

Chapter Two--THE PROUD GOAT OF ALOYSIUS PANKBURN

I

Quick eye that he had for the promise of adventure, prepared always for the unexpected to leap out at him from behind the nearest cocoanut tree, nevertheless David Grief received no warning when he laid eyes on Aloysius Pankburn. It was on the little steamer Berthe. Leaving his schooner to follow, Grief had taken passage for the short run across from Raiatea to Papeete. When he first saw Aloysius Pankburn, that somewhat fuddled gentleman was drinking a lonely cocktail at the tiny bar between decks next to the barber shop. And when Grief left the barber's hands half an hour later Aloysius Pankburn was still hanging over the bar still drinking by himself.

Now it is not good for man to drink alone, and Grief threw sharp scrutiny into his pass-ing glance. He saw a well-built young man of thirty, well-featured, well-dressed, and evidently, in the world's catalogue, a gentleman. But in the faint hint of slovenliness, in the shaking, eager hand that spilled the liquor, and in the nervous, vacillating eyes, Grief read the unmistakable marks of the chronic alcoholic.

After dinner he chanced upon Pankburn again. This time it was on deck, and the young man, clinging to the rail and peering into the distance at the dim forms of a man and woman in two steamer chairs drawn closely together, was crying, drunkenly. Grief noted that the man's arm was around the woman's waist. Aloysius Pankburn looked on and cried.

"Nothing to weep about," Grief said genially.

Pankburn looked at him, and gushed tears of profound self-pity.

"It's hard," he sobbed. "Hard. Hard. That man's my business manager. I employ him. I pay him a good screw. And that's how he earns it."

"In that case, why don't you put a stop to it?" Grief advised.

"I can't. She'd shut off my whiskey. She's my trained nurse."

"Fire her, then, and drink your head off."

"I can't. He's got all my money. If I did, he wouldn't give me sixpence to buy a drink with."

This woful possibility brought a fresh wash of tears. Grief was interested. Of all unique situations he could never have imagined such a one as this.

"They were engaged to take care of me," Pankburn was blubbering, "to keep me away from the drink. And that's the way they do it, lollygagging all about the ship and letting me drink myself to death. It isn't right, I tell you. It isn't right. They were sent along with me for the express purpose of not letting me drink, and they let me drink to swinishness as long as I leave them alone. If I complain they threaten not to let me have another drop. What can a poor devil do? My death will be on their heads, that's all. Come on down and join me."

He released his clutch on the rail, and would have fallen had Grief not caught his arm. He seemed to undergo a transformation, to stiffen physically, to thrust his chin forward aggressively, and to glint harshly in his eyes.

"I won't let them kill me. And they'll be sorry. I've offered them fifty thousand--later on, of course. They laughed. They don't know. But I know." He fumbled in his coat pocket and drew forth an object that flashed in the faint light. "They don't know the meaning of that. But I do." He looked at Grief with abrupt suspicion. "What do you make out of it, eh? What do you make out of it?"

David Grief caught a swift vision of an alcoholic degenerate putting a very loving young couple to death with a copper spike, for a copper spike was what he held in his hand, an evident old-fashioned ship-fastening.

"My mother thinks I'm up here to get cured of the booze habit. She doesn't know. I bribed the doctor to prescribe a voyage. When we get to Papeete my manager is going to charter a schooner and away we'll sail. But they don't dream. They think it's the booze. I know. I only know. Good night, sir. I'm going to bed--unless--er--you'll join me in a night cap. One last drink, you know."

II

In the week that followed at Papeete Grief caught numerous and bizarre glimpses of Aloysius Pankburn. So did everybody else in the little island capital; for neither the beach nor Lavina's boarding house had been so scandalized in years. In midday, bareheaded, clad only in swimming trunks, Aloysius Pankburn ran down the main street from Lavina's to the water front. He put on the gloves with a fireman from the *Berthe* in a scheduled four-round bout at the *Folies Bergères*, and was knocked out in the second round. He tried insanely to drown himself in a two-foot pool of water, dived drunkenly and splendidly from fifty feet up in the rigging of the *Mariposa* lying at the wharf, and chartered the cutter *Toerau* at more than her purchase price and was only saved by his manager's refusal financially to ratify the agreement. He bought out the old blind leper at the market, and sold breadfruit, plantains, and sweet potatoes at such cut-rates that the gendarmes were called out to break the rush of bargain-hunting natives. For that matter, three times the gendarmes arrested him for riotous behaviour, and three times his manager ceased from love-making long enough to pay the fines imposed by a needy colonial administration.

Then the *Mariposa* sailed for San Francisco, and in the bridal suite were the manager and the trained nurse, fresh-married. Before departing, the manager had thoughtfully bestowed eight five-pound banknotes on Aloysius, with the foreseen result that Aloysius awoke several days later to find himself broke and perilously near to delirium tremens.

Lavina, famed for her good heart even among the driftage of South Pacific rogues and scamps, nursed him around and never let it filter into his returning intelligence that there was neither manager nor money to pay his board.

It was several evenings after this that David Grief, lounging under the after deck awning of the Kittiwake and idly scanning the meagre columns of the Papeete Avant-Coureur, sat suddenly up and almost rubbed his eyes. It was unbelievable, but there it was. The old South Seas Romance was not dead. He read:

WANTED--To exchange a half interest in buried treasure, worth five million francs, for transportation for one to an unknown island in the Pacific and facilities for carrying away the loot. Ask for FOLLY, at Lavina's.

Grief looked at his watch. It was early yet, only eight o'clock.

"Mr. Carlsen," he called in the direction of a glowing pipe. "Get the crew for the whale-boat. I'm going ashore."

The husky voice of the Norwegian mate was raised for'ard, and half a dozen strapping Rapa Islanders ceased their singing and manned the boat.

"I came to see Folly, Mr. Folly, I imagine," David Grief told Lavina.

He noted the quick interest in her eyes as she turned her head and flung a command in native across two open rooms to the outstanding kitchen. A few minutes later a barefooted native girl padded in and shook her head.

Lavina's disappointment was evident.

"You're stopping aboard the Kittiwake, aren't you?" she said. "I'll tell him you called."

"Then it is a he?" Grief queried.

Lavina nodded.

"I hope you can do something for him, Captain Grief. I'm only a good-natured woman. I don't know. But he's a likable man, and he may be telling the truth; I don't know. You'll know. You're not a soft-hearted fool like me. Can't I mix you a cocktail?"

III

Back on board his schooner and dozing in a deck chair under a three-months-old magazine, David Grief was aroused by a sobbing, slubbering noise from overside. He opened his eyes. From the Chilian cruiser, a quarter of a mile away, came the stroke of eight bells. It was midnight. From overside came a splash and another slubbering noise. To him it seemed half amphibian, half the sounds of a man crying to himself and querulously chanting his sorrows to the general universe.

A jump took David Grief to the low rail. Beneath, centred about the slubbering noise, was an area of agitated phosphorescence. Leaning over, he locked his hand under the armpit of a man, and, with pull and heave and quick-changing grips, he drew on deck the naked form of Aloysius Pankburn.

"I didn't have a sou-markee," he complained. "I had to swim it, and I couldn't find your gangway. It was very miserable. Pardon me. If you have a towel to put about my middle, and a good stiff drink, I'll be more myself. I'm Mr. Folly, and you're the Captain Grief, I presume, who called on me when I was out. No, I'm not drunk. Nor am I cold. This isn't shivering. Lavina allowed me only two drinks to-day. I'm on the edge of the horrors, that's all, and I was beginning to see things when I couldn't find the gangway. If you'll take me below I'll be very grateful. You are the only one that answered my advertisement."

He was shaking pitiably in the warm night, and down in the cabin, before he got his towel, Grief saw to it that a half-tumbler of whiskey was in his hand.

"Now fire ahead," Grief said, when he had got his guest into a shirt and a pair of duck trousers. "What's this advertisement of yours? I'm listening."

Pankburn looked at the whiskey bottle, but Grief shook his head.

"All right, Captain, though I tell you on whatever is left of my honour that I am not drunk--not in the least. Also, what I shall tell you is true, and I shall tell it briefly, for it is clear to me that you are a man of affairs and action. Likewise, your chemistry is good. To you alcohol has never been a million maggots gnawing at every cell of you. You've never been to hell. I am there now. I am scorching. Now listen.

"My mother is alive. She is English. I was born in Australia. I was educated at York and Yale. I am a master of arts, a doctor of philosophy, and I am no good. Furthermore, I am an alcoholic. I have been an athlete. I used to swan-dive a hundred and ten feet in the clear. I hold several amateur records. I am a fish. I learned the crawl-stroke from the first of the Cavilles. I have done thirty miles in a rough sea. I have another record. I have punished more whiskey than any man of my years. I will steal sixpence from you for the price of a drink. Finally, I will tell you the truth.

"My father was an American--an Annapolis man. He was a midshipman in the War of the Rebellion. In '66 he was a lieutenant on the Suwanee. Her captain was Paul Shirley. In '66 the Suwanee coaled at an island in the Pacific which I do not care to mention, under a protectorate which did not exist then and which shall be nameless. Ashore, behind the bar of a public house, my father saw three copper spikes--ship's spikes."

David Grief smiled quietly.

"And now I can tell you the name of the coaling station and of the protectorate that came afterward," he said.

"And of the three spikes?" Pankburn asked with equal quietness. "Go ahead, for they are in my possession now."

"Certainly. They were behind German Oscar's bar at Peenoo-Peenee. Johnny Black brought them there from off his schooner the night he died. He was just back from a long cruise to the westward, fishing beche-de-mer and sandalwood trading. All the beach knows the tale."

Pankburn shook his head.

"Go on," he urged.

"It was before my time, of course," Grief explained. "I only tell what

I've heard. Next came the Ecuadoran cruiser, of all directions, in from the westward, and bound home. Her officers recognized the spikes. Johnny Black was dead. They got hold of his mate and logbook. Away to the westward went she. Six months after, again bound home, she dropped in at Peenoo-Peenee. She had failed, and the tale leaked out."

"When the revolutionists were marching on Guayaquil," Pankburn took it up, "the federal officers, believing a defence of the city hopeless, salted down the government treasure chest, something like a million dollars gold, but all in English coinage, and put it on board the American schooner Flirt. They were going to run at daylight. The American captain skinned out in the middle of the night. Go on."

"It's an old story," Grief resumed. "There was no other vessel in the harbour. The federal leaders couldn't run. They put their backs to the wall and held the city. Rohjas Salced, making a forced march from Quito, raised the siege. The revolution was broken, and the one ancient steamer that constituted the Ecuadoran navy was sent in pursuit of the Flirt. They caught her, between the Banks Group and the New Hebrides, hove to and flying distress signals. The captain had died the day before--blackwater fever."

"And the mate?" Pankburn challenged.

"The mate had been killed a week earlier by the natives on one of the Banks, when they sent a boat in for water. There were no navigators

left. The men were put to the torture. It was beyond international law. They wanted to confess, but couldn't. They told of the three spikes in the trees on the beach, but where the island was they did not know. To the westward, far to the westward, was all they knew. The tale now goes two ways. One is that they all died under the torture. The other is that the survivors were swung at the yardarm. At any rate, the Ecuadoran cruiser went home without the treasure. Johnny Black brought the three spikes to Peenoo-Peenee, and left them at German Oscar's, but how and where he found them he never told."

Pankburn looked hard at the whiskey bottle.

"Just two fingers," he whimpered.

Grief considered, and poured a meagre drink. Pankburn's eyes sparkled, and he took new lease of life.

"And this is where I come in with the missing details," he said. "Johnny Black did tell. He told my father. Wrote him from Levuka, before he came on to die at Peenoo-Peenee. My father had saved his life one rough-house night in Valparaiso. A Chink pearler, out of Thursday Island, prospecting for new grounds to the north of New Guinea, traded for the three spikes with a nigger. Johnny Black bought them for copper weight. He didn't dream any more than the Chink, but coming back he stopped for hawksbill turtle at the very beach where you say the mate of the Flirt was killed. Only he wasn't killed. The Banks Islanders held

him prisoner, and he was dying of necrosis of the jawbone, caused by an arrow wound in the fight on the beach. Before he died he told the yarn to Johnny Black. Johnny Black wrote my father from Levuka. He was at the end of his rope--cancer. My father, ten years afterward, when captain of the Perry, got the spikes from German Oscar. And from my father, last will and testament, you know, came the spikes and the data. I have the island, the latitude and longitude of the beach where the three spikes were nailed in the trees. The spikes are up at Lavina's now. The latitude and longitude are in my head. Now what do you think?"

"Fishy," was Grief's instant judgment. "Why didn't your father go and get it himself?"

"Didn't need it. An uncle died and left him a fortune. He retired from the navy, ran foul of an epidemic of trained nurses in Boston, and my mother got a divorce. Also, she fell heir to an income of something like thirty thousand dollars, and went to live in New Zealand. I was divided between them, half-time New Zealand, half-time United States, until my father's death last year. Now my mother has me altogether. He left me his money--oh, a couple of millions--but my mother has had guardians appointed on account of the drink. I'm worth all kinds of money, but I can't touch a penny save what is doled out to me. But the old man, who had got the tip on my drinking, left me the three spikes and the data thereunto pertaining. Did it through his lawyers, unknown to my mother; said it beat life insurance, and that if I had the backbone to go and get it I could drink my back teeth awash until I died. Millions in the

hands of my guardians, slathers of shekels of my mother's that'll be mine if she beats me to the crematory, another million waiting to be dug up, and in the meantime I'm cadging on Lavina for two drinks a day. It's hell, isn't it?--when you consider my thirst."

"Where's the island?"

"It's a long way from here."

"Name it."

"Not on your life, Captain Grief. You're making an easy half-million out of this. You will sail under my directions, and when we're well to sea and on our way I'll tell you and not before."

Grief shrugged his shoulders, dismissing the subject.

"When I've given you another drink I'll send the boat ashore with you," he said.

Pankburn was taken aback. For at least five minutes he debated with himself, then licked his lips and surrendered.

"If you promise to go, I'll tell you now."

"Of course I'm willing to go. That's why I asked you. Name the island."

Pankburn looked at the bottle.

"I'll take that drink now, Captain."

"No you won't. That drink was for you if you went ashore. If you are going to tell me the island, you must do it in your sober senses."

"Francis Island, if you will have it. Bougainville named it Barbour Island."

"Off there all by its lonely in the Little Coral Sea," Grief said. "I know it. Lies between New Ireland and New Guinea. A rotten hole now, though it was all right when the Flirt drove in the spikes and the Chink pearler traded for them. The steamship Castor, recruiting labour for the Upolu plantations, was cut off there with all hands two years ago. I knew her captain well. The Germans sent a cruiser, shelled the bush, burned half a dozen villages, killed a couple of niggers and a lot of pigs, and--and that was all. The niggers always were bad there, but they turned really bad forty years ago. That was when they cut off a whaler. Let me see? What was her name?"

He stepped to the bookshelf, drew out the bulky "South Pacific Directory," and ran through its pages.

"Yes. Here it is. Francis, or Barbour," he skimmed. "Natives warlike and

treacherous--Melanesian--cannibals. Whaleship Western cut off--that was her name. Shoals--points--anchorage--ah, Redscar, Owen Bay, Likikili Bay, that's more like it; deep indentation, mangrove swamps, good holding in nine fathoms when white scar in bluff bears west-southwest." Grief looked up. "That's your beach, Pankburn, I'll swear."

"Will you go?" the other demanded eagerly.

Grief nodded.

"It sounds good to me. Now if the story had been of a hundred millions, or some such crazy sum, I wouldn't look at it for a moment. We'll sail to-morrow, but under one consideration. You are to be absolutely under my orders."

His visitor nodded emphatically and joyously.

"And that means no drink."

"That's pretty hard," Pankburn whined.

"It's my terms. I'm enough of a doctor to see you don't come to harm. And you are to work--hard work, sailor's work. You'll stand regular watches and everything, though you eat and sleep aft with us."

"It's a go." Pankburn put out his hand to ratify the agreement. "If it doesn't kill me," he added.

David Grief poured a generous three-fingers into the tumbler and extended it.

"Then here's your last drink. Take it."

Pankburn's hand went halfway out. With a sudden spasm of resolution, he hesitated, threw back his shoulders, and straightened up his head.

"I guess I won't," he began, then, feebly surrendering to the gnaw of desire, he reached hastily for the glass, as if in fear that it would be withdrawn.

IV

It is a long traverse from Papeete in the Societies to the Little Coral Sea--from 100 west longitude to 150 east longitude--as the crow flies the equivalent to a voyage across the Atlantic. But the Kittiwake did not go as the crow flies. David Grief's numerous interests diverted her course many times. He stopped to take a look-in at uninhabited Rose Island with an eye to colonizing and planting cocoa-nuts. Next, he paid his respects to Tui Manua, of Eastern Samoa, and opened an intrigue for a share of the trade monopoly of that dying king's three islands. From Apia he carried several relief agents and a load of trade goods to the Gilberts. He peeped in at Ontong-Java Atoll, inspected his plantations on Ysabel, and purchased lands from the salt-water chiefs of northwestern Malaita. And all along this devious way he made a man of Aloysius Pankburn.

That thirster, though he lived aft, was compelled to do the work of a common sailor. And not only did he take his wheel and lookout, and heave on sheets and tackles, but the dirtiest and most arduous tasks were appointed him. Swung aloft in a bosun's chair, he scraped the masts and slushed down. Holystoning the deck or scrubbing it with fresh limes made his back ache and developed the wasted, flabby muscles. When the Kittiwake lay at anchor and her copper bottom was scrubbed with cocoa-nut husks by the native crew, who dived and did it under water, Pankburn was sent down on his shift and as many times as any on the shift.

"Look at yourself," Grief said. "You are twice the man you were when you came on board. You haven't had one drink, you didn't die, and the poison is pretty well worked out of you. It's the work. It beats trained nurses and business managers. Here, if you're thirsty. Clap your lips to this."

With several deft strokes of his heavy-backed sheath-knife, Grief clipped a triangular piece of shell from the end of a husked drinking-cocoa-nut. The thin, cool liquid, slightly milky and effervescent, bubbled to the brim. With a bow, Pankburn took the natural cup, threw his head back, and held it back till the shell was empty. He drank many of these nuts each day. The black steward, a New Hebrides boy sixty years of age, and his assistant, a Lark Islander of eleven, saw to it that he was continually supplied.

Pankburn did not object to the hard work. He devoured work, never shirking and always beating the native sailors in jumping to obey a command. But his sufferings during the period of driving the alcohol out of his system were truly heroic. Even when the last shred of the poison was exuded, the desire, as an obsession, remained in his head. So it was, when, on his honour, he went ashore at Apia, that he attempted to put the public houses out of business by drinking up their stocks in trade. And so it was, at two in the morning, that David Grief found him in front of the Tivoli, out of which he had been disorderly thrown by Charley Roberts. Aloysius, as of old, was chanting his sorrows to the stars. Also, and more concretely, he was punctuating the rhythm with

cobbles of coral stone, which he flung with amazing accuracy through Charley Roberts's windows.

David Grief took him away, but not till next morning did he take him in hand. It was on the deck of the Kittiwake, and there was nothing kindergarten about it. Grief struck him, with bare knuckles, punched him and punished him--gave him the worst thrashing he had ever received.

"For the good of your soul, Pankburn," was the way he emphasized his blows. "For the good of your mother. For the progeny that will come after. For the good of the world, and the universe, and the whole race of man yet to be. And now, to hammer the lesson home, we'll do it all over again. That, for the good of your soul; and that, for your mother's sake; and that, for the little children, undreamed of and unborn, whose mother you'll love for their sakes, and for love's sake, in the lease of manhood that will be yours when I am done with you. Come on and take your medicine. I'm not done with you yet. I've only begun. There are many other reasons which I shall now proceed to expound." The brown sailors and the black stewards and cook looked on and grinned. Far from them was the questioning of any of the mysterious and incomprehensible ways of white men. As for Carlsen, the mate, he was grimly in accord with the treatment his employer was administering; while Albright, the supercargo, merely played with his mustache and smiled. They were men of the sea. They lived life in the rough. And alcohol, in themselves as well as in other men, was a problem they had learned to handle in ways not taught in doctors' schools.

"Boy! A bucket of fresh water and a towel," Grief ordered, when he had finished. "Two buckets and two towels," he added, as he surveyed his own hands.

"You're a pretty one," he said to Pankburn. "You've spoiled everything. I had the poison completely out of you. And now you are fairly reeking with it. We've got to begin all over again. Mr. Albright! You know that pile of old chain on the beach at the boat-landing. Find the owner, buy it, and fetch it on board. There must be a hundred and fifty fathoms of it. Pankburn! To-morrow morning you start in pounding the rust off of it. When you've done that, you'll sandpaper it. Then you'll paint it. And nothing else will you do till that chain is as smooth as new."

Aloysius Pankburn shook his head.

"I quit. Francis Island can go to hell for all of me. I'm done with your slave-driving. Kindly put me ashore at once. I'm a white man. You can't treat me this way."

"Mr. Carlsen, you will see that Mr. Pankburn remains on board."

"I'll have you broken for this!" Aloysius screamed. "You can't stop me."

"I can give you another licking," Grief answered. "And let me tell you one thing, you besotted whelp, I'll keep on licking you as long as my

knuckles hold out or until you yearn to hammer chain rust. I've taken you in hand, and I'm going to make a man out of you if I have to kill you to do it. Now go below and change your clothes. Be ready to turn to with a hammer this afternoon. Mr. Albright, get that chain aboard pronto. Mr. Carlsen, send the boats ashore after it. Also, keep your eye on Pankburn. If he shows signs of keeling over or going into the shakes, give him a nip--a small one. He may need it after last night."

V

For the rest of the time the Kittiwake lay in Apia Aloysius Pankburn pounded chain rust. Ten hours a day he pounded. And on the long stretch across to the Gilberts he still pounded.

Then came the sandpapering. One hundred and fifty fathoms is nine hundred feet, and every link of all that length was smoothed and polished as no link ever was before. And when the last link had received its second coat of black paint, he declared himself.

"Come on with more dirty work," he told Grief. "I'll overhaul the other chains if you say so. And you needn't worry about me any more. I'm not going to take another drop. I'm going to train up. You got my proud goat when you beat me, but let me tell you, you only got it temporarily. Train! I'm going to train till I'm as hard all the way through, and clean all the way through, as that chain is. And some day, Mister David Grief, somewhere, somehow, I'm going to be in such shape that I'll lick you as you licked me. I'm going to pulp your face till your own niggers won't know you."

Grief was jubilant.

"Now you're talking like a man," he cried. "The only way you'll ever lick me is to become a man. And then, maybe--"

He paused in the hope that the other would catch the suggestion. Aloysius groped for it, and, abruptly, something akin to illumination shone in his eyes.

"And then I won't want to, you mean?"

Grief nodded.

"And that's the curse of it," Aloysius lamented. "I really believe I won't want to. I see the point. But I'm going to go right on and shape myself up just the same."

The warm, sunburn glow in Grief's face seemed to grow warmer. His hand went out.

"Pankburn, I love you right now for that."

Aloysius grasped the hand, and shook his head in sad sincerity.

"Grief," he mourned, "you've got my goat, you've got my proud goat, and you've got it permanently, I'm afraid."

VI

On a sultry tropic day, when the last flicker of the far southeast trade was fading out and the seasonal change for the northwest monsoon was coming on, the Kittiwake lifted above the sea-rim the jungle-clad coast of Francis Island.

Grief, with compass bearings and binoculars, identified the volcano that marked Redscar, ran past Owen Bay, and lost the last of the breeze at the entrance to Likikili Bay. With the two whaleboats out and towing, and with Carl-sen heaving the lead, the Kittiwake sluggishly entered a deep and narrow indentation. There were no beaches. The mangroves began at the water's edge, and behind them rose steep jungle, broken here and there by jagged peaks of rock. At the end of a mile, when the white scar on the bluff bore west-southwest, the lead vindicated the "Directory," and the anchor rumbled down in nine fathoms.

For the rest of that day and until the afternoon of the day following they remained on the Kittiwake and waited. No canoes appeared. There were no signs of human life. Save for the occasional splash of a fish or the screaming of cockatoos, there seemed no other life. Once, however, a huge butterfly, twelve inches from tip to tip, fluttered high over their mastheads and drifted across to the opposing jungle.

"There's no use in sending a boat in to be cut up," Grief said.

Pankburn was incredulous, and volunteered to go in alone, to swim it if he couldn't borrow the dingey.

"They haven't forgotten the German cruiser," Grief explained. "And I'll wager that bush is alive with men right now. What do you think, Mr. Carlsen?"

That veteran adventurer of the islands was emphatic in his agreement.

In the late afternoon of the second day Grief ordered a whaleboat into the water. He took his place in the bow, a live cigarette in his mouth and a short-fused stick of dynamite in his hand, for he was bent on shooting a mess of fish. Along the thwarts half a dozen Winchesters were placed. Albright, who took the steering-sweep, had a Mauser within reach of hand. They pulled in and along the green wall of vegetation. At times they rested on the oars in the midst of a profound silence.

"Two to one the bush is swarming with them--in quids," Albright whispered.

Pankburn listened a moment longer and took the bet. Five minutes later they sighted a school of mullet. The brown rowers held their oars. Grief touched the short fuse to his cigarette and threw the stick. So short was the fuse that the stick exploded in the instant after it struck the water. And in that same instant the bush exploded into life. There were wild yells of defiance, and black and naked bodies leaped forward like

apes through the mangroves.

In the whaleboat every rifle was lifted. Then came the wait. A hundred blacks, some few armed with ancient Sniders, but the greater portion armed with tomahawks, fire-hardened spears, and bone-tipped arrows, clustered on the roots that rose out of the bay. No word was spoken. Each party watched the other across twenty feet of water. An old, one-eyed black, with a bristly face, rested a Snider on his hip, the muzzle directed at Albright, who, in turn, covered him back with the Mauser. A couple of minutes of this tableau endured. The stricken fish rose to the surface or struggled half-stunned in the clear depths.

"It's all right, boys," Grief said quietly. "Put down your guns and over the side with you. Mr. Albright, toss the tobacco to that one-eyed brute."

While the Rapa men dived for the fish, Albright threw a bundle of trade tobacco ashore. The one-eyed man nodded his head and writhed his features in an attempt at amiability. Weapons were lowered, bows unbent, and arrows put back in their quivers.

"They know tobacco," Grief announced, as they rowed back aboard. "We'll have visitors. You'll break out a case of tobacco, Mr. Albright, and a few trade-knives. There's a canoe now."

Old One-Eye, as befitted a chief and leader, paddled out alone, facing

peril for the rest of the tribe. As Carlsen leaned over the rail to help the visitor up, he turned his head and remarked casually:

"They've dug up the money, Mr. Grief. The old beggar's loaded with it."

One-Eye floundered down on deck, grinning appeasingly and failing to hide the fear he had overcome but which still possessed him. He was lame of one leg, and this was accounted for by a terrible scar, inches deep, which ran down the thigh from hip to knee. No clothes he wore whatever, not even a string, but his nose, perforated in a dozen places and each perforation the setting for a carved spine of bone, bristled like a porcupine. Around his neck and hanging down on his dirty chest was a string of gold sovereigns. His ears were hung with silver half-crowns, and from the cartilage separating his nostrils depended a big English penny, tarnished and green, but unmistakable.

"Hold on, Grief," Pankburn said, with perfectly assumed carelessness. "You say they know only beads and tobacco. Very well. You follow my lead. They've found the treasure, and we've got to trade them out of it. Get the whole crew aside and lecture them that they are to be interested only in the pennies. Save? Gold coins must be beneath contempt, and silver coins merely tolerated. Pennies are to be the only desirable things."

Pankburn took charge of the trading. For the penny in One-Eye's nose he gave ten sticks of tobacco. Since each stick cost David Grief a cent,

the bargain was manifestly unfair. But for the half-crowns Pankburn gave only one stick each. The string of sovereigns he refused to consider. The more he refused, the more One-Eye insisted on a trade. At last, with an appearance of irritation and anger, and as a palpable concession, Pankburn gave two sticks for the string, which was composed of ten sovereigns.

"I take my hat off to you," Grief said to Pankburn that night at dinner. "The situation is patent. You've reversed the scale of value. They'll figure the pennies as priceless possessions and the sovereigns as beneath price. Result: they'll hang on to the pennies and force us to trade for sovereigns. Pankburn, I drink your health! Boy!--another cup of tea for Mr. Pankburn."

VII

Followed a golden week. From dawn till dark a row of canoes rested on their paddles two hundred feet away. This was the deadline. Rapa sailors, armed with rifles, maintained it. But one canoe at a time was permitted alongside, and but one black at a time was permitted to come over the rail. Here, under the awning, relieving one another in hourly shifts, the four white men carried on the trade. The rate of exchange was that established by Pankburn with One-Eye. Five sovereigns fetched a stick of tobacco; a hundred sovereigns, twenty sticks. Thus, a crafty-eyed cannibal would deposit on the table a thousand dollars in gold, and go back over the rail, hugely-satisfied, with forty cents' worth of tobacco in his hand.

"Hope we've got enough tobacco to hold out," Carlsen muttered dubiously, as another case was sawed in half.

Albright laughed.

"We've got fifty cases below," he said, "and as I figure it, three cases buy a hundred thousand dollars. There was only a million dollars buried, so thirty cases ought to get it. Though, of course, we've got to allow a margin for the silver and the pennies. That Ecuadoran bunch must have salted down all the coin in sight."

Very few pennies and shillings appeared, though Pankburn continually and

anxiously inquired for them. Pennies were the one thing he seemed to desire, and he made his eyes flash covetously whenever one was produced. True to his theory, the savages concluded that the gold, being of slight value, must be disposed of first. A penny, worth fifty times as much as a sovereign, was something to retain and treasure. Doubtless, in their jungle-lairs, the wise old gray-beards put their heads together and agreed to raise the price on pennies when the worthless gold was all worked off. Who could tell? Mayhap the strange white men could be made to give even twenty sticks for a priceless copper.

By the end of the week the trade went slack. There was only the slightest dribble of gold. An occasional penny was reluctantly disposed of for ten sticks, while several thousand dollars in silver came in.

On the morning of the eighth day no trading was done. The gray-beards had matured their plan and were demanding twenty sticks for a penny, One-Eye delivered the new rate of exchange. The white men appeared to take it with great seriousness, for they stood together debating in low voices. Had One-Eye understood English he would have been enlightened.

"We've got just a little over eight hundred thousand, not counting the silver," Grief said. "And that's about all there is. The bush tribes behind have most probably got the other two hundred thousand. Return in three months, and the salt-water crowd will have traded back for it; also they will be out of tobacco by that time."

"It would be a sin to buy pennies," Albright grinned. "It goes against the thrifty grain of my trader's soul."

"There's a whiff of land-breeze stirring," Grief said, looking at Pankburn. "What do you say?"

Pankburn nodded.

"Very well." Grief measured the faintness and irregularity of the wind against his cheek.

"Mr. Carlsen, heave short, and get off the gaskets. And stand by with the whaleboats to tow. This breeze is not dependable."

He picked up a part case of tobacco, containing six or seven hundred sticks, put it in One-Eye's hands, and helped that bewildered savage over the rail. As the foresail went up the mast, a wail of consternation arose from the canoes lying along the dead-line. And as the anchor broke out and the Kittiwake's head paid off in the light breeze, old One-Eye, daring the rifles levelled on him, paddled alongside and made frantic signs of his tribe's willingness to trade pennies for ten sticks.

"Boy!--a drinking nut," Pankburn called.

"It's Sydney Heads for you," Grief said. "And then what?"

"I'm coming back with you for that two hundred thousand," Pankburn answered. "In the meantime I'm going to build an island schooner. Also, I'm going to call those guardians of mine before the court to show cause why my father's money should not be turned over to me. Show cause? I'll show them cause why it should."

He swelled his biceps proudly under the thin sleeve, reached for the two black stewards, and put them above his head like a pair of dumbbells.

"Come on! Swing out on that fore-boom-tackle!" Carlsen shouted from aft, where the mainsail was being winged out.

Pankburn dropped the stewards and raced for it, beating a Rapa sailor by two jumps to the hauling part.