

welcome that colt with open arms, and Burns Philp would drop it at the very front door, on Yule Island. Burns Philp are useful people; they run boats that can take on anything, from a dozen of pocket handkerchiefs to a prize bull, in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, or Cairns, and see it right to the head station of the Mission.

The great stores of Australian big cities are usually 'Brothers Limited,' or '_____ and Co.,' which means that they are companies managed for the benefit of a number of shareholders. If a shareholder sends an order to the firm to select and ship to Yule Island so many dozen cotton and flannelette shirts, so many khaki drill trousers, so many dozen socks, so many pairs of stout walking boots for men and women (fives, sixes, sevens for the latter) so many cases of groceries, meats, flour, kerosene, he pockets a certain portion of the profit himself. . . . And, after all, those shares pay so well—one can afford it. And there are Fathers, gently reared, who are trying to learn to do without socks, though walking the greater part of the day—because socks wear out so quickly, and the supply is far too small.

Other things wanted are simple colored pictures of sacred subjects, with only one or two figures in each, for use in the schools; all sorts of school stationery; first-aid pocket medical cases, for the Fathers to carry on their long rounds among the native towns; field-glasses (much wanted among the mountains), drugs of all ordinary kinds, especially quinine and cordials.

There is a Father who wants a gramophone, with records of band music, laughing songs, recitations, to aid him in his apostolic work. It brings in the natives from the outlying districts—and once there, you may leave the rest of it to him.

III.

And now about the mountains.

Few people have any idea of the difficulty of moving about in Papua. There is, perhaps, no country in the world of such an extraordinary conformation. It is a continent rather than an island. The Australian-owned portion is twice as large as England. German New Guinea is nearly as large, and Dutch New Guinea very much larger. Practically the whole of this great country is mountain. There is a small belt of level, close about some portion of the coasts, and in the upper parts of the ranges you may strike a mile or so of tableland. But take it all in all, New Guinea is simply a jumble of precipices, peaks, and torrents, the mountains running to thirteen thousand feet (in Australian Papua), the rivers most unnavigable by reason of their rapid fall. Of roads into the interior there are absolutely none, with the exception of forty miles of horse track through the plantation country behind Port Moresby, the capital, and of the Catholic Mission horse and bullock track, that leads right away from the coast into the heart of the unknown and unexplored country lying among the colossal summits of the great main range. It was this latter road that I was to take. Few travellers have been along this route; one might count them every one—a handful of prospectors, looking for gold; a few Government officers, patrolling after murderers, two collectors of birds and insects, one literary man. Of white women, none

But the Sisters of the Mission

had passed through, until I went. The road is a marvel; it was made by years of appalling labor, through engineering difficulties that would have daunted most professional road engineers. The Fathers and three or four coadjutor Brothers carried it through, aided by the paid labor of a small number of natives. It traverses country that else must have remained eternally closed to white influence. For all its wonderful construction, however, it is trying, and the missionaries who practically live on it, going up and down about their work, have not an easy time.

Bioto station is the 'jumping-off place.' Here a Brother lives, and takes charge of the forwarding arrangements for the interior, besides working among the natives of the surrounding country.

The Sisters escorted me to Bioto from Inawaia, with the carriers that had been engaged at the latter town. In the afternoon, all packing and loading done, my seven New Guinea men took up the painted canvas swags that held my clothes and food and cooking pots and tent, I said good-bye to the Sisters, and started off, the carriers and I, for the mountains.

We had three hours to go to the first rest-house, where we were to pass the night. It was quite in consonance with Mekeo custom that four of my men, with a tiring walk before them, should refuse to touch the rice I had served out, while the others ate heartily. The trouble, as usual, was girls. There were two or three young women from the nearest village seated before the Mission house verandah, watching the party set out, and in consequence, none of the unmarried men, of whom there were four among my carriers, could eat a morsel—it would have been most improper for them to do so. So the four unlucky ones took a reef in their belts—they were already tight-laced, one would have thought almost beyond endurance—put their food in packets of banana leaf, and started off in the heat, dinnerless. As for the girls, they went on chewing betel-nut, and took no notice of the bachelors at all.

Some miles out, we were coming into uninhabited country, so the bachelors begged a halt, devoured their food ravenously, and let out their belts a little. After this, day by day, as we ascended from the plains into the mountains, a steep bit of track nearly always resulted in the temporary disappearance of a bachelor carrier, to let out his waist a little more. By the time we had reached the Kuni country, where the real pinch of steepness begins, the bachelors' waists rivalled the comfortable figures of the married men. One may 'suffer to be beautiful'—but not on a Papua mountain track.

And now for three days the carriers and I travelled on, starting as soon as there was light enough to see, journeying through the endless morning under a blaze of equatorial sun, and halting towards one o'clock at the rest house that generally appeared alongside the track about that hour.

Near the plains we lunched, rested, and then travelled on; but once in the mountains, it was a race every day with the rain, which begins regularly soon after noon, and comes down like a waterspout till sunset—so, when the rest-house was reached we stopped. These houses have been built by the Mission for the use of the Fathers when travelling up and down. They are about thirteen miles apart as a rule; mere huts of sticks and thatch, set up on piles, and containing nothing more than an iron cooking pot, a billy-can and a tin pannikin or two, and some sort of a rude camp bed. When the Fathers travel, their carriers sleep inside at one end of the hut. Mine had the loan of my tent, and were very comfortable underneath the house each night, sheltered from the keen mountain winds that are so trying to the native, once the sun is down.

After the first day, the easy level of the plains was left behind; and now one began to understand

The Wonder of the Mission Track—

be it repeated, the only road in all New Guinea that penetrates into the far interior. Along the edges of formidable scarps and gorges it crept, knitted in long zig-zags up the sides of hills as steep as a house-roof, round ugly corners where one's feet dangled over floating clouds—creeping and wriggling and getting along somehow through a landscape that was literally set on edge. Here for the first time one saw the extraordinary formation of the mountain country, every hillside running into every other, without a yard of level, and almost every hill ending, as it touched the next, in a stream or a waterfall. Down the cliffs and gorges they came, those innumerable streams, foaming among huge green varnished leaves as big as hearth-rugs, and stately croziers of giant ferns, taller than the tallest man—scattering cool spray over the rich red clusters of the wild begonia, cutting formidable gullies across the path, as they rushed out from the dark recesses of clefts and caves filled with orchid, jasmine, and maidenhair. A country wet and green as a salad; a country wild,

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