

Adventure



A Romance of
The South Seas

BY
JACK LONDON

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CHAPTER II.
SOMETHING IS DONE.
THE morning David Sheldon decided that he was worse. That he was appreciably weaker there was no doubt, and there were symptoms that were unfavorable. He began his rounds looking for a sign of life. He wanted trouble. In full with the strained situation would be serious enough; but as it was, himself growing helpless, something had to be done. The blacks were getting more sullen and defiant, the appearance of the men the previous night on his veranda—one of the gravest of offences on Berande—ominous. Sooner or later they would get him, if he did not get them, if he did not once again sear on the dark souls the flaming mastery of the white man.
He returned to the house disappointed. No opportunity had presented itself of making an example of insolence and insubordination—such as had occurred on every other day since the kness smote Berande. The fact that he had offended was in itself suspicious. They were growing crafty. There was one man against two hundred. He was horribly afraid of his kness overpowering him and leaving him at their mercy. He saw visions of the blacks taking charge of the plantation, looting the store, burning the buildings and escaping to Malaita. Also one grew vision of the light of his own head, sun dried and him and delivered that blow, when his head and the plantation would have been theirs. Hatred and murder and lust for revenge they possessed to overflowing. But one thing they lacked, the thing that he possessed—the flame of mastery that would not quench, that burned fiercely as ever in the disease wasted body.
"Narada! Billy!" Sheldon called sharply.
Two men slunk unwillingly forward and waited.
Sheldon gave the keys of the handcuffs to a house boy, who went under the house and loosed the prisoner.
"You fella Narada, you fella Billy, take um this fella boy along tree and make fast, hands high up," was Sheldon's command.
While this was being done one of the house boys fetched a heavy handed, heavy lashed whip. Sheldon began a speech.
"This fella Arunga, me cross along him too much. I no steal this fella Arunga. I no gammon. I say, 'All right, you come along me Berande, work three fella year.' He say, 'All right, me come along you work three fella year.' He come. He catch plenty good fella kai kai (food) plenty good fella money. What name he run away? Me too much cross along him. I knock what name outa him fella. I pay Seelee, big fella master along Balesuna, one case tobacco catch that fella Arunga. All right. Arunga pay that fella case tobacco. Six pounds that fella Arunga pay. Alle same one year more that fella Arunga work Berande. All right. Now he catch ten fella whip three times. You fella Billy catch whip, give that fella Arunga ten fella three times. All fella boys look see, all fella Marys (women) look see: blame bye, they like run away they think strong fella too much, no run away. Billy, strong fella too much ten fella three times."
The house boy extended the whip to him, but Billy did not take it. Sheldon waited quietly. The eyes of all the cannibals were fixed upon him in doubt and fear and eagerness. It was the moment of test, whereby the lone white man was to live or be lost.
"Ten fella three times, Billy," Sheldon said encouragingly, though there was a certain metallic rasp in his voice.
Billy scowled, looked up and looked down, but did not move.
Sheldon's voice exploded like a pistol shot. The savage startled physically. Grins overspread the grotesque features of the audience, and there was a sound of tittering.
"Spose you like too much lash that fella Arunga, you take him fella Tulagi," Billy said. "One fella government agent make plenty lash. That um fella law. Me sarvee um fella law."
It was the law, and Sheldon knew it. But he wanted to live this day and the next day and not to die waiting for the law to operate the next week or the week after.
"Too much talk along you," he cried angrily. "What name, eh? What name?"
"Me sarvee law," the savage repeated stubbornly.
"Astoa!"
Another man stepped forward in almost a sprightly way and glanced insolently up. Sheldon was selecting the worst characters for the lesson.
"You fella Astoa, you fella Narada,

tie up that fella Billy," Sheldon said, and fella same fella way.
"Strong fella tie," he cautioned them. "You fella Astoa take that fella whip. Plenty strong big fella too much ten fella three times. Sarvee?"
"No," Astoa grunted.
Sheldon picked up the rifle that had leaned against the rail, and cocked it. "I know you, Astoa," he said calmly. "You work along Queensland six years."
"Me fella missionary," the black interrupted with deliberate insolence.
"Queensland you stop jail one fella year. White fella master fool no hang you. You too much bad fella. Queensland you stop jail six months two fella time. Two fella time you steal. All right, you missionary. You sarvee one fella prayer?"
"Yes, me sarvee prayer," was the reply.
"All right, then you pray now, short time little bit. You say one fella prayer quick, then me kill you."
Sheldon held the rifle on him and waited. The black glanced around at



SHELDON HELD THE RIFLE ON HIM AND WAITED.

his fellows, but none moved to aid him. They were intent upon the coming spectacle, staring fascinated at the white man with death in his hands who stood alone on the great veranda.
"Astoa," Sheldon said, seizing the psychological moment, "I count three fella time. Then I shoot you fella dead, good by, all finish you."
And Sheldon knew that when he had counted three he would drop him in his tracks. The black knew it, too. That was why Sheldon did not have to do it, for when he had counted one, Astoa reached out his hand and took the whip. And right well Astoa laid on the whip, angered at his fellows for not supporting him, and venting his anger with every stroke. From the veranda, Sheldon egged him on to strike with strength, till the two tried savages screamed and howled while the blood oozed down their backs. The lesson was being well written in red.
When the last of the gang, including the two howling culprits, had passed out through the compound gate, Sheldon sank down half fainting on his couch.
"You're a sick man," he groaned.
"A sick man."
"But you can sleep at ease tonight," he added, half an hour later.

CHAPTER III. THE JESSIE.

TWO days passed, and Sheldon felt that he could not grow any weaker and live, much less make his four daily rounds of the hospital. The deaths were averaging four a day, and there were more new cases than recoveries. The blacks were in a funk. Each one, when taken sick, seemed to make every effort to die. They believed they were going to die, and yet, believing this with absolute conviction, they somehow lacked the nerve to rush the frail wraith of a man with the white skin and escape from the charnel house by the whale boats. They chose the lingering death they were sure awaited them rather than the immediate death they were very sure would pounce upon them if they went up against the master. That he never slept they knew. That he could not be conjured to death they were equally sure—they had tried it. And even the sickness that was sweeping them off could not kill him.
With the whipping in the compound discipline had improved. They cringed under the iron hand of the white man. They gave their scowls or malignant looks with averted faces or when his back was turned. They saved their mutterings for the barracks at night, where he could not hear. And there were no more runaways and no more night prowlers on the veranda.

Dawn of the third day after the whipping brought the Jessie's white sails in sight. His partner was on board, vigorous and hearty from six weeks recruiting in Malaita. He could take charge now and all would be well with Berande.
Sheldon lay in the steamer chair and watched the Jessie's whaleboat pull in for the beach. He wondered why only three sweeps were pulling, and he wondered still more when, beached, there was so much delay in getting out of the boat. Then he understood. The

three blacks who had been pulling started up the beach with a stretcher on their shoulders. A white man, whom he recognized as the Jessie's captain, walked in front and opened the gate, then dropped behind to close it. Sheldon knew that it was Hughie Drummond who lay in the stretcher, and a mist came before his eyes. He felt an overwhelming desire to die. The disappointment was too great. In his own state of terrible weakness he felt that it was impossible to go on with his task of holding Berande plantation tight gripped in his fist. Then the will of him flamed up again, and he directed the blacks to lay the stretcher beside him on the floor. Hughie Drummond, whom he had last seen in health, was an emaciated skeleton.

"Black water fever," the captain said. "He's been like this for six days, unconscious. And we've got dysentery on board. What's the matter with you?"

"I'm burying four a day," Sheldon answered, as he bent over from the steamer chair and inserted a thermometer under his partner's tongue. Captain Oleson swore blasphemously and sent a house boy to bring whiskey and soda. Sheldon glanced at the thermometer.

"One hundred and seven," he said. "Poor Hughie."

Captain Oleson offered him some whiskey.
"Couldn't think of it—perforation, you know," Sheldon said.

He sent for a boss boy and ordered a grave to be dug; also, some of the packing cases to be knocked together into a coffin. Having given the orders, Sheldon lay back in his chair with closed eyes.
"It's been fair hell, sir," Captain Oleson began, then broke off to help himself to more whiskey. "Contrary winds and calms. We've been driftin' all about the shop for ten days. There's ten thousand sharks following us for the tucker we've been throwin' over to them. They was snappin' at the oars when we started to come ashore. We got it from the water—water from Owga creek. Filled my casks with it. How was we to know? I've filled there before an' it was all right. We had sixty recruits—full up, and my crew of fifteen. We've been buryin' them day an' night. The beggars won't live, dash them! They die out of spite. Only three of my crew left on its legs. Five more down. Seven dead. Oh, h—! What's the good of talkin'?"

"How many recruits left?" Sheldon asked.

"Lost half. Thirty left. Twenty down, and ten tottering around," Sheldon sighed.

"That means another addition to the hospital. We've got to get them ashore somehow. Viaburi! Hey, you, Viaburi, ring big fella bell strong fella too much."

The hands, called in from the fields at that unwanted hour, were split into detachments. Some were sent into the woods to cut timber for house beams, others to cutting cane grass for thatching and forty of them lifted a whale boat above their heads and carried it down to the sea. Sheldon had gritted his teeth, pulled his collapsing soul together and taken Berande plantation into his fist once more.

"Have you seen the barometer?" Captain Oleson asked, pausing at the bottom of the steps on his way to oversee the disembarkation of the sick.

"No," Sheldon answered. "Is it down?"

"It's going down."
"Then you'd better sleep aboard tonight," was Sheldon's judgment. "Never mind the funeral. I'll see to poor Hughie. If you can see your way to it, come ashore tomorrow and lend me a hand. If you can't, send the mate."

"Right O. I'll come myself. Mr. Johnson's dead, sir. I forgot to tell you—three days ago."

Sheldon turned to his partner, calling for boys to carry him into the house. But Hughie Drummond had reached the end. His breathing was imperceptible. By mere touch Sheldon could ascertain that the dying man's temperature was going down. It must have been going down when the thermometer registered one hundred and seven. He had burned out. Sheldon knelt beside him, the house boys grouped around, their white singlets and loin cloths peculiarly at variance with their dark skins and savage countenances, their huge ear plugs and carved and glistening nose rings. Sheldon tottered to his feet at last and half fell into the steamer chair. Oppressive as the heat had been it was now even more oppressive. It was difficult to breathe. He panted for air. The faces and naked arms of the house boys were banded with sweat.

"Marster," one of them ventured, "big fella wind be come, strong fella too much."

Sheldon nodded his head, but did not look. Much as he had loved Hughie Drummond, his death and the funeral it entailed seemed an intolerable burden to add to what he was already sinking under. He had a feeling—nay, it was a certitude—that all he had to do was to shut his eyes and

let go and that he would die, sink into immensity of rest. His weary body seemed torn by the oncoming pangs of dissolution. He was a fool to hang on. He had died a score of deaths already, and what was the use of prolonging it to two more deaths before he really died? Not only was he not afraid to die, but he desired to die.
But his mind that could will life or death still poised on. He saw the two whaleboats land on the beach and the sick, on stretchers or pickaback, groaning and wailing, go by to the

grious procession. He saw the wind making on the clouded horizon and thought of the sick in the hospital. Here was something waiting for his hand to be done, and it was not in his nature to lie down and sleep or die when any task remained undone.

The boss boys were called and given their orders to rope down the hospital with its two additions. He remembered the spare anchor chain, new and black painted, that hung under the house suspended from the floor beams and ordered it to be used on the hospital as well. Other boys brought the coffin, a grotesque patchwork of packing cases, and under his directions they laid Hughie Drummond in it. Half a dozen boys carried it down the beach, while he rode on the back of a



THE BLACKS GAZED APPREHENSIVELY AT THE DARK LINE ON THE WATER.

another, his arms around the black's neck, one hand clutching a prayer book.

While he read the service the blacks gazed apprehensively at the dark line on the water, above which rolled and tumbled the racing clouds. The first breath of the wind, faint and silken, tonic with life, fanned through his dry baked body as he finished reading. Then came the second breath of the wind, an angry gust, as the shovels worked rapidly filling in the sand. So heavy was the gust that Sheldon, still on his feet, seized hold of his man-horse to escape being blown away. The Jessie was blotted out, and a strange, ominous sound arose as mul-

titudinous wavelets struck foaming on the beach. It was like the bubbling of some colossal caldron. From all about could be heard the dull thudding of falling coconuts. The tall, delicate trunked trees twisted and snapped about like whiplashes. The air seemed filled with their flying leaves, any one of which, stem-on, could brain a man. Then came the rain, a deluge, a straight, horizontal sheet that poured along like a river, defying gravitation. The black, with Sheldon mounted on him, plunged ahead into the thick of it, stooping far forward and low to the ground to avoid being toppled over backward.

"He's sleeping out and far tonight," Sheldon quoted as he thought of the dead man in the sand and the rainwater trickling down upon the cold clay.

(To be Continued next Tuesday)

EXPERT ESTIMATES COST OF NEW STATE HIGHWAY

Building of Salem-Portland Road to be Commenced in Earnest Next Spring.

OREGON AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE, Corvallis, Or., Oct. 27.—It is estimated by Professor E. F. Ayers, highway construction expert at the Oregon Agricultural College, that an expenditure of \$80,000 is necessary for the good roads work proposed between Salem and Portland. He has recently returned from an inspection of the road to be improved, on which he accompanied the Hon. G. A. Rogers, chairman of the State Highway Commission, of which Judge Dimmick and C. T. Pahl, of Multnomah, are the other members. The trip had as its main purpose a study of the necessary drainage work. The distribution of crushed rock along the road will begin at once, but the regular construction work will not commence until spring. The road parallels the Southern Pacific railroad all the way, on the east side of the river. Drainage work and surfacing, Professor Ayers says, is to be begun in the near future.

Expect New Depot.

There seems some prospect for a new depot at this place so we are informed. The project is in the hands of the Budget and is expected to receive the recommendation of that body.—Willamina Herald.

Vern Copie, buyer for Tillison & Company, of Salem, was in the city on business last Saturday.

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Children's gun metal shoes, size 9 to 11	\$1.50
Children's gun metal shoes, size 11½ to 2½	\$1.75
Children's patent leather shoes, size 5 to 8½	\$1.50
Children's patent leather shoes, size 9 to 11½	\$1.75
Children's patent leather shoes, size 11½ to 2½	\$2.00

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