



GOVERNMENT STATION AT KOKODA IN 1906

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at the top just a breathless bit of wet rag; and yet our carriers went up and down it for water as coolly as if it had been a patent lift. Before the rain set in, we got from its summit our first panoramic view of the country we had so far left behind.

Leaving "The Divide" at 6.40 next morning, we met some rough walking over roots and seedlings, and, as usual, constantly crossed streams, and eventually touched the Mambare, a broad and lovely river running through and over huge pebbles, its water clear as glass. For a time we hugged its right bank, then turning into a native garden, once 300 acres of tropical plenty, now, thanks either to native habit or white intrusion—I am not clear which—a tangled and overgrown waste, we saw above us the buildings of Kokoda, the farthest inland Government Station in Papua.

Kokoda

Kokoda is a most radiant spot, set high on the edge of a small plateau. At the rear and right virgin forests fence it about, in front, in a basin, grow all things that tell of shade—great plantain fronds, broad and spacious as green sails, and many another plant with leaves of varied hue and shape, and all gigantic. About this basis dwell trees tall and stately, courted of lovely parasites. Near by, the water flows, and then the mountains rise fold on fold till Mount Victoria pierces the sky at 12,000 feet.

Situated at the foot of the main range and 1,000 feet above sea level, Kokoda has a climate which is, from a tropical standpoint, good, while the plateau is rich almost beyond belief. As an illustration, in the station garden (30 acres being under cultivation), there grew taro, yams, sweet-potatoes, bananas (I saw 15 dozen in one bunch), Indian corn, coconuts, betel-nuts, paw paws, granadillas, pineapples, chillies, oranges, lemons, English cabbages, carrots, parsnips, radishes, lettuces, French beans, melons and swede turnips.

From Kokoda right back to Buna Bay, the country is magnificently watered, level, and heavily timbered, and judging from the quantities of cane, vegetables, and fruit brought in by the natives all

along the route, must be rich. With the exception of the Kumusi River, and even this can be crossed at a ford a short distance from the wire bridge, and the Divide, which could be made practicable for pack traffic at a comparatively small cost, the present track is to-day possible for horses and mules during the dry season. So there are no insurmountable natural obstacles in the path of development from the sea to Kokoda, when the right men choose to tread it.

Into the Mountains

At nine o'clock on October 26 we left lovely Kokoda, and putting the last outpost of the white man behind our backs, and plunging into the virgin forest, scrambled over roots and logs and along creeks for about an hour—and then up the mountain's face. With breathers every 100 feet or so, up we went, getting foothold as best we could, now dropping for a little, but only to rise again. At noon we halted on a steep slope, and facing about saw Mount Lamington, and all the way we had travelled from the sea spread out before us. We were now 3,200 feet above sea-level, and had risen 2,200 above Kokoda. Starting again, we dropped for a while, and creeping along some nervy places, reached camp without mishap ahead of the rain. Striking camp at 7.45 next morning, we clambered over rocks and trees and along the edge of things till we reached a village perched above the valley.

We were now in the region of leeches and scrub-itch, the former fastening on to boots or the natives' legs as we walked; while touching a bush frequently resulted in a leech hanging to a finger. They crawled through any opening in a boot, and if putties are not well rolled, or trousers not tucked into socks, one was apt to find blood in one's boots on reaching camp.

On the Summit

Then the trees grew more gnarled, the mosses richer, the silence one that could be felt—and at last we stood on one of the summits of the Owen Stanley Range, 8,690 feet above the sea, and out beyond the intervening valleys we caught glimpses of great distances, and saw

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