Eagerly they listened, glad of any distraction, but when Piang explained that he wanted them to abandon their safe bamboo floats for the treacherous flats, home of crocodiles and vermin, there was a murmuring protest. Anger blazed in Piang’s eyes.

“Am I not charm boy?” he demanded. “Any one who refuses to obey me will be thrown to the crocodiles!” Gradually the dominant nature overruled their timidities, and the protests subsided. Following Piang’s directions, strips of bamboo were cut, and the charm boy constructed light frames for his feet. They looked like snow-shoes, and when he bound one securely to each foot and jumped lightly to the bank, there was a cry of surprise. Piang, the wonderful, was indeed sent by Allah to guide them!

In a twinkling each Moro was supplied with similar mud-shoes, and like giant land-crabs, they flitted off across the marsh. Too wise to begin before reconnoitering, Piang led his men to the banks of the stream below to Big Bend. After hasty calculations he set them to work digging toward the head waters, following a line of ratan which he stretched to guide them.

Faster, faster flew the scoops and broad knives; deeper, wider grew the ditch that was to form a new river-bed. Piang was everywhere. He flew about on his light frames as lightly as a faun, directing the construction of new tools, calculating and measuring for the ditch.

Once he heard a call from the man guarding the rafts. A troop of wild hogs, attracted by the comoties, was trying to reach the rafts. Piang lighted a torch and hurled it among them. Crocodiles lurked near, and he ordered torches kept burning to frighten them also.

New difficulties confronted Piang. Would the water not at first rush through the ditch with such force that the rafts would be dashed to pieces? He held a branch in the current; it was torn from his grasp. With great foresight, he ordered all the floats to be taken up the river and securely moored. Back to the ditch he flew. Yes, yes, it was going to be successful! Before the attack was made by Kali Pandapatan, Piang would have the rafts through the cut-off, safely on their journey to the estuary. How surprised the dato would be when Piang advanced against the enemy from the other side of the Big Bend! He laughed softly,

hugging himself in boyish delight.

Away he pattered toward some men who were apparently in difficulty.

"*Halamantek!*" ("Leeches!") they called. They were pulling the slothful creatures off each other, but as soon as they freed themselves from the pests, more fell from above or crept up from the mud. Piang had foreseen this difficulty and had supplied himself with a small gourd filled with cocoanut oil, strongly saturated with cinchona (quinine). Offering some of his small store to the men, they gratefully rubbed the mixture into their flesh and bent to their task again. Piang exhorted them to work, warning them if the ditch was not completed before moonrise, all would be lost, and off he danced blending in with the night and its secrets like a picturesque *pampahilep* (jungle imp).

Only Moros could have accomplished so difficult a task in the dark. With a will they sturdily plied the crude tools and before the blackness of the night had been lifted by the rising moon, the excited little party was crowding around Piang as he examined the few remaining feet to be accomplished. Like a general meeting a crisis, Piang sharply gave his orders:

"Tooloowee, take your pole and stand on the far side of the ditch. When I give the signal, push the dyke with all your might." He stationed another powerful Moro opposite Tooloowee.

"Bungao, do you hasten to the rafts and prepare to resist the first flood that will sweep through the ditch."

When all was ready Piang raised his hand and the struggle began. Little by little the soft mud was worked away, and the current, feeling the banks weaken, seemed to lose interest in its natural bed. At first the stream only caressed its new-found outlet, but gradually it concentrated its forces, and, with a mighty rush, attacked the slight remaining resistance and went thundering off into the ditch. A smothered cry went up from the Moros:

"Piang! Piang!" How they loved their wise little charm boy!

But the work was not yet completed. Piang let go his anchorage and headed for the mouth of the ditch. The water was rapidly widening the work of their hands,

but in places the cut-off was barely wide enough to let the long slender floats by, and the water was rushing through with terrific force. The moon trembled on the brink of the jungle. Would they reach the other side in time to aid Kali? Suppose he was driven back before Piang and his men could attack from the other side?

"*Ala! ala!*" ("Quickly! quickly!") Piang called softly. His raft came up with a sudden jerk, almost throwing him into the seething, muddy torrent. Other rafts bumped into his, and soon a blockade was forming as the swift current bore them down upon him. Piang cut and slashed at the banks, tearing away protruding vines and accumulating driftwood. The moon, the moon, would it wait? Frantically he toiled while Tooloowee held off the other rafts with his long pole. When Piang's float was finally released, it bounded joyously along, nosing first one bank, then the other. The river! He could see it! Only a few rods more!

At the mouth of the ditch there was more trouble. Mud and debris had collected along the sides, but these were quickly worked through and they passed into the main river. Little short of a miracle had been performed. The ditch was growing wider and deeper every moment and judging from the enormous flow of water, it would not be long before the river deserted its circuitous route in favor of this direct one.

"Quick! quick!" whispered Piang. "Bungao, bind the siwaka rafts together and head for Cotabato. We will overtake you before sunrise." A faint cry reached them. Kali had begun the attack. In an agony of suspense the brave Moros worked their way up toward the Big Bend. Suddenly Piang grasped Tooloowee's arm and pointed toward a streak that ran across the river.

"The boom! We must cut it!" They made a dash toward the obstacle that stood in Kali's path, but an arrow whizzed by their heads.

"Tooloowee, we have been discovered. I go to cut the way!" and before the astonished Tooloowee could prevent, Piang had dived into the water and disappeared.

"Piang, the crocodiles, the crocodiles!" wailed Tooloowee, but the charm boy could not hear as he slipped up the muddy river, swimming easily under water. Just as Kali was preparing to retreat, driven back by the fierce storm of arrows, he gave the signal that had been agreed upon. Three loud calls in imitation of the

mina-bird went wailing through the night. What was Kali's surprise to hear the answer a few yards in front of him! And what was that dark shape bobbing up and down on the boom?

While he watched, amazed, the big clumsy logs divided, and swung slowly out, leaving the channel clear. Piang had severed the ratan thongs.

"Léééé lelele ouiiiiii!" crashed through the night, and Kali recognized his tribal war-cry.

"Piang! Piang!" he cried. The dark shape, clinging to the drifting boom answered, and Kali rushed toward it. Before the enemy could gather their scattered wits, the whole party was sweeping by, on toward freedom. As Kali bore down on Piang, the boy raised himself to meet the raft. It was coming at a terrific rate, and he feared it would knock him off the boom; measuring the distance, he prepared to leap. On came the raft, Kali leaning far over the side, arms extended to grab the boy. When Kali was only a few yards off, Piang screamed:

"*Boia! boia!*" ("Crocodile! crocodile!") The men on the raft saw the water stir and hurled spear and arrow, but they glanced off the scaly hide. It was a race with death, and what a miserable death for Piang, their idol! The boy grew cold and sick as he waited. Suddenly the raft paused, held in check by Kali's pole. Piang almost fainted. What was his chief doing? In a moment he realized that the quick action had saved his life. The raft swerved, bumped against the crocodile, and came between it and Piang. The next moment Piang was in Kali's arms.

In the light of the gray dawn, Sicto watched these two as they gazed into each other's eyes; they swept triumphantly by, heedless of flying arrows. The radiant fire-tree blooms still clustered around Piang's head, and his sacred charm gleamed in the early light. Firmly believing that spirits had aided Piang in his remarkable feat, Sicto trembled with fear, and, with a last glance at the victorious charm boy, he turned and fled into the jungle.

Wonderingly, Kali Pandapatan and his followers viewed the new cut-off as they floated by. Amazed, they listened to the marvelous tale. Old Dato Kali Pandapatan laid his hands once again on his favorite's head:

“Little brother,” he said, “this shall be known as Piang’s Cut-off. Some day you will be the greatest dato in Mindanao.”

Fifth Adventure

Riding the Cataract

News that a strange craft had put into Cotabato reached Piang in his mountain home. Hurriedly he gathered his few weapons together and started down the trail. He passed many traders and venders, who had also heard of the boat, and he hastened his steps in his desire to be there early.

"*Un-di?*" ("Whither?") called Sicto as Piang trotted past him.

"To the barrio," replied Piang. Sicto hurried to keep up with him, but Piang had no wish to be in company with the ne'er-do-well Moro boy, and he did not try to conceal his feelings. The natural dignity of the Oriental kept Sicto from displaying his anger at the repulse, but he sullenly slackened his pace and registered a black mark against this haughty Piang.

Piang loved to be alone; his playmates were too noisy, too talkative; he, too, loved to chatter and play games at times, but now in the jungle, as the morning light slowly broke through the damp foliage, he wished to be alone and watch nature unfold to the coming day. It seemed to him that the huge elephant ears lifted their dew-weighted leaves and shook themselves in the gentle wind. The monkeys peeped out at him and continued to make their toilet undisturbed. Other travelers startled the little creatures into watchfulness, but Piang came upon them so silently, so peacefully, that they scarcely noticed him.

There was one spot, half-way down the trail which he wanted to reach alone; there the jungle seemed to part, as if to grant a glimpse of the harbor below. He quickened his stride, and as he passed a party of men one of them called to him, "You will be first to-day, little fleet one." So there was none before him. He was glad, and when he came within sight of the clearing, he rejoiced in his solitude. He wondered if the boat was a vinta from Borneo, or if it was loaded with copra for Japan. There now, when that mist lifted, he would know.

As the beautiful harbor broke upon his sight, Piang paused, holding his breath, for out of the boat, the only one in view, smoke was pouring. It was on fire! But why were the people not trying to save the cargo? A huge black stick standing in the middle of the hull was belching smoke. While he was regretting that he would be too late to assist at the rescue, he was startled by a thin white stream spurting out of the mast-head. Gradually he connected it with the shrill whistle that pierced his ears.

Piang wanted to run back, to warn the others that some strange monster had sailed into their midst; but he saw that his brothers in the barrio were calmly watching the thing, and as it did not seem to hurt them, he took courage and dashed on down the trail into the jungle. All the rest of the journey he strained his ears to catch that shrill voice, which he was now sure came from the boat. As he flew through the silent forest he recalled the tales of the demons that the wise men talked about, and he decided to approach the thing with caution. Finally he stood on the shore, and there before his eyes was a boat that seemed to be alive. It was breathing. But where were its sails? How did it move? Clusters of natives, their fear stilled by curiosity, watched the approach. Breathlessly they waited. It was coming toward the tiny wharf, and just as it settled alongside, a piercing screech from it sent them tumbling over each other in a mad attempt to get away. From the safety of trees and huts they waited. Big men, pale and straight, walked from the boat and beckoned them to descend. Cautiously the more daring ones responded, and soon the whole population was gathered around the visitors.

Curious to see what the strangers were showing the dato, Piang slipped quietly up behind and caught sight of the most beautiful colored cloth he had ever seen. “Bandana,” the pale man called it. Piang longed to possess it for his mother; how she would love to wear it for her gala head-dress! The sailor then produced a tiny object that glistened and sparkled in the sun; it was about as large as the palm of Piang’s hand and very thin. The Moros were very much excited over it, and when Piang reached up on tip-toes to peer through the crowd, he cried aloud, for there, staring back at him was a boy he had seen somewhere. The little brown face and the piercing black eyes, the long hair twisted in a knot with the ends flying loose, were all strangely familiar. It was—Piang! “Mir-ro,” he repeated after the white man when his scattered wits permitted, and the crowd had ceased its merriment at his expense. The Moros were more interested in the knives, tobacco, and strange food that the strangers had brought than in the red bandana

handkerchief and the toy mirror; but Piang longed to carry the two things that had caught his eye back to his mother, and he was silently gazing at them when Sicto, attracted by Piang's admiration, picked the mirror up to look at it.

Before Piang realized it, Sicto was negotiating with the owner, offering in trade his brass buyo, or betel-box, used for containing a preparation of the betel pepper, extensively chewed in the East. Why had Piang not brought his brass? He would run and fetch it; but the man would not wait. Just as he saw the things about to pass into the hands of his rival, he remembered his ring. Attracting the attention of the trader, he quickly unscrewed the tiny center and proudly displayed a few glittering flakes; Piang did not know that they were gold dust; but the trader whistled a low note of surprise and called one of his shipmates aside. The Moro boy had seen the Japanese trade whole shiploads of copra for the shiny stuff, so, when he had found some in the sand one day, he had gathered it.

When the trader made it clear to Piang that he could have the treasures for more of the flakes, he was delighted, and without a moment's delay started off up the trail, not deigning to glance at the disappointed Sicto.

Up, up, he climbed. Heat, thirst, nothing slackened his pace. Arriving at his home, he flew to the lake, and, without a word to any one, jumped into his banco and pushed out into the water. Sweat poured down his face; mosquitos buzzed around his head: but he had no time to build a smudge. He must hurry, or the strange boat would leave the island and take forever the treasures Piang so coveted.

Soon he struck the current, and when he felt the boat settle into it he dropped over the side, holding on to the outriggers, and let the boat pull him through the cool water. He noticed another banco in the distance and wondered what brought another person out on the lake in the heat, but the mosquitos occupied all his attention, and he dived and swam under the water to avoid them, soon forgetting the other boatman.

Which stream had he paddled up before, when he had found the bright sand? He examined the shore carefully as he climbed into the boat. It must be there. Yes,

he remembered the orchids in that tree. Cautiously he guided the banco to the mouth of the creek, and he shuddered as he caught sight of a shiny black object slipping into the water. It was a harmless snake, but Piang did not like snakes and he hurried past the spot. Gradually he lost sight of the lake and the sun; overhanging vegetation and fallen trees engulfed him. At times he could not use his paddle, and cautiously avoiding the thorns and poisoned things, he pulled the boat along from above. Soon this little stream would take him into the big river where he had found the pretty sand.

Piang was startled by a sound behind him. Surely he had heard a paddle. But all was silence when he paused to listen. When he came to the river he shouted with delight, for his journey was half over, and there in the sun sparkled his treasure. Taking his gourd from the boat, he filled it with sand and then started the long process of washing it away. Always in the bottom would be left a few of the bright grains. These he poured on a leaf, but he discovered in dismay that they stuck there, and when he tried to brush them off, they sank into the leaf.

While he was pondering on his predicament he heard the chatter of a hablar-bird, and he chuckled to himself. He searched his banco for his bow and arrows, but was astonished to find only the bow. What a misfortune! He must have lost the arrows on the trail. Nothing daunted, little Piang set about his task in another manner. Scattering a handful of parched corn in a clearing, he laid the noose of his rope around it, and taking the end of it in his hand, silently withdrew into the thicket and waited.

Soon the big bird discovered the handy meal and, loudly proclaiming its rights to possession, flapped its way to the earth and lighted right in Piang's noose. The hablar-bird fluttered and chattered as it settled to the task of filling its craw with the good food. Cautiously Piang watched his chance and, with a deft twitch of the rope, secured the noose around the bird's foot. Such screaming and flapping! "Now you be good bird, and I no hurt you," Piang admonished. Catching hold of the creature behind the head, Piang held it firmly and quickly plucked three large feathers from its brilliant plumage. He then set it free and laughed to see it searching for its lost glories.

Piang would have enjoyed watching it, as it scolded him from a high limb, but he could not delay and he set about his task quickly. Cutting off the end of each quill, he scraped it clean inside and washed the pithy part out. He had seen his

father prepare a quill in this way for packing tobacco-powder.

When these receptacles were ready to receive the gold-dust, he began washing the sand again; and when he had secured enough to fill all three quills he stuck a piece of green banana on the ends for a stopper. Now he would have the treasures for his mother—that beautiful cloth and the funny, thin thing that played pranks on you when you looked into it.

What was that sound? Surely some one was spying on him. In a flash he remembered the banco on the lake, the other sounds he had heard. Also he remembered that Sicto wanted the same treasures that he coveted. He had been followed by the bully, and now, without his bow and arrows, he was helpless. To gain the lake again, he must pass through that treacherous creek, and he knew that Sicto would think nothing of robbing him and hastening to the village to buy the treasures with Piang's hard-earned bright sand. Somewhere those wicked eyes were watching him from the foliage, but Piang bravely covered his misgivings.

There were two trails to the village; one lay to the west through the lake that he had crossed; the other was straight ahead, down the river. But there were cataracts on this river, and Piang wondered if he could make his way on foot from the head of the first one to the right trail. He decided to take the risk and quickly headed his banco in that direction. As he started down the river, he heard a howl of rage, and glancing back, saw Sicto preparing to follow.

So! It was to be a race! Piang had foiled the bully, and his little heart beat faster as he realized the consequences if Sicto should catch him. Piang had a good start, but the river was so treacherous, the eddies so powerful, that sometimes his boat seemed to stand still or almost turn around when it was caught by the counter-current. How he loved his slim little craft! Whenever possible, it obeyed his wish, and he chuckled to see Sicto struggling with his heavy boat. If he could only reach the first head-water and land on the opposite shore, he would not fear defeat. For who was more fleet-footed than Piang, who more able to ferret his way through the almost impenetrable jungle?

Cautiously he watched the shore; he had been this way only once before, and wondered if he could remember where the trail began at the water's edge. The current was so swift here that it was hardly necessary to paddle at all; so he

rested to examine the shore.

But what was the matter with Sicto? Why had he stopped paddling? In a flash it came over Piang that the cataract was near, and he started to back water with all his might. To his horror he found that he could not control the boat; fight as he would, it paid no heed to his struggle, but dashed on toward the waterfall. At first Piang thought he would swim, but realized that he would be swept over just the same. There was only one thing to be done—he must ride the cataract. Sicto was left far behind, clinging to the bank, watching with a sneer the boy going as he thought, to his death. He wondered why Piang was standing up in the banco; surely it would be best to lie flat in the boat and cling to the bottom.

Gracefully Piang poised his body for the dive. The feathers were safely thrust into his long hair, and his bolo secured in his belt. With hands outstretched above his head, he waited for the great moment. He knew that if he was skilful he could clear the dangerous waters below the falls and either swim to the shore or reach his banco. Faster, faster went the boat, and his little heart thumped so that he feared it would burst. He tried to remember that this was not such a dangerous feat; others had accomplished it, and he could, if he was careful. The drop was only a few yards, but the danger lay in the shoals at the foot of the falls. What a beautiful sight Piang was, poised on the brink of that foaming cataract, the black jungle for a background! As he felt the banco quiver and twist he prepared for the dive. Finally the boat reached the crest and, with a lurch, shot from under the boy as he sprang far out into space. It seemed an eternity to Piang before he plunged into the waters below; then he sank down, down. The roaring and thundering deafened him, and he wondered if he should ever stop tumbling over in the water. It tossed him, tore from his hands any support he was able to grasp, and finally, after almost depriving him of breath, left him floating on the surface of a calm pool. How delicious the rest seemed! How tired he was! As he lay there on his back, he watched the water pour over the rocks above his head, and marveled that he had accomplished it all so easily.

With hands outstretched above his head, he waited for the great moment.

With hands outstretched above his head, he waited for the great moment.

Gradually Piang regained his composure, and his first thought was for the quills. Yes, they were still safe, and he must hurry. Not fearing Sicto’s interference any more, he began to wonder how he should find the trail. Searching the river for

his banco, he discovered it caught by some reeds near the shore. It was easy to swim on that side of the river; so he slowly made his way to the overturned canoe, deftly righting it, and in a moment was over the side, searching for the extra paddle he always kept tied in the bottom. Fortunately it had not been torn away, and avoiding the rapids, he hugged the shore and finally resumed his journey down the river.

What a wonderful experience Piang had had! How he would boast of his bravery, Moro fashion, and maybe the wise men would praise him. As he paddled down the river he kept his eyes open for trails; and when he heard the next cataract thundering its menace in the distance, he decided to land and search the jungle for a path. Beaching his banco, he hid it in the undergrowth, and, carefully avoiding the stinging vines, crept into the shadow of the jungle.

The great silence was everywhere, and Piang wondered if he could trust his instinct to lead him aright. The heavy vines obstructed his passage, and he was forced to cut and hew his way through the edge of the forest. Nature does her best to protect the jungle, for always, on the edges, bamboo, and *bajuca* (pronounced bah-hoo-kah) vie with each other in forming an impenetrable wall; but after the first few yards the obstinacy of the vines seems to relax, their sentinel duty over.

Luckily for Piang, the jungle was well supplied with paths here, and he soon found the one leading down to the barrio. His heart was light, now, and he threw back his head and shouted with glee as he remembered Sicto, pale with terror, lest he too be swept over the cataract. Very quickly his exultation subsided, however, when he realized that Sicto could easily be on this same trail, and he redoubled his efforts as he imagined he heard twigs snapping behind him. What if the boat had already gone. What if its coveted treasures were lost forever?

From his customary trot Piang broke into a run, and, panting and sweating, pushed forward. Soon the trail joined the one he had taken that morning, and in a moment he would come to the clearing where he had first seen the strange boat. Yes, there it was; ugly, cross-looking, without one of those bright-patched sails that decorated all the boats Piang had ever seen. But—was it moving? With a cry, Piang started forward as the white smoke appeared, and the shriek echoed and reëchoed through the jungle. Fury, resentment, and determination flashed across his face; with a howl he darted down the trail. There was only a little way

to go now, and he would run like the wind. Friends and strangers tried to speak to him as he approached them on the trail, but he brushed them aside impatiently and rushed onward.

With his last bit of breath he stumbled through the barrio, but the boat was steadily moving out to sea. He threw himself on his face and beat the wharf with his clenched fists. All was lost—the beautiful “ban-da-na” for his mother, the “mir-ro,” too! An exclamation from one of the men arrested his attention, and he sprang to his feet in an instant. The boat had stopped; and—could he believe his eyes?—the man with the treasures was getting into a small skiff and was beckoning to Piang!

Quickly the boy responded. Making sure that the precious quills were safe, he dived into the sea and struck out toward the approaching boat. When they pulled him over the side, a cheer went up from the Moros on the bank and was answered by another from the strange boat. Eagerly Piang searched the boat for the two objects so dear to his heart, but the trader silently tapped the ring and waited. Slyly the boy considered. Finally he drew forth one quill and offered it to the man. He handed Piang the red calico handkerchief, saying “ban-da-na.” Eagerly the boy grabbed it. Guardedly the two contemplated each other. The trader reached into his pocket and produced the toy mirror, surrounded by colored pins; Piang offered to trade for another quill, but the man shook his head. Piang resolutely shook his, and the owner intimated that the trade was over by slipping the mirror back into his pocket. Piang could not stand the suspense, despite his passion for making a good trade, so he thrust the other quill into the stranger’s hand, grasped the treasure, and, saluting them in his dignified fashion, slipped over the side and was off.

When Sicto slunk into the hill barrio that night he was anxious to avoid Piang, but our hero was not concerned about him at all. Around the great fire in the center of the village were seated all the important members of the tribe, and Sicto’s envy was complete when he saw that Piang’s mother was the object of adoration. There she sat, the coveted “ban-da-na” crowning her stately head, and around her neck was suspended the funny thing that laughed back at you. Silently she offered each member of the circle one of the colored pins, and when all were supplied, they fell to the task of picking their teeth, at intervals

reverently examining the instrument. When the allotted period had elapsed, Piang's mother again extended the mirror, and when each one had gazed into the depth, the pin was replaced, later to be handed on to a new comer.

Sicto had joined the less fortunate persons who were watching the ceremony from a distance. Only the elect were permitted to approach the circle. From his place of honor Piang glanced loftily in their direction, and as his eyes met Sicto's, his triumph was complete. Under Piang's steady gaze, the bully quailed and, dropping his eyes, shambled off into the darkness.

Sixth Adventure

The Jungle Menace

Dato Kali Pandapatan had declared a three days' holiday in honor of Piang's safe return from his long journey to the haunt of Ganassi, the wonder man. That one so young had accomplished the difficult task proved to the tribe conclusively that Piang was indeed the chosen of Allah, the charm boy by divine right. Kali was glad of the opportunity to plunge his people into gaieties, for a mysterious shadow had hovered over the barrio for a week, and he hoped to dispel the effects of a recent disaster by merriment and fiesta. In the night an infant had disappeared from its hammock under the mango-tree and no trace of it had ever been found. The mother, who had been sleeping on the ground near her babe, told a strange story of being awakened by a suffocating pressure on her chest; as she stretched out her hand in the dark, she encountered a cold, clammy mass that moved under her touch. She must have fainted, for when she was able to scream for assistance, her baby was gone, and there were no tracks in the sand. The river was searched, but the crocodile pickets were intact; no monster from the river had broken through the barriers.

The ominous whisper, "Bal-Bal," passed from lip to lip. Only that supernatural jinn could have whisked the infant from their midst; only Bal-Bal, with his demon body, sailing through the air on enormous wings, could have descended upon them so silently, so stealthily. Fearfully the wise men kept watch for the return of Bal-Bal, whose fateful visits were believed to come in pairs.

At first the news of the fiesta failed to rouse the people from the lethargy into which they had sunk, but gradually their pleasure-loving natures responded, and preparations were begun for the three days' play.

"Goody-goody!" exclaimed Papita, the little slave girl, dancing about, clapping her hands. "We are to have the macasla fiesta, Piang. Just think, we are to go to the ocean to-morrow!" Piang's newly acquired dignity would not permit him to

respond to Papita's levity, but he secretly rejoiced, too, over the prospects of fun and excitement at the macasla.

Runners were sent into the jungle to procure the all-important macasla herb, and that night the mixture was prepared. Macasla, chilli-peppers, carot, and tobah shrub were pounded together in an old dug-out canoe. Wood-ashes, earth, alcohol, and water were added, and the mixture was allowed to ferment. Early the next morning nearly all the inhabitants embarked upon the short journey to Parang-Parang, their seaport barrio. Every available boat was filled with the merry throng, and the river sang a soft accompaniment to their chatter; pet monkeys, parrots, and mongoosen joined in the hubbub, and the din echoed through the forest, to be taken up by nature's wild children. Bal-Bal was forgotten, for the moment, by all except the bereaved parents, who had remained behind with the aged, to mourn their loss.

"I see the ocean! Oh, I saw it first!" cried Papita, nearly upsetting the banco in her glee. "Piang, do stop being so solemn and look—over there—through the trees!"

"I saw the ocean long ago, Papita," answered the boy with exaggerated dignity.

With a sigh the girl turned away, despairing of drawing him into sociability. Piang, the playfellow, had vanished, and Piang, the charm boy, was so superior, so awe-inspiring. Out of the corner of his eye Piang watched her. He longed to frolic and play, as of old, but the weight of the tribe was on his young shoulders, and he must put aside childish things. With folded arms he watched the revelers; his heart beat violently, but, to the envy and admiration of all, he retained his dignity and rigidity.

The travelers gave a shout as they rounded a bend and came upon the sea. The curving coast line seemed to be ever smiling as the waves wooed it with cajoling and caressing whispers.

The tide was on the turn; not a moment was to be lost. Men, women, and children assembled about the dug-out, carrying wicker baskets which they filled with the macasla mixture. Scattering quickly along the extensive shoals, they ran into the water, waist deep, immersing the baskets, jerking them about until the macasla was all washed out; slowly they retreated to the shore. Impatiently they

waited five, ten minutes; then things began to happen. Crabs abandoned their holes and scurried about aimlessly; children, wild with delight, pursued and captured the bewildered creatures, tossing them into a brass pot of water over the fire. Small fish came gasping to the top; finally large ones began to show signs of distress. Screaming and laughing at the top of their voices, the Moros pursued; the men harpooning the largest fish, the women skilfully dipping up the smaller ones with nets. Helplessly the beautiful, rainbow-tinted creatures floated about, their opalescent hues fading soon after the Moros took them from the water. Monsters over a yard long fought for their freedom; giant crabs and shrimp struggled in the nets. A *liendoeng* (water-snake), brilliantly striped with red and black, made the women scream with fright. Dashing among them, laughing and yelling as merrily as the other boys, Piang pursued the offending reptile, here, there, and finally grabbed the wriggling creature and ran to the beach.

“Ah là là là lélé!” he cried, dancing and jumping about, waving the snake above his head.

“Oh, goody! Piang has come back to us,” cried the delighted Papita. “You will not frown and scowl again, will you, Piang?”

A shadow fell upon the manly young brow of Piang. He had transgressed; he had forgotten his responsibility for the moment and had allowed his glee to banish the dignity of his calling: Throwing the snake into the basket, he quietly walked away from the merry-makers.

Crowds of friendly natives swarmed along the beach, hoping the kill would be great enough to supply food for all. At other times the Moros would have preserved any surplus fish, but those caught under the influence of macasla cannot be cured or dried, as they soon putrify. The macasla only blinds them temporarily, however, and those fortunate enough to escape soon recover, suffering no ill effects. Ten canoes, full of splendid fish, were the reward of the macasla fiesta. A huge fire was built on the beach, and the small fish, stuffed into green bamboo joints, were thrown in the ashes; larger ones were sprinkled with *lombak* dust (seasoning) and wrapped in pisang leaves. Weird instruments made their appearance: drums of bell-metal, jew’s-harps of bamboo. The *gansas*, a flute that the performer plays from one nostril, would have distracted an American’s attention from the music, holding him in suspense, anticipating the

dire consequences of a sneeze.

Gradually the monotonous music stirred the savages to action. Solemnly they formed a circle around the fire, arms extended, lightly touching each other's finger-tips. To and fro they swayed in time to the crude music, and when the drums thundered out a sonorous crescendo, they crouched to the earth, springing up in unison, uttering fearful yells. When the individual dancing commenced, exhausted members began to fall out, leaving the youth and vigor of the tribe to compete for the honors. A maiden must prevent a youth from confronting her; the youth, while attempting to gain his position, must beware lest the maiden present her back to him. Fast and furiously they whirled and dodged, and a shout went up from the bystanders as each unfortunate dancer was compelled to retire. Finally there were only three contestants left; Papita, Piang, and Sicto. Gracefully the little slave girl eluded the boys; slyly she circumvented their attacks. Her little bare feet twinkled daintily about on the sand; her brass anklets jingled merrily; and the fireflies, confined in her hair, glowed contentedly.

Now the hands must be held behind the back at all times during the dance, and when Sicto, exasperated at the girl's nimbleness, attempted to grab her, Piang protested loudly. A surly growl was Sicto's response, and during the hot dispute that followed, as the dancers swayed and dodged, Papita caught Sicto off his guard, and to his mortification he found himself contemplating the comely back of the girl. Over her shoulder she taunted the astonished boy, and thunderous applause greeted his defeat. Sicto slunk off into the shadow, muttering maledictions against Piang, whom he blamed primarily for his downfall. Papita, Piang, which would win? Breathlessly the audience followed the agile movements of the two; eagerly they claimed the honors for their favorite.

The music ceased abruptly. With fear in their hearts and bated breath, the tribe waited again for the sound that had disturbed their revelry:

"*Le le, li li.*" The tribal call rang through the forest faintly.

"*Blako ampoen*, Allah," ("I beg for mercy, Allah,") whispered Kali Pandapatan, supplicatingly.

The call was repeated, came steadily nearer. Finally from the gloom of the river shot a banco, a very old man working at the paddle. It was Pandita Asin from the

barrio.

“*Un-di?*” (“Whither?”) called Kali Pandapatan.

“The barrio—Bal-Bal!” gasped the exhausted old man.

The night pressed upon them. Up the river darted Asin’s slender banco with Kali Pandapatan and a few picked warriors.

“Asin, we shall need you, and you, Piang,” the chief had said, and the boy jumped into the boat. Far behind they left the terrified, confused throng, preparing to embark, and soon the night swallowed up the little advance party, as it hurried toward the stricken barrio.

Piang reached up on tiptoe to pluck a ripe mango

Piang reached up on tiptoe to pluck a ripe mango

A white mist rose from the water, obscuring the view; a damp breeze chilled the travelers, and they anxiously scanned the heavens for Bal-Bal, the terrible. Obstructions in the river were numerous and dangerous. Once they grazed the side of a floating log; it immediately turned upon them, emitting blood-curdling bellows through gaping jaws. Piang’s spear silenced the menacing crocodile, and the party hurried on. A *taloetook* (owl) wailed his melancholy koekh-koekh, and the mournful sound seemed to draw the handful of men closer together. Through the jungle the river wound its serpentine way; dense growths crowded the bank and leaned far out over the stream. Trailing vines and hanging ferns brushed the occupants of the canoe, and in fear they avoided contact with them, so often did their velvety green conceal wicked thorns and poisonous spines. Fiery eyes dotted the jungle, stealthily watching for a chance to pounce upon the intruders; rustling of the rushes warned them of invisible dangers.

“*Karangan!*” (“Sand-bar!”) cried Piang, and just in time the banco swerved, avoiding the slimy mud that might have held them prisoners, at the mercy of prowling night terrors.

A light twinkled in the distance; confused sounds reached the rescuers, and they pushed forward with renewed energy.

“Ooooh, Mihing!” called Asin, in his cracked, wavering voice.

“Ooooh!” came the answer from the barrio.

“Piang, we look to you to protect us from Bal-Bal, to you and your sacred anting-anting.” Solemnly Kali Pandapatan made this announcement.

The boy was the first to land. The lame and the halt crowded around him, imploring him to save them. Confused, Piang wondered what was expected of him but suddenly he remembered what the great Ganassi had said:

“The source of power is faith!”

His proud little head went up; his brave eyes smiled:

“Have no fear, my people. Piang, the charm boy, will protect you.”

A startling phenomenon had terrified the barrio. Just at dusk, old Asin had been squatting in the doorway of his hut, dreamily watching Papita’s little white fawn munching mangos under the fatal tree, when suddenly he saw it rise, struggle, suspended in the air, then disappear. Its pathetic cry was heard once, high above their heads. Then there was silence. The aged populace had been too frightened to investigate and had hovered around the fire, afraid to venture beyond its circle of light. Asin had been despatched to notify the head of the tribe that Bal-Bal was hovering near.

All eyes turned toward the charm boy.

“La ilaha illa llahoe,” softly prayed Piang, scrutinizing the frowning jungle, as it closed in on all sides.

“Kali Pandapatan,” finally announced the boy, “it is given that we act as brave men. If it is Bal-Bal who has been swooping upon us, have no fear; he can come no more with Piang, the charm boy, prepared to meet him. If it is something else that is hovering near, we must go boldly forth and slay our enemy.”

A relieved sigh from the listeners greeted this speech.

“Bravely spoken, little brother,” said Kali Pandapatan.

Another boat load arrived from the sea, and when the nature of the calamity had been explained, all volunteered to aid in the search. Each man bearing a torch, they went in pairs, scattering through the jungle. At given intervals, Piang who remained in the barrio at the entreaty of the aged, was to respond to the clan call.

“Lē lē li li!” echoed through the somber night, giving courage to the faint of heart and keeping the searching party’s spirits up. Stealthily the charm boy crept around the edge of the clearing, examining every possible opening; cautiously he peered into nooks and crannies.

The mango-tree! What was there about that old jungle veteran that drew the boy toward it? The babe had disappeared from under its shelter; the fawn had been whisked from its protection. A cry from the circle around the fire arrested him as he approached the tree, but he reassured them, exposing the charm, and bravely went forward. Dew on the heavy, dark foliage glistened in the firelight, and the golden fruit peeped forth temptingly. Piang reached up on tiptoe to pluck a ripe mango, supporting his body against a large vine that hung from the tree. The vine stirred, trembled, and disappeared. With a low cry the boy recoiled. The tree was bewitched, was alive. Would its huge limbs enfold him in its embrace as it had done the other two victims? Piang was unable to move. Fascinated, he stared wide-eyed at the tree with its wealth of parasite life sapping its vitality. Trailing orchids and tree-ferns festooned its limbs; *liana* and *bajuca* vines smothered it in death-like embrace. Coil upon coil of these serpent-like jungle creepers, ignoring or circumventing the smudge platform halfway up the trunk, ascended to the tree’s very crest, only to return, dangling and swinging like the ragged draperies of a slattern, reaching out tenacious arms in search of new support.

At any moment Piang expected to be seized by this supernatural monster, and yet he could not cry out or move. Where did it hide its victims? Did it inhale life or suck it into its trunk? Scarcely realizing what he was doing, the boy focused his gaze upon two dazzling points of light that gradually came nearer, nearer. A peacefulness came over him, and he wondered why he had been so terrified a moment before. Slowly a numbness crept up his limbs; a giddiness attacked him. On came the hypnotic, icy lights, until they were within a few feet of his face.

“Lē lē li li!” crashed through the stillness. With the dim past Piang connected the disturbing sounds. The gleaming lights were beautiful, compelling.

“Lē lē li li!” A memory of some duty faintly stirred Piang’s subconsciousness, and his senses tried to respond to the call. Bright and intense grew the twin fires. One instant they seemed as minute as fireflies, the next as large as moons. Yes, the tree was alive; it was moving. A giant creeper was swaying toward him, would grasp him in its toils.

“Lē lē li li!” persistently the call was repeated. “Lē lē li li!” A duty! What was it? Charm boy? Who was charm boy? Involuntarily Piang’s hand sought the charm on his breast and grasped it. He was saved! With a shriek he darted back just in time. The vine lunged out, quivered, and recoiled.

Asin, who had been curiously watching Piang for some time, rushed toward him and caught the fainting boy in his arms.

Quietly Piang gave his orders; unquestioningly he was obeyed. After his mishap he had not regained consciousness for two days, and during his illness he had prated senselessly about trees that were alive and vines that had eyes, much to the disturbance of Kali Pandapatan and Asin. But when he whispered his suspicions to his chief, Kali gave a low whistle.

Asin and Tooloowee were taken into the secret, and they set to work to develop Piang’s plan. A wild boar, which had been captured for crocodile bait, was fastened to a pole in the middle of the *campong* (clearing). Around it was built a bamboo pen, opened at one end, from which extended a low, fenced-in lane about forty feet long. Arranged in this lane, at intervals, were slip nooses of ratan, which, rising above the structure, looked like skeleton arches.

Impatiently the Moros waited for night; fearfully they watched the mango-tree. There was no tom-tom serenade such as usually heralds the coming of night; no fires were lighted; the evening meal was forgotten. An ominous silence pervaded the barrio.

Night came—soft, fragrant night, with its thousand wonders. The inquisitive moon peeped over the palm fronds, peeped again, and decided to remain. Papita, her anklets and bangles clinking dully, moved listlessly about, sorrowing for her lost pet; Sicto followed her persistently, annoying her with his attentions. The

sulky mestizo took pleasure in provoking the little girl, for was she not Piang's favorite, and was not Piang his enemy? He moodily contemplated the charm boy at work on the silly-looking structure that he was not allowed to approach.

Gracefully the little slave-girl eluded Piang and Sicto

Gracefully the little slave-girl eluded Piang and Sicto

When it was finished, Kali Pandapatan ordered every one to go to their homes, to lock and bar the doors, and, under pain of his displeasure, to make no sound. The death-like stillness was fraught with tension. From the window in the nearest house, Piang kept watch with Kali, Asin, and Tooloowee; in his hand he held the ratan cable that controlled the nooses in the narrow lane. Minutes, hours trailed by, and still the barrio watched. A gentle wind awakened the forest whispers and gathered its freight of seed and pollen to scatter abroad. The prisoner in the deserted campong protested and struggled, its ugly grunts disturbing the jungle peace. Dull clouds obscured the moon, and for a long time the barrio was in darkness. When the light burst suddenly upon them, the Moros started from their drowsiness and gazed with awe on the swaying, shuddering mango-tree. Not a leaf was stirring on the surrounding trees, but the mango rustled and trembled ominously.

"See, Kali! I was right!" whispered Piang. No superstitious horror pervaded the hut where the four men watched, but in every other house Moros fell upon their faces, beseeching Allah to protect them from Bal-Bal. The capricious moon plunged into a shadowy cloud again. The next flood of light disclosed a vision so horrible that even Kali and his brave followers stiffened with fear. Out of the mango-tree a black, writhing mass crept toward the terrified squealing boar. Unfolding length after length, the thing advanced, until nearly thirty feet of sinuous, undulating life stretched between the mango tree and the boar's cage. Papita, sickened with fear, buried her face in her mother's bosom, weeping hysterically; Sicto, pale and trembling, grasped the window for support.

"*Ular-Sawa!*" ("Giant python!") he gasped, hastily closing the window. A little captive monkey whined pitifully.

The massive creature, distracted by the sound, paused, head up, forked tongue darting in and out of the open jaws, for the Regal Python has no ears, but hears with its tongue. That delicate nerve center registers sounds by vibration, and

when a python is eager to listen, it extends its black, forked tongue.

“Oh, will it go into the trap?” breathed Piang. The boar, watching its fate, squealed, and the python advanced. Missing the easy lane, it approached the cage from the side, and tried to batter it down with its powerful head. Failing in this, it attempted to slip over the fence, but the pickets had been sharpened to prevent this, and finally it discovered the opening.

Seeming to disapprove of the symmetrical structure, it hesitated to thrust its enormous length into the strange-looking thing. The Moros were fearful lest the creature escape and continue to overshadow their barrio. Once the python seemed about to retreat, but at that moment the boar struggled so desperately that the python’s natural instinct prevailed, and without a moment’s hesitation, it writhed into the lane, past the first loop, past the second, until it reached the cage.

“Now, Piang, now!” softly whispered Kali. Calculating the distance, Piang jerked the ratan cable, and the noose tightened around the snake’s throat.

In a moment the fence was lashed to pieces, and the pickets were flying about like so many chips, as the serpent fought and struggled. Piang and his helpers secured the cable to a post and rushed into the campong. Catching hold of the other cables, they pulled them tighter and tighter until the snake was unable to move.

The clouds were heavy and the moon shone fitfully.

“Torches!” yelled Kali, and the women scurried about in search of them. Piang and Tooloowee cautiously approached the monster’s head, holding on a stick some cotton soaked with poison. Savagely the python bit at the extended stick, and the cotton caught on the long recurved teeth. Try as it would, it could not get rid of its mouthful. The Moros congratulated themselves, thinking the danger past, little knowing what the fatal consequences would be. Under the stimulus of the poison the python began to expand, until the loops of ratan creaked and snapped. The snake did not plunge or struggle, but quietly, steadily pulled. That python broke green ratan thongs half an inch in diameter, and soon twisted out of all its fastenings except the one about its neck. Catching hold of the mango-tree with its tail, it pulled until its eyes bulged from the sockets, but the ratan held.

Releasing its hold on the tree, it flopped about the campong, pulling and straining at the cable.

Finally it lay perfectly still, its dull, lidless eyes rolling upward. Without any warning, its lithe tail shot outward, swept the crowd of bystanders, and those fatal, living rings closed around Sicto, compressing the unfortunate boy with such force that he gasped for breath. Without a thought for the helpless boy, the women dropped the torches and fled screaming through the night, leaving the campong in darkness.

Only Piang came to the none too popular mestizo's assistance. He hurled himself at the reptile's head, campilan raised to strike, but instead of falling upon the mark, his knife severed the one remaining cable and set the monster free. Perceiving its new antagonist, and feeling its freedom, the snake rapidly unwound its tail from Sicto, who fell to the ground with a dull thud. Darting forward with lightening rapidity, it caught Piang in its circular embrace, and, coiling its tail around the tree, flattened the boy against it, as if in a mill. Tighter, closer hugged those massive, chilling rings, but Piang fought bravely.

"A light! a light!" screamed Tooloowee, as he dragged the insensible Sicto away, and, out of a nearby hut dashed a slender, graceful figure in response to the call, a fresh torch streaming its smoke and sparks around her head.

"Quick, Papita," urged Tooloowee, and the girl came fearlessly to the aid of Piang.

"Piang!" she wailed. "Why didn't you let it have Sicto!" Her voice seemed to put new life into the suffocating boy. With one supreme effort Piang managed to loosen his arm and struck once, twice. The python, now bleeding profusely, hissed and writhed, still tightening around the boy. Once again Piang thrust, at last reaching the creature's heart. The rings loosened, relaxed, and Tooloowee's well-aimed blow severed the awful head, which bounced and rolled to Papita's feet.

When they carried the limp, lacerated body of Piang to his hut, there was lamenting and weeping in the barrio. Piang, their beloved charm boy was dead.

A mournful *tilick* (death signal) was sounded on the tom-toms, and the wail soon gathered volume until the jungle and river seemed to take up the plaint.

Dead? Could Piang, the invincible, be killed? Papita crouched in the doorway. Kali Pandapatan bent over the still little form. Anxiously he watched the eyelids quiver, the lips part. A sigh of relief broke from the chief, and he murmured softly:

“Little brother, you have the strength of a packda; the cunning of the civet-cat, and the wisdom of the mina-bird. May your days be long.”

A knowing smile flitted across Kali’s face as he caught the irrelevant reply:

“Papita—is she safe?”

Seventh Adventure

The Secret of the Source

There had been a great drought. Plague was sure to follow such weather, and the Moros were already dying of starvation. “Rice, rice!” was the cry, but everywhere the crop had failed, and the natives were desperate.

Piang had been more successful in foraging than the other lads had, and his mother was safe for a time, but there seemed to be no hope, and he sorrowed as he pictured her dying for want of the food that it was his business to provide for her.

In the stifling heat of midday, the village was startled by the appearance of several white men on the biggest animals they had ever seen. Tiny ponies, straying about the village, fled to cover at sight of the strange creatures, and most of the women hid themselves in fright. The Moro men sullenly watched the strangers advance, making no attempt to stop them, but there was no mistaking their hostile attitude.

“Where is the dato?” asked the interpreter, who rode in ahead of the men. There was no answer.

“Come, where is the chief? The white men bring good news; they bring food.”

Instantly there was a change. Kali Pandapatan stepped in front of the others and said in his musical patois:

“I am Dato Kali Pandapatan. Speak. Do not deceive us.”

A lengthy conversation followed, and while the two men were arguing and gesticulating, the strangers gradually coaxed some of the children toward them. Finally the women sidled nearer, and soon the entire population had hedged the

little company in, and were gazing with awe at the huge American horses with their odd trappings. One mare stamped her foot and neighed loudly, scattering the spectators in every direction, greatly to the amusement of the white men.

It was all very hard for the dato to understand. He explained to his people that some great power had sent the white men to save them from starvation. The interpreter had told him that the Moros all belonged now to some nation called the United States. A fierce murmur rippled through the crowd at this piece of news. The dato raised his hand for quiet.

“Let us hear them through. We are hungry; let them feed us. We will fight for our freedom later, if necessary.”

Haughtily Dato Kali Pandapatan faced the newcomers and bade them speak. The interpreter explained that the men were United States soldiers, and that their chief had commanded them to search the islands for starving Moros and to relieve their suffering. The crafty dato pondered long before he accepted their offer, all the while watching for an attack. It was impossible for him to believe their generosity could be genuine, so used was he to the treachery of Spanish strangers. When the pack-train loaded with supplies appeared at the head of the steep mountain pass, a cry went up from the hungry people, and a rush was made toward it. When the supplies had been portioned out to each family, and suspicion banished from the minds of the natives, the “Americanos” were hailed as their saviors. Lieutenant Lewis, in charge of the expedition, was offered every courtesy, and the soldiers were showered with gifts of brass and trinkets. Dato Kali Pandapatan vowed his allegiance to the soldiers and offered the services of his tribe.

“Ask the dato if he has heard of the mysterious rice that has been found on Lake Lanao, Ricardo,” said Lieutenant Lewis.

The interpreter addressed the dato and learned that it was a well known fact that rice had appeared on the surface of the lake from no apparent source. As it had never been grown in that district, the authorities were puzzled over the persistent rumors. If it could be cultivated there, it might be possible to supply the tribes with enough to avoid these frequent famines.

“He says he is not sure, sir, but travelers from that section all bring the same

tales of gathering rice in an eddy at one corner of the lake. The tribes are very fierce around there, and as they will not tolerate interference from strangers, no one has dared to investigate."

"I can easily believe it. General Bushing's expedition through that country met with fearful opposition. It's a wonder to me that so many of them came out alive." The lieutenant was silent for a time, then said:

"Ask him if he has a swift runner, some one that he can trust."

Ricardo questioned the chief.

"Yes, sir, he says there is a boy named Piang, who is fleeter than the wind, surer than the sun."

"Ask him if he will send this boy for me to the lake to search out the truth about this rice. Offer him fifty bushels of corn for the lad's family and tell him I will send him twenty-five bushels whether he is successful or not."

"Piang! Piang!" the name was on every one's lips. From out the crowd stepped a slender faun of a youth, slim and supple as a reed. The gaily-colored breech-cloth wound about his loins supported his bolo and small knives, and in his tightly knotted long hair, glistened a creese. With silent dignity he awaited his orders. No curiosity manifested itself in his face; no question was on his lips; he simply waited. Lieutenant Lewis marveled at the boy's indifference, but when the mission was explained to Piang, the light that sparkled in his eyes and the expressions of excitement and joy that chased each other across his face removed all doubt from the lieutenant's mind.

Piang was chosen! Piang was to ferret out the secret of the lake! Piang was to bring honor to his tribe! When it was explained to him that his mother would be provided for, he abruptly turned from the dato and dashed off to his hut to procure weapons and scanty provisions. A silence held the natives as they waited for Piang to reappear. They all seemed to sense the dangers that were confronting the boy so eager to undertake the task. Hardly ten minutes had elapsed before he was in their midst again. He salaamed before the dato and, without a glance at the others, bounded up the trail, away into the jungle.

“But,” protested the lieutenant, “no one has given him any orders, any directions.” The interpreter conveyed the American’s misgivings to the dato. A smile broke over his face.

“Piang needs no directions, no advice. No jungle is too thick for him to penetrate, no water deep enough to hide its secrets from him. Piang will bring you news of the rice. I have spoken.”

“And to think of the fuss it takes to get a few dough-boys ready for a hike!” exclaimed the amazed lieutenant.

The jungle was terrible. Everywhere Piang came across victims of the drought. Little monkeys, huddled together, cried like babies; big birds, perched on the sun-scorched trees, were motionless. He stumbled over something soft. Always on the alert, his bolo was ready in an instant, but there was no need for it. He looked down into the dying eyes of a little musk-deer. Pity and misgiving filled his heart, and he wondered if he would be able to reach the Big Pass before he starved. Surely, up there it would be different; they always had rain, and if he could only hold out.... A snuff-like dust constantly rose from the decayed vegetation; it pained his nostrils, and he muffled his face in his head-cloth as he penetrated deeper into the jungle. He must reach a clearing before night; it would mean almost certain death to sleep in the jungle’s poisonous atmosphere. There was a good spot further up, and he worked his way toward it, determined to reach it for his first night. The liana-vine that he cut for water was dry. He listened for the trickle of a brook. The jungle is usually full of little streams, but no sound rewarded his vigilance. Stumbling along, he began to think his journey would end there, when he was startled by loud chattering. A monkey settlement was evidently near, and he knew by their liveliness that they were not famishing for water. Spurred on by hope, he redoubled his efforts and was rewarded by the sight of a cocoanut grove in a clearing.

There was a general protest from the inhabitants as he made his appearance, but he paid no attention to the monkey insults hurled at him and gratefully picked up the cocoanuts with which they bombarded him. Shaking each one, he tossed it from him. They were all dry. The monkeys were too clever to waste any nuts that had milk in them. Piang tied his feet together loosely with his head-cloth, and,

using it as a brace, hopped up one of the trees as easily as a monkey. Sitting in the branches, he drained one cocoanut after another, and when his thirst was slaked, he amused himself by returning the bombardment. He was surrounded by monkey snipers and he laughingly rubbed his head where one of their shots had struck home. With careful aim he showered the trees, and gradually the monkeys began to disperse. He had won; the fun was over. He watched them scold and fuss as they retreated into the jungle, regretting that he had not kept them with him a little longer for company.

The big sun was dipping into the trees now, and he descended to gather material for his bed. High up in the cocoanut-tree Piang built his couch. He selected two trees that were close together, and, cutting strips of ratan, bound stalks of bamboo together making a platform which he lashed to the trees, far out of reach of night prowlers. He dipped into his scanty provisions, and then, scrambling to his nest, covered himself with palm branches, which afford warmth as well as protection from the unhealthy dew. Quickly Piang sank into an untroubled slumber. All night long creatures fought below him for the few remaining drops of moisture in the discarded shells, but he knew that he was safe, and their snarls and bickerings did not alarm him.

Piang started guiltily. He must have overslept. The sun was high, but for some reason the heat had not awakened him. Sitting up, he rubbed his eyes, sniffed the air, and uttered a shout of joy. A gentle rain was trickling through the foliage; the spell was broken; the jungle would live again. After hastily gathering a few nuts he climbed down the tree and prepared for his journey, thankful that the drought was to be broken by the gentle “liquid sunshine,” as it is called, instead of by a violent typhoon. Eating what he wanted of the soft, green cocoanut meat, he tied two nuts to the ends of a ratan strip, and, slinging them across his shoulder, was off again, darting here and there to avoid the stinging vines and treacherous pitfalls.

Over and over they rolled, splashing and fighting

Over and over they rolled, splashing and fighting

How many days was he from Lake Lanao? He counted the suns that must rise and set before he should arrive. There were four, if he should be fortunate

enough to find the Ganassi trail. Piang had not lost time by returning to the coast to pick up the trail, but had trusted to his instinct to lead him aright. Surely, if he followed the sun by day, and the big bright evening star by night, he would come upon the trail the second day. He must avoid the lake people at all costs; they were not to be trusted, and his life would pay the penalty if they caught him spying. Silently the jungle child sped along. Nothing escaped his watchful eye; no sound eluded his trained ear. Once he darted aside just in time to escape the toils of the dread python as it swooped from above to claim its victim. Another time his bolo saved him, and a wild civet-cat lay at his feet. Chuckling at his prowess, Piang drew his knife across the animal's belly, and slipped off the skin, almost whole. It would be useful to him, and maybe he could find the herb that is used to cure pelts.

It was very difficult traveling. The sun was not visible during the afternoon, and Piang lost his direction. Blundering here and there, he often came back to the same place. It was no use; he could not find the trail without the assistance of sun or stars. Sometimes it was days before either could penetrate the dense mist that accompanies the tropical rains. Discouraged, he threw himself on the ground.

An unusual sound made him jerk his head up to listen. It came again, and the boy rose quietly to his feet, focusing his senses on the sound. Cautiously he advanced toward it. In the jungle it is always wiser to be the one to attack. The sound was repeated, and Piang breathed easier. It was made by an animal, not by his dread lake enemies. Gradually he crept nearer and when he parted the bushes and peeped through, he almost shouted in his excitement. He had reached the Big Pass. A broad river swept rapidly by, and along the banks wild carabao rolled and splashed, making queer diminutive sounds, not in keeping with their ungainly size. Piang was careful to keep out of sight, as they are apt to be dangerous when their very uncertain nerves are startled.

For more than two days Piang fought his way through the entanglement of cogon grass and vicious vines, cutting and hewing his way, afraid to cross the river and follow the Ganassi trail. Finally, one rosy dawn, he came upon the lake as it sparkled and shimmered in the early light. The boy held his breath, delighted with the beauty of the view. Far in the distance mountains rose in a blue and purple haze. The lake was nestled in the heart of them, fed by many clear brooks and springs. Its bed had once been the crater of an active volcano, but Piang did

not know this.

From his retreat, built high among the dense trees, Piang watched the lake people ply their way to and fro across the water. Somewhere on that lake was the secret of the floating rice, and the boy was determined to discover the truth. He hid before dawn at the water's edge near a spot that he had noticed was much frequented. As usual, a swarm of natives visited it about noon. Piang watched them dip up gourds and cocoanut-shell cups full of water. They strained it through cloths, repeating and repeating the action. He was sure it was the coveted rice that they were gathering and he impatiently waited for them to go; no sooner had they departed, however, than others arrived to take up the task. There was nothing to do, but wait again for dawn, and Piang wriggled himself back to his grove and mounted his platform home.

He was very restless all night and hardly slept at all, so anxious was he for the first streaks of light. As he lay with eyes upturned, he watched the stars grow dim: before they had entirely disappeared, Piang was standing by the water ready for the dive. His bolo was slung at his side, and in his mouth he carried a smaller knife. One never knows what one may meet at the bottom of an unknown lake, and Piang was prepared for any emergency.

At last it was light, at last he could see into the clear lake. Climbing out on the rocks as far as he could, he let himself down into the cool water. How he rejoiced at the feel of it and how easily he slipped along toward the spot where he had watched the natives the day before!

He looked for signs of rice. Seaweed tricked him; bubbles vanished and he reached to grasp them. Round and round he swam, and finally his hands closed over something small and slippery. Breathlessly he fingered it, and opening his hand as he trod water, he beheld the mushy rice grains.

Taking a long survey, he assured himself that there was no one in sight. Yesterday the Moros had not come before noon; and if he worked quickly, he might discover the secret to-day. Taking a long breath, Piang dived straight down and, swimming along the bottom, examined the rocks carefully; but he came back to the surface none the wiser for his plunge. A puzzled look puckered his face. Tilting his head to one side, he considered. That was surely rice; it did not grow here, so it must come from under the water. Again he dived, but this time

he swam nearer the surface and he saw that there was more rice floating by than he had imagined. It was not coming from the bottom, it was drifting from the center of the lake!

Excitedly he headed in that direction, swimming under water whenever he lost the trail of the rice. It was not strange that it only came to the top in that one spot. There was a strong current that bore it upward, whirling it in an eddy before it sank to the bottom. Farther, farther he went, always swimming toward the center of the lake; and as he went, the rice grew thicker. Eagerly he plunged forward, keeping his eyes open, watching the rice.

He stopped. What was that dark object resting on the bottom? He did not know how exhausted he was until he paused for breath; then, knowing that his next dive would take him far down, he rolled over on his back and floated quietly. Burning with curiosity, he could hardly wait to see what was there. Slowly he swam downward. Something warned him to be more careful, and afterward he was grateful for his caution, for had he plunged recklessly to the bottom, in all probability in would have been his last dive.

He was aware of a large body moving near him and he dodged just in time to avoid a collision, striking out for the surface. Lying flat on the water, he peered into the depth and discovered several dark things swimming about. Frightened at first, he remembered that sharks and crocodiles do not live in mountain lakes. Bravely he descended, but this time he swam with his bolo in his hand. Down, down, and again he saw the queer, square things flopping about. They were huge tortoises, clustered around a darker object at the very bottom of the lake. Once more Piang came to the top. He was not afraid now; tortoises do not fight unless attacked, and the boy could easily outswim any of the clumsy creatures. But what were they doing out there in the middle of the lake? Tortoises live near shoals and feed on fungi and roots. As he plunged down once more, he was met by a strong up-current and had to fight his way through. Tiny particles stung him as they rushed by, and it seemed to him that millions of fish were darting here and there, snapping at something. It was rice. Gradually it dawned on Piang that he had reached his goal; the tortoise had reached it first, and the secret lay hidden in that dark thing at the bottom.

Frantically, but steadily, he worked his way down, avoiding weeds and driftwood. The water grew calmer as he neared the bottom, the rush of the

current less. His breath was almost gone; he could hardly stand it a few seconds longer, but he must see what it was there. With one supreme effort, he struggled and reached the hard sand of the lake floor. A trifle dazed, he looked about, and there, towering above him, was a ship.

Piang was almost unconscious when he reached the air. Had he been dreaming? How could a ship be resting on the bottom of Lake Lanao? Restraining his curiosity, he forced himself to rest. Lying on his back again, he took long regular breaths until he was entirely rested. Slowly he descended and, avoiding contact with the loggy tortoise, circled around the dark thing. Yes, it was a boat. Piang had seen only one other boat like it in his life. It was only about thirty-five feet long, but to the boy it seemed to rise above him like a mountain. Fascinated, he sank lower until he was standing on the deck. The tortoises and fish paid no attention to him, and he examined it carefully. The big tube, sticking up in its middle Piang recognized as the thing that belches smoke, and along the sides, covered with slime and weeds, were small black objects. He had heard that these boats hurl “hot-spit” into the jungle when they are angry, and he supposed it must come from these ugly things. All this occupied only a few seconds, but to Piang it seemed like years. Making a hasty ascent, he again filled his lungs and prepared to explore farther. As he worked his way back, he crossed the current that was bearing the rice to the surface and remembered his mission. Following the milky trail, he arrived at the stern of the boat and shuddered to see the mass of animal life clustered there. Worming his way alongside, he frightened the swarming creatures, and they scattered, leaving him a clear view of the boat. Only one old tortoise refused to be disturbed, and Piang watched it pull and bite at something. He was very close to it, when suddenly something blinded him. He put out his hands to ward it off, but the rush increased, and when he found his way to the top his hands were full of soggy rice. The old tortoise had torn the end of a rice-sack, and the contents were being whirled upward.

As the boy lay on the water, reviewing his remarkable discovery, his strength almost exhausted, he was startled into the realization of a new danger. Quickly he dived, but not before a man in a vinta, headed that way, had seen him. Piang was caught. In his excitement he had failed to watch for the coming of his enemies, and now he must fight. Swiftly the vinta approached. Piang could see it through the water and he watched until it was over his head. With a lunge, he struck at it with all his might, upsetting it and throwing the occupant out. With a

yell the man grabbed Piang, and the startled boy recognized his old enemy, Sicto, the outcast, who drifted from tribe to tribe, a parasite on all who would tolerate him. He was making his home with the lake people just now and had discovered Piang's hiding-place. Guessing that the boy was after the secret of the rice, he had watched his chance and had pounced on him when he was least able to protect himself.

Over and over they rolled, splashing and fighting. Piang was struggling for breath, but luckily he still had his bolo in his hand. The big bully was sure to win the fight unless Piang could escape soon, as he was already winded and exhausted. A happy thought flashed through Piang's mind. He watched for one of the tortoises to swim near the surface, and then shrieking "Crocodile," he pointed toward it. When the frightened Sicto shrank from the tortoise, Piang struck with all his might, but he was so weak and his knife was so heavy that he only stunned his adversary.

Then he was away like a flash. Before the bully could recover, Piang had righted the vinta and was paddling off in the direction of the river. Sicto tried to follow him, but Piang only laughed and paddled faster. He was free again; he had a boat, and knew the secret of the rice. Allah was indeed good to little Piang.

Rapidly he plied his paddle. The current was against him as he headed for the mouth of the river, but he worked steadily and soon lost sight of the infuriated Sicto.

He paused. Coming out of the river was a flotilla of boats. They were the usual rice-fishers, and he must pass them to gain the outlet. What if they called to him? He could not speak their dialect, and they would surely recognize Sicto's boat. He did not think they had seen him, so he changed his course to the east-ward and slowly paddled in that direction. They soon passed behind him, paying no attention to the solitary boatman, and he thankfully headed toward the river. As soon as the men reached Sicto, he would tell them of the fight, and they would give chase. Piang's chances of escape were indeed slim, but he had a little start.

Stubbornly he fought the current; patiently he worked against the swift water. At last he was in the river, but he knew that by this time the Moros were in pursuit. That they did not appear in the river behind him was no reason to feel safe. He was sure they would try to head him off by land, as the river wound round and

round through the valleys. The odds were certainly against Piang. He was in a strange country, unfamiliar with the trails and hunted by the swiftest tribe of Moros. The Ganassi trail was out of the question. It would be lined with the lake people watching for him. The jungle, which he had worked his way through, would be searched, and his recent camping site discovered. Every passable trail to his home would be watched.

Suddenly Piang remembered the “Americano” soldiers. They lived somewhere off in the other direction, beyond the terrible marshlands. Without a moment’s hesitation, he headed toward the shore, pulled up the vinta, and secured it. He then plunged into the stream and swam to the opposite shore. When the lake people found the vinta, they would search that side of the jungle. Piang was pleased at his ruse.

Bravely the boy faced his only avenue of escape. The journey through the marshlands and over the mountains was considered impossible, but Piang was not discouraged. Searching the surrounding jungle, he made sure that he had not been discovered, and, turning his back on his home as well as on his enemies, headed toward the distant peaks, the Dos Hermanas.

“Halt!” The sentry on Post No. 4 wheeled and took aim. There was another rustle in the bushes. “Halt!” came the second warning. Luckily the man was an old soldier, whose nerves were well seasoned. There would be only one more warning; the bullet would come then. Tensely the sentry listened. In the jungle one does not wait long out of curiosity. Just as he was about to utter his ultimatum and emphasize it with lead, a slender form tottered through the bushes and fell to the ground.

“Sure, an’ he ’s a-playin’ dead. None of that game for yer Uncle Dudley.” The Irishman, coming to port arms, sang out:

“Corporal of the guard. Number Four!” Never taking his eyes off the still form, he waited.

“What’s up?” called the corporal, as he came running up the trail with his squad.

“Suspicious greaser!” The sentry pointed at the prostrate form. Cautiously they approached it. Too many times their humane sympathy had been rewarded by treachery. The native did not stir. One of the guard poked him with his foot. There was no resistance.

“Guess he’s all in, all right,” announced the corporal. “Heave him up. Never mind the leeches; they won’t hurt you.” The boy was lifted to the top of a woodpile. He bore the marks of the jungle. His hands and feet were scratched and torn by thorns, some of which still showed in the flesh. His ribs showed plainly through the tightly pulled skin, and leeches clung to him, sucking the blood from his tired body. The long hair had been jerked from its customary chignon, and was hanging loose around his head. His thin arms hung listlessly at his side.

“Gosh, he needs a wash bad enough. Must have been starving, too.” With his bayonet the corporal removed the black hair from the face. Uttering an exclamation, he bent over the boy.

“Well, I’ll be dinged! This is the kid Lieutenant Lewis sent up to the lake! How in tarnation did he get to us from this direction?” The men silently exchanged glances, all remembering their fruitless attempts to make a trail over the Dos Hermanas. Forcing water between the parched lips, the corporal gently shook Piang. The boy opened his eyes and shuddered.

“You’re all right now, little ’un,” the corporal said, and although Piang did not understand the language, he responded to the kind tone with a weak smile. Slowly getting to his elbow, he motioned toward the garrison:

“*Hombre!*” (“Man!”) he muttered. It was the only Spanish word he knew, and the soldiers guessed that he wanted Lieutenant Lewis.

“Give him a lift, boys,” said the corporal and set the example by helping Piang to stand.

“Why, the boy’s story is incredible, Lewis. It is simply impossible that a gunboat could be at the bottom of Lake Lanao,” General Beech protested as he walked to

and fro in front of his desk in the administration building.

“If you will search the records at headquarters, sir, I think you will find mention of three gunboats that were shipped to this island by the Spanish government and disappeared mysteriously on the eve of our occupancy.”

And so it turned out. Inquiries among the older natives of the barrio brought confirmation of the report, and weird tales of transporting the diminutive gunboats in sections over the mountain passes began to float about. Finally General Beech was convinced and gave the necessary orders to equip and send an investigating party to the lake. Piang was to be the guide.

The transport *Seward* carried the troops around to Iligan, and the struggle up the mountain trail to Lake Lanao began.

Sicto was the first to give warning of the approach. He came upon the party one morning as they were breaking camp near the Marie Christina falls and immediately dashed off to Marahui.

“The white devils are coming,” he shrieked. “Piang, the traitor, is leading them to us!”

Dato Grande assembled his council, and they awaited the coming of the soldiers with misgivings. They had good reason to fear the Americans. General Bushing had swept that district in his marvelous campaign, and there was many a cripple among the lake people to testify to the accuracy of his marksmen. But they were relieved by the appearance of Ricardo, the interpreter, who explained to the dato that the troops were not hostile, but had come to make friends with the Moros.

Proudly Piang swung along at the head of the column, guiding them to his recent platform home. Camp was pitched on the shore, and the engineers commenced work at once. The boy impatiently waited for the divers to fix their cumbersome suits, and when all was ready, he plunged into the water and disappeared from view. The grotesque figures floating down with him made Piang want to laugh. They looked like huge devil-fish, and he wondered how they could stand the clumsy dress. After he had led the men to the boat he came to the top and swam with eyes down. If there were more boats, he wanted to find them first. The men on the bank were watching his agile movements with interest. With a shout he

disappeared again. Yes, yes, there was a second boat. And as he circled the sunken craft he spied another near it. Striking out for the shore, he swam to where the general and the lieutenant were waiting.

“What is he chattering about, Ricardo?” asked the general.

“He says he has seen the other two boats, sir.”

“This is certainly a fortunate discovery, Lewis. I shall make a report to Washington on the matter, and you shall be commended for your sagacity.”

The young officer flushed with pleasure, but replied:

“Thank you, sir, but I think the boy Piang deserves all the credit.”

It was many days before the task was completed. The rice had remained a mystery to the last, and the officers puzzled over the fact that it had not rotted entirely. The first report from the divers confirmed the rumor that the boats had been scuttled, presumably to prevent the Americans from capturing them. They had all been loaded with rice packed in sacks, and secured in tin-lined boxes. Until recently it had been protected from the water, but something heavy from above had fallen on them, crushing the outside coverings. The tortoise had done the rest.

Another surprise awaited the troops. A diver brought up a handful of Krag cartridges.

“This *is* a mystery,” said Lieutenant Lewis. “The Spanish never used Krags; we were the first to bring them to this part of the world, weren’t we?”

A shadow crossed General Beech’s face. Quietly he ordered the divers to search for more ammunition. Silently they waited, and Lewis wondered what had brought the sad expression to his chief’s face. When the divers brought up a wooden box half filled with cartridges, the two officers bent over it; on one side, branded in the wood, was plainly visible:

“Depot Quartermaster, San Francisco, Cal.”

“I thought so,” murmured the general.

“Well, what do you know about that!” exclaimed Lewis. “The public has been wondering for years what became of the thousands of rounds of ammunition General Bushing took with him on his spectacular march through Mindanao. Murder will out. It is here!” He rubbed his hands together in glee, laughing softly.

“How do you suppose this ammunition got here, Lewis?” General Beech asked gravely.

“Why, dumped here, of course. Don’t you remember the Sunday editions at home proclaiming Bushing a hero because he had used more ammunition and apparently done more fighting, than any one on record? Why didn’t he come out with the truth?”

General Beech colored at this injustice to his colleague.

“The usual hasty conclusion characteristic of Young America!” said the General, sharply. “Do you know, young man, that General Bushing is not only one of our ablest soldiers, but one of the most finished diplomats in the service?” Lewis had never seen General Beech so agitated.

“This discovery will be no news to the war department; they are in possession of the detailed account of the accident.” He paused, his eyes sweeping the lake. “Lewis, this lake is the site of a most unfortunate accident. Out there,” General Beech pointed toward the center of the lake, “dozens of our soldiers were lost, and the public will never know the tragic story of their fall. General Bushing was trying to transport six rafts of ammunition across the lake to the troops stranded at Camp Vicars. During a wild night storm, the handful of men set out on improvised rafts, but half-way across they were attacked from all sides and nearly annihilated. Only the wisdom and bravery of General Bushing saved the entire detachment from death; he ordered the ammunition thrown overboard and rescued his remaining men after a hard fight. That the survivors, one and all, have kept faith, and never divulged the story of the lost Krags, proves the remarkable influence General Bushing had over his command, for had the Moros got wind of this handy arsenal—!”

The day finally came when the tiny flotilla was at last raised, and, gay in its paint and polished metal, gallantly rode at anchor. All the lake tribes were assembled to witness the celebration, and they gazed with wonder at the strange craft. Many Americans had been attracted to the lake by news of the discovery, and the camp had grown to almost twice its original size. Some of the officers' wives had endured the hardships of the journey to witness the novel sight.

The boats were pronounced seaworthy and were to be tested. The largest boat, the flagship, was decorated from one end to the other with its faded pennants, but in the stern, proudly proclaiming its present nationality, flew the Stars and Stripes. Under the flag at the bow stood a sturdy, nonchalant figure, arms folded, head erect. Condescendingly Piang swept the crowd of wondering natives with his haughty eye. He paid no more attention to Sicto than to the others. In his supreme self-confidence Piang scorned to report Sicto to the authorities. He was clothed in a new dignity that put him far above considering such an unworthy opponent as Sicto and he silently cherished the hope that other opportunities to outwit the mestizo would be granted him.

An order was given. A shrill whistle startled the jungle folk. The engines throbbed, and one after another the boats responded. A cheer went up from the banks.

Piang had been given the honor of renaming the boats. The smallest one bore the name of his mother, Minka. The next was dedicated to the memory of his tribe's greatest hero, Dato Ali, and characteristically, on the bow of the flagship, beneath the boy's feet, glittered the bright gold letters, "P-I-A-N-G."

Eighth Adventure

The Juramentado Gunboat

The transport *Seward* was approaching Jolo. Far in the distance the sunset tinged the coast with myriads of delicate tints, softening the harsh outline of the jungle. A flock of wild pigeons hovering over the town, suggested domestic peace, which was far from the actual state of affairs in that hotbed of intrigue. Glasses were trained on the isolated garrison, a mere speck of civilization, hurled at the foot of the jungle, and the excited tourists covered themselves with glory by their foolish questions.

Queer, dark-skinned people in dirty, many-colored garments, looking like a rainbow fallen in disgrace, greeted the newcomers in sullen silence, their disapproval very evident. A quarantine officer boarded and asked for the young lieutenant who was to join the Siasi garrison.

“Hello, Lewis! There is some uprising in Basilan. Jekiri again, I guess. They want you up at headquarters immediately.”

The chug-chug of the engine was the only sound as the trim little gunboat *Sabah* slipped along. Lewis had been given command of a squad of cavalry and ordered to proceed to Basilan to put down any outbreak that might threaten. “Juramentado,” was whispered, and his orders were not to allow the troops to become involved but to quell any trouble that was brewing.

“A pretty big order for a shave-tail (greenhorn) Lewis,” General Beech had said at parting, “but I bet you and that dark shadow of yours will make good.” The hearty handclasp and kind smile warmed the young officer’s heart. General Beech was unusually young for his post as division commander, and he had endeared himself to his followers by his kindly manner and dignified directness,

and Lewis would have faced death for him.

“Thank you, sir,” was all that he said, and “the dark shadow” salaamed according to his custom.

That night as the Americans swung along under the dome of brilliant stars, a question arose as to the meaning of juramentado.

“Piang,” Lieutenant Lewis said, “tell us about this custom of your people, won’t you?”

Bashfully the boy hung his head and wriggled his toes. He was ashamed of his fierce people since the good American had taken him into his home, but they prevailed upon him to explain, and among them they gathered the following story from his funny, broken English:

When a Moro wearies of life and wishes to take a short cut to paradise, he bathes in a holy spring, shaves his eyebrows, clothes himself in white and is blessed by the pandita. The oath he takes is called *juramentar* (die killing Christians), and he arms himself with his wicked knife and starts forth. Selecting a gathering, well sprinkled with Christians, he begins his deadly work, and as long as he breathes, he hews right and left. Piang told them that he had seen one strong Moro juramentado pierced by a bayonet, drive the steel further into himself, in order to reach the soldier at the other end of the gun, whom he cut in two before he died.

The horror on the faces of his listeners made Piang pause, but they urged him on.

“Since we are headed toward Jekiri’s sanctum, I guess it behooves us to get all the dope goin’ about these fellows,” interjected a recruit.

Piang’s big, black eyes filled with mystery when he described how the juramentado rides to the abode of the blessed on a shadowy, white horse, taller than a carabao, just as dusk is falling. Indeed, he assured them that he had seen this very phenomenon himself and shivered at the recollection of the unnatural chill and damp that crept through the jungle while the spirit was passing.

“Bosh, Piang, you mustn’t believe those fairy tales now. You are a good American.”

“Sure, me good American, now,” grinned the boy.

There is nothing to differentiate the island of Basilan from the many others in the Sulu group. The natives seemed far from hostile, however, and Lieutenant Lewis remarked upon their docility to Sergeant Greer.

“Don’t let ’em fool you, sir; they’re not to be trusted,” he replied.

“Oh, Sergeant, I think we are all too scared of the dirty beggars. If we ever stop dodging them, they will stop lying in wait for us.”

The old man’s face did not reveal his misgivings, but he wondered where this young upstart would lead the men and inwardly cursed the war department for sending troops into the jungle under the command of a baby. He was soon to change his opinion of this particular “baby.”

Camp was pitched near the water’s edge in a tall cocoanut grove that supplied them with food and water as well as shade. The chores over, liberty was granted to explore the island. The sergeant shook his head; he seemed to feel the inexperience of the new officer and overstepped the bounds of discipline when he warned him again of the treachery of the natives, advising him to keep the men in camp.

“That will do, Sergeant,” replied the lieutenant. The old man stiffened into a salute, wheeled, and disappeared down the company street.

At sunset retreat was sounded, and after all the men had been accounted for, they gathered around the fires. Picturesque natives mingled with the jolly soldiers, bartering and arguing over trifling purchases. Through the warm fragrance, unfamiliar sounds kept reminding Lewis that he was far from home. The twilight deepened into night, and pipe in hand, he reviewed the strange scene. Folks at home were celebrating Christmas Eve. Somewhere the snow was falling, bells jingling, and a mother’s prayers were being whispered for the far-away boy in the Sulu jungle. Little Piang was squatting at his feet, silently watching the scene, happy because he was near his master. Suddenly the boy jumped up,

dashed into the crowd, and yelled:

“Juramentado!”

A tall Moro, without any warning, had begun to shriek and whirl, cutting to and fro with his terrible campilan, and before any one could prevent, he had felled two troopers. With a howl, Lewis plunged into their midst, pistol leveled, but before he could pull the trigger, the Moro buried the sword in his own vitals and pitched forward, dead.

“See, another!” cried Piang.

Just in time a bullet from the lieutenant’s revolver silenced another deadly fanatic. They had slipped into the gathering, well concealed beneath enshrouding green sarongs, but Piang’s quick eye had detected them before they had a good start.

“Piang has saved us from a terrible row, boys,” said Sergeant Greer, and when the wounded were cared for, the rough soldiers tossed the graceful boy on their shoulders and paraded through the camp, much to the delight of the hero.

“I go to find the sultan to-morrow, sir?” asked Piang. “Him at Isabella, and I must give him Kali Pandapatan’s message.”

“Well, Piang, I am with you. I’m going to face that old codger and tell him what I think of his fiendish tricks of killing us off by this beastly juramentado, when he claims to be at peace with America.”

Lewis learned many things during the trip, and Piang delighted in guiding his friends through the jungle he loved so well, through the grass eight feet high, under trees laden with strange fruits. Monkeys were swinging in the trees chattering and scolding the intruders.

“You want monkey, sir?” asked Piang.

“Can you catch one without hurting it?”

“You watch Piang,” chuckled the boy. The others hid, and Piang struck a match. The tree, full of curious little people, shook as they scampered about trying to

see what Piang was doing. He paid no attention to them, and as he struck match after match, they gradually crept nearer. Shielding the flame from the inquisitive creatures, he excited their curiosity until they were unable to resist, and soon one hopped to the ground. Another came, and another. Piang paid no attention to the visitors, continuing to hide the flame in his hands. Lewis almost spoiled it all by laughing outright, for it was indeed a ridiculous sight to see the little wild things consumed with curiosity. Walking upright, their funny hands dangling from the stiff elbows, they advanced. One venturesome little gray form clinging to the branch overhead by its tail, timidly touched Piang's shoulder. It paused, touched it again, and finally confidently hopped upon it, all the while craning its neck, making absurd faces at the sulphur fumes. Two little arms went around Piang's neck; a soft little body cuddled up against him, and all the while the monkey twisted and turned in its efforts to discover the mystery of the flame.

The click of a camera sounded like a gunshot in the intense stillness, and up the trees went the little band in a flash, all but the prisoner in Piang's arms.

"Great, Piang," called Lewis. "I hope the picture will be good, for it was the strangest sight I ever saw in my life."

"Oh, me love monkeys," replied the boy, stroking and soothing the frightened creature. "You want this one?"

"No, let the little beast off, I couldn't bear to cage it up." A banana and some sugar repaid the monkey for the experiment and after he was free, he followed the travelers, chattering and begging for sweets.

When they came to Isabella, capital of Basilan Island, Piang scurried off in search of the sultan. The men amused themselves watching the excitement they created. An American soldier is a wonderful and dreadful thing to these wild folk.

"The sultan, he out in other barrio. Me catchim." This being interpreted meant that Piang would guide them to his house.

When they finally came to a clearing, Lewis wondered why Piang stopped in front of a filthy hut, half-way up two cocoanut-trees; he was impatient to be off, as he wanted to reach the sultan's palace before dark. Piang was arguing with a

dirty woman cleaning fish in the river.

“Piang, what’s the idea? Let’s get on,” impatiently said Lewis.

“This His Excellency Paduca Majasari Amiril Sultan Harun Narrasid’s house,” replied Piang with awe.

“Gee, what a name!” exclaimed Lewis. “And to go with that dugout, too. Say, Piang, I suppose we could call the old chap Pad for short?”

Piang grinned, but instantly went on his knees, head touching the ground as a sullen, dark face, a white scar slashed across the cheek, appeared at the opening.

“What does the beggar mean by that grunt, Sergeant?” asked Lewis.

“That’s the old boy himself, sir, wanting to know why you have disturbed his royal sleep.”

Lewis was dumfounded! This dirty, insignificant creature the sultan! He wanted to laugh, but the solemn little figure, prostrate before the man, made him say quietly:

“Piang, get up, I want you to talk to him.”

Timidly the boy raised his eyes to his august lord; another grunt seemed to give Piang permission, for he rose and faced Lewis.

“What you want Piang to say? Be careful. He not like joke and might chop off Americanos.”

Lewis realized it was no trifling matter to meet this scoundrel alone in the jungle, far from reinforcements. His message was simple, short, and impressive:

“Ask him why the devil he allowed those juramentados to invade my camp?”

With much ceremony Piang addressed the sultan, bowing and scraping before him. The low, ugly growls in response made Lewis furious, but he refrained from showing his anger. The sultan’s reply amazed him.

He expressed his regrets indifferently, that the camp had been disturbed. But (he threw up his hands to indicate his helplessness) who could stop the sacred juramentado? Not he, powerful sultan that he was. To-day was a feast of the Mohammedans. To-day was a most holy day, and, of course, the sultan could not be held responsible if some of his men had become excited. True, many good Americans had met their death in this way; it was most unfortunate, but how could it be stopped? Did the Christians not have their Christmas, and did they not kill turkeys and cut trees? The Moros are a fierce people and celebrate their feast days in a more violent manner.

Poor Lewis! Thoroughly exasperated, he tried to argue through Piang, but finding it hopeless, he told the boy to finish Kali Pandapatan's business with the sultan as quickly as possible.

Discouraged, he started back through the jungle, wondering how many more fanatics had broken loose during his absence. The sultan was deliberately picking the troops off, a few at a time, always insisting that he was at peace with the Americans. The war department, many miles away, was unable to understand the situation. Orders required that the Moro receive humane treatment, and forbade any drastic measures being taken against the juramentados, saying time would cure it. It was outrageous, and intelligent men were being made fools of by the sultan, who understood the state of affairs perfectly.

The jungle began to irritate Lewis; it was a constant fight. The terrible heat, the tenacity of the vines and undergrowth seemed directed toward him personally, as he stumbled and fought his way along. How impossible to deal with the crafty sultan according to Christian standards! He should be given treatment that would bring him to terms quickly, and Lewis longed to get a chance at him.

Suddenly an idea flashed into his head. He hurried Piang, bidding him find a shorter cut home, as night was gathering.

"Sergeant Greer, come to my tent immediately," ordered the lieutenant when he had looked over the camp and found everything safe.

"Allow no one to enter, orderly," he said and closed the flaps.

"Sergeant, I have a plan and I need your experience and advice to carry it out.

That old sultan is a fiend, and I am going to get him!”

“That’s been tried many times, sir, and he is still ahead of the game.”

But after Lewis had talked rapidly for a few minutes, disclosing the plan that was slated to best his majesty, a smile broke over the weather-beaten features of the sergeant, and he slapped his thighs in appreciation.

“Well, sir, we can try it, and if it does work, headquarters will flood you with thanks; if it fails, and I warn you it might, you will be cut into hash either by the sultan or the war department.” This was good advice from the old soldier.

“I know it, Sergeant, but I am going to take the risk if you are with me.” The enthusiastic young man dashed out of the tent to make the necessary preparations for the great event.

Christmas morning dawned sultry and heavy. The mist lifted after reveille and the troops were astonished that the *Sabah* had disappeared. Their surprise was greater to find a corporal in charge of the camp. There was a positive order that no trooper should enter the barrio, and an air of mystery hung over the whole camp. Where was the gunboat, the lieutenant, the sergeant, and the interpreter, Piang? The corporal shook his head to all these questions.

Suddenly rapid firing was heard in the direction of the barrio, and every soldier seized his gun and ran into the company streets, but the corporal, calm and undisturbed, dismissed them.

Nervously the men wandered about; the two wounded men became the center of attraction and related for the hundredth time their sensations when the juramentado had struck them down. They were not seriously wounded, but the cruel cuts were displayed, and they did not prove an antidote to the tenseness of the situation.

The firing had ceased after about ten minutes, and new sounds took its place: wails and shrieks, the crackling of bamboo, told the story of the burning village. But who had attacked the town? The corporal smiled to himself, quietly.

Cheerily a whistle rang out, sending the men running to the beach; there was the *Sabah*, tripping jauntily through the water toward her recent mooring-place, and on her deck, smiling and waving, were the missing men.

“Merry Christmas,” Lewis greeted the men, as he walked down the company street. Stopping at the cook’s tent, he inquired what there was for dinner.

“Beans, bacon, and hardbread,” was the reply.

“Tough menu for Christmas, eh, cook?”

A shrill whistle echoed through the forest

A shrill whistle echoed through the forest

Since their arrival, every turkey and duck had disappeared, and the barrio offered nothing to enhance their limited ration. It was an old trick; the natives objected to sharing their food with soldiers, and as soon as any troops landed on the island, ever possible article was spirited away into the jungle.

It was a bad day for every one. Most of the men were homesick, and they all felt the shadow of impending disaster; only Lewis and his confidants realized the seriousness of the situation, however.

“Corporal, take four men with bolos and cut six banana trees,” called Lewis. “Plant them in a row down the company street.”

Curiosity and amusement were mingled with indifference as the men started toward the thicket to execute the order. What had come over the lieutenant? Obediently the trees were brought, and Lewis superintended the planting. The squad was kept busy cutting ferns and palms, and it began to dawn on the astonished men that they were preparing for a holiday. The spirit was taken up generally, and the gloom was gradually dispelled.

“Here, Jake, hang this mistletoe up over the folding doors,” commanded the corporal, handing him a bamboo shoot, and pointing to the tent door. “Now when she comes asailin’ in to dinner, all unaware of your presence, smack her a good one, right on the bull’s eye.”

Laughter and shouts greeted this order, and when Kid Conner offered to

impersonate a lovely damsel and, with mincing step and bashful mien, appeared at the opening, Jake was game, and a skuffle ensued. Shrieks of merriment coming from the cook tent aroused Lewis's curiosity, and even his weighty matters were forgotten when he beheld Irish cooky on his knees before the incinerator arranging a row of well-worn socks. Solemnly folding his hands he raised his eyes in supplication:

"Dear Santa, don't forget your children in this far-away jungle. We are minus a chimney on this insinuator, but we are bettin' on you and the reindeers just the same, to slip one over on us and come shinnin' down a cocoanut-tree with your pack. Never mind the trimmin's and holly, just bring plenty of cut plug and dry matches."

And so the day worn on. Toward noon the storm broke; runners announced the approach of the sultan, and Lewis was far from calm when he gave the order to admit him to camp.

"Piang," he said, "there is the deuce to pay, I know, but you stick by your uncle, and we will pull through."

No insignificant nigger greeted Lewis this time. The sultan had come in state. Where he had gathered his train, the men could not imagine, but there he was, garbed in royal raiment, attended by slaves and retainers. Solemnly the procession advanced. Advisers, wives, slaves, and boys with buyo-boxes followed his majesty, who was arrayed in a red silk sarong, grotesquely embroidered with glass beads, colored stones, and real pearls. His hair was festooned with trinkets strung on wire, and on his fingers were fastened tiny bells that jingled and tinkled incessantly. They got on Lewis's nerves, and he quaked inwardly when he realized why he was honored by this visit.

Finally when the members of the court had arranged themselves around their master, he loftily signaled for his buyo; Lewis, nothing daunted, motioned to his striker. Amid smothered laughter he produced the lieutenant's pipe and tobacco, using a tin wash-basin for a tray. Mimicking the actions of the royal slave the man salaamed before Lewis and proffered the pipe. Lest the sultan should despise his barren state, minus slaves, advisers, and wives, Lewis summoned Sergeant Greer and directed him to remain beside him to share the honor of the visit.

When Lewis caught Irish cooky, arrayed in apron and undershirt, with a basting spoon and a meat ax held at attention, making faces at his old sergeant, the humor of the situation came over him, and he smiled to himself as he looked at the scene before him: the banana-trees, loosely flapping their wilted leaves, the socks idly waiting to be the center of merriment again, the troop drawn up at attention, regardless of the variety of uniform, and beyond, the *Sabah*, sole reminder of civilization, bobbing at anchor.

Never removing his eyes from Lewis's face, the sultan completed the ceremony of the buyo, and after deliberately rolling a quid of betel-nut, lime-dust, and tobacco leaves, the august person stuffed it into his mouth.

The trees rang with silence. Lewis thought his ears would burst as he strained them to catch the first sound that was to decide his fate. Faithfully Piang remained by his friend's side, despite the angry glances directed toward him from the sultan's party; the lad was fearful of the outcome of this tangle.

Finally the spell was broken. Women giggled, slaves flitted about, administering to the wants of the party, and the interpreter rose to deliver the complaint.

Had there not been a treaty of peace signed between Moroland and America?

"Yes," replied Lewis. "And I am happy to serve a government that greets the Moro as brother." The sultan stirred, perplexed by the reply.

"Then what right had that boat," asked the interpreter, pointing to the *Sabah*, "to shell the barrio, destroying property and killing?"

This question was received by Lewis and the sergeant with grave surprise. Solemnly they exchanged inquiring glances, then in mock indignation glowered at the *Sabah*. The *Sabah* disturb the peace? When had that happened?

Insolently the interpreter related the story of the attack, and a rustle of surprise and delight ran through the troop. Sorrowfully Lewis and the sergeant shook their heads, and the sultan, puzzled at first, began to realize that he was dealing with a new kind of "Americano." The two men's heads bent lower and lower as they sorrowed over the misdemeanor of their little boat. Weighed down with grief, Lewis signaled Piang to prepare for his reply to the noble visitor.

How could he (Lewis) appease the powerful sultan for this mishap? What amends could he make for the treachery of his little gunboat? Not even he [his hands went up in imitation of the sultan's own gesture of the day before] could help it, powerful officer though he was. It was Christmas, a most holy day, and doubtless before dawn the truant craft had slipped out of the harbor without permission and had gone juramentadoing.

"Attention!" commanded Sergeant Greer, startling the troop into rigidness. Their delight had almost expressed itself in a whoop.

With exaggerated gestures, Lewis continued.

Did the Moro not have similar customs? And did the sultan not sympathize with him in his inability to stop this dreadful practice in the Celebes Sea? American boats are dangerous on their feast days, and no one can tell when they may go juramentadoing to celebrate the occasion. That is the only custom they could celebrate to-day. Look! [He pointed at the pitiful banana-trees.] There are no gifts to adorn them with, no turkeys to kill; and the soldiers' hearts are sad. But the *Sabah* evidently appreciated her capabilities, and doubtless before night she would again honor her country by recklessly shelling the jungle.

At this moment from the *Sabah* a shrill whistle echoed through the forest, scattering the assembled guests in all directions. Some took to trees, others threw themselves face down, on the ground.

The sultan was furious. He gruffly ordered his subjects back, and his beady eyes glared at the impostor, but he was too much of a diplomat to display his feelings further. The soldiers had been amused at first, but they realized the danger of trifling with the sultan. Every tree and corner of the jungle would respond with an armed savage, eager to destroy them, should the order be given, and uneasy glances were directed at the irate potentate. All the recent good humor and mirth had vanished; only the sergeant and the lieutenant retained an air of utter indifference. They quietly continued to smoke, gazing off into the far horizon, oblivious of their surroundings. Were they pushing that huge American bluff too far?

After long deliberation, the sultan apparently reached his conclusion. He whispered an order, and several runners disappeared into the jungle. Lewis heard

the sergeant catch his breath, but the old man preserved his dignity admirably. More silent waiting and smoking followed. The sultan growled his displeasure as an adviser attempted to give some piece of advice, displaying a far from lovely temper. Piang valiantly stood his ground, ready to fight and die by his friend.

Finally sounds of the returning slaves reached the gathering. What was coming? Armed savages? Or had he ordered his poison reptiles to be let loose among the soldiers? The stillness was oppressive. No one moved, and the sultan continued to study the averted face of the officer.

A sound floated to them, nearer, nearer. The men braced themselves for a fight. But the sound? It was one they had all heard, a familiar, homelike sound.

“Gobble-gobble!” It was answered from all directions. Gradually the truth dawned on Lewis. He had won, and the warm blood rushed through his tired limbs.

“Turkeys, by gosh!” shouted a recruit, and the cry was taken up by the whole command, for slaves were pouring in with fowls of every description. The sergeant vainly tried to establish order in the ranks, but the reaction was too great. All the good humor and excitement of the morning was restored, and the innate childishness of the soldier began to assert itself.

“Here, Jake, hang this fellow up on that tree so he can salute his majesty in true turkey fashion,” shouted one man, and Jake, game as usual, tossed a big gobbler up in one of the mock Christmas-trees. From this point of vantage the bird made the jungle resound with its protests, while the troop screamed with laughter as Jake undertook to interpret the creature’s address.

“Piang, what will we say to the old codger now?” asked Lewis.

“I ask for gift for *Sabah*; it keep her good,” grinned the boy, and when he delivered that message to his majesty, a smile nearly destroyed the immobility of his features. A slave handed Lewis a package done up in green leaves, and when he curiously loosened the wrappings, a handful of seed-pearls, beautiful in luster and coloring fell in his palm.

“Thank him for the *Sabah,* Piang. I guess this will ease her restless spirit, all

right. Tell him it will also serve as a balm for the wounds of the men who were attacked by the juramentados."

Regally the old potentate rose to take leave. Lewis wanted to slap him on the back in that "bully-for-you-old-top" manner, but the farce must be completed. When the sultan paused opposite Lewis, measuring him with those cruel, steely eyes, Lewis's only indiscretion was a wavering of the eyelid, just one little waver, but it was very much like a wink. There was undoubtedly a response in the other's eyes, but that is between the sultan and Lewis.

As solemnly as they had come, the procession disappeared into the jungle. The giant trees, smothered by vines and noxious growths, swallowed the brilliant throng and seemed to symbolize the union of the savage and the jungle. The sergeant's great, brawny hand was extended and grasped by Lewis in appreciation of what they had been through together.

Excitement reigned everywhere. The bedlam of fowls about to be decapitated and the shrieks of the troopers vied with each other for supremacy. Piang was being lionized by the men, toasted and praised in high fashion.

When Lewis inspected the Christmas dinner, the old Irishman winked a solemn wink, as he reminded the lieutenant of the discarded menu.

"You knew it all the time, sor; why didn't you put me on?" With a noncommittal smile, Lewis proceeded on his usual inspection tour. After he had returned to his tent and was settling himself to enjoy the hard-earned meal, he was startled by an unusually loud outburst among the men. It gradually dawned upon him what it was. "Three cheers for the lieutenant! Three cheers for Piang!" was the cry that was disturbing the jungle twilight.

Ninth Adventure

The Bichara[1]

Piang was about to land for the first time at Zamboanga. His tribe had looked with distrust upon the overtures made by Governor Findy, and although they obeyed his command to appear at the *bichara*, they were prepared to fight if necessary. Pagans, Mohammedans, Catholics, and Protestants were ordered to assemble at Zamboanga to establish peaceful trading relations, a thing that had never been dreamed of in the belligerent Sulu Isles, and Americans as well as natives were fearful of the outcome. The governor was severely criticized for his experiment, but he had made a deep study of the Moros, and was willing to run the risks of the present in his desire to bring the light of freedom and peace to the misguided savages. After centuries of oppression and outrages against them, the Moros had of necessity become suspicious and cautious. Preyed upon by Jesuits, Filipinos, and Spaniards, they had long ago found a ready bolo the safest argument. Governor Findy had sent them word that they were to be protected from their enemies, and that Americans were their friends, but disturbing whispers of traps and bondage made the wild folk hesitate to obey the summons.

Thus, a strange scene was being enacted at the Zamboanga wharf. From all directions weird crafts made their way hesitatingly toward it. The sentries were distrustfully scrutinized, but not a soldier was armed.

“See, Kali Pandapatan, I told you the new governor was good. He trusts us and permits us to enter his barrio as friends.” Proudly the tribe’s charm boy sprang from the war-prau, and, to the astonishment of the soldiers, as well as the Moros, strutted up to the sergeant in charge and offered his hand, American fashion.

“I’ll be dinged, if it ain’t Piang!” exclaimed Sergeant Greer. “Is this your old man, Piang?” he asked genially, pointing to Kali Pandapatan. The old chief stiffened at the apparent familiarity.

“Him big chief! Him Kali Pandapatan,” hastily corrected Piang.

“Excuse me, sor; no hard feelings, I hope. Had a rough trip over, I hear; how did you leave the missus?”

When the remark had been interpreted, a murmur rippled through Kali’s ranks, and hands flew to hips. No Moro permits his women to be spoken of.

“What’s all the fuss, kid?” asked the sergeant, innocently.

With an impish grin, Piang replied:

“Him no like talk about missus; him got twenty.”

“The deuce he has!” laughed the sergeant. “Some old scout!”

The good-natured Irishman finally gained the confidence of the ruffled potentate, and when Piang explained that he and the soldier were old friends, Kali solemnly acknowledged the union with a stiff handshake.

“Ver’ good,” said the savage with a grin. Piang glowed with pride at Kali’s display of English.

“Now what do you know ’bout that?” commented Greer.

The savages were for all the world like packs of wild animals brought to bay. Gaudy Bogobos from Davao brushed shoulders for the first time with Sabanas and Kalibugans, and their snarls and bickerings boded ill for the success of the bichara; but finally the natives huddled together, linked by the common suspicion of their Christian enemy.

Before entering the town, every visitor was required to place his weapons in the *lanceria*. Now a weaponless Moro is the most embarrassed of men, with the possible exception of the dreamer who finds himself at a party in pajamas. A Moro’s idea of his costume, arranged in order of its importance is: first, weapons; second, hat; third, shirt, and, incidentally, trousers.

“Juramentado! Gobernado!” faintly whispered Piang

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The timid creatures slunk along, looking suspiciously behind them, but as the soldiers paid no attention to them, they gradually forgot their enmity toward civilization and became engrossed in the new delights: pink lemonade, pop-corn, toy balloons. They were beside themselves with joy. When ice-cream was introduced, and they had been assured that it would not burn them, their admiration was unbounded. Piang surreptitiously slipped some of the heavenly sweet into his wallet for future consumption and was dismayed a little later to find a thin stream trickling down his leg and an empty wallet.

Governor Findy watched with interest the mingling of the many alien people. Wily Chinamen behind their bamboo street-stalls ministered to the wants of the throng, taking in trade bits of gold-dust and trinkets of brass; Filipinos offered their wares, cooling drinks and sweets. The Filipino's costume is very different from that of the Moro. He wears stiff, white trousers, carefully creased and immaculate shirts which hang outside the trousers. He wears no shoes, and his short black hair is oiled and brushed very carefully.

"Now, it's many times I've been wonderin' what the advantage is in wearin' your shirt outside your trousers," said Sergeant Greer to a sentry. "That's what I call practical," and he pointed to an ice-cream vender, industriously wiping a spoon on the tail of his shirt, before offering it to a new customer.

There was great excitement over the coming *baile* (ball). That night savages and Christians were to enjoy the festivities side by side, and marvelous tales of preparation were being circulated. Piang and Kali Pandapatan wandered about the village, pausing here and there, filled with awe at the novel sights. The value of garters as necklaces had been discovered, and a brilliant crimson pair decorated the chief's neck (he had gladly parted with five dollars' worth of gold-dust for the treasure). Gilt collar buttons were forced into the holes in his ears. Safety-pins and their surprises had to be investigated, and an admiring throng crowded around, marveling at Kali's daring.

"Kali!" Piang exclaimed suddenly. "Look!"

Seated at a table in front of a Chino café, were three men in earnest conversation: Alverez, a Filipino mestizo, who had acquired by deception the Moro title, Dato Tamangung; his cousin Vincente; and the Moro malcontent, Sicto. The two Filipinos were disloyal employees of the government, already

suspected of being the instigators of unrest among the Moros. Sicto was a deserter from Kali's ranks and was wanted by that august chief for many serious offenses. Dato Kali Pandapatan scorned to report Sicto to the authorities. A Moro dato is supreme and has the right to punish his subjects according to his own lights. A woman, mingling with the gala bichara throng had a mere stump for an arm; she was a thief and her hand had been severed to prevent it from offending again. A man with face half covered showed the savage justice dealt a liar; his mouth had been split from ear to ear to permit easier passage of the truth. Sicto would be handled according to Moro law, but not here.

Kali and Piang exchanged a knowing look, and Piang wandered off, apparently seeking new pleasures, but furtively watching the three men. He wormed his way through the crowd intent on a game of chess, played by two venerable old Chinamen. A sudden "Sssshhh" from Sicto interrupted Alverez's excited whisper, but not before Piang had caught a few significant words:

"The baile—juramentado—Findy."

The little charm boy's heart beat violently, but his face never changed expression. Juramentado! So some poor misguided fanatic had been persuaded to assassinate the governor. He and Kali must prevent the outrage, for had they not sworn allegiance to this new chief? Piang feared that Sicto suspected the words had been overheard, so he carefully avoided Kali and strolled on among the people. A glance at his chief had warned Kali that trouble was in the air.

Sicto, Alverez, and Vincente moved off toward the dock.

"Sicto, did Piang hear what I said?" asked Alverez.

"Does the jungle hear the trumpeting of the elephant?" angrily retorted Sicto.

"He hasn't spoken to any one yet," said Vincente, significantly. "We had better get rid of him before—"

A whispered conversation followed, and Alverez finally exclaimed:

"I'll do it! Wait here. Watch Piang." Then he hurried off.

Without approaching Kali, or divulging the secret to any one, Piang followed the

men to the dock, and Sicto laughed softly as he watched the unsuspecting boy walk into the trap. The little gunboat *Sabah* was bobbing at her moorings, and Piang joined the crowd that was gazing in wonder at the strange craft. A shrill whistle, signifying the *Sabah's* intention of immediate departure, so terrified the Moros that some took to their heels while others sought the safety of tall lamp-posts. Piang was laughing merrily when he was startled by a noise, and turning, he saw Alverez and a soldier running toward him.

Instantly everything was confusion, and Piang realized that he was the center of the excitement.

"Are you Piang?" asked the soldier, cautiously approaching him.

"Sure, me Piang."

"Hike! Beat it!" said the man, pointing to the *Sabah*.

What did he mean? Was Piang to be allowed to go aboard the boat?

The soldier made it very plain, finally, that such was the case, but Piang insisted that he could not depart on a pleasure ride without getting his chief's permission.

"*Sigi*, beat it, I tell you, *pronto*!" said the soldier impatiently, emphasizing the command with a push. Almost before Piang realized it, he found himself on the gunboat, which was slowly moving out toward the channel. In his hand was a crumpled piece of paper which the soldier had gingerly thrust into it.

"Here's your passport, kid," he had said with a grin. Piang carefully unrolled the paper and stared at the queer American characters. A sailor offered to translate it for him, but when he glanced over the paper, he uttered a low whistle.

"Say, you go away back and sit down! Don't you come near me or any one else, sabe?"

Piang recoiled before the look of disgust on the sailor's face. What was the matter with every one? Why were they all afraid to come near him, and where were they taking him? He summoned up enough courage to ask who had written the letter, and when he was told that it was signed by Governor Findy, he felt reassured. Surely if the good governor was sending him somewhere, it would be

all right. Disconsolately, Piang crouched in a corner, watching sharks and dolphins sporting in the foaming wake. He wondered how long the boat was going to be out, if it would return in time for him to save the governor. When he started toward a group of men to ask for information he was met with a shout.

“Get out of here, you!” they yelled, and poor Piang hurriedly retreated to the stern. Much talk of the coming baile seemed to indicate that the sailors expected to return before evening, so Piang patiently squatted on a coil of rope, wondering when the mysteries of his errand would be revealed to him.

The ocean is dotted with many lovely islands off Zamboanga. Somber, lowering Basilan guards its secrets to this day; Sacol, home of Dato Mandi, invites and then repels the intruder; tiny clumps of vivid green rise out of the channel in the most unexpected places, as if timidly wishing to investigate before adding their emerald mite to crown the Celebes. The island toward which the *Sabah* was making her way seemed blacker and denser than its more frivolous neighbors. Two staccato whistles warned the islanders of the *Sabah’s* approach, and the beach was soon the scene of lively commotion. The engines stopped, and the gunboat slid along easily. A boat was lowered. The sailors were speaking in low voices; one looked toward Piang and shook his head sadly.

“My task is not to be an easy one,” thought the charm boy, but his head went up proudly. These sailor men should see how a brave Moro executed the commands of his superiors.

“Come on, kid,” called a jacky, and just as Piang stepped over the side a kindly sailor slipped a quarter in his hand. It was evidently a gift, and the boy grinned appreciatively.

“Wastin’ your coin, man,” remarked another sailor with a harsh laugh. “He’s not likely to need *dinero* (a silver coin) soon.” Piang wondered again at the pitying looks that were cast at him, but he only held his head higher and climbed into the boat. The men seemed in a great hurry; they landed far up the beach, and bags and provisions were hastily dumped on the sand.

“Here you are, young ’un,” said a sailor, and Piang looked up eagerly.

“Me, here?”

“Yep, this is your place,” replied the man, looking away quickly from the soft brown eyes.

Obediently the jungle boy jumped out, awaiting instructions. The sailor in charge pointed to the paper in Piang’s hand and waved toward the barrio.

“For dato?” Piang asked, with a puzzled look.

“Sure, the dato,” replied the man evasively, and Piang turned and started off through the jungle, following a well defined path.

“Plucky kid, that,” said the sailor who pushed off. “Wonder if he knows what’s up? Half the time they don’t tell the poor devils. Row over toward the patrol-boat, and I’ll warn them to watch carefully to-night in case he tries to escape. When they first land here they kick up a terrible row and usually try to make a get-away or commit their particular brand of hari-kari [suicide].”

Piang was in a great hurry. There was no time to be lost and whatever the business in hand might be, it must be finished quickly. He wondered why some of the sailors had not come with him. Americans are always so curious and never lose an opportunity to visit a strange barrio. He ran on swiftly.

Two sounds broke simultaneously on his ears. What was there in them to strike a chill to his heart, to fill him with forebodings? That shrill whistle! It was surely the *Sabah’s,* and as Piang came to a small clearing, he caught a glimpse of the harbor. A cry broke from him. The *Sabah* was sailing away. Before he could fully realize the calamity, that other sound, ominous and terrible, came again from the barrio. A low rumbling, punctuated with shrieks and screams, came nearer, nearer. Suddenly from out the dense undergrowth protruded a face, shoulders, and finally a woman, old and bent, crept through. Spell-bound, Piang watched her. Wisps of unkempt gray hair straggled around her head; filthy rags hung from her lean, stooping shoulders; sunken eyes, sly and vicious, glared at Piang. Tremblingly the boy watched her creep toward him. There was something about the old hag that turned his blood cold. The distant rumble became individual howls, and Piang suddenly realized that he was being hunted. But why, and by whom? The innocent paper in his hand crackled. The old hag was very near, was about to touch him. With a shriek, Piang jumped back. Her hands were festered; her face and neck were covered with white splotches.

“A leper!” cried the boy and suddenly he realized that he had been trapped by that villain, Sicto. Not Sicto, but Alverez had filched the order for the confinement of a leper, had erased the name, and substituted Piang’s. He flung the damning paper from him.

As the boy darted off through the jungle, the old woman yelled. The cry brought the others, and when Piang caught sight of them, he almost lost hope. Would he be able to escape the contamination of this island? With mad shrieks, the lepers gave chase, eager to lay hands on one so lately relegated to their colony. Was he not a leper too? What right had he to scorn them, his brothers? Hotter, fiercer grew the chase. The island was so small that it afforded little refuge for the hunted boy. Sounds from all sides indicated that the chase was almost over; it was only a matter of minutes now, and never again could he leave the dread colony.

A rustle at his feet startled him, and some animal scurried off into the bush. A dark hole from which it had evidently crawled attracted Piang’s attention, and without an instant’s hesitation, he flung himself on the ground and wormed his body into the welcoming shelter. Pulling a fallen branch in front of the opening, he shrank farther back into the cave. Cave? No, he had taken refuge in a fallen tree trunk, hollowed out by the persistent ferreting of termites (ants).

“He was here, here,” screamed the old woman. The pursuers flocked to the spot, and Piang listened as they beat the bush, clamoring for their victim. They were so infuriated at the new arrival’s unsociability that they would probably kill him if they found him.

Piang crouched back in his cramped quarters. The tiny white ants announced their disapproval of the intrusion by vicious stings, but Piang did not move. A sudden jolt made his heart beat wildly. Some one had jumped on the other end of the log, and the rotting wood had caved in. He expected each moment to be his last. Over his head the pattering of bare feet, running along the trunk, sounded like thunder.

When the lepers moved off into the jungle, Piang was not deceived. They would lie in wait, and their revenge would be the more terrible for the delay. Sweat poured down Piang’s face; his body ached where the ants had stung him. He tried to plan some means of escape, but none came to his tired brain.

“There is no God but Allah,” whispered the charm boy, and a peace seemed to fall upon him.

Many weary hours went by before a squawk penetrated the death-like stillness. Fruit-bats! It must be night. Very slowly he made his way toward the opening. Unfortunately for Piang the full moon was rising, making the soft, tropical night a wonder of beauty and loveliness. Cautiously he thrust his head through the branches that shielded his retreat. He was very near the ocean; the other end of the fallen tree, in which he had found refuge, was lying in the water, and the rising tide was gradually creeping up over it. The gentle swish of the sea comforted Piang. It was his friend, the only friend that could help him escape from this island of decay. His practised eyes discerned the shadowy forms of watchers squatting along the beach; beyond, the patrol-boat moved about restlessly, and in the distance twinkled the lights of Zamboanga.

“If I could only get past the lepers and the boat, I could swim back,” thought Piang, and he looked with longing at the oily smoothness of the water. Nothing could slip past the boat on that sea of glass in the bright moonlight. He remembered the schools of sharks he had seen in the *Sabah’s* wake and shuddered; but even that was better than being doomed to die here. He pillowed his head on his arms and leaned against the trunk; his hand closed over a piece of dry bamboo. Lifting it to his eye, he idly squinted through it; it was smooth and clean.

Piang fell to soliloquizing. How many times, surrounded by his friends, he had swum in the moonlight. He remembered one night in particular. How they had sported with bamboo sticks, blowing the spray high in the air, laughing as it fell upon each other! Piang could swim miles with arms folded, pushing through the water like a fish, rolling over on his back or sides, when tired. He had fooled the tribe by staying under water for three minutes, breathing easily through his hollow, bamboo tube. Kali had given him a prize.

Piang’s eyes widened, brightened. With the bamboo stick—could he? He blew through it softly and laughed. But how to get into the water without being detected? The approaching tide, lapping the other end of the fallen log, seemed to be caressing it in pity. Piang examined it closely. Dared he crawl along the trunk? His eyes fell upon the hole just above the water where one of his pursuers had broken through.

“Allah, I thank Thee,” breathed the excited boy. He had found his chance, had discovered a possible means of escape.

Crawling back into the log, he tested the heart of the tree and to his joy, it crumbled under his touch. With a smothered cry, he began to cut his way through the pithy, dust-like wood, and as he gradually worked quantities of the soft fiber loose, he tossed it behind him. If he could work his way through the rotted trunk before the tide turned, it would be an easy matter to slip through the hole into the water.

It was suffocating in the damp inclosure, as the discarded pith began to fill the opening. Tiny apertures let in just enough air, but Piang was panting and dripping with sweat. As he struggled on toward the hole, he could feel the water under him, as it swayed the log gently. Only a little further!

The moonlight bathed Piang in its soft light; a cool breeze blew across his face. One of the watching lepers stood up suddenly.

“There are many crocodiles to-night,” he finally said, pointing toward the log where a slight ripple, widening into vanishing rings, closed over a dark form.

“That’s a queer kind of fish!”

The sailors on the patrol-boat crowded around the speaker, glad of any excitement to break the monotony of their vigil. A thin stream of water had spurted up, disturbing the perfect calm of the surface, and a small black object could plainly be seen, hurrying through the water.

“Now what the deuce?” said the captain. Two bells were loudly sounded, and the boat bounded forward.

“Look out, don’t run it down. Steer to one side.”

The search-light, turned full upon the strange object, revealed to the puzzled sailors a slim bamboo tube, sticking upright, propelled by a strong force from below.

“Now, why don’t that stick float, instead of sailing along like a periscope?” pondered the captain.

As suddenly as the phenomenon had appeared, it sank from sight and the chase ended abruptly.

“Look at our visitors,” said a sailor, pointing over the side. Long streaks of phosphorescence darted back and forth in the shadow of the boat.

“That’s a pretty bunch of shovel-nosed man-eaters, for you,” remarked the mate. “Gosh, wouldn’t you hate to give the hungry devils a chance at you, though?”

The baile was in full swing. The bichara was proving a great success. Governor Findy graciously accepted the savages’ allegiance to the new government and their promises to make the trading system a success. The small park in the center of the garrison was teeming with life. On one side the American band gave the first notes of civilized music that the Moros had ever heard; opposite, rows of brass tom-toms responded mournfully. Gaudy lanterns festooned the tall trees and swung between, describing graceful curves. Flickering moonlight and fireflies added their bit. At one end of the park a platform had been erected for the officers and their families. The savages crowded around as the Americans swayed to the waltz, and their surprise was no less than that of the Americans, when the tom-toms stirred the Moros to the dance and they whirled and crouched in native fashion.

Governor Findy was surrounded by his personal guard; burly Irishmen shared this honor with stalwart Moros, thus proving the governor’s trust in the wild people.

Dato Mandi, Dato Kali Pandapatan, and Governor Findy were conversing on the steps of the dancing platform.

“Kali says that Piang mysteriously disappeared about noon to-day,” explained Mandi in excellent English.

“Who is this Piang, Mandi?” asked the governor.

“Piang is the idol of the Buldoon tribe. He is Kali Pandapatan’s famous charm boy, friend of General Beech and Lieutenant Lewis,” replied Mandi.

“Strange that one so well known should disappear. Yes, I have heard much of this boy’s loyalty and sagacity.” The two Moros turned quickly, warned by a startled look on the governor’s face. Far down the smooth shell road a figure was staggering, wavering toward them.

“Trouble, trouble,” muttered Findy.

The music ceased with a discordant jar, there was a slight stir among the spectators as Sicto and his companions attempted to retire, but to their surprise, Kali’s faithful men closed about them significantly. On came the figure, lithe, slim, and brown.

“Piang!” cried Kali Pandapatan, and instantly his eyes sought out the cowering Sicto.

The heavy, labored breathing became audible as the exhausted boy stumbled through the crowd. A sentry started forward to seize him, but the governor waved him aside. Dripping and panting, Piang staggered toward his chief.

“Juramentado—gobernador!” faintly whispered Piang.

A wild shriek crashed through the intense stillness; a green sarong was torn off, and the white-clad figure of a juramentado rushed at the governor. But Kali Pandapatan was quicker, and just as the assassin raised his barong, a slender kriss glistened in the moonlight and descended. The juramentado lay bathed in his own blood.

Jumping up to the platform, Kali Pandapatan raised his hands.

“My brother chiefs,” he cried, “did any of you know of this foul plot?”

“No, no!” came the quick response from every Moro, and although the Americans could not understand his words, they began to realize that Kali was exhorting his people to disclaim knowledge of the outrage.

“Viviz Gobernador!” came from the full, savage throats, and the cry was taken

up by the multitude.

The dazed governor looked down at the prostrate figure at his feet, looked long, and sorrowed.

“But for the brave Piang I should have been lying there,” he murmured.

Piang supported by Kali watched this new chief.

“Come here, Piang,” said the governor. Fumbling with the collar of his white uniform, he loosened something.

“My lad, I thank you for your bravery,” he said, his voice shaking slightly. “For your timely arrival, and your courage. Your name shall be sent to the great chief at Washington.”

The words were repeated to the jungle boy, and his manly little chest swelled with pride.

“Piang, I am about to decorate you with the emblem of our government; these infantry cross-guns I shall pin on your breast.” The dignified governor reached forward to make good his words, but he paused in embarrassment, the noble speech dying on his lips. He gazed in dismay at the naked little savage, standing straight and expectantly before him.

“I shall *place* this emblem.” The officer began again. There was a titter among the spectators.

Piang, eagerly eyeing the treasure, wondered why the governor delayed. Suddenly a gleam of understanding broke over him, and he grinned, broadly. With the tip of his finger he touched the shining cross-guns, then his necklace of crocodile teeth. The situation was saved.

Amid thunderous applause the smiling governor fastened the guns to the indicated article of dress, and loud and clear rose the shout:

“Piang! Piang!”

[1] *Bichara* means meeting and corresponds to the East Indian word, *durbar*.

Tenth Adventure

Piang’s Triumph

Two years had passed since the bichara. Prosperity and honor had come to Dato Kali Pandapatan and his people under the rule of General Beech and Governor Findy, and Piang had been raised to the post of official interpreter. Sicto, the disturber, had been seized in Zamboanga on the charge of complicity in the plot on Governor Findy’s life; he had attempted to escape, and there were varying reports as to the results. Some said that he had been killed by a crocodile, others that he had escaped and swum to Basilan; but the tribe had not heard of him since the bichara, and they were relieved to be rid of his bullying presence. Especially the little slave girl, Papita, whom Sicto had annoyed since infancy, was glad that he was gone. Sicto’s father had captured the little maid in a raid on the Bogobo country, and the boy seemed to think it his special privilege to abuse and torment her.

Along the steep mountain trail, dividing the jungle as a river might, crept a slow procession. A lumbering carabao swayed lazily forward, and on each side walked four stalwart Moros, ever heedful of the dignified figure astride the beast. Dato Kali Pandapatan rode in silence. Occasionally he gazed down into the deep valleys or off in the direction of Ganassi Peak, but the sorrowful, patient expression never left his face.

Where was Piang? For three days the boy had been missing, and Kali guessed only too easily what had taken him away in such haste. A few days before little Papita had mysteriously disappeared. It was whispered that the notorious Dato Ynoch (Ee-nock) had kidnapped her, and Kali was already preparing an expedition against the marauder. He felt the strain of civilization for the first time, for he had given his word never to assemble his warriors without the permission of the white chiefs at Zamboanga. But Piang, the impatient, the valiant, could not brook the delay, and had in all probability started after his little

friend alone. Kali's messengers should return to-day, and he had ridden far out to watch for their coming.

The procession reached the clearing that gave a full view of the sea. In the distance the eye could discern the curving coast of tiny Bongao; Kali was impervious to the summer beauty and youth of the sparkling ocean, to the charm of the dainty island so gaily chatting with the garrulous waves. He did not see the graceful, white rice-birds or the regal aigrets flitting about among the trees; he saw only the vast, restless ocean. There were no boats in sight.

Slowly the willing carabao was turned homeward, and the aged monarch sorrowfully gave up hope of sending succor to Piang that night. The recent storm had probably delayed his envoys, and he must wait the *Sabah's* monthly visit, which would come the next day.

At the door of his hut Kali Pandapatan was helped from the royal beast's back and up the steep ladder entrance into the cool dusk of the interior where industrious women squatted at their several tasks.

"I miss the child's lively chatter," Aioi was saying sadly.

"She was a trying pupil, I can tell you," remarked the woman at the loom, "but a winning child." She leaned closer to Aioi and whispered:

"Did you know that Papita had been asked in marriage?" The surprised look on Aioi's face made an answer unnecessary.

"Our chief is said to have spurned the offer. You know he has always hoped to prove Papita's noble birth; he wanted Piang to have her, so when the terrible Dato Ynoch's offer came—"

"Who speaks the name of our enemy in my house?" thundered Kali, glowering at the chattering women. "Bend to your tasks and have done with idle gossip."

What difference did it make to Piang if he was alone, if he had only the barest clue to Papita's whereabouts? He was going to follow up that clue, and something seemed to tell him that he was on the right track. The jungle was

dripping and steaming after a three days' downpour; monkeys and birds were huddled in the trees, melancholy, but patient, knowing that their friend, the burning tropic sun, would come to them again, some day. Piang trudged on through the sticky, slippery jungle. An occasional fresh track or recent camping site made him push forward eagerly. What he should do when he did overtake the kidnappers, he had no idea, but something always happened to help Piang. He reverently touched his sacred charm.

The deluge through this lower jungle must have been terrific. Piang was glad that he had been in his mountain barrio during the tempest. Strewn everywhere were branches and enormous tree-ferns; a dead hablar-bird lay in his path. Leeches, hiding on the backs of leaves and twigs, caught at Piang as he brushed by, clinging and sucking their fill, before he could discover them. He raised one foot quickly and yelled:

"*Tinick!*" ("Thorn!") While he was searching for the thorn his other foot began to ache and pain. Piang was too wise to hesitate a moment, so he swung up to a low branch and sat there nursing his feet. He was puzzled; there was no thorns in them, and he could find no cuts. Gradually the soles of the feet began to swell and take on a purplish hue. Piang gave a low whistle and bent to examine the ground.

"*Badjanji!*" ("Bees!") he exclaimed. The ground was yellow with the little bedraggled, stupified creatures. They had been beaten down by the storm and would remain there until the sun came to coax them into industry again. Swinging lightly from one tree to another, Piang reached one of the numberless brooks that ramble aimlessly about through the jungle, and, dropping to its banks, buried his feet in the healing clay. After a short time the pain grew better, and he continued his journey.

He was nearing Dato Ynoch's domain on the banks of Lake Liguasan. The outlaw had chosen his lair well, for it was one of the most inaccessible spots in Mindanao. On all sides treacherous marsh lands reached out from the lake, and it was almost impossible to tell when one might step from the solid jungle into a dangerous morass. A few hidden trails led to the barrio, and by great good luck Piang discovered one. Quietly he crept along into the ever-increasing twilight, for the trail led deep into the jungle's very heart where daylight and sunshine never penetrate. Sounds came faintly from the barrio; tom-toms and many drums

beat a monotonous serenade. A fiesta must be in progress. A fiesta? Piang's face grew hot, and his black eyes flamed. Could it be that the fiesta was poor Papita's wedding? He broke into a run and, panting and sweating, pushed farther into the darkening jungle; but the trail was evidently an abandoned one, for it brought up suddenly against a wall of thorns and closely woven vines. Throwing himself on the ground, Piang wriggled through the offensive marsh weeds, and finally found himself almost on the edge of Lake Liguasan. From his retreat he could plainly see the village streets. The barrio was certainly preparing for a fiesta and no ordinary one, either, for elaborate and barbaric decorations shrouded huts and street. Raised on two posts at the entrance of the village, was a carcass of a mammoth crocodile, in its opened jaws a human skull. Piang shuddered. He had heard that Dato Ynoch's followers were gathered from among the renegade Dyak pirate head-hunters, who fled to Mindanao from Borneo justice. The human skull confirmed the rumor, for there are no cannibal tribes among the Moros.

It was certainly a marriage feast that the women were preparing. A raised platform in the middle of the campong (common), tastefully decorated with skulls small, skulls large, and skulls medium, formed the altar, and a large black bullock was already tied to the *sapoendoes* (sacrifice post). Piang flushed with excitement at an unusually loud beating of tom-toms; the chief was coming. Piang had long wished to see this terrible Ynoch. Weird stories of his terrible personality, his disfigured countenance were widespread. That so powerful a dato could have sprung up so suddenly puzzled the Moros, and Ynoch's identity still remained a mystery.

Down the center of the street advanced a gaudy procession headed by a barbaric priestess. From her head protruded massive horns decorated with flaming red flowers. Around her loins was strapped a crimson sarong; her body swayed and twisted to the savage rhythm of the tom-toms. A tall, amazingly fat man stepped to the platform. His back seemed oddly familiar to Piang, as well as the slinking gait, the shambling step. Straining his eyes, Piang waited. Dato Ynoch raised his hand for silence and turned toward the waiting populace. Piang nearly cried out as he caught sight of the face.

Oily of hair, oily of eye was this Dato out-law. His shifting glance wandered restlessly over the heads of the people, meeting no man's eye. Beneath the pomp of his trappings, the fat, overfed body protruded grotesquely, and his movements

were slow and clumsy. One almond-shaped eye had been partly torn from its socket, leaving a hideous, red scar. An ear, which appeared to have slipped from the side of the oily head and lodged on a fold of the fat neck, had in reality been neatly carved from its proper place by an enraged slave and poorly replaced by a crude surgeon. A bamboo tube had been inserted in the original ear-drum.

“Sicto!” gasped Piang. The mysterious Dato Ynoch, was Sicto, the mestizo.

That Papita had been dragged to the barrio, Piang now had no doubt, and his nimble wits began to look about for a way of escape. He was near the banks of a creek that led to the Cotabato River and thinking that the most likely escape, he wormed his way toward it. Along the bank were canoes of every description. The swift ones seemed to be all four-oared, and he knew that he must have a fleet, light vinta to elude the Dyaks. He spied a tiny white boat tied to a gilded post, and his heart nearly stopped beating when he read the name “Papita” on the bow.

“Papita!” Piang scornfully whispered. “Papita, indeed!” His lip curled, and he glared through the rushes at the hideous Sicto.

“Well, it shall be Papita’s after all!” Piang said and he smiled. He crept toward the little craft to see if there were paddles in it. There were two, and Piang suddenly remembered that part of the Dyak betrothal ceremony takes place upon the water.

The waterspout caught the eggshell praus in its toils

The waterspout caught the eggshell praus in its toils

Long Piang pondered as he watched the preparations for Papita’s betrothal. He examined the *cotta,* counted the praus, and his keen eyes followed the creek to its sharp turn. He crawled past the bend to make sure that the stream was navigable. Satisfied that he could escape through its waters, Piang began to cut rushes, and, squatting in the protecting undergrowth, busily worked while he indignantly listened to the loquacious Sicto telling his followers that Papita was no slave, but a maiden of royal Bogobo birth. He and his father had kept it secret because they intended her for his wife, and at last he had captured the girl from Kali Pandapatan. Faster and faster flew Piang’s fingers, and finally a basket began to shape itself out of the rushes. Soon Piang had two perfect baskets, and

he slung them over his shoulder. While Sicto and his villains were celebrating the coming wedding, Piang quietly slipped back through the jungle, back to the brook where the medicinal clay had cured the bee stings. When he returned later, he handled the baskets with great care and chuckled softly to himself.

A second beating of tom-toms thundered through the barrio. The bride was coming. Down an avenue made for her by hostile looking women, crept a tiny, terrified figure. It was draped in the softest Eastern stuffs; jeweled anklets and bangles tinkled merrily. A gauzy veil of wondrous workmanship swathed the figure, but through it all Piang recognized his beloved Papita. Slowly she approached the altar; fearfully she raised her eyes to the man who awaited her there. Her little feet faltered, and the priestess supported her. Papita leaned heavily against the woman. Three soft notes of a mina-bird floated over the barrio, and Papita became suddenly alive. Again the notes stole through the jungle. The bride threw back her veil.

“The unwilling maid seems to have forgot her woe,” said one scornful woman to another. “Now that she is about to become our chief’s first wife, she does not weep and cry to be taken home.”

The priestess commenced the ceremony that was to last all night. Chants, prayers, admonitions, all, Papita responded to with renewed vigor, and her eyes furtively glanced toward a spot near the curve of the creek where a slender reed swayed unceasingly. After many hours the priestess led the way to the water and Ynoch placed Papita in her gala vinta and pushed her out into the stream. He got into another, and the two boats nosed each other while the crowd showered them with oils and perfumes. When the command came to part, each boat shot off in an opposite direction. A maiden and a bridegroom are each supposed to meditate for the last time on the advisability of the union before the final ceremony; so reads the Dyak marriage laws.

As indifferently as a queen, Papita plied her paddle, paying no heed to the unfriendly eyes and mutterings of the Dyaks; she seemed in no haste and managed her vinta with amazing skill for one so small. Only once she seemed to lose control; her vinta cut deep into the tall rushes near the bend of the creek. Had the Dyaks been less intent on exhibiting their scorn, they might have noticed that when the boat drew back from the rushes it rode deeper in the water, and the little figure labored harder at the paddle as the vinta turned the bend and

passed from sight.

“Piang! is it you?”

As Papita spoke, the form lying in the bottom of the vinta slowly unfolded like a huge jack-knife. The merry eyes twinkled, the youthful, firm mouth curved at the corners, and Piang, the adventurer, smiled up at the astonished girl.

“But yes, Chiquita, did you think that Piang would suffer the outcast Sicto to kidnap his little playmate?” Piang took up the paddle and the vinta shot forward. Silently the two bent to the task, every moment increasing the distance between them and their enemies.

“Will they catch us, Piang?”

“Of course not, my Papita. Piang, the charm boy comes to rescue you.” The proud head went up with arrogant superiority.

“But there are many hidden cut-offs and creeks between us and the river, Piang; Sicto will surely trap us.” The terrified expression in the girl’s soft eyes touched Piang’s heart.

“Have no fear, Papita. Let Sicto overtake us and he will be sorry. Put your ear to the baskets.”

As the girl bent over the two baskets, lying in the bottom of the vinta, a frown puckered her brow. A dull hum, like a caged wind protesting in faint whispers, rose from them. Gradually a smile broke over her face, and she laughed softly.

“Yes; Sicto will be sorry if he overtakes us,” she whispered.

Through the deepening night, a roar came to the fugitives. A deep, cruel howl; tom-toms beat a ragged and violent alarm; savage war-cries rent the air, bounding back from one echo to another. Papita’s hand wavered at her paddle. Piang’s stroke grew swifter, surer. The outraged bridegroom had returned from his meditations to find himself brideless.

“How will they come, Piang?” Papita’s voice trembled.

“Some by water, some by land. Work, Papita.”

And so the deadly tropic night closed about them. The little nut-shell sped down the river, past snags, skulking crocodiles, and many unseen dangers. The jungle came far out over the water, dangling her treacherous plant-life above them, ready to drag them from the vinta: it crept beneath them, shooting up in massive trees that obstructed their passage—trees loaded down with parasites, intertwined, interlaced in hopeless confusion, each trying to crush and climb over the other in the fight for supremacy.

Where the creek empties into the Cotabato River, Piang paused; there were suspicious-looking shadows close to the bank, and he reached for his precious baskets.

“Work slowly, Papita,” he whispered, and the trembling girl kept the vinta just moving. From its ominous silence, the jungle crashed into chaos.

“Lè lè lè lè iiiiiio!” shrieked the echoes.

Piang was ready.

“Lè lè lè lè iiiiiio!” he tauntingly replied.

Kneeling in the bow of the vinta, he hastily lighted a green resinous torch and stuck it upright. It gave forth the pungent, heavy perfume of the jungle pitch. Waiting until his enemies were almost upon him, Piang raised one basket above his head and opened the trap. A sudden buzz and whirl filled the air; Piang reached for the second basket and held it in the smoke of the torch, ready to open. For a few moments, nothing happened, but the enemy slackened their pace, and the war cries were silenced. Finally yells of rage and pain broke from them:

“Badjanji!” they screamed. The little insects, infuriated at the treatment they had received, fairly pounced upon the defenseless Dyaks. No jungle pest is so dreaded as the enraged honey-bee. Its envenomed stings are poisonous, deadly, and often cause more painful wounds than bolos. The men fought desperately. Tauntingly Piang laughed, swiftly he and Papita paddled, and the smoke from the torch enveloped them in its protecting waves. Coming abreast of the war-

prau, Piang loosed the other basket of bees.

On sped the vinta, and ever nearer came the great estuary that gave upon the Celebes Sea. The sounds of the sufferers grew fainter, and finally Papita and Piang were again alone in the great night.

“They will return and assemble the war fleet, Papita; they will pursue us into the ocean. If the water is rough, we cannot cross the bay to Parang-Parang in this vinta. We must hide near the coast and make our way homeward on foot.”

Morning fairly burst upon them. Twilight in the tropics is a name only, for the sun rises and disappears abruptly, and it is day or night in a few moments. The early light showed the ocean in the distance, and at the same moment sounds behind made Piang listen anxiously.

“They are coming, Papita; we must hide.”

As Piang headed for the bank, he noticed a thin stream of smoke trembling above Bongao. He paused and trained his eye on the blur. Suddenly he dug his paddle into the water.

“Papita, quick! The *Sabah* is coming!”

Again the vinta shot forward, down through the shifting, treacherous delta, out into the ocean. Louder grew the beating of paddles against the Dyak war-praus, and Piang could hear the war chant. He knew that Sicto cared little for ships; he had evaded too many of them. Only the *Sabah*, Sicto feared, but he would probably take a chance on this being the Chino mail boat or a Spanish tramp. That the Dyaks would take the chance and follow, Piang was sure.

The sea was choppy and fretful. The little bride boat danced and careened about recklessly. Between the *Sabah* and Piang lay Bongao, and straight for Bongao he headed, skilfully keeping the vinta steady. A white mist rose, as if to hide the vinta from the pursuers, but when the fleet reached the river’s mouth a yell announced that they had been discovered. The race was for life, for more than life, and the boy seemed possessed of a supernatural strength. Nearer came the smoke, and finally around the point of Bongao, burst the little gunboat. At first the Dyaks did not heed the stranger, so used were they to hurling contempt at

island visitors, but when in answer to Papita's signal, as she stood up waving her disheveled wedding veil, there came a shrill whistle, they paused in dismay.

In a very short time Papita and Piang were raised over the side of the *Sabah*, and General Beech and Governor Findy were questioning them.

"You say that Dato Ynoch is pursuing you?"

"Yes, yes, that is him in the first prau," excitedly replied Piang.

"Well, Piang, it is Ynoch that brings the *Sabah* here to-day. We thank you, my boy, for tempting him into the open."

When the Moro boy disclosed Ynoch's identity, a grim smile settled over Governor Findy's face.

"Man the guns, Captain!" commanded General Beech in his dignified, quiet way.

The Dyaks were scattering in the wildest confusion, making their way back to the river with all speed, but the *Sabah* relentlessly pursued. A sudden darkening shadow startled the captain of the *Sabah*, and he pointed toward the mountains.

"Something queer hatchin' over there, General."

A dense mist hid the hills; only old Ganassi Peak stood out, dignified and stern. Like a dirty piece of canvas, one cloud balanced itself on Ganassi's shoulder and rapidly spread itself around the peak. It seemed to sap the very life from Ganassi, as it enveloped it in a chilling embrace. Slowly the cloud loosed its hold and bounced along on the lower hills. In its center it seemed to bear a restless, struggling mass, and the passengers on the *Sabah* watched it nervously. Strange things happen very suddenly in the sunny Celebes. Fascinated, they watched the odd cloud lumbering toward them, dipping and lifting its burden. It sailed over the mountains, flitted past the jungle and reached the ocean, where it hovered and waved as if undecided which way to go. At times, like canvas, it would belly down in the middle, almost burst, right itself, and come sailing on. Again and again the heavy contents pulled the cloud to earth, but valiantly struggling with its burden, it resisted. The cloud brought with it a death-like mist, damp and choking, and the sunshine was abruptly put out. The thing hesitated over the *Sabah*, dipping and sucking itself back, as if made of elastic; it wandered about

aimlessly and paused over the fleeing Dyaks. Finally as if discouraged and strained beyond its endurance, it gave up.

With shrieks and cries the Dyaks watched it. Tons and tons of water burst from the cloud, striking the sea with a hiss that sent the spray high in the air.

“Waterspout!” yelled the captain and ordered the *Sabah’s* engines stopped. In horror they beheld the crazy column careen about, obeying its master, the capricious wind, and following any stray current; around and around the spiral, grinding mass of water veered and circled aimlessly. It danced and capered about the ocean like some malignant monster loosed from torment, and finally, as if by direct intent, started for the river’s mouth. The Dyaks saw it coming, and in their puny efforts to escape, looked like ants before an elephant. The five streams, flowing through the delta of the Cotabato River, seemed to draw the vicious waterspout toward them, and on it went, directly in the wake of the doomed Dyaks. Tensely the *Sabah’s* passengers followed the course of the spout. The whirling Nemesis descended upon the pirates; their cries of anguish came faintly through the roar and hiss of water; crude Dyak prayers, shrieked by terrified worshipers, smote upon their ears, and finally, like a whirlwind, the waterspout pounced upon its victims. It caught at them with a thousand arms; it tossed them up, bore them down, tore them from the light eggshell praus, crushing them to bits.

Through the entire fleet stalked the monster, dealing out death and destruction to all, and, when there remained naught to vent its wrath upon, like an insatiate giant, it turned toward the jungle. Straight up the river it marched, rooting up trees, tearing down banks, and gradually vanished in the distance, leaving wreckage and disaster in its path.

Silenced by the terrible spectacle, the Americans seemed to huddle closer together for protection, or comfort. But two figures stood out alone on the *Sabah’s* deck.

Papita’s eyes were fastened on Piang, on the charm that dangled from his necklace of crocodile teeth; Piang was lost in Ganassi Peak. His eyes were filled with a divine awe as he silently faced his beloved peak, where dwelt his wonder man, the Hermit Ganassi. Every element of his being, his very attitude, proclaimed that his spirit was pouring out a thanksgiving to his patron, whose

prayers to Allah, the Merciful, had sent the waterspout to destroy his enemies. The Christians, boasting a greater God, were put to shame by this artless exhibition of a faith that they could never feel, and their eyes were filled with admiration as they looked upon this Moro boy, transfigured in his faith, as he muttered softly:

“There is no God but Allah!”

THE END

Colophon

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Encoding

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- 25-AUG-2007 Started.

Corrections

The following corrections have been applied to the text:

Location	Source	Correction
Page 11	[*Not in source*]	”
Page 82	Assin	Asin
Page 144	bajuka	bajuca
Page 211	confidents	confidants
Page 212	mein	mien

works. See paragraph 1.E below.

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