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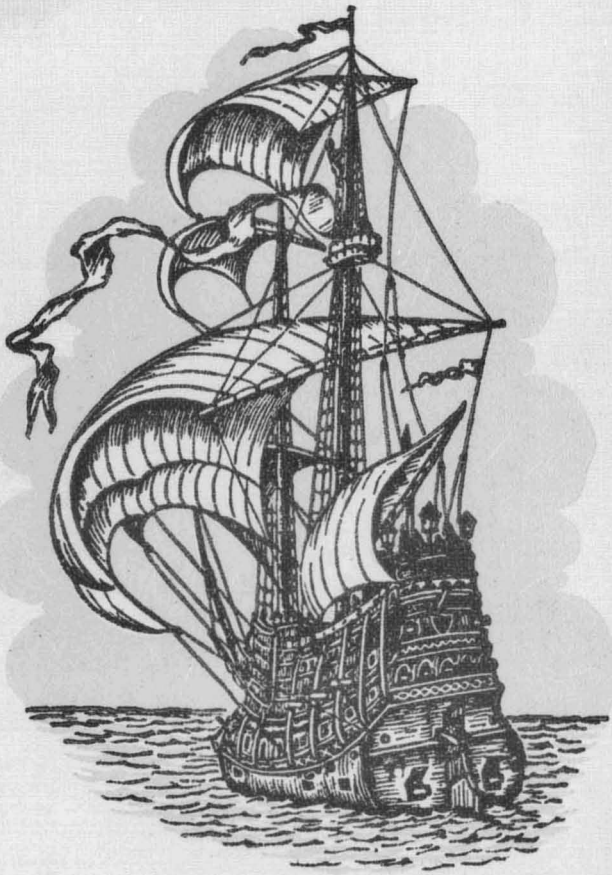
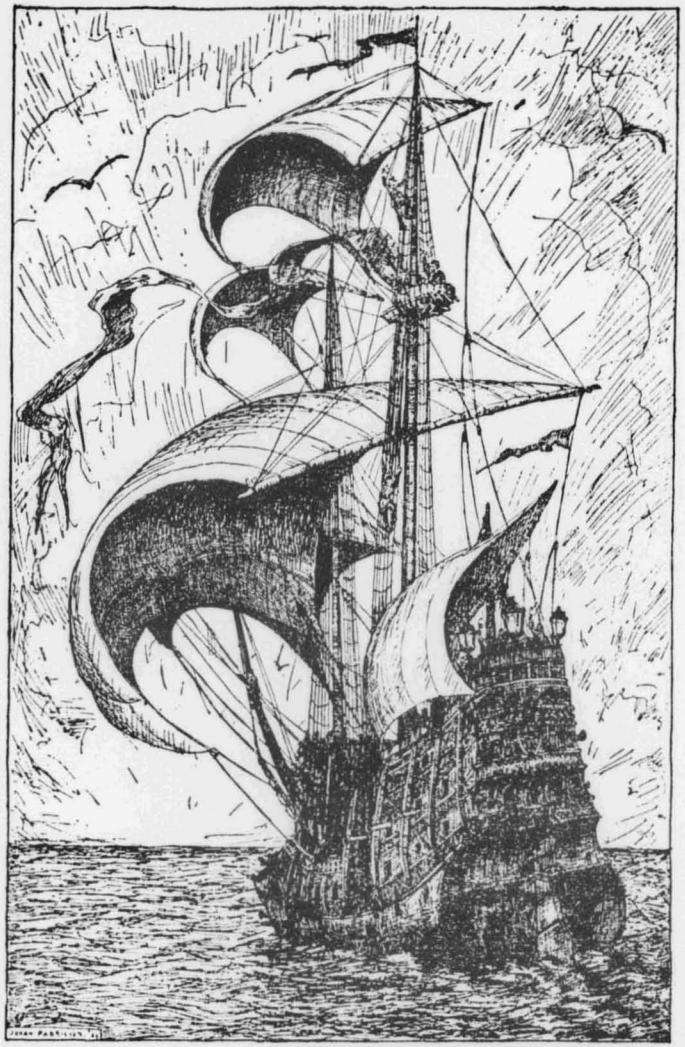


JOHAN WIGMORE FABRICIUS

JAVA HO !



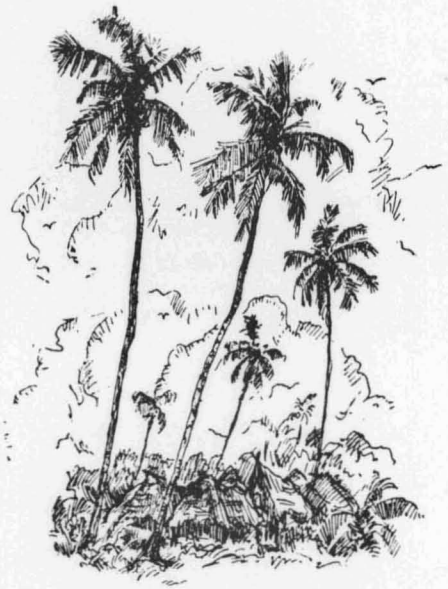
THE NIEUW HOORN

JAVA HO!

THE ADVENTURES OF FOUR BOYS AMID FIRE, STORM AND SHIPWRECK

BY

JOHAN WIGMORE FABRICIUS



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TO
MY FATHER
JAN FABRICIUS

FOREWORD

TO MY BOY READERS

HERE you have the story of an old Dutch seafarer, Willem Ysbrantszoon Bontekoe, whose voyage to the East Indies was once famous throughout the world, if only because it was the most unlucky passage on record in Holland's golden age, that era of the first adventurous journeys to the Indies.

It was the most unlucky voyage on record—but Bontekoe struggled through! And so, to this day, when an undertaking is brought to a happy end after many difficulties and dangers, they say in Holland: 'Well, that was a voyage of Bontekoe!'

You will not find his name in the histories. He did not make Holland rich, as Piet Hein did when he captured the Spanish galleys loaded with silver from America. He did not defeat the English like Maerten Harpensz Tromp, who carried a broom at the masthead after he had swept the enemy from the sea.

Bontekoe's task was simple. In his little ship, in which to-day no one would venture to cross the Baltic, he sailed around the Cape of Good Hope and on the *Nieuw Hoorn*, through storms and a thousand other dangers, proceeded to the dark, mysterious Indies, which were almost unknown at the time. He was a comrade and a father to his sailors; and he knew when a Captain must leave his burning ship. He never boasted of his heroism in after years.

His life shows how a man should live. In days of storm and trouble, prove that you are a good seaman on the Sea of

Life, keep a cool head, a brave heart, and don't quit your ship so long as it does not go down under you! Then you can say in after days: 'My voyage was very stormy!' and you can add, with a smile: 'But it was a voyage of Bontekoe!'

JOHAN FABRICIUS

VOORBURG
Autumn 1926

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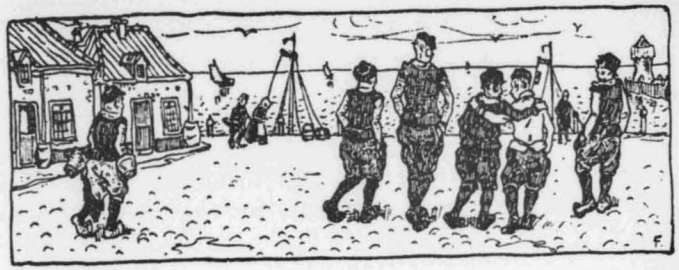
PART ONE



CHAPTER I

THE CALL OF THE SEA

'YOU young devil, hold the rod tight!'

'I *am* holding it tight, master!'

'D'you call that tight? You'll never make a good smith!'

Peter Hajo was silent for a moment. Then he grumbled, 'Don't want to be one.'

'Wh-what did you say? You don't want to be a smith?'

'No, master, I want to go to sea.'

Master Wouter, farrier of the smithy, 'The Iron Man', in sheer amazement held the heavy hammer, which he had just raised, suspended in the air for a moment. Then he struck a resounding blow; the sparks flew into the faces of master and helper and the smith's bass voice confirmed what the hammer had just proclaimed with iron tongue: 'Stuff and nonsense!' Peter Hajo looked at the red-hot rod in silence. Master Wouter too was silent, but his quick, angry hammer-strokes told Peter more than enough.

Peter understood the language of that hammer well! When he stepped into the glowing smithy in the grey dawn of a winter morning he had always made up his mind outside what his master's mood would be that day.

'Blow up the fire a bit,' growled Master Wouter. 'It's almost out! I'm striking my hammer flat this way and the rod's still round.'

'How can I blow, master, when I'm holding——'?

'Are you a sissy that you can't hold the rod with one hand?'

Peter Hajo was not a sissy. He gripped the rod hard with his right hand and worked the bellows with his left without giving a sign that the strokes now hammered straight down into the tense muscles of his back and hurt him cruelly. There was a broad grin on his sooty face as he asked: 'What if I have to scratch my nose now, master?'

'Put it on the anvil and I'll scratch if for you with my hammer! What do you want to do at sea, anyway! Catch herring? Or drown like your father? Or be dragged to the galleys by the pirates of Dunkirk?'

'I want to go whaling, master. And then to East India. But'—Peter swallowed hard—'they won't take boys of fourteen, master! Got to be sixteen. Go and catch gudgeon, they tell you!'

Master Wouter grinned. But his face grew dark a moment later when his ill-tempered wife flew into the smithy and scolded: 'Are you deaf? The bell has rung three times in the shop and my carrots are getting burnt!'

Master Wouter glanced towards the door, which had closed with a bang, laid down his hammer, grumbling and shrugging his shoulders, and clumped out of the smithy. Peter, now that he was alone, stared into the flames of the forge.

'Come back again when you're sixteen,' they said. More than two years longer! Enough to make you go mad. As though he couldn't do the work of a sixteen-year-old boy! He'd like to see any boy in Hoorn who could hold the rod as tight as he had just done! And where was there one who was a match for him? Hadn't he beaten up Peer den Vos three days ago worse than he had ever been beaten in his life because he had fished in Peter's hole without asking permission—the hole that Peter had made in the ice where it was two feet thick? And Peer den Vos was a head taller than he!

It was a low trick to keep him on land. Why, when he could barely walk he had caught the ropes which the returning

fishermen threw to his older friends and tied them around the piles with a regulation sailor's knot; and when he was only five years old he had hidden in his father's fishing-cutter and sailed with him to catch herring!

How he longed to wander about on the sea without a sight of land for miles; how he wanted to see the wide world and come back with regular seamen's legs and tell tall stories, just like those sunburned tars who had sailed to the East with Jan Pieterszoon Coen and now told the truth or lied, just as they felt like doing, and no land rat could say to them: 'Now, you're making it all up!'

The East! Well, he couldn't count on that for the present. Perhaps later, when he had made a few trips on a whaler, when his hands would be chapped with salting fish, when the smell of the blubber clung to his hair and his clothes—perhaps then they would take him along. Oh, the joy of it and the splendour! Peter saw in his mind's eye visions of mountains, brilliant parrots, dancing savages, monkeys, tigers, crocodiles. . . .

The vision was gone.

Here he stood, Peter Hajo, apprentice in the smithy, 'The Iron Man'. There lay the rod which he must hold tight again; there hung the bellows. Two years more he must work the bellows and hold rods tight within grey walls and dirty windows. Peter Hajo, 'Wild' Hajo: a sea-gull in a cage, a shark in a pond.

Hark! What's that? He listened. A crowd of boys out in the street sang as they came along:

To sea! To sea!
The wind is blowing free!
The wind calls us to roam!
Who'd care to stay at home?
To sea! To sea!

Peter knew that they were going to catch flounders in the harbour. And he? He . . . !

When Master Wouter returned to the smithy after a short time he opened his eyes in surprise.

'The young devil!' he muttered. He seized the rod fiercely; his hammer fell on the glowing iron with a crash like a thunderbolt.

Peter Hajo had disappeared.

. . . . .

Outside it was a cold December day.

Peter pulled his cap down over his ears, stuck his hands and wrists into his pockets, pressed his arms against his sides, and began to trot as fast as he could to grow warm. In the seventeenth century winter was still winter!

He soon caught up with the band of singing boys. There was Leendert—'Long Leen'—of course leading the crowd as usual. Peter meant to fight it out with him as soon as he got a chance, for Leen always looked down on a fellow scornfully, and might take too much upon himself in the end.

Padde was there too, good-natured Fatty Padde, who always blinked his eyes, and of course had to carry the nets and the bucket as usual.

Padde was Peter's shadow, and followed in his footsteps in all his pranks. It was he who spread the news of Peter Hajo's exploits, and defended him against every one when Peter was not there to do it himself. It had happened a hundred times that Padde, who couldn't run as fast as the occasion sometimes demanded, fell into the clutches of an angry farmer

or the night-watchman, and the next day showed his bumps, bruises, and black and blue spots to Peter, reproaching him bitterly.

'Why do you get caught?' Peter would ask.

Padde started up angrily. 'All right! Go alone after this! D'you think I care the least bit!' And his eyes blinked worse than ever.

'Hajo!' cried Padde now, as he saw his hero approaching. 'I thought you were working in "The Iron Man".'

'It got too hot for me!' said Peter. 'Where are you going for your carp?'

'To the carp-hole,' they answered.

'No luck there. The carp are around the sea dike. Plenty of ice there. And the eels are there too.'

'Yes,' said Padde, 'there are more than twenty yards of thick ice there.'

'All right,' said Long Leen, 'you can go to the dike. We won't stop you. Give me my hatchet, Padde. We're going to the hole.'

Padde hesitated.

Peter Hajo coolly asked: 'Whose pail is that?'

'Mine,' replied Padde. 'And one net's mine too.'

'Good! Give them the rest and come along! We don't need a hatchet. I started a hole, and we can do the rest with our wooden shoes.'

'I'll do the stamping,' said Padde. He unfastened two nets that were hanging across his shoulder and handed them and the hatchet back to Long Leen.

. . . . .

Silently the two lads ran across the grain market and along the ferry piers with their tall warehouses and the grand houses of the aristocracy. They were just about to turn to the right to the dike when a little Frisian boat sailed into the harbour through the narrow channel, clear of ice. They ran up to help in the landing. Padde escaped by a hair being dragged into the water by the rope, and saved himself by leaping boldly on board. Here he landed in the midst of a group of distinguished gentlemen. Greatly embarrassed, he straightened himself up again.

The gentlemen laughed and stepped ashore. Peter Hajo bowed respectfully.

'Who were they all?' he asked Skipper Blok, the owner of the boat.

'The one with the beard is Skipper Bontekoe,'[1] said Blok.

'Of course! But the others?'

'Don't know. But all five are in the East Indian Company. The skinny fellow is from Enkhuizen and the fat one with the big gloves from Zeeland. I brought them to Texel in my boat and had to call for them again there. You know the *Nieuw Hoorn* is anchored there.'

'The *Nieuw Hoorn*?'

'Skipper Bontekoe's skiff, ready to start for the East Indies! You ought to see it! Two hundred men aboard!'

Hajo looked thoughtfully after the elegantly dressed gentlemen, who were standing before Bontekoe's house. . . .

Padde had stood and listened in silence; now he took up his pail and the two boys went on.

When they reached the sea dike they saw that Padde's report about the thickness of the ice was correct. Suddenly Hajo stood still. Padde stopped and looked around in surprise. There was a dangerous look in Hajo's eyes.

[1] In Dutch this is pronounced *Bontekoo*.

'Look there, Padde,' said Hajo slowly, pointing. 'What do you see there on the ice?'

'Good heavens!' cried Padde. 'There's some one ahead of us.'

'Yes!' said Hajo. 'Catching carp in *my* hole. D'you know him? I don't.'

Padde began to breathe hard from excitement. 'In *our* hole! No, I can't see as well as you.'

'Come along!' commanded Hajo.

Together they steered towards the ruthless carp-fisher.

He was a well-dressed boy of about the age of Hajo and Padde. With his pail beside him, he was pounding hard on the ice with his hatchet in order to arouse the carp, frozen with the cold, and drive them into the hole where his net hung. The boy was so engrossed in his labours that he did not notice what threatened him.

Padde could no longer contain himself and ran towards the busy fisherman. But when he came up to him he had the bad luck to slip; he fell over backwards on the ice, hitting his head, and raised himself again in a thoroughly bad temper.

The boy looked up in surprise. His serious face became sympathetic. 'Yes, the ice is very slippery here,' he said.

'What are you doing here?' asked Padde, scrambling up on his short legs.

'Catching carp,' answered the boy. 'Did you hurt yourself?'

'Catching carp!' screamed Padde. 'I'll help you!'

The boy looked at Padde in surprise. Then he said: 'It's not necessary—where you're standing. The carp got frightened there.'

Padde struggled for breath. He couldn't find words to express his rage, so he kicked over the pail standing next to the new boy. The carp went flopping all over the ice.

The eyes of the unknown boy sparkled with anger. He sprang up quickly, stood squarely before this disturber of the peace, and said quietly and pleasantly: 'Put the carp back into my pail.'

'I'll put you in the pail and throw you into the ice-hole!' replied Padde.

'Go ahead,' said the boy. 'But first pick up the carp. One-two——'

At that Hajo came up. 'Stop! You let my friend alone.'

The boy looked at his new opponent from head to foot. Hajo never could stand this, but especially not when the one who looked him over seemed such a paragon as this unknown boy.

'Good day!' said the stranger pleasantly.

'Where do you live?' asked Hajo threateningly.

'I come from Alkmaar.'

'So you didn't know that this is my ice-hole?'

'Your ice-hole?' asked the boy, and continued innocently: 'And when the ice melts again, will that be your hole?'

That was too much. 'Come out on the dike!' said Hajo curtly. 'I want to fight with you.'

Padde was glowing with joyful expectation. 'Now you'll see! He'll beat you up till you flop around like a carp!'

The strange boy paid no attention to this. 'I'll go with you,' he said to Hajo. 'But first this Fatty must——' He walked towards Padde, who was blinking hard. 'One, two, thr——'

'Pick them up, Padde!' said Hajo.

Padde stooped down. 'I'll do it because I want to see you beat him up, Hajo!' he declared.

Peter Hajo and the unknown model boy went out on the dike. Gasping and puffing, Padde followed them, his own pail on one arm, the pail full of carp on the other. So they reached the deserted dike. Padde turned over his empty pail and sat down.

'Begin!' said Padde.

The two deadly foes stood facing each other. Hajo's eyes were sparkling, his supple body crouched, ready to spring. The other boy stood erect, awaiting the attack, calm as a bear.

'Fire into him, Hajo!' cried Padde. 'You'll throw him down with one push.'

But Hajo had not waited for Padde's advice. He had

rushed in to surprise him. The strange boy, however, proved as strong as he was calm. He caught Hajo, who had to use all his exceptional dexterity to escape being downed.

Padde in his excitement had jumped up from his pail and was now dancing around the two wrestlers. 'You'll win, Hajo! He's as stiff as a dried cod!'

But Peter Hajo—'Wild Hajo'—terror of the peaceful little town of Hoorn, had found his master! After a fierce struggle, lasting several minutes, they stood facing each other just as at the beginning—that is, Hajo was as red as a boiled lobster, the strange boy not in the least excited.

'We're getting nowhere,' gasped Hajo. 'Let's take a rest and begin all over again.'

The other boy dropped his arms at once. And while Hajo breathlessly sat down on the pail which Padde yielded to him, the other boy glanced at his clothes and brushed the sand off his breeches.

'It's a damned shame that you let him go, Hajo,' said Padde. 'You'd have had him on his back in two seconds.'

'Shut up!' growled Hajo.

The lad from Alkmaar looked at his opponent kindly. 'Take a good rest,' he said anxiously.

Hajo looked at him suspiciously. But he could not see a trace of mockery on his serious countenance.

'Are you a smith?' asked the boy.

Involuntarily Hajo wiped his black face with his sleeve. 'And you're a scribbler, I s'pose, all dressed up that way?'

'I'm a cabin-boy,' answered the strange boy.

Hajo jumped up. 'Cabin-boy?'

'Is it so strange to be a cabin-boy?' asked the other in surprise.

Hajo made an involuntary movement. 'I wouldn't be one for anything!' he grumbled, but his voice broke.

'Why not?'

'Because——'

'We've got fine jobs here,' declared Padde. 'He's going to be a farrier and I'm going into my uncle's brewery. We know where we're at. You can play the fool on your stinking boat.'

Hajo tried to keep his face expressionless. 'Are you going whaling?'

'No,' answered the stranger. 'I'm going to the East Indies on the *Nieuw Hoorn*.'

Hajo's heart stood still. As calmly as he could, he asked: 'How—how old are you?'

'I'm fourteen.'

'*Fourteen*?'

'Don't you believe him, Hajo!' cried Padde.

But Hajo knew very well that the boy was not lying. 'Who—who hired you?' he stammered.

'Skipper Bontekoe.'

'So,' grumbled Hajo. 'And I suppose your daddy went to the skipper in person to get a soft berth for his little boy, didn't he?'

The strange boy was looking straight ahead, across the dike. 'I never knew my father,' he said.

Hajo turned crimson; he felt like boxing his own ears.

'Well,' said Padde, 'just the same, you're a devilish grand little gentleman, ain't you? And you went to the skipper in your finest suit! Where do you live here?'

The boy thought this over for a moment. 'On the ferry pier,' he said at last.

'Didn't I tell you, Hajo? A neighbour of Skipper Bontekoe!'

The boy looked at Hajo searchingly. 'You say you don't want to go to sea, but you don't mean it.'

'I do, too,' growled Hajo.

'But why not? You see and hear a thousand things that you wouldn't get hold of otherwise! And why should we let the Spaniards and the Portuguese grab everything for themselves over there? Later I'm going to go into the shipping business and build ships for sailing all the seas; I'm going to——'

Hajo jumped up with a start. With face averted, without saying a word, he turned towards the Wester dike.

The future shipbuilder looked after him in silent amazement. And Padde burst out: 'Didn't he tell you he don't want

to go to sea? Why d'you keep on gabbing? Or d'you think it's any fun to listen to your babble when he's got to stay at the smithy?' He took up his pail and muttered: 'God help you if I ever meet you again!' And, grumbling, Padde trotted after Hajo.

The unknown boy looked after the pair for a moment. There was an almost imperceptible smile on his lips as he took up his pail and wandered along the dike towards the ferry pier.

. . . . .

Hajo and Padde ran along the Wester dike, beneath the gates, and then farther on, Padde a step behind Hajo. The weather had been quiet all day, but now, towards evening, a wind was coming up. There was a storm brewing in Hajo. Padde, wishing to pour oil on the troubled waters, began to abuse the unknown boy. 'He and his ships! His ships are probably wooden shoes with a mast in the middle!'

Hajo did not reply. His grey eyes stared into the distance across the sea. He did not hear Padde; he did not see the white sea-gulls, fluttering about and screeching, nor the grey crows flying away as they beat their wings and cawed.

Hajo was listening to the song of the sea! The sea was speaking to Hajo—the sea that lures and intoxicates, the sea that consumes its soul with unsatisfied longing. 'Peter,' the sea whispered in his ear, 'Peter—Peter, come, Peter; do come! I am infinite, Peter. No one really knows me, Peter. If you knew, Peter, what strange, far countries there are, if you knew the mystery of the storm, if you knew what is hidden in my unfathomable depths! Peter . . .! Peter . . .!'

Padde gasped and puffed and began to walk more slowly.

Hajo noticed this and turned around in silence. Now they were going against the wind; Hajo pulled off his cap and let the salt breezes blow through his blond hair.

Padde made another attempt. 'Let him go to sea. We're better off here, ain't we, Hajo?' But when he got no answer, he gave it up. So the two boys returned to the gate just as it began to grow dark. Hajo walked towards the main turret.

'Ain't we going home yet?' asked Padde.

'You can go!'

'I'll stay with you.'

At the main turret, Hajo turned left to the ferry pier. He stopped before Skipper Bontekoe's house and said: 'Go home now, Padde!' Then he went up the steps and let the heavy knocker fall.

Padde watched him, speechless.

The maid opened the door and looked with suspicion at this unexpected guest, whom she knew well.

'Is the skipper at home?' asked Hajo. 'I want to speak with him.'

'You?' asked the maid. '*You* speak to the skipper?'

Padde had found his tongue again. 'Let him in!' he yelled. 'Or I'll throw down your pail again to-morrow!'

'Be still, Padde!' said Hajo, and he turned to the maid again: 'Tell the skipper that I want to go to the East with him. Please, tell him . . .'

Apparently the maid had a soft heart. She had just meant to bang the door in Hajo's face, but now she hesitated a moment. 'Go to the East with him? *You* go to the East?'

At that a boy's voice cried from the upper story: 'Let him in, Aagje! The skipper knows about him!'

Hajo shuddered. That voice—wasn't that . . .?

He came in. But when he had left his wooden shoes in the entrance and now stood in his stocking feet on the thick hall rug in the elegant hall with its brass candles, he realized that he had lost his last chance. The boy with whom he had fought lived in this house!

CHAPTER II

SKIPPER BONTEKOE

TO turn back was out of the question—Hajo was caught in the trap. The maid led him through a wide, dark hall into a grand room where he was to wait.

And Hajo waited in the sweat of his brow. Reverently he looked at the heavy, polished oak furniture; at the gleaming copper around the stately fireplace; at the drawings of ships in golden frames, some of them cut into sections like a fish so that you could look straight into them; at the black velvet draperies and the beautiful carpet that seemed to be burning under his feet. 'What do you want here, you intruder?' they seemed to say. 'Don't touch us, you'll only soil us. And how you smell of horse hoofs!' The great mirror on the wall whispered to him: 'Couldn't you have combed your hair first? How dirty and black you look!'

Hajo began to use his sleeve in an attempt to improve his appearance—without very favourable results. The sleeve was black too.

Poor Peter Hajo! He felt like howling. *He* howl!

At that a heavy step came down the hall. The door opened: Skipper Willem Ysbrantszoon Bontekoe, commander of the East Indian sailing ship, the *Nieuw Hoorn*, entered the room.

'Good evening, young man!' said the skipper, kindly. 'I understand you want to ask me something.'

His kindness was worse than a beating. Peter Hajo was dazed. What was this? The skipper wasn't putting him out? Was speaking kindly to him? Or was he deceiving him? Impossible! There was no cunning in the seaman's clear eyes.

'Skipper,' stammered Hajo. 'Skipper—I'd like—I want—I——'

A smile appeared on the bronzed face of the great man. 'From my nephew's story, I thought you could use your tongue,' he said.

So there it was! There he had it! Hajo's chin trembled. But he said not a word.

The skipper began to pity him. 'Very well, then,' said he. 'Then I'll speak. It's all settled. You can come along.'

'Along—— ?' stammered Hajo, who felt the ground sinking beneath him.

'Along to the East Indies,' said the skipper. 'On the *Nieuw Hoorn*!'

Hajo began to tremble. '*Nieuw Hoorn*——' he stammered. 'The East—— ?'

'That's it,' said the skipper, smiling. 'You're a quick lad. And my nephew tells me that you have a pair of strong fists, and that you won't let any one interfere with your rights. I need such qualities in my crew.'

'Skipper!' Hajo seemed about to seize Bontekoe's hands.

The skipper was surprised, after all, at Hajo's expression of deep emotion. 'Do you want so much to come along?'

Then something occurred that hadn't happened to Hajo for years: he wept.

'So, so,' said Skipper Bontekoe. 'Your name's Hajo, isn't it?'

'Yes, sir, skipper—Peter Hajo.'

'Son of Harmen Hajo?'

'Yes, sir, skipper. But Father is——'

'I know,' said Skipper Bontekoe. 'That same night three other cutters sank.' He was silent a moment and then said slowly, without looking at Hajo: 'Your father, Peter Hajo, was a fine man. I expect his son to be like him.' Then he asked suddenly: 'Of course your mother is willing to have you——'

'Oh, she thinks it splendid, skipper!'

'What does she think splendid? That you're leaving her? That you're going away?'

'Yes, of course, skipper!'

Bontekoe could not suppress a smile. Then his face became serious again and he asked: 'What did you do on land, Peter Hajo?'

'I was a smith's helper, skipper.'

'Learn anything else before that?'

'Yes, sir, skipper. Apprentice to a druggist.'

'Didn't you like that?'

'No, sir, skipper.' And Hajo added anxiously: 'They discharged me, skipper——'

'So? How was that?'

Peter bit his lips. He couldn't tell the skipper that he had stolen liquorice sticks and given the druggist's cat pills to make her catch mice. The skipper came to his aid: 'Perhaps you've worked at something else?'

'Yes, sir, skipper!' said Hajo, glad to escape. 'Tinker.'

Bontekoe opened his eyes wide. 'And—er—before that?'

'Mason, skipper.'

'And before that?'

Peter stopped to think. 'I believe——'

'Don't break your head thinking, Peter Hajo. I can see that you've had a checkered past. Sent away everywhere?'

Hajo nodded. Full of dread, his eyes followed the skipper, who was walking about the room lost in thought. 'Skipper,' groaned Hajo, 'I will—I want to—I promise——'

Bontekoe turned around abruptly and looked straight into Hajo's face. Hajo felt his eyes seeing right through his jacket. And for this reason he looked straight back into the skipper's eyes.

'Listen, Peter Hajo,' said the skipper. 'If your mother has no objections, report to-morrow to Ferryman Blok and tell him that on the day after to-morrow you'll go on his boat to Texel, where the *Nieuw Hoorn* is awaiting favourable winds.'

'Yes, sir, skipper!' It sounded like a shout of joy. And Peter rubbed his sooty fists hastily over his face, beaming with inexpressible happiness—and wet with tears of joy.

'Don't do that!' cried Bontekoe. 'You'll look just like a black.'

Hajo drew down his fists, as if he had been caught in some new prank. 'Skipper, I will always——'

'I don't doubt it, Peter Hajo. Good-for-nothing boys are well enough on land; we need men on an East Indian ship. If your mother doesn't object, you'll be one of my crew from to-morrow on. Remember that there must be no bad report of the crew of the *Nieuw Hoorn* and that we must honour the flag that's flying from the mainmast. Do you understand?'

'I understand, skipper.' By heaven, the words came out bravely.

And then came the great moment: Skipper Bontekoe, commander of the *Nieuw Hoorn*, held out his hand to the cabin-boy, Peter Hajo. Peter trembled in all his limbs: the hand of *his* skipper!

. . . . .

At the door in the hall the boy who had fished that afternoon in his ice-hole was waiting for him. 'My name's Rolf,' he said. 'We must be good friends, for on board my uncle won't be my uncle, but the skipper, and I'll be a cabin-boy, as you know.'

'Aren't you angry with me?' stammered Hajo.

'Angry?' asked Rolf. And his face was as serious as ever as he added: 'Do you think I'd have let you fish in it if it had been *my* ice-hole?'

CHAPTER III

MOTHER

IN her poor little house on the Béguine Path, Peter Hajo's mother was waiting.

Three years ago, during the autumn storms of 1615, never to be forgotten, her husband's cutter had gone down and Peter's father and uncle had been drowned. Mrs. Hajo was left with four children: Peter, two girls now twelve and ten years old, Antje and Maartje, and Doris, the baby boy, who at that time was just beginning to walk. It was an almost impossible task for the poor widow to earn enough to support herself and four children, in addition to looking after them and the household. But she held on bravely.

She was greatly troubled, too, that her eldest boy seemed born to be hanged. From morn till night Peter played the maddest pranks; there were complaints every day from the whole neighbourhood.

In his twelfth year he had expressed the wish to go to sea. From that day on his mother never had a peaceful moment. She tried in every way to get him interested in something else. First he was apprenticed to a cobbler, where he stood it three whole weeks. Then he was sent away. A tanner, a butcher, and a carpenter gave him up. Fate plainly did not mean him to be a mason, a tinker, or a druggist. At last he came to Master Wouter's smithy. He had been there half a year!

Had Peter Hajo suddenly become transformed? Not in the least. He had simply found that he disliked being a smith less than working at any other trade on land, and had made up his mind to stand it until the chance came to go to sea.

. . . . .

Peter's mother was not feeling happy that evening as she waited for her eldest son. The wife of the farrier from 'The Iron Man' had come in an hour ago and said in her shrill, scolding voice: 'My husband may be a fool, but I won't be one. I'll see to it that your ne'er-do-weel of a boy never crosses my threshold again! I'm through with him!'

Peter Hajo's mother had not answered.

They ate their supper in silence. The mother's depressed mood affected the children. When Antje, Maartje, and Doris had gone to bed, she sat by the fire with her sewing. 'The sea,

that's the trouble,' she sighed. And yet the sea would, after all, be the best place for him. There he couldn't run away when the mood came over him; there stern discipline ruled; there his passionate love of adventure would be satisfied. But there was still time for that. Who would take a fourteen-year-old boy? And then . . . Peter's mother bit her trembling lips and sewed with trembling hands.

She waited and waited. . . .

At last the door was thrown open, her boy dashed in and threw himself into her arms, crying: 'Mother! Mother! I'm going to sea!'

Peter's mother turned white. She threw her arms around

him and covered his head with kisses. 'My boy! My dear boy! How—how did this come about—all at once—— ?'

'Skipper Bontekoe—*Nieuw Hoorn*—Texel—the East Indies,' Peter exploded. 'I'll tell you all about it!'

'Very well, my boy,' said his mother. And while she stared out into the night through the door, still standing open, she repeated quietly: 'Very well. . . . Now close the door, Peter.'

And she freed Peter from her embrace and walked unsteadily to the cupboard where his cold supper was waiting.

CHAPTER IV

FAREWELL VISITS

EARLY the next morning Padde knocked at the little window-panes of the Hajo cottage. Hajo opened the window and proclaimed the great news to his friend.

Padde almost fell over backwards. Hajo related all that had happened since they had parted. 'And to-morrow I'm sailing to Texel on *The Sun of Hoorn*, Padde!'

'To-morrow,' cried Padde, horrified. 'Impossible! They'll have to wait a day!'

'Why impossible?' asked Hajo.

'Why?' repeated Padde. 'Your mother will have to sew on your outfit and you'll have to take leave of the town. How can you do that in one day?'

'My mother began my outfit last night,' said Hajo, 'and I can make all my farewells in an hour!'

'You're wrong,' retorted Padde. 'Come, put on your wooden shoes. We'll start off at once!' And he began to count off on his fingers all whom Hajo would have to visit.

'I must go to Skipper Blok to tell him——'

'No time for that,' Padde interrupted him. 'I've counted thirty-seven on whom you must call.'

'Skipper Blok comes first.'

Hajo went into the back room, where his mother was sewing busily, told her his plan, kissed her, and departed with Padde.

For the first time in his life Hajo allowed Padde to lead. His eyes shone with the great happiness that had come upon him so unexpectedly.

'First you must say good-bye to Master Wouter,' said Padde. And they turned their steps towards the smithy.

'Something wrong with the master,' Hajo declared when he heard the angry hammer-strokes from within.

'Probably his dear little wifie's been after him,' replied Padde. He opened the door and called: 'Good-morning, master. We've come to say good-bye.'

Master Wouter dropped his hammer. 'You imp of Satan!' was all he said.

'Don't be angry at me, master,' begged Hajo, 'because I ran away yesterday——'

'He's going to the East Indies,' said Padde. 'Maybe he'll never come back.'

Even a hard man like the smith is sometimes tender. 'To the East?' he asked, and his voice trembled a little. 'Is it true, Hajo?'

'Yes, master.'

'Haven't you an old chest, master?' said Padde. 'Something that would do for a sailor's chest? That's why we came.'

Master Wouter held out his black, hard hand to Hajo. 'I'm not angry at you, that's the truth—h'm! And I have a chest for you too. And what a chest! I'll add some hoops to make it stronger.'

Hajo tried to thank him. 'Master, I——'

'Sssst!' hissed the smith. 'Don't talk so loud! If my wife heard you. . . . And when you come to fetch the chest, go around the back way, you understand. . . .'

The boys went. 'Now to Skipper Blok!' ordered Padde.

But Skipper Blok was not at home, and Padde led the way to Truitje Cannegieter, who lived in Lily Street. Truitje, a blonde, rosy girl dressed in a red bodice and a blue skirt, was busily scrubbing the street in front of the door. 'Hello!' she

cried joyfully when she saw the two inseparables. 'Where are you going?'

'To the East Indies!' said Padde. 'Hajo is. . . . So won't you go and see whether you have a few glass beads, Truitje? For the savages, you know, to keep them from killing Hajo.'

'Glass beads?'

'Yes, and any old thing you find—patches, toys that you

don't want any more. Just go and see; we'll wait. That's why we came.'

When Truitje had disappeared into the house, Padde turned to Hajo: 'Don't you see now that you need a few days to say good-bye?'

At that moment Truitje's twenty-year-old sister, Sytje, joined them, sturdy, blooming, and rosy like her sister. She held something under her apron and motioned for Peter Hajo to come inside the door. There she whispered: 'There's a Frisian sailor on board the *Nieuw Hoorn* named Hilke—Hilke Jopkins. Will you give him this from me?' And she held out a pair of gigantic woollen gloves.

'Socks?' asked Hajo.

'Gloves!' answered Sytje, her feelings almost hurt.

'They're so enormous——'

'Well, he's—oh, he's pretty big himself! And gloves are better too big than too small. I think it's disgusting when a man has little hands like a girl, don't you?'

'Yes,' said Hajo firmly.

'Well, then,' continued Sytje, 'tell him they weren't finished when he was here. And, if you can, try to make him take care of himself, won't you? Hilke is always so terribly careless.'

'I'll look out for him,' promised Hajo.

Sytje looked at him tenderly. 'Here!' she whispered, and she drew from her pocket a bright tie. 'Come here, laddie, and I'll tie it for you.' And she tied it around his neck very carefully. 'Tell Hilke to write to me. Will you?'

'Yes, Sytje.'

'And to come back soon. Will you?'

'Yes, Sytje.'

'And tell him that——' Sytje's lips began to tremble.

'I'll tell him, Sytje,' Hajo assured her.

And then Sytje seized Hajo's blond head between her hands and gave the astonished boy a resounding kiss on both cheeks. 'Now go!' she whispered, as steps were heard in the hall.

Truitje came back with a disreputable looking doll, a half-broken knocker, a copper bird-cage, badly bent, a rusted coffee-mill, a mask, and an assortment of glass beads. Looking about carefully, she cut the string around her neck and said: 'Here, take these too! I'll say that I lost them.'

'I wonder if they'll let me take all that on board?' asked Hajo doubtfully.

'Why not?' answered Padde indignantly. 'When your life will be at stake!'

'Well, then, I'll take Gerrit along in the cage!' Gerrit was a tame crow that Hajo had cherished for the past two years.

Next they went to deaf old Nelis, an old sea-dog whose kind wife, Grietje, gave Padde a little bottle full of a kind of oil, a remedy against sea-sickness for Hajo.

On the way to their next victim, who was to supply more glass beads and bright buttons, Padde tactfully turned to his

own house. When his mother had been informed that Hajo was starting for the East Indies she brought forth a little bundle knotted in a red handkerchief and said: 'Give that to your mother. I'll come to help her later—she probably has her hands full with your outfit. . . . Be careful of your clothes and save as much of your wages as you can for your mother!'

Hajo bit his lips. 'I'd have done that anyway,' he said.

When the two boys opened the bundle, they saw a pair of breeches and a pair of socks.

Padde took them up with deep respect. 'My new breeches,' he said. 'Strong and untearable. And she just finished the socks.'

Hajo looked a bit embarrassed. 'Your breeches?' he asked.

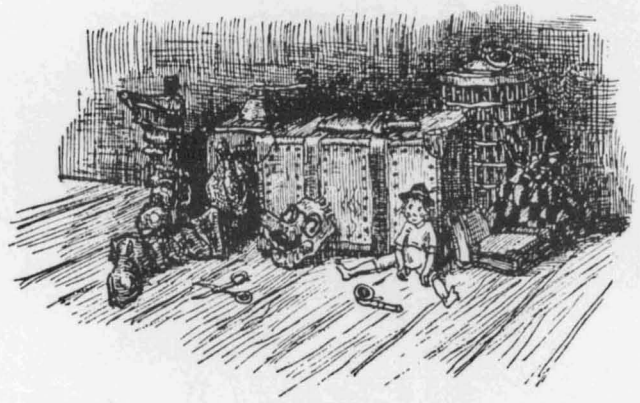
'Yes, and the socks were meant for me too. But that makes no difference. She'll knit me some new ones. Come along now! To Jansje Besen!'

. . . . .

Before they were finished Hajo might have started a second-hand shop with his acquisitions for his Indian journey. That night he said good-bye to Antje and Maartje and Doris, as they lay in bed, and promised to bring them parrots and cocoanuts, monkeys, tigers, young elephants, and cannibals in a cage. He kissed their little soft tow-heads and came back to his mother with tear-stained face.

She tied the key for his chest around his neck on a string and a little bag containing three gulden as well.

'If your ship—if you should be shipwrecked,' said Hajo's



mother, 'you won't lose the money, and—I've put Father's little Bible in your chest and a lock of hair of each of us. So you'll have something when you want to think of us. You'll be back in two years. You'll be a big, strong young man then who has seen more of the world than Father or I. During all this time, Peter, I will—I will wait for you and trust firmly that all is going well with you. And, dear Peter, if you should ever be in trouble, just say to yourself : " My mother is thinking of me," and cheer up. Will you promise me this, Peter ? '

'Oh, mother ! ' groaned Peter.

'So that's settled, my boy. And now you must go to bed, for you have a busy day ahead.'

And Peter Hajo, cabin-boy on the East Indian sailing-vessel

Nieuw Hoorn, let his mother take him to his bed like a very little boy. He undressed without knowing what he was doing. But behind the grey cloud of to-day gleamed, far off in the distance, a vision of something strange and bright, and so his heart swelled with joy and excitement. . . .

His mother went back into the sitting-room. She leaned against the mantel and stood there a moment as calmly as a mother can who has just said farewell to her boy who is going to the East Indies. Then her shoulders began to tremble and she hid her face in her hands.

CHAPTER V

PADDE SEES HIS FRIEND OFF

ON the morning of December 28th 1618, at nine o'clock, the Frisian boat *The Sun of Hoorn* was to take Skipper Willem Ysbrantszoon Bontekoe to the *Nieuw Hoorn*, lying at anchor at Texel and waiting for favourable winds. At about seven o'clock that morning two boys, bending beneath their loads, came down the pier towards the landing-place.

When they reached the boat, Padde set down the baggage, seated himself on the dented cage—to the deep disgust of the crow, Gerrit, which moved about uneasily and looked through the bars, very much annoyed—and wiped his forehead. 'Well,' said he, 'now the old boat can't sail without you.'

Hajo remained standing for a while, then he sat down by Padde. His eyes tried to pierce through the grey fog. The sound of a fog-horn reached his ears from far off in the distance. Then it became still again except for the soft sound of the water striking against the pier.

This sense of quiet made Hajo feel happier; he still seemed to be bidding his mother good-bye and promising her to behave like a man. Now he was a cabin-boy; in a few years he would be a sailor, and later, who knows, he might be sailing as—well it, *was* possible, now wasn't it?—as boatswain! Boatswain Hajo! How proud his mother would be! 'Have you heard?' people would say. 'He tried twelve trades as a boy and failed thirteen times, and now—who would have thought it!—Boatswain Hajo!'

Skipper Blok arrived with his two sons. 'Well, you're in plenty of time,' he cried, smiling at the two boys. But then he pointed to the bird-cage and all the other bundles and asked: 'Must you take all that rubbish?'

'It's not rubbish!' exclaimed Padde.

'Very well, then, it's not rubbish,' drawled Blok. 'Throw it in. But I can tell you what the boatswain of the *Nieuw Hoorn* will do!'

At a quarter to nine Rolf appeared with his chest under his arm. Hajo ran up to him and the two boys shook hands.

Gradually the day grew clearer. And at last, when the tower of the big church boomed forth twelve bronze strokes and the chimes of St. Anthony began to tinkle clearly, a group of gentlemen, with Bontekoe in their midst, came down the mole.

'They're seeing my uncle off as far as Texel,' said Rolf. 'The one with the pale face is Rol, the merchant; he's going to the East Indies too. On business for the Dutch East India Company—it's their ship.' And like Hajo and Padde, he took off his cap respectfully.

'Good morning!' Bontekoe greeted them cordially. He glanced at his two good cabin-boys and smiled benevolently at fat little Padde, who was bowing low. Then the gentlemen walked up the gang-plank. Rolf jumped on board. Skipper Blok made ready to start.

The moment had come for Hajo and Padde to part. They stood there, without a word, but with tears in their eyes.

At last Hajo turned away abruptly and walked up the gang-plank. They drew up the plank, and Padde watched the boat leaving the land. Then, at the last moment, with a cry of despair, he jumped. . . .

Blok caught him and pulled him aboard, for Padde's feet had landed in the water.

'Hajo!' the poor fellow cried while he let the water run out of his wooden shoes, 'it won't do . . .! I'll go with you to Texel!'

Bontekoe had watched Padde's feat and cried: 'Why, here we have our famous jumper again! What shall we do with him?'

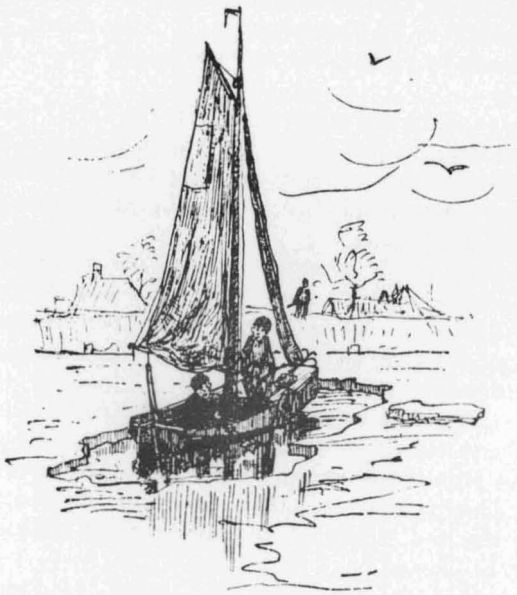
Blok wasn't a bad fellow. He knew that Hajo and Padde were inseparable friends. 'I'll take him along,' he laughed. 'He can take a look at the *Nieuw Hoorn*—that's worth seeing!'

The boat sailed through the drifting ice and came to the

open sea. Bontekoe stepped up to Padde. 'Do you want to go to sea later, too?'

Padde shook his head with undisguised disgust. 'I'm going into my uncle's brewery. There you know where you're at.'

Bontekoe looked at Padde up and down. 'You're quite right. A fine business!' And Bontekoe joined the gentlemen who were seated in the stern of the boat.



Hajo sat by the mast and with dim eyes glanced back at the receding outlines of the little town that was silently disappearing behind a veil of fog. At that moment the cross-beam came swinging towards him. Quick as lightning he ducked it and felt himself restored to reality.

The weather grew better. The sun shone, the sky was blue, there was a steady east wind.

'If this continues, we'll sail this afternoon,' said Bontekoe to the other gentlemen. 'What do you think of the breeze, Blok?'

'It's a stiff breeze and steady, skipper!'

An hour later they sighted Texel. The yellow dunes gleamed in the sunlight; here and there a red roof glowed, and—and . . .!

'The *Nieuw Hoorn*!' cried Hajo, pointing forward. 'Padde!' He seized his friend by the arm and excitedly showed him a vague something in the distance. 'Just look, Padde!'

'I don't see anything,' insisted Padde. 'My eyes ache, they're so tired. But I'll get your things for you.' And Padde reeled to the place where Hajo's chest and junk were stowed away.

Bontekoe watched Padde attentively as he dragged Hajo's possessions forward. 'To whom does all that belong?' he asked.

'To Peter Hajo, skipper.'

'So—so. Call Hajo.'

'Don't move an eyelash!' Rolf whispered into Hajo's ear. 'He's not so bad.'

But Hajo felt a bit shaky when he faced the skipper.

'Is that your outfit, Peter Hajo?' His voice sounded dangerous.

'Yes, sir, skipper.'

'What do you mean to do with all that?'

'Trade it, skipper——'

'You mean to trade things on your own and injure the company's business?'

'Injure the company, skipper?'

Padde came up. 'It's to save his life, skipper.'

Bontekoe looked up in surprise. 'I'm speaking to him, not to you.' He sent a searching glance over all the rubbish. 'And the crow? Going to trade it too?'

'No, sir, skipper. That's Gerrit. He's coming along—to keep me company.'

'For company? So—so. How did you come by Gerrit?'

'Got him out of his nest, skipper, when he was very young.'

'Caw, caw!' cried Gerrit.

The gentlemen looked very much amused and Hajo gained

courage. 'Gerrit is very knowing, skipper! Gerrit understands everything. And he doesn't fly away any more.'

'Is he so tame?'

'Yes, sir, skipper. I cut his wings.'

The gentlemen began to laugh. 'Peter Hajo, attend to me,' said Bontekoe. 'If my boatswain Folkert Berentsz sees you climbing aboard with all that household stuff he'll throw you and Gerrit into the North Sea. So you'd better say to him: "The skipper told me to ask you whether there isn't a little room for this somewhere!" Do you understand?'

'Yes, sir, skipper!' Hajo beamed.

He went forward, still looking at the *Nieuw Hoorn*, growing larger and larger. How proudly the ship rose above the greyish-green water! Soon Hajo could distinguish the beautiful carving on the stern, the slender galley, the round portholes.

Boom! Boom! Two white clouds of smoke rose from both sides of the ship, and at the same moment the gay flag of the Dutch East India Company flew from the summit of the mainmast. Hajo trembled with excitement. He could scarcely control his desire to cry 'Hurrah!' and dance on the wooden deck. Now this was *his* ship! This ship was to bear him through a thousand dangers and adventures to the famous land of his dreams—India!

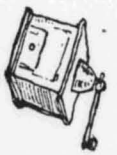
At last they were near her. A rope-ladder was thrown down from the *Nieuw Hoorn*; Bontekoe and the other gentlemen climbed up. Hajo followed, with Padde in his rear to help him carry his things, and last of all Rolf.

'Catch me if I fall,' wailed Padde, and then with a heartbreaking cry he yelled: 'My coffee-mill!' With graceful swinging movements the coffee-mill sank into the depths of the sea.

'Caw!' cried Gerrit in fear.

Still lamenting, Padde climbed up. So they came on deck, where a crowd of sailors received them with shouts of mocking laughter. 'Gudgeon!' one cried. 'I smell land rats!' 'See the crow!'

Hajo bit his lips.



'Catch me if I fall,' wailed Padde, and then with a heartbreaking cry he yelled: 'My coffee mill!'

And Padde cried : ' Forward ! Show us where we must go ! '

They all began to roar, but a good-natured cook in a white apron and with a rosy face, went up to the boys and said : ' Let them laugh. They mean no harm. Come, I'll take you to your quarters.'

They descended into the hull. ' Here, these hammocks aren't taken. Of course the best places have been taken. In bad weather you'll have a tough time. But you'll get used to it. Stow away your stuff before the boatswain sees it ! But the crow ? We can't keep him hidden for long.'

' Caw ! ' Gerrit confirmed the truth of this statement.

' The skipper knows about him,' said Padde.

' Then that's settled,' declared the cook. ' Here's a nail ; you can hang it there for the present. My name's Bolle.' And Bolle disappeared with a friendly nod.

Padde was yawning with all his might. ' I'm going up,' he said. ' The air is awful here.' And he tottered up the stairs, striking against the door.

A quarter of an hour later, when they had stowed away their things, Rolf and Hajo were about to follow him. But a heavy, loud voice roared at them : ' Thunder and lightning ! Are you beginning to be lazy already ? There's a swab ! And there's plenty of water, if you look for it. And you, here's a cloth. The one scrubs, the other washes up. Do you understand ? '

' What shall I scrub, boatswain ? '

' Thunder and lightning ! What shall you scrub ? Scrub the ship ! Or do you want to scrub the North Sea ? Begin at the stern and end with the galley and the bowsprit. If I find a dirty speck, you'll both be keelhauled. Forward ! To work ! ' And Folkert Berentsz, boatswain of the *Nieuw Hoorn*, continued his rounds.

Hajo began to scrub busily.

But Rolf surveyed the surface of the ship and then remarked, as he drew Hajo along with him : ' We'll begin with the stern to-day. You can't scrub a whole ship in an afternoon—and old Thunder and Lightning knows that too.'

. . . . .

While the two cabin-boys scrubbed and wiped up the deck, Skipper Bontekoe was making sure that all was ready for their departure. He sent a few boats to land for fresh water. Rolf noticed it as it was brought aboard. ' We're sailing to-day,' he said to Hajo. ' Sooner than I expected.'

' How do you know ? '

' Taking on fresh water. That's always the last thing.'

Hajo looked around for Padde. Rolf called to Blok : ' Have you seen Padde, Blok ? '

' Yes, he's sleeping in my boat. I'm starting back in a minute, but you'd better leave him. Otherwise he'll go along to India ! ' He laughed and climbed down the ladder-rope.

The boys went on with their work. Hajo scrubbed with all his might. He regarded every bit of the deck that he had scrubbed with great satisfaction. He knew this bit and it knew him. He was establishing a profound friendship with the *Nieuw Hoorn* !

Suddenly Rolf seized his arm. ' There—the boat's leaving us ! '

Hajo stared wide-eyed after the receding boat. ' Padde ! ' he cried. ' Farewell, Padde ! ' And he waved the big, red

handkerchief which Padde's mother had given him, while the tears ran down his cheeks. 'Farewell, Padde! Padde!'

He did not note that the hubbub on the lower deck was increasing; he did not hear the sailors scurrying about, nor the rattling of the anchor chain, nor the confusion of voices above and below. 'Good-bye, Padde! Padde!' he cried and kept on waving and waving.

And then he felt the deck tremble beneath his feet; the roaring of cannon deafened him; a cloud of smoke enveloped the ship. Sailors were swarming in the rigging; the sails were let out, they flew in the wind until strong, brown fists made them fast. A mighty 'Hurrah!' rose from two hundred throats.

Hajo drew a deep breath. The *Nieuw Hoorn* was putting to sea.

. . . . . .

Rolf and Hajo were hanging over the railing, dreamily watching the grey strip of land growing fainter in the distance. Silently they looked across the wide surface of the green water, turning to white marble where the foam surged around the vessel. A few sea-gulls, quietly beating their wings, flew around the masts.

Suddenly they heard a soft rustling. They turned—and—there stood Padde, his face pale and swollen from sleep. He stammered: 'What—what were the cannon shooting for, Hajo?'

CHAPTER VI

PADDE, THE STEWARD'S HELPER

SKIPPER BONTEKOE and Mr. Rol, the merchant, were seated opposite each other at the heavy oak table in the big cabin of the *Nieuw Hoorn*. The skipper was studying a large marine chart and the merchant was deeply engrossed in long columns of figures and was jotting down some notes. Suddenly the silence was rudely broken by the cry: 'Let go! I must see the skipper!' and the door of this holy of holies was burst open. Fat little Padde rushed in, pursued by the ship's dignified grey-haired surgeon-barber, commonly known as Daddy Longjacket. With eyes full of horror, the intruder stared at the captain and cried: 'Skipper! . . . The boat is gone!'

'Skipper!' growled the furious surgeon, gasping for breath, 'this good-for-nothing youngster has—h'm!'

'Never mind,' said Bontekoe. 'I'll attend to the young man.'

'Then I'll go, skipper, but—h'm!' and Daddy Longjacket angrily closed the door behind him.

Padde fell on his knees before the skipper. 'Dear, kind skipper,' he implored with tears in his eyes, 'turn back! Oh, please, please . . . !'

In a voice that boded no good, Bontekoe ordered him to get up and explain just what had happened.

'I fell asleep,' whimpered Padde. 'Last night I didn't sleep a wink.'

'The devil. Why didn't you go to sleep then in Blok's boat?'

'I did, dear, kind skipper! But it rocked so terribly that I came back on board here again. Oh, dear God, and when all those cannon roared all at once——'

'So you heard the cannon?'

'Oh, yes, skipper, but I didn't dare to come out! I thought—I thought the pirates of Dunkirk were coming!' And

Padde's eyes were again full of wild terror of the dreaded sea-pirates!

'You little fool, if you'd only come out then you could still have got back!'

'And not now, skipper?' Padde's wail of distress was heart-breaking.

Bontekoe didn't quite know what to think of it all. 'Are you trying to fool me?' he asked. 'Tell me the truth! Did you want to go along with your friend?'

Padde's eyes almost popped out of his head. 'Go along to the East Indies?' he stammered, and the poor boy clutched his hair. 'Why, I'm going into my uncle's brewery! Oh, dear, kind skipper, turn back for heaven's sake!' And Padde again fell on his knees before Bontekoe and tried to seize his hands.

Bontekoe saw that he had made a mistake; he was convinced that this boy had not meant to go along as a stowaway. He walked up and down in thought, and then asked: 'Your name's Padde?'

'Padde Kelemeyn, skipper, from the Apple Harbour.'

'Now listen to me carefully, Paddy Kelemeyn. We'll have to find you something to keep you busy on board, for the devil still finds work for idle hands to do. And if you work hard and we should happen to pass a ship sailing back to Holland, I'll pass you over to her and send you back home to Hoorn.'

'When might that be, skipper?' asked poor Padde.

'It might be to-morrow and it might be in three months.'

'Three months!' repeated Padde in despair.

'We'll look after you,' Bontekoe consoled him. 'Now we'll see how we can best use you. What are you going to be?'

'I'm going into my uncle's brewery—there you know where you're at,' replied Padde sadly.

'Then we'll let you help the steward here—that will be good training for the brewery. Ask one of the sailors to show you the steward, and tell him from me that you're to be his helper. Understand?'

'Yes, skipper.'

'Then go. The door is back of you.'

'Yes, skipper.' But Padde remained rooted to the spot.

'Skipper—skipper'—Padde's eyes blinked desperately—'can't you please sail back quickly?'

This was too much. Skipper Bontekoe's gesture was so terrifying that Padde tumbled backwards through the door in such haste that he bumped into a fat, rosy, friendly, cross-eyed man and knocked him over. 'Why don't you look where you're going?' snapped Padde.

Speechless with amazement, the man got up again.

Padde continued on his way, furious, and asked the first sailor he met for the steward. The sailor sent him on a wild-goose chase and when the other sailors whom he approached saw that he was a greenhorn, they kept up the game of sending him from pillar to post.

While he stood in deep despair, ready to jump overboard and wishing that the *Nieuw Hoorn* were at the bottom of the sea, the same fat, rosy-faced man whom he had knocked over came up to him and asked him what was the matter. Padde told him to go, that he was tired of being the joke of them all when he only wanted to know where to find the steward.

'The steward? Well, well, it's a miracle: I'm the steward!'

Padde couldn't believe that this was not another practical joke, but when he was at last convinced he told the kind steward that he was to be his helper.

'Miracle! I had just asked the skipper for a helper.' Then

he stared at Padde and stopped. 'Well, if it isn't the greatest miracle,' he whispered. 'A real miracle. You look just like my—my boy.'

'Is he on the ship too?' asked Padde.

The fat man was about to say something, but he shook his head instead.

'Where is he?' asked Padde again.

The steward coughed and laid his hand on Padde's shoulder. Then he said: 'Come, here are twenty jars that must all be washed. Come—come along, little chap.'

CHAPTER VII

A JOLLY CREW

THE crew of the *Nieuw Hoorn* was made up, with a few exceptions, of jolly, friendly fellows who worked hard, did not fear the devil himself, and roared with laughter till the walls of the forecastle shook.

The three greenhorns made a few friends the very first evening. First there was the surgeon-barber, kind, dignified Daddy Longjacket, who always said prayers before and after meals. Then there were Black Gys, the smith; Diede Dudes, the carpenter; Floorke, Gerretje, Nosey, Steven Düffel—and Harmen! Harmen van Kniphuizen, the cook's helper, was a few years older than Hajo and Rolf. He was really a born poet.

If you greeted Harmen with a simple 'Good day,' he would reply, 'It is, I'll say!' If you asked Harmen, 'What's the roast to-night?' he'd grin and say, 'Can't tell—but I might!' He could climb like a monkey, swim like a fish, run like a deer; he was as strong as any full-grown tar, and he could make your hair stand on end with his long, tough yarns. . . .!

After the evening meal, some of the men went to sleep at once, snoring like fog-horns. Others played cards, and all of them smoked, blowing forth such clouds of smoke that you couldn't see your next neighbour. The tobacco wasn't always of the best, and sometimes some of the tars would pull a shipmate's pipe out of his mouth because they couldn't stand the stench any longer.

Then some one cried, 'Play for us, Kniphuizen! Play something!' and a dozen others joined loudly in the cry.

Without much urging Harmen, the cook's helper, fetched

his fiddle, jumped up on the table and scraped away for all he was worth. His instrument was not a Stradivarius and Harmen often missed a note, but the sailors didn't mind. They stamped the time with their feet and with rollicking voices sang the 'Beggars' Song' of the brave Dutch rebels who had fought for the Prince of Orange against Spain.

Then came the time to tell stories, and they began drawing the long bow, each trying to outdo the other with tales of past adventures among crocodiles, lions, tigers and cannibals,

whales that swallowed boats, and other experiences that made Padde's eyes pop out of his head with fear, but only brought a smile to Rolf's lips.

Among those who told the tallest stories Hajo noticed a big fellow with hair like flax, light blue eyes, large ears that stood out from his head, and hands. Hajo couldn't look at them without recalling Sytje's gloves. They offered a fine field for tattooing and their owner had made the most of it: there were two anchors on the hands, two hearts pierced by an arrow on the wrists, and on the arm a three-master sailing over stormy waves. Hajo was deeply impressed. This was a regular sailor!

When four bells sounded and the seamen crept to their

berths, Hajo looked up the tall Frisian. 'Is your name Jopkins?' he asked. 'Hilke Jopkins?'

'That's me.'

'Then I have something for you from—from Sytje.'

Hilke opened his eyes, seized Hajo by the arm, and drew a deep breath. 'Show it to me!' he said.

They went up on deck together, and there Hajo gave Hilke the gloves. He stroked them tenderly. 'Wonderful,' he muttered, 'wonderful!'

'She said you're to write to her and you're to take care of yourself, and she wanted to say something else, but then she had to cry.'

'Wonderful . . .!' Hilke shook his head. 'The gloves fit perfectly. Look!'

'She gave me a tie,' remarked Hajo, and he displayed Sytje's brilliant gift. 'It's for Sundays.'

'I should say! What—what'll you take for the tie?'

'It's not for sale,' said Hajo. But he had heard Hilke's voice tremble, and he added: 'You can have it for nothing.'

'Wonderful' was all Hilke could say. He caressed the tie and then took Hajo's hand. 'If you ever need me, my lad——'

'Hilke—would you—perhaps——?' and Hajo stopped in confusion.

'Go ahead! Shoot! What is it?' asked the big fellow.

'Would you do an anchor or a ship or what is easiest on me?'

Hilke turned up his sleeve. 'Choose what you like. I can do anything, and it doesn't hurt. Have you a sweetheart?'

'No,' confessed Hajo shyly. 'Is that necessary?'

'No, but I could have made two hearts. Only you must have a sweetheart. Some of the lads put in a name like Catherine or something. But it never comes off, you know. The way I have it, without a name, is better; then it's always right, you know.'

Hajo didn't quite understand, and so he asked: 'When will you do it, Hilke?'

'In a few days when the worst of getting started is over.'

'That's fine,' said Hajo. 'And Hilke, I'm part Frisian too.'

'What ?' roared Hilke. 'You're a Frisian ?'

'My mother come from Friesland.'

'I thought so ! A lad like you ! I'll teach you all the different knots too. . . . Never heard of them all ?' and he roared off a list of six or seven sailors' knots.

Hajo almost dropped to the deck with excitement and they parted, exchanging a swift good night. The tall sailor went to his duties while the cabin-boy stood happily thinking over what the immediate future held for him.

CHAPTER VIII

CELEBRATING THE NEW YEAR

THE boys had to work hard. Scrubbing, polishing, wiping up were the order of the day, and when the boatswain happened to give them a moment's breathing-space, the sailors always found something for them to do. Padde was an exception—he lived like a head steward, slept late, ate with eagerness, and occasionally rinsed a few jugs while talking to the steward. From the first, the steward did most of the work, while Padde dangled his fat legs from an empty barrel like a king on his throne.

'Shall I help you, Squint-eye ?' Padde would ask sometimes when the steward gasped from bending down so much.

'Stay where you are, my boy, I'm nearly finished !' he would answer.

But Hajo was saddled with every possible and impossible piece of work, wherever he showed his pleasant face. The surgeon would use him to pound herbs, knowing that Hajo had been in an apothecary's shop ; Black Gys, the smith, would ask him to help with cramp-irons ; the baker had him knead dough ; or Diede Dudes, the carpenter, would order him to saw boards. . . . His only reward was that they said : 'You can help me often,' or gave him a box on the ear if he made a mistake.

But when Skipper Bontekoe passed him, as he scrubbed the deck or carried two pails of ice-cold water in his frozen fingers, and stopped to ask : 'Do you like it here, Peter ?' all was well again. He would pull off his cap and say : 'Very much skipper !' and the great man would nod approvingly.

The sailors didn't bother Rolf as much as Hajo. He was so serious that even the older men respected him, and Bolle, the cook, began teaching him the Malay language, while manipulating his steaming potatoes or stirring his great pot of beans. Rolf wrote down every word and practised at every opportunity, so that his master soon began to fear that he would come to the bottom of his knowledge.

Rolf occupied his evenings in study, too. He had made friends with Daddy Longjacket who permitted him to read some of the books in his cabin. It was quiet in Daddy Longjacket's retreat and Rolf read with intense concentration everything he could get hold of. After his first visit every one called him ' The Bookworm '. But this too increased the respect felt for the boy by the sailors.

Hajo, on the contrary, had decided on the very first evening to learn to play the fiddle. He approached Harmen, the musical prodigy of the *Nieuw Hoorn*, who was immensely flattered by his request.

' I'll teach you,' said Harmen, ' but you mustn't think that you can learn the fiddle full speed—you can be glad if you know it well in a month.'

' I'll try hard,' promised Hajo. ' Harmen, oughtn't there be another string here ? '

' Oh, yes,' replied Harmen, ' there were three. But the one screeched so that I cut it off.' With a sweeping gesture he placed the violin against his chest and scratched away for dear life.

' May I now ? ' asked Hajo with trembling voice.

' Be careful now,' warned Harmen as he handed him the miraculous box. Timidly Hajo drew the bow across the strings.

' You'll learn,' Harmen assured him. ' If you don't know a note now and then, just skip it—see ! Everybody does it, and no one will notice it. Here, I'll play you a funeral.'

' Splendid ! ' sighed Hajo, when he had finished.

Harmen's artistic soul rejoiced. ' Well, I'll lend it to you,' he generously volunteered. ' But don't let the others hear you until you know how, for they'd smash my fiddle over your head.'

Hajo chose a deserted spot for his practice, with Padde as admiring audience.

So Hajo chose a deserted spot for his practice, with Padde as admiring audience. Sometimes they sat together the whole evening, while Padde listened and stared sleepily across the ocean. . . . They were both thinking of their mothers, so far away.

Gerrit, the crow, was having a fine time, too. The sailors slipped all sorts of things to him, even tobacco, and paid much more attention to him than he deserved; for Gerrit responded with haughty indifference and allowed himself to be stroked only by Hajo. But he was not the only live pet on board. Lysken Cocs, a pale, thin kitchen-boy with innocent eyes, had a white guinea-pig with brown spots, named Joppie. It would creep down its master's open collar and tumble out again at the bottom of his trousers, while he assisted the trick by drawing in his belly as far as possible. The sailors called this 'A trip around the world' and admired it almost as much as Joppie's other accomplishment of 'praying' before it got its dish of food, when it would fold its fore-paws, close its round eyes, and move its little snout up and down.

When Gerrit and Joppie were introduced in the cook's galley, Gerrit cried 'Caw!' while the guinea-pig stood on its hind paws, sniffed, and trotted around foolishly. Gerrit sharpened his beak, peered out of his bright eyes at the stranger, plucked at his feathers, and with great self-satisfaction again screamed 'Caw!'

'Is that all he knows?' asked Lysken. 'Come here, Joppie!'

Joppie came, climbed along Lysken's outstretched arm, disappeared down Lysken's collar, and reappeared at his feet in a jiffy. Gerrit expressed his surprise by another 'Caw!' Joppie seemed annoyed and kept turning around in a circle. His master declared this was a storm portent, and for fear lest a fight ensue he picked up his pet and carried him away.

. . . . . .

On the morning of the last day of the year the *Nieuw Hoorn* sailed by Pleimuiden, and Padde, lost in melancholy, saw it sink out of view. Suddenly two sailors appeared and one of

them said: 'Let's take him. Lysken is too skinny, anyway.' The other collared Padde who screamed lustily: 'Let me go! I'm the steward's helper.'

'We're not going to kill you. Just come along!'

They dragged him to the forecastle, where the sailors shoved

him into a gay, checked dress, on which paper flowers were pasted. They smashed a yellow flaxen wig, around which hung a wreath of forget-me-nots, down on his head.

'What's all this anyway?' wailed Padde.

'You're the New Year,' replied the sailors. 'The boatswain will be the Old Year. Why don't you laugh? We're going to have pancakes and hot doughnuts.'

Hot doughnuts . . .! Padde began to take an interest.

'Now take little steps—you're supposed to be a girl. And keep nodding and smiling. We'll cover you with flour—your face! And you must carry this basket and scatter flowers as you walk. We'll get you this evening when it's time. And you must say a poem—for the New Year! Harmen will give us one.'

After more instructions and much teasing Padde lost his temper, to the joy of the sailors, who roared at him, while Harmen told him he was as green as grass.

The whole ship was in an uproar. Chinese lanterns and garlands of artificial flowers adorned the cabin and the forecastle. A huge vat was gilded on the outside so that it might serve as coach when the New Year was drawn in by four sailors.

The boatswain was so busy with preparations for the celebration that he quite forgot to let his 'Thunder and Lightning!' roar at the cabin-boys. He even begged Padde's pardon when they collided at a busy moment, and Padde, who had expected a smack in the face, toppled over with surprise.

The dinner exceeded even the wildest expectations. First there were baked beans and bacon with a mug of foaming beer, then boiled rice with plenty of sugar; and at the last, amid great excitement, an enormous raised cake, over which brandy was poured and then lighted by the boatswain. The flames spurted up almost to the ceiling. Hajo and Padde had never seen anything like this, and Padde was in deadly agony lest the cake be burned up, while some of the sailors grumbled that it was a sin and a shame to consume brandy in this way. But the cake tasted marvellous, and when Skipper Bontekoe and Mr. Rol came to see whether everybody was happy, there was no end of hurrahing.

That evening there were more surprises and practical jokes, but the real excitement began at a quarter to twelve, when the whole crew was ordered on deck and lined up in double array, so that they formed a gangway between them, leading to an elevated platform on which stood four chairs, adorned with garlands. Chinese lanterns hung on the yards, and the

bright lights danced over the sailors' faces and lighted up the sails from below in red, blue, and orange against the dark sky. While the waiting sailors stuck their hands in their pockets and stamped their feet to keep warm, the skipper, Mr. Rol, and the chief pilot, Jan Piet van Hoorn, appeared at the door of the cabin and walked along the passage between the men. Two hundred sinewy hands snatched off two hundred caps at the same moment, and a broad, youthful smile appeared on the face of the skipper as he nodded to them.

That was what the sailors loved about their skipper! His smile went straight to their hearts, and they stretched their necks and nodded. Skipper Bontekoe was a splendid skipper!

Now appeared a venerable old man with a long, white mantle covered with golden stars, borne by four pages. He walked between the grinning sailors, bowed low before the gentlemen, who rose and bowed in turn, and began his speech with trembling voice. With many pauses and promptings from the quick-witted Harmen, the formidable boatswain, now thoroughly tamed, stammered his New Year's speech, in which he wished the East India Company, the skipper, the other gentlemen, the ship, and the crew a successful voyage and a Happy New Year. When the agony was over, the skipper thanked him and the crew and led him to the vacant fourth chair.

Padde was howling from deep emotion, when Harmen pushed him into the barrel and ordered him to stay there until the cannon boomed midnight. There it came—Boom! Boom! Boom! The ship trembled. Boom! Padde held his ears and then yelled: 'Let me go!' But at that moment four sailors picked up the gilded barrel and carried it between the line of sailors, roaring: 'Hurrah for the New Year!'

Padde strewed flowers with all his might, but was less successful at smiling and laughing, as he crawled out of the deep barrel.

'Sssh!' cried the sailors. 'He's got to say a verse!'

Padde looked around in terror, but Harmen gave him a nudge that almost knocked him over. 'Skipper——' Padde began, and his lips trembled.

'I am the New Year!' prompted Harmen in an angry whisper.

But Padde continued: 'Skipper, I heard—what the—b-b-boatswain s-s-said and——'

Then Harmen rushed in and saved the night. He sprang to Padde's side, seized his hand and declaimed:

We are the New Year!
We bring joy and blessings here!
The *Nieuw Hoorn* to India now will sail
For the company's great gain. All hail!
Your trusty seamen call to you:
Long live Skipper Bontekoe![1]

Harmen waved his arm, and with one shout the sailors roared with him: 'Long live Skipper Bontekoe!' Then each of the sailors got a drink of brandy while the gentlemen drank to the New Year in wine.

'Men,' said Bontekoe, 'I drink this glass to you! I know that you are all inspired by the same determination as I am—to bring the *Nieuw Hoorn* safely to India and home again!'

With more hurrahs and cheers for the skipper and the *Nieuw Hoorn* they began to sing, under the boatswain's leading, the

[1] In Dutch, Bontekoe is pronounced to rhyme with 'you'.

beautiful old song, 'Wilhelmus von Nassauen[1]'. Their eyes sparkled and a deep feeling of devotion welled up in their hearts as they vowed to remain faithful to their Fatherland till death.

Then Bontekoe disappeared into his cabin with the Old Year and the crew hurried to the forecastle, where they celebrated till far into the night. Harmen played his fiddle, the sailors sang and talked and struck the tables with their fists.

'It's going to be a lucky voyage!' they declared.

It's going to be a lucky voyage. . . . So they all thought.

[1] 'Wilhelmus von Nassauen' is the Dutch national song.

CHAPTER IX

THE STORM

ON January 1st 1619 the *Nieuw Hoorn* passed the south-east of England; the wind was in the east and their course was south-south-west.

Suddenly the force of the wind grew much stronger and it blew now south, now north. Towards noon it settled in the south, and the *Nieuw Hoorn* began to paw the waves like a horse, dipping its prow in the waves. Padde turned green.

'Sick?' asked Harmen kindly. 'H'm, first time with a heavy sea! Ask the boatswain for the spot-where-you-can't-get-sea-sick.'

'The spot-where-you-can't-get-sea-sick? Is there one?'

'Didn't you know that? Every ship has one spot-where-you-can't-get-sea-sick! If the boatswain doesn't tell you, ask the skipper. He'll know.'

Padde started in search of this blessed spot, and the first person he ran into was Nosey. Nosey told him to lie down on his back at various places on the deck and watch his feet. 'If your feet go up and down you're in the wrong spot. But if the ship moves and your feet remain still you've got it.'

Padde thanked him for his good advice and began lying down wherever he could without being in danger of the jeers of the sailors. Suddenly some one shouted: 'Here, are you dead?' and Padde crawled up on his shaky legs as fast as he could and stared into red-headed Floorke's friendly eyes.

Padde told Floorke that he was looking for the spot-where-you-can't-get-sea-sick—just for fun, you know! Floorke's eyes sparkled and he said kindly: 'When you feel sea-sick, just tell me and I'll show you the spot.'

'Well, tell me!' begged Padde.

'But you're not sea-sick yet?'

Padde laughed heartily. 'Of c-c-course not! But I'd l-l-like to know it.'

'All right! Go up the mainmast to the highest yard-arm.'

'You're not lying?'

'Lying? Why, just work it out. Where does the movement come from? From the waves! Well, then you must get as far from the water as you can. See? And where's that? At the top of the mainmast!'

Padde saw the point of the argument and started for the shroud. But when he saw how it trembled and shook up there, and how the pennon was whipped about, he pronounced Floorke a common liar and declared that you couldn't fool him!

Angry at this deceitful world, he came upon Hajo and asked him whether he might have his remedy for sea-sickness from Grietje. When Hajo gave him permission, he pulled it out of his pocket—for he had taken it from Hajos' chest, to be on the safe side—and uncorked the bottle with its oily contents. He had to use all his will and close his eyes and nose before he could take a swallow of the stuff.

'Do you feel better now?' asked Hajo.

'Much b-b-better,' Padde assured him.

'Take another swallow,' advised Hajo; but Padde had become sea-sick with a vengeance before the words were out of his mouth. Hajo made up his mind without a moment's hesitation. He threw the bottle overboard.

'W-what a pity!' wailed poor Padde.

. . . . . .

On January 4th the wind changed to the south-west and grew so fierce that they had to haul in the mainsail. That night they fastened the foresail too, and the ship sailed west with one sail.

Padde no longer appeared on deck; the cross-eyed steward had taken him to his quarters and spoiled him like a baby. Hajo, too, had fallen a victim to sea-sickness, but Rolf, the Bookworm, was spared. He often supported Hajo when they were sent together into the rigging and was in danger a hundred times of falling from the tossing ropes.

The next day, towards evening, the storm broke. The waves dashed against the creaking hull with the roar of thunder, while clouds of foam spurted far above the yard-arms. The dark waters surged and seethed as if the powers of evil, rising from the sea, were threatening the *Nieuw Hoorn* with destruction.

That night the boys lay awake with staring eyes, listening . . . listening. . . .

The lantern in their quarters rocked terrifyingly and cast gruesome, living shadows. Not many of the crew could sleep; most of them were wide awake, while a few groaned as if in a nightmare.

Now the *Nieuw Hoorn* was lifted high in the air, creaking in all its timbers, and now it was flung far down into the depths of the sea. Hajo closed his eyes and pressed his arms tight against the walls of his narrow berth. Boy, boy—how the lamp rocked! Through his half-closed lids he saw the light racing wildly to and fro. What if the *Nieuw Hoorn* should sink? What if the waves should tear it apart, roaring in triumph over its prey? What if the two hundred of them

The boatswain rushed through the door with a lantern, up to his knees in water, and roared: 'All hands on deck!'

with Gerrit and Master Wouter's chest and the skipper should be dragged down into the cold, dark, salt sea, where sea monsters glared at them with green eyes and opened their horrible jaws. . . . Hark, how the waves shook the ship! Hajo seemed to taste the water, to feel it. . . . Mother! Mother! Oh, God! Terror and excitement made him feverish. He wiped the sweat from his face.

Rolf jumped up suddenly. 'I'm going out to look at things!' he called, and, holding on to anything he could clutch, he tottered out between the berths. He returned in a few minutes, wet to the skin, and fell down, dead tired.

'What's the weather like?' yelled Hajo, so that his joke might not be lost to the world. Some one began to sing a sailors' song in a hoarse, squeaky voice.

Then suddenly . . . a clap of thunder—a crash! . . . The sailors jumped up, shouting in confusion. The door of the forecastle had been splintered and the water rushed in through the opening and splashed against the walls. Then before they knew what was the matter, the boatswain rushed through the door with a lantern, up to his knees in water, and roared: 'All hands on deck!'

'Help! More help!' A cry came from outside.

Then the crew of the *Nieuw Hoorn* showed of what stuff they were made. One, two, three—they were in their breeches and they followed the boatswain and his lantern into the black night. Come what might, here were two hundred regular fellows, not afraid of the devil and his grandmother.

Outside all seemed a chaos of roaring and creaking, swinging masts, a flapping sail, and cries above the howling of the storm: 'We'll sink! the port-holes in the bow are open!'

From aft several dark figures appeared with a light that was suddenly extinguished. Then there rose a cry: 'Skipper Bontekoe!'

'Skipper! The hold is filling! The port-holes are stove in!'

'The devil! Nail them up, Berentsz!'

'Skipper!'

'Twenty men to the hold!'

Berentsz had vanished with a dozen sailors.

'Skipper! Water in the forecastle!'

'Buckets!'

They brought buckets from everywhere, but before they began bailing out the water they smashed the chests that were floating about and dashing against their legs. They formed a double line and passed the buckets from hand to hand. Now and then a man would topple over into the water, bucket and all, but he would jump to his feet again like a cat, and in half an hour the work was done. Then the men who had been sent into the hold returned—they had secured the port-holes by nailing double doors over them.

The sails had all been reefed, but now the ship was whirled so wildly about that there was danger of being broken to bits. Twenty men, clenching their teeth, crowded on sail again and the tossing of the ship grew less. The storm drove before it an icy rain, which splashed upon the deck like hail and veiled sea and sky.

A gloomy morning dawned in the east through the grey rain. The ship's course lay to the west.

. . . . . .

The storm raged day in, day out. The sailors' eyes and noses were red and swollen, their clothes were sodden with cold and damp, their skin was lashed by the hail and the rain.

Three days after the night of terror great flocks of sea-gulls flew over the ship, struggling against the storm. Exhausted and with wings feebly fluttering, they were dashed against the yards and rigging or tumbled on the deck. Their appearance indicated that land was near, but no one could see even twenty yards through the rain, waves, and clouds of foam.

The storm kept tugging madly at masts and sails and the waves fell upon the ship like a troop of hungry wolves. They snorted and trembled with the lust of destruction; they rolled over one another, they fought for their prey, howling, whining, and spitting foam.

Four days later, on the afternoon of January 12th, the storm

triumphed. There had been a moment's peace; then came a blast of wind which crashed like a cannon-shot against the bow; the crew inside sprang up and listened! There was a crash that seemed to rend the ship, another momentary silence, and the storm raged on.

The sailors rushed out, falling over one another.

'The mainmast is broken!'

The break had occurred thirty feet above the deck. The skipper stood looking at it, with a crowd of sailors around him, ready to carry out his orders. They climbed up the rigging like squirrels, holding fast by hands and feet and half-closing their eyes against the furious rain. With frozen fingers they loosed the topmast and let it slide down. Would the mast stand firm? With intense excitement the men below watched their comrades working up above them on the creaking mast, bending and turning beneath the lashes of the storm. Then a deep sigh of relief was heard: the topmast sank down. The hurricane tugged furiously at the ship, but the mast held firm.

. . . . .

Hajo had got over his sea-sickness and conquered his fears. The storm had lasted so long now, and they had held out so well, that he was used to it. He ran about the pitching vessel like a regular tar; his legs had begun to get the proper bowed look of the seaman; he spat the salt water from his mouth and snorted and sneezed; he felt proud and manly, ready to cope with every danger.

One fine day the storm gave up the battle. After a few convulsive blasts and a deep, long sigh, it sank into the sea, exhausted. The water did not grow calm as quickly; but gradually the waves, too, lost their destructive force and on January 20th the weather was at last fair and calm. It had grown less cold too, and one seemed to catch a breath of the south.

A beautiful peace descended upon the *Nieuw Hoorn*. The sailors sang as they hung up their things to dry. They stared up into the blue sky, with their hands in their pockets, and decided that the weather would continue favourable for a

time. They smoked, laughed, and spat magnificently again; their vitality was not shaken.

But one little corpse, laid away in a tightly corded, wooden box, was sent down to lie on the bosom of the deep. On the coffin this epitaph was painted by an unskilled hand:

JOPPIE

✠

JANUARY 19TH 1619

His own death he did forecast,
And died a hero to the last.

Lysken Cocs cried all through the burial.

CHAPTER X

COMPANY AT SEA

THEY all had their hands full now! Everything on the ship was topsy-turvy. Pieces of rope and torn bits of sail were drifting about the deck and the salt had eaten into all the copper and iron parts.

The sailors worked like beavers to get everything shipshape again. They scrubbed, oiled, and polished, and tried hard to mend their broken sea-chests and put them in order. The din

of hammering and nailing was deafening, but every one was in a good mood and the sailors sang as they worked.

They made the most of the favourable weather by strengthening the mainmast. The skipper himself directed the work. He had them take the main-topsail from the mast and set it in place of the mainsail. The main-topmast was replaced by the topgallant mast with the main-topgallant-sail. Thanks to these measures and to a favouring south-east breeze, the *Nieuw*

Hoorn was able to sail fairly fast once more. The course was towards the Canary Islands—south-south-west.

Hajo had arranged one morning to have Hilke tattoo an anchor on his upper arm. After an hour's work that symbol of hope glowed on Hajo's arm in two colours. The anchor was blue, while the bit of rope circling around it was a bright red.

Radiant with pride and satisfaction, Hajo regarded this work of art. 'So!' said Hilke, proud of his labours. 'Now tell me honestly: did it hurt?'

'Not a bit,' lied Hajo, who had manfully suppressed many a groan. 'And I'm much obliged to you, Hilke!'

'That's nothing,' replied Hilke. 'And if you should ever need—well, if you want a pair of hearts on your arm later I'll do the trick for you.'

Early the next morning, when the men were still lying in their berths and drawing on their socks, Harmen rushed into the forecastle in great excitement.

'Boys! A sail! A sail!'

That got them. They jumped up and ran to the deck in their bare feet and underclothes, leaving the forecastle deserted.

Only one nose showed above a blanket. It was Padde's. The poor lad lay in his berth with dull eyes. A sail in sight! . . . Would he have to return home now? Padde shivered with suspense. Home! . . . Would his mother be angry? Was she longing for him? Or was she glad to—h'm—to be rid of him? Padde didn't believe that! He knew he would be welcome at home. But—to leave Hajo! To see him go to the cannibals alone? He couldn't do that.

Was India far away still? Probably not: for they had been on the way a long time now. What if he should go along—to the East Indies—and then return at once? If he completed the whole journey, he could bring home a good bit of money!

Hajo dashed in at this moment. 'Padde! Come on! A ship!'

'Of course you're glad about it!' Padde said sourly.

'Yes, it's great!'

'So you want to get rid of me?'

'Get rid of you? Of you?' Hajo broke into loud laughter, and at this Padde drew down his lower lip even more. 'Oh, Padde! the ship's behind us. It's taking the same course!'

Padde sighed with relief, but at the same time he grumbled: 'What a pity! I'd have liked going home!'

Skipper Bontekoe had the *Nieuw Hoorn* sail to leeward so that the sails hung limp and the other ship could catch up with the East Indian sailing-ship.

The distant sail grew larger; soon it could be seen that it too was a three-master. Then a flag arose on the mizzen. The crew looked at it eagerly till the wind blew the bright cloth taut and they could see the design on it.

'The flag of the East Indian Company!'

'Yes,' they all shouted, 'our company's flag!'

Then came an answering shout. The crew hung over the sides, chatting and laughing. It was a long time since they had seen anything but water and sky!

Then a white cloud of smoke tumbled from the side of the strange ship. 'Boom!' And almost at the same moment it thundered from beneath the wooden deck beneath their feet: the *Nieuw Hoorn* was answering their salute. Long before the smoke had disappeared Padde had sought safety below.

And the sailors who had listened to his terrified remarks about pirates with broad grins, now almost fell over backwards from laughing. Padde had evidently never heard of firing a salute!

A quarter of an hour later they could distinguish the faces of the new-comers. A thundering 'Hurrah!' rose from both ships, and the men waved their caps and handkerchiefs. A yawl was lowered from the other boat, a few men stepped into it, and it was rowed towards the *Nieuw Hoorn*.

The sea was calm, and yet the tiny boat bobbed up and down like a cork. There! it was hidden beneath a big wave spewed out by a whale. 'Bah!' said the whale, 'I don't like your taste. Skip along, yawl!' And now, look, it lay on a strip of water like a sea-gull. It rocked away again in a cradle made of two waves. You felt queer and dizzy only from watching it.

Bontekoe had a ship's ladder lowered; a cloth was laid from

Hajo had arranged one morning to have Hilke tattoo an anchor on his upper arm.

the stairs to the big cabin; the skipper and the merchant came out and waited at the railing.

The yawl was very near now. There were six rowers, sturdy fellows, and the two other men who sat there formed the greatest contrast to each other that one could imagine. The one was tall, pale, and thin, with a narrow face and smooth, blond hair; the other was short, thickset, weather-beaten, and brown like an old sail, and curly, stubborn, brown hair showed beneath his three-cornered hat.

The yawl had scarcely reached the ship before he jumped up and sprang up the ladder like a squirrel. The other man followed with much dignity.

'Welcome!' said Bontekoe heartily, and he stretched his tanned fist out to his guests. 'Welcome to the *Nieuw Hoorn*, gentlemen! My name is Bontekoe and this is Mr. Rol, a merchant of the company.'

'Pieter Thysz van Amsterdam, skipper of the *Nieuw Zeeland*,' replied the other, introducing himself in a voice like a fog-horn booming in a storm. 'I am happy to meet you! Since we left Vlissingen in December we haven't sighted a sail.'

The other gentleman, the merchant on board the *Nieuw Zeeland*, introduced himself in turn.

'Won't you come to my cabin, gentlemen,' Bontekoe suggested. 'I have some good wine left.'

'That won't go amiss,' roared the little skipper.

Bontekoe and he walked arm in arm into the cabin, laughing and chatting, while the two merchants followed with dignified steps, exchanging polite, deliberate remarks.

When the cabin door had closed, the crew spun their yarn with the men in the yawl.

'Ahoy!'

'Ahoy!'

'Got a good skipper?'

'Good enough. We call him "The Porpoise." When he whispers in his cabin, we have to hold our hands over our ears in the hold—or we'd go deaf. But he's free with the drinks!'

'Yes, and with the rope!' shouted another sailor in the yawl.

'Ahoy!' cried Harmen, from the *Nieuw Hoorn*. 'Here's a riddle for you: If six men are sitting in a yawl, which is the funniest?'

'Give it up. What's the answer?'

'Well,' drawled Harmen, 'I give it up, too. You all look as funny as they make 'em.'

'Just you come down here!'

'My mother won't let me!'

And the sailors held their sides with laughing.

At this moment the gentlemen came from the cabin. 'This

afternoon then!' roared the little skipper of the *Nieuw Zeeland*. 'I have some fine old Tokay. You'll see that I know something about food and drink!' Then he looked up at the mainmast. 'Well, looks as though he could weather another gale!'

'As soon as we anchor again we'll repair it even better,' replied Bontekoe.

'Where are you going to land? On the Cape Verde Islands?'

'Yes. We'll have to get fresh water somewhere about there.'

'Then we'll land there too.'

The two skippers shook hands, and the little Porpoise quickly descended, followed by the long, lean merchant.

Bontekoe turned to his crew. 'Boys, we're sailing along with the *Nieuw Zeeland*. They've had no damage and so can sail faster than we. What did you say, Floorke?'

Floorke grinned. 'We won't give them the lead, skipper!'

Bontekoe smiled. 'That's what I'm thinking! Well, what's

next ?' he asked, while he looked at Floorke tugging at his belt.

Floorke shrugged his shoulders and winked at his shipmates. 'Well ?'

'They said that the Porpoise is free with the drinks, skipper.'

Bontekoe took the hint. 'Well, for'ard!' he ordered, secretly amused at his colleague's nickname. 'Get your drink. But then get busy! Understand ?'

And how they understood! They ran like rabbits, crying 'Long live the skipper!' and carrying Floorke on their shoulders.

Bontekoe watched them with a smile. 'They're children,' he said to the merchant next to him, 'and must be treated like children.'

Rol shrugged his shoulders. 'Then the reins shouldn't be too loose, skipper.'

Bontekoe's face darkened. 'I must have friends near me,' he replied shortly. 'I can't work with slaves.'

. . . . .

Pleasant days followed. The wind blew steadily from the same direction; the weather remained fine; it grew warmer every day. By skill and stratagem the *Nieuw Hoorn* succeeded in keeping up with its companion ship.

On January 23rd another sail was sighted to starboard. As it approached they saw that it was the *Enkhuizen*, which had started at almost the same time as the *Nieuw Hoorn* for the coast of Coromandel. The skipper was a quiet, dignified man, Jan Jansz van Enkhuizen.

The three ships now sailed on together. At night they took turns in showing the signal light, giving the course to the other two. Sailing like this made the voyage more sociable. It

almost seemed as though the journey might become a pleasure-cruise. The three skippers often visited one another and passed the time in pleasant talk.

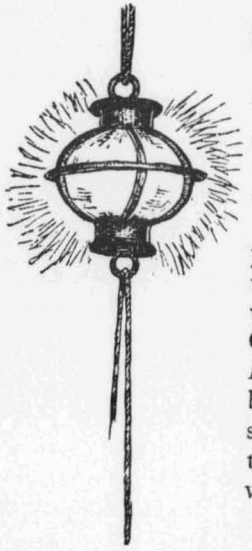
They passed the Canaries without sighting them.

A swarm of dolphins swam towards the *Nieuw Hoorn* and followed the ship for days. The sun cast a violet gleam on their dark backs, as four or five of them rose together from a green wave and gracefully glided away again, cutting a sheaf of golden water with their scalloped fins.

It grew so warm that the men went about stripped to the waist, while the sweat ran down their backs.

CHAPTER XI

PADDE PEEPS THROUGH A FOG-HORN



ONE morning when Hajo stepped sleepily from the hold to wash his face, he stood still in amazement. A cloud hung over masts, ropes, and sails. The ship aft could barely be distinguished. 'Fog!' murmured Hajo as he breathed the damp air.

It was fog with a vengeance! When you leaned over the railing all was grey, without beginning or end. Sky and water had melted into one. 'Oo-ee! Oo-eeeeee!' The fog-horns of the *Enkhuizen* and the *Nieuw Zeeland* were booming. Boatswain Berentsz and two sailors were hoisting a big lantern to the foresail. It looked like a pale lemon when it hung in place.

'Oo-eeooeeee!'

The sailors grumbled. They said that they were blowing out their lungs every half hour, that they would rather have gills like the fish, and the worst of it was, that they couldn't count on reaching the Cape Verde Islands, for the simple reason that in this sort of weather they might just as well look for Berentsz's red under-drawers, which had been blown over board on the last voyage, as for an island.

The cabin-boys had to take turns at blowing the fog-horn. The men said that they would get fine voices and kissable lips that way.

Harmen proved to be a master of the art of blowing through a fog-horn. He tooted songs, dancing around in a circle, and stood just where he had begun as he finished the song.

'You ought to go to the circus,' remarked Rolf.

'Did you ever get smashed on the head with a fog-horn?' asked Harmen.

At that moment Padde appeared, lured by Harmen's fog-songs.

While fooling Padde into believing that he could see through the fog by peeping through the fog-horn with one eye closed, Harmen and Lysken forgot to blow their horns.

Then something terrible happened! A grey, uncouth monster pushed by close to the figure-head; the confused sound of voices was lost in the hoarse sound of a fog-horn.

'The helm! Turn back the helm!' some one called.

At the same moment light flashed through the fog. There was the outline of a sail, the sharp creaking of wood against wood—and they had passed!

Padde had fallen on the deck from fright.

Harmen and Lysken stood there trembling.

The thunder of Folkert Berentsz's voice roused them from their stupefaction. 'What the devil do you mean! Two yards more and we would have smashed into the *Enkhuizen*.

Thunder and lightning! why did I put you here?' And Harmen and Lysken each got a swift kick in the seat of his breeches. Harmen snatched the fog-horn from Padde's hand. 'Hoo-hoo-hooee!' he blared—but this time without a tune!

The boatswain had disappeared.

'If he tells the skipper we'll sure be keelhauled!' said Lysken, rubbing his legs.

But Berentsz wasn't a sneak. He ruled his crew without calling on the skipper.

CHAPTER XII

ROLF

THEY had meant to land at the island of Saint Anthony to take in water, but they could not sight the island through the thickening fog and the rain. So they turned their course to Majo and Fogo of the Cape Verde group of islands. The wind changed freakishly; they had to tack and lost contact with the other East Indian ships; the fog-horns alone could be heard now and then in the distance.

The days became long and monotonous. The sailors lay in their berths for hours at a time and played cards. Hajo was writing a letter to his mother with Rolf's assistance, so that he might send it to her by the first ship they met.

'Can't you write?' Rolf had asked when Hajo begged his aid.

'I can read a little,' Hajo hastened to explain, while the blood rose in his cheeks. 'Padde can't read nor wrote.'

'Why compare yourself with Padde?'

'If I only knew somebody who——'

'I'll teach you,' said Rolf. And he attacked the matter with characteristic energy.

Padde sat by his side while Hajo let his brown fist wander over the paper, which grew no whiter under his manipulation. Rolf quietly and firmly guided Hajo's goose-quill along the correct course, and Hajo sighed from excitement.

'What are you writing anyway?' asked Padde respectfully. He waited patiently until Hajo, two minutes later, answered: 'Don't disturb me now, Padde.'

Later, when Hajo and Rolf were alone together, Hajo asked

the question that had been burning on his lips. At last he blurted it out: 'Say, Rolf, don't you write letters to your mother?'

Rolf's shoulders shook. 'My mother isn't living,' he replied briefly and gruffly.

Hajo had been prepared for this answer. 'Has she been dead long?' he asked softly.

'She died in March last year.'

'And you haven't any one at all left who——?'

'My uncle,' said Rolf.

'Yes, but your father——? You said on the dike—do you remember?'

'My father went to the East Indies twelve years ago,' said Rolf. 'He sailed as a skipper under Pieter Both; in the year 1615 his ship sank on the coast of Celebes. But we didn't hear of this till last year. Nothing was heard of the crew. My mother was very sick at the time. Five weeks later she was dead.'

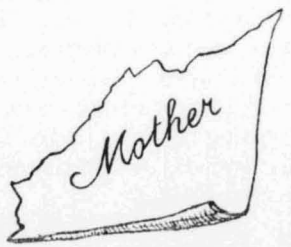
'Say—Rolf,' whispered Hajo. 'Is Zelly-Zellybees very big? You know things sometimes happen that surprise you—later.'

Rolf seemed to be struggling violently with his feelings. Then he shrugged his shoulders, as if to show how hopeless he felt Hajo's suggestion to be and, with averted face and forced lightness, he replied: 'No use deceiving one's self!'

Then he got up, took a book from the closet and sat down next to Hajo at the table. Hajo, seeking in vain for a word of comfort, pressed his hands against his forehead and stared at the letters.

'Oo-hoo-hueeee . . .!' shrieked the fog-horn outside.

The next morning the fog grew lighter and the world seemed larger once more.



CHAPTER XIII

MOON MAGIC

'LAND! Land ahoy!'

The sailors came rushing from every nook and corner. Still holding their cards, dominoes, or pipes in their hands, they leaned over the railing and searched for the greyish-blue outlines of land, to starboard.

Bontekoe was standing on deck with Rolf and the pilot. 'It must be Fogo,' said the latter.

'I think so too,' said Bontekoe. 'We'll find a place to anchor and take in supplies to-morrow. The sea must have plenty of fish here. We'll take advantage of it!'

They took soundings, but the plumb-line did not reach bottom, even after they had let it out to the end. There was no chance of anchoring here. Bontekoe decided to sail along the coast until he found a bay.

Gradually the grey folds of the fog had been rolled away; the sun broke through and again began to burn the bare backs of the sailors. It had grown hotter during the last few weeks.

Towards twilight they found a bay. Two great rocky cliffs, rising from the sea about a mile away, promised shelter. The water was a deep blue and almost unruffled. But again the plumb-line was thrown out in vain—it did not touch bottom. Bontekoe decided to risk floating about for the night. All sails were taken in.

An unforgettable evening followed. The fog had now vanished completely; the disk of the moon, Queen of the Night, enthroned amidst her radiant court of many-coloured stars, shed her serene light upon the fantastic shapes of the cliffs with mild splendour. High above the cliffs that seemed

insignificant beneath its greatness towered a solitary mountain, like a lonely priest frozen in eternal prayer.

Sea-gulls flew screaming from the cliffs up into the sky and whirled in great circles around the *Nieuw Hoorn*. Then they slowly disappeared again and all was silent except for the monotonous song of the waves that never sleep.

That evening Harmen got out his fiddle once more and the sailors sang songs of home. Bolle, in sheer delight, brought down his fists on his white breeches so that the flour flew about like powder. Nosey emptied his pipe against his flat palm and Hilke Jopkins looked up to the stars.

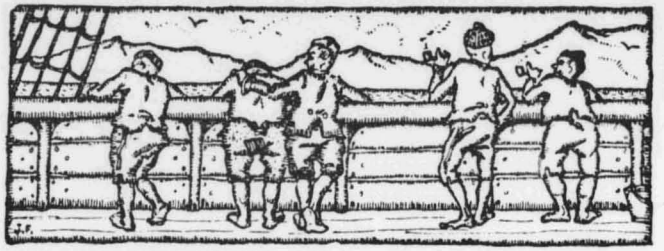
Hajo leaned silently over the railing.

Rolf sat in the surgeon's cabin, bending over a map of the Cape Verde Islands.

Padde had thrown a line baited with bacon through one of the port-holes and was waiting for the fish to bite.

The *Nieuw Hoorn* was rocking on the waves like a great cradle. You could hum a lullaby in time with its motion.

In the bay a great, golden disk swam upon the surface of the water—the reflection of the moon.



CHAPTER XIV

A GOOD CATCH

THE sailors could hardly wait the next morning to scramble out of their berths. The sun was still half-buried beneath the horizon when a little group of shipmates was hanging over the sides. If you looked carefully, you could see a kid high up on one of the cliffs. It was low tide; a good bit of the strand lay before them and Harmen could see in the pools, without the aid of a fog-horn, but with a certain amount of imagination, lobsters and crabs swimming about. Padde felt his mouth water, for crabs were his favourite dish.

They were to sail on again that evening, so it meant making the best of this day! They wanted to rig out that old ark, the *Nieuw Hoorn* so shipshape that not even a mother-in-law could find anything to object to! Directly after breakfast the yawl was lowered for the purpose of getting supplies and obtaining fish.

Who wanted to go along?

The whole crew!

'Yes, but these islands are Spanish!'

'Just let the Greasers[1] come on!'

Lots were drawn to decide, and Hajo was overjoyed when he and Rolf both drew long pieces. They descended the rope ladder with thirty other seamen.

[1] Nickname for the Spaniards. The Dutch and Spaniards were bitter enemies at this time.

Along the strand appeared trees with slender trunks and fan-shaped tops, gleaming through the morning mists—palms!

'That's Javanese cauliflower, Hajo!' said Floorke, who had made four voyages to the East Indies.

Hajo glanced suspiciously at the others. But the sailors rowed silently on while they nodded their heads seriously. Then Hajo replied: 'Oh, I thought they were cabbage-turnips, but that was because Floorke's head was in the way.'

And all the seamen roared with laughter as they threw out their net. They rowed on, dragging the net behind the boat.

'Something must be caught now! Let's see!'

Berentsz gave the order to draw in the net and pull hard.

The sailors watched, with eyes popping from their heads. A big turtle lay in the net.

'What a funny beast!'

'Will it bite?'

'Bite? We'll bite into it this evening! We'll have a fine soup! Hurrah!'

'Hullo! What's that?' cried the boatswain.

For at that moment they heard a loud report from the strand and something fell into the water aft.

'The Greasers! They're firing!'

All eyes were turned to the strand where a group of men could be seen. 'Give me a musket!' cried one of the sailors. 'I can shoot a fly's leg at a hundred yards!'

There was another report and again something fell into the water.

'To your oars! They'll be shooting holes in our clothes—and we have no thread with us!'

'Wait, I'm loading!' grumbled the sharpshooter. The loading of a musket was work requiring time, experience, and deliberation.

Another shot! A bullet flew over their heads.

And now the sailor who could shoot a fly's leg at a hundred yards was ready. He aimed, grimly—there was a report like a peal of thunder!—and the marksman almost fell out of the yawl with his gun, from the kick.

There was a loud cry from the strand. One of the Spaniards

There was a loud cry from the strand. One of the Spaniards dropped his weapon and fell back on the sand.

dropped his weapon and fell back on the sand. The others sought cover quickly in a little wood.

'Stop your fooling, Klaas! To your oars—we're nearing the breakers!'

At that moment there was another shot from the land. The yawl quivered and a little fountain spouted up from the bottom. 'Oh, my foot! Oh! Oh!' groaned one of the men.

They stopped the leak with rope fibre, while the wounded sailor held his foot in his hands. 'They've shot my big toe to bits,' he wailed.

'You'll get a new one for Christmas!' Berentsz consoled him. 'Now row, my lads! One—two; one—two. . . .'

Soon they were beyond range of the shore.

In their excitement they had all forgotten that their net was still hanging in the water. They drew it in and all rejoiced when they saw that it was full of glittering, floundering fish! Only the wounded sailor failed to share their pleasure. He had removed his shirt and with Rolf's help was bandaging his bleeding foot.

The others scarcely noticed it. They were rough chaps, these sailors.

. . . . .

No one on board had heard the shooting, for there all were busy at sawing and hammering. The spare topmasts in the hold were drawn on deck through the after-hatch. A spar fourteen palms long was sawed lengthwise and the two halves were frapped around the broken mast, along with the two other topmasts. Now they could again hoist the topmast, which had been supporting the mast temporarily, and use the mainsail. It was a pleasure to see their work when they had finished! The mast looked like one of the great pillars of the Church of Saint Anthony at Hoorn. Now they were ready for another storm!

They were just tackling the shroud when the boat returned. The catch exceeded their greatest expectations. Bolle broiled the fish in fine style. Opinion differed as to his turtle-soup, but most of them ate it with a relish, for every one had worked

hard. They pushed loads of brown beans down their throats, too. Even the wounded sailor yielded to none in appetite, and Padde tried to make up for his disappointment in having no crabs by consuming whole mountains of shell-fish.

That night the *Nieuw Hoorn* put to sea again and steered straight for the Equator. Our friends hung over the railing and looked back at the land slowly receding. The sky and the water were golden in the setting sun, the mountain and cliffs a deep blue. Hajo felt depressed. In his soul he still heard the echo of the cry of pain which the Spaniard on the shore had uttered. He thought that the shape of the island looked like a grave. The surf surrounded it like a white wreath for the dead.

CHAPTER XV

BECALMED

BREAKFAST was scarcely over the next morning when Diede Dudes ran in to report that he saw two sails to leeward. The sailors burned their tongues in their haste to gulp down their coffee boiling hot. As the two ships approached they proved to be the *Nieuw Zeeland* and the *Enkhuizen*. What a surprise! They saluted three times with the flag and the other ships too seemed delighted at this reunion.

Bontekoe ordered the yawl to be lowered. He and the chief pilot descended and the sailors rowed with might and main to the *Nieuw Zeeland*.

'Were you on land too?' they yelled up, as soon as the two skippers had gone into the cabin.

'Yes. Tried to get water on Maio. But the Greasers fired at us. They killed Long Harm and Freckle-face Dircksz!'

Again the three ships sailed farther south in company. But one unlucky day the sails hung down limp; they floated idly on the smooth face of the water; the heat melted the tar in the seams. The sailors did not know what to do from sheer tedium. It was hot everywhere and the wood burned beneath their feet. The cooks in the caboose were red as lobsters. Even their pipes of tobacco didn't taste good. Drinking—this alone brought momentary pleasure.

The skipper started all sorts of games; the prizes were apples and pears from the hold. The deuce! They were worth running for, or jumping in sacks, or pushing a wheelbarrow! One sailor loaded Squint-eyed Jack into his wheelbarrow amidst general shouts of laughter.

The sailors tumbled about in the Atlantic for half the day; they jumped from the bowsprit far out into the water, dived through beneath the ship, splashed and paddled to their

One sailor loaded Squint-Eyed Jack into his wheelbarrow amidst general shouts of laughter.

hearts' content and climbed up again on the rope-ladder. But five minutes later they were just as hot as before. Their skin peeled. The sailor who had lost his great toe at Fogo now had the other big toe bitten off by some strange sea-monster. They argued for a long time whether it was a shark or something else. The sailor himself said that the devil was at work here—to lose two toes in turn!

The boys were kept busy. While the sailors didn't move a finger, they had to keep cleaning, cleaning, cleaning. They had to scrub and wipe up. If the sun hadn't been shining so confoundedly bright, Boatswain Berentsz would certainly have made them polish it too.

But at last, when the boatswain grew weary of standing behind the busy cabin-boys all day, these poor Cinderellas too enjoyed unlimited freedom for a time.

Rolf made good use of it by improving his knowledge of Malay, which he had begun to study with Cook Bolle, with the aid of the surgeon, who spoke it fluently. Daddy Longjacket, the surgeon-barber, rejoiced in his eager student; he was amazed at the fund of information which Rolf had gathered in so short a time from his books on medicine, and now began to give him an idea of the nature and position of the fixed stars and the planets and taught him to make a sextant. Rolf absorbed everything like a sponge, and even embarrassed his worthy master at times by demanding more information than Daddy Longjacket could give.

Hajo played the fiddle and Harmen, his teacher, had the same experience as Daddy Longjacket—his pupil outstripped him. 'Can't you lure the wind for us, Hajo?' said Rolf, as he passed by. 'Your playing is wonderful!'

Hajo stopped fiddling. 'Do you think so?' Praise from Rolf meant more to him than the exaggerated words of ten sailors. Padde, for once, agreed with Rolf, and when Hajo played very slowly and with many trills he nodded, deeply moved. He flatly declared, too, that a ship was no use without wind—and no one contradicted the greenhorn this time!

'Foo-eeeeeet . . .!' A gust of wind! Splendid, refreshing. The sailors shouted, hoisted the mainsail, and expected

to make twenty knots an hour. Flop! and then the wind was gone.

They would not give up hope—that was only the beginning. Soon more wind would come. But it did not come.

. . . . .

Three days later a great dark cloud appeared in the east, throwing a black shadow upon the water, darkening the whole sky within an hour. There was the silence of death.

The crew felt the strain. 'A windspout!' they whispered. In spite of the darkness, the heat that brooded over them was terrifying. Suddenly—a blast of wind! . . . Another! And then another! The sails tugged at the rigging, bellowed, tore, and fell again. Then the rain rattled down so hard that they were all wet through before they knew it. The jets of water drummed down on the wooden deck with deafening strength, as though a hundred drummers were playing.

The sailors roared with joy. They caught the water in buckets, tubs, and sails; they took off their clothes and ran about naked, yelling and tussling. 'This is fine, what?'

Rrrrrt! The rain ended with a swift whirl. Quite suddenly. Not another drop fell. The sun came out again. Everything that had been dripping wet was as dry as a bone in a few seconds. Silence. Complete silence. The burning rays of the sun fell straight down on the ship. That afternoon there was a repetition of this sport.

The next day it was repeated three times. Yet with all this, they did not advance an inch. Finally the wind began to blow in earnest, but it whirled like a top. Every instant the men were kept busy at the sails.

The nights were miraculous. The world seemed like a jewel-case filled to overflowing. The gold of the stars dripped into the water, which was itself like molten gold. The foam of the waves, dashing from the bowsprit, was pure silver, and millions of gems flashed in all directions. The stars were tossed from left to right, leaving a glowing trail behind them.

The moon seemed to have fathomed the wonderful mystery of all this splendour—it shone serenely in all this brilliant confusion.

Hajo could not make himself go to bed on these marvellous nights; the stars at play held him captive; he felt as though he had been transported to fairyland, to a magic garden of fantastic events from which it was impossible to escape. There, in the north, Holland must be situated, and Hoorn and the Béguine Path. . . . How was it possible?

Three, six, eight stars were tossing about in the heavens. Now another one! And over there—four at the same time!

Rolf and Padde stood by his side, reflecting on the scene.

'Hajo,' asked Padde, 'how d'you think the Equator looks?'

'Perhaps like a rope of fire—or something like that,' said Hajo.

'It's all fire here.'

Hajo gazed before him, absorbed in thought. 'Rolf, how is this. . . . Look how many stars are falling! . . . How does that come about—all these falling stars!'

'They don't really fall. They only change their place and——'

'You can say the same thing when a tile falls from the roof on your head—it only changed its place!' Padde retorted. 'See, there are six falling at once!'

The boys were silent as they stared into space. An hour later Padde broke the silence: 'If only my mother could see all this—and my brothers and sisters!'

The tears came into Hajo's eyes. Rolf suggested that the go to sleep.

CHAPTER XVI

CROSSING THE LINE

AFTER three endless weeks of incessant tacking the day came at last when they crossed the Equator. The sailors who had often before taken the Indian route—and this included the greater part of the crew—made a great mystery of the event. A distinguished guest was expected at noon, for Neptune in person was to arise from the deep and visit the *Nieuw Hoorn* in state. He would assume command of the ship for half an hour, graciously supervise the baptism of the new hands, and then dive down into the salt waves again with his train.

The main-deck was decorated with green garlands—the same that had served so well at the New Year festivities. A throne for the mighty god of the sea was built against the mainmast, with a vat full of water in front. Since the greenhorns must not learn in advance for what this served, several of the old hands locked them up in the forecastle. Harmen had Padde in charge and took delight in painting what was about to happen in the darkest colours. Padde moaned and groaned, while the others laughed as they were locked in—but their laughter did not quite hide their fears.

At eight bells they were summoned forth. Their shipmates were drawn up in a double row, and between these the boys were driven forward with rattles to the throne where Father Neptune, surrounded by his retinue, sat. The skipper and the master pilot stood at each side of him. Neptune wore a stately

mantle on which were pasted paper fishes, and his hand held a formidable trident on which a dried codfish was spitted. His servants wore masks with long, pointed noses and great green fish eyes. Seaweed hung from their red hair. One of them stood beside the vat with huge shears to shave the greenhorns close to the scalp. His red hose looked suspiciously like Harmen's under-drawers. The other stood by with full pails, ready for the baptism.

There was no delay. The servants of Neptune seized the greenhorns by their coat-tails, pushed them one after the other into the vat, and poured the pails of water over them, to make a good job of it. Then the red-hosed lackey of King Neptune cut off their hair. It flew about in flocks, and the roars of pain of the victims showed that the sea-barber was not exactly an expert. When all the greenhorns were shorn to the skin and the water dripped from their clothes from top to toe, Neptune arose from his throne with regal air and commanded: 'What ho! the steward!'

Squint-eyed Jack appeared on the instant.

'A drink for the crew, cup-bearer!' ordered His Majesty.

'Long live King Neptune!' bellowed the sailors.

'For the greenhorns, too, Your Majesty?' asked Squint-eyed Jack.

'Thunder and lightning!' roared His Majesty. 'There are no greenhorns now!'

'Aye, aye, sire!' and Squint-eyed Jack hurried away, assisted by the hands of the eager sailors.

He returned with his helpers, rolling a barrel of beer before him. The sailors raised their tankards on high and drank to the health of Neptune, of the skipper and the boatswain, of the East India Company, of Holland, of Java, of the *Nieuw Hoorn*, to a happy and successful voyage, to favourable winds, and to everything else to which one could possibly drink. Neptune himself, who might be thought to prefer his native element, salt water, proved a lover of good beer, too, and dipped his grey moustaches deep in his mug.

When the barrel was empty there was a general farewell. Neptune shook hands with the skipper, restored him to the

command of the *Nieuw Hoorn*, and allowed the crew to conduct him in triumph to the rope-ladder. He wished them all a pleasant journey once more and then returned to the waves with his followers.

A quarter of an hour later Boatswain Folkert Berentsz rushed to the deck, his hair as wet as though he too had just received the baptism of crossing the line. 'Thunder and lightning!' he roared, 'what's all this trash? Away with it! Where are those lazy louts? For'ard! Clear this away!'

. . . . .

The wind was now south-east. They took their course above the Abreojos, a group of low, rocky islands on the coast of Brazil. The wind grew stronger that night and they just managed to sail around these barren islands. The stem was now directed towards Tristan da Cunha, a group of small islands; but the wind changed to the north-west and they turned their course to the Cape of Good Hope, to get fresh supplies there. It was a considerable distance, but the wind was favourable and the bow flashed through the waves like a dolphin. The crew was in high spirits.

That afternoon Hajo suddenly pointed upward. 'Look, what enormous gulls!' A flock of white birds was floating high above them in the air, flying from the south. They flew with astonishing swiftness, but their long, slender feet scarcely seemed to move. 'Albatrosses!' cried Rolf. 'Then we're near the Cape!' A few sailors on deck, too, shouted: 'Albatrosses! We're near the Cape!' Then every one rushed about and cried out excitedly.

They were mighty creatures. A dozen were now flying above the *Nieuw Hoorn* and more were coming from the south. They did not seem to be flying, they soared on their gigantic wings, which scarcely seemed to move.

That afternoon they sighted the Cape. But their joy was brief, for there was a stiff wind from the west and it was impossible to reach land. A sailing council was held on the *Nieuw Zeeland*.

After careful deliberation they decided to sail on. East

Indian sailing-ships often had much trouble with scurvy, due largely to the diet of salt meat. But the crews of the three ships were still in good health and there was still enough fresh water on hand. On May 12th, four and a half months after their departure from Holland, they sailed round the Cape, and turned to the north-east. They had land in sight as far as Terre de Natal. The weather was clear and they could distinguish the numerous cliffs and the lofty cones of the Drakensberg Mountains, whose summits pierced the sky.

The *Enkhuizen* was to sail along the Coromandel coast, so her skipper decided to cross through the Mozambique Channel in order to take in supplies on the islands to the west of the northern point of Madagascar. Bontekoe and Pieter Thysz of the *Nieuw Zeeland* bade the captain of the *Enkhuizen* farewell, and the three skippers drank a glass of wine to the safe arrival of their three ships. An hour later the *Enkhuizen* sent three farewell salutes across the water.

Hajo gazed dreamily after its grey, shadowy form. To the Coromandel coast—was that different from India? It had the same far-away; mysterious sound. How wide the world must be! Hajo felt a profound, silent admiration for the skipper who could bid his companions farewell in the midst of an unknown sea, and, trusting in God and his compass, bravely set forth in his ship with a few hundred men towards strange, distant lands, where there would perhaps not be a white face to welcome him. 'A Happy Journey . . .!' Hajo whispered softly.

Bontekoe and Pieter Thysz sailed south around Madagascar.

One day the flag of the *Nieuw Zeeland* hung at half-mast.

'A death' said the sailors of the *Nieuw Hoorn*, as they hung over the railing and looked across the water. That evening a funeral service was held on the *Nieuw Zeeland*, the body was sent overboard, two cannon shots were fired—and the flag was hoisted again.

But two days later it again hung at half-mast. Then the crew of the *Nieuw Hoorn* knew scurvy was raging on the *Nieuw Zeeland*. The next day Pieter Thysz visited Bontekoe. He was irritated and angry because of conditions on his ship, and

grew violent when he learned that Bontekoe intended to hold his course two points farther to the north than he approved. Red with anger, he hurried away, crying: 'Sail where you please! To hell, for my part!'

Bontekoe remained calm. 'Every one to his belief! A happy voyage!'

'A happy voyage to you!' panted the other, and he flew down the ladder-rope like a cat.

That night after dinner every one felt depressed. From habit the crew went on deck again as usual to chat together beneath the heavens, glowing with stars, but their talk hung fire; they sat silent, listening to the rush of the waves against the bow.

That afternoon three men had fallen sick on the *Nieuw Hoorn*.

CHAPTER XVII

SCURVY ON BOARD

WITHIN a few days fifteen men were ill. They groaned and moaned in the forecastle so that no one could sleep. Every day more grew ill. Daddy Long-jacket clutched his hair and invented all sorts of remedies for them to drink. Sometimes they helped a bit, largely due to his hopeful encouragement. But there could be no complete cures until the cause of the disease was removed— the lack of fresh food.

Lysken Cocs was the worst. His light blue, dull eyes were deeply hollowed, his nose grew thinner every day and beads of perspiration hung in his straw-coloured hair. 'I'm going to die,' he sighed. 'First my father, then Joppie—my family can't get over scurvy.' A convulsive movement of his mouth showed that he was suffering.

The next day the flag hung at half-mast. . . .

Bontekoe gave Harmen his friend Lysken's full wages for the voyage. Harmen knew Lysken's mother, so that he was to give the money to her on his return. He cried as he hid it in a little bag.

Their anxiety increased, for now there were twenty-eight patients. Many of the others had blue circles under their eyes, pale faces and white lips, and they complained of weariness in their legs. One day, when five fell sick, Bontekoe decided not to sail on. He turned the ship towards Madagascar, where they hoped to get supplies. Diede Dudes, who felt a bit under the weather himself, climbed to the crow's nest every hour, none the less, to look for land with his keen eyes. On the fourth he sighted mountains.

'Land! Land ahoy!' There was great excitement and all their troubles vanished.

The land looked fertile and attractive when they approached it, but they could find no landing-place, not even for the boat in which the skipper and thirty men put out. They saw naked black men on shore, and Floorke volunteered to swim through the fiercely raging surf. When he reached shore at last and addressed them in Malay they held back in terror.

They were splendidly built fellows, big and black as coal; they had woolly, thick hair and were covered from top to toe with a design of stars and flowers tattooed into their skin. One of them gained courage and pointed to the *Nieuw Hoorn* and then to the south. Floorke could not understand a word of their language, but returned to the boat, reporting that the savages had said that there was a landing-place to the south.

They sailed for days without finding a bay. The sailors lost confidence in Floorke's knowledge of languages and grew depressed again. There were now forty patients.

After they had sailed south to the twenty-ninth degree of latitude and had not sighted land, much less anchorage, they went about and sailed north-east to the seventeenth degree. There they changed their course towards the strait between Mauritius and Réunion, to try to run up to one of these islands.

That day the sailor Boutjens died. None of the crew had liked him, and Hajo alone had nursed him to the end. Though Boutjens had played many a nasty trick on the cabin-boy, he now left Hajo all his savings, thirteen silver gulden. The next day they sent his body overboard, and as they looked after it they saw the white belly of a shark gleaming in the water. A cry of horror arose from the crew when they saw Boutjens's body disappear. The day after, when the smith was buried in the same sad fashion, three sharks appeared as he went overboard. Their keen scent guided them to follow their prey.

The smith had left two little daughters in Enkhuizen, and Hajo, with the skipper's approval, decided to give the money he had inherited from Boutjens to these two poor orphans when he returned to Holland.

The next day the disease claimed another victim. After two days they sighted the eastern point of Réunion. They skirted the shore, and in spite of the fact that the coast was steep and dangerous, Bontekoe and twenty men landed to reconnoitre.

Even the wildest anticipations of Floorke, who always expected wonders, were exceeded. Fifty yards from the shore were several clusters of trees, in the shadows of which they found hundreds and hundreds of turtles. The forest behind these trees resounded with the cries of birds. As the men forced their way through the high grass and ferns they heard the trampling of hoofs. It sounded like cattle on the run. In the trees parrots were screaming. Chickens flew up noisily before the feet of the sailors and ran clucking between wild pine-apple plants with lacquer-red leaves. Big, greyish-blue wood-pigeons peeped down through the branches and expressed their surprise by cooing.

The boat returned to the ship laden with pine-apples, turtles, and pigeons. When the patients saw what their shipmates had brought back from land they implored Bontekoe to put them ashore. Bontekoe conferred with the merchant, Mr. Rol.

Rol objected strongly on the ground that this venture might endanger the whole voyage, while Bontekoe could scarcely conceal his wrath. 'As father of my sailors, I cannot allow more of them to be thrown to the sharks!' he replied. 'And if the honourable shipowners and shippers don't understand that, let them make a journey to the East Indies as skippers themselves!'

Rol looked down. 'I beg to state that I oppose this decision.'

'Will you have it in writing?' asked Bontekoe bitterly—and he went to his sick sailors.

'Boys, get into the boat; I'm going to land you.'

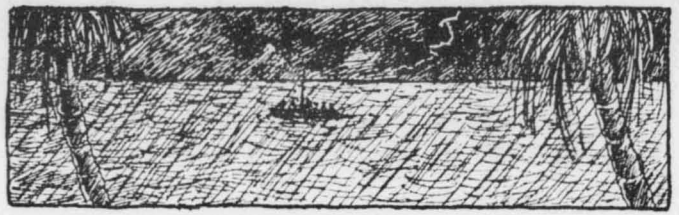
'Hurrah for the skipper! Hurrah! Long live the old man!'

Bontekoe let them take a sail to serve as tent, along with oil, vinegar, cooking utensils, tools, and weapons. Two cook's helpers went with them, and the skipper himself entered the yawl in which they were rowed to shore.

The other sailors began a new voyage of discovery in another direction, on which they caught two hundred wood-pigeons. They broiled these on long spits for the sick and the hale, and all sat enjoying the feast at twilight before the glowing campfires.

On board they ate turtles with stewed plums, smoked their pipes, looked up at the stars, and no longer thought the world quite as unkind as before. Three hours after sunset Bontekoe returned from shore with the men who were not ill, and decided to continue down the coast in the yawl in order to find a place to anchor for the big ship.

Rolf got his uncle's permission for him and Hajo to sail along that night. Hajo jumped three yards into the air from joy when he heard this and performed a dance for which a Zulu warrior might have envied him.



CHAPTER XVIII

FLAMINGO BAY

NO sound broke the silence of the night but the regular ripple of the oars and the gentle surge of the waves which were scarcely breakers. There was not a breath of wind; sailing was out of the question. The coast became low and swampy; here and there a bit of white sand gleamed between low shrubbery and creeping plants. The waves flowed up against the shore without striking and sank back again just as silently.

The moon now and again hid behind a few clouds. Then the trees along the beach seemed like dark cliffs, bending forward threateningly or like monstrous, many-footed spectres creeping over the sand, and the strangely shaped roots, which wound down to the water's edge in a dirty-green tangle, were turned into poisonous reptiles, threatening to ensnare and strangle every creature venturing into their realm.

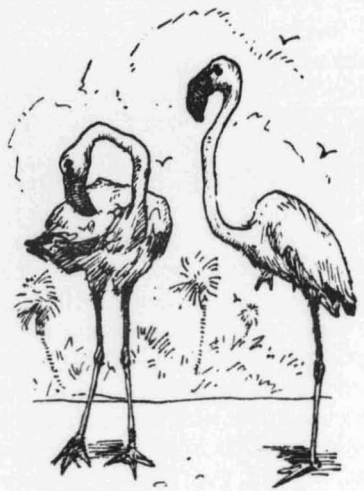
They came to a small river, but the sailors tried in vain to row up. A tangle of plants barred the way. Along the shore were strange, lofty trees, with their branches entangled above the water. The foliage was so dense that not an inch of the sky was visible through it; the river seemed to flow from a dark cleft in the rocks. Glow-worms flitted about hither and thither; a few sailors thought they saw a pair of gleaming eyes through the trees. Bontekoe took a chance and fired. The effect was startling: it sounded like a thousand musket shots; the woods resounded with shrill cries, the noise of breaking branches and the beating of wings. Next to the boat a jagged

tail rose above the water, shimmering in the moonlight, and lashed about so that the water splashed in all directions.

'An alligator,' said the skipper as he leaned over the boat's edge.

Gradually even the rough sailors fell under the spell of the mysterious tropical night. They no longer sang, they no longer spoke, they listened uneasily to the hot, panting breath of the night.

No one had noticed that the sky at one side had turned black.



A thick cloud was hiding the moon. Suddenly a fierce tropical storm was upon them and they had to land for safety. After they put to sea again they rowed till dawn and at last came upon a splendid, sandy bay, thirty-nine fathoms deep. They put to shore and started forth in search of new wonders.

'Hello! Look there!' They all stopped in amazement. From the cluster of trees along the shore stepped a red bird with dignified, measured tread. Its legs were almost a yard long and its long, slender, oddly curving neck ended in a small head with a heavy, crooked bill. Then two more appeared,

and then perhaps a dozen, half fluttering over the ground with great, light steps. Suddenly all stood still, turned their heads in the direction of the intruders, and uttered a hoarse cry of surprise, upon which dozens of these curious, rosy stilt-walkers came out of the little wood and looked at Bontekoe and his men in wonder. But their astonishment did not trouble them long. They turned their long necks about in the most fantastic fashion as they arranged their feathers, stalked with great dignity to the strand, and stuck their heads into the brackish water, unafraid. They were lucky at fishing; several of them immediately held a struggling fish in their bills.

'Flamingos!' said Bontekoe.

When the men left the strand, they found at the edge of the woods, in the shadow of some trees, many huge turtles. 'There can't be any men living here,' said Hilke. 'These animals are all so unafraid.'

They made their way through the underbrush without much difficulty. Orchids hung on the branches; their delicate blossoms glowed in exotic beauty against the dark wood, in the green twilight of the foliage. The strangest plants grew side by side: there were hairy shrubs with big, juicy berries; low, little trees standing seemingly on fifty stilts instead of one trunk; their fruit grew in clusters like grapes. And everywhere between the trees great ferns shot up, holding their leaves above the sailors like hands with long, pointed fingers. Thousands of gaily coloured little birds hung swinging on the fruits or fluttered and capered from branch to branch, eating incessantly. Parrots with flaming red tails stooped their heads, as they looked curiously at the men, and then screamed in the most heart-rending manner.

At last they reached a narrow, headlong stream flowing from the mountains southward to the sea. The men ran along its shore and saw fat eels creeping along the ground! And suddenly they all cried out in surprise as a flock of fat geese waddled out of the shrubbery and seemed about to bathe.

'We'll never leave this place, skipper!' they shouted in wild excitement. One of them caught a goose and took it for the ship's kitchen. At Bontekoe's order, they returned to

the shore where they were welcomed by the screams of more than a hundred flamingos.

'Now you'll see something!' promised Floorke. He called out, clapped his hands and ran towards the great birds, which now spread their wings in fear. And the sailors saw a sight so beautiful and strange that they stood open-mouthed in amazement. It was like a garden of red roses in blossom, all opening their rosy chalices at once and rising to the heavens in splendid opulence of colour.

It was now about eight o'clock in the morning. A breeze had sprung up and they could hoist their sail. The sailors, reclining in the most comfortable attitudes possible, let their fingers glide through the clear blue water, roared with delight when the mast barely cleared their heads as it swung around, and talked excitedly of their adventures of the past night, and of others still to come. And they wailed forth in chorus their whole, extensive assortment of sailors' songs, each more doleful than the one before. For sailors sing jolly songs only when things go wrong. When all is going well, as on that glorious morning, no melody is sad enough for them.

. . . . .

Seven hours later the *Nieuw Hoorn* lay at anchor in the inlet which they unanimously christened 'Flamingo Bay.'

The sun flamed down upon them.

CHAPTER XIX

TROPICAL PLENTY

WHAT feasts they now enjoyed! They only had to stretch out their hands and they had as much game as they wished. Six men drew their net through the brackish water and in a moment their net was full.

Harmen, Rolf, and Hajo went to the little stream teeming with eels. Hajo waded in carefully to seize them, but they slipped through his fingers.

'I know what to do!' said Harmen. 'We'll draw our shirts through the water!' This improvized net was now drawn through the stream with great success. Harmen meanwhile had tied the legs of his breeches tight around his ankles so that they might be used to stow away the eels. 'They don't bite,' he assured the two other boys as he let the slippery, twisting creatures glide down his legs. At last his breeches were so full that they puffed out all around and rippled mysteriously up and down. 'It's a nasty feeling!' Harmen conceded.

Some of the other sailors had gone out to catch pigeons. It was touching to watch some of these beautiful, greyish-blue birds risk their lives in their effort to free their imprisoned friends. The parrots, too, fought bravely for their brothers and screamed and bit the sailors who had captured one of them.

Padde was too excited to stay in one place; he appeared everywhere where he was least wanted, returned and made remarks about what the others were doing. Like a magpie, he was ready to hop up a tree at any moment for fear of a

Like a magpie, Padde was ready to hop up a tree for fear of a lion or tiger.

lion or tiger and he avoided every thick tree-trunk behind which a cannibal might be hiding.

He wandered down to the shore where a group of sailors were catching turtles—not a very exciting pursuit, for these clumsy giant-turtles made no resistance except to draw their head and feet into their shell. The sailors turned them on their backs and dragged them to the cook's galley.

Padde decided to get busy too. But while he was trying to turn over a heavy giant-turtle, he discovered a hole in the sand beneath the turtle in which lay numerous eggs as big as pigeons' eggs. He began to yell: 'Come here! Look at this!'

The sailors ran up and were quite as astonished as Padde; but Gerretje, a sailor with a long neck and a head as round as a bullet, who had been twice to Bantam and to Sumatra, dug the eggs out of the hole without saying a word and hid them in his cap.

'Here, give them to me!' roared Padde. 'They're my eggs!'

'Keep quiet and wait a while,' answered Gerretje. 'She'll come back and lay some more for you!'

Padde was furious. To prove it, he struck Gerretje on the head just as he had put his cap on, with a grin. Padde ran away as fast as he could, while Gerretje swore and scolded as he tried to wipe this mess of scrambled eggs off his eyes, ears, and neck.

As Padde hurried away, he saw a pot placed beneath a tree. There were notches cut in the trunk out of which dripped a thick, white fluid. It looked attractive, it smelled pleasant, and so he stuck his thumb and forefinger into the pot and licked them. The thick, white stuff tasted very sweet, and as he loved everything sweet, he stuck his finger in again, licking and sucking, while he made up his mind not to stop till he had got to the bottom of it. But suddenly a shower of hard nuts rained down on his head and shoulders and from above he heard the voice of Nosey thundering: 'Stop, you miserable thief!'

Padde, frozen with fear, looked up into the long, feathery leaves of the palm-tree. But when he saw that it was only

Nosey, and not a cannibal hiding up in the leafy crown, he grew impudent again.

'If you say another word, I'll knock the whole thing over!' he declared and he stuck his whole hand into the pot once more. Then he strolled on, licking his hand, so busy that he did not notice that a big wasp, attracted by the sweet smell, was settling on his hand from beneath. Suddenly he felt a fierce sting; he flung the insect violently from him, screamed as if he were being murdered, and stuck his whole hand into his mouth to lick away the pain. It was swollen like a bladder.

Then he found relief for his disgust with life by playing in the mountain stream. He filled his mouth with water, floated on his back and let the water spout from his mouth between his fingers, playing at being a whale. He tried to leap like a pike too, and jumped from an overhanging branch into the water. But he came down hard on his belly, so he gave up swimming.

. . . . .

That noon they enjoyed a feast of pigeons and geese, roasted on spits, eels and all sorts of fish. For dessert they had all kinds of splendid fruit and puddings made of flour, sliced pine-apple and coco-nut milk, with a sauce of berries.

At twilight they sat around the camp-fires, about which buzzed an army of insects, and at night they put up tents made of sailcloth. Hajo, Rolf, and Padde spread blankets on the ground, beneath which they had rolled grass for pillows

and felt as if they were in a palace. The sailors who had finished their tents lighted their pipes and stared up at the stars. Harmen brought out his fiddle and he and Hajo played in turn.

Then they all crept away to their beds. Hajo and Padde listened to the chirp of countless crickets, the hum of other insects, cries from the forest dying away in a thousand echoes.

Hajo was chewing a blade of grass, his head between his hands, his eyes closed. Padde was lying on his back and staring at the moon.

'Hajo?' said Padde softly, 'how long have we been away from Hoorn?'

'How long? Maybe half a year.'

'Half a year!' sighed Padde. 'I can still see myself sitting on the mole, on Gerrit's cage. Say, where is Gerrit anyway?'

'Here. I put him on that low branch over there. He's sleeping. Gerrit!'

'Caw!' screamed Gerrit sleepily. He was about to fly down from his perch, decided otherwise, looked plaintively at his master, swallowed hard at something, and stuck his black head down between his wings.

'Good night!' said Hajo to him. 'Sleep well.'

STRANGE CREATURES OF THE TROPICS

CHAPTER XX

THEY had no end of adventures the next day. Early in the morning they took a wonderful, exhilarating sea-bath. They danced towards the mighty breakers, dashed into the hollow of the waves, shot through beneath them and came up again with dripping hair, just in time to dive once more into a new breaker driving the other before it like a chariot-driver.

After they had dried themselves in the sand and the sun, they lay calculating how much longer their journey would last. 'We'll be there in half a year,' guessed Hajo.

'In three months,' thought Rolf.

Suddenly Padde sprang up and stared at the other two with startled eyes. 'An earthquake!' he stammered. 'I felt the earth moving beneath me!'

'You imagined it, Padde.'

'Imagined it nothing!' But he lay down again. 'How long will the journey last? I think——' But now he shot up again, more quickly than before and with horrified eyes stared at the spot where he had been lying. Then something very curious happened: the sand parted, crumbled, and a little black-and-dun head peeped out! A pair of tiny, black paws moved the sand away and now appeared:

'A young sea-turtle!' cried Rolf.

It was a pretty creature, not much bigger than a walnut, and its shell was still soft. It fidgeted helplessly with its heavy little paws and kept turning its blunt little head with the bright eyes as though it meant to unscrew it from the body.

There! Another little head peeped out from the sand! And another! The boys dug away the sand, and there lay a nest swarming with the little turtles!

'Let's count them,' cried Rolf. And they counted one

hundred and thirty eggs and twenty-eight young turtles, hatched or still creeping from the eggs.

'You should have stayed there, Padde,' said Rolf. 'Half of them aren't hatched yet.'

'Oh, yes,' grinned Padde. 'But when I tell them in Hoorn that I hatched turtles no one will believe me!'

'Well, you didn't really hatch them,' said Rolf. 'You only helped the sun a little.'

'The sun?' asked Padde in amazement.

'Do you think the old turtles take the trouble? They don't care about the eggs! They just dig a hole, lay the eggs in it,

cover it with sand, and swim back into the water. The sun does the rest!'

'Hello! What are those?' interrupted Hajo, as he pointed at four clumsy, bluish-grey birds moving awkwardly forward in the shadow of the trees. They had small wings, not meant for flying, and such short legs that their plump bodies almost touched the sand. The boys hurried after them and caught one without much trouble, while the others waddled away as fast as they could. Hajo closed his hand over the unusually strong, heavy bill, for fear of being bitten.

'A swan,' said Padde.

'No,' replied Rolf. 'It isn't web-footed.'

They looked it over carefully. Its body was larger than a swan's, thick and round and adorned with a funny little tail of the same yellowish-grey colour as the wings. The upper bill was covered largely with a wrinkled skin and ended in a

hooked point. The short, strong feet had four toes. The creature had a maw; but the most curious thing about it was a big fold of skin around its head into which it could draw its whole bill.[1]

'Let's ask the surgeon!' they decided; and with all their united strength and due caution, because of the creature's powerful bill, they carried the heavy bird back to camp.

'It's a dodo,' declared Daddy Longjacket.

To Padde's great surprise, Rolf asked: 'To what family does it belong?'

'I know his cousin,' laughed Padde. 'Geert Oliekoek's lame wood-pigeon has a maw like that too!'[2]

Several sailors ran up. They recognized only two families of animals, those you could eat and those that didn't taste good. Unfortunately for him, the dodo belonged in the former class. A few hours later he was broiling on a spit.

. . . . .

That day half the sailors started out on voyages of discovery, and the three lads too decided to go farther inland. The sun clock which they had set up on the strand showed that it was not yet eight o'clock when the gallant three set forth. They wanted to go upstream as far as possible and walked single file along the bank. The low shrubbery changed into lofty bamboo forests; the woods grew more luxuriant and dark; climbing plants, forming inextricable tangles, often barred the way.

Once the boys walked through a long arbour where the air was hot and moist and full of the sweet odour of thousands of orchids, enchanting in their calm splendour. The boys sat

[1] None of the three boys could know that they had caught a bird about which scientists would be quarrelling centuries later. The *Dodo* or *didu*, which was native to Réunion and is now extinct, owed its tragic disappearance to the fact that the sailors who landed on Réunion through many years killed these 'swans' with sticks and ate them.

[2] In this remark Padde was two hundred years ahead of his time. It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that Sir Richard Owen, the great naturalist, proved through his famous studies of the skeleton that the *dodo* belongs to the pigeon family.

down a moment in silence. The water steamed. It murmured against the great, greyish-blue stones as if it were telling an old fairy-tale not yet related to any human ear. Sometimes the water rushed over the stones as though the fairy king were speaking. The plants, the trees, and the flowers listened and leaned far over to the little stream, to catch its every whisper. The plants that grew in the river let themselves be rocked slowly in its current; their great, white blossoms gleamed forth like the countenances of pale, wicked princesses.

The boys struggled on, forcing their way through the creepers and wading through the rippling, clear water. The woods grew still, disquietingly still, like that enchanted forest which had to remain silent a thousand years because a falling branch had crushed the fairy queen. 'Here I am!' the stream now sang out loud, rejoicing in his own high spirits and listening to his voice resounding clearly in the stillness. 'Let him who is thirsty seek refreshment with me! I come from afar and I wander afar. I have no rest, I have no rest. . . . Out of my way, stupid stones, who try to bar my way from envy because you are not free and immortal as I am! And, oh, you poor, dear trees, doomed to die on the spot where you were born, how I pity you! You gentle, quiet leaves, and you pure, stainless flowers, hearkening to my adventures with wide-open chalices—come, fling yourselves into my arms! I will lead you far away from here, far away. . . .'

Hajo felt his blood racing more swiftly through his veins. The impulse to wander and seek adventure grew stronger in his heart. Here and there the boys came upon a clearing where flowers grew in such profusion as they had never known. Gay butterflies as large as their hands and innumerable brilliant birds fluttered around the alluring chalices of the flowers. Before them, between the trees, gleamed mountains, deep violet against the green.

They decided to follow a branch of the stream and crept on between ferns and trees until they found themselves unexpectedly before a large pond over which hung a thick haze.

'A hot spring!' cried Rolf.

'Hot?' asked Hajo and Padde, and they stuck their fingers into the water. But they drew back their hands quickly. 'Boiling hot!'

'The ground is volcanic here,' explained Rolf. 'That's why the water is so hot. If you dug down here you'd finally come upon fire.'

Padde turned as white as chalk. 'But then we're standing—right over hell here!'

'Yes,' replied Rolf, 'take care that you don't fall in.'

. . . . .

Feeling hungry, Hajo and Rolf started off on an egg-hunting expedition, and when they returned with their booty they

caught sight of Padde peeping through the foliage. He laid his finger on his lips in warning when he heard them. They crept after him and, after looking in vain for a while, finally discovered a strange creature like a lizard clinging with its round, thick tail to a branch. Because of its dark green colour, it could scarcely be distinguished from the leaves. It was almost as long as an arm, and its large, pointed head looked like a helmet above the thin, shrunken neck. A blue sack, covered with dark brown spots, hung like a beard beneath its chin and throat. Its high, scalloped spine gave it a certain resemblance to a dragon. A line of reddish-brown spots ran along its body. Its eyes protruded and were covered, except for the pupils, by

brilliant red and green lids. They kept moving restlessly about. In front, on its nose, it had two horn-like humps.

The creature remained as still as death—absolutely motionless except for the eyes.

'Wait!' whispered Padde. 'You'll see something funny.'

And the three boys waited with almost as much patience as the chameleon which Padde had come upon unexpectedly. A little black insect with yellow stars on its breastplates came dancing towards them; buzzing gaily, it tickled Hajo's chin, and then flew to a large, red flower about a foot from the mouth of the motionless green dragon. It did not see the chameleon nor notice that two wicked, murderous eyes were following its every movement. These two eyes rolled forward, so that they seemed about to fall out of the chameleon's head. The creature measured the distance, opened its mouth slowly, very slowly—and all was over! Its tongue, almost half as long as its whole body, had shot out like lightning, caught the unsuspecting little insect, shot back again as though fastened on a spring, and gulped down the poor victim. It remained absolutely motionless through the whole business. And while Hajo and Rolf were still looking at the flower on which the insect had sat, the eyes of the mysterious assassin were wandering restlessly about again in search of more prey.

Padde giggled and pinched Hajo until he was black and blue.

Another insect, a greenish-golden, capricious little chap came buzzing by, seemingly very busy but really a good-for-nothing idler enjoying the day. It flew about happily, even settled on the chameleon's back, and then examined a sunny leaf. Not a motion escaped the watchful eyes of the chameleon, lying in wait. The distance seemed too great, so it decided to move a short step back. With its long, queer legs and its tail, it changed its position, measured the distance, opened its mouth. . . . But the golden insect had flown up higher to examine another leaf above. The chamelon swallowed its disappointment and tried again, for a true chameleon never gives up. His way of living proves that he believes in his lucky star. So then—a step higher, carefully! Now another! Now another! The insect is still regarding the leaf. The chameleon is gulping

with excitement. It opens its mouth—and again the little idler escapes him by deciding to land on a leaf two ells farther down. Quick! the chameleon's eyes turn upon it. Noiselessly it moves down again, step by step! it measures the distance once more, and now . . . But the golden insect is circling away over the head of the chameleon, buzzing gaily.

The would-be assassin does not betray his disappointment and rage by a single movement. Ah! and now hope springs anew in his chameleon breast. A little reddish-black insect is creeping clumsily out of one flower towards another within range of the enemy's jaws. It disappears into the flower while the chameleon waits with mouth half opened to snatch him. The deuce! he's staying a long time. The boys waited almost as eagerly as the chameleon. At last the little creature reappeared, licking his legs clean, and crawled nearer. The chameleon made ready. . . . But at that moment a hand moved down slowly towards the chameleon's neck. At the very second when the chameleon's long tongue shot forth to seize the insect, Rolf's fingers closed tight around the bandit's neck, just behind his three-cornered head. The creature uttered a hoarse cry. And to the boundless amazement of Hajo and Padde it changed colour. The blueish-brown band on the body turned pale; the blue sack around the neck and the edge of the mouth turned lemon yellow!

But Rolf was not frightened. He seized the chameleon's body with his left hand and tried to lift the creature from the branch. But this proved impossible. 'Deuce take him!' said Rolf. 'He's sitting tight! We'll have to take the branch along.'

Hajo knelt on the ground and quickly cut off the branch with his knife.

'That's fine!' said Rolf. 'And now—how shall we get him to the ship?'

'Here!' cried Padde eagerly, pulling off his shirt. 'We'll carry him in this!'

'We'll show him to Daddy Longjacket,' said Rolf, delightedly. 'It's a chameleon, of course, but I'd like to know what kind.'

'Do you want to know his whole family?' asked Padde.

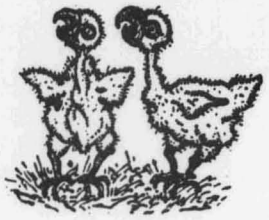
Rolf laughed. 'Did you see him change colour when I grabbed him?'

'Yes,' replied Hajo. 'How does he do that?'

'I wish I knew. Come, let's boil our eggs now in the hot spring!'

While Rolf and Padde placed the eggs which they had found in the hot spring and watched them boil, Hajo had still another adventure. He saw a nest in the trunk of a tree, and as he approached the opening a head with a crooked beak suddenly appeared and a parrot flew out of the hole and disappeared.

One, two, three, Hajo had climbed up the tree and was



looking eagerly into the hollow. There in the dark nest squatted two curiously ugly young creatures; their black heads and beaks were too large for their wretched, bare little bodies. Hajo seized one of them, drew him out into the daylight, and climbed down again.

'There, we'll raise him, fellows,' he announced.

The boys were surprised at the ugliness of the young bird. 'Can he eat, do you suppose?'

'Eat? He almost bit off my thumb! Come here, old fellow!' And Hajo stroked the young parrot and talked gently to him while he pushed a piece of banana into his beak. 'Gerrit will ~~be~~ glad to have company!' he remarked.

'And I'll teach him to talk!' promised Padde.

At last the time came to return to camp, and the boys started off again, wading along the edge of the clear little stream, talking in great excitement, and discussing plans for

the training of parrots. They reached camp at twilight and found every one busily baking and roasting.

The parrot and the chameleon were proudly displayed to Daddy Longjacket, final authority on all scientific subjects. He was as delighted as a child when Rolf asked him to look while he carefully opened Padde's shirt. He exclaimed: 'It's a panther-chameleon! I'll preserve him in brandy!'

The sailors were speechless with amazement. 'Thunder and the devil!' exclaimed a skinny little tar whose nose looked like a beet. 'In brandy? I wish I was a cammelegon too!'

CHAPTER XXI

THE JOYS OF SWAPPING

THEY remained on the island three whole weeks. They tarred the ship inside and out, opened all the hatches and port-holes, and sprinkled vinegar on the wooden floors—all to disinfect the *Nieuw Hoorn* with fresh air and sun. While part of the crew were busy at this, the others were drying fish, which they hung on long cords in the sun. Then they pickled geese and prepared a big vat of sea water on deck for the live sea-turtles. They gathered great bundles of seaweed on the shore to supply the turtles with food[1] and Harmen, Hajo, and Rolf built a big coop for the geese and pigeons, whose wings had been clipped.

. . . . .

When Gerrit first saw the naked young parrot which his master brought up to him, he stared in silent horror at him and then pecked at him furiously, probably to learn what he was made of. To punish him, Hajo held Gerrit under water, a thing he detested. Blaming the new-comer for his trouble, he turned away in contempt and angrily arranged his wet feathers, while Hajo tempted the parrot with a tit-bit. The intruder was by no means grateful and bit Hajo severely.

'Wait till he gets hungry!' said Hajo to himself. 'Tomorrow he'll know better.' He put both Gerrit and the parrot into the copper cage, to get them used to each other,

[1] Sea-turtles themselves collect and construct these curious, round bundles of seaweed. Professional turtle-hunters look for these stores and wait by them until the giant turtles come up to them and then capture them.

and placed a board part way up between them to keep them from attacking one another. Gerrit, spoiled by his recent freedom, drew his head into his feathers every time his master approached. The young parrot stared blankly and kept his bill as tightly closed as if he suspected Hajo of wishing to poison him.

That afternoon the parrot began to groan and Hajo made up his mind to take him back to his nest the next morning. And Gerrit, too, was moved by Joppie's pain, for so Hajo had named his new pet, in memory of the dear, departed guinea-pig. After he had listened for some time, Gerrit began to meditate. Then he came to a great decision. He whetted his bill, leaned against the board and gave it a hard blow, and then another. A piece of the board splintered off. Gerrit began to enjoy the sport. He hacked away, whetting his bill at intervals, and then uttered a loud caw.

The boys heard this from their tent and Hajo ran to see what was wrong. He returned immediately, with beaming countenance, and called excitedly: 'Come quick! Gerrit's feeding him!'

The boys crept quietly after him and could hardly believe their eyes when they saw Gerrit sticking his black bill through a hole in the board and pushing a piece of banana to Joppie. Snap! Joppie had seized it and was swallowing it. Hajo jumped for joy. 'Isn't that a fine crow?'

'Now we can take away the partition,' suggested Rolf.

But Hajo was wiser. 'And spoil it all!' he cried. 'Why, Gerrit thinks Joppie's a young crow, because he can't see him.'

'Won't he be surprised when you do take away the board at last and he sees a parrot with his bright feathers!' laughed Rolf.

'Gee, what fun!' giggled Padde.

. . . . .

So Joppie grew splendidly, and one fine morning the boys saw the two sitting like old friends on Gerrit's perch—Joppie in grey and brilliant red, Gerrit dignified and solemn in serious

black. Hajo opened the cage and Gerrit hopped out with a cry of joy. Joppie followed, and with much fluttering of wings and screaming fell on the ground. Gerrit, whose wings had grown again by now, began to give him lessons in flying, and Joppie tried hard, although he never succeeded in flying as gracefully and lightly as a Dutch crow. They were inseparable companions, shared their food, bananas and berries—all except worms, for which Joppie showed deep disgust. Gerrit stared at him when he refused his offerings, shook his black head, opened his bill, and swallowed his worm in peace.

At last the day for their departure arrived. After all preparations had been made, a drum summoned every one on board. All the sick had recovered except seven, who went on board with sad faces. At four o'clock in the afternoon the *Nieuw Hoorn* sailed away, watched by an army of red flamingos. The wind was favourable and they hoped to reach Mauritius before sunrise.

But they were doomed to disappointment. They had veered from the course and now they could see the island but not reach it. Bontekoe did not dare to undertake the long, unbroken voyage through the Indian Ocean until all his crew was well again. He changed his course to the island Santa Maria, hard by Madagascar, opposite Antongil Bay.

The weather continued favourable; the sea glowed like molten fire at night, and the heavens were so blue during the day that the porpoises leaped up out of the water to enjoy the sight. After a week they sighted Santa Maria. They sailed westward around the island; the plummet indicated from six

to eight fathoms. The water was so clear that they could see bottom. Towards noon they found a good place to anchor, and scarcely had they reefed sail when they saw three boats nearing, crowded with brown bodies. The sailors hunted forth their glass beads, pocket-mirrors, spoons, knives with copper handles, and all sorts of knick-knacks. Then they hurried on deck with their pockets full of things to barter.

Meanwhile the boats had come up closer. There was a terrible hullabaloo and every one of the rowers kept shouting orders which no one obeyed. The rowers faced the stem, and instead of two oars they held in their brown fists a spar flattened at the sides which they drew through the water left and right in turn.

Floorke again tried his 'fluent' Malay. 'Ho there!' he cried. 'Have you something to eat? *Makan? Nassi? Klappa? Pisang?*'[1]

'*Kuckleku!*' yelled the natives and held up baskets of chickens.

'You see, they understand,' said Floorke, looking around proudly.

Bontekoe had come out of his cabin and watched them with a smile. 'Throw out a line, boys, and pull one of them up!'

The line was caught by one of the boats, and then there was a fight as to who should go first. Finally one of the natives flung two of his mates into the sea while he managed to hold tight to the line which the sailors pulled in.

He was a splendidly built fellow. He had crinkled black hair and was naked, except for a loin-cloth; his dull, olive-coloured skin was tattooed on breast and shoulders. He looked around a moment in boundless surprise and began to laugh. Floorke took out a little mirror and held it before his face. He stopped laughing, looked behind the mirror and into it again, moved away, and watched Floorke's grinning face suspiciously.

'You can have it,' said Floorke, 'but you must give us *makan!*' And Floorke chewed vigorously. Then Padde came up with the baby's rattle from Truitje. The brown face

[1] *Makan*, food; *nassi*, rice; *klappa*, coco-nut; *pisang*, banana.

smiled again, opened its mouth, showing a row of ivory teeth set in red gums, and flashed eager glances from sparkling black eyes at the rattle. 'You can have it!' said Padde, following Floorke's example, 'but you must give me *makan*' —and he, too, began to chew.

The man leaned down to the railing to his companions, whose shouts and cries had increased until no one could hear a word. But as soon as they saw him, they stopped as if by a charm and listened to him. The sounds fell like a waterfall from his lips; he roared as though they were all deaf, and spoke with his fingers and arms and legs as well. When he had finished they replied in the same fashion and then held up baskets, large and small, roaring the while like a herd of bulls. Other boats loaded with melons, apples, and rice came driving through the water so fast that the foam splashed up a yard or more.

The sailors lowered a rope and after more long explanations a basket of food, including a white rooster tied fast, was sent up to them. When it was on deck, the native indicated that they must pay before he gave up the basket.

'White men have evidently been here before,' remarked Bontekoe with a smile. 'Come, let's bargain and barter a bit!' He sent Hilke to fetch some tin spoons, which won immediate favour. The native offered the whole basket in exchange for the spoons.

'We'll go on land later and see what we can find,' said Bontekoe. Then he returned to his cabin with Mr. Rol and the pilot. The sailors knew why 'the old man' was leaving them—so that they might enjoy their pleasure undisturbed; he realized that the men were panting to begin haggling with the natives. Scarcely had the three disappeared behind the cabin door before the sailors hunted forth copper buttons, screws, bright coins, and glass beads to exchange for baskets of poultry or armfuls of melons.

When the bargain-fever had cooled, the sailors decided to have a bit of sport. They threw the rope over the railing again, waited until half a dozen savages clung to it, and then pulled it out of reach of the others. One, who had got hold

One of the savages, who had got hold of the end of the rope, had to let go and fell on his companions like a ripe coco-nut.

of the end, had to let go and fell on his companions like a ripe coco-nut. The others had climbed up like monkeys. Now they grinned, exchanged a few words, and seemed to think everything they saw very funny. And when the first arrival began to rattle on his new possessions, they opened their mouths, listened with sparkling eyes and seemed about to begin dancing.

The boatswain had a bowl of Spanish wine set before them, but they were suspicious. At last one of them knelt down, touched the bowl, and then drank from it. He looked up in glad surprise, smacked his tongue, and buried his face in it again. The others took the hint, sprang towards the bowl, and pushed one another away, grunting, smacking, and lapping up the wine like pigs.

Some of the sailors filled the bowl again, with grins on their faces, but none of the savages was willing to stand aside for fear of losing his place. The sailors could hardly find room to pour the wine between their heads. At last the boatswain put an end to things. The drinkers licked up the last drop of the sweet wine, looked at one another with sparkling eyes, and began to laugh until the tears ran down their cheeks. Their gaiety was infectious; only a few sailors looked sour because of this waste of good wine. When the savages seized one another round the waist and danced around in a circle, snapping their thumbs and screaming, the sailors held their sides with laughter.

At twilight the two boats of the *Nieuw Hoorn* landed. About a hundred natives were waiting with cattle and sheep and baskets of chickens, pheasants, pigeons, and glorious fruits. The bargaining was lively. Floorke exchanged his pocket-knife for about fifty chickens, for which he would build a coop which could stand under his berth. And he would eat eggs or chicken every day. Bolle bought a cow for the galley in exchange for a pocket-mirror and a Jack-in-the-box. Harmen, too, did pretty well: he bought a basket of juicy melons and two dozen pheasants for a few copper buttons. The *Nieuw Hoorn* was becoming another Noah's Ark.

Hajo, too, made an excellent bargain that afternoon. He

gave Truitje's little scissors for a big, strong bow and a beautifully carved quiver full of arrows. The new owner of the scissors cut his nails, his eyebrows, and his hair. Hajo set up a target in the form of a melon on the end of a stick and for a few days did nothing but shoot. The natives almost fell down with surprise that this white boy could be so awkward with bow and arrow. But Hajo persisted, scarcely took time to eat, and after three days he hit the mark regularly. Then he went forth to hunt like a native and came back with three wild fowls, which tasted twice as good to him as domestic fowls, even though these were tenderer.

A few minutes' walk inland brought the sailors to a little village in a clump of coco-nut trees. The low huts were made of bamboo with roofs of leaves and had only one opening. Everything was fearfully dirty, and children were playing in the mud with monkeys and dogs. When the sailors approached the enclosure around the houses, all fled *en masse*. The monkeys climbed into the trees, the dogs herded together and barked furiously at the intruders, while the children fled into the huts.

Not a woman had showed her face. The doors were slammed quickly, while here and there a face peeped out in alarm.

'What a pity!' said Floorke. 'I'd like to see one of the women.'

'Wait a minute,' said Harmen. 'I'll be back in a moment,' and he ran towards the boats. He returned in a few minutes with his fiddle! And now the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin was repeated. Scarcely had the first notes sounded before the door was opened, and then another, very cautiously, and first one dark girl and then others peered out at the player. The men standing around the sailors could not contain themselves; they began dancing around the fiddler, snapping their thumbs, clapping their hands and balancing gracefully. Then the women and girls ventured out too, dressed quite as inadequately as the men; and behind their mothers, hiding and peeping out like children all over the earth, were the naked little ones with their pot-bellies and their mouths opened so wide that you could stick a fist into them.

Harmen fiddled with might and main. 'Begin dancing,' he told the sailors, 'and the girls will join in.'

So the sailors took hands and formed a ring around the women along with the grinning natives. They sang to Harmen's playing, and then the fun began. One of the girls tried to break through, but when she attempted to slip between Floorke and Gerretje, the two seized her and she had to dance with them willy-nilly. The other girls tried the same trick, and soon other sailors had caught them. This was too much for Harmen. He handed his fiddle over to Hajo and did not stop before he too had a girl dancing at each side of him to the strains flowing from the violin. Padde was standing aside when Nosey and Gerretje suddenly arranged to let go and forced him into the circle with the girls. He tried to break through, but now Harmen seized him and so he had to dance on between Harmen and a pretty little native girl. . . .

CHAPTER XXII

OFF TO MADAGASCAR!

THE skipper decided to cross over to Madagascar with the bigger of the two boats to see if they might obtain a larger supply of fruit, for they did not yet have enough fresh food to venture on the long crossing to their destination.

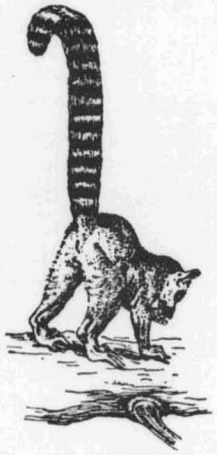
Harmen obtained permission for himself and the three boys to go along, and the next morning at dawn the yawl put forth. It was a perfect morning. A gentle east wind favoured them and they sailed westward, rocking on the quiet waves. At noon they sighted Madagascar, first merely a greyish-blue strip of land on the western horizon, then extending far into the distance. Tall grey mountains loomed up before them, and a yellow breach in the surf showed that there a river flowed into the sea. They steered towards this spot and by evening they had reached the shore.

They took their weapons and, in the falling darkness, examined their surroundings. There was no sign of a human being. The woods began hard by the shore. A network of plants barred their way. Abruptly, they found themselves in the tropical primeval forest where a silent, pitiless struggle for light goes on continuously. Every tree, every plant threatens to strangle its neighbour in its shadow. The giants of the forest stand, crown to crown, as unconquerable rulers of their domain. In this realm of force, weakness is a crime punishable by death, and might is right.

Cunning alone can maintain itself against might, and the

creepers and parasitic plants that cling to the giant trees find their way to the light through this instinct. Ravens croak gloomily in the trees and bats flutter through the branches. The moon has risen ; the evening mists float over the water in mysterious shapes, clad in long, pale draperies. They perform a mysterious dance to the music of the waves.

Silent and a bit oppressed, the sailors returned to the boat. The sky glowed red towards the east—it was the reflection of



the fire lighted on the *Nieuw Hoorn* in case the wanderers wished to return that night. They lighted another fire in greeting. It was good to know that their friends were so near in their beloved barge, damaged to be sure, but capable none the less of making two knots more than any other ark sailing the seas ! God willing, it would bring them all back home to their native land, where it was so cosy ; where, instead of these mysterious forests, you saw geraniums at the windows ; where you waded in rubber boots through the mud ; to the land of cheeses and butter where you mother or your sweetheart knitted socks for you, kissed you, and served a good cup of coffee from the old coffee-pot over the fire. The sailors sighed and fell asleep, dreaming of home.

. . . . .

The next morning they felt born anew. They rowed up the river, met with all sorts of difficulties, barely escaped destruction from a landslide, and were almost swept to their doom by a waterfall before they returned to the spot from which they had set out. After their fruitless errand they were eager to return to the *Nieuw Hoorn* that very night. They set sail again, were overtaken by a storm which rendered them helpless in the wind, forced them to sacrifice their sail and row back to the *Nieuw Hoorn.*

Mr. Rol received Bontekoe in his cabin.

'And what did you bring back from the journey ?' he asked.

Bontekoe then realized for the first time that the journey had been quite fruitless. In his joy over their happy return after all the dangers that had threatened them, he had entirely failed to take this into account. Now he suddenly faced the prosaic question—What had the journey profited them ?

'A bundle of wet clothes,' he answered.

'That won't help the company much !' remarked Mr. Rol, with a smile.

'The company !' The longer the *Nieuw Hoorn* was on its way, the more deeply rooted had Bontekoe's instinctive feeling become that the ship belonged to him and his two hundred

men who were ready every day to risk their lives for it. Now, once more, after these recent struggles with storm and sea, he felt himself lord and master of the *Nieuw Hoorn*. But this merchant, this cold-blooded calculator who could not be roused by the excitement of any adventure, this Prying Peter whom he wouldn't even be able to employ as a common sailor, this Rol was talking drivel about 'the company'!

Later, when the vessel lay safely moored at Bantam, 'the company' would have its turn, and Mr. Rol could buy and sell and balance accounts to his heart's content. But the task of bringing the *Nieuw Hoorn* there safely rested upon the shoulders of Willem Ysbrantszoon Bontekoe, and at this moment he was still skipper of his ship, after God.[1]

'The company!' he repeated angrily, and he turned his sturdy back squarely upon the dumbfounded merchant and walked to his berth.

[1] 'Skipper, after God' was a current expression at the time.

CHAPTER XXIII

FIRE ON BOARD!

ON the ninth day after the *Nieuw Hoorn* had anchored at Santa Maria all the men had recovered. They put to sea cheerfully, trusting that their supply of fresh food would last. They steered south-east to the thirty-third degree of latitude and then turned north-east to the Strait of Sunda.

These were peaceful, beautiful days. The sailors were busy with the chickens, and ate more eggs than they had ever eaten before. Padde grew as round as an egg himself and the sailors told him he must exercise. With a sigh he made up his mind to undertake a task which Squint-eyed Jack had always performed himself, namely, to descend down into the hold every afternoon and fill a little barrel for the crew's drink the next morning.

Joppie had been taught to speak. The sailors roared with delight the first time he plainly said 'Hajo!' But it soon became evident that Joppie was a tease. He now called his master the whole day, preferably in curt, commanding tones like the boatswain's, and again cajolingly, excitedly, or in alarm, as though he were saying: 'Hajo, you haven't fallen overboard, have you?' When Hajo came running up to ask what the boatswain wanted, he would find, instead of grumbling Folkert Berentsz, cheerful Joppie waiting to have his head scratched. All the sailors who had taken pains to teach the eager parrot their names now bitterly regretted their mistake.

Gerrit seemed satisfied with his foster-child. At first he had seemed a bit startled at the crooked beak and bright feathers

of his young protégé, but when Joppie began saying 'Caw' in true crow-fashion he accepted him as one of the family.

. . . . . .

At last the day came which the crew of the *Nieuw Hoorn* were never to forget—the nineteenth of November 1619.

Padde had gone down to the hold that afternoon as usual and had set his candle on a large barrel so that his hands should be free to pump the liquor. When his little barrel was full, he seized the candle once more; but by an unhappy chance the burning end of the wick sent off a spark straight into the bunghole of the big barrel. The brandy caught fire, the hoops burst with a dull explosion, and the burning fluid covered the whole floor. With a yell Padde flew up the stairs, seized two buckets with which Hajo and Rolf were scrubbing the deck, and poured them down the hatch.

'Padde! What's the matter?'

Poor Padde tried to stammer, but explanations were no longer required—the sound of hissing and spurting and a cloud of steam bursting from the hatch told the story.

'Fire! Fire!'

The sailors came rushing towards them, many with buckets, crying: 'Where is the fire?'

'In the hold!' Every voice trembled with fear and excitement. Every one hunted up buckets with lightning speed and flung them down the hatch. After about a hundred buckets had been poured down, Folkert Berentsz climbed down into the hold and fortunately could find no more fire there. Meanwhile Bontekoe had hurried to the hold, where he found pools of burning fluid on the floor. Again the bucket brigade got busy, and after about ten buckets had been poured over the floor, the fire here too seemed extinguished.

A sigh of relief arose. Still gasping with their labours, the men spoke of the danger that had threatened. If the fire had reached the powder magazine . . .

'Padde!' some one called. 'You're wanted in the skipper's cabin!'

The poor boy was trembling in every limb. Without being

noticed, he managed to hide down in the hold. It was black as night down there; he made his way down the stairs gropingly, tottered towards a coil of rope, buried his face in his hands, and cried bitterly.

Suddenly he heard something. He listened with his heart pounding. He hardly dared open his eyes in this terrifying darkness. Cr-ack! Cr-ack! With chattering teeth Padde raised his head. Was he mad? There, across the hold, great

flames were blazing up! There was a smell of sulphur. Great heavens! . . . The coal was on fire!

With a yell Padde dashed to the ladder.

'The coal! . . . The c-coal! . . .'

Confusion rose anew. 'The coal? Is the coal on fire?' A few agile sailors scramble down into the hold, armed with buckets, which they dash over the burning coal. There is a sound of hissing, yellow fumes of sulphur rise from the glowing pile of coal, and in a moment the air in the hold is so oppressive that no one can remain there more than a minute or two.

But the sailors are tough. Again and again they descend

the narrow ladder, laden with heavy buckets. They stumble through the inferno of heat, smoke, and sulphur, throw the water upon the coal and totter back to the ladder, cursing and with their eyes full of tears. Not all can find their way back. Some of them sink down, dazed, half-strangled, after running about helplessly in the dark.

Bontekoe himself leads them—until his voice is choked and he staggers up the ladder. But he is below again in a minute. 'Courage, my lads!' he calls to them. They chop holes in the deck and send masses of water into the hold. Will it save them? The wooden floor beneath their feet grows steadily hotter; the sailors have to jump about like fleas and cool their half-charred soles in the buckets which they keep fetching.

Shall they throw the gunpowder overboard? The danger of meeting a Spanish vessel in these waters is too great. Without gunpowder they would be lost. It seems best to wait to the last moment before throwing the barrels of powder overboard.

They must hold out!

. . . . .

But there were traitors among them. The yawl had not been hauled up since their departure from Santa Maria and the sloop had just been lowered because it was in their way in putting out the fire. Seeing their chance, several of the crew had let themselves down, swum to yawl or sloop, and hidden beneath the benches. Rol, as he went to the cabin to collect his papers, in case things went worse, saw a sailor crawling into the yawl.

'What's this?' he called.

'Better come too!' cried the sailors. 'The old ark will explode in a minute!'

'I'm going to call the skipper!' replied Rol angrily.

'Then we'll cut the ropes!'

'Scoundrels!' shouted Rol in a fury.

'Are you coming or not?' they called from the yawl.

The merchant debated a moment. Then, with an angry gesture, he called down sullenly: 'I'm coming!' And he

hurried to the cabin for his papers. His documents were more precious to him than his honour.

When he had glided down into the yawl on a cable, the sailors cut the ropes. 'Are you going to row away?' asked Rol in alarm.

'No. We want to stand by to help. But the whole thing will blow up in a minute. We mustn't be too near.'

The merchant did not reply, and with anxious countenance looked at the ship, from which clouds of dirty yellow smoke were rising. 'It's madness to think they can save it!' he said, to quiet his conscience, and he blew on his pale hands, which had been scraped by the rope.

. . . . .

The others on the ship kept up the fight. With eyes half-closed the men handed on the buckets. Hold out, boys!

The surgeon rushed up. 'Skipper, the boats are gone!'

Paralysed with fear, every one dashed to the railing. 'The boats gone?' There they saw the boats rocking! Helpless rage overcame those left behind.

'Skipper, what now?'

The men had never seen their skipper look like this. His frank seaman's countenance was distorted with anger and pain. 'Trim your sails, my lads! We'll run them down!'

Grief over the treachery of their mates made the crew obey swiftly, and now they steered straight towards the boats. But these seemed to suspect the danger threatening them. They rowed like mad, and when they were three times the length of the ship ahead of the *Nieuw Hoorn*, they headed straight into the wind, so that they could not be pursued.

'Well, then, we'll leave them to their conscience!' cried the skipper. 'Overboard with the powder! The old ark's still afloat—and we'll stick together!'

'Hurrah, Bontekoe!' roared the sailors, to let the cowards over there know that there were men left who didn't scuttle off in the boats when the ship was in danger. Grimly they took hold of the powder-barrels with their weather-beaten fists, throwing them from man to man and so overboard. Then

Bontekoe ordered some of the sailors who were especially good carpenters to be lowered down the ship's side where they could bore holes into the sides beneath the surface. He planned to fill the hold with water and put out the fire from below. But they tried in vain—the thick iron plates rendered all their efforts futile

Back to the buckets then!

Ha! Tongues of flame are beginning to leap from one of the hatches! It's the Devil himself, the tars think. Smash his head!

In feverish excitement they fetch water, but the fire flashes higher and higher. Strangely enough, the cr-cracking, bursting, cr-crackling sounds have ceased. With a roar the fire shoots its long red tongue up out of the hatches.

'The oil is afire!' some one shouts.

As if suddenly paralysed, the sailors let their arms sink. Big tears are rolling down their brown cheeks now.

'Water!' roars some one.

And they swing the buckets again. While they are fighting the fire and cooling their burned feet, the sailors are crying like children. But give up? Ho, not yet! Dutch boys don't give up so soon! Howling is no disgrace—tears are water, too, and will help put out the fire. So, with hot, bare legs, they stand firm on the burning deck and work like heroes.

One of the bravest workers in the front line, slaving in the smoke and steam, was Padde. With eyes and lips pressed tight together, defying the fire, he expiated his guilt.

They toiled on. There was despair in their hearts—but they toiled on. Until—with a deafening crash the deck aft gave way and a few of the brave fellows plunged, with a shriek, into the sea of flames! Ha! How the sparks flew far up above the masts! And the flames reared themselves up against the yards, leaped upon the sails, and flung the white wings of the *Nieuw Hoorn*, now scorched and blazing, far up on high. The broken rigging, slackening, fell down into the burning cauldron, with thousands of little flames climbing up on them like ladders.

Now they attacked the flag itself! Up they leaped to seize the beautiful, gay banner! A flame snatched at it and blackened

its brilliance. The others danced around it in triumph, proclaiming their victory!

Hajo, Rolf, and Padde were standing by the mainmast. Farther up, the deck was beginning to bend, and the wood showed the brown marks of the burning fire below. Rolf drew his two companions along. 'Into the sea!' he hissed between clenched teeth. The boys, dumbfounded, obeyed him. Several more had hurried after Rolf and jumped into the ocean. Others, paralysed by fear, had not acted quickly enough and were now sinking into the flames.

Then it happened! A terrible explosion, an infernal roar, a stinging smell, stifled cries, the terrified bellowing of the cattle—the rest of the gunpowder had caught fire. Another blast! The *Nieuw Hoorn* was torn asunder. Masts, planks, men, animals, and parts of them flew up into the air. Hissing, crackling, sending up wreaths of black smoke and golden sparks, the ruins of the ship crashed together once more and sank into the waves.

The men in the boats shuddered as they looked. Was it possible? Had the *Nieuw Hoorn*, their splendid ship, really gone down? That black cloud against the evening sky, red as blood—was that all that was left of her? No! there in the water were drifting pieces of masts, chests, beams, and to these masts, chests, and beams were clinging living beings. 'Help! Row for your lives!'

Hajo was the first of the three boys from Hoorn to collect his wits. He saw the mizzen-mast drifting by and managed to climb upon it. Thinking and acting with lightning quickness, he flung a rope towards Padde, who was clinging to a barrel that was slowly filling. Padde fumbled for the rope but missed it. Again Hajo flung it out, and this time Padde succeeded in catching it. When his saviour had pulled him towards the mast, he seized Hajo's knees, groaning: 'Hajo—oh, God—Hajo!'

'Climb up!'

'I can't!'

Exerting all his strength, Hajo succeeded in setting his friend astride on the mast. Padde sobbed as his head fell against

Hajo's shoulder. Now for Rolf! Great heavens, where was Rolf? Hajo looked around in helpless terror. Out there, beyond his reach, a few sailors were wrestling with the waves. Here and there, in the twilight, he saw figures working their way towards masts, planks, barrels, or spars. 'Rolf! Rolf! Rolf!' he cried.

'Hello, Hajo!'

Thank God! Rolf had found refuge in a crow's-nest. Where were the boats? Too far away to call them. It was too dark to see where they were rowing. 'Boat ahoy! Ahoy!' roared Hajo.

'Hajo——' wailed Padde.

'Courage, Padde!' Hajo closed his eyes for a moment to collect himself. Tears ran slowly down his cheeks. When he opened his eyes again, the yawl was within fifty feet of them. It could not approach nearer because of the heavy wreckage between. Hajo measured the distance with his eye. Could he reach the yawl? 'Stay here, Padde!' he ordered. 'And hold tight!'

'Oh, God! Hajo—you're not leaving me? Hajo. . . .'

Hajo pressed his lips together, glided down from the mast, and swam towards the yawl. But his arms were heavy as lead.

They threw a cable towards him. He seized it and let them draw him forward. 'No!' he gasped as the sailors tried to lift him in. 'I'll rest a second. Give me the cable—I want to—I want——' His eyes closed; his hands let go of the boat's edge; the sailors in the yawl barely managed to catch hold of him and pull him up.

Then Bokje, the trumpeter, sprang overboard with a plumb-line, swam to Padde and let himself and Padde be pulled in. Another sailor rescued Nosey. Floorke, snorting and splashing, saved himself by his own strength and at once began to scold the men in the yawl. But when he saw one after the other risking his life to rescue a drowning mate from the sharks his wrath was allayed a little. They rowed around and around the spot where the *Nieuw Hoorn* had sunk. At last they believed they had fished out all those near by. Some of them

lost consciousness at once; others were hysterical from excitement. But the skipper? Where was the skipper?

Suddenly Harmen's head appeared to larboard. They drew him aboard the yawl; he spat out a mouthful of sea water, pointed back, and stammered: 'The sk—skipper!' Then he fell back. They saw a bit of wreckage where he had pointed and on it a man. In the growing darkness they rowed as near as possible to the drowning man. Bokje, the best swimmer of them all, sprang overboard again with a line and almost at once was back with the skipper. They lifted him into the yawl and laid him in the stern. Thank God! 'Skipper, tell us! What next?'

With feeble voice Bontekoe ordered them to stand by the wreck that night in order to fish out what provisions they could the next morning. Then he fainted from pain and sank back unconscious. The sailors rowed around the fatal spot once more, but in the darkness they found no one else, dead or alive. They drew in their oars to await the next day.

But waiting is not easy when horror is still in full view. The men who had fallen asleep from sheer exhaustion awoke with a feeling of uneasiness.

'Let's row away!' they said. 'Why don't we get away?'

The others shook their heads. 'We must find something to eat to-morrow. The bread we have won't last a day.'

But the grumblers were not satisfied. 'What good is food if the sea rises and breaks the yawl to pieces?'

'We must wait! Skipper's orders!'

There was silence for a time. But a night is long, and soon their restlessness grew again. 'Let's row off! We can do without food for a few days! We might sight land to-morrow. We're not far from Sumatra!'

'We must wait! Skipper's orders!'

'Well, then——'

'What's that—"Well then"? Are you one of the sneaks who got away?'

'If we hadn't, you'd all be eaten by sharks now!'

'It was a low trick!'

'What about your low trick—trying to ram into us!'

'You deserved it!'

'But it wasn't so easy, eh?'

'Come, fellows,' said one of the sailors, 'no use squabbling now. Let's row away!'

'No,' persisted some of the others. 'The skipper said No.'

Silence followed. The minutes crept on. Suddenly a sailor swore, seized the oars, and began to row. The spell exerted by the skipper's word had been broken. All who could still sit up began to row. Where? To land! Where was that? No one knew. But rowing at least put an end to their restlessness. Row, mates! Row! Row! No one was steering.

Several men now awoke as from a nightmare. 'Where are we?'

'In the yawl.'

'In the yawl?' A brief silence—then memory seemed to come back. 'Where are we going now?'

'To Sumatra.'

'Where is Sumatra?'

'Close by. Take care or you'll stumble over it!'

Silence again. The sailors row on, obstinately.

'Hank,' some one calls in a faint voice. 'Is that you, Hank?'

'Yes, Kalle. Where are you?'

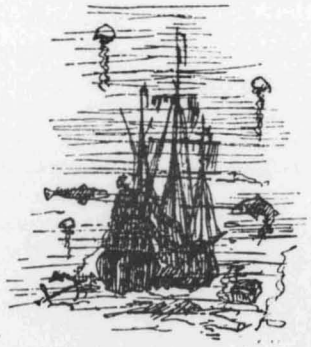
'For'ard. I have such pain.'

'It'll pass, Kalle. My paws are burnt.'

'Hold them in the water! Are we near land, Hank?'

'When it's light to-morrow maybe we'll see it. Just wait, Kalle, till it's light.' The rowers sigh and row steadily on.

Splash! Splash! Splash!



CHAPTER XXIV

IN THE OPEN BOATS

MORNING dawned at last, but there was no land in sight. The sloop too had disappeared. Groaning, the sailors dropped their oars. Only now they began to realize how weary they were. They had all fallen asleep at sunrise, while the yawl rocked upon the waves. Now the sky, like a glorious blue tent, rose above the immeasurable surface of the sea.

They awoke towards afternoon and evening, refreshed by their long sleep, and hope sprang anew in their hearts. They roused the skipper.

'Skipper, what now? No land in sight.'

'So you rowed away from the wreck after all?'

'Yes, skipper, we thought——'

'That was wrong! Is there a sail in the yawl?'

They searched and reported that there was none.

'Then off with your shirts and make a sail!'

They set to work hopefully. The skipper would get them to Sumatra somehow. . . . Meanwhile the surgeon examined the sick and wounded. Almost all had scorched their soles badly. The skipper had two wounds on his head. Rolf had a severe burn on his leg. The surgeon softened some of the bread which they had on board and laid this poultice on their wounds. Meanwhile they counted their number—there were forty-six of them in all. The sloop could hold eighty at most. And where were the others?

By twilight the 'sail' was ready. They raised the mast in

the yawl and fastened boom and gaff to it. An oar served as forestay. When both masts were stepped and the sails were made fast they steered north-east. Every man received a slice of bread as his share—and it was discouraging to see how little was left!

Padde had slept the whole day. When he was aroused towards evening by the noise made in putting up the mast, he hid his head in his arms again and pretended to be asleep. He could not face his shipmates!

Hajo, like all the others, was full of hope again and definitely counted on sighting land on the morrow, now that they were sailing the true course. But Rolf, who had followed their voyage day by day on the chart during the past few months, was less optimistic. The pain in his leg did not add to his cheerfulness, and made him feel feverish.

So darkness fell upon them and embraced the whole world. Towards midnight Gerretje raised a great hullabaloo. 'Land! Land!' he shouted.

Every one started up. 'Where is land?'

To larboard, in the far distance a little light gleamed. A frenzy of joy took possession of the shipwrecked men. They seized their oars. Boatswain Floorke even declared that he saw mountains. To-morrow they would be strolling beneath coco-nut trees. Row, my lads, row! But the mountains vanished and proved to be clouds. And the light kept moving up and down. Some of them stopped rowing as though they feared to have their suspicions confirmed. The light off there is not land. It is a boat full of shipwrecked men.

'The sloop!'

The pain of disappointment is mitigated by the joy of seeing their shipmates again. The sloop too has two sails, light grey specks. They stop rowing and await her—no sense in getting farther off the course now!

'Sloop ahoy!'

'Ahoy!'

They call to one another and there are cries of excitement and of joy when two friends recognize each other's voices.

'Have you anything to eat?'

'Three loaves of bread. And you?'

'Nothing.'

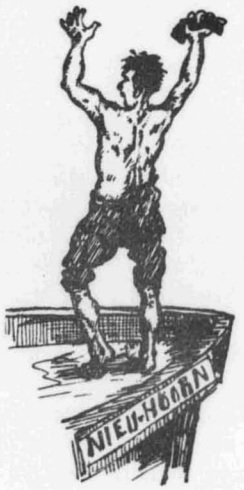
'The devil! What course are you taking?'

'No course. And you?'

'We're going by the stars. The skipper is with us.'

'The skipper? Listen, fellows, the skipper is in the yawl. Skipper, are you there? Hurrah for the skipper, mates!'

They roared hoarsely, all together.



'When will we land, skipper? To-morrow?'

'Courage, my lads! We must trust in God!'

'Amen,' replied a few pious sailors.

. . . . .

They continued together, the yawl setting the course. Soon the sloop fell behind. They rowed harder and caught up again. 'Skipper, take us into the yawl. We'll have more sail then and go twice as fast, skipper.'

But the sailors in the yawl objected. 'The yawl isn't big enough for so many, skipper!' And when the men in the sloop tried to hold fast to the yawl, they pushed them back roughly.

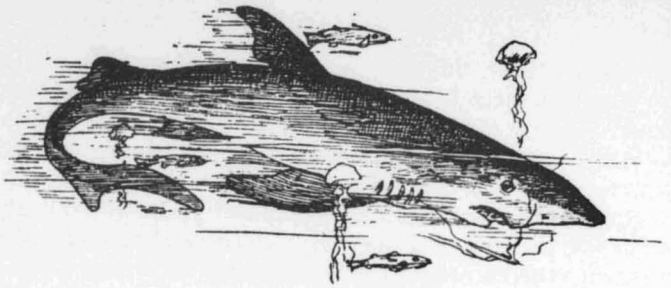
The poor fellows in the sloop began to row again. The oil lantern was placed on board the yawl to guide the sloop. At last dawn broke. The men searched the horizon eagerly—in vain. Some of them assuaged their grief by overwhelming Padde with reproaches; but a few others, and above all Hajo and Rolf, stood by him. It was an accident, they said; he couldn't help it.

That day they roughly charted their course to Sumatra, Java, and the Straits of Sunda from memory. On the day of the tragedy Bontekoe had made it five and a half degrees southern latitude. So they were now approximately ninety miles from land. Then one of the sailors found he had a compass in his pocket. They made a quadrant on a board and set their course towards Sumatra.

So they sailed on, according to the sun by day, to the stars by night. On the third day their supply of bread was exhausted. They had begun to feel the tortures of thirst, too. But they remained hopeful. The wind favoured them and the sea was calm. The next day black clouds formed on the horizon. Then rain rattled down. New strength sprang up in them; their hearts rose. They filled the two barrels that had contained bread with water.

The night turned cold and the sailors shivered in their wet clothes. But the next day the sun was so hot that they were dried in a minute and their skins began to crack. The heat became suffocating and the sea was as smooth as glass. There was no escape from the red-hot sun. They grew more thirsty. Bontekoe cut the heels off his shoes and let them all have a 'cup' of water from the barrels. Three-quarters of their supply was now gone for they had to share with their mates in the sloop who had nothing in which to store water. The days that followed were terrible. Their tongues turned to leather, their throats and palates were parched. They had cramp from lack of food. Every morning they hoped to see land, and they were always overcome by disappointment when so far as eye could see, there was only water.

Silence fell upon them.



CHAPTER XXV

DESPAIR AND HOPE

A NEW shipmate had appeared among the shipwrecked men. They felt his presence, heard it in their own hoarse, feeble voices, and saw it in the dull, glazed eyes of their mates. His name was Despair.

When one of the sailors saw what looked like land, all of them seized their oars feverishly and, gasping, rowed hard through the waves. Then Despair vanished as silently as he had come. But when the land resolved itself as usual into air and clouds, the intruder returned. The men avoided looking at one another in order to escape him and remained silent lest their voices betray his presence. The silence grew oppressive; it wrung the heart.

One day there was great excitement. About thirty sea-gulls flew towards the boats from the east. By twilight they had caught five of them. The birds were plucked and the meat was divided. With eager hands the sailors took the tiny bit of meat intended for them, and chewed and sucked as long as possible on the bones. The next morning the gulls had vanished.

None the less they felt more hopeful now. Sharing the food-supply between sloop and yawl had strengthened their sense of comradeship too, and they decided to take their shipmates in the sloop into the yawl, in spite of the danger involved. The oil in the lantern had long since been consumed, and so the danger of losing contact by night had increased considerably. The mast and the sail of the sloop were taken over by

the yawl. When the wind rose towards evening, all rejoiced to note that the yawl was sailing faster, in spite of the heavier load.

It was now five days since the sailors had tasted a drop of water.

Behind the boats a horrible escort had gathered. When a sailor saw the white belly of a shark gleaming in the water for the first time he uttered a yell of loathing and terror. Time and again one of the sailors would thrust a rusty sword that they had found in the sloop into the water and all cried out with joy when a trail of red blood showed that the blow had been aimed well.

But worst of all was the torture of thirst. One day a school of flying-fish rose directly before the boat, probably to escape the sharks. They fell against the sail and were snatched by the sailors, who consumed them greedily. They tasted better than the most delicious salmon.

Then they sailed on again. On December 1st—it was the twelfth day since they had been in the boats—some of the men, in spite of the warnings of the skipper and the surgeon, began to drink the salt water. Since it did not allay their thirst, they drank more and more till their stomachs rebelled and threw it all up. This was fortunate for them, for so they escaped worse tortures. But their throats burned more than ever and their thirst had increased. Floorke had made a cut in his arm and was sucking his own blood.

Daddy Longjacket, the surgeon, who had lost all his vitality, suggested feebly that they spring a leak in the yawl and all go to their death together.

'And feed the sharks?' asked Bontekoe.

Not one of them wanted that. With renewed energy, firmly resolved not to yield their bodies to the sharks so long as they had a spark of life in them, the men searched the eastern sky.

The sharks were patient; they did not abandon the yawl.

Then their courage sank again. Several of the sailors threatened to throw themselves overboard.

'The devil take you!' said Bontekoe angrily, with his hoarse voice. 'If the stupid fish can hold out, can't we?'

But some of them had lost the last bit of endurance. It was not the first time in the annals of the sea that sharks had pursued a boatful of shipwrecked sailors! They knew what they were about! With hollow, feverish eyes they stared into the water and cringed when a shark flashed near.

Hajo tried to encourage Padde, but was near despairing himself. Bontekoe, like Hajo, tried to comfort his seventy children—but he was in need of comfort himself.

Rolf said nothing, but stared for hours at a time at the eastern horizon. Everything depended on sticking it out! Sticking it out!

The next day it rained. In nervous haste the sailors caught the water in their sails, filled the two barrels, their leather caps, their shoes, drinking greedily all the while. . . . Their clothes were wet through. The morning air was cool, the sky a hopeless grey. Now that their thirst was quenched they stared with heavy eyes into the thick rain and mist. The brooding silence of the past week fell upon them once more.

There was a hoarse cry—'Land!'

They all sat still, as if turned to stone, staring with wide-open eyes, their faces full of doubt and fear. They scarcely dared to rise and convince themselves. Who could now bear another disappointment?

But the man at the helm was certain. 'Land! Land ahead!' There were tears in his voice.

Then they raised their stiff limbs, looked and—there, on the eastern horizon . . .! Some of them roared with joy, others stared in silence at the greyish-blue line in the greyish-blue distance.

Then, cursing and gasping, they set sail once more. Gradually the strip of land grew larger. They distinguished hills, the lighter strip of surf, and beyond it green woods. It could not be Sumatra—it was a little island. But Bontekoe knew that a chain of islands lay west of Sumatra, hard by the coast. This must be one of them.

As they approached the island, the sea began to swell.

'We must find a place to land!' said Bontekoe. And in spite of the protests of the eager crew he forced them to sail around the island until they found a little bay. They rowed in, dropped anchor, climbed out of the boat as fast as their stiff and swollen limbs permitted, and waded through the shallow water.

In tears, the poor fellows kissed the strand.

CHAPTER XXVI

JOPPIE THE THIRD

WHEN the first excitement was over, some of them crept up from the shore towards the woods. There were coco-nut palms everywhere, and they only had to stoop to pick up coco-nuts. Most of these had been cracked in falling and could be split open with the hands. And then they set their teeth in the white meat. . . . When they had all stuffed down as many coco-nuts as they had room for, they felt the need of rest—nothing but rest! They dragged together dry grass and leaves, and then. . . . Oh, how many days had passed since they had been able to stretch themselves! And now they had a soft bed and were no longer in danger of starving to death! Now everything was right! The skipper was with them, and he knew the way! With boundless gratitude they all fell asleep.

But a few hours later one after the other awoke with terrible stomach aches. They had eaten too much and their organs could not digest the unaccustomed food. At last they fell asleep again and were awakened by the sun. They lay in the warm sand beneath the glowing sun, which would soon become too hot. They listened to the surf in silence, full of a deep sense of joy.

Bontekoe summoned them to say a prayer of thanks together. Then they sang a few psalms. The sailors had rarely prayed with a more profound sense of gratitude than on this wonderfully beautiful morning on the shore of this little island off the coast of Sumatra.

After that they began to reconnoitre once more. One party went to the south along the shore, the other towards the north. They returned with coco-nuts, bananas, and several other strange fruits. They had not come upon any human beings, but the party that had gone north had met with an amusing incident.

They had found a skiff on the shore, from which a path led through the woods. Although they had not seen a soul, they had heard the bark of a dog, and when they had followed the sound they came upon a clearing in the centre of which stood a dilapidated little hut raised on high piles, to which a half-starved dog was tied. A few doves fluttered from the thatched roof and out of the low door, giving the whole building the appearance of a dovecot rather than a human dwelling.

As soon as the dog saw them, he greeted them joyfully, stood

on his hind legs, wagged his tail, and generally expressed his delight in meeting them. When they tried to enter the house by a rickety ladder it fell to pieces. Further exploration brought nothing more to light. They untied the dog and Floorke decided to take him along as a prize of war. Mad with excitement, the dog leaped around among his rescuers while the sailors tried in vain to solve the mystery of the abandoned boat, the dilapidated hut, and the starved dog.

So they returned to the yawl with one living creature more. The others, envious of this adventure, spun long yarns of their experiences until Floorke called a halt. Then they loaded the yawl with coco-nuts and bananas and stowed away as much fruit as they could in every available corner until the yawl looked like a market-boat. They had found no water, so they filled their barrels with the milk from the coco-nuts.

When they were about to start the dog begged, in dog-fashion, to be taken along. The sailors yielded. You could count his skinny ribs, his ears stood up stiff and long, his coat was bristly; but they decided that he had an honest nature, judging by his frank eyes.

They christened him too. They called him 'Joppie'—for it's a rule of the sea to try a thing three times.

The yawl set sail once more at twilight. But now the sailors

were filled with new courage. The skipper declared that they would see Sumatra within two days. They gulped down the sense of fear that overcame them as the island sank into the darkness—and soon the gentle, serene moon rose to watch like a mother over the seventy brave lads. A great swarm of bats rose high above the yawl, flying like silent shadows towards the east.

Silence everywhere. Silence. Silence.

CHAPTER XXVII

SUMATRA

THERE was a golden gleam in the ivory-coloured sky; a few little clouds rose, showing a golden lining beneath; then the sun itself, glorious in rose-red draperies, ascended from the sea. Later it assumed its day clothes and the heavens turned blue, bright blue, until it became cobalt.

Three brilliant white sea-gulls flew about the yawl, diving gracefully into the water for fish. Joppie barked at them fiercely till the sailors taught him manners by holding him in the sea till he stopped. At noon they sighted Sumatra, as Bontekoe had calculated—a long strip of land changing gradually into a wall of deep violet mountains, behind which sat a giant volcano, belching thick, white clouds of smoke across the sky.

Since they still had plenty of food, they decided to sail along the coast until they reached the Strait of Sunda and Bantam. They changed their direction to the south-east. The sun was setting and the wind had veered to the north so that all was well for them. Then the moon rose, first pale, then with a silvery glow that filled the whole sky with mysterious brilliance. The stars gleamed in many colours and seemed to send down upon the earth the sound of soft, sweet music.

A boat! As if bathing in the moonlight, the little vessel danced upon the waves. A solitary fisherman, standing and casting his net, was so engrossed in this task that he did not see the yawl approaching. He was almost naked and the moonlight outlined his slender form. A cloth was knotted around his head like a crown. Suddenly he noticed the yawl, drew in his net, and paddled away in his slender boat. It danced over the high breakers gaily, while Floorke shouted a few Malay words in vain. '*Sobat!* Friend!' he roared. But the native did not seem to trust greatly in their friendship.

The next day their supply of coco-nuts grew low and they had to replenish their stock.

They succeeded in landing at the mouth of a river. The tall trunks of coco-nut palms and betel palms rose high along its banks, and a grove of bamboo trees near by rustled in the breeze and gleamed in the sunlight. Floorke found a plant on which grew edible beans. Their oily taste inclined them to believe that they must be very nourishing, and the skipper ordered them to gather as many as possible.

The men then explored the region in small groups. Suddenly Harmen and Padde, who had wandered away from the others, saw before them—a little fire!

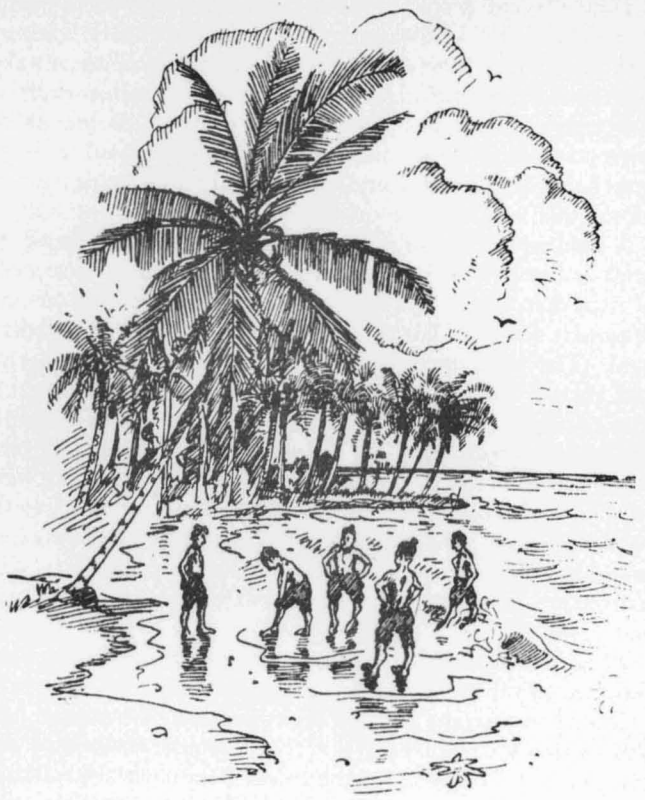
'What l-luck!' stammered Padde.

Harmen had flung himself on his knees and was blowing into the ashes as hard as he could. Here was something they needed! Hilke had left the tinder-box in the sloop when he and the others had come into the yawl. But here was fire! 'Wood!' ordered Harmen, between breaths. 'Dry wood! Padde got busy, and, thanks to Harmen's blowing, flames soon sprang up out of the ashes.

'What's that?' asked Padde, pointing to a banana leaf on which lay a little pile of tobacco. Harmen seized it and stuck it into his pocket. Then he yelled: 'Ho! Hello! Come here!'

The sailors came rushing up, and when they saw those two precious gifts to men, fire and tobacco, they danced for joy. Grinning they took their pipes out of their pockets while the tobacco was carefully divided. There was little, but each one would at least have a few whiffs.

That night they all sat around their fire, wondering about the inhabitants of the island who had left the fire and the tobacco behind them, perhaps in sudden flight. They heard strange sounds in the trees, as of monkeys climbing and great birds calling. The ghostly shapes of bats flitted over the water like grey spooks. It was good to be sitting by the great fire in safety. When Bontekoe called for volunteer sentinels, Hajo and Rolf were the first to come forward, and when they walked off to station themselves on the river, Padde came trotting after.



They succeeded in landing at the mouth of a river. The men then explored the region in small groups.

They climbed a tree growing over the water, from which they had a splendid view upstream. But they had not reckoned with those imps of torture which make it impossible to pass the night in the tropical forests without protection against them—mosquitoes. Their buzzing was enough to drive one mad. Sssssssuuuu—sssssinnng—sssssuuuu. Padde cut off a leafy branch and began to fan and beat about him till he nearly fell off the tree, and the two others followed suit.

A herd of young wild boars came down to the water to drink and wallow in it. Suddenly one disappeared with a cry of pain that was stifled in the water as some unseen enemy dragged it down. The others rushed away. The boys breathed hard. The mosquitoes kept on stinging them. Glow-worms rose around them and soared into the crowns of the trees. A frog croaked and another answered from the opposite bank. Breckeckeckeckeckkkkk. . . . A waterfowl flew out of the reeds, dashed clumsily against the tree in which the three boys were sitting, tumbled into the water, and then settled quietly in another clump of reeds. They heard a monotonous, wailing sound like the soft sing-song of a half-forgotten melody. The natives say that crocodiles sing to lure their prey into the water.

At last Hilke and Harmen arrived to relieve the boys. They returned to the camp and fell asleep by the fire.

They had scarcely finished their breakfast of coco-nut milk and roasted nuts or beans the next morning, when they saw three natives walking along the strand from the south. Daddy Longjacket, the surgeon, Bolle and Floorke, who all boasted of speaking 'fluent' Malay, were sent to meet them, Floorke girding on the rusty sword and acting as leader of the delegation.

When the two groups stood face to face, the natives made a very favourable impression. Their skin was light, they wore bright cloths around their smooth, shining black hair, and while they were bare to the waist, they wore a kind of skirt with beautiful designs upon them around their hips. They seemed civilized and addressed the sailors fearlessly and without surprise, greeting them in the Malay tongue.

Floorke at once took command of the situation. '*Makan? Bajar!*' ('Have you food? We'll pay!')

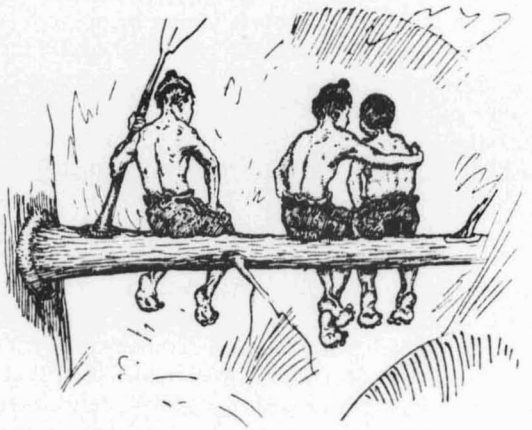
'*Ada makanan, tuan,*' came the affirmative reply.

'*Makanan apa?*' asked Floorke. ('What kind of food?')

One of the Malays enumerated: '*Nassi, kambing, ajam-ajam, ikan, buwah*' ('Rice, goat, chickens, fish, fruit.)

'*Negeri apa ini?*' inquired the surgeon now. ('What land is this?')

'*Negeri Lampong, tuan,*' came the reply.



'Ah, the southernmost province of Sumatra! Good! *Mana negeri Djawa?*' ('Where is Java?')

The Malays pointed down the coast to the south-east.

'Right!' exclaimed the surgeon joyfully, and in Malay he told them that they had been shipwrecked and were now bound for Bantam.

Bantam was far, with a sea between, the natives assured them before they started off to fetch supplies. Bontekoe in the meantime collected all the money he could from the sailors. They dug into their pockets and caps until they had scratched together eighty reals.[1] Bontekoe thought the natives would know the value of money, for plenty of trading ships

[1] A *real* was a Spanish coin worth about twelve and a half cents.

touched along their coast and so they could make use of the coins they received.

About twenty natives soon appeared with fowls, rice, fruit, and two goats. Bontekoe, delighted at the prospect of having his men enjoy an appetizing meal again after weeks of bitter want, soon came to an agreement about the price; and then the meal was prepared in a singularly cheerful mood. Bolle, the cook, and Harmen, his assistant, had never before received so much good advice. Every one wanted to taste whether 'it was done at last' till the cook had to beat them off with the wooden spoon which he had made from a branch.

CHAPTER XXVIII

MALAY HOSPITALITY

ACCORDING to the natives there was a village about an hour upstream by boat. Bontekoe decided to let them row him there in order to secure more provisions, and told his nephew that he might come along as interpreter. Rolf was delighted and immediately inquired: 'May Hajo come along?'

Bontekoe grinned. 'You two are always holding each other's apron-strings! Well then——!'

Rolf ran as fast as he could to tell Hajo. Five minutes later Harmen approached the skipper. 'I—I've never been in a Malay boat, skipper!' and he swallowed hard.

'What!' cried Bontekoe. 'If I take you along too, the natives will think I've been sailing with a load of children!'

Harmen turned white. 'Children, skipper? I'll be sixteen in March!'

'Clear out!' laughed the skipper, and Harmen was about to slink off when Rolf stopped him. 'He'll take you,' he whispered.

At that moment the boat shot in, paddled by two Malays, seated one in the prow, one in the stern. As soon as the skipper and the three boys had taken their places, the Malays pushed off. At that moment Padde came running up, out of breath.

'I'm going along,' he cried. 'Put her back!'

'You can swim after us!' grinned Harmen, little thinking that Padde would follow his suggestion. Splash! he had dashed into the water and was wading after them. With the help of Hajo and Rolf, the skipper pulled the determined

Padde on board. 'You damned youngster!' stormed the skipper. 'Do you want to be swallowed by a crocodile?'

'I want to go with my friend,' gasped Padde, as he seated himself on the bottom of the boat and angrily began to wring his wet cap.

'Forward! Row!' Bontekoe ordered, and the two Malays at once dipped their paddles in the water, although the order had been given in Dutch. They worked the boat around the bay with the greatest skill and then turned up the widening river. The bright palms-tree along the banks gave place to darker trees with foliage, higher than the church at home. Great brown monkeys followed the boat along the shore, leaping from one climbing plant to another or from tree to tree. One old monkey threw stones at them, without paying any attention to the Malay curses of the two natives. Brilliantly coloured birds fluttered from branch to branch, spreading their long tails.

They passed a few little huts where they saw women washing clothes in the river. They wore a skirt, or *sarong*, as Rolf called it, closed over their bosom, and beat the wash against a large stone. Naked children were playing in the water, the girls with their hair tied high in a knot, the boys shaved except for a coal-black lock in the front of their oval-shaped skulls.

As soon as the women noticed the boat, they cried out in surprise: '*Tjo-bah!*' They overwhelmed the two men in the boat with questions, as they shot by, but they got no answer except '*Diam*!' ('Hold your tongue!')

The Malays at last stopped and fastened their boat near a little hut, beneath which other boats were moored. Bontekoe and the four boys followed their guides along a path through bamboo forests and beside two ponds until they reached the village, surrounded by green grass, in which two giant buffaloes with heavy horns were grazing. An embankment of earth covered with growing plants and flowers and topped by a fence of thick, pointed bamboo pales surrounded the village. Before an opening in this rampart squatted a man with a spear.

When the two Malays called to him, he rose, looking at the white men with suspicion, and struck twice upon a wooden

Before an opening in this rampart squatted a man with a spear. He rose, looking at the white men with suspicion.

block. They passed through and came to an open space swarming with poultry.

Beneath the shade of a cluster of banana and *papaja*-trees four young girls were pounding rice. Their beautiful, shining black hair was gracefully knotted on their necks and a few bright flowers were placed in it. Their bosoms were uncovered to the waist but they wore a garment from the hips to the knees. They hummed as they pounded the grain in four wooden troughs, fastened in a row in a log shaped like a boat, stopping only to drive off the greedy chickens. When they observed the five whites, they screamed.

'*Tabeh*!' said Harmen pleasantly. ('Good day!')

'*Tabeh, tuan*!' stammered one of the girls in reply. ('Good day, sir.')

As the little party crossed to the village proper, all the inhabitants came out, probably in response to the signal that had been given on the block of wood by the watchman. Harmen greeted them, but his pleasant '*Tabeh*' was answered only by a murmur.

The houses were all built on high, strong piles. Some of them had a balcony and three or four lattice-windows. The walls of bamboo were skilfully woven, with all sorts of figures in the design. Beneath the pointed roofs the wood was carved and painted. Under most of the houses a boat was fastened with ropes of *rotang*,[1] and all of them sported a cage on a post in which a little grey pigeon lived. There were chickens everywhere and a few young roosters mingled their hoarse crowing with the self-satisfied cackling of the hens. As in the village of Santa Maria, here too the women and girls peeped out timidly from behind the windows and at sight of the strangers the naked babies fled for safety to their mothers.

So they approached the largest and most beautiful house, probably that of the village chief. Their guides bade them wait, and in the meantime Harmen continued his efforts to make friends by repeating '*Tabeh*' and nodding. At last he seemed to make headway. Some of the natives began to call to one another and to grin. 'Aha!' thought Harmen. 'Now

[1] *Rotang*—bamboo.

I've caught you.' And to every one's surprise, he turned a marvellous somersault. Harmen was equal to the circus in some of his tricks, and this time too he made a hit. There was a moment's silence, then all burst into loud laughter. The women and girls in the background, pushed forward and so Harmen turned another somersault, this time backwards.

At that moment appeared on the veranda of the chieftain's house a native, dressed in a long skirt around his loins, a jacket, and a headcloth. He wore a broad, gold-embroidered girdle, in the back of which was fastened a curiously shaped weapon with a graceful hilt. There was silence immediately, and as he stepped slowly and solemnly down the veranda to greet the strangers, the Malays stepped back respectfully and squatted on the ground at some distance, their hands in their laps. Bontekoe and the four boys realized at once that this was a different people from the blacks of Santa Maria and decided not to fail in civility. Bontekoe bowed and all the boys followed his example except Padde, who in his confusion wiped his nose on his sleeve and cleared his throat.

The chief bowed in welcome and bade the strangers to be his guests. Rolf, who spoke Malay best, thanked him, and then they followed him to the veranda, in response to his hospitable gestures. Here several women and girls had seated themselves, but at a sign from the chief they yielded their places and spread six mats for the strangers and the chief, who all sat down, their legs crossed beneath them. At another sign, the girls set down a copper bowl in which stood several vessels, fantastically carved. In one of them lay a nut, in another a wreath of green leaves, in a third a white powder, in the fourth something else. What was all this, thought the boys.

The native made a little mat of a few leaves, took something from each of the vessels, folded the leaves together, and stuck them into his mouth. His gesture invited them to do likewise.

'Do as he does!' Bontekoe told his band of faithful followers. 'You must chew it—it's a cud of betel-nuts.'

The skipper and the boys did their best and stuck their cuds into their mouths. The stuff tasted bitter.

There was a long silence, for Bontekoe had given Rolf a hint

to wait until their host had addressed them. At last the chief motioned to the girls to remove the bowl and turned to Bontekoe.

'May I ask, sir, from where you come?'

Rolf told their story as best he could, and explained that they hoped to purchase food enough at Sumatra for the rest of their journey. The chief assured them that there were probably people in the village who could sell them food, and invited them to honour him by taking the next meal with him and passing the night with him. Rolf accepted with pleasure the invitation for the meal for his party, but regretted that, as they must hurry back to their companions and proceed to Bantam, they would be unable to remain overnight.

Rolf turned to translate the conversation to his uncle and the others. Harmen had become suspicious and proclaimed his distrust of the artful chieftain to the others. Bontekoe shared his feeling—there was something oppressive in this excess of politeness—and he regretted that he had not brought a dozen sturdy sailors with him instead of four boys.

'In India a guest is held sacred!' he said, trying to make the best of a difficult situation. Hajo thought that their host was a very pleasant fellow and that it was not right always to suspect people. And Padde couldn't keep his eyes off the girl who had handed him the dish of betel. Her head was a lovely oval; her little ears, nose, and mouth were more delicate than any he had ever seen. Her gracefully arched eyebrows, her glowing dark eyes half-veiled by long lashes, her magnificent head of hair in which a silver ornament and a few white blossoms were fastened, her slender throat passing so softly into the exquisite line of the shoulders, her fine arms, hands, and fingers, her beautiful ankles with their silver rings, her curiously coloured garment—she was a picture of perfect beauty. Padde was lost to the world.

The girl, too, noticed Padde. Now and then she sent a shy glance from the corner of her eye, whereupon Padde would turn as red as a beet and look away.

Their host now suggested that they visit the village, and they accepted gladly, happy to get up once more and stop chewing betel.

'Do you pound rice in your country as we do here?' inquired the chief as they passed another group of four girls engaged in this work.

'Rice doesn't grow in our country,' replied Rolf, to the great surprise of all who heard him.

'May we watch them?' asked Rolf, pleasantly.

'Certainly,' answered the well-bred chief. And he motioned to the girls to continue their pounding.

They took their places along both sides of the log, took hold of a long wooden stick, and began to pound in obedience to a whispered order of one of them. Bontekoe and the boys soon saw that they pounded according to a definite rhythm. Then the leader whispered a word and all four suddenly changed the time. They began to hum, first softly, then more loudly, changing their song as they changed their rhythm.

The whole scene was inexpressibly peaceful; the air was saturated with the sweet odour of flowers, the sun shone softly upon them.

'Delightful!' cried Bontekoe, and the girls blushed as if they had understood his praise. The youngest giggled, whereupon the others, too, grew merry, until an old woman, who brought a new supply of unpeeled rice in a basket, scolded them shrilly. The chief led his guests on until they stopped to watch an old man carving the wood of a door. His only tool was a short knife, but with infinite patience he had created, as if by magic, a design in which birds, fishes, and trees appeared beautifully outlined.

When they returned to the house of the chieftain the feast awaited them. It was served on a large mat, around which the guests, seated on smaller mats, enjoyed a profusion of dishes served in plantain leaves. There were all sorts of fish served with rice, chicken, and all kinds of fruit. But everything was so strongly seasoned that the tears came to their eyes. There was a great variety of pastry as dessert, and afterwards a fermented palm wine was handed round. Harmen still suspected the chief and hesitated before each dish until he had seen him partake of it.

After dinner they attacked the problem of procuring supplies

for their shipmates. Rolf inquired of the natives standing about whether they had any food to sell and Bontekoe bought as many chickens and as much rice as he needed and had it sent to the yawl. The two goats offered them proved so young that they decided to look at a young buffalo instead, a fine fellow with great horns. When they had agreed on a price, the question was how to get him to the yawl. Not trusting the native to deliver the animal, the four boys offered to lead him by a rope down the river, while the skipper returned to the yawl with the two natives.

After the boys had bidden the skipper farewell, they borrowed a rope to throw around the buffalo's horns. Harmen, who was used to cattle, managed to throw the lasso, but the buffalo was new to this game and charged upon him, snorting and bellowing. Faced by the angry beast, with death the matter of a moment, Harmen saved himself instinctively by one his his circus tricks. He rushed upon the buffalo, grasped him by the horns and leaped over him backwards!

It was an achievement to be talked of for fifty years in Harmen's native village, and it lost nothing in the telling! But at the time it astonished the natives as much as the buffalo, which now stumbled down to the rampart, where it stood with lowered head and fiery eyes.

Rolf angrily asked the native who had sold them the buffalo to help them, but he declared that he was afraid.

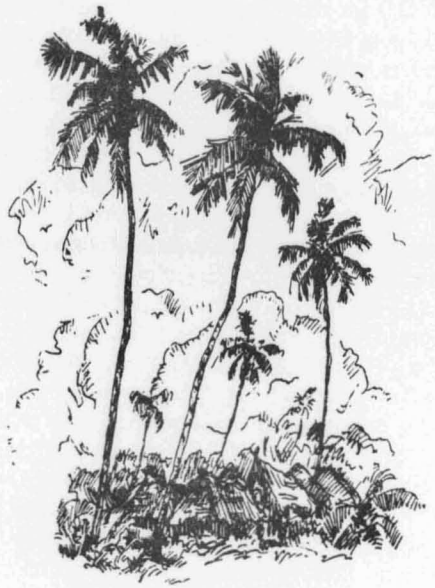
'Afraid?' said Rolf. 'Don't you know how to manage your own bull?'

'My bull?' replied the wily Malay. 'He's not my bull. I've sold him to you.'

Furious though they were, there seemed no way out but to wait until it grew dark and then fasten a rope around the buffalo's legs. Though Bontekoe would be uneasy at their delay, they would explain it all to him later. In the meantime they returned to the chief's house, where they were again courteously served with palm wine and then led to their quarters to rest.

Chatting happily and delighted by the exhilarating effects of the wine and the kindness of the chief, the boys followed a

servant to a little hut near by. They climbed up a steep ladder and crept into the dark interior, Harmen leading, Padde bringing up the rear. They were scarcely safely inside when they were seized by unseen hands and, in spite of their furious struggles, bound—and left alone in the darkness.



CHAPTER XXIX

DERELICT

A BLIND rage that they had allowed themselves to be caught in a trap overwhelmed the four boys. They tried in vain to free themselves, but the *rotang* ropes were strong.

'If the skipper and our mates only knew, they'd free us!' said Hajo.

'Why don't you go and tell them?' asked Harmen scornfully.

At this moment they heard confused voices outside. Rolf pricked his ears and caught: 'Seventy.' So! That was about the number of the crew in the yawl. The Malays were plainly planning something against them. And the skipper—where would he be at this moment?

'He's probably back at the camp by now,' said Rolf. 'All their kindness was meant to take us in. They would have let us go if we hadn't waited. They intend to attack the camp unawares to-night.'

'If we could only warn them!' Hajo clenched his teeth in rage. 'Tied fast and imprisoned!' he muttered.

It grew still outside—strangely still. Later they heard children crying, the shrill voices of women, the howling of dogs. A ray of moonlight shone through a crack in the roof. How late was it? Midnight? Dawn?

Then the ladder creaked. They heard a quick, soft step. The door creaked, the floor yielded a little. '*Tuan*!' a soft, girlish voice murmured.

The boys heard their hearts beating. '*Apa*?' asked Rolf.

The girl knelt down, found the rope that bound Rolf's hands, and loosened it with much effort. 'Now you can free the others,' she whispered. 'The men have all left the village.

Go out by the gate, then to the left by the little path. They won't look for you there.' She crept away again and down the ladder.

The boys did not hesitate a moment. Rolf freed Hajo's hands in mad haste and together they released Harmen and Padde.

'What a darling!' sighed Padde. 'It was the girl with the lovely eyes, of course!'

With their hands freed, they untied the ropes around their feet and with stiff legs crept down the ladder. They made their way to the gate, and as they crept from house to house they noticed that all the boats had been removed. Would they be able to warn their mates in time?

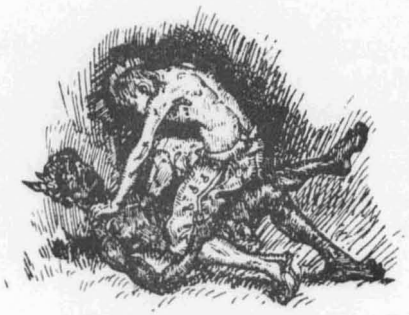
As they crossed the courtyard in the greatest haste, Harmen unluckily stepped on a sleeping chicken. It flew up, clucking wildly, and was immediately joined by a chorus of other hens and a dozen barking dogs. Quick as lightning Harmen jumped into the bushes surrounding the open court and the others followed, their teeth chattering with fear. A woman stepped out of the nearest hut and called anxiously: '*Si-apa*?' ('Who's there?')

Other doors were opened. Then the woman said: 'It was the chickens.' The doors were closed again and silence reigned once more.

The four boys continued until they had almost reached the outer gate. Here Harmen crept on in advance to see whether it was still guarded. The others awaited his signal. He moved silently to where the block of wood stood and peered around the corner. A native, with his back towards them, sat on the ground, humming a monotonous, nasal tune. Harman decided that he could manage this alone. He crept on silently, step by step, holding his breath! Now another step, silently; and now the native raised his head, stopped humming, and seemed to stop breathing. It was one of those strange moments when one sees nothing, hears nothing, yet feels that danger is near. The man turned his head slowly.

Harmen did not wait. He sprang upon the sentinel like a wild cat, seized him by the throat, pressed him to the ground

with all his strength, holding him down with his knees. There was a stifled cry—no more. The native, mad with fear and pain, struggled and tried to reach the knife in his girdle. But Harmen did not let go his hold—there was no escape. The man's struggles grew feebler; his legs fell back limply. Harmen let go, shuddered, laid his head on the man's breast and listened to hear whether his heart was still beating. 'Thank God,' he whispered with convulsed lips. He turned to signal to the others, but they had forestalled him. 'Dead?' asked Rolf, while Hajo and Padde stared in horror at the limp body.



'No—only out of breath,' said Harmen. 'Take his knife—and his spear. We'll need them.'

The boys almost flew down the path to the river. Each of them felt that they would be too late to warn their friends, but none would confess this. Run, boys, run! They reached the river. All the boats were gone! Now down the path along the river, with Harmen leading! Run! Sometimes they missed their way, but always the silvery sheen of the water between the trees guided them. Run! Run!

They passed a house—thank God, there was no dog barking. Run! What was that? Voices? Yes, they saw three, four, six boats returning from the shore! Had the natives been routed? Or had the skipper put to sea in the yawl. . . . Oh,

God—was the yawl gone? The boys peered out from the trees and searched the faces in the boats for their friends, Floorke, Hilke, Gerretje, or one of the seventy others.

There was a tent made of mats in the first boat—the boat of the chieftain, their cunning betrayer, who had won them over by kindness only to destroy them! Other boats followed. The rowers all seemed very much excited; Rolf could not make out what they were saying. In none of the boats did they see any of their friends. Bontekoe and his trusty crew had defended themselves bravely, that was clear.

The boys dashed on. Now they saw a boat hanging under a hut which they passed. Cautiously they lifted it from the ropes, carried it to the river and lowered it. With trembling hands they seized the paddles in the bottom of the boat and pushed off. This was better. They got on fast, for the current was so strong that they merely had to hold their course. The trees along the shore glided by like pictures in a dream. The boys shivered from the damp mists—or was it from excitement? Soon they would be with their friends and would tell them of their adventures—of Harmen's wonderful jump over the buffalo, of the sweet little girl who had rescued them, and of how they had got the best of the wily chieftain. Who laughs last laughs best! Then they would set sail again, cheerfully. Java wasn't far away now!

They glided past the bend of the river where they had watched the night before. Now they could look down the river as far as the sea. The yawl was gone!

The boys moored their boat at a spot where they saw one of the anchors lying in the sand, with its cable cut. And there—on the shore—who was it? Floorke! Covered with wounds, he lay there, staring up into the starry heavens. His face and hair were clotted with blood, his mouth was half open so that his white teeth gleamed in the moonlight. Overcome with horror, the boys hid their faces.

'Dead!' stammered Harmen, and Padde cried: 'There—another! and there . . .'

The second body—it was Nosey's—was mutilated as horribly as the first. The third was the unfortunate sailor who had lost his toe at Fogo, wounded by the Spaniards. Speechless, shuddering, the four boys looked at their dead shipmates.

At last Harmen broke the silence. 'What's to become of us?' he asked hoarsely. Then he yelled: 'Look! there!' and he pointed to the south, where a tiny grey spot showed against the dark horizon. 'The yawl!' He drew off his breeches, waved them in a frenzy, and tried to shout above the roar of the surf: 'Comrades!' He shook his fist, and then he threw himself upon the sand with a groan.

Hajo roused himself from his despair first. 'We'll follow them in the boat!' he cried.

Harmen jumped up. 'The boat!' And he stared wide-eyed at the spot where they had left the boat. It was gone!

'Why didn't you tie it fast?' he cried furiously. 'Look, there it is! Wait'—and he was about to dash into the sea.

Rolf held him back. 'Too late, Harmen. Look.' And Harmen, trying angrily to shake off Rolf's clutch, looked out and saw the boat overturned by the breakers and sinking beneath them.

'It would not have been of any use,' said Rolf.

'What now?' roared Harmen. 'Let ourselves be butchered?'

'We'll walk to the Strait of Sunda,' said Rolf. 'We've got legs! From there we'll cross over to Bantam.'

'The Strait of Sunda is just around the corner, I s'pose,' jeered Harmen, flinging himself down into the sand again.

'I'm with you, Rolf,' said Hajo. 'I won't give up.'

Rolf nodded. 'But we must hurry. They'll be looking for us. But we'll bury—them first.'

With knives and bare hands they dug a broad grave, laid Floorke in the middle and the two others by his side. Then they threw sand upon their lost mates, covered the grave, and said farewell.

'That is over!' said Rolf huskily. 'Now we must go.'

Again Harmen and Padde objected, but Rolf scarcely listened. 'Ready, Hajo?'

'You're coming along, Padde!' ordered Hajo.

'I'm not coming!' spluttered Padde.

White with rage, Hajo turned upon him. 'Don't you want to see your mother again?' he asked. At that Padde yielded. Then Hajo turned to Harmen. 'You're coming too,' he ordered.

'Let him alone, Hajo,' said Rolf carelessly. 'We've no use for weak sisters.'

At that Harmen jumped up with an oath. 'I'll go,' he said. 'But as soon as we're in Bantam I'll give you a beating for calling me a weak sister!'

Rolf paid no attention to this. 'Come!' he ordered. 'Along the shore.'

Silently the little band turned southward. Sleep well, Floorke, good chap! Farewell, Nosey. And you, Steven, the Unlucky! Rest in peace, all three! Your mates won't forget you, that's sure! . . .

The boys loitered along, Harmen and Padde in the rear. To Bantam—how far was that? To Bantam! And there was a sea between.

But gradually Rolf's determination affected the others. The devil! weren't there four of them, three of them grown lads, each of them armed with a knife, and with a dagger and a spear to boot? Perhaps they would come upon the yawl again if it returned to anchor. Anyway, they would show the Dutch East India Company the kind of cabin-boys they were!

Suddenly they heard fierce yelping behind them. They turned around in terror. A dog was dashing towards them—nothing but a dog with his tongue hanging out of his mouth like a rag.

'Joppie!'

It *was* Joppie. Wild with joy, he leaped upon them.

'That makes five,' said Rolf. 'Are you going to Bantam with us, Joppie?'

'Wow! wow! wow!' barked Joppie. That is dog language and means: 'You bet I am!'

So the five companions walked along the shore into an unknown future until dawn gilded the distant mountains. Then, tired to death, they stretched their weary bodies in the sand and slept!

PART TWO

CHAPTER XXX

THE WANDERERS

THE boys were awakened by the sun and the birds. Rested and cheered by the daylight, they soon recovered their spirits. They took a bath, baked themselves in the sand, and then breakfasted on the coco-nuts which Harmen had thrown down from a tree he had climbed. Hajo began to make himself a bow and arrows of bamboo wood, and as soon as the others saw him at work they decided to do likewise.

They exercised their ingenuity in strengthening the bows, twisting the strings from strips of the bark, and sharpening the long, slender arrows. Harmen made a few arrows for 'big game' by using some nails that he found in his pocket to tip the arrows.

Then they cut themselves three strong spears of bamboo, so that, with the sentinel's formidable weapon, each was armed with a spear and bow and arrows. Now they could take up the fight with all Sumatra! When a sea-gull flew by, four arrows whizzed through the air, and Padde actually brought down one of its white feathers.

That was the first, and the last time as well, that one of Padde's shots struck anything except one of his friends. 'The devil!' he cried, 'I didn't know I was such a good shot!' The others, too, were dumbfounded. But when he aimed at another sea-gull and his arrow whizzed through Hajo's hair instead, they put a stop to his efforts. Harmen wrenched the bow out of his hands and broke it in two. 'That's not a toy for you!' he declared, while Padde raged in vain.

The boys started their march again. They walked until heat, hunger, and thirst forced them to halt. Again they dined on coco-nuts and wet their throats with the milk. March

on! They felt like singing, and found that they walked better as they sang. They sang all the songs they knew, to cheer themselves, and even Joppie joined the quartet.

Joppie was not fat, but he took good care to have enough to eat. He would disappear at intervals between the trees and shrubs, and when the boys heard him yelping and followed the sound, they would see him gnawing at a mouse or a rat. He ate insects, worms, flies, and lizards too and everything seemed to agree with him.

At twilight the boys reached a narrow bay. The water was so calm and transparent that they sat down without a word to watch the sun setting in it. As the red disk dropped, Rolf said softly: 'The sun is rising now in Holland.'

Holland! They heard only the one word and their mood grew tender. The distant roar of the surf recalled sounds that were dear to memory. . . . How they longed to be at home in the cosy sitting-room, around the table with the others, eating Mother's steaming soup and carrots, or on the bench in front of the house, talking to the passers by—all good friends—and then to go in, wind the clock, crawl behind the bed-curtains, and lie down in the feather-bed with its deep hollow, where you slept better than anywhere else in the world.

'Do you know what always happens with me?' asked Harmen. 'When I'm away, I'm homesick, and when I'm at

home I get away as fast as I can. My father doesn't earn enough for the family. It's all right the first two days, but then . . .'

They were all silent. No one had listened to him. Suddenly he jumped up and took a deep breath. 'Come on! Let's make ourselves a house for to-night.'

They all agreed, and soon they had fastened their four spears crosswise together, laid another stake across them, made walls of a few branches and large plantain leaves, and spread grass upon the ground. Enchanted with their summer-house, they went to sleep. But in less than an hour they were so hot that they all crept out of their green tent again and passed the night under the open sky.

The next morning they found, lying comfortably in it on the soft grass and snoring happily, their friend Joppie.

CHAPTER XXXI

PADDE LOSES HIS TROUSERS

THE next morning was touched with magic. Dawn broke, colouring the horizon with bright beauty. The birds chanted in chorus. The sun, appearing from behind the deep purple hills, flung gold upon sky and water. 'Good morning!' said the sun.

The boys plunged into the bay, paddled, splashed, dived, and swam out to the breakers. Suddenly Padde began to yell and to run towards the land with wild leaps to the spot where their clothes lay.

What had happened? While they were swimming, a band of monkeys had come down from the trees, and the boldest had approached the clothes step by step, keeping a watchful eye on the boys meanwhile. When Padde screamed, the monkey had snatched the first garment he got hold of and jumped back into the tree, carrying Padde's breeches with him!

But Joppie, who had been roused from sweet dreams by Padde's yells, caught him on the fly and managed to get hold of one end of the trouser-leg. The other monkeys, seeing their friend in trouble, came to the rescue, and a tug of war ensued between the monkeys and Joppie. With his teeth buried in the trouser-leg, he was being pulled up from the ground, while Padde came running up as fast as his fat legs could carry him, hopeful of saving his precious breeches.

At this moment Joppie fell to the ground with a yelp of pain and half a trouser-leg, while the monkeys scurried off with deafening cries of triumph. Padde picked up the bit of cloth, saw that it was about as big as a handkerchief, and swore like a trooper as the others joined him.

Harmen tried to console him. 'It's not so bad—there are no girls near!' he said.

But Padde was heart-broken. At last Harmen had a brilliant idea.

'You shall have them, Padde! Just watch me.' And while the others watched him doubtfully, he began his shrewd campaign to recover the trousers. He opened the battle with a fierce war-cry, which the robbers in the tree answered in kind.

'Ssssst!' Harmen warned the others. 'They'll do everything I do, you see?' He leaped into the air, waved his arms, and made a handspring. The monkeys yelled and some of them leaped to another tree.

'Good!' rejoiced Harmen. 'Now we'll have them, one—two—three.' Then he lifted up his own trousers from the ground and threw them down again with an expression of utter disgust.

'Chrrr!' said the monkey who had the booty, holding on to it with might and main.

'It didn't work,' said Harmen sadly. 'I thought he'd throw them down.'

While the others were laughing at him, he had another idea. He tried to borrow Hajo's trousers, and when Hajo refused, he grumbled and took his own. He laid them on the ground as bait and placed above them a sling made of *rotang*, the end of which he kept in his hand. Concealing himself behind a big tree, he awaited developments.

One of the monkeys climbed down, dangling from a branch by his tail, and examined the bait. But the monkey which still held Padde's breeches paid no attention to the affair. Harman seemed to forget that there was nothing to be gained by capturing any other monkey. His honour was at stake. So he watched and watched.

At length the dangling monkey made a bold attempt. He snatched at the sling and Harmen drew it—he had caught his monkey! But at this moment the other monkey, still holding tight to Padde's breeches, swooped down, seized Harmen's 'bait' with his hind leg and made off with his prey, chattering

loudly. Harmen stood with his mouth open, so completely dumbfounded that he dropped his *rotang* lasso, and the captured monkey capered up the tree after his companions.

Harmen broke into a roar of agony. He wailed that he was the victim of his own generosity. In trying to help Padde, he had sacrificed his own trousers. And now, what ?

They talked and they debated. At last Hajo solved the difficulty by plaiting skirts of long grasses, fastened around the waist by *rotang* girdles, for the two trouserless boys. They put them on with deep sighs. But when Harmen saw that he looked like a regular cannibal he became reconciled and performed a war-dance, waving his spear and long knife so frantically that the monkeys in the trees chattered with delight.

Rolf ordered them to start again and they destroyed all traces of their stay. They followed the narrow strand around the bay until they reached the opposite side, where they came upon a path leading inland. They decided to continue along the strand, however, but suddenly found their way blocked by a wall of steep, bare cliffs going straight into the sea. So they had no choice but to return and take the path through the woods.

After the heat of the sun, the shady path was pleasant ; but they feared that it would lead to a village and proceeded cautiously. They peered around every curve. Suddenly Hajo, who was leading, made a sign, and the three others hid in a clump of bamboo-trees while he crouched in a bush growing near a coco-nut palm. But the danger proved a help instead, for Rolf was able to learn from the two little naked boys who came along that the path did indeed lead to their village, but that they would find another path by a brook which would take them into the deep, deep forest.

A few hundred yards farther on they came upon the brook, across which lay the trunk of a coco-nut tree. They crossed and on the other side saw a path, which they followed till noon, when they lay down to sleep for a few hours. They were very hungry, but as there was nothing to eat in sight, they drew their belts tighter and continued between steep, rocky walls covered with ferns ; through the dry bed of a river ; along

paths of overwhelming tropical beauty. Exotic ferns and shrubs spread their fantastic leaves, while innumerable brilliant red flowers sparkled among them and strange birds and butterflies fluttered about. It was a living fairy-tale.

They walked and walked for hours. Hajo was in a waking dream. He felt this path must lead to Wonderland, to a

secret treasure-house of a tropical kingdom, to mysteries forbidden to the human eye. How silent it was ! Not even a bird stirred here. How warm and moist the air was, how heavy the odour of the flowers.

Quite unexpectedly they came upon a high plateau, from which they had an unbroken view. Everywhere there were green trees covered with blossoms. They felt that they could breathe freely again ! They dropped into the grass and slept.

After an hour they continued their march until sunset, when they stood before a ravine. They decided to spend the night here, and, spreading a couch of ferns and grasses, they sat at the edge of the plateau, looking up the blue ravine,

behind which the red sun was setting in majesty. The sky grew pale. Night came on. How still it was! By now the boys were well enough acquainted with the tropics to know that this stillness would not last long. First the crickets would chirp. Mysterious, blood-curdling cries would break the silence of the night. Vague forms would approach in the dark —perhaps death would fall upon one unawares while one's blood froze in one's veins and one tried in vain to fling the horrible apparition from one!

They seemed to hear the trees conspiring to fall upon them; to listen to the soft tread of a tiger approaching; to feel the cold breath of a poisonous reptile and its moist belly on their bare shoulders. The gleaming, creeping plants seemed to be turning to snakes that tried to strangle them.

But at last, utterly exhausted, the boys fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXXII

A NEST OF CATS

NEXT morning the sun drove away all these phantoms and the boys awoke with a sense of relief. The trees stood forth in proud beauty; the little birds filled the air with their gay chatter, and the bright orchids caught their eyes and filled them with delight.

But their stomachs were empty! They must find something to eat or they would turn into walking skeletons. Yesterday they had eaten only fruit—delicious but not satisfying to Dutch boys! With bows and arrows, with spears and knives, they set forth to hunt, agreeing to meet here in an hour.

Hajo and Padde returned with two pigeons which Hajo had shot and with two more young pigeons which he had taken from a nest. Rolf had gone forth without a weapon, as a naturalist rather than as a hunter, and he forgot his hunger as he watched the thousand and one miracles around him. Here, wading through ferns higher than his waist, he saw an unknown, greenish-golden insect; here, a splendid, speckled orchid; here, a great red butterfly larger than the Lilliputian bird which was attacking it.

Suddenly he stepped back with a cry of amazement. Was this really wonderland? On the ground lay a flower so big . . . Rolf would never have believed that a flower could be so big! It seemed to be growing from the root of a plant whose other blossoms resembled a large cauliflower in form and colour. The open flower was flesh-coloured, and five thick petals in the middle were folded around a bowl-shaped cup. Rolf stooped to examine it and a swarm of insects flew buzzing

from the bowl, while a strong, unpleasant smell of decay rose to his nostrils. Decidedly, this beautiful flower did not smell good! Rolf raised one of the petals; it felt heavy and cold. What a pity that Daddy Longjacket was not here to enjoy this strange specimen!

Suddenly Rolf remembered that he had gone forth in search of something to eat, and all at once he felt as hungry as a lion. Less than a hundred steps away he saw a tree with a smooth trunk on which grew large, prickly fruits. He climbed another tree whose branches crossed over into the taller tree and worked his way up to the fruit. He cut off three of them, letting them drop into the ferns, and scrambled and balanced himself until he stood on the ground once more. He found his fruit. Each was larger than a human head and covered with thick, pointed spines or prickles.

He returned to find Hajo and Padde plucking the pigeons and proceeded to cut open the fruit. Brrr! The smell was anything but pleasant. It reminded them of onions, rotten eggs, and cheese. Padde held his nose and Hajo suggested that the fruit was rotten.

'Impossible!' said Rolf. 'The skin is whole, and, look, it's quite fresh inside! I remember now. The surgeon told us about a fruit that tastes very good but smells bad. It's a *durian*. I'm going to taste it.'

The fruit was separated into little cells by a yellowish-white skin. In each of the cells lay a kernel about the size of a duck's egg. Rolf took one of these kernels and put it into his mouth.

'Well?' asked the two boys, watching him with admiration.

'Fine,' said Rolf. 'Like nuts with cream. Taste it!'

Holding his nose, Hajo took one of the kernels and agreed that it wasn't bad. They both began to enjoy the feast, but Padde moved away twenty feet, declaring that the stench was making him sick.

Where was Harmen staying all this time, they wondered.

'He's hunting big game,' said Hajo. 'Maybe he'll come back with a royal tiger!'

'Of course he will,' laughed Rolf.

. . . . .

Armed with spear and dagger and dressed in his grass skirt, like a true cannibal, Harmen had taken the direction where the plateau rose gradually to the foot of a mountain. He had forced his way through hanging and creeping plants; climbed over dead giants of the forest and fallen into the soft mould; crept between narrow, rocky ravines and scraped his knees; plucked at a peacock's tail and clutched at a thorny bush to save himself from falling. He had picked up one of the peacock's feathers and stuck it into his long, neglected locks. While he was hacking away at a bamboo, a snake had fallen on his bare shoulder. He had flung it off in disgust.

And at last he came to the memorable spot where, as he always related afterwards, he had dropped his spear and dagger in astonishment. Between high bamboo stalks, in a nest of moss and leaves, lay three—cats! Harmen would never have believed it! The cats were rather large, almost the size of dogs. They had bright yellow coats with black stripes, and there were black rings around their tails. Harmen wanted to take one of these nice little pussies along, not to eat, but to play with! They were playing together so prettily! They were lying on one side and striking at one another with their paws —what thick, black paws they were for such nice little creatures! With a quick clutch, Harmen took one of them by the neck and carried it off to surprise his friends.

He made his way back in great excitement, dragging his spear behind him like a long sword, for the weight of the cat hindered him in breaking his way through the brush. At last he saw his friends.

'Hello! I have something, boys! A cat! Hold Joppie!' and he burst into full view.

Joppie's hair was standing up straight.

'But—it's a tiger!' cried Rolf.

Harmen stared at him. 'Good morning . . .!'

'A young royal tiger!'

Harmen turned white. 'A young tiger? The devil! Then I've been standing by a tiger's den! There were three of them! Three royal tigers!' And Harmen dropped his pussy with a shudder. But Rolf seized it.

'We must get away at once, the mother will be after it! Take the pigeons and the fruit—I'll carry the tiger.'

'What will you do with it?' asked Harmen, horrified.

'Tame it,' replied Rolf. 'It's very young. Come.'

'We'll take him back to Hoorn,' cried Hajo.

'If he doesn't eat us all up in a month," grumbled Harmen, as he picked up the fruit and smelled at it suspiciously.

They started, Padde and Joppie bringing up the rear, toward the ravine when—Hajo uttered a yell of horror—something sprang out of the bushes, not twenty feet away. The boys

knew at once—it was the proud, cruel monarch of the Indian jungle! Here he was, though the sun was still high in the heavens; his eyes did not gleam like fire; he did not spit poison; he was an animal like others as he turned his dark, flat head towards the boys, as if surprised himself. The stood paralysed with terror. There was a terrible moment. The creature bared its strong, sharp teeth and growled, suddenly turned its green eyes on Rolf—probably on the young cub in his arms—beat the ground with its thick, round tail, slunk back a step, uttered a hoarse, sharp roar, more ominous than any sound than they had ever heard, stooped to spring—when Rolf, following an inspiration, flung the cub violently towards the tiger.

He had done the very best thing possible. The tiger seized the cub between its teeth and leaped, with a splendid, graceful vault, away into the bushes.

'Bye-bye!' stammered Harmen with lips as pale as chalk.

The boys ran down the path as fast as their legs could carry them, Harmen first, like a professional sprinter; Padde last, always looking back in terror, and crying: 'Not so fast! I can't . . .!'

CHAPTER XXXIII

'TABEH!'[1]

THE boys ran, ran! They felt that the forest was bewitched since they had stood face to face before its monarch. The bushes, the clusters of bamboo—he might jump at them from anywhere!

Forward! Ever forward! At last they sat down, dripping with sweat.

'Where's Joppie?' asked Rolf. Joppie had disappeared.

'A fine dog!' grumbled Harmen. 'Why didn't he attack the tiger?'

'Why didn't you?'

'I! If he had waited a moment longer, I was going to throw this at him,' and he pointed to the *durian*. 'The smell would have done for him!'

'And I had my spear ready, eh, Padde?' cried Hajo.

'You could have killed him, if you had tried!' agreed Padde. 'I had my hands full of the pigeons or I would——' But at this they all roared so that he could only add: 'You didn't laugh before!'

They started again and soon came upon a cross path, on which they found the mark of a child's foot. Before venturing farther, they made a meal of the pigeons, and Hajo and Rolf feasted on the fruit which Harmen and Padde scorned to touch.

They called for Joppie again and again, but in vain. The way became steep and they had to climb. On one side rose a

[1] *Tabeh!*—Good day!

cliff from which a band of monkeys watched them and sent dry branches down on their heads. Now the path turned off and they stood before a natural stairway. Was it really possible that Nature had arranged these broad, basaltic steps so evenly? At each side stood banana-trees, with clusters of yellow fruit, shading the stairs with their great green leaves, and in the cracks of rocks grew dark-green moss with little red flowers.

'Like the stairway to an old castle!' said one of the boys.

They plucked some of the bananas, but they tasted bitter.

'Wild bananas,' explained Rolf.

Hajo listened to a sound in the distance and cried joyfully: 'A waterfall!' They dashed up the steps and found themselves on another plateau. They hurried on, circling a little wood of palm-trees, and stood before a lake.

It was enchanting. On one side of the lake rose a steep cliff; far up on this wall a little stream sprang forth; its silvery water danced lightly over the cliff; singing and splashing, it dashed into the silent lake, sunk deep between lofty bamboos, rustling softly, and waving fan-palms. In the centre lay an island, covered with ferns and flowers and reflected in the silent, mysterious water, motionless except where the waterfall foamed and frothed. Birds fluttered over the low branches everywhere and trilled their wonderful songs above the roar of the water. On the bank stood a heron, balancing on one leg. Pick! He had dipped his bill under the water. It came up with a silvery fish, while circles formed on the surface of the water, flowing towards a water-lily and flashing back again. The heron threw the glittering fish into the air and caught it in its open bill. The scene was so beautiful that it made the tears come to one's eyes.

'I'm never going away from here!' said Hajo.

Soon the boys were in the lake, while the heron looked at them thoughtfully. How wonderfully cool and transparent was the water! They could touch the stones at the bottom in diving. They swam to the island and took a little nap.

When the heat of the early afternoon had passed, they awoke feeling very hungry. Hajo and Harmen tried to shoot the fish with their arrows, without success, but Rolf, taking

a lesson from the heron, managed to spear as many big fish as the four could eat.

After their meal they wandered about on the plateau, found some oranges that were wonderfully sweet, and returned through the cluster of palms.

Suddenly Rolf stopped his companions. 'Look!' he said softly.

It was like a beautiful dream. Two deer and several does were drinking, with heads thrown far back and antlers gleaming. Their great, startled eyes shone softly; their graceful necks and slender legs were exquisitely formed. Suddenly one of them seemed to scent danger. It sniffed the air, gave forth a sound like a dog's yelp and—what was that? An echo? The herd disappeared in the thicket and the boys, speechless with amazement, stared after them.

Suddenly, who should come dashing up with tongue hanging out of his mouth but Joppie! So that had been the echo! The dog sprang upon his masters, barked, wagged his tail, and licked their hands and faces as if half-mad with joy. Then he fell upon the remains of the fish and almost choked to death on a fish-bone.

As the boys left the lake, they cast a last, lingering glance upon it. This was the most beautiful thing they had seen in all their lives. They could hear the rushing of the waterfall for almost half an hour, when they stood still.

After a few hours it began to grow dark and they selected an open clearing between two bamboo groves for their camp. Strangely enough, they felt less frightened to-night. Had they become familiar with the jungle? Had the encounter with the tiger made other dangers less terrifying?

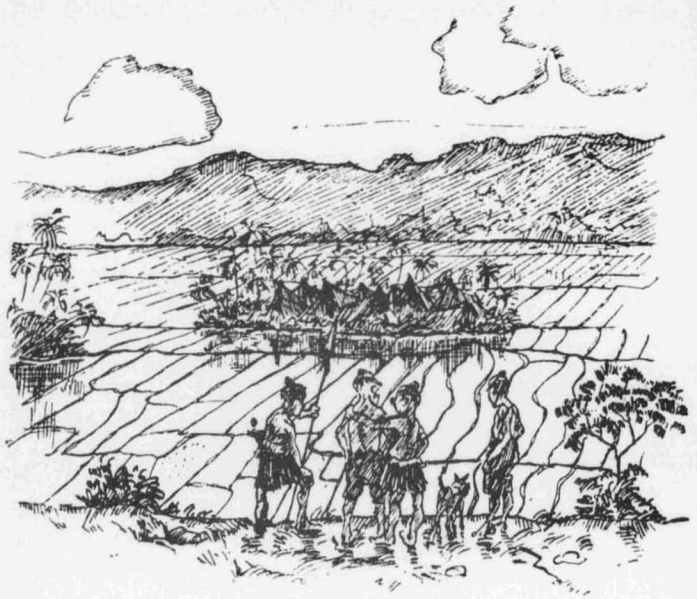
Suddenly Hajo raised his head. 'I hear something!'

They listened. It sounded like the dull beat of a drum.

'People!' whispered Hajo. 'I hear a flute too.'

They ran down towards the sound.

All at once the forest ended and before them they saw a wide valley, divided into ponds. In the centre, surrounded by gardens of coco-nut palms, lay a little village from which rose the gleam of lights. How could they come nearer without being seen? They would trust their lucky stars! The village



All at once the forest ended and before them they saw a wide valley. In the centre lay a little village from which rose the gleam of lights.

seemed to be celebrating, so the natives would probably not be on guard.

They descended over a dam. 'They're rice-fields,' said Rolf, pointing to the ponds. 'Isn't it splendid here?' The boys stood still for a moment and enjoyed the view of the rice-fields stretching far and wide before their admiring eyes. How small they felt in all this spacious darkness! Hark! The music sounded louder. The song of the flute came to them clear and soft and died away in melancholy sweetness.

Cautiously they crept on, while the frogs watched them curiously. At last they approached the first garden of coco-nut palms—and next they saw a gate. There was a guard-house with a hollow trunk hanging beside it for the signal, but there was no sentinel in sight. The boys crouched down and peered through the paling. The natives were sitting in an open space, in a great circle, and in the centre dancers were performing a ritual with strange movements. On their own heads they wore horrible heads with wild hair and big glass eyes, and around their shoulders wide mantles of long leaves. The musicians sat cross-legged around the dancers, striking their queer, long drums with the palms of their hands or blowing on wooden flutes. One of them played a one-string violin that lay on the ground and another struck two cymbals. Back of them sat men with smoking torches, and back of these again squatted the audience, beating time with their hands.

'A kermess!' whispered Padde.

Harmen was looking at the fiddler. 'He doesn't know how! Wrong! Wrong again! Does he call that playing?' He couldn't contain himself. 'Shall I go and show him how to play? Hold my spear, Hajo.'

'Stop it! No nonsense!' Rolf whispered threateningly.

'Why not?' asked Harmen. 'They'll be glad to hear some one who can play. . . . And look what they have to eat. . . . Smell it! . . . And I haven't touched a fiddle for so long! Listen. . . . Wrong again!'

At that he threw his weapons down, dashed cheerfully through the gate up to the assembled village, and cried out heartily: '*Tabeh!*'

CHAPTER XXXIV

PADDE DISAPPEARS

THE drums stopped beating, the dancers ceased moving. The natives all stared at this strange visitor with his skirt of grass. Then a few strong fellows seized Harmen, bound his hands behind his back, and drew him along to a hut where they left him a prisoner, fastening the door with *rotang* ropes. Then the villagers held a conference, but the distance was too great for Harmen's friends to gather what they were saying.

'We must wait,' said Rolf. 'We can't rescue him until they've gone to sleep.'

After what seemed endless minutes, the natives at last scattered to their various houses and Rolf and Hajo, leaving Padde and Joppie to guard their weapons, crept towards the hut where Harmen lay a prisoner. At this moment, in spite of their serious danger, they could scarcely suppress their laughter, for suddenly Harmen began singing the first measures of the 'Song of the Beggars':

> Strike up the drum, with dirredomdeine!
> Strike up the drum, with dirredomnus!

The old Dutch song sounded strange on this mysterious night beneath the Indian full moon. But his friends realized that Harmen was not expressing his desire to drum; he was indicating to them where he lay.

After they had crept around the whole enclosure without finding an opening, they returned to the gate, where a sentinel now squatted, humming monotonously. What were they to do? Fall upon him? Hajo had an idea. He picked up a stone and threw it over the head of the native. The man raised his head as it fell.

Silence. The crickets chirped. In the distance they heard the call of a deer.

Hajo threw another stone. This time his plan was successful. The man seized his spear and moved towards the spot where the stone had fallen. Hajo and Rolf slipped silently past the guard-house and through the gate. They did not venture to cross the open court, but crept around it from tree to tree.

'Listen!' said Hajo suddenly. The boys held their breath.

'I don't hear anything.'

'Nor I. But I thought just now——'

'Probably it was Harmen. Just listen: now he's singing the "Volendam Fisher"!'

They crept on, neither of them suspecting that a bloody drama had just taken place outside the gate. Padde had heard the two stones fall close beside him and now the sentinel got up and came straight towards him! With beating heart, Padde watched him searching and poking his lance through the bamboo branches. This was too much for Joppie—he shook off Padde's clutch and flew at the man's legs. With a curse the Malay flung him aside, leaped forward, and Padde, in blind fear, without knowing what he was doing, held out a lance. The spear cracked; he heard a dull sound, a rattling in the throat, the impact of a falling body. Padde jumped up with a shudder and saw the native twisting in agony on the ground, with the spear buried deep in his breast. Padde felt everything whirl before his eyes; he hid his face in his hands. Away! Away from here. Away! Away! . . . And with Joppie at his heels, he rushed off.

. . . . .

Harmen was singing:

The fisherman of Volendam,
He went to Duiveland . . .

Still creeping from house to house, Hajo and Rolf approached Harmen's prison.

'Harmen!'

'Hello! The devil! I was wondering where you——'

'Ssssst! I'm coming.' Rolf climbed quickly up the ladder; fortunately for him it was in the shadow. He cut the bamboo ropes holding the door. Cr-crack! Cr-crack!

'Harmen, where are you?'

'Here! Rolf—those scoundrels——!'

Rolf knelt to cut his bonds. 'Ouch!'

'Are you free?'

'Yes!'

'Come along then!'

They climbed down and, after waiting to make sure that they had not been seen, they crept around through the village, along the paling, and to the gate. Rolf took a stone and threw it beyond the gate. Nothing stirred.

He threw another stone.

It was as silent as death.

Rolf crept on first and they all got through the gate safely. Nothing in sight. But here! What was this?

They gave a cry of horror when they saw the sentinel lying dead in his own blood.

'Padde? Where's Padde?' Hajo rushed to the spot where they had left him.

Padde was gone, but the weapons were still there.

Rolf knelt by the Malay. 'He's dead,' he whispered.

'Could Padde have——?'

Rolf jumped up. 'We must be off—quick!'

Hajo seized the dead man's spear and dagger and then they fled. 'Rolf!' sobbed Hajo as they ran. 'Mustn't we——?'

'We must get away!' said Rolf. 'If they find us here, we'll all be——'

Harmen stooped at this moment and held up Padde's skirt to their view.

'Thank God!' said Rolf, 'then he fled in the right direction! Keep it, so that they won't find it!'

The boys ran between the terraced rice-fields along the dam, fell, slipped, picked themselves up and ran again until they arrived on the other side of the valley, steeped in moonlight.

CHAPTER XXXV

DOLIMAH

THEY followed the path through the woods, stumbled over the roots of trees and shrubs, waded through marshy ground covered with ferns until they fell exhausted beneath the pale moon. When they awoke at last the sun was standing high in the heavens and the birds were warbling above their heads.

The boys decided that they must look for Padde. But where? When Hajo suddenly burst into convulsive sobs for his lost friend, Harmen got up abruptly and declared that he would turn back to see whether they had been followed. He returned almost immediately, gasping, almost speechless from surprise. Then he stammered: 'He's sitting over there—with Joppie—and a little dark girl! Before a fire!'

The boys rushed towards the smoke rising near a coco-nut-tree and called: 'Padde! Hello, Padde!'

'Wow, wow!' Joppie came running towards them, leaping and yelping with joy. But Padde did not seem in the least surprised to see them. 'So, here you are!' he said, slightly embarrassed, and he cleared his throat. 'Did you happen to find my skirt?'

'Here,' replied Hajo quickly. 'But how did you——?'

Padde sighed as he fastened his only garment around his waist. 'So, that's settled!' Then he explained: 'This is the little girl who freed us that night when the chief—you remember? She followed us. Didn't you?' and he turned to the girl, who stood aside with downcast eyes. 'You wanted

to come with us—*Sama saga?* Last night when I fled'—Padde shuddered—'I found her.'

'So you killed him?'

'Is he dead?' asked Padde. 'I—I couldn't help it; he was coming towards me——'

The boys were silent for a moment. Then Rolf turned to the girl.

'*Apa munamah nja?*' he asked. 'What is your name?'

'Dolimah, *tuan*,' she answered softly.

'Dolimah, why did you leave your *dessah*?'

'Luntar, my little brother, saw me get up that night. He told.'

'And'—Rolf hesitated—'you want to come with us now?'

'I don't dare go back,' she whispered.

'Couldn't you go to some other *campong*[1] and live there?'

Dolimah shook her head. 'They'd ask me who I am and take me back.'

'How did you live all these days?'

'I couldn't eat—I was so afraid. I ran, ran——' She seemed about to faint.

'She hasn't had anything to eat!' cried Rolf to the boys, looking in alarm at the drooping girl. Without a word Harmen scurried up the nearest coco-nut-tree. Then he cried to Hajo: 'Pigeons up here!' and Hajo aimed with his deadly arrow. While Rolf led the girl to a pile of leaves to rest, Harmen climbed down again, split a coco-nut and offered the pieces to the child.

'She's sweet, isn't she?' sighed Harmen. 'Here, angel child, take this too.'

'Here,' snapped Padde jealously, snatching it out of Harmen's hand, 'you must break it. She can't eat it that way!' and he tried to break it with all his might.

'All you've done is to spoil it with your dirty fingers!' grumbled Harmen, taking it again. 'You can set fire to a ship all right, but when it comes to cracking a coco-nut . . .' Cr-crack! He had broken it and handed the small pieces to Dolimah.

[1] *Campong*—a settlement.

At this moment Hajo returned with a wood-hen, and in a jiffy it had been plucked and was roasting before the fire, which Dolimah had made by rubbing two sticks together. They piled on more wood and soon the bird was sizzling above the flames.

'This is for Dolimah,' grumbled Harmen. Then he turned to the others.

'You'd better go and get me some more wood-hens—pigeons will do too, but they must be plump.'

'Anything else you'd like?' asked Rolf, much amused. 'Come along, Hajo!' and the two boys started off, followed by Joppie.

'Isn't it fine?' said Hajo, as they walked on. 'It's all so much nicer since Dolimah's coming with us! Won't they stare when we get to Bantam? And later, in Hoorn!'

Rolf was gazing thoughtfully ahead. 'Hajo,' he replied at last, 'I think we ought to advise her to return to her village.'

'But why?' asked Hajo in alarm.

Rolf was silent, and Hajo grew more serious than usual. Without success they returned to camp, to find the bird burned black and Harmen in a bad temper.

'Why hasn't Dolimah eaten it?' they asked.

'Probably not good enough for her. I offered it to her, but she refused. Now it's all charred.'

The girl seemed to understand that they were talking about her. 'I may not eat it, sir,' she said to Rolf. After his first surprise, he began to understand. 'Probably her religion forbids it,' he explained to the others.

'Is that it?' asked Harmen, with a sigh of relief, as he divided the wood-hen among the four and gave Joppie the skeleton. 'Ask her what she's allowed to eat, Rolf."

'I'm allowed to eat this,' replied the girl to Rolf's question, 'but only when it's been killed with a knife.' And she would not yield though Harmen again offered her the tenderest morsel.

It was time to depart, and Rolf, with some hesitation, turned to Dolimah again. 'Wouldn't it be better for you to go back to your people? We're glad to have you with us—but we're afraid you'll be sorry later.'

Dolimah's lovely little head sank. 'I don't dare to go back,' she whispered, terror-stricken. 'I—I don't dare.'

Rolf replied firmly: 'Then come with us! Are you still tired?'

'No,' answered Dolimah happily. 'I'm not tired.'

'What's Rolf talking to her about anyway?' asked Padde, jealous again.

'He's just showing off because he can talk Malay,' said Harmen to comfort him.

'Come, fellows,' said Rolf cheerfully. 'Pack up! She's coming along. Forward to Bantam!'

They marched on, all feeling very superior now that they had some one to protect. Dolimah ran along with short, quick, light steps and showed them all sorts of things as she grew more and more confident. 'Look, this is a *ganjong*! You can eat the roots—but first they must be broken up and made into flour. I'll bake you a little cake if we can find something for baking. That's *djambu*! Splendid. Taste it!' With her clever fingers she plucked a transparent fruit that looked like glass and handed it to Padde. While he hesitated, Harmen snatched it, gobbled it, and cried, 'Fine! fine!'

Later she pointed out a creeping plant with long clusters of green leaves. '*Gadung*! You can eat the root-bulbs.' Hajo pulled up the plant, and there, to be sure, were round bulbs.

'Well, she knows a thing or two,' cried Harmen delightedly. 'Now we won't starve to death.'

So they walked on, with Dolimah chatting in their midst, until the girl plainly showed that she was exhausted. Harmen led the way through the shrubbery to a clearing, where they suddenly saw a dwarf deer look at them with soft, bright eyes and then leap away on slender, graceful legs.

'A *kantjil*!' cried Dolimah happily. 'It's the weakest of all the animals, but the most cunning too. Do you know that a *kantjil* once drove an elephant away?'

'How did he do that?' asked Rolf, laughing.

'I'll tell you,' said the girl, and while the boys threw themselves on the ground and sleepily listened to her musical voice she began:

'In a certain jungle all the animals were living peacefully together till an elephant came and immediately began to pull down trees. The other animals were terribly frightened. There had never been an elephant in their forest and they considered how they might get rid of him. "I'll drive him away," said the tiger. Well, of course he always brags. The elephant caught him up on his splendid white tusks—and they were red when the tiger fell to the ground. Now all the animals were afraid to take up the match until the *kantjil* assured them: "I'll drive him away!" The other animals all laughed at him. "When he sees you coming, he'll run away in terror!" they cried.

'But the *kantjil* said to the porcupine: "Give me one of your quills." "What for?" answered the porcupine. And the others jeered: "To drive the elephant away!" The porcupine shook his sides with laughter and snorted: "Go ahead, pull out one of my quills!" while the others laughed and the porcupine uttered a groan of pain—the *kantjil* neatly pulled out the longest and strongest quill he could find.

'Then it leaped to the part of the jungle where the elephant dwelt. "Get along now and be off!" said the *kantjil*. The elephant was just about to uproot a few trees. "Who's that piping?" he asked. "A mouse?" "Oh, so you're half blind too?" said the *kantjil*. "Then you'd better get away as fast as you can before the *kantjil* comes." "What's a *kantjil*?" asked the elephant, calmly eating all the leaves off another tree. "A creature twice as strong and big as you!" replied the *kantjil*. "That's not true!" objected the elephant. "I'm the biggest and strongest of all the animals." "You'd like to be," said the *kantjil*; "but when the *kantjil* comes walking, the mountains quake, and when he goes into the water to bathe, he floods the whole forest."

'The elephant leaned against a *waringi*-tree in surprise until it fell over, with its roots sticking up in the air. "You're lying!" growled the elephant. "What? You don't believe me?" asked the *kantjil*. "No, I don't," replied the elephant. "Then I'll show you something!" said the *kantjil*, and it held the porcupine's quill right under his nose. "Look here! That's how thick his hairs are!" The elephant hadn't a word to say; he trembled all over, raised his trunk, and lumbered away, trumpeting, as fast as he could, and he never came back again to the jungle where the awfully big *kantjil* lived.'

Dolimah paused. 'Now you see how cunning the *kantjil* is,' she added.

Hajo had not been able to follow more than half of it, but while she told the story he felt that he was getting closer to Nature. It almost sounded to him, as she spoke in her soft voice, that the *kantjil* itself was telling this fable of cunning and of good-natured stupidity. How beautiful India became when you grew to know it this way.

'What did she tell?' asked Harmen, sucking at a *djambu*.

Neither Rolf nor Hajo could find just the right words to answer. Harmen continued eating, Padde was snoring. Even the birds grew still in the sultry noonday heat.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE FIGHT IN THE CAVE

AFTER a short nap they awoke unrefreshed. The air was oppressive, and Padde complained of a headache. Rolf asked Dolimah how she was feeling, and she answered that she had been thinking of the course they must follow.

'We'll never get to the sea this way,' she said. 'The sea lies to the west, where the sun sets.'

Rolf was startled. 'But the Straits of Sunda is to the south?' he inquired doubtfully.

'Yes,' answered Dolimah, 'but it's so far away that you'll never get there. The spirits dwelling in the *waringi*-trees will put a spell upon us. They are everywhere! There are spirits in the flowers, in the stones and shells, in the silent lakes, in the mountains, beneath the waterfalls. If you look at anything long, the spirit dwelling in it will take possession of your soul. And any one in their power can never escape. You would stand on the shore and look across the water—but if you sailed away in your boat, the spirits would torment you until you no longer cared to live. And if you did not return you would die.'

Rolf took a deep breath involuntarily.

'You'll never reach the sea,' she continued dreamily. 'First you'll feel brave, but at last you'll yield. There will be thickets of bamboo and forests of *djati*, mountains and swamps, and wide plains without shade. You will count the hours—and at last you will sink to the ground in pain. Then the spirits will triumph.'

Rolf was silent a moment; then, concealing his fears, he started and they began their march again. Hajo shot a pigeon, and when it drew dark and they heard the rumbling of thunder,

they decided to halt and build a fire before the rain made it impossible. Dolimah drew two dry bamboo sticks from her *sarong*. In one of them was a hole into which she placed the other and rubbed it with amazing speed and with practised skill. A spark flew out of the dry wood upon the chips of tinder which Rolf had arranged on the ground. Harmen used his breath to fan the flame and soon they had a crackling fire. Then he plucked the pigeon and soon it was roasting on a spit.

But a storm was brewing and soon thunder and lightning broke the silence. When a branch fell from a tree, Dolimah whispered softly, solemnly, with eyes wide open: 'The spirits!'

Hajo and Rolf, lying on their stomachs in the moss, were idly staring at a little green and gold insect busily creeping over grass and stones. When the lightning fell, it gleamed like gold and stopped. When the thunder roared, it stopped. Then, when it was silent once more, it raised its feelers and stumbled on between branches and leaves through the vast forest.

Was there a great difference between them and the insect, the boys were thinking. How boundless all was here, how small and feeble were they! 'If you look at anything long, the spirits will take possession of your soul,' Dolimah had said. They mustn't brood.

Harmen now divided the pigeon, but when Padde refused his share his friends stared. 'Are you sick?' they asked; but before they could hear his answer, the storm had burst. Ping! Pong! Pang! Ping! Pang! . . . The branches bent beneath the water, they groaned and cracked; the lightning flashed, filling the air with rays of blue and diamond. Their fire had been put out, and so the little band went on, seeking a shelter. The rain made Harmen feel jolly, and he burst into a song in which Hajo and Rolf joined. Only Padde remained ill-tempered and gave Joppie a kick when he got in his way. Dolimah picked up some of the flowers which the rain had washed down and stuck them in her hair and in her *sarong*.

'Pretty fine girl, eh?' cried Harmen.

'Sing something, too, Dolimah,' begged Rolf.

'Yes,' said Dolimah, and, raising her *sarong* gracefully and walking like a queen through the water, she sang:

Udjan dateng, kambing lari!
Udjan dateng, sukah menari!

(When it begins to rain, the goats prance away!
When it begins to rain, I like to dance away!)

She showed them how to hold a big banana-leaf over their heads like a *pajong*. Harmen, Hajo, and Rolf felt like Bushmen as they wandered beneath the dripping trees with the great leaves over their heads. They were at home in the jungle now. They wouldn't be surprised if a tiger came towards them and asked, in pure Malay, 'Where are you going?'

They would merely reply: '*Tabeh!*'

What if a hobgoblin should appear and keep them company until they reached his cave? or if they met a *kantjil* and a porcupine arm in arm, great friends since their triumph over the elephant? At that moment the darkness was shot through by a flash of lightning and they saw a few coco-nut-trees. 'A native settlement!' whispered Dolimah. 'Where there are coco-nut palms, a settlement is always near.'

Suddenly Padde began to complain again. 'My head aches so, and my legs feel so heavy!'

The boys looked frightened.

'Is he ill?' asked Dolimah. Rolf nodded.

Soon they stood before a coco-nut plantation and Harmen climbed up one of the trees to get a few coco-nuts. Suddenly the lightning flashed again and they saw a few pointed roofs—some fourteen or fifteen little houses on high palings.

Meanwhile Dolimah was assuring Padde that she would cure his headache on the morrow with certain herbs. He didn't understand a word, but he was cheered by her sweetness and her soft voice.

They skirted the little village, bounded on one side by rice-fields, on the other by the jungle. Walking was not easy in the downpour and the boys often slipped. Dolimah alone did not slip. Like a rope dancer she stepped along over slippery dams

and the trunks of trees which served as bridges over the stream into which flowed the water from the rice-fields. Joppie caught a fat rat, and both of them made such a hullabaloo that the dogs of the settlement answered it.

After two hours of running and wading through the drenching rain that seemed determined never to end, they reached a plateau near a ravine. Rolf and Dolimah sat down by Padde, whose teeth were chattering, while Hajo and Harmen started forth with their spears to search the region for shelter.

As they stumbled along, above the ravine yawning at their feet, the ground suddenly gave way beneath Harmen. He caught at a projecting root and saved himself, but his spear fell from his hands. It caught about ten yards below, and in spite of Hajo's protests, Harmen went after it. He descended by the roots of a great tree growing at the edge of the defile, and—crash!—he had fallen right upon his spear.

He saw a sort of trail before him and shouted to Hajo, watching him in agony, that he would try it. Again something fell, and Hajo cried out, 'Harmen!'

There was a moment's silence. Then Harmen gasped: 'I caught myself—I'm hanging on by my spear. So!' Again silence. Then he called up: 'I see a cave.'

'A cave?'

'I'm not talking Chinese, am I? It's quite dry! Just what we're looking for.'

'Harmen! Listen, Harmen . . .'

But Harmen was silent in all languages, including Chinese. Then he called up: 'I crawled in. There's an animal here—with two fiery eyes! Come down! We'll spear it.'

'Maybe it's a tiger?'

'It's not a tiger,' said Harmen, but he was a bit startled, just the same.

'How do you know?'

'He told me so himself,' laughed Harmen. 'Come on now, or are you afraid?'

That was a dangerous question, and Hajo jumped down. Harmen helped to catch him, and the two boys crept towards a cave of rock with an opening high enough for a man to enter. They crept into the cave breathlessly, holding their spears ready, and there, two staring yellow eyes glared at them!

'There, you see!' whispered Harmen. 'He won't do anything!'

Hajo could not answer; his throat felt dry and he was trembling.

'Now,' whispered Harmen, 'I'll let him taste my spear, and then you strike!'

'Ye-es,' stammered Hajo, dumbfounded by Harmen's coolness at this dangerous moment.

Harmen raised himself, leaned back, and hurled his spear with all his might towards the gleaming yellow eyes. There was a fierce, hoarse roar. Then the mighty creature sprang up on high, breaking the spear with a loud crash. It had struck home.

The fetid smell of the cave made the boys feel faint, and they both grasped Hajo's lowered spear tight now. The wounded beast crouched and, with a snarl, sprang—straight at the spear, which they were pointing towards it. It gave a terrible cry; as its full weight fell upon the spear, they pressed their weapon hard against it. The creature fell to the ground. 'Hold tight!' groaned Harmen, and, gasping painfully, they both leaned hard upon the spear.

The shaft broke. The boys stumbled forward as they felt the beast's hot breath upon their faces, and they leaped so high that they knocked their heads against the stones of the cave above them. It made them see stars. They tried to rush out, but they could not find the entrance.

It was no longer necessary to escape, however. The beast had raised its head—and then had suddenly rolled over, beating about with his paws and roaring in agony. Then they heard the death-rattle. It ceased while they were still crouching in a corner.

'He's dead!' whispered Harmen. 'I'll——'

'Take care! Not too close!'

'But h-he's dead!' gasped Harmen. He crawled towards the creature. 'Dead as a doornail!' he pronounced. 'Here, I'll t-take him by h-his tail! Drag him out!' And he began to drag the heavy body to the entrance. And then, at last, the old Harmen with whom Hajo was familiar came to the surface again. 'The devil! He's heavy! Help me, Hajo!'

Still trembling in all their limbs, they dragged the animal out of the cave together.

It was a panther.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE DELUGE

THEY went back to find the others, and after much climbing and scrambling found them crouched together in the pouring rain. Harmen related the tale of the cave and the unknown beast, and made the most of it, omitting no detail. When they reached the ravine, Harmen jumped and helped to catch the others as they risked their limbs, if not their lives, in turn. They crept into the cave, stepping over the dead panther with a shudder, where a horrible stench of blood and decay met them.

'It doesn't smell very good,' said Harmen, apologizing. 'But it's warm and dry.'

'If a tiger should come,' said Hajo, as he placed Dolimah in the farthest corner, 'he'd have to get past us before he could get at Dolimah!'

If a tiger should come! . . . The boys listened uneasily. The rain seemed far away here. They were dry and their clothes were beginning to steam. But the rain was falling monotonously out there. Pools became streams that flowed down into the dry bed of the ravine. Other streams joined them, and soon a swift river was foaming and rushing on. Water! Water! It rose higher and higher. Here is more water for you, River! Receive it in your arms! From the defiles, from the valleys, the water flowed down and the rain rattled and splashed still more fiercely into the river. The drops shoot down below the brown surface a finger's length at least; a great air bubble swells up like a blister; another raindrop strikes upon it violently; a second bubble of air is formed on the first and together they dance along like frolicsome little rabbits.

The stream grows broader and deeper. It rushes on headlong. It carries along a bridge in its flight. Lightning flashes. There is a deafening roar and two clouds send down a cloudburst of rain. Rrrrang! It comes rattling down. The surging water rises and strikes against the shore. It dashes against an obstructing dike, drives against it again and again, hurling trees, planks, stones, and beams against the earthen embankment, reinforced by bamboo. Forward! Gallop on! The flood has softened the river-banks until the roots of the trees growing there are loosed beneath the mass of water. Here two trees drive with increasing speed against the dike, while others are swept along in frenzied confusion.

But the dike is still standing firm against the flood.

The villagers, roused from peaceful slumber, start up from their bamboo couches. Hark! What is that sound of groaning and creaking, growing louder every minute and roaring above the beating, crackling rain? In feverish haste they gather their possessions together and drive their flocks up the declivities. A cry resounds through the village, freezing their blood:

'*Banjir!*' ('The Flood!')

Rending, storming, roaring until the mountains re-echo its rage, it comes, and there, at a bend, the dike is torn asunder, a large piece in the centre gives way, the sides plunge down. . . . And gradually all grows still. The fury of the stream is broken. Released from its narrow, confining channel, like a giant who could not turn about and stretch his limbs, it now flows quietly on, covering the whole valley. . . .

The villagers look on the scene of destruction with tears. One of them hast lost his rice-fields, another sees his house totter and—now it is swept along in the flood! The cattle of a third, in stupid panic and bewilderment, rush straight into the water.

And still the rain falls, beating its monotonous sing-song tenaciously, like a tormenting spirit. Tormenting? No! The rain is beneficent, gentle, conscious of its fructifying power. He is not to blame that men divide the earth into lots and construct dikes and dams for fear of others taking more than

their share. He is not to blame that men have captured the buffalo and rendered him stupid and helpless so that he can no longer save himself.

. . . . .

Dolimah was awakened by the roar of the water in the distance. '*Banjir!*' she whispered, and she began to think of home. It was still raining when the boys awoke and saw Joppie snoring near them. He was covered with mud up to his ears so he must have found the way hard going.

They went out to look at the panther. He measured about two ells, with his tail. The two spears had done good service—the first penetrating his flank, the other passing straight through his body and coming out again near the right shoulder-blade.

'We must skin him—we can make good use of this bit of leather!' said Harmen.

'Good to sleep on,' remarked Rolf. 'It will keep out the damp.'

'Or we might make me a pair of trousers,' suggested Harmen. 'I look like a jumping-jack in this skirt.'

'You'd look fine in panther-skin breeches,' laughed Rolf. 'Can you roar?'

At that Harmen roared so loud that the whole valley trembled and Padde and Dolimah, inside the cave, shuddered with fear.

'Do you know how to skin him?' asked Rolf.

Harmen stared at Rolf wide-eyed. 'Oh, no! I s'pose I never skinned a rabbit?'

'Yes, but this is not a rabbit!'

'Of course a panther isn't a rabbit! But skinning him won't be any different.' He drew the two spears from the body. Then they decided to postpone operations until after breakfast. Padde was still in pain and had a fever. Hajo and Harmen were sent to forage for food, and on their way to the village saw what damage had been caused by the flood. The little bridge had been swept away, the little stream was now a muddy river, so they had to make a new path along the edge of the forest. Scratched and bleeding, they arrived near the village in about an hour and searched for coco-nuts, hoping to avoid any encounter with a native.

Suddenly a little boy appeared near the enclosure. Harmen jumped over the fence and began to speak, but the boy in an agony of fear clung to a coco-nut tree and with eyes as big as saucers stared at this half-naked white devil.

'*Tabeh!*' said Harmen. Then he pointed to his stomach and added: '*Makan!*' The little savage understood. Like

a squirrel he climbed up the tree and began to throw down coco-nuts.

'Good!' said Harmen. 'Catch them, Hajo, and hide them in the bushes. We'll take all we can carry and get the others later.'

When three trees had been stripped of their coco-nuts Harmen declared himself satisfied and jumped back again to Hajo. A few hours later they returned to the plateau, and when they were about to jump down to the cave, they saw to their amazement—a rope ladder!

'Hello!' called Rolf from below. 'How do you like my ladder?'

'Did you make it?' asked Harmen admiringly. 'I call that a good job! How did you do it?'

'Pieces of bamboo bound together with *rotang* thongs,' explained Rolf. 'We'll draw it in at night with this stick. Where did you get all those coco-nuts?'

'Somebody picked them for me,' replied Harmen, grandly. And they told their story.

'You're too cheeky,' remarked Rolf. 'You'll get caught one fine day, Harmen.'

Harmen put on his foxy expression. 'I'm like a flea—you catch him, but he's gone!'

The rain was still falling steadily. They went into the cave, where Padde lay in a delirium.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

SI-KAMPRET

THAT afternoon the boys bound the panther to several bamboo stalks and dragged the heavy load above the cave. After half an hour of hard work Harmen had completed the task of skinning him and sent the bare body over the declivity. Then he spread out the skin in the shrubbery and prayed for sunshine to dry it.

But the rain continued to fall and great grey clouds concealed the mountains in the distance. . . . In the cave Padde lay tossing in the grip of a severe fever. They tried to make a fire, but the wood was too damp. The boys sat staring out into the grey, misty twilight, where they could not see more than ten yards before them. It was difficult to breathe, too, in the sultry air.

The next day there was still rain, rain, rain.

Dolimah and Rolf looked for medicinal herbs near the cave while she explained the virtues of certain plants. 'This is the *sidagori lelaki*,' she said. 'If one eats its stalk it makes one strong. And that over there is the *daūn tidur-tiduran*. It brings sleep. But I don't know many remedies. The *dukun* knows them all—and he knows how to drive away evil spirits too.'

Rolf listened with intense interest, for everything that Dolimah told him about Malay beliefs and customs had a peculiar charm for him.

Harmen and Hajo went hunting, but all they found were the footprints of an animal which they thought must be a deer.

That night in the cave no one felt very cheerful. Dolimah made a paste of some herbs and placed this on Padde's chest. Rolf and Hajo stared out into the veiled grey landscape again, while Harmen was winding *rotang* stalks together and making a rope of them, humming songs of home as he worked.

But the song of the rain sounded everywhere. Sometimes its murmur seemed to grow faint, dying away in a gentle trickle, and then it rattled down again so violently that any hope of seeing the sun rise radiantly on the morrow expired. They went to sleep. In the middle of the night Harmen jumped up and threw his knife at a glittering creature that hissed and wound its way along the ground. Joppie recoiled, with hair standing erect, too terrified to bark. A snake had crept into their cave.

After an uneasy night and a meagre breakfast of coco-nuts, the three boys started off, Rolf to gather edible fruits and roots, Hajo and Harmen to lay a trap for the deer. In a by-path they came upon new hoof-marks which the rain had not

even washed down—the deer must have passed within a minute or two. Harmen set his snare so cleverly that it seemed he must have practised poaching more than once before. Indeed on their way back to the cave, he entertained Hajo with the story of some of his forbidden escapades in Hoorn, among them one exploit when he had trapped seven hares at once.

When they approached the plateau, Rolf met them eagerly. 'Have you seen Dolimah?' he asked, and the surprise on their faces was sufficient answer. Dolimah had gone without leaving a word of explanation, and Rolf tried to console them by suggesting that she was looking for more herbs. But gloom settled on their spirits.

Towards evening they heard footsteps. They rushed out. Dolimah! Dolimah! and with her was a little chap with big ears that stood far out from his head. When he saw the boys he looked amazed and made ready to run.

'*Ikut sadjah, Saleiman,*' said Dolimah. And Rolf added: '*Ah-äh, mari. Djangan takut!*' ('Don't be afraid!')

Saleiman hesitated and then descended the rope-ladder. He

was far from handsome. His legs and arms were lean and looked as if they were made of brown wood, while his knees and elbows resembled thick knots. His back was bony and he was covered from head to toes with scars.

'He's going to make fire for us,' said Dolimah to Rolf. 'And he's going to bring us something to eat.'

Saleiman shyly drew from his *sarong* a few bits of wood and bent over some coco-nut fibre which the boys had tried in vain to ignite the day before. He began to rub hard and to blow. The sparks began to fly and a flame sprang up from the coco-nut kindling; then a little cloud of blue smoke rose, and, there, they had a fire!

The boys looked at it as though they had found a golden treasure. The cheerful flames made them all happy. How warm and bright the cave seemed now!

They thanked him, and he seemed to assume that this was a signal for departure. After Dolimah had asked him to return on the morrow, he went forth into the pouring rain.

Dolimah explained that she had come upon him when he was at play with some friends and that he had agreed to make fire for her and to preserve silence.

'Do you know what they call him?' she asked with a smile. '"*Si-Kampret*"!' ("Bat") because he has such big ears, like a bat. But he doesn't like it. He told me his name was Saleiman—so I pretended I didn't hear the others.' And Dolimah laughed.

CHAPTER XXXIX

SALEIMAN AND HIS FLUTE

THE boys laid the fire at the entrance of the cave and flung so much wood upon it that the flames flared up. Ah, this was comfort at last. Even Padde seemed to enjoy it as he stared at the ghostly shadows in the back of the cave.

Dolimah gazed dreamily into the flames, and then she began to tell the story of how fire was first brought to men by the good spirits who rewarded a pious man. They taught him how to strike two sticks together and to repeat a magical charm, telling him that he must use it for good ends only. Later he grew angry at a rich man who had done him harm and planned to burn his house down. But though he struck the sticks, he had forgotten the incantation—because he had cherished evil thoughts. At last, however, after rubbing and rubbing, a spark flew out of the bamboo—but it flew into his *sarong*, the *sarong* caught fire, and the man was burned to death!

'But the rich man had seen from his window how the poor man had made fire and he commanded his servants to rub bamboo sticks together till a spark flashed from them. So men learned the secret of making fire. But no one knows the incantation now. . . .' Dolimah had ended her story.

Silence reigned in the cave except for the crackling, sputtering fire. They were warm now and fell asleep more hopefully.

The next day it rained again, but Saleiman appeared with a cracked earthen jar, a big lump of boiled rice in a plantain leaf, a few herbs, and some big bananas. Dolimah thanked

him and begged him to come again that evening with his flute.

Dolimah prepared a hearth and placed the earthen pot on the fire to concoct a soup of rice, herbs, and bits of banana for the invalid. But the poor boy could not eat and began to lament that he had ever come to this terrible country, where he would die. Hajo cheered him to the best of his ability by assuring him that as soon as he could walk they would go on to Bantam, and then they would be ready to sail for Hoorn, their pockets full of the money they had earned.

Towards evening Saleiman returned with three dried fish, a few eggs, and eight cobs of maize, not to mention a little stone pot. Dolimah thanked him, but realizing that he had probably taken things where he had found them, she begged him not to bring anything more. Saleiman looked so embarrassed that she asked him to play, and so he squatted on the ground and produced his flute. It was a hollow piece of bamboo with holes burned into it, and the mouthpiece was made of a shoot into which a narrow slit had been cut. Saleiman hesitated, while the boys stood by staring, until Rolf urged him to play for them. Then he placed the flute against his protruding lips and began.

First came a long-drawn-out, nasal tone like the distant cry

of a bird in the night; then another, higher but long-drawn-out and just as melancholy as the first. Then the flute fell quickly to the first tone, rose again, passed softly up to the second tone, and sounded a third tone, mysterious, as if sighing. So the flute wailed or sang a solemn measure until, suddenly—tiereliet! tiereliet! tiereliet!—it rose high and warbled like a bird. Saleiman's face was very serious. Now he seemed to charm soft voices out of the mist and now a melody, soft, seductive, like a lullaby. It was a melody, yet none of them could have repeated it, for the tones were trilled so fast yet so lightly that they could not catch them. He ended with a dark, long tone which seemed to tremble like a ray of light upon a dark sea.

'Was that the moon?' asked Dolimah.

'Yes,' replied Saleiman.

'And can you do the stream, and the crocodile, and the snake? Please do the snake!'

The young musician thought for a moment and began. Hst! You actually felt the snake coming, with its flat head raised and its tongue hissing! Saleiman swayed his skinny back in time to the music as the snake stopped, moved forward, hissed, turned its head from side to side, and rolled itself into a heap.

'He can charm snakes that way,' explained Dolimah. 'Now do the fire.'

Saleiman looked into the fire and began to improvise until the gentle flames had become transformed into a fierce conflagration. He looked up triumphantly, but Dolimah wanted more. 'The two birds,' she entreated.

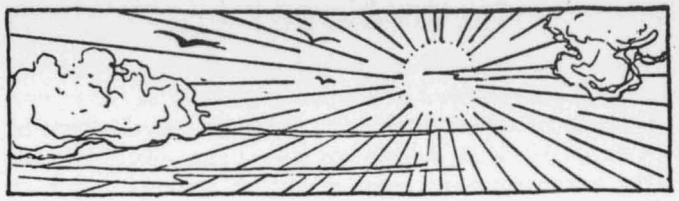
And again this ugly, lean boy, with his bat's ears, charmed them all with trills, long cries of alluring tenderness and hoarse quavers that made them think of the call of birds which they had heard.

'Play the most beautiful thing you know, Saleiman!' begged Dolimah now. He closed his eyes and played a soft, sweet melody, soaring ever higher to the clouds, only to break off abruptly at the end in a shrill discord followed by a melancholy strain dying away into silence.

'What was that?' asked Dolimah. Saleiman did not answer. Then she asked: 'Was it—Saleiman?'

Saleiman scrambled to his feet and started off. But first he took out of his *sarong* a little box with a glow-worm fastened to the bottom, to protect him against evil spirits.

The boys regarded the flap-eared lad with envy and admiration now. Harmen sighed and wished he had his fiddle to play with him, but none of the others seemed enthusiastic about this idea.



CHAPTER XL

HARMEN GETS CAUGHT!

THE next day Harmen sprang up with a shout: 'The sun! The sun is shining!'

There stood the sun, high above the mountains, gleaming like gold. The valley was steaming. The blue sky seemed to be moist still—as if its colours were not quite dry. The trees looked as if they had been newly painted green and the flowers like red, white, yellow, and blue splashes on the bushes.

Little green parrots, bronze-green pigeons, turtle-doves tumbled about in the trees, sending down a shower of diamonds. Great butterflies fluttered from flower to flower, spreading their wings or folding them with infinite grace, coquetting with the sunlight and shadow, kissing the hearts of the blossoms.

The boys sat at the entrance of the cave, letting their clothes dry and looking with delight over the ravine and the plateau. How did all this life and colour return so suddenly? Even the trees seemed to be stretching themselves, and the flowers, that lay so bent and broken yesterday, raised their heads proudly.

Suddenly Padde came creeping out. The others were frightened to see how pale and thin he had become, how dull were his eyes. They made him lie down in the sun. It was plain that they could not continue their journey for the present.

Though Hajo and Harmen had gone every day to look at their snare, they had not caught the deer, as they hoped. But on the way back this morning Harmen stumbled over a pheasant, splendidly marked, with black tail-feathers a yard

and a half long. Rolf admired their catch. 'We'll have a fine dinner now!' he cried. 'This pheasant with rice, maize, dried fish, two eggs for Padde—and Dolimah is gathering herbs and fruit.'

Rolf had become very domestic. He had laid dry grass on the floor of the cave as a carpet and fastened the Panther skin to a few poles as a sort of canopy under which Padde could lie in the shade, while enjoying the fresh air. Now he suggested that they make a bench and table. Hajo agreed to help him, but Harmen felt too restless. Armed with his faithful spear, he went forth to hunt.

He failed to catch a lizard and a partridge. He bit boldly into a long, green fruit, as he thought it, only to feel the tears gushing from his eyes and his tongue smarting from pepper. He spat it out with disgust and walked on. Suddenly he heard the sound of bleating. Could it be a sheep? He advanced cautiously and, peering between the trees, saw a young kid! It was tied fast to a wooden peg and stood in a sort of gangway. Heavy wooden beams had been driven into the ground to form it. What did it mean? A kid tied up in the jungle—why, a tiger might come along. And the rope was so short that it could scarcely graze. And what was this gangway? Ah, of course—it was a tiger trap! Harmen now noticed, half hidden by the foliage, a trap-door on each side. When the tiger jumped in to devour the kid, the trap-doors would fall and the tiger would be caught.

'Ma-a-ah!' bleated the poor little kid.

'I'm coming,' called Harmen gently. 'Harmen won't let the bad tiger eat you. No, no! Harmen will take you. Be still. I'm coming!'

'Ma-a-ah!' bleated the kid joyfully.

'Goodness!' said Harmen, 'those doors are thick! How'll I get to you without getting into the trap? Oh, now I know!' He held out his long spear and began to file the *rotang* rope with its sharp blade. The kid helped him, without knowing it, by drawing the rope tight as it strained away from the spear; yet he made slow progress. But at last it was nearly cut through; the kid tugged with all its might and rebounded against the wooden beams. The rope had yielded. The kid seemed so dazed by the shock that it turned on Harmen, with horns lowered, but suddenly changed its mind and began gambolling away with sprightly leaps and bounds.

'Here, come back!' shouted Harmen angrily, and flew after it. But as he raced through the gangway, one of the beams yielded a little; he stumbled and heard two heavy thuds. When he looked up, the trap-doors had fallen. He was a prisoner.

He seized his spear and threw it with all his strength against the door. His spear shivered and fell, but the door stood firm. It was made of *djati* wood, which even defies the destructive attacks of the white ants. Harmen stood erect, breathing hard, with clenched teeth and tears in his eyes. He must get out. But how? The wooden walls were at least five ells high. The floor, as well as the walls, was made of heavy beams placed beneath the side walls, so that there was no chance of raising them and burrowing out. He tried to cut notches into the wood, but after working hard for half an hour, he saw how hopeless this was. He threw himself into a corner and raged. Then it occurred to him to call for help. 'Ho! Ho! Help!' he roared. But Echo alone answered. Then he heard a pitiful bleat in the distance: 'Ma-a-ah!'

He screamed until he was hoarse, quickly, so that he should not hear the echo. But when he stopped from sheer exhaustion, he heard on every side: 'Ho-ho! Help! I'm caught!'

He put his fingers in his ears—the sound frightened him.

He braced himself against one of the doors and pushed and pushed. He tried the other. They stood firm. In a sudden fury, he began to kick against the door with his heels until they turned blue and purple. 'Get away!' he yelled wildly —and he heard 'Get away!' repeated on every side.

He had a new idea. He would use his spear as a vaulting pole and jump! Careful now! He walked to the farthest corner of the trap, planting his spear in a crack, and leaped. With his hands clutching the shaft, he swung himself up in a curve, and then the shaft broke and with a wild cry Harmen fell heavily on the wooden floor. He stumbled to his feet, tried to stand, tottered, fell over, and remained lying there.

When he opened his eyes again it was late afternoon. The birds were warbling once more after the silence of the noonday heat. His head ached. At first he looked around in surprise. Then an uneasy feeling seized him and he clutched his head to collect his thoughts. He tried to rise, trembled, and fell back again. He waited until he felt better. Then he opened his eyes and saw the walls enclosing him.

He was caught. . . . To-morrow or the next day the cannibals who had set the trap would come and eat him up. Harmen sighed—and the sigh turned into sobbing. 'Help! Help!' he called again, and listened. The birds stopped trilling for a moment and then went on singing, drowning the echo of his cries.

He sat staring at the wall opposite. Would his friends search for him? How far was he from the cave? He had walked to the west. First there had been the lizard, then the partridge. . . . He began to exercise his imagination and concocted a tale of a fight with a tiger, of his heroism. . . . Suddenly he jumped up enraged at himself, at mankind, at the world. Here he was cooking up a drama in which he was to strut before the others. The whole world seemed a Punch and Judy show in which men could not distinguish between a jest and the serious side of life.

So Harmen blamed the world and men for his own stupidity in getting caught in a trap which was not even meant for him.

Twilight fell, then it grew dark, and the pale moon began to gleam through the bamboo clusters. Crickets chirped. Insects

buzzed around his head. A frog joined in the concert, then came other musicians of the dark. Harmen listened to the solemn song of this Indian night, and even began to compose a poem about his fate.

Suddenly he pricked his ears and started up. Something was clambering up the wooden wall outside! Was it a beast of prey? He seized the part of the broken spear with the shaft and stood waiting.

There! Something black appeared above the boards—a brown face with great, frightened eyes and flap ears framed in the light of the moon. It was Saleiman.

CHAPTER XLI

PA-SAMIRAH, THE DUKUN[1]

WHEN Harmen had left his companions, Hajo and Rolf at once began to busy themselves with the manufacture of kitchen utensils. With their poor implements they made a bamboo table and goblets, and spoons and dishes of coco-nut shells. Dolimah, who had gone in the meantime to look for herbs and fruits for Padde, met Saleiman coming towards the cave with a live chicken under his arm. She thanked him, but asked whether the villagers were not beginning to notice his thefts. He explained that they blamed the evil spirits, which seemed very busy at the moment, for a tiger had stolen one of the dogs. But the villagers had just set a trap for this robber!

Dolimah now begged her faithful admirer to induce the medicine-man of his village to come to Padde's aid. This seemed to amaze Saleiman, but when she promised that the *dukun* should have the panther skin as a reward he agreed to try.

Padde's face was burning with fever when she returned to the cave, and he still refused to eat. Dolimah told the two boys of the probable visit of the *dukun* and of her promise to give him the panther skin, and a warm feeling of gratitude rose in their breasts. Her unending help touched them deeply. Now she busied herself with preparing a dinner of pheasant, rice, herbs, and fruit. They had been wondering why Harmen remained away so long, but now, when they were ready to sit down at their table for the first time, they became seriously alarmed about his absence.

Though the meal was much better than any they had tasted in months, no one was in the mood to enjoy it. As soon as they had finished, Rolf and Hajo set out to look for Harmen, taking the same way that he had followed. Though they called and searched everywhere, they saw no trace of him, and so they

[1] *Dukun*—medicine man.

returned to the cave, hoping to hear that he had returned. But instead they were greeted by Padde's delirious cries. He had grown much worse since morning and was tossing about feverishly and crying out 'Fire! Fire!' in piercing tones. When he was not raving about the burning of the ship, he mumbled confused snatches about life at home in Hoorn, or sobbed convulsively because he could not keep up with the others. Rolf and Hajo cooled his forehead with water, but they felt utterly helpless before this danger.

Suddenly some one outside the cave coughed and Dolimah whispered: 'The *dukun*.'

At the entrance of the cave, like a shadow in the twilight, stood an ancient native with a white beard, as thin as a skeleton. Dolimah addressed him politely, praising his skill, and he nodded, thoughtfully spitting a red juice on the grey stones.

'Where is the sick boy?'

'In the cave, Pa-Samirah.'

'Where is the panther skin?'

'Above you, good sir.'

He looked up, nodded, and spat again. 'The whites must stay outside. You must help me,' he ordered in a hoarse voice that sounded like the creaking of an old cart.

The boys withdrew, with a sense of oppression in leaving Padde to this sinister being; but, after all, Dolimah was with him. More than ever they felt themselves lost in this strange land. Dolimah, Saleiman, the *dukun* were at home here, they knew the birds, the plants, the animals—and the spirits! Spirits? Dolimah had made them feel that there were spirits. And now this old man had come to drive the evil spirits out of Padde! What a strange authority he had exerted over them when he had asked them to depart. And he could command the spirits! The two Dutch boys began to feel very small. Even Saleiman understood the soul of fire, stream, and rain; and the animals understood him, down to the snake which had answered his call.

A piercing scream reached them from within the cave. They ran towards it, but Dolimah whispered: 'The *dukun* is with him,' and tried to stop them. Hajo brushed past her none the less, but when the old man, who sat by Padde, turned his

head, mumbled, and stared at him with fixed, unseeing eyes, he fell back. Murmuring and humming monotonously, the *dukun* turned again to the patient.

Gradually the screams subsided, but the even sing-song of

the old man went on. After an eternity of waiting, Dolimah tiptoed out and whispered: 'The spirits are fleeing! He had me grate some herbs for him!' Then she returned to the cave and they waited again. At last the old *dukun* came out like an Old Man of the Mountain, but they stood in too much awe of him to thank him. They went softly into the cave—Padde was fast asleep, breathing peacefully.

The miracle-man stood outside, waiting for his panther skin. While Hajo rolled it up, Hajo tried to thank him, but the words stuck in his throat as he looked into this dull, dead countenance, as old as eternity. The *dukun* slowly spat forth more of the red juice that looked like blood. His slack mouth revealed a toothless jaw; his grey eyebrows were lifted high on his wrinkled forehead. He took the panther skin in silence, fastened his *sarong*, and climbed up the rope-ladder.

'Do you understand all this?' asked Hajo.

'Not in the least,' replied Rolf. 'How in the world could he——' He stopped thoughtfully. Suddenly he spoke: 'Hajo! Where can Harmen be?'

'Oh, ye-yes,' stammered Hajo. 'I'd forgotten about him.' The two boys looked greatly disturbed.

. . . . .

After Si-Kampret had guided the *dukun* to the cave he had started for home again. Suddenly he heard a plaintive bleating and ran towards it. He found a kid with a *rotang* rope around its neck, and knew at once that this was the kid from the tiger trap. He must find out what had happened. Was an evil spirit at work? But he had a talisman on his finger against the spirits of the forest, so he felt brave. The way to the trap

was long and roundabout, but he entertained himself by thinking of all the food he would sneak for Dolimah to-morrow—eggs and rice and dried meat. The moon was shining behind him and he watched his shadow as it ran along. His ears stuck out more than ever in the moonlight and he stared sadly and angrily at his image. Just then a bat flew above his head and the

two shadows met. Saleiman muttered a curse as he saw them and ran on under the trees, where he need not watch himself.

How he wished he might find a tiger in the trap—and kill him with a long bamboo stake which he would heat in a fire and put out the tiger's eyes! Then they wouldn't call him 'Bat-ears' any longer. . . . Dolimah always called him Saleiman—he felt happier when he remembered that.

Now he had come to the trap, and he climbed up along its side. Then he tumbled down again from sheer surprise.

'Saleiman!' roared Harmen. 'Where are you? Here, cut

down a bamboo rod and stick it down.' And he threw his knife out so that it almost struck Saleiman's skull.

But Saleiman had a better plan. He cut a *rotang* rope, bound one end on a branch and threw it down to Harmen, who worked his way up and out while Saleiman was still climbing down the tree. Harmen gave a deep sigh when he stood on the ground once more, thanked Saleiman briefly, took his knife, and ran. It was not easy to find his way in the dark, and he thought the way would never end. But at last he found a path between the trees—and then he heard a sound.

Careful! He hid in the bushes and watched the approaching figure. It was a Malay. And—and—what was he carrying there? Harmen snorted with rage: it was his panther skin!

The man stopped. Bony and crooked, his shadow looked threatening in the moonlight. 'Who is there?' he asked.

'I!' said Harmen, springing out, and he dealt the Malay a blow, snatched the skin, and ran in the direction from which the native had come before he had taken time to think. But he was sure that the fellow had stolen his skin.

He reached the plateau, scrambled down the ladder, fell, picked himself up again, and rushed into the cave.

'Harmen!'

Harmen panted as he threw the skin on the ground. 'There's your skin again! Anything to eat here!'

They stared at him wide-eyed.

CHAPTER XLII

FLIGHT

'WE must get out as fast as we can,' said Rolf as soon as they had heard Harmen's story. 'The *dukun* won't pass this by!'

'What will we do with Padde?'

'Carry him. We'll stretch the panther skin between two poles and make a litter. Come on!' and he quietly explained to Dolimah what had happened.

Hajo and Harmen prepared the litter, binding the skin to the poles with *rotang*, while Rolf gathered up the food and utensils and fastened them to a staff. 'Ready? Then wake Padde!' he ordered.

At that moment Saleiman came running in and announced that the angry *dukun* was approaching with a crowd of natives. Harmen picked Padde up—the boy was still fast asleep and hung limp in his arms. With the help of the others he got him up and on the litter. Hajo and Rolf picked it up and they started off.

Saleiman led the way, carrying the staff across his shoulder and walking with the easy, quick tread of those used to carrying heavy loads. Dolimah and Harmen bore the weapons and Joppie ran joyfully ahead. It was a strange caravan.

Now they heard the cry of a beast. 'It's my deer,' exclaimed Harmen joyfully, and he ran after Joppie to the spot where he had set his snare. In the lower sling struggled a young wild pig, at which Joppie barked furiously.

'A pig!' murmured Harmen in disgust. 'Come, I'll help you.' But the little pig almost strangled itself in its efforts to free itself. Harmen seized it, bound its hind legs together, and carried it back.

'Let's see the deer,' said Rolf.

'It's not a deer,' replied Harmen, 'but it's good to eat just the same.'

The boys took turns in carrying the litter, and once, when Rolf saw how tired Dolimah seemed, he suggested that they rest. But Saleiman seemed so disturbed that they pushed on. The forest came to an end and the soil became rocky. Only a few shrubs grew here. Then they came to a ravine at the bottom of which sparkled a little stream. Beyond stretched a plateau surrounded by a wall of mountains.

'There!' said Saleiman, and he pointed to a bridge. It was a sort of hammock, made of *rotang*, stretched across the ravine at its narrowest point.

'You must cut down the bridge when you've crossed over,' he said. They had all had the same idea. Now Harmen was the first to step on it. It began to swing violently, but Dolimah assured them that it was strong.

It was time to say farewell to Saleiman. 'He couldn't get back,' explained Dolimah, 'after we've broken it down behind us.'

'How about you?' asked Rolf, looking at her.

'I can't go back anyway,' she replied softly.

'Why not?' asked Saleiman shyly.

'Oh, it's much too far to my village,' she answered gently.

'I'll take you there!' promised Saleiman quickly.

She looked at him affectionately but sadly. 'I thank you, Saleiman—for everything. But I can't go back.'

The others crossed the swinging bridge with great difficulty, and when they had reached the other side, Harmen cut the ropes. The bottom dropped out of it and a few bamboo sticks shot down into the river like arrows. They had cut off their pursuers and were safe!

'Good-bye!' they called across to Saleiman, standing alone in the moonlight. He did not answer. But when the boys had turned to the south he called: 'Dolimah, I'll wait here—every evening—till it's new moon—till the beginning of the Fasting Month. . . .'

'But I won't come back,' answered Dolimah.

He did not reply, but they saw him standing like a statue

in the moonlight as long as they could mark the spot where the bridge had hung.

Now that the danger of pursuit was past, they realized how tired they were. They lay down near a bush and fell asleep beneath the starry sky.

When they awoke the next morning, the sun was shining directly upon them. There were no sheltering trees, no birds, no butterflies, nothing but cold, hard stones, and in the distance the blue mountains. They ate some rice and dried fish and started on again. Padde was still sleeping, breathing quietly, and they could not help thinking of the *dukun* whom they had rewarded so badly.

There was not a cloud in the sky and the sun was hot although it was still early. Dolimah was very silent, nor did she hum as usual on the march. When Rolf asked her of what she was thinking, she shook her head. But later she began speaking of her little brothers and sisters, especially of her little brother Dajik.

'He'll be grieving that I'm gone,' she sighed. 'He loves everybody, and he knows all the flowers and the trees and the animals.' She gazed dreamily at the distant mountains and added: 'If I should ever return to my village, Dajik would say: "I knew she'd come back . . ."'

The sun grew so hot that they began to stumble. The very air seemed to be trembling with the heat, and so they lay down to rest. Their throats were parched, but they did not feel like eating. When they awoke it was cooler and they could enjoy the chicken which Harmen had killed and roasted for them before a fire made by Dolimah. Padde was still sleeping, and Harmen began to suspect him of keeping his eyes closed in order to escape walking.

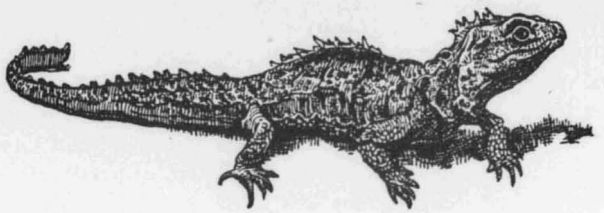
The rocky plain seemed endless, and the mountains looked just as far away as they had looked that morning. That night they built a big fire, for the stones beneath their feet were damp and cold though it had been so hot all day. Dolimah began talking about her brother Dajik again and about the festival month approaching at the new moon, and the boys knew that she was feeling homesick.

Suddenly Hajo pointed to the west. 'Look! Sea-gulls!'

They sprang up in surprise. The word touched a sensitive cord in their breasts. Sea-gulls! There, far in the west, they soared in their evening flight. If you held your breath, you could almost hear them saying: 'Tschiep! . . . the sea is here still! It sends you greetings and asks why you are so long on the way! Tschiep! . . .' One of them waved his wings at them and flew away.

But the boys felt happier in their hearts now. The sea! There, in the west, not far away, lay the sea. Now they knew how they had longed for it when they had wandered through all this green jungle of trees, creepers, and flowers. How oppressive, how impenetrable were these green walls, rising one close behind the other, where native spirits mocked at them while they were sighing for their home!

But now they were near the sea again! To-morrow morning they would turn westward, they would let their glances travel far over the water and breathe the fresh, salty air with deep breaths. Westward to-morrow! The sea to-morrow! They forgot the hard stones on which they lay as they fell asleep and dreamed of the sea and its distant roar.



CHAPTER XLIII

THE BIJAWAK

EARLY the next morning, when they picked up the litter to start forth, Padde awoke and looked about him in surprise. 'Wh-what's up now?' he asked in a weak voice.

'Padde! How are you? Do you feel better?'

'So-so. I'm very weak. But why are you carrying me here?'

They explained matters to him as they carried him over the barren country until they reached a wide cleft in the rock at the bottom of which ran a little stream, probably the same which they had crossed above on the swinging bridge. By following the stream they would reach the sea, and so they kept on for another half hour, when they came upon a narrow stairway leading down to the stream far below them. They descended cautiously, at the risk of their necks—Padde almost fell out of his litter several times—and found themselves in a cool, green gorge. What a relief after the blazing sun through which they had walked so many miles! They stooped and greedily drank the cold fresh mountain water out of their hands.

They decided to wade downstream as far as they could, and then to break a path through the dense foliage, if they must. Anything seemed better than to return to the burning sunlight above! All went better than they had expected. The pebbles in the stream had been rounded off by the water and as they proceeded they found a shallow pool where they all bathed—even Joppie. At the end of another hour they came upon a

footpath by the side of the stream, and then it was easy going until twilight. They began to consider where they would find a resting-place, for now that it had grown darker the gorge assumed a terrifying, mysterious look with its walls closing around them. They decided to keep on to the next bend, and there, to their delight, they saw a fine sandy place overhung with leafy green branches, like a curtain. The cliffs were covered with ferns and little trees in blossom and the charming, natural bower was scented with their sweet odour.

'What's that over there?' cried Padde suddenly. 'A cr-cr-crocodile?'

Harmen jumped, and there, winding and twisting like a serpent, an enormous lizard shot between his legs and gave him such a fierce blow with its tail that he fell sprawling. He tried to block its way, but it reared, showing a yellowish-white belly and clawing at his face with a black claw with long, sharp nails. Harmen dodged, the creature fell heavily into the water with a splash and disappeared.

'It's a *bijawak!*' stammered Dolimah. 'A very big one. They steal chickens and eggs.'

'The devil take him!' said Harmen angrily. 'Let's camp here, just the same!' The boys took possession of this idyllic spot for the night, making beds of ferns and starting a fire with

much difficulty since the wood was damp. While the moonlight fell upon them and they listened to one of Dolimah's tales of a *bijawak* which had been caught in her village, Harmen withdrew with the unfortunate little pig, whose hour had come. Their supplies were almost at an end and the pig had to be sacrificed to their needs.

When he returned, he spitted it on his spear and turned it above the rising flames. As he stood there, with his body naked except for the skirt of grasses, grinning, and twisting the hissing, spluttering little victim at the end of his spear, he looked for all the world like a devil himself in hell. His shadow, strangely magnified, imitated every movement in ghostly mockery on the bare, white cliff opposite.

CHAPTER XLIV

ESCAPE

THEY were waked the next morning by the furious screams of a dozen little monkeys. They were clambering about the cliffs on the other side, and the trees were full of them. The caravan had landed in a monkey settlement. The sun had not yet risen, but a few reddish-grey clouds glowed in the pale grey sky. Gigantic bats, *kalongs*, returning from their night's plundering, were flying lazily back to their resting-places.

Now black clouds began driving above their heads from the west. They stood threateningly above the rocky cliffs, where they lingered until others joined them and a heavy, black roof of cloud formed above the narrow ravine. The boys felt as though they were at the bottom of a funereal vault. Lying on their backs in their beds of ferns, they stared sleepily at the gloomy, mysterious scene—the black shroud above them, the grey cliffs facing them, the dark trees and the scurrying monkeys. These no longer screamed, but sprang about and up and down, peering at the boys like wicked little devils with their eyes flashing, and showing their teeth.

Suddenly, as though a great lantern had been lighted, a pale, golden light illumined the black clouds from below. Absolute silence reigned, except for the rushing of the little stream. It seemed to cast a spell upon the boys; they lay beneath its power without strength to move, and they could neither think nor shake it off. But now the heavens began to leak. Warm drops of rain roused them out of their dazed enchantment.

Rolf started up suddenly, looked at the others in alarm and called: 'Boys, it's raining! The river will rise!'

Hajo, Harmen, and Joppie jumped up and in a jiffy everything was packed, helter-skelter. The other half of the pig, which they had put aside for to-day, had disappeared, and Harmen began cursing the whole tribe of *bijawaks* up and down.

'Wouldn't it be funny if we were all drowned now!' suggested Harmen cheerfully. 'All our troubles for nothing, eh?'

The falling drops turned into a downpour. After half an hour the stream had widened so that they could no longer see the footpath. Joppie splashed ahead sturdily, but suddenly he was caught by the swift current and carried along until he managed to save himself on a big rock.

'That may happen to us all if this rain keeps up,' said Rolf anxiously.

Harmen picked up Joppie and carried him, though his hands were full, and Dolimah waded silently behind. The water had now risen to above their knees, and whenever Hajo or Rolf happened to step into a hole, Padde's litter was buried beneath the flood. . . . It began to grow exciting! Now the water was almost up to their waists and Padde had to sit up in his litter. Now and then they encountered small rapids where they had to make their way carefully through the raging current. While they were struggling to get Padde and the litter over a dangerous spot, Rolf stumbled; the litter slipped from Hajo's hands and Rolf and Padde were swept beneath the water. They came up again, circling around helplessly. Rolf was driven against a rock, where he managed to pull himself up and look about, utterly dazed. Padde drifted on, kicking with all his might.

Hajo flung himself into the stream and swam, with sturdy strokes, in pursuit of his friend. He found a foothold, seized Padde by his legs, swam with him towards the left side, where the water was shallow, struggled to his feet, and helped Padde up. Terrified and scarcely able to stand, Padde clung to his comrade with a desperate hold.

'Hang on to our arms!' ordered Rolf, who had waded

towards them. 'The litter's gone. It's easy going with the current.'

They went on, with terror in their hearts, while Padde tottered and fell and the two others clutched him. At a bend in the river Harmen cried out in alarm: the gorge was closed above their heads and the water rushed into a dark grotto. What could they do? They stopped, horrified by the prospect. There was no way out except through the grotto.

'Into the grotto!' ordered Rolf.

'I'm afraid . . .!' Padde was sobbing.

'Come along!' said Rolf firmly and the boys staggered in. Dolimah hesitated a moment, but the stream forced her along. Joppie began to howl, but Harmen threatened to throw him overboard, and he stopped.

The sides and roof of the grotto gleamed black from the water flowing over it. In places it was so low that the boys had to stoop to get through. It was full of bats, which fluttered about their faces, but they scarcely noticed them in their agony of haste. Striking their heads against stones in the darkness, stumbling, staring, and straining towards a ray of light which would indicate that they had come to the end of this dark passage, they went on as if pursued by the furies. Hajo dragged Padde; Harmen clutched Joppie, though he was no light load; Rolf tried to help Dolimah.

'Light!' cried Hajo at last. 'There's light!'

Gasping, weighed down by the darkness, oppressed by the stale air and the sound of the flitting bats, they at last escaped out of the uncanny darkness of the grotto into the light. Yes, there was the end! There was daylight again, glorious daylight!

They waded out of the grotto and drew a deep breath. The walls of cliffs had disappeared as if by magic and trees grew on both banks of the river. In sudden transport of relief the boys threw themselves headlong into the water, Rolf and Hajo holding Padde by the hand, and swam to the shore. They scrambled up, helped Dolimah to get a foothold, looked for a soft place to rest, and sank down.

'Heigh there, Joppie, you monster!' cried Harmen. 'Can't

you even say 'Thank you, dear Harmen,' when I saved your life?'

Joppie was lying with his head resting on his paws. He sighed deeply, crept closer and snuggled up to Harmen's steaming body.

The exhausted boys fell into a dreamless sleep while the rain continued to pour heavily down upon them.

CHAPTER XLV

THE RAFT

WHEN they awoke they were dry. A radiant blue sky rose above them like a dome, and in its centre hung a splendid golden chandelier, the sun. Refreshing odours filled the air, the wet, green trees shone and sparkled, while the birds chattered noisily and fluttered about on bright wings. The stream tumbled out of the ravine over the rocks helter-skelter, splashing the water on high. The entrance of the grotto, adorned with flowers and ferns, looked so mysteriously alluring that the boys almost felt inclined to go into it again.

But there seemed to be no way out of this beautiful spot. The trees were crowded close together and the shrubs grew so thick that it seemed impossible to force a path through them. Harmen's immediate concern was food. He found some edible fruits and brought them back to roast them. After much effort he succeeded in building a fire, but while he was about to begin his labours as cook Hajo and Rolf came running up.

'Rolf knows how we'll get to the sea,' shouted Hajo. 'We'll float down on a raft!'

Harmen opened his mouth in surprise. Then he gasped: 'That's the idea!' He abandoned his fire and set to work with the two others. They cut down twenty sturdy bamboo stalks to the length of fifteen feet each and twenty more each ten feet long. These formed the foundation. Fortunately there was plenty of *rotang* for binding—indeed, the whole jungle was full of it. The boys stripped the tough, flexible

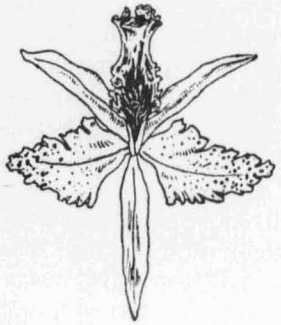
stems of thorns and used them to bind the cross stalks over the others.

Dolimah came to look on. 'What are you making?' she asked.

They told her, and she watched them thoughtfully while they tugged and toiled and moiled until the sweat dropped from their foreheads and ran down their backs.

'The river flows into the sea,' she said after a moment. 'All rivers end in the sea.'

'Well, that's where we want to go,' replied Rolf.



'And then?' she whispered. 'When you've reached the sea——?'

'Then we're going to Bantam! We'll find a boat somehow.'

She said no more, but returned to Padde, where she sat silent.

After a few hours the framework of the raft was finished. Harmen tested the network and knots with professional skill, leaving Hajo and Rolf to complete the superstructure, while he and Padde went fishing. Padde was feeling better and, as a passionate fisherman, could not resist the lure of angle and worms. But they were both in a quarrelsome mood. They argued and disagreed about a good place to stand, about hooking and angling, until Padde forgot himself and boxed Harmen's ears. Harmen bided his time and then threw Padde

into the water. But after several violent struggles with the fish, in which the latter got the best of it, Harmen returned with a fine carp and Padde with two heavy specimens of an unknown species which weighed eight pounds between them.

When they were brought 'to the table', Harmen declared that they tasted fine. 'They taste exactly like that fine, expensive fish, like——'

'Like salmon, do you mean?' asked Rolf.

'Yes, I think so. The skipper and the gents ate it just before we sailed.'

Rolf grinned. 'How do you know how that fish tasted? You weren't invited to the farewell dinner!'

'Well, if you must know,' replied Harmen, 'this fish tastes just how the one for the skipper smelled!'

They all laughed, but Harmen's horse-laugh out-roared the rest.

CHAPTER XLVI

DOLIMAH IS HOMESICK

AFTER dinner the boys chatted together, cheerfully. They were satisfied with their day's work. Rolf and Hajo had completed half of the superstructure of the raft in a few hours and were sure they could finish the deck the next morning. They planned how to fasten a rudder to it, and Harmen insisted that there must be a cook's galley in front.

'Don't you think it would be nice, too,' he added, 'if we built a little roof for Dolimah?'

She started up when she heard her name. 'What are you thinking of?' asked Rolf. 'You've been so quiet all evening.'

Dolimah remained silent. Her lips trembled; she tried to speak, but words failed her. There were tears in her eyes.

Harmen looked at her with pity. 'She wants to go back to her cannibal settlement,' he said.

'Do you want to go back to your people, Dolimah?' asked Rolf gently.

She dropped her long lashes and nodded. Their happy mood was destroyed at one blow.

'How could you get back?' asked Rolf. His voice trembled a little, but he faced the situation bravely. 'Surely not through the ravine?'

'No,' she answered. 'I'll cross the river here and follow the ravine on the other side. Saleiman promised to take me back.'

'And when you get back home, what will happen to you?'

'I don't know. I don't dare think of it.'

Rolf sat quietly brooding for a time. Then he turned to his companions. 'Boys, we—we've got to take her back.'

'Good night!' replied Harmen.

'It's not a question whether we like it or not,' Rolf declared

angrily. 'We can't let her go alone! If you don't like it, you can stay here.'

'Like it?' snapped Harmen. 'I know as well as you that we can't leave her after she helped us out of our mess. You needn't think that I don't care——' But his voice broke and he struck the ground with his fist.

Padde spoke up softly, with averted face: 'I'm not going back.'

'Aren't you ashamed?' scolded Harmen angrily. But Padde whimpered: 'I just can't—I want to go to my mother.'

Dolimah had seen with alarm the effect of her words. 'I don't want you to come back with me!' she murmured. 'I can find the way alone.'

Rolf shook his head. 'We'll take you back to Saleiman, Dolimah.'

'Oh, then—then I won't go! Then I'll stay with you!'

'Don't be foolish, Dolimah,' said Rolf. 'You'd want to go back sooner or later anyway, you know.'

She began to sob softly.

'What are we going to do now?' asked Harmen sadly.

'Wait till to-morrow anyway,' replied Rolf. 'We can't do anything about it to-night.'

The boys sat silent. They felt that Dolimah's departure was inevitable, and that it was their duty to take her back. But the idea of turning back from the sea, now that it was so near, and going back through this country which seemed to them more strange, more cruel, more terrifying with every succeeding day, made them shudder.

But gradually they grew more hopeful. Perhaps Dolimah would feel different to-morrow, thought Harmen. If they were all especially good to her, perhaps she would forget her homesickness. And if they built her a nice roof, as if she were the skipper of the raft—perhaps that would help to cheer her.

With such plans in their heads the boys fell asleep.

Dolimah continued to sob for a long time; her slender shoulders shook convulsively. But at last she had wept her fill and she rested. She was aware that the four boys were

sleeping, for she could distinguish the quiet breathing of Rolf and Hajo, Padde's fitful gasps, and Harmen's snoring.

She considered quietly what she must do, and after a few moments came to a decision. The moon rose above the trees. It was almost full. She got up cautiously and went to the edge of the forest, where some white flowers gleamed in the moonlight. She picked an armful of the most beautiful flowers and returned. She laid a flower by Harmen's face, so that the odour hung over him. Then she laid one by Padde, and then by the two others. The moon shone down upon the sleepers' faces. Dolimah looked at them long, turning from one to the other, and her eyes filled with tears. Then the harsh cry of a peacock roused her from her brooding. She opened her arms and dropped all the remaining flowers at the feet of her friends.

'You must lead me, dear, kind moon!' she begged. 'Will you protect me against evil spirits?'

She raised her *sarong* to her knees and waded like a little water sprite through the shallow parts of the river. Before she climbed up the ascent on the opposite side, she turned back once more and gazed at the four boys. When she reached the top of the bank, she cast a lingering glance at them, sobbed softly, and turned with hasty steps on her way.

Above her hung the starry heavens. She wandered on through a treasure-chamber filled to the brim with diamonds, emeralds, and rubies.

CHAPTER XLVII

HARMEN TRIES A NEW TRICK

WHEN the boys awoke the next morning and saw the flowers around them and no Dolimah they understood. 'What shall we do?' asked Harmen. There were tears in their eyes.

'Nothing,' said Rolf. 'We could never catch up with her now.'

They were silent. 'What a darling,' said Harmen, 'to lay the flowers here like this!'

Rolf drew a deep breath. 'Let's go,' he said abruptly. 'I —I can't stand it here any longer!'

The boys sprang up. Forward! No more delay now! They worked at completing the raft with furious haste, with clenched teeth, without the usual noisy scuffles, without joking. They must get to Bantam. Courage now!

That afternoon the raft was finished, with a rudder to steer it. They carried it to the river and fastened it to the shore with *rotang* ropes. When the boys jumped on it, to try it, it scarcely sank lower. Then they stamped a layer of clay over the bamboo of the fore-deck, and Harmen carried a few pieces of wood extra to start a new fire. With a few stakes to serve as boat-hooks and a supply of fish which Padde had caught while the others were finishing the raft all was ready.

'All right?'

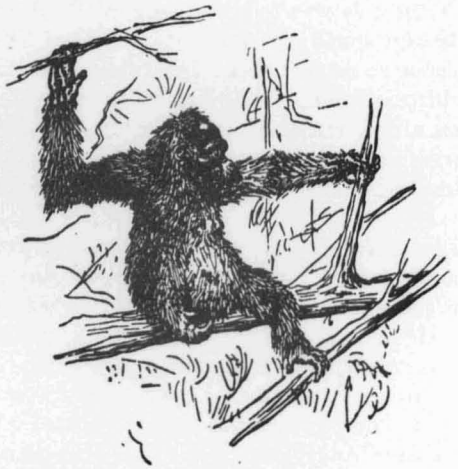
'Yes! Come, Joppie!'

They drew in their cable, pushed off, and steered for the middle of the stream. Harmen stood at the prow with his stake, Hajo and Rolf aft, so that they could guide the raft steadily. Padde and Joppie acted as overseers.

The current was swift, but fortunately there were no heavy

rocks in the water. The raft, after all, was bound only with *rotang* ropes and things might become serious if it were dashed against a cliff with great force. But for the present it was gliding smoothly and lightly down the river.

The river grew broader at the next bend and they had a magnificent view of its banks. Thick trees, with mighty trunks which would need three men to span them, rose to dizzy heights. Many of them were covered with dark moss, but their



tall trunks were smooth, with light grey or reddish-brown rinds. Occasionally they passed a *waringi*-tree beneath whose mighty branches stood roots like stilts, or like the pillars beneath a bridge. Between the pillars, through which the light penetrated, hung garlands of blossoms on creeping and climbing plants.

As they drifted on, they saw an orang-outang, which Padde mistook for a cannibal, but otherwise they had no exciting adventures that day. At sunset they found a place 'to anchor' and after a meal composed chiefly of Padde's catch of fish they lay down by the fire to escape the stings of the gnats and mosquitoes. But they could not sleep, for they were thinking of Dolimah. They saw her slender figure wandering alone over

the plateau in the broiling sun. They would have given much to know if their little patron saint had reached Saleiman in safety. Their hearts were heavy for their lost companion.

They awoke early the next morning and breakfasted on four fish which Padde had caught while the three others had dived, swum, and practised throwing their spears at a mark. Then they pushed off and steered towards the middle of the river once more. It was a wonderful morning and soon they began to sing as they floated down the broad stream.

'A raft's the only way to travel,' sighed Padde, who lay in the middle and stared up into the blue sky. 'You get on without having to do any work. It's better than lying in that miserable litter of yours. That had a disgusting stench!'

The three others were about to berate him for his ingratitude, but they were just rounding a curve and all their attention was required to avoid several big rocks that threatened to overturn their raft.

'I wish it would rain again so that the water would rise!' said Harmen. At the same moment he sent the raft to the shore with a strong shove and whispered: 'Take care! Look at that!' He pointed to a spot before them where a cloud of smoke rose between the trees, on the opposite side of the river. Then they saw a roof gleaming between the leaves.

How could they pass without being observed? 'Shall we wait till it's dark?' suggested Rolf. But Harmen scorned the idea, and Hajo thought they might send the raft down while they walked on the shore, to attract less attention. The question was whether the raft could pass the village without being stopped by projecting stones or branches. They experimented by throwing bits of wood down the river, and found the best place from which to send the raft on its solitary way.

'Good!' cried Harmen enthusiastically. 'We'll go to the other side with the raft, let it float down, and follow it! Come, Hajo, we'll take the side where the village is—then we'll have something to see. Rolf and Padde can stay on this side. Then we'll be sure to have the raft without having to swim for it.'

'If you go by the village side there'll be sure to be trouble,' said Rolf. 'I'll stay with you and Hajo can go with Padde!'

They agreed to this, and Harmen and Rolf dragged the raft to a position where they could send it drifting down the stream. 'If only they don't capture it!' sighed Rolf.

Harmen was silent for a moment. Then he said: 'I'm going along with it! Now don't fall over with surprise—or you'll land in the water! I won't stay on top—I'll creep beneath it so that they won't see me. Then if they sneak it, I'll be on hand to get it again.'

'How will you get enough air?' asked Rolf, not in the least approving of this plan.

'I live on love,' answered Harmen with a grin. 'The raft lies a good deal above the water. If I stick my head between the bamboo, I'll get enough air. Come along, Joppie!' He pushed off the raft, threw Joppie on the bamboo with a fine swing of his shoulders, sprang into the water, and dived beneath the raft.

Rolf watched it floating away with a sinking heart. Harmen had got the best of him by springing a reckless plan on him suddenly; but if he jumped into the river now and brought the raft back to the shore he would only increase the danger of being stopped by natives.

Joppie was whining with all his might, since this whole undertaking puzzled him. 'Shut up!' cried Harmen from beneath the bamboo deck. 'Harmen is here with you!'

But Joppie continued to grieve. He sniffed all about him, sat on his hind paws, opened his mouth, and howled sadly the one long-drawn-out tone common to all Indian village curs.

Rolf followed the progress of the raft with uneasy attention. Now it had passed the village and now—merciful heavens!—a boatful of naked boys was starting after it. They paddled and screamed until they reached it—and sprang upon it!

CHAPTER XLVIII

ON TO JAVA!

HARMEN had started on his dangerous adventure cheerfully. He lay back, folded his hands, and took a deep breath. 'Now if Joppie will only shut up, all's well,' he thought.

But Joppie continued to howl for a while and then suddenly stopped. Harmen tried to peer through the cracks, pricked his ears, heard the sound of oars and of something banging against the raft. Then he saw a naked boy spring on the raft—and then half a dozen more. Joppie wagged his tail at them and licked their feet, to the intense disgust of Harmen. Then he began to think what fun it would be to tickle their soles from beneath and how he would make them jump—and the very thought of this made him burst into laughter.

But he didn't think it so funny when they all came over to the side where he was lying, for suddenly he began to swallow water instead of air and almost choked to death. He crept out in the back, caught the edge of the raft to hold himself up, raised his dripping head with its wild crop of hair and his blue face out of the water, and roared: 'Thunder-r-r-r-r and damnation-n-n-n!' He was almost as good as Folkert Berentsz.

The Malay boys stared at this river monster for a second as though they were frozen with terror. Then they ran to the opposite side of the raft and fell into the water like frogs. Harmen went back to his old position where he could now breathe freely once more. It was this sudden disappearance which strengthened their belief that an evil spirit, some devil, had taken possession of the raft. They jumped into their boat and paddled back to the shore.

When Harmen had recovered from his fright and his wrath, he glanced back to see whether he had passed the village and whether he was being pursued. Then, after he had turned past another bend in the river, he got out and jumped on the raft again. Joppie greeted him enthusiastically, wagging his tail and leaping up at him, but Harmen replied with a swift kick. Joppie, looking very much puzzled, crept to the other side.

Harmen floated on, very well satisfied with himself, and listening to the warbling of the birds and breathed the heavy, sweet odours with the feeling that he was like Adam in Paradise. He passed a white heron standing on one foot in the green bushes and saw his image reflected in the bright water. He closed his eyes and dreamed. How odd and fantastic life was in Sumatra! He gave a deep sigh, and when Joppie came towards him again his heart was softened and he took his pet in his arms.

Bump! The raft struck against the river-shore and Harmen jumped up and tied it fast in a shady spot between water-lilies. 'Well, they'll be sure to find me,' he thought as he lay down on the deck again and fell asleep.

. . . . .

Padde and Hajo had observed from a distance the little drama of Harmen's sudden appearance among the native boys and had thanked their stars that it had ended happily. Then they began to struggle through the underbrush and made their way with no more than the usual difficulty to the raft. There they lay down beside Harmen and Joppie, who were both snoring loud enough to strike terror to the heart, and waited for Rolf.

Suddenly they were roused from their nap by loud cries on the opposite bank. What could it be?

After he had observed the successful outcome of Harmen's adventure, Rolf had found a path leading to the village and continued to advance cautiously, slinking from bush to bush. Suddenly he saw two little naked boys advancing.

They were calling loudly to each other, discussing the incident of the raft.

'Bung of Bapah-Lolleh says he's going to follow up the raft and see where it is,' said one of them.

'He's a liar. He wouldn't dare,' replied the other.

'He found the skin of a poison-snake yesterday, and with that as a charm he can do anything, he says. Anyway, he's started.'

They had passed out of sight and hearing now, and Rolf came out of hiding once more. 'We'll have to see about this Bung of Bapah-Lolleh,' he thought as he walked on, avoiding the village as much as he could. He glanced through the

bushes into a coco-nut plantation and to his amazement observed a fairly big monkey plucking the coco-nuts in a tree and throwing them down to a native below, who gathered them up. 'Very convenient,' thought Rolf. 'We'll have to train a monkey too!' Then he returned to the river path, discovered the raft on the opposite side, and was about to make his way to the bank to swim across, when he saw a little brown boy, with his back towards him, peering across at the raft.

'Ah, Bung!' he roared in a voice of thunder. Bung could not have been more terrified if he had been struck by lightning. Then he tried to escape, but Rolf caught him and held him fast. Bung bit and screamed and begged for mercy, until Rolf agreed to free him on one condition: he must go to his village

and tell them that it was in danger from a band of robbers, eighty of them, who were advancing from above the village. Trembling in every limb, Bung promised to carry the bad news to Bapah-Lolleh. But before he sped away, Rolf learned from him that the sea was only a day's distance from there, that there was another big settlement near the sea, and that Java and Bantam were not far away.

The boys were in high spirits as they pushed off and steered the raft towards midstream. On to Bantam! Bantam was not far away!

That evening they dined on fish, as they sat around the fire on the raft, and later they looked out from their leafy bower near the shore upon the silvery stream. It was all so unreal that not one of them would have been surprised if a Viking ship with white sails and fluttering flag had suddenly sailed by; or if a company of elves had risen from the waves and floated over the water, hand in hand, dancing their graceful measures. Look! There sat the King of the Frogs, wearing his golden crown on his head and all sorts of orders on his breast.

Suddenly the fairy-tale was over! The elves and the King of the Frogs had vanished, but a great dark thing came straight towards the raft. It stopped now and then, and came nearer once more! A crocodile! The boys, watching it approach, with intense excitement but not with fear, suddenly saw a flat head with greenish-yellow eyes and crooked, projecting teeth pushing itself forward on the deck, while the monster tried to pull itself up by its forepaws.

The boys had sprung up and seized their spears, but the crocodile, which had been seeking a comfortable log from which to view the landscape by moonlight, seemed quite as startled as they. It fell heavily back into the water and swam away.

'We must sleep on land,' said Rolf. 'It's not safe here!'

The boys agreed, and silently they stepped into the forest where they found a soft resting-place for the night a short distance from the bank. But here the gnats and midges drove them crazy. There was no possibility of sleeping.

But listen! Ding-dong-ding-dong-clang. The sound came

from the village below, of which Bung had told them. Since they could not sleep anyway, they must try to pass it to-night! They jumped up, rubbed their bites, and started back for the raft. Harmen picked up Joppie, who had slept through the proceedings of the crocodile and the gnats with equal calm, and sent him flying from the bank to the raft in a fine curve. He landed on his feet, rolled over on one side—and was snoring before the boys had got started!

'He's a fine watchdog!' said Harmen, with a grin.

They steered to the middle and saw lights below on the right bank, so they kept to the left, in the shadow. To avoid further danger they threw all their fire overboard except a few glowing sticks, and made Padde bend over this to conceal the light. They moved as quietly as they could as they approached nearer and the sounds of the music grew louder. Ding-dong-dong-clang-ping-tock-tock-dung-dung. . . .

Harmen began to long for his fiddle, and that led Padde to recall the coffee-mill that had fallen overboard at the beginning of this inauspicious journey. Before they knew how it came about, the two were engaged in a wordy quarrel and then in a fist-fight until Rolf put a stop to their dangerous sport. And suddenly they saw that they had passed the settlement safely and after half an hour they tied up the raft once more.

Padde was fast asleep and they called in vain to wake him until Harmen shouted: 'Padde, heigh, look! A crocodile!'

Padde jumped up as if some one had struck him. 'Where?' he cried.

'In your ear,' said Harmen, picking up the other sleepy-head, Joppie. 'Come, we're going to sleep on land.'

Though they covered themselves with leaves, they found little relief. The gnats had a fine feast that night.

CHAPTER XLIX

JOPPIE MAKES A DISCOVERY

THE next morning when Joppie began to drink a few draughts of the river water, he showed great disgust and spat it all out of his mouth again. 'What's wrong with him?' asked the boys; but Harmen jumped up, threw himself flat on the raft and drank some of the water too. 'It's bitter!' he cried with great joy.

The others ran up and tasted it, and while they spat out the evil-tasting stuff, they looked at one another with overwhelming delight. 'It's brackish, boys! We're near the sea!'

Hajo was untying the raft and Harmen was making ready to push off when Rolf stopped them. 'Boys, we must decide what we're going to do first. We must be sure of what we want.'

'Well, we know that, old scribbler,' snapped Harmen. 'We want to get to the sea.'

'Without sails or food?'

'Wh-what? Do you intend to put to sea on this raft?'

'Yes. I think we can manage it if the weather holds good.'

'Thunder-r-ation!' stammered Harmen. But the sense of adventure attracted him. After all, Rolf wasn't merely a scribbler!

'And if there should be a storm?' asked Padde.

'There won't be a storm,' cried Harmen in great excitement.

'Let's get ready at once,' said Hajo, with beaming countenance.

'We must make the raft stronger and higher first,' said Rolf, 'and we must make a mast. But a sail?'

'I'll get one at the village,' Harmen assured them.

'Steal it?' asked Rolf thoughtfully.

'Can't be helped,' replied Harmen.

They covered the raft with leaves to hide it from sight and pushed through the underbrush on the bank to catch a glimpse of the sea. Suddenly Hajo stopped. 'Listen! I hear it—the sea!'

Then they forced their way through bushes and trees, scratching themselves, gasping, stumbling, and plunging on until—there lay the ocean, blue, infinite!

They breathed in the fresh, salty air; they listened to the glittering, surging breakers as if enchanted by their music. How the waves came racing up! They were broken and flung back into the arms of the sea which gave them new strength. Roaring and tossing their crests, they rolled up in rank after rank, bearing bright pebbles and shells as votive gifts to the white strand.

The boys stood for a long time filling their eyes with this view of their great, beloved friend. The sea would carry them on strong arms safely to Bantam and then back to Holland. They dashed into the surf and sighed with deep happiness. Now they felt free once more with all the wide sea before them!

'We're on a bay here,' remarked Rolf. 'The whole shore is curved. There are two large bays on the south shore of Sumatra, I know.'

'And when could we reach Bantam?' asked Hajo.

'With favourable winds in a week perhaps.'

A week! The boys had to think this over. In a week they would be shaking Bontekoe's hand? For they felt absolutely certain that Bontekoe and his sixty brave lads had reached Bantam in safety long ago.

Then and there they decided to gather supplies for ten days. Hajo and Rolf gathered coco-nuts, Padde went fishing for eels and whatever else luck might bring, and Harmen chopped wood to strengthen the raft. By noon they had a big pile of coco-nuts, Padde had caught eight big fish and twelve smaller ones, and Hajo had shot two pigeons.

'We must hang the fish up to dry, after slitting them,' said Harmen, as he cut them open, spread them apart with little pieces of wood, and hung them on a line above the smoke of a fire.

Suddenly Hajo ran up in great excitement. 'Put out the fire! Quick! There's a boat coming. They'll see the smoke!'

He put out the fire with his feet, while Harmen dragged the busy fisherman, Padde, from his exposed position just as the boat came down the river. It was a small boat with a high sail, and in it were three Malays, one of them busy with a net, another singing monotonously by the mast, the third steering.

Harmen was prevented with great difficulty from trying to attack them to capture the sail, but the others proved too much for him. They returned to their various labours, and that evening they counted more than a hundred coco-nuts, tied together by the dozen, and sixty good fish. They had water-jars, *rotang*, and bamboo logs for strengthening the raft and for the mast, and *rotang* ropes.

Then they returned to fetch the raft, carrying the water-containers with them to get a supply of fresh water upstream. Fifteen minutes after they set forth they had reached their bay in safety.

'And now,' remarked Harmen grandly, 'while you work on the raft I'll go for the sail.'

'And you won't make too much trouble, will you?'

'Can't promise,' said Harmen. 'But when we meet again I'll have a sail—or I'll grow feathers and lay eggs.'

'Well, push off then!' said Rolf, laughing.

And Harmen pushed off.

CHAPTER L

HARMEN CAPTURES A SAIL

HARMEN walked along the path by the river side. Fortunately he need not swim, for the village lay on this side too. But as he advanced he had to force his way through trees and thickets, an uncanny task in the darkness. His blood ran cold and perspiration stood on his forehead and hands. In about half an hour after he had reached their former anchorage, he found a footpath leading to the village. About twenty boats lay along the banks, their sails bound round their masts. The settlement lay close by the river, and he must act cautiously. Taking advantage of a moment when a dark cloud pushed its way across the moon, Harmen crawled to the nearest boat and crouched down behind it.

Which sail should he take? He saw one that was not tied fast—that would be the easiest. He crept over and examined it. 'H'm!' he debated. 'Boatswain Berentsz wouldn't look at it, but we'll take what we can get.'

He was just about to start off with his booty when, to his disgust, he saw a native coming towards him. He had a knife in his belt, but Harmen had one also. The native, carrying a lantern, seemed to be looking for Harmen, but as he got nearer he turned to one of the boats and set his lantern on the ground.

From his hiding-place Harmen watched him working at the boat. 'I'd like to have that lantern for us,' he thought. 'Why not blow it out and run?' The native continued at his labour of setting up his mast and sorting his nets. Plainly he was going to fish. After waiting long for his chance, Harmen crept up while the Malay's head was turned and blew out the lantern.

But the man noticed this, so Harmen ducked and crept back into the shadow once more. While he was blaming himself for being too slow, he heard the man strike fire again and light his lantern.

'Well, at least I've learned that he has a tinder-box,' said Harmen to console himself. 'We can use that. I think I'll throw my sail over his head—then I'll have him and the rest too!'

The Malay had finished his preparations and began to push his boat into the water.

'Wait, I'll help you!' whispered Harmen, as he sneaked silently behind the native, who did not suspect the danger threatening him in the rear. As he bent forward to give his boat the last push to send it into the river, Harmen threw himself upon him with his sail, like a great bat. The native went sprawling into the water with Harmen on top of him. A desperate struggle ensued. Harmen managed first to tug the fellow's knife out of his girdle and throw it on shore. Then he drew the sail like a sack over the man's head, forced his hands behind him, and pressed one hand over his mouth to keep him from crying for help. But once the native was on his feet and on land again he fought like a raging beast. He bit Harmen's hand so badly that the boy almost yelled himself, and it was only when he had thrown his adversary on his back and gagged him with a piece of the sail that he felt safe.

Harmen dragged his victim to a boat, bound his wrists and ankles with ropes so that he should not remove the gag, and left him lying in the shadow. Then he picked up the knife and listened. No one had heard them, thank heaven! On hands and knees he made his way to the place where the native's boat lay waiting for him. He took up the lantern, unfurled the sail, and pushed off. 'Well, if this isn't travelling like a rajah!' Harmen chuckled as he watched the cheerful light of the lantern and the breeze sent the graceful vessel gliding over the water.

Half an hour later he sailed into the bay where the raft was fastened, sprang to shore, and called: 'Get up, fellows!'

'Harmen! Are they chasing you?'

'Not that I know—but we'd better skip. I've captured a sail—and a boat too!

'A boat? Can we sail to Bantam in it?' asked Padde.

'Not in this cockleshell,' replied Harmen contemptuously.

'And we don't want to steal more than we must,' added Rolf. 'Come, let's load and be off.'

They loaded their supplies of coco-nuts, fish, and water, took the sail from the boat and threw it on the raft, and pushed off. But suddenly Harmen stopped and looked back

to the shore in great distress. 'My hooks—and the eels!' he cried as he turned from the raft.

'Hurry up!' they cried. But Harmen was running with great leaps and bounds to the place where he had set his eel-hooks. 'I have one!' he called back. 'Never saw a finer! And here's another! And, great heavens! here's a third. Boys, let's stay until to-morrow morning. They won't come after us until the sun's up—and I'm crazy about eels.'

'Are you coming or not?' shouted Rolf.

'No, I'm not!'

'Push off, Hajo!' commanded Rolf.

'Wait!' yelled Harmen as he ran back to shore and landed with a flying leap on the raft. Then he turned to Rolf angrily: 'When we get to Bantam you'll get a beating for this!'

'From whom?' asked Rolf coolly.

'From me!' roared Harmen, as he helped to push the raft from the shore.

The river glided gently towards the sea, and soon they passed the last trees on the banks and dashed into the surf. The raft was raised on high and flung down again; the bamboo creaked; the foam splashed high above their heads. But they held themselves bravely while Rolf and Hajo pushed with all their might away from the shallow bottom and the raft shot through the surf and lay safely on the smooth sand.

'A fine ark!' cried Harmen. 'We must baptize it!'

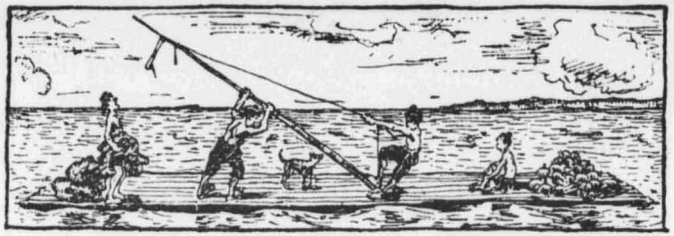
'Wasn't this baptism enough?' laughed Rolf.

'It needs a name,' replied Harmen. 'Dolimah is a fine name.'

The boys nodded. 'Dolimah!'... They looked back to the land they were leaving. Strand, forest, and the mountains in the distance were all bathed in the moonlight. And now that they were about to say farewell to all this, they realized that they were leaving Dolimah for ever, and they felt as though they were losing a part of themselves. In their minds they saw Dolimah and Saleiman seeking her village, they heard Saleiman playing magic strains on his flute, they shared Dolimah's silent, anxious fears as to her fate when she returned home. They seemed to see the *kantjil* peering through the bushes with the porcupine, the elephant, and many good and evil spirits. They all stood aside to let Dolimah pass like a little princess. . . . She had been a little princess to the boys—a patron saint, a loyal helper.

So they baptised the raft *Dolimah* and prayed that it might bring them safely to Bantam. Devils of the sea, evil spirits of the storm, hear ye: this raft is the *Dolimah*!

Rocking gently on the waves, the *Dolimah* swam off into the silvery infinity of moon, stars, clouds, sea, and sky.



CHAPTER LI

ON THE OPEN SEA

THEIR first task was to hoist sail by means of *rotang* ropes drawn through some holes in the mast. As well-trained sailors, they made a good job of it and the mast stood fairly steady.

'Shall we hang the lantern up now?' asked Harmen, proud of the result.

'And light the way for the natives to follow us?' laughed Rolf.

'I don't see why these Malays are all against us,' sighed Harmen wearily. 'Well, I'm dog-tired.' He threw himself down and in a moment he was snoring.

Rolf sent the two others to sleep while he kept watch for the night with the clew-line of the sail in one hand and the rudder in the other. He followed the stars and held his course north-east. There was just enough breeze from the land to fill his sails, and he watched the Southern Cross as his guide. The longer he looked at it, the more wonderful and strange it seemed to him.

The others awoke the next morning, surprised to see nothing but ocean and a chain of blue mountains on Sumatra, far in the west. Hajo relieved Rolf, who stretched himself out on the deck and fell asleep almost instantly.

. . . . .

Half an hour later the whole deck was covered with lines on which hung the fish that Harmen was drying. Then he

began to look for his precious eels, and almost jumped overboard when Padde told him they were hanging from the raft, still on their hooks.

'They might have been snapped off a hundred times during the night! Why didn't you put them in the water for drinking?' he stormed.

'Too disgusting!' said Padde, turning up his nose.

'Why, you miserable land-rat! Didn't I catch them in that very water?' and Harmen threw two eels into the bamboo containers. 'Now we'll eat this fellow at once,' and he began to skin the eel. 'I'll never find a place like that again! If there were one like it in Hoorn, I'd never leave home again.'

Towards noon they approached an island, but though they could not get near enough to plainly distinguish the trees, there were only cliffs along the shore, and they did not venture to trust their raft to the buffeting of the surf. So they sailed past it, as it lay bathed in opulent sunshine. It was quite small, and everywhere on its grey cliffs they saw little monkeys.

Suddenly the sky darkened, black shadows fell upon the island, which had glittered like brass in the sun, and, hark! the wind came tearing against their sail so violently that the mast creaked and the raft shook. The water splashed over the deck.

Rolf awoke with a start and looked around in surprise. He was just about to suggest that they take down the sail, when the storm tugged at it so hard that the line was torn from Hajo's fingers, the crossbar swung forward, and the mast fell to the right and hung there awry.

'My eels!' yelled Harmen in agony. The clever creatures made the best of their opportunity, for they had slipped out of the bamboo containers bound to the mast; and as it swung the sail against Harmen's chest and struck him down so that he lost a valuable moment, they wriggled to the edge of the raft and found refuge in the water.

The tears stood in Harmen's eyes. 'Who knotted that *rotang* in the back so miserably?' he yelled.

'I made the knot,' stammered Padde.

'What are you doing on a ship anyway?' stormed Harmen.

'I didn't want to go on a ship,' wailed Padde. 'I wanted to go to my uncle's brewery! There you know where you're at!'

While the two were still quarrelling, Hajo and Rolf repaired the damage as best they could and tied all the knots tight in approved sailor's fashion. But they had rough sailing, and Harmen had to tie Joppie to the mast to keep him from being washed overboard. The raft seesawed alarmingly and all four were dripping wet. Then it began to rain and the island was hidden behind a veil, along with everything else; but the rain

seemed to calm the sea, and the wind, too, gradually grew more quiet.

The boys looked ahead sadly. Their fire was out, there was no sun, there were no stars by which to steer.

'How can we hold our course?' growled Harmen.

'By the wind,' suggested Hajo. 'Keep the wind to the left aft.'

'There ain't no wind,' grumbled Harmen. 'A fine course this!'

Hajo and Rolf set the sail, but it remained hanging limp. They dined on dried fish, dripping with sea water, and stared cheerlessly at their raft as twilight fell.

. . . . .

It rained all night and the water fell upon the sleeping boys, but they were so tired that they did not notice it. Harman

had taken the watch for the night and now steered by the clouds, until, towards dawn, a wind rose again and began to bulge the sail. He tightened it and then hung over the rudder with his arms, fast asleep and snoring like the Seven Sleepers. But he held his course—asleep and with no stars to guide him!

CHAPTER LII

JAVA!

THE next day was cloudy again, and it rained steadily until evening. Then the wind changed to the south and the clouds scattered to the north like a herd of frightened sheep. Soon the sky was as clear as a newly washed window.

'When do you think we'll sight Java?' asked Hajo.

'We may be half-way there,' replied Rolf. 'We covered a good many knots to-day.'

The next morning was enchanting. A grey fog lay over the ocean, and in it hung the sun, like a Chinese lantern. Then it turned from red to gold; and a golden streak fell across the water to the horizon, while the fog reflected the sunlight and the heavens were bathed in flaming glory.

Harmen could not resist dipping into the sea and swimming after the raft, though Rolf warned him against the danger of sharks. When he climbed on board again he began telling all the yarns about sharks that he could remember, and then turned to his daily sport of teasing Padde, while they breakfasted on dried fish.

Suddenly Padde's eyes almost popped out of his head; he yelled and pointed to the water. Just beneath the surface, they saw the white belly and the terrible jaw of a shark. Harmen had jumped up and seized his spear. He took his position at the edge of the raft. The other three watched with intense excitement. Rage against this cruel, ruthless monster of the sea that rendered their ocean unsafe made them tremble with disgust when he showed his head once more. Harmen threw his spear with all his might and they

saw it penetrate the shark's belly. He turned over, his tail splashed high, and he sank again into the depths of the sea.

'That settled him!' gasped Harmen.

They kept looking back, but no shark appeared.

The day became almost unbearably hot, but later Rolf spied land again—another little island. They decided to land if they could make it, for their supply of drinking water was almost exhausted. The four took turns at the rudder, for the glare was now so strong that none of them could look over the blazing sea for long without being dazzled. The wind was

blowing from the south, carrying with it the heat of a furnace. Their throats were parched and they were grateful for the coco-nut milk that cooled them.

When they reached the island that afternoon the shore was so rocky that they could not think of landing. They decided to sail to the right, around the island, where the coast seemed flatter. After a time they came upon a narrow bay where there were scarcely any breakers, so that they could enter safely.

But now, as they entered the bay, they saw far away on the horizon a grey blur.

'Java!' cried Harmen.

'Are you sure?'

'Can't I see?' His voice trembled with joy. 'The two mountains with the gap to the left, that's Java! Didn't I see it on my last journey?'

'What now?' asked Hajo, gasping.

Harmen snatched the rudder and was all for proceeding straight to Java, but the others forced him to land on the island to gather coco-nuts for the rest of the journey. They drew the raft ashore and were greeted by the screeches of more sea-gulls than they had ever seen before. They picked as many young coco-nuts as they thought they would need for the milk they contained, gathered wood for a fire, and carried some large palm leaves aboard the raft to make a kind of awning to protect them from the broiling sun. At twilight they put off again.

They agreed to take turns that night at the rudder, beginning with Harmen. The evening was extraordinarily beautiful. The sun, red as blood, dipped into the sea, and then the mists rose from the east, veiling the mountains in the distance. But when the stars began to glitter in the sky the mists disappeared and they saw the mountains as a dark mass on the eastern horizon.

Java! . . . Java! . . .

CHAPTER LIII

REUNION

THEY leaped for joy the next morning when they saw Java's sunny, laughing shore before them. The boys looked at it as if spellbound. So this was Java, of which they had heard so much! In this beautiful island lived the rulers who walked beneath golden parasols in courts of pleasure, through wide avenues of sweet-scented flowers. Their garments were encrusted with precious stones and they carried gleaming daggers with jewelled hilts and . . . What hadn't Daddy Longjacket told them about this Wonderland!

The sun was still concealed behind the mountains, and cliffs, forests, and the sea itself were bathed in a grey mist. The air was soft, and the only sound was the rushing of the waves.

'I'm hungry,' declared Harmen firmly. 'How about some fresh fish?'

'I'll throw out my line,' volunteered Padde and they let him try his luck, after Rolf had decreed that they must continue around the coast until they came upon Dutch ships. But Padde's only bite was a tiny fish scarcely six inches long. Rolf and Hajo were weaving an awning of leaves, and this immediately made Harmen and Padde decide that they needed new skirts to make a proper entrance in Java. So they steered on until they came unexpectedly on a boat with five natives. The boys seized their spears, resolved to defend themselves to the death, but when they saw the gentle faces of the natives, who stopped in utter surprise, they called out '*Tabeh!*' instead.

A murmur arose in the boat. 'Is this Java?' asked Rolf. They nodded.

'And are there any Dutch ships here?'

They pointed to the east, looking more astonished than before.

'Far from here?'

They shook their heads.

'Can we get to them to-day?'

'Of course, sir.'

'What did he say?' asked Harmen.

There were tears in Rolf's eyes. 'We—we can get to the ships to-day!'

The boys looked at him uncomprehendingly. Then Harmen yelled '*Tabeh!*' and he began to perform a wild dance with his bare legs, while the tears rolled down his cheeks. 'Heigh, Padde, you funny little pig!' he cried.

Padde almost choked with laughing and shouted back: 'Harmen, you're a funny pig yourself!' They fell into each other's arms, flopped down on the deck, and turned somersaults until the raft creaked. Joppie too seemed to have become mad. He barked and jumped up on the two boys, tugging at Padde's shirt until he fell over backwards into the water. Rolf had to help him aboard again, while Joppie sat howling from excitement.

The natives watched this performance in amazement. '*Mabok* . . . Drunk!' was their conclusion.

But Harmen was standing soberly on his two bare legs again and roaring: 'Fellows! Hurrah for Rolf! Long live the Scribbler! I could wring your neck for joy! Eh, Joppie! You old Chinaman! Shut up!' And Harmen began to howl out loud for joy like Joppie himself. Then Padde joined in, while the other two almost fell over with laughing. Joppie stopped in surprise and seemed flattered to see the two sitting, with their heads thrown back, and yowling like true native curs. Harmen biffed Padde in the face for fun, but unfortunately Padde's nose began to bleed. Joppie immediately began to lick his face, while Padde was too weak from laughing to keep him away.

'Come, boys, stop your nonsense now,' said Rolf at last. 'We have a hot day ahead—let's finish the awning.'

A quarter of an hour later their tent was finished. A mat, two yards square, was fastened to four poles so that there was just room enough for them to sit in its shelter. By noon the heat was unendurable. They did not care to eat nor even to sleep. They kept looking to the east across the glittering water.

Harmen and Padde had finished their new skirts and seemed as proud of them as they had been when they got a pair of new trousers in the past. It did not occur to them that any one would think these new garments queer. 'How does it look?' asked Harmen. 'Does it look right in the back?'

'Splendid,' replied Padde. 'And how does mine look?'

'Turn around,' ordered Harmen.

Padde turned, Harmen gave him a slap that sent him flying to the other side of the raft. Then Harmen roared with laughter and cried: 'Ouch! how my hand burns!' Padde at first seemed inclined to fight, but then he too joined in the laughter. No one could be angry to-day!

In the afternoon it grew cooler and the sky was overcast. The boys were sitting in front while Padde steered, when Hajo began staring steadily at one spot. 'I think—I see—a ship!' he gasped.

They jumped up. Harmen was the first to confirm Hajo's words, and then Rolf too saw it. But poor Padde blinked his eyes nervously in vain and at last he screamed: 'I don't see it! I can't see it!'

'Why don't you open your eyes?' growled Harmen, but the two others consoled Padde by declaring that they would all have to board the ship together, no matter who saw it first.

But they did not reach the ship as early as they hoped. The hostile spirits of the sea seemed determined to thwart them. And when they were near their goal, a storm burst upon them as if the devil himself and all his witches were riding the clouds. Only the good seamanship of the boys kept them afloat, while the wind blew the raft before him like a top.

Suddenly Hajo shouted: 'A light!' and almost at the same instant Harmen roared: 'Ship ahoy! Ship ahoy!' Their raft

was moving so fast that the light grew appreciably larger every minute. Then they sighted another light—and then a third! Now they are no more than five hundred yards away from it. They can distinguish the dark hull of an East Indian sailing-ship!

'Let's shout, fellows,' cried Harmen, full of excitement.

'All together now—one, two, three.'

'Ship ahoy!' All four of them shouted—and Joppie joined in with a loud howl.

'Again!'

'Ship ahoy!'

'I see people,' cried Rolf. 'Boys, we must get nearer to her!'

After endless minutes of manipulating the raft, they struck against the wooden side of the tall ship anchored there and Harmen called: 'A rope-ladder!' as loud as he could.

Then they saw heads gathering in a blur above them and at last a rope-ladder was flung down. Harmen caught it with a wild cry and was about to start climbing up when he remembered the rule of the sea. 'Padde! You're first!' and he gave him a fierce shove that nearly knocked him over. 'Now, you, Hajo! Go ahead! And now you, Rolf!'

'No, I'll go last,' said Rolf, quite as if he were a skipper and must now abandon his ship. 'But how shall we get Joppie up?'

Without a word, Harmen seized Joppie by the scruff of the neck and carried him up as a mother dog carries her puppies. He was still spitting Joppie's hairs from his mouth when Rolf reached the deck behind him.

And who was this standing there with outstretched arms and catching all four of them at once in his gigantic embrace, while he laughed and cried at the same time.

None other than Hilke Jopkins!

CHAPTER LIV

ABOARD THE *NIEUW ZEELAND*

'MY dear fellows! I thought you had all gone to the devil!' There were tears in Hilke's eyes as he spoke. 'Call Bolle, one of you!'

But Bolle, the cook, had rushed up, wiping his greasy hands on his apron. 'Boys, boys, are you back again? How did you make it?'

But before the boys were allowed to tell their story, they had to eat, and Bolle ran to the galley to prepare bacon and beans, porridge and all their favourite dishes of which they had been so long deprived.

Hilke could not believe his eyes, even though he held the boys by the hand, when he saw their strange little grass skirts.

'Give me a pair of breeches later, Hilke,' said Harmen. 'On whose boat are you, anyway?'

'On the *Nieuw Zeeland*!'

'Wh-at? On that wretched skiff?'

'Hel-lo!' yelled some of the sailors. 'Go easy, young fellow!'

'I wasn't talking to you,' remarked Harmen magnificently. 'Hilke, where is the skipper? *Our* skipper, I mean of course.'

'Bontekoe has a new ship, the *Berger Boat*. Farther along. Near Batavia.'

'And did you and Bolle leave the old man?'

'Couldn't help ourselves. He's not going back. Going to sail to the China coast.'

'I'll stand by him,' declared Harmen. 'I won't desert the skipper.'

'Well, we'll see about that later,' answered Hilke mildly.

'Come and get some breeches now and then spin your yarn.'

'Boys, we must report to the captain first,' Rolf reminded them, only to be told that the captain and chief pilot had gone to visit the *Maid of Dordrecht*, Captain Jan Coen, and would not return till nightfall.

When Harmen and Padde had been supplied with breeches which covered their nakedness, even if they did not greatly add to their appearance, since they were both much too long, the boys began inquiring about their friends. Most of them were in Bontekoe's crew; some of them, including the steward, Padde's friend, were dead. Gerretje was married to a Javanese girl—to the great indignation of Harmen, who declared he'd get him away and make him sign on as a sailor again. Their gossip was interrupted by Bolle's appearance with a royal feast and so much mustard and pepper that they quite forgot their flat, unseasoned meals of the past weeks. Then Harmen borrowed a pipe and some tobacco and began to tell the tale of their wanderings.

What a yarn he spun! According to his tale, the four heroes, along with Joppie, had attacked and captured several villages; Dolimah had been head over ears in love with him; and the story of the panther was painted in such lurid colours that the sailors were chilled to the heart. When Harmen observed that he was making a fine impression with his story, he immediately added a female panther and five cubs to the adventure, ending it with the death of the whole panther family. Then he told of two gigantic serpents who had besieged the boys in their cave. But when he reached a splendid climax in which he had tied together their two tails with a special kind of sailor's knot, so that they would remain bound together for life, he suddenly paused.

'That was a lie,' he confessed, as they stared at him incredulously. 'Let Hajo tell the rest.'

'No, no. Go on! Can't you tell a story without lying?'

Harmen shook his head. 'At first, yes, but not as I go on. And when I read on your mugs that you don't believe me, I can't believe it myself. Go on, Hajo!'

So Hajo took up the story, but he was not allowed to proceed without constant dramatic additions by Harmen and occasional slaps on the shoulder from Hilke, who would almost break the boy's bones with his enthusiasm while he looked round the circle of sailors and roared: 'There's a Frisian lad for you!'

. . . . .

It was eleven at night before the jolly crew and the four derelicts retired to the forecastle. The sailors were just beginning to undress when they heard a voice booming like a cannon. 'The Porpoise!' they stammered and hurried to meet their captain. The boys waited in their berths, listening to commands and curses roared in tones to rival a hurricane.

When Hilke returned, wet to the skin, he reported that they would sail towards Batavia on the morrow so that the quartet would see Bontekoe before they had expected.

Exhausted though they were, the boys could not fall asleep immediately. They lay wondering whether they would be encountering the Chinese under Bontekoe or returning to Hoorn. The lamp swung wildly from side to side, the masts creaked, and the sailors who returned reported that half the crew and the captain himself were staying up all night to battle with the storm. The boys remembered that Bontekoe had said of the Porpoise: 'But he's a fine sailor!'

Rolf lay awake long after his companions were asleep. He was thinking of the moment when he and Hajo would have to bid each other farewell—for he felt certain now that their ways would soon part.

CHAPTER LV

GOOD-BYE TO SKIPPER BONTEKOE

THE sun shone the next morning; the storm had abated. After enjoying a cup of hot coffee, the quartet reported to the Porpoise, who was awaiting them in his cabin.

'Come in!' he thundered. There sat the Porpoise, with his copper-coloured countenance and dark red cheeks and his bristling little curls. Around him were stuffed animals of every sort. In one corner stood a wooden tiger with yellow, glassy eyes, looking quite as fierce as the tiger they had encountered in Sumatra. An albatross hung from the ceiling, holding a fish in his mouth and supporting a bat between his wings. A shark, a sword-fish, a devil-fish, and an enormous ray hung in another corner. Beneath the table at which the captain sat lay a crocodile with green eyes.

It was like a magician's cell, ruled over by a terrible wizard.

'Your float almost sent me to the bottom last night!' thundered the Porpoise pleasantly. 'What's your name?'

'Harmen van Kniphuizen, skipper.' The room made Harmen shudder. No wonder the sailors called it the morgue!

'And you?' he roared kindly at Hajo.

'Peter Hajo, skipper.'

The Porpoise looked at Rolf next.

'Rolf Romeyn, skipper.'

'And I'm Padde Kelemeyn from the Apple Harbour,' Padde informed the captain.

'Did I ask you anything?' roared the latter. Then he turned to Rolf. 'You're Bontekoe's nephew? If you stay with me, you'll be an able-bodied seaman in a year.'

'Thank you, skipper. But I'm going to stay with my uncle.'

'Training to be a pilot?'

'Yes, skipper.'

The captain turned to Harmen and Hajo. 'And you two? I have room for you.'

Harmen was staring thoughtfully into a cupboard in which were a plover with a nest of eggs, and other birds, along with a number of jars in which snakes, frogs, and lizards were preserved in alcohol.

'Hello!' bellowed the captain. 'Didn't you hear me?'

Harmen started up. 'Not at first, skipper. You speak so softly——'.

The captain rolled his eyes fiercely. 'I asked whether you want to come with me.'

'I must sleep over that, skipper,' Harmen replied, hesitating. 'I must find out whether my skipper can get along without me.'

There was a brief silence. Then the captain roared: 'You can go!' and the boys hurried out, glad to escape from this den of horrors.

. . . . .

Then came the great afternoon when the four boys got aboard the *Berger Boat*, lying at anchor at the newly founded town of Batavia, and shook hands with their skipper, the very best skipper in the world, and then with Daddy Longjacket too. Bontekoe slapped them on the back so hard that their bones cracked, and Daddy Longjacket spoke to them with trembling voice. Then Bontekoe took them to his cabin and had coffee and cake served, just as though they were gentlemen, and made them tell him their story.

When they had recalled it all from beginning to end and the skipper and Daddy Longjacket had told them how the yawl had finally reached Bantam, after many adventures, the skipper asked: 'And now, my lads, what are you thinking of doing?'

Harmen asked: 'Is it true that you're going to fight the Chinese?'

Bontekoe smiled. 'Not exactly. But next week I sail for Ternate, and I'll probably stay about here a few years.'

'A few years?'

'His Excellency the Governor had arranged it so.'

The boys sighed. They had always thought that there was no one higher than their skipper, and now they learned that he too must obey some one higher up.

The skipper smiled at their astonishment. 'I advise you to sign on under Captain Pieter Thysz of Amsterdam.'

When they protested, he added: 'You haven't much choice. There may not be another ship sailing to Holland for a long time. Conditions here are very unsettled since we captured Jacatra and turned it into Batavia, and they're holding all the ships ready in case of trouble.' Then he turned to Hajo. 'Hajo, I've another piece of advice for you. You've got a good head on your shoulders. You must train to become a pilot.'

'Skipper!' stammered Hajo. He felt dazed.

'Would you like to? I'll give you a letter to the directors of the East India Company.'

There were tears in Hajo's eyes. 'Thank—you, skipper.'

'And what about you, Padde?' Bontekoe asked the little fatty. 'What are you going to do?'

Padde turned as red as a lobster, sighed, and blinked. He couldn't say a word.

'The Porpoise isn't crazy about taking him,' explained Harmen.

Bontekoe's smile was full of pity. 'Have you asked him outright?' he inquired. 'Well, then, see to it that all three of you get signed on. If necessary, I'll say a good word for him to the captain.' Then he turned to his nephew and looked at him steadily. 'And you, Rolf? What will you do?'

'I'll stay with you, of course, uncle,' replied Rolf, without a moment's hesitation.

'Rolf . . .!' cried Hajo, looking at him in grief.

Bontekoe smiled at the two friends. 'The world is small, my lads,' he said consolingly. 'You'll run across each other again before you know it. And now I must pay you off. . . . To make up for all the things that my crew lost, the East India Company has agreed to double the pay agreed upon.'

So Harmen received fifty-five gulden, and Hajo and Padde

each forty-three gulden, for their fourteen months' journey to the East Indies. The skipper also entrusted fifty-five gulden to Harmen to be given to Lysken Coc's mother on his return to Holland.

'Yes, skipper,' said Harmen. 'Fifty-five gulden! How glad his mother will be!'

Bontekoe looked at Harmen kindly and nodded his head thoughtfully. But any one who could read the skipper's face could have seen that he doubted whether Lysken Coc's mother would feel very happy when she received the little bag of money—instead of her son! Then he wrote the letter of recommendation for Hajo, folded it, and told him to give it to the captain of the *Nieuw Zeeland* to take charge of it for him.

And then came the moment of parting. Harmen and Hajo each seized one of the skipper's hands. 'We'll never get another skipper like you, skipper!' declared Harmen hoarsely. 'The best skipper in the world—eh, Hajo?'

Bontekoe laughed and walked with them to the ship's ladder. 'Boys,' he said, 'we may not meet again for a few years perhaps. Give my regards to Hoorn, and behave as you've behaved with me! And now good luck!'

'The same to you, skipper! Good-bye!'

. . . . .

That evening at twilight the three shipmates were standing together in 'the morgue' again. A battery of bottles stood in a line on the captain's table, two of them empty, a third half-full. The candlelight made the wine look like bright blood.

When the boys told the captain that they had come to sign on for the return journey, he engaged Hajo as seaman and Harmen as second cook. When Padde asked timidly: 'And me? What shall I be?' the captain growled: 'What will you be? A pot-belly, if you keep on like that. I can't use you.'

Then Harmen spoke up. 'Skipper, you'd better see Skipper Bontekoe about him—he specially recommends him. You see, skipper, he's slow, and when he makes a knot you can always

A battery of bottles stood in a line on the captain's table, two of them empty, a third half full. The candlelight made the wine look like bright blood.

pull it out again with one jerk. But you know what he's fine at? Steward's boy. Just think, skipper, of all the trouble we had on the *Nieuw Hoorn*—all because the steward's boy, the blunderhead, stood a lighted candle next to a barrel of brandy. Boom! The whole boat blew up. Nothing like that would ever happen with Padde, skipper!'

Padde drew a deep breath and stared at the bat above his head.

'Skipper,' begged Hajo, 'we started together and——'

The Porpoise looked at Padde, then at Hajo, then at Harmen. He drank another glass, cleared his throat, and bellowed again:

'What were you on the way here?'

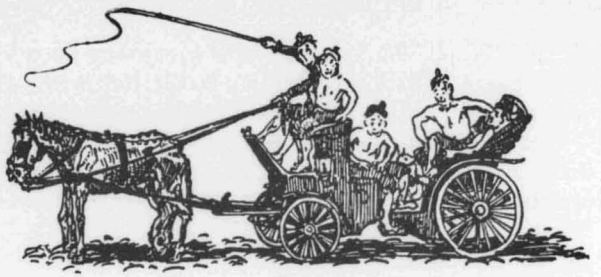
It was a painful question. Padde coughed and turned pale. But Harmen came to the rescue. 'He was Jack of all trades, skipper. He can scrape turnips, clean the pots, wash bottles——'

'All right,' roared the captain. 'Steward's boy!'

'Thank you, skipper,' cried all three with one voice. 'Thank you!' And they went out.

. . . . .

That night they ate on deck by lantern light, for the oppressive heat made the air below suffocating. Gnats danced around their heads. The shore looked alluring. Lights sparkled between the palms and the newly built houses with their white walls loomed out of the darkness. The water was still now. There, in the near distance, lay the *Maid of Dordrecht*, with the Governor; and farther on the *Neptunus*, and the *Morning Star*. And there, farther north, shone the lights of the *Berger Boat*, with the very best skipper in the world! A happy journey, skipper! And take care of yourself if you have to fight with the Chinamen!



CHAPTER LVI

A VISIT TO GERRETJE

THE next morning the four inseparables rowed to shore with a few other sailors. While they were still staring in amazement at the brilliant crowd of gaily dressed Orientals, whom should they see rushing up to them and embracing all four at once but Gerretje! He had heard from the cook about the return of the derelicts and had come to invite them to his house.

'Is it true that you are married to a girl from Java?' asked Harmen severely.

'Well, what of it?'

'You ought to be ashamed of yourself! When you left such a nice sweetheart in Hoorn!'

'Don't talk that old stuff!' growled Gerretje, annoyed and embarrassed at the same time. 'I didn't come to discuss that.' He led them to a wagon that looked like a big box on wheels. On the front seat sat a native driver with a straw hat shaped like a big mushroom. 'Step in, gentlemen!' said Gerretje with a sweeping gesture.

The boys were dumbfounded. Then Harmen grinned. 'Is there room enough for us all?'

'Seven of us got in the other day. Must that filthy cur come along too?' replied Gerretje briefly.

'He's not a filthy cur,' cried Harmen indignantly. 'It's Joppie.'

'What! Joppie, don't you know Gerretje any more?'

Joppie began to bark and jump up to Gerretje's face to lick it with so much enthusiasm that Gerretje had to ward him off. The boys stowed themselves away in the cart while a crowd of natives and Chinese children gathered and stared at this strange party.

'Must Padde come too?' asked Gerretje.

'Of course!' cried Padde, deeply hurt. 'I belong with them!'

'All right, all right. Then we'll have to take off this blue nigger,' said Gerretje; and before the sleepy driver knew it,

Gerretje had dragged him down from his seat. 'Tell your master I'll bring the horses back myself!' he yelled in Dutch at the poor fellow.

'Does he understand that?' asked Harmen.

'Why not? He's not deaf!' replied Gerretje.

The wagon rattled along past the little shops on the quay, where everything under the sun was exposed for sale in a bright confusion of colours. Chinamen in wide trousers and narrow jackets sat working before open doors and windows, wearing their long pigtails in a topknot on their shaven heads or wound around their foreheads or hanging over their shoulders with the ends tucked neatly in their pockets.

'This evening is *Pasar malem*—something like our kermess,' remarked Gerretje. 'We'll have a fine time. You'll eat at

my house. Hilke's coming too. *Rys tafel.*[1] Why are you looking so nasty, Harmen?'

'Oh, nothing. I don't like the stuff.'

Gerretje opened his eyes in amazement. 'You don't like *rys tafel*?'

'Who knows what they put into the mess?' said Harmen contemptuously. 'Scorpions, worms——'

'You're crazy,' scolded Gerretje. 'It's wonderful. I eat it every day.'

'Matter of taste,' replied Harmen coolly. 'But I must say I never felt so grand in my life'—and he leaned back while he filled his pipe. But the back of the cart rattled so that he had to sit up straight again.

They drove over a wooden bridge across a muddy, brown stream into a broad avenue lined with tall trees. Gradually, beneath the spell of the radiant East Indian morning, the song of the birds all around them, and the sweet odours wafted towards them, they grew silent. Now and then they met a few women in gay *sarongs* and long *badjus*[2] with beautiful pins, carrying flat parasols gracefully over their shoulders; or mowers, wearing only a loin-cloth and carrying their load of mowed grass with easy, light steps; or a Chinese merchant, holding in his hand a *klontong*[3] to announce his coming from afar.

The boys soon learned that in the East Indies even the very poorest man has a retinue of some sort, though it were only his wife, walking behind her lord and master and carrying the chicken which they had bought at the market. After they had passed the fortress where the Dutch had resisted the natives for five months, they came to gardens planted with coco-nut, banana, and other exotic trees, behind which stood houses of bamboo with verandas against which grew orchids and othe strange flowers. Parrots stood on tall poles, and the trees swarmed with little birds in bright feathers, warbling and chirping gaily

[1] *Rys tafel*—A Javanese culinary institution, still standard in homes and hotels, consisting of rice, fish, hash, and many other ingredients.

[2] *Badju*—an over-dress.

[3] *Klontong*—a kind of drum.

'So,' said Gerretje proudly, 'here we are! But I must drive you up in style!'

They had to cross a little river over a dry ditch, but before they had accomplished this feat the back wheels of the cart went down into the ditch while the horses' front feet went up into the air. Gerretje took the accident calmly while he and his guests pulled the cart and the two horses out and set them on level ground again.

'Get in again,' insisted Gerretje. 'When I say I'll drive you up in style, then I drive you up in style!' And he was as good as his word.

The house was made of bamboo, and the front veranda, on which stood a table and a few rocking-chairs, was screened off at the sides by palms in tubs. Between the palms peeped two little brown boys.

'Who are they?' asked Harmen curiously.

'Oh, all the youngsters came along with my wife,' said Gerretje crossly. 'And her mother and her aunts and the whole tribe! It's the custom here. I inquired about it.'

'So there you are with a ready-made Javanese family,' jeered Harmen.

'Keep still!' begged Gerretje. 'If I had known . . . The whole seventy-seven of them keep talking all day and my money's gone before I've had a chance to look at it! *Ajo! Lekas!*'[1] he roared at the youngsters, and they disappeared.

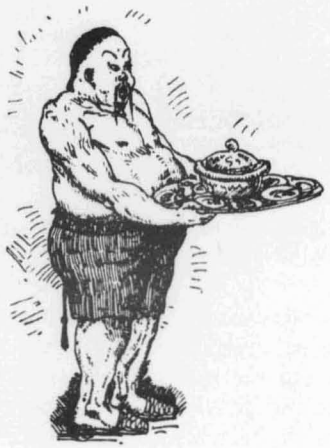
While Gerretje looked after his borrowed steeds, his friends dropped into the rocking-chairs and took it easy. Then their host tried to summon his wife by making a fog-horn of his hands and bawling 'Mina! Min-a-a-a-a-h!' with all his might. There was no answer, but in the room, behind a curtain separating it from the veranda, there suddenly arose the loud clucking of a hen. Gerretje dashed in and a battle ensued between him, armed with a broom, and the hen determined to maintain its position in his bedroom. When he finally came forth as victor, wiping the perspiration from his brow, he was in a rage because of the mess in his bedroom caused by the hen and two little boys who had eaten *durian*

[1] 'Away with you! Quick!'

there and left behind them the evil smell of that strange fruit.

Further inquiries among the numerous members of his wife's family brought to light that Mina had gone to the festival and would probably not return till the next day. The boys decided to go to a Chinese restaurant recommended by Gerretje, and as soon as Hilke had joined them they started back again. Gerretje had armed himself with a jar of arrack to celebrate the occasion.

Loa Hok Sen's restaurant had a curved roof with wooden



dragons at the points and long pennons covered with Chinese characters stood at each side of the entrance. Loa Hok Sen, an incredibly fat son of the Celestial Empire, received them on the veranda, welcoming them in very curious Malay, nasal and long-drawn-out, in which he constantly pronounced *r* as if it were *l*.

Harmen offered to treat the whole party, and when the proprietor had been reassured as to who would pay the bill, he waddled off to order the meal. In spite of the suspicious appearance and the unfamiliar names of unknown dishes, they

ate their way through from beginning to end, with huge enjoyment. When they were unable to eat one bite more, they rolled down from their chairs to the floor of the veranda and enjoyed their after-dinner naps in peace.

CHAPTER LVII

THE FAIR

WHEN the boys awoke it had grown cooler and they were bent on buying some of the things they needed before the fair beckoned to them. Gerretje drove them to a shop smelling of incense, flowers, and all sorts of other perfumes, situated near the harbour. Bright, glittering, sparkling articles of every sort lay about in a brilliant confusion of colours. The merchant wore a gold-embroidered cap, a long, greyish-white blouse, and a waistcoat with a golden design. His wide trousers were made of the same material and his bare feet were stuck into black velvet sandals embroidered with gold. He greeted them with a dignified gesture and waited for them to declare their wishes.

When they left the shop half an hour later Harmen had a Chinese pipe with a tube and gay tassels and a violin under his arms, a red fez with a black tassel on his head, a splendid Javanese dagger in his belt, and gold-embroidered sandals on his feet. The others, too, were loaded down with ivory elephants, fans, perfume-boxes, dolls, and bracelets. Luckily Rolf had had sense enough to order four sailors' chests for the four derelicts before they had squandered all their money. They would be on hand in two days, and then they would be ready to start back for home and Mother!

They returned to the *Nieuw Zeeland* to stow away their treasures, which Harmen and Gerretje took on board while the others waited on the pier. On their return Harmen was in high feather, for he had a great surprise for them—Gerretje had signed for the return voyage on the *Nieuw Zeeland*!

'Hurrah for Gerretje!' cried Harmen. 'Hip, hip, hurrah!' cried the others, and Gerretje joined in loudest of all.

Then they drove on to the fair while Harmen played for them on his new fiddle, which he would not let out of his hands. There were tents everywhere, booths with smoking lamps and flaring torches, figures in gay coats and *sarongs*. No one screamed, quarrelled, or shouted his wares. The traders sat silently smoking their long straws of tobacco and spoke only when a customer addressed them.

The boys were amazed at the various races of Orientals that were gathered here. The natives were in their best clothes. The children wore silver anklets and rings on their fingers. The women had combed their black, glossy hair even more beautifully than usual and wore white flowers, exhaling a sweet strong perfume, in the heavy knots resting on the nape of the neck. The men looked dignified with their smooth head-cloths over their dark countenances.

When they reached the spot where Javanese dancing was going on they could not tear themselves away. Amazed, delighted, almost hypnotized, they watched the marvellous movements of the dancing-girls for nearly an hour. One of them wore a beautiful golden helmet—she must be a queen, they thought! Gradually they became accustomed to the monotonous sound of the *gamelang*; they felt that music and dance were one, as the dancing-girls performed new figures, one more lovely than the other, to new airs.

They saw a puppet performance at the theatre, too—puppets with funny faces and queer, thin arms, who performed strange antics while a man sat close by and told the story. Their only regret was that they understood so little.

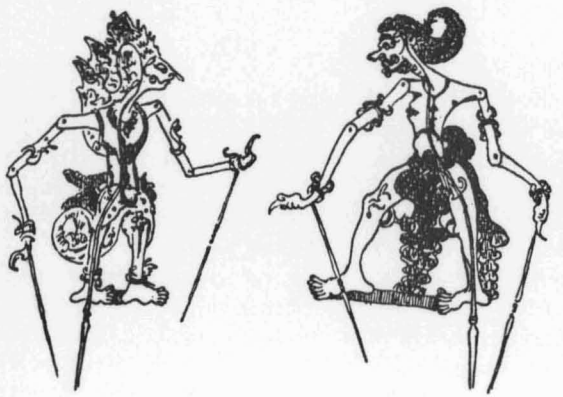
Next they saw a cock-fight, where angry fighting-cocks inflicted terrible wounds on each other with silver spurs fastened to their feet. The natives sat watching this cruel sport silently, and the little pieces of silver lying before them showed that there was betting on the rival birds.

But the Dutch boys were disgusted with this sport and walked away, thinking what a strange people this was, so far

advanced in civilization in many ways, so little developed in others!

It was late when they returned, and as Hajo and Rolf walked together down the broad avenue, with Hilke and Padde ahead of them, they discussed their future.

'Rolf, perhaps—perhaps I'll be pilot some day on the ship of which you're skipper,' stammered Hajo.



'Or you'll be skipper of a ship built by me!' replied Rolf.

Hajo stood still. 'Do you mean it? Could I—get to be a skipper?'

'Why not, if you worked as hard as you can? Just look at the Porpoise! Don't you think you can learn as much as he?'

They were silent. Hajo had to think carefully over what Rolf had said. He, Peter Hajo, become a skipper? With two pilots and a boatswain under him? With a ship of his own and his own crew?

Skipper Hajo—how sweet that sounded! But he must work for it—work hard, work for years. Well, why not? Hajo would clench his teeth, learn to read and write, swallow one book after another, line for line, until he knew it by heart.

He would study the charts of the stars, night after night, till there was no oil left in the lamp. He would calculate in his bed at night and go to Zaandam and Amsterdam where the ships lay along the great piers, to study them. And when he was a man he would have a beard just like Skipper Bontekoe, And now, on the voyage home, he would watch the Porpoise day after day, to see what a skipper had to do.

CHAPTER LVIII

HOME AGAIN!

ON March 8th 1620 the *Nieuw Zeeland* weighed anchor, and on December 28th of the same year she dropped anchor again on the sandy roadstead of Flushing, after a successful voyage.

The *Nieuw Zeeland* had sailed from the green shores of Java with a stiff south-easter swelling her sails, while the boys tearfully waved farewell to Rolf; and now they tearfully greeted their native dunes, emerging from the grey mists in the cold dawn. There they stood, with their collars turned up and their hands in their pockets, Hajo and Harmen and Hilke and Padde and Gerretje and a hundred other sailors, talking and waving their hands, shouting or blowing on their cold hands.

There lay Flushing with its red roofs and its squat tower with the flag floating to show that a ship, full of coffee, tobacco, pepper, and cloves, had come from the East Indies. Crowds gathered from shops and houses, while the gentlemen of the business office prepared to be rowed over to the *Nieuw Zeeland*.

Yes, here they were again, back home in the very best country of all! And all the flags, all the crowds, all the excitement were for them!

Would they ever go back to the East Indies again? At the moment no one had the least desire to do so—but they knew themselves! After a month of sitting by the fire, with a pipe and a cup of coffee, and spinning yarns until they themselves didn't know what was true and what invented; after their pockets, now crammed full of gulden, were empty again, they

would become discontented and long for the sea and their comrades, and, although they had sworn a month ago never to sail so far again, they would sign on for another voyage for the East!

But now, while the anchor-chain rattled, they were too happy to think of anything but the joy of being at home once more. They would be paid off in a few minutes, and with their pockets full of bright silver and with their monkeys and their parrots they would stand on solid land!

Two hours later they had all been paid off and Hajo had been ordered by his skipper to report to him in a week so that he might present him and his letter from Bontekoe to the directors of the East India Company.

. . . . .

The little group of sailors bound for Hoorn reached their native town after three days of many adventures, driving, skating, and sleighing over frozen fields and dikes, beneath steadily falling snow. At the market place they separated, each hurrying home with his goods and chattels as fast as his feet could carry him.

There stood Hajo's little house! Was it really so small as

that? He flung open the low door and rushed in. 'Mother! Mother!'

'Peter! My boy!'

He was in her arms—in the arms of his own dear mother—and both were laughing and sobbing at the same time. How small and frail she was, thought Peter. She tried to look at his face, but then she began to laugh and cry again, so she kissed him once more and kept repeating: 'My boy! Are you really here again? My Peter.'

The children had come running out of the other room, and Hajo jumped up and embraced them and kissed them—Antje and Maartje and Doris. Hajo knelt down before Doris, but his little brother looked at him with big, frightened eyes and retreated into a corner.

'Don't you know me any more, Doris?' asked Hajo.

'Wh-where is the el-lel-ephant?' stammered Doris, trembling.

Hajo laughed out loud. 'He does know me, after all! Here, here is the elephant!' He jumped up, ran to his chest, opened it and threw everything about topsy-turvy. 'Here, Antje, a doll for you with Chinese eyes! And a fan for you, Maartje! Smell it! Mother, I'm going to study to become a pilot! And maybe a skipper later! And, Doris, here's your elephant!' Hajo held out a white ivory elephant to his little brother, who seized it joyfully.

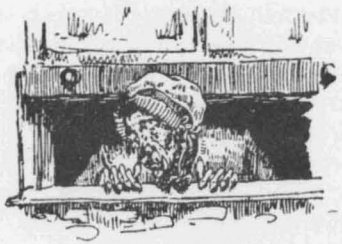
'And—and—where's the c-cannibal?' he demanded next.

'Here's the cannibal!' roared Hajo, making a terrible grimace and snatching at the little chap until he screamed with terror and flew to his big sister's arms.

Then Hajo had to tell his story, by bits and pieces—of the fire on the *Nieuw Hoorn* and its sinking, of their adventures in the yawl, of Sumatra and Dolimah and her kindness to them, of the panther and the medicine-man, Pa-Samirah, of the raft and their reunion at Bantam, and their return home on the *Nieuw Zeeland*, and of his promised visit to see the directors at Amsterdam!

Then Padde came to invite them over to his house for the evening. But first Hajo and his mother went to take the dead

sailor's money, which Harmen had entrusted to Hajo, to Lysken Coc's mother. She was a pale, thin little woman with great sad eyes. She received the silver gulden in silence and put them away in an old, worn chest.



'I was afraid . . .' she whispered and could say no more. When Hajo's mother kissed her, she burst into tears.

. . . . .

That night they all celebrated New Year's Eve in Hoorn, and the sailors who had to go on farther to Enkhuizen sat with their shipmates around the hearth and helped to swap tall stories. Outside the snow kept falling, spreading its white cover softly over the little town, like a kind mother. At midnight twelve firm strokes of the clock from the tower resounded through the hushed stillness of the snow. Eyes looked into other eyes and hand sought hand in deep rejoicing that they had been spared to greet the New Year at home once more!

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