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While their house was being built, the Wittmers settled in caves fashioned by pirates.

FLOREANA (Continued)

Footsore as I was, I had to go up to look at the spring. In contrast to our first grim view of the sandy, lifeless shore with its black rocks, this circle of green trees was something from a fairy tale. After the glare of the sun which had beat down on us for the last part of our march, it was wonderfully cool and pleasantly dark in the shade of the thick foliage.

The cool spring water gushed and gurgled, sparkling like quicksilver. We put our hands in it and held them against our burning faces; then we drank from our cupped hands the first water the island had offered us. In that moment we forgot all the trials of the last days. Now at last we felt secure.

Yes, if all went well the first native of Floreana would soon be born. When we left Europe in June, I already was expecting a child, though it was not certain till we were on the high seas. My sister, whom I had left so abruptly in Cologne, impulsively rushed over to Amsterdam to see me off, and I was pretty sick most of the time until we sailed. She was horrified at the idea that I was probably pregnant and would have to have my first baby on a remote Pacific island with no physician or midwife or drugs, not even a telephone. I had shared her apprehensions at the time, though I tried not to show it. But now I was looking forward to the day: the new arrival was due around the end of December.

Meanwhile, our settling continued. It was weeks before the first piece of land was cleared enough to live, more or less, from our own planting: weeks of laborious work, which filled the whole day, took my mind off my condition. The days were so short, and there was so much to be done!

Sometimes Heinz gave up a day to hunt. We needed meat, he especially for his labors. One time he would shoot a small boar, another time a bull. We soon had so much meat that we couldn't eat it all at once, and we had to learn how to preserve it.

It had rained incessantly. Four or five hours of sunshine a week were more than average, and we were grateful for every bit: on the whole, the climate up here was rather depressing for an expectant mother!

When the sun did appear, I would sit outside the living-room cave, sewing the first baby things. It is not so easy to shake off the habits of civilization; even on a des-

ert island, you keep on doing crochet work around a baby's vest. I'd also made a pillow for the baby but didn't have the stuffing. "Have to feather our own nest," remarked Heinz, and promised to shoot one of the sea birds for stuffing.

I Begin to Have Doubts

Despite all these preparations, however, I was beginning to get rather apprehensive—partly about the house, of course. Heinz and Harry had so much else to do, and there were only three short months for building our house before the coming of the baby. The cave wouldn't do for a nursery; the lava stone was so soft that the rain water kept seeping through.

Apart from all this, having your first baby was a bit alarming in itself. "We've at least got someone with medical knowledge on the island," said Heinz comfortingly, "so nothing much can go wrong."

That was true, and the next time Dr. Ritter dropped in to see us for a few minutes, I asked him: "You will help me, won't you, Dr. Ritter, when the time comes?"

"I'm afraid not," he said to my surprise and dismay. "I didn't come to Floreana to practice as a doctor. I can't sit round here all the time, can I? I've got too much to do. But you can let me know if you need me."

How could any man be so heartless, I thought. How was I going to let him know when my labor began? Heinz wouldn't want to leave me on my own, and poor Harry's eyesight was so bad he would never find his way.

Dr. Ritter evidently realized my disappointment and did his best to soften the blow. "You mustn't take it all so seriously. Children are born every minute of the day—it's nothing to be frightened of. As you work hard and keep moving all the time, you'll find everything will go off smoothly."

I can't say I found this much comfort, but I hoped he was right.

(But the birth does not go smoothly, and Mrs. Wittmer not only faces the ordeal without medical aid but without husband and son. And then, alone in the climax of her labor, she hears the dreaded roar of another island resident—a charging wild bull. Read "Floreana," Part II, in next week's issue of Family Weekly.)