

TWO YEARS AMONG THE MOST SAVAGE RACE IN THE WORLD

Where Human Beings Slay and Devour One Another
Where Song Birds Build Gardens about Their Nests
Where Nature is Most Beautiful
and where Man is Most Vile.

A E. PRATT has just returned unscathed to his English home after two years of life among the most savage race in the world. He has lived with his son, a boy of 19 now, in a region where human beings slay and devour one another, and where song birds build the most beautiful gardens about their nests upon the ground. He has supped and slept amongst men the most depraved on earth, amidst scenes the most beautiful, a place where humanity alone has sunk beneath the lowest level of the beasts, and where the lower forms of life have surpassed in beauty and intelligence their fellows in other parts of the world.

It is of the Papuans, a little known race of British New Guinea, that A. E. Pratt and his son are now telling London, and their descriptions of the strange aborigines of this remote part of Australasia have astonished all hearers. The monstrous practices in which they indulge are enhanced in hideousness by the fact that, according to the returned explorers, they are an intelligent, quick, merry race of men. Alert of mind, comely and strong of body, they laugh delightedly over the unspeakable outrages which they commit. They are not a low browed, skulking, squalid race like other man eating savages, but nimble of mind and muscle, daring people with open countenances and laughing lips.

Have All Wives They Can Afford.

"The Papuans are polygamists," said Mr. Pratt, "and a man may have as many wives as he can support; but, owing to the great poverty which usually obtains in the islands, few can keep more than two. It is curious to note that, although the Papuan savages are separated from Australia by only a narrow strait, they are, physically and mentally at least, much higher in the human scale. It would be hard to make an exact comparison of their morals, or 'immorals,' but it is certain that the manner of their most repulsive rituals is not as revolting in appearance as is those of the Australians."

"The stature of the Papuan varies. Many of the tribes found in the mountain sections are of splendid, commanding physiques. This is especially true of those living near the German frontier; but there are some tribes of small stature in the mountains and many men of notable size and strength near the sea coast. The Matsigenas are a tribe of fair sized people who live in the lowlands, but near Port Moresby there is a tribe of small Papuans who are the most singular human beings I have seen. They are almost amphibious in their daily habits, adapting themselves from infancy to the water with as much ease as to land life. They are actually web footed, a hereditary mark of ancient aquatic habits."

Cannibal Rites at Festivals.

It is when tribe meets tribe on festive occasions that what we may call murder is done between the merry-makers, and that men, women, and children actually feast upon the cooked flesh of fellow creatures. It is when the mirth is at its highest that one of these laughing, singing tribesmen spears his rival or his tribal adversary. Nor does the most timid Papuan look upon such a tragedy as other than a jolly joke, a cause for laughter, a proof that the festival has proved a grand success. At other than a festival the slaying of a tribesman means war with the tribe of the slayer, and the victims of battle supply the victors' commissariat. Some tribes actually slay and devour the people of their own tribes, striking them down in cold blood, hesitating not to gorge themselves upon the flesh of their own relatives. Nor is there in this monstrous practice any evidence of malignity. The corpse is looked upon as proper food. The killing is done by the village butcher as a matter of course. There is no grief manifested, and it is likely that none is felt.

Contradictory as it may seem, these Papuans, according to Mr. Pratt, are not devoid of all gentle or affectionate traits. They have, too, a sense of what civilized people call honor. They do not cheat or lie readily, as many aborigines do, and in their dealings with him they proved both trustworthy and trusting in most cases. The tribes with which he visited proved themselves to be loyal and indefatigable in his service, reciprocating his fair treatment, responding to his kindness, and quickly learned everything he could teach them.

Man's Life Worth a Pig.

"But while we were encamped at Kebea," he says, "one morning we received an unpleasant surprise. The natives of a village on an opposite ridge, within calling distance, shouted over to us that they had killed and eaten the brother of one of my best hunters, Ow Bow. The slain Papuan himself was a faithful and trusted guide. There was great excitement, and the brother of the murdered man, summoning all the other villagers, came and demanded all the guns and rifles to go to this village and shoot all these people, which, of course, I refused. The noise was terrible, and it went on



A WEIRD TRIBAL DANCE.

At meetings of the tribes, on festive occasions, is enacted the dance here depicted. The headdress is made of grass fibre, and the strange armlets are woven of pandanus fibre. The necklaces are of dogs' teeth; the anklets are of feather-work. The central figure in the dance wears a huge headdress of bura parrot plumes surmounted by a gigantic aigrette of parrot's feathers. The dancers wear great bunches of grass behind, and carry light grass wands purely for decorative effect. The nose ornament is worked from the curl of a shell brought by the Kubadi people from the coast, and traded with the Mafulu people for pigs and produce of their rich valley. These ornaments are greatly coveted, but are so rare that small villages have only one, and the young dancers have to take turns in wearing it. During these dances old tribal scores are often paid off, and a man finds opportunity to spear his adversary.



THE CURIOUS DRUMS OF THE TUGERI (DUTCH NEW GUINEA).

The body of the drum is cut and hollowed from a solid trunk, and curiously carved. The handle also is cut from the solid log. The drumheads are of lizard-skin.

showing at least a natural aptitude for the business of banking.

Want to Eat Traveler's Son.

"On one occasion," continued Mr. Pratt, "I had to send my son, then a boy of 18, who had acquired the language, to Ekekel with a small following to get much needed supplies. The native carriers feared to go, and I dreaded the worst that might happen. They finally agreed to accompany my son, who was well armed with modern weapons, and the journey was accomplished in safety until the party was half way on its return. There they passed a village near which a man had been murdered, and the villagers, suspecting our party, demanded that my son be given up to be killed and eaten. Our party made as to take counsel over the matter. Night fell quickly, and in the darkness, by hard and constant running, my boy and his followers came off in safety. I do not think that a youth of 18 has ever conducted so hazardous a journey in Papua."

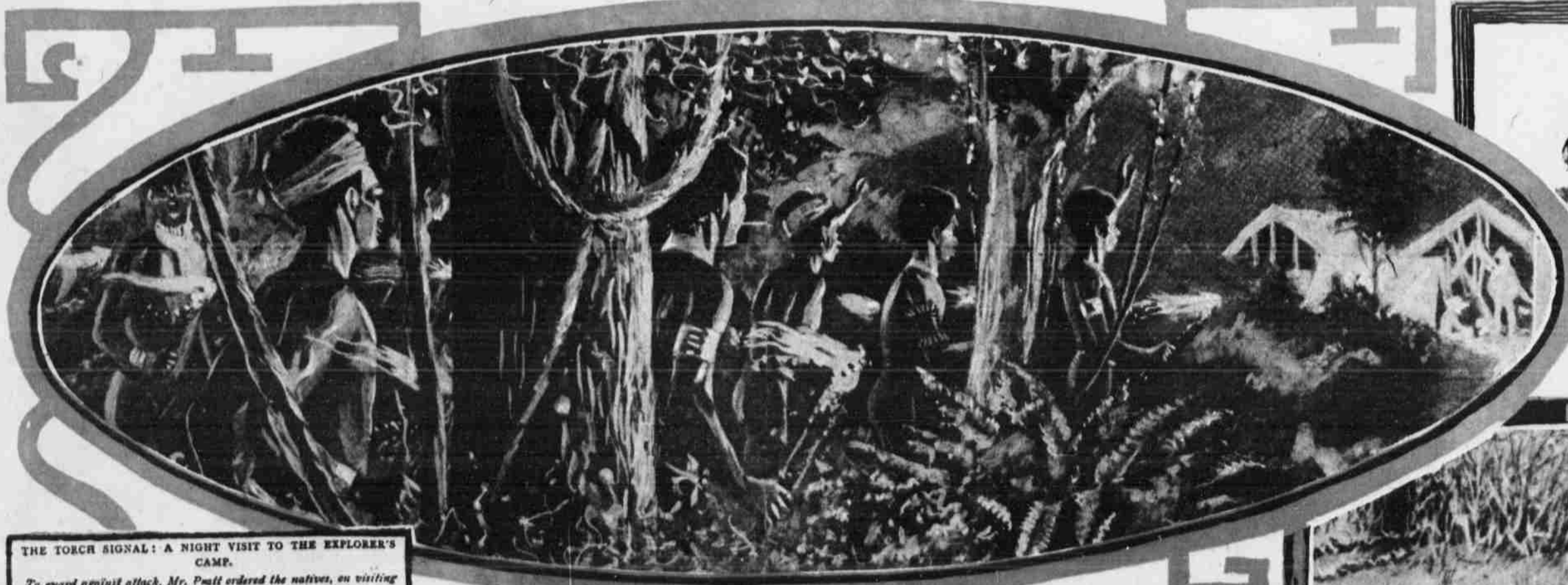
Mr. Pratt describes the ornithology of Papua as including the oddest and most beautiful examples of bird life he has known. There he saw the marvelous bluebirds of paradise, one of the latest discoveries, and there he watched, astonished, the splendid bower bird, which builds upon the ground a nest that is a true bird cottage, which makes about its door a garden of orchid blooms plucked in the wilderness, and which actually dances with its mate among the well ordered rows of flowers.

The Papuans are good hunters, but bad farmers. They guard their women while the latter work, but most of their agriculture is a failure. In hunting they drive the wild pig, the cassowary, and the wallaby into ingeniously contrived



PAINT AS MOURNING: A PAPUAN FUNERAL; THE WIDOW, PAINTED BLACK, FOLLOWING HER HUSBAND'S CORPSE.

runways made of grass. They fish in the low countries with hand made nets, and their weapons are spears, bows and arrows, and clubs. They have a system of spreading news and communicating from village to village by shouting to one another across the valleys and gorges, the words spreading from hilltop to hilltop with wonderful rapidity. Near Hood's bay the Pratt party visited the Motu-Motu people, the mysteries of New Guinea, for they are plebeian and the white apes upon their black flesh has never been explained by scientists who have seen them.



THE TORCH SIGNAL: A NIGHT VISIT TO THE EXPLORER'S CAMP.

To guard against attack, Mr. Pratt ordered the natives, on visiting him at night, to carry torches, and hold the camp from a distance before entering.

throughout the day. Then, on the third day, an emissary but welcomed by the tribesmen of the human victim. The arrived from the other village and announced that his people were willing to give a pig as pay for the murdered man, and the outlandish proposition was not only promptly accepted

of this kind it would have been a life for a life, the friends of the victims usually waiting in advantageous places to spear the offenders at the first opportunity."

Mr. Pratt's party, by dint of uniformly fair treatment of the natives, had comparatively little trouble. Upon first penetrating the islands the Pratt expedition found that its supply of beads, which are the journey money of the Papuans, was exhausted. To go back at that time would have been too great a delay. It was impossible to go forward without either paying the natives for their services and supplies or establishing some kind of a credit system with them. Mr. Pratt chose the latter plan. The natives at once grasped the cause and meaning of it and permitted the party to open an account. On another occasion, passing from the boundaries of a tribe to which he had paid many beads, he sought to borrow back this supply of the standard exchange of the realm, promising to return the loan with interest. Men, women, and children fell in with the suggestion at once,



BUYING A WIFE: A PAPUAN WOOING.

The suitor offers some portion of his wealth—a forest shell or a necklace of dogs' teeth, or, most valuable of all, a shell armband. If he is wealthy the price is paid accordingly by the stern father. The bride sits near at hand during the bargaining.



A FEATHERED ARTIST: THE BOWER-BIRD AND ITS WONDERFUL GARDEN.

Not only does the bower-bird build one of the most wonderful nests known to naturalists, but it actually lays out a garden. It picks the blossoms of orchids, and arranges them in alternate lines of mauve and white. Among these rows of flowers it dances to its mate.