

The Crown Jewels of Bonando.

New Guinea, or, to be more correct, a large part of New Guinea, is at present in that fascinating stage of transition from the internecine wars of heathenism to the peace of the Gospel — a stage at which when things and people in every relationship of life get very mixed, sometimes in a delicious abandon, which well becomes the happiness of these most naturally happy of all God's children, as when they are laughing and singing. Christian and heathen together, in Papuan dance under the stars and the waving palms; or when 'the horn of the hunter is sounding' and the brave puts on his feathers and his paint, and rubbing an extra polish on his spears, joins his own to the six hundred or so voices in the lilting refrain of a hunting song as the whole village trots along the narrow track through the long grasses and away to the haunt of the wild pig and wallaby.

But sometimes the mixing is of a more unlovely and often of a bloody sort, and many are the stern, hard tales that could be told of epic battles fought by simple Papuan men and women, boys and girls, against the revolting heathenism which consistently strives to ruin the splendour, nobleness and purity of their Christian lives. The story that I shall tell, in some sense, combines these two aspects of the clash of Christian and heathen ideas.

Foa, (sic) is the fairest, sweetest and best of the three of Mandarena, who was the 'taumauma' (i.e., high chief) of the Uiake tribe. Foa, following the custom of her race, was betrothed (sic) at birth by her parents to one Urakueta, of the village of Bonando. As she grew up, however, she made no secret of the fact that she cared not for Urakueta, who was, and is in truth, a worthless scamp. At 17, the age of sixteen, Foa, having been under Christian instruction for four years and proved in every way satisfactory, was baptized, and took Wimmibred for her Christian name.

At last the worthless Urakueta determined to rise up and vindicate the hoary traditions of his fathers, and aided by the Bonando bloods, a dark night, and a surprise attack, Wimmibred was carried off bodily to Bonando. Her relatives of Uiake were not long in organising their forces, and the sun rose upon a 'shindy' in Bonando.

Now a New Guinea battle is a good, straightout, honest affair as a rule. Hammer and jab with 'kadega' (club) and 'io' (spear),

and it always goes on until either somebody is seriously injured, or, as happened in this case, somebody is killed.

It was Kaiko, a brow cousin of Winiwini's, who had the misfortune to meet a 'kadega' harder than his head, and a sober stillness reigned until the news having spread along the fifteen miles of coast to Wanigela, the Rev. (Bab., i.e., 'Daddy') Fisher, priest-in-charge, appeared by mid-day and, as is a missionary's wont, removed the cause of the trouble - in this case the wonderful Winiwini; but not before he had made arrangements for the men of Bonando and Uiahu to go along with him to Tufi ~~and~~ to make a confession to 'Government' and accept the lawful punishment.

This act was staged a fortnight later, when His Excellency the Governor, Judge Murray, tried the case and ruled: -

"That as the Maizin people have had the advantage of mission teaching and Government ruling for fifteen years, and know quite well that this 'Nugin fashion' is no good; therefore the people of Bonando shall pay to the people of Uiahu the price of a man's blood and half the price again; also, of course, the man who hit poor Kaiko shall serve one year with hard labour in Tufi gaol."

Those were seventy or eighty happy men who stepped into the canoes in Tufi harbour, and they have been thanking 'Bab.' Fisher ever since that they got off so lightly.

The scene shifts to the bamboo verandah of the Wanigela Mission House four months later when Sakai (the 'taupau^{ma}'^{ES.CS}) met Augustine Kawasari ('taupau^{ma}' of Uiahu, and uncle to the late lamented Kaiko) in order to pay over the 'blood money'.

String after string of 'sapi-sapi', i.e., fine, thin, hand-ground discs of pink shell, beautifully threaded in lengths of from three to six feet, and worth in English money £1 per foot. String after string did Sakai lay out until the pile was a foot high, to be crowned with three pairs of pigs' tusks, well mounted, and one magnificent pair of python tusks mounted in a perfect double circle for neck decoration, and worn, when fighting or hunting, hanging by a string around the neck and so dangling in front, that the owner might readily put the tusks in his mouth when he desires to assume a fearsome aspect. On the top of the gorgeous array of wealth Sakai next arranged four fair and beautiful headdresses of Gora pigeon, parakeet, and Bird of Paradise feathers. There was the standard regulation price of a man's blood. According to

all the laws of the Maisin and Ubir, (which alterth not,) there in that pile of beads and leather and bones was the just and lawful satisfaction which justice demanded the slayer should pay to the relatives of the slain.

Another pile, half the size, of 'sapi-sapi' and beautifully rare 'kausi kausi' (armlets and necklaces) was placed a foot or so away from the larger pile. Then the talking continued. It was rapidly arranged that Augustine and his people should take the big pile. So far it was plain sailing, 'kaito had been killed, and there was kaito's money.' But the small pile appeared to Augustine as a trap to catch him. The case resolved itself thus:—

Barando wanted Winiwed. By force and the Government they lost her. Barando now tries other means. There is the price of a woman. It is a woman Barando wants. If I touch that small pile then Barando (sic) will rightly claim a Uiahu woman. And not until until 'Bato.' Fisher had gone sweetly surety (sic) for the openhanded generosity of Barando did Augustine say, 'Basit!' (It is enough) and all returned to their homes satisfied, or apparently so.

It was peace for a month or so, and Winiwed was well settled and happy doing some housework on the Mission. Then we heard that the Banandists were 'getting the wind up.' Some of the Uiahu bloods continued to talk fight in revenge for kaito, and the atmosphere of Barando became so charged with fear that the poor things could scarcely sleep at night. Every falling coconut brandy and every pig that blundered through the undergrowth was the foot ball of the armies of Uiahu.

Now we come to the 'idyll' from the point of view of all concerned, and not least the missionary. The people of the village of Raino (sic), who live alongside the church at Wanigela, and who, being of the Ubir nation, are traditional enemies rather than friends of the Maisin of Barando, hearing of the sad plight of the Banandos, sent along a deputation with authority to invite them to shift house and come and live at Wanigela. If they cared to come they (the Raino people) would give to Barando building sites for their houses, lands for their gardens, and fishing rights on the reef, which while under the wing of the Church they would be quite secure from Maisin aggressions. Next morning at eight saw old Sakai, with all the Banando men and half of the women, spying out the land very cheerfully in spite of sleepy eyes.

In the course of the day sundry conferences were held, the lands were duly handed over, and Barando entered into possession of—

her new inheritance, under the shadow of Holy Church, and incidentally added another language to the three languages which are spoken within a stone's-throw of the Church of S. Peter, Wanigela.

The next day was given over to greetings and receiving testimonials of friendship from the tribesmen of the neighbouring villages. When I left Wanigela, building was already going ahead in the new village; Banando, old village was deserted.

So ended the Winidud epic so far as the people of Urohu and Banando are immediately concerned. This fair lover of nations goes her happy way at Wanigela, waiting for and looking for her true love, and he who wins her will win that which is more precious than all the jewels of a hundred Banandos, for 'a good wife is more precious than rubies.'

—J.B.