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ACROSS PAPUA

(Continued from previous page)

toothed peaks and broad plains, above and beneath the clouds, for part of Papua lay stretched at our feet, and part rose in splendid isolation sheer through the mists that floated far above our heads.

That night, we camped well down the main range at an altitude of 6,786 feet, and consequently had a chilly time, but the wood was good, so the carriers could fight the cold, and we were happy.

The camp was pitched on a high plateau completely fenced in by moun-

tains, save where one long valley wound through the encircling hills towards Port Moresby. Some day, the road connecting Kagi with the capital will follow this route; the engineering difficulties at any rate as regards mule traffic being comparatively slight; meanwhile, the native path leads up and down and along the crest of the ranges partly because the Papuan has no use for easy grades, principally for commissariat reasons, the villages being, as a rule, built on high ground.

Alternately rising and falling, we at last reached a plateau, and looking back saw the crests of Mount Victoria tower-

ing above the clouds, with a peak to the right that marked our march, and still further, the dark outline of the Gap.

"Gardens of the Ghosts"

At 6.45 next morning we left Maneri, and dropping down, crossed a stream to face a 2,000 feet climb, but here a track was cut, and some attempt had been made to grade it. Half way up, we got a view of the hill-tribes' Valhalla, Mount Victoria, and saw the mists rising above "the gardens of the ghosts," to use the poetic imagery of these people.

We found this land from Kagine an area of beauty and great richness, which some day must give of its plenty to the world. Here we ate lovely bananas and luscious pineapples, the latter fruit growing at Mount Knutsford at an altitude of as much as 5,000 feet. At Rigo, just above sea level they are huge, some being 17 inches long by 11½ inches in diameter.

At 6.35 we bade farewell to the final real mountain village, and tramping over range and valley, came to the last big hill, and from its top saw in the far distance the last of the Gap and all the mystic mountain land.

Topping our last rise, we looked down on the plantations of Sogeri clinging to the opposite slope. Then down the decline we went, through the village of Sogeri, and walking in great form, reached a camp, and the end of our march, at 10.40 on the morning of November 5, 1906.

Prospects and Difficulties

Our march showed us the rich possibilities of the country from Buna Bay to Kokoda, and from Kagi to Sogeri, taught us the disabilities under which digging and developmental prospecting is at present carried on; the potentialities of the northern and mountain tribes; the enormous difficulties of transport over the main range; the arduous nature of operations undertaken to punish recalcitrant tribes; and finally proved that in this maligned climate it is possible for unseasoned men, starting in no sense in the pink of walking form, to get across Papua (the main range thrown in), without contracting a symptom of malarial fever or any other disease.

Our journey had taken 22 days, on 20 of which rain fell. All that lay ahead of us now was a ride of 35 miles to Port Moresby.

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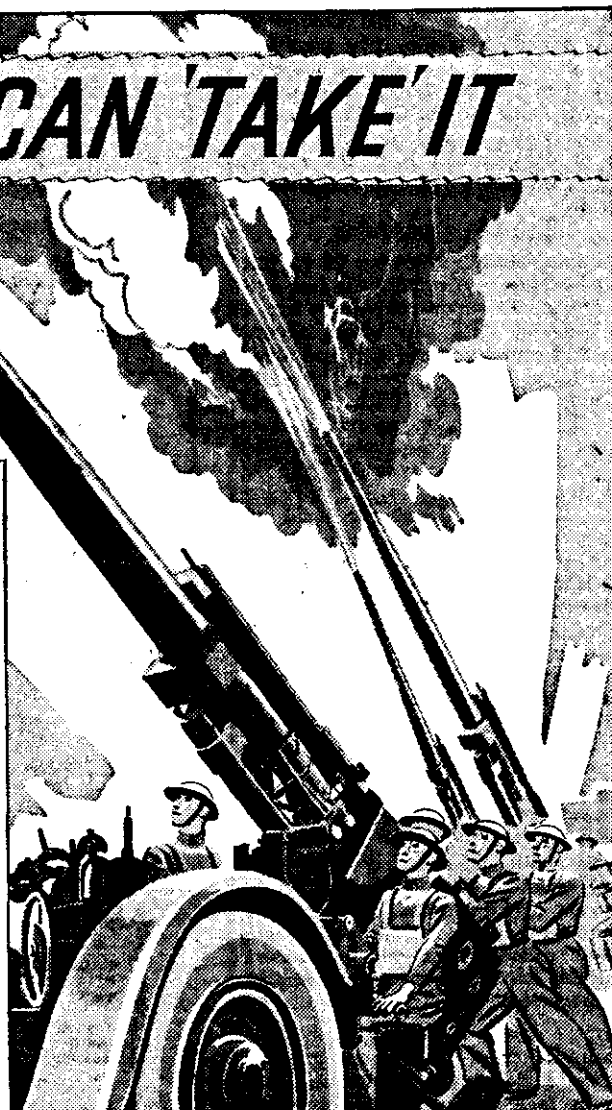
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