

Exit Tony Blount

by Sydney Parkman
CHAPTER XIV
Continued

At first he was inclined to evade trouble by discontinuing his researches. It was no real business of his, he told himself. But after a while he came to the reluctant conclusion that he could not afford to take up such an impersonal attitude. True, he was occupying his present position by the merest whim of fate, but however accidentally it might have been forced upon him, the fact remained that while he occupied it he would be held responsible for all that went on on the island.

It was this realization which induced him to make a closer study of the reports, and to discover what he could about the actual state of affairs by personal observation and inquiry; and the further his researches went the more obvious it became that a glaring discrepancy existed between the official account of the island's affairs and its actuality.

In point of fact, direct inquiry proved to be an extremely difficult matter; for he immediately found himself faced with a blank wall of incomprehension — a real wall — on all sides. He began with the house-boys, and later tried questioning odd villagers with whom he came into contact, but in neither case could he obtain any satisfactory information. They all spoke a primitive, scholastic English which was sufficient for ordinary purposes, but seemed that they either could not or would not understand the simplest questions relating to their conditions of life, and everywhere he met with a curious, distrustful reticence which brought him to a dead stop.

The more he saw, however, the more evident it became that there was something very wrong, indeed, with the condition of the natives. Their demeanour alone was proof of it, for they displayed a sudden uneasiness in his presence which was utterly foreign to the Kanaka nature as he had known it, and it seemed to him that their attitude of mingled fear and furtive resentment had its roots in some fundamental misuse of authority.

It was obviously impossible to approach Strang upon the subject all he had more definite information at his disposal, for he had a strong suspicion that the trader was at the bottom of it; and this suspicion deepened into certainty in the course of the next few days, when he began to talk to MacFann upon the subject.

This girl had been something of a mystery to him from the beginning. When he had first seen her on the night of their arrival at the island, he had imagined her to be one of the trader's domestics — though even then he had been struck by her assured manner, which was in marked contrast to the somewhat cowed bearing of the house-boys. In the following days, however, he had discovered that she occupied a special position in the household which he found it impossible to define.

She spoke very fair English, which argued long association with the trader or the late Resident, and in the course of several early conversations with her, Thurlow found that her outlook was the oddest mixture of childlike and sophistication. As with Strang, she appeared to regard him as an equal and addressed him simply by his surname — which by some peculiarity of native pronunciation she rendered "Turlo."

She was a curious, reserved girl, seldom speaking unless directly addressed, but she had apparently taken a liking to him in her queer

way, for when he moved into the Residency she took to paying him occasional visits there — turning up unexpectedly and unannounced, and departing just as casually. His two house-boys seemed to take her very much for granted, and as she appeared to be content to sit quietly watching him as he poured over the dusty files, he raised no objection to her presence. Indeed, he rather liked her silent companionship in a way, though he failed to see what en-

joyment she could have extracted from her visits. It was when he had drawn blank in other directions that he hit upon the idea of questioning her upon the affairs of the island — exercising considerable caution to begin with, in case she repeated the conversation to Strang. She answered readily enough, however, and after a while his questions became more open as he saw that she was making no effort to conceal anything from him.

What she told him more than confirmed the suspicions he had been entertaining. It took him some little time to grasp the situation as a whole, but when he did so, it became appallingly apparent that the government of the island had been anything but the benevolent autocracy which the doctor had found reason to commend. An autocracy it had certainly been, but there had been remarkably little benevolence about it; for while many of the

regulations imposed on the Kanakas were harsh and arbitrary — as in the destruction of the drums — others were no less distinctly commercial in character. To be continued

EASTBOURNE, England. (CP) — The hotel association of this Sussex resort will be more careful this year in selecting candidates for a cheap-rate holiday scheme for aged people. Last year many "hard-up" pensioners arrived in automobiles.

VALLEYFIELD W. M. S. — The monthly meeting of the Valleyfield W. M. S. was held in the school room of the church on Wednesday evening, with Miss Ann MacDonald as leader. The theme was "Enlistment". After the call to worship, hymn "Christ The Lord Is Risen Today" was sung. Scripture reading from Mark 16 was read by Mrs. Carman Rogers. This was followed by a prayer. Interesting paragraphs on grace, service and

fellowship from the book "Means Of Grace", were read by several members. Hymn 108 was sung, followed by a very interesting question and answer forum and articles on missionaries at work in Canada, recruiting new workers and church extension by several members. The benediction closed the worship period. The business period opened with the minutes of last meeting, followed by roll call answered by 12 members with a verse of scripture. A letter on temperance

from Miss Callbeck was read and a discussion on temperance conducted followed. The offering was received and the treasurer gave a very encouraging report. It was decided to study the 5 questions in chapter one in the book "Means Of Grace" for next meeting. Mrs. Fraser was appointed as leader and Mrs. Roy Gillis to have study book. Mrs. W. R. Bruce led in prayer and the Lord's Prayer closed the meeting. A dainty lunch was served by the committee and a social time enjoyed.

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