THE ARGUS PHEASANT

BY JOHN CHARLES BEECHAM

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Cover

THE ARGUS PHEASANT

The Chinaman's laborious progress through the cane had amused Pg ii

The Chinaman's laborious progress through the cane had amused her. She knew why he stepped so carefully

THE ARGUS PHEASANT

BY

JOHN CHARLES BEECHAM

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GEORGE W. GAGE

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THE ARGUS PHEASANT

Ah, God, for a man with a heart, head, hand,
Like some of the simple great ones gone
Forever and ever by;
One still, strong man in a blatant land,
Whatever they call him—what care I?—
Aristocrat, democrat, autocrat—one
Who can rule and dare not lie! *Tennyson.*

CHAPTER I

THE OMNISCIENT SACHSEN

It was very apparent that his Excellency Jonkheer Adriaan Adriaanszoon Van Schouten, governor-general of the Netherlands East Indies, was in a temper. His eyes sparked like an emery-wheel biting cold steel. His thin, sharp-ridged nose rose high and the nostrils quivered. His pale, almost bloodless lips were set in rigid lines over his finely chiseled, birdlike beak with its aggressive Vandyke beard. His hair bristled straight and stiff, like the neck-feathers of a ruffled cock, over the edge of his linen collar. It was this latter evidence of the governor's unpleasant humor that his military associate, General Gysbert Karel Vanden Bosch, observed with growing anxiety.

The governor took a pinch of snuff with great deliberation and glared across the big table of his cabinet-room at the general. Vanden Bosch shrank visibly.

"Then, my dear *generaal*," he demanded, "you say we must let these sons of Jazebel burn down my residences, behead my residents, and feed my *controlleurs* to the crocodiles without interference from the military?"

"*Ach*, no, your excellency!" General Vanden Bosch expostulated hastily. "Not that!"

"I fear I have not understood you, my dear general. What do you advise?"

The icy sweetness of the choleric Van Schouten sent a cold shiver along the commander's spine. He wriggled nervously in the capacious armchair that he filled so snugly. Quite unconsciously he mumbled to himself the clause which the pious Javanese had added to their prayers since Van Schouten's coming to Batavia: "And from the madness of the *orang blanda* devil at the *paleis*, Allah deliver us."

"Ha! *generaal*, what do you say?" the governor exclaimed.

Vanden Bosch coughed noisily and rallied his wits.

"Ahem, your excellency; ah-hum! It is a problem, as your excellency knows. I could send Colonel Heyns and his regiment to Bulungan, if your excellency so

desires. But—ahem—as your excellency knows, all he will find is empty huts. Not a proa on the sea; not a Dyak in his field."

"You might as well send that many wooden men!" Van Schouten snapped.

The general winced. His portentously solemn features that for forty years had impressed the authorities at The Hague with his sagacity in military affairs became severely grave. Oracularly he suggested:

"Would it not be wise, your excellency, to give Mynheer Muller, the *controlleur*, more time? His last report was very satisfactory. Very satisfactory, indeed!" He smacked his lips at the satisfactoriness thereof.

"*Donder en bliksem!*" the governor swore, crashing his lean fist on the table. "More time for what? The taxes have not been paid for two years. Not a kilo of rice has been grown on our plantations. Not a liter of dammargum has been shipped here. The cane is left to rot uncut. Fire has ravaged the cinchona-groves my predecessors set with such care. Every ship brings fresh reports of piracies, of tribal wars, and head-hunting. How much longer must we possess our souls in patience while these things go on?"

The general shook his head with a brave show of regret.

"*Ach!* your excellency," he replied sadly; "he promised so well."

"Promises," the governor retorted, "do not pay taxes."

Vanden Bosch rubbed his purple nose in perplexity.

"I suppose it is the witch-woman again," he remarked, discouragedly.

"Who else?" Van Schouten growled. "Always the witch-woman. That spawn of Satan, Koyala, is at the bottom of every uprising we have in Borneo."

"That is what we get for letting half-breeds mingle with whites in our mission schools," Vanden Bosch observed bitterly.

The governor scowled. "That folly will cost the state five hundred *gulden*," he remarked. "That is the price I have put on her head."

The general pricked up his ears. "H-m, that should interest Mynheer Muller," he remarked. "There is nothing he likes so well as the feel of a guilder between his fingers."

The governor snorted. "*Neen, generaal*," he negatived. "For once he has found a sweeter love than silver. The fool fairly grovels at Koyala's feet, Sachsen tells me."

"So?" Vanden Bosch exclaimed with quickened interest. "They say she is very fair."

"If I could get my hands on her once, the Argus Pheasant's pretty feathers would molt quickly," Van Schouten snarled. His fingers closed like an eagle's talons.

"Argus Pheasant, Bintang Burung, the Star Bird—'tis a sweet-sounding name the Malays have for her," the general remarked musingly. There was a sparkle in his eye—the old warrior had not lost his fondness for a pretty face. "If I was younger," he sighed, "I might go to Bulungan myself."

The governor grunted.

"You are an old cock that has lost his tail-feathers, *generaal*," he growled. "This is a task for a young man."

The general's chest swelled and his chin perked up jauntily.

"I am not so old as you think, your excellency," he retorted with a trace of asperity.

"*Neen, neen, generaal*," the governor negatived, "I cannot let you go—not for your own good name's sake. The gossips of Amsterdam and The Hague would have a rare scandal to prate about if it became whispered around that Gysbert Vanden Bosch was scouring the jungles of Bulungan for a witch-woman with a face and form like Helen of Troy's."

The general flushed. His peccadillos had followed him to Java, and he did not like to be reminded of them.

"The argus pheasant is too shy a bird to come within gunshot, your excellency," he replied somberly. "It must be trapped."

"Ay, and so must she," the governor assented. "That is how she got her name. But you are too seasoned for bait, my dear *generaal*." He chuckled.

Vanden Bosch was too much impressed with his own importance to enjoy being chaffed. Ignoring the thrust, he observed dryly:

"Your excellency might try King Saul's plan."

"Ha!" the governor exclaimed with interest. "What is that?"

Van Schouten prided himself on his knowledge of the Scriptures, and the general could not repress a little smirk of triumph at catching him napping.

"King Saul tied David's hands by giving him his daughter to wife," he explained. "In the same way, your excellency might clip the Argus Pheasant's wings by marrying her to one of our loyal servants. It might be managed most satisfactorily. A proper marriage would cause her to forget the brown blood that she hates so bitterly."

"It is not her brown blood that she hates, it is her white blood," Van Schouten contradicted. "But who would be the man?"

"Why not Mynheer Muller, the *controlleur*!" Vanden Bosch asked. "From what your excellency says, he would not be unwilling. Then our troubles in Bulungan would be over."

Van Schouten scowled thoughtfully.

"It would be a good match," the general urged. "He is only common blood—a Marken herring-fisher's son by a Celebes woman. And she"—he shrugged his shoulders—"for all her pretty face and plump body she is Leveque, the French trader's daughter, by a Dyak woman."

He licked his lips in relish of the plan.

Van Schouten shook his head.

"No, I cannot do it," he said. "I could send her to the coffee-plantations—that would be just punishment for her transgressions. But God keep me from sentencing any woman to marry."

"But, your excellency," Vanden Bosch entreated.

"It is ridiculous, *generaal*," the governor cut in autocratically. "The argus pheasant does not mate with the vulture."

Vanden Bosch's face fell. "Then your excellency must appoint another resident," he said, in evident disappointment. "It will take a strong man to bring those Dyaks to time."

Van Schouten looked at him fixedly for several moments. A miserable sensation of having said too much crept over the general.

"Ha!" Van Schouten exclaimed. "You say we must have a new resident. That has been my idea, too. What bush-fighter have you that can lead two hundred cut-throats like himself and harry these tigers out of their lairs till they crawl on their bellies to beg for peace?"

Inwardly cursing himself for his folly in ceasing to advocate Muller, the general twiddled his thumbs and said nothing.

"Well, *generaal*?" Van Schouten rasped irascibly.

"Ahem—you know what troops I have, your excellency. Mostly raw recruits, here scarce three months. There is not a man among them I would trust alone in the bush. After all, it might be wisest to give Mynheer Muller another chance." His cheeks puffed till they were purple.

Van Schouten's face flamed.

"Enough! Enough!" he roared. "If the military cannot keep our house in order, Sachsen and I will find a man. That is all, *generaal*. *Goedendag!*"

Vanden Bosch made a hasty and none too dignified exit, damning under his breath the administration that had transferred him from a highly ornamental post in Amsterdam to live with this pepper-pot. He was hardly out of the door before the governor shouted:

"Sachsen! *Hola*, Sachsen!"

The sound of the governor's voice had scarcely died in the marbled corridors when Sachsen, the omniscient, the indispensable secretary, bustled into the sanctum. His stooped shoulders were crooked in a perpetual obeisance, and his damp, gray hair was plastered thinly over his ruddy scalp; but the shrewd twinkle in his eyes and the hawklike cast of his nose and chin belied the air of humility he affected.

"Sachsen," the governor demanded, the eagle gleaming in his lean, Cæsarian face, "where can I find a man that will bring peace to Bulungan?"

The wrinkled features of the all-knowing Sachsen crinkled with a smile of inspiration.

"Your excellency," he murmured, bowing low, "there is Peter Gross, freeholder of Batavia."

"Peter Gross, *Pieter* Gross," Van Schouten mused, his brow puckered with a thoughtful frown. "The name seems to have slipped my memory. What has Peter Gross, freeholder of Batavia, done to merit such an appointment at our hands, Sachsen?"

The secretary bowed again, punctiliously.

"Your excellency perhaps remembers," he reminded, "that it was Peter Gross who rescued Lieutenant Hendrik de Koren and twelve men from the pirates of Lombock."

"Ha!" the governor exclaimed, his stern features relaxing a trifle. "Now, Sachsen, answer me truthfully, has this Peter Gross an eye for women?"

The secretary bent low.

"Your excellency, the fairest flowers of Batavia are his to pick and choose. The good God has given him a brave heart, a comely face, and plenty of flesh to cover his bones. But his only mistress is the sea."

"If I should send him to Bulungan, would that she-devil, Koyala, make the same fool of him that she has of Muller?" the governor demanded sharply.

"Your excellency, the angels above would fail sooner than he."

The governor's fist crashed on the table with a resounding thwack.

"Then he is the man we need!" he exclaimed. "Where shall I find this Peter Gross, Sachsen?"

"Your excellency, he is now serving as first mate of the Yankee barkentine, *Coryander,* anchored in this port. He was here at the *paleis* only a moment ago, inquiring for news of three of his crew who had exceeded their shore leave. I think he has gone to Ah Sing's *rumah makan*, in the Chinese campong."

Van Schouten sprang from his great chair of state like a cockerel fluttering from a roost. He licked his thin lips and curved them into a smile.

"Sachsen," he said, "except myself, you are the only man in Java that knows anything. My hat and coat, Sachsen, and my cane!"

CHAPTER II

AH SING COUNTS HIS NAILS

Captain Threthaway, of the barkentine, *Coryander*, of Boston, should have heeded the warning he received from his first mate, Peter Gross, to keep away from the roadstead of Batavia. He had no particular business in that port. But an equatorial sun, hot enough to melt the marrow in a man's bones, made the *Coryander's* deck a blistering griddle; there was no ice on board, and the water in the casks tasted foul as bilge. So the captain let his longing for iced tea and the cool depths of a palm-grove get the better of his judgment.

Passing Timor, Floris, and the other links in the Malayan chain, Captain Threthaway looked longingly at the deeply shaded depths of the mangrove jungles. The lofty tops of the cane swayed gently to a breeze scarcely perceptible on the *Coryander's* sizzling deck. When the barkentine rounded Cape Karawang, he saw a bediamonded rivulet leap sheer off a lofty cliff and lose itself in the liana below. It was the last straw; the captain felt he had to land and taste ice on his tongue again or die. Calling his first mate, he asked abruptly:

"Can we victual at Batavia as cheaply as at Singapore, Mr. Gross?"

Peter Gross looked at the shore-line thoughtfully.

"One place is as cheap as the other, Mr. Threthaway; but if it's my opinion you want, I advise against stopping at Batavia."

The captain frowned.

"Why, Mr. Gross?" he asked sharply.

"Because we'd lose our crew, and Batavia's a bad place to pick up another one. That gang for'ard isn't to be trusted where there's liquor to be got. 'Twouldn't be so bad to lose a few of them at Singapore—there's always English-speaking sailors there waiting for a ship to get home on; but Batavia's Dutch. We might have to lay around a week."

"I don't think there's the slightest danger of desertions," Captain Threthaway replied testily. "What possible reason could any of our crew have to leave?"

"The pay is all right, and the grub is all right; there's no kicking on those lines," Peter Gross said, speaking guardedly. "But most of this crew are drinking men. They're used to their rations of grog regular. They've been without liquor since we left Frisco, except what they got at Melbourne, and that was precious little. Since the water fouled on us, they're ready for anything up to murder and mutiny. There'll be no holding them once we make port."

Captain Threthaway flushed angrily. His thin, ascetic jaw set with Puritan stubbornness as he retorted:

"When I can't sail a ship without supplying liquor to the crew, I'll retire, Mr. Gross."

"Don't misunderstand me, captain," Peter Gross replied, with quiet patience.

"I'm not disagreeing with your teetotaler principles. They improve a crew if you've got the right stock to work with. But when you take grog away from such dock-sweepings as Smith and Jacobson and that little Frenchman, Le Beouf, you take away the one thing on earth they're willing to work for. We had all we could do to hold them in hand at Melbourne, and after the contrary trades we've bucked the past week, and the heat, their tongues are hanging out for a drop of liquor."

"Let them dare come back drunk," the captain snapped angrily. "I know what will cure them."

"They won't come back," Peter Gross asserted calmly.

"Then we'll go out and get them," Captain Threthaway said grimly.

"They'll be where they can't be found," Peter Gross replied.

Captain Threthaway snorted impatiently.

"Look here, captain!" Peter Gross exclaimed, facing his skipper squarely. "Batavia is my home when I'm not at sea. I know its ins and outs. Knowing the town, and knowing the crew we've got, I'm sure a stop there will be a mighty unpleasant experience all around. There's a Chinaman there, Ah Sing, a public-house proprietor and a crimp, that has runners to meet every boat. Once a man goes into his *rumah makan*, he's as good as lost until the next skipper comes along short-handed and puts up the price."

Captain Threthaway smiled confidently.

"Poor as the crew is, Mr. Gross, there's no member of it will prefer lodging in a Chinese crimp's public house ten thousand miles from home to his berth here."

"They'll forget his color when they taste his hot rum," Peter Gross returned bruskly. "And once they drink it, they'll forget everything else. Ah Sing is the smoothest article that ever plaited a queue, and they don't make them any slicker than they do in China."

Captain Threthaway's lips pinched together in irritation.

"There are always the authorities," he remarked pettishly, to end the controversy.

Peter Gross restrained a look of disgust with difficulty.

"Yes, there are always the authorities," he conceded. "But in the Chinese campong they're about as much use as a landlubber aloft in a blow. The campong is a little republic in itself, and Ah Sing is the man that runs it. If the truth was known, I guess he's the boss Chinaman of the East Indies—pirate, trader, politician—anything he can make a guilder at. From his rum-shop warrens run into every section of Chinatown, and they're so well hid that the governor, though he's sharp as a weasel and by all odds the best man the Dutch ever had here, can't find them. It's the real port of missing men."

Captain Threthaway looked shoreward, where dusky, breech-clouted natives were resting in the cool shade of the heavy-leafed mangroves. A bit of breeze stirred just then, bringing with it the rich spice-grove and jungle scents of the thickly wooded island. A fierce longing for the shore seized the captain. He squared his shoulders with decision.

"I'll take the chance, Mr. Gross," he said. "This heat is killing me. You may figure on twenty-four hours in port."

Twelve hours after the *Coryander* cast anchor in Batavia harbor, Smith, Jacobson, and Le Beouf were reported missing. When Captain Threthaway, for all his Boston upbringing, had exhausted a prolific vocabulary, he called his first mate.

"Mr. Gross," he said, "the damned renegades are gone. Do you think you can find them?"

Long experience in the vicissitudes of life, acquired in that best school of all, the forecastle, had taught Peter Gross the folly of saying, "I told you so." Therefore he merely replied:

"I'll try, sir."

So it befell that he sought news of the missing ones at the great white *stadhuis*, where the Heer Sachsen, always his friend, met him and conceived the inspiration for his prompt recommendation to the governor-general.

Peter Gross ambled on toward Ah Sing's *rumah makan* without the slightest suspicion he was being followed. On his part, Governor-General Van Schouten was content to let his quarry walk on unconscious of observation while he measured the man.

"God in Israel, what a man!" his excellency exclaimed admiringly, noting Peter Gross's broad shoulders and stalwart thighs. "If he packs as much brains inside his skull as he does meat on his bones, there are some busy days ahead for my Dyaks." He smacked his lips in happy anticipation.

Ah Sing's grog-shop, with its colonnades and porticoes and fussy gables and fantastic cornices terminating in pigtail curlicues, was a squalid place for all the ornamentation cluttered on it. Peter Gross observed its rubbishy surroundings with ill-concealed disgust.

'"Twould be a better Batavia if some one set fire to the place," he muttered to himself. "Yet the law would call it arson."

Looking up, he saw Ah Sing seated in one of the porticoes, and quickly masked his face to a smile of cordial greeting, but not before the Chinaman had detected his ill humor.

There was a touch of three continents in Ah Sing's appearance. He sat beside a table, in the American fashion; he smoked a long-stemmed hookah, after the Turkish fashion, and he wore his clothes after the Chinese fashion. The bland innocence of his pudgy face and the seraphic mildness of his unblinking almond eyes that peeped through slits no wider than the streak of a charcoal-pencil were as the guilelessness of Mother Eve in the garden. Motionless as a Buddha idol he sat, except for occasional pulls at the hookah.

"Good-morning, Ah Sing," Peter Gross remarked happily, as he mounted the colonnade.

The tiny slits through which Ah Sing beheld the pageantry of a sun-baked world opened a trifle wider.

"May Allah bless thee, Mr. Gross," he greeted impassively.

Peter Gross pulled a chair away from one of the other tables and placed it across the board from Ah Sing. Then he succumbed to it with a sigh of gentle ease.

"A hot day," he panted, and fanned himself as though he found the humidity unbearable.

"Belly hot," Ah Sing gravely agreed in a guttural voice that sounded from unfathomable abysses.

"A hot day for a man that's tasted no liquor for nigh three months," Peter Gross amended.

"You makee long trip?" Ah Sing inquired politely.

Peter Gross's features molded themselves into an expression eloquently appreciative of his past miseries.

"That's altogether how you take it, Ah Sing," he replied. "From Frisco to Melbourne to Batavia isn't such a thunderin' long ways, not to a man that's done the full circle three times. But when you make the voyage with a Methodist captain who doesn't believe in grog, it's the longest since Captain Cook's. Ah Sing, my throat's dryer than a sou'east monsoon. Hot toddy for two."

Ah Sing clapped his hands and uttered a magic word or two in Chinese. A Cantonese waiter paddled swiftly outside, bearing a lacquered tray and two steaming glasses. One he placed before Ah Sing and the other before Peter Gross, who tossed a coin on the table.

"Pledge your health, sir," Peter Gross remarked and reached across the board to clink glasses with his Chinese friend. Ah Sing lifted his glass to meet the sailor's and suddenly found it snaked out of his hands by a deft motion of Peter Gross's middle finger. Gross slid his own glass across the table toward Ah Sing.

"If you don't mind," he remarked pleasantly. "Your waiter might have mistaken me for a plain A. B., and I've got to get back to my ship to-night."

Ah Sing's bland and placid face remained expressionless as a carved god's. But he left the glass stand, untasted, beside him.

The *Coryander's* mate sipped his liquor and sank deeper into his chair. He studied with an air of affectionate interest the long lane of quaintly colonnaded buildings that edged the city within a city, the Chinese campong. Pigtailed Orientals, unmindful of the steaming heat, squirmed across the scenery. Ten thousand stenches were compounded into one, in which the flavor of garlic predominated. Peter Gross breathed the heavy air with a smile of reminiscent pleasure and dropped another notch into the chair.

"It feels good to be back ashore again for a spell, Ah Sing," he remarked. "A nice, cool spot like this, with nothing to do and some of your grog under the belt, skins a blistery deck any day. I don't wonder so many salts put up here."

Back of the curtain of fat through which they peered, Ah Sing's oblique eyes quivered a trifle as they watched the sailor keenly.

"By the way," Peter Gross observed, stretching his long legs out to the limit of their reach, "you haven't seen any of my men, have you? Smith, he's pock-marked and has a cut over his right eye; Jacobson, a tall Swede, and Le Beouf, a little Frenchman with a close-clipped black mustache and beard?"

Ah Sing gravely cudgeled his memory.

"None of your men," he assured, "was here."

Peter Gross's face fell.

"That's too bad!" he exclaimed in evident disappointment. "I thought sure I'd find 'em here. You're sure you haven't overlooked them? That Frenchie might call for a hop; we picked him out of a hop-joint at Frisco."

"None your men here," Ah Sing repeated gutturally.

Peter Gross rumpled his tousled hair in perplexity.

"We-el," he drawled unhappily, "if those chaps don't get back on shipboard by nightfall I'll have to buy some men from you, Ah Sing. Have y' got three good hands that know one rope from another?"

"Two men off schooner *Marianna*," Ah Sing replied in his same thick monotone. "One man, steamer *Callee-opie*. Good strong man. Work hard."

"You stole 'em, I s'pose?" Peter Gross asked pleasantly.

Ah Sing's heavy jowls waggled in gentle negation.

"No stealum man," he denied quietly. "Him belly sick. Come here, get well. Allie big, strong man."

"How much a head?"

"Twlenty dlolla."

"F. O. B. the *Coryander* and no extra charges?"

Ah Sing's inscrutable face screwed itself into a maze of unreadable wrinkles and lines.

"Him eat heap," he announced. "Five dlolla more for board."

"You go to blazes," Peter Gross replied cheerfully. "I'll look up a couple of men somewhere else or go short-handed if I have to."

Ah Sing made no reply and his impassive face did not alter its expressionless fixity. Peter Gross lazily pulled himself up in his chair and extended his right hand across the table. A ring with a big bloodstone in the center, a bloodstone cunningly chiseled and marked, rested on the middle finger.

"See that ring, Ah Sing?" he asked. "I got that down to Mauritius. What d'ye think it's worth?"

Ah Sing's long, claw-like fingers groped avariciously toward the ring. His tiny, fat-encased eyes gleamed with cupidity.

With a quick, cat-like movement, Peter Gross gripped one of the Chinaman's hands.

"Don't pull," he cautioned quickly as Ah Sing tried to draw his hand away. "I was going to tell you that there's a drop of adder's poison inside the bloodstone that runs down a little hollow pin if you press the stone just so—" He moved to illustrate.

"No! No!" Ah Sing shrieked pig-like squeals of terror.

"Just send one of your boys for my salts, will you?" Peter Gross requested pleasantly. "I understand they got here yesterday morning and haven't been seen to leave. Talk English—no China talk, savvy?"

A flash of malevolent fury broke Ah Sing's mask of impassivity. The rage his face expressed caused Peter Gross to grip his hand the harder and look quickly around for a possible danger from behind. They were alone. Peter Gross moved a finger toward the stone, and Ah Sing capitulated. At his shrill cry there was a hurried rustle from within. Peter Gross kept close grip on the Chinaman's hand until he heard the shuffling tramp of sailor feet. Smith, Jacobson and Le Beouf, blinking sleepily, were herded on the portico by two giant Thibetans.

Peter Gross shoved the table and Ah Sing violently back and leaped to his feet.

"You'll—desert—will you?" he exclaimed. Each word was punctuated by a swift punch on the chin of one of the unlucky sailors and an echoing thud on the floor. Smith, Jacobson, and Le Beouf lay neatly cross-piled on one of Ah Sing's broken chairs.

"I'll pay for the chair," Peter Gross declared, jerking his men to their feet and shoving them down the steps.

Ah Sing shrilled an order in Chinese. The Thibetan giants leaped for Peter Gross, who sprang out of their reach and put his back to the wall. In his right hand a gun flashed.

"Ah Sing, I'll take you first," he shouted.

The screen separating them from the adjoining portico was violently pushed aside.

"Ah Sing!" exclaimed a sharp, authoritative voice.

Ah Sing looked about, startled. The purpled fury his face expressed sickened to a mottled gray. Adriaan Adriaanszoon Van Schouten, governor-general of Java, leaning lightly on his cane, frowned sternly at the scene of disorder. At a cry from their master the two Thibetans backed away from Peter Gross, who lowered his weapon.

"Is it thus you observe our laws, Ah Sing?" Van Schouten demanded coldly.

Ah Sing licked his lips. "Light of the sun—" he began, but the governor interrupted shortly:

"The magistrate will hear your explanations." His eagle eyes looked penetratingly upon Peter Gross, who looked steadfastly back.

"Sailor, you threatened to poison this man," the governor accused harshly, indicating Ah Sing.

"Your excellency, that was bluff," Peter Gross replied. "The ring is as harmless as your excellency's own."

Van Schouten's eyes twinkled.

"What is your name, sailor, and your ship?" he demanded.

"Peter Gross, your excellency, first mate of the barkentine *Coryander* of Boston, now lying in your excellency's harbor of Batavia."

"Ah Sing," Van Schouten rasped sternly, "if these drunken louts are not aboard their ship by nightfall, you go to the coffee-fields."

Ah Sing's gimlet eyes shrank to pin-points. His face was expressionless, but his whole body seemed to shake with suppressed emotion as he choked in guttural Dutch:

"Your excellency shall be obeyed." He salaamed to the ground.

Van Schouten glared at Peter Gross.

"Mynheer Gross, the good name of our fair city is very dear to us," he said sternly. "Scenes of violence like this do it much damage. I would have further discourse with you. Be at the *paleis* within the hour."

"I shall be there, your excellency," Peter Gross promised.

The governor shifted his frown to Ah Sing.

"As for you, Ah Sing, I have heard many evil reports of this place," he said. "Let me hear no more."

While Ah Sing salaamed again, the governor strode pompously away, followed at a respectful distance by Peter Gross. It was not until they had disappeared beyond a curve in the road that Ah Sing let his face show his feelings. Then an expression of malignant fury before which even the two Thibetans quailed, crossed it.

He uttered a harsh command to have the débris removed. The Thibetans jumped forward in trembling alacrity. Without giving them another glance he waddled into the building, into a little den screened off for his own use. From a patent

steel safe of American make he took an ebony box, quaintly carved and colored in glorious pinks and yellows with a flower design. Opening this, he exposed a row of glass vials resting on beds of cotton. Each vial contained some nail parings.

He took out the vials one by one, looked at their labels inscribed in Chinese characters, and placed them on an ivory tray. As he read each label a curious smile of satisfaction spread over his features.

When he had removed the last vial he sat at his desk, dipped a pen into India ink, and wrote two more labels in similar Chinese characters. When the ink had dried he placed these on two empty vials taken from a receptacle on his desk. The vials were placed with the others in the ebony box and locked in the safe.

The inscriptions he read on the labels were the names of men who had died sudden and violent deaths in the East Indies while he had lived at Batavia. The labels he filled out carried the names of Adriaan Adriaanszoon Van Schouten and Peter Gross.

CHAPTER III

PETER GROSS IS NAMED RESIDENT

"Sailor, the penalty for threatening the life of any citizen is penal servitude on the state's coffee-plantations."

The governor's voice rang harshly, and he scowled across the big table in his cabinet-room at the *Coryander's* mate sitting opposite him. His hooked nose and sharp-pointed chin with its finely trimmed Van Dyke beard jutted forward rakishly.

"I ask no other justice than your excellency's own sense of equity suggests," Peter Gross replied quietly.

"H'mm!" the governor hummed. He looked at the *Coryander's* mate keenly for a few moments through half-closed lids. Suddenly he said:

"And what if I should appoint you a resident, sailor?"

Peter Gross's lips pressed together tightly, but otherwise he gave no sign of his profound astonishment at the governor's astounding proposal. Sinking deeper into his chair until his head sagged on his breast, he deliberated before replying.

"Your excellency is in earnest?"

"I do not jest on affairs of state, Mynheer Gross. What is your answer?"

Peter Gross paused. "Your excellency overwhelms me—" he began, but Van Schouten cut him short.

"Enough! When I have work to do I choose the man who I think can do it. Then you accept?"

"Your excellency, to my deep regret I must most respectfully decline."

A look of blank amazement spread over the governor's face. Then his eyes blazed ominously.

"Decline! Why?" he roared.

"For several reasons," Peter Gross replied with disarming mildness. "In the first place I am under contract with Captain Threthaway of the *Coryander*—"

"I will arrange that with your captain," the governor broke in.

"In the second place I am neither a soldier nor a politician—"

"That is for me to consider," the governor retorted.

"In the third place, I am a citizen of the United States and therefore not eligible to any civil appointment from the government of the Netherlands."

"*Donder en bliksem!*" the governor exclaimed. "I thought you were a freeholder here."

"I am," Peter Gross admitted. "The land I won is at Riswyk. I expect to make it my home when I retire from the sea."

"How long have you owned that land?"

"For nearly seven years."

The governor stroked his beard. "You talk Holland like a Hollander, Mynheer Gross," he observed.

"My mother was of Dutch descent," Peter Gross explained. "I learned the language from her."

"Good!" Van Schouten inclined his head with a curt nod of satisfaction. "Half Holland is all Holland. We can take steps to make you a citizen at once."

"I don't care to surrender my birthright." Peter Gross negatived quietly.

"What!" Van Schouten shouted. "Not for a resident's post? And eight thousand guilders a year? And a land grant in Java that will make you rich for life if you make those hill tribes stick to their plantations? What say you to this, Mynheer Gross?" His lips curved with a smile of anticipation.

"The offer is tempting and the honor great," Peter Gross acknowledged quietly. "But I can not forget I was born an American."

Van Schouten leaned back in his chair with a look of astonishment.

"You refuse?" he asked incredulously.

"I am sorry, your excellency!" Peter Gross's tone was unmistakably firm.

"You refuse?" the governor repeated, still unbelieving. "Eight—thousand—guilders! And a land grant that will make you rich for life!"

"I am an American, and American I shall stay."

The governor's eyes sparkled with admiration.

"By the beard of Orange!" he exclaimed, "it is no wonder you Yankees have sucked the best blood of the world into your country." He leaned forward confidentially.

"Mynheer Gross, I cannot appoint you resident if you refuse to take the oath of allegiance to the queen. But I can make you special agent of the *gouverneur-generaal*. I can make you a resident in fact, if not in name, of a country larger than half the Netherlands, larger than many of your own American States. I can give you the rewards I have pledged you, a fixed salary and the choice of a thousand hectares of our fairest state lands in Java. What do you say?"

He leaned forward belligerently. In that posture his long, coarse hair rose bristly above his neck, giving him something of the appearance of a gamecock with feathers ruffled. It was this peculiarity that first suggested the name he was universally known by throughout the Sundas, "De Kemphaan" (The Gamecock).

"To what province would you appoint me?" Peter Gross asked slowly.

The governor hesitated. With the air of a poker player forced to show his hand he confessed:

"It is a difficult post, mynheer, and needs a strong man as resident. It is the residency of Bulungan, Borneo."

There was the faintest flicker in Peter Gross's eyes. Van Schouten watched him narrowly. In the utter stillness that followed the governor could hear his watch tick.

Peter Gross rose abruptly, leaped for the door, and threw it open. He looked straight into the serene, imperturbable face of Chi Wung Lo, autocrat of the governor's domestic establishment. Chi Wung bore a delicately lacquered tray of Oriental design on which were standing two long, thin, daintily cut glasses containing cooling limes that bubbled fragrantly. Without a word he swept

grandly in and placed the glasses on the table, one before the governor, and the other before Peter Gross's vacant chair.

"Ha!" Van Schouten exclaimed, smacking his lips. "Chi Wung, you peerless, priceless servant, how did you guess our needs?"

With a bland bow and never a glance at Peter Gross, Chi Wung strutted out in Oriental dignity, carrying his empty tray. Peter Gross closed the door carefully, and walked slowly back.

"I was about to say, your excellency," he murmured, "that Bulungan has not a happy reputation."

"It needs a strong man to rule it," the governor acknowledged, running his glance across Peter Gross's broad shoulders in subtle compliment.

"Those who have held the post of resident there found early graves."

"You are young, vigorous. You have lived here long enough to know how to escape the fevers."

"There are worse enemies in Bulungan than the fevers," Peter Gross replied. "It is not for nothing that Bulungan is known as the graveyard of Borneo."

The governor glanced at Peter Gross's strong face and stalwart form regretfully.

"Your refusal is final?" he asked.

"On the contrary, if your excellency will meet one condition, I accept," Peter Gross replied.

The governor put his glass down sharply and stared at the sailor.

"You accept this post?" he demanded.

"Upon one condition, yes!"

"What is that condition?"

"That I be allowed a free hand."

"H'mm!" Van Schouten drew a deep breath and leaned back in his chair. The sharp, Julian cast of countenance was never more pronounced, and the eagle eyes gleamed inquiringly, calculatingly. Peter Gross looked steadily back. The

minutes passed and neither spoke.

"Why do you want to go there?" the governor exclaimed suddenly. He leaned forward in his chair till his eyes burned across a narrow two feet into Peter Gross's own.

The strong, firm line of Peter Gross's lips tightened. He rested one elbow on the table and drew nearer the governor. His voice was little more than a murmur as he said:

"Your excellency, let me tell you the story of Bulungan."

The governor's face showed surprise. "Proceed," he directed.

"Six years ago, when your excellency was appointed governor-general of the Netherlands East Indies," Peter Gross began, "Bulungan was a No Man's land, although nominally under the Dutch flag. The pirates that infested the Celebes sea and the straits of Macassar found ports of refuge in its jungle-banked rivers and marsh mazes where no gun-boat could find them. The English told your government that if it did not stamp out piracy and subjugate the Dyaks, it would. That meant loss of the province to the Dutch crown. Accordingly you sent General Van Heemkerken there with eight hundred men who marched from the lowlands to the highlands and back again, burning every village they found, but meeting no Dyaks except old men and women too helpless to move. General Van Heemkerken reported to you that he had pacified the country. On his report you sent Mynheer Van Scheltema there as resident, and Cupido as *controlleur*. Within six months Van Scheltema was bitten by an adder placed in his bedroom and Cupido was assassinated by a hill Dyak, who threw him out of a dugout into a river swarming with crocodiles.

"*Lieve hemel*, no!" Van Schouten cried. "Van Scheltema and Cupido died of the fevers."

"So it was reported to your excellency," Peter Gross replied gravely. "I tell you the facts."

The governor's thin, spiked jaw shot out like a vicious thorn and his teeth clicked.

"Go on," he directed sharply.

"For a year there was neither resident nor *controlleur* at Bulungan. Then the

pirates became so bold that you again took steps to repress them. The stockade at the village of Bulungan was enlarged and the garrison was increased to fifty men. Lieutenant Van Slyck, the commandant, was promoted to captain. A new resident was appointed, Mynheer de Jonge, a very dear friend of your excellency. He was an old man, estimable and honest, but ill-fitted for such a post, a failure in business, and a failure as a resident. Time after time your excellency wrote him concerning piracies, hillmen raids, and head-hunting committed in his residency or the adjoining seas. Each time he replied that your excellency must be mistaken, that the pirates and head-hunters came from other districts."

The governor's eyes popped in amazement. "How do you know this?" he exclaimed, but Peter Gross ignored the question.

"Finally about two years ago Mynheer de Jonge, through an accident, learned that he had been deceived by those he had trusted, had a right to trust. A remark made by a drunken native opened his eyes. One night he called out Captain Van Slyck and the latter's commando and made a flying raid. He all but surprised a band of pirates looting a captured schooner and might have taken them had they not received a warning of his coming. That raid made him a marked man. Within two weeks he was poisoned by being pricked as he slept with a thorn dipped in the juice of the deadly upas tree."

"He was a suicide!" the governor exclaimed, his face ashen. "They brought me a note in his own handwriting."

"In which it was stated that he killed himself because he felt he had lost your excellency's confidence?"

"You know that, too?" Van Schouten whispered huskily.

"Your excellency has suffered remorse without cause," Peter Gross declared quietly. "The note is a forgery."

The governor's hands gripped the edge of the table.

"You can prove that?" he cried.

"For the present your excellency must be satisfied with my word. As resident of Bulungan I hope to secure proofs that will satisfy a court of justice."

The governor gazed at Peter Gross intently. A conflict of emotions, amazement, unbelief, and hope were expressed on his face.

"Why should I believe you?" he demanded fiercely.

Peter Gross's face hardened. The sternness of the magistrate was on his brow as he replied:

"Your excellency remembers the schooner *Tetrina*, attacked by Chinese and Dyak pirates off the coast of Celebes three years ago? All her crew were butchered except two left on the deck that night for dead. I was one of the two, your excellency. My dead comrades have left me a big debt to pay. That is why I will go to Bulungan."

The governor rose. Decision was written on his brow.

"Meet us here to-night, Mynheer Gross," he said. "There is much to discuss with Mynheer Sachsen before you leave. God grant you may be the instrument of His eternal justice." Peter Gross raised a hand of warning.

"Sometimes the very walls have ears, your excellency," he cautioned. "If I am to be resident of Bulungan no word of the appointment must leak out until I arrive there."

CHAPTER IV

KOYALA'S PRAYER

It was a blistering hot day in Bulungan. The heavens were molten incandescence. The muddy river that bisected the town wallowed through its estuary, a steaming tea-kettle. The black muck-fields baked and flaked under the torrid heat. The glassy surface of the bay, lying within the protecting crook of a curling tail of coral reef, quivered under the impact of the sun's rays like some sentient thing.

In the village that nestled where fresh and salt water met, the streets were deserted, almost lifeless. Gaunt pariah dogs, driven by the acid-sharp pangs of a never-satiated hunger, sniffed among the shadows of the bamboo and palmleaf huts, their backs arched and their tails slinking between their legs. Too weak to grab their share of the spoil in the hurly-burly, they scavenged in these hours of universal inanity. The doors of the huts were tightly closed—barricaded against the heat. The merchant in his dingy shop, the fisherman in his house on stilts, and the fashioner of metals in his thatched cottage in the outskirts slept under their mats. Apoplexy was the swift and sure fate of those who dared the awful torridity.

Dawn had foretold the heat. The sun shot above the purple and orange waters of the bay like a conflagration. The miasmal vapors that clustered thickly about the flats by night gathered their linen and fled like the hunted. They were scurrying upstream when Bogoru, the fisherman, walked out on his sampan landing. He looked at the unruffled surface of the bay, and then looked upward quickly at the lane of tall kenari trees between the stockade and government buildings on an elevation a short distance back of the town. The spindly tops of the trees pointed heavenward with the rigidity of church spires.

"There will be no chaetodon sold at the *visschersmarkt* (fishmart) to-day," he observed. "Kismet!"

With a patient shrug of his shoulders he went back to his hut and made sure there was a plentiful supply of sirih and cooling limes on hand.

In the fruit-market Tagotu, the fruiterer, set out a tempting display of

mangosteen, durian, dookoo, and rambootan, pineapples, and pomegranates, jars of agar-agar, bowls of rice, freshly cooked, and pitchers of milk.

The square was damp from the heavy night dew when he set out the first basket, it was dry as a fresh-baked brick when he put out the last. The heavy dust began to flood inward. Tagotu noticed with dismay how thin the crowd was that straggled about the market-place. Chepang, his neighbor, came out of his stall and observed:

"The monsoon has failed again. Bunungan will stay in his huts to-day."

"It is the will of Allah," Tagotu replied patiently. Putting aside his offerings, he lowered the shades of his shop and composed himself for a siesta.

On the hill above the town, where the rude fort and the government buildings gravely faced the sea, the heat also made itself felt. The green blinds of the milk-white residency building, that was patterned as closely as tropical conditions would permit after the quaint architecture of rural Overysel, were tightly closed. The little cluster of residences around it, the *controlleur's* house and the homes of Marinus Blauwpot and Wang Fu, the leading merchants of the place, were similarly barricaded. For "Amsterdam," the fashionable residential suburb of Bulungan village, was fighting the same enemy as "Rotterdam," the town below, an enemy more terrible than Dyak blow-pipes and Dyak poisoned arrows, the Bornean sun.

Like Bogoru, the fisherman, and Tagotu, the fruit-vender, Cho Seng, Mynheer Muller's valet and cook, had seen the threat the sunrise brought. The sun's copper disc was dyeing the purple and blue waters of the bay with vermilion and magentas when he pad-padded out on the veranda of the *controlleur's* house. He was clad in the meticulously neat brown jeans that he wore at all times and occasions except funeral festivals, and in wicker sandals. With a single sweep of his eyes he took in the kenari-tree-lined land that ran to the gate of the stockade where a sleepy sentinel, hunched against a pert brass cannon, nodded his head drowsily. The road was tenantless. He shot another glance down the winding pathway that led by the houses of Marinus Blauwpot and Wang Fu to the town below. That also was unoccupied. Stepping off the veranda, he crossed over to an unshaded spot directly in front of the house and looked intently seaward to where a junk lay at anchor. The brown jeans against the milk-white paint of the house threw his figure in sharp relief.

Cho Seng waited until a figure showed itself on the deck of the junk. Then he

shaded his eye with his arm. The Chinaman on the deck of the junk must have observed the figure of his fellow countryman on the hill, for he also shaded his eyes with his arm.

Cho Seng looked quickly to the right—to the left. There was no one stirring. The sentinel at the gate drowsed against the carriage of the saucy brass cannon. Shading his eyes once more with a quick gesture, Cho Seng walked ten paces ahead. Then he walked back five paces. Making a sharp angle he walked five paces to one side. Then he turned abruptly and faced the jungle.

The watcher on the junk gave no sign that he had seen this curious performance. But as Cho Seng scuttled back into the house, he disappeared into the bowels of the ugly hulk.

An hour passed before Cho Seng reappeared on the veranda. He cast only a casual glance at the junk and saw that it was being provisioned. After listening for a moment to the rhythmic snoring that came from the chamber above—Mynheer Muller's apartment—he turned the corner of the house and set off at a leisurely pace toward the tangle of mangroves, banyan, bamboo cane, and ferns that lay a quarter of a mile inland on the same elevation on which the settlement and stockade stood.

There was nothing in his walk to indicate that he had a definite objective. He strolled along in apparent aimlessness, as though taking a morning's constitutional. Overhead hundreds of birds created a terrific din; green and blue-billed gapers shrilled noisily; lories piped their matin lays, and the hoarse cawing of the trogons mingled discordantly with the mellow notes of the mild cuckoos. A myriad insect life buzzed and hummed around him, and scurried across his pathway. Pale white flowers of the night that lined the wall shrank modestly into their green cloisters before the bold eye of day. But Cho Seng passed them by unseeing, and unhearing. Nature had no existence for him except as it ministered unto his physical needs. Only once did he turn aside—a quick, panicky jump—and that was when a little spotted snake glided in front of him and disappeared into the underbrush.

When he was well within the shadows of the mangroves, Cho Seng suddenly brightened and began to look about him keenly. Following a faintly defined path, he walked along in a circuitous route until he came to a clearing under the shade of a huge banyan tree whose aërial roots rose over his head. After peering furtively about and seeing no one he uttered a hoarse, guttural call, the call the

great bird of paradise utters to welcome the sunrise—"Wowk, wowk, wowk."

There was an immediate answer—the shrill note of the argus pheasant. It sounded from the right, near by, on the other side of a thick tangle of cane and creeper growth. Cho Seng paused in apparent disquietude at the border of the thicket, but as he hesitated, the call was repeated more urgently. Wrenching the cane apart, he stepped carefully into the underbrush.

His progress through it was slow. At each step he bent low to make certain where his foot fell. He had a mortal fear of snakes—his nightmares were ghastly dreams of a loathsome death from a serpent's bite.

There was a low ripple of laughter—girlish laughter. Cho Seng straightened quickly. To his right was another clearing, and in that clearing there was a woman, a young woman just coming into the bloom of a glorious beauty. She was seated on a gnarled aërial root. One leg was negligently thrown over the other, a slender, shapely arm reached gracefully upward to grasp a spur from another root, a coil of silky black hair, black as tropic night, lay over her gleaming shoulder. Her sarong, spotlessly white, hung loosely about her wondrous form and was caught with a cluster of rubies above her breasts. A sandal-covered foot, dainty, delicately tapering, its whiteness tanned with a faint tint of harvest brown, was thrust from the folds of the gown. At her side, in a silken scabbard, hung a light, skilfully wrought kris. The handle was studded with gems.

"Good-morning, Cho Seng," the woman greeted demurely.

Cho Seng, making no reply, snapped the cane aside and leaped through. Koyala laughed again, her voice tinkling like silver bells. The Chinaman's laborious progress through the cane had amused her. She knew why he stepped so carefully.

"Good-morning, Cho Seng," Koyala repeated. Her mocking dark brown eyes tried to meet his, but Cho Seng looked studiedly at the ground, in the affected humility of Oriental races.

"Cho Seng here," he announced. "What for um you wantee me?" He spoke huskily; a physician would instantly have suspected he was tubercular.

Koyala's eyes twinkled. A woman, she knew she was beautiful. Wherever she went, among whites or Malays, Chinese, or Papuans, she was admired. But from

this stolid, unfathomable, menial Chinaman she had never been able to evoke the one tribute that every pretty woman, no manner how good, demands from man—a glance of admiration.

"Cho Seng," she pouted, "you have not even looked at me. Am I so ugly that you cannot bear to see me?"

"What for um you wantee me?" Cho Seng reiterated. His neck was crooked humbly so that his eyes did not rise above the hem of her sarong, and his hands were tucked inside the wide sleeves of his jacket. His voice was as meek and mild and inoffensive as his manner.

Koyala laughed mischievously.

"I asked you a question, Cho Seng," she pointed out.

The Chinaman salaamed again, even lower than before. His face was imperturbable as he repeated in the same mild, disarming accents:

"What for um you wantee me?"

Koyala made a moue.

"That isn't what I asked you, Cho Seng," she exclaimed petulantly.

The Chinaman did not move a muscle. Silent, calm as a deep-sea bottom, his glance fixed unwaveringly on a little spot of black earth near Koyala's foot, he awaited her reply.

Leveque's daughter shrugged her shoulders in hopeless resignation. Ever since she had known him she had tried to surprise him into expressing some emotion. Admiration, fear, grief, vanity, cupidity—on all these chords she had played without producing response. His imperturbability roused her curiosity, his indifference to her beauty piqued her, and, womanlike, she exerted herself to rouse his interest that she might punish him. So far she had been unsuccessful, but that only gave keener zest to the game. Koyala was half Dyak, she had in her veins the blood of the little brown brother who follows his enemy for months, sometimes years, until he brings home another dripping head to set on his lodge-pole. Patience was therefore her birthright.

"Very well, Cho Seng, if you think I am ugly—" She paused and arched an eyebrow to see the effect of her words. Cho Seng's face was as rigid as though carved out of rock. When she saw he did not intend to dispute her, Koyala flushed and concluded sharply:

"—then we will talk of other things. What has happened at the residency during the past week?"

Cho Seng shot a furtive glance upward. "What for um?" he asked cautiously.

"Oh, everything." Koyala spoke with pretended indifference. "Tell me, does your *baas*, the *mynheer*, ever mention me?"

"Mynheer Muller belly much mad, belly much drink *jenever* (gin), belly much say 'damn-damn, Cho Seng,'" the Chinaman grunted.

Koyala's laughter rang out merrily in delicious peals that started the rain-birds and the gapers to vain emulation. Cho Seng hissed a warning and cast apprehensive glances about the jungle, but Koyala, mocking the birds, provoked a hubbub of furious scolding overhead and laughed again.

"There's nobody near to hear us," she asserted lightly.

"Mebbe him in bush," Cho Seng warned.

"Not when the southeast monsoon ceases to blow," Koyala negatived. "Mynheer Muller loves his bed too well when our Bornean sun scorches us like to-day. But tell me what your master has been doing?"

She snuggled into a more comfortable position on the root. Cho Seng folded his hands over his stomach.

"Morning him sleep," he related laconically. "Him eat. Him speakee *orang kaya*, Wobanguli, drink *jenever*. Him speakee Kapitein Van Slyck, drink *jenever*. Him sleep some more. Bimeby when sun so-so—" Cho Seng indicated the position of the sun in late afternoon—" him go speakee Mynheer Blauwpot, eat some more. Bimeby come home, sleep. Plenty say 'damn-damn, Cho Seng.'"

"Does he ever mention me?" Koyala asked. Her eyes twinkled coquettishly.

"Plenty say nothing," Cho Seng replied.

Koyala's face fell. "He doesn't speak of me at all?"

Cho Seng shot a sidelong glance at her.

"Him no speakee Koyala, him plenty drink *jenever*, plenty say 'damn-damn, Cho Seng.'" He looked up stealthily to see the effect of his words.

Koyala crushed a fern underfoot with a vicious dab of her sandaled toes. Something like the ghost of a grin crossed the Chinaman's face, but it was too well hidden for Koyala to see it.

"How about Kapitein Van Slyck? Has he missed me?" Koyala asked. "It is a week since I have been at the residency. He must have noticed it."

"Kapitein Van Slyck him no speakee Koyala," the Chinaman declared.

Koyala looked at him sternly. "I cannot believe that, Cho Seng," she said. "The captain must surely have noticed that I have not been in Amsterdam. You are not telling me an untruth, are you, Cho Seng?"

The Chinaman was meekness incarnate as he reiterated:

"Him no speakee Koyala."

Displeasure gathered on Koyala's face like a storm-cloud. She leaped suddenly from the aërial root and drew herself upright. At the same moment she seemed to undergo a curious transformation. The light, coquettish mood passed away like dabs of sunlight under a fitful April sky, an imperious light gleamed in her eyes and her voice rang with authority as she said:

"Cho Seng, you are the eyes and the ears of Ah Sing in Bulungan—"

The Chinaman interrupted her with a sibilant hiss. His mask of humility fell from him and he darted keen and angry glances about the cane.

"When Koyala Bintang Burung speaks it is your place to listen, Cho Seng," Koyala asserted sternly. Her voice rang with authority. Under her steady glance the Chinaman's furtive eyes bushed themselves in his customary pose of irreproachable meekness.

"You are the eyes and ears of Ah Sing in Bulungan," Koyala reaffirmed, speaking deliberately and with emphasis. "You know that there is a covenant between your master, your master in Batavia, and the council of the *orang kayas* of the sea Dyaks of Bulungan, whereby the children of the sea sail in the proas

of Ah Sing when the *Hanu Token* come to Koyala on the night winds and tell her to bid them go."

The Chinaman glanced anxiously about the jungle, fearful that a swaying cluster of cane might reveal the presence of an eavesdropper.

"S-ss-st," he hissed.

Koyala's voice hardened. "Tell your master this," she said. "The spirits of the highlands speak no more through the mouth of the Bintang Burung till the eyes and ears of Ah Sing become her eyes and ears, too."

There was a significant pause. Cho Seng's face shifted and he looked at her slantwise to see how seriously he should take the declaration. What he saw undoubtedly impressed him with the need of promptly placating her, for he announced:

"Cho Seng tellee Mynheer Muller Koyala go hide in bush—big *baas* in Batavia say muchee damn-damn, give muchee gold for Koyala."

The displeasure in Koyala's flushed face mounted to anger.

"No, you cannot take credit for that, Cho Seng," she exclaimed sharply. "Word came to Mynheer Muller from the governor direct that a price of many guilders was put on my head."

Her chin tilted scornfully. "Did you think Koyala was so blind that she did not see the gun-boat in Bulungan harbor a week ago to-day?"

Cho Seng met her heat with Oriental calm.

"Bang-bang boat, him come six-seven day ago," he declared. "Cho Seng, him speakee Mynheer Muller Koyala go hide in bush eight-nine day."

"The gun-boat was in the harbor the morning Mynheer Muller told me," Koyala retorted, and stopped in sudden recollection. A tiny flash of triumph lit the Chinaman's otherwise impassive face as he put her unspoken thought into words:

"*Kapitein* him bang-bang boat come see Mynheer Muller *namiddag*," (afternoon) he said, indicating the sun's position an hour before sunset. "Mynheer Muller tellee Koyala *voormiddag*" (forenoon). He pointed to the sun's morning position in the eastern sky.

"That is true," Koyala assented thoughtfully, and paused. "How did you hear of it?"

Cho Seng tucked his hands inside his sleeves and folded them over his paunch. His neck was bent forward and his eyes lowered humbly. Koyala knew what the pose portended; it was the Chinaman's refuge in a silence that neither plea nor threat could break. She rapidly recalled the events of that week.

"There was a junk from Macassar in Bulungan harbor two weeks—no, eleven days ago," she exclaimed. "Did that bring a message from Ah Sing?"

A startled lift of the Chinaman's chin assured her that her guess was correct. Another thought followed swift on the heels of the first.

"The same junk is in the harbor to-day—came here just before sundown last night," she exclaimed. "What message did it bring, Cho Seng?"

The Chinaman's face was like a mask. His lips were compressed tightly—it was as though he defied her to wedge them open and to force him to reveal his secret. An angry sparkle lit Koyala's eyes for a moment, she stepped a pace toward him and her hand dropped to the hilt of the jeweled kris, then she stopped short. A fleeting look of cunning replaced the angry gleam; a half-smile came and vanished on her lips almost in the same instant.

Her face lifted suddenly toward the leafy canopy. Her arms were flung upward in a supplicating gesture. The Chinaman, watching her from beneath his lowered brow, looked up in startled surprise. Koyala's form became rigid, a Galatea turned back to marble. Her breath seemed to cease, as though she was in a trance. The color left her face, left even her lips. Strangely enough, her very paleness made the Dyak umber in her cheeks more pronounced.

Her lips parted. A low crooning came forth. The Chinaman's knees quaked and gave way as he heard the sound. His body bent from the waist till his head almost touched the ground.

The crooning gradually took the form of words. It was the Malay tongue she spoke—a language Cho Seng knew. The rhythmic beating of his head against his knees ceased and he listened eagerly, with face half-lifted.

"*Hanu Token, Hanu Token*, spirits of the highlands, whither are you taking me?" Koyala cried. She paused, and a deathlike silence followed. Suddenly she began speaking again, her figure swaying like a tall lily stalk in a spring breeze, her

voice low-pitched and musically mystic like the voice of one speaking from a far distance.

"I see the jungle, the jungle where the mother of rivers gushes out of the great smoking mountain. I see the pit of serpents in the jungle—"

A trembling seized Cho Seng.

"The serpents are hungry, they have not been fed, they clamor for the blood of a man. I see him whose foot is over the edge of the pit, he slips, he falls, he tries to catch himself, but the bamboo slips out of his clutching fingers—I see his face—it is the face of him whose tongue speaks double, it is the face of—"

A horrible groan burst from the Chinaman. He staggered to his feet.

"*Neen, neen, neen, neen*," he cried hoarsely in an agonized negative. "Cho Seng tellee Bintang Burung—"

A tremulous sigh escaped from Koyala's lips. Her body shook as though swayed by the wind. Her eyes opened slowly, vacantly, as though she was awakening from a deep sleep. She looked at Cho Seng with an absent stare, seeming to wonder why he was there, why she was where she was. The Chinaman, made voluble through fear, chattered:

"Him junk say big *baas gouverneur* speakee muchee damn-damn; no gambir, no rice, no copra, no coffee from Bulungan one-two year; sendee new resident bimeby belly quick."

Koyala's face paled.

"Send a new resident?" she asked incredulously. "What of Mynheer Muller?"

The look of fear left Cho Seng's face. Involuntarily his neck bent and his fingers sought each other inside the sleeves. There was cunning mingled with malice in his eyes as he looked up furtively and feasted on her manifest distress.

"Him chop-chop," he announced laconically.

"They will kill him?" Koyala cried.

The Chinaman had said his word. None knew better than he the value of silence. He stood before her in all humbleness and calmly awaited her next word. All the while his eyes played on her in quick, cleverly concealed glances.

Koyala fingered the handle of the kris as she considered what the news portended. Her face slowly hardened—there was a look in it of the tigress brought to bay.

"Koyala bimeby mally him—Mynheer Muller, go hide in bush?" Cho Seng ventured. The question was asked with such an air of simple innocence and friendly interest that none could take offense.

Koyala flushed hotly. Then her nose and chin rose high with pride.

"The Bintang Burung will wed no man, Cho Seng," she declared haughtily. "The blood of Chawatangi dies in me, but not till Bulungan is purged of the *orang blanda*" (white race). She whipped the jeweled kris out of its silken scabbard. "When the last white man spills his heart on the coral shore and the wrongs done Chawatangi's daughter, my mother, have been avenged, then Koyala will go to join the *Hanu Token* that call her, call her—"

She thrust the point of the kris against her breast and looked upward toward the far-distant hills and the smoking mountain. A look of longing came into her eyes, the light of great desire, almost it seemed as if she would drive the blade home and join the spirits she invoked.

With a sigh she lowered the point of the kris and slipped it back into its sheath.

"No, Cho Seng," she said, "Mynheer Muller is nothing to me. No man will ever be anything to me. But your master has been a kind elder brother to Koyala. And like me, he has had to endure the shame of an unhappy birth." Her voice sank to a whisper. "For his mother, Cho Seng, as you know, was a woman of Celebes."

She turned swiftly away that he might not see her face. After a moment she said in a voice warm with womanly kindness and sympathy:

"Therefore you and I must take care of him, Cho Seng. He is weak, he is untruthful, he has made a wicked bargain with your master, Ah Sing, which the spirits of the hills tell me he shall suffer for, but he is only what his white father made him, and the *orang blanda* must pay!" Her lips contracted grimly. "Ay, pay to the last drop of blood! You will be true to him, Cho Seng?"

The Chinaman cast a furtive glance upward and found her mellow dark-brown eyes looking at him earnestly. The eyes seemed to search his very soul.

"*Ja, ja*," he pledged.

"Then go, tell the captain of the junk to sail quickly to Macassar and send word by a swift messenger to Ah Sing that he must let me know the moment a new resident is appointed. There is no wind and the sun is high; therefore the junk will still be in the harbor. Hurry, Cho Seng!"

Without a word the Chinaman wheeled and shuffled down the woodland path that led from the clearing toward the main highway. Koyala looked after him fixedly.

"If his skin were white he could not be more false," she observed bitterly. "But he is Ah Sing's slave, and Ah Sing needs me, so I need not fear him—yet."

She followed lightly after Cho Seng until she could see the prim top of the residency building gleaming white through the trees. Then she stopped short. Her face darkened as the Dyak blood gathered thickly. A look of implacable hate and passion distorted it. Her eyes sought the distant hills:

"*Hanu Token*, *Hanu Token*, send a young man here to rule Bulungan," she prayed. "Send a strong man, send a vain man, with a passion for fair women. Let me dazzle him with my beauty, let me fill his heart with longing, let me make his brain reel with madness, let me make his body sick with desire. Let me make him suffer a thousand deaths before he gasps his last breath and his dripping head is brought to thy temple in the hills. For the wrongs done Chawatangi's daughter, *Hanu Token*, for the wrongs done me!"

With a low sob she fled inland through the cane.

CHAPTER V

SACHSEN'S WARNING

Electric tapers were burning dimly in Governor-General Van Schouten's sanctum at the *paleis* that evening as Peter Gross was ushered in. The governor was seated in a high-backed, elaborately carved mahogany chair before a highly polished mahogany table. Beside him was the omniscient, the indispensable Sachsen. The two were talking earnestly in the Dutch language. Van Schouten acknowledged Peter Gross's entrance with a curt nod and directed him to take a chair on the opposite side of the table.

At a word from his superior, Sachsen tucked the papers he had been studying into a portfolio. The governor stared intently at his visitor for a moment before he spoke.

"Mynheer Gross," he announced sharply, "your captain tells me your contract with him runs to the end of the voyage. He will not release you."

"Then I must fill my contract, your excellency," Peter Gross replied.

Van Schouten frowned with annoyance. He was not accustomed to being crossed.

"When will you be able to take over the administration of Bulungan, *mynheer*?"

Peter Gross's brow puckered thoughtfully. "In three weeks—let us say thirty days, your excellency."

"*Donder en bliksem!*" the governor exclaimed. "We need you there at once."

"That is quite impossible, your excellency. I will need help, men that I can trust and who know the islands. Such men cannot be picked up in a day."

"You can have the pick of my troops."

"I should prefer to choose my own men, your excellency," Peter Gross replied.

"Eh? How so, *mynheer*?" The governor's eyes glinted with suspicion.

"Your excellency has been so good as to promise me a free hand," Peter Gross replied quietly. "I have a plan in mind—if your excellency desires to hear it?"

Van Schouten's face cleared.

"We shall discuss that later, *mynheer*. You will be ready to go the first of June, then?"

"On the first of June I shall await your excellency's pleasure here at Batavia," Peter Gross agreed.

"*Nu!* that is settled!" The governor gave a grunt of satisfaction and squared himself before the table. His expression became sternly autocratic.

"Mynheer Gross," he said, "you told us this afternoon some of the history of our unhappy residency of Bulungan. You demonstrated to our satisfaction a most excellent knowledge of conditions there. Some of the things you spoke of were —I may say—surprising. Some touched upon matters which we thought were known only to ourselves and to our privy council. But, *mynheer*, you did not mention one subject that to our mind is the gravest problem that confronts our representatives in Bulungan. Perhaps you do not know there is such a problem. Or perhaps you underestimate its seriousness. At any rate, we deem it desirable to discuss this matter with you in detail, that you may thoroughly understand the difficulties before you, and our wishes in the matter. We have requested Mynheer Sachsen to speak for us."

He nodded curtly at his secretary.

"You may proceed, Sachsen."

Sachsen's white head, that had bent low over the table during the governor's rather pompous little speech, slowly lifted. His shrewd gray eyes twinkled kindly. His lips parted in a quaintly humorous and affectionate smile.

"First of all, Vrind Pieter, let me congratulate you," he said, extending a hand across the table. Peter Gross's big paw closed over it with a warm pressure.

"And let me thank you, Vrind Sachsen," he replied. "It was not hard to guess who brought my name to his excellency's attention."

"It is Holland's good fortune that you are here," Sachsen declared. "Had you not been worthy, Vrind Pieter, I should not have recommended you." He looked at

the firm, strong face and the deep, broad chest and massive shoulders of his protégé with almost paternal fondness.

"To have earned your good opinion is reward enough in itself," Peter Gross asserted.

Sachsen's odd smile, that seemed to find a philosophic humor in everything, deepened.

"Your reward, Vrind Pieter," he observed, "is the customary recompense of the man who proves his wisdom and his strength—a more onerous duty. Bulungan will test you severely, *vrind* (friend). Do you believe that?"

"Ay," Peter Gross assented soberly.

"Pray God to give you wisdom and strength," Sachsen advised gravely. He bowed his head for a moment, then stirred in his chair and sat up alertly.

"*Nu!* as to the work that lies before you, I need not tell you the history of this residency. For Sachsen to presume to instruct Peter Gross in what has happened in Bulungan would be folly. As great folly as to lecture a dominie on theology."

Again the quaintly humorous quirk of the lips.

"If Peter Gross knew the archipelago half so well as his good friend Sachsen he would be a lucky man," Peter Gross retorted spiritedly.

Sachsen's face became suddenly grave.

"We do not doubt your knowledge of conditions in our unhappy province, Vrind Pieter. Nor do we doubt your ability, your courage, or your sound judgment. But, Pieter—"

He paused. The clear gray eyes of Peter Gross met his questioningly.

"—You are young, Vrind Pieter."

The governor rose abruptly and plucked down from the wall a long-stemmed Dutch pipe that was suspended by a gaily colored cord from a stout peg. He filled the big china bowl of the pipe with nearly a half-pound of tobacco, touched a light to the weed, and returned to his chair. There was a pregnant silence in the room meanwhile.

"How old are you, Vrind Pieter?" Sachsen asked gently.

"Twenty-five, *mynheer*," Peter Gross replied. There was a pronounced emphasis on the "*mynheer*."

"Twenty-five," Sachsen murmured fondly. "Twenty-five! Just my age when I was a student at Leyden and the gayest young scamp of them all." He shook his head. "Twenty-five is very young, Vrind Pieter."

"That is a misfortune which only time can remedy," Peter Gross replied drily.

"Yes, only time." Sachsen's eyes misted. "Time that brings the days 'when strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders shall cease because they are few, and the grasshopper shall become a burden, and desire shall fail.' I wish you were older, Vrind Pieter."

The old man sighed. There was a far-away look in his eyes as though he were striving to pierce the future and the leagues between Batavia and Bulungan.

"Vrind Gross," he resumed softly, "we have known each other a long time. Eight years is a long time, and it is eight years since you first came to Batavia. You were a cabin-boy then, and you ran away from your master because he beat you. The wharfmaster at Tanjong Priok found you, and was taking you back to your master when old Sachsen saw you. Old Sachsen got you free and put you on another ship, under a good master, who made a good man and a good *zeeman* (seaman) out of you. Do you remember?"

"I shall never forget!" Peter Gross's voice was vibrant with emotion.

"Old Sachsen was your friend then. He has been your friend through the years since then. He is your friend to-day. Do you believe that?"

Peter Gross impulsively reached his hand across the table. Sachsen grasped it and held it.

"Then to-night you will forgive old Sachsen if he speaks plainly to you, more plainly than you would let other men talk? You will listen, and take his words to heart, and consider them well, Pieter?"

"Speak, Sachsen!"

"I knew you would listen, Pieter." Sachsen drew a deep breath. His eyes rested fondly on his protégé, and he let go Gross's hand reluctantly as he leaned back in his chair.

"Vrind Pieter, you said a little while ago that old Sachsen knows the people who live in these *kolonien* (colonies). His knowledge is small—"

Peter Gross made a gesture of dissent, but Sachsen did not let him interrupt.

"Yet he has learned some things. It is something to have served the state for over two-score years in the Netherlands East Indies, first as *controlleur*, then as resident in Celebes, in Sumatra, in Java, and finally as secretary to the *gouverneur,* as old Sachsen has. In those years he has seen much that goes on in the hearts of the black, and the brown, and the yellow, and the white folk that live in these sun-seared islands. Much that is wicked, but also much that is good. And he has seen much of the fevers that seize men when the sun waves hot and the blood races madly through their veins. There is the fever of hate, and the fever of revenge, the fever of greed, and the fever to grasp God. But more universal than all these is the fever of love and the fever of lust!"

Peter Gross's brow knit with a puzzled frown. "What do you mean, Sachsen?" he demanded.

Sachsen smoothed back his thinning white hair.

"I am an old, old man, Vrind Pieter," he replied "Desire has long ago failed me. The passions that our fiery Java suns breed in men have drained away. The light that is in a comely woman's eyes, the thrill that comes at a touch of her warm hand, the quickened pulse-beat at the feel of her silken hair brushing over one's face—all these things are ashes and dust to old Sachsen. Slim ankles, plump calves, and full rounded breasts mean nothing to him. But you, Vrind Pieter, are young. You are strong as a buffalo, bold as a tiger, vigorous as a banyan tree. You have a young man's warm blood in your veins. You have the poison of youth in your blood. You are a man's man, Peter Gross, but you are also a woman's man."

Peter Gross's puzzled frown became a look of blank amazement. "What in the devil are you driving at, Sachsen?" he demanded, forgetting in his astonishment that he was in the governor's presence.

Sachsen leaned forward, his eyes searching his protégé's.

"Have you ever loved a woman, Pieter?" he countered softly.

Peter Gross appeared to be choking. The veins in his forehead distended.

"What has that to do with Bulungan?" he demanded. "You've known me since I was a lad, Sachsen; you've known all my comings and goings; why do you ask me such—rot?"

A grimly humorous smile lit the governor's stern visage.

"'Let the strong take heed lest they fall,'" Sachsen quoted quietly. "Since you say that you love no woman, let me ask you this—have you ever seen Koyala?"

The little flash of passion left Peter Gross's face, but the puzzled frown remained.

"Koyala," he repeated thoughtfully. "It seems to me I have heard the name, but I cannot recall how or when."

"Think, think!" Sachsen urged, leaning eagerly over the table. "The half-white woman of Borneo, the French trader's daughter by a native woman, brought up and educated at a mission school in Sarawak. The Dyaks call her the *Bintang Burung*. Ha! I see you know her now."

"Leveque's daughter, Chawatangi's grandchild?" Peter Gross exclaimed. "Of course I know her. Who doesn't?" His face sobered. "The unhappiest woman in the archipelago. I wonder she lives."

"You have seen her?" Sachsen asked.

Peter Gross's eyes twinkled reminiscently. "Ay, that I have."

"Tell me about it," Sachsen urged, with an imperceptible gesture to the governor to say nothing. He leaned forward expectantly.

Peter Gross cocked an eye at the ceiling. "Let me see, it was about a year ago," he said. "I was with McCloud, on the brig *Mary Dietrich*. McCloud heard at Macassar that there was a settlement of Dyaks at the mouth of the Abbas that wanted to trade in dammar gum and gambir and didn't ask too much *balas* (tribute money). We crossed the straits and found the village. Wolang, the chief, gave us a big welcome. We spent one day palavering; these natives won't do anything without having a *bitchara* first. The next morning I began loading operations, while McCloud entertained the *orang kaya*, Wolang, with a bottle of gin.

"The natives crowded around pretty close, particularly the women, anxious to

see what we were bringing ashore. One girl, quite a pretty girl, went so far as to step into the boat, and one of my men swung an arm around her and kissed her. She screamed."

The governor took his pipe out of his mouth and looked up with interest.

"The next minute the mob of Dyaks parted as though cut with a scythe. Down the lane came a woman, a white woman."

He turned to the secretary. "You have seen her, Sachsen?"

"*Ja*, Pieter."

"Then you can guess how she keeled me over," Peter Gross said. "I took her for white woman, a pure blood. She is white; the brown in her skin is no deeper than in a Spaniard's. She walked up to me—I could see a hurricane was threatening—and she said:

"'You are English? Go back to your ship, now; don't wait a minute, or you will leave your heads here.'

"'Madam,' I said, 'the lad was hasty, but meant no harm. It will not happen again. I will make the lady a present.'

"She turned a look on me that fairly withered me. '*You* think you can buy our women, too?' she said, fairly spitting the words. 'Go! go! Don't you see my Dyaks fitting arrows in their blow-pipes?'

"McCloud came running up with Chief Wolang. 'What's this?' he blustered, but Koyala only pointed to the sea and said the one word:

"'Go!'

"McCloud spoke to Wolang, but at a nod from Koyala the chief gave an order to his followers. Fifty Dyaks fitted poisoned arrows into their *sumpitans*. McCloud had good judgment; he knew when it was no use to *bitchara* and show gin. We rowed back to the ship without the cargo we expected to load and set sail at once. Not an arrow followed us, but the last thing I saw of the village was Koyala on the beach, watching us dip into the big rollers of the Celebes Sea."

"She is beautiful?" Sachsen suggested softly.

"Ay, quite an attractive young female," Peter Gross agreed in utmost seriousness.

The governor's grim smile threatened to break out into an open grin.

Sachsen looked at the table-top thoughtfully and rubbed his hands. "She lost you a cargo," he stated. "You have a score to settle with her." He flashed a keen glance at his protégé.

"By God, no!" Peter Gross exclaimed. He brought his fist down on the table. "She was right, eternally right. If a scoundrelly scum from over the sea tried to kiss a woman of my kin in that way I'd treat him a lot worse than we were treated."

Van Schouten blew an angry snort that cut like a knife the huge cloud of tobacco-smoke in which he had enveloped himself. Peter Gross faced him truculently.

"We deserved what we got," he asserted. "When we whites get over the notion that the world is a playground for us to spill our lusts and vices on and the lower races the playthings we can abuse as we please, we'll have peace in these islands. Our missionaries preach morals and Christianity; our traders, like that damned whelp, Leveque, break every law of God and man. Between the two the poor benighted heathen loses all the faith he has and sinks one grade lower in brutishness than his ancestors were before him. If all men were like Brooke of Sarawak we'd have had the East Indies Christianized by now. The natives were ready to make gods out of us—they did it with Brooke—but now they're looking for a chance to put a knife in our backs—a good many of them are."

He checked himself. "Here I'm preaching. I beg your pardon, your excellency."

Van Schouten blew another great cloud of tobacco-smoke and said nothing. Through the haze his eagle-keen eyes searched Peter Gross's face and noted the firm chin and tightly drawn lips with stern disapproval. Sachsen flashed him a warning glance to keep silent.

"Mynheer Gross," the secretary entreated, "let me again beg the privileges of an old friend. Is it admiration for Koyala's beauty or your keen sense of justice that leads you to so warm a defense?"

Peter Gross's reply was prompt and decisive.

"Vrind Sachsen, if she had been a hag I'd have thought no different."

"Search your heart, Vrind Pieter. Is it not because she was young and comely, a

woman unafraid, that you remember her?"

"Women are nothing to me," Peter Gross retorted irritably. "But right is right, and wrong is wrong, whether in Batavia or Bulungan."

Sachsen shook his head.

"Vrind Pieter," he declared sadly, "you make me very much afraid for you. If you had acknowledged, 'The woman was fair, a fair woman stirs me quickly,' I would have said: 'He is young and has eyes to see with, but he is too shrewd to be trapped.' But when you say: 'The fault was ours, we deserved to lose the cargo,' then I know that you are blind, blind to your own weakness, Pieter. Clever, wicked women make fools of such as you, Pieter."

One eyebrow arched the merest trifle in the direction of the governor. Then Sachsen continued:

"Vrind Pieter, I am here to-night to warn you against this woman. I have much to tell you about her, much that is unpleasant. Will you listen?"

Peter Gross shrugged his shoulders.

"I am at your service, Sachsen."

"Will you listen with an open mind? Will you banish from your thoughts all recollection of the woman you saw at the mouth of the Abbas River, all that you know or think you know of her fancied wrongs, and hear what old Sachsen has to say of the evil she has done, of the crimes, the piracies, ay, even rebellions and treasons for which she has been responsible? What do you say, Vrind Pieter?"

Pieter Gross swallowed hard. Words seemed to be struggling to his lips, but he kept them back. His teeth were pressed together tightly, the silence became tense.

"Listen, Sachsen," he finally said. His voice was studiedly calm. "You come from an old, conservative race, a race that clings faithfully to the precepts and ideals of its fathers and is certain of its footing before it makes a step in advance. You have the old concept of woman, that her lot is to bear, to suffer, and to weep. I come from a fresher, newer race, a race that gives its women the same liberty of thought and action that it gives its men. Therefore there are many things concerning the conduct of this woman that we look at in different ways. Things that seem improper, ay, sometimes treasonable, to you, seem a perfectly natural

protest to me. You ignore the wrongs she has suffered, wrongs that must make life a living hell to her. You say she must be content with the place to which God has called her, submerge the white blood in her, and live a savage among savages."

Peter Gross pulled his chair nearer the table and leaned forward. His face glowed with an intense earnestness.

"Great Scot, Sachsen, think of her condition! Half white, ay, half French, and that is as proud a race as breathes. Beautiful—beautiful as the sunrise. Taught in a missionary school, brought up as a white child among white children. And then, when the glory of her womanhood comes upon her, to learn she is an illegitimate, a half-breed, sister to the savage Dyaks, her only future in their filthy huts, to kennel with them, breed with them—God, what a horror that revelation must have been!"

He raked his fingers through his hair and stared savagely at the wall.

"You don't feel these things, Sachsen," he concluded. "You're Dutch to begin with, and so a conservative thinker. Then you've been ground through the routine of colonial service so many years that you've lost every viewpoint except the state's expediency. Thank God, I haven't! That is why I think I can do something for you in Bulungan—"

He checked himself. "Common sense and a little elemental justice go a long, long way in dealing with savages," he observed.

Sachsen's eyes looked steadily into Peter Gross's. Sachsen's kindly smile did not falter. But the governor's patience had reached its limit.

"Look you here, Mynheer Gross," he exclaimed, "I want no sympathy for that she-devil from my resident."

An angry retort leaped to Peter Gross's lips, but before it could be uttered Sachsen's hand had leaped across the table and had gripped his warningly.

"She may be as beautiful as a houri, but she is a witch, a very Jezebel," the governor stormed. "I have nipped a dozen uprisings in the bud, and this Koyala has been at the bottom of all of them. She hates us *orang blandas* with a hate that the fires of hell could not burn out, but she is subtler than the serpent that taught Mother Eve. She has bewitched my *controlleur*; see that she does not bewitch you. I have put a price on her head; your first duty will be to see that she

is delivered for safe-keeping here in Batavia."

The governor's eyes were sparkling fire. There was a like anger in Peter Gross's face; he was on the point of speaking when Sachsen's nails dug so deeply into his hand that he winced.

"Mynheer Gross is an American, therefore he is chivalrous," Sachsen observed. "He aims to be just, but there is much that he does not understand. If your excellency will permit me—"

Van Schouten gave assent by picking up his pipe and closing his teeth viciously on the mouthpiece.

Sachsen promptly addressed Peter Gross.

"Vrind Pieter," he said, "I am glad you have spoken. Now we understand each other. You are just what I knew you were, fearless, honest, frank. You have convinced me the more that you are the man we must have as resident of Bulungan."

Peter Gross looked up distrustfully. Van Schouten, too, evinced his surprise by taking the pipe from his mouth.

"But," Sachsen continued, "you have the common failing of youth. Youth dreams dreams, it would rebuild this sorry world and make it Paradise before the snake. It is sure it can. With age comes disillusionment. We learn we cannot do the things we have set our hands to do in the way we planned. We learn we must compromise. Once old Sachsen had thoughts like yours. To-day"—he smiled tenderly—"he has the beginnings of wisdom. That is, he has learned that God ordains. Do you believe that, Vrind Pieter?"

"Ay, of course," Peter Gross acknowledged, a trifle bewildered. "But—"

"Now, concerning this woman," Sachsen cut in briskly. "We will concede that she was wronged before she was born. We will concede the sin of her father. We will concede his second sin, leaving her mother to die in the jungle. We will concede the error, if error it was, to educate Koyala in a mission school among white children. We will concede the fatal error of permitting her to return to her own people, knowing the truth of her birth."

His voice took a sharper turn.

"But there are millions of children born in your own land, in my land, in every land, with deformed bodies, blind perhaps, crippled, with faces uglier than baboons. Why? Because one or both of their parents sinned. Now I ask you," he demanded harshly, "whether these children, because of the sin of their parents, have the right to commit crimes, plot murders, treasons, rebellions, and stir savage people to wars of extermination against their white rulers? What is your answer?"

"That is not the question," Peter Gross began, but Sachsen interrupted.

"It is the question. It was the sin of the parent in both cases. Leveque sinned; his daughter, Koyala, suffers. Parents sin everywhere, their children must suffer."

Peter Gross stared at the wall thoughtfully.

"Look you here, Vrind Pieter," Sachsen said, "learn this great truth. The state is first, then the individual. Always the good of the whole people, that is the state, first, then the good of the individual. Thousands may suffer, thousands may die, but if the race benefits, the cost is nothing. This law is as old as man. Each generation says it a new way, but the law is the same. And so with this Koyala. She was wronged, we will admit it. But she cannot be permitted to make the whole white race pay for those wrongs and halt progress in Borneo for a generation. She will have justice; his excellency is a just man. But first there must be peace in Bulungan. There must be no more plottings, no more piracies, no more head-hunting. The spear-heads must be separated from their shafts, the krisses must be buried, the *sumpitans* must be broken in two. If Koyala will yield, this can be done. If you can persuade her to trust us, Pieter, half your work is done. Bulungan will become one of our fairest residencies, its trade will grow, the piracies will be swept from the seas, and the days of head-hunting will become a tradition."

Peter Gross bowed his head.

"God help me, I will," he vowed.

"But see that she does not seduce you, Vrind Pieter," the old man entreated earnestly. "You are both young, she is fair, and she is a siren, a vampire. Hold fast to your God, to your faith, to the oath you take as a servant of the state, and do not let her beauty blind you—no, nor your own warm heart either, Pieter."

Sachsen rose. There were tears in his eyes as he looked fondly down at the

young man that owed so much to him.

"Pieter," he said, "old Sachsen will pray for you. I must leave you now, Pieter; the governor desires to talk to you."

CHAPTER VI

THE PIRATE LEAGUE

As Sachsen left the room the governor snapped shut the silver cap on the porcelain bowl of his pipe and regretfully laid the pipe aside.

"*Nu*, Mynheer Gross, what troops will you need?" he asked in a business-like manner. "I have one thousand men here in Java that you may have if you need them. For the sea there is the gun-boat, *Prins Lodewyk*, and the cutter, *Katrina*, both of which I place at your disposal."

"I do not need a thousand men, your excellency," Peter Gross replied quietly.

"Ha! I thought not!" the governor exclaimed with satisfaction. "An army is useless in the jungle. Let them keep their crack troops in the Netherlands and give me a few hundred irregulars who know the cane and can bivouac in the trees if they have to. Your Amsterdammer looks well enough on parade, but his skin is too thin for our mosquitoes. But that is beside the question. Would five hundred men be enough, Mynheer Gross? We have a garrison of fifty at Bulungan."

Peter Gross frowned reflectively at the table-top.

"I would not need five hundred men, your excellency," he announced.

The governor's smile broadened. "You know more about jungle warfare than I gave you credit for, Mynheer Gross," he complimented. "But I should have known that the rescuer of Lieutenant de Koren was no novice. Only this morning I remarked to General Vanden Bosch that a capable commander and three hundred experienced bush-fighters are enough to drive the last pirate out of Bulungan and teach our Dyaks to cultivate their long-neglected plantations. What say you to three hundred of our best colonials, *mynheer*?"

"I will not need three hundred men, your excellency," Peter Gross declared.

Van Schouten leaned back in surprise.

"Well, Mynheer Gross, how large a force will you need?"

Peter Gross's long, ungainly form settled lower in his chair. His legs crossed and his chin sagged into the palm of his right hand. The fingers pulled gently at his cheeks. After a moment's contemplation he looked up to meet the governor's inquiring glance and remarked:

"Your excellency, I shall need about twenty-five men."

Van Schouten stared at him in astonishment.

"Twenty-five men, Mynheer Gross!" he exclaimed. "What do you mean?"

"Twenty-five men, men like I have in mind, will be all I will need, your excellency," Peter Gross assured gravely.

Van Schouten edged his chair nearer. "Mynheer Gross, do you understand me correctly?" he asked doubtfully. "I would make you resident of Bulungan. I would give you supreme authority in the province. The commandant, Captain Van Slyck, would be subject to your orders. You will be answerable only to me."

"Under no other conditions would I accept your excellency's appointment," Peter Gross declared.

"But, Mynheer Gross, what can twenty-five do? Bulungan has more than one hundred thousand inhabitants, few of whom have ever paid a picul of rice or kilo of coffee as tax to the crown. On the coast there are the Chinese pirates, the Bugi outlaws from Macassar and their traitorous allies, the coast Dyaks of Bulungan, of Tidoeng, and Pasir, ay, as far north as Sarawak, for those British keep their house in no better order than we do ours. In the interior we have the hill Dyaks, the worst thieves and cut-throats of them all. But these things you know. I ask you again, what can twenty-five do against so many?"

"With good fortune, bring peace to Bulungan," Peter Gross replied confidently.

The governor leaned aggressively across the table and asked the one-word pointed question:

"How?"

Peter Gross uncrossed his legs and tugged gravely at his chin.

"Your excellency," he said, "I have a plan, not fully developed as yet, but a plan. As your excellency well knows, there are two nations of Dyaks in the province. There are the hillmen—"

"Damned thieving, murdering, head-hunting scoundrels!" the governor growled savagely.

"So your excellency has been informed. But I believe that much of the evil that is said of them is untrue. They are savages, wilder savages than the coast Dyaks, and less acquainted with *blanken* (white men). Many of them are head-hunters. But they have suffered cruelly from the coast Dyaks, with whom, as your excellency has said, they have an eternal feud."

"They are pests," the governor snarled. "They keep the lowlands in a continual turmoil with their raids. We cannot grow a blade of rice on account of them."

"That is where your excellency and I must disagree," Peter Gross asserted quietly.

"Ha!" the governor exclaimed incredulously. "What do you say, Mynheer Gross?"

"Your excellency, living in Batavia, you have seen only one side of this question, the side your underlings have shown you. With your excellency's permission I shall show you another side, the side a stranger, unprejudiced, with no axes to grind either way, saw in his eight years of sailoring about these islands. Have I your excellency's permission?"

A frown gathered on the governor's face. His thin lips curled, and his bristly mane rose belligerently.

"Proceed," he snapped.

Peter Gross rested his elbows on the table and leaned toward the governor.

"Your excellency," he began, "let it be understood that I bring no accusations to-night; that we are speaking as man to man. I go to Bulungan to inquire into the truth of the things I have heard. Whatever I learn shall be faithfully reported to your excellency."

Van Schouten nodded curtly.

"Your excellency has spoken of the unrest in Bulungan," Peter Gross continued. "Your excellency also spoke of piracies committed in these seas. It is my belief, your excellency, that the government has been mistaken in assuming that there is no connection between the two. I am satisfied that there is a far closer union and

a better understanding between the Dyaks and the pirates than has ever been dreamed of here in Batavia."

The governor smiled derisively.

"You are mistaken, Mynheer Gross," he contradicted. "I almost believed so, too, at one time, and I had Captain Van Slyck, our commandant at Bulungan, investigate for me. I have his report here. I shall be glad to let you read it."

He tapped a gong. In a moment Sachsen bustled in.

"Sachsen," the governor said, "Kapitein Van Slyck's report on the pirates of the straits, if you please."

Sachsen bowed and withdrew.

"I shall be glad to read the captain's report," Peter Gross assured gravely. A grimly humorous twinkle lurked in his eyes. The governor was quick to note it.

"But it will not convince you, eh, *mynheer*?" he challenged. He smiled. "You Yankees are an obstinate breed—almost as stubborn as we Dutch."

"I am afraid that the captain's report will not cover things I know," Peter Gross replied. "Yet I have no doubt it will be helpful."

The subtle irony his voice expressed caused the governor to look at him quizzically, but Van Schouten was restrained from further inquiry by the return of Sachsen with the report. The governor glanced at the superscription and handed the document to Peter Gross with the remark: "Read that at your leisure. I will have Sachsen make you a copy."

Peter Gross pocketed the report with a murmured word of thanks. The governor frowned, trying to recollect where the thread of conversation had been broken, and then remarked:

"As I say, Mynheer Gross, I am sure you will find yourself mistaken. The Dyaks are thieves and head-hunters, a treacherous breed. They do not know the meaning of loyalty—God help us if they did! No two villages have ever yet worked together for a common aim. As for the pirates, they are wolves that prey on everything that comes in their path. Some of the *orang kayas* may be friendly with them, but as for there being any organization—bah! it is too ridiculous to even discuss it."

Peter Gross's lips pressed a little tighter.

"Your excellency," he replied with perfect equanimity, "you have your opinion and I have mine. My work in Bulungan, I hope, will show which of us is right. Yet I venture to say this. Before I have left Bulungan I shall be able to prove to your excellency that one man, not so very far from your excellency's *paleis* at this moment, has united the majority of the sea Dyaks and the pirates into a formidable league of which he is the head. More than this, he has established a system of espionage which reaches into this very house."

Van Schouten stared at Peter Gross in amazement and incredulity.

"Mynheer Gross," he finally exclaimed, "this is nonsense!"

Peter Gross's eyes flashed. "Your excellency," he retorted, "it is the truth."

"What proofs have you?" the governor demanded.

"None at present that could convince your excellency," Peter Gross admitted frankly. "All I have is a cumulative series of instances, unrelated in themselves, scraps of conversations picked up here and there, little things that have come under my observation in my sojourns in many ports of the archipelago. But in Bulungan I expect to get the proofs. When I have them, I shall give them to your excellency, that justice may be done. Until then I make no charges. All I say is—guard carefully what you would not have your enemies know."

"This is extraordinary," the governor remarked, impressed by Peter Gross's intense earnestness. "Surely you do not expect me to believe all this on your unsupported word, *mynheer*?"

"The best corroboration which I can offer is that certain matters which your excellency thought were known only to himself are now common gossip from Batavia to New Guinea," Peter Gross replied.

The governor's head drooped. His face became drawn. Lines formed where none had been before. The jauntiness, the pompous self-assurance, and the truculence that so distinguished him among his fellows disappeared from his mien; it was as though years of anxiety and care had suddenly passed over him.

"This discussion brings us nowhere, Mynheer Gross," he wearily remarked. "Let us decide how large a force you should have. What you have told me convinces me the more that you will need at least two hundred men. I hesitate to send you

with less than a regiment."

"Let me deal with this situation in my own way, your excellency," Peter Gross pleaded. "I believe that just dealing will win the confidence of the upland Dyaks. Once that is done, the rest is easy. Twenty-five men, backed by the garrison at Bulungan and the hill Dyaks, will be able to break up the pirate bands, if the navy does its share. After that the problem is one of administration, to convince the coast Dyaks that the state is fair, that the state is just, and that the state's first thought is the welfare of her people, be they brown, black, or white."

"You think twenty-five men can do all that?" the governor asked doubtfully.

"The men I shall choose can, your excellency. They will be men whom I can trust absolutely, who have no interests except the service of Peter Gross."

"Where will you find them, *mynheer*?"

"Here in Java, your excellency. Americans. Sailors who have left the sea. Men who came here to make their fortunes and failed and are too proud to go back home. Soldiers from the Philippines, adventurers, lads disappointed in love. I could name you a dozen such here in Batavia now."

The governor looked at his new lieutenant long and thoughtfully.

"Do as you deem best, *mynheer*. It may be God has sent you here to teach us why we have failed. Is there anything else you need, besides the usual stores?"

"There is one more request I wish to make of your excellency," Peter Gross replied.

"And that is—"

"That your excellency cancel the reward offered for the arrest of Leveque's daughter."

Van Schouten stroked his brow with a gesture of infinite weariness.

"You make strange requests, *mynheer*," he observed. "Yet I am moved to trust you. What you ask shall be done."

He rose to signify that the interview was at an end. "You may make your requisitions through Sachsen, *mynheer*. God speed you and give you wisdom beyond your years."

CHAPTER VII

MYNHEER MULLER WORRIES

Seated in a low-framed rattan chair on the broad veranda of his cottage, Mynheer Hendrik Muller, *controlleur*, and acting resident of Bulungan, awaited in perspiring impatience the appearance of his military associate, Captain Gerrit Van Slyck.

State regulations required daily conferences, that the civil arm of the government might lay its commands upon the military and the military make its requisitions upon the civil. An additional incentive to prompt attendance upon these was that *mynheer* the resident rarely failed to produce a bottle of Hollands, which, compounded with certain odorous and acidulated products of the tropics, made a drink that cooled the fevered brow and mellowed the human heart, made a hundred and twenty in the shade seem like seventy, and chased away the home-sickness of folk pining for the damp and fog of their native Amsterdam.

It was no urgent affair of state, however, that made Muller fume and fuss like a washerwoman on a rainy Monday at Van Slyck's dilatoriness. A bit of gossip, casually dropped by the master of a trading schooner who had called for clearance papers an hour before, was responsible for his agitation.

"When does your new resident arrive?" the visiting skipper had asked.

"The new resident?" Muller returned blankly. "What new resident?"

The skipper perceived that he was the bearer of unpleasant tidings and diplomatically minimized the importance of his news.

"Somebody down to Batavia told me you were going to have a new resident here," he replied lightly. "It's only talk, I s'pose. You hear so many yarns in port."

"There is nothing official—yet," Muller declared. He had the air of one who could tell much if he chose. But when the sailor had gone back to his ship he hurriedly sent Cho Seng to the stockade with an urgent request to Van Slyck to come to his house at once.

Van Slyck was putting the finishing touches to an exquisite toilet when he

received the message.

"What ails the doddering old fool now?" he growled irritably as he read Muller's appeal. "Another Malay run amuck, I suppose. Every time a few of these *bruinevels* (brown-skins) get krissed he thinks the whole province is going to flame into revolt."

Tossing the note into an urn, he leisurely resumed his dressing. It was not until he was carefully barbered, his hair shampooed and perfumed, his nails manicured, and his mustache waxed and twisted to the exact angle that a two-months old French magazine of fashion dictated as the mode, that the dapper captain left the stockade. He was quite certain that the last living representative of the ancient house of Van Slyck of Amsterdam would never be seen in public in dirty linen and unwashed, regardless how far *mynheer the controlleur* might forget his self-respect and the dignity of his office.

Van Slyck was leisurely strolling along the tree-lined lane that led from the iron-wood stockade to the cluster of houses colloquially designated "Amsterdam" when the impatient Muller perceived his approach.

"Devil take the man, why doesn't he hurry?" the *controlleur* swore. With a peremptory gesture he signaled Van Slyck to make haste.

"By the beard of Nassau," the captain exclaimed. "Does that swine think he can make a Van Slyck skip like a butcher's boy? Things have come to a pretty pass in the colonies when a Celebes half-breed imagines he can make the best blood of Amsterdam fetch and carry for him."

Deliberately turning his back on the *controlleur*, he affected to admire the surpassingly beautiful bay of Bulungan, heaven's own blue melting into green on the shingly shore, with a thousand sabres of iridescent foam stabbing the morning horizon. Muller was fuming when the commandant finally sauntered on the veranda, selected a fat, black cigar from the humidor, and gracefully lounged in an easy chair.

"*Donder en bliksem! kapitein*, but you lie abed later every morning," he growled.

Van Slyck's thin lips curled with aristocratic scorn.

"We cannot all be such conscientious public servants as you, *mynheer*," he observed ironically.

Muller was in that state of nervous agitation that a single jarring word would have roused an unrestricted torrent of abuse. Fortunately for Van Slyck, however, he was obtuse to irony. He took the remark literally and for the moment, like oil on troubled waters, it calmed the rising tide of his wrath at what he deemed the governor-general's black ingratitude.

"Well, *kapitein, gij kebt gelijk* (you are right, captain)" he assented heavily. The blubbery folds under his chin crimsoned with his cheeks in complacent self-esteem. "There are not many men who would have done so well as I have under the conditions I had to face—under the conditions I had to face—*kapitein*. *Ja!* Not many men. I have worked and slaved to build up this residency. For two years now I have done a double duty—I have been both resident and *controlleur*. *Jawel!*"

Recollection of the skipper's unpleasant news recurred to him. His face darkened like a tropic sky before a cloudburst.

"And what is my reward, *kapitein*? What is my reward? To have some *Amsterdamsche papegaai* (parrot) put over me." His fist came down wrathily on the arm of his chair. "Ten thousand devils! It is enough to make a man turn pirate."

Van Slyck's cynical face lit with a sudden interest.

"You have heard from Ah Sing?" he inquired.

"Ah Sing? No. *Drommel noch toe!*" Muller swore. "Who mentioned Ah Sing? That thieving Deutscher who runs the schooner we had in port over-night told me this not an hour ago. The whole of Batavia knows it. They are talking it in every *rumah makan*. And we sit here and know nothing. That is the kind of friends we have in Batavia."

Van Slyck, apprehensive that the impending change might affect him, speculated swiftly how much the *controlleur* knew.

"It is strange that Ah Sing hasn't let us know," he remarked.

"Ah Sing?" Muller growled. "Ah Sing? That bloodsucker is all for himself. He would sell us out to Van Schouten in a minute if he thought he saw any profit in it. *Ja!* I have even put money into his ventures, and this is how he treats me."

"Damnably, I must say," Van Slyck agreed sympathetically. "That is, if he

knows."

"If he knows, *mynheer kapitein*? Of course he knows. Has he not *agenten* in every corner of this archipelago? Has he not a spy in the *paleis* itself?"

"He should have sent us word," Van Slyck agreed. "Unless *mynheer*, the new resident, is one of us. Who did you say it is, *mynheer*?"

"How the devil should I know?" Muller growled irritably. "All I know is what I told you—that the whole of Batavia says Bulungan is to have a new resident."

Van Slyck's face fell. He had hoped that the *controlleur* knew at least the identity of the new executive of the province. Having extracted all the information Muller had, he dropped the cloak of sympathy and remarked with cool insolence:

"Since you don't know, I think you had better make it your business to find out, *mynheer*."

Muller looked at him doubtfully. "You might make an effort also, *kapitein*," he suggested. "You have friends in Batavia. It is your concern as well as mine, a new resident would ruin our business."

"I don't think he will," Van Slyck replied coolly. "If he isn't one of us he won't bother us long. Ah Sing won't let any prying reformer interfere with business while the profits are coming in as well as they are."

A shadow of anxiety crossed Muller's face. He cast a troubled look at Van Slyck, who affected to admire the multi-tinted color display of jungle, sun, and sea.

"What—what do you mean, *kapitein*?" he asked hesitantly.

"People sometimes begin voyages they do not finish," Van Slyck observed. "A man might eat a pomegranate that didn't agree with him—pouf—the colic, and it is all over. There is nothing so uncertain as life, *mynheer*."

The captain replaced his cigar between his teeth with a flourish. Muller's pudgy hands caught each other convulsively. The folds under his chin flutterred. He licked his lips before he spoke.

"*Kapitein*—you mean he might come to an unhappy end on the way?" he faltered.

"Why not?" Van Slyck concentrated his attention on his cigar.

"*Neen, neen*, let us have no bloodshed," Muller vetoed anxiously. "We have had enough—" He looked around nervously as though he feared someone might be overhearing him. "Let him alone. We shall find some way to get rid of him. But let there be no killing."

Van Slyck turned his attention from the landscape to the *controlleur*. There was a look in the captain's face that made Muller wince and shift his eyes, a look of cyincal contempt, calm, frank, and unconcealed. It was the mask lifting, for Van Slyck despised his associate. Bold and unscrupulous, sticking at nothing that might achieve his end, he had no patience with the timid, faltering, often conscience-stricken *controlleur*.

"Well, *mynheer*," Van Slyck observed at length, "you are getting remarkably thin-skinned all of a sudden."

He laughed sardonically. Muller winced and replied hastily:

"I have been thinking, *kapitein*, that the proa crews have been doing too much killing lately. I am going to tell Ah Sing that it must be stopped. There are other ways—we can unload the ships and land their crews on some island—"

"To starve, or to be left to the tender mercies of the Bajaus and the Bugis," Van Slyck sneered. "That would be more tender-hearted. You would at least transfer the responsibility."

Muller's agitation became more pronounced.

"But we must not let it go on, *kapitein*," he urged. "It hurts the business. Pretty soon we will have an investigation, one of these gun-boats will pick up one of our proas, somebody will tell, and what will happen to us then?"

"We'll be hung," Van Slyck declared succinctly.

Muller's fingers leaped in an involuntary frantic gesture to his throat, as though he felt cords tightening around his windpipe. His face paled.

"*Lieve hemel, kapitein*, don't speak of such things," he gasped.

"Then don't talk drivel," Van Slyck snarled. "You can't make big profits without taking big chances. And you can't have piracy without a little blood-letting. We're in this now, and there's no going back. So stop your squealing."

Settling back into his chair, he looked calmly seaward and exhaled huge clouds of tobacco smoke. The frown deepened on Muller's troubled brow as he stared vacantly across the crushed coral-shell highway.

"You can think of no reason why his excellency should be offended with us, *kapitein*?" he ventured anxiously.

The *controlleur's* eagerness to include him in his misfortune, evidenced by the use of the plural pronoun, evoked a sardonic flicker in Van Slyck's cold, gray eyes.

"No, *mynheer*, I cannot conceive why the governor should want to get rid of so valuable a public servant as you are," he assured ironically. "You have certainly done your best. There have been a few disturbances, of course, some head-hunting, and the taxes have not been paid, but outside of such minor matters everything has done well, very well indeed."

"*Donder en bliksem*," Muller exclaimed, "how can I raise taxes when those Midianites, the hill Dyaks, will not let my coast Dyaks grow a spear of rice? Has there been a month without a raid? Answer me, *kapitein*. Have you spent a whole month in the stockade without being called to beat back some of these thieving plunderers and drive them into their hills?"

The sardonic smile flashed across Van Slyck's face again.

"Quite true, *mynheer*. But sometimes I don't know if I blame the poor devils. They tell me they're only trying to get even because your coast Dyaks and Ah Sing's crowd rob them so. Ah Sing must be making quite a profit out of the slave business. I'll bet he shipped two hundred to China last year."

He glanced quizzically at his associate.

"By the way, *mynheer*," he observed, "you ought to know something about that. I understand you get a per cent on it."

"I?" Muller exclaimed, and looked affrightedly about him. "I, *kapitein*?"

"Oh, yes you do," Van Slyck asserted airily. "You've got money invested with Ah Sing in two proas that are handling that end of the business. And it's the big end just now. The merchandise pickings are small, and that is all I share in."

He looked at Muller meaningly. There was menace in his eyes and menace in his voice as he announced:

"I'm only mentioning this, *mynheer*, so that if the new resident should happen to be one of us, with a claim to the booty, his share comes out of your pot, not mine. Remember that!"

For once cupidity overcame Muller's fear of the sharp-witted cynical soldier.

"*Wat de drommel*," he roared, "do you expect me to pay all, *kapitein*, all? Not in a thousand years! If there must be a division you shall give up your per cent as well as I, *stuiver* for *stuiver*, *gulden* for *gulden*!"

A hectic spot glowed in each of Van Slyck's cheeks, and his eyes glittered. Muller's anger rose.

"Ah Sing shall decide between us," he cried heatedly. "You cannot rob me in that way, *kapitein*."

Van Slyck turned on his associate with an oath. "Ah Sing be damned. We'll divide as I say, or—"

The pause was more significant than words. Muller's ruddy face paled. Van Slyck tapped a forefinger significantly on the arm of his chair.

"Just remember, if the worst comes to the worst, there's this one difference between you and me, *mynheer*. I'm not afraid to die, and you—are!" He smiled.

Muller's breath came thickly, and he stared fascinatedly into the evilly handsome face of the captain, whose eyes were fixed on his with a basilisk glare. Several seconds passed; then Van Slyck said:

"See that you remember these things, *mynheer*, when our next accounting comes."

The silence that followed was broken by the rhythmic pad-pad of wicker sandals on a bamboo floor. Cho Seng came on the veranda, bearing a tray laden with two glasses of finest crystal and a decanter of colorless liquid, both of which he placed on a small porch table. Drops of dew formed thickly on the chilled surface of the decanter and rolled off while the Chinaman mixed the juices of fruits and crushed leaves with the potent liquor. The unknown discoverer of the priceless recipe he used receives more blessings in the Indies daily than all the saints on the calendar. When Cho Seng had finished, he withdrew. Muller swallowed the contents of his glass in a single gulp. Van Slyck sipped leisurely. Gradually the tension lessened. After a while, between sips, the captain remarked:

"I hear you have a chance to pick up some prize money."

Muller looked up with interest. "So, *kapitein*!" he exclaimed with forced jocularity. "Have you found a place where guilders grow on trees?"

"Almost as good as that," Van Slyck replied, playing his fish.

Finesse and indirection were not Muller's forte. "Well, tell us about it, *kapitein*," he demanded bluntly.

Van Slyck's eyes twinkled.

"Catch Koyala," he replied.

The captain's meaning sank into Muller's mind slowly. But as comprehension began to dawn upon him, his face darkened. The veins showed purple under the ruddy skin.

"You are too clever this morning, *kapitein*," he snarled. "Let me remind you that this is your duty. The *controlleur* sits as judge, he does not hunt the accused."

Van Slyck laughed.

"And let me remind you, *mynheer*, that I haven't received the governor's orders as yet, although they reached you more than a week ago." Ironically he added: "You must not let your friendship with Koyala blind you to your public duties, *mynheer*."

Muller's face became darker still. He had not told any one, and the fact that the orders seemed to be public property both alarmed and angered him.

"How did you hear of it?" he demanded.

"Not from you, *mynheer*," Van Slyck mocked. "I really do not remember who told me." (As a matter of fact it was Wang Fu, the Chinese merchant.)

Muller reflected that officers from the gun-boat which carried Van Schouten's mandate might have told more than they should have at the stockade. But Koyala had received his warning a full week before, so she must be safely hidden in the jungle by now, he reasoned. Pulling himself together, he replied urbanely:

"Well, *kapitein*, it is true that I have rather neglected that matter. I intended to speak to you to-day. His excellency orders Koyala Bintang Burung's arrest."

"The argus pheasant," Van Slyck observed, "is rarely shot. It must be trapped."

"*Nu, kapitein*, that is a chance for you to distinguish yourself," Muller replied heartily, confident that Van Slyck could never land Koyala.

Van Slyck flecked the ash from his cigar and looked at the glowing coal thoughtfully.

"It seems to me that you might be of material assistance, *mynheer*," he observed.

"In what way?"

"I have noticed that the witch-woman is not—er—" He glanced at Muller quizzically, wondering how far he might venture to go—"not altogether indifferent to you."

Muller drew a deep breath. His ruddy face became a grayish purple. His clenched hands gripped each other until the bones crunched and the veins stood in ridges. Drops of perspiration gathered on his forehead, he wiped them away mechanically.

"*Kapitein!*" he gasped.

Van Slyck looked at him incredulously, for he had not dreamed Muller's feelings ran so deeply.

"You think—she—sometimes thinks of me?"

Van Slyck's nimble wits were calculating the value to him of this new weakness of the *controlleur*. He foresaw infinite possibilities, Muller in love would be clay in his hands.

"I am positive, *mynheer*," he assured with the utmost gravity.

"*Kapitein*, do not make a mistake," Muller entreated. His voice trembled and broke. "Are you absolutely sure?"

Van Slyck restrained a guffaw with difficulty. It was so ridiculous—this mountain of flesh, this sweaty, panting porpoise in his unwashed linen in love with the slender, graceful Koyala. He choked and coughed discreetly.

"I am certain, *mynheer*," he assured.

"Tell me, *kapitein*, what makes you think so?" Muller begged.

Van Slyck forced himself to calmness and a judicial attitude.

"You know I have seen something of women, *mynheer*," he replied gravely. "Both women here and in the best houses in Amsterdam, Paris, and London. Believe me, they are all the same—a fine figure of a man attracts them."

He ran his eye over Muller's form in assumed admiration.

"You have a figure any woman might admire, *mynheer*. I have seen Koyala's eyes rest on you, and I know what she was thinking. You have but to speak and she is yours."

"Say you so, *kapitein*!" Muller cried ecstatically.

"Absolutely," Van Slyck assured. His eyes narrowed. The devilish humor incarnate in him could not resist the temptation to harrow this tortured soul. Watching Muller closely, he inquired:

"Then I can expect you to spread the net, *mynheer*?"

The light died in Muller's eyes. A slow, volcanic fury succeeded it. He breathed deeply and exhaled the breath in an explosive gasp. His hands clenched and the veins in his forehead became almost black. Van Slyck and he leaped to their feet simultaneously.

"Kapitein Van Slyck," he cried hoarsely, "you are a scoundrel! You would sell your own mother. Get out of my sight, or God help you, I will break you in two."

The door of the *controlleur's* dwelling opened. Muller leaped back, and Van Slyck's hand leaped to his holster.

"I am here, Kapitein Van Slyck," a clear, silvery voice announced coolly. Koyala stood in the doorway.

CHAPTER VIII

KOYALA'S WARNING

For a moment no one spoke. Koyala, poised lightly on her feet, her slender, shapely young figure held rigidly and her chin uptilted, gazed steadily at Van Slyck. Her black eyes blazed a scornful defiance. Before her contempt even the proud Amsterdammer's arrogance succumbed. He reddened shamefacedly under his tan.

"I am here, Kapitein Van Slyck," Koyala repeated clearly. She stepped toward him and reached out a slender, shapely arm, bare to the shoulder. "Here is my arm, where are your manacles, *kapitein*?"

"Koyala!" Muller gasped huskily. His big body was trembling with such violence that the veranda shook.

"This is my affair, *mynheer*," Koyala declared coldly, without removing her eyes from Van Slyck. She placed herself directly in front of the captain and crossed her wrists.

"If you have no irons, use a cord, *kapitein*," she taunted. "But bind fast. The Argus Pheasant is not easily held captive."

Van Slyck thrust her roughly aside.

"Let's have done with this foolishness," he exclaimed bruskly.

"What folly, *mynheer kapitein*?" Koyala demanded frigidly.

"You had no business eavesdropping. If you heard something unpleasant you have only yourself to blame."

Koyala's eyes sparkled with anger.

"Eavesdropping, *kapitein*? I came here with a message of great importance to *mynheer* the *controlleur*. Even the birds cock their ears to listen when they hear the hunter approach, *kapitein*."

Turning her back with scornful indifference on Van Slyck, she crossed over to

Muller and placed both her hands on his shoulder. Another fit of trembling seized the acting resident and his eyes swam.

"You will forgive me, will you not, *mynheer*, for taking such liberties in your house?"

"Of—of course," Muller stammered.

"I heard a little of what was said," Koyala said; "enough to show me that I have a good friend here, a friend on whom I can always rely."

Van Slyck caught the emphasis on the word "friend" and smiled sardonically.

"Well, *Sister* Koyala," he remarked mockingly, "if you and *Brother* Muller will be seated we will hear your important message."

Muller plumped heavily into a chair. Things had been going too rapidly for him, his heavy wits were badly addled, and he needed time to compose himself and get a fresh grip on the situation. There was only one other chair on the veranda. Perceiving this, Van Slyck sprang forward and placed it for Koyala, smiling satirically as he did so. Koyala frowned with annoyance, hesitated a moment, then accepted it. Van Slyck swung a leg over the veranda rail.

"Your message, my dear Koyala," he prompted. He used the term of endearment lingeringly, with a quick side glance at Muller, but the *controlleur* was oblivious to both.

"The message is for Mynheer Muller," Koyala announced icily.

"Ah? So?" Van Slyck swung the leg free and rose. "Then I am not needed. I bid the dear bother and sister adieux."

He made an elaborate French bow and started to leave. The embarrassed Muller made a hasty protest.

"Ho, *kapitein*!" he cried, "do not leave us. *Donder en bliksem!* the message may be for us both. Who is it from, Koyala?"

Van Slyck was divided between two desires. He saw that Muller was in a panic at the thought of being left alone with Koyala, and for that reason was keenly tempted to get out of sight as quickly as possible. On the other hand he was curious to hear her communication, aware that only a matter of unusual import could have called her from the bush. Undecided, he lingered on the steps.

"It was from Ah Sing," Koyala announced.

Van Slyck's indecision vanished. He stepped briskly back on the porch.

"From Ah Sing?" he exclaimed. "Mynheer Muller and I were just discussing his affairs. Does it concern the new resident we are to have?"

"It does," Koyala acknowledged.

"Who is it?" Muller and the captain cried in the same breath.

Koyala glanced vindictively at Van Slyck.

"You are sure that you will not sell me to him, *mynheer kapitein*?"

Van Slyck scowled. "Tell us about the resident," he directed curtly.

Koyala's eyes sparkled maliciously.

"The new resident, *mynheer kapitein*, seems to have a higher opinion of me than you have. You see, he has already persuaded the governor to withdraw the offer he made for my person."

Van Slyck bit his lip, but ignored the thrust.

"Then he's one of us?" he demanded bruskly.

"On the contrary, he is a most dangerous enemy," Koyala contradicted.

"*Lieve hemel*, don't keep us waiting," Muller cried impatiently. "Who is it, Koyala?"

"A sailor, *mynheer*," Koyala announced.

"A sailor?" Van Slyck exclaimed incredulously. "Who?"

"Mynheer Peter Gross, of Batavia."

Van Slyck and Muller stared at each other blankly, each vainly trying to recall ever having heard the name before.

"Pieter Gross, Pieter Gross, he must be a newcomer," Van Slyck remarked. "I have not heard of him before, have you, *mynheer*?"

"There is no one by that name in the colonial service," Muller declared, shaking

his head. "You say he is of Batavia, Koyala?"

"Of Batavia, *mynheer*, but by birth and upbringing, and everything else, a Yankee."

"A Yankee?" her hearers chorused incredulously.

"Yes, a Yankee. Mate on a trading vessel, or so he was a year ago. He has been in the Indies the past seven years."

Van Slyck broke into a roar of laughter.

"Now, by the beard of Nassau, what joke is Chanticleer playing us now?" he cried. "He must be anxious to get that Yankee out of the way."

Neither Koyala nor Muller joined in his mirth. Muller frowned thoughtfully. There was the look in his eyes of one who is striving to recollect some almost forgotten name or incident.

"Pieter Gross, Pieter Gross," he repeated thoughtfully. "Where have I heard that name before?"

"Do you remember what happened to Gogolu of Lombock the time he captured Lieutenant de Koren and his commando?" Koyala asked. "How an American sailor and ten of his crew surprised Gogolu's band, killed a great many of them, and took their prisoners away from them? That was Pieter Gross."

"*Donder en bliksem.* I knew I had reason to remember that name," Muller cried in alarm. "We have no Mynheer de Jonge to deal with this time, *kapitein*. This Yankee is a fighter."

"Good!" Van Slyck exclaimed with satisfaction. "We will give him his bellyful. There will be plenty for him to do in the bush, eh, *mynheer*? And if he gets too troublesome there are always ways of getting rid of him." He raised his eyebrows significantly.

"This Yankee is no fool," Muller rejoined anxiously. "I heard about that Lombock affair—it was a master coup. We have a bad man to deal with, *kapitein*."

Van Slyck smiled cynically.

"Humph, *mynheer*, you make me tired. From the way you talk one would think

these Yankees can fight as well as they can cheat the brown-skins. We will fill him up with Hollands, we will swell his foolish head with praise till it is ready to burst, and then we will engineer an uprising in the hill district. Koyala can manage that for us. When Mynheer, the Yankee, hears of it he will be that thirsty for glory there will be no holding him. We will start him off with our blessings, and then we will continue our business in peace. What do you think of the plan, my dear Koyala?"

"Evidently you don't know Mynheer Gross," Koyala retorted coldly.

"Do you?" Van Slyck asked, quick as a flash.

"I have seen him," Koyala acknowledged. "Once. It was at the mouth of the Abbas River." She described the incident.

"He is no fool," she concluded. "He is a strong man, and an able man, one you will have to look out for."

"And a devilish handsome young man, too, I'll wager," Van Slyck observed maliciously with a sidelong glance at Muller. The *controlleur's* ruddy face darkened with a quick spasm of jealousy, at which the captain chuckled.

"Yes, a remarkably handsome man," Koyala replied coolly. "We need handsome men in Bulungan, don't we, captain? Handsome white men?"

Van Slyck looked at her quickly. He felt a certain significance in her question that eluded him. It was not the first time she had indulged in such remarks, quite trivial on their face, but invested with a mysterious something the way she said them. He knew her tragic history and was sharp enough to guess that her unholy alliance with Ah Sing grew out of a savage desire to revenge herself on a government which had permitted her to be brought up a white woman and a victim of appetites and desires she could never satisfy. What he did not know, did not even dream, was the depth of her hate against the whole white race and her fixed purpose to sweep the last white man out of Bulungan.

"We do have a dearth of society here in Bulungan," he conceded. "Do you find it so, too?"

The question was a direct stab, for not a white woman in the residency would open her doors to Koyala. The Dyak blood leaped to her face; for a moment it seemed that she would spring at him, then she controlled herself with a powerful effort and replied in a voice studiedly reserved:

"I do, *mynheer kapitein*, but one must expect to have a limited circle when there are so few that can be trusted."

At this juncture Muller's jealous fury overcame all bounds. Jealousy accomplished what all Van Slyck's scorn and threats could not do, it made him eager to put the newcomer out of the way.

"What are we going to do?" he thundered. "Sit here like turtles on a mud-bank while this Yankee lords it over us and ruins our business? *Donder en bliksem*, I won't, whatever the rest of you may do. *Kapitein*, get your wits to work; what is the best way to get rid of this Yankee?"

Van Slyck looked at him in surprise. Then his quick wit instantly guessed the reason for the outburst.

"Well, *mynheer*," he replied, shrugging his shoulders indifferently, "it seems to me that this is a matter you are more interested in than I. Mynheer Gross does not come to displace me."

"You are ready enough to scheme murders if there is a *gulden* in it for you, but you have no counsel for a friend, eh?" Muller snarled. "Let me remind you, *kapitein*, that you are involved just as heavily as I."

Van Slyck laughed in cynical good humor.

"Let it never be said that a Van Slyck is so base as that, *mynheer*. Supposing we put our heads together. In the first place, let us give Koyala a chance to tell what she knows. Where did you get the news, Koyala?"

"That makes no difference, *mynheer kapitein*," Koyala rejoined coolly. "I have my own avenues of information."

Van Slyck frowned with annoyance.

"When does he come here?" he inquired.

"We may expect him any time," Koyala stated. "He is to come when the rainy season closes, and that will be in a few days."

"*Donder en bliksem*, does Ah Sing know this?" Muller asked anxiously.

Van Slyck's lips curled in cynical amusement at the inanity of the question.

"He knows," Koyala declared.

"Of course he knows," Van Slyck added sarcastically. "The question is, what is he going to do?"

"I do not know," Koyala replied. "He can tell you that himself when he comes here."

"He's coming here?" Van Slyck asked quickly.

"Yes."

"When?"

"I am not in Ah Sing's councils," Koyala declared coldly.

"The deuce you're not," Van Slyck retorted irritably. "You seem to know a lot of things we hadn't heard of. What does Ah Sing expect us to do? Pander to this Yankee deck-scrubber until he comes?"

"We will do what we think best," Muller observed grimly.

Koyala looked at him steadily until his glance fell.

"You will both leave him alone and attend to your own affairs," she announced. "The new resident will be taken care of by Ah Sing—and by me."

CHAPTER IX

THE LONG ARM OF AH SING

Two weeks after receiving his appointment as resident of Bulungan, Peter Gross stood on a wharf along the Batavia water-front and looked wistfully out to sea. It was early evening and quite dark, for the moon had not risen and the eastern sky from the zenith down was obscured by fitful patches of cloud, gray-winged messengers of rain. In the west, Venus glowed with a warm, seductive light, like a lamp in a Spanish garden. A brisk and vigorous breeze roughed the waters of the bay that raced shoreward in long rollers to escape its impetuous wooing.

Peter Gross breathed the salt air deeply and stared steadfastly into the west, for he was sick at heart. Not until now did he realize what giving up the sea meant to him. The sea!—it had been a second mother to him, receiving him into its open arms when he ran away from the drudgery of the farm to satisfy the wanderlust that ached and ached in his boyish heart. Ay, it had mothered him, cradling him at night on its fond bosom while it sang a wild and eerie refrain among sail and cordage, buffeting him in its ill-humor, feeding him, and even clothing him. His first yellow oilskin, he remembered poignantly, had been salvaged from a wreck.

Now he was leaving that mother. He was leaving the life he had lived for ten years. He was denying the dreams and ambitions of his youth. He was casting aside the dream of some day standing on the deck of his own ship with a score of smart sailors to jump at his command. A feeling akin to the home-sickness he had suffered when, a lad of fifteen, he lived through his first storm at sea, in the hold of a cattle-ship, came over him now. Almost he regretted his decision.

Since bidding good-bye to Captain Threthaway two weeks before, he had picked twenty-four of the twenty-five men he intended to take with him for the pacification of Bulungan. The twenty-fifth he expected to sign that night at the home of his quondam skipper, Captain Roderick Rouse, better known as Roaring Rory. Rouse had been a trader in the south seas for many years and was now skipper of a smart little cottage in Ryswyk, the European residence section of Batavia. Peter Gross's presence at the water-front was explained by the fact that he had an hour to spare and naturally drifted to Tanjong Priok, the shipping center.

The selection of the company had not been an easy task. Peter Gross had not expected that it would be. He found the type of men he wanted even scarcer than he anticipated. For the past two weeks beachcombers and loafers along the wharves, and tourists, traders, and gentlemen adventurers at the hotels had looked curiously at the big, well-dressed sailor who always seemed to have plenty of time and money to spend, and was always ready to gossip. Some of them tried to draw him out. To these he talked vaguely about seeing a little of Java before he went sailoring again. Opinion became general that for a sailor Peter Gross was remarkably close-mouthed.

While he was to all appearances idly dawdling about, Peter Gross was in reality getting information concerning hardy young men of adventuresome spirit who might be persuaded to undertake an expedition that meant risk of life and who could be relied upon. Each man was carefully sounded before he was signed, and when signed, was told to keep his mouth shut.

But the major problem, to find a capable leader of such a body of men, was still unsolved. Peter Gross realized that his duties as resident precluded him from taking personal charge. He also recognized his limitations. He was a sailor; a soldier was needed to whip the company in shape, a bush-fighter who knew how to dispose those under him when Dyak arrows and Chinese bullets began to fly overhead in the jungle.

Two weeks of diligent search had failed to unearth any one with the necessary qualifications. Peter Gross was beginning to despair when he thought of his former skipper, Captain Rouse. Looking him up, he explained his predicament.

"By the great Polar B'ar," Roaring Rory bellowed when Peter Gross had finished his recital. "How the dickens do you expect to clean out that hell-hole with twenty-five men? Man, there's a hundred thousand Dyaks alone, let alone those rat-faced Chinks that come snoopin' down like buzzards smellin' carrion, and the cut-throat Bugis, and the bad men the English chased out of Sarawak, and the Sulu pirates, and Lord knows what all. It's suicide."

"I'm not going to Bulungan to make war," Peter Gross explained mildly.

Roaring Rory spat a huge cud of tobacco into a cuspidor six feet away, the better to express his astonishment.

"Then what in blazes are you goin' there for?" he roared.

Peter Gross permitted himself one of his rare smiles. There was a positive twinkle in his eyes as he replied:

"To convince them I am their best friend."

Roaring Rory's eyes opened wide.

"Convince 'em—what?" he gasped.

"That I am their friend."

The old sea captain stared at his ex-mate.

"You're jokin'," he declared.

"I was never more serious in my life," Peter Gross assured gravely.

"Then you're a damn' fool," Roaring Rory asserted. "Yes, sir, a damn' fool. I didn't think it of ye, Peter."

"It will take time, but I believe I see my way," Peter Gross replied quietly. He explained his plan briefly, and as he described how he expected to win the confidence and support of the hillmen, Roaring Rory became calmer.

"Mebbe you can do it, Peter, mebbe you can do it," he conceded dubiously. "But that devil of an Ah Sing has a long arm, and by the bye, I'd keep indoors after sundown if I were you."

"But this isn't getting me the man I need," Peter Gross pointed out. "Can you recommend any one, captain?"

Roaring Rory squared back in his chair.

"I hain't got the latitude and longitude of this-here proposition of yours figured just yet," he replied, producing a plug of tobacco and biting off a generous portion before passing it hospitably to his visitor. "Just what kind of a man do you want?"

Peter Gross drew his chair a few inches nearer the captain's.

"What I want," he said, "is a man that I can trust—no matter what happens. He doesn't need to know seamanship, but he's got to be absolutely square, a man the sight of gold or women won't turn. He has to be a soldier, an ex-army officer, and a bush-fighter, a man who has seen service in the jungle. A man from the

Philippines would just fill the bill. He has to be the sort of a man his men will swear by. And he has to have a clean record."

Roaring Rory grunted. "Ye don't want nothin', do ye? I'd recommend the Angel Gabriel."

"There is such a man," Peter Gross insisted. "There always is. You've got to help me find him, captain."

Rouse scratched his head profoundly and squinted hard. By and bye a big grin overspread his features.

"I've got a nevvy," he announced, "who'd be crazy to be with ye. He's only seventeen, but big for his age. He's out on my plantation now. Hold on," he roared as Peter Gross attempted to interrupt. "I'm comin' to number twenty-five. This nevvy has a particular friend that's with him now out to the plantation. 'Cordin' to his log, this chap's the very man ye're lookin' for. Was a captain o' volunteer infantry and saw service in the Philippines. When his time run out he went to Shanghai for a rubber-goods house, and learned all there is to know about Chinks. He's the best rifle shot in Java. An' he can handle men. He ain't much on the brag order, but he sure is all there."

"That is the sort of a man I have been looking for," Peter Gross observed with satisfaction.

"He's worth lookin' up at any rate," Captain Rouse declared. "If you care to see him and my nevvy, you're in luck. They're comin' back to-night. They had a little business here, so they run down together and will bunk with me. I expect them here at nine o'clock, and if ye're on deck I'll interduce you. What d'ye say?"

"I knew you wouldn't fail me, captain," Peter Gross replied warmly. "I'll be here."

The shrill whistle of a coaster interrupted Peter Gross's melancholy reflections. He recollected with a start that it must be near the time he had promised to be at Captain Rouse's cottage. Leaving the wharves, he ambled along the main traveled highway toward the business district until overtaken by a belated victoria whose driver he hailed.

The cool of evening was descending from the hills as the vehicle turned into the street on which Captain Rouse lived. It was a wide, tree-lined lane, with oil lamps every six or seven hundred feet whose yellow rays struggled ineffectually

to banish the somber gloom shed by the huge masses of foliage that shut out the heavens. Feeling cramped from his long ride and a trifle chill, Peter Gross suddenly decided to walk the remainder of the distance, halted his driver, paid the fare, and dismissed him. Whistling cheerily, a rollicking chanty of the sea to which his feet kept time, he walked briskly along.

Cutting a bar of song in the middle, he stopped suddenly to listen. Somewhere in the darkness behind him someone had stumbled into an acacia hedge and had uttered a stifled exclamation of pain. There was no other sound, except the soughing of the breeze through the tree-tops.

"A drunken coolie," he observed to himself. He stepped briskly along and resumed his whistling. The song came to an abrupt close as his keen ears caught a faint shuffling not far behind, a shuffling like the scraping of a soft-soled shoe against the plank walk. He turned swiftly, ears pricked, and looked steadily in the direction that the sound came from, but the somber shadows defied his searching glance.

"Only coolies," he murmured, but an uneasy feeling came upon him and he quickened his pace. His right hand involuntarily slipped to his coat-pocket for the pistol he customarily carried. It was not there. A moment's thought and he recollected he had left it in his room.

As he reached the next street-lamp he hesitated. Ahead of him was a long area of unlighted thoroughfare. Evidently the lamp-lighter had neglected his duties. Or, Peter Gross reflected, some malicious hand might have extinguished the lights. It was on this very portion of the lane that Captain Rouse's cottage stood, only a few hundred yards farther.

He listened sharply a moment. Back in the shadows off from the lane a piano tinkled, the langorous Dream Waltz from the Tales of Hoffman. A lighted victoria clattered toward him, then turned into a brick-paved driveway. Else not a sound. The very silence was ominous.

Walking slowly, to accustom his eyes to the gloom, Peter Gross left the friendly circle of light. As the shadows began to envelop him he heard the sound of running feet on turf. Some one inside the hedge was trying to overhaul him. He broke into a dog-trot.

A low whistle cut the silence. Leaping forward, he broke into a sprint. Rouse's cottage was only a hundred yards ahead—a dash and he would be there.

A whistle from in front. A like sound from the other side of the lane. The stealthy tap-tapping of feet, sandaled feet, from every direction.

For a moment Peter Gross experienced the sensation of a hunted creature driven to bay. It was only for a moment, however, and then he acquainted himself with his surroundings in a quick, comprehensive glance. On one side of him was the hedge, on the other a line of tall kenari-trees.

Vaulting the hedge, he ran silently and swiftly in its shadow, hugging the ground like a fox in the brush. Suddenly and without warning he crashed full-tilt into a man coming from the opposite direction, caught him low, just beneath the ribs. The man crashed back into the hedge with an explosive gasp.

Ahead were white pickets, the friendly white pickets that enclosed Captain Rouse's grounds. He dashed toward them, but he was too late. Out of a mass of shrubbery a short, squat figure leaped at him. There was the flash of a knife. Peter Gross had no chance to grapple with his assailant. He dropped like a log, an old sailor's trick, and the short, squat figure fell over him. He had an instant glimpse of a yellow face, fiendish in its malignancy, of a flying queue, of fingers that groped futilely, then he rose.

At the same instant a cat-like something sprang on him from behind, twisted its legs around his body, and fastened its talons into his throat. The impact staggered him, but as he found his footing he tore the claw-like fingers loose and shook the creature off. Simultanelusly two shadows in front of him materialized into Chinamen with gleaming knives. As they leaped at him a red-hot iron seared his right forearm and a bolt of lightning numbed his left shoulder.

A sound like a hoarse, dry cackle came from Peter Gross's throat. His long arms shot out and each of his huge hands caught one of his assailants by the throat. Bringing their heads together with a sound like breaking egg-shells, he tossed them aside.

Before he could turn to flee a dozen shadowy forms semi-circled about him. The starlight dimly revealed gaunt, yellow faces and glaring eyes, the eyes of a wolf-pack. The circle began to narrow. Knives glittered. But none of the crouching forms dared venture within reach of the gorilla arms.

Then the lion arose in Peter Gross. Beside him was an ornamental iron flower-pot. Stooping quickly, he seized it and lifted it high above his head. They shrank from him, those crouching forms, with shrill pipings of alarm, but it was too late.

He hurled it at the foremost. It caught two of them and bowled them over like ninepins. Then he leaped at the others. His mighty right caught one under the chin and laid him flat. His left dove into the pit of another's stomach. The unfortunate Chinaman collapsed like a sack of grain.

They ringed him round. A sharp, burning sensation swept across his back—it was the slash of a knife. A blade sank into the fleshy part of his throat, and he tore it impatiently away. He struck out savagely into the densely packed mass of humanity and a primitive cave-man surge of joy thrilled him at the impact of his fists against human flesh and bone.

But the fight was too unequal. Blood started from a dozen cuts; it seemed to him he was afire within and without. His blows began to lack power and a film came over his eyes, but he struck out the more savagely, furious at his own weakness. The darkness thickened. The figures before him, beside him, behind him, became more confused. Two and three heads bobbed where he thought there was only one. His blows went wild. The jackals were pulling the lion down.

As he pulled himself together for a last desperate effort to plough through to the security of Rouse's home, the sharp crack of a revolver sounded in his ear. At the same instant the lawn leaped into a blinding light, a light in which the gory figures of his assailants stood out in dazed and uncertain relief. The acrid fumes of gunpowder filled his nostrils.

Darting toward the hedges like rats scurrying to their holes, the Chinamen sought cover. Peter Gross hazily saw two men, white men, each of them carrying a flash-light and a pistol, vault the pickets. A third followed, swinging a lantern and bellowing for the "*wacht*" (police). It was Roaring Rory.

"Are you hurt?" the foremost asked as he approached.

"Not bad, I guess," Peter Gross replied thickly. He lifted his hand to his forehead in a dazed, uncertain way and looked stupidly at the blood that gushed over it. A cleft seemed to open at his feet. He felt himself sinking—down, down, down to the very foundations of the world. Dimly he heard the cry:

"Quick, Paddy, lend a hand."

Then came oblivion.

CHAPTER X

Captain Carver Signs

When Peter Gross recovered consciousness fifteen minutes later he found himself in familiar quarters. He was lying on a cot in Captain Rouse's den, commonly designated by that gentleman as "the cabin." Captain Rouse's face, solemn as an owl's, was leaning over him. As he blinked the captain's lips expanded into a grin.

"Wot did I tell ye, 'e's all right!" the captain roared delightedly. "Demmit, ye can't kill a Sunda schooner bucko mate with a little bloodlettin'. Ah Sing pretty near got ye, eh, Peter?"

The last was to Peter Gross, who was sitting up and taking inventory of his various bandages, also of his hosts. There were two strangers in the room. One was a short, stocky young man with a pugnacious Irish nose, freckly face, and hair red as a burnished copper boiler. His eyes were remarkably like the jovial navigator's, Peter Gross observed. The other was a dark, well-dressed man of about forty, with a military bearing and reserved air. He bore the stamp of gentility.

"Captain Carver," Roaring Rory announced. "My old mate, Peter Gross, the best man as ever served under me."

The elder man stepped forward and clasped Peter Gross's hand. The latter tried to rise, but Carver restrained him.

"You had better rest a few moments, Mr. Gross," he said. There was a quiet air of authority in his voice that instantly attracted the resident, who gave him a keen glance.

"My nevvy, Paddy, Peter, the doggonest young scamp an old sea-horse ever tried to raise," Rouse bellowed. "I wish I could have him for'ard with a crew like we used to have on the old *Gloucester Maid*." He guffawed boisterously while the younger of the two strangers, his face aglow with a magnetic smile, sprang forward and caught Peter Gross's hand in a quick, dynamic grip.

"Them's the lads ye've got to thank for bein' here," Roaring Rory announced, with evident pride. "If they hadn't heard the fracas and butted in, the Chinks would have got ye sure."

"I rather fancied it was you whom I have to thank for being here," Peter Gross acknowledged warmly. "You were certainly just in time."

"Captain Rouse is too modest," Captain Carver said. "It was he who heard the disturbance and jumped to the conclusion you might be—in difficulty."

The old navigator shook his head sadly. "I warned ye, Peter," he said; "I warned ye against that old devil, Ah Sing. Didn't I tell you to be careful at night? Ye ain't fit to be trusted alone, Peter."

"I think you did," Peter Gross acknowledged with a twinkle. "But didn't you fix our appointment for to-night?"

"Ye should have carried a gun," Roaring Rory reproved. "Leastwise a belayin'-pin. Ye like to use your fists too well, Peter. Fists are no good against knives. I'm a peace-lovin' man, Peter, 'twould be better for ye if ye patterned after me."

Peter Gross smiled, for Roaring Rory's record for getting into scrapes was known the length and breadth of the South Pacific. Looking up, he surprised a merry gleam in Captain Carver's eyes and Paddy striving hard to remain sober.

"I'll remember your advice, captain," Peter Gross assured.

"Humph!" Roaring Rory grunted. "Well, Peter, is your head clear enough to talk business?"

"I think so," Peter Gross replied slowly. "Have you explained the matter I came here to discuss?"

"Summat, summat," Rouse grunted. "I leave the talking to you, Peter."

"Captain Rouse told me you wanted some one to take charge of a company of men for a dangerous enterprise somewhere in the South Pacific," Carver replied. "He said it meant risking life. That might mean anything to piracy. I understand, however, that your enterprise has official sanction."

"My appointment is from the governor-general of the Netherlands East Indies," Peter Gross stated.

"Ah, yes."

"I need a man to drill and lead twenty-five men, all of whom have had some military training. I want a man who knows the Malays and their ways and knows the bush."

"I was in the Philippines for two years as a captain of volunteer infantry," Carver said. "I was in Shanghai for four years and had considerable dealings at that time with the Chinese. I know a little of their language."

"Have you any one dependent on you?"

"I am a bachelor," Captain Carver replied.

"Does twenty-five hundred a year appeal to you?"

"That depends entirely on what services I should be expected to render."

Confident that he had landed his man, and convinced from Captain Rouse's recommendation and his own observations that Carver was the very person he had been seeking, Peter Gross threw reserve aside and frankly stated the object of his expedition and the difficulties before him.

"You see," he concluded, "the game is dangerous, but the stakes are big. I have no doubt but what Governor Van Schouten will deal handsomely with every one who helps restore order in the residency."

Captain Carver was frowning.

"I don't like the idea of playing one native element against another," he declared. "It always breeds trouble. The only people who have ever been successful in pulling it off is the British in India, and they had to pay for it in blood during the Mutiny. The one way to pound the fear of God into the hearts of these benighted browns and blacks is to show them you're master. Once they get the idea the white man can't keep his grip without them, look out for treachery."

"I've thought of that," Peter Gross replied sadly. "But to do as you suggest will take at least two regiments and will cost the lives of several thousand Dyaks. You will have to lay the country bare, and you will sow a seed of hate that is bound to bear fruit. But if I can persuade them to trust me, Bulungan will be pacified. Brooke did it in Sarawak, and I believe I can do it here."

Carver stroked his chin in silence.

"You know the country," he said. "If you have faith and feel you want me, I'll go with you."

"I'll have a lawyer make the contracts at once," Peter Gross replied. "We can sign them to-morrow."

"Can't you take me with you, too, Mr. Gross?" Paddy Rouse asked eagerly.

Peter Gross looked at the lad. The boy's face was eloquent with entreaty.

"How old are you?" he asked.

"Seventeen," came the halting acknowledgment. "But I've done a man's work for a year. Haven't I, avunculus?"

Captain Rouse nodded a reluctant assent. "I hate to miss ye, my boy," he said, "but maybe a year out there would get the deviltry out of ye and make a man of ye. If Peter wants ye, he may have ye."

A flash of inspiration came to Peter Gross as he glanced at the boy's tousled shock of fiery-red hair.

"I'll take you on a private's pay," he said. "A thousand a year. Is that satisfactory?"

"I'm signed," Paddy whooped. "Hooray!"

When Peter Gross and his company left Tanjong Priok a fortnight later Captain Rouse bade them a wistful good-bye at the wharf.

"Take care of the lad; he's all I got," he said huskily to the resident. "If it wasn't for the damned plantation I'd go with ye, too."

CHAPTER XI

MYNHEER MULLER'S DREAM

The Dutch gun-boat *Prins Lodewyk*, a terror to evil-doers in the Java and Celebes seas, steamed smartly up Bulungan Bay and swung into anchorage a quarter of a mile below the assemblage of junks and Malay proas clustered at the mouth of Bulungan River. She carried a new flag below her ensign, the resident's flag. As she swung around, her guns barked a double salute, first to the flag and then to the resident. Peter Gross and his company were come to Bulungan.

The pert brass cannon of the stockade answered gun for gun. It was the yapping of terrier against mastiff, for the artillery of the fortress was of small caliber and an ancient pattern. Its chief service was to intimidate the natives of the town who had once been bombarded during an unfortunate rebellion and had never quite forgotten the sensation of being under shell-fire.

Peter Gross leaned over the rail of the vessel and looked fixedly shoreward. His strong, firm chin was grimly set. There were lines in his face that had not been there a few weeks before when he was tendered and accepted his appointment as resident. Responsibility was sitting heavily upon his shoulders, for he now realized the magnitude of the task he had so lightly assumed.

Captain Carver joined him. "All's well, so far, Mr. Gross," he observed.

Peter Gross let the remark stand without comment for a moment. "Ay, all's well so far," he assented heavily.

There was another pause.

"Are we going ashore this afternoon?" Carver inquired.

"That is my intention."

"Then you'll want the boys to get their traps on deck. At what hour will you want them?"

"I think I shall go alone," Peter Gross replied quietly.

Carver looked up quickly. "Not alone, Mr. Gross," he expostulated.

Peter Gross looked sternly shoreward at the open water-front of Bulungan town, where dugouts, sampans, and crude bark canoes were frantically shooting about to every point of the compass in helter-skelter confusion.

"I think it would be best," he said.

Carver shook his head. "I don't think I'd do it, Mr. Gross," he advised gravely. "I don't think you ought to take the chance."

"To convince an enemy you are not afraid is often half the fight," Peter Gross observed.

"A good rule, but it doesn't apply to a pack of assassins," Carver replied. "And that's what we seem to be up against. You can't take too big precautions against whelps that stab in the dark."

Peter Gross attempted no contradiction. The ever increasing concourse of scantily clad natives along the shore held his attention. Carver scanned his face anxiously.

"They pretty nearly got you at Batavia, Mr. Gross," he reminded, anxiety overcoming his natural disinclination to give a superior unsolicited advice.

"You may be right," Peter Gross conceded mildly.

Carver pushed his advantage. "If Ah Sing's tong men will take a chance at murdering you in Batavia under the nose of the governor, they won't balk at putting you out of the way in Bulungan, a thousand miles from nowhere. There's a hundred ways they can get rid of a man and make it look like an accident."

"We must expect to take some risks."

Perceiving the uselessness of argument, Carver made a final plea. "At least let me go with you," he begged.

Peter Gross sighed and straightened to his full six feet two. "Thank you, captain," he said, "but I must go alone. I want to teach Bulungan one thing to-day—that Peter Gross is not afraid."

While Captain Carver was vainly trying to dissuade Peter Gross from going ashore, Kapitein Van Slyck hastened from his quarters at the fort to the

controlleur's house. Muller was an uncertain quantity in a crisis, the captain was aware; it was vital that they act in perfect accord. He found his associate pacing agitatedly in the shade of a screen of nipa palms between whose broad leaves he could watch the trim white hull and spotless decks of the gun-boat.

Muller was smoking furiously. At the crunch of Van Slyck's foot on the coraled walk he turned quickly, with a nervous start, and his face blanched.

"Oh, *kapitein*," he exclaimed with relief, "is it you?"

"Who else would it be?" Van Slyck growled, perceiving at once that Muller had worked himself into a frenzy of apprehension.

"I don't know. I thought, perhaps, Cho Seng—"

"You look as though you'd seen a ghost. What's there about Cho Seng to be afraid of?"

"—that Cho Seng had come to tell me Mynheer Gross was here," Muller faltered.

Van Slyck looked at him keenly, through narrowed lids.

"Hum!" he grunted with emphasis. "So it is Mynheer Gross already with you, eh, Muller?"

There was a significant emphasis on the "*mynheer*."

Muller flushed. "Don't get the notion I'm going to sweet-mouth to him simply because he is resident, *kapitein*," he retorted, recovering his dignity. "You know me well enough—my foot is in this as deeply as yours."

"Yes, and deeper," Van Slyck replied significantly.

The remark escaped Muller. He was thrusting aside the screen of nipa leaves to peer toward the vessel.

"No," he exclaimed with a sigh of relief, "he has not left the ship yet. There are two civilians at the forward rail—come, *kapitein*, do you think one of them is he?"

He opened the screen wider for Van Slyck. The captain stepped forward with an expression of bored indifference and peered through the aperture.

"H-m!" he muttered. "I wouldn't be surprised if the big fellow is Gross. They say he has the inches."

"I hope to heaven he stays aboard to-day," Muller prayed fervently.

"He can come ashore whenever he wants to, for all I care," Van Slyck remarked.

Muller straightened and let the leaves fall back.

"*Lieve hemel, neen, kapitein*," he expostulated. "What would I do if he should question me. My reports are undone, there are a dozen cases to be tried, I have neglected to settle matters with some of the chiefs, and my accounts are in a muddle. I don't see how I am ever going to straighten things out—then there are those other things—what will he say?"

He ran his hands through his hair in nervous anxiety. Van Slyck contemplated his agitation with a darkening frown. "Is the fool going to pieces?" was the captain's harrowing thought. He clapped a hand on Muller's shoulder with an assumption of bluff heartiness.

"'Sufficient unto the day—' You know the proverb, *mynheer*," he said cheerfully. "There's nothing to worry about—we won't give him a chance at you for two weeks. Kapitein Enckel of the *Prins* will probably bring him ashore to-day. We'll receive him here; I'll bring my lieutenants over, and Cho Seng can make us a big dinner.

"To-night there will be schnapps and reminiscences, to-morrow morning a visit of inspection to the fort, to-morrow afternoon a *bitchara* with the Rajah Wobanguli, and the day after a visit to Bulungan town. At night visits to Wang Fu's house and Marinus Blauwpot's, with cards and Hollands. I'll take care of him for you, and you can get your books in shape. Go to Barang, if you want to, the day we visit Rotterdam—leave word with Cho Seng you were called away to settle an important case. Leave everything to me, and when you get back we'll have *mynheer* so drunk he won't know a tax statement from an Edammer cheese."

Muller's face failed to brighten at the hopeful program mapped out by his associate. If anything, his agitation increased.

"But he might ask questions to-day, *kapitein*—questions I cannot answer."

Van Slyck's lips curled. His thought was: "Good God, what am I going to do

with this lump of jelly-fish?" But he replied encouragingly:

"No danger of that at all, *mynheer*. There are certain formalities that must be gone through first before a new resident takes hold. It would not be good form to kick his predecessor out of office without giving the latter a chance to close his books—even a pig of a Yankee knows that. Accept his credentials if he offers them, but tell him business must wait till the morning. Above all, keep your head, say nothing, and be as damnably civil as though he were old Van Schouten himself. If we can swell his head none of us will have to worry."

"But my accounts, *kapitein*," Muller faltered.

"To the devil with your accounts," Van Slyck exclaimed, losing patience. "Go to Barang, fix them up as best you can."

"I can never get them to balance," Muller cried. "Our dealings—the rattan we shipped—you know." He looked fearfully around.

"There never was a *controlleur* yet that didn't line his own pockets," Van Slyck sneered. "But his books never showed it. You are a book-keeper, *mynheer*, and you know how to juggle figures. Forget these transactions; if you can't, charge the moneys you got to some account. There are no vouchers or receipts in Bulungan. A handy man with figures, like yourself, ought to be able to make a set of accounts that that ferret Sachsen himself could not find a flaw in."

"But that is not the worst," Muller cried despairingly. "There are the taxes, the taxes I should have sent to Batavia, the rice that we sold instead to Ah Sing."

"Good God! Have you grown a conscience?" Van Slyck snarled. "If you have, drown yourself in the bay. Lie, you fool, lie! Tell him the weevils ruined the crop, tell him the floods drowned it, tell him a tornado swept the fields bare, lay it to the hill Dyaks—anything, anything! But keep your nerve, or you'll hang sure."

Muller retreated before the captain's vehemence.

"But the *bruinevels*, *kapitein*?" he faltered. "They may tell him something different."

"Wobanguli won't; he's too wise to say anything," Van Slyck asserted firmly. "None of the others will dare to, either—all we've got to do is to whisper Ah Sing's name to them. But there's little danger of any of them except the Rajah

seeing him until after the *Prins* is gone. Once she's out of the harbor I don't care what they say—no word of it will ever get back to Batavia."

His devilishly handsome smile gleamed sardonically, and he twisted his nicely waxed mustache. Muller's hands shook.

"*Kapitein*," he replied in an odd, strained voice, "I am afraid of this Peter Gross. I had a dream last night, a horrible dream—I am sure it was him I saw. I was in old de Jonge's room in the residency building—you know the room—and the stranger of my dream sat in old de Jonge's chair.

"He asked me questions, questions of how I came here, and what I have done here, and I talked and talked till my mouth was dry as the marsh grass before the rains begin to fall. All the while he listened, and his eyes seemed to bore through me, as though they said: 'Judas, I know what is going on in your heart.'

"At last, when I could say no more, he asked me: '*Mynheer*, how did Mynheer de Jonge die?' Then I fell on the ground before him and told him all—all. At the last, soldiers came to take me away to hang me, but under the very shadow of the gallows a bird swooped down out of the air and carried me away, away into the jungle. Then I awoke."

Van Slyck broke into scornful laughter.

"*Mynheer*, you had enough to worry about before you started dreaming," he said bluntly. "If you're going to fill your head with such foolishness I'll leave you to your own devices."

"But, *kapitein*, it might be a warning," Muller cried desperately.

"Heaven doesn't send ravens to cheat such rogues as you and I from the gallows, *mynheer*," Van Slyck mocked. "We might as well get ready to meet our new resident. I see a boat putting off from the ship."

CHAPTER XII

PETER GROSS'S RECEPTION

When Peter Gross stepped ashore at the foot of the slope on which the fort and government buildings stood, three thousand pairs of eyes, whose owners were securely hidden in the copses and undergrowth for a quarter of a mile in both directions along the shore-line, watched his every movement. With the lightning celerity with which big news travels word had been spread through Bulungan town that the new resident was coming ashore, and every inhabitant possessed of sound legs to bear him had run, crawled, or scrambled to a favorable patch of undergrowth where he could get a first glimpse of the *orang blanda* chief without being observed.

Perfectly aware of this scrutiny, but calmly oblivious to it, Peter Gross stepped out of the boat and directed the sailors who rowed it to return to their ship. As their oars bit the water he faced the path that wound up the hillside and walked along it at a dignified and easy pace. His sharp ears caught the incessant rustle of leaves, a rustle not made by the breeze, and the soft grinding of bits of coral under the pressure of naked feet.

Once he surprised a dusky face in the bush, but his glance roved to the next object in his line of vision in placid unconcern. As he mounted the rise he made for the *controlleur's* home, strolling along as calmly as though he were on a Batavia lane.

"*Duivel noch toe!*" Muller exclaimed as the boat returned to the ship. "He is coming here alone." His voice had an incredulous ring as though he half doubted the evidence of his own senses.

Van Slyck's eyes danced with satisfaction, and his saturnine smile was almost Mephistophelian.

"By Nassau, I was right, after all, *mynheer*," he exclaimed. "He's an ass of a Yankee that Van Schouten is having some sport with in sending him here."

"There may be something behind this, *kapitein*," Muller cautioned apprehensively, but Van Slyck cut him short.

"Behind this, *mynheer*? The fool does not even know how to maintain the dignity due his office. Would he land this way, like a pedler with his pack, if he did? Oh, we are going to have some rare sport—"

Van Slyck's merriment broke loose in a guffaw.

"You-you will not do anything violent, *kapitein*?" Muller asked apprehensively.

"Violent?" Van Slyck exclaimed. "I wouldn't hurt him for a thousand guilders, *mynheer*. He's going to be more fun than even you."

The frank sneer that accompanied the remark made the captain's meaning sufficiently clear to penetrate even so sluggish a mind as the *controlleur's*. He reddened, and an angry retort struggled to his lips, but he checked it before it framed itself into coherent language. He was too dependent on Van Slyck, he realized, to risk offending the latter now, but for the first time in their acquaintanceship his negative dislike of his more brilliant associate deepened to a positive aversion.

"What are we going to do, *kapitein*?" he asked quietly.

"Welcome him, *mynheer*!" Again the sardonic smile. "Treat him to some of your fine cigars and a bottle of your best Hollands. Draw him out, make him empty his belly to us. When we have sucked him dry and drenched him with liquor we will pack him back to the *Prins* to tell Kapitein Enckel what fine fellows we are. To-morrow we'll receive him with all ceremony—I'll instruct him this afternoon how a resident is installed in his new post and how he must conduct himself.

"Enckel will leave here without a suspicion, Mynheer Gross will be ready to trust even his purse to us if we say the word, and we will have everything our own way as before. But s-s-st! Here he comes!" He lifted a restraining hand. "Lord, what a shoulder of beef! Silence, now, and best your manners, *mynheer*. Leave the talking to me."

Peter Gross walked along the kenari-tree shaded lane between the evergreen hedges clipped with characteristic Dutch primness to a perfect plane. Behind him formed a growing column of natives whose curiosity had gotten the better of their diffidence.

The resident's keen eyes instantly ferreted out Van Slyck and Muller in the shadows of the veranda, but he gave no sign of recognition. Mounting the steps of the porch, he stood for a moment in dignified expectancy, his calm, gray eyes

taking the measure of each of its occupants.

An apprehensive shiver ran down Muller's spine as he met Peter Gross's glance —those gray eyes were so like the silent, inscrutable eyes of the stranger in de Jonge's chair whom he saw in his dream. It was Van Slyck who spoke first.

"You were looking for some one, *mynheer*?" he asked.

"For Mynheer Muller, the *controlleur* and acting resident. I think I have found him."

The mildness with which these words were spoken restored the captain's aplomb, momentarily shaken by Peter Gross's calm, disconcerting stare.

"You have a message for us?"

"I have," Peter Gross replied.

"Ah, from Kapitein Enckel, I suppose," Van Slyck remarked urbanely. "Your name is—" He paused significantly.

"It is from his excellency, the Jonkheer Van Schouten," Peter Gross corrected quietly.

Peter Gross's tolerance of this interrogation convinced Van Slyck that he had to do with an inferior intelligence suddenly elevated to an important position and very much at sea in it.

"And your message, I understand, is for Mynheer Muller, the *controlleur*?" the captain inquired loftily with a pert uptilt of his chin.

"For Mynheer Muller, the *controlleur*," Peter Gross acknowledged gravely.

"Ah, yes. This is Mynheer Muller." He indicated the *controlleur* with a flourish. "But you have not yet told us your name."

"I am Peter Gross."

"Ah, yes, Pieter Gross. Pieter Gross." The captain repeated the name with evident relish. "Pieter Gross. Mynheer Pieter Gross."

There was a subtle emphasis on the *mynheer*—a half-doubtful use of the word, as though he questioned Peter Gross's right to a gentleman's designation. It was designed to test the sailor.

Peter Gross's face did not change a muscle. Turning to the *controlleur*, he asked in a voice of unruffled calm: "May I speak to you privately, *mynheer*?"

Muller glanced apprehensively at Van Slyck. The fears inspired by his dreams made him more susceptible to ulterior impressions than the captain, whose naturally more acute sensibilities were blunted by the preconceived conviction that he had an ignorant Yankee to deal with. Van Slyck smiled cynically and observed:

"Am I in the way, Mynheer Gross?" Again the ironic accent to the *mynheer*. He rose to go, but Muller stayed him with the cry:

"*Neen, neen, kapitein.* Whatever comes from the governor concerns you, too. Stay with us, and we will see what his excellency has to say."

None knew the importance of first impressions better than the captain. If the new resident could be thwarted in his purpose of seeing Muller alone that achievement would exercise its influence on all their future relations, Van Slyck perceived.

Assuming an expression of indifference, he sank indolently into an easy chair. When he looked up he found the gray eyes of Peter Gross fixed full upon him.

"Perhaps I should introduce myself further, captain," Peter Gross said. "I am Mynheer Gross, of Batavia, your new resident by virtue of his excellency the Jonkheer Van Schouten's appointment."

Van Slyck's faint, cynical smile deepened a trifle.

"Ah, *mynheer* has been appointed resident," he remarked non-committally.

Peter Gross's face hardened sternly.

"It is not the custom in Batavia, captain, for officers of the garrison to be seated while their superiors stand."

For a moment the astonished captain lost his usual assurance. In that moment he unwittingly scrambled to his feet in response to the commanding look of the gray eyes that stared at him so steadily. The instant his brain cleared he regretted the action, but another lightning thought saved him from the folly of defying the resident by reseating himself in the chair he had vacated. Furious at Peter Gross, furious at himself, he struggled futilely for an effective reply and failed to find it.

In the end he took refuge in a sullen silence.

Peter Gross turned again to Muller.

"Here are my credentials, *mynheer*, and a letter from his excellency, the governor-general," he announced simply.

With the words he placed in Muller's hands two envelopes plentifully decorated with sealing-wax stamped with the great seal of the Netherlands. The *controlleur* took them with trembling fingers. Peter Gross calmly appropriated a chair. As he seated himself he remarked:

"Gentlemen, you may sit."

Van Slyck ignored the permission and strolled to one end of the veranda. He was thinking deeply, and all the while stole covert looks at Peter Gross. Had he been mistaken, after all, in his estimate of the man? Was this apparent guilelessness and simplicity a mask? Were Koyala and Muller right? Or was the resident's sudden assumption of dignity a petty vanity finding vent in the display of newly acquired powers?

He stole another look. That face, it was so frank and ingenuous, so free from cunning and deceit, and so youthful. Its very boyishness persuaded Van Slyck. Vanity was the inspiration for the resident's sudden assertion of the prerogatives of his office, he decided, the petty vanity of a boor eager to demonstrate authority. Confidence restored, he became keenly alert for a chance to humble this froward Yankee.

It was some time before Muller finished reading the documents. He was breathing heavily the while, for he felt that he was reading his own death-warrant. There was no doubting their authenticity, for they were stamped with the twin lions of the house of Orange and the motto, "*Je Maintiendrai*." The signature at the bottom of each was the familiar scrawl of Java's gamecock governor.

Muller stared at them blankly for a long time, as though he half hoped to find some mitigation of the blow that swept his vast administrative powers as acting resident from him to the magistracy of a district. Dropping them on his lap at last with a weary sigh, he remarked:

"Welcome, Mynheer Gross, to Bulungan. I wish I could say more, but I cannot. The most I can say is that I am happy his excellency has at last yielded to my

petition and has relieved me of a portion of my duties. It is a hard, hard residency to govern, *mynheer*."

"A splendid start," Van Slyck muttered to himself under his breath.

"So I have been informed, *mynheer*," Peter Gross replied gravely. "Pardon me a moment."

He turned toward Van Slyck: "Captain, I have a letter for you also from his excellency. It will inform you of my appointment."

"It would be better form, perhaps, *mynheer*, for me to receive his excellency's commands at Fort Wilhelmina," Van Slyck replied suavely, delighted at being able to turn the tables.

"Very true, very true, *kapitein*, if you insist," Peter Gross agreed quietly. "I hope to visit you at the fort within the hour. In the mean time you will excuse Mynheer Muller and me."

For the second time a cold chill of doubt seized Van Slyck. Was it possible that he had misjudged his man? If he had, it was doubly dangerous to leave Muller alone with him. He resolved to force the issue.

"A thousand pardons, *mynheer*," he apologized smilingly. "Mynheer Muller just now requested me to remain."

A swift change came into the face of Peter Gross. His chin shot forward; in place of the frank simplicity on which Van Slyck had based his estimate was a look of authority.

"Mynheer Muller cancels that invitation at my request," he announced sternly.

Van Slyck glanced in quick appeal at his associate, but Muller's eyes were already lowering under Peter Gross's commanding glance. Unable to find a straw of excuse for holding the captain, the *controlleur* stammered:

"Certainly, *mynheer*. I will see you later, *kapitein*."

Even then Van Slyck lingered, afraid now to leave Muller alone. But the cold, gray eyes of Peter Gross followed him; they expressed a decision from which there was no appeal. Furious at Muller, furious at his own impotence, the captain walked slowly across the veranda. Half-way down the steps he turned with a glare of defiance, but thought better of it. Raging inwardly, and a prey to the

blackest passions, he strode toward the stockade. The unhappy sentinel at the gate, a Javanese colonial, was dozing against the brass cannon.

"Devil take you, is this the way you keep guard?" Van Slyck roared and leaped at the man. His sword flashed from its scabbard and he brought the flat of the blade on the unhappy wretch's head. The Javanese dropped like a log.

"Bring that carrion to the guard-house and put some one on the gate that can keep his eyes open," Van Slyck shouted to young Lieutenant Banning, officer of the day. White to the lips, Banning saluted, and executed the orders.

In barracks that night the soldiers whispered fearfully to each other that a *budjang brani* (evil spirit) had seized their captain again.

CHAPTER XIII

A Fever Antidote

"You have found Bulungan a difficult province to govern, *mynheer*?" Peter Gross asked.

The words were spoken in a mild, ingratiating manner. Peter Gross's voice had the friendly quality that so endeared him to all who made his acquaintance, and the harshness that had distinguished his curt dismissal of the supercilious Van Slyck was wholly absent.

Muller wiped away the drops of perspiration that had gathered on his forehead. A prey to conscience, Van Slyck's dismissal had seemed to him the beginning of the end.

"*Ach, mynheer,*" he faltered, "it has been a heavy task. Too much for one man, altogether too much. Since Mynheer de Jonge left here two years ago I have been both resident and *controlleur*. I have worked night and day, and the heavy work, and the worry, have made me almost bald."

That a connection existed between baldness and overwork was a new theory to Peter Gross and rather amusing, since he knew the circumstances. But not the faintest flicker of a smile showed on his face.

"You have found it difficult, then, I presume, to keep up with all your work?" he suggested.

Muller instantly grasped at the straw. "Not only difficult, *mynheer*, but wholly impossible," he vehemently affirmed. "My reports are far behind. I suppose his excellency told you that?"

He scanned Peter Gross's face anxiously. The latter's serenity remained undisturbed.

"His excellency told me very little," he replied. "He suggested that I consult with you and Captain Van Slyck to get your ideas on what is needed for bettering conditions here. I trust I will have your coöperation, *mynheer*?"

Muller breathed a silent sigh of relief. "That you will, *mynheer*," he assured fervently. "I shall be glad to help you all I can. And so will Kapitein Van Slyck, I am sure of that. You will find him a good man—a little proud, perhaps, and headstrong, like all these soldiers, but an experienced officer." Muller nodded sagely.

"I am glad to hear that," Peter Gross replied. "The work is a little new to me—I presume you know that?"

"So I heard, *mynheer*. This is your first post as resident?"

Peter Gross's eyelids quivered a trifle. Muller's admission revealed that he had had correspondence with Ah Sing, for from no other source could the news have leaked out.

"This is my first post," he acknowledged.

"Possibly you have served as *controlleur*?" Muller suggested.

"I am a sailor," Peter Gross replied. "This is my first state appointment."

"Then my experience may be of value to you, *mynheer*," Muller declared happily. "You understand accounts, of course?"

"In a measure. But I am more a sailor than a supercargo, *mynheer*."

"To be sure, to be sure," Muller acquiesced heartily. "A sailor to the sea and to fighting in the bush, and a penman to his books. Leave the accounts to me; I will take care of them for you, *mynheer*. You will have plenty to do, keeping the tribes in order. It was more than I could do. These Dyaks and Malays are good fighters."

"So I have been told," Peter Gross assented dryly.

"They told you correctly, *mynheer*. But they will get a stern master now—we have heard of your work at Lombock, *mynheer*."

The broad compliment was accompanied by an even broader smile. Muller was very much pleased with himself, and thought he was handling a delicate situation in a manner that Van Slyck himself could not have improved upon.

Peter Gross's gravity did not relax. "How are the natives? Do you have much difficulty?" he inquired.

Muller assumed a wobegone expression. "*Ach, mynheer*," he exclaimed dolorously, "those hill Dyaks are devils. It is one raid after another; they will not let us alone. The rice-fields are swept bare. What the Dyaks do not get, the floods and typhoons get, and the weevils eat the stubble. We have not had a crop in two years. The rice we gathered for taxes from those villages where there was a little blessing on the harvest we had to distribute among the villages where the crop failed to keep our people from starving. That is why we could not ship to Batavia. I wish his excellency would come here himself and see how things are; he would not be so critical about the taxes that are not paid."

"Do the coast Dyaks ever make trouble?" Peter Gross asked.

Muller glanced at him shrewdly.

"It is the hill Dyaks who begin it, *mynheer*. Sometimes my coast Dyaks lose their heads when their crops are burned and their wives and children are stolen, but that is not often. We can control them better than we can the hill people, for they are nearer us. Of course a man runs amuck occasionally, but that you find everywhere."

"I hear there is a half-white woman who wields a great influence over them," Peter Gross remarked. "Who is she?"

"You mean Koyala, *mynheer*. A wonderful woman with a great influence over her people; they would follow her to death. That was a wise act, *mynheer*, to persuade his excellency to cancel the offer he made for her person. Bulungan will not forget it. You could not have done anything that pleases the people more."

"She is very beautiful, I have heard," Peter Gross remarked pensively.

Muller glanced at him sharply, and a quick spasm of jealousy contracted his features. The resident might like a pretty face, too, was his instant thought; it was an angle he had not bargained for. This Mynheer Gross was strong and handsome, young—altogether a dangerous rival. His mellow good nature vanished.

"That depends on what you call beauty," he said surlily. "She is a witch-woman, and half Dyak."

Peter Gross looked up in pretended surprise.

"Well, *mynheer*, I am astonished. They told me in Batavia—" He checked himself abruptly.

"What did they tell you in Batavia?" Muller demanded eagerly.

Peter Gross shook his head. "I should not have spoken, *mynheer*. It was only idle gossip."

"Tell me, *mynheer*," Muller pleaded. "*Lieve hemel*, this is the first time in months that some one has told me that Batavia still remembers Muller of Bulungan."

"It was only idle rumor," Peter Gross deprecated. "I was told you were going to marry—naturally I believed—but of course as you say it's impossible—"

"I to marry?" Muller exclaimed. "Who? Koyala?"

Peter Gross's silence was all the confirmation the *controlleur* needed. A gratified smile spread over his face; he was satisfied now that the resident had no intention of being his rival.

"They say that in Batavia?" he asked. "Well, between you and me, *mynheer*, I would have to look far for a fairer bride."

"Let me congratulate you," Peter Gross began, but Muller stayed him.

"No, not yet, *mynheer*. What I have said is for your ears alone. Remember, you know nothing."

"Your confidence is safe with me," Peter Gross assured him.

Muller suddenly recollected his duties as host.

"Ho, *mynheer*, you must have some Hollands with me," he cried hospitably. "A toast to our good fellowship." He clapped his hands and Cho Seng appeared in the doorway.

"A glass of lemonade or iced tea, if you please," Peter Gross stated.

"You are a teetotaler?" Muller cried in dismay.

"As resident of Bulungan, yes, *mynheer*. A servant of the state cannot be too careful."

Muller laughed. "Lemonade and *jenever*, Cho Seng," he directed. "Well,

mynheer, I'll wager you are the only resident in all the colonies that will not take his glass of Hollands. If it were not for *jenever* many of us could not live in this inferno. Sometimes it is well to be able to forget for a short time."

"If one has a burdened conscience," Peter Gross conditioned quietly.

Muller started. He intuitively felt the words were not idle observation, and he glanced at Peter Gross doubtfully. The resident was looking over the broad expanse of sea, and presently remarked:

"You have a splendid view here, *mynheer*. I hope the outlook from my house is half so good."

Muller roused himself. "That is so, *mynheer*," he said. "I had almost forgotten; we will have to put your house in order at once. It has not been occupied for two years, and will need a thorough cleaning. Meanwhile you must be my guest."

"I thank you, *mynheer*," Peter Gross replied quietly.

"You will have an establishment, *mynheer*?" Muller asked curiously. "Have you brought servants? If not, I shall be glad to loan you Cho Seng."

"Thank you, I am well provided," Peter Gross assured.

Cho Seng padded out on the porch and served them. Being a well-trained servant, he scarcely glanced at his employer's guest, but Peter Gross favored him with a thoughtful stare.

"Your servant has been with you a long time, *mynheer*?" he inquired carelessly.

"A year, *mynheer*. I got him from Batavia. He was recommended by—a friend." The pause was perceptible.

"His face seems familiar," Peter Gross remarked in an offhand manner. "But that's probably imagination. It is hard to tell these Chinese apart."

Conscious of having said too much again, Muller made no reply. They sipped their drinks in silence, Peter Gross thinking deeply the while why Ah Sing should make a former waiter in his *rumah makan* Muller's servant. Presently he said:

"If it is not too much trouble, *mynheer*, could you show me my house?"

"Gladly, *mynheer*," Muller exclaimed, rising with alacrity. "It is only a few steps.

We will go at once."

For the next half hour Peter Gross and he rambled through the dwelling. It was modeled closely after the *controlleur's* own, with a similar green and white façade facing the sea. The atmosphere within was damp and musty, vermin scurried at their approach, but Peter Gross saw that the building could be made tenable in a few days. At last they came to a sequestered room on the north side, facing the hills. An almost level expanse of garden lay back of it.

"This was Mynheer de Jonge's own apartment," Muller explained. "Here he did most of his work." He sighed heavily. "He was a fine old man. It is too bad the good God had to take him away from us."

Peter Gross's lips pressed together tightly.

"Mynheer de Jonge was careless of his health, I hear," he remarked. "One cannot be too careful in Bulungan. Therefore, *mynheer*, I must ask you to get me a crew of men busy at once erecting two long houses, after these plans." He took a drawing from his pocket and showed it to Muller. The *controlleur* blinked at it with a puzzled frown.

"These buildings will ruin the view, *mynheer*," he expostulated. "Such long huts —they are big enough for thirty men. What are they for?"

"Protection against the fevers, *mynheer*," Peter Gross said dryly. "The fevers that killed Mynheer de Jonge."

That evening, when Peter Gross had returned to the ship, Muller and Van Slyck met to compare notes. The captain was still boiling with anger; the resident's visit to Fort Wilhelmina had not soothed his ruffled temper.

"He told me he brought twenty-five irregulars with him for work in the bush," Van Slyck related. "They are a separate command, and won't be quartered in the fort. If this Yankee thinks he can meddle in the military affairs of the residency he will find he is greatly mistaken."

"Where will they be quartered?" Muller asked.

"I don't know."

"Maybe he will place them in the huts he has ordered me to build back of the residency," Muller remarked, rubbing his bald pate thoughtfully.

"He told you to build some huts?" Van Slyck asked.

"Yes, some long huts. Big enough for thirty men. He said they were to be a protection against the fevers."

"The fevers?" Van Slyck exclaimed in amazement.

"Yes, the fevers that killed Mynheer de Jonge, he said."

Van Slyck's face became livid with passion. "Against the fevers that killed de Jonge, eh?" he snarled. "The damned Yankee will find there are more than fevers in Bulungan."

He flashed a sharp look at Muller.

"When you see Koyala," he said, "send her to me."

CHAPTER XIV

KOYALA'S DEFIANCE

From his quarters in the residency building, the same room where his predecessor, the obstinate and perverse de Jonge, had lived his brief and inglorious career, Peter Gross looked across the rolling expanse to the jungle-crested hills of Bulungan.

It was now two weeks since his coming. Many changes had been wrought during the fortnight. The residency had been cleared of vermin and made habitable. Paddy Rouse had been installed as secretary and general factotum. The tangle of cane, creeper growth, and nipa palm that had grown in the park of shapely tamarinds since de Jonge's death had been cut away. Two long, low buildings had been erected as barracks, and Captain Carver had converted the newly created plain into a drill-ground.

They were drilling now, the khaki-clad twenty-five that had crossed the Java Sea with Peter Gross. Two weeks on shore, supplementing the shipboard quizzes on the drill manual, had welded them into an efficient command. The smartness and precision with which they executed maneuvers compelled a grudging admiration from the stolid Dutch soldiers of Fort Wilhelmina who strolled over daily to watch the drills.

"They'll do, they'll do," Peter Gross assured himself with satisfaction.

He stepped back to his desk and took a document from it. It was Muller's first report as *controlleur*. Peter Gross ran his eyes down the column of figures and frowned. The accounts balanced and were properly drawn up. The report seemed to be in great detail. Yet he felt that something was wrong. The expenses of administration had been heavy, enormously heavy, he noted. Instead of exporting rice Bulungan had been forced to import to make good crop losses, the report showed.

"Mynheer Muller is a good accountant," he observed to himself. "But there are a few items we will have to inquire into." He laid the report aside.

The door opened and Paddy Rouse entered. His bright red hair, scrubby nose,

and freckled face were in odd contrast to his surroundings, so typically Dutch. Mynheer de Jonge had made this retreat a sanctuary, a bit of old Holland transplanted bodily without regard to differences of latitude and longitude. In the east wall was a blue-tile fireplace. On the mantel stood a big tobacco jar of Delftware with the familiar windmill pattern. Over it hung a long-stemmed Dutch pipe with its highly colored porcelain bowl. The pictures on the wall were Rembrandtesque, gentlemen in doublet and hose, with thin, refined, scholarly faces and the inevitable Vandyke beard.

"A lady to see you, sir," Paddy Rouse announced with military curtness, saluting. The irrepressible Irish broke through in a sly twinkle. "She's a beauty, sir."

Peter Gross controlled the start of surprise he felt. He intuitively guessed who his visitor was.

"You may show her in," he announced.

"Yes, sir."

"And, Paddy—call Captain Carver, please."

"Yes, sir."

The shock of red hair darted away.

Peter Gross looked out of the window again. The crucial moment, the moment he had looked forward to since accepting his appointment, was upon him. What should he say to her, this woman of two alien, utterly irreconcilable races, this woman so bitterly wronged, this woman with a hot shame in her heart that would not die? How should he approach her, how should he overcome her blind, unreasoning hatred against the dominant white race, how persuade her to trust him, to give her aid for the reclamation of Bulungan?

At the same time he wondered why she had come. He had not anticipated this meeting so soon. Was there something back of it? As he asked himself the question his fingers drummed idly on the desk.

While he was meditating he became suddenly aware of another presence in the room. Turning, he found himself looking into the eyes of a woman—the woman of his thoughts. She stood beside him, silent, possessed. There was a dagger in the snakeskin girdle she wore about her waist—a single thrust and she could have killed him. He looked at her steadily. Her glance was equally steady. He

rose slowly.

"You are the Juffrouw Koyala," he announced simply. "Good morning, *juffrouw*." He bowed.

There was an instant's hesitation—or was it only his imagination, Peter Gross asked himself—then her form relaxed a trifle. So slight was the movement that he would not have been sure had not every muscle of her perfect body yielded to it with a supple, rhythmic grace.

"Won't you be seated?" he remarked conventionally, and placed a chair for her. Not until then did she speak.

"It is not necessary, *mynheer*. I have only a few words to say."

The cold austerity of her voice chilled Peter Gross. Yet her tones were marvelously sweet—like silver bells, he thought. He bowed and waited expectantly. In a moment's interlude he took stock of her.

She was dressed in the native fashion, sarong and kabaya, both of purest white. The kabaya reached to midway between the knees and ankles. Her limbs were bare, except for doe-skin sandals. The girdle about her waist was made from the skins of spotted pit vipers. The handle of the dagger it held was studded with gems, rubies, turquoises, and emeralds. A huge ruby, mounted on a pin, caught the kabaya above her breasts; outside of this she wore no jewelry. Her lustrous black hair hung loosely over her shoulders. Altogether a creature of the jungle, she looked at him with a glance in which defiance was but thinly concealed.

"What did you wish to see me about?" Peter Gross asked when he saw that she was awaiting his permission to speak.

Something like a spark shot from the glowing coals of her eyes. The tragic intensity of those eyes stirred anew the feeling of pity in the resident's heart.

"I am told, *mynheer*, that the governor withdrew his offer for my person at your request," she said coldly.

The statement was a question, Peter Gross felt, though put in the form of a declaration. He scrutinized her face sharply, striving to divine her object.

"That is true, *juffrouw*," he acknowledged.

"Why did you do this, *mynheer*?"

Peter Gross did not answer at once. The direct question astonished him.

"Why do you ask, *juffrouw*?" he parried.

Her finely chiseled head tilted back. Very royal she looked, very queenly, a Diana of the tropic jungle.

"Because Koyala Bintang Burung asks no favors from you, Mynheer Gross. Nor from any white man."

It was a declaration of war. Peter Gross realized it, and his face saddened. He had expected opposition but not open defiance. He wondered what lay back of it. The Dyak blood in her, always treacherous, never acting without a purpose, was not frank without reason, he assured himself.

"I had no intention of doing you a favor, *juffrouw*," he announced quietly.

"What was your object, *mynheer*?"

The words were hardly out of her mouth before she regretted them. The quick flash of her teeth as she bit her lips revealed the slip. Peter Gross instantly divined the reason—her hostility was so implacable that she would not even parley with him.

"To do you justice, *juffrouw*," he replied.

The words were like oil on flame. Her whole figure stiffened rigidly. The smoldering light in her eyes flashed into fire. The dusk in her face deepened to night. In a stifled voice, bitter with scorn, she cried:

"I want none of your justice, *mynheer*."

"No, I suppose not," Peter Gross assented heavily. His head sagged and he stared moodily into the fireplace. Koyala looked at him questioningly for a moment, then turned swiftly and glided toward the door. A word from Peter Gross interrupted her.

"*Juffrouw!*"

She turned slowly. The cold disdain her face expressed was magnificent.

"What shall I do?" he entreated. His mild, gray eyes were fixed on her flaming orbs pleadingly. Her lips curled in scornful contempt.

"That is for you to decide, *mynheer*," she replied.

"Then I cross from the slate all that has been charged against you, *juffrouw*. You are free to come and go as you wish."

A flash of anger crossed Koyala's face.

"Your pardon is neither asked nor desired, *mynheer*," she retorted.

"I must do my duty as I see it," Peter Gross replied. "All that I ask of you, *juffrouw*, is that you do not use your influence with the natives to hinder or oppose the plans I have for their betterment. May I have your pledge for that?"

"I make no promises and give no pledges, *mynheer*," Koyala announced coldly.

"I beg your pardon—I should not have asked it of you. All I ask is a chance to work out my plans without hindrance from those whose welfare I am seeking."

Koyala's lips curled derisively. "You can promote our welfare best by going back to Java, *mynheer*," she retorted.

Peter Gross looked at her sadly.

"*Juffrouw*," he said, "you are speaking words that you do not know the meaning of. Leave Bulungan? What would happen then? The Chinese would come down on you from the north, the Bugis from the east, and the Bajaus from every corner of the sea. Your coasts would be harried, your people would be driven out of their towns to the jungles, trade would cease, the rice harvests would fail, starvation would come upon you. Your children would be torn from you to be sold in the slave-market. Your women would be stolen. You are a woman, *juffrouw*, a woman of education and understanding; you know what the white man saves you from."

"And what have you whites given us in return for your protection?" she cried fiercely. "Your law, which is the right of a white man to cheat and rob the ignorant Dyak under the name of trade. Your garrisons in our city, which mean taking away our weapons so that our young men become soft in muscle and short in breath and can no longer make war like their fathers did. Your religion, which you force on us with a sword and do not believe yourself. Your morals, which have corrupted the former sanctity of our homes and have wrought an infamy unspeakable. Gin, to make our men stagger like fools; opium, to debauch us all! These are the white man's gifts to the Dyaks of Borneo. I would rather see

my people free, with only their bows and arrows and sumpitans, fighting a losing fight in their jungles against the Malays and the Chinese slave-hunters, than be ruined by arrach and gin and opium like they are now."

She was writhing in her passion. Her bosom rose and fell tumultuously, and her fingers opened and closed like the claws of an animal. In this mood she was a veritable tigress, Peter Gross thought.

"All that you have said is the truth," he admitted. He looked very weary, his shoulders were bent, and he stared gloomily into the hearth. Koyala stared at him with a fierce intensity, half doubtful whether he was mocking her. But his dejection was too patent to be pretense.

"If you believe that, why are you here?" she demanded.

"Because I believe that Bulungan needs me to correct these evils, *juffrouw*," he replied gently.

Koyala laughed shrilly, contemptuously. Peter Gross's form straightened and the thin, firm lines of his lips tightened. He lifted a restraining hand.

"May I speak for a few moments, *juffrouw*?" he asked. "I want to tell you what I am planning to do for Bulungan. I shall put an end to the gin and opium trade. I shall drive the slave-hunters and the pirates from these seas, and the head-hunters from their *babas* (jungles). I shall make Bulungan so peaceful that the rice-grower can plough, and sow, and harvest with never a backward look to see if an enemy is near him. I shall take the young men of Bulungan and train them in the art of war, that they may learn how to keep peace within their borders and the enemy without. I shall readjust the taxes so that the rich will pay their just share as well as the poor. I shall bring in honest tax-collectors who will account for the last grain of rice they receive. Before I shall finish my work the *Gustis* (Princes) will break their krisses and the bushmen their sumpitans; hill Dyak and coast Dyak will sit under the same tapang tree and take sirih and betel from the same box, and the Kapala Kampong shall say to the people of his village—go to the groves and harvest the cocoanut, a tenth for me and a tenth for the state, and the balance for you and your children."

Koyala looked at him searchingly. His tremendous earnestness seemed to impress her.

"You have taken a big task upon yourself, *mynheer*," she observed.

"I will do all this, *juffrouw*, if you will help me," Peter Gross affirmed solemnly.

Scornful defiance leaped again into Koyala's eyes and she drew back proudly.

"I, *mynheer*? I am a Dyak of Bulungan," she said.

"You are half a daughter of my people," Peter Gross corrected. "You have had the training of a white woman. Whether you are friend or foe, you shall always be a white woman to me, *juffrouw*."

A film came across Koyala's eyes. She started to reply, checked herself, and then spoke, lashing the words out between set teeth.

"Promise upon promise, lie upon lie, that has been the way with you whites. I hate you all, I stand by my people."

Swift as the bird whose name she bore, she flashed through the door. Peter Gross took a half-step forward to restrain her, stopped, and walked slowly back to his chair.

"She will come back," he murmured to himself; "she will come back. I have sown the seed, and it has sunk in fertile ground."

In the banyan grove Koyala, breathing rapidly because of her swift flight, came upon Kapitein Van Slyck. The captain rose eagerly as she darted through the cane.

"What did he say?" he asked. "Did he try to make love to you?"

Koyala turned on him furiously. "You are a fool, we are all fools!" she exclaimed. "He is more than a match for all of us. I will see you later, when I can think; not now." She left the clearing.

Van Slyck stalked moodily back to the fort. At the edge of the grove he slashed viciously at a pale anemone.

"Damn these women, you never can trust them," he snarled.

When the only sounds audible in the clearing were the chirping of the crickets and the fluting of the birds, a thin, yellow face with watery eyes peered

cautiously through the cane. Seeing the coast clear, Cho Seng padded decorously homeward to the *controlleur's* house, stepping carefully in the center of the path where no snakes could lie concealed.

CHAPTER XV

THE COUNCIL

The council of the chiefs was assembling. From every part of Bulungan residency they came, the Rajahs and the Gustis, the Datu Bandars or governors of the Malay villages, and the Orang Kayas and Kapala Kampongs, the Dyak village heads. Their coming was in answer to the call of Peter Gross, resident, for messengers had been sent to every part of the province to announce that a great *bitchara* (talk) was to be held in Bulungan town.

They came in various ways. The Malay Datu Bandars of the coast towns, where the Malays were largely in the ascendent, voyaged in royal sailing proas, some of which were covered with canopies of silk. Each had twenty men or more, armed to the teeth, in his cortège. The inland Rajahs traveled in even greater state. Relays of slaves carried them in sedan chairs, and fifty gleaming krisses marched before and fifty after. The humbler Orang Kayas and Kapala Kampongs came on foot, with not more than ten attendants in their trains, for a village head, regardless of the number of buffaloes in his herd, must not aspire to the same state as a Rajah, or even a Gusti. The Rajah Wobanguli received each arrival with a stately dignity befitting the ruler of the largest town in the residency, and assigned him and his people the necessary number of houses to shelter them.

But these were not the only strangers in Bulungan. From all the country round, and from every village along the coast, Dyaks, Malays, Chinese, and Bugis, and the Bajau sea-wanderers, streamed into the town. The usually commodious market-place seemed to shrink and dwindle as the crowd of traders expanded, and the raucous cries of the venders rang about the street to a late hour at night.

In every second house a cock-fight was in progress. Sweating, steaming bodies crushed each other in the narrow streets and threatened ruin to the thatched houses. Malays scowled at Dyaks, and Dyaks glared vindictively at Malays. Shrewd, bland Chinese intermingled with the crowd and raked in the silver and copper coins that seemed to flow toward them by a magnetic attraction. Fierce, piratical Bugis cast amorous glances at the Dyak belles who, although they shrank timidly into their fathers' huts, were not altogether displeased at having their charms noticed.

There was hardly a moment without its bickering and fierce words, and there were frequent brawls when women fled shrieking, for hill Dyak and coast Dyak and Malay and Bugi could not meet at such close quarters without the feuds of untold generations breaking out.

Foremost in the minds and on the lips of every individual in that reeking press of humanity was the question: "What will the *orang blanda* (white man) want?" Speculation ran riot, rumor winged upon rumor, and no tale was too fantastical to lack ready repetition and credulous listeners. *Mynheer* would exact heavy penalties for every act of piracy and killing traced back to Bulungan, so the stories ran; *mynheer* would confiscate all the next rice crop; *mynheer* would establish great plantations and every village would be required to furnish its quota of forced labor; *mynheer* would demand the three handsomest youths from each village as hostages for future good behavior. Thus long before the council assembled, the tide was setting against Peter Gross.

Bulungan was ripe and ready for revolt. It chafed under the fetters of a white man's administration, lightly as those fetters sat. Wildest of Borneo's residencies, it was the last refuge of the adventurous spirits of the Malay archipelago who found life in the established provinces of Java, Sumatra, and Celebes all too tame.

They had tasted freedom for two years under Muller's innocuous administration and did not intend to permit the old order to be changed. Diverse as their opinions on other matters might be, bitter as their feuds might be, hill Dyak and coast Dyak, Malay, Chinese, Bugi, and Bajau were united on this point. So for the first time in Bulungan's history a feeling of unanimity pervaded a conclave of such mongrel elements as were now gathered in old "Rotterdam" town. This feeling was magnified by a report—originating, no one knew where, and spreading like wildfire—that the great Datu, the chief of all the pirates of the island seas, the mysterious and silent head of the great confederation, was in Bulungan and would advise the chiefs how to answer their new white governor.

Peter Gross was not wholly ignorant of public sentiment in the town. One of Captain Carver's first acts on coming to Bulungan was to establish the nucleus of a secret service to keep him informed on public sentiment among the natives. A Dyak lad named Inchi, whom Carver had first hired to help with the coarsest camp work, and who had formed an immediate attachment for his soldierly white *baas*, was the first recruit in this service and brought in daily reports.

"Inchi tells me that the chiefs have decided they will pay no more tax to the government," Carver announced to Peter Gross on the morning of the council. The resident and he were on the drill-ground where they could talk undisturbed. Peter Gross's lips tightened.

"I expected opposition," he replied non-committally.

"Too bad we haven't the *Prins Lodewyk* here," Carver remarked. "A few shells around their ears might bring them to their senses."

"We don't need such an extreme measure yet," Peter Gross deprecated gently.

"I hardly know whether it's safe for us to venture into the town," Carver observed. "Couldn't you arrange to have the meeting here, away from all that mob? There must be thirty thousand people down below."

"I would rather meet them on their own ground."

"It's a big risk. If there should be an attack, we couldn't hold them."

"Thirty thousand against twenty-five would be rather long odds," Peter Gross assented, smiling.

"You're going to use the fort garrison, too, aren't you?" Carver asked quickly.

"I shall take just two people with me," Peter Gross announced.

"My God, Mr. Gross! You'll never get back!" Carver's face was tense with anxiety.

"Three people will be just as effective as twenty-six, captain," Peter Gross declared mildly. "The victory we must gain to-day is a moral victory—we must show the natives that we are not afraid."

"But they're bound to break loose. A show of military force would restrain them —"

"I think it would be more a provocation than a restraint, captain. They would see our helplessness. If I go alone they will reason that we are stronger than they think we are. Our confidence will beget uncertainty among them."

Carver had long since learned the futility of trying to dissuade his chief from a course once adopted. He merely remarked:

"Of course I'll go?"

"I'm sorry, captain—" Peter Gross's face expressed sincere regret. "Nothing would please me more than to have you with me, but I can't spare you here."

Carver realized that himself. He swallowed his disappointment.

"Whom were you planning on taking?" he asked abruptly.

"Inchi—"

Carver nodded approval.

—"And Paddy Rouse."

"Paddy?" the captain exclaimed. "Of what use—I beg your pardon, Mr. Gross."

Peter Gross smiled. "It does seem a peculiar mission to take that youngster on," he said. "But Paddy's going to be rarely useful to me to-day, useful in a way every man couldn't be. These natives have a superstitious reverence for red hair."

An understanding smile broke upon Carver's face.

"Of course. A mighty good idea. Bluff and superstition are two almighty-powerful weapons against savages."

"I also hope that we shall have another ally there," Peter Gross said.

"Who is that?"

"The Juffrouw Koyala."

Carver frowned. "Mr. Gross," he said, "I don't trust that woman. She's Dyak, and that's the most treacherous breed that was ever spawned. We've got to look out for her. She's an actress, and mighty clever in playing her little part, but she can't hide the hate in her heart. She'll keep us on the string and pretend she's won over, but the first chance she gets to strike, she'll do it. I've met that kind of woman in the Philippines."

"I think you are wholly mistaken," Peter Gross replied decisively.

Carver glanced at him quickly, searchingly. "She's a damn pretty woman," he remarked musingly, and shot another quick glance at the resident.

"That has nothing to do with the matter," Peter Gross replied sternly.

Abruptly dropping the topic, Carver asked:

"At what hour does the council meet?"

"Four o'clock."

"You'll be back by sundown?"

"I am afraid not. I shall probably spend the night with Wobanguli."

Carver groaned. "Send Inchi if things look as though they were going wrong," he said. "Might I suggest that you let him go to the village right away, and keep away from you altogether?"

"If you'll instruct him so, please. In case there is trouble, throw your men into the fort." He took a package of papers from his pocket and gave them to Carver. "Here are some documents which I want you to take care of for me. They are all addressed. One of them is for you; it appoints you military commandant of Bulungan in case something should happen to me down below. Don't use it otherwise. If Van Slyck should make a fuss you will know how to handle him."

"I understand," Carver replied shortly, and pocketed the envelope. He strode back to his shelter with a heavy heart.

CHAPTER XVI

PETER GROSS'S PLEDGE

The afternoon sun was pouring its full strength on the coral highway to Bulungan when Peter Gross rode to the council. He was mounted on a thoroughbred that he had brought with him from Java, and was in full-dress uniform. On his breast gleamed several decorations awarded him by Governor-General Van Schouten. It was the first time he had used them, and it was not vanity that inspired him to pin them on his coat. He realized the importance of employing every artifice to impress the native mind favorably toward its new ruler. Paddy Rouse was in field-service uniform, and rode a chestnut borrowed from the military stables.

The terrific din created by several thousand gongs of brass, copper, and wood, beaten in every part of Bulungan to testify to the holiday, was plainly audible as they cantered along the road.

"Sounds like the Fourth of July," Paddy remarked cheerfully.

When they neared the village two Gustis, youthful Dyak chiefs with reputations yet to make, charged toward them with bared krisses. As the hoofs of their jet-black steeds thundered toward Peter Gross, Paddy gave his horse the spur and shot it half a length ahead of the resident. His hand was on the butt of his pistol when a low-voiced warning from his chief restrained him. Just as it seemed that they would be ridden down the horsemen parted and flashed by with krisses lifted to salute. They wheeled instantly and fell in behind the resident.

"Whew," Paddy whistled softly. "I thought they meant business."

"It was meant to do us honor," Peter Gross explained.

More native princes spurred from the town to join the procession. In each instance the demonstration the same. Paddy noted that every one was mounted on a black horse and carried a kris whose handle was of either gold or ivory, and was studded with gems. None used saddles, but each horse was caparisoned with a gayly colored saddle-cloth embroidered with gold thread. The bridles were of many-colored cords and the bits of silver. He pointed out these things to Peter

Gross in an undertone.

"That shows that they are all of princely rank," Peter Gross informed him.

The din from the gongs became almost deafening as they entered the outskirts of the town. The crowd thickened also, and it became increasingly difficult to break through the press. Paddy Rouse's eyes swam as he looked into the sea of black and brown faces grimacing and contorting. The scene was a riot of color; every native was dressed in his holiday best, which meant garments of the gaudiest and brightest dyes that his means enabled him to procure. Paddy noticed a patriarch in a pea-green velvet jacket, blue and orange chawat, or waist-cloth, and red, yellow, and blue kerchief head-dress. Most of the kerchief head-dresses, worn turban-fashion, were in three colors, blue predominating, he observed.

"Big reception they're giving us," Paddy remarked.

Peter Gross's reply was noncommittal. He felt a little of the forces that were at work beneath the surface, and realized how quickly this childishly curious, childishly happy mob could be converted into a bedlam of savagery.

As they neared the huge twin Hindu deities, carved in stone, that formed the gate-posts of Wobanguli's palace grounds and the council-hall enclosure, the crowd massed so thickly that it was impossible for them to proceed. Paddy drove his horse into the press and split an aisle by a vicious display of hoofs and the liberal use of his quirt-stock. The crowd gave way sullenly, those behind refusing to give way for those in front. Paddy leaned sidewise in his saddle as they passed between the scowling gods.

"Into the lion's den," he whispered to Peter Gross. His eye was sparkling; roughing the natives had whetted his appetite for action.

Peter Gross sprang from his horse lightly—he had learned to ride before he went to sea—and entered the dimly lit hall. Rouse remained at the entrance and began looking about for Inchi. The little Malay was rubbing down a horse, but gave no sign of recognition when Rouse's glance met his. As Paddy looked away, his face, too, sobered. Only his eyes were more keenly alert.

As Peter Gross became accustomed to the semi-darkness, he distinguished about forty chiefs and princes seated along the side walls of the building. There were two Europeans in the room in one corner. Peter Gross guessed their identity before he could distinguish their faces; they were Muller and Van Slyck.

At the farther end of the hall was a platform. Two chairs of European make had been placed upon it. Wobanguli occupied one, the other was vacant. The hall was thick with smoke, for those who were not chewing betel were laboring on big Dutch pipes, introduced by their white rulers.

Silence greeted Peter Gross as he slowly walked the length of the hall, and none rose to do him the customary honor. Instead of mounting the platform he remained standing at its base and looked sternly into the face of the Rajah. In a voice suspiciously sweet he asked:

"Is it so long since a son of the white father has come to Bulungan that you have forgotten how he must be received, O Rajah?"

There was a moment's pregnant pause, a moment when the royal mind did some quick thinking. Then Wobanguli rose and said:

"We have heard the call and we are here, resident."

The moment Wobanguli rose a quick rustle and the clicking of steel apprised Peter Gross that the others also had risen. Although he knew it was not in his honor—custom forbade lesser chiefs from sitting while the Rajah stood—he accepted it as such. He did not look around until he had mounted the platform. Then he gazed at each man individually. Something in his silent scrutiny sent a cold chill into the hearts of more than one of the chiefs who had endured it, but most of them returned it boldly and defiantly.

Not until each of the forty had felt the power of his mesmeric glance did Peter Gross speak.

"You may tell the council the purpose of this meting, Rajah," he announced, turning to Wobanguli, and then seated himself in the vacant chair.

As Wobanguli came forward, Peter Gross had an opportunity to measure his man. The Rajah was tall, quite tall for a Bornean, powerfully built, but a trifle stoop-shouldered. His features were pronouncedly Malay rather than Dyak; there was a furtive look in his half-shut eyes that suggested craft and cunning, and his ever-ready smile was too suavely pleasant to deceive the resident.

"A panther; he will be hard to tame," was Peter Gross's unspoken thought.

Wobanguli began speaking in sonorous tones, using Malay-Dyak dialect, the *lingua franca* of the residency.

"Rajahs, Custis, Datus, and Kapalas, to-day hath Allah and the Hanu Token and the great god Djath given a new ruler to Bulungan."

Peter Gross's brow contracted thoughtfully. It was apparent from Wobanguli's exordium that he was striving to please the adherents of every faith represented among the natives present. The Rajah continued:

"In the days when the great fire mountains poured their rivers of flame into the boiling ocean our forefathers, led by the great god Djath, came to Borneo. They built villages and begat children. The fire mountains belched flame and molten rock, the great floods came to drown the mountains, the earth shook, and whole jungles were swallowed up; but ever our fathers clung to the island they had come to possess. Then Djath said: 'This is a strong people. I shall make it my own, my chosen people, and give to them and to their children's children forever the land of Borneo.'

"From the seed of our fathers sprang many tribes. New nations came from over the sea and found habitation with us, and we called them 'brother.' Last of all came the white man. He sold us guns, and knives, and metals, and fine horses, and the drink that Allah says we must not touch, and opium. By and bye, when he was strong and we were weak, he said: 'I will give you a resident who shall be a father unto you. There will be no more killings, but every man shall have plenty of gongs and brass rings for his wives, and many bolts of brilliantly colored cloth, and much tobacco.' So we let the white man give us a ruler."

There was an ominous stirring among the assembled chiefs. Peter Gross's face maintained an inscrutable calm, but he was thinking rapidly. Wobanguli's speech had all the elements of nitroglycerine, he realized.

"It is now many moons since the first white father came to dwell with us," Wobanguli continued. "Three times has the great fire mountain belched flame and smoke to show she was angry with us, and three times have we given of our gifts to appease the spirits. We are poor. Our women hide their nakedness with the leaves of palm-trees. Our tribesmen carve their kris-handles from the branches of the ironwood-tree."

He paused. The air was electric. Another word, a single passionate plea, would unsheath forty krisses, Peter Gross perceived. Wobanguli was looking at him, savage exultation leering in his eyes, but Peter Gross's face did not change a muscle, and he waited with an air of polite attention. Wobanguli faced the assembly again:

"Our elder brother from over the sea, who was sent to us by the little father at Batavia, will tell us to-day how he will redeem the promises made to us," he announced. "I have spoken."

So abrupt was the climax that Peter Gross scarcely realized the Rajah had concluded until he was back in his chair. There was a moment's dramatic hush. Conscious that Wobanguli had brought him to the very edge of a precipice as a test, conscious, too, that the Rajah was disappointed because his intended victim had failed to reveal the weakness he had expected to find, Peter Gross rose slowly and impressively to meet the glances of the forty chiefs now centered so hostilely upon him.

"Princes of our residency of Bulungan"—he began; there was a stir in the crowd; he was using the native tongue, the same dialect Wobanguli had used—"the Rajah Wobanguli has told you the purpose of this meeting. He has told you of the promises made by those who were resident here before me. He has reminded you that these promises have not been fulfilled. But he has not told you why they were not fulfilled. I am here to-day to tell you the reason."

A low, whistling sound, the simultaneous sharp intake of breath through the nostrils of forty men, filled the room. Pipes and betel and sirih were laid aside. Rajahs, governors, and princes craned their heads and looked ominously over the shafts of their spears at their resident.

"There are in this land three peoples, or perhaps four," Peter Gross said. "Only two of these are the real owners of Borneo, the people whose fathers settled this island in the early days, as your Rajah has told you. They are the hill Dyaks and the sea Dyaks, who are one people though two nations. The Malays are outlanders. The Chinese are outlanders. They have the same right to live here that the white man has—no more, no less. That right comes from the increase in riches they bring and the trade they bring."

A hoarse murmur arose. The Malay Datus' scowls were blacker. The Dyaks looked sullenly at their arch-enemies, the brown immigrants from Malacca.

"Long before the first white man came here, the two nations of Dyaks—the Dyaks of the sea and the Dyaks of the hills—were at war with each other. The skulls of the people of each nation decorated the lodge-poles of their enemies. The Dyaks of the sea made treaties with the Bajaus, the Malays, the Bugis, and the Chinese sea-rovers. Together these people have driven the Dyaks of the hills far inland, almost to the crest of the great fire mountains. But the price they pay

is the surrender of their strong men to row the proas of their masters, the pirates. The spring rains come, but the rice is left unsowed, for a fair crop attracts the spoilers, and only the poor are left in peace. Poverty has come upon your Dyaks. Your kris-handles are of wood, while those of your masters are of gold and jewels."

Peter Gross paused. The Dyaks were glaring at the Malays, the Malays looked as fiercely back. Several chiefs were fingering their kris-handles. Muller was watching the tribesmen in anxious bewilderment; Van Slyck hid in the shadows.

"Forget your feuds and listen to me," Peter Gross thundered in a voice of authority that focused instant attention upon him. "Let me tell you what I have come to do for Bulungan."

He turned a group of short, lithely built men armed with spears.

"To you, hill Dyaks, I bring peace and an end of all raiding. No more shall the coast-rovers cross your borders. Your women will be safe while you hunt dammar gum and resin in the forests; the man who steals a woman against her will shall hang. I, your resident, have spoken."

He turned toward the delegation of coast natives.

"To you, Dyaks of the sea, I bring liberation from your masters who make slaves of your young men. There will be no more raids; you may grow your crops in peace."

To the scowling Malays he said:

"Merchants of Malacca, think not that my heart is bitter against you, for I bring rich gifts to you also. I bring you the gift of a happy and contented people, rich in the produce of this fertile island, eager to buy the things you bring to them in trade. The *balas* money which you now pay the pirates will be counted with your profits, for I will drive the pirates from these seas.

"These are my commands to all of you. Keep your houses in order. If a Dyak of the hills slay a Dyak of the sea, keep your krisses sheathed and come and tell me. If a man take a woman that is not his own, keep your krisses sheathed and come and tell me. If your neighbor arm his people and drive your people to the jungle and burn their village, come and tell me. I will do justice. But swift and terrible will be my vengeance on him who breaks the law."

An ominous rumble of angry dissent filled the hall. It was instantly quelled. Towering over them, his powerful frame lifted to its full height, Peter Gross glared at them so fiercely that the stoutest hearts among them momentarily quailed and shrank back. Taking instant advantage of the silence, he announced sternly:

"I am now ready to hear your grievances, princes of the residency. You may speak one by one in the order of your rank."

Calmly turning his back on them, he walked back to his chair.

There was a tense silence of several minutes while Datu looked at Rajah and Rajah at Datu. Peter Gross saw the fierce sway of passions and conflicting opinions. Muller looked from face to face with an anxious frown, striving to ascertain the drift of the tide, and Van Slyck grinned saturninely.

A powerful Malay suddenly leaped to his feet, and glared defiantly at Peter Gross.

"Hear me, princes of Bulungan," he shouted. "Year after year the servants of him who rules in Batavia have come to us and said: 'Give us a tenth of your rice, of your dammar gum, give us bamboo, and rattan, and cocoanuts as tribute money and we will protect you from your enemies.' Year after year have our fields been laid waste by the Dyaks of the hills, by the Beggars of the sea, till our people are poor and starve in the jungles, but no help has come from the white man. Twice has my village been burned by men from the white man's ships that throw fire and iron; not once have those ships come to save me from the sea Beggars. Then one day a light came. Grogu, I said, make a peace with the great Datu of the rovers of the sea, give him a part of each harvest. Three great rains have now passed since I made that peace. He has kept my coasts free from harm, he has punished the people of the hills who stole my cattle. With whom I ask you, princes of Bulungan, shall I chew the betel of friendship?"

"Ai-yai-yai-yai," was the angry murmur that filled the hall in a rising assent.

A wizened old Malay, with a crooked back and bereft of one eye, rose and shook a spear venomously. His three remaining teeth were ebon from excessive betel-chewing.

"I had forty buffaloes," he cried in a shrill, crackly voice. "The white man in the house on the hill came and said: 'I must have ten for the balas (tribute money).'

The white kris-bearer from the war-house on the hill came and said: 'I must have ten for my firestick-bearers.' The white judge came and said: 'I must have ten for a fine because your people killed a robber from the hills.' Then came the sea-rovers and said: 'Give us the last ten, but take in exchange brass gongs, and copper-money, and silks from China.' Whom must I serve, my brothers, the thief who takes and gives or the thief who takes all and gives nothing?"

The tumult increased. A tall and dignified chief in the farther corner of the hall, who had kept aloof from the others to this time, now rose and lifted a hand for silence. The poverty of his dress and the lack of gay trappings showed that he was a hill Dyak, for no Dyak of the sea was so poor that he had only one brass ring on his arm. Yet he was a man of influence, Peter Gross observed, for every face at once turned in his direction.

"My brothers, there has been a feud between my people of the hill and your people of the coasts for many generations," he said. "Yet we are all of one father, and children in the same house. It is not for me to say to-day who is right and who is wrong. The white chief bids us give each other the sirih and betel. He tells us he will make us both rich and happy. The white chief's words are good. Let us listen and wait to see if his deeds are good."

There was a hoarse growl of disapproval. Peter Gross perceived with a sinking heart that most of those present joined in it. He looked toward Wobanguli, but that chieftain sedulously avoided his glance and seemed satisfied to let matters drift.

A young Dyak chief suddenly sprang to the middle of the floor. His trappings showed that he was of Gusti rank.

"I have heard the words of the white chief and they are the words of a master speaking to his slaves," he shouted. "When the buck deserts his doe to run from the hunter, when the pheasant leaves the nest of eggs she has hatched to the mercy of the serpent, when the bear will no longer fight for her cubs, then will the Sadong Dyaks sit idly by while the robber despoils their villages and wait for the justice of the white man, but not before. This is my answer, white chief!"

Whipping his kris from his girdle, he hurled it at the floor in front of Peter Gross. The steel sank deeply into the wood, the handle quivering and scintillating in a shaft of sunlight that entered through a crack in the roof.

An instant hush fell on the assembly. Through the haze and murk Peter Gross

saw black eyes that flamed with hate, foaming lips, and passion-distorted faces. The lust for blood was on them, a moment more and nothing could hold them back, he saw. He sprang to the center of the platform.

"Men of Bulungan, hear me," he shouted in a voice of thunder. "Your measure of wickedness is full. You have poisoned the men sent here to rule you, you have strangled your judges and thrown their bodies to the crocodiles, you have killed our soldiers with poisoned arrows. To-day I am here, the last messenger of peace the white man will send you. Accept peace now, and you will be forgiven. Refuse it, and your villages will be burned, your people will be hunted from jungle to swamp and swamp to highland, there will be no brake too thick and no cave too deep to hide them from our vengeance. The White Father will make the Dyaks of Bulungan like the people of the lands under the sea—a name only. Choose ye, what shall it be?"

For a moment his undaunted bearing and the terrible threat he had uttered daunted them. They shrank back like jackals before the lion, their voices stilled. Then a deep guttural voice, that seemed to come through the wall behind the resident's chair, cried:

"Kill him, Dyaks of Bulungan. He speaks with two tongues to make you slaves on the plantations."

Peter Gross sprang toward the wall and crashed his fist through the bamboo. A section gave way, revealing an enclosed corridor leading to another building. The corridor was empty.

The mischief had been done, however, and the courage of the natives revived. "Kill the white man, kill him," the hoarse cry arose. A dozen krisses flashed. A spear was hurled, it missed Peter Gross by a hair's breadth. Dyaks and Malays surged forward, Wobanguli alone was between him and them. Paddy Rouse sprang inside with drawn pistol, but a hand struck up his pistol arm and his harmless shot went through the roof. A half-dozen sinewy forms pinned him to the ground.

At the same instant Peter Gross drew his automatic and leaped toward Wobanguli. Before the Rajah could spring aside the resident's hand closed over his throat and the resident's pistol pressed against his head.

"One move and I shoot," Peter Gross cried.

The brown wave stopped for a moment, but it was only a moment, Peter Gross realized, for life was cheap in Borneo, even a Rajah's life. He looked wildly about—then the tumult stilled as suddenly as though every man in the hall had been simultaneously stricken with paralysis.

Gross's impressions of the next few moments were rather vague. He dimly realized that some one had come between him and the raging mob. That some one was waving the natives back. It was a woman. He intuitively sensed her identity before he perceived her face—it was Koyala.

The brown wave receded sullenly, like the North sea backing from the dikes of Holland. Peter Gross replaced his pistol in its holster and released Wobanguli—Koyala was speaking. In the morgue-like silence her silvery voice rang with startling clearness.

"Are you mad, my children of Bulungan?" she asked sorrowfully. "Have you lost your senses? Would the taking of this one white life compensate for the misery you would bring on our people?"

She paused an instant. Every eye was riveted upon her. Her own glorious orbs turned heavenward, a mystic light shone in them, and she raised her arms as if in invocation.

"Hear me, my children," she chanted in weird, Druidical tones. "Into the north flew the Argus Pheasant, into the north, through jungle and swamp and canebrake, by night and by day, for the Hanu Token were her guides and the great god Djath and his servants, the spirits of the Gunong Agong called her. She passed through the country of the sea Dyaks, and she saw no peace; she passed through the country of the hill Dyaks, and she saw no peace. Up, up she went, up the mountain of the flaming fires, up to the very edge of the pit where the great god Djath lives in the flames that never die. There she saw Djath, there she heard his voice, there she received the message that he bade her bring to his children, his children of Bulungan. Here is the message, chiefs of my people, listen and obey."

Every Dyak groveled on the ground and even the Malay Mahometans crooked their knees and bowed their heads almost to the earth. Swaying from side to side, Koyala began to croon:

"Hear my words, O princes of Bulungan, hear my words I send you by the Bintang Burung. Lo, a white man has come among you, and his face is fair and

his words are good and his heart feels what his lips speak. Lo, I have placed him among you to see if in truth there is goodness and honesty in the heart of a white man. If his deeds be as good as his words, then will you keep him, and guard him, and honor him, but if his heart turns false and his lips speak deceitfully, then bring him to me that he may burn in the eternal fires that dwell with me. Lo, that ye may know him, I have given him a servant whose head I have touched with fire from the smoking mountain."

At that moment Paddy, hatless and disheveled, plunged through the crowd toward Peter Gross. A ray of sunlight coming through the roof fell on his head. His auburn hair gleamed like a burst of flame. Koyala pointed at him and cried dramatically:

"See, the servant with the sacred flame."

"The sacred flame," Dyaks and Malays both muttered awesomely, as they crowded back from the platform.

"Who shall be the first to make blood-brother of this white man?" Koyala cried. The hill Dyak chieftain who had counseled peace came forward.

"Jahi of the Jahi Dyaks will," he said. Peter Gross looked at him keenly, for Jahi was reputed to be the boldest raider and head-hunter in the hills. The Dyak chief opened a vein in his arm with a dagger and gave the weapon to Peter Gross. Without hesitating, the resident did the same with his arm. The blood intermingled a moment, then they rubbed noses and each repeated the word: "Blood-brother," three times.

One by one Dyaks and Malays came forward and went through the same ceremony. A few slipped out the door without making the brotherhood covenant, Peter Gross noticed. He was too elated to pay serious attention to these; the battle was already won, he believed.

In the shadows in the rear of the hall Van Slyck whispered in the ear of a Malay chieftain. The Malay strode forward after the ceremonies were over, and said gravely:

"Blood-brother, we have made you one of us and our ruler, as the great god Djath hath commanded. But there was one condition in the god's commands. If you fail, you are to be delivered to Djath for judgment, and no evil shall come upon our people from your people for that sentence. Will you pledge us this?"

They were all looking at him, Malay, hill Dyak, and sea Dyak, and every eye said: "Pledge!" Peter Gross realized that if he would keep their confidence he must give his promise. But a glance toward Van Slyck had revealed to him the Malay's source of inspiration, and he sensed the trick that lay beneath the demand.

"Will you pledge, brother?" the Malay demanded again.

"I pledge," Peter Gross replied firmly.

CHAPTER XVII

THE POISONED ARROW

"And so," Peter Gross concluded, "I pledged my life that we'd put things to rights in Bulungan."

Captain Carver did not answer. It was dim twilight of the evening following the council meeting—they were met in Peter Gross's den, and the captain had listened with an air of critical attention to the nocturnal chirping of the crickets outside. Had it not been for occasional curt, illuminative questions, Peter Gross might have thought him asleep. He was a man of silences, this Captain Carver, a man after Peter Gross's own heart.

"On the other hand they pledged that they would help me," Peter Gross resumed. "There are to be no more raids, the head-hunters will be delivered to justice, and there will be no more trading with the pirates or payment of tribute to them. Man for man, chief for chief, they pledged. I don't trust all of them. I know Wobanguli will violate his oath, for he is a treacherous scoundrel, treacherous and cunning but lacking in courage, or his nerve wouldn't have failed him yesterday. The Datu of Bandar is a bad man. I hardly expected him to take the oath, and it won't take much to persuade him to violate it. The Datu of Padang, the old man who lost the forty buffaloes, is a venomous old rascal that we'll have to watch. Lkath of the Sadong Dyaks left while we were administering the oath; there is no blood of fealty on his forehead. But I trust the hill Dyaks, they are with me. And we have Koyala."

Another silence fell between the resident and his lieutenant. It was quite dark now and the ends of their cigars glowed ruddily. There was a tap on the door and Paddy Rouse announced himself.

"Shall I get a light, sir?" he asked.

"I don't think it is necessary, Paddy," Peter Gross replied kindly. He had conceived a great affection for the lad. He turned toward Carver.

"What do you think of the situation?" he asked pointedly.

Carver laid his cigar aside. It was not casually done, but with the deliberateness of the man who feels he has an unpleasant duty before him.

"I was trying to decide whether Koyala is an asset or a liability," he replied.

Peter Gross, too, listened for a moment to the chirping of the crickets before he answered.

"She saved my life," he said simply.

"She did," Captain Carver acknowledged. "I'm wondering why."

Peter Gross stared into the evening silence.

"I believe you misjudge her, captain," he remonstrated gently. "She hasn't had much chance in life. She's had every reason for hating us—all whites—but she has the welfare of her people at heart. She's a patriot. It's the one passion of her life, the one outlet for her starved and stunted affections. Her Dyak blood leads her to extremes. We've got to curb her savage nature as far as we can, and if she does break the bounds occasionally, overlook it. But I don't question her absolute sincerity. That is why I trust her."

"If she were all Dyak I might think as you do," Captain Carver said slowly. "But I never knew mixed blood to produce anything noble. It's the mixture of bloods in her I'm afraid of. I've seen it in the Philippines and among the Indians. It's never any good."

"There have been some notable half-breed patriots," Peter Gross remarked with a half-smile that the darkness curtained.

"Dig into their lives and you'll find that what an infatuated people dubbed patriotism was just damned meanness. Never a one of them, but was after loot, not country."

"You have old Sachsen's prejudices," Peter Gross said. "Did I tell you about the letter I got from him? I'll let you read it later, it's a shame to spoil this evening. Sachsen warns me not to trust the girl, says she's a fiend. He coupled her name with Ah Sing's." The vicious snap of the resident's teeth was distinctly audible. God, how an old man's tongue clacks to scandal. "I thought Sachsen was above it, but 'Rumor sits on the housetop,' as Virgil says...."

His voice trailed into silence and he stared across the fields toward the jungle-

crowned hills silhouetted against the brilliantly starlit sky.

"Sachsen is too old a man to be caught napping," Carver observed.

"There probably is some sort of an understanding between Koyala and Ah Sing," Peter Gross admitted seriously. "But it's nothing personal. She thought he could help her free Bulungan. I think I've made her see the better way—at least induced her to give us a chance to show what we can do."

"You're sure it was Ah Sing's voice you heard?"

Peter Gross perceived from the sharp acerbity of the captain's tone, as well as from the new direction he gave their conversation, Carver's lack of sympathy with his views on Koyala's conduct. He sighed and replied mildly:

"I am positive. There is no other bass in the world like his. Hoarse and deep, a sea-lion growl. If I could have forced the bamboo aside sooner, I might have seen him before he dodged out of the runway."

"If he's here we've got the whole damn' wasp's nest around our ears," Carver growled. "I wish we had the *Prins* here."

"That would make things easier. But we can't tie her up in harbor, that would give the pirates free play. She's our whole navy, with nearly eight hundred miles of coastline to patrol."

"And we're here with twenty-five men," Carver said bitterly. "It would be damned farcical if it wasn't so serious."

"We are not here to use a mailed fist," Peter Gross remonstrated mildly.

"I understand. All the same—" Carver stopped abruptly and stared into the silence. Peter Gross made no comment. Their views were irreconcilable, he saw. It was inevitable that Carver should undervalue moral suasion; a military man, he recognized only the arbitrament of brute force. The captain was speaking again.

"When do you begin the census?"

"Next Monday. I shall see Muller to-morrow. It will take at least two months, possibly three; they're very easy-going here. I'd like to finish it before harvest, so as to be able to check up the tax."

"You're going to trust it to Muller?"

The question implied doubt of his judgment. Peter Gross perceived Carver was averse to letting either Muller or Van Slyck participate in the new administration outside their regular duties.

"I think it is best," the resident replied quietly. "I don't want him condemned on his past record, regardless of the evidence we may get against him. He shall have his chance—if he proves disloyal he will convict himself."

"How about Van Slyck?"

"He shall have his chance, too."

"You can't give the other man all the cards and win."

"We'll deal fairly. The odds aren't quite so big as you think—we'll have Koyala and the hill Dyaks with us."

"H'mm. Jahi comes to-morrow afternoon, you say?"

"Yes. I shall appoint him Rajah over all the hill people."

Carver picked up his cigar and puffed in silence for several moments.

"If you could only trust the brutes," he exploded suddenly. "Damn it, Mr. Gross, I wish I had your confidence, but I haven't. I can't help remember some of the things that happened back in Luzon a few years ago—and the Tagalogs aren't far distant relatives of these cusses. 'Civilize 'em with a Krag,' the infantry used to sing. It's damn' near the truth."

"In the heart of every man there's something that responds to simple justice and fair dealing—What's that?"

A soft thud on the wall behind them provoked the exclamation. Carver sprang to his feet, tore the cigar from Peter Gross's mouth, and hurled it at the fireplace with his own. Almost simultaneously he snapped the heavy blinds together. The next moment a soft tap sounded on the shutters.

Peter Gross lit a match and stepped to the wall. A tiny arrow, tipped with a jade point, and tufted with feathers, quivered in the plaster. Carver pulled it out and looked at the discolored point critically.

"Poisoned!" he exclaimed. He gave it to the resident, remarking ironically:

"With the compliments of the Argus Pheasant, Mr. Gross."

CHAPTER XVIII

A SUMMONS TO SADONG

With pen poised, Peter Gross sat at his desk in the residency building and stared thoughtfully at the blank sheets of stationery before him. He was preparing a letter to Captain Rouse, to assure that worthy that all was going well, that Paddy was in the best of health and proving his value in no uncertain way, and to give a pen picture of the situation. He began:

> DEAR CAPTAIN:
>
> Doubtless you have heard from Paddy before this, but I want to add my assurance to his that he is in the best of health and is heartily enjoying himself. He has already proven his value to me, and I am thanking my lucky stars that you let me have him.
>
> We have been in Bulungan for nearly a month, and so far all is well. The work is going on, slowly, to be sure, but successfully, I hope. I can already see what I think are the first fruits of my policies.
>
> The natives are not very cordial as yet, but I have made some valuable friends among them. The decisions I have been called upon to make seem to have given general satisfaction, in most instances. I have twice been obliged to set aside the judgments of *controlleurs*, whose rulings appeared unjust to me, and in both cases my decision was in favor of the poorer litigant. This has displeased some of the *orang kayas*, or rich men, of the villages, but it has strengthened me with the tribesmen, I believe.

He described the council and the result, and continued:

> I am now having a census taken of each district in the residency. I have made the *controlleur* in each district responsible for the accuracy of the census in his territory, and have made Mynheer Muller, the acting-resident prior to my coming, chief of the census bureau. He opposed the count at first, but has come round to my way of thinking, and is prosecuting the work diligently. The chief difficulty is the natives—some one has been

> stirring them up—but I have high hopes of knowing, before the next harvest, how many people there are in each village and what proportion of the tax each chief should be required to bring. The taxation system has been one of the worst evils in Bulungan in the past; the poor have been oppressed, and all the tax-gatherers have enriched themselves, but I expect to end this....
>
> I had a peculiar request made of me the other day. Captain Van Slyck asked that Captain Carver and his company be quartered away from Bulungan. The presence of Carver's irregulars was provoking jealousies among his troops, he said, and was making it difficult to maintain discipline. There is reason in his request, yet I hesitate to grant it. Captain Van Slyck has not been very friendly toward me, and a mutiny in the garrison would greatly discredit my administration. I have not yet given him my answer....
>
> Inchi tells me there is a persistent rumor in the town that the great Datu, the chief of all the pirates, is in Bulungan. I would have believed his story the day after the council, for I thought I recognized his voice there; but I must have been mistaken. Captain Enckel, of the *Prins Lodewyk*, who was here a week ago, brings me positive assurance that the man is at Batavia. He saw him there himself, he says. It cannot be that my enemy has a double; nature never cast two men in that mold in one generation. Since Inchi cannot produce any one who will swear positively that he has seen the Datu, I am satisfied that the report is unfounded. Maybe you can find out something.

As Peter Gross was affixing the required stamp, the door opened and Paddy Rouse entered.

"The baby doll is here and wants to see you," Paddy announced.

"Who?" Peter Gross asked, mystified.

"The yellow kid; old man Muller's chocolate darling," Paddy elucidated.

Peter Gross looked at him in stern reproof.

"Let the Juffrouw Koyala be the Juffrouw Koyala to you hereafter," he commanded harshly.

"Yes, sir." Paddy erased the grin from his lips but not from his eyes. "Shall I ask the lady to come in?"

"You may request her to enter," Peter Gross said. "And, Paddy—"

"Yes, sir."

"—leave the door open."

"Yes, sir."

The red head bobbed to hide another grin.

Koyala glided in softly as a kitten. She was dressed as usual in the Malay-Javanese costume of kabaya and sarong. Peter Gross could not help noticing the almost mannish length of her stride and the haughty, arrogant tilt of her head.

"Unconquerable as the sea," he mused. "And apt to be as tempestuous. She's well named—the Argus Pheasant."

He placed a chair for her. This time she did not hesitate to accept it. As she seated herself she crossed her ankles in girlish unconsciousness. Peter Gross could not help noticing how slim and perfectly shaped those ankles were, and how delicately her exquisitely formed feet tapered in the soft, doe-skin sandals.

"Well, *juffrouw*, which of my *controlleurs* is in mischief now?" he asked in mock resignation.

Koyala flashed him a quick smile, a swift, dangerous, alluring smile.

"Am I always complaining, *mynheer*?" she asked.

Peter Gross leaned back comfortably. He was smiling, too, a smile of masculine contentment. "No, not always, *juffrouw*," he conceded. "But you kept me pretty busy at first."

"It was necessary, *mynheer*."

Peter Gross nodded assent. "To be sure, *juffrouw*, you did have reason to complain," he agreed gravely. "Things were pretty bad, even worse than I had expected to find them. But we are gradually improving conditions. I believe that my officers now know what is expected of them."

He glanced at her reprovingly. "You haven't been here much this week; this is only the second time."

A mysterious light flashed in Koyala's eyes, but Peter Gross was too intent on

admiring her splendid physical sufficiency to notice it.

"You are very busy, Mynheer Resident," Koyala purred. "I take too much of your time as it is with my trifling complaints."

"Not at all, not at all," Peter Gross negatived vigorously. "The more you come, the better I am pleased." Koyala flashed a swift glance at him. "Come every day if you can. You are my interpreter, the only voice by which I can speak to the people of Bulungan and be heard. I want you to know what we are doing and why we are doing it; there is nothing secret here that you should not know."

He leaned forward earnestly.

"We must work out the salvation of Bulungan together, *juffrouw*. I am relying very much upon you. I cannot do it alone; your people will not believe in me. Unless you speak for me there will be misunderstandings, maybe bloodshed."

Koyala's eyes lowered before his beseeching gaze and the earnestness of his plea.

"You are very kind, *mynheer*," she said softly. "But you overestimate my powers. I am only a woman—it is the Rajahs who rule."

"One word from Koyala has more force in Bulungan than the mandate of the great council itself," Peter Gross contradicted. "If you are with me, if you speak for me, the people are mine, and all the Rajahs, Gustis, and Datus in the residency could not do me harm."

He smiled frankly.

"I want to be honest with you, *juffrouw*. I am thoroughly selfish in asking these things. I want to be known as the man who redeemed Bulungan, even though the real work is yours."

Koyala's face was hidden. Peter Gross saw that her lips pressed together tightly and that she was undergoing some powerful emotion. He looked at her anxiously, fearful that he had spoken too early, that she was not yet ready to commit herself utterly to his cause.

"I came to see you, *mynheer*, about an affair that happened in the country of the Sadong Dyaks," Koyala announced quietly.

Peter Gross drew back. Koyala's reply showed that she was not yet ready to join

him, he perceived. Swallowing his disappointment, he asked in mock dismay:

"Another complaint, *juffrouw*?"

"One of Lkath's own people, a Sadong Dyak, was killed by a poisoned arrow," Koyala stated. "The arrow is tufted with heron's feathers; Jahi's people use those on their arrows. Lkath has heard that the head of his tribesman now hangs in front of Jahi's hut."

The smile that had been on Peter Gross's lips died instantly. His face became drawn and hard.

"I cannot believe it!" he exclaimed at length in a low voice. "Jahi has sworn brotherhood with me and sworn to keep the peace. We rubbed noses and anointed each others' foreheads with the blood of a fresh-killed buffalo."

"If you choose the hill people for your brothers, the sea people will not accept you," Koyala said coldly.

"I choose no nation and have no favorites," Peter Gross replied sternly. "I have only one desire—to deal absolute and impartial justice to all. Let me think."

He bowed his head in his hands and closed his eyes in thought. Koyala watched him like a tigress in the bush.

"Who found the body of the slain man?" he asked suddenly, looking up again.

"Lkath himself, and some of his people," Koyala replied.

"Do the Sadong Dyaks use the sumpitan?"

"The Dyaks of the sea do not fight their enemies with poison," Koyala said scornfully. "Only the hill Dyaks do that."

"H-m! Where was the body? How far from the stream?"

"It was by a water-hole."

"How far from Lkath's village?"

"About five hours' journey. The man was hunting."

"Was he alone? Were there any of Lkath's people with him?"

"One. His next younger brother. They became separated in the baba, and he

returned home alone. It was he who found the body, he and Lkath."

"Ah!" Peter Gross exclaimed involuntarily. "Then, according to Dyak custom, he will have to marry his brother's wife. Are there any children?"

"One," Koyala answered. "They were married a few moons over a year ago." Pensively she added, in a woman's afterthought: "The woman grieves for her husband and cannot be consoled. She is very beautiful, the most beautiful woman of her village."

"I believe that I will go to Sadong myself," Peter Gross said suddenly. "This case needs investigating."

"It is all I ask," Koyala said. Her voice had the soft, purring quality in it again, and she lowered her head in the mute Malay obeisance. The action hid the tiny flicker of triumph in her eyes.

"I will go to-morrow," Peter Gross said. "I can get a proa at Bulungan."

"You will take your people with you?"

"No, I will go alone."

It seemed to Peter Gross that Koyala's face showed a trace of disappointment.

"You should not do that," she reproved. "Lkath is not friendly to you. He will not welcome a blood-warrior of Jahi since this has happened."

"In a matter like this, one or two is always better than a company," Peter Gross dissented. "Yet I wish you could be there. I cannot offer you a place in my proa—there will be no room for a woman—but if you can find any other means of conveyance, the state will pay." He looked at her wistfully.

Koyala laughed. "The Argus Pheasant will fly to Sadong faster than your proa," she said. She rose. As her glance roved over the desk she caught sight of the letter Peter Gross had just finished writing.

"Oh, you have been writing to your sweetheart," she exclaimed. Chaffingly as the words were spoken, Peter Gross felt a little of the burning curiosity that lay back of them.

"It is a letter to a sea-captain at Batavia whom I once served under," he replied quietly. "I told him about my work in Bulungan. Would you care to read it?"

He offered her the envelope. Quivering with an eagerness she could not restrain, Koyala half reached for it, then jerked back her hand. Her face flamed scarlet and she leaped back as though the paper was death to touch. With a choking cry she exclaimed:

"I do not want to read your letters. I will see you in Sadong—" She bolted through the door.

Peter Gross stared in undisguised bewilderment after her. It was several minutes before he recovered and placed the letter back in the mailing receptacle.

"I never will be able to understand women," he said sadly, shaking his head.

CHAPTER XIX

KOYALA'S ULTIMATUM

The house of Lkath, chief of the Sadong Dyaks, stood on a rocky eminence at the head of Sabu bay. The bay is a narrow arm of the Celebes Sea, whose entrance is cunningly concealed by a series of projecting headlands and jealously guarded by a triple row of saw-tooth rocks whose serrated edges, pointed seaward, threaten mischief to any ship that dares attempt the channel.

Huge breakers, urged on by the southeast monsoon, boil over these rocks from one year's end to the next. The headlands drip with the unceasing spray, and at their feet are twin whirlpools that go down to the very bowels of the earth, according to tradition, and wash the feet of Sangjang, ruler of Hades, himself. Certain it is that nothing ever cast into the whirlpools has returned; certain it is, too, say the people of Bulungan, that the Sang-sangs, good spirits, have never brought back any word of the souls of men lost in the foaming waters.

In their rocky citadel and rock-guarded harbor the Sadong people have for years laughed at their enemies, and combed the seas, taking by force when they could, and taking in trade when those they dealt with were too strong for them. None have such swift proas as they, and none can follow them into their lair, for only the Sadong pilots know the intricacies of that channel. Vengeful captains who had permitted their eagerness to outrun discretion found their ships in the maelstrom and rent by the rocks before they realized it, while the Sadongers in the still, landlocked waters beyond, mocked them as they sank to their death.

Two days after Koyala had reported the murder of the Sadonger to Peter Gross a swift proa approached the harbor. Even an uncritical observer would have noticed something peculiar in its movements, for it cut the water with the speed of a launch, although its bamboo sails were furled on the maze of yards that cluttered the triangle mast. As it neared the channel its speed was reduced, and the chug-chug of a powerful gasoline motor became distinctly audible. The sentinel on the promontory gesticulated wildly to the sentinels farther inland, for he had distinguished his chief, Lkath, at the wheel.

Under Lkath's trained hand the proa skipped through the intricate channel

without scraping a rock and shot the length of the harbor. With shouts of "*salaamat*" (welcome) the happy Sadongers trooped to the water-front to greet their chief. Lkath's own body-guard, fifty men dressed in purple, red, and green chawats and head-dresses and carrying beribboned spears, trotted down from the citadel and cleared a space for the voyagers to disembark from the sampans that had put out for them.

As the royal sampan grounded, Lkath, with a great show of ceremony, assisted out of the craft a short, heavy-jowled Chinaman with a face like a Hindoo Buddha's. A low whisper of awe ran through, the crowd—this was the great Datu himself. The multitude sank to its knees, and each man vigorously pounded his head on the ground.

The next passenger to leave the sampan was the Rajah Wobanguli, tall, a trifle stoop-shouldered, and leering craftily at the motley throng, the cluster of houses, and the fortifications. A step behind him Captain Van Slyck, dapper and politely disdainful as always, sauntered along the beach and took his place in one of the dos-à-dos that had hastened forward at a signal from Lkath. The vehicles rumbled up the hill.

When they neared the temple that stood close to Lkath's house at the very summit of the hill an old man, dressed in long robes, stepped into the center of the band and lifted his hand. The procession halted.

"What is it, voice of Djath?" Lkath asked respectfully.

"The *bilian* is here and awaits your presence," the priest announced.

Lkath stifled an exclamation of surprise.

"Koyala is here," he said to his guests. Ah Sing's face was expressionless. Wobanguli, the crafty, smiled non-committally. Van Slyck alone echoed Lkath's astonishment.

"A hundred miles over jungle trails in less than two days," he remarked, with a low whistle. "How the devil did she do it?"

There was no doubting the priest's words, however, for as they entered the temple Koyala herself came to meet them.

"Come this way," she said authoritatively, and led them into a side-chamber reserved for the priests. The room was imperfectly lit by a single window in the

thick rock walls. A heavy, oiled Chinese paper served as a substitute for glass.

"He will be here to-morrow," she announced. "What are you going to do with him?"

There was no need for her to mention a name, all knew whom she referred to. A silence came upon them. Van Slyck, Wobanguli, and Lkath, with the instinct of lesser men who know their master, looked at Ah Sing. The Chinaman's eyes slumbered between his heavy lids.

"What are you going to do with him, Datu?" Koyala demanded, addressing Ah Sing directly.

"The Princess Koyala is our ally and friend," he replied gutturally.

"Your ally waits to hear the decision of the council," Koyala retorted coldly.

Wobanguli interposed. "There are things, *bilian*, that are not fitting for the ear of a woman," he murmured suavely, with a sidelong glance at Ah Sing.

"I am a warrior, Rajah, as well as a woman, with the same rights in the council that you have," Koyala reminded.

Wobanguli smiled his pleasantest. "True, my daughter," he agreed diplomatically. "But he is not yet ours. When we have snared the bird it is time enough to talk of how it shall be cooked."

"You told me at Bulungan that this would be decided on shipboard," Koyala replied sharply. A tempest began to kindle in her face. "Am I to be used as a decoy and denied a voice on what shall be done with my prisoner?"

"We haven't decided—" Van Slyck began.

"That is false!"

Van Slyck reddened with anger and raised his hand as though to strike her. Koyala's face was a dusky gray in its pallor and her eyes blazed with contempt.

"Peace!" Ah Sing rumbled sternly. "He is my prisoner. I marked him for mine before he was named resident."

"You are mistaken, Datu," Koyala said significantly. "He is my prisoner. He comes here upon my invitation. He comes here under my protection. He is my guest and no hostile hand shall touch him while he is here."

Ah Sing's brow ridged with anger. He was not accustomed to being crossed. "He is mine, I tell you, woman," he snarled. "His name is written in my book, and his nails shall rest in my cabinet."

The Dyak blood mounted to Koyala's face.

"He is not yours; he is mine!" she cried. "He was mine long before you marked him yours, Datu."

Wobanguli hastened to avoid a rupture. "If it is a question of who claimed him first, we can lay it before the council," he suggested.

"The council has nothing to do with it," Koyala retorted. There was a dangerous gleam in her eyes. "I marked him as mine more than a year ago, when he was still a humble sailor with no thought of becoming resident. His ship came to the mouth of the Abbas River, to Wolang's village, and traded for rattan with Wolang. I saw him then, and swore that one day he would be mine."

"You desire him?" Ah Sing bellowed. The great purple veins stood out on his forehead, and his features were distorted with malignancy.

Koyala threw back her head haughtily.

"If I do, who is going to deny me?"

Ah Sing choked in inarticulate fury. His face was black with rage.

"I will, woman!" he bawled. "You are mine—Ah Sing's—"

He leaped toward her and buried his long fingers, with their sharp nails, in the soft flesh of her arm. Koyala winced with pain; then outraged virginity flooded to her face in a crimson tide. Tearing herself away, she struck him a stinging blow in the face. He staggered back. Van Slyck leaped toward her, but she was quicker than he and backed against the wall. Her hand darted inside her kabaya and she drew a small, silver-handled dagger. Van Slyck stopped in his tracks.

Ah Sing recovered himself and slowly smoothed his rumpled garments. He did not even look at Koyala.

"Let us go," he said thickly.

Koyala sprang to the door. She was panting heavily.

"You shall not go until you pledge me that he is mine!" she cried.

Ah Sing looked at her unblinkingly. The deadly malignancy of his face caused even Van Slyck to shiver.

"You may have your lover, woman," he said in a low voice.

Koyala stared at him as though turned to stone. Suddenly her cheeks, her forehead, her throat even, blazed scarlet. She flung her weapon aside; it clattered harmlessly on the bamboo matting. Tears started in her eyes. Burying her face in her arms, she sobbed unrestrainedly.

They stared at her in astonishment. After a sidelong glance at Ah Sing, Wobanguli placed a caressing hand on her arm.

"*Bilian*, my daughter—" he began.

Koyala flung his arm aside and lifted her tear-stained face with a passionate gesture.

"Is this my reward?" she cried. "Is this the return I get for all I have done to drive the *orang blanda* out of Bulungan? My lover? When no lips of man have ever touched mine, shall ever touch mine—" She stamped her foot in fury. "Fools! Fools! Can't you see why I want him? He laughed at me—there by the Abbas River—laughed at my disgrace—yea, I know he was laughing, though he hid his smile with the cunning of the *orang blanda*. I swore then that he would be mine—that some day he should kneel before me, and beg for these arms around his, and my kiss on his lips. Then I would sink a dagger into his heart as I bent to kiss him—let him drink the deep sleep that has no ending outside of Sangjang."

Her fingers clenched spasmodically, as though she already felt the hilt of the fatal blade between them.

Van Slyck drew a deep breath. The depth of her savage, elemental passion dazed him. She looked from man to man, and as he felt her eyes upon him he involuntarily stepped back a pace, shuddering. The doubt he had of her a few moments before vanished; he did not question but what he had glimpsed into her naked soul. Lkath and Wobanguli were convinced, too, for fear and awe of this wonderful woman were expressed on their faces. Ah Sing alone scanned her face distrustfully.

"Why should I trust you?" he snarled.

Koyala started, then shrugged her shoulders indifferently and flung the door open for them to pass out. As Ah Sing passed her he halted a moment and said significantly:

"I give you his life to-day. But remember, Bintang Burung, there is one more powerful than all the princes of Bulungan."

"The god Djath is greater than all princes and Datus," Koyala replied quietly. "I am his priestess. Answer, Lkath, whose voice is heard before yours in Sadong?"

Lkath bowed low, almost to the ground.

"Djath rules us all," he acknowledged.

"You see," Koyala said to Ah Sing, "even your life is mine."

Something like fear came into the eyes of the Chinaman for the first time.

"I go back to Bulungan," he announced thickly.

CHAPTER XX

LKATH'S CONVERSION

The afternoon sun was waning when Peter Gross's sailing proa arrived at Sadong. The resident had been fortunate in finding a Sadonger at Bulungan, and a liberal promise of brass bracelets and a bolt of cloth persuaded the rover to pilot them into Sadong harbor. Paddy Rouse accompanied his chief.

A vociferous crowd of Dyaks hastened to the beach under the misapprehension that the proa was a trader. When shouts from the crew apprised them that the *orang blanda* chief was aboard, their cries of welcome died away. Glances of curious and friendly interest changed to glances of hostility, and men on the edges of the crowd slunk away to carry the news through the village. The inhospitable reception depressed Peter Gross, but he resolutely stepped into one of the sampans that had put off from shore at the proa's arrival and was paddled to the beach.

"We must be awfully popular here," Paddy remarked cheerfully, and he looked unabashed into the scowling faces of the natives. He lifted his hat. Rays from the low-hanging sun shone through his ruddy, tousled hair, making it gleam like living flame. A murmur of surprise ran through the crowd. Several Dyaks dropped to their knees.

"They're beginning to find their prayer-bones, Mr. Gross," Paddy pointed out, blissfully unconscious that it was he who had inspired their reverence.

At that moment Peter Gross saw a familiar girlish figure stride lightly down the lane. His face brightened.

"Good-afternoon, *juffrouw*!" he exclaimed delightedly as she approached. "How did you get here so soon?"

He offered his hand, and after a moment's hesitation Koyala permitted his friendly clasp to encircle the tips of her fingers.

"Lkath has a house ready for you," she said. "The dos-à-dos will be here in a moment." They chatted while the natives gaped until the jiggly, two-wheeled

carts clattered toward them.

Lkath received them at the door of his house. Peter Gross needed only a glance into his face to see that Koyala had not been mistaken in her warning. Lkath entertained no friendly feeling toward him.

"Welcome to the falcon's nest," Lkath said.

The words were spoken with a stately courtesy in which no cordiality mingled. Dyak tradition forbade closing a door to a guest, however unwelcome the guest might be.

Seized with a sudden admiration of his host, who could swallow his prejudices to maintain the traditional hospitality of his race, Peter Gross resolved to win his friendship at all costs. It was his newborn admiration that inspired him to reply:

"Your house is well named, Gusti. None but eagles would dare roost above the gate to Sangjang."

Lkath's stern features relaxed with a gratified smile, showing that the compliment had pleased him. There was more warmth in his voice as he said:

"My poor house and all that is in it is yours, Mynheer Resident."

"There is no door in Borneo more open than Lkath's," Peter responded. "I am happy to be here with you, brother."

The words were the signal, according to Dyak custom, for Lkath to step forward and rub noses. But the chief drew back.

"The blood of one of my people is between us, Mynheer Resident," he said bluntly. "There can be no talk of brother until the Sadong Dyaks are avenged."

"Am I not here to do justice?" Peter Gross asked. "To-morrow, when the sun is an hour high, we will have a council. Bring your people who know of this thing before me at that time."

Lkath bowed and said: "Very good, Mynheer Resident."

Having performed his duty as head of his nation, Lkath the chief became Lkath the host, and ushered Peter Gross, Rouse, and Koyala into the house. Peter Gross was surprised to find the dwelling fitted out with such European conveniences as chandelier oil-lamps, chairs, and tables, and even a reed organ. Boys dressed in

white appeared with basins of water and napkins on silver salvers for ablutions. The dinner was all that an epicure could desire. Madeira and bitters were first offered, together with a well-spiced vegetable soup. Several dishes of fowls and other edible birds, cooked in various ways, followed. Then a roast pig, emitting a most savory odor, was brought in, a fricassée of bats, rice, potatoes, and other vegetables, stewed durian, and, lastly, various native fruits and nuts. Gin, punch, and a native beer were served between courses.

Lkath's formal dignity mellowed under the influence of food and wine, and he became more loquacious. By indirect reference Peter Gross obtained, piece by piece, a coherent account of the hunting trip on which the Sadonger had lost his life. It confirmed his suspicion that the brother knew far more about the murder than he had admitted, but he kept his own counsel.

The next morning the elders assembled in the *balais*, or assembly-hall. Peter Gross listened to the testimony offered. He said little, and the only man he questioned was the Sadonger's brother, Lkath's chief witness.

"How did they know it was Jahi who was responsible?" he asked the Sadongers who had accompanied Lkath on the search. "They broke into voluble protestations. Did they use the sumpitan? Was it not exclusively a weapon of the hill Dyaks? Did not the feathers on the arrow show that it came from Jahi's tribe? And did they not find a strip of red calico from a hillman's chawat in the bush?"

Peter Gross did not answer their questions. "Show me where the body was found," he directed.

Paddy Rouse, usually bold to temerariousness, protested in dismay, pointing out the danger in venturing into the jungle with savages so avowedly unfriendly.

"There is no middle course for those who venture into the lion's den," Peter Gross replied. "We will be in no greater danger in the jungle than here, and I may be able to solve the mystery and do our cause some good."

"I'm with you wherever you go," Paddy said loyally.

Lkath led the expedition in person. To Peter Gross's great relief, Koyala went also. The journey took nearly five hours, for the road was very rugged and there were many détours on account of swamps, fallen trees, and impenetrable thickets. Koyala rode next to Peter Gross all the way. He instinctively felt that she did so purposely to protect him from possible treachery. It increased his

sense of obligation toward her. At the same time he realized keenly his own inability to make an adequate recompense. Old Sachsen's words, "If you can induce her to trust us, half your work is done," came to him with redoubled force.

They talked of Bulungan, its sorry history, its possibilities for development. Koyala's eyes glowed with a strange light, and she spoke with an ardency that surprised the resident.

"How she loves her country!" he thought.

They were riding single file along a narrow jungle-path when Koyala's horse stumbled over a hidden creeper. She was not watching the path at the moment, and would have fallen had not Peter Gross spurred his animal alongside and caught her. Her upturned face looked into his as his arm circled about her and held her tightly. There was a furious rush of blood to her cheeks; then she swung back into the saddle lightly as a feather and spurred her horse ahead. A silence came between them, and when the path widened and he was able to ride beside her again, he saw that her eyes were red.

"These roads are very dusty," he remarked, wiping a splinter of fine shale from his own eyes.

When they reached the scene of the murder Peter Gross carefully studied the lay of the land. Lkath and the dead man's brother, upon request, showed him where the red calico was found, and how the body lay by the water-hole. Standing in the bush where the red calico strip had been discovered, Peter Gross looked across the seven or eight rods to the water-hole and shook his head.

"There is some mistake," he said. "No man can blow an arrow that far."

Lkath's face flashed with anger. "When I was a boy, Mynheer Resident, I learned to shoot the sumpitan," he said. "Let me show you how a Dyak can shoot." He took the sumpitan which they had taken with them at Peter Gross's request, placed an arrow in the orifice, distended his cheeks, and blew. The shaft went across the water-hole.

"A wonderful shot!" Peter Gross exclaimed in pretended amazement. "There is none other can shoot like Lkath."

Several Sadongers offered to show what they could do. None of the shafts went quite so far as their chief's. Taking the weapon from them, Peter Gross offered it

to the dead Sadonger's brother.

"Let us see how far you can shoot," he said pleasantly.

The man shrank back. Peter Gross noticed his quick start of fear. "I cannot shoot," he protested.

"Try," Peter Gross insisted firmly, forcing the sumpitan into his hand. The Sadonger lifted it to his lips with trembling hands, the weapon shaking so that careful aim was impossible. He closed his eyes, took a quick half-breath, and blew. The arrow went little more than half the distance to the water-hole.

"You did not blow hard enough," Peter Gross said. "Try once more." But the Sadonger, shaking his head, retreated among his companions, and the resident did not press the point. He turned to Lkath.

"It is time to start, if we are to be back in Sadong before *malam*" (night) "casts its mantle over the earth," he said. Well content with the showing he had made, Lkath agreed.

They were passing the temple; it was an hour before sundown when Peter Gross said suddenly:

"Let us speak with Djath on this matter." He singled out Koyala, Lkath, and the Sadonger's brother, inviting them to enter the temple with him. A dusky pallor came over the Sadonger's face, but he followed the others into the enclosure.

"The great god Djath is not my god," Peter Gross said, when they had entered the silent hall and stood between the rows of grinning idols. "Yet I have heard that he is a god who loves the truth and hates falsehood. It seems good to me, therefore, that the Bintang Burung call down Djath's curse on this slayer of one of your people. Then, when the curse falls, we may know without doubt who the guilty one is. Is it good, Lkath?"

The chief, although plainly amazed at hearing such a suggestion from a white man, was impressed with the idea.

"It is good," he assented heartily.

Peter Gross looked at Koyala. She was staring at him with a puzzled frown, as if striving to fathom his purpose.

"Invoke us a curse, O Bintang Burung, on the slayer," he asked. "Speak your

bitterest curse. Give him to the Budjang Brani, to the eternal fires at the base of the Gunong Agong."

Koyala's frown deepened, and she seemed on the point of refusal, when Lkath urged: "Call us down a curse, daughter of Djath, I beg you."

Seeing there was no escape, Koyala sank to her knees and lifted her hands to the vault above. A vacant stare came into her eyes. Her lips began to move, first almost inaudibly; then Peter Gross distinguished the refrain of an uninterpretable formula of the Bulungan priesthood, a formula handed down to her by her grandfather, Chawatangi. Presently she began her curse in a mystic drone:

"May his eyes be burned out with fire; may the serpents devour his limbs; may the vultures eat his flesh; may the wild pigs defile his bones; may his soul burn in the eternal fires of the Gunong Agong—"

"Mercy, *bilian*, mercy!" Shrieking his plea, the dead Sadonger's brother staggered forward and groveled at Koyala's feet. "I will tell all!" he gasped. "I shot the arrow; I killed my brother; for the love of his woman I killed him—"

He fell in a fit, foaming at the mouth.

There was utter silence for a moment. Then Peter Gross said to the aged priest who kept the temple:

"Call the guard, father, and have this carrion removed to the jail." At a nod from Lkath, the priest went.

Neither Lkath nor Koyala broke the silence until they had returned to the former's house. Peter Gross, elated at the success of his mission, was puzzled and disappointed at the look he surprised on Koyala's face, a look of dissatisfaction at the turn of events. The moment she raised her eyes to meet his, however, her face brightened.

When they were alone Lkath asked:

"How did you know, O wise one?" His voice expressed an almost superstitious reverence.

"The gods reveal many things to those they love," was Peter Gross's enigmatical reply.

To Paddy Rouse, who asked the same question, he made quite a different reply.

"It was really quite simple," he said. "The only man with a motive for the crime was the brother. He wanted the wife. His actions at the water-hole convinced me he was guilty; all that was necessary was a little claptrap and an appeal to native superstition to force him to confess. This looked bad for us at the start, but it has proven the most fortunate thing that could have happened. Lkath will be with us now."

CHAPTER XXI

Captured by Pirates

When they rose the next morning Peter Gross inquired for his host, but was met with evasive replies. A premonition that something had gone wrong came upon him. He asked for Koyala.

"The Bintang Burung has flown to the jungle," one of the servant lads informed him after several of the older natives had shrugged their shoulders, professing ignorance.

"When did she go?" he asked.

"The stars were still shining, Datu, when she spread her wings," the lad replied. The feeling that something was wrong grew upon the resident.

An hour passed, with no sign of Lkath. Attempting to leave the house, Peter Gross and Paddy were politely but firmly informed that they must await the summons to the *balais*, or assembly-hall, from the chieftain.

"This is a rum go," Paddy grumbled.

"I am very much afraid that something has happened to turn Lkath against us," Peter Gross remarked. "I wish Koyala had stayed."

The summons to attend the *balais* came a little later. When they entered the hall they saw a large crowd of natives assembled. Lkath was seated in the judge's seat. Peter Gross approached him to make the customary salutation, but Lkath rose and folded his hands over his chest.

"Mynheer Resident," the chief said with dignity, "your mission in Sadong is accomplished. You have saved us from a needless war with the hill people. But I and the elders of my tribe have talked over this thing, and we have decided that it is best you should go. The Sadong Dyaks owe nothing to the *orang blanda*. They ask nothing of the *orang blanda*. You came in peace. Go in peace."

A tumult of emotions rose in Peter Gross's breast. To see the fruits of his victory snatched from him in this way was unbearable. A wild desire to plead with

Lkath, to force him to reason, came upon him, but he fought it down. It would only hurt his standing among the natives, he knew; he must command, not beg.

"It shall be as you say, Lkath," he said. "Give me a pilot and let me go."

"He awaits you on the beach," Lkath replied. With this curt dismissal, Peter Gross was forced to go.

The failure of his mission weighed heavily upon Peter Gross, and he said little all that day. Paddy could see that his chief was wholly unable to account for Lkath's change of sentiment. Several times he heard the resident murmur: "If only Koyala had stayed."

Shortly before sundown, while their proa was making slow headway against an unfavorable breeze Paddy noticed his chief standing on the raised afterdeck, watching another proa that had sailed out of a jungle-hid creek-mouth shortly before and was now following in their wake. He cocked an eye at the vessel himself and remarked:

"Is that soap-dish faster than ours, or are we gaining?"

"That is precisely what I am trying to decide," Peter Gross answered gravely.

Paddy observed the note of concern in the resident's voice.

"She isn't a pirate, is she?" he asked quickly.

"I am very much afraid she is." Peter Gross spoke calmly, but Paddy noticed a tremor in his voice.

"Then we'll have to fight for it?" he exclaimed.

Peter Gross avoided a direct reply. "I'm wondering why she can stay so close inshore and outsail us," he said. "The wind is offshore, those high hills should cut her off from what little breeze we're getting, yet she neither gains nor loses an inch on us."

"Why doesn't she come out where she can get the breeze?"

"Ay, why doesn't she?" Peter Gross echoed. "If she were an honest trader she would. But keeping that course enables her to intercept us in case we should try to make shore."

Paddy did not appear greatly disturbed at the prospect of a brush with pirates. In

fact, there was something like a sparkle of anticipation in his eyes. But seeing his chief so concerned, he suggested soberly:

"Can't we beat out to sea and lose them during the night?"

"Not if this is the ship I fear it is," the resident answered gravely.

"What ship?" The question was frankly curious.

"Did you hear something like a muffled motor exhaust a little while ago?"

Paddy looked up in surprise. "That's just what I thought it was, only I thought I must be crazy, imagining such a thing here."

Peter Gross sighed. "I thought so," he said with gentle resignation. "It must be her."

"Who? What?" There was no escaping the lad's eager curiosity.

"The ghost proa. She's a pirate—Ah Sing's own ship, if reports be true. I've never seen her; few white men have; but there are stories enough about her, God knows. She's equipped with a big marine engine imported from New York, I've heard; and built like a launch, though she's got the trimmings of a proa. She can outrun any ship, steam or sail, this side of Hong Kong, and she's manned by a crew of fiends that never left a man, woman or child alive yet on any ship they've taken."

Paddy's face whitened a little, and he looked earnestly at the ship. Presently he started and caught Peter Gross's arm.

"There," he exclaimed. "The motor again! Did you hear it?"

"Ay," Peter Gross replied. "We had gained a few hundred yards on them, and they've made it up."

Paddy noted the furtive glances cast at them by the crew of their own proa, mostly Bugis and Bajaus, the sea-rovers and the sea-wash, with a slight sprinkling of Dyaks. He called Peter Gross's attention to it.

"They know the proa," the resident said. "They'll neither fight nor run. The fight is ours, Paddy. You'd better get some rifles on deck."

"We're going to fight?" Rouse asked eagerly.

"Ay," Peter Gross answered soberly. "We'll fight to the end." He placed a hand on his protégé's shoulder.

"I shouldn't have brought you here, my lad," he said. There was anguish in his voice. "I should have thought of this—"

"I'll take my chances," Paddy interrupted gruffly, turning away. He dove into their tiny cubicle, a boxlike contrivance between decks, to secure rifles and cartridges. They carried revolvers. When he came up the sun was almost touching the rim of the horizon. The pursuing proa, he noticed had approached much nearer, almost within hailing distance.

"They don't intend to lose us in the dark," he remarked cheerfully.

"The moon rises early to-night," Peter Gross replied.

A few minutes later, as the sun was beginning to make its thunderclap tropic descent, the *juragan*, or captain of the proa issued a sharp order. The crew leaped to the ropes and began hauling in sail. Peter Gross swung his rifle to his shoulder and covered the navigator.

"Tell your crew to keep away from those sails," he said with deadly intentness.

The *juragan* hesitated a moment, glanced over his shoulder at the pursuing proa, and then reversed his orders. As the crew scrambled down they found themselves under Paddy's rifle.

"Get below, every man of you," Peter Gross barked in the *lingua franca* of the islands. "Repeat that order, *juragan*!"

The latter did so sullenly, and the crew dropped hastily below, apparently well content at keeping out of the impending hostilities.

These happenings were plainly visible from the deck of the pursuing proa. The sharp chug-chug of a motor suddenly sounded, and the disguised launch darted forward like a hawk swooping down on a chicken. Casting aside all pretense, her crew showed themselves above the rail. There were at least fifty of them, mostly Chinese and Malays, fierce, wicked-looking men, big and powerful, some of them nearly as large, physically, as the resident himself. They were armed with magazine rifles and revolvers and long-bladed krisses. A rapid-firer was mounted on the forward deck.

Paddy turned to his chief with a whimsical smile. "Pretty big contract," he remarked with unimpaired cheerfulness.

Peter Gross's face was white. He knew what Paddy did not know, the fiendish tortures the pirates inflicted on their hapless victims. He was debating whether it were more merciful to shoot the lad and then himself or to make a vain stand and take the chance of being rendered helpless by a wound.

The launch was only a hundred yards away now—twenty yards. A cabin door on her aft deck opened and Peter Gross saw the face of Ah Sing, aglow in the dying rays of the sun with a fiendish malignancy and satisfaction. Lifting his rifle, he took quick aim.

Four things happened almost simultaneously as his rifle cracked. One was Ah Sing staggering forward, another was a light footfall on the deck behind him and a terrific crash on his head that filled the western heavens from horizon to zenith with a blaze of glory, the third was the roaring of a revolver in his ear and Paddy's voice trailing into the dim distance:

"I got you, damn you."

When he awoke he found himself in a vile, evil-smelling hole, in utter darkness. He had a peculiar sensation in the pit of his stomach, and his lips and tongue were dry and brittle as cork. His head felt the size of a barrel. He groaned unconsciously.

"Waking up, governor?" a cheerful voice asked. It was Paddy.

By this time Peter Gross was aware, from the rolling motion, that they were at sea. After a confused moment he picked up the thread of memory where it had been broken off.

"They got us, did they?" he asked.

"They sure did," Paddy chirruped, as though it was quite a lark.

"We haven't landed yet?"

"We made one stop. Just a few hours, I guess, to get some grub aboard. I can't make out much of their lingo, but from what I've heard I believe we're headed for one of the coast towns where we can get a doctor. That shot of yours hit the old bird in the shoulder; he's scared half to death he's going to croak."

"If he only does," Peter Gross prayed fervently under his breath. He asked Paddy: "How long have we been here?"

"About fourteen hours, I'd say on a guess. We turned back a ways, made a stop, and then headed this way. I'm not much of a sailor, but I believe we've kept a straight course since. At least the roll of the launch hasn't changed any."

"Fourteen hours," Peter Gross mused. "It might be toward Coti, or it might be the other way. Have they fed you?"

"Not a blankety-blanked thing. Not even sea-water. I'm so dry I could swallow the Mississippi."

Peter Gross made no comment. "Tell me what happened," he directed.

Paddy, who was sitting cross-legged, tried to shuffle into a more comfortable position. In doing so he bumped his head against the top of their prison. "Ouch!" he exclaimed feelingly.

"You're not hurt?" Peter Gross asked quickly.

"A plug in the arm and a tunk on the head," Paddy acknowledged. "The one in my arm made me drop my rifle, but I got two of the snakes before they got me. Then I got three more with the gat before somebody landed me a lallapaloosa on the beano and I took the count. One of the steersmen—*jurumuddis* you call 'em, don't you?—got you. We forgot about those chaps in the steersmen's box when we ordered the crew below. But I finished him. He's decorating a nice flat in a shark's belly by now."

Peter Gross was silent.

"Wonder why they didn't chuck us overboard," Paddy remarked after a time. "I thought that was the polite piratical stunt. Seeing they were so darned considerate, giving us this private apartment, they might rustle us some grub."

"How shall I tell this light-hearted lad what is before us?" Peter Gross groaned in silent agony.

A voluble chatter broke out overhead. Through the thin flooring they heard the sound of naked feet pattering toward the rail. A moment later the ship's course was altered and it began pitching heavily in the big rollers. Peter Gross sat bolt upright, listening intently.

"What's stirring now?" Paddy asked.

"Hist! I don't know," Peter Gross warned sharply.

There was a harsh command to draw in sail, intelligible only to Peter Gross, for it was in the island patois. Paddy waited in breathless anticipation while Peter Gross, every muscle strained and tense, listened to the dissonancy above, creaking cordage, the flapping of bamboo sails, and the jargon of two-score excited men jabbering in their various tongues.

There was a series of light explosions, and then a steady vibration shook the ship. It leaped ahead instantly in response to its powerful motor. It was hardly under way when they heard a whistling sound overhead. There was a moment's pause, then the dull boom of an explosion reached their ear.

"We're under shell-fire!" Paddy gasped.

"That must be the *Prins*," Peter Gross exclaimed. "I hope to Heaven Enckel doesn't know we're aboard."

Another whistle of a passing shell and the thunder of an explosion. The two were almost simultaneous, the shell could not have fallen far from the launch's bow, both knew.

"They may sink us!" Paddy cried in a half-breath.

"Better drowning than torture." The curt reply was cut short by another shell. The explosion was more distant.

"They're losing the range." Paddy exclaimed in a low voice. In a flash it came to him why Peter Gross had said: "I hope Enckel doesn't know we're here."

Peter Gross stared, white, and silent into the blackness, waiting for the next shell. It was long in coming, and fell astern. A derisive shout rose from the pirates.

"The *Prins* is falling behind," Paddy cried despairingly.

"Ay, the proa is too fast for her," the resident assented in a scarcely audible voice. Tears were coursing down his cheeks, tears for the lad that he had brought here to suffer unnameable tortures, for Peter Gross did not underestimate the fiendish ingenuity of Ah Sing and his crew. He felt grateful for the wall of darkness between them.

"Well, there's more than one way to crawl out of a rain-barrel," Paddy observed with unimpaired cheerfulness.

Peter Gross felt that he should speak and tell Rouse what they had to expect, but the words choked in his throat. Blissful ignorance and a natural buoyant optimism sustained the lad, it would be cruel to take them away, the resident thought. He groaned again.

"Cheer up," Paddy cried, "we'll get another chance."

The grotesqueness of the situation—his youthful protégé striving to raise his flagging spirits—came home to Peter Gross even in that moment of suffering and brought a rueful smile to his lips.

"I'm afraid, my lad, that the *Prins* was our last hope," he said. There was an almost fatherly sympathy in his voice, responsibility seemed to have added a decade to the slight disparity of years between them.

"Rats!" Paddy grunted. "We're not going to turn in our checks just yet, governor. This bird's got to go ashore somewhere, and it'll be deuced funny if Cap Carver and the little lady don't figure out some way between 'em to get us out of this."

CHAPTER XXII

In The Temple

The hatch above them opened. A bestial Chinese face, grinning cruelly, appeared in it.

"You b'g-um fellow gettee outtee here plenty damn' quick!" the Chinaman barked. He thrust a piece of bamboo into the hole and prodded the helpless captives below with a savage energy. The third thrust of the cane found Peter Gross's ribs. With a hoarse cry of anger Paddy sprang to his feet and shot his fist into the Chinaman's face before the resident could cry a warning.

The blow caught the pirate between the eyes and hurled him back on the deck. He gazed at Paddy a dazed moment and then sprang to his feet. Lifting the cane in both his hands above his head, he uttered a shriek of fury and would have driven the weapon through Rouse's body had not a giant Bugi, standing near by, jumped forward and caught his arm.

Wrestling with the maddened Chinaman, the Bugi shouted some words wholly unintelligible to Paddy in the pirate's ear. Peter Gross scrambled to his feet.

"Jump on deck, my lad," he shouted. "Quick, let them see you. It may save us."

Paddy obeyed. The morning sun, about four hours high, played through his rumpled hair, the auburn gleaming like flame. Malays, Dyaks, and Bugis, attracted by the noise of the struggle, crowded round and pointed at him, muttering superstitiously.

"Act like a madman," Peter Gross whispered hoarsely to his aide.

Paddy broke into a shriek of foolish laughter. He shook as though overcome with mirth, and folded his arms over his stomach as he rocked back and forth. Suddenly straightening, he yelled a shrill "Whoopee!" The next moment he executed a handspring into the midst of the natives, almost upsetting one of them. The circle widened. A Chinese mate tried to interfere, but the indignant islanders thrust him violently aside. He shouted to the *juragan*, who ran forward, waving a pistol.

Every one of the crew was similarly armed, and every one wore a kris. They formed in a crescent between their officer and the captives. In a twinkling Peter Gross and Rouse found themselves encircled by a wall of steel.

The *juragan's* automatic dropped to a dead level with the eyes of the Bugi who had saved Paddy. He bellowed an angry command, but the Bugi closed his eyes and lowered his head resignedly, nodding in negation. The other islanders stood firm. The Chinese of the crew ranged themselves behind their captain and a bloody fight seemed imminent.

A Dyak left the ranks and began talking volubly to the *juragan*, gesticulating wildly and pointing at Paddy Rouse and then at the sun. A crooning murmur of assent arose from the native portion of the crew. The *juragan* retorted sharply. The Dyak broke into another volley of protestations. Paddy looked on with a glaringly stupid smile. The *juragan* watched him suspiciously while the Dyak talked, but gradually his scowl faded. At last he gave a peremptory command and stalked away. The crew returned to their duties.

"We're to be allowed to stay on deck as long as we behave ourselves until we near shore, or unless some trader passes us," Peter Gross said in a low voice to Rouse. Paddy blinked to show that he understood, and burst into shouts of foolish laughter, hopping around on all fours. The natives respectfully made room for him. He kept up these antics at intervals during the day, while Peter Gross, remaining in the shade of the cabin, watched the pirates. After prying into every part of the vessel with a childish curiosity that none of the crew sought to restrain, Paddy returned to his chief and reported in a low whisper:

"The old bird isn't aboard, governor."

"I rather suspected he wasn't," Peter Gross answered. "He must have been put ashore at the stop you spoke of."

It was late that day when the proa, after running coastwise all day, turned a quarter circle into one of the numerous bays indenting the coast. Peter Gross recognized the familiar headlands crowning Bulungan Bay. Paddy also recognized them, for he cried:

"They're bringing us back home."

At that moment the tall Bugi who had been their sponsor approached them and made signs to indicate that they must return to the box between decks from

which he had rescued them. He tried to show by signs and gestures his profound regret at the necessity of locking them up again, his anxiety to convince the "son of the Gunong Agong" was almost ludicrous. Realizing the futility of objecting, Peter Gross and Paddy permitted themselves to be locked in the place once more.

It was quite dark and the stars were shining brightly when the hatch was lifted again. As they rose from their cramped positions and tried to make out the circle of faces about them, unceremonious hands yanked them to the deck, thrust foul-smelling cloths into their mouths, blindfolded them, and trussed their hands and feet with stout cords. They were lowered into a boat, and after a brief row were tossed on the beach like so many sacks of wool, placed in boxlike receptacles, and hurried inland. Two hours' steady jogging followed, in which they were thrown about until every inch of skin on their bodies was raw with bruises. They were then taken out of the boxes and the cloths and cords were removed.

Looking about, Peter Gross and Paddy found themselves in the enclosed court of what was evidently the ruins of an ancient Hindoo temple. The massive columns, silvery in the bright moonlight, were covered with inscriptions and outline drawings, crudely made in hieroglyphic art. In the center of one wall was the chipped and weather-scarred pedestal of a Buddha. The idol itself, headless, lay broken in two on the floor beside it. Peter Gross's brow puckered—the very existence of such a temple two hours' journey distant from Bulungan Bay had been unknown to him.

The *juragan* and his Chinese left after giving sharp instructions to their jailers, two Chinese, to guard them well. Peter Gross and Paddy looked about in vain for a single friendly face or even the face of a brown-skinned man—every member of the party was Chinese. The jailers demonstrated their capacity by promptly thrusting their prisoners into a dark room off the main court. It was built of stone, like the rest of the temple.

"Not much chance for digging out of here," Rouse observed, after examining the huge stones, literally mortised together, and the narrow window aperture with its iron gratings. Peter Gross also made as careful an examination of their prison as the darkness permitted.

"We may as well make ourselves comfortable," was his only observation at the close of his investigation.

They chatted a short time, and at last Paddy, worn out by his exertions, fell

asleep. Peter Gross listened for a while to the lad's rhythmic breathing, then tip-toed to the gratings and pulled himself up to them. A cackle of derisive laughter arose outside. Realizing that the place was carefully watched, he dropped back to the floor and began pacing the chamber, his head lowered in thought. Presently he stopped beside Rouse and gazed into the lad's upturned face, blissfully serene in the innocent confidence of youth. Tears gathered in his eyes.

"I shouldn't have brought him here; I shouldn't have brought him here," he muttered brokenly.

The scraping of the ponderous bar that bolted the door interrupted his meditations shortly after daybreak. The door creaked rustily on its hinges, and an ugly, leering Chinese face peered inside. Satisfying himself that his prisoners were not planning mischief, the Chinaman thrust two bowls of soggy rice and a pannikin of water inside and gestured to Peter Gross that he must eat. The indignant protest of the door as it closed awoke Paddy, who sat bolt upright and blinked sleepily until he saw the food.

"What? Time for breakfast?" he exclaimed with an amiable grin. "I must have overslept."

He picked up a bowl of rice, stirred it critically with one of the chopsticks their jailers had provided, and snuffed at the mixture. He put it down with a wry face.

"Whew!" he whistled. "It's stale."

"You had better try to eat something," Peter Gross advised.

"I'm that hungry I could eat toasted sole leather," Paddy confessed. "But this stuff smells to heaven."

Peter Gross took the other bowl and began eating, wielding the chopsticks expertly.

"It isn't half bad—I've had worse rations on board your uncle's ship," he encouraged.

"Then my dear old avunculus ought to be hung," Paddy declared with conviction. Hunger and his superior's example finally overcame his scruples, however, and presently he was eating with gusto.

"Faith," he exclaimed, "I've got more appetite than I imagined."

Peter Gross did not answer. He was wondering whether the rice was poisoned, and half hoped it was. It would be an easier death than by torture, he thought. But he forebore mentioning this to Paddy.

CHAPTER XXIII

Ah Sing's Vengeance

Two days, whose monotony was varied only by occasional visits from one or another of their jailers, passed in this way. Peter Gross's faint hope that they might be able to escape by overpowering the Chinamen, while the latter brought them their meals, faded; the jailers had evidently been particularly cautioned against such an attempt and were on their guard.

On the afternoon of the second day a commotion in the fore-court of the temple, distinctly audible through the gratings, raised their curiosity to fever heat. They listened intently and tried to distinguish voices and words in the hubbub, but were unsuccessful. It was apparent, however, that a large party had arrived. There were fully a hundred men in it, Peter Gross guessed, possibly twice that number.

"What's this?" Paddy asked.

Peter Gross's face was set in hard, firm lines, and there was an imperious note in his voice as he said:

"Come here, Paddy. I have a few words to say to you."

Paddy's face lost its familiar smile as he followed his chief to the corner of their prison farthest from the door.

"I don't know what this means, but I rather suspect that Ah Sing has arrived," Peter Gross said. He strove to speak calmly, but his voice broke. "If that is the case, we will probably part. You will not see me again. You may escape, but it is doubtful. If you see the slightest chance to get away, take it. Being shot or krissed is a quicker death than by torture."

In spite of his effort at self-control, Paddy's face blanched.

"By torture?" he asked in a low voice of amazement.

"That is what we may expect," Peter Gross declared curtly.

Paddy breathed hard a moment. Then he laid an impulsive hand on his leader's arm.

"Let's rush 'em the minute the door opens, Mr. Gross."

Peter Gross shook his head in negation. "While there is life there is hope," he said, smiling.

Paddy did not perceive that his chief was offering himself in the hope that his death might appease the pirate's craving for vengeance.

They strolled about, their hearts too full for speech. Presently Paddy lifted his head alertly and signaled for silence. He was standing near the window and raised himself on tiptoe to catch the sounds coming through. Peter Gross walked softly toward him.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I thought I heard a white man speaking just now," Paddy whispered. "It sounded like Van Slyck's voice—Hist!"

A low murmur of ironic laughter came through the gratings. Peter Gross's face became black with anger. There was no doubting who it was that had laughed.

A few minutes later they heard the scraping of the heavy bar as it was lifted out of its socket, then the door opened. Several armed Chinamen, giants of their race, sprang inside. Ah Sing entered behind them, pointed at Peter Gross, and issued a harsh, guttural command.

The resident walked forward and passively submitted to the rough hands placed upon him. Paddy tried to follow, but two of the guards thrust him back so roughly that he fell. Furious with anger, he leaped to his feet and sprang at one of them, but the Chinaman caught him, doubled his arm with a jiu-jitsu trick, and then threw him down again. The other prodded him with a spear. Inwardly raging, Paddy lay motionless until the guards tired of their sport and left him.

In the meantime Peter Gross was half led, half dragged through the fore-court of the temple into another chamber. Those behind him prodded him with spear-points, those in front spit in his face. He stumbled, and as he regained his balance four barbs entered his back and legs, but his teeth were grimly set and he made no sound. Although he gazed about for Van Slyck, he saw no signs of him; the captain had unquestionably deemed it best to keep out of sight.

In the chamber, at Ah Sing's command, they bound him securely hand and foot, with thongs of crocodile hide. Then the guards filed out and left the pirate chief alone with his prisoner.

As the doors closed on them Ah Sing walked slowly toward the resident, who was lying on his back on the tessellated pavement. Peter Gross looked back calmly into the eyes that were fixed so gloatingly upon him. In them he read no sign of mercy. They shone with a savage exultation and fiendish cruelty. Ah Sing sighed a sigh of satisfaction.

"Why you don't speak, Mynheer Gross?" he asked, mimicking Van Schouten's raspy voice.

Peter Gross made no reply, but continued staring tranquilly into the face of his arch-enemy.

"Mebbe you comee Ah Sing's house for two-three men?" the pirate chief suggested with a wicked grin.

"Mebbe you show Ah Sing one damn' fine ring Mauritius?" the pirate chief mocked.

Peter Gross did not flick an eyelash. A spasm of passion flashed over Ah Sing's face, and he kicked the resident violently.

"Speakee, Chlistian dog," he snarled.

Peter Gross's lips twitched with pain, but he did not utter a sound.

"I teachum you speakee Ah Sing," the pirate declared grimly. Whipping a dagger from his girdle, he thrust it between Peter Gross's fourth and fifth ribs next to his heart. The point entered the skin, but Peter Gross made no sound. It penetrated a quarter-inch.

Ah Sing, smiling evilly, searched the face of his victim for an expression of fear or pain. Three-eighths of an inch, half an inch—Peter Gross suddenly lunged forward. An involuntary contraction of his facial muscles betrayed him, and the Chinaman pulled the dagger away before the resident could impale himself upon it. He stepped back, and a look of admiration came upon his face—it was the tribute of one strong man to another.

"Peter him muchee likee go *sangjang* (hades)," he observed. "Ah Sing sendee

him to-mollow, piecee, piecee, plenty much talkee then." The pirate indicated with strokes of his dagger that he would cut off Peter Gross's toes, fingers, ears, nose, arms, and legs piecemeal at the torture. Giving his victim another violent kick, he turned and passed through the door. A few minutes later a native physician came in with two armed guards and staunched the flow of blood, applying bandages with dressings of herbs to subdue inflammation.

Night settled soon after. The darkness in the chamber was abysmal. Peter Gross lay on one side and stared into the blackness, waiting for the morning, the morning Ah Sing promised to make his last. Rats scurried about the floor and stopped to sniff suspiciously at him. At times he wished they were numerous enough to attack him. He knew full well the savage ingenuity of the wretches into whose hands he had fallen for devising tortures unspeakable, unendurable.

Dawn came at last. The first rays of the sun peeping through the gratings found him asleep. Exhausted nature had demanded her toll, and even the horror of his situation had failed to banish slumber from his heavy lids. As the sun rose and gained strength the temperature sensibly increased, but Peter Gross slept on.

He awoke naturally. Stretching himself to ease his stiffened limbs, he felt a sharp twitch of pain that brought instant remembrance. He struggled to a sitting posture. The position of the sun's rays on the wall indicated that the morning was well advanced.

He listened for the camp sounds, wondering why his captors had not appeared for him before now. There was no sound outside except the soughing of the wind through the jungle and the lackadaisical chatter of the pargams and lories.

"Strange!" he muttered to himself. "It can't be that they've left."

His shoulders were aching frightfully, and he tugged at his bonds to get his hands free, but they were too firmly bound to be released by his unaided efforts. His clothing, he noticed, was almost drenched, the heavy night dew had clustered thickly upon it. So does man cling to the minor comforts even in his extremity that he labored to bring himself within the narrow park of the sun's rays to dry his clothing.

He was still enjoying his sun-bath when he heard the bar that fastened the door of his chamber lifted from its sockets. His lips closed firmly. A half-uttered prayer, "God give me strength," floated upward, then the door opened. An armed guard, one of his jailers for the past two days, peered inside.

Seeing his prisoner firmly bound, he ventured within with the customary bowl of rice and pannikin of water. A slash of his kris cut the thongs binding Peter Gross's hands, then the jailer backed to the door while the resident slowly and dazedly unwound the thongs that had bound him.

Expecting nothing else than that he would be led to the torture, persuaded that the door would be opened for no other purpose, Peter Gross could not comprehend for a few moments what had happened. Then he realized that a few hours of additional grace had been vouchsafed him, and that Ah Sing and his crew must have left.

He wondered why food was offered him. In the imminent expectancy of death, the very thought of eating had nauseated him the moment before. Yet to have this shadow removed, if only for a few hours, brought him an appetite. He ate with relish, the guard watching him in the meantime with cat-like intentness and holding his spear in instant readiness. As soon as the resident had finished he bore the dishes away, barring the door carefully again.

CHAPTER XXIV

A RESCUE

Released from his bonds, for the jailer had not replaced these, Peter Gross spent the hours in comparative comfort. He amused himself in examining every inch of the cell in the faint hope that he might find a weak spot, and in meditating other plans of escape. Although missing Paddy's ready smile and readier chaff greatly, he did not worry about the lad, for since he was safe himself he reasoned that his subordinate must be.

Late in the afternoon, while he was pacing his cell, the sharp crack of a rifle suddenly broke the forest stillness. Holding himself tense and rigid with every fiber thrilling at the thought of rescue, he listened for the repetition of the shot. It came quickly, mingled with a blood-curdling yell from a hundred or more savage throats. There were other scattered shots.

His finger-nails bit into his palms, and his heart seemed to stand still. Had Carver found him? Were these Dyaks friends or enemies? The next few moments seemed that many eternities; then he heard a ringing American shout:

"We've got 'em all, boys; come on!"

Peter Gross leaped to the grating. "Here, Carver, here!" he shouted at the top of his voice.

"Coming!" twenty or more voices shouted in a scattered chorus. There was a rush of feet, leather-shod feet, across the fore-court pavement. The heavy bar was lifted. Striving to remain calm, although his heart beat tumultuously, Peter Gross waited in the center of the chamber until the door opened and Carver sprang within.

The captain blinked to accustom himself to the light. Peter Gross stepped forward and their hands clasped.

"In time, Mr. Gross, thank God!" Carver exclaimed. "Where's Paddy?"

"In the other chamber; I'll show you," Peter Gross answered. He sprang out of his cell like a colt from the barrier and led the way on the double-quick to the

cell that had housed him and Paddy for two days. Carver and he lifted the bar together and forced the door. The cell was empty.

It took a full minute for the resident to comprehend this fact. He stared dazedly at every inch of the floor and wall, exploring bare corners with an eager eye, as though Paddy might be hiding in some nook or cranny. But the tenantless condition of the chamber was indisputable.

A half-sob broke in Peter Gross's throat. It was the first emotion he had given way to.

"They've taken him away," he said in a low, strained voice.

"Search the temple!" Carver shouted in a stentorian voice to several of his command. "Get Jahi to help; he probably knows this place."

"Jahi's here?" Peter Gross exclaimed incredulously.

"He and a hundred hillmen," Carver replied crisply. "Now to comb this pile."

The tribesmen scattered to search the ruin. It was not extensive. In the meantime Peter Gross briefly sketched the happenings of the past few days to Carver. At the mention of Van Slyck the captain's face became livid.

"The damn' skunk said he was going to Padang," he exclaimed. "He left Banning in charge. I hope to God he stays away."

One of Jahi's hillmen reported that no trace of Rouse could be found. "Him no here; him in bush," he said.

"The Chinks have gone back to their proas; the trail heads that way," Carver said. "Some of Jahi's boys picked it up before we found you. But what the deuce do they want with Rouse, if they haven't killed him?"

"He's alive," Peter Gross declared confidently, although his own heart was heavy with misgiving. "We've got to rescue him."

"They've got at least five hours the start of us," Carver remarked. "How far are we from the seacoast?"

Peter Gross's reply was as militarily curt as the captain's question.

"About two hours' march."

"They're probably at sea. We'll take a chance, though." He glanced upward at the sound of a footfall. "Ah, here's Jahi."

Peter Gross turned to the chieftain who had so promptly lived up to his oath of brotherhood. Warm with gratitude, he longed to crush the Dyak's hand within his own, but restrained himself, knowing how the Borneans despised display of emotion. Instead he greeted the chief formally, rubbing noses according to the custom of the country.

No word of thanks crossed his lips, for he realized that Jahi would be offended if he spoke. Such a service was due from brother to brother, according to the Dyak code.

"Rajah, can we catch those China boys before they reach their proas?" Carver asked.

"No can catch," Jahi replied.

"Can we catch them before they sail?"

"No can say."

"How far is it?"

They were standing near a lone column of stone that threw a short shadow toward them. Jahi touched the pavement with his spear at a point about six inches beyond the end of the shadow.

"When there shall have reached by so far the finger of the sun," he declared.

Both Carver and Peter Gross understood that he was designating how much longer the shadow must grow.

"About two hours, as you said," Carver remarked to his chief. "We'd better start at once."

Jahi bowed to indicate that he had understood. He took some soiled sheets of China rice paper from his chawat.

"Here are skins that talk, *mynheer kapitein*," he said respectfully. "Dyak boy find him in China boy kampong."

Carver thrust them into his pocket without looking at them and blew his whistle. A few minutes later they began the march to the sea.

While they were speeding through a leafy tunnel with Jahi's Dyaks covering the front and rear to guard against surprise, Carver found opportunity to explain to Peter Gross how he had been able to make the rescue. Koyala had learned Ah Sing's plans from a native source and had hastened to Jahi, who was watching the borders of his range to guard against a surprise attack by Lkath. Jahi, on Koyala's advice, had made a forced march to within ten miles of Bulungan, where Carver, summoned by Koyala, had joined him. Starting at midnight, they had made an eight-hour march to the temple.

"Koyala again," Peter Gross remarked. "She has been our good angel all the way."

Carver was silent. The resident looked at him curiously.

"I am surprised that you believed her so readily," he said. They jogged along some distance before the captain replied.

"I believed her. But I don't believe in her," he said.

"Something's happened since to cause you to lose confidence in her?" Peter Gross asked quickly.

"No, nothing specific. Only Muller and his *controlleurs* are having the devil's own time getting the census. Many of the chiefs won't even let them enter their villages. Somebody has been stirring them up. And there have been raids—"

"So you assume it's Koyala?" Peter Gross demanded harshly.

Carver evaded a reply. "I got a report that the priests are preaching a holy war among the Malay and Dyak Mohammedans."

"That is bad, bad," Peter Gross observed, frowning thoughtfully. "We must find out who is at the bottom of this."

"The Argus Pheasant isn't flying around the country for nothing," Carver suggested, but stopped abruptly as he saw the flash of anger that crossed his superior's face.

"Every success we have had is due to her," Peter Gross asserted sharply. "She saved my life three times."

Carver hazarded one more effort.

"Granted. For some reason we don't know she thinks it's to her interest to keep you alive—for the present. But she has an object. I can't make it out yet, but I'm going to—" The captain's lips closed resolutely.

"You condemned her before you saw her because she has Dyak blood," Peter Gross accused. "It isn't fair."

"I'd like her a lot more if she wasn't so confounded friendly," Carver replied dryly.

Peter Gross did not answer, and by tacit consent the subject was dropped.

Captain Carver was looking at his watch—the two hours were more than up—when Jahi, who had been in the van, stole back and lifted his hand in signal for silence.

"*Orang blanda* here stay, Dyak boy smell kampong," he said.

CHAPTER XXV

The Fight on the Beach

Carver gave a low-voiced command to halt, and enjoined his men to see to their weapons. As he ran his eyes over his company and saw their dogged jaws and alert, watchful faces, devoid of any trace of nervousness and excitability, his face lit with a quiet satisfaction. These men would fight—they were veterans who knew how to fight, and they had a motive; Paddy was a universal favorite.

A Dyak plunged through the bush toward Jahi and jabbered excitedly. Jahi cried:

"China boy, him go proa, three-four sampan."

"Lead the way," Carver cried. Peter Gross translated.

"Double time," the captain shouted, as Jahi and his tribesmen plunged through the bush at a pace too swift for even Peter Gross.

In less than three minutes they reached the edge of the jungle, back about fifty yards from the coral beach. Four hundred yards from shore a proa was being loaded from several large sampans. Some distance out to sea, near the horizon, was another proa.

A sharp command from Carver kept his men from rushing out on the beach in their ardor. In a moment or two every rifle in the company was covering the sampans. But there were sharp eyes and ears on board the proa as well as on shore, and a cry of alarm was given from the deck. The Chinese in the sampans leaped upward. At the same moment Carver gave the command to fire.

Fully twenty Chinamen on the two sampans floating on the leeward side of the proa made the leap to her deck, and of these eleven fell back, so deadly was the fire. Only two of them dropped into the boats, the others falling into the sea. Equipped with the latest type of magazine rifle, Carver's irregulars continued pumping lead into the proa. Several Chinamen thrust rifles over the rail and attempted a reply, but when one dropped back with a bullet through his forehead and another with a creased skull, they desisted and took refuge behind the ship's steel-jacketed rail. Perceiving that the proa was armored against rifle-fire, Carver

ordered all but six of his command to cease firing, the six making things sufficiently hot to keep the pirates from replying.

The sampans were sinking. Built of skins placed around a bamboo frame, they had been badly cut by the first discharge. As one of them lowered to the gunwale, those on shore could see a wounded Chinaman, scarce able to crawl, beg his companions to throw him a rope. A coil of hemp shot over the deck of the vessel. The pirate reached for it, but at that moment the sampan went down and left him swirling in the water. A dorsal fin cut the surface close by, there was a little flurry, and the pirate disappeared.

Peter Gross made his way through the bush toward Carver. The latter was watching the proa with an anxious frown.

"They've got a steel jacket on her," he declared in answer to the resident's question. "So long as they don't show themselves we can't touch them. We couldn't go out to them in sampans if we had them; they'd sink us."

"Concentrate your fire on the water-line," Peter Gross suggested. "The armor doesn't probably reach very low, and some of these proas are poorly built."

"A good idea!" Carver bellowed the order.

The fire was concentrated at the stern, where the ship rode highest. That those on board became instantly aware of the maneuver was evident from the fact that a pirate, hideously attired with a belt of human hands, leaned over the bow to slash at the hempen cable with his kris. He gave two cuts when he straightened spasmodically and tumbled headlong into the sea. He did not appear above the surface again.

"*Een*," John Vander Esse, a member of the crew, murmured happily, refilling his magazine. "Now for *nummer twee*." (Number two.)

But the kris had been whetted to a keen edge. A gust of wind filled the proa's cumbersome triangular sail and drove her forward. The weakened cable snapped. The ship lunged and half rolled into the trough of the waves; then the steersmen, sheltered in their box, gained control and swung it about.

"Gif heem all you got," Anderson, a big Scandinavian and particularly fond of Rouse, yelled. The concentrated fire of the twenty-five rifles, emptied, refilled, and emptied as fast as human hands could perform these operations, centered on the stern of the ship. Even sturdy teak could not resist that battering. The proa

had not gone a hundred yards before it was seen that the stern was settling. Suddenly it came about and headed for the shore.

There was a shrill yell from Jahi's Dyaks. Carver shouted a hoarse order to Jahi, who dashed away with his hillmen to the point where the ship was about to ground. The rifle-fire kept on undiminished while Carver led his men in short dashes along the edge of the bush to the same spot. The proa was nearing the beach when a white flag was hoisted on her deck. Carver instantly gave the order to cease firing, but kept his men hidden. The proa lunged on. A hundred feet from the shore it struck on a shelf of coral. The sound of tearing planking was distinctly audible above the roar of the waves. The water about the ship seemed to be fairly alive with fins.

"We will accept their surrender," Peter Gross said to Carver. "I shall tell them to send a boat ashore." He stepped forward.

"Don't expose yourself, Mr. Gross," Carver cried anxiously. Peter Gross stepped into the shelter of a cocoanut-palm and shouted the Malay for "Ahoy."

A Chinaman appeared at the bow. His dress and trappings showed that he was a *juragan*.

"Lower a boat and come ashore. But leave your guns behind," Peter Gross ordered.

The *juragan* cried that there was no boat aboard. Peter Gross conferred with Jahi who had hastened toward them to find out what the conference meant. When the resident told him that there was to be no more killing, his disappointment was evident.

"They have killed my people without mercy," he objected. "They will cut my brother's throat to-morrow and hang his skull in their lodges."

It was necessary to use diplomacy to avoid mortally offending his ally, the resident saw.

"It was not the white man's way to kill when the fight is over," he said. "Moreover, we will hold them as hostages for our son, whom Djath has blessed."

Jahi nodded dubiously. "My brother's word is good," he said. "There is a creek near by. Maybe my boys find him sampan."

"Go, my brother," Peter Gross directed. "Come back as soon as possible."

Jahi vanished into the bush. A half-hour later Peter Gross made out a small sampan, paddled by two Dyaks, approaching from the south. That the Dyaks were none too confident was apparent from the anxious glances that they shot at the proa, which was already beginning to show signs of breaking up.

Peter Gross shouted again to the *juragan*, and instructed him that every man leaving the proa must stand on the rail, in full sight of those on shore, and show that he was weaponless before descending into the sampan. The *juragan* consented.

It required five trips to the doomed ship before all on board were taken off. There were thirty-seven in all—eleven sailors and the rest off-scourings of the Java and Celebes seas, whose only vocation was cutting throats. They glared at their captors like tigers; it was more than evident that practically all of them except the *juragan* fully expected to meet the same fate that they meted out to every one who fell into their hands, and were prepared to sell their lives as dearly as possible.

"A nasty crew," Carver remarked to Peter Gross as the pirates were herded on the beach under the rifles of his company. "Every man's expecting to be handed the same dose as he's handed some poor devil. I wonder why they didn't sink with their ship?"

Peter Gross did not stop to explain, although he knew the reason why—the Mohammedan's horror of having his corpse pass into the belly of a shark.

"We've got to tie them up and make a chain-gang of them," Carver said thoughtfully. "I wouldn't dare go through the jungle with that crew any other way."

Peter Gross was looking at Jahi, in earnest conversation with several of his tribesmen. He perceived that the hill chief had all he could do to restrain his people from falling on the pirates, long their oppressors.

"I will speak to them," he announced quietly. He stepped forward.

"Servants of Ah Sing," he shouted in an authoritative tone. All eyes were instantly focused on him.

"Servants of Ah Sing," he repeated, "the fortunes of war have this day made you

my captives. You must go with me to Bulungan. If you will not go, you shall die here."

A simultaneous movement affected the pirates. They clustered more closely together, fiercely defiant, and stared with the fatalistic indifference of Oriental peoples into the barrels of the rifles aimed at them.

"You've all heard of me," Peter Gross resumed. "You know that the voice of Peter Gross speaks truth, that lies do not come from his mouth." He glanced at a Chinaman on the outskirts of the crowd. "Speak, Wong Ling Lo, you sailed with me on the *Daisy Deane*, is it not so?"

Wong Ling Lo was now the center of attention. Each of the pirates awaited his reply with breathless expectancy. Peter Gross's calm assurance, his candor and simplicity, were already stirring in them a hope that in other moments they would have deemed utterly fantastic, contrary to all nature—a hope that this white man might be different from other men, might possess that attribute so utterly incomprehensible to their dark minds—mercy.

"Peter Gross, him no lie," was Wong Ling Lo's unemotional admission.

"You have heard what Wong Ling Lo says," Peter Gross cried. "Now, listen to what I say. You shall go back with me to Bulungan; alive, if you are willing; dead, if you are not. At Bulungan each one of you shall have a fair trial. Every man who can prove that his hand has not taken life shall be sentenced to three years on the coffee-plantations for his robberies, then he shall be set free and provided with a farm of his own to till so that he may redeem himself. Every man who has taken human life in the service of Ah Sing shall die."

He paused to see the effect of his announcement. The owlish faces turned toward him were wholly enigmatic, but the intensity of each man's gaze revealed to Peter Gross the measure of their interest.

"I cannot take you along the trail without binding you," he said. "Your oaths are worthless; I must use the power I have over you. Therefore you will now remember the promise I have made you, and submit yourselves to be bound. *Juragan*, you are the first."

As one of Carver's force came forward with cords salvaged from the proa, the *juragan* met him, placed his hands behind his back, and suffered them to be tied together. The next man hesitated, then submitted also, casting anxious glances at

his companions. The third submitted promptly. The fourth folded his hands across his chest.

"I remain here," he announced.

"Very well," Peter Gross said impassively. He forced several Chinamen who were near to move back. They gave ground sullenly. At Carver's orders a firing-squad of three men stood in front of the Chinaman, whose back was toward the bay.

"Will you go with us?" Peter Gross asked again.

The Chinaman's face was a ghostly gray, but very firm.

"Allah wills I stay here," he replied. His lips curled with a calm contemptuousness at the white man's inability to rob him of the place in heaven that he believed his murders had made for him. With that smile on his lips he died.

A sudden silence came upon the crowd. Even Jahi's Dyaks, scarcely restrained by their powerful chief before this, ceased their mutterings and looked with new respect on the big *orang blanda* resident. There were no more refusals among the Chinese. On instructions from Peter Gross four of them were left unbound to carry the body of their dead comrade to Bulungan. "Alive or dead," he had said. So it would be all understood.

CHAPTER XXVI

"To Half of My Kingdom—"

Captain Carver selected a cigar from Peter Gross's humidor and reclined in the most comfortable chair in the room.

"A beastly hot day," he announced, wiping the perspiration from his forehead. "Regular Manila weather."

"The monsoon failed us again to-day," Peter Gross observed.

Carver dropped the topic abruptly. "I dropped over," he announced, "to see if the *juragan* talked any."

Peter Gross glanced out of the window toward the jungle-crowned hills. The lines of his mouth were very firm.

"He told me a great deal," he admitted.

"About Paddy?" There was an anxious ring in Carver's voice.

"About Paddy—and other things."

"The lad's come to no harm?"

"He is aboard Ah Sing's proa, the proa we saw standing out to sea when we reached the beach. He is safe—for the present at least. He will be useful to Ah Sing, the natives reverence him so highly."

"Thank God!" Carver ejaculated in a relieved voice. "We'll get him back. It may take time, but we'll get him."

Peter Gross made no reply. He was staring steadfastly at the hills again.

"Odd he didn't take you, too," Carver remarked.

"The *juragan* told me that he intended to come back with a portion of his crew for me later," Peter Gross said. "They ran short of provisions, so they had to go back to the proas, and they took Paddy with them. Some one warned them you

were on the march with Jahi, so they fled. Tsang Che, the *juragan*, says his crew was slow in taking on fresh water; that is how we were able to surprise him."

"That explains it," Carver remarked. "I couldn't account for their leaving you behind."

Peter Gross lapsed into silence again.

"Did you get anything else from him, any real evidence?" Carver suggested presently.

The resident roused himself with an effort.

"A great deal. Even more than I like to believe."

"He turned state's evidence?"

"You might call it that."

"You got enough to clear up this mess?"

"No," Peter Gross replied slowly. "I would not say that. What he told me deals largely with past events, things that happened before I came here. It is the present with which we have to deal."

"I'm a little curious," Carver confessed.

Peter Gross passed his hand over his eyes and leaned back.

"He told me what I have always believed. Of the confederation of pirates with Ah Sing at their head; of the agreements they have formed with those in authority; of where the ships have gone that have been reported missing from time to time and what became of their cargoes; of how my predecessor died. He made a very full and complete statement. I have it here, written in Dutch, and signed by him." Peter Gross tapped a drawer in his desk.

"It compromises Van Slyck?"

"He is a murderer."

"Of de Jonge—your predecessor?"

"It was his brain that planned."

"Muller?"

"A slaver and embezzler."

"You're going to arrest them?" Carver scanned his superior's face eagerly.

"Not yet," Peter Gross dissented quietly. "We have only the word of a pirate so far. And it covers many things that happened before we came here."

"We're waiting too long," Carver asserted dubiously. "We've been lucky so far; but luck will turn."

"We are getting the situation in hand better every day. They will strike soon, their patience is ebbing fast; and we will have the *Prins* with us in a week."

"The blow may fall before then."

"We must be prepared. It would be folly for us to strike now. We have no proof except this confession, and Van Slyck has powerful friends at home."

"That reminds me," Carver exclaimed. "Maybe these documents will interest you. They are the papers Jahi found on your jailers. They seem to be a set of accounts, but they're Dutch to me." He offered the papers to Peter Gross, who unfolded them and began to read.

"Are they worth anything?" Carver asked presently, as the resident carefully filed them in the same drawer in which he had placed Tsang Che's statement.

"They are Ah Sing's memoranda. They tell of the disposition of several cargoes of ships that have been reported lost recently. There are no names but symbols. It may prove valuable some day."

"What are your plans?"

"I don't know. I must talk with Koyala before I decide. She is coming this afternoon."

Peter Gross glanced out of doors at that moment and his face brightened. "Here she comes now," he said.

Carver rose. "I think I'll be going," he declared gruffly.

"Stay, captain, by all means."

Carver shook his head. He was frowning and he cast an anxious glance at the resident.

"No; I don't trust her. I'd be in the way, anyway." He glanced swiftly at the resident to see the effect of his words. Peter Gross was looking down the lane along which Koyala was approaching. A necklace of flowers encircled her throat and bracelets of blossoms hung on her arms—gardenia, tuberose, hill daisies, and the scarlet bloom of the flame-of-the-forest tree. Her hat was of woven nipa palm-leaves, intricately fashioned together. Altogether she was a most alluring picture.

When Peter Gross looked up Carver was gone. Koyala entered with the familiarity of an intimate friend.

"What is this I hear?" Peter Gross asked with mock severity. "You have been saving me from my enemies again."

Koyala's smile was neither assent nor denial.

"This is getting to be a really serious situation for me," he chaffed. "I am finding myself more hopelessly in your debt every day."

Koyala glanced at him swiftly, searchingly. His frankly ingenuous, almost boyish smile evoked a whimsical response from her.

"What are you going to do when I present my claim?" she demanded.

Peter Gross spread out his palms in mock dismay. "Go into bankruptcy," he replied. "It's the only thing left for me to do."

"My bill will stagger you," she warned.

"You know the Persian's answer, 'All that I have to the half of my kingdom,'" he jested.

"I might ask more," Koyala ventured daringly.

Peter Gross's face sobered. Koyala saw that, for some reason, her reply did not please him. A strange light glowed momentarily in her eyes. Instantly controlling herself, she said in carefully modulated tones:

"You sent for me, *mynheer*?"

"I did," Peter Gross admitted. "I must ask another favor of you, Koyala." The mirth was gone from his voice also.

"What is it?" she asked quietly.

"You know whom we have lost," Peter Gross said, plunging directly into the subject. "Ah Sing carried him away. His uncle, the boy's only living relative, is an old sea captain under whom I served for some time and a very dear friend. I promised him I would care for the lad. I must bring the boy back. You alone can help me."

The burning intensity of Koyala's eyes moved even Peter Gross, unskilled as he was in the art of reading a woman's heart through her eyes. He felt vaguely uncomfortable, vaguely felt a peril he could not see or understand.

"What will be my reward if I bring him back to you?" Koyala asked. Her tone was almost flippant.

"You shall have whatever lies in my power as resident to give," Peter Gross promised gravely.

Koyala laughed. There was a strange, jarring note in her voice.

"I accept your offer, Mynheer Resident," she said. "But you should not have added those two words, 'as resident.'"

Rising like a startled pheasant, she glided out of the door and across the plain. Peter Gross stared after her until she had disappeared.

CHAPTER XXVII

A Woman Scorned

It was Inchi who brought the news of Paddy's return. Three days after Koyala's departure the little Dyak lad burst breathlessly upon a colloquy between Peter Gross and Captain Carver and announced excitedly:

"Him, Djath boy, him, *orang blanda* Djath boy, him come."

"What the devil is he driving at?" Carver growled. The circumlocution of the south-sea islander was a perennial mystery to him.

"Paddy is coming," Peter Gross cried. "Now get your breath, Inchi, and tell us where he is."

His scant vocabulary exhausted, Inchi broke into a torrent of Dyak. By requiring the lad to repeat several times, Peter Gross finally understood his message.

"Paddy, Koyala, and some of Koyala's Dyaks are coming along the mountain trail," he announced. "They will be here in an hour. She sent a runner ahead to let us know, but the runner twisted an ankle. Inchi found him and got the message."

There was a wild cheer as Paddy, dusty and matted with perspiration, several Dyaks, and Koyala emerged from the banyan-grove and crossed the plain. Discipline was forgotten as the entire command crowded around the lad.

"I shot two Chinamans for you," Vander Esse announced. "An' now daat vas all unnecessary."

"Ye can't keep a rid-head bottled up," Larry Malone, another member of the company, shouted exultingly.

"Aye ban tank we joost get it nice quiet van you come back again," Anderson remarked in mock melancholy. The others hooted him down.

Koyala stood apart from the crowd with her Dyaks and looked on. Glancing upward, Peter Gross noticed her, noticed, too, the childishly wistful look upon her face. He instantly guessed the reason—she felt herself apart from these

people of his, unable to share their intimacy. Remorse smote him. She, to whom all their success was due, and who now rendered this crowning service, deserved better treatment. He hastened toward her.

"Koyala," he said, his voice vibrant with the gratitude he felt, "how can we repay you?"

Koyala made a weary gesture of dissent.

"Let us not speak of that now, *mynheer*," she said.

"But come to my home," he said. "We must have luncheon together—you and Captain Carver and Paddy and I." With a quick afterthought he added: "I will invite Mynheer Muller also."

The momentary gleam of pleasure that had lit Koyala's face at the invitation died at the mention of Muller's name.

"I am sorry," she said, but there was no regret in her voice. "I must go back to my people, to Djath's temple and the priests. It is a long journey; I must start at once."

"You cannot leave us now!" Peter Gross exclaimed in consternation.

"For the present I must," she said resignedly. "Perhaps when the moon is once more in the full, I shall come back to see what you have done."

"But we cannot do without you!"

"Is a woman so necessary?" she asked, and smiled sadly.

"You are necessary to Bulungan's peace," Peter Gross affirmed. "Without you we can have no peace."

"If you need me, send one of my people," she said. "I will leave him here with you. He will know where to find me."

"But that may be too late," Peter Gross objected. His tone became very grave. "The crisis is almost upon us," he declared. "Ah Sing will make the supreme test soon—how soon I cannot say—but I do not think he will let very many days pass by. He is not accustomed to being thwarted. I shall need you here at my right hand to advise me."

Koyala looked at him searchingly. The earnestness of his plea, the troubled look

in his straight-forward, gray eyes fixed so pleadingly upon her, seemed to impress her.

"There is a little arbor in the banyan-grove yonder where we can talk undisturbed," she said in a voice of quiet authority. "Come with me."

"We can use my office," Peter Gross offered, but Koyala shook her head.

"I must be on my journey. I will see you in the grove."

Peter Gross walked beside her. He found difficulty in keeping the pace she set; she glided along like a winged thing. Koyala led him directly to the clearing and reclined with a sigh of utter weariness in the shade of a stunted nipa palm.

"It has been a long journey," she said with a wan smile. "I am very tired."

"Forgive me," Peter Gross exclaimed in contrition. "I should not have let you go. You must come back with me to the residency and rest until to-morrow."

"A half-hour's rest will be all I need," Koyala replied.

"But this is no place for you," Peter Gross expostulated.

"The jungle is my home," Koyala said with simple pride. "The Argus Pheasant nests in the thickets."

"Surely not at night?"

"What is there to harm me?" Koyala smiled wearily at his alarm.

"But the wild beasts, the tigers, and the leopards, and the orang-utans in the hill districts, and the snakes?"

"They are all my friends. When the tiger calls, I answer. If he is hungry, I keep away. I know all the sounds of the jungle; my grandfather, Chawatangi, taught them to me. I know the warning hiss of the snake as he glides through the grasses, I know the timid hoofbeat of the antelope, I know the stealthy rustle of the wild hogs. They and the jackals are the only animals I cannot trust."

"But where do you sleep?"

"If the night is dark and there is no moon, I cut a bundle of bamboo canes. I bind these with creepers to make a platform and hang it in a tree. Then I swing between heaven and earth as securely or more securely, than you do in your

house, for I am safe from the malice of men. If it rains I make a shelter of palm-leaves on a bamboo frame. These things one learns quickly in the forest."

"You wonderful woman!" Peter Gross breathed in admiration.

Koyala smiled. She lay stretched out her full length on the ground. Peter Gross squatted beside her.

"You haven't told me where you found Paddy?" he remarked after a pause.

"Oh, that was easy," she said. "Ah Sing has a station a little way this side of the Sadong country—"

Peter Gross nodded.

"I knew that he would go there. So I followed. When I got there Ah Sing was loading his proa with stores. I learned that your boy was a prisoner in one of the houses of his people. I went to Ah Sing and begged his life. I told him he was sacred to Djath, that the Dyaks of Bulungan thought him very holy indeed. Ah Sing was very angry. He stormed about the loss of his proa and refused to listen to me. He said he would hold the boy as a hostage.

"That night I went to the hut and found one of my people on guard. He let me in. I cut the cords that bound the boy, dyed his face brown and gave him a woman's dress. I told him to wait for me in the forest until he heard my cry. The guard thought it was me when he left."

Her voice drooped pathetically.

"They brought me to Ah Sing. He was very angry, he would have killed me, I think, if he had dared. He struck me—see, here is the mark." She drew back the sleeve of her kabaya and revealed a cut in the skin with blue bruises about it. Peter Gross became very white and his teeth closed together tightly.

"That is all," she concluded.

There was a long silence. Koyala covertly studied the resident's profile, so boyish, yet so masterfully stern, as he gazed into the forest depths. She could guess his thoughts, and she half-smiled.

"When you left, I promised you that you should have a reward—anything that you might name and in my power as resident to give," Peter Gross said presently.

"Let us not speak of that—yet," Koyala dissented. "Tell me, Mynheer Gross, do you love my country?"

"It is a wonderfully beautiful country," Peter Gross replied enthusiastically, falling in with her mood. "A country of infinite possibilities. We can make it the garden spot of the world. Never have I seen such fertile soil as there is in the river bottom below us. All it needs is time and labor—and men with vision."

Koyala rose to a sitting posture and leaned on one hand. With deft motion of the other she made an ineffectual effort to cover her nut-brown limbs, cuddled among the ferns and grasses, with the shortened kabaya. Very nymphlike she looked, a Diana of the jungle, and it was small wonder that Peter Gross, the indifferent to woman, gave her his serious attention while she glanced pensively down the forest aisles.

"Men with vision!" she sighed presently. "That is what we have always needed. That is what we have always lacked. My unhappy people! Ignorant, and none to teach them, none to guide them into the better way. Leaders have come, have stayed a little while, and then they have gone again. Brooke helped us in Sarawak—now only his memory is left." A pause. "I suppose you will be going back to Java soon again, *mynheer*?"

"Not until my work is completed," Peter Gross assured gravely.

"But that will be soon. You will crush your enemies. You will organize the districts and lighten our burdens for a while. Then you will go. A new resident will come. Things will slip back into the old rut. Our young men are hot-headed, there will be feuds, wars, piracy. There are turns in the wheel, but no progress for us, *mynheer*. Borneo!" Her voice broke with a sob, and she stole a covert glance at him.

"By heaven, I swear that will not happen, Koyala," Peter Gross asserted vehemently. "I shall not go away, I shall stay here. The governor owes me some reward, the least he can give me is to let me finish the work I have begun. I shall dedicate my life to Bulungan—we, Koyala, shall redeem her, we two."

Koyala shook her head. Her big, sorrowful eyes gleamed on him for a moment through tears.

"So you speak to-day when you are full of enthusiasm, *mynheer*. But when one or two years have passed, and you hear naught but the unending tales of tribal

jealousies, and quarrels over buffaloes, and complaints about the tax, and falsehood upon falsehood, then your ambition will fade and you will seek a place to rest, far from Borneo."

The gentle sadness of her tear-dimmed eyes, the melancholy cadences of her voice sighing tribulation like an October wind among the maples, and her eloquent beauty, set Peter Gross's pulses on fire.

"Koyala," he cried, "do you think I could give up a cause like this—forget the work we have done together—to spend my days on a plantation in Java like a buffalo in his wallow?"

"You would soon forget Borneo in Java, *mynheer*—and me."

The sweet melancholy of her plaintive smile drove Peter Gross to madness.

"Forget you? You, Koyala? My right hand, my savior, savior thrice over, to whom I owe every success I have had, without whom I would have failed utterly, died miserably in Wobanguli's hall? You wonderful woman! You lovely, adorable woman!"

Snatching her hands in his, he stared at her with a fierce hunger that was half passion, half gratitude.

A gleam of savage exultation flashed in Koyala's eyes. The resident was hers. The fierce, insatiate craving for this moment, that had filled her heart ever since she first saw Peter Gross until it tainted every drop of blood, now raced through her veins like vitriol. She lowered her lids lest he read her eyes, and bit her tongue to choke utterance. Still his grasp on her hands did not relax. At last she asked in a low voice, that sounded strange and harsh even to her:

"Why do you hold me, *mynheer*?"

The madness of the moment was still on Peter. He opened his lips to speak words that flowed to them without conscious thought, phrases as utterly foreign to his vocabulary as metaphysics to a Hottentot. Then reason resumed her throne. Breathing heavily, he released her.

"Forgive me, Koyala," he said humbly.

A chill of disappointment, like an arctic wave, submerged Koyala. She felt the sensation of having what was dearest in life suddenly snatched from her. Her

stupefaction lasted but an instant. Then the fury that goads a woman scorned possessed her and lashed on the blood-hounds of vengeance.

"Forgive you?" she spat venomously. "Forgive you for what? The words you did not say, just now, *orang blanda*, when you held these two hands?"

Peter Gross had risen quickly and she also sprang to her feet. Her face, furious with rage, was lifted toward his, and her two clenched fists were held above her fluttering bosom. Passion made her almost inarticulate.

"Forgive you for cozening me with sweet words of *our* work, and *our* mission when you despised me for the blood of my mother that is in me? Forgive you for leading me around like a pet parrot to say your words to my people and delude them? Forgive you for the ignominy you have heaped upon me, the shame you have brought to me, the loss of friendships and the laughter of my enemies?"

"Koyala—" Peter Gross attempted, but he might as well have tried to stop Niagara.

"Are these the things you seek forgiveness for?" Koyala shrieked. "Liar! Seducer! *Orang blanda!*"

She spat the word as though it were something vile. At that moment there was a rustling in the cane back of Peter Gross. Bewildered, contrite, striving to collect his scattered wits that he might calm the tempest of her wrath, he did not hear it. But Koyala did. There was a savage exultation in her voice as she cried:

"To-morrow the last white will be swept from Bulungan. But you will stay here, *mynheer*—"

Hearing the footsteps behind him, Peter Gross whirled on his heel. But he turned too late. A bag was thrust over his head. He tried to tear it away, but clinging arms, arms as strong as his, held it tightly about him. A heavy vapor ascended into his nostrils, a vapor warm with the perfume of burning sandalwood and aromatic unguents and spices. He felt a drowsiness come upon him, struggled to cast it off, and yielded. With a sigh like a tired child's he sagged into the waiting arms and was lowered to the ground.

"Very good, Mynheer Muller," Koyala said. "Now, if you and Cho Seng will bind his legs I will call my Dyaks and have him carried to the house we have prepared for him."

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Attack on the Fort

When Peter Gross failed to return by noon that day Captain Carver, becoming alarmed, began making inquiries. Hughes supplied the first clue.

"I saw him go into the bush with the heathen woman while we was buzzin' Paddy," he informed his commander. "I ain't seen him since."

A scouting party was instantly organized. It searched the banyan grove, but found nothing. One, of the members, an old plainsman, reported heel-marks on the trail, but as this was a common walk of the troops at the fort the discovery had no significance.

"Where is Inchi?" Captain Carver inquired. Search also failed to reveal the Dyak lad. As this disquieting news was reported, Lieutenant Banning was announced.

The lieutenant, a smooth-faced, clean-cut young officer who had had his commission only a few years, explained the object of his visit without indulging in preliminaries.

"One of my Java boys tells me the report is current in Bulungan that we are to be attacked to-morrow," he announced. "A holy war has been preached, and all the sea Dyaks and Malays in the residency are now marching this way, he says. The pirate fleet is expected here to-night. I haven't seen or heard of Captain Van Slyck since he left for Padang."

He was plainly worried, and Carver correctly construed his warning as an appeal for advice and assistance. The captain took from his wallet the commission that Peter Gross had given him some time before.

"Since Captain Van Slyck is absent, I may as well inform you that I take command of the fort by order of the resident," he said, giving the document to Banning. The lieutenant scanned it quickly.

"Very good, captain," he remarked with a relieved air. His tone plainly indicated that he was glad to place responsibility in the crisis upon an older and more experienced commander. "I suppose you will enter the fort with your men?"

"We shall move our stores and all our effects at once," Carver declared. "Are your dispositions made?"

"We are always ready, captain," was the lieutenant's reply.

From the roof of the residency Carver studied Bulungan town through field-glasses. There was an unwonted activity in the village, he noticed. Scanning the streets, he saw the unusual number of armed men hurrying about and grouped at street corners and in the market-place. At the water-front several small proas were hastily putting out to sea.

"It looks as if Banning was right," he muttered.

By sundown Carver's irregulars were stationed at the fort. Courtesy denominated it a fort, but in reality it was little more than a stockade made permanent by small towers of crude masonry, filled between with logs set on end. The elevation, however, gave it a commanding advantage in such an attack as they might expect. Peter Gross had been careful to supply machine-guns, and these were placed where they would do the most efficient service. Putting the Javanese at work, Carver hastily threw up around the fort a series of barbed-wire entanglements and dug trench-shelters inside. These operations were watched by an ever-increasing mob of armed natives, who kept a respectful distance away, however. Banning suggested a sortie in force to intimidate the Dyaks.

"It would be time wasted," Carver declared. "We don't have to be afraid of this mob. They won't show teeth until the he-bear comes. We'll confine ourselves to getting ready—every second is precious."

A searchlight was one of Carver's contributions to the defenses. Double sentries were posted and the light played the country about all night, but there was no alarm. When dawn broke Carver and Banning, up with the sun, uttered an almost simultaneous exclamation. A fleet of nearly thirty proas, laden down with fighting men, lay in the harbor.

"Ah Sing has arrived," Banning remarked. Absent-mindedly he mused: "I wonder if Captain Van Slyck is there?"

Carver had by this time mastered just enough Dutch to catch the lieutenant's meaning.

"What do you know about Captain Van Slyck's dealings with this gang?" he demanded, looking at the young man fixedly.

"I can't say—that is—" Banning took refuge in an embarrassed silence.

"Never mind," Carver answered curtly. "I don't want you to inform against a superior officer. But when we get back to Batavia you'll be called upon to testify to what you know."

Banning made no reply.

Carver was at breakfast when word was brought him that Mynheer Muller, the *controlleur*, was at the gate and desired to see him. He had left orders that none should be permitted to enter or leave without special permission from the officer of the day. The immediate thought that Muller was come to propose terms of surrender occurred to him, and he flushed darkly. He directed that the *controlleur* be admitted.

"*Goeden-morgen, mynheer kapitein*," Muller greeted as he entered. His face was very pale, but he seemed to carry himself with more dignity than customarily, Carver noticed.

"State your mission, *mynheer*," Carver directed bluntly, transfixing the *controlleur* with his stern gaze.

"*Mynheer kapitein*, you must fight for your lives to-day," Muller said. "Ah Sing is here, there are three thousand Dyaks and Malays below." His voice quavered, but he pulled himself together quickly. "I see you are prepared. Therefore what I have told you is no news to you." He paused.

"Proceed," Carver directed curtly.

"*Mynheer kapitein*, I am here to fight and die with you," the *controlleur* announced.

A momentary flash of astonishment crossed Carver's face. Then his suspicions were redoubled.

"I hadn't expected this," he said, without mincing words. "I thought you would be on the other side."

Muller's face reddened, but he instantly recovered. "There was a time when I thought so, too, *kapitein*," he admitted candidly. "But I now see I was in the wrong. What has been done, I cannot undo. But I can die with you. There is no escape for you to-day, they are too many, and too well armed. I have lived a

Celebes islander, a robber, and a friend of robbers. I can at least die a white man and a Hollander."

Carver looked at him fixedly.

"Where is the resident?" he demanded.

"In a hut, in the jungle."

"In Ah Sing's hands?"

"He is Koyala's prisoner. Ah Sing does not know he is there."

"Um!" Carver grunted. The exclamation hid a world of meaning. It took little thought on his part to vision what had occurred.

"Why aren't you with Koyala?" he asked crisply.

Muller looked away. "She does not want me," he said in a low voice.

For the first time since coming to Bulungan, Carver felt a trace of sympathy for Muller. He, too, had been disappointed in love. His tone was a trifle less gruff as he asked: "Can you handle a gun?"

"*Ja, mynheer.*"

"You understand you'll get a bullet through the head at the first sign of treachery?"

Muller flushed darkly. "*Ja, mynheer,*" he affirmed with quiet dignity. It was the flush that decided Carver.

"Report to Lieutenant Banning," he said. "He'll give you a rifle."

It was less than an hour later that the investment of the fort began. The Dyaks, scurrying through the banyan groves and bamboo thickets, enclosed it on the rear and landward sides. Ah Sing's pirates and the Malays crawled up the rise to attack it from the front. Two of Ah Sing's proas moved up the bay to shut off escape from the sea.

An insolent demand from Ah Sing and Wobanguli that they surrender prefaced the hostilities.

"Tell the Rajah and his Chinese cut-throat that we'll have the pleasure of hanging

them," was Carver's reply.

To meet the attack, Carver entrusted the defense of the rear and landward walls to the Dutch and Javanese under Banning, while he looked after the frontal attack, which he shrewdly guessed would be the most severe. Taking advantage of every bush and tree, and particularly the hedges that lined the lane leading down to Bulungan, the Malays and pirates got within six hundred yards of the fort. A desultory rifle-fire was opened. It increased rapidly, and soon a hail of bullets began sweeping over the enclosure.

"They've got magazine-rifles," Carver muttered to himself. "Latest pattern, too. That's what comes of letting traders sell promiscuously to natives."

The defenders made a vigorous reply. The magazine-rifles were used with telling effect. Banning had little difficulty keeping the Dyaks back, but the pirates and Malays were a different race of fighters, and gradually crept closer in, taking advantage of every bit of cover that the heavily grown country afforded.

As new levies of natives arrived, the fire increased in intensity. There were at least a thousand rifles in the attacking force, Carver judged, and some of the pirates soon demonstrated that they were able marksmen. An old plainsman was the first casualty. He was sighting along his rifle at a daring Manchu who had advanced within three hundred yards of the enclosure when a bullet struck him in the forehead and passed through his skull. He fell where he stood.

Shortly thereafter Gibson, an ex-sailor, uttered an exclamation, and clapped his right hand to his left shoulder.

"Are ye hit?" Larry Malone asked.

"They winged me, I guess," Gibson said.

The Dutch medical officer hastened forward. "The bone's broken," he pronounced. "We'll have to amputate."

"Then let me finish this fight first," Gibson retorted, picking up his rifle. The doctor was a soldier, too. He tied the useless arm in a sling, filled Gibson's magazine, and jogged away to other duties with a parting witticism about Americans who didn't know when to quit. There was plenty of work for him to do. Within the next half hour ten men were brought into the improvised hospital, and Carver, on the walls, was tugging his chin, wondering whether he would be able to hold the day out.

The firing began to diminish. Scanning the underbrush to see what significance this might have, Carver saw heavy columns of natives forming. The first test was upon them. At his sharp command the reply fire from the fort ceased and every man filled his magazine.

With a wild whoop the Malays and Chinese rose from the bush and raced toward the stockade. There was an answering yell from the other side as the Dyaks, spears and krisses waving, sprang from the jungle. On the walls, silence. The brown wave swept like an avalanche to within three hundred yards. The Javanese looked anxiously at their white leader, standing like a statue, watching the human tide roll toward him. Two hundred yards—a hundred and fifty yards. The Dutch riflemen began to fidget. A hundred yards. An uneasy murmur ran down the whole line. Fifty yards.

Carver gave the signal. Banning instantly repeated it. A sheet of flame leaped from the walls as rifles and machine-guns poured their deadly torrents of lead into the advancing horde. The first line melted away like butter before a fire. Their wild yells of triumph changed to frantic shrieks of panic, the Dyaks broke and fled for the protecting cover of the jungle while the guns behind them decimated their ranks. The Malays and Chinese got within ten yards of the fort before they succumbed to the awful fusillade, and fled and crawled back to shelter. A mustached Manchu alone reached the gate. He waved his huge kris, but at that moment one of Carver's company emptied a rifle into his chest and he fell at the very base of the wall.

The attack was begun, checked, and ended within four minutes. Over two hundred dead and wounded natives and Chinese lay scattered about the plain. The loss within the fort had been four killed and five wounded. Two of the dead were from Carver's command, John Vander Esse and a Californian. As he counted his casualties, Carver's lips tightened. His thoughts were remarkably similar to that of the great Epirot: "Another such victory and I am undone."

Lieutenant Banning, mopping his brow, stepped forward to felicitate his commanding officer.

"They'll leave us alone for to-day, anyway," he predicted.

Carver stroked his chin in silence a moment.

"I don't think Ah Sing's licked so soon," he replied.

For the next three hours there was only desultory firing. The great body of natives seemed to have departed, leaving only a sufficient force behind to hold the defenders in check in case they attempted to leave the fort. Speculation on the next step of the natives was soon answered. Scanning the harbor with his glasses, Carver detected an unwonted activity on the deck of one of the proas. He watched it closely for a few moments, then he uttered an exclamation.

"They're unloading artillery," he told Lieutenant Banning.

The lieutenant's lips tightened.

"We have nothing except these old guns," he replied.

"They're junk," Carver observed succinctly. "These proas carry Krupps, I'm told."

"What are you going to do?"

"We'll see whether they can handle it first. If they make it too hot for us—well, we'll die fighting."

The first shell broke over the fort an hour later and exploded in the jungle on the other side. Twenty or thirty shells were wasted in this way before the gunner secured the range. His next effort landed against one of the masonry towers on the side defended by the Dutch. When the smoke had cleared away the tower lay leveled. Nine dead and wounded men were scattered among the ruins. A yell rose from the natives, which the remaining Dutch promptly answered with a stinging volley.

"Hold your fire," Carver directed Banning. "We'd better take to the trenches." These had been dug the day before and deepened during the past hour. Carver issued the necessary commands and the defenders, except ten pickets, concealed themselves in their earthen shelters.

The gunnery of the Chinese artilleryman improved, and gaunt breaches were formed in the walls. One by one the towers crumbled. Each well-placed shell was signalized by cheers from the Dyaks and Malays. The shelling finally ceased abruptly. Carver and Banning surveyed the scene. A ruin of fallen stones and splintered logs was all that lay between them and the horde of over three thousand pirates and Malay and Dyak rebels. The natives were forming for a charge.

Carver took the lieutenant's hand in his own firm grip.

"This is probably the end," he said. "I'm glad to die fighting in such good company."

CHAPTER XXIX

A WOMAN'S HEART

Lying on the bamboo floor of the jungle hut which Muller had spoken of, his hands and feet firmly bound, and a Dyak guard armed with spear and kris at the door, Peter Gross thought over the events of his administration as resident of Bulungan. His thoughts were not pleasant. Shame filled his heart and reddened his brow as he thought of how confidently he had assumed his mission, how firmly he had believed himself to be the chosen instrument of destiny to restore order in the distracted colony and punish those guilty of heinous crimes, and how arrogantly he had rejected the sage advice of his elders.

He recollected old Sachsen's warning and his own impatient reply—the event that he deemed so preposterous at that time and old Sachsen had foreseen had actually come to pass. He had fallen victim to Koyala's wiles. And she had betrayed him. Bitterly he cursed his stupid folly, the folly that had led him to enter the jungle with her, the folly of that mad moment when temptation had assailed him where man is weakest.

In his bitter self-excoriation he had no thought of condemnation for her. The fault was his, he vehemently assured himself, lashing himself with the scorpions of self-reproach. She was what nature and the sin of her father had made her, a child of two alien, unincorporable races, a daughter of the primitive, wild, untamed, uncontrolled, loving fiercely, hating fiercely, capable of supremest sacrifice, capable, too, of the most fiendish cruelty.

He had taken this creature and used her for his own ends, he had praised her, petted her, treated her as an equal, companion, and helpmate. Then, when that moment of madness was upon them both, he had suddenly wounded her acutely sensitive, bitterly proud soul by drawing the bar sinister. How she must have suffered! He winced at the thought of the pain he had inflicted. She could not be blamed, no, the fault was his, he acknowledged. He should have considered that he was dealing with a creature of flesh and blood, a woman with youth, and beauty, and passion. If he, who so fondly dreamed that his heart was marble, could fall so quickly and so fatally, could he censure her?

Carver, too, had warned him. Not once, but many times, almost daily. He had laughed at the warnings, later almost quarreled. What should he say if he ever saw Carver again? He groaned.

There was a soft swish of skirts. Koyala stood before him. She gazed at him coldly. There was neither hate nor love in her eyes, only indifference. In her hand she held a dagger. Peter Gross returned her gaze without flinching.

"You are my prisoner, *orang blanda*," she said. "Mine only. This hut is mine. We are alone here, in the jungle, except for one of my people."

"You may do with me as you will, Koyala," Peter Gross replied weariedly.

Koyala started, and looked at him keenly.

"I have come to carry you away," she announced.

Peter Gross looked at her in silence.

"But first there are many things that we must talk about," she said.

Peter Gross rose to a sitting posture. "I am listening," he announced.

Koyala did not reply at once. She was gazing fixedly into his eyes, those frank, gray eyes that had so often looked clearly and honestly into hers as he enthusiastically spoke of their joint mission in Bulungan. A half-sob broke in her throat, but she restrained it fiercely.

"Do you remember, *mynheer*, when we first met?" she asked.

"It was at the mouth of the Abbas River, was it not? At Wolang's village?"

"Why did you laugh at me then?" she exclaimed fiercely.

Peter Gross looked at her in astonishment. "I laughed at you?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, on the beach. When I told you you must go. You laughed. Do not deny it, you laughed!" The fierce intensity of her tone betrayed her feeling.

Peter Gross shook his head while his gaze met hers frankly. "I do not recollect," he said. "I surely did not laugh at you—I do not know what it was—" A light broke upon him. "Ay, to be sure, I remember, now. It was a Dyak boy with a mountain goat. He was drinking milk from the teats. Don't you recall?"

"You are trying to deceive me," Koyala cried angrily. "You laughed because—because—"

"As God lives, it is the truth!"

Koyala placed the point of her dagger over Peter Gross's heart.

"*Orang blanda*," she said, "I have sworn to kill you if you lie to me in any single particular to-day. I did not see that whereof you speak. There was no boy, no goat. Quick now, the truth, if you would save your life."

Peter Gross met her glance fearlessly.

"I have told you why I laughed, Koyala," he replied. "I can tell you nothing different."

The point of the dagger pricked the resident's skin.

"Then you would rather die?"

Peter Gross merely stared at her. Koyala drew a deep breath and drew back the blade.

"First we shall talk of other things," she said.

At that moment the rattle of rifle-fire reached Peter Gross's ears.

"What is that?" he cried.

Koyala laughed, a low laugh of exultation. "That, *mynheer*, is the children of Bulungan driving the white peccaries from Borneo."

"Ah Sing has attacked?" Peter Gross could not help, in his excitement, letting a note of his dismay sound in his voice.

"Ah Sing and his pirates," Koyala cried triumphantly. "Wobanguli and the warriors of Bulungan. Lkath and his Sadong Dyaks. The Malays from the coast towns. All Bulungan except the hill people. They are all there, as many as the sands of the seashore, and they have the *orang blanda* from Holland, and the Javanese, and the loud-voiced *orang blanda* that you brought with you, penned in Van Slyck's kampong. None will escape."

"Thank God Carver's in the fort," Peter Gross ejaculated.

"But they cannot escape," Koyala insisted fiercely.

"We shall see," Peter Gross replied. Great as were the odds, he felt confident of Carver's ability to hold out a few days anyway. He had yet to learn of the artillery Ah Sing commanded.

"Not one shall escape," Koyala reiterated, the tigerish light glowing in her eyes. "Ah Sing has pledged it to me, Wobanguli has pledged it to me, the last *orang blanda* shall be driven from Bulungan." She clutched the hilt of her dagger fiercely—.

Amazed at her vehemence, Peter Gross watched the shifting display of emotion on her face.

"Koyala," he said, suddenly, "why do you hate us whites so?"

He shrank before the fierce glance she cast at him.

"Is there any need to ask?" she cried violently. "Did I not tell you the first day we met, when I told you I asked no favors of you, and would accept none? What have you and your race brought to my people and to me but misery, and more misery? You came with fair promises, how have you fulfilled them? In the *orang blanda* way, falsehood upon falsehood, taking all, giving none. Why don't I kill you now, when I have you in my power, when I have only to drop my hand thus —" she flashed the dagger at Peter Gross's breast—"and I will be revenged? Why? Because I was a fool, white man, because I listened to your lies and believed when all my days I have sworn I would not. So I have let you live, unless—" She did not finish the thought, but stood in rigid attention, listening to the increasing volume of rifle-fire.

"They are wiping it out in blood there," she said softly to herself, "the wrongs of Bulungan, what my unhappy country has suffered from the *orang blanda*."

Peter Gross's head was bowed humbly.

"I have wronged you," he said humbly. "But, before God, I did it in ignorance. I thought you understood—I thought you worked with me for Bulungan and Bulungan only, with no thought of self. So I worked. Yet somehow, my plans went wrong. The people did not trust me. I tried to relieve them of unjust taxes. They would not let me take the census. I tried to end raiding. There were always disorders and I could not find the guilty. I found a murderer for Lkath, among his own people, yet he drove me away. I cannot understand it."

"Do you know why?" Koyala exclaimed exultingly. "Do you know why you failed? It was I—I—I, who worked against you. The *orang kayas* sent their runners to me and said: 'Shall we give the *controlleur* the count of our people?' and I said: 'No, Djath forbids.' To the Rajahs and Gustis I said: 'Let there be wars, we must keep the ancient valor of our people lest they become like the Javanese, a nation of slaves.' You almost tricked Lkath into taking the oath. But in the night I went to him and said: 'Shall the vulture rest in the eagle's nest?' and he drove you away."

Peter Gross stared at her with eyes that saw not. The house of his faith was crumbling into ruins, yet he scarcely realized it himself, the revelation of her perfidy had come so suddenly. He groped blindly for salvage from the wreck, crying:

"But you saved my life—three times!"

She saw his suffering and smiled. So she had been made to suffer, not once, but a thousand times.

"That was because I had sworn the revenge should be mine, not Ah Sing's or any one else's, *orang blanda*."

Peter Gross lowered his face in the shadow. He did not care to have her see how great had been his disillusionment, how deep was his pain.

"You may do with me as you will, *juffrouw*," he said.

Koyala looked at him strangely a moment, then rose silently and left the hut. Peter Gross never knew the reason. It was because at that moment, when she revealed her Dyak treachery and uprooted his faith, he spoke to her as he would to a white woman—"*juffrouw*."

"They are holding out yet," Peter Gross said to himself cheerfully some time later as the sound of scattered volleys was wafted over the hills. Presently he heard the dull boom of the first shell. His face paled.

"That is artillery!" he exclaimed. "Can it be—?" He remembered the heavy guns on the proas and his face became whiter still. He began tugging at his bonds, but they were too firmly bound. His Dyak guard looked in and grinned, and he desisted. As time passed and the explosions continued uninterruptedly, his face became haggard and more haggard. It was because of his folly, he told himself, that men were dying there—brave Carver, so much abler and more foresighted

than he, the ever-cheerful Paddy, all those he had brought with him, good men and true. He choked.

Presently the shell-fire ceased. Peter Gross knew what it meant, in imagination he saw the columns of natives forming, column upon column, all that vast horde of savages and worse than savages let loose on a tiny square of whites.

A figure stood in the doorway. It was Koyala. Cho Seng stood beside her.

"The walls are down," she cried triumphantly. "There is only a handful of them left. The people of Bulungan are now forming for the charge. In a few minutes you will be the only white man left in Bulungan."

"I and Captain Van Slyck," Peter Gross said scornfully.

"He is dead," Koyala replied. "Ah Sing killed him. He was of no further use to us, why should he live?"

Peter Gross's lips tightened grimly. The traitor, at least, had met the death he merited.

Cho Seng edged nearer. Peter Gross noticed the dagger hilt protruding from his blouse.

"Has my time come, too?" he asked calmly.

The Chinaman leaped on him. "Ah Sing sends you this," he cried hoarsely—the dagger flashed.

Quick as he was, quick as a tiger striking its prey, the Argus Pheasant was quicker. As the dagger descended, Koyala caught him by the wrist. He struck her with his free hand and tried to tear the blade away. Then his legs doubled under him, for Peter Gross, although his wrists were bound, could use his arms. Cho Seng fell on the point of the dagger, that buried itself to the hilt in the fleshy part of his breast. With a low groan he rolled over. His eyeballs rolled glassily upward, thick, choked sounds came from his throat—

"Ah Sing—comeee—for Koyala—plenty quick—" With a sigh, he died.

Peter Gross looked at the Argus Pheasant. She was gazing dully at a tiny scratch on her forearm, a scratch made by Cho Seng's dagger. The edges were purplish.

"The dagger was poisoned," she murmured dully. Her glance met her prisoner's

and she smiled wanly.

"I go to *Sangjang* with you, *mynheer*," she said.

Peter Gross staggered to his knees and caught her arm. Before she comprehended what he intended to do he had his lips upon the cut and was sucking the blood. A scarlet tide flooded her face, then fled, leaving her cheeks with the pallor of death.

"No, no," she cried, choking, and tried to tear her arm away. But in Peter Gross's firm grasp she was like a child. After a frantic, futile struggle she yielded. Her face was bloodless as a corpse and she stared glassily at the wall.

Presently Peter Gross released her.

"It was only a scratch," he said gently. "I think we have gotten rid of the poison."

The sound of broken sobbing was his only answer.

"Koyala," he exclaimed.

With a low moan she ran out of the hut, leaving him alone with the dead body of the Chinaman, already bloated purple.

Peter Gross listened again. Only the ominous silence from the hills, the silence that foretold the storm. He wondered where Koyala was and his heart became hot as he recollected Cho Seng's farewell message that Ah Sing was coming. Well, Ah Sing would find him, find him bound and helpless. The pirate chief would at last have his long-sought revenge. For some inexplicable reason he felt glad that Koyala was not near. The jungle was her best protection, he knew.

A heavy explosion cut short his reveries. "They are cannonading again," he exclaimed in surprise, but as another terrific crash sounded a moment later, his face became glorified. Wild cries of terror sounded over the hills, Dyak cries, mingled with the shrieking of shrapnel—

"It's the *Prins*," Peter Gross exclaimed jubilantly. "Thank God, Captain Enckel came on time."

He tugged at his own bonds in a frenzy of hope, exerting all his great strength to strain them sufficiently to permit him to slip one hand free. But they were too tightly bound. Presently a shadow fell over him. He looked up with a start, expecting to see the face of the Chinese arch-murderer, Ah Sing. Instead it was

Koyala.

"Let me help you," she said huskily. With a stroke of her dagger she cut the cord. Another stroke cut the bonds that tied his feet. He sprang up, a free man.

"Hurry, Koyala," he cried, catching her by the arm. "Ah Sing may be here any minute."

Koyala gently disengaged herself.

"Ah Sing is in the jungle, far from here," she said.

A silence fell upon them both. Her eyes, averted from his, sought the ground. He stood by, struggling for adequate expression.

"Where are you going, Koyala?" he finally asked. She had made no movement to go.

"Wherever you will, *mynheer*," she replied quietly. "I am now your prisoner."

Peter Gross stared a moment in astonishment. "My prisoner?" he repeated. "Nonsense."

"Your people have conquered, *mynheer*," she said. "Mine are in flight. Therefore I have come to surrender myself—to you."

"I do not ask your surrender," Peter Gross, replied gravely, beginning to understand.

"You do not ask it, *mynheer*, but some one must suffer for what has happened. Some one must pay the victor's price. I am responsible, I incited my people. So I offer myself—they are innocent and should not be made to suffer."

"Ah Sing is responsible," Peter Gross said firmly. "And I."

"You, *mynheer*?" The question came from Koyala's unwilling lips before she realized it.

"Yes, I, *juffrouw*. It is best that we forget what has happened—I must begin my work over again." He closed his lips firmly, there were lines of pain in his face. "That is," he added heavily, "if his excellency will permit me to remain here after this fiasco."

"You will stay here?" Koyala asked incredulously.

"Yes. And you, *juffrouw*?"

A moment's silence. "My place is with my people—if you do not want me as hostage, *mynheer*?"

Peter Gross took a step forward and placed a hand on her shoulder. She trembled violently.

"I have a better work for you, *juffrouw*," he said.

Her eyes lifted slowly to meet his. There was mute interrogation in the glance.

"To help me make Bulungan peaceful and prosperous," he said.

Koyala shook herself free and walked toward the door. Peter Gross did not molest her. She stood on the threshold, one hesitating foot on the jungle path that led to the grove of big banyans. For some minutes she remained there. Then she slowly turned and reëntered the hut.

"Mynheer Gross," she said, in a choking voice, "before I met you I believed that all the *orang blanda* were vile. I hated the white blood that was in me, many times I yearned to take it from me, drop by drop, many times I stood on the edge of precipices undecided whether to let it nourish my body longer or no. Only one thing kept me from death, the thought that I might avenge the wrongs of my unhappy country and my unhappy mother."

A stifled sob shook her. After a moment or two she resumed:

"Then you came. I prayed the Hanu Token to send a young man, a young man who would desire me, after the manner of white men. When I saw you I knew you as the man of the Abbas, the man who had laughed, and I thought the Hanu Token had answered my prayer. I saved you from Wobanguli, I saved you from Ah Sing, that you might be mine, mine only to torture." Her voice broke again.

"But you disappointed me. You were just, you were kind, righteous in all your dealings, considerate of me. You did not seek to take me in your arms, even when I came to you in your own dwelling. You did not taunt me with my mother like that pig, Van Slyck—"

"He is dead," Peter Gross interrupted gently.

"I have no sorrow for him. *Sangjang* has waited over-long for him. Now you come to me, after all that has happened, and say: 'Koyala, will you forget and

help me make Bulungan happy?' What shall I answer, *mynheer*?"

She looked at him humbly, entreatingly. Peter Gross smiled, his familiar, confident, warming smile.

"What your conscience dictates, Koyala."

She breathed rapidly. At last came her answer, a low whisper. "If you wish it, I will help you, *mynheer*."

Peter Gross reached out his hand and caught hers. "Then we're pards again," he cried.

CHAPTER XXX

THE GOVERNOR'S PROMISE

Peter Gross had just concluded an account of his administration in Bulungan to Governor-General Van Schouten at the latter's *paleis* in Batavia. The governor-general was frowning.

"So! *mynheer*," he exclaimed gruffly. "This is not a very happy report you have brought me."

Peter Gross bent his head.

"No census, not a cent of taxes paid, piracy, murders, my *controlleurs*—God knows where they are, the whole province in revolt. This is a nice kettle of fish."

Sachsen glanced sympathetically at Peter Gross. The lad he loved so well sat with bowed head and clenched hands, lines of suffering marked his face, he had grown older, oh, so much older, during those few sorry months since he had so confidently declared his policies for the regeneration of the residency in this very room. The governor was speaking again.

"You said you would find Mynheer de Jonge's murderer for me," Van Schouten rasped. "Have you done that?"

"Yes, your excellency. It was Kapitein Van Slyck who planned the deed, and Cho Seng who committed the act, pricked him with a upas thorn while he slept, as I told your excellency. Here are my proofs. A statement made by Mynheer Muller to Captain Carver and Lieutenant Banning before he died, and a statement made by Koyala to me." He gave the governor the documents. The latter scanned them briefly and laid them aside.

"How did Muller come to his death?" he demanded.

"Like a true servant of the state, fighting in defense of the fort," Peter Gross replied. "A splinter of a shell struck him in the body."

"H-m!" the governor grunted. "I thought he was one of these traitors, too."

"He expiated his crimes two weeks ago at Fort Wilhelmina, your excellency."

"And Cho Seng?" the governor demanded. "Is he still alive?"

"He fell on his own dagger." Peter Gross described the incident. "It was not the dagger thrust that killed him," he explained. "That made only a flesh wound. But the dagger point had been dipped in a cobra's venom." Softly he added: "He always feared that he would die from a snake's poison."

"It is the judgment of God," Van Schouten pronounced solemnly. He looked at Peter Gross sharply.

"Now this Koyala," he asked, "where is she?"

"I do not know. In the hills, among her own people, I think. She will not trouble you again."

The governor stared at his resident. Gradually the stern lines of his face relaxed and a quaintly humorous glint came into his eyes.

"So, Mynheer Gross, the woman deceived you?" he asked sharply.

Peter Gross made no reply. The governor's eyes twinkled. He suddenly brought down his fist on the table with a resounding bang.

"*Donder en bliksem!*" he exclaimed, "I cannot find fault with you for that. The fault is mine. I should have known better. Why, when I was your age, a pretty woman could strip the very buttons from my dress coat—dammit, Mynheer Gross, you must have had a heart of ice to withstand her so long."

He flourished a highly colored silk handkerchief and blew his nose lustily.

"So you are forgiven on that count, Mynheer Gross. Now for the other. It appears that by your work you have created a much more favorable feeling toward us among many of the natives. The hill Dyaks did not rise against us as they have always done before, and some of the coast Dyak tribes were loyal. That buzzard, Lkath, stayed in his lair. Furthermore, you have solved the mysteries that have puzzled us for years and the criminals have been muzzled. Lastly, you were the honey that attracted all these piratical pests into Bulungan harbor where Kapitein Enckel was able to administer them a blow that will sweep those seas clear of this vermin for years to come, I believe. You have not done so badly after all, Mynheer Gross. Of course, you and your twenty-five men might have come to

grief had not Sachsen, here, heard reports that caused me to send the *Prins Lodewyk* post-haste to Bulungan, but we will overlook your too great confidence on the score of your youth." He chuckled. "Now as to the future."

He paused and looked smilingly into the eyes that looked so gratefully into his.

"What say you to two more years at Bulungan, *mynheer*, to straighten out affairs there, work out your policies, and finish what you have so ably begun?"

"Your excellency is too good," Peter Gross murmured brokenly.

"Good!" Van Schouten snapped. "*Donder en bliksem, mynheer*, it is only that I know a man when I see him. Can you go back next week?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"Then see that you do. And see to it that those devils send me some rice this year when the tax falls due or I will hang them all in the good, old-fashioned way."

THE END

The Big Fight
The Big Fight
Capt. David Fallon M.C.
Capt. David Fallon M.C.

Few soldiers in this great war have been through adventures more thrilling, dramatic and perilous than fell to the lot of Captain David Fallon.

He is a young Irishman whose first fighting was against the hillmen in their uprisings in India. He received the Indian Field Medal.

The opening of the war found him physical instructor and bayonet drill master at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, New South Wales. He went through the entire, terrible Gallipoli campaign.

He was in scores of fierce trench battles.

He commanded a tank in an amazing war adventure.

He has served as an aërial observer, spotted enemy positions and fought enemy aeroplanes.

On the road to Thiepval with a shoulder smashed by shrapnel he remained in command of his men behind barricades made of the dead and for twenty-two hours held off the Germans until reinforcements arrived.

On scout duty he frequently penetrated German trenches and gun positions in the night.

A bomb duel with a German patrol when he was detected in their trenches brought him irreparable injury.

He lay for three days in the mud of a shellhole in the enemy country with his right arm blasted, his upper jaw broken, his face and shoulders burned, but survived and managed to escape.

He was awarded the Military Cross for daring and valuable service to his King.

You will probably hear Captain Fallon lecture, but his book is something you will wish to keep. It is historical and every word rings true.

THE WAR BOOK WITH A THRILL

SPECIMEN CHAPTER

CHAPTER XII

"RAZZLE DAZZLE"

It was at Beaumont-Hamel, about September 16th, that I got my chance to command a "tank."

The dear girl was named "Razzle Dazzle." She was very young, having been in service only three months, but rather portly. Matter of fact, she weighed something over thirty tons. And in no way could you call the dear little woman pretty. She was a pallid gray and mud-splashed when I got her and there was no grace in the bulging curves of her steel shape. Or of her conical top. Or her ponderous wheels.

The fact is that she showed every aspect of being a bad, scrappy old dearie. The minute I saw her in her lovely ugliness I knew she would like trouble and lots of it. Her metabolism was a marvel. She carried a six-hundred-horse-power motor. And out of her gray steel hoods protruded eight guns. An infernal old girl, you can bet she was. All ready to make battle in large quantities.

When I boarded "Razzle Dazzle" she was full of dents. She had rocked around among several trench charges. But the reason for my assignment to her was prosaic. Her captain had not been killed. He was just sick—some stomach complaint. I was drafted on an hour's notice to the job, this, because of long training in handling rapid-fire guns.

It was all new to me, but highly interesting. My crew consisted of seven men—five of them well experienced. And a black cat. Although she was a lady-cat she had been named "Joffre" and I can't tell you why because I never received any explanation on this point myself. But "Joffre" was very friendly and insisted on sitting either on my knee or shoulder from the moment I sealed myself and my men in the tank. We had our outlook from several periscopes above the turret and from spy holes in the turret itself.

The order had come to me about one in the morning, and it was nearly three when we started lumbering out toward the enemy trenches. We had about six hundred yards to cover. I knew little or nothing of her motor power or speed. My concern was with the efficiency of the guns. She pumped and swayed "across No Man's Land" at about four miles an hour. She groaned and tossed a great deal. And in fact, made such poor progress that my regiment, the Oxfords and Bucks, beat the old dearie to the enemy lines. Our men were among the barbed wire of the first line, fighting it, cutting it, knocking it down before the old "Razzle Dazzle" got into action.

But she "carried on" just the same. And when she smote the barbed-wire obstacles, she murdered them. She crushed those barriers to what looked like messes of steel spaghetti.

Instead of sinking into trenches as I feared she would, she crushed them and continued to move forward. Of course, we were letting go everything we had, and from my observation hole, I could see the Germans didn't like it.

They had put up something of a stand against the infantry. But against the tank they were quick to make their farewells. It was a still black night, but under the star-shells we could see them scurrying out of our way.

This was very sensible of them because we were certainly making a clean sweep of everything in sight and had the earth ahead throwing up chocolate showers of spray as if the ground we rode was an angry sea of mud.

Every man in the tank was shouting and yelling with the excitement of the thing and we were tossed up against each other like loosened peas in a pod. Only Joffre remained perfectly cool. Somehow she maintained a firm seat on my swaying shoulder and as I glanced around to peer at her she was calmly licking a paw and then daintily wiped her face.

Suddenly out of a very clever camouflage of tree branches and shrubbery a German machine-gun emplacement was revealed. The bullets stormed and rattled upon the tank. But they did themselves a bad turn by revealing their whereabouts, for we made straight for the camouflage and went over that battery of machine guns, crunching its concrete foundation as if it were chalk.

"British blood is calling British blood"
"British blood is calling British blood"

Then we turned about and from our new position put the Germans under an enfilade fire that we kept up until every evidence was at hand that the Oxfords and Bucks and supporting battalions were holding the trenches.

But this was only preliminary work cut out for the tank to do. I had special instructions and a main objective. This was a sugar refinery. It was a one-storied building of brick and wood with a tiled roof. It had been established as a sugar refinery by the Germans before the war and when this occasion arose blossomed as a fortress with a gun aimed out of every window.

To allow it to remain standing in hostile hands would mean that the trenches we had won could be constantly battered. Its removal was most desirable. To send infantry against it would have involved huge losses in life. The tank was deemed the right weapon.

It was.

Cleaning Mills bombs

Cleaning Mills bombs

And largely because "Razzle Dazzle" took matters into her own hands. The truth is she ran away.

We rocked and plowed out of the trenches and went swaying toward the refinery. I ordered the round-top sealed. And we beat the refinery to the attack with our guns. But they had seen us coming and every window facing our way developed a working gun. There were about sixteen such windows. They all blazed at us.

My notion had been to circle the "sugar mill", with "Razzle Dazzle" and shoot it up from all sides. We were getting frightfully rapped by the enemy fire, but there was apparently nothing heavy enough to split the skin of the wild, old girl. Our own fire was effective. We knocked out all the windows and the red-tiled roof was sagging. As I say, my notion was to circle the "mill" and I gave orders accordingly. But the "Razzle Dazzle's" chauffeur looked at me in distress.

"The steering gear's off, sir," said he.

"Stop her then and we'll let them have it from here," I ordered.

He made several frantic motions with the mechanism and said:

"I can't stop her, either."

And the "Razzle Dazzle" carried out her own idea of attack. She banged head-on into the "mill." She went right through a wide doorway, making splinters of the door, she knocked against concrete pillars, supports and walls, smashing everything in her way and bowled out of the other side just as the roof crashed in and apparently crushed and smothered all the artillery men beneath it.

On the way through, the big, powerful old girl bucked and rocked and reared until we men and the black cat inside her were thrown again and again into a jumble, the cat scratching us like a devil in her frenzy of fear.

Closed up in the tank as we were, we could hear the roar and crash of the falling "mill," and from my observation port-hole I could observe that it was most complete. The place had been reduced to a mere heap. Not a shot came out of it at us.

But still the "Razzle Dazzle" was having her own way. Her motorist was signaling me that he had no control of her. This was cheerful intelligence because right ahead was a huge shell crater. She might slide into it and climb up the other side and out. I hoped so. But she didn't. She hit the bottom of the pit, tried to push her way up and out, fell back, panted, pushed up again, fell back and then just stuck at the bottom of the well, throbbing and moaning and maybe penitent for her recklessness.

Penitence wasn't to do her any good. It wasn't five minutes later when the Germans had the range of her and began smashing us with big shells. I ordered my men to abandon her and led them in a rush out of the crater and into small shell holes until the storm of fire was past.

When it was, "Razzle Dazzle" was a wreck. She was cracked, distorted and shapeless. But the runaway engine was still plainly to be heard throbbing. Finally a last big shell sailed into the doughty tank and there was a loud bang and a flare. Her oil reservoir shot up in an enormous blaze.

"Razzle Dazzle" was no more. But she had accounted for the "refinery." And our infantry had done the rest. The German position was ours.

I was all enthusiasm for fighting "tanks." But my superiors squelched it. For when I asked for command of a sister of "Razzle Dazzle" next day, a cold-eyed aide said to me:

"One tank, worth ten thousand pounds, is as much as any bally young officer

may expect to be given to destroy during his lifetime. Good afternoon."

He never gave me a chance to explain that it was "Razzle Dazzle's" own fault, how she had taken things into her own willful control. But he did try to give me credit for what "Razzle Dazzle" had herself accomplished. He said the destruction of the "sugar mill" had been "fine work."

I wonder what "Joffre" thought of it all. I don't remember seeing her when we fled from the "tank," except as something incredibly swift and black flashed past my eyes as we thrust up the lid. I sincerely hope she is alive and well "somewhere in France."

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