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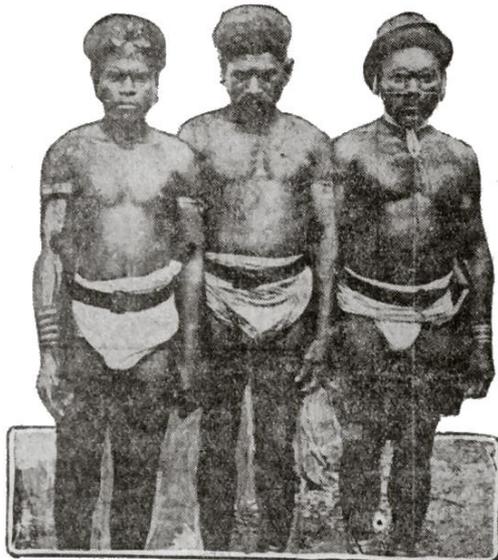
THE BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE—FEBRUARY 15, 1920—SEVENTY-SIX PAGES

“WAITING TO BE MURDERED”

That the Terrifying Position of Joseph English on Christmas Island After He Had Managed to Escape From the First Attack of His Mutinous Native Workmen—The Only White Man on the Island and Expecting That Every Day Would Be His Last



*SOUTH SEA ISLAND NATIVES
AND THEIR "HOMES"*



TYPICAL SOUTH SEA ISLAND NATIVES



*JOSEPH ENGLISH READING HIS
OWN MAP OF CHRISTMAS ISLAND*

By JAMES H. POWERS

The Globe has already told how a Malden boy became manager and only white person on Christmas Island, that lonely bit of land in the Pacific, and how he was attacked without warning by mutinous natives.

Last Sunday's instalment left him fighting for his life after the driver of his car had been overpowered. His only weapon was a piece of board and the natives had already begun the death chant.

THE STORY OF JOSEPH ENGLISH

Erie Plantation was shaped like a huge crescent, arching back from the shores of the Grand Lagoon. The rise from the edge of the water was very gradual, all the way to the upper side, and the young coconut palms, set out at regular intervals all the way from above the tide mark to the top of the slope, resembled a field of tall grain.

Sweeping around to the rear, and close to the middle of this arm of Christmas Island, ran the auto road, turning a sharp curve inland from the lagoon above Motu Manu peninsula, and then bending around the convex of the crescent back to the waters of the lagoon, close below the Great Erie Basin.

The roadbed was raised slightly, like a bridge. Back of it towered the tangle of the wild coconut palms, the luxuriant vines and creepers, and the heavy undergrowth, broken, here and there, by the dwarfed and stunted vegetation that indicated a rocky upland.

Edging Toward the Road

And now, in the growing dusk of that December evening, I was fighting my way toward the crushed coral and sand of that road, striking out with both hands, as in a dream.

Once the surge of the attacking savages nearly swept me from my feet. Then I recovered my balance once more and fought on, desperately, with a growing dread in my heart.

The blood streamed into my eyes and blinded me, temporarily. I dashed it away with the back of my hand. The yells and screams of my opponents sang at my ears like a wild, unearthly chanting.

It seemed as if I had become some mechanism, without conscious direction of my arms and hands. They beat out, out, out, forever, into the endless rush of my assailants.

And ever we drew farther and farther up that sandy slope toward the road.

A numbness began to creep into my veins. I knew that I was tiring. Those few yards that lay between me and the auto road seemed to have become miles, and my progress to have dropped to inches.

I began to lose hope, and then a mad insanity of battle possessed me, and, lowering my head, I rushed the upper edge of the encircling natives, cursing and shouting at them as I came on.

A Weapon at Last

They gave a few yards, then closed in again. As they stood near at hand, preparing to finish me with one final, overwhelming deluge of sheer numbers, one of my feet slipped and I tumbled into a small hole.

In those few seconds, strangely swift like the momentary flash through the camera shutter, 'Frisco rose before my staring eyes, with its docks and its litter of masts and funnels. The picture faded and another came homehome which I was never to see.

My hands reached out to help me scramble to my feet again, for I was resolved to die standing. One hand struck something hard. It was the handle of a shovel.

With a bound I was out of the hole, swinging my weapon about me. My courage came back. In the deepening twilight I saw Teri A Fa towering before me, a club upraised in his hands and the blood lust of his progenitors in his eyes.

I whirled the shovel over my shoulder, it fell on his black head with a sickening crash, and he tumbled to the sands, moaning.

The other native workmen now stood off, and the rocks began to whirr and whistle about my ears and many of them struck me. But I waited no longer. Again I drove toward the road, and, this time they broke away before the murderous shovel.

Race Never to Be Forgotten

I was on the road at last. Before me, sweeping away in a dim curve that vanished in the darkness toward the rear of the grove, I saw that blessed road, - free, open, clear, with not a human being on it before me.

And without awaiting to wage the battle further against such hopeless odds, I turned, flung the shovel with all my might into the faces of Sanata and the rest of the shrieking horde, and then I began to run.

That race I shall never forget while I live. The road was warm under my bare feet as I made time look scarce down over the coral and sand and pebbles that stretched, 17 kilometers, to London House.

The natives set out in pursuit at once. Some of them cut down through the plantation to cut me off before I should reach the seashore road above Motu Manu, but the soft sand and the nurseries and trees made their going difficult.

Gradually they began to drop behind. I fled with the cool northwest wind in my face, the more cool, too, it seemed, for the sweat that covered me from head to foot.

The noise behind me began to lessen. The cries died away, one after another, until there was left but a far shouting, back around the curve over which I had come.

"You must get to the guns first . . . you must get to the guns first."

The thought rang in my mind like a refrain.

Again the horrible fear came. Suppose they had dispatched someone over to London House before the rumpus had been started? Suppose they had forestalled me? Suppose

At the End of His Strength

I tried to run faster. The giant cocoanut palms at the inner side of the road loomed, mysterious, swaying uneasily in the wind. Up in the darkening sky there was a promise of stars. At the distance, below the rapidly dwindling plantation groves, I could see the grayish dim waters of the lagoon ahead.

My lungs were pounding with the effort, my breath came in gasps and my lips were dry and my throat parched. But I dared not stop. I felt that if I should stop I might never start again. My tired arms swung wearily at my sides with the rhythm and regularity of pendulums, and my feet rose and fell like automatons.

When I reached Motu Manu Peninsula, I was utterly fagged out. Only the imperative command of self-protection, the instinct for life kept me going. My whole body seemed like a fumbling, staggering bundle of numb nerves.

I was running along the shore now, with the vast sweep of the lagoon at my left. Before me stretched the white road toward London House.

Then, suddenly, I could run no more. My pace had become less than a trot, despite my effort, and I dropped into the dog walk. It was the best that I could do.

More than an hour had passed. Now, by the stars, I could see that it was not far from midnight, probably about 11 o'clock. I was creeping along at what seemed a snail's pace. And the sinsong refrain in my mind had become an obsession, almost maddening

"The arms," it said, "the arms, you must get to the arms first."

London House at Last

And thus I came down the north arm of Christmas Island, my island, the domain over which I had felt the silly, foolish thrill of an Emperor, and I drew near to the Point, and saw at last the shadowy form of London House, bulking black against the open sea beyond the straits. And the noise of the breakers on the reefs off Cookes Isle smote my ears like a kind word from heaven.

Were they waiting for me? Was someone lurking there in the shadows, with my own weapons, ready to kill me when I should appear? I did not dare. If they were there before me, I might as well die at once. I could stand no more this night. So I staggered up to the doorway, and pushed over the threshold.

There was not a light in the place, but I knew well where the arms were kept and I fumbled over toward the wall for my shotgun and my revolver.

As my hands closed over them, exhausted as I was, I turned again toward the door. Suppose they should come. Well, I would wait for them and give them a reception that

In Broad Daylight

I lay on the bunk inside of the doorway, with the shotgun in my hands, loaded, and the charged revolver beside me, and the ammunition boxes on the floor within reach.

One by one the half-hours and the hours struck in the battered clock behind me . . . 12m 12:30, 1, 1:30, 2, 2:30, 3 I do not know how long I lay there.

The moon had come up, and spilled a glint of silver over the shifting waters of the straits. The boom and moan of the surf along the outer rim of the land grew vague and less insistent. My tired body was burning with the bruises I had received, and my face was stiff with the cuts.

And, somehow or other, and in spite of all my will power and fear, I fell asleep.

It was broad daylight when I awoke. Looking at the solemn old clock on the wall, I saw that it was 7 o'clock. I was raked with pain and soreness, but the necessity of action swept back over me almost with the remembrance of the terrible experiences of the night. So I climbed out of the cot, and, after scanning the surroundings through my glass, I came back within doors.

Last Place for Safety

Clearly I could not remain long at London House. If the mutineers were telling the truth when they shouted at me, that they would have my life, this was the last place on Christmas Island for me to remain.

Here they knew I lived. Here they would come, inevitably. I could not guard this whole place alone, even with the guns.

A spear stroke with one of the fish spears, a determined, well-planned foray with knives while I lay asleep and it would all be over. There were a dozen and one ways in which they could put an end to me.

The consciousness of what they had done, and what the mutiny would mean when the schooner arrived in Spring, all this, I thought, would lend more determination to their plans. If I were dead and buried there could be any number of excuses, fever, sharks in the lagoon.

And London House, with the whole northern arm of Christmas Island opening down upon it, and the trees and undergrowth to shelter my foes, London House seemed to me that morning impossible.

Moving to Motu Manu

I resolved to move to Motu Manu peninsula. This was but six or seven kilometers distant, and had some excellent sheds in which I could establish myself securely. Besides, I would then be protected

by the open lagoon on three sides, and there would be but a narrow strip of pathway over which they could approach my quarters.

I would have to move with a push cart. The automobiles at London House were hopeless, despite the stacked tanks of gasoline in the sheds. The motor boat was broken down and had been hauled up and stored in the outbuilding near the house. Besides this, I could not move the Motor boat alone. The only good automobile, too, was lost, abandoned where Tama and I had left it at the Erie Plantation, last night.

So I gathered up the clock and the instruments with which I kept the records and surveys of the island, and all the ammunition for the guns, and the clothing, of which there was but little, and whatever else I felt that I might need. These I loaded into the cart. It was a dire labor, for my limbs almost refused to move at all, but I decided that they would be straightened out faster if they persisted in working.

Enemy Had Vanished

When I had established myself in my new quarters, I returned to London House to take the morning reading of the surf, and to make a report of the trouble. The latter I wrote out at length, naming all the ringleaders, and signed and locked it up in the safe.

I knew that the natives would be unable to move or open the safe, and it was the first place the captain of an incoming schooner would look, if I were missing. I smiled at the trap I had laid for the mutineers, to be sprung in the event of my death.

As I had been given, by virtue of my job as a manager of the island, the authority of a ship captain in case of mutiny, I resolved, should I meet Teri A Fa, or Teru Cook, or Tauril, or Tiva or Panu or Sanata – I would shoot to kill on the last move that they made.

All day long, Jan 1, 1918, I stayed at Motu Manu, too feeble and too weary to move about beyond the sheds. I sat in the sand under the side of the buildings and, with my gun beside me, searched the shores of the lagoon through my marine glasses for a trace of the enemy.

For all my searchings, however, I saw nothing. Not a sign of any human being came within the range of the lenses. An immense solitude brooded over Christmas Island.

Ammunition Useless

On the next day I awoke sick and sore, after a very bad night. I was almost a nervous wreck. Horrible nightmares kept fetching me abruptly awake, and I would sit up in the dark, in a cold sweat, straining my ears for a sound of the natives. Every whisper and drift of the wind in the palm groves seemed to spell some lurking danger.

When I arose I determined to walk to London House again, to help my recuperation. I slung my shotgun over my shoulder, filled my pockets with cartridges and stuck my revolver through the belt.

About halfway to my destination I spied a great bird, and, resolving to shoot it to make a broth, I threw up my gun and pulled the trigger. The hammer thumped with a dull, dead sound on the cartridge.

I stopped with a sickness at heart, and began to examine the cartridges. My gun ammunition was practically all spoiled from dampness.

I sat down there in the morning sunlight and pondered over my misfortunes, wondering if the revolver cartridges were equally bad. I was almost afraid to look.

I pulled the trigger, and the first shot rang out loud and sharp. My heart rose. I pulled the chamber about to the next and fired. It was dead. So was the next. When I got back to Motu Manu I should have to do some pretty careful investigation, it was plain. It would not do to be caught with worthless cartridges.

Back to London House

I walked on my way to London House, thinking over the situation again, in view of the problem raised by my bad ammunition. If the cartridges were mostly bad, I resolved to move back to London House the next day, with the hand cart. My examination that night proved my suspicions correct.

That move nearly finished me. Instead of getting stronger daily, I seemed to be getting weaker. It took me seven hours to push the cart with my belongings back to London House, and when at last I arrived, I was as exhausted as I had been on the night of the attack.

But, at any rate, I was at the island headquarters, and there I would remain and protect the property of the company. That was my duty.

During the next two days there was still no sign of my former workmen. They were probably lurking in the woods, or on the lower plantations, waiting for me to become unwary.

I resolved that they would have a very long wait.

Waiting to Be Murdered

On the sixth day after the fight I went to Motu Manu once more to see if I could find nay trace of the men. Once more I was unsuccessful. Since the night when the system of government on my little domain had crashed to pieces, I had not laid eyes on a single native, even at a distance.

It was a peculiar experience, this waiting to be murdered. I did not worry much about an attack during the day for then I was on the alert. But I could not guard the London House and the sheds and remain awake all night, day after day. It was wearing me down.

When Sunday came, I determined to range further than Motu Manu peninsula. I walked out to Eleven Kilometers, on the edge of Erie Plantation, where quarters used to be.

The place had been ransacked from end to end. All of the provisions were gone, the rations were missing, and, lying out in the middle of the road, I beheld an automobile tire, a new one, cut to pieces. It was my last spare tire.

The enemy, with the use of the two or three men who had tinkered about the auto and the machine boat, had put the machine together again, then, and they were running it.

My wrath at this development waxed hot, and I set off for the other side of the plantation, to see if I might find any one upon whom to wreak vengeance for the affront.

But at Sixteen Kilometer flat, below Erie Basin, I came to a halt, growing weary. My caution took charge and I decided not to go further from my base of supplies.

Too Much to Be Borne

Thus the day passed. I visited Motu Manu almost daily, and set to work cleaning the trees, to occupy my mind. My devices, however, were scarcely a success, for I had to stop constantly to search the shores of the lagoon through my glasses, and the road toward Erie, and the Point, for a sign of the foe.

On the 11th day of my isolation I was taken down with a fever. The worry was beginning to keep me awake all night long, all the time. I began to wonder how long I could stand this and remain alive and sane.

On this day I found a fig tree, stripped of leaves, nearly, but with five great luscious figs upon it. And this gave me as much pleasure and delight as if I had been a child.

Again the sea rose up beyond the narrow straits off Cookes Island, and I sat in discouragement and watched the spume flung over the rocks, and listened to the shrill calling of the birds down the wind as they circled the air above the lagoon.

Down the reefs, with a steady, seething roar, the breakers were marching up endlessly, hurling their white scud up out of the gray-blue open waters of the Pacific. And above them, like an immense pale bowl of turquoise (*) blushing to mauve and scarlet on the horizon, lay the sky.

A rush of sick tears came to my eyes. I felt that this could not, must not go on. I could not stand it much longer. And there, on the shore, indifferent under the magnificence of the sunset, I made up my mind to a desperate expedient.

Another instalment of these thrilling adventures will be published in next Sunday's Globe.

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