

take twenty-four hours to get through from Mafulu to Dilava. Now the active and practised Fathers can do it in seven hours at a pinch, and even an untrained stranger like myself did not take more than ten, making about five for each half, with the stop at Deva-Deva between. This second half of the journey lay

Through Perpendicular Cliff Forests,

and into and out of I do not know how many gorges, and through the Kea River, luckily not in flood, just where a magnificent waterfall, near three hundred feet in height, flung itself down from the verge of an overhanging cliff. The Kea is hard to cross when flooded, and even the hardy natives cannot swim it once it turns to a torrent. Yet they get across, by a way that is almost incredibly strange. They load themselves with heavy stones, and walk over under water, on the bottom of the river. The Fathers have seen a native who was taking a letter across disappear altogether under the water, all but his hand, which progressed slowly across the raging stream, holding aloft the precious paper.

By and by we came out on high windy ridges, where the cloak of forest was growing thin, and the air became suddenly cool, and great green and orange hornbills aeroplaned across blue gulfs, making a droning noise like an engine as they went. The pines began to appear—the great pines of Mafulu, that have built the station and the church, and keep the sawmill fed with fine timber. We were in the high country; the track ran along at four thousand feet, and none of the surrounding peaks was less than six or seven. The black, narrow gorges opened out, and one saw wide, pleasant valleys, full of grass and sun; great pines stood out alone like monuments, and the fresh winds of the hilltops blew down cheerily to tell one that one was not tired. . . . Could this be Papua of the dense, luscious-scented, steamy forests, the warm, enervating rain, the intolerable sun? It was a new country up there, and one well worth visiting—but one that would never be visited, save by stray travellers like myself. The barrier of the Roro and Kuni country stands between Mafulu and the outer world for ever; it will remain what it is—a sanctuary of the hills, 'the world forgetting, by the world forgot.' The Mission was almost in sight, but not quite, when we reached the sawmill. Here, in the heart of unknown Papua, at the end of a track that can carry nothing but horse and mule loads of goods,

There Was a Mill

in full working order (not on the day that I saw it, for they were shifting the machinery), with a race running down the slope above, where they had harnessed the nearest torrent to take the place of steam, and huge trunks lying about, and oxen, great, powerful, gentle creatures, drawing more and more trunks in from the forest. The machinery was all of wood, save the saw itself, but it worked as well as if it had been forged in Birmingham, and the piles of clean, fragrant planks lying about were just like any plank turned out by any mill in a manufacturing town. Two Fathers and a Brother were working here this morning, in worn clothes and boots; they are very anxious to replace the little church at Mafulu station by one that is made altogether of sawn boards, and everyone takes a hand in the work.

I had been expected here; they left off work when they saw me, unyoked the oxen from the logs, and set out with me for the station, delightedly showing off their valley, and their district, and their new-made road, and their beautiful scenery, as we went. Small wonder that the Fathers feel as if the Mafulu country were indeed their own. They were the discoverers, the civilisers, the cartographers, road-makers, bridge-builders, cultivators of the district, and they are pushing out their influence on every side, year by year, into the still unknown and uncivilised country that lies higher up and beyond.

How Gay They Were, These French and Swiss Fathers

and Brothers, here at the end of the world—here alone with the savages, dressed like workmen, poorly fed and

housed, utterly divorced from all amusement, news, luxury, relaxation! What jokes they had with each other—what allusions, nicknames, light-hearted school-boy fun! What bright intellects flashed like swords from these worn scabbards of hard-worked frames! Surely, in this out-of-the-way, hard, hidden life, the best material was being used—not the odds and ends and left-overs, but men who would have made a mark anywhere.

Too good for the work? The Catholic Mission does not think anything too good for it; the missionaries themselves do not think they are good enough.

Half an hour brought us—at last—to Mafulu, the end of the long, long journey. Beyond this I did not intend to go; time far led me, for, once off the Mission track, one can never tell how long a journey will take, and I was only provisioned for a week or two.

Here Was the End of My Excursion.

It was a little brown house, standing tiptoe on the top of a peak four thousand feet high, set in the midst of a ring of splendid mountains six, seven, and eight thousand feet in height, with the ten thousand foot sugarloaf of Mount Yule showing faint and blue in the distance. Clouds are always floating and wreathing about these mountain tops; the mission house itself is constantly buried in cloud. And the blues, the greens, the magnificent hyacinths, the heliotropes, the turquoises, purple-satin colors of the high, encircling peaks, no pen could describe, and I think no brush save that of Turner could paint.

Many of these peaks have never been climbed or visited; the Fathers only go where there are inhabitants. Often enough their work leads them into country where white men have not only never been seen, but never even been heard of. I heard enough wild adventures during the two or three days I stayed at the Mission to have filled half a library. The very last time that my hosts had fared forth into the unknown country, they had chanced on villages of dead people—whole towns piled up with corpses higher than the Fathers' heads, and polluting the air for miles. They have often interfered with cannibal feasts; often stepped in, unarmed, between hostile natives wild with the lust of blood. That none of them have been killed is something very like a miracle. Perhaps a little more than very like.

Listen to a Story.

Eight years ago, Bishop De Boismenu came up to this very spot. It was the most dangerous place in Papua to visit just then, for Baiva, the great cannibal chief of the district, had given out that he would kill the first white man who dared to pass a certain fig-tree. In that fig-tree were hung up the unburied bones of Baiva's only brother, who had been killed by Government troops, in punishment for a raid made on the missionaries. The missionaries had done all in their power to keep the Government from avenging their wrongs, but without effect. So it was that Baiva's brother died, and that Baiva made his vow.

Father C—told me the whole story, standing beside me under the shade of the great fig-tree; the bones were still in the branches, the valley looked as it had looked on the day eight years ago, when the Bishop came up, alone, to the fatal tree, and confronted Baiva. The savage chieftain barred the way; behind him were his men in panoply of war—painted, feathered, armed with clubs and spears.

'He came up to them unarmed,' said the Father, 'here where you stand, and said that he only wished for peace. And Baiva said that he had vowed to kill the first white man who dared to pass that tree, and now the white man had done it, and he would kill him where he stood. And he took his war club in his hand. As for Monseigneur, he thought that he had failed in his mission of peace to Baiva, and that the end had come: so he commended his soul to God. And there was silence; not a warrior stirred, but Baiva did not strike. All in one moment he stretched out his hand to Monseigneur, and said: "I have changed my mind; I do not wish to kill you. I am your friend, and I will give you the best piece of ground I have, for nothing, to build your house on."'

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