

Long Ago is
Far Away
Penelope Hope



There are moments when I know just how that coelacanth felt when the African fisherman dragged her up into a power boat. This book is an attempt to present the activities and motivations of a generation whose writings are fossilised in archives. I hoped, because I was influenced by that generation, that I could interpret their efforts in such a way that people here and now would at least sympathise with their strivings even though they believe them to be misguided. That is what I have been telling myself anyway. In fact I have enjoyed myself collecting the records of people who happened to come to the rivers that flow into the Gulf of Papua: from the visit of the *Fly* in 1845 up until 1929 when government influence appeared to have been established and the world depression was thwarting those who had hoped to develop the country by European standards.

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Long Ago is Far Away

By the same author

The Voyage of the Africaine, Melbourne 1968

LONG AGO IS FAR AWAY

*Accounts of the early exploration and settlement of the
Papuan Gulf area*

Penelope Hope

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Author's Note

This book is about a place and the people who came there in the years before the second world war. It is told as far as possible by the written records which unavoidably give the story the bias of the colonial period; but though there is a movement away from even remembering that period this leads to misconceptions and ill-feeling which is unfair to the memory of those who did what they did because they didn't know what else to do.

The main period—from 1912 to 1929—is one which suffers from the so-called generation gap—a phrase I suspect which owes more to alliteration than to aptness. 'Gap' is not the word, mist I think is more descriptive. The generation moves and acts but the motives lose clarity as in a mist because of the shift in age and enthusiasm—the generation itself has moved to another position and cannot explain itself to itself, much less to the eagle-eyed young it helped to train.

I can only illustrate this waffly talk by my own experience. The letters I have used were carried about in a camphorwood trade box for thirty years before I came to read them. I found, reading the letters of parents who wrote them when they were younger than I am now, that I was detached emotionally from the people they portrayed. In the same way my own letters were those of a stranger—not one I felt much drawn to actually—those of a rather opinionated and parent-dominated young female.

In the same way, as I read the patrol reports, they were new to me—and yet something stirred every now and then and I have been unable to resist inserting comments and judgments which were then quite unthinkable. If there is a feeling of detachment about my account it is because I have been careful to use only statements supported by the contemporary written word—the comments are mine now, perhaps flavoured by recollection but not very much. I want the writers to speak for themselves. It would be easy, and quite false, to turn the people who appear into prototypes and it would be possible, using illuminating small clues in the earlier reports (of men I did not meet) to present quite lively, but probably fictional, characters. I have chosen extracts and phrases to accentuate characteristics but that is as far as it seems to me legitimate to go.

It occurred to me that all the people who appear were under some pressure themselves. They were all born in the last half of the nineteenth century, their reading in their formative years stressed the supremacy of the white skin and European values and the duty to enlighten the savages; they were educated under a paternal system and held by conventions which gave little encouragement to the sort of initiative and enterprise they possessed. That they chose to come to far away places (far away from Europe that is) was called 'Love of Adventure' but no one found it necessary to coin the phrase 'Love of the Office Desk' to account for those who stayed at home. In an undefined and sometimes unconscious way they came because they were rebelling against the system. Yet the patrol officers were employed under the terms of the old ways to enforce the system they hoped to escape.

This is all very broad generalisation of course, and I can add a number of 'yes buts' to the chorus I seem to hear. I mention it because this question was in my mind when I was collecting these accounts of exploration and hardship, excitement and endeavour, of conscientious efforts sustained through conditions of boredom, discomfort, danger, and ignorance. There must be a reason why men came and worked and died in that alien place dominated by the river and the rain.

One settler has published his own story and so appears only incidentally here.¹ This was Benjamin Butcher who was inspired by the story of Chalmers (see pp. 10ff) to join the London Missionary Society and came out to work in the place where Chalmers met his death. I am sure he was a true Christian but he was also an enterprising pioneer and the establishment he built on Aird Hill gave him scope for his talents in a way he would never have had in London. (He was proud to have been born within the sound of Bow Bells.) When he was in his eighties he published a book of his reminiscences describing the district and his work there from 1912 to 1935: he travelled all the waterways and visited all the villages, studying the way of life of the people, their habits, customs and beliefs, and had opportunities of seeing a great number of their ceremonies that are no longer practised. His accounts are spirited and observant, and though one may deplore his use of phrases such as 'sexual orgies' and 'nights of horror' when describing the marriage ceremonies, they are part of his profession and the language of his generation. He set up a hospital and treated their illnesses; he started a technical school and taught carpentry, cane furniture and basket-making; he built a slip and repaired boats and their engines, and built two launches; he built a dam and powerhouse to generate electricity for the mission station. He invented an improved sieve for sago making and an improved dryer for copra making. He planted palm nuts at Veru and when they came into bearing made soap (a most significant contribution).

His tolerance for the delta people was boundless but his book reveals a tendency to undercover sniping at the white people whom he met and associated with on apparently friendly terms. It must be noted that the

government people and the planters seldom acknowledged his efforts either—there was an atmosphere of intolerance (or was it competition?)

There were only three commercial ventures in the district. Ogamobu Plantation on the Kikori River, begun in 1914; a company which leased land on the Paibuna River to distil spirit from sago palms which lasted from 1920 to 1923 (see pp. 111ff); and Lewis Lett's sawmill on the Wame River, 1922 (see pp 80ff). It seems unfair in a way that these last two ventures can be recorded only briefly, while Ogamobu is recorded almost week by week from 1914 to 1929. The extent of the material throws out of balance the importance of the work done by the government officers and the mission—yet the letters give a detailed picture of the life they all lived with the rivers and the rain. The story of Ogamobu as a commercial venture reflects the uneasy financial state of those between-wars years and was repeated in a number of similar failures all over the territory of Papua.

The company, Kikori Plantations Pty Co., was formed in Melbourne in 1918, based on a venture which began in 1914, just before the war broke out. It was unfortunate that coconuts had been planted for the climate was unsuitable and though they began planting rubber in 1920, by 1924 the shareholders lost enthusiasm and the company was liquidated. Percy Robinson (see pp. 144ff), G.A. Loudon and T.D. Ryan formed Ogamobu Plantation Limited with 8,004 shares at £1 issued out of a nominal capital of £20,000, paid up to 10s. each, and 2.6d. per share per year due for the next four years if required. G.A. Loudon, whose affairs were multifarious and apparently prosperous (and whose initials were said by some Port Moresby people to stand for God Almighty) came to visit Ogamobu and immediately things began to move on the scale to which he was accustomed. A rubber expert was sent out, three carpenters came to build the rubber factory, smoke house, and storeroom. Percy, accustomed to paying his way as he went along ('Robinsons' said a sister-in-law once, 'seem to think they will get rich by economising') was not particularly happy about this burst of spending and did what he could to keep expenses down. Loudon, however, appeared to view this with suspicion and it became plain that he aimed to become sole owner. He first bought out T.D. Ryan, without giving Percy the opportunity of taking half Ryan's share—which would have made him equal partner. In justice to Loudon it is possible that Percy, who had never commanded what businessmen would call capital, was not at that moment able to find the money for Ryan's shares even at the original price, but Percy found it difficult to accept that Loudon, busy with other matters in Port Moresby, was entitled to send 'commands' on the actual running of what Percy, understandably, regarded as 'his' plantation. He was manager and intended to manage.

In 1925 rubber was selling at 31¾d. per lb, attributed by a news item quoted in the *Papuan Courier* (5/6/25) 'to the vogue for balloon tyres', but was also a result of the Stevenson Scale. This had been in force since

1922 and regulated the amount of rubber released on the market according to the ruling price. It is for qualified students of perhaps more authoritative sources to tell the history of the rubber market but the juxtaposition of news items in the issue of the *Papuan Courier* for 12 February 1926 seems significant. Page 9 carries a paragraph headed 'War on Rubber Price' quoting the United States Secretary for Commerce asking for American people to reduce rubber consumption, stimulate the use of synthetic rubber and the production of rubber in countries where price fixing is unlikely; and to discourage bankers giving American credit for support of British combinations. On page 11 of the same issue is the report of a 'surprise announcement' by the Colonial Office that for the quarter beginning 'next February' the rubber plantations in Ceylon and Malaya will be allowed to export 100 per cent of the standard production.

The price justified Loudon's precipitate expenditure but also in February 1926 the Customs Tariff for Papua and New Guinea Bounties Bills were passed by both houses of the Commonwealth Parliament. These provided for preference on goods imported into the Commonwealth from Papua where such goods were already dutiable under the Commonwealth tariff; and the Bounties Bill provided that bounties shall be payable on 'certain imports into Australia from Papua for a period of ten years from January 1927'. Unfortunately neither copra nor rubber were included in the 'certain imports'.

By April 1928 the price of rubber fell to 10¼d. and a report from England was quoted by the *Papuan Courier* (p. 9, 3/4/1928) that 'Rubber shares also gave way generally and extensively. Until the equilibrium of supply demand is reached it is reasonable to expect that the selling price will be below the cost of production on all but the new and favoured properties . . .'. Ogamobu was a new and favoured property but with all Percy's management could not produce under 1s. a lb. On 27 April the *Papuan Courier* reported that 'Papuan rubber is now practically unsaleable in Sydney for Australian consumption' and though the Legislative Council appealed for the Bounties Act to be amended to allow a bounty on Papuan rubber 'when the London price falls below 1/- per lb' the Federal Cabinet did not approve the application.

From Port Moresby Percy sent to Irene, at Ogamobu, his usual diary of events and interchanges. The story is told from his point of view only and shows that his pugnacious honesty could be as little understood by his antagonists as he could understand or condone nineteenth century free enterprise. He sent a copy of his submission to the court on his application for liquidation and winding up the company's affairs, and it seems fairly clear that very little of the money earned by the plantation or the trade store had been used to pay Ogamobu debts nor had Loudon paid any calls on his shares. Loudon was keeping a number of balls in the air at once and presumably felt justified in diverting ready cash in the direction of direst necessity. This to Percy was rank dishonesty—his financial dealings

Author's Note

were more in the fashion of jam tins on the kitchen mantelpiece and he had no inclination to become part of Loudon's empire.

After the liquidation the property was put up for auction. Everyone in town came to see the fun but no one bid. Then it was advertised for tender. Percy believed he had come to an arrangement with the General Manager of the British New Guinea Development Company to join in a tender (and why did he suppose that history would not repeat itself?) When the tender—only one—was opened it was on behalf of the British New Guinea Development Company alone and his only consolation was that it was for £2,000 more than the agreed sum for the joint tender.

Irene pointed out that the sum they were able to bring away was roughly equal to the amount Percy's superannuation would have been but this was not wholly true. She may have believed that she could have been satisfied tending her garden in Broken Hill but Percy had at least lived the life he felt impelled to live, and though financial success would have proved his point it was not the only reward.

I would like to thank all those patient people who have let me talk my way into this compilation. I shall not name them because, though I have tried to follow their advice and suggestions, I know that the result is far from the book they seemed to expect. But I remember them, and all those helpful librarians and archivists, with gratitude. They tidied me up whatever the result may be.

Contents

Author's Note	v
List of Maps	xii
List of Plates	xiii
1 The Visitors	1
2 The Establishment of the Government Station and the First Patrols	43
3 Spread of Influence	57
4 From the Purari to the Era rivers	74
5 To the Mountains in the North	87
6 To the Paibuna and Omati rivers	109
7 The Turama River	122
8 Percy Robinson and Ogamobu Plantation	144
9 Irene Robinson at Ogamobu	196
Postscript	248
Notes	251
Reading List	255
Index	258

List of Maps

1 Delta Division	End papers
2 Western Division	4
3 Patrol by A.R.M. Flint and P.O. Saunders to the Samberigi Valley	90
4 Paibuna and Omati rivers	112

List of Plates

	<i>Facing Page</i>
I Government Station, Kikori	34
II London Missionary Society station at Urika	34
III Kaimari village	35
IV Tugi men wearing the <i>togonu</i>	35
V Samberigi men	50
VI Front of <i>rami</i> in old Koropenairu	50
VII On board S.S. <i>Houtman</i>	50
VIII On the verandah at Ogamobu	51
IX Irene Robinson and Di	51
X Before Ogamobu was planted	146
XI The Robinsons in the 'jungle'	146
XII Men bringing a wharf pile into position at Ogamobu	147
XIII An R.A.A.F. seaplane at Kikori	147
XIV On the steps of the government residence	162
XV Irene and Di with houseboys and dogs	162
XVI Percy, Irene and dog	163

1

The visitors

The delta of the Kikori River is not enticing. The Gulf of Papua receives the flow from rivers rising far inland and delivering to the sea fresh muddy water so that there are, quite far out, mudbanks invisible in the brown cloudy water, unexpected currents and choppy seas, especially in the season, from May to September, when the south-east wind blows, and the rain rains every day. The coast is low and forbidding with mangrove flats and altogether lacks the charm of white beaches, blue water, and palms of the tropical stereotype.

For the first twenty miles through the interlocking waterways the muddy banks are lined with mangroves and sago palms. The rivers between the Purari in the east and the Paibuna in the west are tidal with a six to eight feet rise and fall except at the spring tides in March and September when the rise and fall can double, and indeed the river levels above the tidal mark can suddenly rise and take the traveller by surprise. West of the Paibuna is the Turama River which has no delta and is subject to bores: the river current meets the incoming tide which rises to a wave three or four feet high which roars up the surface of the river in what seems to the traveller in a small vessel as a thoroughly malevolent way. As a patrol officer said, of an exceptional bore on the Omati River (the next river west of the Kikori): 'To be hit by a wall of water on a pitch black night in drenching rain is an experience that cannot be forgotten'.

Another inconvenience, in addition to snags and great floating trees washed out of the banks, was mudbanks which defied the map makers by perpetually changing as the silt washed down, built up and deflected the current to form another bank. Wilfred Beaver¹ speaking of the mouth of the Fly River, said

Mibu must have originally been a small sandbank, for almost in its centre is a patch of sand some sixty acres in extent and excellent cocoanut ground; round this sandbank mud and mangrove collected until the whole island attained its present size . . . I think it was on Abaura, one of the great Kiwai fishing grounds, that there was once found deeply imbedded in the centre some wreckage of an ancient ship, clearly showing how the island grew.

There are records of early visitors who landed briefly,² impelled by the need for wood or water, so that it can be said that, unlike the people of the central mountains, the Gulf and Delta people were aware of sailing ships and guns and other races, yet they did not have contacts in the way that north and east coast New Guinea people had with trading vessels from the Asian peoples farther north. Each year the Motuan *lakatoi* (double canoes with sails) came to trade from the vicinity of what is now Port Moresby as far as the Purari delta country to the east of the Gulf, and the Torres Strait people came perhaps to Kiwai Island in the mouth of the Fly River in the west. It is likely that European and Asian ships were lost in these difficult waters; early visitors to the villages observed metal objects which could only have come from wrecks, but whatever the ultimate fate of the crews the relationship could not be described as a cultural interchange.

Jukes's *Narrative* shows, in the first detailed description of the delta, that the inhabitants were anything but defenceless, that their dug-out canoes were far more efficient and faster than the European vessels, their arrows could be fired at any time though the European muskets of the period (1845) were useless in a downpour of rain, and that attacks (or resistance) were well planned and united. They understood the tactics of ambush and also of lying in wait when the European ship seemed about to get into difficulties.

Yet in spite of his observation of their skills they were still 'savages' to him, though possibly he had a wide definition of savages. After an account of a landing by the Europeans into a village (which appears from his map to be near the mouth of the Paibuna River) cleared of its inhabitants by firing their six-pounders over it, during which they shot two pigs, Jukes describes the 'jubilee of rejoicing' as the hungry men cooked and ate them.

It was not indeed until they were all gone that the reflection occurred to me that we had in fact *stolen them*; but I could not for the life of me feel the proper degree of contrition for so heinous an act, and I very much fear should have utterly forgotten its enormity had we had an opportunity of stealing any more. The fact was we had been some time confined to salt provisions, and had now been several weeks on rather short allowance even of that . . . As soon as we had got on board the *Prince George*, we saw about a dozen natives in the large house again, walking about apparently to see what damage we had done. I am afraid they must have thought us a shocking set of buccaneering savages.*

* Jukes's account of this area can be found in his *Narrative* between pages 221 and 288.

His description of the rivers (they went up the Kikori to about the place where the government station now stands), the night noises 'a combination of croakings, quackings and gruntings', the great prickly succulent plants and matted creepers, the birds in the tops of the trees and flying west in flocks in the evening, all evoke memories of the country as it was eighty-five years later. The only thing he does not mention is the fireflies in some trees at night reflected shivering in the water and rising against the dark foliage pulsating with a greenish light.

No one visited the area, as far as records show, for the next thirty-two years. A generation was born and grew up with perhaps stories from the old men of their confrontation with those horrifying white-skinned men who made loud noises with spears. Oral history does not appear to extend further than a generation but it may be that if we look at written records we would find it possible to translate legends and myths back to the facts from which they sprang.

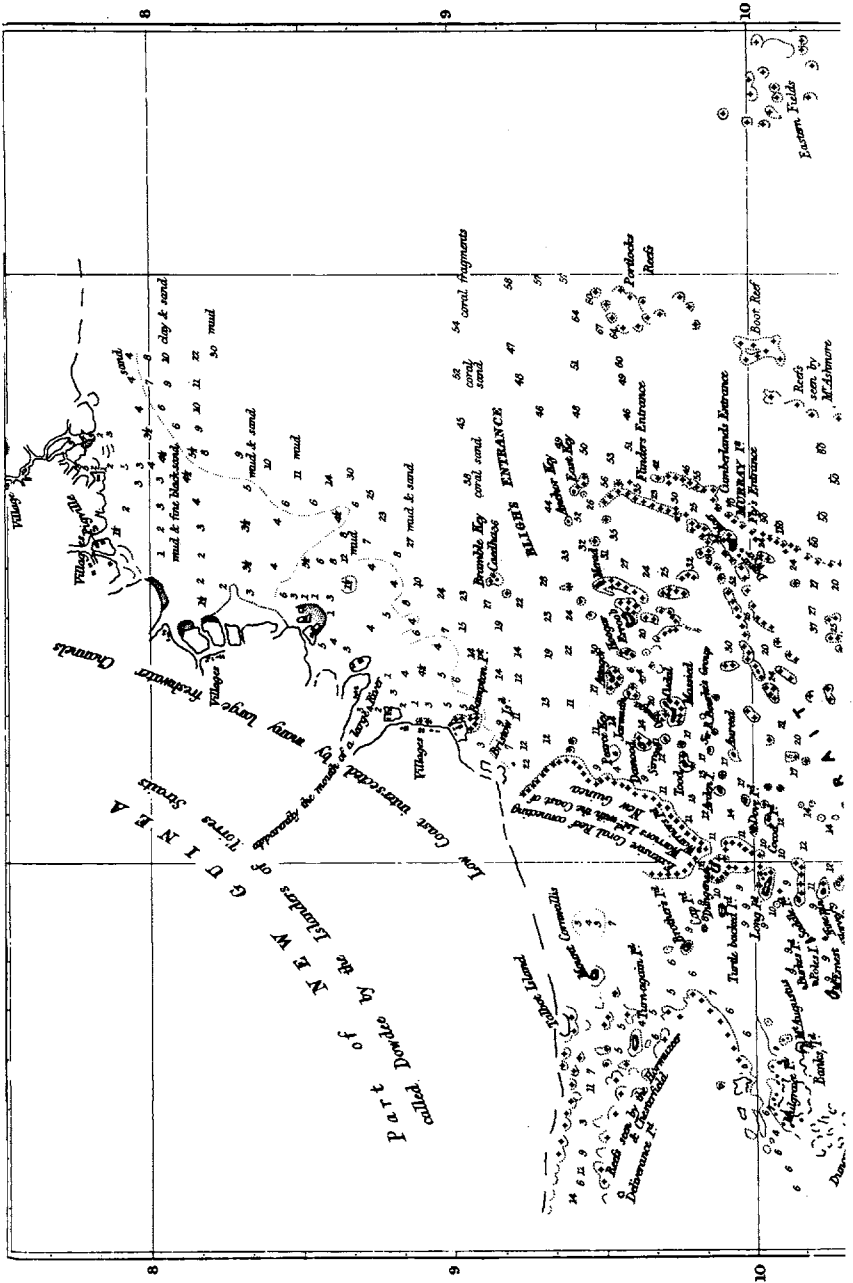
So the advent of Theodore Bevan³ must have been greeted by a feeling of 'This must be what Grandpa was on about'. He arrived in 1887 with a 'small screw steamer of 90 tons' and travelled up the Kikori River as far as the Sirebi River, discouraging the too inquisitive with blasts of the whistle. He described the change in the vegetation once the tidal limit is passed, and the limestone peaks through which the river runs. He made friends with the inhabitants of a village perched on the top of one of these peaks and taught them to shake hands. He returned to the coast and travelled up the Purari River before his time ran out and he had to return the steamer.

To confirm the discoveries the New South Wales Government lent Bevan a steam launch, and the Queensland Government lent a surveyor in order to map the repeat journey, and they set out in October of the same year, 1887. He believed that the rainy season began in December though in fact the wettest period in that area is from May to September so that his visits were luckily timed to avoid it.

On their return Bevan published a pamphlet entitled *Mr Theodore F. Bevan's Fifth Expedition to British New Guinea*. It was an *edition de luxe* and limited to 100 copies—two of which were sent to Queen Victoria and the Prince of Wales, and another to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty. To ensure a rather wider audience he included the text in *Toil, Travel and Discovery*. . . . No word was spared, no ink was saved, to carry the reader along with the explorers—named this time, or at least the Europeans are: Mr H.J. Hemmy, licensed surveyor; Martin Langdon, engineer; Richard Sadlier; H.O. Fastre; 'and four coloured boys'. The *Mabel* is described as 'an *open* boat that could be put into a decent-sized drawing room'. He must have been thinking of Windsor Castle for the dimensions are given as: 48 feet long by 8 feet beam and drawing 6 feet.

They first circled Aird Hill which is bounded by rivers, and was named by Blackwood of the *Fly* but not visited by him. This group of peaks rises

Long Ago is Far Away



2. Western Division. From J. Beete Jukes, *Narrative of the Surveying Voyage of H.M.S. Fly, Commanded by Captain F.P. Blackwood . . .*

The Visitors

from the surrounding swampy plain and appears to be an island which was there before the river silt built up the coast line. He then went north up the Kikori to the Sirebi 'nearly a hundred miles inland'. Here the *Mabel* ran aground and he gives a detailed account of their efforts to pull her into deeper water. A small party from the previously-visited village downstream came along to see what was going on and Bevan described the scene in his very best prose.

The idea occurred to the leader to avail of their services in tearing down great cables of 'lawyer' vine, extending from the ground to the tops of trees one hundred to one hundred and fifty feet in height—when additional and much-needed hawsers could be made. So much confidence gained, they might go further and aid in a combined effort to right the launch and place her on an even keel. The work of tearing down the vines was commenced, and by semaphore signs, or, more strictly speaking, terpsichorean movements of the legs and arms, after their own fashion, also by encouraging shouts, these natives were coaxed nearer and nearer, and a present was floated down to them when within thirty yards' distance. But, mark you! an order was now shouted across the river to the cook to boil some potatoes for the probably hungry visitors. . . . and the Papuans fled in abject terror. . . . They came up again by-and-by, and in half an hour's time one canoe was within a few feet of the launch, and the whites, who were more careful in modulating their voices, explained what was wanted by dumb show. A more romantic spot for so dramatic a scene could not have been chosen. Deep down under a lofty range, picture the river winding through a fertile and well-wooded valley. Glistening in the sun are banks of polished pebbles, round which steely blue sheets of smooth deep water alternate with eddies and rapids. High and dry mid-stream lies exposed to view the fine lines and coppered hull of the *Mabel*. Looking to the south, or down-stream, the river banks are composed of hunks of the richest black alluvium to be found anywhere in the world, and fringed by lofty forest trees and giant palmate growths. Enlivening the greenness of the vegetation are many-hued plants and shrubs, conspicuous amongst which may be noticed the salmon-pink floral leaves of the beautiful *Manilloa grandiflora* of Scheffer. Partly hidden by intervening vegetation, the white folds of the tent are visible in this direction, while a scarlet rug and a coloured shirt hung out to dry on the bushes, also the thin spiral column of smoke rising from the camp-fire, around which one or two men are moving, lend colouring and animation to the scene. With their shoulders under the *Mabel's* port bilge are the rest of the party, while not

fifteen paces distant, paddles in hand, in their frail canoe, stand fifteen naked Papuans. Though they roll their eyes over launch, hawser, foreigners, windlass, and all, and their well-oiled mahogany visages fairly beam with intelligence as to what it all means, yet they will not stir hand or foot to assist in righting the launch.

After landing abreast of the camp and thereby disturbing the equanimity of the cook, whose teeth rattled like castanets, the Tumuan paddled off to their homes, thirty miles down-stream, to report these strange goings-on to their fellow-*indigènes*.

Eventually, after a night in a thunderstorm described with such dramatic detail that the reader is left exhausted, the *Mabel* was refloated, and the subsequent journey back to the coast and up the Purari for eighty miles is almost an anticlimax.

The steamer showed herself superior to the canoes on one occasion. The village was, I think, one now called Ukiaravi on the Baroi River.

As the bend was rounded it became evident that an unusually large settlement of natives inhabited this region. As far as the eye could reach the river banks were lined with houses, many of which were of the hugest dimensions—three hundred to four hundred feet in length—built on piles, and towering to a height of over one hundred feet from the ground. Then, as the *Mabel* steamed on, there was a scene of excitement enacted that baffles all description, and into the spirit of which even the very pigs and dogs seemed to enter. Women, children, and reserves lined the high banks and indulged in the maddest of terpsichorean exercises while the men—who in the space of a few minutes had decorated their persons with feathers, paints, shell ornaments, and grotesque masks—rushed about, almost tumbling over one another in their haste, and getting bows and arrows, spears and paddles between their legs, preparatory to launching big war canoes. Wherever the eye rested, either before or behind, canoes—holding twenty to thirty men apiece—were soon seen emerging from every creek and reach, till the river, which had here narrowed to little over three hundred yards, was black with one immense flotilla!

. . . In their overwhelming force they held the *Mabel* and its handful of men in derision, and commenced to mob the party, even getting into the gig and passing oars, rowlocks, and rudder into their canoe. This was noticed just in time and steam put on the whistle. The shriek that followed, however, was all but deadened by the delirious clamour of thousands of natives! When they had recovered from their first shock of surprise, the natives,

in full paint and white shell-work decorations, again surged round their supposed prey in noisy concourse. It was impossible to make other than slow progress in the *Mabel*, for, should anything happen to the firearms, as would not unlikely be the case if the launch drove on to a hidden bank or struck a submerged 'snag', it would then be optional whether the party became food for fishes or for cannibals. Another source of anxiety, if amidst such surroundings one could have experienced a sensation of that kind, was that evening dusk had begun to fall, and while the river had here narrowed to three hundred yards, in half an hour at most the *Mabel's* engines would stop working from want of fuel.

Two miles of continuous villages had now been passed, evening was approaching, and but a few sticks of firewood remained. To have proposed to land with axes among these savages to cut fresh fuel would have been downright madness and have caused a mutiny amongst the crew. Ahead the narrowing creek was a veritable *cul-de-sac*. But now an incident occurred that brought matters to a crisis. The natives, whom the steamer's whistle and one or two shots fired straight up into the air had caused to sheer off a few yards, returned to the charge. While one load of forty stalwart Papuans made as though they would board the launch on her starboard rail—thereby capsizing her for a certainty—others crowded into the gig that was being towed astern, and one native already had the unshipped rudder in his hand. To the leader at the wheel Sadlier sang out from aft that he would have to fire, as the natives were preparing for a rush. Wishing above all things to avoid bloodshed, Mr Bevan then gave the order 'Full speed astern'. The effect was instantaneous. While neither whistle nor the roar of guns—of whose destroying properties they were entirely ignorant—had any terror for these aboriginals, yet the *magic* by which this little paddleless boat, smaller than one of their own canoes, was moved backwards and forwards at will caused their retirement to a respectful distance. And before they had recovered from their surprise the *Mabel* had completed her evolution and was ploughing her way downstream in the gathering dusk at a speed of ten knots. As the *Mabel* flew back on her own track down the watery street, an avenue was formed through that immense flotilla; upon which the plumed and painted warriors stood awestruck. Half an hour after the last of the long line of houses had been passed, anchor was dropped in a by-channel, as it had then become quite dark. Whereas down the main river flew, in hot haste, the pursuing war canoes of the baffled natives! Gone in pursuit when they had recovered their senses.

They returned to Aird Hills and Bevan climbed the highest peak

'the last fifty yards being very precipitous. Ample reward, however, was gained by the view from the summit, where, owing to a landslip, one or two gigantic cedars had been dislodged. Twenty miles to the south, over the lowlands, the open water of the Gulf of Papua was visible. In the valley beneath the river lay like a white ribbon till it was lost to sight where the country rose in tier above tier of serrated forest-clad peaks towards the north-east. Then followed a great valley, or possibly a lake, from the far side of which towered skyward the striated acclivities of the great mountains of the main range.

How one longed for a navigable balloon to penetrate those hidden inner mysteries of mountain, flood, and field—of tropical-alpine and possibly snow-crowned peaks.

The year after Bevan's adventures Sir William MacGregor was appointed Administrator (later Lieutenant-Governor) of British New Guinea, as the southern part of the island became known when it was declared a British possession in 1888. He saw it as his first task to find out what the Crown now possessed and climbed mountains, visited goldfields, and steamed along the coast and to the outlying islands. A greater contrast to the flamboyant Bevan can hardly be imagined, and his official reports give facts and judgments but very little intimation of his personal experiences. His diaries are a shade more revealing and those covering the period from November 1890 to August 1892 have been preserved in the National Library of Australia. The 1892 volume describes his visit to the head of the Gulf: to the Turama (where he was caught alone in a dinghy by a four foot bore), the Omati and Kikori rivers. He climbed Aird Hills (and was stung on the nose by a hornet), and had a confrontation with a body of men in canoes at the same part of the river where both Blackwood and Bevan had encountered similar inimical parties. This is the area of open water where the Tiviri meets the Kikori and is just north of where the government station now stands.

A canoe containing fourteen men came up on the east side of one of the islands and shouted to the steam launch.

We made the usual advances and they caught us up after about a mile or two . . . I gave them a big knife, a plane iron, red cloth, beads, and red tape. We asked them to tow us and they started but soon relinquished that. Then they pulled over to the left bank and kept behind us. When we went to make tea for luncheon they followed over, although they said before they were going to stop at two or three patches of sago to make sago. We gave them tobacco all round and some more presents.

The Visitors

Then we noticed several canoes come up the left bank, and soon some were seen coming up the right bank also all keeping close inshore. About ten or twelve men* on each side. Those from the opposite bank spread out three or four being above us as if to cut off our retreat. There was a great debate when our friends joined the others and it is supposed that the chief of the first canoe was trying to dissuade them from attacking us. At all events there was a hasty shouted debate for a little in loud language. One man stood in the end of a canoe and shook or held out a handful of arrows. Some of our people then shouted out that they were landing below us with bows and arrows. I ordered up two men to the top of the bank. We were now as it were surrounded. Before this Cameron and I had got our rifles ready as I did not like the look of things at all. Some 250 men round about us and they hemming us in on all sides. I ordered the men all into the boat and to pull out into midstream the river being about 700 yards broad. I saw myself some land with bows and arrows to go into the bush behind us. This made their hostile intentions quite plain. I stood up and made signals to the nearest canoes only some 50 or 60 yards off to sheer away; they did not, but more men landed. I took up my rifle and motioned and shouted them off, but they would not go. Then Buni, Isu and Tom saw a man with bow and arrow on the bank behind us and said it was the man that asked me for a tomahawk trying to shoot me. I told them to shoot him; they again shouted out that they saw one or two men on the bank only a few yards off trying to shoot at us I replied 'Damn your eyes, why don't you shoot them'. The others were as quick as our men and kept behind trees so that they could not shoot at them. I told Cameron to keep his rifle on the bush, Johnny and another to take charge of the canoes upstream, and two men to pull the boat out. The difficulty was to get anyone to pull as of course all wished to shoot. We got clear of the bank and I was still with my rifle ready trying to warn off the canoes, but the men seeing the natives getting their bows and arrows ready fired on them. I fired at two or three canoes and once or twice at the water near them. I suspect the others fired at men. Many of the canoes were emptied at once by their occupants jumping or falling overboard, but I fancy I saw one at least fall shot. In a few minutes the river was clear of them. The canoes furthest up made further off. Cameron dropped a bullet near the bow of one of them. One canoe stood its ground

* A slip for 'canoes' perhaps. Otherwise his later estimate of 250 men cannot be reconciled.

on the right bank and shouted 'Miro' [peace] and were left alone. They got all the canoes ashore. They might have given us a shower of arrows from the shore, but that most of them must have lost them when they jumped or fell overboard. After we pulled away from them they assembled, at least half a score or more canoes did so at a creek. We pulled back towards it to shew that we were not running away, and at 1000 or 2000 yards I put live Martini Henry bullets near them, after which we heard no more uproar among them. They did not attempt to follow.⁴

Sir William used Bevan's (or Hemmy's) maps but decided to substitute native names for Bevan's compliments to his patrons or possible patrons. Wherever he made contact with canoe parties he gave presents and asked for the native names of the rivers and islands and villages. His estimate of the height of Bevan's 'striated acclivities of the great mountains of the main range' was 5,000 or 6,000 feet high.

During the ten years after MacGregor's visit there were probably more callers along the coast though I have found no record of inland visits. A government station had been established for the Western Division at Mabudauan (the headquarters moved to Daru in 1893) and its jurisdiction extended to the west bank of the Purari River. Recruiting vessels for the pearlshell diving in the Torres Strait may have come farther than the mouth of the Fly River but on the whole the sagacious captain got his ship across the Gulf as directly as possible. To the east of the Gulf were small mission stations, set up for the London Missionary Society by James Chalmers and manned by Polynesian teachers.⁵ Chalmers arrived in Port Moresby in 1877 and spent most of the next twenty-four years travelling in small boats round the coast, up the Purari and Fly rivers, and over to the Torres Strait, but it was not until April 1901 that he arranged to visit the Aird River and the delta country at the head of the Gulf. The small steamer anchored off the village of Dopima, on Goaribari Island, and immediately a great crowd of men came off and swarmed on board. Chalmers managed to clear the decks at sunset (as was his usual practice) and promised to go ashore next morning. Accordingly he set off in the whaleboat with O.F. Tomkins, who had been Chalmers's assistant for less than a year, and some Kiwai mission students. They were seen to enter the village and they were never seen again. The steamer waited all day and moved in closer to the village but crowds pressed on board and began looting and the captain escaped to Daru for help.

It is suggested now that Chalmers just happened to arrive as a new *dubu* (long house) had been built and it was necessary to anoint it with human blood. It is quite possible to believe that if he had arrived a week earlier or a week later he would have added the education of the Goaribari to his record. As it happened the irony of his death was intensified by the

sort of action that he had resisted by example and precept all through his career.

The news reached Port Moresby two weeks later and the governor, Sir George Le Hunte, immediately ordered coal and supplies to be put on board the *Merrie England* (the government yacht) and set out with five white officials, thirty-six of the native constabulary, armed with Martini-Enfield rifles, and accompanied by two missionaries (unarmed). Towing behind the steamer came four whaleboats, the gig, and the *Ruby* (from Daru). The Queensland Government chartered the steamship *Parua* in Thursday Island and sent over ten men of the Royal Australian Artillery under Lieutenant Brown and accompanied by the Resident Magistrate from Daru.

The arrival of this flotilla naturally aroused some opposition and the Governor retaliated by returning fire and when he landed caused the long houses to be burnt and the 'war canoes' destroyed. In the next two days ten villages were visited and the long houses burnt.

This behaviour was familiar to the Goaribari as a normal intertribal reaction and it is highly improbable that they recognised that it was in fact Punishment inflicted with the highest possible moral precepts. Sir George reported:

I gave orders that we were not to begin hostilities, but that directly the natives began to fire their arrows at us we should return it with rifle fire at once, and that on no account if they called out 'peace' (*miro*) was any answer to be given, as I had no intention of misleading them as to the nature of our visit; and I accept in the fullest measure the entire responsibility for this and every other step that was taken, and none were taken except by my explicit orders. I was not on an exploring expedition using every effort to conciliate the natives and avoid collision, even refraining from retaliation of dangerous attacks as many a time our officers and men have bravely done. I had come to meet face to face a cruel set of savages, who, we were now satisfied, had committed a treacherous massacre of a defenceless and peaceful party of white men and natives whom they had invited ashore, and had looted and nearly secured their vessel and its crew; and I was determined that if they attacked my force first, they should reap the result immediately; at the same time none were to be shot at who were running away or not engaged in the attack. I considered this to be of greater importance than getting to a hand-to-hand fight and killing more men or taking prisoners; the first lesson I intended to teach them was the immediate result of firing arrows within striking distance of any of my party. . . .

Twenty-four natives were killed, three 'said to have been wounded'.

It is possible, however, that the real number killed or fatally wounded is larger, for those who got away any distance into the bush and died there would not be known; no wounded were found anywhere. I should be hypercritical were I to say that I deplored the loss of life on this occasion. I deplore the necessity for taking it at all, and I am very glad it was not greater, but it was inevitable, and the natives brought it on themselves, and I believe conscientiously that they deserved it.⁶

He permitted no looting but felt that articles such as carved figures and stone axes should be removed first 'as otherwise they would be uselessly destroyed. . . . I brought away some cuttings of a scarlet hibiscus for Mr Hunt and Mr Dauncey, as I thought they would like to plant them at the Mission Stations.'

As well as curios and cuttings the party took one prisoner who was able to give an eye witness account, through an interpreter (one of the native police), and also to name the two who actually killed Chalmers and Tomkins, but they were not arrested.

The *Annual Report* for 1903-4 gives hints at the next episode. Sir George Le Hunte had revisited the area in February of 1902 and stayed there for a week making daily trips to villages on the mainland and on Goaribari Island; he then left the country to become Governor of South Australia. The Chief Judicial Officer, who had been in the country for only a year, became Acting Administrator. Judge Robinson set out in the *Merrie England* to visit the Fly, Bamu, Gama, and Turama rivers, taking Dr Seligman and two other members of Daniell's Ethnological Expedition, and decided to call at Goaribari and retrieve the heads and bones of Chalmers and Tomkins. The Goaribari, having been assured that all had been forgiven, assumed that all had been forgotten and came on board in good faith. The man captured by Sir George Le Hunte in 1901 pointed out the two who had struck the blows that killed Chalmers and Tomkins, they were seized, and a fight broke out in which a number of Goaribari were shot, and six hostages taken.

There seems to have been no suggestion that the deaths of the nine Kiwai mission students and the two others should be avenged and it has been noted that among the armed constabulary there were Kiwais who may have seized the opportunity to do some avenging on the Papuans' behalf. Opinion as to the justification for this outbreak was divided and though some people approved others called for a special inquiry and poor Judge Robinson shot himself.

Captain Barton, who was the Resident Magistrate of the Central Division (with headquarters at Port Moresby), became the next Administrator, and to him fell the task of establishing a new association with the Goaribari. This was complicated by an epidemic of whooping cough at Daru in February 1905. Of the six hostages captured the previous year four were

detained at Daru and two were taken to Port Moresby. There was the very real risk that whooping cough could be brought to Goaribari by the four from Daru—though the unkind implication can be taken from Captain Barton's phrasing that he was rather more concerned to prevent the disease from spreading to the east than of protecting the delta people. The four men were brought alongside the *Merrie England* in a boat so that they could see and talk to the two from Port Moresby after the difficulty of contagion 'had been explained to them'.

It was feared that when they saw their fellows, and realized that these were going home while they would be detained, there would be great lamentation, but, contrary to expectation, they accepted their fate with apparent unconcern.

Goaribari was visited on 18th March. At first no canoe would approach within hail of the ship, but the two hostages ascended into the rigging and shouted in their own language to the people on the shore, and after a time a couple of canoes put off and boldly came to alongside. One of the natives who ventured out to the ship was Kemeru, the man who was captured by Sir George Le Hunte on his first visit immediately after the murder of Messrs Chalmers and Tomkins. The two captives were sent ashore the same evening in one of the canoes, having been told that the Administrator and party would visit the village on the following morning. Though these men were evidently quite convinced of the Government's good intentions, they had not wholly succeeded during the night in allaying the alarm of their fellows, who were inclined when the party landed next day to stand somewhat aloof. Having been invited to enter the 'daimu' (men's house) cooked food was set before the party, and placed on a mat, in the midst thereof was a skull which they affirmed to be that of one of the murdered missionaries. Subsequent examination showed it to be indubitably that of a white man, and it was given to the London Missionary Society's representative at Daru. Before leaving, the people plucked up courage and a considerable number came to see us in the village.⁷

The death of Chalmers and the aftermath received a great deal of publicity both in England (the headquarters of the London Missionary Society) and in Australia; and perhaps it is not too much to say created new attitudes towards the responsibilities of governing and educating a people so near to Australian shores. It certainly put Goaribari on the map. Later visitors, influenced by the fascinated horror with which that generation dwelt on any details of cannibalism and headhunting, saw what they expected to see.

In 1906 the Papua Act came into effect and British New Guinea became

the Territory of Papua governed and financed by the Commonwealth of Australia which took over the contributions previously paid by New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland, though the total amount remained £20,000.

The accounts of Captain Barton's regime from 1904 to 1906 read rather like the proceedings of a classroom left without a teacher but the squabbings of factions in Port Moresby did not affect the inhabitants of the delta immediately. A new government station was opened at Kerema as headquarters of the Gulf Division (the Western Division, administered from Daru, still extended from the Dutch border to the west bank of the Purari River) and the Central and Gulf Divisions were gazetted as 'settled labour districts'.

However, the *Annual Report* for 1907-8 reveals that the Goaribari were disturbed because the *Merrie England* had not called in 1907—one result of the distractions in Port Moresby of the previous year. By this time Captain Barton was on leave (and resigned at the end of the year) and Judge Hubert Murray (who had been appointed in 1904) was Acting Administrator. He journeyed on the *Merrie England* on a tour of inspection of the west and among his passengers was Staniforth Smith (Commissioner of Lands and Director of Agriculture), the Assistant Resident Magistrate from Daru, the Reverend E. Baxter Riley of the London Missionary Society's station at Daru, the Acting Private Secretary, and Miss Beatrice Grimshaw. Miss Grimshaw, an Irish journalist who later settled in Papua, wrote her account of this visit in *The New New Guinea*, published in London in 1911.

The famous, or infamous, Goari-Bari lay right before us—a long, low swampy island near the mouth of a great river (the Aird), with a row of ill-constructed brown huts showing prominently on the mud of the foreshore. The sky was yellow-grey, low, and hot, the sea lumpy and choppy; the wind blew strong, and it had no freshness in it. An ugly day, an ugly place.

For an hour or two the *Merrie England* waited, and then, greatly daring, one or two canoes stole out from the town and paddled near us. Our interpreter called to them, assuring them of our friendly intention and displaying calico and tobacco. But for a considerable time the Goari-Barians hesitated, paddling up and down excitedly in their canoes, chattering like parrots, shivering with excitement—ready at any moment either to grasp the arrows in the bottoms of the canoes or to turn tail and rush for shore. They were the ugliest crowd I had yet seen in the country—naked, save for a scrap of bark or fibre; lean and ungraceful, their heads shaved bare to the middle, with a bunch of greasy curls hanging out behind, their faces painted with red stripes and patches. Feathers streamed and grass armlets fluttered about their restless persons; they were jumpy, excitable . . . The

popular and apparently the reasonable idea of a cannibal is that he is the fiercest of human beasts, warlike, fearless, and determined, knowing nothing of nerves, nothing of feeling—a creature of iron. . . .

Instead of which, he is the most hysterical, the most nervous, twittery, jumpy, wire-hung creature that ever existed outside of a ladies' boarding-school. If you hold out a finger, he starts. If you speak suddenly, he squeaks. If you look fixedly at him for a few seconds, he vanishes into the bush so swiftly and silently that you are half convinced he never was there at all. It is extraordinarily difficult to take him for what he is really worth, and to realise that this silly, painted, prancing creature with the hysterical giggle and the childish manner is actually a dangerous brute at bottom, and that he would desire nothing better than to knock you on the head and eat you—only for that Nordenfeldt gun on the bridge and the rack of rifles in the pretty little gilded and brocaded saloon. . . .

Beatrice Grimshaw also described her visit to a *dubu*—evidently a communal dwelling for she does not mention that there were also similar houses (*daimo*) reserved for the men of the village.

It stood close to the landing-place, on a bed of black swamp alive with small crawly crabs, and was approached by a very rough skeleton ladder some eight or nine feet high. . . . The *dubu*, as paced by some of the ship's party, was just upon 600 feet long. Its height was uniform all through, and seemed about twelve feet. Like an immense brown centipede it wound its way backwards through the swamp, supported on innumerable feet of upbearing piles, and covering an extent of ground that seemed practically endless. It took us quite a long time to walk down the dim brown tunnel of the interior, looking at everything as we went—the walls, of close-fitted stickwork; the roof, nipa-palm thatch; the curious little sections into which the whole place was divided, like the pens in a cattle-show, each pen being the abode of a more or less happy family, as proved by the domestic goods lying about—woven baskets, clay pots, belts, pieces of bark cloth. In the very centre of the building there was a sort of little bay looking out over the swamp and the creek. Here certain treasures, probably communal, were placed—two or three small wooden images of human beings, very rudely carved (we tried to buy them, but they seemed to be without price), several skulls, some carved into patterns of a rather Celtic character, some fitted with artificial snouts of bone fastened on with clay, which made them look extremely like the heads of beasts until closely examined.⁸

Between 1845 and 1907 the recorded visits describing the area have each in their own voice conveyed the preconceptions of their own time. The British Royal Navy; a young man no doubt influenced by stories of African exploration; a colonial administrator; a missionary (with a strong bent for exploration); official reports written to justify the conduct of administration; and an enterprising woman journalist compiling an account of a country in the news with one eye on the public and the other on government approval.

Up to this time too, though the visitors to the Gulf of Papua did not disregard lucrative possibilities, their journeys were exploratory. Gold, of course, was always possible, and Sir William MacGregor noted coal seams when he went up the Purari River. These reported seams of coal inspired, in part, the MacKay-Little Expedition in 1908.* In fact the expedition was just returning when the *Merrie England* (with Beatrice Grimshaw) was visiting Goaribari. Donald MacKay's project was to travel up the Purari, explore the mountains, travelling west to the Strickland and then down the Fly. They did not manage more than about 150 miles west of Biroe on the Purari (Sir William MacGregor's farthest point), they found coal but no gold, and MacKay felt that he had lost the contest because he had not accomplished what he set out to do. For he was not, I believe, an explorer in the sense that Bevan was. Bevan wanted to be the first 'civilised mortal [to] gaze' on the unknown—Donald MacKay pitted himself against natural obstacles, among which he included the people who lived in the area, and he fought the unknown. And on his terms he lost. His diary of the journey rests in the Mitchell Library (B929). It is written in a pocket-sized notebook in rather cramped handwriting in an *aide memoire* style: no punctuation except full stops, many rather confusing abbreviations and a very individual spelling varied by an occasional outbreak of a primitive Pitman's shorthand. It is not surprising that it has remained unpublished yet there are in it revealing details and a moving picture comes of the reactions of the people of the area to this great invasion. His account mainly records a man of his time and training but also difficulties which rarely now have to be overcome. The party survived on a diet lacking most of the things we now take as essential, and survived too the medicaments with which he tried to treat the symptoms of malnutrition. They had assumed that they would be able to live off the country—that throngs of welcoming villagers would arrive to sell vegetables and pigs. But what few villagers there were (and it was much later realised that that area is populated sparsely with people who are practically nomadic) not only did not have food to spare but had no concept of selling it.

* Donald MacKay (1870-1958). A New South Wales station owner who had engaged in gold mining ventures in Australia, rode round Australia on a bicycle in 1898, and had travelled widely.

The sight of the party with its eighty-four carriers and four white men, escorted by police and the Resident Magistrate from Kerema, would be enough to make anybody's larder quail. But MacKay reports, without apparent comprehension, that after they had, he believed, been promised food, the 'Bush Natives' returned with plants and cuttings. Eichorn,* the naturalist with the party, planted them 'so the natives should have a garden in the near future without the trouble of making same'.

This party was the first to visit the precipitous limestone country and the astonishing gorge (now known as Masuwer Gorge)¹⁰ where rivers rush down the mountains to meet the Purari. The force of the current has carved cliffs in the limestone of several hundred feet and the waters thunder through. It is in this area that preliminary work is being done on a hydroelectric scheme.

The gorge proved a serious obstacle and the onward journey was delayed as they made attempts to find a way across one of the smaller torrents. They made rafts which were not a success and then felled trees to make a double canoe. Little[†] and Pratt^{**} climbed ridges and hills and went up creeks (Little washing for gold and Pratt surveying) hoping to get a clear view of some easier route. They found a 10 foot seam of coal just west of Masuwer Gorge and north of Mt Favenc.

They managed to cross the river with the aid of some of the rafts they had made, the three canoes, and a canoe they found and took, leaving a tomahawk and knife as payment. It was while they were ferrying across that, I think, the bushmen began to feel nervous about their intentions. They had tried with their gifts of plants to indicate the correct way to acquire food, now they brought two pigs and laid eight sticks across one to show that it was eight tomahawks. MacKay gave them one tomahawk for one and a 14 inch knife for the other. These were accepted, and on another day, after the party had travelled for four days, three men came over, accepted tobacco, but ' . . . they go away but later on fire an arrow which sticks in my pyjamas which were drying near tent. I am too seedy to take any notice.'

There were other signs—branches laid across tracks, parties of bushmen

* J. Eichorn. I have been unable to find any biographical details. There is a reference in the *Papuan Times* (18/12/1911) to Mr J. Eichorn working with Mr Meek, who represented Mr Walter Rothschild, collecting butterflies.

† W.J. Little (1886–1920) arrived in New Guinea about 1900. He was a nominated member, representing mining interests, of the Legislative Council 1906–18.

** A.E. Pratt (1862–1925) joined the government service as field surveyor in 1909, and accompanied Staniforth Smith on his expedition in 1910–11. Not to be confused, as Clune did, with A.E. Pratt, a naturalist who wrote *Two Years among New Guinea Cannibals*, London, 1906.

who waved them back, and the shooting of one of a party of carriers making sago—to show that the bushmen didn't care for the invasion. But they climbed on. To MacKay this was waste land and his for the taking—one now thinks of his reaction had a hundred people (black or white) come uninvited over his acres in Australia, shooting sheep, but it was not a comparison easily made then.

He described a village and a meeting:

Many Palm trees on sides and top of main mountain to left. [Mt Favenc[?]] Fine starry night. See the moon. No rain. Start at 8, fine pad following ridge, good view of mountains on either side, cone peak on right. Sago where we come down to creeks, some grass patches, muddy, many sago trees. Getting on to ridge again Palm trees planted along track close together
50. Many bush native tracks in 1½ miles, hear natives calling, many fresh footprints along pad. Sit down and wait for our boys in a pretty shady slope. Soon hear roar of voices then shouting, conch shells coming quickly nearer. Get out rifles ready. Natives rush up track, we fire over their heads 2 rounds they clear. Hear shots back where boys come up. Bishop shot bush native who was coming at him, he rolled down hill . . . We go on and find rising ground see spots of blood so may have wounded bush native unintentionally. Falling ground again then small rise and come to village street. Houses on left on right end big house 35 yards long, built up on pigsties* and on uprights 7 ft above ground. Door in centre 4 foot × 2.9, over door ornaments, Pigs jaws, cassowary beaks, cuscus jaws sticks made in triangles and squares, small bags and bundles of sticks. Coconut trees in fruit. Built on small neck of land 30 ft flat. Fine view all round, mountains. On either side of river one big clearing. House on small hill in distance and hills, in front small garden down to left. Shouting of natives in valley. Small huts, one full of native cloth and sago (womens) big house no window, very dark, small compartments, stacks of arrows, some tommahawks, lime gourds, native cloth. Sago in bamboo, bundles of long-podded beans, tobacco leaves drying. Some necklaces many woven baskets . . . house at west end only 3 ft above ground, door and ornaments same, ladder either end log of wood with notches cut in same.

* A building term: The method of building up a wall with logs laid transversely on one another. H.C. Cardew in a patrol report (33/30/16) of a visit to the River Turama said of this method ' . . . it is not, as far as I could gather, to guard against attack through the floor of the house but adopted only for strength'.

Had lunch, fine and sunny, leave 12.20. Sharp descent, come to flat, one native standing along side of shield some 4 ft × 2'6. He is told to go and waved to but stands stolidly. Shots fired over his head he clears. See no more of them.

One can imagine how Bevan would have described this episode—and it was a case of 'bursting for the first time, since its creation, on civilized mortal gaze'. The question that arises is which of the gazes was the civilised one. The solitary warrior with his wooden shield defending his rights against the unknown? Or the expedition, smug behind their guns, enduring privation, illness, leeches, mud, and strenuous travelling to satisfy their curiosity? Sir William MacGregor would have understood the warrior but believed it his duty to seduce the high endeavour with red calico.

They reached a point about twenty miles south-east of Mt Murray which seems to be the eastern end of the Kerabi Valley which was not visited again until Flint and Saunders went there in 1922 (see Chapter 5).

The return was as strenuous as the outward journey and took four and a half weeks. One carrier had cut his foot and had to be carried in a sling; the food supplies were low 'on vegetarian diet, salt only 1 lb left, so once a day while it lasts, yams and old lard (German butter) and asparagus damper without salt, tea no sugar'. The tent flies were leaking and the swags and clothes 'nearly played out'. When they were seen to be travelling back to the east bushmen appeared and guided them to good tracks. When they came to a point where the track branched one side was blocked and from a cliff shouts from the bushmen indicated the other 'which saves us considerably'. When they crossed back over the 'Purari Divide' (Crummer Peaks?) they came into another territory where the bushmen were not as forgiving and fired five arrows when they passed some boulders; and as they neared their old camp shouted defiance and shot at the sago makers. Little, Eichorn, and MacKay, with six boys, 'decide to go and shake them up'. There were only two bushmen left in the village but the guns were fired. 'Think this should show B.N. that they must leave us alone.'

On his way back to Sydney MacKay added a postscript to his diary: 'Regrets are vain but this failure will haunt me so long as I remain on deck'.

MacKay did not return to Papua but Little did his best to promote the coal discovery. In 1911 he took a party up the Kikori and approached the coal seams by way of the Sirebi and across country to the Ilo, a tributary of the Samia River. He reported seams '12 feet thick' and that they had returned travelling south following the trend of the coal and found

a 3-foot seam outcropping (with the certainty of other seams beneath this seam) 10 miles from our camp on the Sireba, where there is a good deep waterway, which leads to, I believe, a good deep harbour on the coast.

Most of the country through which we travelled on our return

journey is good agricultural land, low plateaux, intersected by numerous streams, and covered with the usual Papuan forest. The last 10 miles of the journey was through a large flat. We saw no natives, but saw a native house some distance from our tracks. The country through which a tramway would need to be constructed (a distance of 10 miles) is almost perfectly flat, and there are not many creeks, so the engineering difficulties are nil.¹¹

At the time this optimistic report was received others were coming in from the Vailala River of oil seepages and gas, and towards the end of 1911 J.E. Carne, Assistant Government Geologist of New South Wales, came to Papua to report on the oil and the coal. Little guided him to the seams but unfortunately Carne's report on the coal later disposed of Little's high hopes politely but firmly. He reported that even if the coal were workable (and at best might only be suitable for domestic use and stationary engines) the cost of winning it would be high. 'From the geologically recent age of the strata containing the seams, it is unlikely that hard dry coals will be discovered in them.'¹²

The Lieutenant-Governor went on leave in 1910 and Staniforth Smith became Administrator. He held the offices of Commissioner of Lands, and Director of Mines, Agriculture, and Works, which must have kept him fairly consistently at his desk in Port Moresby. He had read the reports of coal and the observations of the MacKay-Little expedition¹³ and, accordingly, as Administrator, he decided to go and see for himself. Coalfields would be valuable, everyone was searching for gold in the hills, and for country suitable for agriculture to bring more settlers to the country. He set out in November 1910 to cross inland from the upper Kikori River to the Strickland River. He was accompanied by Leonard Murray (Private Secretary to the Governor), J.P. Hennelly (Resident Magistrate, Gulf Division), L.L. Bell (who had escorted MacKay and Little up the Purari, and was now Chief Inspector of Native Affairs), A.E. Pratt (who had joined the government service as field surveyor on his return from the MacKay-Little expedition), twenty-five police, and fifty carriers. In his report Staniforth Smith says:

As we had been fourteen days on the march, the ordinary provisions for the police and carriers had become so reduced that there was little more than sufficient to carry them back to the boats. It was decided that Messrs Hennelly and Murray should return with fourteen police and thirty-three carriers, and that Messrs Bell and Pratt should accompany me with eleven police and seventeen carriers, with 23 loads of emergency rations for the police and carriers that had been provided at my own expense.

The return party arrived safely, though there is no record of their journey,

which must have been onerous. Staniforth Smith and his party were not heard of again until March 1911, when he arrived at the camp on the Kikori from which he had set out, under the impression that he had been struggling down the Strickland. The journey had been a gruelling one among the unpleasant limestone ridges and disappearing rivers, the moss and cold of the high valleys. His party had lost themselves, when they came to a river and made rafts they ran into rapids, their rafts capsized, eleven carriers were drowned and they lost their food and papers. It is impossible to know now why the party ran into quite so many dramatic disasters—even allowing for the difficult terrain—and there is nothing to be gained by rehashing the gossip that ran round the country for years, but one point can be made. The men who were sent out to look for him felt that the haste and urgency of their journeys endangered them and their men without the justification of studying the country, pacifying the inhabitants, and making geographical surveys on which reliable maps could be based.

Judge Herbert was in charge of the relief party which included eleven government officials, thirty-eight police, eighty-seven carriers, and a small fleet of launches and cutters—to which was added a whaleboat which had been stolen from Daru and was providentially found in a creek at Goaribari. The cutter *Taowara* was left at Goaribari, under guard, as a supply ship. Judge Herbert, with Leonard Murray, took the steam launch ('with a good Malay crew' from Thursday Island) and travelled up the Bamu and Turama rivers. They got caught by the bores in the rivers and ran out of lubricating oil for the engine and limped back to Goaribari (using dripping and the engineer's hair oil which can't have done the engine any good) to find that Staniforth Smith's party had returned and taken the *Taowara* (with all the stores) to Thursday Island. Leonard Murray took a whaleboat and travelled (with a Port Moresby crew rowing) 160 miles in three days to Urika and back to get lubricating oil.

G.H. Massey Baker (Assistant Resident Magistrate, Western Division) and a party were sent up the Fly River to the Strickland River with instructions to wait for two months or until relieved (or Staniforth Smith arrived).

Wilfred Beaver (Resident Magistrate, Western Division)* was sent to

* Wilfred Beaver (1882-1917). Joined the government service in 1905 and in the first two years had escorted a party of gold seekers up the Waria River, helped establish a gold mining settlement, and became Mining Registrar of the Yodda goldfield. From there he was appointed Assistant Resident Magistrate in the Northern Division and then transferred to the Central Division. In 1910 he was promoted to be Resident Magistrate of the Western Division and in the years before he enlisted in the war he explored the area from the then Dutch boundary and inland west of the Fly River and travelled into all the rivers between the boundary and the Purari in a whaleboat.

follow the tracks of His Excellency the Administrator's party. In Chapter XXI of his book (see n. 1) he gives an account of the country and people of the headwaters of the Kikori River and happens to mention, as his authority, that he was 'a member' of the party that followed Staniforth Smith's route. The details are the same and demonstrate his ability to observe and evaluate essentials, but the report itself was written a week after he returned and he put it *all* down.¹⁴

On the 18th February [1911], I left the *Merrie England* in the launch *Wanetta*, four whaleboats in tow, for the Upper Kikori—the camp whence Mr Smith's party had set out. The officers accompanying me were Mr A.R.M. [Assistant Resident Magistrate] Ryan and Messrs Cardew and Remington. About mid-day on the 20th, we arrived at the site of the camp, after an uneventful journey, except for sundry breakdowns of the launch in places where she was most needed. The principal matter calling for attention was a report made to me by two natives of Goaribari, accompanying the party, to the effect that the Administrator had returned down the Kikori and had been killed, with his whole party, by natives of Kiko and others of the up-river tribes. While still suspicious and not altogether convinced of the truth of the story, for obvious reasons it was distinctly advisable to make some inquiry before setting out on the inland trip; more especially as some few hundred yards from the base camp that had been established on the track cut by Mr Smith there were stated to be found two sticks crossed in the native manner of blocking a road. In addition, Constable Genau, who had accompanied Mr Smith on a part of his journey, emphatically stated that, on parting, Sergeant Sefa mentioned that he would do this in case they returned. I may say that I more than suspect the report of Mr Smith's death originated in the minds of some of the carriers who were beginning to be less enthusiastic at the prospect of the trip ahead, while the two crossed sticks were placed in position by Constable Genau himself on the same account.

This, however, was not known at the time; I decided, therefore, to send the launch back to Goaribari with Mr Cardew, in order that some investigations should be made lower down the river. . . . The intervening time until definite news could be obtained was spent in preparations for the journey, the whole of the stock of rice being thoroughly examined. It was lucky that I had caused this to be done, as it was discovered that twenty bags were green and rotten with age, no light matter when every pound of rice might mean all the difference between success and failure. An examination of the route was also made to find any

supporting evidence of the return story, but nothing was discovered.

On the 24th February, Mr Herbert arrived after having failed to discover the slightest confirmation of the Goaribari man's story. He also brought with him Mr Cardew and Mr Brown, who was to assume charge of the base camp after our departure.

Mr Herbert and party left at 7 o'clock down stream with the intention of ascending the Turama, and make an attempt of cutting inland for at least a fortnight northerly in the hope of striking our westerly track from that point. My own party started at 8, consisting of Messrs Ryan, Cardew and Remington, 16 armed constabulary, 4 special constables, and 72 carriers. Apart from those carrying our own food and the camp gear, every man was weighted down with a double load of two bags of rice,* while every constable, non-commissioned officers included, carried a bag of rice in addition to his rifle, ammunition, and kit—a loading that none but the extreme necessity of the expedition would justify. I was unfortunate in having to leave behind my senior non-commissioned officer, Corporal Oia (through illness), who had accompanied both Mr Ryan and myself on so many trips, and who was a host in himself for general utility and bushcraft. Lance-Corporal Boka and Lance-Corporal Rueta, the latter especially, proved rather hopeless as assistants. We arrived at the Administrator's first camp at lunch time, and reached his second in the evening. The carriers came into camp completely done up, although the stage was an extremely short one. After lunch, we had our first acquaintance with the local natives; about 40 of them coming out on to the track, and proved very friendly. They were men of fine physique and light-skinned, and seemed in appearance very similar to the natives of the Upper Vailala and Purari. Of course, we were unable to communicate with them except by signs.

Next morning the bushmen came into camp just before starting and helped us to carry for a few yards. Our carriers were hard put to it, and complained bitterly. A short stage only was covered this day.

An hour's travelling over good country on the 27th, brought us to Mr Smith's No. 3; thence we had more good walking along ridges till we camped at 4 o'clock. All along I saw 'sign' of natives, and it is quite evident there was a considerable population in the vicinity. In the evening another large mob of bushmen visited the camp, and we were able to buy three pigs. They were similar in appearance to those we had previously seen, and gave us to

* A bag (or mat) of rice weighed 45 lbs.

understand that the track we were following was a long and bad one, and evidently knowing where we wanted to go proposed taking us along their own road.

We had no little trouble in getting the carriers away this morning, some proving almost mutinous. However, we got them going, and an hour's walk brought us to Mr Smith's No. 4. Everywhere we saw signs of natives, and met a number of them. The party finally camped for the night in the Administrator's No. 5 camp; the track now having risen to a fair height and left the level country. Heavy rain fell during the night, and the brown flies supplied by the Government store being absurdly small and inadequate, I was rather nervous about the safety of the store of rice.

The track led over the hills, passing the first party's No. 6, and we dropped down into an almost dry creek just about dinner-time. Later in the day, except for one or two holes, the water almost disappeared, our first experience of the limestone that we later were to have so much of.

As I had been warned by Mr Murray that the next stage was a waterless one, I pitched camp about an hour from this creek sending back for water, at the base of the big limestone hill. This was in order to cross to water on the other side in the one stage.

Next day we got away early, and found the hill quite as bad as it had been reported. For ourselves it was bad; for our loaded men, it was terrible going over the steep sharp crags of limestone, spaced in between with great holes. The pull up to the Administrator's No. 7 (where he had camped waterless) was a very bad one. As I had no mind to spend the night as he had done, and sleep on the sharp coral needles, we went on to his No. 8 where we found a small pot-hole of water, sufficient for the evening and morning meals.

Bushmen paid us a visit before we started on the 3rd March. The track led uphill, and at the top (some 4,000 feet), through the fog, we caught glimpses of very rough mountains ahead. We then descended into a creek, and, following this down, reached the Administrator's No. 9, in the middle of a potato garden close to a village. We were received in a friendly manner, and a small trade in potatoes soon sprang up. The village or tribe seems to be known as Kai ai (spoken nasally), and possesses one house, with a population of possibly 150. The men are well made, light skinned, and wore beards. Every man carries, slung under his arm, a blanket or cape of native cloth, and wears, instead of the sihi or nothing at all, a small frontal covering of the same material. Their arms are lances, bows and

arrows, small stone clubs of poor make and no design, and, in striking contrast to these, axes of the very finest, apparently of jade or greenstone, splendidly bevelled. The most striking thing about these people was their habit of wearing around the neck a dried hand—prepared much in the same way as I have seen heads in the extreme west of the Division. They also wear necklaces, if one can call them such, of human bones and jawbones. Whether these were those of enemies or relatives is not clear, but, from the experience of other parts of Papua, I should decidedly say they belonged to relatives. The dried hands were probably those of enemies. They possess very large gardens of sweet potatoes, and also cultivate extensively sugar cane and bananas. They appeared to appreciate our manufactured tobacco.

Next morning, on starting, their manner changed altogether. Commencing with attempts, in some cases successful ones, at stealing knives and tomahawks, they made distinctly hostile demonstrations as we descended into the creek from the hill. A few of the bolder spirits, under pretence of showing us the way, rushed the carriers clambering over the fallen timber, with which the creek was blocked, and managed to wrench away some of their knives, while a considerable body of them appeared undecided whether they were going to attack the rearguard or not. Not wishing to have any trouble with them, I got the party away as speedily as was possible, and we continued on our way down the bed of the creek. The track then turned up another creek at right angles, and the afternoon's walking was by no means good. We reached Mr Smith's No. 10 at 4.15, and halted there. As usual we saw many signs of native occupation right through the day, betokening the existence of considerable population.

On 5th March we continued our way up the creek, the walking not being at all good. Not long after starting we fell in with a body of the Kaiai people, whose attitude was anything but friendly, and we were forced several times to form up in the expectation of an attack. The track now led up very steep hills, and we reached His Excellency's No. 11 for camp, being dogged the whole way by the bushmen. No water was obtainable at this camp, accordingly a fly was spread in the hope of rain during the night. A little fell, enough only to cook a half ration for the men. About 9 the sentries gave the alarm that a body of natives was prowling about, but nothing occurred.

Next morning, after some searching, which delayed our start until after noon, we found water some distance down the mountain. Our stage accordingly was only about 4 miles to

Mr Smith's No. 12, which proved an exceedingly cold one. More natives were met with during the day.

The pad next morning (7th March) led us up the big mountain, which I believe is known as Mt Murray. Heavy rain started at noon, drenching all to the skin, and we camped where we could, wet, cold, and miserable. It took hours to get a fire going, all the timber being sodden with damp. The trees were covered with moss, and the ground presented the same appearance.

On 8th March, early in the morning, we reached the Administrator's No. 13, where he had parted from Messrs Hennelly and Murray. This was supposed by the latter officers to be the highest part of the range, but we found that it was necessary to ascend still a considerable height up to Mr Smith's No. 14, which we reached in the driving rain, and which proved bitterly cold by reason of the bleak wind and great altitude. The men suffered considerably. Again we met bushmen whose friendly attitude proved only a cloak to make a deliberate attempt at our baggage, culminating in an audacious and impudent assault on Mr Remington in the endeavour to seize a tomahawk from his belt. This people seemed to call themselves Tugi or Bisaravi, and lived in the great valley below the mountain, of which we had caught glimpses during our progress. I was getting rather tired of these continual and outrageous thefts, which had now been going on for some days past. It was evident that the word of our coming was sent on from village to village, and we were looked upon apparently as of no account, and not to be taken seriously. It was abundantly clear that there is frequent communication, and by a much shorter route with the people at Kikori and those in the valley below.

On 9th March we had not long broken camp when I again came on to a large party of natives, evidently awaiting us. The track was leading down the mountain side, and resembled a precipice more than anything else. I was in front, Mr Remington in the centre, and Messrs Ryan and Cardew had the rather unenviable task of bringing up the rear. The police, apart from the advance and rearguards, were distributed through the line of carriers, which stretched over some distance. Our reception by the natives was most friendly at first. Their attitude soon changed. The first I knew of anything wrong was a man leaping out from under a hollow tree on to Constable Dehuri, immediately following me, knocking him down and seizing his tomahawk. Before Dehuri could turn almost his assailant had thrown himself over the mountain side, and I could hear him crashing and plunging through the undergrowth. It was impossible at the same time to know what was going on behind or to defend the line

of carriers. The track was so faint, the mountain side so steep, that it took us all our time to keep our footing; the loaded carriers were simply at the mercy of their assailants. Twice, as I was slipping desperately over greasy tree-trunks, a native stepped out from the mob ahead, and with drawn axe waited for me. I think I managed to find my footing and my pistol in about the same second. He laughed and bounded away. For over three hours during the morning we had to suffer these continual attacks and ambushes. A yell from some carrier and a crashing of bushes told me what was going on behind; I had all I could do with the advance to make a way down the hill, for the natives in ever-increasing numbers, crowded on and round the track, refusing a passage, and I literally had to push a way through them, no pleasant task with their sharp lances and formidable stone axes in such close proximity. The police, mindful of their orders, behaved with commendable restraint and discipline under most severe provocation.

During the descent I was able, when the fog lifted in places, to get views of a great valley running east and west, and by the very large area of cultivated ground, apparently thickly populated. The attitude of the inhabitants and their numbers did not encourage me in the idea that it would be desirable to establish a depot for Mr Remington and his five police, as instructed, in the middle of this hornet's nest.

At last, about 1 o'clock, we came to a small creek, where I waited for the whole party to come up. Each officer had the same story to report, centre and rear. The morning had consisted of a continual series of ambushes, assaults, and thefts, suffered without retaliation by our party. Just after leaving camp, the rearguard was attacked. Constable Airuso was seized from behind by the neck and his tomahawk stolen. Not much later, Lance-Corporal Rueta was similarly treated. Airuso went to his aid, and, obeying his orders, did not fire, but hurled his rifle at the corporal's assailants, who then made off. In the centre Constable Genau was attacked, and a desperate but unsuccessful attempt was made to seize his rifle. Mr Cardew had a similar experience, the bushmen making for his hat. As far as the carriers were concerned, at least fifteen knives and tomahawks were forcibly taken, the men were helpless to defend themselves, loaded down under their swags. They were simply knocked down and robbed. The police were similarly unable to protect the carriers, for the first one knew was a bushman leaping out of the thick scrub without it being possible to see.

On the other side of the creek the natives, fully armed, gathered in force, and it looked as if they were going to try

conclusions then and there, an assumption strengthened by the fact that another body had gathered in the rear, and commenced rolling stones down the mountain side. However, after some trouble, I induced a couple of the older men to venture up to us, and giving them small presents, tried to explain that we wished for nothing but a friendly passage. To their credit I will say that, apparently, they did their best to stop the younger warriors. Negotiations were suddenly broken off, however, by one man who crossed the creek with some potatoes to where we four whites were seated. We were quite ready to trade, but when he was sufficiently near for his purpose, the man dropped his potatoes and made a desperate—and unsuccessful—attempt to grab Mr Remington's tomahawk from his belt.

After a short halt here we again proceeded on our way. So thick was the block of natives ahead that I simply could make no progress at all, and Mr Ryan finally came up to the front to help. Literally we had to drive them before us at the point of the revolver, which I may say the bushmen made more than one attempt to grab. As far as was possible in the thick scrub, I had police as flankers to drive ahead the natives lying in ambush on both sides, and who were continually bursting out on the line as they had done during the morning. The whole day's march had been nothing more than a series of ambushes and desperate assaults, which it was evident enough must be stopped if I were going to perform the mission I was on. At the same time I was more than anxious to pass through without bloodshed.

Finally, towards 5 o'clock, we left the hills and passed through a lane formed by the fence of a large garden. Inside the fence the garden was swarming with armed men, while large bodies were round our front, rear, and left flank. We got through them safely, and then descended a gentle slope, through long grass in which also it was evident many men were hidden. Rain was coming on, and it was necessary to camp. A spot nearby seemed suitable, and I ordered a halt, and the baggage put down. At the same time the natives closed in around us, until we were surrounded by fully 300 men or more. A rush was made, and a bag of rice was stolen off a carrier's back. It was impossible to make the bushmen move off, nor was it advisable to send off men to the bush to cut wood for the camp and tents, even had it been possible. They were closing in on us all the time, and it seemed only now a question of a short while before they made a rush in earnest. I therefore asked Mr Ryan to fire a shot in the air in the hope that it would scare them off, fully determining that, if that course were not successful, I would order a volley also to be fired in the air. Restraint had been carried far beyond

the limits of common prudence, even apart from the importance of the task we were sent to carry out, and which did not brook delay.

Mr Ryan at once fired a shot into the air, the action being explained to those around us. The natives fell back a little, and then came on again. Almost immediately a shot came from the rear, followed by several others, and the natives disappeared. At once I gave the order to cease fire, which was immediately obeyed, except by, I regret to say, Constables Komugu, Aidoro, and Borua. I was extremely angry at the firing at first, as no orders had been given. However, I later ascertained that three police in the rear had simply fired in the air—the course I had intended to order. Constable Airuso had apparently fired the first shot, wounding a man. On the other flank another man had been wounded, by whom I cannot say, although I believe it to have been Komugu. The men who fired in the air certainly disobeyed orders but, in effect, they simply anticipated my instructions by a second or two, and indeed brought about the effect desired. All round, the detachment had behaved in an exemplary manner, with the exception of Komugu, Aidoro, and Airuso on this single occasion, under the most trying circumstances throughout the day. I am not aware of any other casualties beyond the two men wounded. That we would have to fight our way sooner or later was certain—the attitude of the bushmen left no alternative.

The ground being now clear, we were able to pitch camp. During the night we were forced to turn out by the approach of a body of natives.

I determined to remain in camp to-day, as the men sorely needed a rest. The camp was shifted back a couple of hundred yards to a better site, whence a magnificent view of the valley was obtainable. Right ahead a low range covered with cultivated ground and topped with villages closed the northern side. Beyond it, tier upon tier of huge ranges, each apparently broken by valleys, probably thickly populated, in between. Almost north towered a great mountain, perhaps 40 miles away, and to the left of that another. Well to the west was a third large mountain a great distance away. Probably none of these three were under 10,000 feet. As far east as we could see the valley appeared all under cultivation, and thickly populated; to the west it was the same until broken by its trend north-westerly. The name of the valley or its inhabitants seems to be Sambrigi. It must be quite 5,000 or 6,000 feet above sea level.

It seemed most imprudent to establish a depot here manned by only five men. It was only after careful consideration that I reluctantly came to the conclusion that this part of the plan

could not be carried out, and I decided to send Mr Remington back to Kikori with the sick, etc., and to push on as far as it was possible, adding Mr Cardew to my party, and making the force of police fourteen in all. Natives were so numerous that the original force would scarcely have been strong enough. . . .

Next day, 11th March, I sent off Mr Remington with six police and 30 carriers. We remained in camp, repacking loads, etc., for to-morrow's start. The original idea was that as at first we should start off with two bags of rice each as loading. This was found impossible, the men, having already carried this weight for eleven days, were unable to do so further. Accordingly, one and a half bags formed the load for each carrier, a bag for each A.C.

On 12th March we recommenced our search. On our last stage we had utterly lost Mr Smith's track; the chances of following it, or picking it up rather, through miles of cultivated country did not seem promising.

However, we started off in a westerly direction, followed and flanked by large bodies of natives. Suddenly coming into a potato garden, Constable Bosaru drew my attention to a Burrows 'Welcome label,* and, after a search, we found indications that the Administrator's party had slept there. We continued our way down the valley, passing through many and large villages, and continually being molested. Not once only were we treated to arrow, lance, and stone fire, but we succeeded in passing through the populated parts without fighting by dint of careful watching and the good discipline of the party. The parties following us were never less than 200 or 300, and, as we crossed the last ridge, a strong body was preparing to make a rush on the rearguard. Indeed, one lance fell within a short distance of Mr Ryan, who was in charge of the rear for the day. We were glad to be able to camp unmolested on a ridge a couple of miles from the nearest village. Not once had we seen signs of His Excellency's march, but the natives had waved us on in a westerly direction with the words 'Gavana Turama' or 'Gavana Kiko'. I gathered, from the signs they made, that His Excellency's party had met with some mishap there.

On 13th March we spent the morning wandering rather helplessly, hoping to cut some track of His Excellency's. About 2 I decided to make for the water-course running down the centre of the valley, and we camped there rather down-spiritedly. Mr Ryan suggested sending out a few police up the river, which was done. In about an hour they returned, with the tidings that

* The name of an English firm which supplied medicines.

they had discovered Mr Smith's camp on the other side, not fifteen minutes away. That we were able to pick up the party's tracks during the last two days was an extraordinary piece of luck, and by the merest chance.

The waterway we were camped on flowed west, and was of considerable size. Although without any signs to guide us, it seemed clear Mr Smith had followed this river. We did likewise, and were surprised to find what was a big stream utterly vanish after a few hours' walking only to reappear just as suddenly half-a-mile further on. No traces of His Excellency were seen, except here and there a cut twig at long intervals at the water's edge. At noon we fell in with more natives, who proved most friendly. They called themselves Paruwari, and were similar in type and appearance to the Sambrigi people. A feature of these people is their great skill in constructing weirs in the river for fishing purposes. Many of these weirs were found. We passed Mr Smith's No. 17 at 3 p.m., and camped an hour and a half later. The river had become very deep and swift, and difficult to walk along.

Following the river all day, under the guidance of our Paruwari friends, practically no signs of Mr Smith were seen until we reached his No. 18 at dinner-time. Had great difficulty in getting along, as he had been walking in circles and crossing and re-crossing the river, which in places was very deep. The country passed through was mostly thick forest.

On 16th March, we had the same great difficulty in getting along. So far, we had not seen a single blaze since leaving Mount Murray, and there was not the slightest indication of a track. However, with a long screen of police ahead, we managed to pick up here and there a cut twig, over which moss or the like had grown, and so we got along. To add to our difficulty, the party ahead had marched to every point of the compass and in circles or sections. Passed His Excellency's No. 18, and camped on the bank of the river, to which Mr Smith had again returned, near his No. 20, which was discovered by a search party of police. The distance travelled per day by the Administrator for the past few days could not have been more than a couple of miles due west or north-west, if that. The river here flowed west between some high gorges, and was of some size.

On 17th March, we crossed the river for a start, having first sent a party across to pick up the Administrator's tracks, which were of the faintest. We now left the river, which apparently dived into the mountains underground and crossed a rough divide of limestone for some distance. About 2.30 passed Mr Smith's No. 21, and noticed a large collection of empty tins, as if he

had been camped here for some days. As there was a good deal of sago near by, this was probably the case. Also, I noticed that two of the whites of the party had to sleep on sticks. Later, I was surprised to find a large river roaring up from underground; no small creek but a sizeable stream.

On 18th March, we had fair going in the morning, but soon got into bad limestone. Saw many signs of natives the last two days, and a deal of sago. Passed Mr Smith's No. 22 at 2.30, and we then had a bad climb up a limestone mountain which was very rough. As Mr Ryan had a bad attack of fever, I decided to camp in an old native village. We were some distance from water, which we had some difficulty in locating. There was an unknown river on our right, and many high and rough mountains. Leeches were very bad.

19th March. The early morning's walk was good enough, but it did not last long, and we got into limestone again. I was glad enough to descend to a creek, where we found Mr Smith's No. 23 at 11.30. As usual, we passed many indications of bushmen, and about twenty visited us at lunch-time with potatoes and sugar-cane. They gave us to understand that the Administrator had either descended or crossed a river not many days ahead. We, of course, thought it would be the latter.

After lunch we had a miserable time, such indications as the first party had left taking us over and down great limestone mountains and precipices. It was now growing late, and no sign of water could be found. About five o'clock, Mr Ryan and myself descended into a great mass of limestone rocks, and, as the carriers were a long way behind, we decided to camp here where we could. Tents were pitched where it was possible amid the boulders and lumps of coral in the dark. After a long search, we were fortunate in finding a little trickle of water, so the men had not to go supperless to bed. A good deal of sago had been seen during the day.

We reached Mr Smith's No. 24 fifteen minutes after starting on the 20th March. Thence we went east, south, north, and west, following his track over bad limestone. At noon, we reached his No. 25. The walking was good for two hours, and then, as a huge limestone hill was ahead, giving every prospect of a waterless camp, I halted fairly early. Passed much sago, and saw many signs of native occupation. All the country was of limestone formation, the water running underground.

On 21st March, the track led straight up an extraordinarily steep limestone mountain, taking Mr Ryan and myself exactly one hour to reach Mr Smith's No. 26, where his party had evidently to camp without water. It took the carriers another

hour to reach this spot. Reaching the top of the mountain, we had a great view of a splendid valley below, about 10 or 12 miles across; a little to our right and a little higher up was a small clearing where we assumed the Administrator's party had made observations, the first apparently since leaving Mount Murray. We then descended the mountain, having a lot of delay in picking up the tracks. Just when reaching the level, I passed a huge boulder, under the lee of which were two skulls laid neatly side by side and the portions of skeletons, with the remains of fires. Some of the party maintained that these were the remains of a cannibal feast. At one o'clock we passed the Administrator's No. 27. The walking then became very bad, as the track, the sole signs of which were the nail-scratches made by the boots of the previous party, took us through a congeries of great limestone boulders. Just before dark, when I thought we were going to have a waterless camp, we discovered a tiny hole of water. The direction travelled most of the day was east and south, so much so that we immediately jumped to the conclusion that the Administrator was making a beeline for the coast down the valley.

On the morning of 22nd March, we passed water in twenty minutes from leaving camp, and Mr Smith's No. 28 in half-an-hour. We next came to a broad creek, and found an evidently long-disused canoe tied up. We were checked here for nearly an hour, being unable to find the road, and thought that it was at this point that the Administrator had descended to the sea, in view of the fact that all along the natives that we had met had made signs that the *Gavana* had pulled down a river. His track was at last found which led over level alluvial country till it came out on the bank of a broad and placid stream (his camp No. 29), where it abruptly ended, nor could we discover any trace of raft-building or a crossing. There were many evidences that he had made sago here. As we could find no traces at all, I decided to halt here until we could pick up the track again, and to make sago, so that our travel-worn men could spell. Messrs Ryan and Cardew crossed the river in the abandoned canoe from the creek mentioned above, which we had sent back for, and went along trying to gather some information. The camp was visited by some natives during the afternoon, but they proved very nervous. Such travelling as we had done during the day took us east, south, south-east, and south-west, in the order mentioned.

Next morning we remained in camp, and were visited by the natives, who seemed to have more confidence. Mr Ryan and Mr Cardew had again gone across, looking for tracks. We learned

that the name of the river was Mobi, and that the Administrator had crossed it in canoes and gone to a river called Kiko, down or across which we had travelled, as they (the natives) made the signs of paddling. As I knew Mr Smith's intention, I assumed it was the latter. The Turama was stated to be on the western side again of the Kiko. The conversation was, of course, carried on by signs, but we gathered—or jumped to the conclusion—that both the Mobi and the Kiko were tributaries of the Turama. The Mobi was flowing south-east, and came from the north or north-west.

Mr Ryan had, after great trouble, succeeded in locating Mr Smith's crossing, and picked up his track. As it led through prickly pandanus and reed brake, which had grown up again, it needed no little determination and perseverance on his (Ryan's) part. We accordingly shifted camp to the other side.

Next morning (24th March), we started off again with some of the bushmen as guides, travelling up along the western bank of the Mobi, which was the first considerable stream we had passed in that direction. We passed many gardens and small detached houses, in one of which we found the hammock forks of Mr Smith's No. 30, scarcely an hour's walk from his No. 29.

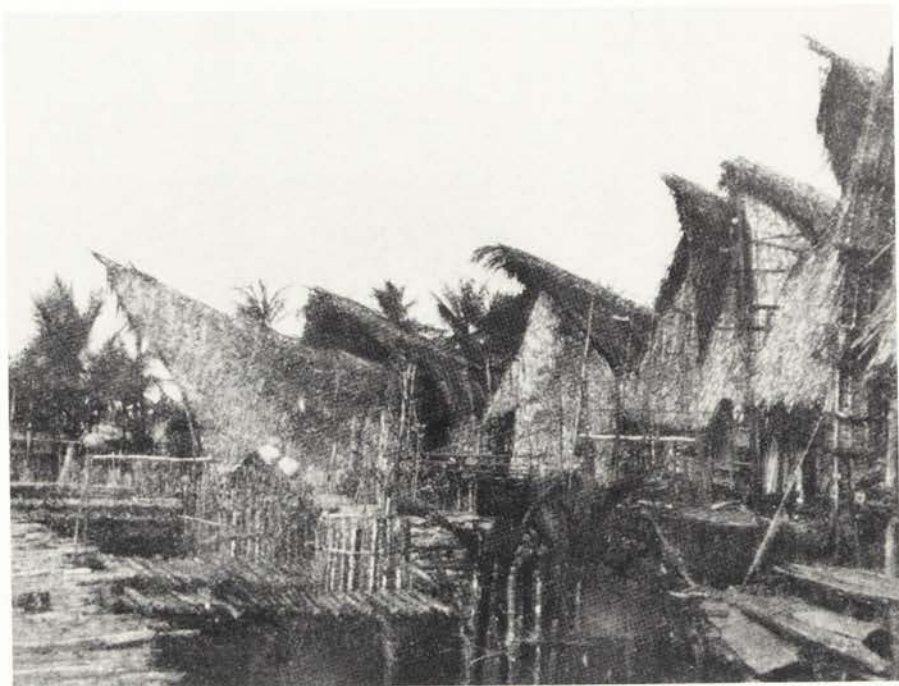
About ten o'clock we reached a considerable village of one large and eleven small houses, containing a fair population. They were friendly enough, and we did some trading for food. They have many canoes, in no way differing from those of the Turama or Goaribari, and, like all the other natives we met, had a plentiful supply of pearl-shell and cowrie shell ornaments, to say nothing of many small pieces of brass and iron. This undoubtedly means close and frequent communication with the coast. We followed the Mobi up for some time longer, and then another stream, almost as big, running in the same direction, which our guide said was the Koroba (evidently a tributary). Reached Mr Smith's No. 31 before noon. The walking was good all the afternoon, except that the course was erratic, the previous party having doubled back on itself more than once. We were also checked for some time at a long chain of what appeared to be dried-up lagoons, now covered with grass, fern, and bracken. In the centre of each was a deep hole; in one what was evidently a native well, boarded in. After nearly an hour's delay, and with the help of our usual police screen spread out in line over some three or four hundred yards, we picked up the tracks again. At 4.30 we came down to the banks of a large and swift stream running south-east on our right hand. This is possibly the Mobi again, as we had crossed no other. The direction during the day



I Government Station, Kikori, c. 1916



II London Missionary Society station at Urika, c. 1916



III Kaimari village



IV Tugi men wearing the *togonu*—a head protection

The Visitors

was south, west by south, and west. We camped a few minutes from Mr Smith's No. 32.

25th March. We followed the river up all the morning, having to climb through a long and very rough gorge. The river was very swift and full of rapids and falls. Just here we had our first accident, one of the carriers falling into a limestone hole. We passed Mr Smith's No. 33 at noon, and noted his party had thrown away five large empty pack bags. The walking was a little better during the afternoon. We passed large supplies of sago and many native pads, and everyone saw 'signs' of population. The direction travelled was N.N.W., N. by W., and W.

26th March. We passed His Excellency's No. 34 an hour after breaking camp down again at the river. His track now turned abruptly off to the south, and led straight up one of the steepest limestone hills we had as yet had to climb. This was followed by a second. I put men up trees to try and find out what was ahead or what the country looked like, but we could get nothing very definite or reassuring. Following down the track (we had now left the river for some hours) which again led us all around the compass, although it was not bad going, we found ourselves in a long series of mammoth holes, up and down which we had to go. In more than one place there was quite a good track round, which our carriers behind adopted, leaving us ahead to stagger desperately over the Administrator's route. From eleven o'clock the direction turned from south to west and north-west. We reached No. 35 at two. Again starting off, we struck more bad country, and the men I put up trees could give us no information at all. At last, about 4.30, we came out on good country, and struck a broad pad leading down to a creek. I heard natives, and, after some calling from our Bamu River men, a number came into our camp. Communication, as usual, took place by signs, and one of our men said he could pick up a few words, which I doubted. We gathered that there was a big river near, that the Administrator had gone on to the Kiko and either crossed or descended it, and that the Turama was close to on the other side of the Kiko.

I must confess that the name 'Kiko', although it had long ago aroused our suspicions, did not suggest itself as the Kikori. We had thought of it long ago, as I have said, but dismissed it as out of the question. At the same time, I should have remembered that we had started from the eastern bank of the Kikori, and, travelling west, had not yet crossed it. We thought at the time that we were on the head waters of the Turama, its tributaries that is, and that the main river was a short distance to the west, which we must soon reach. We were wrong in the first, right

in the second conclusion. The Mobi and the Kiko must form the Kikori, down which the Administrator's party descended.

Mr Herbert, before I started, had definitely impressed upon me the necessity of not penetrating further than our food would hold out. Up to the present, for the sake of avoiding the delay of making sago, we had pushed along, feeding the men solely on rice. We now had 24 mats of rice left, with 60 men to feed. It was with great reluctance, and after consultation with Messrs Ryan and Cardew, that I came to the conclusion that our limit had been reached. Had we, at the time, been able to gather definitely from the natives that the Administrator had gone down the Kiko, I should naturally have pushed on at all hazards, more especially as all that we had learned went to show that the Kiko was but a short distance away. All these considerations helped to my decision, added to the fact that our carriers were showing distinct signs of breaking down under the arduous journey.

Before turning back, I was anxious to have a look at the river. Half-an-hour's walk brought us out on the bank of a broad stream, on the other side of which was a steep limestone crag topped by a fair-sized village. It was splendidly situated for native defence. A number of canoes put out, and the people offered to take us across to His Excellency's No. 36, which they said was close by. Nothing else very definite could be got out of them just then. The natives were very much of the same type as those we had met before. They possessed many pearl-shells and cowries, and knew the names Turama and Goaribari well. Their arrows were well made and beautifully decorated, and are identical with those which some of our men said they had seen in Buniki in the Bamu. We know that the Buniki and Turama people trade regularly for arrows, among other things. Such evidence added to other things prove, I think, that there is regular communication with the coast or Turama tribes.

It was to this point, therefore, that we had penetrated. We had reached under almost inconceivable difficulties to within a very short distance of His Excellency's point where he descended the Kikori, at approximately longitude 143 degrees 25 minutes, latitude 6 degrees 35 minutes. From information gathered locally, and supplied by various members of his party and other evidence, it is proved beyond all possible doubt that we had got within one day's march of the point where the party commenced building rafts to descend the river. Needless to say, I did not know this when my party turned back. Altogether the distance traversed by my party would be about 170 miles forward from No. 1 base, or about 40 miles west in a straight line from Mount Murray.

On 29th March, we reached our camp on the Mobi at midday. During the march our carriers commenced to break up rapidly, several of them dropping by the way. Their general condition was such as to cause me much anxiety. Up to the present they had had a full ration each day, so I could only put it down to travel-weariness.

Owing to the condition of the carriers, and more to endeavour to find a better route to the coast in order that any subsequent expedition might be able to start so many more miles to the west, I had decided to attempt the descent of the Mobi. Thinking that the river might flow into the Turama, our idea was that we might very possibly meet Mr Herbert returning in the *Wanetta*. We knew that we had not gone sufficiently far west for him to have cut our track in his proposed fourteen days' expedition north from the Turama, and I judged from the difficulty we experienced that he could not possibly find His Excellency's. Accordingly I succeeded in purchasing sixteen canoes, and the afternoon of the 29th and the whole of the 30th were spent in making double canoes and a supply of sago.

We started down stream in eight double canoes on 31st March, having among our sick one carrier who had ruptured himself in a horrible manner. For about 10 miles the stream was placid, the banks were high, fertile, and well populated. This lasted while we were in the valley. We soon entered the mountains and got among a succession of gorges and rapids. The day's losses consisted of two bags of rice, two rifles, some smaller gear, and three canoes smashed, one of which we were able to repair. How no lives were lost was a mystery.

We camped on the bank of the river. Mr Ryan, who had got carried down and had landed on the other side, discovered a well defined pad made fairly recently by knife cuts. We at once thought that His Excellency had somehow or other come this way.

The natives, although they had led us to understand the river was navigable, must have known we could not but come to grief in the falls, and gathered in force just above them evidently to secure the remnants. I presume they were disappointed at the result.

1st April. We started off again, the canoes being rather overloaded owing to the loss of one double canoe. Progress was good for a short while, the river being very fine and abounding in game. About 8.30 we came to a very bad rapid; we landed all the carriers and cargo and endeavoured to get the canoes through by letting them down with ropes. The rapid was about 400 yards long, and the canoes had to shoot it. The first canoe came through

all right; the second, carrying Mr Ryan, capsized after striking and smashing on hidden rocks. Mr Cardew and myself had clambered overland, and I was not aware that Mr Ryan had not done likewise. I saw the canoe shoot past like an arrow, with only the heads of its crew above water; it was carried a long way down before they managed to reach the shore. The steersman of another canoe was thrown violently into the water, and, being caught in a whirlpool, was within an ace of drowning. Altogether we were not sorry to collect all the party together again. It was found that two more canoes were badly smashed—one, however, not hopelessly so, to which Mr Cardew, with great resource, managed to effect repairs. Mr Ryan's escape was a very narrow one. Both he and Mr Cardew lost their watches and other gear, and I lost a few small articles.

While waiting to mend the canoes, I sent on Village Constable Enabi ahead to examine the river. As he had not returned, the whole party, crammed into our remaining craft, started away. We entered a great limestone gorge, the walls of which towered up for many hundred feet. I soon met Enabi, and he told us that not far on there was a big waterfall impossible to traverse, and beyond it another gorge full of rapids. We landed above the fall, and leaving all hands there the three whites went to examine the country. It was evident that it could not be passed, while the country was far too rough to carry the canoes round, apart from the time it would take with our limited supply of food. No way could be discovered out of the difficulty. The only course open was to return to the Mobi camp and go back as we had come. A pad, made with steel tools, was discovered running over the mountains; we again had an idea that His Excellency must have come this way, but we found no signs of his camps. I know now from subsequent inquiry that the Mobi joins the Kikori some distance down, and that after this succession of rapids the river is probably passable.

Next morning (2nd April) we started cutting our way back along the course of the Mobi. Camped just below the first rapids, Mr Ryan having a severe attack of fever.

We continued the journey back, still having to cut almost every yard, except where we managed to get on native pads running between the numerous villages. Just in the middle of the first gorge, perched high on a niche in the limestone, I came upon a regular Golgotha. Literally hundreds of skulls were stacked away neatly in rows, with the other portions of skeletons, apparently a native burial ground. A quaint feature noticed along the river was the number of little structures resembling dovecotes, each containing two or three skulls and bones. During our passage

we came across two coconut trees, one fruiting, the other barren. Some betel nut was also seen, but we already knew the inhabitants used this plant. We passed many sago swamps and finally, after a long and desperate day, nearly nine hours solid walking and cutting, reached our old camp for the third time on the western bank of the Mobi.

Next day, while we were debating how to cross, a kindly old bushman came along, and making signs to us to wait, brought along two canoes. We crossed the whole party inside an hour. I was glad to reward the old gentleman with a knife, of which we had only a few left.

This day and the next (5th April) were spent in making sago. All hands, recognising that unless they worked with a will starvation was staring them in the face, needed little encouragement. With what we made and what we bought, I reckoned we would be able to start off with sufficient for five days, which, with the remaining rice, might just enable us to get back without another halt. I may say that all hands, including ourselves, for some days past had been put on two meals a day only, and this was kept up till the end of the trip. Our own food supply was very low, and our diet consisted solely of meat, sago, rice, and black tea.

The journey back to the Sambrigi valley at the foot of the big mountain was accomplished in six days (11th April) with a speed which far exceeded my most sanguine calculations. No halts were made between morning and evening with the exception of a few minutes rest at noon. The weather, which up to the time we had started back had been all that could be desired, had now become unsettled, and on more than one day we had to walk for hours in the drenching rain. Our most serious anxiety was caused by Mr Cardew becoming exceedingly ill with what I took to be gastritis. He, however, staggered pluckily along and would not allow a halt on his account. I had got a litter prepared for him in case of necessity, but fortunately it was not necessary to use it. The journey through the Sambrigi valley was accomplished without fighting, although we met with the same provocation and a few flights of arrows. The carriers, lightly laden though they were, had all along shown signs of knocking up, and it became no easy task to keep them going and indeed some of them on their feet at all.

We started the ascent of Mount Murray on 12th April, and reached camp No. 8 next day, where we were fortunate to find Mr Remington, who had come to meet us with fresh supplies. I regret to say that one carrier, whom we had to carry over the great mountain, died this morning. We were greatly relieved at

learning from Mr Remington that His Excellency's party had arrived down the Kikori at our base camp. The impossibility of establishing the depot at Sambrigi, and having to turn back without definite news of his party had worried me greatly. The fact that it was the Kikori that the party had descended made it clear in a flash a good many of the problems that had been puzzling us, but it was not till very much later that I obtained the information that made it clear how close we were to his furthest point.

Mr Remington had been getting very anxious at our non-arrival and informed me that apparently no arrangements had been made for getting us away from Goaribari after 7th April.

We arrived back at the base camp on the afternoon of 16th April, having had to carry four men on the shoulders of the police for three days. I regret to say that one of them died a few hours after reaching the Kikori.

Mr Brown and Mr Johnson informed me that the latter had gone to Goaribari about 1st April, and that after the Commander of the *Merrie England* had stated he would wait as long as he could. Whether he would be able to wait was doubtful, and no other provision for getting us away seems to have been made. His Excellency had taken the *Taowara* away to Daru and she had the benzine for the launch and all the reserve stock of provisions. At the base camp, not only had the store of provisions been reduced, but I found that I had fifteen or sixteen extra men to feed from Mr Herbert's and His Excellency's parties. There was enough benzine on the launch to get to Goaribari, but not enough to get through to the Purari, and we had a bare seven days' provision for the 120 men I had now to feed. In the event of the *Merrie England* not being at Goaribari our position was not of the pleasantest. In addition no 'trade' now remained at the camp, so we had not even the wherewithal to buy food. It appears that twenty-four hours after His Excellency reached the base camp, a police patrol was despatched to recall me. Having seven days start, I need hardly say that they did not reach us. Nevertheless every one appeared so certain that we would be overtaken that the contrary was never anticipated, and in consequence no arrangements were made. Mr Brown reported that his stay in camp had been comparatively uneventful. He had been visited nearly every day by considerable parties of natives and had maintained friendly relations with them. A war party of about 100 men from lower down the river had gone up by canoe through the rapids above the camp apparently to fight with some other tribe. Accordingly I ordered everything to be made ready for a start at daylight down the Kikori. If

the *Merrie England* were not at Goaribari we should have to make our way somehow through to the Purari.

At daylight on the 17th, we embarked and started down the Kikori, which was in high flood. Our plan was to stop at the site of the proposed new station and send the launch to Goaribari to ascertain if there was any boat there. Should there not be, she would return and we would start straight away as best we could, even if it involved casting away the launch altogether, for the delta. We arrived at the camp shortly after noon, and Mr Cardew, after some lunch, left at once. He returned at midnight with the welcome news that the *Merrie England* had been hanging on at Goaribari, in the hope of our arrival. Orders were at once given to break camp, which was done in the dark, and in about thirty minutes we were under way. We arrived at the *Merrie England* at daylight. My best thanks are due to Captain Tornaros, for waiting as he did, when the south-east had already started. We arrived at Daru on the 19th April.

I should think the total approximate distance travelled would be about 360 miles, or, in a straight line, about 130 miles, excluding the journeys up and down the Kikori. The total distance traversed by the patrol from Daru and back to that station again would be about 660 miles. The total time occupied was 71 days, and the number of days that we were inland from the Kikori base camp was 51.

We had followed His Excellency's tracks up to what I believe to have been but 4 or 5 miles of his furthest point. It is unnecessary to enlarge upon the difficulties of the road, or of following the track. Some idea, however, of my task may be grasped when it is realized that after parting from Mr Hennelly, at Camp 13, His Excellency had hardly blazed a single tree, had left absolutely no track, and had never cut a twig more than it was absolutely necessary. Such traces as the party had left were all but obliterated by the rapid growth of the scrub, and by moss. When I say that for two days on one occasion we did not find a single sign; on many other occasions we found no traces for hours at a stretch, and at another time for two days we had little to guide us, apart from the camps, but the boot nail scratches on the coral, perhaps the task may be recognised as somewhat beyond the ordinary. Frequently we had to scrape moss from trees, and search among the foliage of the light scrub for some guiding knife cut.

Our own provisions at starting had been cut down to the barest necessities; for three weeks we had been without what even Papuan officers are accustomed to regard as indispensable. Had the expedition been provided, as His Excellency's had been, with

even a small quantity of concentrated food by the Government, I think we should have been able to penetrate some distance further. . . .

Now that the foothills had been visited and there was the possibility of exploitation by commercial interests of oil, gas, and coal, it was clear that the area could not be supervised from Daru by whaleboat, lugger, or steam launch. In addition—or perhaps this was the first consideration—the death of Chalmers and the experiences of Staniforth Smith and Beaver made it necessary to consider what was called ‘pacification’. Benjamin Butcher, of the London Missionary Society, moved by accounts of the death of Chalmers, had asked permission to set up a station in the area but was asked to wait until some government influence had been extended. He was granted land on Aird Hill in 1914, when the government station had been established for two years.

2

The establishment of the government station and the first patrols

The station on the Kikori River was established in February 1912 though it was not until March 1913 that a notice in the *Government Gazette* (No. 5) proclaimed a separate Division, the Delta Division, whose boundaries on the east were the left (west) bank of the Purari River, on the west Bell Point and the east bank of the Turama River, and on the north the boundary of the German Territory. Thus the Purari Delta was cut out of the Gulf Division and no longer the responsibility of the station based at Kerema, and the area from the Dutch boundary to the west bank of the Turama became the Western Division with headquarters at Daru.

The officers appointed to build the station were H.J. Ryan, Resident Magistrate, G.H. Massey-Baker, Assistant Resident Magistrate, and W.H.H. Thompson, Patrol Officer. The *Merrie England* returned in March with the New South Wales Assistant Government Geologist, J.E. Carne, and the Hon. W. Little to inspect the coal seams. Massey-Baker and seven police were sent with them and Beaver came over from Daru to Ryan who was coping with an outbreak of dysentery among the police and prisoners. There were eight cases, of whom two policemen and one prisoner died, before they could hold it, which was considered 'remarkable'. The measures taken against the spread of the disease were to burn the house as soon as a case was reported and shift camp, and 'the unremitting attention of Mr Beaver'. The treatment Ryan mentions is betel-nut: 'the two cases that took nothing else but betel-nut and salt recovering very quickly'.

In the first seven months, Ryan reported,¹ in spite of the swarms of flies which no doubt helped to spread the dysentery, and hordes of crickets which ate uniforms, blankets, papers and books, he and his police and prisoners had cleared five acres, as well as ten acres felled, built the Residency, 60 × 40 feet with a 10-foot verandah all round, standing on 72 8-foot piles, the main roof corrugated iron and the verandah roof of nipa palm leaf 'which is cooler than iron'. The walls and floor were of hard black palm (goro). 'Practically all' the timber used was cut in the bush and adzed and squared by the fifteen armed constables. They also built a 30 × 20 foot

kitchen building which housed the cookboy, the bathroom and a private store; a 35 × 25 foot store; and a 6 × 6 foot outhouse. Barracks, sergeant's house, native labourers' house, and a gaol were all under construction. Ryan felt it necessary to apologise, or at least explain, that the work would have gone forward more expeditiously had he been a draughtsman, and, further, that as his police were all recruits he had first to teach them the use of the tools. However, he was grateful and relieved when Senior-Sergeant Gaiberi arrived in April and took over the training and supervision.

The training and supervision was complicated by a matter described under the non-committal heading of 'Native Affairs'.

Since the station was opened here last February, the effect on the surrounding natives has been marvellous in more than one respect. At first they were under the impression that we were going into the interior, and treated us as a huge joke; but that idea was soon dispelled from their brain as they saw the forest and scrub disappear day by day, to their mind as if by magic. They then conceived the idea that they would like to possess tools that had such a marvellous effect in cutting down trees, and the idea was no sooner born than it was carried into practice, and I have to admit that they were very successful in their first venture.

Seven large canoes of Gababari people came to see the sights and after being told they could only visit the station by day returned at night and removed a 'large number of axes, tomahawks, and three adzes', when the A.C. on guard was on another part of his beat. Messages were sent that the tools must be returned in two weeks. 'Needless to state, the goods were not brought back for they treated my message as nothing but bluff.'

Ryan arrived unexpectedly at the village in the early morning.

I was amongst them demanding back the stolen property but they stoutly denied having stolen anything, tried hard to impress upon me that they would not be guilty of such an act, and coolly informed me that it was the natives of another village who stole the articles. Of course I did not believe them, and searched the chief's son's house. This they resented by firing an arrow, which, fortunately, fell short of the mark, and in the house I recovered some of the stolen property. . . . I decided to arrest the chief's son, a man named Nevi, as he was the principal instigator of the theft. This was a ticklish operation, as I knew they would resent it; but it was carried out and, although six arrows were fired into our midst, there was no bloodshed. So the first great lesson was administered to these natives and the natives of the other surrounding villages, that they must not steal.

The Establishment of the Government Station

During the incarceration of the man Nevi, natives from practically all the villages on the coast have called at the station and have learnt why Nevi was in gaol. As an illustration of the amount of good that has been done since the above, a canoe which I bought some time back was carried down-stream, and was found by natives of the village of Wai-Ou, who have only come under Government influence since the opening of the station, the chief of the village coming with it, in order to explain that his people did not steal it. Natives from several villages have since visited the station, and, if they perceive even an empty tin on the ground, they ask permission to take it before they touch it.

The second report² mentions that the launch *Active*, which arrived in September 1913, had enabled them to patrol approximately 3,500 miles before she broke down and had to be towed back to the station by the whaleboat. H.C. Cardew, the Assistant Resident Magistrate, a qualified engineer, was on leave and there was no one to repair the piston rings. Ryan remarks also that the rainfall during the south-east season had been excessive and regrets that he is unable to give the actual rainfall 'as so far no rain-gauge has been sent to the station'. The discomfort of patrolling the rivers rowed in a whaleboat is not actually mentioned but the broken piston rings seemed to lead naturally to the reference to the rainfall.

Those parts of the Purari which had been taken over from the Gulf Division he reports as being, for orderliness, on a par with the best-conducted natives in the territory; particularly the Vaimuru, who in turn influenced the Urama people (estimated at about 4,000 in seven villages between Era Bay and Pai-a Inlet). He lists villages on Goaribari Island and the vicinity and to the east of Aird Hill which have all been 'most eager to show their loyalty to the Government, and they call regularly at the station' but Gababari, Aidia, and Ubua

have always been troublesome, due to many of the older men, who will not conform in any shape to the advance of civilization, and who always resent the action of the Government, when any arrests have to be made, by firing arrows at the police. The younger men of the above-named villages are quite the reverse, they are most anxious to go to work, but the old men will not let them.

As the coast seemed to be responding the time had come to find out more about the headwaters of the rivers of the district, and the people who lived there. In August 1913, H.J. Ryan and the patrol officer, W.H.H. Thompson, set out to travel west of Kikori and 'across the headwaters of

the Omati, Turama, Gama and Aworra rivers'. This was part of the area which Staniforth Smith had hoped to explore in 1910-11, though they travelled south of his proposed route, and were better equipped with information and interpreters than he had been. It was still a rather more ambitious plan than the terrain would allow, particularly as they chose to set out in the rainiest month of the year. It was the first patrol to engage Goaribari carriers, who regarded the enterprise as a carefree outing, racing the loaded canoes up the Kikori River and, when that palled, shooting snakes and flying foxes with their bows and arrows to provide a fine feast at the evening camp. All thirty-five carriers were needed to manoeuvre the whaleboat and canoes through the rapids above the 1911 relief camp and then all but nineteen of the Goaribari were sent back to Kikori, the whaleboat and two months' stores were left at the relief camp in charge of two armed constables, and the rest of the party began cutting a track to the west. They soon met the limestone ridges and spent the next three days in the rain climbing up and down limestone hills sometimes twenty and sometimes three hundred feet high, crossing creeks at the lowest points, and removing numerous leeches. The rain stopped and the creeks disappeared and the party found itself with no water to cook the rice but happened to notice a clump of bamboos which were full of water—enough for the evening meal.

August 17 No rain during the night, therefore no water in camp to cook breakfast, so all hands were obliged to put a smiling face on and trudge along in the hope of striking water early. 12 noon, still no water, and the country travelled over during the morning was the most rugged and worst I have experienced in the Territory. Some of the mountains crossed were over a thousand feet high, all rent and torn with huge fissures, as well as numerous holes, that were so deep that no bottom could be seen, and one was obliged to be very careful where he put his feet, on descending we invariably found ourselves in a pocket surrounded on all sides by rugged mountains.

They found 'a likely place' and dug a well which struck muddy water at three feet. This was baled out and with leaves to act as a filter filled up again.

... and in a very short time all hands were enjoying a well-earned repast, as it was over 24 hours since our last meal. 8 p.m. Served out some more rice to all hands, and at the time of penning these lines, the whole of the carriers and police are in the best of good humour, and none more so than the Goaribari carriers, who have carried their swags most cheerfully and are generally the first to arrive in camp (this is the first time that

any of these natives have carried) and I must say that they are indeed a surprise, as well as a pleasure, as one never hears them growling.

The map attached to the report gives some notion of the extent of the journey. They found that the country was comparatively sparsely populated by people who did not make gardens and ate the sago which grew in the swamps near the creeks. They gave presents to those few they could persuade to come within speaking distance and found that the dialect included Goaribari and Bamu River words so that it was possible to set up some sort of communication. They travelled on over the limestone ridges of the Darai Hills and eventually reached the village of Kauma which is on the headwaters of the Paibuna River. Thompson left him at this point and set out to return to Kikori with four A.C.s, twenty carriers and five prisoners. Some of the prisoners were brought from Kikori as carriers, but Ryan had had occasion to arrest at least one man at the village of Kisi-Dubu for deliberately misleading the party when hired as a guide to take them to Kauma. (He said his brother and some others had gone to Kauma and 'he was frightened that we would find them along the track, kill them and eat them'.)

Ryan was left with six A.C.s, nine prisoners and five carriers, and the next part of his journey was north-west following the east bank of the Turama River. They had to cut a track through dense vegetation and cross the numerous creeks which ran into the Turama. The means of crossing was to fell trees across the water but an added hazard was the bore to which the Turama is subject.

... found that the bore had washed away the two trees that we felled the evening before ... the two A.C. busy felling two more large trees. Hurried them on a bit as I was expecting the bore in an hour's time. When the two trees fell they only went half way. One of the A.C. then swam across to the opposite bank and felled another tree which also fell short. Saplings were then procured, and by this means the trees were connected, none too soon as we could distinctly hear the roar of the bore coming up. With the exception of one A.C. and one carrier all got safely across before the bore struck our bridge. In a second not a trace of the bridge was left. ... have a small raft made to bring across the A.C. and the carrier.

Each entry for the next few days describes the thick vegetation which had to be cut, the swamps to be waded, the creeks to be crossed, and a variation in the form of grassy meadows which turned out to be under water a foot deep. They reached the point where Hennelly and Leonard Murray had camped on their return from Staniforth Smith's party in 1910,

and the camp made by Judge Herbert and Leonard Murray in 1911 when they came up the Turama hoping to intercept Staniforth Smith.

They came to a river and thought it was the Aworra but it was found (after two days' rafting) to be the Abavi, so they returned and continued in a north-west direction for a week, found another river, the Wawi which came from the west, and ten days later arrived on the bank of a river thirty-five yards wide and flowing south. So they made another raft.

Travelling on a raft took some of the hard work out of moving along but not much.

Passed another large seam of coal 9 a.m. and another seam 9.30 a.m. The river is full of snags, and every 100 yards we hit one. 11 a.m. came to a timber block right across the river, which took us a half hour to cut through. 1 p.m. came to another timber block which took an hour and a half to clear. 4 p.m. came to a large timber block, caused by a large rubber tree which fell from the west bank which is 25 feet above the water, on to the east bank, which is only 3 feet above water. Had the raft pulled lengthwise against the rubber tree, so that the boys cutting could stand on the raft . . . Sent one A.C. with all the carriers ashore on the east bank to clear a site for a camp. Set two A.C.s and two carriers at work cutting the obstruction. I then sent Constables Aiwai and Aiwasa ashore on the western bank for one of them to climb a tree nearby. They went up the rubber tree, and just as they got to the top of the bank, Constable Aiwasa called out 'Bushmen, he come'. I then instructed the sergeant to get out the Turkey red to wave to them; the sergeant handed me the red calico. I then gave him a piece of the calico, and picked up another piece. As I stood up a fierce yell followed by a flight of arrows plainly indicated to me that I was attacked by a hostile party. Previously I had instructed the police that they were not to fire their rifles; but on finding that our attempts to make friends were futile, and as they persisted in firing arrows, I instructed the police to fire a volley over their heads. This had no effect. I then instructed the police to take what cover they could and fire straight. Shortly afterwards my hat was pierced by an arrow, and in about five minutes a bone-tipped arrow entered my left shoulder and remained embedded there. Another arrow then pierced the left sole of my boot, and about five minutes afterwards I was again wounded by an arrow piercing my right forearm and projecting about three inches on the other side. My two hands were thus rendered useless, and I was obliged to let my revolver drop on to the raft. Two of the savages seeing me thus helpless, started to clamber down on to the raft. Just then carrier Pundava jumped on to the raft and, amidst a shower

of arrows, pulled the arrow from my left shoulder and with his tomahawk cut short the arrow that had penetrated my right forearm. He then handed me my revolver. The two natives that were coming on to the raft were shot by A.C. Aiwai as they were about to board it. A.C. Jata was wounded in the right buttock by an arrow. About ten minutes afterwards the arrows ceased and the bushmen retreated, taking their wounded with them and leaving ten of their number dead. The fight lasted about forty minutes and the number of natives that attacked us was between 60 and 70. On examination I found that cook boy Gia was wounded in the back. Fifty-seven arrows were found embedded in the raft, and many more were found on the bank and in the trees. I am indeed thankful that all the carriers were off the raft when the attack was made on us, as otherwise many of them would sure to have been struck by arrows.

. . . On getting ashore from the raft the task of extracting the arrow from my forearm was begun. Some of the police suggested hammering it out . . . as Mr Cardew did with A.C. Daru at Kikori. I dissented. I had a solution of permanganate made; then got one of the armed constables to cut two of the barbs of the arrow off, pour the solution over it, then got vaseline and smeared that part which had to go through my arm. One of the prisoners tried to pull it through, but it would not draw; so he cut round it with a piece of shell. After cutting they started to draw the arrow, which took fully three minutes, but seemed to me to be three hours. I then saw the others were attended to. During the night suffered intense pain. Howling of dogs was heard on the opposite bank. Sleep was impossible.

In his review of the year in the *Annual Report* for 1913-14 the Lieutenant-Governor commented on this patrol:

. . . But what Mr Ryan does not tell is that, if he had chosen to abandon his orderly, Constable Bam, who was lying sick on the raft and unable to move, he might easily have taken cover on the bank and so avoided all danger; instead, however, of seeking the protection which he might so easily have found, Mr Ryan chose to remain on the raft and to defend the sick man's life at the imminent risk of his own. So courageous an action would, in regular warfare, have been rewarded with the Victoria Cross, but as it happened on an obscure Papuan patrol, Mr Ryan must be satisfied with the consciousness that he formed a higher conception of his duty than most men would have done, and that he did that duty fearlessly and well.

A similar tribute could have been paid to the carrier Pundava—and very likely it was though not in print. If Ryan left Constable Bam and his sickness out of his account what else did he think it unnecessary to mention?

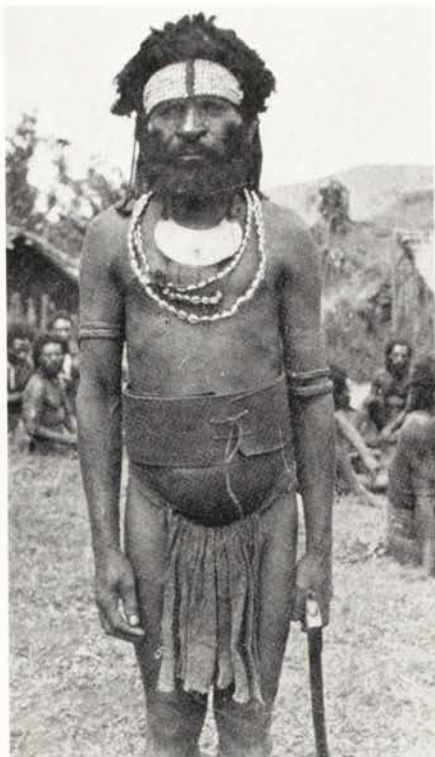
Ryan filled in the rest of his diary after nine days with his arms in slings being helped up and down inclines. They had abandoned the raft and made their way back to a sago patch to make food for the onward journey down the river. Eventually they reached the mouth of the Aworra and made their way to Kiwai Island (in the mouth of the Fly River) where they met a cutter which took them to Daru in the middle of November.

While Ryan and Thompson were making their way to the Turama Dr Anton Breinl, Director of the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine, set out from Port Moresby on an expedition along the coast to map out the distribution of tropical diseases and in particular to report on the prevalence of leprosy. His report was published by the Department of External Affairs in *Bulletin of the Territory of Papua*, No. 2, Melbourne, 1914, and as well as giving some interesting details of a medical survey of that time, includes a graphic story of that part of their journey from Vaimuru to Kikori.

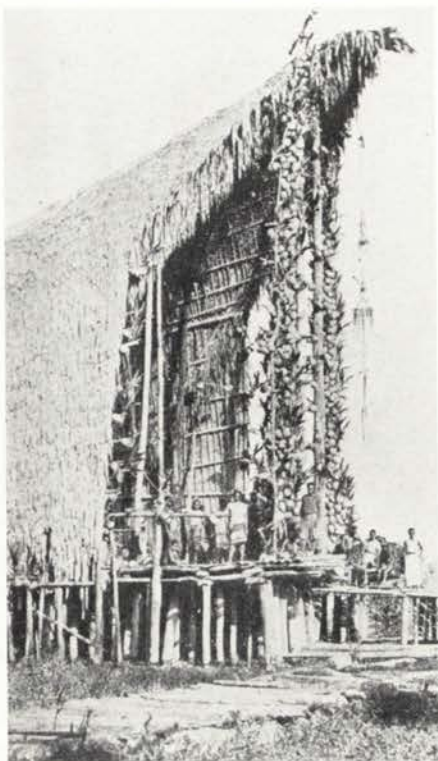
As seems to have been inevitable in those days the journey began in July—just in nice time for the wet season in the Gulf. Breinl was accompanied by a patrol officer, C. Henry, who had been appointed to the Kikori station, two armed constables, and two orderlies. They carried a 'small laboratory outfit' and stores, and planned to depend for carriers from village to village. They travelled by *lakatoi* to Borebada and then walked along the beach inspecting the villages. As far as Kairuku Dr Breinl spoke favourably of the villagers and their helpful dispositions but observed that with the change from the light-skinned type to the shorter dark-skinned people, so they seemed inhospitable and disobliging. 'The cheerful disposition of the natives further east was replaced by a sombre solemnity.'

The natives of Toaripi are of a very good type, well built and willing to help, curious, and with a great sense of humour. . . . Here, as in other villages, after our arrival, the village constable was interviewed and instructed to bring forward all cases of sores and ailments present in the village, and in most instances a house to house inspection was undertaken. The children followed our doings with great interest, and often a peal of merry laughter could be heard when the village idiot came on the scene, or when patients had to crouch down into somewhat unusual positions in order to make the examination of a sore possible.

The sores were examined, and those selected to be scraped and treated were sent to the Rest House. These rest houses, which are surrounded by a fairly large fence, became in the evening a place of great interest. In more than one village a great crowd gathered outside the fence, watching the work with great interest



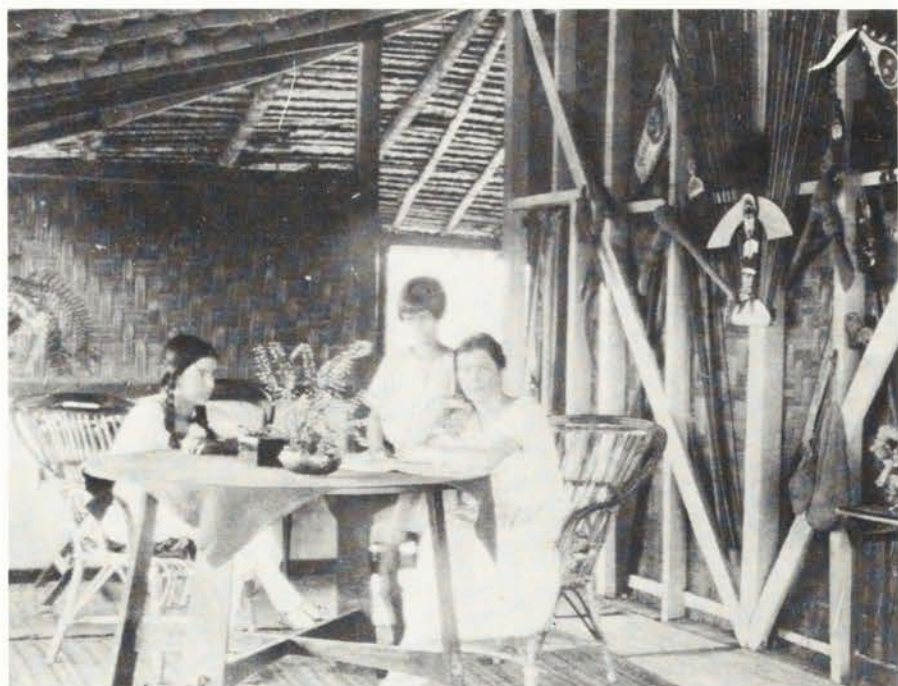
V Samberigi men



VI Front of *rami* in old Koropenairu village



VII On board S.S. *Houtman*: Percy Robinson, Mrs Stevens (wife of a trader at Dobo), Claud and Arthur Williams in March 1914



VIII On the verandah at Ogamobu



IX Irene Robinson and Di in the garden at Ogamobu, c. 1923

and laughing at the distorted faces of their poor compatriots whose complaints were being treated.

They reached the Purari delta and were able to travel by canoe:

The delta canoes are very large, without outriggers, made of a single hollowed-out log with an elaborately carved border. They are flat and entirely open in the stern; when in use this end is closed up by a wall of mangrove mud obtained from the river banks; the bow, which is pointed, has also close to the end a mud barrier. A small boy sits in the bows with his back facing the direction in which the canoe is travelling, in order to break the waves and prevent them from entering the canoe, at the same time keeping careful watch on the mud barrier and repairing it when necessary. These canoes are wonderfully steady, roomy, and comfortable. A large canoe requires a boat's crew of ten to twelve men, who stand up and propel it by means of short, flat, and elaborately carved paddles. The progress, however, is not very fast. . . . small crocodiles were seen frequently, resting on horizontal tree branches, and tumbled into the water as our canoe approached. A few large crocodiles were seen basking in the sun on exposed mud banks.

They reached Urika:

I found amongst the natives a great number of sores and deformities, due to healed sores. It became more and more evident that a diagnosis of a number of cases would be very difficult. The temptation to diagnose many of them as leprosy is removed by the experience that ordinary sores may give rise to deformities of hands and feet, closely resembling the after effects of leprosy, but in the latter cases on careful examination no typical lesions could be found, such as thickening of the nerves or loss of feeling. . . . Kaimari . . . consisted of two villages. They were about the dirtiest and most disreputable of any villages seen. The houses were dirty, and many of them had fallen in disrepair. The platforms in front were so frail that they hardly carried my weight. Sago palm bark, sides of old canoes, and sticks were laid on the ground so as to prevent one from sinking into the mud.

The different parts of the village were separated by mud creeks, which could only be crossed by means of frail bridges consisting of a number of supports—two light poles run into the mud, connected by a crosspiece—and loose saplings, many of them dry and rotten, laid lengthwise. The crossing of these bridges was always a serious undertaking, since a white man lacks

the nimble-footedness of a native, and on more than one occasion the sapling either broke or gave way, and it was only luck which saved one from falling into the soft and tenacious mud which formed the bed of the tidal creek. . . . No fresh water can be got in the village itself, but is brought down in canoes from several miles up river . . .

The number of natives suffering from sores is overwhelming, and the majority of them readily availed themselves of medical advice and treatment. In every part of the village sores of all sizes, descriptions, and odours could be observed. The interdigital sore is quite common; many cases of contracting sore, a type of sore which occurs near the large joints and leads to contracture, and a great number of tropical sores were seen.

Unfortunately, I was unable to stay longer than one day in Kaimare, since our fresh water supply gave out, and we had barely enough in our water bags for one and a half days, and we expected to be in Kikori in this time.

No one enjoyed crossing Port Romilly with a fresh south-easterly blowing but they arrived at Vaimuru which he described as 'the last safe village'.

. . . similar to the previous villages, built on a mud flat and intersected by various tidal creeks, which had to be crossed by means of bridges, which were still more dilapidated than any we had seen before. One of us and two of our boys had the unpleasant experience of breaking through and landing in the mud a few feet below.

They had earlier met Mr Butcher of the new mission station at Aird Hill who had drawn an 'elaborate map' to guide them from Vaimuru to Paia Inlet, from there up the river by means of a cross channel to the Auro River, thence to Aird Hill and Kikori. They set out from Vaimuru in two large canoes with 'a somewhat unwilling boat's crew. Neither Mr Henry nor myself knew anything about the district, and we were entirely dependent on the Vaimuru natives'.

The story of the next few days would have appealed to the Toaripi sense of humour. They would not have taken into account that it took place only ten years after Chalmers's death and that the savagery and cannibalistic tendencies of the delta people had been discussed ever since. Henry and Dr Breinl were sure that their lives were in acute danger. What is astonishing is that it now seems plain that the villagers were warning them of the dangers of tides, winds and weather, and far from any ill intent were willing to do anything to help short of risking their own lives in the waters they knew so well.

They reached a village on Urama Island about midday after entering

a creek which turned into 'a mud bed' through which the crew dragged the canoe for a mile and a half. 'The Vaimuru natives did not seem to be on very friendly terms with these natives, as they did not mix with them or receive or give any presents.' They expressed the opinion that it was the duty of these villagers to take the party on to Kikori 'fortunately, it was discovered that the village did not possess a single canoe sufficiently large to accommodate our party and its packages, and after a great deal of persuasion the Vaimuru boys decided to take us further . . . '.

They rowed very hard most of the afternoon, and about 8 o'clock in the evening they informed us that there was a village near at hand where we might spend the night. . . . landed in a village which, to our greatest astonishment, was situated not on the north-west, but on the south-west corner of the island.

This was the village of Dobi and in the morning

A Vaimuru man, acting as interpreter, informed us that the Dobi natives were only too pleased to provide canoes and a boat's crew for the journey to Kikori. None of our party could understand the language of the Dobi natives and, as we subsequently found, we were being deceived by the interpreter.

The Vaimuru boat's crew was paid off, and the speed with which the boys made for their canoes and disappeared aroused our suspicions. The Dobi boys seemed at first quite friendly and helped take our packages to the landing-place and to get the canoes ready. As soon as the canoes were laden and ready to start, all the boys disappeared . . . Our party consisted of two native police and two orderlies only, and about twenty men were wanted to man the boats. We returned from the landing place, which was about 200 yards from the village to the dubu, with the intention to collect, if possible, a number of boys. After a prolonged parley [in what language?] followed by somewhat more energetic measures, we began the chase. When two or three boys were secured, usually one escaped, and the natives began to show hostility. Finally, we succeeded in securing nine boys, and started again at about 10 a.m. with an unwilling and somewhat hostile boat's crew. We had obtained a number of paddles so that our boys could take part in the rowing. Just before starting, a large tree, which had been uprooted by the storm the previous night, fell across the creek a few yards in front of our canoes, and it took the boys two hours, with tomahawks, etc., to remove this obstacle and clear the creek. We left the shelter of the shore and began to cross Paia Inlet.

When they left the shore the fresh sea breeze whipped up large waves which very nearly swamped the canoes and after travelling only 500 yards they were forced to return and landed on a sand spit near the village. Henry and Breinl still believed they had to enforce obedience but they agreed to the suggestion that there should be a third canoe 'to divide the loads'.

It was, however, impossible to obtain an additional number of boys, and the few we had vanished into space the moment they were not watched. We were thus left with three large canoes a stone's throw from an apparently hostile village, in pouring rain, without a boat's crew, and, after fastening the guarded canoes to trees, we decided to wait events.

They pitched the fly and tent on the highest point of the spit, and

in the later hours of the afternoon, a number of the natives prowled around our camp and one bold warrior came within speaking distance, talking and gesticulating. Unfortunately none of our party had any notion of the native dialect, and the meaning of his rhetorical efforts were lost . . . Afterwards a number of natives came around our camp, remaining at safe distances, and we guessed then that it was their object to gain possession of their paddles, which were in our tent well guarded, . . . and as we imagined well above highwater mark.

. . . the tide rose and soon covered the whole sandspit, so that the water was knee deep in our tents, reaching the canvas of our stretchers. Temporary platforms were erected for our baggage, and we and our boys sat on a dead tree dangling our legs in the water. It was fortunate that some of our heavy baggage had been left in our canoes covered by canvas to protect it against the heavy downpour of rain. Every few minutes one of us inspected the canoes which were moored in the mouth of the creek, and loosened ropes when necessary to allow them to rise with the water, and prevent them from turning turtle. All the time we were wading knee-deep in water, and the rain pouring down so that we and our baggage were in a pitiable state. Finally about 10 p.m., the tide turned and we could go to bed, rolling ourselves up in our wet blankets and dreaming that our canoes had come adrift and left us without provisions, a dream which happily did not prove true. . . .

The next morning the sea had calmed down considerably after the heavy night's rain and after a good deal of persuasion, a crew sufficient to man the three canoes was collected, and we set out again for . . . Kikori station. The Paia Inlet was crossed without any mishap and the canoes entered a creek of the Paia

peninsula which is bordered by the Paia Inlet . . . and by Port Bevan . . . After a few miles, the large Paia village was reached . . . Our natives positively refused to take us any further and suggested that we should procure canoes from the village . . . We were greatly surprised that the natives of this village seemed willing to provide canoes and crew, after an old distinguished man, apparently a chief, had been presented with a tomahawk. All our goods were transhipped into the three canoes, sufficient natives turned up to man them, and we began to leave the village congratulating ourselves on our success. But before the far end of the village was reached, the natives jumped ashore without any warning, leaving us and our stores in the canoe . . . [but taking their paddles with them].

An old ruffian of a native came to our boats and tried to convey to us by sign language that we were requested to spend the night in the village and that a new start might be made next morning. [Probably to fit in with the tides.] Necessity forced us to comply with the request, and we poled our canoes back to the village, and selected a camping-ground, as it did not seem advisable to sleep in a native house of this, to us, unknown tribe, which was apparently not under government control. The natives were friendly and anxious to show their appreciation of our site, and helped us to pitch our tent, but pointed out that the camping ground selected became submerged at high tide. In order to avoid our previous experience, we decided to spend the night in one of the large ravis.

Dr Breinl here pauses to describe the village 'built on a mud flat and was very dirty, refuse and coconut shells lying about'; the inhabitants who were 'scantily dressed . . . two women in mourning wore a kind of stocking made of fibre, and a kind of singlet made of the same material'; and their diseases 'a few sores . . . yaws very prevalent amongst the children. Many inhabitants suffered from *Tinea imbricata*—a skin ringworm . . .'

On Sunday, 31st August, we were astir early in the morning, loading our canoes, and canvassing for men to act as our crew. At first all attempts seemed fruitless; shortly afterwards a few villagers agreed to take us as far as Aird Hill . . . No promise could induce them to take us to the Government Station, which was about twelve miles further. . . . After six hours of slow progress, part of the time against the tide, we reached Aird Hill . . .

Mr and Mrs Butcher showed us great hospitality and next morning offered us their launch and Kikori . . . was reached without further misadventure.

Dr Breinl examined the prisoners and natives employed at the station and reported

'The prevalence of venereal diseases, especially of gonorrhoea, was striking; nearly all the native police suffered from this complaint. The same observation was made in Goaribari villages, where gonorrhoea was widely spread.

According to local information, this disease had only been introduced within the last few years, and had spread far and wide, on account of the absence of morality in a European sense. Wives in the Goaribari villages are exchanged and sold, and are, on the whole, considered an article of trade. The wide distribution of gonorrhoea throughout these villages is extremely serious . . . causing sterility in women . . . The Government has, to a certain extent, realized the danger and has made notification and treatment of infected natives compulsory.

The report continues with a description of the rest of the journey to Daru which was relatively easy as he joined a visiting cutter which was recruiting labour from the Goaribari villages. From the Bamu on he seems to have hired canoes, and a sailing canoe across the Fly River but did not dwell with the same particularity as he did on his journey from Vaimuru to Aird Hill.

3

Spread of influence

Kikori station was placed, either by accident or design, on the boundary between two territories. The coastal people had come along the coast from the west—the Morigio, for instance, were said by the old men to have come from Sisiemi on the Bamu.¹ North of the station, it gradually appeared, was a loosely united group inhabiting the country from the northern reaches of the Omati, across the Kikori, the Sirebi, and along the Tiviri rivers north of Aird Hill and possibly across to the tangle of rivers and creeks west of the Era River. It was suggested by A.L. Blyth, Resident Magistrate, in his annual report 1925–26, that these were tribes which had been pushed down from the highlands.

Both Bevan and MacGregor experienced a confrontation in force at what became known as Attack Bend just north of the station, which was presumably the boundary between the two peoples. The river here widens into what is almost a lake fed by several creeks and where the river narrows are islands which defend the southern end where the station stands on the west bank. The river frontage of Ogamobu ran along the western bank of this reach—which may account for the ease with which the land was bought from the native owners in 1914.

The first systematic patrols were to the coast—Ryan, Cardew, or Thompson, accompanied generally by Sergeant Gaiberi and a varying number of armed constables visited in turn all the villages from the mouth of the Turama east to the Purari delta explaining the government's intentions and warning that a man producing bows and arrows when the government was visiting was liable to have them broken; warning also against harbouring wanted murderers or deserters or escaped prisoners; forbidding pay-back but asking for murders and attacks to be reported to the station.² They engaged interpreters who sometimes became Local Constables, and appointed Village Constables. These were where possible men who had worked on plantations and perhaps spoke a little Motuan—the Purari people, for instance, had had contact with the trading *lakatoi* from Hanuabada; they were also men of standing in the village, and occasionally later discovered to be practising sorcerers which was a cause for dismissal. They received 10s. a year and a uniform. Their duties were to report misdemeanours and help capture escaped prisoners, and to enforce the government rules about cleanliness and village gardens. These rules had

been evolved in the eastern end of the territory and presented problems in the muddy tidal deltas. The village people had always dropped their rubbish into the surrounding mud and waited for the tide to sweep it away. The tide also swept back again anything which floated and returned it to the village so that in the long run this debris gave the mud a bit more solidity than it originally had, by comparison.³ The rule about rubbish heaps to be burnt or buried was thus difficult, if not impossible, to enforce. Gardens too in the tidal swamps were an impractical notion. Each village had areas of sago inland and periodically parties would move to their *komibati* (camp in the bush) and make a store of sago. They caught crabs, snakes, rats and young crocodiles and had ingenious fish traps in the mouths of tidal creeks. There were cassowaries (and their eggs) and wild pigs in the bush and some pigs and dogs were bred with the family. A few coconuts grew and they were encouraged to plant more.

Ryan ('he is a man who hates idleness' remarked Mr Carne)⁴ employed his police and prisoners clearing and building and then set them to clearing and planting coconuts—the first government station plantation to be started.⁵ Rubber seeds were planted in 1916 and seeds, cuttings and plants were sent from the Experimental Gardens at Hombrom Bluff near Port Moresby. Coffee, mango, pawpaw, bananas, pineapples, 'and other fruits', lime trees, and 80 acres of sweet potatoes were planted by 1914.⁶ Whether Ryan's subordinates shared his enthusiasm and energy is nowhere mentioned but the Station Journals build up a picture of strenuous days attending to an amazing variety of jobs. The Resident Magistrate is seen lining up coconuts, soldering the Residency gutters, examining for venereal disease; and building shelves in the office while the Assistant Resident Magistrate 'assembles chairs, rather a trying task as they were all pieces of other chairs'.⁷ Holding the Court of Petty Sessions, repairing the launch engine, mixing cornflour for a sick prisoner, spraying trees, chaining land for Ogamobu (then known as Sewoi) and for the London Missionary Society at Aird Hill; recording the weather, signing on native labour brought in by recruiting vessels, (see pp. 145ff) writing reports and making maps of patrols, receiving Village Constables, and entertaining callers from passing canoes. The routine of the station began at 6 a.m. when prisoners were inspected and formed into working gangs, police inspected and drilled, food given out, sick boys treated, and in the evening the prisoners counted in and guards set—who had to be kept alert by surprise rounds during the night. From time to time prisoners managed to escape, either by slipping into the jungle when in a felling gang, or prising up the floorboards of the gaol.

There was in fact a great deal of canoe traffic up and down the river when the coastal people went to trade with the villages ten or fifteen miles north of the station—crabs and shells for tobacco leaf—though the northern people apparently did not go down to the coast.

The people of Wai-ou, mentioned in Ryan's report of the first year,

belonged to the Kibiri, one of the northern groups and the chief Tetimari sent a present of croton plants as well as returning the government canoe. An indication that the traditions differed is perhaps in the fact that whereas the coastal people lived in a named village the northern Kikori people lived in Siaki's village or Murau's village, both of which had place names too but the name of the headman was more frequently used. Siaki and Murau did not visit the station. The station journal records a visit in September 1912, from the village of Kari on Mati Creek (where Siaki's village, Bagama, was also). The visitors' courage failed them when they reached the station and it took an hour's persuasion to get them to land and pay a proper visit. They brought a young gaura pigeon as a present from the chief Tugiri. This was the first visit from the people of Mati Creek though repeated messages had been sent inviting them to come. This visit took place about a month after Tetimari had received a shock when he discovered that honesty and presents did not prevent the government from coming after his people and rudely intruding on a private killing and eating of twenty people from Kiribari, and the Kiribari retaliation of burning down Tetimari's *dubu*.

But it needed more than a gaura pigeon to deflect the government, though it is true it took from the middle of August, just before Ryan left on his patrol to the Aworra, until January 1914, to track down and arrest ten Kibiri men, and then not without resistance: On one patrol Thompson arrived at the villages at 1 a.m. 'and a fierce scramble took place . . . my own progress ashore was impeded by my getting stuck in the mud up to my hips. On getting ashore I ordered the five natives to be taken to the boat. They struggled like wild cats, one of them seemingly preferring to bury himself in mud rather than be taken in the boat.' In the struggle A.C. Daru was hit by an arrow which 'had gone clean through the upper part of his arm, bone and all, and a piece of it remained sticking out both sides of his arm'. Thompson returned to the station to have the wound attended to and apologised for not making more arrests.

At the Court of Petty Sessions at the end of January five Kibiri who 'voluntarily stated they had been concerned in the Uture (Kiribari) massacre' were committed for trial—it probably did not occur to them to conceal so traditional a proceeding. Of the other five, three were discharged and two old men were sent back to their village 'after the reason for the arrest of the men and the determination of the government to stop tribal massacres had been explained to them'.

When three men from Ubuva (on the coast) called at the station on their way upstream to buy tobacco and heard of the arrest of the Kibiri men they turned back for home. They thought they would be killed because they were friends of the government. Ryan and Cardew went up to visit Siaki and found three booms blocking the entrance to Mati Creek, which they cut through and reached the village. The villagers were at first anxious to fight but 'finally' Siaki said that Tetimari and Nanno were not staying

in the village and never had, and promised to bring some men to the station to visit. He did not come; and the following week several canoes were observed going along the east bank behind the islands to avoid calling at the station, and to increase their speed when the sergeant attempted to intercept them. Cardew and Thompson went up to visit Siaki again and though the villagers were timid they made no resistance and allowed them to enter their houses and *dubus*.

Murau's village, further upstream on Ututi Creek, had not been visited before and 'the natives lined up on the bank . . . dancing and gyrating and waving their 2-handed swords and bows and arrows. Finally they were induced to put their weapons away and become friendly'. They explained presently that the Kibiri had told them that the government was going to arrest Murau's people too.

There were more than five of the Kibiri involved in the fight with the Kiribari so patrols to catch the rest went on. There were raids on *Komibati* where wanted men were said to be hiding, either up creeks at night or following tracks through the bush. The Ubuia people were right to be apprehensive for two canoes returning from Murau's village were attacked but not injured by Siaki's men near Attack Bend. Seven canoes with sixty-eight Gababari men were seen passing east of the island opposite the station who, when intercepted, said they were going to trade with Siaki. They called at the station on their return and 'were very frightened and nervous'. This was a year after the original raid of the Kibiri on the Kiribari, and the Kibiri village was deserted and the people scattered.

The story is complicated by a fight at Kumukumu in May 1914 which has, I think, little to do with the relations between Siaki and Murau and the government. The original patrol report is not among the papers I have seen as the event was the subject of an inquiry by the Commissioner of Native Affairs, but Judge Murray gave an outline in his *Annual Report 1914-15* (p.12). Kumukumu is a village at the foot of Aird Hill and the people were allied to the villages to the north*, but they were exasperated, not by the government but by thefts from their gardens by Mubugoa men employed by the mission station which was in the charge of a Samoan teacher while Mr Butcher was away. It was reported to the government station that the Kumukumu were prepared to attack the mission station

* Patrol Report, Sept. 1917 (Woodward) notes that 'The Kumukumu used to live at Ikiru higher up the Kikori but when a very high tide washed away this village some people took canoes and were carried down stream until they landed and made a village near Aird Hill. Those who could not go in the canoes made rafts of driftwood and were carried downstream to land on the left bank of the Kikori river just above the Sirebi. In later years because of intertribal fighting the Sirebi people abandoned this village and built in the limestone hills on the left bank of the Kikori.'

and the patrol officer (C.L. Herbert) with sixteen armed constables surprised them in the middle of the night. In the long *dubu* on a dark (probably wet) night a confused battle took place and the resistance was so determined that the police were ordered to fire. The report does not say how many were killed but mentions that among them were a woman and two girls.

This happened in May and in the absence of any definite statements one can only notice that about a fortnight later two Kibiri men came to the station with a present of sago—the first visit since the arrests. Not only that but Siaki and some of his men began to come to the station at monthly intervals. And three Kumukumu men visited laden with food as a present. ('They were rewarded.')

Before the station had been established two years Ryan was able to organise a Christmas 'sports day'. He estimated that 'close on 500 visitors' came and camped under flies at the station. Patrol Officer Woodward went down to the Purari delta and escorted seventy-eight men from Ukiaravi, Kairu, Koropenairu and Pia-ora to the station. On the afternoon of Christmas Eve thirty-six canoes arrived from Dopima, Kerewa, Namai, Goari, Aimaha, Ubuu, Aidia, Mubugoa, Keme, Pai-a, and Nagora. On Christmas Day canoes came from Ivaimu (Urama Island) and from Nepou (Kiribari). Siaki came 'in a large canoe with a lot of his people at 10 a.m.' and canoes from Gebabari, Apewa and Dubumubu.

There are no details of the festivities, indeed there are no entries at all until December 28: 'All the local visitors left this morning. Prisoners, police and labourers cleaning up the station grounds.'

Just like a pop festival. Well no—not quite. The coastal villages, the Urama, and Purari villages all had village constables through whom word would have been sent that Ryan was giving a party. Dances, though not, I think, 'sports days', were a traditional and understood part of their social life; but the invitation may have been viewed as yet another aspect of the incomprehensible government policy and one that had better be obeyed, so that the guests probably arrived in a spirit more of tentative curiosity than wholehearted conviviality.

During the preceding twenty months the affairs of the Kibiri were by no means the entire preoccupation of the government. Patrols are recorded to all the villages that came to the party, sometimes routine visits to hold courts of native matters (arbitrating in village disagreements), inspection of villages for cleanliness, to pay to relatives money owing to men who had died while working elsewhere, to return time-expired prisoners, and to talk. On other occasions they raided the villages in the dark of night to arrest malefactors reported to be harbouring there. The malefactors were generally escaped prisoners or deserters from indenture, or men who had taken part in some inter-tribal argument. It was the patrol officers' job to enforce the government promise to punish raiders in an attempt to stem the unending custom of pay-back. Slushing as silently as possible through

the mud and rain to surround the sleeping village, bursting into the smoky *dubu* and seizing the right men in the middle of screams from the women, cries of children, and shouts of indignation from men with spears and clubs is reported as part of the job. In April 1914 the patrol officer comments with gratitude that the 'blue lights supplied by you as an aid to operations in the village at night acted admirably, and were of the greatest assistance in making arrests in the *dubus*'. To a people accustomed to bamboo torches or a sophisticated hurricane lamp the 'blue lights' (fireworks?) must have added stupefaction to surprise.

Most of the guests at the sports day had experienced both kinds of visit. In addition, the villages about the mouths of the rivers Paibuna (*Aidia*), the *Omati* (*Keme*, *Mubugoa*, *Pai-a*, and *Nagoro*), the *Aird* (*Ubua*, *Dubumubu*, *Apewa*, *Gebebari*) and the *Goaribari* islanders (*Dopima*, *Kerewa*, *Namai*, *Goari*) had in recent months, not to mention any earlier, their quarrels and raids the one with another.

The silent three days of the station journal are frustrating, but the questions must remain unanswered. It is possible, however, to guess who was the guiding spirit of the whole entertainment by the fact that the tough and indefatigable *Ryan* is reported as 'sick with fever' from the 7th to the 10th January.

R.D. Kirby joined the Papuan service early in 1915 and was sent to *Kerema* as patrol officer. He came to *Kikori* in June 1915. He had hardly unpacked his bags before he was sent with *Herbert* to *Urama Island* and 'the district north of *Ini Island*' which is the delta of the *Era River*. This can be distinguished on the map but travelling up and round the intersecting waterways which are making their way to the Gulf, all tidal so that the direction of the current changes, offered a challenge to navigation on a par with streets in a strange city. At least streets are signposted. The report of this journey⁸ is enclosed in a jacket with printed instructions on the cover on the subject of sketch maps '... for uniformity the map must occupy one of two sizes of paper—either the size of a half sheet of ruled foolscap or the size of a whole or double sheet'. And adds '... the customs of the natives should as much as possible be noted and reported'. It was difficult, *Herbert* noted, to communicate with the people they visited, 'though both *Goaribari* and *Purari* interpreters were used'.

In the list of villages visited was one named *Kikori* which inspired a minute from *Judge Murray* who had himself paid short visits up all these rivers. 'There is no village known as *Kikori*; *Kikori* is the name of the *dubudaimo* [men's house] at the village of *Ibomo*. *Ibomo* is on the river *Irabe* of which *Era Bay* is probably the anglicised form.' No doubt he was perfectly correct but later reports refer to *Gigori* and to save confusion I shall adopt that spelling now. It is perhaps stressing the obvious to mention the difficulties faced by these early amateur mapmakers—inadequate instruments, and chancy interpretation, not to mention transliterating sounds spoken by people with no idea of letters, and a number of things to attend

to simultaneously so that the map will have a chance to be taken back to base.

The main purpose of this patrol was to investigate a story that the Gigori people had killed some men from Vaimuru at a sago camp and that the Gigori people 'have been bragging of their want of respect for the Government, they—according to our Kipaia informant—being the only village in the district who was not "frightened of the Government" whom they did not consider "strong" '.

Herbert and Kirby and nine police in the launch towing the whaleboat went up the Era River visiting villages along the way, persuading the nervous inhabitants to return from the bush and talk to them. Then they returned to Gigori. Kirby and eight of the police were landed on the bank of a river behind the village to make their way through the bush and Herbert with the launch and whaleboat came roaring up to the front of the village. Before he had reached the village he heard eight shots fired and soon afterwards saw Kirby on the bank with a prisoner. He had met a large number of men who immediately started firing and he felt obliged to order the police to fire over their heads. No one was hit on either side except one policeman's 'clothing was pierced by an arrow'.

It was plainly no use attempting a reasonable conversation so the party 'retired down the river and camped for the night'. They returned in the morning and after waiting in the empty village for an hour and a half they destroyed the bows and arrows they found in the *dubudaimo* and left the pieces in a heap. They remained in the launch calling to the people and presently a few men appeared and talked to them through the Namau interpreter. Herbert explained that the prisoner Akia would be taken to the station because he had fought them but would be brought back later. They then discussed the fight at the sago camp and the Gigori men said yes there had been a fight but no one was killed. The whole affair, said Herbert, would appear to have been 'greatly enlarged' or perhaps 'owing to imperfect interpretation' the information given by the Kipaia people was misunderstood.

When they were leaving Gigori three men came out in a canoe to say goodbye to the prisoner but their courage failed them and they turned back.

For the next two months Kirby was occupied about the station, typing forms, supervising roads and buildings, while Ryan and Herbert (Acting Assistant Resident Magistrate while Cardew was away) were busy tracking the men concerned in different raids as far apart as Wariadai, (up the Turama River), and Morari, a group of villages north of the Tiviri River—later spelt Moreri.

Kirby's first patrol alone was in August, by whaleboat, escorting twenty native labourers recruited for the Vailala oilfields, and to look into various matters at the Urika mission station.

In September he was sent to Kaimari in the Purari Delta to arrest five men wanted for rape and murder. This was the conclusion of a case in

which a party of people from Urama villages had gone to visit Kaimari. A quarrel broke out, arrows were fired and the Urama people left in a hurry without one of their men, Akau, and his wife 'who had not since been heard or seen'. Herbert, who went to inquire into the story, collected a number of possessions left behind by the Urama people and returned them to their owners at Aipikai [Aubaigai] and Maiaki. 'A number of these folk ran away on our approach but soon reappeared when they heard that their belongings were awaiting distribution.' 'The owners seemed duly impressed at regaining their property.' Kirby arrested the five men a month later and reported the fact without details except that he stayed the night in the village.

Ryan was very pleased with the conduct of the next patrol that Kirby undertook, and the report has a minute from Port Moresby 'Mr Kirby seems to be doing very good work'.

Accompanied by a corporal and ten police he went by whaleboat down to Nepou [Nepau] and the villages on Urama Island where he told them that the government had arrested the Kaimari people and intended to punish them and impressed upon them that they were not to take revenge themselves. Then, taking the Village Constable of Nepau and a boy to act as interpreters, he travelled up the Era River calling at each village, trying to make friends with any villagers who had not run away when he came, and giving a present to the headman if he had stayed.

At the village of Gigori Kirby recognised a man who had fired at the last government visit so he arrested him and explained to the villagers why he had done so. The next village was a mile farther up the river and about fifty people were waiting on the bank 'to whom I talked and they seemed very friendly. I asked them if I landed whether they would run away and they said no but on landing with two of the police they all fled and all attempts to get them to come back failed. I discovered afterwards that this was due to the Urama boy who informed them that we had come to arrest them⁹.

He continued up the Era as far as a village named Maipua and then came back down the Era calling on villages on the opposite bank. The only signs of hostility (except for the tendency of the more nervous inhabitants to disappear) was at a village of Mai-meri where ten men came to the bank and told them to go away. 'After talking to them some time decided to go on, when we had got a short distance away we saw two men . . . bring out bows and arrows, and they shouted out that we were frightened to land. At this I turned back and landed taking five police with me, entered the village, leaving the rest of the crew to cook their dinner on the bank.' As they approached they saw about thirty men, four with bows, and through the interpreter he told them that the government wished to be friends but if they fired the Government would fight. 'They would not reply except to tell us to go away. I then walked through the village. We saw about a hundred people, as we approached they kept withdrawing watching us

very keenly. Remained in the village about half an hour, then returned to the bank and had dinner.'

This is the last patrol report signed by H.J. Ryan as officer in charge. The *Papuan Courier* (20/9/18) says that he left the Territory in November 1915, enlisted in February 1916, was commissioned a lieutenant, and was killed in France in January 1918. The newspaper report adds: 'A self-taught man, he combined, with a remarkable tact and ability for dealing with the native races, indomitable energy and utter contempt for danger.' If the attempt must be made to sum up a human being in one sentence this one I suppose is as just as can be. It was written at a period when young men were killed in hundreds every week and the attitude prevailed, to an extent incomprehensible today, that it was inevitable and glorious. Of the men who have appeared in this story Beaver, Henry, Ryan, Staniforth Smith, Massey-Baker, Cardew, and Thompson all left to fight for the British Empire and the first three died. True they could have been killed any day over the previous ten years and the purpose of their activities was the suppression of tribal warfare, among other things. But the European tribal war was believed to be the War to End All Wars.

Considering the beliefs which impelled men to enlist the question arises as to why Kirby, who was 33, chose to come to Papua rather than enlist. He had seen service in the South African war, when he was about 20, and apparently did not return to England but came to Australia where he was in business and later had a small farm.¹⁰ Was it that one war was enough and he chose to serve in another capacity? Or was he wounded in some way which prevented him from enlisting? Whatever the reason it came to the same thing in the end.

He went on patrol to Siaki's village soon after his return from the Era River in October 1915 and though Siaki was out at his *komibati* and at first the people ran away, his Goaribari interpreters persuaded them to return and talk to him for two hours. The next week he went to Murau's village and found Murau away but those who remained he described as friendly. On the same day he visited two more villages on Ututi Creek.

In November and December he patrolled to Kumukumu and the villages round Aird Hill—still very nervous; to the Goaribari villages 'to spread the news of the punishment of those imprisoned for the Weriadai murders and to collect the Weriadai heads'; on a general inspection of the Purari delta villages; and again to the Purari delta taking in the Urama villages. As Cardew was away (S.M. Burroughs was Acting Resident Magistrate) presumably the launch was out of order for Kirby went everywhere in the station canoe (which is always referred to as 'Grace').

In the new year he went to Bagama.

Most of the people were in the village including the chief Siaki, they were not as frightened as they were on the previous visit and after a little while most of the people came and talked to

us, they said they would like to have a V.C. and proposed a man named Daviri who seems a man of influence in the village and he has been several times down to the station.

He went on to Ututi Creek and at Erimuri [Eremere] he learned that the chief Murau had died. He asked the people about another village farther up the creek which they had mentioned on his last visit. Although they now denied its existence Kirby borrowed a small canoe and with three police went up a very small creek in the direction they had pointed. After about a mile and a half they noticed a track which they followed and soon came to a village. The people ran away but 'after some time we got a good many back' and persuaded them to talk. They said the village had the same name as another (Ewake) and that sometimes they lived in one and sometimes in the other. 'I gathered that when they were frightened they lived here as it is very much concealed.'

In the middle of January Kirby with Sergeant Gaiberi and nine police, accompanied by two men who said they were friends of the Veru River people, went by canoe up the Veru. A village, which he names Barikibi, was deserted and decaying—its situation, on a creek running into the Veru, about eight miles from the Kikori River, seems to be the position of Wai-ou in 1912. They went on up the creek and heard an axe to the west. It was necessary to drag the canoe along a very small creek until they came to a village, only one *dubu* and four houses. The women and children ran away but twenty or thirty men stood with their bows and arrows and told the party to go away or they would fire.

We still walked on in their direction, explaining that the Government did not wish to fight . . . they still persisted that we should go away, but when we said no they must make friends first three men put up their bows ready to fire, we then rushed them and arrested three men, the other men ran away and stood some distance away withdrawing as we approached blowing their *kipi* [conch shells] all the time; we talked to these men for a long time explaining why we had arrested these men, who included the chief. . . .

Kirby gives the name of this village as Veru. Was it the new Wai-ou?

Back on the Veru River the next village was emptied as soon as the party arrived except for one man who fired at them and was arrested. Some people appeared on a hill and would come no nearer. They explained that the chief of this village was implicated in the Kiribari raid and he had told the people to run away.

The day, which could be described as full, wound up with arrows shot from a *dubu* on a hill, at Kaoberi, the steady advance of Kirby and the police, talking friendship as they dodged more arrows, and the capture of

one man. The people ran into the bush and after calling for three hours without response the party moved on and camped at a *komibati*. Next they visited Kumukumu and Sabora where they were more welcome, and in fact they slept the night at one end of the *dubu* while the people of Sabora slept at the other. The Kumukumu said they now had to grow their own tobacco as they were afraid to go to Morari as they used to do.

After so-called routine patrols to Goaribari and the Purari delta he went in March to Kumukumu, Auborama, Irimuku and villages on the Ututi Creek—that is, a round trip to Aird Hill, then north and back west along the Tiviri and up to Erimuri. It is interesting that he referred to it as Murau's village although Murau was now dead.

The Auborama people were reported to have settled somewhere along the rivers between Aird Hill and the Tiviri and he explored up creeks and presently found a new village, one large *dubu* and four houses, but no people in sight. He turned into the Tiviri and 'came to the place where the Irimuku natives were said to have come down and built their villages'. Unfortunately he did not say, or perhaps did not know, where they had been before. They landed and followed a track which led to another new village of two *dubus* and four small houses, but no inhabitants. The next track led to a village and people, most of whom ran away but three men and, unusually, two women remained. The chief, Naiwai ' . . . said that all his people had moved down but were at the moment away making gardens up the Kikori'. While they were talking, about twenty women returned, thirty children, and two more men. 'They became very friendly.'

The next day they went on to Ututi Creek and found that nearly everyone was away up the Sirebi River where, they said, they had been returning the visit made the week before by the people of the village of Onimati. Kirby set out to go up to the Sirebi and met thirty-four canoes from Siaki's and Murau's villages and five canoes of Irimuku people. They all came down the river together.

And that is Kirby's last patrol report, dated 23 March 1916.

On 26 April it was reported to Cardew that the villages on the Ututi Creek, the Mati Creek, and the Irimuku people had murdered twelve Morari. It was decided that Cardew should go to Ututi Creek and that Kirby should go to Siaki's village and also if possible to Irimuku. Kirby, with Sergeant Gaiberi and eighteen police, arrived at Siaki's just after daybreak next day. As they came up the creek they heard drums in one of the two *dubudaimo*, that on the right hand side of the creek, and landed to surround it, Sergeant Gaiberi to the front entrance and Kirby to the back. Suddenly A.C. Warupi, who was with Kirby's party, called out 'They have shot Nakati'. Kirby turned round and was shot, from the other *dubu*, in the breastbone and the arm. He ordered the police to fire and they shot the three men standing at the entrance to the other *dubu*. A glimpse of the course of the fight is given in two statements by police taken before the Resident Magistrate in July and they suggest that the police threw

themselves into the fray with an enthusiasm that was more than dutiful. On the other hand Judge Murray, who arrived at Kikori in the beginning of May, wrote to the Minister for External Affairs¹¹ and said:

Sergeant Gaiberi, who is a reliable man, told me that he himself shot one and that he saw five others shot—six in all, and there were no doubt others that he did not see. The other police gave figures which would increase the number but the excitement of the moment is likely to lead to exaggeration. On the whole I should say that ten or twelve were killed and an unknown number wounded. The police had five rounds each and fired them nearly all away.

Two police, Ba'am and Nakati, were hit but their injuries are described as 'not serious'.

When Cardew came, after an unspecified time, he was unable to extract the arrow from Kirby's breastbone and took him to the nearest medical help at the mission station at Urika. The journey does not bear thinking about and there is no account of it. It was at least sixty miles down the rivers and across two stretches of open choppy water, and the small temperamental noisy launch had a speed against the tide, as part of the journey would have to be, of not much more than walking pace. Mr Holmes offered to take Kirby in to the hospital in the mission launch but Kirby died before they reached Port Moresby.

This story has parallels with that of Chalmers's death. Kirby had proved his ability, as Chalmers did, in a number of situations which were no less difficult than this one—except for one thing. And that one thing also has its parallel with Chalmers's death. In both cases they interrupted a tribal practice. It was said that Chalmers arrived at the moment when blood was needed to anoint the new *dubu*. Kirby, it seems, arrived at the village during a celebration of a successful raid on the Morari.

The aftermath, however, shows the changes in government policy and practice in the sixteen years between the two deaths. Before it was punitive—like payback. Now it was disciplinary and determined to enforce the concept of individual responsibility—any eye or tooth would not do—a concept difficult, if not impossible, for villagers to comprehend. In any case who knew with any certainty who was responsible for what? In July, for instance, Chinnery reported that he had been told the whole story by a 'guide', who was perhaps an Irimuku anxious to dissociate himself from government retribution. The guide said that on a payback raid, after the Morari had descended on the Irimuku and killed three men, two women and two girls, the Irimuku revenged these deaths by taking four Morari at Abohau 'three sleeps from Irimuku'. His informant, said Chinnery, 'alleged' that at the Bagama fight thirty men and eight women were killed and fourteen men, nine women, and two girls were

wounded. He gave the names of the men. Thus the government figures, apart from anything else, perhaps are an undeserved reflection on the marksmanship of the police, but on the other hand the local language did not lend itself to precise mathematical calculation. The Goaribari, for instance, had two words to convey numbers: *Nowa* for one, and *newa* for two. *Nowanewa* was three and higher numbers added another *nowa* to the word for three and so on. This was aided by fingers and toes, occasionally by elbows and shoulders, ears and eyes, but on the whole precision ceased at ten.

It is not necessary to decide which set of figures was correct—the point is that the state of confusion made it even more difficult to enforce the strict letter of British law in terms in which it could be understood. Indeed it was necessary to explain it to those responsible for enforcing it. Judge Murray wrote a minute (dated 3 May 1916) to the Officer in Charge, Delta Division¹²:

No effort will be spared to effect the arrest of those men who resisted the police in the discharge of their duty at Siaki's village, and of those who were concerned in the murder of the Morari people.

All those who discharged arrows at the police when Mr Kirby was killed are guilty of murder and may be arrested without warrant. It is lawful for those arresting them to use such force as may be reasonably necessary to overcome any force used in resisting arrest. If the person sought to be arrested takes to flight it is lawful for police officers to use such force as may be reasonably necessary to prevent his escape. But force which is likely to cause death or grievous bodily harm may not be used until the person has been called upon to surrender.

Of course he must be called upon in a language which he understands.

It is hoped that the indignation which officers must necessarily feel at the death of their comrade will not betray them into action which may cause death or unnecessary suffering to innocent persons. In other words anything in the shape of indiscriminate or reckless shooting must be sternly suppressed. The burning of villages will not be allowed except so far as it may be necessary for purposes of defence.

I feel that it is unnecessary to give you these instructions so far as concerns yourself; but they may be useful in preventing any possible misunderstanding by the less experienced of the officers who will be under your orders.

Of course in case of attack officers will take steps as may be necessary in defence of themselves and their police—see circular previously issued on this subject.

The station was manned by H.C. Cardew (who had been in the area most of the time since 1912, as well as going with Beaver when they went to look for Staniforth Smith), E.W.P. Chinnery, and Engineer Patrol Officer Dudley. Immediately after Kirby's death, R.W. Grist and E.P. Hill came over from Kerema and Cardew asked for ten extra armed constables. When Grist and Hill left in June, Patrol Officer Huntingdon arrived, but fell ill and left at the end of July. This left three government officers and perhaps twenty-eight trained Papuan police to manage the station and plantation and 240 prisoners, to attend to the coastal area where several matters were pending, and to winkle out the murderers.

Until July no patrols set out to make arrests but that does not mean that nothing was done. Judging by the later co-operation of the villagers and village constables it was during these two months that messages were sent, rumours reported, and the people of Siaki's village and Irimuku, having run from their villages, had time to think, and wonder, and fear.

Cardew learned of the links between what he calls the Kiko (who were perhaps those who had been known as the Kibiri?) and the Iessu people of the Omati and through them to the people of the Paibuna and Turama in the west. They were also connected with the Sirebi and Irimuku to the north, and to the Boroma and Auboroma to the east. It was an area almost unexplored but could reasonably be expected to be alternate swamp and creeks of varying sizes with limestone outcrops full of caves. It must have been a consolation when he visited Erimuri on the Ututi Creek to find the *dubu* closed at both ends by a framework on which rested broken arrows and bows, and an assortment of the heads of birds, pigs, and other animals. It was said to be a message saying that the Erimuri had done nothing against the government.

The patrols, the short ones by Chinnery and Dudley, went up all the creeks and followed all the tracks to the *komibati*. Sometimes they got there first and caught a few men, sometimes they reached a recently deserted living place. This meant clambering about the limestone or wading through swamps at night. The only querulous note comes from Chinnery who, after wading for two hours breast deep in a swamp in the dark and the rain, found the *komibati* deserted, observed in his report that the swamp water had already ruined two pairs of boots and that he was now using his last pair. Through July and August they kept moving in one direction or another which meant, of course, that Siaki and his men, the Irimuku, and the Kibiri had to keep moving too. Some of the prisoners proved willing to help as guides and informants but some successfully escaped from gaol. They managed to prise up a floorboard and although they were in leg irons, and two warders were sleeping in the cell, they slipped through without attracting the attention of the sentry outside the door. By the beginning of August there are reports of men from Baumu and Mumuriai (villages near the station) making up their own hunting parties and bringing wanted men back to the station.

On 21 August Siaki came to the station and gave himself up. He said he was tired of being chased and his people had no time to make sago. His wife, too, had been caught a few days before.

Cardew's response to this was to send messages to the 'Kiko' people to tell them they had better give themselves up. Whether it was Siaki's surrender or the message, the reports show that those who decided for the government began capturing those who wanted to fight on. The Kibiri people brought in Nanu (or Nanno) the chief of the Aua-Kibiri people and handed him over. Cardew explained: 'This man is the most powerful man amongst the bush tribes and has always been opposed to government influence. On one occasion, I understand, Mr Ryan gave a Kibiri native a V.C. uniform which Nanu tore off before the villagers on the boy's return to the village.'¹³

There was a clash between the Irimuku and the Morari in September which began a new series of patrols to arrest Morari men, and it was found that Boroma and Sirebi tribes had also joined in the attack on the Irimuku. Perhaps this indicates that there was disagreement among the peoples and that, because the Morari (a branch of the Sirebi people) and the Boroma were related, the villagers to the east of the station were not yet convinced that capitulation was inevitable. The Irimuku apparently had no such doubts. The headman began sending, by his son Dubai, men of his own village who were wanted; Dubai was also responsible for capturing the escaped prisoners. The Mumuriai people brought in eight Mati men who included 'Daviri (ex-V.C.)'—that is the Bagama village constable appointed after Kirby's visit in January 1916.

In the beginning of October Judge Murray arrived at Kikori and conducted the trial of the twenty-one natives 'concerned in the murder of the late Patrol Officer Kirby'. They pleaded guilty and in accordance with the law ten were sentenced to death. Such a sentence had to be considered by the Executive Council, which ordered that the death sentence be commuted to imprisonment with hard labour for life in the case of Siaki and Daviri; and for the other eight hard labour for fourteen years. 'The reasons for not carrying out the death sentence were that already ten lives had been taken, including that of the man who had fatally wounded Mr Kirby, and that it seemed to be unnecessary to take any more.'¹⁴

It has proved difficult to find any explicit figures for the sentences of the remaining eleven but from fleeting references it seems probable that they served sentences in Kikori gaol. In the list of the twenty-one men charged and sentenced appear the names Hopimati and Kohomeri;¹⁵ yet Patrol Report 38, dated 13-14 October 1916, records that these two 'lately discharged from gaol by H.E. the C.J.O. were persuaded to come as interpreters' on a patrol to Morari after the fight between the Morari and the Irimuku. The following year Hopimati appears as the headman of a new village built by the Bagama people at the mouth of Mati Creek, 'these

people did not seem to be at all alarmed at our approach, in fact they extended to myself and police a most cordial reception'.¹⁶ Hopimati went with patrols as guide and interpreter for several years, and was chief (though not V.C.) of Kiginu. The last reference is to Opimati 'one of the old men of Kiginu'.

By 1930, when the 14-year sentence men were due to return, they may well have found that Port Moresby now was more familiar to them. The villages they knew were gone. Their people no longer lived away in creeks and swamps, the villages dotted the main river banks, neat houses on open lawns—one won a prize given by the government for the best village in 1929—surrounded by flourishing coconuts, pawpaws, and crotons, for the people found, now they had time, that they were very fond of gardening.

POSTSCRIPT

This chapter was based on the only records available—patrol reports, station journals, and despatches from the Lieutenant-Governor to the Minister for External Affairs in Melbourne.

In 1975—fifty-nine years later—I visited Kikori (all too briefly) and was able to talk to some Mati people. An old man told the story of the fight with such vivid gestures that I could follow the account before it was translated. The details were as the government reports gave them except that the fight began because the people thought it was the Moreri coming up the creek on a payback raid; and that 'everyone' was killed. Of this last it is not unfair to suggest that it is a poetic end to what has now become a saga and I did not press for figures. They were able to tell me the name of the man who actually shot Kirby and the names of the four men who returned after the 14-year sentence—all of which appear (allowing for spelling variations) on the list of those charged at the trial.¹⁷

The real revelation was about Siaki. 'We call him Silaki' they explained politely but firmly. 'He was a nothing.' They named the two real heads—one for each *dubudaimo* (which do not appear in the list)—and were anxious to remove any delusions I might hold of Silaki's power or influence, but would discuss him no further.

During the weeks it took to extract this story from the records I thought I had come close to all these people. The river people interrupted in their traditional forms of life and survival trying to adapt to an uninvited and incomprehensible system; the temperaments of Ryan, Kirby, Herbert, Cardew, Chinnery, and Dudley, each in his own way translating and trying to put into practice the ideas and beliefs of their race and period. Yet Siaki, far from being the cautious, responsible leader of his people, has now his place in their history as a front man, a go-between, the 'nothing' given to the government since they demanded culprits.

But how to reconcile this with the reference in Judge Herbert's report, as leader of the search parties for Staniforth Smith in 1911, that he went

Spread of Influence

to Mati Creek and 'made friends with the chief Kiawara and his co-chief Siaka'?¹⁸ Perhaps the only result of further probing would reveal that Siaka, Siaki, and Silaki was a frequently-used name among the Mati people. Even so that does not change for this Siaki/Silaki that moment when he realised that he would never see the river again. For what?

4

From the Purari to the Era rivers

An essential task of every patrolling officer was to keep a daily journal which became the basis of his report. This report was sent in to the Government Secretary who forwarded it to Judge Murray who read and initialled it—sometimes adding a minute which was very much to the point. The journal-keeping habit was valuable not only as a record for the officer's successors to the area, and the historian, but as a training for the man himself. Some took naturally to the written word but it is revealing with others to observe the gradual change from the stiffness of the school essay to easy accounts of their observations and experiences, coloured by their upbringing, temperament, prejudices, and health. No journal or report ever tells you everything you want to know, and the fragmented filing system, with correspondence, native court reports, accounts and expenses, launch log, the station journals, and maps, all carefully segregated makes it difficult to follow some references in the reports.

If you look at a map of that enormous area with the dot of Kikori to the south of the middle and ask 'Where do you start?' you will get no clear answer from available records. From the point of view of the government it was necessary to explore the terrain, to find and make friends with the inhabitants, and to discover whether there was good agricultural land, or minerals, to attract settlers who would develop them. Finding and making friends with the inhabitants meant educating them in health and hygiene, and diverting their interest in warfare to more peaceful and lucrative pursuits. This could only be achieved by regular visits, patience and understanding seasoned with toughness when considered necessary. The point of view of the inhabitants comes through the reports sometimes when a patrol officer records some revealing incident though the revelation was not always to him what we see now. It was during these years that F.E. Williams, the Assistant Government Anthropologist, was making his detailed study of the Purari people, but the methods and attitudes of anthropology did not penetrate into the government service here until Leo Austen came to Kikori in 1927 and began his study of the Turama people. In fact the reports up to the early 1920s show how people managed without anthropology—mainly by the exercise of intuition and commonsense and nudges from Judge Murray.

Over the years from 1912 to 1929 the domain was administered by a resident magistrate, an assistant resident magistrate, and a patrol officer, supported by a sergeant, a lance-corporal, and a varying number of armed constables—usually about ten or twelve. On special occasions an extra officer was sent to do some specific exploratory patrol. Every new area explored increased the number of routine educational patrols necessary but not the number of officers to make them. There were periods too when leave, ill-health, or a dearth of applicants for the public service reduced the establishment to one officer. There is a gap in the patrol reports, for instance, between May 1920 and February 1921. The station journals for that period show that for some of the time there was only one officer and that the police managed very capably some of the duties generally undertaken by patrol officers. They were sent to recruit labour for the Public Works Department, they escorted time-expired prisoners back to their villages, they were sent to arrest deserters from indenture, and they went to notify relatives of men who had died and whose money was waiting at the station. A.C. Patoa was sent to the coast 'to effect arrests' but for what misdemeanour is not specified.

The patrol reports give the sequence of patrols each year—exploratory and 'general inspection'—and to get some impression of how the people of each area responded to the advent of the government it may be better to follow the visits to particular areas, rather than attempt a chronological account of the diverse activities directed from the headquarters at Kikori. The rivers form convenient sections to look at as they mark off areas of land (or swamps) between them. The Era River divides the area west to the Kikori and east to the Purari; the Kikori and the Sirebi (with its strange source) took them up into the mountains, and after exploring the Samberigi country led to a patrol east to the Purari, thus linking up and covering the journey of MacKay and Little. The exploration of the Omati covered the country west of Kikori and to the south-west of the upper Kikori River; and the Turama, the last and toughest, the land and people east to the Paibuna. The deltas of all these rivers were visited more frequently and the people joined the patrols as interpreters and carriers or paddlers. They had gardens inland and there were also traditional trade routes.

The Purari delta had been patrolled earlier than 1912 when it was part of the Gulf Division, the people had gone to work on the plantations and mines, and had had contact too with the trading *lakatois* from the east. They showed a tolerant adaptability to the new ways, illustrated by an incident reported by A.L. Blyth, the newly-arrived magistrate, in January 1925. At Kairu he 'dealt with a large number of cases, some a rehash of old civil claims etc. many dealt with by Mr Cardew and Mr Johnston and the complainants when bowled out as to previous court having been made laughed and said "True. We didn't know you knew though"!'.

Ukiaravi (on the Baroi River which runs from the Purari) is probably the big village along the river bank described by Bevan, and was visited

by Chalmers and Sir William MacGregor, and was the scene of a punitive expedition in 1908 after an attack on the traders Buchanan and Charpentier. It was described by Ryan in 1914 ' . . . it was like entering a well-lighted town, for on the landing leading to the government rest house were twenty hurricane lamps lighted and a large body of natives with the two village constables, the natives assembled took charge and in a short time had camping gear and stores taken out of the boat and deposited safely in the rest house'.¹

Kirby's patrol in September 1915 was the first to go as far north as Maipua on the left arm of the Era. There were several villages along the Era which had the same name as coastal villages and this was explained later when it was realised that the population of the Era was connected with that of Urama, though which way the migration flowed was not clear. A dialect of the Urama Island people's language (Namau) was spoken or understood as far as Maipua, and the Urama people owned sago land and canoe trees along the right bank.² Above Maipua Woodward found in 1919 there were no more villages though on the right arm of the Era there were three and the people spoke the language of the Gopi people. He went on up this arm for a day and a half, meeting no one except two men in a canoe, one of whom was thwarted of shooting an arrow at them by his bow string breaking. In the afternoon they saw a camp on the bank and dropped anchor. 'After considerable talk with the interpreter' two men came out. They spoke a little Namau and were Ipikoi people. They were nomads and moved over the area between the Era and the Baroi. They said the Purari people came up 'at times' to trade with them and to buy dogs.³ These men had fine bones of cassowary protruding from minute holes pierced on the tip and sides of the nose.

Later that year Woodward went up two creeks, the Mura and the Mina, which came in from the north to join the Tiviri at the Gauri village end; and was disappointed to find that as soon as they reached the higher country the creeks narrowed very quickly and petered out into mudflats and swamps. 'My primary object in exploring these rivers was to find a waterway which would make accessible that vast area of practically unknown country lying between the Purari river on the north and the low-lying coastal area . . . I can only presume now the Curnic, a tributary of the Sirebi, is the main source of draining the country . . .'.⁴

During the early 1920s the patrols continued to find out about the waterways and the northern nomads but they were mainly preoccupied with law and order and health. Officers accustomed to the beach villages of the south-east coast, or the mountain villages of the north-east, found mud very difficult to tolerate, and impossible to condone. 'I think they may be adequately described as filthy oases in a sea of mud for to reach them it is necessary to traverse some 50 or 60 yards of deep mire only to be greeted on arrival by the usual stench of decaying refuse which adheres to all these Urama villages . . .'.⁵ In fact the mud acted as a fortification, further

strengthened by building the village at the head of a narrow tidal creek. When it was felt that the notion of law and government protection had begun to spread they began to persuade the people to make new villages on higher land on the banks of the main rivers, with a wharf, platforms between houses, a fence to keep the pigs away, and latrines over the water. Government regulations assumed that a village was, like a European village, a permanent centre. The coastal people, however, were not very far removed from the nomads. They had a centre for ceremonial and social occasions, but most of the year was spent moving between sago or canoe-making camps, and visiting crab and fishing areas. The regulations were enforced by imprisoning, generally for fourteen days, all those who evaded or refused to do their share of building and cleaning. It was no good doing a token job: platforms 'so insecure they were a menace to life and limb', rest houses 'like hen roosts' or latrines with no hole in the floor incurred a longer sentence. Woodward on one occasion regretted that 'the gaol at Kikori is full to overflowing otherwise I would have punished these people for neglecting to carry out instructions'.

Resentment took the form of a message from the V.C. at Bawi (a Gopi village) that the people were asking what pay they would get for all this work ordered by the government and adding that it was their village not the government's. Like the occasional threats of fighting back or eating the police these mutterings were ignored. Leonard, the patrol officer, had a theory about the resistance; writing of the Gopi villages in 1922 he said:

Most of the men of Iari have been to work, many of them more than once, and I am not altogether surprised that orders have fallen on deaf ears. It has invariably been my experience in dealing with villages where the proportion of indentured labourers is large, that the Native Regulations, as far as they deal with ordinary village duties are ignored and orders are disobeyed . . . apparently these men return to their village with a very inflated idea of their own importance and seem to acquire the idea that the Native Regulations and Government orders are not made for such as they, but are meant solely for the ignorant scum who have not their experience and worldly knowledge. . . .⁶

On the other hand the 'ignorant scum' had their own experience and worldly knowledge and patrol officers whose attitude to their duties was that of schoolmasters training recalcitrant children were occasionally puzzled, shocked or infuriated by an independence of mind which took them by surprise. Deserting the village when the launch was heard was not fear but an indication that they did not wish to meet the government: 'not at home'. Saying what they supposed the government wished to hear was not lying to deceive but to placate. Johnston, who felt it his duty 'to

explain thoroughly', a phrase which appears in practically every report, observed that his audience was attentive at first but presently began to drift away 'I cannot understand why they should do this'.

From time to time, as one reads the patrol reports, a name keeps recurring and presently some sort of picture forms of the man who bore it. One such was a man named Waga, who certainly exhibited independence of mind though his motive (if any) remains a mystery. Was he feckless? Or a practical joker? Or was he indicating that the government did not know everything? When Woodward went up the Purari in September 1922 he travelled up the Baroi to the Kairu effluence, the point at which it joins the Purari, and came on a camp of Pawria people among whom was Waga. Waga came from a village in the hills 'at the source of the Purari', and had married a Pawria woman. As interpreters Woodward took Waga, and a Pawria man, and a man from Ivara who could speak to the Ivara men. Near the point where the Aure flows in from the east they came to the village of I-u where Waga could speak to the men. They were members of a semi-nomadic group who roved between the Purari and Vailala rivers and said they had recently come down from the Aure. The four houses, incidentally, were twenty feet above ground, built on trees which had been cut at that height to serve as piles.

When they entered the western reaches of the Purari Waga pointed out 'a spot where a policeman had been killed by the I-u people when the coal expedition of 1908 came up this river'. This must be a reference to the carrier who was killed.

The current was so strong that the launch was making only two miles an hour so they transferred to the canoe they had been towing and took five hours to do five miles 'hard pulling', and reached a patch of sago which Waga said was where his people were living when he left them. Waga went to look for them and did not come back. They waited before returning to the launch (which took 1¼ hours with the current) and waited again next day. Waga caught up with them at the village of Uri saying that he had returned unsuccessful in his search and made his way to I-u where he borrowed a canoe. 'It seems evident that the native population in the vicinity of the Purari River is very small . . . more easily reached . . . from the Era headwaters which must be close to the Purari.'

Woodward had an opportunity to try this route the following month when he escorted C.E. Lane Poole, Commonwealth Forestry Adviser, who was looking at the timber resources in Papua, and whose report conveys to an outsider's eye that there were lots of trees but no timber. However, no one had crossed the country from the headwaters of the Era to the Purari and there was every prospect that the well watered country would provide the sort of stands of trees he had in mind. The Giori and Obi people knew nothing of the country or of any tracks but Woodward took Waga with them and he said he could get in touch with the Sesa people who roamed the country between the two arms of the Era. The party left their canoes

about 46 miles from Gigori and began to march due north. March is the word Woodward uses in his report.

The country traversed is some of the roughest I have yet seen and judging by the eccentric angles of the rock strata I conclude that this country must have been subjected to a terrific volcanic upheaval . . . Sawback ridges . . . for the most part precipitous and quite unscaleable . . . we dropped down into a small creek the bed of which was plentifully strewn with boulders which made progress for the carriers somewhat difficult . . . [it] led us in the right direction but we were much delayed by having to construct rough bridges . . . to negotiate waterfalls and other difficult places. The creek led us into a larger stream running east . . . 20 yards wide—probably the Era again. After fording the stream at some convenient rapids we were faced with a sheer wall along the north side of the river . . . had to make use of ladders and ropes of vine to climb to the top.

They were able after this to travel more easily along the tops of ridges which gradually increased in height as they moved north. They met two men who ran away but Waga reassured them and one agreed to guide them. They said that just over the hill was Po creek which flowed into the Purari. What the party soon found was Waga's swag on the track and no other sign of either man.

The next five days are exhausting to read about. They struggled up and down ridges and over creeks trying to keep going north but at last, coming to a river, they made rafts which had to be manhandled over rapids and came out a few miles above the point where they had left the launch on the Era. Woodward did not comment on Waga. And there was no timber to report.⁸

In 1924 F.R. Cawley and S.H. Chance went to examine the country from the Purari to the Era—an area for which the Maira Estates Ltd had applied to prospect for oil, and they took Waga as guide. Waga recommended a track from a creek on the west bank of the Purari across to Uri village but neglected to mention that it crossed a thigh-deep swamp so they returned to the river. Waga deserted during the night, having also neglected to mention that the village of Uri—which they presently found—was burnt, deserted, and overgrown. He does not reappear in the reports.

They had sent supplies to meet them at Woodward's Junction (where the Po-omu or Smoky Creek meets the Era) and set out north. The other guides said there were no tracks but Cawley preferred 'personal reconnaissance'. They climbed up and down the precipitous ridges, cutting through lawyer vine and bothered by leeches, and came to the Mena. The guide said they would be unable to get through to the north-east and suggested following downstream. This led them to the place where Waga

had deserted Woodward in 1922. It must have been a place of some significance for when they stopped for lunch and Cawley moved away to take a photograph the guides 'made off into the bush'. They travelled along the ridge to where there were several old shelters and saw in the north a large watercourse 'possibly a tributary of the Purari, and the police revealed that before the guide Kerai left he had told them they would find it and that we could proceed in rafts'. Which they did. The river after twisting about took a northerly direction, then southerly. They came to rapids and all four rafts were overturned. No one was injured or drowned but the typewriter and dispatch box were thrown off and lost; Cawley also lost a new watch and his spectacles and they both lost their hats. The river took them, through another rapid, to Woodward's Junction. 'A close examination . . . did not reveal . . . indications that . . . would lead one to believe that oil existed but . . . towards the source of the Era many samples of coal were seen. . . . between Te-eni and Se-eni creeks a . . . seam forty yards was located.'⁹

From January to April 1923 a party of geologists from the Anglo-Persian Oil Company had been studying the country from the Purari to the Kikori. Saunders took them up the Purari as far as Bevan Rapids where they made a camp 'like a small canvas city' but they did not spend much time there and soon transferred to Woodward's Junction. Saunders had been recalled to Kikori to accompany Woodward to the Samberigi and Leo Austen came from Port Moresby to look after the geologists. They found fossils on both the Iowa and the Po-omu and also met bushmen ' . . . in my opinion these natives are a nomadic tribe which wander over these plateaux between Wai-i and the Iowa'. A policeman sent out to shoot a pigeon came back in about five minutes to say he had been stopped by a party of natives who told him not to come any further. 'Very wisely he came back straightaway . . .'. Two carriers sent to the canoe camp 'came in very breathless and stated they had seen twenty men peering at them through the bush. However after they calmed down a bit they stated it might have been only five but both bushmen and themselves had been so startled they one and all cleared out.' 'I feel inclined to believe that this word Ope means a bushman and is not the real name of the tribe'.

The party came to Kikori and from there explored the Tiviri and the Curnick ('wonderfully fossiliferous limestone'), presumably crossing the route taken by Carne, Little, and Massey Baker in 1912. Though the Commonwealth Government and the oil companies expended a great deal of money prospecting and did not find what they sought, they did speed up exploration with better equipment and qualifications than the Papuan government was able to afford.

Five months before Lane Poole's visit in 1922 Lewis Lett decided to start a sawmill and bought land on the Wame River. He took up logging leases along the Baroi, which excepted ilimo wood which was used for canoes, and for two years the establishment did very well supplying sawn timber

locally though not for export. Bastard reported that four Europeans and fifty-seven indentured labourers were employed and 40,000 to 50,000 superfeet of timber was turned out monthly. '... am informed that the present mill is capable of turning out 60,000 when in full running order with a competent staff'.¹⁰ Six months later Chance reported that 'owing to slack times' there were now only two Europeans and only 25,000 superfeet a month were being turned out.¹¹ By January 1925 Blyth found only one European and three labourers 'anxious for news of the company' and at the village of Omaumeri 'a lot of ex-sawmill boys who are all very anxious about their wages'.¹² The company was refloated early in 1925 and Blyth reported in August 'Work has started again and even the cutting mill was running this morning. There are three whites on the place ... and some 65 boys.'¹³

This history parallels that of Ogamobu Plantation and a number of other small enterprises in Papua during those pre-depression years. There are further references which show that the sawmill was still operating in 1929, but with government officials keeping a keen eye on wage deposits and the housing of the labourers.

Every patrol officer was provided with a medicine chest and, one hopes, a first aid book to go with it because some of the medicaments of those days were poisons if administered haphazardly. There is an account in the Station Journal for September 1913:

At 5 p.m. A.C. Bebega came for quinine and helped himself to Corrosive Sublimate (the blue Perchloride of Mercury). My orderly (one of the new recruits) came running to report the matter and I put Bebega under treatment at once. Sat up most of the night with patient and begin to think I may pull him through.

The next day 'A.C. Bebega is now salivated with the mercury remaining in his system, though his life does not appear to be in any danger ...'. There are passing references in patrol reports to medical aid in the field: setting a child's broken arm; dressing ulcerated legs; and Woodward's account of being asked to do something about a woman who had been bewitched. He thought she was in the last stages of tuberculosis and impossible to aid but rather than refuse to do anything he gave her a 'Livingstone Rouser' and moved quickly on to the next village. Laudanum was given for 'stomach pains', 20 drops, followed an hour later by 20 grs of ipecachuana. Sulphur ointment or zinc ointment after washing with carbolic water was the treatment for ulcers or boils and a good slosh of iodine on cuts. Dover's Powders (which were mainly opium) for fevers, and aperients (generally Epsom salts or castor oil) on every occasion.

It had been noticed that a number of villagers were infected with the skin disease named sepoma and that the leaves of the plant *Cassia alata*

did something to alleviate it. During 1923-24 patrol reports record distributing seeds and plants from the station gardens to all village constables with instructions for the use of the leaves.

Dr Brieni in 1913 did not find any leprosy to speak of but he did find that both police and villagers were infected with venereal disease. He commented on the possibility that the after effects of yaws and ulcers can be mistaken for the effects of leprosy but he did not mention that yaws can be confused with the symptoms of some venereal diseases—perhaps this was not known then.

There was a hospital at Daru and after Kikori was established V.D. inspections became part of the routine. In 1914 Dr Boag set up a temporary hospital at Dopima and gave treatment there¹⁴ and, it seems, trained Sergeant Gaiberi to make inspections. After that the sergeant made regular trips to the coast and V.D. suspects were picked up by a cutter and sent to Daru for treatment. 'The removal of female cases may cause difficulties' Chinnery observed. Dr Boag took 'thirteen females, all married, . . . the healthiest looking of the cases and those most likely to stand the change of diet etc. which their confinement under treatment will mean'.¹⁵

Dr Boag's inspections showed that the infection was too great to be dealt with by this system and the station journal of 8 March 1918 records that when a hospital and a house for the medical officer were built at Kikori Dr Boag took up duty there. He seems to have been more often on patrol than at the hospital and when he went on leave the hospital was in the charge of a medical assistant named Lever.

By 1921 it was thought that the incidence of the disease had increased in the Purari Delta 'as a result of increased intervisiting between the Goaribari and the Purari villages' but the people were reluctant to come to Kikori for treatment. Woodward went down to an island at the mouth of the Urika River, rented an acre of land called Ikinu, and arranged with four groups of villages, Koriki, Iari, Maipua and Kaimari, each to build a house for the use of their own people, for which 'adequate payment' would be made by the Medical Department. He also found twenty-six cases of V.D.

The G.M.O. advises that on his last trip to the Purari he collected a like number i.e. some 50 cases during this month and all these were reported by V.C.s and others. I venture to think that a systematic inspection of all the people in these villages, if such were possible, would result in large numbers being found to be infected. I have no doubt that the frequent visits of the Goaribari people to the Purari villages in recent years has resulted in the spread of venereal disease and on this account I have forbidden any such visits to be made in future. This order will undoubtedly restrict the liberty of the natives, yet under the circumstances I consider it justifiable.¹⁶

This patrol report has one of Judge Murray's minutes: 'Why is systematic inspection of these people not possible? If the Division is too large then Purari can be attached to the Gulf. Please inform the Acting R.M.'

Whether it was this threat or because Woodward and Johnston were particularly conscientious officers (as Judge Murray very well knew) they did inspect everyone (the population had been estimated at 10,000) and the reports of the next visits record the numbers inspected and the numbers sent either to Ikinu or Kikori. At one point Johnston was begged not to send any more as there was no more accommodation at the hospital at Kikori. This was unfortunate as he had just diagnosed two young Goaribari who were about to be married, and would 'indulge in promiscuous sexual intercourse which forms part of the ceremony'. He 'thoroughly cautioned the village constable that they were on no account to take any further part in the ceremony and were to stop quiet in the village until they were sent for'.¹⁷

At each village 'all males are fallen in lines and inspected by myself and the females by a Hospital Orderly and his wife in a separate house . . . the people seemed to take the inspection in good heart . . .'. The numbers inspected: 72, 207, 1162, 311—day after day would seem an answer to Judge Murray's query—but it was done. Whether all the cases were in fact V.D. or what proportion was the related but less vicious yaws will never be known. In 1922 an arsenical compound known as '914' was introduced which acted like magic with one injection to clear up yaws; and injections of carbon tetrachloride, instead of doses of chenopodium, made the treatment of hookworm easier; but V.D. still needed fifteen injections of tartar emetic.

The hookworm campaign began in 1921 when the Rockefeller Foundation sent the ebullient Dr S.M. Lambert to make a survey of the incidence of hookworm in Papua. His book makes very entertaining reading and though on the whole it tells more about Dr Lambert than hookworm, his views on prevention were taken very seriously in the Delta Division. The period could become known as the Latrine Years. First Woodward, as Resident Magistrate and then Leo Bastard who succeeded him, enforced a rule that every village must build a latrine for every twenty-five inhabitants, built out over the river, and that villages must be fenced to keep the pigs out and drinking water holes must also be fenced. Report after report records the number of latrines ordered and punishments if they were not maintained until at last, in 1923, Judge Murray in a minute on PR 11/23-24 asked 'Are these latrines ever used?' A very good question, for Dr Lambert who knew all about the life cycle of the hookworm had no experience of the delta. He advocated 25-foot deep pits, or wharves out over the sea. To put wharves of sufficient length over tidal rivers with a ten to fifteen feet rise and fall, strong enough to withstand the current, on a silty bottom, would defeat more efficient builders than the river people who relied on firmly rooted trees for the

stability of their houses and had no occasion for wharves of any kind until the government came.

On his first visit to the Purari, in January 1925, the new Resident Magistrate, A.L. Blyth, felt impelled to say:

I am not impressed with, and am not in favour of, the over-river latrines . . . I think them an excellent idea over the sea, here they are most unpopular, the natives hate them, they say it is filthy of the government to make them evacuate into the water they and people below them drink, at certain times the rivers are very low and then they require enormous platforms to get to, the native also has a horror of being seen going to attend to a call of nature by anyone else, and these things are so public that I hate going to the ones belonging to the rest houses, anyway they never use them and they look on them as a terrible affliction which they have to keep to please that extraordinary and generally to their idea immodest person the government. Of course till I get the opinion of H.E. on this matter Mr Bastard's orders will stand but I dislike it myself, they say the pigs kept their old ones clean all the time.

He had something to say about the hospital too:

Kuripi: cocoanuts . . . have all been planted along a narrow strip of beach reaching almost to Dr Leigh's new hospital which . . . appears to be rather a useless sort of place, no patients and no one to attend to any, the people have cleaned the site of it however. A hospital with a trained assistant is wanted badly . . . but not where it is so far from the control of anyone at all during the G.M.O.'s absences.¹⁸

Dr Leigh's new hospital was further east along the coast at the mouth of the Alele River and apparently Ikinu had been abandoned.¹⁹ The site may have been washed into the sea as was reported of a number of coastal villages in the early 1920s but there is no direct reference to the event in the patrol reports. A site for a base hospital on the Veru River near Kikori was chosen in 1926 but was not built on. The medical work continued but does not figure as intensely as in 1920-23. The point was that a job was undertaken which needed considerably more trained people and efficient equipment than was available and the miracle is that anything was achieved. The insistence on cleanliness and order, and creating pleasant surroundings and their own coconut and sweet potato plantations, though hardly a substitute for the excitement of warfare, did something to help the change from the old ways. There were efforts by the more enterprising to initiate changes for themselves.

There was a slight attempt at Apiopi in 1923 to emulate the cargo cult that had been so strong at Vailala. The villagers built a tall pole for a wireless mast to get in touch with their ancestors and a platform to receive the goods the ancestors would bring. Johnston said they could leave the pole and perhaps later they might have a flag but the platform must go. A flag would be a poor substitute for the wealth they dreamed of—rather like winning the smallest prize in a lottery, and buying a ticket in a lottery is a manifestation of the same human inclination for a short cut to material possessions. But the platform was dismantled and there were no more attempts.

In June 1927 Blyth visited one of the Kaimare villages and found:

the ravi abandoned and in a dreadful state of neglect, everything out of it. I fell in all available persons of this ravi, some 60 men and asked what it meant. They said they were not going to have ravis any more but live in the women's houses like white men. I talked at some length that what was good for whites was not for New Guinea, that we did not want them to give up all their own customs and have none to take their place etc. etc. They said at last they would rebuild their ravi. . . . adultery is increasing the natives say so . . . in the old days in the ravis at night there was always a man on guard on the doors he saw everyone who went in or out, then if there were trouble in the village they knew who was out, nowadays there is no check on the young men by the old and all respect for the ravi chiefs has gone . . .²⁰

Native plantations had been encouraged either near each village or on suitable land nearby, and every man had to plant and maintain six coconuts. This would have been a good plan except that coconuts did well only near the coast and just as they came into bearing the price of copra fell. Explanations about the world market were viewed with suspicion. The effects of the depression on recruiting were difficult to comprehend too. In the same report Blyth records:

Kanibo . . . saw Mr Treloar . . . has had to move all his buildings from the old site . . . Mr Treloar went to Vaimuru to get [recruit] eighteen boys, he was mobbed by boys wishing to sign, when he had his eighteen he told them he wanted no more, they however said they all wanted to go and when he told them he had no orders for more they made him promise that if he got an order that he would go there, to make this binding they insisted that he carve his 'mark' on the dubu main post and even then he had difficulty getting away. They also told him that now he had made his mark if he did not come to them for boys when

he got his next order they would report him to Mr Blyth for breaking his promise.

By 1929 the area between the Purari and the Era had been travelled over and the country to the north, where the Purari swings west, had been mapped, and discovered to be sparsely inhabited and unsuitable for settlement. No oil or gold had been found and the coal, which appeared to be plentiful, was considered by the experts to be of an inferior quality. Coconuts did not flourish and no advice was given as to what cash crop could be grown. Tobacco and rice were perhaps promising but by then no one could provide the capital to start new ventures. No one mentioned hydro-electric power.

5

To the mountains in the north

After Staniforth Smith's expedition in 1910-11 no one went north of his base camp until Woodward, as Acting Resident Magistrate, with Patrol Officer Barnes, established a camp on the same site and between January and March 1918 made a series of patrols fanning from north-east to north-west.¹ Although they found Staniforth Smith's No. 8 and No. 9 camps and travelled north-east from there they met only two native men and one woman who came close enough to receive a present of a knife. They also followed Ryan's tracks made on his patrol to the Aworra in 1913, but turned north before they reached the villages he found. On another patrol they travelled the area where, according to the corporal (unnamed) who had accompanied Beaver, Beaver had had trouble with the bushmen who tried to snatch their tomahawks. But there was no sign of native occupation when Woodward's party went through.

He found that he had

underestimated the difficulties of transport over such excessively rough country, as a result of which I found I could not penetrate to a greater distance than could be covered in five days' walk from the Base Camp. Native pads were always made use of in preference to cutting tracks, and I estimate that, of the 440 odd miles that have been covered on patrol, less than one-fifth of this distance was travelled by native pads. This fact, I consider, indicates the scarcity of population.

Very odd miles some of them were because although they kept mostly to the base of limestone ridges (and on one occasion found themselves, after one and a half hours, back where they had started) it happened that they found themselves in a ravine which suddenly fell

in a sheer drop of about thirty feet in the creek bed. Rather than turn back we constructed a rough ladder and safely negotiated the fall only to find another similar fall a few yards further on. The latter was again resorted to. Several smaller falls hindered our advance . . . and eventually we came to a large

creek the roar of whose waters we had previously heard from the top of the range.

The jagged limestone cut the feet of carriers and police. Woodward does not mention the state of his boots though after the first patrol Barnes was kept in camp for a fortnight with blistered heels. They met the waterless country and traced the course of creeks as they disappeared and reappeared in an attempt to find the headwaters of the Sirebi and the Omati rivers.

Woodward had been seconded to Kikori for this exploration and was away from the Division until the end of 1918 when he returned as officer-in-charge, though still ranked as Acting Resident Magistrate. His journeys up the Era and pushing north towards the upper Purari were in part directed towards finding a route to the valleys in the mountains both before and after a minute from Judge Murray² 'Has the R.M. considered the possibility of examining the Sambrigi Valley?' No one mentions anywhere an incident related in the MacKay diary of the tribesman who pointed to the route south from the Samia River and it is possible to wonder, without it mattering very much either way, whether Waga's strange behaviour may not have been to prevent this discovery. Saunders, in 1924,³ records 'A.C. Haugopa tells me that he has heard some Purari prisoners at Kikori talking about a road to the Samberigi by the Era River and through people named Sevari'; but, up to 1929, no one had discovered it. In 1922 it was known that there was a route which was used by the valley people which came out just above the Kikori River Base Camp and this was the route of the first exploratory patrol to the Samberigi Valley.

L.A. Flint and H.M. Saunders visited the Samberigi Valley area on a patrol which lasted from January to April 1922.⁴ Staniforth Smith and then Wilfred Beaver had crossed Mt Murray, recorded the name Samberigi Valley, and reached what they supposed were the headwaters of the Kikori River, but as Staniforth Smith had lost his papers in the river his map had been compiled (by A.E. Pratt) from 'fragmentary notes'. Beaver submitted 'a rough sketch' which he said 'cannot pretend to geographical accuracy'. Comparing their maps with that of Flint and Saunders one finds that Mt Murray and the Samberigi Valley are roughly correctly placed but the new map filled in the area from 144° to 143°30' and showed that in that tumbled heap of limestone there were at least four populated valleys besides the Samberigi, and the patrol made a thorough tour, visiting every village (as far as they knew) and making an estimate of the population.

As they had 218 loads of food and gear (of which 136 were mats of rice) and 49 carriers they had to proceed by making depots after they left the river. The carriers were Purari and Goaribari men and Flint said, presumably not having read Ryan's report attentively, that as they were 'canoe men it is anticipated that progress will be slow'. He made no further comment except at the end when he said 'The carriers engaged for the patrol gave every satisfaction'.

To the Mountains in the North

Flint took two men from Ututi and as the patrol moved north two Okani from north of Mt Murray were willing to guide them. It was known that the mountain people came in the dry season down as far as Attack Bend, trading their tobacco, and indeed when Flint reached Samberigi the people refused to accept his tobacco as payment.

The route from the fifth depot to the eighth was up the dry bed of Ise Creek, strewn with innumerable huge boulders, and for two days they had to carry water in bamboo internodes. After depot 8 they met a precipitous wall of limestone whose approaches were blocked by jagged limestone that had fallen from the mountain wall. 'By making detours and building ladders we managed to negotiate the blockage, drop back into the creek, and continued up its bed.' It is no flight of fancy to reflect that some of those Purari and Goaribari, humping 45 lb of rice up and down those sapling ladders, thought longingly of their kind mud and comfortable canoes.

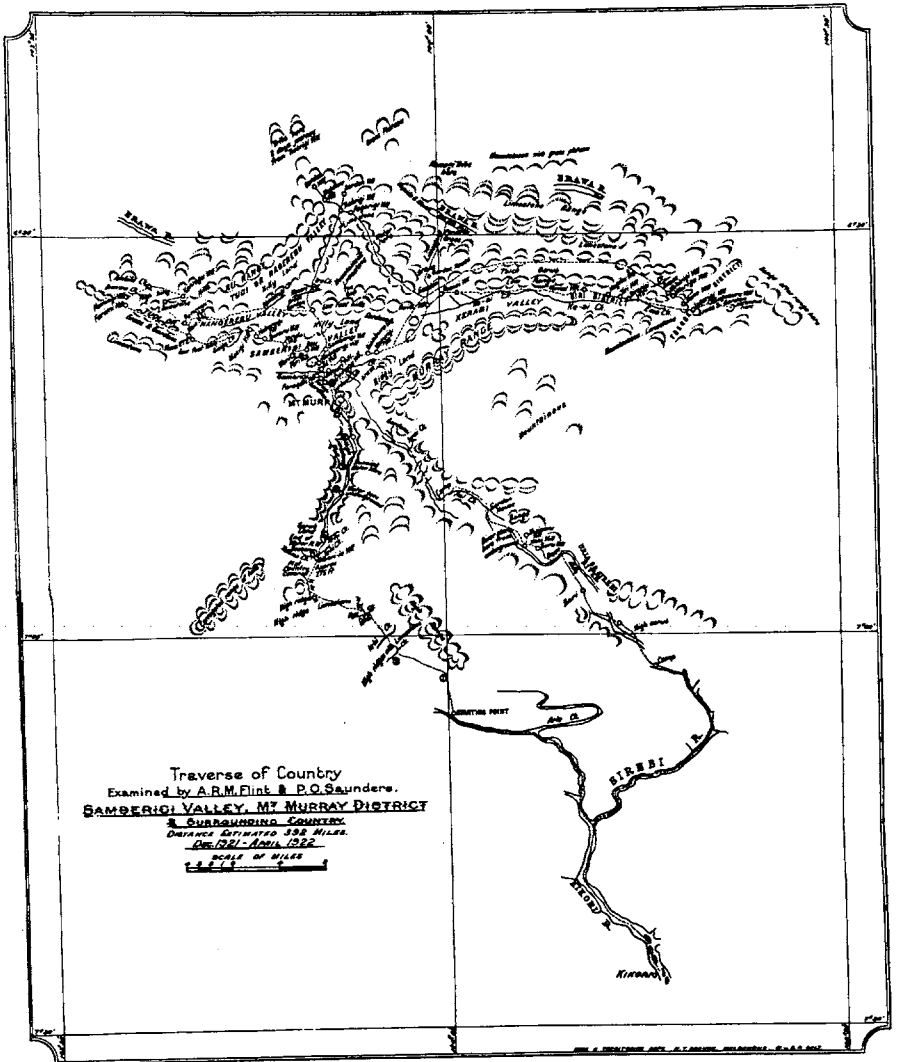
Next they climbed Mt Murray, which took eight hours with no water except what could be squeezed out of the moss from tree trunks. From the summit they saw, stretching to the north-west, a large well-cultivated valley, and range upon range of mountains and two high mountains, one to the north-west and one to east-north-east. When they had descended 2,000 feet they

broke clear of the scrub and saw in front of us a huge valley. The ground was cleared, and cultivated for many miles around with sweet potatoes. Many natives came to meet us with sugar cane. Finally we were escorted to the village of Donugu. We were made very welcome; much handshaking. The air by this time, 5.10 p.m., was decidedly chilly. The fact that the country was cleared of timber for a long way around, we experienced some difficulty in finding timber for our flies. These we had eventually erected, the local people assisting. The people call the valley Samberigi. At last we had reached it.

They made a final depot at Donugu in a store built by the police while the rest of the loads were brought over the mountain, and then twenty-four carriers and eight police went back to Kikori. Fewer mouths to feed. The Samberigi people were hospitable and welcoming, offering tobacco and sugar cane, collecting wood and water for the camp; the women came too, wearing long bark capes.

The patrol moved from village to village, each with from 50 to 150 inhabitants (Samberigi itself the largest with 165) and arrived at Ianda, west of Samberigi, about noon. They decided to have lunch and Flint sat down on some pebbles, about 30 yards from the *dubu*.

I noticed that my action caused a lot of excitement in the village. I had not been seated long before three men accompanied



3. Patrol 13/21-22 by A.R.M. Flint and P.O. Saunders to the Samberigi Valley, Mt Murray District. *Annual Report, 1921-22*

by our interpreters came over to me and said 'Kamio, no sit there'. 'Why?' I queried, 'Because that is the place we cut up men we kill, and their blood runs into the ground' was their reply. 'Where do you cook them?' I asked. They replied 'Over there' pointing to a heap of stones where the carriers were boiling their rice. It was explained to these people that anthropophagy was forbidden by the 'Gub'mint'; and that if they continued the gruesome practice they would be punished for it.

They came to a track leading to the Tugi district and the Okani interpreters were reluctant to go any further but they did come when they were assured of protection and pay.

These are the people Staniforth Smith and Beaver met and were as pugnacious and inhospitable as the Samberigi were welcoming. The patrol spent an anxious night camped outside the village where obvious warlike preparations were being made. At dawn armed men came down but went away when they saw the sentry. The Okani men thought to run home but returned when the Tugi chased them with arrows. The warlike behaviour did not prevent them from coming into the camp 'and sitting on our beds'.

They remained camped outside the village, Niai, for five days while the carriers went back to Donugu for stores, Flint nursed an injured leg, and Saunders visited the village. Instead of welcoming cries of 'Kamio' the Tugi called out 'We do not want to see the Government. This is our land'.

They bought a pig and called all the people to witness the power of the government rifles. When the rifle was discharged 'they all fell down, and most of them crawled away on all fours to their village'.

The carriers brought news that the Niai people had raided and burnt a nearby village and brought along the sole survivor. It seemed to have taken place just before the patrol camped outside Niai and the sounds in the night were not warlike preparations but the return of the warriors.

The patrol pushed on further west, accompanied, rather unwillingly, by four Niai men, and came to the village of Ferimi.

It is erected on the top of a high limestone mountain. The approach was very steep, and defended by three lines of stockades. . . . About 200 yards from the summit we saw a man standing akimbo on a big boulder. He was clothed in a native cloak, silhouetted against the sky. As we approached and shouted 'Amio Amio' he made one gesture towards the north and shouted 'Ba Ba' (Go Away). As we neared the top he disappeared. . . . On entering the village we found only two old men who had been deserted by those who should have remained to protect them, but this is native custom. Weakened by age, they sat in their dubu awaiting the fate which they thought was certain with

calm stoicism. They appeared surprised when we handed them a piece of tobacco and did not attempt to interfere with them. They kept hitting their head with their hands and repeating 'dia dia' (no no kill us).

After an hour or so we managed to get some of the men back in the village.

When they started to go down the other side of the mountain they found another valley almost as large as the Samberigi.

Far below us was a patch of cultivation, the furrows showing up almost as if it had been ploughed. With the village below looking like a toy the whole scene was very picturesque. An hour's walk down the mountain, all under cultivation, we arrived at the village of Hamiagi. Here we were well received by the people. Camp was made near the village; the people assisted the police.

From the top of the mountain only broken mountainous country could be seen so they decided to turn back east and visit the villages they could see north of the route they had been taking. It was, Flint says, very mountainous and they plunged up and down in heavy rain. The people at each village were friendly and helpful, including some Niai people they met. It seemed to have been a misunderstanding as they had thought the patrol to be allies of the Okani and had come to fight. 'It was explained to them that the only part the Government took in their feuds was to suppress them.' They returned to Donugu after being most hospitably entertained by the Samberigi villagers and 'spent the day drying their clothes'.

Saunders with carriers and four police went east to visit more Samberigi villages while Flint with four police went north; both parties took Okani men as interpreters.

It was eleven miles to the northern village of Tiabrigi.

On the way to the village I passed a stone in the scrub. It was bell shape, green with age, and covered with moss. It would weigh about 40 lbs. The legend connected with it is that one day long ago it fell from the sky as a precursor of the coming of a legendary chief called Ro, who journeyed across the Murray Range, and created the Ro people. It is kept free of growth by the Okani people. It is known in the district as Aparanigi.

The northernmost village Flint visited was Mogolovu, whose people told him of a tribe to the north-north-east who traded with them. In the dry weather the Mogolovu travel for three days and wait for their friends who

To the Mountains in the North

take five days to come down to meet them. The Tiabrigi and Mogolovu bring 'knives and tomahawks' which they have bought from the Tugi and exchange them for feathers and spears. Flint came back along the top of a mountain range east of his outward journey and met Saunders who had been along the Kerabi Valley. Together they went north over two mountain ranges and cut their way through thick scrub and in the afternoon came to a grass patch. To the west they could see over a mountain range to another valley evidently cultivated and inhabited.

A sheer drop of about 2,500 feet we came to the banks of a large river. It was fast flowing, about 130 yards wide. The river is known as Erawa. We camped on its bank.

This morning, 14 March, three armed constables went along the river bank up stream with the idea of finding a suitable place to erect a bridge. Self and Mr Saunders went downstream . . . We returned to our camp at dusk having inspected the river for about six miles. During the day we felled a large tree . . . it was swept away almost as soon as it fell into the water. The police . . . reported that they had been unable to find a suitable place for a bridge. This river has very fast flowing rapids accompanied by high waves. It flows in a south-east direction between mountains . . . the only conclusion I could come to was that the Erawa River was the head waters of the Purari River, or a river going through the late German territory . . .

The Kerabi men told us that a long time ago their people tried to cross the river to fight the people across the range. Their attempt failed, five men were drowned. The Siri people also endeavoured to cross the stream, . . . north of their village. They also failed. Two men were drowned. The Kerabi people have seen men on the opposite bank but were unable to communicate with them.

Saunders went back to Donugu to get more stores and Flint travelled east along the Kerabi Valley, visiting four villages on the way. He had heard of the Foraba people and with Kerabi guides and interpreter travelled east over a range of mountains to find the five Foraba villages. The people were frightened and ran away but were persuaded to return though 'they kept continually making signs that they were afraid we would kill them'. Flint climbed a mountain about three miles east of the last village, Suguburu, and 'viewed the surrounding country'. He could see only range after range and broken limestone country. He returned by a route a little to the north of his outward journey. 'We had to cut our way for miles through mountainous country'.

One of the objects of the patrol had been to discover 'the Keai people'. Right from the beginning of the journey inquiries had been made but no

one had ever heard of them. Flint decided that either they had never existed, or if they had must have been wiped out in tribal warfare.

Just as the patrol was about to set out for Kikori three Okani men came and said 'We know where the Keai people are and we will take you to them'. When asked why they hadn't mentioned this before they explained: 'A long time ago we fought the Keai men but now we are friends; we did not want to take you to them until we knew that the Government was our friend'.

The villages were on the south-east side of Mt Murray and it was said to be five days' march. March it seems was a euphemism—it was forty-two miles through limestone country 'crawling on all fours like an animal, over limestone, the police and carriers arrived in camp every night bleeding either from limestone wounds or leeches'.

About two miles before reaching the Ro (Keai) village of Muimani we came upon a river which suddenly welled up, about twenty-five yards wide, with a small eddy in the middle. A few yards on it gathered speed. Forty yards away it was a roaring mass of water about fifty yards wide. The river was very blue. The Ro people call the river Uria—we subsequently learned that lower down it is known as the Sirebi.

Their Okani guides took them on to Bara, and Bara men took them some of the way and then left because 'they were afraid the Sirebi men would kill them'.

When the river calmed down a bit they made rafts and, issuing the last of the food, set off. That evening they came to a Sirebi village where they bought sago and borrowed canoes for the rest of the way.

Entering the Kikori River, our carriers, who were acting as crew, began to shout and chant. Onward, onward, they drove the canoes. They were jubilant at the thought of returning to their homes after an absence of three months, during which time they had travelled 392 miles through the roughest part of New Guinea.

The following year, 1923, Woodward, accompanied by Saunders, went up to the valleys through the Ie-hi gorge (also referred to as Lapi Creek) and returned down the Kikori River.⁵ He went first to the east end of the valley to visit the Kerabi and Tiri (or Siri) districts in the hope that he might find another route south from the Tiri. When he could get no lead he returned, commenting on the trenches which at once drained the slopes and kept the pigs out of the gardens; and collected through two interpreters an account of the migrations from the parent village Hangebari (Hangebarigi) to the east, west, and north, to populate the valleys. He then

travelled through the Tugi valley and returned along the Mobi River to the Kikori as Staniforth Smith had done but without as much trouble. Nor were the Tugi as troublesome as they were to Beaver's party.

The report ends with 'Observations' in which Woodward gave as his opinion that the Lapi Creek route is probably the least onerous but had the disadvantage that it could be used only in the dry season. He was sent to assess whether it would be practicable to establish a sub-station 'to bring the district under control', which he considered could be easily done as he met with no display of hostility. On the other hand 'difficulties of transport and means of communication militate somewhat against the establishment and subsequent efficiency of a sub-Station', nor was control likely to be achieved by an annual visit to the area. 'For obvious reasons it is impracticable to bring prisoners from the interior to gaol at Kikori unless a better and quicker route, which can be used at all seasons of the year, is discovered.' He estimated the population at about 4,000, allowing for the fact that practically no females were seen by either patrol; and observed that the physique and general appearance of the Okani showed that the district was a healthy one: no signs of venereal disease, skin diseases, yaws or ulcers. 'Commercially I do not think the District has much to recommend it, and the inadequate means of communication at present preclude the possibility of enterprise in that direction. For the same reason too, the potential labour supply of the district must remain untapped.'

There are several things to remember before your blood boils or chills at the tone and assumptions in this report. One is that one must not blame the people of a time for thinking in their time—opinion edges slowly until it becomes the thinking of another time. There is also a romantic view that people in valleys should continue to be isolated by the mountains that ring them; yet the coastal people lived their lives in the seclusion of mud and water which isolated them almost as effectively, but everyone agreed that their condition needed changing. Why then should the thought of these valley people with their own agriculture, legends, and laws, taken over as labour supply be more disturbing than the same fate for the people of the delta?

A third point is that some contact had already been made through the traditional tobacco trading route, and steel implements, shell ornaments, and other trade goods were known in the valleys. Speaking of their beautifully-worked stone axes Woodward said 'They are quite willing to exchange their ancient heirlooms for 5/- tomahawks'. Government protection might have its drawbacks but it was only a matter of time before enterprising adventurers climbed Lapi Creek to see what they could find, and better to become acquainted first with a well-meaning and disciplined devil.

The patrol in 1924⁶ was made by Saunders alone and he makes the journey spring to life. Flint and Woodward had mentioned the gorge and that it was difficult, Saunders described it:

... we continued up the river bed and soon entered the bad gorge which is about 20 yards wide in places, on either side of which the walls rise straight up to at least a thousand feet in a most forbidding manner. It is not the kind of place one would care to strike an earthquake nor is it a nice thought to have whilst hurrying through. There are two really bad places where ladders have to be constructed. Found a little water at about midday.

Communication with the Donugu people was comparatively easier because he took three Ututi and two Sirebi carriers (who had volunteered to come) and Forapa as interpreter. Forapa was an Okani man born in the Samberigi and married to a Bara woman. 'I speak to Marai [the Sergeant], who speaks to Pugini, who speaks to V.C. Barima, who speaks to Forapa the Okani, so that it will be understood that a question takes a long time to be answered.'

The other patrols had found that, although the valleys were cultivated and sweet potatoes, cucumbers, taro, and sugar cane grew everywhere the people brought only very small quantities (just as MacKay and Little had found farther east). 'The men are either too lazy or do not consider it their business to bring food.' Not only were they 'parsimonious' but they asked for payment what they wanted, steel tools, whether it was a potato or a cucumber, and the usual currency of sticks of tobacco had no value at all.

The people brought in a few handfuls of potatoes this morning so rice is going out all the time. This morning I planted in the village compound some pumpkin, cucumber, melon and corn seeds and explained to the people what they were and to look after them and transplant them. I also planted tomato seeds. They ought to do very well here and I hope someone in the future will reap the benefit though probably the people will demand an axe for a tomato, what they will ask for a pumpkin I don't like to think.

At Samberigi: 'Here I planted more seeds the people seeming very keen on them and worried me for seeds, but I have only enough to plant a few in each village.'

The earlier patrols commented on the friendliness of the people once the patrol had shown that their intentions were amiable. This time it began to occur to the Okani that once was interesting, twice gave everyone a chance of another look, but three times was becoming a habit to be discouraged.

Made camp at Keniogu the people were very friendly and helped to get fly poles. This evening Sergeant Marai told me that whilst sitting in the dubu at Tiabrigi a man had made threatening

motions at him and had given him to understand that if the Government slept there they would all be killed and eaten. I did not see this performance myself otherwise I would have camped there and given the people an opportunity of trying to carry out their threats. The Sergeant also told me that whilst passing through Mogolovo in the rear of the carriers another man threatened him . . . It was a very fortunate thing that the Sergeant happened to be on the spot as a young A.C. Irahe had loaded his rifle being frightened at the man's attitude and had only been stopped from firing in the nick of time.

While still in the Tugi Valley

I had a talk with some of the men in the dubu this evening, I asked them why they stood on the track and said 'Ba' to us. I told them that a Government party was not used to being spoken to like that. An old man said that the younger men were enquiring why the Government had come three times, that they did not understand the reason of the visits, and that some of the men had said that they did not want the Government to come, as it upset their business. I explained matters as well as I could, and said that the Government meant them no harm, and wanted to be friends, but that we were coming to visit them often, and that it would be just as well not to tell us to go away when we did come. Forapa this evening tells me that he is sick and has been 'purupuried' [bewitched] by the Tugi people. He complains of pains in the stomach so I gave him a good dose of salts.

The Donugu people were still welcoming and helpful. The headman Iari had come down to visit Kikori and Saunders refers to the guide Iari but does not make clear whether he is the same man. The guide Iari was very distressed to learn that Saunders, after visiting the west valleys, proposed to go by the north track from Kerabi village to visit Dono in the Siri District to the east. Iari warned him that they would be killed and refused to come any farther, even when offered an axe. 'The Okani people seem very frightened of the Dono.' They camped the first night in a valley ringed by high mountains and then, continuing due east, saw a village perched on a hill top. Before visiting it they paused for lunch and suddenly Iari dashed up. He had gone to Kerabi by the usual route, collected supporters and come after the patrol. They came to Warigi, a Dono village where the people seemed friendly though the women's houses were covered with bushes and no women were seen. But Iari said 'Dono are not friends'. At Siririgi the people were nervous and remained huddled in the *dubu*, even after the chief received a knife and some boys some calico.

'Tari and his friends kept aloof all the time . . . I cannot help thinking that these people are oppressed and the Okani are the oppressors. They are much smaller than the Samberigi folk and evidently an entirely different type, speaking a different language.'

They had very few steel axes and mostly very inferior native implements. 'Their dubs are stacked with war arrows and spears.'

The people were nervous at Dono and stood about fully armed—the Kerabi men were frightened but stayed until Saunders rose to go back, when they ran ahead of him down the track.

Everywhere he had been asking about the Erawa River, whether there was any place where it could be crossed, and what villages or tribes lived on the other side, but no one could tell him anything. On his return to Kerabi a Kerabi man came and whispered 'Kuarigi' and Saunders gathered that there was a track to a *mina* bridge and that there were many villages on the other side. By this time Saunders had only enough rice left to reach Kikori.

A.C. Rentoul was sent from Port Moresby to go to the Mt Murray district to report on a site for a permanent police camp. He arrived at Kikori unexpectedly on 12 March 1925 when the police and the launch were away with Cawley in the Gopi district. While he was waiting for their return he read the reports of the earlier patrols and only then discovered that they had all travelled in January when the gorges were dry.

Had I an opportunity of discussing the matter with His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor I should have suggested an attempt to reach the valley by way of the Purari or a northern branch of that river, probably identical with the Erawa that fast running stream noted by Mr A.R.M. Flint, but unfortunately owing to His Excellency's absence that was impossible, and my instructions were definite.'

No one was happy about the project. Sergeant Marai was 'seized with pains' when he heard of the trip and Kenaga, a Sirebi interpreter, quickly disappeared. The V.C. at Dopima offered to go, though, 'the first optimist I have met in the D.D.' The party of 109 included Forapa, and the V.C. of Ututi 'with an old Bara man who now lived at Ututi', and ten Bara carriers. Unfortunately the Gopi district had been in the throes of an influenza epidemic, and one by one the police came down with it. Some managed to stay on their feet until they reached Donugu. This time they were issued with an extra grey shirt and blanket, 'they do not seem able to stand the cold and and wet and most of them are far from well'. Rentoul commented on the healthy appearance of the valley people and their freedom from skin disease and noticed the

contrast of silence from the sleeping village and the noisy coughs and snorts from the camp.

Rentoul was away only a little over three weeks and made a quick tour of the Tugi villages to the west, and north to Kerabi, leaving out the Siri district and the Tiabrigi villages.

The track to the Tugi territory from Donugu was overgrown 'showing there had been little communication of late'. They went to Niai No. 2 guided by three members of a Tugi hunting expedition whom they had earlier met unexpectedly to their mutual astonishment.

... we were in full view of the seventy or so armed men lined up behind the first stockade. To our call of 'Kami kami kamio' no response came. The ascent thus proved rather trying to the Goaribari carriers not improved by the fact that V.C. Gihari of Ututi became hysterical and rushed back to tell them that a big fight was imminent. The A.C.s stood it well however and continued the ascent. As we neared the stockade a Tugi man suddenly ran out and embraced our Okani guide, and probably saved a dangerous situation as all opposition quickly melted away and we were soon surrounded by Tugi. To show how highly strung these people are—I had called for the chief, a fine old man, and after explaining that I desired to camp in his village for the night, I picked up a new 18" knife and presented it to him. Immediately a dozen potblackened arms shot out and a dozen of the Tugi struggled for possession ... I was so annoyed that unconsciously I joined in the fray and with A.C. Underari's help succeeded in returning the knife to its rightful owner. Then these strange people instead of being angry, laughed heartily and poked at me with their fingers in a most familiar manner. These Tugi people ... are very 'explosive' and a stupid A.C. or a thieving carrier could quickly cause a dangerous disturbance.

Speaking of the Kerabi villagers he observed:

The people were friendly but still had that distant manner of all the Okani. Unlike most Papuans who will instinctively help a carrier or even a policeman with a heavy burden, these people will stand round and watch tired people erecting flies without attempting to help. All the time they seem to be bored to death and just longing for the visitors to depart and leave them in peace. So far as their alleged stinginess is concerned I am of opinion that their reason for not supplying more food stuff is (1) that they do not desire to encourage the visitor and (2) that they have no great surplus of food to offer.

He had a long talk with the man at Samberigi village

explaining to them the position of the government and how we desired only peace amongst all men. The Okani men of course take up the position that their own conduct is beyond reproach and that all evil comes from the Tugi . . . but I think that there is little to choose between them. Personally I prefer the Tugi because they are proper men and admit their own delinquencies without evasion. . . . Packing up gear for carrying and interviewing members of the Okani from surrounding villages. I have gone into the matter of arranging for a site for a Police Camp. These people would be quite willing to allow the Government to camp anywhere in return for presents, but of course the question of the purchase and transfer of a site was quite unintelligible to them. In any other portion of the Territory I have been in I have always found the natives at least interested in one's party, and willing to do such tasks as water carrying or obtaining firewood for small rewards. But with these strange people it is different. Calico and beads stir their interest very little, and the only things that excite them at all are large knives or tomahawks. They want them for next to nothing however, and the idea of doing menial tasks to secure them, does not appeal to them at all. A party of seven Okanis have promised to accompany me as far as Bara village, but I learn that it was their intention to visit that village anyhow, and they are glad of our company. It is a start anyway in the matter of carrying.

They returned down the gorge not a moment too soon. In the first gorge the water had begun to rise 'in places it amounted to climbing down a waterfall with water over one's waist'. In the night they heard a rumbling like distant thunder and saw a wall of white water coming round the bend carrying trees. In the morning the waters had subsided and one can imagine their apprehension as they entered the second gorge in the afternoon, and hurried the two miles between those looming cliffs listening for a rush of water, and their relief when they saw the ladders still in position at the last block.

Our seven Okani carriers are quite contented and mix freely with A.C. and carriers. When erecting camp they did not assist in any way and when heavy rain came on they calmly took refuge under my own fly much to the disgust of the police who consider them the most awful people they have ever met.

Rentoul's report on 'The practicability of a police camp' concluded that at present a police camp was not feasible until an all-weather track could

be found, as the camp would be cut off during the wet season. The difficulties of the track were also against any trading, recruiting, or development (and the soil was very thin).

I finally recommend that a portion of any funds to be allotted for the establishment of a permanent police camp in the Samberigi Valley, be made available at the close of the south-east season for an attempt by launch and single canoes to reach the Erewa River by way of the upper waters of the Purari or a northern affluent so that the current of Government influence may be advanced from the south-east into the valleys beyond.

Since the report mentions money it is interesting to consider the costs of these expeditions. The patrol reports include a list of stores and trade goods taken and returned, account for anything lost or destroyed, and give the total cost. Until about 1923 the police rations were included though the patrol officers always supplied their own food. The first two patrols, which included police rations, cost £81.17s.6d. (Woodward's base camp in 1918) and £124.7s.4d. (Flint and Saunders).⁸ These were the longest, eighty-one days and ninety-four days.

Payments to carriers, hire of canoes and guides, presents to headmen and buying sago were made in trade goods which were listed at cost. The statement for Woodward's base camp under the heading 'Pay 25 Carriers @ 30/-' lists the trade goods expended and the cost comes to £21.19s.4d.—but 25 times 30s. comes to £37.10s., so £15.10s.8d. was saved. Considering the stringent finances at their disposal one cannot really blame the authorities though I think they would have cracked down pretty sharply on any outside organisation that followed the same practice.

The next three patrols cost much less as the police rations were not included and they were not as long: Woodward and Saunders⁹ were away for 41 days, £70.17s.3d.; Saunders¹⁰ for 31 days, £36.9s.2d.; and Rentoul¹¹ for 32 days, £35.9s.3d. Their parties, except for the first week while they manhandled cases of axes and knives, biscuits, sugar, cartridges, kerosene, blankets, buckets, not to mention those weighty Martini Enfield rifles, and the rice and meat, up the gorge, averaged about forty-five.

No one went to the Samberigi again until the beginning of 1929. The depression no doubt had something to do with it—not so much to save the £40 but because opening new areas would mean recurring expenditure. There was also considerable attention paid to the Turama area which was closer to hand. There remained, however, a gap on the map and B.W. Faithorn and C. Champion were sent to trace the Erewa River 'from the vicinity of Mt Pratt to its confluence with the Ivo-Purari river or to the coast.'¹²

They set out in the beginning of January (and found *sipora* [lime] trees 'planted by Mr Rentoul's cookboy' fruiting at the base camp), and went

on to the village of Sibereu. Here they found ten Okani who were on their way down to Ututi to trade but decided to return with the patrol as guides. This time they carried 300 feet of wire 'strung on the slope of the descent' instead of the sapling and lawyer vine ladders to negotiate the gorge. They came to the village of Kitiboro just before they reached the Murray Range:

where a middle-aged native with arms folded and tomahawk in his belt confronted us. He rather objected to our presence and told us to go away. [The interpreter] Aimai was told to tell him that we were on our way to Samberigi and that we came as friends. A few minutes later two youths appeared and recognising L/Cpl Pugini came forward and greeted him 'O Pugini kamio' and embraced him. The middle-aged individual now came forward, still suspicious, and wanted to know our business. The two youths explained . . . and . . . asking us to wait . . . the three Okani natives went back to their village. Suspecting that they wanted to gain time to warn their womenfolk I waited for what I considered to be a reasonable time and then continued on to the village . . . Pugini was recognised by the chief Iauwa and again embraced as a friend. . . .

At Besabu (Bisabura?) 'another batch of carriers' was sent back to Kikori. 'I intend to carry on with 2 N.C.O., 8 A.C., and 41 carriers. The Okani people appear quite friendly but are loath to part with food'. In fact, as a result of desertions at Besabu, and sickness, the journey was continued from Ferimi with 2 N.C.O.s, 5 A.C.s and 8 carriers. The Samberigi Valley moved Faithorn: ' . . . a pageantry of beauty before our eyes. Sunlit valley and wooded slopes of emerald green gave way to the dark blue hills of distant ranges where pinnacle peak and dome shaped summit lay silhouetted against the sky line of heavenly blue. At our feet spread wild flowers of many colours and names unknown to me.'

They went west to Ferimi 'where I hoped to be sufficiently high . . . to locate the Erawa'. A large party of Niai people, who refused to carry, accompanied the party and presently he noticed that they were all armed. It was difficult to explain that he was making a friendly call on the Ferimi, just as he had on the Niai, and that if they wished to come they must put down their weapons. 'One or two bellicose individuals told me to go on and were becoming impatient. To let them know I was in no hurry I asked for my stool and then seated myself on it on the track'. Cpl Nakea and A.C. Ebani were told to go ahead to Ferimi while Faithorn and A.C. Bati waited for Champion and the carriers. Together they hurried on to Ferimi, ahead, they hoped, of the Niai.

Ferimi is at the extreme summit of a hill about 800 feet. At first the ascent is . . . gradual . . . halfway the slope rises abruptly

until one is within 100 feet of the summit—the slope, absolutely barren, rises almost perpendicularly and one scrambles on hands and knees . . . to reach the first barricade just below the summit. The face of the hill is scarred with grey limestone insecurely embedded in the surface soil and a sore temptation to grasp at in making the ascent . . .

The Ferimi were friendly but timid. There was no water at the village the nearest supply coming from Tiribrigi Creek, an hour's walk to the north.

There was a strange furtiveness about the natives as if always in fear of something, a natural outcome, I suppose, of living in continual fear of raiding parties. Their only enemies, as far as I could judge, are the Niai . . . a more virile tribe and superior in numbers. The population of Ferimi would not exceed 50 . . . all told . . . the Ferimi natives had killed one of the Niai natives some time ago and the Niai people are waiting to pay back.

The Erewa was to the north-east of Ferimi and they reached it the next day: about 120 feet wide running south-east. For the next few days they followed the course of the river, which had chewed its way through the limestone keeping south-east or east. They found a *mina* bridge crossing it, and were able to travel by a track which ran along the left bank, until they reached the village of Kepa.

They had been put on the track by a Kabire man who 'incidentally pointed out several villages on the north side of the Iaro river. It seems to me that north of the Erewa and Iaro rivers many villages exist and that the district is thickly populated'.

One thing I noticed about these people was that they do not walk about armed with weapons like the Samberigi and Tugi do. They give one the impression that they are a peace-loving crowd with no axe to grind and just desire to be left alone to live quietly and contentedly amidst their own immediate surroundings. I do not think they had seen a white man before. The striking of a match filled them with wonderment and when a box of matches was given to one of them it was really amusing to see the futile attempts made to strike one into flame.

Peace-loving the Kabire no doubt were but when Faithorn found that eight blankets and five tomahawks were missing he went back 'two camps' to retrieve them. In the course of the search of the houses a policeman shot a man but the account of the event was sent, under separate cover, to the

Government Secretary. They found all the missing things but left two tomahawks and a blanket in payment for the man who was killed. 'Unfortunately the Kabire people took to the hills and in the absence of an interpreter it was not possible to get in touch with them again.'

Kepa, due north of the Kerabi Valley, was on the left bank of the Erewa separated from the river by a low ridge of limestone. 'The people were very friendly and welcomed us to their village with the customary greeting of "kamio" . . . had heard of the shooting at Kabire and were a little nervous but when the circumstances were explained to them as well as it was possible to do so without the aid of an interpreter they seemed to be more at ease and helped us to pitch camp.'

From Kepa they could see the village of Webu about six miles away to the east. The track was a mixture of slush and swamp and when they reached the hill on which the village stood they observed that the slope was thronged with men who called out, but no one knew whether they were hostile or welcoming, so the patrol came on gently but cautiously. As it happened they were quite willing to be friendly and helpful. They helped set up camp, brought firewood, water and food—for which they were paid—and later brought a pig which was paid for with a tomahawk, beads and salt.

The Webu people traded with the Okani and the Dono and it was found that A.C. Kamaia, who came from Gorau (Purari delta) and who spoke the languages of the upper Era people, was able to talk to the Webu. They learnt that it was possible to travel on the river 'for four or five days'. As A.C. Ebani had trodden on a bamboo spike in the track, Faithorn had limestone cuts on his legs which were not healing, and several carriers were lame, this was good news and they made four rafts. The current was not as swift as had been expected. Both banks were cultivated, mainly sago and bananas. As they floated past a village the people started to run away but Kamaia called to them and presently 'we had several canoes running alongside our stately craft and friendly relations were established' with the exchange of tobacco and salt for sweet potatoes, taro, bananas, breadfruit, sago, beans and manioc. 'There is apparently no shortage of food in this district.' 'It has been a really pleasant day and the beautiful scenery we passed through was appreciated after the weeks of strenuous trekking up hills, through swamps and over limestone ridges. Average width of river 100 yards. Soundings were taken—we were not able to touch bottom with a 6-fathom pole.'

The next day they set out on the rafts, passed a village where the men, unarmed, were lined up along the river bank, and an hour later came to rapids. Only two days of comfort instead of four or five.

The last two days and the next part of the journey was following the river where it takes a curve round the Soaru Range. The village before the rapids was Udunebi and the men said there were many villages on the range but they had never visited them. They wore cassowary quills

To the Mountains in the North

in loops through nose and ears, and forehead bands of kauri shells; and as they propelled their canoes with bamboo poles they were pleased to be given the raft paddles. Though two men promised to guide the party to the next village four days away, when it came to the point they said they were too frightened to go.

They cut a track along the banks of the river though aware that travel on ridges a little distance away might have been easier.

... The day has been eventful for the number of large creeks that had to be negotiated ... and the number of dead bodies found lying among the debris at various intervals along the river bank. Six bodies and one skull ... death had taken place apparently about a week ... hope to elucidate the mystery ... at the first village we came to.

He does not mention this again.

At 1 p.m. we moved along the face of a recent landslide where the fallen boulders rolling down the hillside and into the river had formed dangerous rapids ... Crossing the slope was an arduous performance as the boulders tended to move as soon as any weight was placed upon them. At this moment to add to the terrors of the place a thunderstorm descended on us and each clap of thunder caused nervous glances to be cast towards the cliff above where leaning trees and more boulders were hanging precariously over the slopes waiting for the first puff of wind or heavy rain to drop them down to the river below. One hurried past the beastly place as best one could.

On another day they had to make ladders to surmount a steep cliff that ran flush to the water. When they came down to the water's edge again they saw a *mina* suspension bridge across the river. They hoped this meant a village but instead they came to a higher, steeper precipice and had to make more ladders. 'The task was a difficult one as only a few men at a time could work on the narrow ledge that gave one a secure foothold.' A quarter of an hour after climbing that precipice they came to another one—so they camped in a garden patch.

After heavy rain the river was rising and as they made a ladder to scale yet another precipice.

The river was thundering past us at a terrific rate, a wrack of flying spray and tossing crests. Huge trees ... would come floating steadily down river and as they approached the rapids would gather speed and crash against the boulders with ever increasing velocity.'

They found a native track about 300 feet above the river level and which led to a sago patch. They came to a clearing and saw:

. . . a wonderful glimpse of the narrow valley lay beneath us. The Erewa . . . running from west to due east and coming in head on from the east was another large stream which just before its junction with the Erewa was joined by a smaller stream running in from the north. The united waters then turned practically due south . . . The Junction of these streams appear to be within 1½ miles east of the insurmountable obstacles we had encountered the day before.

As they had only rice enough for three days they stopped to make sago. Then they followed a native track seeing gardens and huts but no people. L/Cpl Pugini and 2 A.C.s were always sent ahead to discover the state and direction of the track but on the third day they saw Pugini's returning footprints and realised they had missed him. They halted by a creek and presently shouts from the carriers drew attention to a native lying dead on the bank. Pugini and the two A.C.s arrived an hour later saying that they had been attacked and fired on by a party of natives who were trying to surround them. Pugini had fired and killed a man. 'Subsequently L/Cpl Pugini and A.C. Marikopi were deprived of their rifles and equipment.'

In spite of this unfortunate event they met men in canoes who, though they kept their distance and could not understand A.C. Kamaia, moved along the opposite bank and by shouts and waves pointed out the best way along the bank. 'It was very good of them I thought. . . .' Later the men left their bows and arrows behind, and presently rather timidly gave sago to A.C. Ebani and A.C. Gija and indicated that there was a sago patch a little way inland. Faithorn decided to camp and make sago and build rafts.

Champion went across the river and climbed to a village on the hill. He managed to persuade the two remaining men to smoke with him but Kamaia could only pick up a word here and there. 'The river here is called the Pio. We understand that another river flows into the Pio a little lower down stream and that a big village called Tura is a day's distance away close to where the Government walks about.'

They made sago and rafts for the next three days and were surprised that the natives on the other bank watched them but kept aloof and silent. A canoe from downstream arrived and the six occupants were greeted by the natives on the bank. It was found that they spoke a language some of the carriers could understand and said that they had been sent for to warn the party of the big rapids that were ahead and that they would all be killed if they attempted it.

Oddly enough Faithorn found it necessary to justify taking this advice:

I had seen enough rapids during the last few weeks to convince me of the foolishness of attempting to raft through them and to ignore the advice of those better informed would be the act of a mad man, so once more we abandoned the rafts on which so much labour had been spent . . . The Sine people promised to guide us on condition that we would not attempt to raft the river.

The guides wanted to take a short cut across country where the Pio made a loop and had to be persuaded that Faithorn wanted to follow the big river through all its twists and bends. In the afternoon they saw on the right bank, dominating the landscape, 'reared the ugly limestone peak known as Masuwer resembling a Sphinx's head . . . any attempt to progress along the right bank would have been frustrated at the slopes of this mountain'. The Sine guides refused to lead the party to look at the rapids—they said they were afraid to go near them and there was no track, and went away.

By crossing a recent avalanche, and scaling two spurs that blocked the way they came to the gorge—MacKay's Hathor Gorge.

The river at this point passes through a gorge-like valley with the slopes on either side running down to the water's edge. The river itself is a raging mass of muddy foam leaping from boulder to boulder and smashing huge timbers to pieces as they go flying off at a tangent from one boulder to another. To be heard one has to bawl out orders at the top of one's voice, so boisterously does the river forge its way along. I have given the name of the river at this point Masuwer Gorge after the name of the grim looking peak that towers above it like some hideous monster waiting to crush those that pass below.

They returned to the camp having proved that the Sine were perfectly right. They set out and followed the Erewa until the track stopped at the foot of a steep spur jutting into the river, which they negotiated with 'a bridge platform' and in the afternoon they came to what Faithorn describes as 'a tricky sector'.

The A.C. hanging on to every little shrub and twig that was growing on the limestone crags, moved along very cautiously, step by step, and following in their steps I could see that it was going to be a ticklish undertaking . . . Up the landslide we now climbed groping for the track in the gathering dusk and the rain descending on us. A.C. Marikopi . . . walked straight on to the almost obliterated track and led us over the hill to the other slope descending to the river . . .

Long Ago is Far Away

The leaders reached camp at 5.40 but Champion and the last carriers did not arrive until 7.30. 'The last two hours travelling was like a nightmare and never again do I wish to repeat the performance.' The next day the Sine guides rejoined them. They had come along to show them where to camp and get timber for rafts. 'They told us we had come to the end of the rapids and it would be safe to raft the river to the Purari.'

6

To the Paibuna and Omati rivers

Goaribari Island is composed of the silt washed down the Omati and Paibuna rivers. The Omati rises in the limestone ridges just south of the Kikori River as it flows from the west before turning south to join the Sirebi. The Paibuna rises near the Darai Hills and flows beside the Turama and for some miles from the coast contributes to a great swamp full of sago. Ryan's patrol in 1913 crossed the country from the Kikori base camp across the headwaters of the Omati, south to the Darai Hills and then struck north-west; Thompson returned from this point and came down the Paibuna. For the next three years the station was preoccupied with the coastal villages, and the hunt for the men concerned in Kirby's death combed the area between the Kikori and the Omati very thoroughly. There were native tracks running across from the Mati and Tewa creeks and *komibati* and canoe-making camps hidden away in the sago swamps and on the creeks.

There was little to choose in fact between the so-called villages and the camps, and inland there were no villages on the river banks. Patrol officers Dudley and Murray, with two sergeants and fifteen A.C.s, raided Pepeha in November 1916 to catch the murderers of a Gibidai man, both villages which were near the Paibuna River. The village constable of Iowa (nearer the coast) had been told to collect information about the Pepeha people but 'finally admitted he had not been near the place because he was frightened' but said that he knew a place where they might find a track. They waded through a sago swamp for about an hour and found themselves suddenly in a large clearing about a mile long and from 2 to 4 chains wide, with logs laid to walk down the middle. They later discovered that the village was fortified by five such clearings so that it was impossible to approach the village without being seen. As well, about two-thirds of the way along, there was a guard house with two men on watch to give the alarm. About thirty men were grouped in front of the *dubu* and on the entrance platform, shouting defiance while the women streamed away from the other end of the *dubu*. Dudley and Murray kept coming in spite of three showers of arrows which did not hit anyone and to which they made no reply. They caught one man and then the Pepeha ran into the swamp.

'After resting a while in the *dubu*' search parties were sent after them and secured three men. The prisoners said they had been expecting an attack from the Gibidai. Dudley reported also that on the way back to the launch Sergeant Gegera, in the dinghy, was attacked by a crocodile and 'had he not jumped forward it would surely have got him'.

The minutes on this report show the sort of discipline exercised over the patrol officers. Chinnery, the Resident Magistrate, sending the report to the Government Secretary, commended the restraint of Dudley and Murray 'which probably averted a serious affray'. The Government Secretary replied that 'His Excellency agrees with me that the patrol officer was too forbearing. His Excellency adds: "He should not risk the lives of his men in this way; it is a fault in the right direction, but still a fault". The Government Secretary added a complaint that no map accompanied this patrol report.¹

The Pepeha were in trouble again late in 1918 when it was reported by the V.C. of Mubugoa (at the mouth of the Omati) that a party of Mubugoa had been camping at a *komibati* for three months. Some Kibeni people came down from their village further north, camped near the Mubugoa men and somehow persuaded them to visit Pepeha and bring some of them back on a return visit. This they did and what was their horror and dismay, they implied, when the Kibeni ambushed them, killed and ate the Pepeha. Woodward arrested the Mubugoa men—among whom he discovered an escaped prisoner who had been at large for ten months. He then raided Kibeni village at 4 a.m. and caught 'only' eleven men as the *dubu* had more exits than was usual. He left Corporal Sura and A.C. Daivi at a garden house at Aiwa to catch two of the Kibeni men while he arranged to send the prisoners to Kikori under escort. Unfortunately Daivi fired at a Kibeni man when he resisted with arrows. An arrow hit an Aiwa man instead of Daivi and the cartridge hit the Kibeni in the face.²

In September 1919 Woodward and Johnston went to the Paibuna by launch with ten police and four time-expired prisoners, to arrest escaped prisoners who were Mubugoa and Kibeni men. After describing searching through creeks and visiting *komibati*, acting on information from the ex-prisoners and a Gibidai man but unable to find anyone in any of the places Woodward concludes: 'I am convinced that the ex-prisoners and the Gibidai man have been deliberately misleading us as to the whereabouts of the Kibeni people. This is, of course, quite a natural thing for them to do, nevertheless it is most annoying.'

It was not only annoying because, in addition to sitting in the launch waiting for the tide 'surrounded by clouds of sandflies' Johnston also reported a rather terrifying experience they had all met with in the night.

Whilst slowly paddling along by moonlight [on the way to a garden where the prisoners had been reported] Mr Johnston had been suddenly startled by a piercing yell from the stern of the

canoe, at the same time the canoe received a severe bump which nearly capsized it. A huge alligator . . . had attacked the canoe and tried to drag one of the police (A.C. Karau) into the water. It was this A.C. who had uttered the yell, and he had saved himself from a horrible death by throwing himself flat in the canoe. Twice the alligator charged the canoe with open jaws and on the second occasion he succeeded in getting his forefeet over the side of the canoe. However, another A.C. (Siwaga) fortunately had the presence of mind to beat the reptile off with his paddle. . . . I examined the canoe and found that in two places the timber on one side had been bitten out to the depth of half an inch by the alligator. Besides this there were deep scratches in the timber made by the brute's claws.³

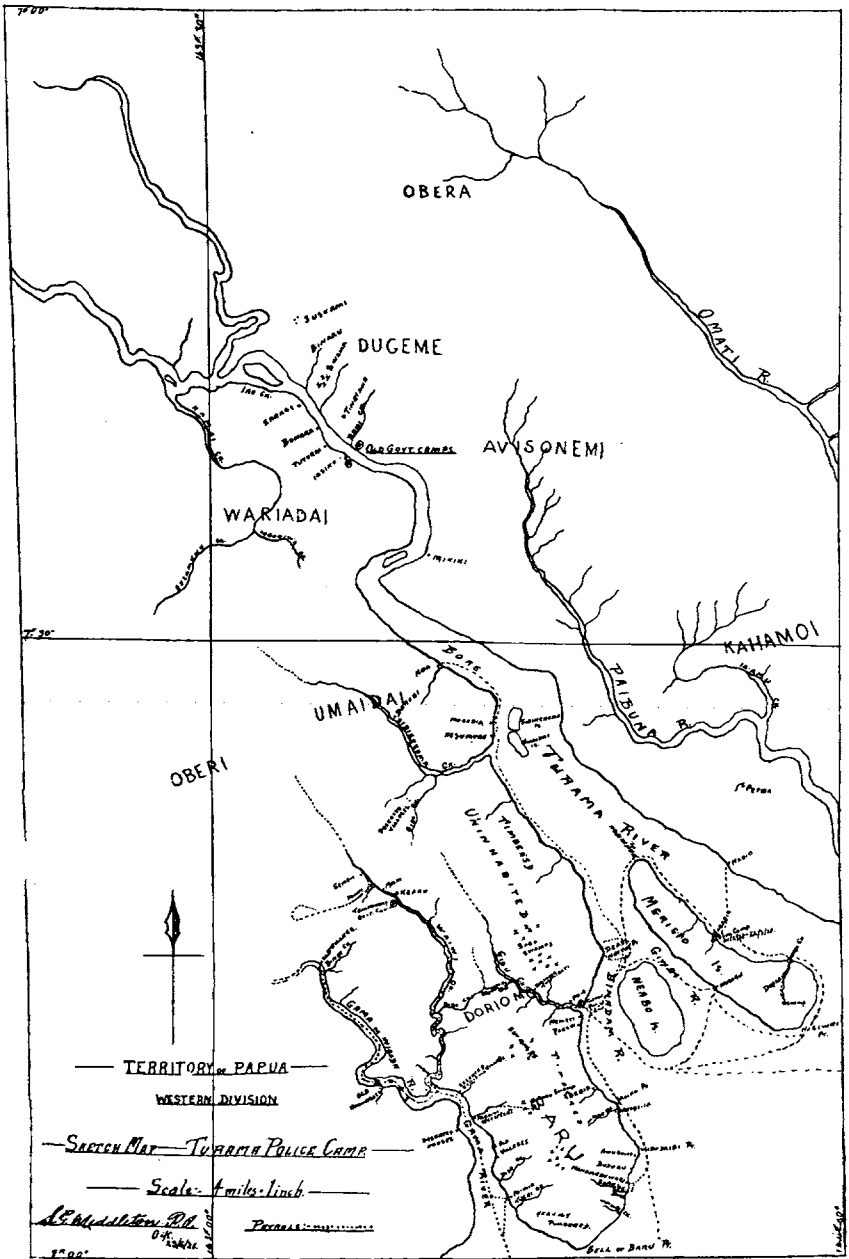
There were still four prisoners at large and in February Johnston with seventeen police set off in the whaleboat to find them. The investigation of the creeks was complicated by heavy rain but he was unable to use the whaleboat awning because of overhanging boughs. Finally they caught one man who gave information which sent the police to a small village—but the wanted men had run away. Nine of the village people returned with the police to assure Johnston 'that they were anxious to have these escapees caught so that their court would be finished and then they could live in peace as now they were not living in any settled place and were tired of the Government continually coming at night'.⁴

The next month Johnston went to visit Pepeha. He sent a Nabio interpreter to tell the chief to come and see him—Gavada the chief and another man responded, both very timid. Johnston assured the chief of his peaceful intentions and was guided 'over one of the worst roads it has ever been my experience to walk on'. The village was farther north than that Dudley and Murray visited, but the system of avenues in a five-acre clearing had been used again. 'One has to walk in the centre where the only logs are and a fall would mean almost complete submersion in mud and slush. . . . They appeared to be a harassed little tribe not only by the Kibeni but the Umadai and the Wariadai tribes of the west bank of the Turama.' When they were assured that the Kibeni had been punished the Pepeha promised to make a new village on the river. The population was fifty-five: twenty-nine men, seventeen women, ten boys and nine girls. 'Presented the men with ramis and women with tobacco'.⁵

The new Pepeha village on the river was called Koperami and they had put up one large *dubu* and three women's houses, well-built and completely empty. Nor were the people back in their old villages. There had been rumours of a 'supposed affray' but apart from some charred bones in a house across the river there was nothing, and no one in the coastal villages could tell Johnston anything when he came in April.⁶

This was awkward because just at this moment the Natalite Company

Long Ago is Far Away



4. Patrol 3/21-22, Paibuna and Omati rivers; patrol 20/23-24, the Kikori River Villages (Commonwealth Archives); Mobi River District *Annual Report*, 1926-27

wanted to buy sago land on the Paibuna and the owners were Pepeha people. Another month went by before the Pepeha were found at Gibidai where 'everything' was explained to them. Two of the owners had taken their wives into the bush for childbirth and the remaining owners refused to go to Kikori for payment so in this case the payment was brought to them and handed over. Natalite was the name of a commercial alcohol distilled from sago palms. The *Papuan Courier* (20/8/20) quoted the prospectus from *Smith's Weekly* (a Sydney publication) which predicted that the Sydney landed cost would be 9½d. a gallon and that the company would spend £126,000 which would include the cost of a 'tanker steamer'. The promoters of this venture, described as 'a scientific party', had come to find a suitable area in March 1919. Johnston escorted S.G. MacDonnell ('whose knowledge of Papua was gained during a five-years residence in the districts to be visited') up the Era River; and Professor Harding ('a science honorman, Sydney University') up the Paibuna. 'It is intended to traverse the Fly River and Delta Country and should their investigations prove equal to their hopes a company is to be formed with a capital of £250,000 . . . the Papuan Government, the B.N.G.D.Co., and others are extending every assistance . . . (*Papuan Courier* 9/1/20).

W.T. Panton and Swansen, representatives of the Natalite Company of Australia Ltd, arrived in the Division in May 1922. The Company had a lease of 'about twenty miles of sago country on the banks of the Paibuna River. The necessary machinery for the manufacture of fuel alcohol from the sago palm is expected to arrive in the near future'.⁷

Woodward went on a patrol up the Paibuna, accompanied by Panton 'to inspect the Natalite sago leases'. I can find no references to Panton's earlier career and if he had not seen this area before the experience was probably depressing. They travelled by whaleboat as there was no fuel for the launch and camped the first night in 'a most unsavoury swamp' as there was no dry land to pitch camp. After a slow trip against the current they reached Pewati creek and set out to visit Gibidai about six miles east 'and a fair proportion of the journey was done kneedeep in water . . . received a hearty welcome from the inhabitants'.⁸

By May 1923 Johnston was able to 'anchor at the Natalite Company's property'. Panton was having trouble with the Goaribari who were making sago camps on the Company's property and destroying a large number of trees to get at the sago grub—a valued food.⁹ Johnston did not mention whether Panton was yet making any alcohol from the sago trees he was destroying.

In June 1923 Panton is recorded as having gone to Port Moresby by the *Varoe* but there is no mention of his return.*

In November 1925 Blyth escorted a Mr Lockwood to the Paibuna and

* W.T. Panton was appointed as a Surveyor in the Government Service in November 1923, *Annual Report* 1924–25.

Omati rivers 'to ascertain the possibilities of commercial development of the sago industry on similar lines to Sarawak . . . passed the old Natalite Company's site . . . the houses had fallen down and the clearing was rapidly becoming overgrown . . . Mr Lockwood so far does not seem impressed with the sago possibilities'.

Nothing more is heard of Lockwood and the people of the Paibuna continued to reap the sago and the sago grubs—if indeed they ever understood that their ownership had been threatened. The Pepeha people spoke a language of their own which was not understood by the Kibini, or the Gibidai, or the Kerewa (the Goaribari) which indicated that they were newcomers to the district—but where from? The Pepeha themselves told Woodward¹⁰ about Vimaio, a spirit in the form of a huge pig, now supposed to live on Morigio Island, who came to a place called Giwoi on the left bank of the Turama. Whilst rooting at the base of a tree for food he heard a droning sound coming from inside the tree and presently out of the hole he had made came many people including one named Sau. Vimaio told Sau and his people, who spoke one language, to go to a place named Bisio, on the Turama and make a village there. He told Nabio to take his people to Padari, further up the Turama, and Dadebi to go to Morigio Island. This was not regarded by Woodward as 'reliable information', and it was not until 1929, when Leo Austen, who was combining patrol work with collecting material for a thesis on the Turama people, to be written 'when time permits', found that the Pepeha spoke the same language as people to the west of the Turama, the Obesi. Before this was explained their old enemies the Kibeni and the Gibidai were on amicable terms with them and all came out of their swamps to the river bank. This 'peace and amity' was attributed by Woodward to the arrest of the Kibeni after the Pepeha ambush in 1919, though as the Pepeha were, by 1922, reduced to 'about 40' they may well have felt the need for compromise.

Of all the people of the delta I find my imagination stirred by a sight of that dwindling tribe moving east through the sago swamps, retaining their language and legends, their system of defence, collecting their food and protecting their wives, surrounded by more aggressive people who regarded them as natural prey.

Johnston travelled, in 1921, from Ututi Creek across country to the Omati to find the Gimini Kairi people and to visit the Iesso, people who lived on the Omati due west of Ututi.¹¹ He went in August of all months of the year and reported that, except for about eight hours, it rained for the whole sixteen days he was away. Rice and matches were lost because 'the paint had rubbed off the swags on the limestone and on trees'. Two Iesso men guided the party and he found that the track ran through a steep valley carved out by the Omati River 'there seemed no point along the route at which one could ascend and the country seemed particularly rough'.

It seemed that Gimini-Kairi was not the name of a tribe but, translated, meant bush people. The most northern village, named Asanu, was built

on a plateau and protected by a chasm 'hundreds of feet deep' crossed by a narrow bridge, and by a stockade of *goro* palm with loopholes for arrow fire. It was said that these fortifications had been built after an attack by the Bara people who lived north of the Sirebi. The people (25 men, 20 women and 10 children), who were noticeably light-skinned, were friendly and hospitable and gave Johnston a roast taro. He was putting salt on it when

I thought to give one of them a little bit. He took it and it was a long time before he would put it in his mouth, but he eventually did and after a few seconds hesitation which was interesting to watch, he jumped up and ran round the verandah insisting on all having a taste. I inquired as to whether they had ever tasted it before, and was told that he had never done so. I am surprised that a trade in this has not sprung up between these people and the coast folk. They made frantic appeals for more and I was glad to be able to give them a little coarse salt that I had with me. This they carefully wrapped up in leaves.

From Asanu he travelled almost due west to visit the Obera people, by way of a narrow gorge cut by a small creek which 'tore through . . . practically forming a long series of cascades. It is very noticeable in these districts that roads are not found except in the vicinity of a village. They apparently choose the beds of creeks to travel in.' They crossed the Omati by a felled tree and climbed to 800 feet. 'The temperature began to get very keen and in conjunction with the unceasing rain made everyone uncomfortable.'

The Obera people were dark-skinned and closer in type to the Kerewa (coastal) people, and spoke the Iesso language. They had trading relations through Kibeni with Pai-i-a (at the mouth of the Omati) and fought with the Turama tribes. Johnston camped at Baire-iu where, after everyone had run away and then been persuaded by the guides to return, they were willing to tell of villages a long way farther north across the Kiko but not to give any information about the Obera people.

It took two days to travel twenty-three miles to Kibeni on the Paibuna: the first part rough limestone, uninhabited and waterless, and then along the banks of the Paibuna. He called in at Gibidai and Pepeha after Kibeni: 'It is pleasing to report that all these tribes that were a short time ago living amidst perpetual tribal strife are now all existing in peace and unity, the worst enemies now being the best of friends . . . the Paibuna when first I visited it on several occasions and found no signs of habitation now presents quite a flourishing scene, with the . . . gardens of the various tribes.'

Johnston went again across country the following year to visit the Avisonimi people who lived between the Paibuna and the Turama¹² and six months later Saunders crossed from the headwaters of the Omati to the

Turama following in part the route Johnston had taken in 1921¹³. The Avisonimi were having trouble with the Wariadai that year and he made a second visit two months later but no one was at home.¹⁴

Early in 1925 Cawley travelled north from the Omati headwaters to the Kikori River above the rapids. The village constable of the Iessa villages, named Bebe, had gone as a guide with Saunders, and Cawley found that, in the intervening three months, Bebe had amalgamated the four small villages into one, Iba. Farther up the river the parent village of the Iessa had moved to a new village, Abu, on the creek of that name and close to the track to Kemerua because they had been constantly raided by the Bara people. Cawley was looking for the Ikobi people who were said to have come down towards Kemerua and left *puri-puri* 'magic' on the road which killed one of the Kemeru. The Ikobi were said to live near the headwaters of the Kikori and three Kemerua men said they knew the track. This turned out to be not strictly accurate as the guide lost his bearings twice, though as they were clambering about in the limestone country it was not surprising. With the aid of Cawley's compass the party finally came to the headwaters of the Himiti Creek and came on the Kikori River just above the rapids. They saw no sign of the Ikobi, but they had found a way to reach the villages along the upper reaches of the Kikori, and hoped to find a route farther west to the mountain valleys.¹⁵

The opportunity to make this exploration came when, in October 1926, a Dikima man, named Matokora, came to Kikori station and reported a raid by the Foi-i people on the Dikima village of Sosogo. This was remarkable to begin with because the Dikima people had not yet been visited by a patrol. Earlier in the year Sydney Chance and Clarence Healy had reached the Ikobi territory and visited Nawagera but turned south-west before they came to the Dikima.¹⁶

Chance and Healy set out at the end of November to visit Sosogo, investigate the raid, find the Foi-i people and try to reach the Samberigi by way of the Mobi River.¹⁷ This is the river which runs into the Kikori down which Staniforth Smith came in 1911, which thwarted Beaver and was the route by which Woodward and Saunders returned in 1923; but very little was known about the Foi-i who lived along the Mobi valley.

Healy was sent to enlist carriers for the expedition and it was suggested that he might try the villages round Aird Hill 'as these people are always being missed'. There is no mention of the number who engaged to come from that area and references to carriers during the journey are to Goaribaris or Kerewa but what was noted was the enthusiasm with which the men offered to come, so many that there were more than they needed. It was not disinterested love of work, or pay at 4d. a day, however, for when they reached Nawagera:

Nearly all of my carriers, who had brought along numerous spare calicoes and knives of their own accord, here requested

permission to trade and Mr Healy and I spent several hours supervising the bargaining. Bows and dogs' teeth very much in demand by the Kerewa carriers—the spare carriers told to parcel all their goods up for transport back to their villages.

They spent two days, with Nawagera guides, walking towards Sosogo and visiting three Ikobi villages now revealed. 'Reference to my patrol 13/25-26 will shew that I marked this area "uninhabited". Nowadays I know better!'

They found Matokora waiting at Sosogo. 'Such people as were left from the raid were living in shelters and were smeared with mud as a sign of mourning. I inspected the burnt down dubu and found out that everything agreed with what they had told us at Kikori.' The Foi-i had been friends with the Dikima and were visiting Keivi when they learned that Kuma of Nawagera had accepted 'the Government clothes': become a Village Constable. When this was reported to their chief Poi-i-mabu he collected a force, swooped down on the Dikima village and killed them all but one youth, Nimebu, who escaped from the *dubu*. Poi-i-mabu had killed the Dikima chief Kikawso.

The logic of an attack on Sosogo rather than the offending village Nawagera is not immediately clear, though it could be on the principle of a firebreak. The Ikobi were collaborators: the Dikima must be stopped.

Chance sent thirty carriers back to the station with mail and with about seven police, L/Cpl Nakea, a Samberigi interpreter from Irimuku, one from Iahu (east of Nawagera), and one from Iessa, and Matokora set out for the Kiko River 'not very far from the village'. It was 100 yards wide and only a narrow canoe to cross by, so that it took some time to get everyone over. On the north side they found an arrow sticking point out in the bank, said to be a defiant sign from the Foi-i. Chance also learnt that they had not yet finished crossing the Kiko—they were on an island two miles wide and the river on the other side was very wide and deep. They felled two trees and started making two canoes.

The next day a party of men appeared across the river

... and much unsatisfactory cross talk was indulged in. The interpretation was very slow as I had to speak to the L/C and from him talk went through Kewari of Iessa, Poivi of Iahu, and Matokora of Dikima to the Foi-i man. I was informed that Chief Poi-i-mabu was very annoyed with Kuma of Ikobi for accepting the V.C.'s uniform and further stated that his fathers had no Government clothes and he (Poi-i-mabu) didn't want any and that he was going to kill us all if we ventured across. He also stated that he was going across to kill Kuma as soon as we had gone.

At 2.30 p.m. we slid our two rough canoes down the bank

and joined them together and, as we were doing this the crowd on the opposite bank, after the usual yelled abuse, vanished.

Just before they went I was told by prisoner Dugi . . . that the people were about to come over and make friends with us, at my request, but that Poi-i-mabu told them not to. He seemed, by the way, to be acting so.

Joined the canoes together, and, in case of armed resistance to our crossing put a shield up in front to protect the paddlers and passengers from any arrows that would come from men hidden in the dense undergrowth.

It was at this point that Chance decided that it was more important to arrest the Foi-i raiders than to explore for a way into the valleys. 'My idea was that such truculence was intolerable and that Poi-i-mabu and his people must be taught what the Government desires.'

Had Poi-i-mabu had some command of the English language he would have expressed his opinion in very much the same way.

When the Dikima carriers realised that Chance was going to confront the raiders they all, except Matokora, ran away. 'No attempt was made to stop them and their act relieved me of the responsibility of returning them and made less to feed.'

Chance and Healy went upstream in a canoe they had found and mended with mud, tapa cloth, nails pulled out of tucker boxes, and wire. There were three villages about five miles north of the deserted village they had camped in (Udukarua) and they removed ten canoes and brought them back. They saw a canoe with four men in it and chased them but the men jumped overboard and into the bush leaving their weapons in the canoe. While they were moving camp to one of the villages farther along the Mobi Poivi of Iahu and Matokora disappeared because

I was informed that Matokora, whose total knowledge of the Government was gained in one trip to Kikori to report the raid, was disgusted with us because we did not shoot the Foi-i people when we had the chance of doing so before, when they were swimming the river.

Again, it seems to me that Matokora's journey to Kikori to enlist the aid of the unknown government was the act of an intelligent and desperate man, and the more admirable because of his ignorance.

From the new base Healy and the police raided the other two villages in the night but caught no one; and explored a road above the camp village and saw a canoe with Poi-i-mabu and some men who shot arrows at his party who did not retaliate. For the next eight days Chance, Healy, and those police not guarding the camp moved about the river and along pads, sometimes seeing the Foi-i but more often feeling that they had just missed

them. They confiscated every canoe they saw and estimated that they had 'practically every village canoe in our possession'. They caught one man and returned to camp. They raided the village of Irumi at dawn and found the *dubu* in ashes—the police were unanimous in stating that Poivi and Matokora . . . had burnt down the *dubu*'.

After five more days of this nerve-racking, exhausting, and unproductive endeavour Chance decided to move back to the village of the first camp, taking canoes by the dozen tied together, an easy job when going down stream'.

When nearing the village of Udukarua, and just as we rounded a corner, we saw smoke rising from the trees near the river bank about 50 to 75 yards in front of us. By signs I halted all the canoes and quickly called L/C Nakea over to me and told him to land as quickly as possible with the police and raid the house, or whatever it was, and cautioned him against firing. Myself and Mr Healy who were in a canoe away from the bank told the Cpl that we would look after the river if any ran away that way—canoes were seen tied up to the bank just ahead of us.

Shortly after the police left I heard a yell and we all paddled down towards the smoke—I next heard two shots; by this time we were almost up to where the canoes were tied up.

A man dived into the water and started to swim across the river so I despatched a small canoe with three paddlers in it to capture him which they did after a great deal of shouting and struggling.

Then another man ran down into the water but was turned inshore by yet another of our canoes. The next thing I saw was A.C. De-ea who was doubled up and holding his abdomen—he informed me that he had been knocked down by a man and had shot at him but did not know whether he had hit him or not. . . . some carriers were endeavouring to get the second man out of the water. He dived and came up again and I ordered him to be caught but he eluded everybody. He now stopped down so long that I grew alarmed and was informed by the carriers that they could not get him up as he was holding on to a root—as I anticipated he was drowned when we got him out. I was informed that the deceased was Memerimabu—he was a fine specimen of a man very powerfully built . . .

The police in all got five prisoners but two were boys.

While walking around the house . . . I noticed a large fire in it but paid no special attention to it, presuming it to be a cooking fire as cabbage in bamboos was scattered about. Just as we were loading the dead man on to a canoe the house went up in flames and nothing could be done to stop its total destruction. Evidently

the fire got scattered about when the men who were in there got out quickly.

We crossed the river to Udukarua village, where the dubu was nearly falling down and made camp . . . The dead man was buried and the two boys, who were released the next day, were shown the place . . . as well as I could explained to them, by signs, that the presents I was giving them were to pay for the sago palms we had previously cut and made up. . . .

At this stage, having five prisoners and the food beginning to run short I decided to make my way back to Kikori but by another route as to drag right back through Dikima and Ikobi would have been very uninteresting.

They set out in canoes but soon A.C. De-ea signalled that they were nearing rapids. They carefully tied up the canoes and cut their way along the left bank until the river ran into a deep gorge.

We followed down the river and got into difficulties, in due course coming to a large waterfall thundering its way downwards. It is higher and larger than Rona Falls and of all the falls I have ever seen, excepting Niagara, is the best. The total drop of the river must be nearly 400 feet and the fall has three drops in it. Spray from the river wets the trees for hundreds of feet up and with the sun's rays making a rainbow the scene was most impressive.

I gather from my perusal of Mr Beaver's report that he did not actually see the waterfall but one of his constables did, and, as I consider that it is well worthy of a name, I would respectfully suggest that for all time this great fall be known as the Beaver Falls and I hope that this naming meets with your approval and that His Excellency will endorse.

Leaving the falls we had to go back the way we had come and from there, led by the prisoners, we cut inland but were forced back twice by impossible limestone country.

They came out to the Kikori River, built rafts, and set out. Soon two struck a snag and overturned which made Chance decide that it might be better to walk along the bank. Presently they met Poivi in a canoe and called to him to come and identify the prisoners. He did this but did not stay long. They met him again with Matokora at a *komibati*. 'Matokora was quite friendly and quite unashamed of himself for running away from us before—I said nothing about the burnt *dubu* at Irumi.'

They finally reached Nawagera and spent a day making sago from two palms bought from the Chief Kai-io. 'Kai-io and all the Ikobi men were very interested in the prisoners as they and the Foi-i are old enemies. . . .

It is more than likely that this last raid is simply a "payback" for the Dikima and Ikobi peoples past misdeeds, but, then again, there is the matter of the threats and all the talk about the undesirability of V.C. uniforms at the Upper Kiko.'

Chance decided to go east to the Base Camp on the Kikori River rather than return down the Omati. They reached it in two days and Chance had an attack of fever while rafts were made to take them to the station.

The report ends with an apology for the map which Chance felt was not up to his usual standard. He could have mentioned that the report itself was rather more than usually in police-witness style and lacking in the comments followed by exclamation marks with which he sprinkled his other accounts. The question really is when he managed to draw his map and write his report. His attack of fever was not the only trouble. He returned to the station to find that his wife had become so ill with blood poisoning that Mr and Mrs Blyth had taken her down to the mission hospital at Urika and he left the next day to follow them.

The Turama River

When the boundaries were gazetted in 1912 for the Delta Division it was convenient to divide the Western Division roughly in half. This line came at the Turama River and it seemed at the time reasonable to retain the west bank in the Western Division and give the east bank to the new Delta Division, just as the Purari River was divided between the Delta and the Gulf Divisions. The Purari above the delta was sparsely inhabited by nomads who on the whole kept themselves to themselves and very few difficulties arose. The division of the Turama was a very different matter.

To begin with there was the matter of getting there. In the south-east season it was extremely hazardous to round Bell Point coming from Daru, even when they acquired powered vessels, so that for nearly six months of the year Daru was cut off from patrolling their bank. From the Kikori side it was almost as bad at any season to get to Morigio Island in the mouth of the Turama and every report dwells on details of the perils and discomforts of the journey: the direction of the wind, the incidence of the bore, the shifting mudbanks, and the cantrips of the various engines in unsuitably designed vessels. The launch *Kikori* was an open boat with an awning and a most temperamental engine, and any sea more than a ripple caused her to roll to a threatening extent. Chinnery, after a rough passage when they ran aground twice and met an unusual bore which came at the right moment to lift them off the sandbank, was moved to end his report by saying 'I agree with the R.M. and Mr Dudley that the launch *Kikori* is not a suitable vessel for work in heavy seas. Some day while engaged on a patrol like this under report, her engine may break down, outside—those on her at the time will have my deepest sympathy.'¹

Apart from these administrative complications no one in 1912 had had much opportunity to observe the inhabitants and their traditional activities. It was very soon discovered that the west bank was inhabited by very vigorous and enterprising people: the Umadai, the Wariadai, and the Doriomo. At the mouth of the river was Morigio Island whose inhabitants had gardens up the river, and, it was suspected, were regarded by the Wariadai as a natural source of heads whenever they needed them. The Morigi were apparently quite willing to join the Umadai or the Doriomo

as occasion demanded, or various combinations made sorties over to Goaribari or to the villages at the mouths of the Paibuna and the Omati. They too, as Woodward said in his annual report in 1921, were 'inclined to give way to their innate tendency to take human life on the flimsiest pretext'.

Cardew described his visit to Morigio when he patrolled the villages in the estuaries of the Kikori, Omati, Paibuna and Turama rivers in January 1913:

The village of Dadebi on the south-eastern end of the island is on Dadebi creek which is screened by mangroves and can only be entered at high tide. As I proceeded up the creek . . . the first houses were met with about half a mile from the mouth, and from that point, for, I should say, at least half a mile, both sides of the bank were lined with houses. On the villagers catching sight of the launch, a scene of wildest confusion ensued, the majority making for the bush, while others, diving precipitately overboard, abandoned their canoes, which floating empty, strewed the waters of the creek. A number of canoes paddled madly to safety on the upper reaches. The voices of the interpreters, whom I had placed in the bow of the launch with calico and tobacco, could not be heard above the din of dogs howling, women and children screaming, and men shouting. I went ashore in the village to see if I could find any old men or women, to whom I could explain our pacific intentions, but could find none. . . . There were none of the very long dubus, met with on the Omati, the largest I should say, being not more than fifty yards long, but many of them were decorated with festoons of skulls, and I noticed three tomahawks, made out of brass belaying pins, mementoes, no doubt, of the days when the *Merrie England* lay off Goaribari . . . I gave A.C. Ari of Aiidia some tobacco with instructions to place it in the village, with signs to show our intentions were friendly. This he did by wrapping the tobacco in green leaves, and placing it on forked sticks in the middle of the village.

His next visit was not pacific. Some Goaribari reported to the station in May of the same year that 'Turama' people had attacked the village of Iowa and they offered twenty-two armed canoes to help the government as they believed that the Morigi would fight back. The help was refused and Cardew and his police plunged into the sago swamp in the middle of the island. At Moddamodda, where there were 'festoons of bones hanging in the trees', they found one man, Ipe, who said that the people of Haragu had 'killed the Goaribaris'. Cardew missed this hint and the real story of the raid was not revealed until 1916. He found in every village new fighting

canoes 'over the bows of which human blood had been poured' and was satisfied that this was the real reason for the massacre.

For various reasons no one went to Morigio again until February 1915 in spite of acrimonious minutes from Judge Murray on the neglect of Morigio and Urama. In September 1914:

There are two Patrol officers at this station and, as far as I can see, no patrolling is being done. The launch is no doubt broken down—but, if so, they should work the whaleboat. Please ask the A.R.M. if he has been to Morigio yet; if not, we must find someone who will.

And in January 1915:

Has the R.M. Delta paid a visit to Morigio Island yet? If not please inform him that it will be necessary to remove this island and the West bank of the Turama from his control.

Ryan replied, not referring to the slip of West for East bank, and the Government Secretary sent a minute from Judge Murray in February 1915.

The R.M. Delta Division has convinced me that, since his return from the Fly River, he has been unavoidably prevented by other serious business, from attending to the Morigio Patrol. He will undertake the Patrol as soon as he has concluded the work on hand—if necessary by whaleboat.

Ryan went to Goaribari in February 1915—by whaleboat—to arrest 'those concerned in the massacre of five men from the village of Weriadai on the west bank of the Turama', but this seems to have been a new fight as 'the dubu contained some ghastly relics of the massacre of the four men'. He did not pretend that it was easy. They were caught in a storm, which smashed the awning of the whaleboat, and prevented them from landing for four hours. At Kerewa 'a large crowd of natives were making a Hostile display on the bank, waving spears and arrows and dancing their War-dance, a few arrows and one spear were thrown at them'. They managed to make over thirty arrests in spite of the opposition and the terrain:

As is well known the whole of the island of Goaribari is a swamp and is intersected with innumerable small creeks not navigable for a whaleboat, and the natives knowing these creeks so well have no great difficulty in eluding the police. Also owing to the incessant rainfall at this time of year the village and all round it is a huge swamp, so much so that every step you take you get bogged. . . . I gave orders that all the old and disused

canoes in the village be collected . . . split up and placed along the tracks . . . the work of watching all approaches to the village was made easier. Had what was left of the unfortunate men who were killed and eaten collected and buried and the front of the dubu and the cubicles where the remains were found I had pulled down in order to impress the people that the custom of eating Human Flesh must cease and that the Government would punish them if they continued the practice. . . .

He left instructions to the Kerewa people 'that they were to get the other men wanted by the time I returned, they were not to run away when the Government arrived as the government would not harm them, they promised to get the men wanted, which remains to be seen . . . '.

He also pointed out in his report that 'The launch is badly missed on an expedition such as this for with it the mouths of the various creeks could be watched and canoes hemmed in.'

In April 1915 Ryan set out, in the whaleboat, 'to apprehend those concerned in the massacre of the Yawobi [Iowa] people', that is the 1913 raid. His party included eleven police, Emai of Dopima ('who expressed a wish to accompany us so I brought him along') the Mubugoa V.C. and 'ex-prisoner Ipe of Dadebi' conveyed in a fleet of the whaleboat, and four canoes; the station canoe as well as one each from Dopima, Aimaha, and Keme. It was not until they had reached Dadebi at 4.45 a.m., after a four-hour journey through heavy rain, that Ipe mentioned that it was the general custom of the people to leave their villages at this time of the year, and go and live for a couple of months up the Turama, where they made new canoes. All the villages and *komibati* were deserted 'I should say that the people left it over a month ago', and although they searched they found nobody.

The launch from Daru arrived and they crossed to the east bank of the Turama and began a week's search of *komibati* up all the little creeks on both banks—by canoe in pouring rain. When their food supplies ran low they returned to Kikori.

When the *Kikori* was in commission again six months later Burroughs, with guide Ipe, went to Morigio to 'make arrests in connection with the raid two or three years ago'. Everyone ran away but came back when they recognised Ipe.

The man Ipe during the time he has been on the Government station has learnt a great deal about the Government and he was of great assistance. I would recommend that this man be appointed Village Constable. With his assistance in being able to get into touch with these people I have no doubt that the men who are wanted can be captured, but the affair is so long ago that even the people who were attacked cannot give any useful information.²

Judge Murray was not satisfied. 'This matter must not be allowed to rest. Another patrol should be undertaken and the arrests carried out. The R.M. can make what use he likes of Ipe but the men must be captured.'

In March 1916 Cardew cleared the matter up.

At daylight I left for Morigi arriving there at high water a little after 8. The main villages of Morigi Island are situated on a creek named Dadebi, lying towards the southern end of the island. . . . The people as a whole are called Nidamudai and speak the Kerewa language. They are similar to the people of Goaribari and if possible a little more villainous in expression. Morigi Island itself is practically one vast sago swamp with komibatis of the . . . villages scattered round its shores. There is also another village, Haragu, on the north-west side. The entrance to Dadebi Creek is only available to a launch at high water. On my entering the creek the natives promptly took to the bush. I got the police to work and ultimately succeeded in making arrests. Those who were not wanted for the murder I released. During the proceedings three arrows were fired and there were numerous cuts and abrasions but nothing very serious. . . . I left Sergeant Gaiberi in charge of police camped at the mouth of Dadebi Creek and started out in the launch with two canoes in tow for Keme where I did not arrive till nearly midnight after a wet and rough trip. I slept in the village.

Friday. (31/3/16) After despatching the prisoners under escort to the station I left Keme at daylight on my return to Morigi where I arrived at 8 a.m., picking up the Sergeant and proceeding round the island. During the day arrests were made and at 6 o'clock I made for a small komibati I had noticed on the northern end of the island. I was unable to make it against the strong tide which follows the bore and the wind gradually increasing with heavy rain and the sea getting up, I decided to run for the eastern bank of the estuary. I had three canoes in tow, filled with police and prisoners, whose howls of terror outdid the wind, one of the police in the canoes tying himself on to the tow rope of the launch so he could come aboard if the canoe foundered. I pulled the canoes up to the launch but it was so thick I couldn't see them at a few feet, and the dinghy breaking adrift in the wind and rain I was unable to pick it up again. I now set a compass course and after a very anxious hour made the eastern bank of the estuary.

Cardew travelled up the Turama but the creeks and villages he mentions no longer appear on available maps. He returned to Keme.

During the trip in conversation with some of the older men I was told of the beginning of the trouble between the Turama and the Kerewa people. It would appear that years ago the two tribes were on friendly terms and the Kerewa people were in the habit of visiting Morigi to buy pearlshell. On one occasion a large party visited the island for that purpose and the Morigi people ushered them into their dubu. Closing the ends they started in to massacre the Kerewas of whom only a few escaped including Emai who is now an old man and one of the leading men of Dopima. The women were either killed or taken as wives by the Morigis, amongst them were the wife and daughter of Emai. The Kerewa people made no attempt at revenge as they were frightened to visit the Turama. Some years after the wife of Emai, with his daughter and a child she had borne to a Morigi man, made an adventurous escape and after many vicissitudes regained her native village of Dopima. The Turama people now resumed hostilities and a number of canoes made a raid on Keme village at the mouth of the Omati. Unfortunately for them they were seen by the Iowa people who followed them and attacking them in the rear drove them into the bush, smashing all their canoes. The Kibi now sounded to the numerous Kerewa villages and mustering all their forces, the remaining Turamas were hunted like rats through the bush until, as my informant told me, not one remained. The Wariadai people who were murdered some time ago at Namoi . . . came as peace envoys from the Turamas. [That is, the January 1915 raid.]

Daru station established a police camp at Bahi Creek on the east bank of the Turama from which Flint and Storry patrolled the area. Judge Murray, visiting Kikori in 1917, went up to visit them. He found Corporal Paradeba in charge of the camp who reported that the local men were not friendly though occasionally they would 'prowl' round the camp and he found it necessary to set a guard both day and night. The patrol reports of this camp were made through Daru and although they would have been helpful to the Delta Division officers there is no record of those patrols in the Kikori reports. It seems probable that the patrolling was done inland from the Wariadai area and for some time the Delta Division was not troubled by the people of the west bank. Between 1916 and 1921, although routine patrols were made to all the villages along the coast, only one visit, that of Johnston in 1919, was made to Morigio Island. He recorded that all the people ran away and when he did manage to talk to some old men they said that the Morigio people 'are seldom on the island for more than a month at a time. They go to the mainland to make sago and hunt and then return to the island to stay till the food runs short, when they go off again. They were evidently just about to leave when we arrived.' Why

they went to the mainland to make sago is a question Johnston did not ask. He also obtained the names (for the census) of 124 men 'thirteen of whom were at work'. He hoped 'that the next visit the Government makes will be attended with better results, as regards getting in touch with them'.⁹

Unfortunately it was not. No patrol to Morigio and the Turama is reported until 1921 when Woodward went to make arrests for the murder of some men from Doriomo. The victims were deserters from Ogamobu Plantation who had called in at Dadebi on their way home. Again it was March and they found that most of the Morigi had gone up the Turama to make canoes. So after trouble with the full-moon bore and some plain words about the unsuitability of the *Kikori* and its unreliable engine, they set off up the Turama as far as Umadai Island where they saw a man in a canoe and a collection of huts on a small creek on the east bank. The whole of that area is one sago swamp intersected with creeks which empty at low tide. For the next four days Woodward sent his fourteen police up creeks and across the swamps searching for the people, who had scattered in every direction except the river, while he moved the launch from creek to creek. 'I shall be glad to get out of this pestilential hole—flies in thousands torture one during the day and mosquitoes and sandflies at night make sleep an impossibility.' Surprisingly, the police made eighteen arrests and on questioning the prisoners it was found that everyone in Dadebi was guilty of the deaths of the Doriomo men and of three Umadai which had not been reported. Besides mosquitoes and sandflies there was another hazard of which the police, wading about, were well aware.

In the early morning I despatched the police to Bisia creek by track. One man was found in a house and he, on seeing the police, took to the river and swam downstream with the current. L/cpl Pandava very pluckily followed after him. By the time the two swimmers had reached the lower creek Pandava was nearly exhausted as he had wasted a lot of wind calling upon his ancestors to guard him against alligators which abound in this river. The Morigio man was a very powerful swimmer and it was only after he had been intercepted by a canoe which had been launched from the mouth of Bevono creek that he gave in and submitted to arrest. This man proved to be Bagemo, one of the chiefs of Dadebi, who is wanted for both Doriomo and Umadai murders. Bagemo is an exceptionally well-built man standing almost 6 feet in height.

It would be gratifying to find out whether L/Cpl Pandava was the same man who as 'the carrier Pundava' helped Ryan in 1913.

They made a night raid on a camp on the west bank and found it deserted. 'Probably too they are anxious to leave the Bisia camp lest the Umadai come down in force and "pay back" for the recent murders of their people

The Turama River

by the Morigios. A search through the sago swamps in the vicinity of the canoes resulted in nothing and I could see that the police had lost all enthusiasm and only entered the swamps reluctantly.⁴

In 1921 the influenza epidemic which swept the world after the 1914-18 war had reached Papua and each division sent patrols to record the spread of the disease—there was little else they could do. It seemed to be moving west and the villagers were instructed to scatter to their gardens. Johnston in November 1921 found that the Morigio people had already done so, that the Kerewa people were 'over the worst', and Paibuna and Turama districts were in the middle of the epidemic. He 'thoroughly instructed the villagers to keep their houses dry and not to go out in the rain'.⁵

The occasion of the next visit was unusual. It had been reported that a Morigio man had killed another Morigio man but this was not quite accurate as Woodward found when he arrived to investigate. It had been an inter-village clash and there had been three murders in which five men were implicated. In the meantime A.C. Patoa, who had been sent ahead to Morigio, had been unable to find anyone. He went over to Nabio and found there that the Umadai had killed five Nabio men and on his own initiative had gone with two other police to Umadai, arrested two men but had retreated (and lost his prisoners) when the Umadai resisted with arrows. He was reprimanded for exceeding his instructions though Woodward considered it a plucky attempt.

This A.C. has done yeoman service in this Division and has effected some remarkably plucky arrests and I am inclined to think that he wanted to live up to his reputation in this respect. A.C. Patoa also stated that he had seen fresh skulls in the Umadai houses which were alleged to be those of the Obara people who live in the hills higher up the Turama.

Woodward went up to Umadai and found that it was not one village but 'a collection of hamlets which were situated at intervals along the right [west] bank of the river for a distance of about two miles . . . have recently come to settle at this bend of the river as many of the houses are still in course of construction. The difficulty of arresting men in such a widely scattered community is obvious . . .'. In any case he believed the attempt to arrest the Umadai people would be more successful if done in conjunction with the Western Division.

They returned to Morigio and visited Haragu:

I was pleased to find quite a large number present including women and children. Never before have I come across people having such a craving for tobacco. After giving out a few small pieces of tobacco as presents I was besieged by both men and women offering sago and in some cases snake skins for a scrap

of tobacco. Snake skins, I found, are the principal article of trade amongst these people. They cannot grow tobacco, so they exchange snake skins for tobacco with the Goaribari people. The latter use snake skins for their drums. The snakes sought after for this purpose are a non-venomous water snake which are found in small creeks running into the Turama and also in the Gama river district. I am told that snake catching is entirely the work of the women, who sit in the mud along the creek banks and search for the snakes, which secrete themselves in holes along the banks. When caught the head of the snake is held down by a forked stick, and the skin is cut in a circle round the neck, and at the end of the tail. The skin is then pulled off whilst the snake is alive, and the snake itself is returned to the water again, where it soon grows another skin. The skins are then split down the centre and placed under the sleeping mats in order to press them and partially dry them. They are then hung up in the roof of the Daimo, and the drying process is completed by the smoke from the fire which collects in the apex of the roof. The natives assure me that the snakes do not die after having the outer skin removed, but I cannot vouch for the truth of this.

... Apparently our departure was viewed with regret by many of the inhabitants their farewell words being interpreted to me as follows: 'Since you cannot remain here it is better that you leave your spirits behind with us—they can join you later'. Whilst saying this many of the people came into the river knee deep and just as the launch was moving away they splashed water towards the launch with their hands.

... At Nagoro found a big dance in progress in the newly-built dubu-daimo which is about 120 yards in length. Spent several hours looking on at this dance as with the beating of drums etc. sleep was an impossibility. I counted 150 dancers in the dubu each of whom had a drum, in addition to these there must have been at least 200 onlookers.⁶

It was in 1922 that every village was told that villagers must return every new moon for four days to clean and repair their village. In spite of the new moon bore which made travelling across the estuary a bit tricky the order was obeyed to good effect. Dadebi, in November 1922, had several new houses and *dubu* and a wharf, the grass was cut and they were building a government rest house.

A recurring theme in the reports is the optimistic assumption that a tidy village conforming to regulations indicated conformity with other government rules. In the case of Dadebi, Saunders, going to collect some escaped prisoners, take a census, and inspect the village in late August 1923 was 'rather surprised to see a lot of the people clearing out', but they came

The Turama River

back and he and the V.C. were able to bring in four of the prisoners. The same thing happened at Haragu—no one remained but a very old man named Musi.

He could not tell me why the people had run away but he said the women were frightened because there are so few men in the village owing to such a lot being in Daru, some as prisoners, others as witnesses, whilst many are up the Turama with the A.R.M., W.D. It was evident that certainly the village was sadly decimated of men, the women had done nearly all the building in the new village. They seemed to think that their menfolk would all come back soon and it was very sad to think that in many cases a long time would elapse before they would return to their homes, but happily I don't think the women realise this.⁷

The A.R.M., Western Division was A.C. Rentoul, accompanied by Johnston from Kikori, who set up a police camp at Umadai after the Umadai and the Wariadai had raided the Avisonemi on the east bank of the Turama. They settled in at Umadai village, where, after some resistance, the men had run into the swamps though some of the women chose to remain. An understandable decision as it was August and raining every day. Whether the swamps were impossible even for the Umadai or they were having a change of heart I don't know but it is reported that quite soon the Umadai came back to the village after messages had been sent that Rentoul wanted only certain men and each day canoes of men, women, children, and dogs returned and the normal life of the village was resumed. The men wanted for the Avisonemi raid gave themselves up and were taken to Daru and the villagers broke their arrows as a sign of peace.

Among the carriers were some Morigi men and when Rentoul wanted to get in touch with the Wariadai one Kari of Dadebi said he was a friend of the Wariadai and would go up the river and tell them that the government wished to make a friendly visit. So he and seven other Morigi went ahead and Rentoul followed to spend the night about five miles down from Saragi to avoid arriving after dark. In the morning news came that the party sent to Wariadai had all been killed. 'This was indeed a disappointment' said Johnston. They went immediately to Saragi which was deserted and found two of the Dadebi men decapitated but arranged in a sitting position with hands on knees.

After this the patrols were very much the same as those made after Kirby's death:* tracking the malefactors day and night to every camp and swamp until they were caught, or betrayed, or gave themselves up. The camp was

* A detailed account of the patrols undertaken from the camp appears in Lett, *Knights Errant of Papua*, pp. 107-26.

closed in November 1923 but it soon became plain that the relations between the Wariadai and the Morigi were as inimical as ever and they resisted the government attempts at mediation for another six years.

A new Resident Magistrate was appointed to Kikori in October 1924. He was A.L. Blyth who had joined the service early in 1914. He was a retired English military man with standards of colonial service hitherto unknown in the Delta Division. He had a gammy leg—whether it was an old assegai wound, as was hinted, or a tropical ulcer inflamed by alcohol as the teetotallers scornfully suggested, never became clear. It meant that he made no long exploratory patrols—he sent the lower ranks on those. He also loathed canoes and whaleboats and would have liked a smart cabin boat with uniformed crew so that he could sweep up to village wharves lined with cheering populace and make a royal progress through the village attended by a suite of smart Armed Constables. What he got was the elderly launch *Kikori*—no cabin and a leaky awning, a noisy engine which spat hot oil and broke down whenever it was most inconvenient or dangerous and not one of whose idiosyncrasies were spared to the eyes of the Government Secretary in his reports. Reading the reports is a comprehensive education in loose crank shafts, stern gland packings, magnetoes and other technical terms, but he did keep the thing moving, and the *Kikori* becomes a malevolent entity, in league with the tides and the rain, to be outwitted and subdued. Finally, to save reading the unremitting accounts of her cantrips I suspect, he was given the *Kismet*, which had been used by the Medical Officer on his patrols for some years, which at least had a cabin so that he did not have to camp in the village resthouses, another custom he found undignified. Unfortunately it was soon found that the Kelvin sleeve engine had been designed for the nice clean sea and the river silt upset its delicate interior—so the Government Secretary had still to read endless accounts of emergency repairs. Yet though he insisted on forms and ceremonies to an extent which irritated his immediate subordinates Blyth had a quality which the villagers recognised. His reports show a new attitude towards the people—less schoolmaster and policeman in tone and more attentive to their reasons for their behaviour which they were ready to explain to a sympathetic ear.

The first patrols he made were to Goaribari and Morigio. There had been reports that the Umadai and Doriomo had come as far as the uninhabited island Neabo, and that a Doriomo had been killed at Gabadia. Blyth and Cawley arrested the murderers.

The chief of Gabadia has really invited reprisals from Doriomo by this murder. It is thought having built a new dubu he wants a new skull to wet it. . . . It appears the Morigio had built five large canoes to go fight if necessary and I am inclined to think they are the aggressors as they say the Government has never settled for Johnston's carriers killed on the Turama.⁸

The Turama River

The next month he went to Morigio again. His report opened with the comment, after spending the night at Pai-i-ia:

'The Goaribari cannot build rest houses, the so-called "bungalow type" seems beyond them and I shall be very pleased if we get a cabin launch where one can sleep after the day's work without fleas and breakneck floors.'

At Dadebi he arrested V.C. Seni and five others and sent them under escort to Kikori.

Had a yarn with some Umadai men. They say they are friends now with Morigio but that Doriomo and Wariadai are not; that the Morigio are preparing for a raid and want the Umadai to join them. A payback for carriers on Johnston's patrol who were killed by Wariadai. They were told not to be foolish—the Government would attend to it 'when they had a new ship'.

He came back to Ai-idia where he met L/Cpl Urevu who had come from Kikori with the news that the six Morigi he had just arrested had escaped. A great gale rose so that neither the escapees nor the launch could get to the island.⁹

He returned the following week with Rentoul in the Daru vessel *Nivani*, leaving Sergeant Marai in charge of the station. They took with them Local Constable Samia—a Morigio man who had enlisted at Kikori—and he led them to Seni's village which was empty. The village the other side of the creek (V.C. Inu) was still occupied and Blyth persuaded the people to listen to him on the subject of no payback, that they only wanted those responsible, that it did not pay to screen them as it only made their lives miserable, 'the old story'. 'Suddenly' they told him where Seni was and offered to come to help bring him in and another escapee I-au for good measure.

They camped at Gabadia for the night and in the morning nine more Morigi arrived. Blyth encouraged them to plan the campaign and followed their suggestion. If the *Nivani* followed out of sight they, in their canoe, would search the creeks for Seni's camp. The next day, up near Umadai Island they found it—but not Seni. Blyth persuaded the men in the camp to talk to him. It had always been supposed that Havoka was the chief of the only clan on the island of Morigio, but this was not so. There were three other clans, the chiefs of which were helping Blyth because only Havoka's clan was friendly to Seni. As village constable Seni had bullied them and reported only men from their clans and never from Havoka's. While they were talking a canoe arrived from Dadebi bringing two of the escapees for which the men who had made the captures received tomahawks and their crew five sticks of tobacco each. These presents were noticed by the men from the camp and they immediately decided to bring in Seni

and the other three. They suggested that Samia remain with them, without his uniform but with his handcuffs, he could arrest Seni and they would bring him back to Kikori. Presumably this plan was successful and Blyth finished the report by saying

The impression I was given of the Morigio as a fierce turbulent truculent people, only partially controlled, does not seem borne out by my three visits there. There are quite a number of ex-work boys there and these help very materially in explaining the folly of running away. I have also found out that as long ago as 1921 the station was in the habit of despatching A.C. to arrest anyone wanted just as one might at Buna or Kokoda, and my ideas have somewhat changed from what I was told. . . . my ambition is to get these people to bring in their own offenders, by and bye they will realise it is more comfortable to do so, than for the whole community to have to move house to the bush for one man. Personally I am inclined to think the lower Turama will have peace for some time and possibly, if we at Kikori had a more suitable vessel, for all time.¹⁰

For over a year there was peace, or at any rate no disturbing reports, though he was still battling with the *Kikori*. Suddenly in quick succession three V.C.s and a canoe with a speared boy arrived from Morigio. The village constables said that the Morigi were quarrelling among themselves and also some were refusing to listen to them saying that their *dubus* did not belong to the government; and that the Wariadai and Umadai were fighting again. The *Kikori* was out of commission so Blyth chartered the *Varoe*, a 60-ft ketch which ran along the coast from Port Moresby to Daru and called at Kikori about once a month, which happened to be at the station when the reports came in.

It seemed to be the Seni-Havoka combination again and Blyth lectured them on 'the folly of their clan setting the village by the ears'. At Kikori both V.C.s had said that they

wished to lay charges against these two but they appeared frozen dumb in the presence, nothing definite could be formulated. After a long and wearisome, though highly interesting at times discussion, it was agreed between the people and myself that one clan should move to Gaibadia, where I formerly arrested Inu for murder, and that should be their village, the others remaining here, as it is the dubu chiefs seem as if they will never agree being all jealous of each other.

One V.C. complained of being 'threatened' by Gori, who was arrested, and Obai who escaped. Blyth was told later that they were both noted sorcerers.

The Turama River

At Haragu the V.C., Inai-i, laid forty-seven complaints but of these only eleven were considered justifiable. The eleven were 'quite truculent' and said their *dubu* was not a government *dubu* and they were friends of the Doriomo who were also not government.

I told them not to be fools and merely dealt with them for neglect of village . . . whilst they were lined up in front of me Pekai-i darted right under my feet and off yelling to the others to run. A.C. Kabidue was quickly after him but it took the united efforts of Kabidue, Inai-i and Samia to bring the yelling, biting, scratching creature back, meantime I was left with the job of preventing ten other young gentlemen from getting away from me.

He put sixteen prisoners on board the *Varoe* and gave all the old men 'a very severe talking to'.¹¹

In June it was rumoured that two Morigi had been killed at Neabo by the Umadai. V.C. Kovea reported a week later that the Umadai had nothing to do with it and that the two men had been killed by Morigi headed by V.C. Naopi, and ex-local constable Samia. Again the *Varoe* happened to be in and the *Kikori* couldn't be made to run so they had a rough passage across in the *Varoe*. There was no one at Dadebi except Sisewa and Seni (both now discharged from gaol) who helped search the *komibati*. Samia and four others were arrested but V.C. Naopi had left for *Kikori* under the impression that the Umadai were still held responsible.¹²

It is an interesting coincidence that the *Kismet* arrived soon after the second chartering of the *Varoe*.

The next patrol to the Turama in February 1927 was intended as a joint patrol and was inspired by a misunderstanding.¹³ As Blyth heard it the Wariadai had raided the Obera people ('my people') who lived on the eastern side of the Turama near the Darai Hills. It was finally resolved as being a raid by the Wariadai right enough but on the Oberi people who roamed about west of the Wariadai beyond Komoi Creek, a tributary of the Turama. A mistake which happened surprisingly rarely, considering difficulties of interpretation. What is not clear is how the report came to be made to *Kikori*, or at all.

The patrol has a great many interesting points and was the first from *Kikori* to go up the Turama since Rentoul's 1923 camp and beyond. Blyth also heard of a recent raid by the Baru people (south of Doriomo and down to Bell Point) against the Umadai and Wariadai. As the Baru had villages along the Gama River he took the *Kismet* up there too, although the *Nivani* did not arrive at the meeting place.

Everywhere he went he was surprised to find tumbledown dirty villages and to meet men who announced themselves as village constables with nothing to prove it except in one or two cases a village book—tattered and

empty. The village book was kept for patrol officers to record visits and orders given by them to the village constables.

I am afraid I do not agree with the idea of not clothing the bush V.C. I think the continued presence of the uniform has a salutary effect, here, unless one knew, one would not know a V.C. from anyone else. Inai-i, my D.D.V.C., keeps tripping as he interprets me by saying 'you get Government clothes (tapping his own) you get Government pay waidon you do government work proper' to which they naively answer 'we don't' which flattens my eloquence.

The exception was V.C. Naino of Tutakoi in the Wariadai area who remained in the village when everyone else ran.

... he actually had a very old A.C. sulu and a ragged red sash and what had been a V.C. book—no information in it however. He has not been paid for two years he says. He says he does not want to be V.C. no clothes, no pay. To satisfy him I gave him two years' pay in trade at 10/- a year and a second-hand rami.

As they came up the Turama they met four large canoes 'full of men in feathers and paint' making upstream which, when they met the launch, turned and outdistanced it easily. They landed at a small creek and it was later discovered, after a lot of hide and seek, that it was Gibu Creek which led across to Waiwi Creek (which ran into the Gama) by a skidway over which canoes could be pulled.

Up the Gama the villages were deserted except at Poimea where he talked to a man who said he was the V.C. but had nothing to show for it, and another who said he was V.C. of Nemedi at the junction of the Gama and Waiwi Creek. These two appeared to be co-operating, and the police caught one man (and put both cuffs on one wrist) after a rather confusing account of canoes chased, abandoned and collected by the launch. The canoes were full of arrows with detachable heads, one of which was a 6 inch knife.

After three days of this Blyth, who had fever, sent all the local V.C.s to Daru 'to allow the R.M. to question them himself. They have done nothing but tell me a different yarn every time and I have not any more time to waste on Doriomo if I am to get through my own programme. It is a pity the Daru launch did not come as promised.'

The V.C. at Kesumubu (Umadaï), Sogi-i, half-heartedly co-operated by giving the names of the men in the raid but not mentioning that the men themselves were sitting in the canoes listening to the discussion. Blyth 'harangued the mob for an hour on the folly of their ways' and retired to the launch with a temperature of 104°. After two days during which

The Turama River

the V.C.s dashed about carefully not finding any of their confederates and the police searched the creeks and gardens more conscientiously but without finding anyone either, Blyth gave another talk and left for Wariadai.

They travelled past the deserted Wariadai villages to Tutakoi where Naino agreed to come with them. They passed Saragi where the Morigio carriers had been killed—now deserted and fallen down. Passed Komoi Creek and on up to the Wariadai boundary where the water was clear enough to fill the tanks—they had been drinking, Blyth said, 'liquid mud' for four days and he recommended installing a large efficient filter on the launch, or larger tanks.

When they returned to Iosiku Naino and Inai-i (of Haragu) went out and brought in three of the wanted men, and although four were still at large Blyth returned down the river. He called in at Pepeha to inquire about Kibau, an escaped prisoner who had been at large for some time. Patrols had looked for him and V.C.s and villagers had been instructed to bring him in. When it was learnt that Kibau was a noted and powerful sorcerer it was suspected that even if deliberate deceit was not being practised no one was prepared to bring him in. Kibau's wife's brother, Kimori of Ai-idia, had hoped to satisfy the government by reporting that Kibau was dead and brought bones to prove his story. Under Blyth's questioning on this patrol Kimori admitted that the bones were alligator's. At Pepeha everyone assured him that Kibau was not dead so Blyth talked to the V.C.s of Nabio and of Pepeha—he said that their villages were under suspicion of murder and the only way to clear themselves was to bring in Kibau himself. 'I said I would give them a month and after that I would have to believe they killed him.' Kibau was soon brought to Kikori.

In 1927, there was a readjustment of the division boundaries and patrols from Kikori inspected the west as well as the east bank. Between February and the next patrol in November V.C.s from Umadai and Doriomo paid a visit to Kikori station, though it was described as a voluntary visit and does not necessarily indicate any administrative arrangements.¹⁴

The November 1927 patrol went up as far as Tutakoi and Blyth summed up his impressions:

The visits of the V.C.s etc. have done good. The villages are better built, and are starting to look more like permanent settlements and not komibatis, the people have lost their fear apparently and come freely to one and talk about pig troubles etc. As there has not been a raid of any sort that I know of within the last six months I thought it wise, I stand to be corrected, to have a general amnesty for all offenders over the six month limit, and therefore made no arrests. With care, tact and at least quarterly visits I see no reason why these so-called 'intractable' people should not be as good as our (D.D.) own Era, Gopi crowd.

The engine had been giving trouble so he did not visit Doriomo and had a hair-raising crossing from Morigio in a *gubu* [cyclone] when the *Kismet's* engine blocked, tore out some screws and caused a bad leak, in the middle of the open water and a heavy sea.

I am applying, even if only on Humane Society's grounds to have the *Kismet's* engine replaced . . .

In conclusion I would like to express my sincere feeling of (it is difficult to express it) but I want it recorded that Coxswain Tai-i at the wheel and Lote at the engine should have it remembered that at a time when every native on the boat was calling on his father and mother etc. they stuck solid to their jobs and I honestly believe without these two I would never have got the *Kismet* home.¹⁵

The aftermath of the Doriomo-Umadai visit to Kikori was not as happy as Blyth had hoped. The party called peacefully on Goaribari as they returned home and the Doriomo invited the Goaribari to visit them. The Goaribari went, peacefully, to Doriomo and while there accepted an invitation to visit the Baru on their way home. The Baru set upon them and killed nine of them and the Goaribari came straight to Kikori and reported it as they had been taught to do. The *Kismet* had been called to Daru to have the engine repaired and then to take part in the establishment of a police camp beyond Ellangowan Island on the Fly River. Blyth explained the situation and promised to deal with the Baru when he returned but this was asking too much of the Goaribari. While he was away the villages of Ai-idia, Keme, Goro, Paia-a, Nagoro, Dadebi, and Haragu joined forces with the four Goaribari villages, raided the Baru, and brought nineteen heads home. It must have felt quite like old times.

Blyth returned from the Fly on 21 January 1928 and on the 23rd he was off to visit the coast villages. He arrested thirty-six men (including 2 V.C.s) and retrieved seven skulls and a jawbone. The loss of the skulls he believed was a more telling punishment than the terms of imprisonment the villagers would have to serve. A fortnight later he and E. Oldham, the R.M. at Daru, went to the Turama and Gama rivers and Morigio. They collected five more skulls and made fourteen arrests at Dadebi, Haragu and Gabadia. 'The R.M. W.D. agreed with me that it was better to arrest only actual murderers as tho all able-bodied men appear implicated we could not leave the village defenceless in case of a pay back.' Baru and Doriomo villages were deserted as were those of Umadai, and as 'the No. 2 pump gave way' the *Minnetonka* towed the *Kismet* and the prisoners back to Kikori.

It was decided that a police camp should be established on Morigio, partly to reassure the villagers who felt defenceless with so many of their men in gaol, and also to be on the spot if the Baru and Doriomo decided to

pay back. S.G. Middleton, a newly-appointed patrol officer, set up the camp at Gabadia with Cpl Oka, six A.C.s, and the court interpreter Owamu. The people of Dadebi, Haragu, and Gabadia were delighted, everyone helped the police to clear a site for police barracks and rest house, Middleton dressed sores and inspected for V.D. while the Village Constables and our old friend Samia, who had finished his term in gaol and was now a Village Councillor, were sent to bring in a few outstanding raiders. There were various rumours of Baru, Umadai, and Wariadai scouts and parties asking questions but, apart from a display of bad temper, breaking and stealing canoes, at a Keme sago camp by an unidentified party of men, nothing happened.

Sir Hubert Murray came over to inspect the camp and Blyth took him and Middleton on the *Kismet* to visit Umadai but the villages were deserted. Sir Hubert thought that the camp would be more useful if it were more central so they moved to Gibu Creek which was between the Doriomo and the Baru areas and was connected to the Waiwi Creek by a canoe skidway (noted by Rentoul and later by Blyth). There were no villages on the creek and they had to begin by clearing a site. Three A.C.s were sent up the creek to cut timber for the buildings but returned very soon to say men on the bank had shot arrows at them. Middleton, with seven police in two canoes, went up the creek and, round one of its numerous bends, they came on a number of canoes filled with men who shouted challenges and waved their bows.

I endeavoured to make them understand we wanted peace. They called they had not come to play but fight and as soon as we were in range they started to fire arrows at us. I told my carriers to pull towards them but they were terror stricken and would not move, this was awkward as we became a stationary target for an increasing shower of arrows. I then told four A.C. to go ashore and try to get behind the canoes, as soon as they did the hostiles advanced on us sending more and more arrows, my orderly and De-*ea* kept begging me to allow them to shoot but this I did not allow until my own hat was hit. I then told the police to fire low at the canoes and one or two rounds sent the hostiles scrambling for the banks where two of them were caught by the police who had gone ashore.

The prisoners said they were Doriomo who had planned a raid on Morigio and the party had been preparing for the pre-raid feast when they were interrupted by the arrival of the camp. Middleton examined the ten newly-painted canoes and found eighteen skulls and 'thousands of arrows which were destroyed'. 'I then decided to remain at camp till I could confer with the R.M.'¹⁶

The *Kismet* arrived two days later bringing Claud Champion, who was

even younger than Middleton, and ten more police. Three of the original seven returned to Kikori so that the camp was now manned by Middleton, Champion, and fourteen Armed Constables. It was probably news of this, and of the clash with the Doriomo, that finally persuaded V.C. Naino of Tutakoi and V.C. Basaki of Mogodio to come to the camp to announce that their people were tired of fighting and wished to return to their villages on the main river. 'I talked to them strongly on government ideas and their own folly in committing acts which caused them to have to live uncomfortably in the bush, they agreed they were foolish. Soon after they left for Haragu in good spirits.'

The interesting thing about this camp is that the Baru people, after Middleton and Champion had visited the villages up the Gama, abandoned their villages and settled along Gibu Creek and along the shore. By the end of March Middleton was able to report, after a description of a patrol to visit the villages of Bell Point,

Arriving back at the camp a strange sight met us. The creek was full of canoes, the camp of people, the bush was ringing with the sound of axes. Landing we found the people of the Gama villages, of Nemedi, Weboda, Paravi, and Poimia were paying us a friendly visit whilst representatives of all three Morigio villages were also here, and it was pleasing to see these former enemies all together and perfectly friendly. Took the opportunity of a combined talk to both parties . . . On the 1st [April] the camp was like a beehive, people arriving and departing in all directions, told that the Kearu have said they will drive us into the sea. Councillor Samia says that after we left Gabadia some Umadai and Wariadai canoes came down to raid but hearing the government was so close went back. . . .

V.C. Sogomi is employed on building a village on the opposite side of the Gibu . . . V.C. Inu of Gabadia and Sogomi of Nemedi came to me with their arms round each other and said they wanted to go to Inu's village, I warned Inu if anything happened to these Gama people at his village there would be heavy retribution, he told me he had made Sogomi his brother and all would be peace, they went off together happily. . . .

Villages are springing up all along the Turama from the camp to Bell Point with people industriously fishing and canoes everywhere.

There were still some wanted men from the country between the Waiwe Creek and the upper Gama who were not caught until Champion made a second camp on the Waiwe in May. From this camp they went farther up the Gama looking for five Paravi men. They found the village very recently deserted and established themselves 'as cosily as we could'. They

rounded up the livestock and sent a Paravi man they had earlier arrested to tell the people that the government intended to remain in possession of their canoes until they came and made friends.

Just before dark a number of women and old men returned . . . and settled into their houses, from then until late at night there was a stream of them and when I wakened on the 30th I found all but a few stragglers returned. Selected Koikia 'the strong man' of the village as V.C. and after having his duties explained I told him to pick out those concerned in the Idua affair. He picked out five men whose names agree with those I had already. After arresting them we struck camp. . . .

By June a Medical Assistant had been sent to help and although the police were not as disciplined as they usually were, Middleton had boils, and Champion was ill, the work of following up the raiders, making friends and giving medical help went on. When Middleton went up to the Waiwe camp he found Champion so ill that he decided to close the camp and bring him back to Gibu. The police were to return by canoe through the creeks next day and they probably had a more restful journey than that in the small motor boat with a strong south-east wind blowing. They travelled in the evening when they hoped the wind would not be so strong and camped at the mouth of the Gama at 1 a.m. on the chance that the wind might drop at sunrise. It blew unremittingly all next day and it was impossible to get round Bell Point.

At 10 p.m. in bright moonlight we decided to try again. As we approached the sandbank the wind again freshened and we experienced a very rough time, the little launch, however, was doing very well in the mountainous seas when the steering again gave way. Lalai again saved the situation by jumping on the counter and steering her by hand. We reached camp at 2.25 a.m. . . .

Three weeks later, during which one A.C. was killed by a falling tree branch in the wind, and another badly tusked by a charging boar, V.C.s brought in prisoners, and Champion continued very ill, the *Kismet* arrived bringing A.R.M. Leo Austen to take over the camp and took Champion back to Kikori.

The following month the *Kismet* came with supplies and mail and Blyth reported:

. . . went ashore when I thought I had hit Kikori again. From near and far canoes were coming in. I was met on the wharf by eleven Village Constables and it seemed hundreds of people,

and they knew my name, how I don't know, and called it out and were most effusively friendly. A greater change to Gibu as I first knew it could not be imagined, clearings along it, large dubus and permanent ones too, decent villages not collections of fowl houses, all speak most eloquently of the work accomplished by Mr Middleton assisted by Mr Champion. . . . It was decided that the time had come to go up the river and form a camp at Umadai and arrangements were made for the camp to move to Kesumubu to remain there a fortnight when I would come down again and the camp would then go to Wariadai for a month after which the officers are of the opinion that it may be withdrawn i.e. end of August. . . . all gear not now wanted was put on board the Kismet as the remainder of the stay will be under canvas. All evening people were coming in and they seemed to delight in coming and telling us all their family history etc. certainly the people have learnt their lesson. At night we had an exceptionally high tide . . . the house was surrounded with water, canoes came to the back steps and I fancy the camp is just being shut in time as the spit on which it stands is rapidly disappearing.

In May 1929 Leo Austen went to Morigio to distribute compensation for the eight Morigi carriers who were killed by the Wariadai in 1923. His reports reflect a high regard for native customs and he was scrupulous in his choice of carriers. He took care not to ask any man to go into the territory of hereditary enemies and had felt very strongly that Morigi carriers should not have been taken, even if they volunteered, into the Umadai and Wariadai areas. This sense of justice enabled him, however, to see the Morigi with a clear and unbiased eye.

The dance took place at Gabadia and was the first time in the history of Morigi that Umadai and Wariadai had come to a dance there. They had two bush pigs, shot by A.C.s, and plenty of sago, and after a dance at night the peace ceremony was held in the afternoon. This was the payment of the death price to the next-of-kin of the Morigi carriers killed by the Wariadai in 1923. The whole of Gabadia and Dadebi were assembled as well as the Umadai and Wariadai as witnesses. Thirteen next of kin are listed and the names of eight dead carriers. No one else came forward.

The dance at night was not as great a success as the previous night. The single boys were angry that they did not get presents and would not dance. Later on I went over and got things going and they all soon forgot their troubles as soon as they worked up to the rhythm.

The Umadai and Wariadai went home in the morning. When carriers were asked for from Morigi the single boys ran off into the bush and had to be dealt with under Native Regulations.

Of all the swashbuckling tribes in this division the Morigi are the worst. They cause strife and discontentment setting village against village, dubu against dubu, clan against clan. No other village I know of has so many petty quarrels. I would a thousand times rather deal with an Umadai man than with one from either of the Morigi villages. I told them I would put down this quarrelling and I intend to. I also told them that in future any man firing an arrow at the roof of the dubu would be charged with threatening behaviour. This is the beginning of the quarrels and the action is taken up by both sides of the dubu usually ending in a free fight. They thoroughly understand the Government for they have been under control for years. Many have been to work and they come back bush lawyers.¹⁷

8

Percy Robinson and Ogamobu Plantation

Ogamobu Plantation was on land taken up on the Kikori River by Percival Robinson in 1914, and it so happens that his wife, Irene, kept every letter he ever wrote to her; her sisters kept Irene's letters; and a friend kept most of his daughter's letters, so that fifty years later there is a personal and domestic record of his adventure, trials, and failure, from 1914 to 1929. They were family letters and the frame in which their concerns were set was not very often described. This is difficult to understand until reminded that they were homesick letters—letter-writing days were when you permitted yourself to think of home and 'normal' life, and Irene, in particular, was aware that her conventional sisters did not wish to be disturbed too much by an account of life so alien to their own.

Percy Robinson and his two young brothers-in-law arrived at Kikori government station in April 1914, by accident, or perhaps one should say after a very short premeditation. They had set out from Adelaide to take up land at the Daly River in the Northern Territory, a plan which had been maturing for three years, and at Thursday Island Percy met, by chance, H.C. Cardew, the Assistant Resident Magistrate at Kikori. One evening's conversation and Percy changed his plans to a coconut plantation in Papua.

This impulsive behaviour is not quite as scatterbrained as it sounds. It was a desperate attempt to start a new life and if you are set on such a course it may as well be something as far as possible from the old. He had been a member of the South Australian public service since he was 16 and at 40 he had nothing to look forward to but to watch the government gazette for promotion, tinker with his car on Saturdays, and wait for his superannuation, a future quite unsuited to his temperament. The generation of Percy and his wife Irene was the second after the days of those pioneers who came to found a new settlement in South Australia on Wakefield's plan, and by their day Adelaide had become a close community whose main energies seemed to be devoted to maintaining all the British conventions their grandparents had left England to improve. The world was divided into 'us' and 'them' with strong class sub-divisions for 'us'. (Apart from a few Chinese market gardeners who went from house to house

with their vegetables it is very probable that Percy and Irene had never seen, much less spoken to, any member of another race.)

Arthur and Claud Williams were Irene's brothers. They are always referred to and treated as children—perhaps because they were not only the youngest of a family of nine, but had been brought up by their widowed mother and six powerful elder sisters. At the time of the journey they were about 19 and 21. Arthur, the elder, had some training and considerable ability with engines of any kind. Claud was a gentle delicate youth with no recorded talents and dominated by the lively determined Arthur. It does seem extraordinary to have sent Claud off to grow tobacco on the Daly River, and even more so to set him down on the edge of a jungle in an almost untamed district to start a plantation. It was of course strongly held in those days that boys had to be manly and that forcing gentle ones into uncongenial physical activities made 'men' of them. Claud was not the only misfit sent to Papua and luckily the climate upset him and he soon came home.

Arthur was a very different character and at the age of 22 found himself master of a steam launch, a lease of unfelled jungle, and lots of 'niggers' by whom his slightest command had to be obeyed. It was Adventure too, crocodiles to shoot, the possibility of arrows shot by protesting villagers, and *no* sisters. He had no training in organising labour, managing finances, nor as far as can be known any practical knowledge of building houses, wharves, roads, draining swamps, felling, clearing or planting.

These things considered it is more remarkable that he achieved anything than that he did not achieve the amount that he led everyone to believe he had. Another astonishing aspect of this project is that Percy had no money that could be described as capital and when he went back to Australia in 1914 he managed, in spite of the war, to persuade a number of businessmen to form the Kikori Plantation Company with a capital of £7,500—which at that time was a handsome sum. (It can be remembered that at that time the government of the Commonwealth contributed £20,000 a year to run the whole country.)

In 1916 Percy, Irene, and their elder daughter aged 7, came up to visit 'their' plantation. They found Arthur installed on 'his' plantation in a house on the river bank and coconuts planted and growing, and although Percy itched to get going he had to return to Broken Hill where he was Chief Electoral Officer. In among his official duties he worked out a proposition, which he put up to his board of directors, that the company should buy a ketch the income from which, in addition to the earnings from a trade store, would cover the costs of developing the plantation.

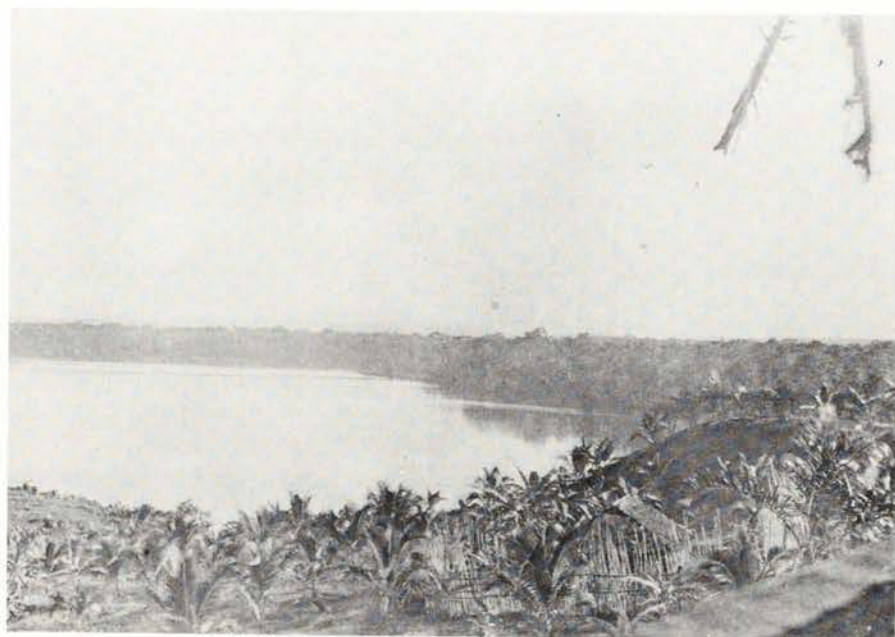
In Papua all labour for plantations, the copper mines, gold mining, carriers for government patrols, ships' crews on coastal vessels, any work, in fact, which was for hire, was done by indentured labour. Licensed recruiters came to villages (and the Delta Division was a well-populated area), having always some 'contact' man who was usually a man who had

already been away to work, and he discussed with the young men and the elders the conditions and advantages of the proposal. The elders generally decided how many young men they would allow to go and everyone received a small present. The recruiters then took the applicants to the nearest government station where the Resident Magistrate told them, through an interpreter, the conditions of work, the rate of pay (10s. a month for ordinary plantation labour) and the length of contract—one, two or three years, never more—and made sure they were in good health. The contract for each recruit was made out in his name and he touched the pen as he filed past the table. Labour regulations controlled the employers too with specific rations, sleeping quarters, hours of work, issue of blankets, cloth, and eating utensils, health inspections, and periodic inspections on the property by government officials, when complaints were received. Payment of wages was made at the end of the period of indenture, at the government station at which the contract was issued—though permission to make an advance could be granted by the magistrate. It was the employer's responsibility to return the workers to the village they came from, but the regulations also insisted that those who did not stay for the agreed period (called deserters) should be punished (by a gaol sentence) by the government.

Percy pointed out that there was money to be made, if they had the ketch, carrying time-expired indentured labourers home to western villages, carrying freight along the coast, and recruiting labour for the eastern plantations and the copper mines (near Port Moresby) for the return trip to Port Moresby. The board took what Percy considered an unnecessarily long time to agree and procrastinated even longer over the choice of a vessel. At last, at last it was decided, and an unfinished ketch in a yard in Sydney was bought for £1,400. She was 60 feet long, 16 feet beam, drew 7 feet 9 inches and was 'thirty-odd tons'. Percy resigned from the Commonwealth Public Service at the end of 1917.

The journey from Sydney to Port Moresby on the *Varoe* as the ketch was named, does not properly belong here—which is rather a pity. Irene's account, like her letters on their trip in 1913 in the steam launch from Brisbane to Thursday Island, is lively and revealing. Percy helped the engineer to instal the engine in the *Varoe* so that he could learn the working of the engine and 'be independent of anyone else'. He had already learnt about navigation on the first trip—which was just as well. The naval authorities demanded that a ship of this size should be in charge of a qualified captain and mate but during the war these were hard to find. They finally took on two retired octogenarians who soon proved quite unequal to the job. He had also engaged Major McKell and felt extraordinarily lucky to have found him because he had had fifteen years' experience in the New Hebrides. A qualification Percy presently had cause to dislike extremely.

There are optimistic and cheerful letters from Irene to her mother about



X Before Ogamobu was planted, c. 1926



XI The Robinsons in the 'jungle', c. 1916



XII Men bringing a wharf pile into position at Ogamobu plantation, Kikori River, 1920. From *A Pictorial History of New Guinea* by Noel Gash and June Whittaker, Jacaranda Press



XIII An R.A.A.F. seaplane (top left) called at Kikori in 1927. Here the crew are on the wharf saying farewell.

Arthur and Claud and a glowing account of Ogamobu, so that Percy's letter, when she and Claud had returned to Adelaide, comes as a surprise. He had taken over the *Varoe*, leaving McKell at Ogamobu and Arthur with the steam launch *Remora*, to recruit and run the plantation at Varoe in the Purari delta. Varoe, later named Kanibo, was bought primarily for the purpose of supplying seed nuts for Ogamobu and nuts to feed Ogamobu labourers, and later, as more trees came into bearing, copra. He had come into Port after his first trip, bounded to the post office for his mail—to be greeted by 'Hullo, you have bad luck—I have just sent off your mail by the *Vailala*'.

18 October 1918. I started in pursuit of your letters on the 3rd instant from Port with 73 passengers which, with myself and crew, brought our complement up to eighty souls all told. They all had colds or catarrh or something and were most of the time violently sea sick so I consumed my meals—dry biscuits—in the seclusion of the engine room where the noise of the engine was music to me in comparison.

We got to Varoe on Friday where I found a note from Arthur saying he would be back on Saturday so I waited. He turned up on the following Tuesday and I handed over twenty-one of my passengers for delivery in the Purari and piked outside again. The Varoe bar, we find, is possible at high tide if the sea is not too rough. I got to Goaribari all right and delivered the rest of my passengers at their various villages and then went on to Kikori where I found McKell down with a bad attack of fever and a poisoned leg. He had been on his back for a week and was in a very bad state. I sent up for the doctor and fixed him up as well as I could. Arthur turned up on Sunday with 33 recruits from the Purari and after signing them on to Kemp Welch Estates as per order I packed him and McKell off in the *Varoe* to the Fly to do some recruiting and give them a change of air and scenery.

So I am temporarily in charge here again. We have eighty-six labourers signed on here now and, with the 33 recruits there is well over 100 on the place. (I have removed all the labour from Varoe.) I am intending to fell and clear 200 acres before Christmas. We already have about 60 acres down. When that 200 acres is planted up next year (if possible) we will have about the area that the Board thinks was planted before I left! So I have to do it on the side and can claim no credit for the extra achievement without putting Arthur's estimates in the mud.

I don't know, yet, what I am to do about Varoe. The five thousand trees in full bearing (estimated) came out at twelve hundred on actual count, and the 'two hundred acres planted'

came out at thirty-four acres when the rule was put over them. So I have cleared all the labour off the place and have not yet solved the problem of what to do.

I am trying to get the lalang grass off Bagama but it is a heart breaking job. I wish I could get rid of the place for what it cost us—if we could ensure that the owner would not start a store there.¹

My first day in charge here was celebrated by quite a chapter of accidents. I had hardly arrived on the clearing to inspect the work before one of the scrub cutters presented for my inspection a horribly gashed foot that he had cut with his axe. I fixed him up and sent him off just in time to receive another with a cracked head—don't know how he did it. Then, as a final catastrophe, a tree fell on Dimabi and killed him instantly. As you have probably not heard a hundred savages doing their death wail you can have no idea of the uproar. I knocked them off and started for the house with the body and then all the women joined the chorus. I was glad when I could chase the mob to their quarters and lock up the body out of sight. We buried him this morning and the incident is, apparently, forgotten already. You remember Dimabi? He was boat boy on the launch. Arthur beat him up and got fined £5 so I took him away from the launch and put him to work at Ogamobu to keep him out of Arthur's way. This continual trouble with the authorities has got to be stopped somehow and although Huntington has got his and is on his way to Port to attend to troubles of his own that even Arthur admits are a full discharge of his desire for revenge, it is only a question of time before Woodward, the new magistrate, will be a 'cow' also unless I can devise some means to check his unruly conduct. He was full of good resolutions for three days after Woodward arrived but Huntington hadn't left the place before he was again talking about 'black swine' and 'belting their blocks off' and generally performing in his old pleasant manner.

By the way your letters got right to the terminus before I caught up. Arthur broke the news when I met him at Varoe that he had taken my mail to Ogamobo and left it there for me! I was used to it by that time, however, so didn't mind another week or so.

Each trip to Ogamobu Percy roared in and kept everyone up to the mark. He was a short neatly-built man with a bald head, a red moustache, and freckles and, perhaps because he was short, he was always inclined to be more forceful than was perhaps necessary, though not with the native employees. About the crew on the *Varoe* he wrote in November 1918:

They are a fine crew and I don't wish for a better. I can see that they approve of me, too, as a boss although I don't think they respect me much—it is more a sort of pity for a harmless individual that gives as little trouble as possible or, as Vagi puts it, they are good to me and I am good to them. That is the motto of the vessel. I must admit they carry out their side of the contract for a more conscientious and considerate crew no one could wish for. I shall try and sign them on for a year this time if I can get them to do it. Arthur says that these Port Moresby boys can't be got ever to sign for more than six months but I have done such a number of things that he said could not be done that I have hopes.

At Ogamobu he made a clean sweep of Arthur's boss boys who 'failed to come up to the new standards'.

By the way you remember Baidam—the warder in the Kikori Hospital who humbugged along Evoi's wife—well he was only fined, after all, and sacked so he carried out his threat and came to me for a job. I put him on for a month on trial much against Arthur's advice but on the strength of my own judgment of his appearance and he turned out an absolute prize winner. He and McKell are very much alike and get on like one o'clock. So I shot out Evuga and the rest of his crew of loafers and am now well satisfied with the staff at Ogamobu. Nearly all the old guard have been paid off now and I have 60 brand new boys (signed on for three years) who have no bad traditions to overcome. . . . Things are very different at Ogamobu now to when you were there and there is orderly discipline and plenty of hard work going on. At the same time there is much more contentment. We have twenty-four women on the place and numerous children and babies. They have gardens of their own and are allowed to entertain their relations at week ends. The mile or so of sago swamp has proved a great success, and the sago boys go out every day and make sago. We have a regular supply of coconuts up from Varoe and the boys are all fat and contented on a total cost to us of threepence per head per week! I have cut out rice altogether and no one misses it as they are amply fed now on the native food they are accustomed to. . . .

Woodward, the new R.M. is a real good sort and shows every intention of avoiding friction with us. . . . I am satisfied that the days of continual trouble with the Government are past.

Irene sent King Dick spinners and the ship's diet was varied by:

two of the largest king fish I have ever seen within ten minutes, quite four feet long and proved to Heagi that I was right when I said that the brass wire was quite strong enough for anything.

At Mipani I had another good bit of sport with an alligator. We were watching him swimming about in the river about seventy yards astern of us and just as he came into some shallow water and I was getting ready to fire he suddenly threw up his head with a huge fish in his jaws. I fired and got him stone dead with the one shot. I had lunch off the fish and the crew and recruits had the beano of their lives on the alligator. . . . I nearly forgot to tell you the news—Two of the trees at Ogamobu are flowering. One has two fine flower spathes and the other three.

There is very little local colour in his accounts of recruiting trips, he is mostly preoccupied with the finances of the venture. There was growing competition for recruiting, passengers, and freight: six ketches and two 100-ton steamers were 'reaching out after the business now and it is simply a case of survival of the fittest, we can't *all* live on it'. One effect of this competition was that recruiting vessels began reaching up rivers unvisited before, and he described a trip up the Era River.

27.1.1919 I thought the north-west season was the mild and pleasant time of year for vessels but I find that this is the worst time and my crew hate going out at all. . . . All the crew tried to get out of going this trip—they didn't like the weather—and the day before we started Vagi developed fever. Of course I thought that he was malingering so refused to let him off but just before we started he sent a message to say he was too sick to come. I insisted that he must come well or ill and delayed the boat till he came. His relations brought him over from the village stretched out in a double canoe wrapped from head to foot in blankets like whatsername in his Barge. They had a dickens of a trip through the sea that was running even in the harbor and when they finally got alongside I had to admit he was too sick to come. He was sweating and shivering and temperature 105 and pulse going like the deuce. I felt a brute and went without him. So I had to be my own engineer on this trip as I couldn't trust any of the others.

It took me three days to get to Varoe where I handed over some of my passengers to Arthur and started off for the top of Era Bay to open up that new recruiting ground that Jack Nelson was always talking about. I anchored that night at Vaimuru to pick up an interpreter as none of my crew knows these people's lingo and while I was sitting at tea in my cabin a painted and befeathered face framed itself in the port hole and remarked

'Hullo taubada'. I did not recognise him but when I got on deck he was waiting for me and the first thing he said was to enquire for the 'sinabada'. It was Evoi our cook boy, but you wouldn't have known him. I said you had gone to your village and he said 'Tst tst' and looked most distressed and sympathetic being under the impression that I had found you unsatisfactory and had lost all the trade I had originally paid for you.

We took off an interpreter and his bodyguard and started out next morning. I did not do as well as I hoped as fighting has broken out again and the interpreter firmly declined to go near two of the villages on my list. As he explained through Heagi 'One village he go along the other village. He fight like Hell and killim'. I asked whether there were *any* left to recruit as I thought they might be glad to get away but it appeared not. 'Twenty they kai kai and plenty more they killim along canoe—they sink like stone'. The interpreter clearly disapproved of this careless waste of good food and as I agreed on other grounds I looked properly sympathetic. The successful raiders seemed to me a good field for recruiting but it seemed not as they 'all walk about bush' from which I gathered that they had sought the seclusion of the jungle till the Government's memory was mellowed by time. They are sophisticated enough to know that the Government frown on this sort of thing although they can't understand why.

So these two villages were 'off' and all the others were as wild as hares and very shy of any strange appearances. In most cases they took to the bush on sight and even where they did not our old interpreter's nerves were a bit jumpy and interfered with the flow of his eloquence.

However I got twenty altogether and went on to Kikori expecting to meet Arthur with *some* at any rate. He arrived a few minutes after I did but with all the passengers still on the *Remora* and no recruits as he had not yet started to deliver them or done any recruiting at all.

The difficulty with Arthur at the Varoe plantation was merely the start. Percy got orders from eastern plantations (east of Port Moresby that is) for dried sago for their labour. It seemed reasonable to Percy to put Arthur at Varoe to superintend sago gangs and have sago ready for shipment when the ketch came in. He was also to supervise clearing and planting more coconuts and to have nuts ready for Ogamobu. He had the steam launch *Remora* to be used for recruiting (on orders brought by the *Varoe*) and could take some passengers back to their villages. What sent Percy nearly into apoplexy was that he did and he didn't—he could never be depended upon to have jobs done on time. McKell and Arthur no doubt had happy

hate sessions and Percy complained that whenever he had a new idea Arthur said 'Can't be done' (the inference being that if it could he would have done it) 'as you'll learn when you've been in the country as long as I have'. And McKell said 'Can't be done, as you would know if you had had fifteen years' experience in the New Hebrides'. No one, Percy least of all, noticed that 'Can't be done' was just the challenge he needed to see if it could.

It seems clear now that Arthur's answer to Percy's reorganisation was to engage in a go-slow strike or overtime ban—neither of which forms of resistance were at that time recognised, at any rate by Percy, who was simply unable to understand how Arthur could neglect all the tasks that were there to do. Arthur had some shares in the company and was receiving £300 a year all found—as much as an Assistant Resident Magistrate. For the next two years Percy's letters mention, with increasing irritation, amounting in the end to vituperation, Arthur's sins of omission, and only very rarely and then grudgingly his occasional successes. In spite of his determination to prove that he had been right to launch into a new life, he was not sure that he could and in those years, as his letters to Irene show, he was in a state of suspense, conscious of his age, of tackling so many new ideas, worrying about finance, and finding that the life on the *Varoe* (an early dream of bliss) was now too strenuous for him. He also realised he wanted to tackle Ogamobu himself and his letters written when he was living there, are the happiest and most relaxed.

In the meantime he solved the sago problem by buying from the native owners 1,000 acres of sago land, and installing a gang of ten to make sago at Bagama, thus relieving Arthur of one neglected responsibility. He sold the *Remora* to G.A. Loudon, general manager of the British New Guinea Development Company, put Arthur to run the *Varoe*, and employed a man named Simpson to develop the *Varoe* plantation, now renamed Kanibo, and run a trade store there on commission.

One Sunday in August, 1919, he settled down to have a long chat to Irene:

It is raining in a fashion unknown to people down South—just a steady unbroken sheet of water roaring down in one unending cascade. Simpson is out on the back line with eighty boys felling jungle and there is no one in the house but me and the cook. So it looks a good chance to write a peaceful letter—not my usual hasty screed written against time with one leg in the air and my mind trying to think about other things at the same time . . .

We left Port last Thursday, only half a day behind our advertised time—which is the best yet—and carried Mr and Mrs Brown, the new Kikori magistrate and his wife. Mrs Brown is a real treat. She is a she doctor and was surgeon to the Turkish Household Guards through the Balkan war from start to finish.

Then she went right through this war from start to finish so she had eight years of continuous service at the front. You can imagine from this what stamp of person she must be. She wears her hair short, does not know she possesses legs and is a lady. About 35 I should say and as handsome as anyone with her brains and experiences could be. We enjoyed her immensely. We got to Kanibo on Friday evening and Arthur said we would 'hop out at day break' but I knew he only said this to make everyone uncomfortable. It was the top of high water at 5 p.m. so starting at that hour in the morning would mean a slashing ebb tide against us all the way. So I was not had this time and quietly made my own preparations to spend the morning shooting alligators with Mrs Brown. We had some exciting sport and killed one but it slid into deep water and we did not get it although it gave us some excitement by thrashing about on the bank in its death throes.

Simpson has done absolute marvels at Kanibo in the six weeks he has been there. He has only six boys at work and he has got the place looking a picture besides collecting 1,500 nuts and collecting nearly 20 tons of sago—over £200 worth! His commission alone amounts to £60! Arthur is delighted but what I *can't* understand is that he doesn't seem to have the faintest appreciation of the obvious inference. He was there for over a year with a staff ranging from 25 to 13 boys and had hardly anything to show for it. I don't think he got more than 2 tons of sago and that was brought to him by the villagers for sale. Also he 'needed at least 50 boys' and couldn't—I mean 'nobody could'—get sago. Simpson's performance proves that I was quite right in expecting better things and was *not* just finding fault. Also I was right in estimating over £1000 as our loss through Arthur's wilfulness last year. He is an expensive luxury.

Unfortunately I had to take Simpson off the job for a time. McKell has been complaining for some months past and I knew we had reached his limit so I took Simpson along in case. Sure enough McKell was all set to return by the *Varoe* so I relieved him although it is most frightfully inconvenient with all this new development just under way and Kanibo showing nearly £100 per month clear profit. It hurt I can tell you. But it is no use messing about. I have no use for weaklings and I am satisfied that McKell's health is as good as mine—he only thinks he is sick. Also he has taken a leaf out of Arthur's book and thinks he can ride roughshod over me. I consider that three months' leave after his short service is extremely generous but when he talked about the Melbourne Cup he meant to go to—four months hence—I politely said that I expected him on the plantation again

by November. He said in that case he would not be coming back so I quite genially said that doubtless he would act as best suited him. I think he was surprised that I did not immediately faint with horror at the thought of losing his marvellous services but what he didn't know was that I saw this coming and did all my fainting three months ago. . . .

We arrived here on Saturday night, handed over on Sunday and at 7 a.m. on Monday I was on the back line of our boundary with 80 boys and started them on the big job of 300 acres felling. At 10 a.m. I said good bye to McKell and saw the *Varoe* off. . . .

Simpson is a good man and I am satisfied he will do all right. His only trouble is that he goes raving mad if he gets hold of whiskey. He has been working with Butterworth for the past year and hadn't tasted a drop. Arthur knows all this and yet, would you believe it? when we went ashore at Kanibo Arthur took a bottle of whiskey ashore and urged Simpson to drink! Isn't it beyond comprehension? Of course Simpson had a drink—I couldn't interfere—and then another at Arthur's urgent invitation and then got up in the night and swilled the rest of the bottle and was maudlin all next day to the edification of Mrs Brown. I was black with rage but didn't say anything.

I know you will be pleased to hear that I parted with McKell with mutual expressions of esteem and on the best of terms. We haven't had a single word of disagreement throughout our experience and he was quite fulsome in his expressions of appreciation. It is really quite easy to get on with human beings. All you have to do is to let them be as rude as they like whenever they feel that way. Avoid claiming the least semblance of consideration of *your* rights or wishes while you let them get away with everything they think they have the shadow of a claim to (and then some) and they only treat you with contemptuous scorn and do not quarrel with you. It is so easy I wonder anyone ever quarrels. In justice to McKell I must say that Arthur's manner to me is hardly one to inspire respect for me in anyone else and, when all is said and done, McKell did give me good, conscientious work. He has earned his salary and delivered the goods and we have parted good friends. . . .

As I write I have before me an orchid of most impressive beauty. The flower stalk is three feet long and the head carries fifty separate flowers each on a stalk 4 inches long. The flower itself resembles a small tulip but of course, being an orchid, the petals are nothing like so trim and respectable as a tulip but ragged and twisted. It is sulphur yellow with irregular black dots. I found the plant on the top of a tall tree. You remember those baskets of fern on the trees? Well it is just the same. It was

wrapped round the trunk and the top is over 6 feet across. The leaf stalks are about eight feet long. The Lord knows what it weighs but it took ten boys to carry it, and a small section of the tree, to the house. It had about twelve flowering stalks on it— all broken now of course—and is really the most magnificent piece of vegetable I have ever seen. I always said that the first time I was clearing I would get a collection of orchids and I have made a fine start already. I get two or three each day as the trees are felled. The felling is very heavy where we are. The timber is heavier at the back on the hills than it is on the flat. I found a lovely little creek and waterfall yesterday with a gravelly bottom and lovely spring water and ferns and things just like Waterfall Gully.* The timber is magnificent hardwood and I am going to start a pit saw and collect timber for a permanent house. More money has been wasted on those absurdly constructed shacks than a good permanent house would have cost. Felling is interesting work—to watch—and it is most thrilling to see those huge trees come crashing to earth. Yesterday I saw a Bird of Paradise in full plumage. I was standing on a hill in the middle of a five acre patch of clearing when the bird flew out of the trees and passed quite slowly a few feet over my head and settled in a tree about twenty yards away in full view. I wished you were there. You would revel in grubbing about among the parasite ferns and things clinging to the upper branches of the tree after they are felled. Every tree seems to be a perfect fernery in the tops.

Now that I have been able to attend to the plantation end of this job I am beginning to see daylight through the tangle, and the worry and uncertainty is not driving me half crazy. The bald fact is that I have had to practically begin all over again—the plantation development I took over last year at this time boils down to next to nothing, comparatively speaking. Out of the entire area of 240 acres—when you deduct all the uncleared swamp and the flat on the Tiwu (which was only planted just before I arrived), and realise that the whole of the nuts on the high land are failures and must be cut out (about 100 acres) it leaves very little of any value on the whole place. Certainly not more than 100 acres that can be called planted with serviceable nuts. Of course you must add about 40 acres that were just planted when we arrived but they are too young to count for much. That is a frank statement of the case (a bit franker than I have given the Board) and is a heavy fall from the 400 acres I understood to be planted. Of course Arthur is not to blame

* A picnic place outside Adelaide, South Australia.

for the failure of the nuts at the back but I wish to the Lord he had planted up the swamps before he started on the back ridges. . . . We cleared 95 acres of flat, and half the swamp, drained all the plantation, and generally cleaned up—really an astonishing amount of work for which I must give McKell credit.

. . . I am felling about 350 acres of scrub this year and when that is cleared the whole of the lease will be opened up. Then I intend planting 300 acres—or more—with rubber and extending the rubber into the present coconuts wherever they are not doing well cutting out the nuts as we go. . . . Then I mean to block up the creek below the boys houses which makes that huge swamp in the south-west corner and reclaim it and plant it up with nuts following it as far as it goes right back into the rubber. Then I will do the same with the creek just above our house and treat that big swamp the same way. When this is done and the land north of Tiwu Creek planted up we should have about 350 acres of good nuts and a like area of rubber. But, as you see, you may say that the plantation, to all practical purpose, is only just started.

Simpson is quite enthusiastic about Kanibo plantation and certainly the nuts—what there are of them (about 30 acres!!) are coming on magnificently. . . . Simpson is sure he can get 100 acres of plantable land by a bit of draining and banking and I shall give him the labour and let him go to it as soon as I can spare him.

The next letter was written while having an attack of fever, a symptom of which is to sink the sufferer into the deepest gloom. None of Irene's replies have been kept and the month or more to wait for the next letter after receiving groans and snarls of despair cannot have made absence any easier to bear. When he had a pen in his hand it took charge and whatever was in his mind at the moment came flowing out. Perhaps twelve years of marriage led to an understanding of this trait and certainly she could never feel that she was not told everything bad or good.

By October he had recovered his energy though he can't be said to have been having fun. In October 1919, after a few well-turned phrases expressing his opinion of Arthur's way of running the *Varoe*, he wrote:

To turn to more cheering aspects I am more than pleased with the way things are going here. . . . I undertook to fell 300 acres in three months. This is the end of the sixth week and we have felled 175 acres and have the easiest part ahead of us. I am the more gratified as every mortal thing has been against us—quite enough to provide material for a tale of woe to account for next to nothing being done.

To begin with we have not had a single fine day in the six weeks. *Every* morning we wake to the sound of the rain streaming down. The labour 'falls in' in the pouring rain and splashes out to work through a mile or so of mud and wet. And as our clearing is at the back of the lease time is lost in going to and fro. Then Baidam—our only boss boy—got pleurisy and has been laid up for the past three weeks—I am afraid he is going to die. Simpson has had two bouts of fever and, at present, has a swollen foot—most ghastly sore—and can hardly hobble about. Then we have had our labour troubles of course in the early stages that have had to be coped with. So what with *incessant* bad weather, boss boy laid up entirely, Simpson incapacitated and the labour 'trying it on' with the new management I think you will agree there would be a pretty good case to account for a falling short in our programme—especially as the programme was judged by old hands as being a stiff one that was *possible* but a bit too much to expect. Well today is halfway along and we are 25 acres ahead of it. The beauty of it is that I haven't issued a grain of rice, or a pound of meat the whole time. No imported food is used at all although I was tempted at one time as this was one of the 'try on' games of the labour at first. The trouble is that there is no game here now. We haven't got a shooting boy as there seems nothing to shoot. It is rather serious as the labour wants meat and if they once take it into their heads to sulk you can't do a thing. I now know that that was Arthur's trouble—he treated the labour like dogs and they simply wouldn't work for him. You may 'belt their blocks off' and punish them but if they don't want to work you can't make them. They have nothing to learn from the I.W.W. I can assure you. Simpson treats them like children. He pulls their legs and 'kids' them on. He rarely punishes a boy. Any way the result is that we sidestepped the food question and the labour is quite happy and contented and working well. We had a government inspection on Saturday and there was not a complaint. Incidentally we exercise a little diplomacy with the government officials to the same end. Of course quarreling with officials and brutally illtreating the natives at the same time *may* be personally gratifying but it is a poor policy from shareholders point of view. . . .

After the end of next week we will have a block of 100 acres right in the middle still to do. This may strike you as a queer way to attack the job but it is a part of the 'kidding' process. It is partly this scheme that has kept the labour from losing heart in the face of the magnitude of their task. There is a number of factors but one of the most easily explained is that in the isolated patch is now collected all the wallabies, cassowaries etc.

that may have been about and so just at a time when the labour is heartily sick of the whole thing they will bog in like seven devils to get at the game and their interest and energy will be kept up to the end.

Three hundred acres of virgin jungle looks a fearful task. I confess that when I scrambled through to the back line the first day my heart failed me—it seemed such a cheek for us human insects to undertake to remove all that millions of tons off the face of the earth. This portion is considerably more than the whole of the area cleared when you were here and when it is all cluttered up with huge forest trees and under scrub it seems like all out of doors . . . you can imagine what it feels like to struggle into it for nearly a mile and then sit down and realise that you have undertaken to *remove* it all! The way I started was to work out a week's task on my programme. Then I divided it into strips from west to east of such width that if the boys did their work they came out at the home end on Saturday morning. They were getting nearer home every day and if they failed to reach there on Saturday morning they worked on Saturday afternoon. So it became a sort of game and kept their minds off the rest of the job. After a Sunday spell they were ready to go back to the end and start again. Also I built a road through the centre of the jungle so they didn't waste time scrambling over felled timber in going to and fro to work.

. . . I don't wonder McKell's nerves broke down. I have been removing the causes ever since I have been here. There were five yapping mongrels infesting the house that were under your feet the whole time and yapped in chorus all night long whenever a leaf stirred. Then every lock was stiff and awkward to get at and every door stuck—the store room was all in confusion so you couldn't find anything and the same was true of the trade store. To put it shortly there wasn't a thing you touched that wasn't inconvenient or irritating. Well I've altered all that and our domestic arrangements run on greased wheels. Also I have erected another of those watershed affairs so we can get pure water—McKell drank the filthy river water (with a native village just above us and another below us it is no good to me) and then cursed the climate when he got fever. Also it never struck him that his periods of fever, and sickness generally, invariably followed the consumption of a bottle of whiskey at a sitting. I have only just finished that ounce of quinine that I bought in Sydney so you can guess that fever troubles me very little. Also I haven't got a sore on me and have never had one since I came. So I consider that my theory about diet, cleanliness and common sense generally in one's habits is demonstrated. . . .

A fortnight later he added another instalment:

Everything happens at once and today is the day. The Berkshire sow has a litter of ten dinky little black and white pigs, Baidam has returned cured, Simpson is back at work, and we lost the whole morning's work through a boy being killed and coming to life again—all this happened before 9 o'clock in the morning. It only needed the *Varoe* to turn up to complete the circle but of course she didn't although she is four days overdue as usual.

The sow's contribution may strike you as insignificant but thereby hangs a tale (that is too long to tell) and I opened the day with a lively hour in consequence.

At 8 o'clock I was out at my dam looking after the erecting gang when Simpson came along to say that one of the felling gang had been instantly killed by a tree falling on him so he had knocked off his labour—eighty-seven boys—and they were bringing in the body, so I knocked off my gang and all the women collected to receive the corpse and do their part (which consists of howling in chorus like a pack of dingoes). When the funeral procession arrived about an hour later the corpse was sitting up in the litter looking quite peaceful and happy with the back of his head gaping wide open and the brains showing through. Simpson dressed it and put in a few stitches with an ordinary needle and cotton and I expect the boy will be back at work in a week! They are marvellous beggars—any white man would either have been killed instantly or, at best, would be in hospital for months with concussion and probably come out a lunatic.

I was awfully thankful it was no worse. I was remarking to Simpson the same morning that we were two thirds through our job and hadn't killed anyone yet. We have had two close calls. One boy had his hip put out and another got his back scored from shoulders to hips by a falling tree but no one killed up to date.

The marvel is that so few accidents occur. No one who has not seen felling in operation could realize how dangerous it is in this dense jungle. A big tree falling is more like an explosion than anything else—trees come down in every direction. It is rarely the tree that is felled that does the damage, it is the other trees that it brings down—they fall in all sorts of directions and at most incredible distances from the actual felled tree. I have seen a tree fifty yards away come down a good two minutes after everything had subsided—and fall in the opposite direction. And then big limbs off standing trees are liable to thud down an hour later and injured trees may take till next day to come

down with a rush, unexpectedly. I have seen some blood freezing escapes by a few inches and both Simpson and I have had to step lively on more than one occasion. That is another feature—you can't get away very readily as there is not a square foot of clear space to run in. I got out of trouble once by hopping under a big felled tree and let that take the crash—if I had lost my head and tried to run I would have been caught all right. Simpson was as white as a sheet when he came up as everyone thought the tree caught me. Simpson has had some close calls too. Of course if you conduct operations from the house verandah the risk is not so great but then your labour sheet tells the tale. . . . We are well into that middle block and I think three weeks will see it out. I can hardly believe it. Besides this I have got all the wooden structure of my dam finished and next week start filling in—if the *Varoe* turns up with the cement for the water valve. . . . Like everything else the practical side introduced novelties that didn't appear in theory. For one thing when I came to sink my piles across the bed of the creek I found complications in the shape of submerged tree trunks, stone and all sorts of obstacles. Also the timbering has to be of the heaviest kind and it takes some handling when the boys are working in soft mud and on slippery banks. However it is all in position now and the rest is just straight out hard labour.

I am keeping quite fit and well—as a matter of fact we are living like fighting cocks as far as kai kai [food] is concerned. . . . You will smile when I tell you that I have developed quite a talent as a cook. It started through the store sending a small tin of afternoon tea biscuits on McKell's order for a large tin of cabin bread. So we ran out of biscuits. I stood it as long as I could and then went into the kitchen and experimented with flour. I turned out some quite serviceable scones and in a day or two improved on them till they are now good enough for anyone to eat. So I go into the kitchen every evening at 5.30 on getting in from toil and make a batch of scones and 'compose' a dinner. I only know three different menus but I ring the changes on those and, so far, our meals have not palled on us. Aumokoal is quite tolerable under the more benign influence of my supervision and, in fact, I find him most willing and competent. He seems to be eager to stand well with me and so far I have seen no occasion to act the brute. Which reminds me I am drying some sago which I will send by this mail for you. I don't think you will find it mouldy as I have seen to the drying myself. I wish you could see the process! The sago is spread out on calico on the grass by the house and Aumokoal understands that his present safety and his future salvation depend on his preserving

that sago from six pigs, four dogs and a multitude of hens—all of which are earnestly addicted to sago. The consequence is that the day is made hideous every few minutes by blood curdling savage yells followed by howls of anguish, or frantic grunts or raucous screeching, according to whether it is dogs, pigs or hens that are the offenders. The coal black form of Aumokoal is seen leaping in pursuit with his eyes glaring and presenting every aspect of a blood thirsty savage on the war path. And as all these thieves lurk in the long grass and watch in the hope of catching Aumokoal off his guard he is kept in constant action.

When the *Varoe* arrived it brought the chairman of the Board of Directors, a wealthy businessman named Burston, who cheered Percy immensely by approving of everything done so far, authorising expenditure beyond his most ambitious dreams for permanent buildings—boys' houses, stores, a manager's house 'of unlimited splendour'—and another 100 acres to be added to Ogamobu, and raised his salary to £400 a year all found 'which makes it worth £600'. He also endeared himself by giving Arthur a 'talking to' and letting him know that the Board judged him by results and his performance was not impressive. He then swept Percy off to Port Moresby and a tour of other plantations. 'I have now been on all the plantations west of Port and also all in the Sogeri district and the more I see of other plantations the better pleased I am with our own'.

In December he returned with 5,000 seed nuts from Kanibo, to find that Simpson had finished the felling.

I have just been watching the impenetrable jungle that I used to struggle into, and get lost in, less than four months ago rising to the high Heavens in flame and smoke. It is good to see, and good to contemplate good work well done. And the scale is large enough for anyone. Imagine an area equal to a line from the Hackney Hotel to Parliament House corner, then down King William Road to City Bridge, along Queens Drive to Hackney Bridge and back along Hackney Road to the corner you started from—that is the size of block you have to imagine thickly strewn with great trees, branches, and dry scrub six feet or more deep and closely packed—some fire!* . . .

I was up at the Station on Saturday. Mrs Brown has really done marvels. She has a flourishing vegetable and flower garden and the place looks like a section of the Zoological Gardens with all the pet birds and animals she has running about in cages and aviaries. She has a cuscus, hornbill, flying squirrel, kingfishers and

* The city of Adelaide.

all sorts of birds, two of my little pigs, goats, fowls and a husband whose fat and complacent air is in strong contrast to the drawn and nervy appearance of everyone else. She is a woman after your own heart, too, as you will realize when I tell you that she not only brought here a complete set of Royal Doulton service but *uses it every day!* Besides silverware and that sort of thing.

The litter of pigs was a success—which is another knock to our grouchy friends. Of the eleven none died but three were stolen, two I gave to Mrs Brown—she thinks she bought them—and I sold the rest straight off the teat for £2 each—£12. So I have close up got our money back in the first litter. Now Ruby has had seven more yesterday. She ate the last litter and McKell said it was 'too wet' or something and we had no hope of breeding pigs. Ruby has not eaten these yet but, of course, she may do so. Whitburn [the new man at Kanibo] says that once they do it they are apt to always do it.

I killed Scotty Currie for the feast. Did I tell you that I promised the boys a great feast and a holiday if they finished the work at the time I set? Well anyway they did so they had the feast. I spent £10 on it and killed a pig as well. I gave them Friday and Saturday morning holiday so they had three days and they certainly made the most of it. They stuffed themselves all day and danced all night. They decorated themselves and their houses with variegated leaves and flowers and created really a most effective scene of festivity. I bought up seven dozen discarded flags—red flags with God Save the King in white letters eight inches long—and presented them to the boys and you would have laughed to see the use they made of them—they wore them for sashes, turbans, neckerchiefs, ramis [or laplap]—the latter was the funniest as the printing appeared in various places and the whole estate was dizzy with 'God Save the King'. But they were brilliant colour and that was all that was wanted. The whole affair was a great success and was a good stunt. We had a job getting them back into the collar but they are working all right again now.

He spent Christmas morning, 1919, having a chat on paper with Irene.

At last I seem to have a chance for a yarn with you. This is a steady job and no error. I remember my mother (and you too) complaining that she never seemed to get a minute to herself. I know what she meant now. It is the difference between an office, where you slam the door and go away till next morning, and living right on your job. The sight of me sitting down is the signal for everyone to crowd in with petitions, complaints,



XIV On the steps of the government residence. From left: Plem, Percy, Mrs Blyth and Irene, c. 1927



XV Irene and Di with houseboys and dogs in the new house, c. 1927



XVI Percy, Irene and dog

enquiries. There are 120 natives and three white men who all regard me as the goat to grouch to whenever they feel like it and the favourite time for it is when I have a pen in my hand. . . . Yesterday afternoon a savage came up to the house while I was doing some accounts and insisted on seeing me personally. He was shaking with excitement, tears streaming from his eyes and—doubtless—red in the face. It seemed that his wife had smitten him with 'bit of au' [wood] and cut his head. The tale was related with much dramatic gesture and excitement. I don't know what I was expected to do but I told him that I was a married man myself and he had my entire sympathy. He went off quite contented and the incident closed.

Then there is the 'stitoré'—a never failing recourse when all else fails. I don't think I ever settle down for a half hour's smoke or a bath or shave but Aumokoal creeps to my elbow with the news that 'boys want stitoré'. So I spend the time, instead, selling rubbish at exorbitant prices to policemen or to the husbands of wives of easy morals (the only people who have any cash here).

Ruby was to have graced the Christmas feast today but as she has brought up her family in a most conscientious way she has escaped that fate. . . . Ruby and her piccaninnies have been really quite funny. I prepared the hospital for her and made all arrangements for the doctor and nurse and so on and then the three days feast happened so I took a chance on it and put off shutting her up till after the feast. As a result she beat me to it and established herself in a house of her own in the bush. I sent Aumokoal to look for her and after three days search he got her address and reported 'seben pigsh'. I told him I would give him one if he successfully brought up the family. So he called every morning with food and water. But she evidently hated so much publicity for the next thing she departed with her family and gave Aumokoal another two days hunt to trail her to her lair. Then he reported 'fipe pigsh' and I thought it all up. But although she shifted her residence no less than five times we lost no more and have now taken them away and farmed them out to the Goaribari women who suckle them and get them as fat as 'hogs'. The little Berkshire ones are absolutely round and follow the women about wherever they go. . . .

Some clever Frenchman once remarked that no man who truly loved his fellows could escape becoming a misogynist at forty. And another wise bird—American probably—said that the more he knew of human beings the better he loved his dog. I agree with them. From which you will deduce that Simpson is feeling his feet a bit. He came here half starved and was eager to take on the work at £9 a month. I paid him £20 and keep—which

is considerably better than £300 per an. these times. Also he was shaken to the soul with fear as he had had a close look at his next step—the beachcomber—and this job came just in time to save him. In spite of these conditions I treated him with uniform politeness and consideration and was careful to avoid any suggestion of my knowledge of these things. His memory lasted just three months. Now he is well fed and in a good billet and everything running smoothly he is beginning to regard me as a dam nuisance about the place. He confided in Arthur that he didn't care about sharing a house—he wanted a house of his own. . . . Of course I know why Simpson wants a house of his own. The first thing he would do would be to order a case of whiskey and start indulging himself in drink (and other forms of entertainment) which my presence acts in restraint of as things are. So things stay as they are till he has finished his work and I am prepared to part with him. I can see well enough where the shoe pinches and why my tactful politeness goes for nothing. When Whitburn was here for a couple of weeks I used to listen to him and Simpson conversing and realized just where I fail in engaging his friendship and approval. He and Whitburn are supposed to be friends but, to my mind, their intercourse consisted of calling each other 'liar', arguing, cursing each other and generally exhibiting the utmost hostility in the friendliest spirit.

The work was not proceeding according to program as they had discovered thirty acres unfelled in the middle of a block reported by McKell to be all cleared and under sweet potatoes. In fact, the sweet potatoes were 'a fringe around the edge' which would probably not supply the labour until the next crop was ready. Then both sago gangs reported that the sago swamps were cut out and another area had to be found and bought from the native owners.

After Christmas he described the Brown's Christmas party—'all eight of us'.

Mrs Brown really made a remarkable showing in the circumstances and it went off very well indeed. We had hornbill soup, curried prawns, roast chicken, roast wallaby, fruit salad, mince pies, trifle and all the usual 'fixings'—devilled almonds, sweets and a tablecloth of the greatest magnificence. I thought of you instantly I saw it. It was elaborately worked like the tea cloths you have but of a most intricate design. And all the table service and fittings were quite the best I have ever come across. Simpson thought it was 'all rot'.

We lost another boy the day after Christmas. I don't know

why he died—he said he was going to and he did. So last night was made hideous in his honour with drums, conch shells and dingo like howls the whole night through. They put it off till last night so as to provide an entertainment for Saturday.

I got this far when the usual thing happened. First Everuda arrived with a pig and a cassowary. So I had to go down and listen to the history of their respective deaths, weigh them, enter the weights in the game book and serve out presents to the shooting boy and a horde of amateur assistants who helped to bring in the spoils.

I had hardly caught my breath and locked up when the best part of a village appeared trailing up the path bearing a squealing pig positively woven to a pole—I don't know how he even managed to break a squeal loose! This was for sale or barter. I couldn't refuse although I didn't want it, as I am trying to encourage the natives to bring produce to the place. So we haggled and bargained for an hour or so and the pig was duly weighed and tied up for future use. A half hour's interval what time I got rid of Aumokoal by serving out lunch materials. Then Sikori arrived with still another pig and a similar horde of excited assistants and the whole programme gone over again. After lunch the 'stitoré' for two hours and by that time I wouldn't have taken up a pen to write myself a cheque for a hundred pounds let alone write fool letters that probably bore you to death.

He continued the letter on New Year's day with a review of the achievements of the last two years and patted himself on the back, as indeed he was entitled to do. Since he had arrived in 1918 he had built up the recruiting business from nothing and the *Varoe's* earnings (of 'over £6,000') had paid for the development of Ogamobu, Kanibo, and Bagama.

From broad issues he turned to one of his favourite discourses: attention to detail.

Mrs Brown is a treat and restores my fading faith in human beings. She says she likes this place—Kikori—can't see anything wrong with the climate and conditions and wants her husband to take up land and start a plantation. She has accommodated herself to the conditions and made herself perfectly happy and contented with all kinds of interests and hobbies—in fact she is getting all the best out of the place instead of groaning and complaining because everything is not exactly like the last place she came from.

When I recall all the 'can't do its' and grouches and complaints I have suffered from and now, from experience, have confirmed my impression that it was nothing but futility I have come to

the conclusion that the average human being is a futile ass without any more initiative than a child.

When I came here first the salt used to be put on the table in a soggy mass mixed up with rust-stained paper in a Cerebos tin. I remarked on it and was referred to the damp climate—'nothing will keep dry in this infernal hole'. Well one day I tipped it out on a plate and told Aumokoal to put it in the oven. He brought it back in ten minutes and I put it in one of those screw top glass jars that sweets are sold in. That was three months ago and it has had no attention since. It is still as dry as it would be in Broken Hill. Ten minutes and a little commonsense. The sugar was the same. I took it out of the bag and put it in an iron boiler with a lid and suspended it from a beam in the pantry with a single wire. Then I treated a wisp of cotton wool with glycerine and corrosive sublimate and tied it on the wire. That was six months ago and the sugar is not only always as dry as you have it south but not an ant has been near it. (Before we had nearly as many ants in it as there were grains and 'you can't keep the damned ants away—they get in everything'). The job took about 15 minutes six months ago.

Then leather articles 'you can't keep leather here—it grows whiskers in a week'. Well I have three pairs of leather boots and a leather suitcase and my camera case and binocular case and none of them ever get 'whiskers' although—bar the big boots—I rarely use any of them. But I had Aumokoal give them a thorough doing with coacholine and about once a month or so I tell him to give them a rub over. Scrub itch or bites of any kind is purely a question of using the simplest precautions. The turmoil of rushing up and down stairs for supplies during meals I overcame by putting in an hour one day and fixing four shelves in a big trade camphorwood box on end. This I have standing on a small table in a corner of the dining room and have put a wisp of cotton wool round each leg. This holds everything in the way of food—milk, sugar, fruit, sauces, etc. that we require—a sort of chiffonier you know—and no ant ever goes near it.

And so it goes on. There is absolutely nothing here in the way of inconvenience that a little—a *very* little—commonsense will not overcome. It makes me sick to hear the futile idiots talk and it is most refreshing to see a woman like Mrs Brown calmly accommodating herself without fuss or complaint.

Handling the natives is just the same. They are only big kids and have all the faults of children. If you have the sense to overlook—or take at their true worth—such little misdemeanours and don't expect more from them than you would from a child you have no trouble. Aumokoal springs off his tail if I so much

as look at him but I rarely speak to him in much above a whisper and yet he obeys me and works well—you wouldn't know the boy now—Simpson, on the other hand, roars at both boys—his own and mine—flies into flaming rages with them and does not get half the attention. He never seems to get anything done without violence and rage while I only murmur a direction and it is done at once.

Mrs Lever, the wife of the Medical Assistant, gave a party for New Year's day.

The dinner was quite nice last night and Mrs Lever went to a great deal of trouble. It was characteristic of Mrs Brown that she lent Mrs Lever her Royal Doulton for the occasion and characteristic of Mrs Lever that one of the plates 'got broken'.

Mrs Brown is really a surprising person. She turned up to the dinner wearing her war decorations in honour of her hostess. She has the Croix Militaire, a Balkan decoration and about half a dozen others. The French Military Cross was presented by the General on the field off his own tunic when she was rescued from the Arabs. She was surgeon to the Foreign Legion in Algiers and some of them were captured. The Arabs tore out all her toe and finger nails and otherwise amused themselves with her by torture, and one of the officers they half flayed and then crucified. It was for her assistance in saving this bird that she got the cross. She certainly has had some adventures although she never mentions them except a word or two at a time apropos something else. I was at the station this morning admiring the furniture she devises out of kerosene cases!

I have just made up my rainfall record for the month. I got a proper rain gauge and measure through the Director of Lands and have kept a very careful record through the month. You will not be surprised to hear that still another bogey is pricked or squashed or whatever it is you do to bogeys. Read this—it is the official record:

Rainfall for month 12 inches (round figures)

Wet days during month 22 days

Wouldn't you imagine we had been floundering round in pouring rain all the month?

Now read mine which I guarantee accurate in the face of a million 'official records':

Rainfall for month 8 inches

Wet days during month 4

Gauge recorded rain in 22 readings—17 of the 22 readings were 10 pts and under

Long Ago is Far Away

Rain recorded 12 nights (before 6 a.m.) and 10 days
Highest reading (2.62) fell at night
Heaviest day rains were: .81, .75, .39, and .29
Bright sun *every* day. Rain in short showers
Oh what a difference when the commonsense facts are known!

One wonders about Simpson, although with no details of his place of origin or upbringing, not even his Christian name, it is a fruitless speculation. After the Christmas festivities the *Varoe* came in, bringing whisky ordered by Simpson who 'celebrated her arrival by getting beastly drunk in half an hour' and 'made a fearful fool of himself in front of the labour'. So Percy sent him off recruiting with Arthur, hoping he would come to his senses before they returned.

11 January 1920. Simpson returned the day before with eight boys and with his sanity completely restored—he is another person—polite, considerate and full of eagerness to get back on his job. So my prescription was evidently right but what puzzles me is why it is that anyone who *can* behave like a decent human being can change around like that. However I am thankful for small mercies and at present all is well. . . .

Simpson and Arthur are, at present, on their best behaviour so of course Whitbourne must break out. The day before the ketch returned to Ogamobu I was awakened at midnight with a note from the magistrate and the entire labour force from Kanibo! It appears that they had deserted in a body after stealing two canoes and gone to the government at Kikori with complaints that Mr Whitbourne beat them from morning to night. Brown very decently sent them on to me to give me a chance to adjust the matter without going to court about it. So I held a midnight enquiry on the verandah in my pyjamas and finally sent them off to the boys' houses quite satisfied and the whole matter amicably settled. But I haven't settled with Whitbourne yet as he passed me in the night as he was on his way to Kikori per canoe while I was on my way to Kanibo in the ketch to see him. There's always something. However he seems to have a fine lot of development under way at Kanibo and I was very pleased with my inspection of the place. The more I see of what can be done with that place the more Claud and Arthur's shocking inefficiency becomes evident. Apart from the development of the property the sago business is growing by leaps and bounds. I have just made a contract with the Laloki Mining Company to supply them with 200 bags of dry sago a month at £15 per ton—about £75 per month!

We are really doing wonderfully well in every direction. In

the last two trips I have shipped into Port £100 worth of logs off the Tewu block—timber that would have been burnt otherwise. The ketch has earned in *net* profit over £500 in five months and our net profit from sago is £138. We are earning over £2,500 per annum after paying all expenses—salaries and everything. In addition to this our planting enterprises are being developed at about half the standard costs so we are getting it both ways. The recruiting shows a net profit of well over £320 apart from the ketch.

Percy went in to Port [Moresby] in January (1920) and did not enjoy himself. As a consequence of the maritime strike no ships were calling:

The Lord alone knows when these few words will reach your patient eye. There is no prospect of any mail leaving here for at least another month and no certainty that we will be any nearer to it even then. The government had the mail sent to Thursday Island and proposed to get it across from there. Then the influenza broke out so they sent it all back again to Sydney. . . . Port is a little Hell upon Earth just now. No fresh food, stifling hot weather, mosquitoes day and night nipping at you, no news of the world and no entertainment of any sort to keep your mind off your troubles. . . . I shall be glad to get away to the plantation.

He returned bringing an agricultural expert named Zimmer to give his opinion on the district generally as a coconut growing proposition.

All these confounded arguments will now be settled for good. I have had the estates surveyed so now we know exactly what our areas are and now I will get an expert opinion on the trees themselves so we will know exactly what is wrong with them—if anything—and what we are to expect. I am gradually cutting out all those idiotic arguments about the land, coconuts, rainfall, climate, ad nauseam, and reducing all the factors to exact statements. . . .

14 March 1920 Well nothing could be more favourable than their reports, and still another bogey is pricked. When McKell left here he said we had every pest under the sun, the land was no good and the climate likewise. Zimmer says we have no pests at all and both he and Stanley [the Government Geologist] say that the land and climate are perfectly suitable for either coconuts or rubber. . . . While the experts were here we gathered and opened our first ripe nuts and all agreed there was nothing to complain of. The nuts looked very small but when we opened

them up we found the husk very thin so the nut itself was much larger than one would expect and the meat was nearly an inch thick—quite a good copra nut. . . . McKell foretold that our nuts would never ripen and that they would contain no meat at all.

This is the first peaceful moment since I got back. It is Sunday morning and just clearing up into a fine and pleasant day. There is not a sound except the drums in the native quarters . . . I came out on the verandah with my block and fountain pen and had just started the first word of this letter when Aumokoal crept round the corner with the broom and the obvious intention of vigorously sweeping all round my chair for hours. He hasn't thought of sweeping the verandah before for weeks to my certain knowledge. So I chased him out and, while I was about it, I chased Heni out too.

Simpson is sick and taking it out in bed, being Sunday. He has been awfully bad ever since the ketch departed and could hardly drag himself about. I managed to cut off his supply of liquor from Port but I couldn't prevent Arthur entertaining him on the *Varoe*. When I protested Arthur pronounced 'A few drinks won't hurt him' with all the authority of a Harley Street specialist and that closed the subject. It is nice to have the opinions of one with so profound and varied knowledge and experience of life as Arthur. It fills up my own inexperience and ignorance.

The wharf had collapsed no less than six times over the years so Percy determined to design one that would stay put and combined the operation with building his pit saw to provide timber for the new buildings.

As I sit here I can look down on the finished result of my labours of the last few weeks—all finished and set ready for trial tomorrow. I have built my pit saw alongside the wharf and the log for cutting is in place for our first attempt tomorrow morning. I am anxious to get going but quite confident of success although I have received nothing but discouragement from the start. Simpson says it can't be done—he has seen it tried on several of the plantations he has been on but it failed every time. Arthur is pessimistic but enjoying the anticipation of my failure. Brown says it has been tried over and over again at the station but they never did any good with it, and so on. Even in Port there was a feeling that it took a lot of doing but, as against that, Sefton finds no difficulty and makes a great success of his mill. However we'll see tomorrow.

My wharf is really brilliant and I wish you were here to admire it. . . . It looks really O.K. and is exactly right. I found that the

ramp I had made was rather a pull up. The wharf meets the bank about five feet from the top so I made a cutting through it and graded it but the grade was a bit steep in view of slippery clay so, with much temerity I undertook to make concrete steps! They turned out the very thing and now our approach looks like the entrance to the Commonwealth Bank in Sydney. . . . I have planted a hedge of crotons and flowering shrubs each side on the bank and made a limestone road from the steps. Then I built a very strongly built shed on the flat to one side and erected my pit saw under it. The idea is that we can float our timber to the pit saw and so save labour of logging and when the sawing is finished we have a wharf shed already in position and nothing to do but pull down the pit saw and build in the sides of the shed. . . .

Monday night. I made a gay start with my pit saw gang this morning but found, as usual, I was not to get away with it without trouble. Those saws have been the limit! First, none was to be obtained in Port, sent South for them, they arrived a couple of days after the ketch left Port so there was another month's delay. Then they shipped them without handles and I had to wait another month. This morning I found the handles wouldn't fit and I had to file the saws down. Then to cap all the saws were neither set or sharpened—just the raw article as it leaves the manufacturer. So I had to first file them down to fit the handles then set and then sharpen them. Luckily Simpson knew something of setting and sharpening so he fixed that for me. So our day has gone. However the boys have been having a great time improving the wharf approach with limestone paths, fences and no end of frill. They are awfully amusing. Now they see what I am about they have taken over the whole show and regard me as a bit of a nuisance. They bring their friends down after 'knock off' to admire their work and are as proud as Punch over the whole thing. They asked me if I would carve their names in the soft cement before it hardened so that there would be a record of the builders . . . Simpson related a great joke on Baidam the other day apropos. Baidam got enraged with some of the Goaribaris and yelled at them 'You niggers think I'm a black man like you. Well I'm not, I'm a black white man'. Baidam is doing all this planting and so on, of course. Simpson merely looks on and interferes. But Simpson knows that *he* is the one that is doing it all and *I* just fuss around and make foolish interferences. Baidam got nearer to it than any of them one day when he explained to the gang that they must do what I said whether they understood why or not, because, he said, 'Head belong Taubada plenty think too much'.

Sunday (21 March 1920) morning again and a truly gorgeous day. The sun is sparkling clear and the air like wine. The northwest is just about finished and we are beginning to get dewy nights and clear cold mornings again. I got over the difficulty about putting on damp clothes in the morning . . . I roll up my pants, over night, beginning at the waist so that the top part is inside the tight roll and I fold up my shirt and put it under my pillow. In the morning I have a nice warm, dry, garment to put next my body and my pants are quite dry except for the ends of the legs which don't matter. Then I slip on a woollen coat over my cotton shirt and discard this when I come in to breakfast. It is quite cold from six till eight a.m. and then warms up till a cotton shirt is as much as one can do with.

We have quite a regular routine here now. A bell rings at 5.30 and we have coffee and a pipe while the boys eat breakfast (which consists of sweet potatoes cooked overnight and left in the bossboy's charge) then at 6 there is a violent uproar of conch shells and the gangs 'fall in'. We have 150 now so it is quite a gathering. Then the various tasks are allotted, food for lunch served out, sores and sickness treated and we depart to work. At eight, having seen the various gangs well started on their respective jobs we come in to breakfast and a smoke. Then back on the job till noon when everyone knocks for lunch till one p.m. Then back again till 5.30 which makes the even twelve hours round. Then I bath and shave, get into my pyjamas and eat some food and after a pipe on the verandah turn in with a book and a pipe till the nine o'clock gun by which time I am good and ready for sleep.

I began to think there was a hoo-doo on my pit saw. Started on Tuesday and it came on to rain—the first rain we have had in the day time for over three weeks. Then I discovered that you can't saw in the rain—the saw sticks. So I had to stop once more to thatch the roof of the shed. It was all ready for thatching but I meant to leave it for some convenient time with casuals or a punishment gang. So I took the weeding gang and sent them to Bagama for grass. This was an economical scheme as they were weeding the cocoanuts at Bagama incidentally and the labour was not wasted as it would be if they were getting nipa. Moreover the grass roof is infinitely better. It lasts much longer, is cleaner and looks better. It beats me why this has not been done before. McKell sent the gang twenty miles away for nipa while a gang was pulling grass at Bagama a mile away and *burning* it!

I was wrong about our wharf approach looking like the entrance to the Commonwealth Bank in Sydney. It now looks

like the approach to Taronga Park.* My gang took the bit in its teeth and ran wild with post and rail fences, gardens with dinky borders and all sorts of fancy fittings while I stood around and interfered as little as possible. They reminded me of school boys building a robbers cave, or a rabbit hutch or something dear to the school boy soul. Nothing was too much trouble and they toiled frantically only too scared that I would stop them. . . . On Friday we once more attacked the pit saw job and I was delighted to see them make a success of it from the very start. The first few cuts were a bit wavy as was only to be expected and lots of minor adjustments became necessary from time to time but before the day was out they were rattling along in great style and had entirely mastered it. Already they have cut up one big hardwood log into four by fours, four by twos and several fitches that will be O.K. for decking the wharf. But it pains me to use this wood in the rough for building. It is cabinet maker's wood and it is a sin to use it for anything else. It is a deep red with yellow—bright yellow—streaks in it and the grain is as smooth as velvet.

A fortnight later he was able to write:

I am really quite proud of my pit saw gang. They have not only cut vast piles of 4×4 and 3×2 timber but they now can mark the logs for cutting up, block them level for the saw and, in fact, do the whole thing without supervision. They go on their own in a canoe to the Tiwu block (where the logs are stacked) sling a log on each side of the canoe, paddle back to the wharf, roll the log up the skid on to the stage, mark out the various sizes it is to be cut, block it level and cut it up—all on their own. I consider it marvellous for two weeks training considering they are only raw western boys who never handled a saw of any kind before. Of course we have had all sorts of trouble and wept tears of blood at times before we beat it (I didn't know much myself of a practical nature before we started) and we have devised all sorts of patents to overcome difficulties and, in some directions, we are working on plans of our own quite different to what I have seen elsewhere. But it *works!*

It took the boys many days to realize that I was serious in my maniacal craze for straight lines and right angles but they dropped to it at last after a fearful expenditure of energy on my part and now I have to look on silently while they

* The Sydney Zoological Gardens.

painstakingly get the micrometer on to something that does not matter at all! . . .

We have a ridiculous cockatoo which, for some reason or other, has adopted the pit-saw gang and sits all day on the rafters of the shed conversing in the native language with the boys with shrieks of ribald laughter (also in the native voice) and most painful language in English in which, I regret to say, I recognise my own voice. Cocky (with startling originality its name is Cocky) 'Cocky kai kai abia', 'mahuta las you . . .' (the latter in my voice), 'Wadime! wadime!' she shrieks exactly as I do when I want anything stopped in a hurry.

For the next three months everything ran along reasonably—true several batches of rubber seeds did not germinate but finally one did, Percy went in to Port and took delivery of 'stumps' (which are in effect cuttings) and got a satisfactory strike. The pit saw gang faltered while he was away but he got them going again and trained boys in the use of planes to dress the timber. Whitbourne left Kanibo but Swanson took the job, and Simpson excelled himself in hard work and good manners. There was a brush with the agents in Port Moresby which precipitated crisp letters all round and Irene received a rehearsal text of them. Arthur was still a thorn and announced that he was due for four and a half months' leave on full pay which Percy referred to the Board but set in train hiring Harry Percy* to run the *Varoe*.

His May (1920) letter began placidly:

Sunday morning again! They seem to whiz past like the centuries in Wells's *Time Machine* leaving an impression of a grey blur of Sundays going past too quick to see. . . . It is a lovely morning. We had nearly half an inch of rain last night and a few belated clouds are still left (but hurrying home before the sun gets too strong) and the air is moist and cool.

Simpson went off last evening to spend the week end with Lever and I have the whole place to myself for the day. Not that I have any complaint against Simpson these days—he seems to have recovered and is quite sane and easy to live with just now. He has had no liquor for two months and seems to have much better control over himself in every way. He is working like a navy—as usual—and has the labour well in hand and a fine lot of work done in the rubber plantation. I am anxious to get the planting finished before the wet weather really sets in—if it ever does! We had 20 inches in April and only two

* By one of those coincidences which complicate biography Percy's successor on the *Varoe* was named Harry Percy.

wet mornings. No wet days at all . . . This rainfall question may strike you as of little importance to occupy so much of my attention but I can assure you it is going to be a very vital question in five years' time when we start rubber tapping. . . .

The pit saw gangs are well into their stride again and have done great work this week. We have huge stacks of sawn timber and next week we start on the studs. That will give us all the timber for the house but the floor joists and roof beams. . . . I have ordered the iron etc. for the roof and plan to pick up the floor boards when I am going past Manu Manu sawmill to get the last shipment of rubber stumps in July next. If everything falls out right the iron should reach Port early in July and I can load that, then run to Manu Manu and while we are loading the boards I can send a note overland and have the stumps pulled and stacked against our arrival. But it will be a long time before the house is actually built. Before we can start we must build a decent road from the wharf to the site of the house, then level and grade a place for it and put in 40 piles. . . .

The Browns went in to Port this trip. Isn't the Govt sickening the way they treat their officials! The Browns toiled day and night to make the station habitable. They made gardens, built furniture, added a bathroom and decent kitchen to the house and the Lord knows what in the way of improvement for their comfort and then, just as they were on the point of heaving a sigh and sitting back to enjoy the fruit of their labour, the Governor comes up with instant marching orders and they are removed at a day's notice. The new magistrate—Keelan—is a returned soldier suffering from shell shock and mad as a hatter but thank heaven, a type I can manage and I think we will be left at peace. You have no idea to what extent the efficient organisation of our job depends on a tactful handling of the government officials. They can just about double our costs of development by a wave of the hand. . . . The labour is well contented at present and working well but the least thing may start a riot and then up go our maintenance costs and down goes our development return. We have 113 effective units at work, that is exclusive of the sago gang (9), cooks (5), pit saw gang (4), hospital, gaol and deserters . . . Simpson is straining every nerve to be ready for the stumps that should arrive in two weeks—I ordered twelve thousand instead of ten as I calculated the ketch is sure to be late on her return this trip and I reckoned he could do it although he was very doubtful. . . . The rubber is going on finely. That plantation will only cost about £3 per acre in spite of the enormously increased cost of all supplies (the increase in the tobacco ration alone amounts to £200 a year over

costs of two or three years ago—7/- per lb now against 3/- in 1916!) and the fact that we are paying tip top salaries for management. . . .

It has been a most peaceful day . . . even the native quarters have kept their drums silent all day. I know the reason for that extraordinary circumstance though—they are all sleeping the sleep of utter exhaustion. The Kiwais had an immense celebration and dance last night commencing at 6 o'clock and the drums and shouting were still going on with unabated vigor at 7 o'clock this morning. It died down gradually and by about 9 there was the silence of the grave over the whole place which is unusual enough to be quite uncanny.

The affair was to celebrate various deaths that have taken place in the last few weeks. It is the custom for the bereaved to give a feast and dance about a week after the death of a near relative but these deaths followed each other so fast that they ran into each other and finally resulted in nearly everyone being involved as hosts or givers of the feast. So they pooled their sorrows and had one immense celebration.

Three wives and several children and a man were the deaths and we are getting quite a little grave yard in the plantation. I don't much like it but can't very well object. It is rather dangerous to interfere in these primitive affairs. But the boys were so taken with the concrete work that I taught them to do that they were inspired with the idea of making tombstones! I nearly fainted when they came to me about it and asked for some cement and lime. I let them have it although I'm derved if I fancy decorating the plantation with tombstones besides graves which were objectionable enough without sign posts as well! . . .

I don't know what caused all these deaths but most of them just died after the native fashion. One woman died in childbirth and one—well she was the victim of an accident. She and her husband had some domestic difference of opinion and, as the boys carefully impressed on me, the husband didn't kill her, he only 'squeezed her throat too much'. It sounds a bit absurd but I know exactly what they mean. He did not intend to go to extreme measures but in his enthusiasm for reform he slightly overdid it. But he didn't kill her, they were very earnest in impressing me with that. . . .

Did I tell you that 24 boys that Arthur recruited for us about six weeks ago deserted after working two days, taking with them their axes and blankets and stealing one of the plantation canoes to get away on? A dead loss of £75 to charge against our costs of development. I didn't think we had a dog's chance of seeing

them, or our property, again as they belong to Morigi district which is very wild and difficult. However a government patrol went down there to see what could be done and by great good luck they caught seven of them and recovered a number of the axes. The seven are now at the station and Johnston says he feels sure he can get the rest, or most of them, in the course of the next month or so. This is great good luck if it is so as we will have them on the plantation when they finish their sentence in gaol and the extra labour will come in nicely just when it is needed most—at the beginning of the felling season next August. . . .

Johnston says he went to a village in Morigi about our deserters and enquired for the village constable. The natives went off with the message and presently returned with a nicely polished skull. Johnston asked what that was for and they gravely remarked that *that* was the village constable . . . So he appointed a new one that was a bit more alive and it is this new broom who is gaining merit by recovering our boys for us.

. . . the Kumi Kumi people attacked the Mission station at Aird Hill and wrecked the store after rifling it. These birds are the same ones that fired on the *Remora* in 1915 you remember and there was such a fuss over the subsequent slaughter by the Police. Then down at Goaribari the Ubua villagers killed a policeman and sent a message to say that the 'Government no walk about now' so they conclude they are frightened and propose to do as they please in future. There has certainly been little patrolling in this division for a long while and it does not take long for the natives to notice it.

We have been eagerly looking out for the ketch these last three or four days but I had a hunch she would be late—just as well I ordered the extra stumps. The holes are all ready for them now and Simpson is perishing to get them in.

Wednesday. The ketch came in late last night and brought me a bolt from the blue. I knew something was due to happen to put out my arrangements for my trip south but this is worse than my gloomiest anticipations and I have had a sleepless night of worry and have a pretty bad attack of fever this morning in consequence.

It seems that when Arthur got to Port he found he couldn't get Harry Percy to take the ketch as he expected so he just anchored her in the harbour and caught the steamer south after making some arrangement for Butterworth to lend his man Mullins to take the vessel out to Kikori and throw her on my hands. Mullins came to Port a week or two later and arrived here last night with about 3,000 rubber stumps instead of 12,000,

no food, no kerosene fuel and with everything wrong that can go wrong with the engine, and the vessel leaking like a sieve and the crew practically running it and him. My present feeling is that I can't do it. It makes me feel like a school kid who is due to fight the school bully after lessons, but I simply *have* to so I suppose I will. All my housebuilding, pit saw and numerous jobs I have half done must be dropped for ever now because I can't take them up after four or five months neglect and anyway If I survive this extra strain on top of everything else I will certainly *have* to take a rest. There is some limit to human endurance and I have asked my unfortunate constitution to put up with a good deal this last two and a half years as it is. Arthur telegraphed to the Board to say he was sending the vessel out to me and said that Simpson could easily manage without my assistance! . . .

Well I am off to the Fly in an hour or so if I can borrow spark plugs and kerosene from the station. I can't get any food because we are short here ourselves. Goodbye dear I was trying to build up my health so as to greet you in good nick when I came down but it looks as if I shall come down a sick man after all, if I don't land in hospital before. I wish I could get out of it—I feel as if I really can *not* take it on but I tell myself that things are never quite as bad as they look and I have always before discovered a reserve strength to meet these sudden stresses but when the fever is on you these things don't appeal. I can only think that this is the worst of the south-east season and the rotten condition the vessel and engine are in. Well I must go—goodbye again—give my love to the kids.

Irene had to wait several weeks before she had another letter and that can't have been soothing either.

18 June 1920. I only got in yesterday and found the *Marsina* in and due to leave today so I haven't time to do much more than say that I arrived and am still alive. . . . We had a most ghastly trip—the engine continually breaking down at critical moments and a leaking stern tube that kept the crew pumping the whole time. In every case the breakdown discovered some fresh place where Arthur had made a temporary makeshift repair just good enough to tide him over last trip and he *must* have known that he was leaving me a peck of troubles. . . . On top of all that we ran into the worst spell of weather I have ever experienced in the Fly. It poured with rain every night and blew half a gale all the time. We had to beach the vessel twice to try and repair the stern tube and stern gland and when the water

circulating pump of the engine—which is some new experiment of Arthur's—didn't break down the oil feed blew out. Mullins was sick and altogether we had a Hell of a time for ten days before we got our load of recruits and returned to Kikori half-starved and about knocked out. We left next day for Kanibo and picked up the sago and cocoanuts and beached the vessel once more for repairs. Then went to Urika mission for a load of copra—do you remember that creek? It was a lively performance getting the *Remora* through but that is nothing to the excitement of getting the *Varoe* through. At one adventure all our recruits dived overboard and fled to the bank thinking we were wrecked. Then we got out just after dark and started for Port. The leak started again almost at once and poured in through the stern tube just like a fireman's hose. That meant all hands on the pump day and night till we got to Port. Arthur had mended it with plasticine (!) before but the extra running had still further extended the trouble (as he must have known it would) and it was hopeless to try and do anything without getting new parts. By continual pumping we could just keep ahead of it so we carried on and got into Port yesterday pretty well knocked out but with a full load of freight and well up to our average of recruits (35) so the trip is financially successful and Arthur is deprived of his anticipated satisfaction of having people saying that everything went to pot the minute *he* left the ketch. . . .

It is difficult at this distance, and reading all at once letters written at weekly intervals over nearly three years, to understand why Percy and Arthur sustained so acrimonious an association. Why Arthur, who was very popular and charming in Port Moresby, did not find himself another job. Why Percy, who does seem to have reached a point of irritation which blinded him so that he distrusted everything Arthur did, good or bad, did not sack him as Burston suggested, and as he had the power to do. One can see by the handwriting when the letter is going to degenerate into nervy repetition of the wrongs he suffered from all the Europeans with whom he worked, with the tedious refrain of Arthur's malevolence. This time after two more trips in the ketch he went down with dengue fever and by August, writing to report his recovery and his arrangements to take leave when Arthur returned, his handwriting had returned to the normal well-formed flowing style. He had employed his convalescence writing his annual report and was delighted to find from the agent's books that whereas he had estimated £1,000 to clear and plant 300 acres of rubber he had planted 350 acres at a cost of £1001.6s.9d. 'In other words I kept to the sum allotted and got 50 acres more. It cost £2.17.4 to plant. No one here will believe it as £6 per acre is the standard cost. But the figures are supplied quite independently of me from the Moresby Trading Agency books.'

Arthur returned to Port Moresby with his wife, a splendid girl, and everyone hoped that this would improve the situation all round. Percy left Simpson, with an assistant Burlingham, at Ogamobu, Arthur with the refitted *Varoe*, Swanson at Kanibo, and came south in October. As usual there are no letters covering the period when he was with Irene but it becomes clear that a large part of his holiday was spent in discussions with the Board. Arthur and Simpson both wrote direct to the Board criticising Percy, and gained the support of the Moresby Trading Agency who, according to Percy, had certain inefficiencies in the handling of the company's affairs to justify. The upshot was a general spring cleaning in the course of which Arthur and Simpson were dismissed and Percy returned in February, 1921, feeling that at last he would be able to run things as he thought they should be run. He brought back with him one Shafto, who had qualifications to take over the *Varoe* and who was in addition pleasant and polite.

The spring cleaning had now to be finished in Port Moresby. He started by going through the accounts and found that Arthur, although appearing to run the *Varoe* successfully, had an account with the store of such a size that the profits of the business were more than absorbed. He listed the contents of the mail he found on his first morning at the office of the agents:

16 February 1921 . . . the ketch came in on Sunday. She came in as I was shaving before breakfast and immediately I had finished my tea and alleged toast I went across to Bertie's* house and spent the whole day there out of harms way! On Monday at 9 o'clock I entrenched myself at the M.T.A. office and awaited events. While I was waiting I perused my mail which consisted of (1) a peremptory letter from Simpson demanding that the whole of his balance of salary (£150) should be immediately banked in the Bank of N.S.W. (2) Ditto from Burlingham (3) similar letter from Swanson threatening legal proceedings if the money was not coming forthwith (4) letter from Freshwater complaining that his sling (rope affair for slinging cattle) was not returned and that 'Mr Robinson' had said his company would buy a bull calf but had not called for it (most unfriendly letter) (5) letter from 'the solicitor for Mr H.A. Collins' claiming £100 for breach of contract and giving notice of further proceedings if the money was not paid before I left Port (6) notice from M.T.A. showing a debit of £195 and requesting payment (7) letter from the copper mines cancelling our recruiting order. Cheerful mail what?

Then Arthur barged in walking heavily. He saw me out of

* A solicitor in Port Moresby and a personal friend.

the tail of his eye but kept his shoulder to me for about 20 minutes while he walked about the office. I determined to wear him out and sat tight. He tired first and turned to the door to go out but that brought him square on to me and as I caught his eye I said 'When will it suit you to hand over to your successor?' He said 'Any time' and I said 'Fix a definite time and we will meet you here and go aboard' so he said 'Half past three' and that ended the interview. . . . I fixed up my mail—gave the letter about Collins [who had thought he was going to run the *Varoe*, probably on Arthur's sayso] to Bertie to attend to—told the M.T.A. to disregard Simpson's letter—pay £50 into Burlingham's account and send Swanson his money. I saw a letter in which Swanson said he had asked Arthur to arrange for £5 to be sent to his mother and the balance to himself. This was dated last December but no doubt Arthur 'forgot'. Then I drew out £100 from my private banking account and handed it to the M.T.A. to cover what is due to Arthur. So now I am broke too! . . . I have taken Simpson's downfall into my own hands . . . that will leave me high and dry until I acquire a fresh team of hostile friends. . . .

I am sitting on the Club verandah enjoying the view of two whaleboats gliding through the still waters of the harbour in the golden rays of the setting sun—a scene of peaceful calm with a background of vivid blue hills and a still golden light lending a glamour to the scene. In the first boat is Arthur and his wife and in the second his household goods. The rippling wake embraces the *Varoe* from which they have departed and the bow points to Konidobu and parts unknown to which his future path extends . . . I have had no more than a dozen words with him and those of the most formal character and have kept strictly on a business footing. The time has passed for talk and I have no desire, in his regard, except that I shall never come in contact with him again.

But Arthur's name still comes up—like the itch after the mosquito has gone.

17 February 1921. I find that he was instrumental in Swanson leaving and threatening legal action. He not only 'forgot' about his money but also 'lost' his order for food etc. and went out with nothing whatever in goods for buying sago or any food for himself. So Swanson was subsisting on native food for a month or more on top of the time the *Varoe* was on the slip . . .

Percy was so obsessed by Arthur's supposed malevolent plots that he

does not appear to have realised that he was also contending with economic forces quite outside his control. He observed:

Things are in an awful state here in the business way. All recruiting is stopped and even the copper mines have cancelled all recruiting orders. I got in touch with Mr Hogan Taylor (the manager of Loloki Copper Mines) and have got an exception made in our favour so we are now the only firm doing business. . . . We would have been in a desperate position just now as you can't get an order for recruits for love or money and, even if you did, no one has any cash to pay for them.

A fortnight later he reveals that after all the copper mines were unable to take any recruits, so he set out with Shafto consoled by a full load of passengers and an order for twenty-five recruits from the M.T.A., to find out what had been happening at Kanibo and Ogamobu.

17 March 1921. We made a good run with fine weather to Kanibo where we arrived at daylight on Saturday morning. I found the place absolutely gutted—not a bed or furniture or as much as a teaspoon left on the place. Arthur had put on 63 boys in my absence and two absolutely useless boss boys. There was not the slightest indication that any work on the plantation had been done since I left and the whole place overgrown and rapidly reverting to nature. The house is a wreck and there are no tools left on the place except a few broken knives and a damaged spade. . . . I have all the facts relating to Swanson now and there is no shadow of doubt that he deliberately drove him out. On his return on his first trip out in November he brought back Simpson and when they called at Kanibo Swanson—who had had no rations or sago trading goods for two months—gave them a big requisition for both and also a message to the agents to pay in his balance of salary to his bank account and send £5 to his mother for Christmas. They 'forgot' to do any of these things and actually went back without a thing for him. It is too much to ask anyone to believe that Arthur could do that accidentally. Anyway Swanson thought he was abandoned and, anyway, having no goods to trade with he couldn't earn any commission, which was all he relied on for his salary, he cleared out and wrote heated letters to me.

I had the luck to secure the Chinaman Ah Wong while in Port and took him out with me to take over Kanibo. So I installed him and left him busy building a new house for himself. . . .

We got to Ogamobu on Monday morning and Simpson and

Burlingham came aboard looking very fit and well—Simpson especially, I was surprised to notice, looked more spick and span and healthy than I had ever seen him. We went over the plantation and I was pleased to find everything in good order and the rubber quite up to my best expectations. The house is just finished and although of course it is not built in the way I planned it is quite a good house and seems well put together as far as a cursory inspection could see. Anyway it will do quite well and I was pleased with it. I expressed my satisfaction to Simpson with the house and plantation and said nothing about the evidences of wasted labour I saw all around. He wouldn't understand and anyway it can't be mended but I know if I had been here we would easily have got 250 acres felled and cleared besides what has been done.

I left Simpson about sun down having explained about the pay-off and what I wanted done. He promised to be down to the vessel first thing in the morning with the boys to be paid off and agreed to get the contracts together and prepare the statement of their advance wages paid, debits to the store etc. during the evening in readiness for the pay-off. About £400 was involved.

The next morning I waited till ten o'clock and as there were no evidences of any activity on the plantation, or any sign of Simpson, I went up to the house to see about it. I found him in his office surrounded by a confusion of books and papers maudlin drunk and nothing done at all!

So I opened out there and then and told him exactly what I thought of him. But I hadn't more than fairly got into my stride before he leapt in the air and came at me with the announcement that he would 'knock my block off'! So I knocked him down and then, having started, thought I might as well make a job of it so I beat him up. You could hardly call it a fight as he did no more than try to protect his face with his arms and bawled out 'wait a minute! wait a minute' the whole time! but such as it was it did me a lot of good. I left him in the wreckage of his furniture a much chastened and sorry man and went off to the station with the boys after I had finally discovered their contracts among the confusion. Simpson came on later on in a canoe and went to the hospital.

I had a bit of a job with the pay-off, as you can imagine, with no books or records to help matters and, afterwards, we spent the rest of the day till sundown trading with the paid-off boys in the store. I can never be grateful enough to Shafto for the loyal assistance he gave me. I do not know how I should have managed without him. . . . Of course Burlingham should

have been the one to fill the breach but he was drunk too and quite useless all day.

Next day we continued the trading and collecting store debts and about noon Simpson returned from the hospital repaired and in a very chastened mood. He said his mind had been poisoned and he had made an error and wanted to kiss and be friends again. I told him he was sacked and there was no more to be said. Then he offered to stay on till I got another man (with the idea, no doubt, that I would forget in time) but I think he is best off the place once and for all. . . .

Well I must take a spell. This is the first time I have been able to hold a pen for a week and my hands are still very sore. It is beastly to be so soft. I will write again perhaps tomorrow. I am missing you horribly but otherwise this trip is balm to my soul it is so calm and peaceful. I can best describe Shafto by saying that he is the exact opposite to Arthur. It is rather remarkable but his outstanding qualities—the qualities he has in a much higher degree than the average—are just exactly the opposite to the ones that Arthur is remarkable for. He is impregnably cheerful—kind to the boys to a degree that is quite laughable to anyone accustomed to the New Guinea fashion—imperturbable in any difficulty that arises and most deferential and considerate to me! He is one of those that wakes up happy and cheerful in the morning and the boys were frankly puzzled at him at first. He always phrases his orders something after this fashion 'Vagi would you haul in that main sheet please?' and then when it is done he says 'Thank you'. It sounded awfully funny at first but I sat back and didn't interfere and now the boys have caught it and talk to each other in the same way! The amount of 'pleeses' and 'tank yous' that fly about the boat are really screamingly funny but he has got away with it and I can see will control the crew far better that way than the roaring brutal style that is far too prevalent here. He has taken hold of the whole job in a capable efficient manner streets ahead of my wildest hopes. God grant it lasts for I really have lost my punch and cannot stand the strains I used to. I am not right yet in spite of my trip south, although my health seems all right, my nervous resistance has gone to pieces compared with what it used to be.

Sunday. We had a good trip across to the Bamu and thence to Kiwai with our passengers and so down to Freshwater's. The Freshwaters were a little cold at first but thawed later and I found that his letter was not intended for me as he was told that I was finished with the Company and had gone south not to return! As nothing was heard for six months regarding the bull and other

business and no body had been to see about it he naturally thought I had slung him over and cleared out. Hence the letter to the company. They were both a bit sore with Arthur for not calling as they knew he had his wife aboard and had seen the vessel sail right past their place on three occasions. . . . I was more than a bit sore seeing that I gave him definite instructions to waste no time in calling for the cattle etc. . . . We had a most pleasant stay at Maderi while our business was being put through and the heifers loaded on board and then had a good run back to the Bamu and so back to Kikori where we arrived on Sunday morning well up to time.

. . . I was awfully amused to see the calm way the cow took possession of the hold and travelled with us for a week without turning a hair or going dry. Of course the useful Vagi turned out to be a first class dairy maid and knew all about cows. I have yet to find anything he doesn't know all about. But the spectacle of Vagi calmly marching down with a bucket to milk the cow twice a day struck me as too funny on our little vessel.

22 March 1921. . . . We dropped Simpson at Kanibo and I thankfully watched him vanish down the beach. He was a very subdued and retiring person on the vessel. I saw no evidence of the bloodthirsty threats about shot guns and revolvers that he has been entertaining Burlingham with. He got the wind up on Burlingham who came to me with a solemn warning to look out for him.

By the way Ah Wong has handled his job in the fortnight or so that he has been at it I should say that he is going to be more of a success than I had dared to hope. He has built himself a good house and got quite a lot of work done on the plantation and a bigger lot of nuts than we have ever had in one trip. He is certainly an immense improvement on any white man that I have ever had there and he, also, will *do what he is told*. So I think I have got an organisation now that should do good team work—without which no business can succeed.

When they returned to Port both Percy and Shafto were ill and Percy, who was assailed by what he described as 'congestion of the liver', had a fatalistic feeling that this was another blow—Shafto's own sufferings, from his first attack of fever, were quite secondary to Percy's loss of a good man. But they both recovered and the next blow was the news that the copper mines had closed down—paid off 900 boys and given all white employees a month's notice.

So everything came at once as usual! But, also as usual, things were not so black as they looked. Shafto is now out of the hospital

quite recovered and all that talk of his being so very bad was bosh—he is quite all right. Then Louden returned to Port and I got him to give us a contract for five tons of sago (at £15 per ton) per month and he promised recruiting orders shortly. So we can carry on all right I think. . . . We are off at daylight on Saturday with a full load of passengers and quite a good lot of freight so this trip will pay expenses and we have an assurance of a full load out next trip. But after that only the sago will save us as there will be few passengers left and no recruits till Louden comes to light with an order. Bad luck the mines closing down. Things are awful all round here in the business way. . . . You will be pleased to learn that I am taking out a ham and all sorts of luxurious kai kai (at my own expense) and some decent furniture and mean to make myself comfortable now that I have a house to myself. I am fed up with hardship and never again will I live with anyone but you—that is if we ever live together again in this world.

Although Shafto had declared himself recovered he was not completely fit and the engine chose to give trouble on the journey out so that it took five days to reach Kanibo, where Ah Wong was still giving satisfaction, and finally arrived at Ogamobu at the end of April.

I found things running quite satisfactorily here when I arrived. The boys seem well in hand and working well and—wonder of wonders!—no tales of woe. Burlingham is not brilliant and his brain works like the mills of God without the sureness but he has no desire to teach me anything and he will do what he is told without argument—in fact he is an assistant and subordinate officer of the company. I have had a busy time this week as you might suppose. I put in Sunday getting the furniture and household equipment into place and making the place habitable. Monday I started the new road which I told Simpson to build but which he said was not possible on account of the numerous drains. It will be finished tomorrow and is the only properly drained, graded and levelled road on the place so far. . . . I took down that old French bedstead and enamelled it white and tore the mattress to pieces and burnt the ticking (Simpson had been sleeping on it) and teased the packing and disinfected it in the sun. The boy is busy restuffing it beside me while I write this with one eye and instruct him with the other—you would be surprised what a good job he is making of it—quilting it properly with a bag needle and thread and the little leather buttons. . . . You really have no adequate idea of this place as it is now. The labour is jolly and contented and you never hear the least rowing

and belting that must be your outstanding recollection of Arthur's regime—as it is of mine. The sullen, resentful look that I remember of that time is a thing of the past. This house is situated on what was the edge of the jungle when we were here in 1916. That is 30 chains from the river. Now, looking back from the house the edge of the jungle is 110 chains further back! This will give you some idea of the extent of the place. The rubber begins at the back of the house so you have cocoanuts between the house and the river and rubber from the back of the house to the jungle. The house is a very rough job, of course, and nothing is exactly straight or upright or accurately spaced and it is not in the least as I designed it. But it is, at any rate, a white man's house and can be made a permanent and respectable building with comparatively little expense. A £100 for sawn floor boards and walls and a couple of weeks work and it will satisfy anyone we put to live in it. . . .

I expect the ketch back from the Fly on Sunday at earliest. Baidam and Rarona return in her from their spell and then we will get on with the clearing. This is not half done nor is the Tiwu touched. I find it hard to see what the deuce Simpson did do in six months with 160 head of labour. . . . However let's forget the past and hope that I may be left in peace for a time at least to get on with my job. I don't mind toiling and can put up with hardship if I must, but what I resent is being made a sort of practical joke for the Fates. I no sooner get things going than some cursed complication outside my control seems to crop up. I will never forgive the Allmighty for not even letting me have a peaceful spell south after I had just about broken myself earning it. The worst of it is that I am finding it increasingly hard to respond to these stresses—my reserves are not so good and I am much slower recuperating. . . . I believe if I could get a straight run of six months here with nothing but plain hard work and nothing to worry about I would recover, but (you see) something will turn up in a few weeks just as I am settling down.

He continued the letter on the next Sunday morning.

. . . this morning I am in the vein as I have all my little jobs off my mind and—to confess the truth—I am feeling a bit selfcomplacent, for the jobs are well done and an immense amount of work achieved. It is astonishing what a lot you can do with plenty of labour well organised. This time last week we arrived at a raw house, barely finished building, with lumber and rubbish all over the place and the surroundings looking as if the Battle of Mons had been fought over it—a rotten, bumpy,

switchback of a road leading to it and grass everywhere. My new road was finished yesterday and has turned out exactly as I hoped. It is an easy grade the whole way and when you go up you *stay* up—you do not immediately top the rise and descend again! . . . I have had the grass cleared from round the house and the ground levelled and garden beds laid out and have already a lot of pineapples and bananas growing vigorously and four mango trees. There is a lot to do in this line yet of course.

I slept in my newly done up bed last night and shifted to my own bedroom—I have been sleeping in the spare room while I was getting it ready. The white enamelled bedstead looks fine and the mattress was a brilliant success. I have a nice silky oak wash stand and chest of drawers and altogether the room is quite civilized looking. The spare room has a nice iron bed and that chest of drawers that Holmes had and an iron wash stand complete with jug and basin. So I am prepared for visitors if any come. Bertie talks of coming out to stay with me for a week or two and Shafto's father may arrive by next *Varoe*. I wish we had a board floor—the palm floor is the only really serious defect—I nearly said flaw. It is raining this morning after a full week of perfect sunny weather. I don't mind seeing it is Sunday. In fact it suits me admirably as it will set my road and do the plants good.

I find the absence of news of you makes you seem an awful long way off. I have not heard of you since the letter you wrote in February just after you returned to Adelaide—and this is the 1st of May. And I can not get any mail now till about the 25th—more than three weeks yet. . . .

I put in yesterday afternoon typing out all our requisitions and wrote two letters to Loudon and my monthly report to Melbourne. I expect Burlingham this morning with the store account and labour sheet and that will complete my mail for the month. Burlingham will be a success I think. . . . I keep our relationship strictly official and find our living in separate establishments an immense advantage. I shall never again live in the same house with any assistant on this place—it is too great a handicap and about on a par with employing relations who address you by your Christian name. . . . Here comes Burlingham—I will write further when the ketch arrives.

10 p.m. Just had word from Shafto sent by canoe to say engine broken down altogether and he has gone on to Kanibo under sail. Am sending this per canoe to catch him. God helpus!

The next letter, written on two Sundays, is twenty-six pages of domesticity: roads, bridges, gardens, drains, rain, building married quarters, felling and clearing, his new and satisfactory cook boy, the visit of a cockatoo,

philosophical remarks about subordinates and self-styled experts, hardly a word about Arthur, and reporting a southern mail brought by another ketch. On page 24 he said:

It is hard to believe that it is only a month yesterday since I arrived but it has been a great rest to me and my health is improving fast. If only I am let alone! Fate seems to hand out a small taste of what things might be just to let me know that my ambitions are not impossibilities but are just not for me. My trip around with Shafto was, in every last degree, exactly what I had always dreamt of as what should obtain. And now I have had a month of conditions here that are exactly as I always felt things should be but weren't. . . . I expect the ketch towards the end of next week with a later batch of news from you and I think it about time I closed this voluminous screed and got busy with my typewriter.

A fortnight later he wrote

4 June 1921. When I closed my letter to you last Sunday week (22nd May) I meant not to write again until the ketch had brought the mail from you but I expected the vessel any day after that and she is not here yet. Nearly two weeks over due. I suppose something has gone wrong—Shafto has gone down to fever and ordered south or he has got on a bar [mudbank] or something. I feel like a hen with too many chickens.—things seem to go on all right when I can keep my hand on the throttle but I can't be in several places at once and it is in those places that these 'tales of woe' are always cropping up. Well! perhaps he is only delayed and nothing worse. In the meantime things here, in my immediate neighbourhood, are running smooth as silk.

We had one little disturbance last week but it didn't worry me at all—in fact it rather suits my book in many ways. It is one of the aftermaths of Simpson of course. He had a harem of petted darlings on this place who never worked and were entertained at the expense of the company by Simpson—not only in the matter of food but in handsome gifts of blankets, print, tobacco, dresses etc. which Simpson dealt out from the store in payment for favours received but which I can find no record of as having been placed to his private account. Well when I took hold the first thing I noticed was that none of the women went out for potatoes, or took out the midday meal to the field or went out for shell fish or any of the things that were the regular routine when I left last year. Also the houses were dirty and the grass growing about them. So I made enquiries and found

that the women's tasks had fallen into disuse while I was away. No doubt Simpson found it difficult to be harsh with them under the circumstances. I also found that the husbands had acquiesced in the women's slothfulness for much the same reason, at any rate arising from the same cause, since the wives were a fine source of supply to them in various trade goods. So I laid down the law and attempted to restore things, but was met with open defiance. I said nothing about it but simply cut off supplies and the next time they lined up coolly for their food Burlingtonham broke the news that I had said that if they wouldn't work they would get no kai kai. Much indignation! The next day they went out and got shell fish and brought out the boys meals. That went on for two or three days and then they stopped—thinking, I suppose, that I would forget the matter once I saw them at work. But I didn't and, when they stopped, supplies stopped again. That put the lid on it and the next day the whole seventeen *and their husbands* stole my brand new canoe, only launched on Saturday, together with eleven axes and knives, and deserted.

I took out warrants for the arrest of the men the same day and, in a week, the lot will be working for nothing at Kikori, and will come back here—without their wives—to make up the rest of their contract. So that will be a wholesome little lesson after the laxity that has existed here in my absence. It will suit me that way and also it will defer the payment of wages—due in September—by a couple of months which suits us fine these hard times and moreover I lost their services in the worst wet months when you can't get so much work out of them and get them back just in the best time of the year. So I reckon I score don't you? Of course their wages cease from the day they cleared out and, when they have served their sentence with hard labour, they are returned here to make up their time—much chastened I hope. So we have no women on the place now, except a few Kiwais belonging to the boss boys, who are as virtuous as Caesar's wife claimed to be and I am afraid I am very unpopular with the Goaribari ladies after the attractive Mr Simpson. So we are a bit short-handed and, between the fear of the grass getting into the new clearing on the one hand, and the rubber being ruined by second growth and grass on the other, I am rather put to it. Then we have our married quarters finished bar the roof and the bunks, and the stock yard is ready except for putting the posts up and the rails in. However I will try and get thirty or so Kiwais as soon as the ketch comes—if she ever does!

But my garden is a real joy. I have had a couple of lame boys on the job all the time and it is getting to the stage when I have to wonder what I shall have done now. Woodward came to lunch

a day or so ago and donated 60 coffee plants and eight pomegranates. I have put in 20 pawpaw trees and then, yesterday, Baidam came along at six o'clock heading a procession of twenty boys each staggering under a load of ferns, orchids and 'Au hua hua' generally. Au hua hua—literally—means 'tree flowers'. Up here most of the flowers that grow are au hua hua for the simple reason that unless a flower is content to grow and bloom in the dark and go from the cradle to the grave without a glimpse of the sun its only hope is to climb the highest tree it can find and get above the jungle. So most of the flowers are tree parasites and so are most of the ferns.

Well the boys deposited about a cart load of expensive ferns and orchids on the verandah that would have brought tears of envy from the eyes of the curator of any botanical garden and I got out at daylight this morning and Hepea and I decorated the place with them till we looked like Christmas Day. Most of them are attached to sections of the limb of their parent tree and all he had to do was to bore a hole in the wood and suspend the lot from the fascia board of the verandah with wire. We have a fern or orchid hanging between each verandah post and the rest we wired on to the posts or on the piles below. They look fine. This is certainly the place for growing things. Of all the hundreds of plants and cuttings I have planted this last month not a thing has died—in fact most of them went right on growing as if they had never been disturbed.

He described the plan of the garden which led to a level space for the summerhouse, and the following Sunday reported that his mutineers were now toiling for the government.

No sign or word of the ketch yet. The Lord alone knows what has happened and in the meantime we are short, or entirely out, of everything. I have not tasted tea or coffee, bread or biscuits for three weeks and I am on the last of my tobacco.

It will not happen again though, as I mean to keep two months stock in hand in future. The boys have had no tobacco or coconuts for the same period and are grumbling. . . .

I am afraid I shall have to let the new clearing go for the present. When I put the gangs on to finish it I found that only a strip 10 chains wide along the cultivated area had been roughly gone over once and the rest was absolutely untouched since it was burnt off. I naturally thought that it had all been gone over and was pretty disgusted even then as it should have been finished and planted by the time I returned but when I found that even the rough work had only been done on the strip next to the

planted area it gave me a shock I can tell you. Then when I put the gangs out to weeding the rubber I found that instead of each boy doing 26 trees per day they could only do 12 I looked into it and found that while the trees observable from the road were cultivated in a 12 ft ring the more remote parts were hardly touched and were all overgrown with scrub and grass. So that means twice the labour I calculated on. This comes on top of the loss of eighteen of my labour in gaol and I find I have to pay off at least a dozen useless sick boys who are only a nuisance on the place. I got a bill that raised my hair from the hospital the other day. One boy, alone, had an account of five guineas for medical attention. When I looked up their contracts I found that all the useless boys of poor physique and all the hospital patients had been recruited by Arthur last January. It is quite clear what he did. He got all the recruits he could without discrimination and then culled out all the wasters who he knew would be rejected by the mines and signed them on to us taking the good ones into Port. And he signed them on at mining rate of wages (12/6 and 15/-) although he knew we never pay more than 10/- for field labourers. . . . so I have some problem to face—especially with the ketch (which is my only chance of getting more labour) three weeks overdue and no certainty that she will ever return. So things are anyhow and I feel a bit fed up this morning.

Sunday morning. No sign of the ketch. I have sent to Aird Hill for some food and tobacco but the chances are that Butcher will have none to spare. I'll take care this does not happen again. I came out from Port with only supplies ordered by Burlingham as I had nothing to do with the ordering up to that time but, luckily, I brought out some extra stuff on my private account that I wouldn't charge the company with. . . . I couldn't bring myself to open a tin of it until a week or two ago and then I had to as there was nothing else to eat. Now that is all finished and I am on the World. . . . I think the worst hardship I am suffering is the complete absence of a line of reading matter on the place. If I haven't something to bury myself in I start thinking until I feel like a raving lunatic.

Three days later he wrote:

15 June 1921. Bad news has a way of travelling fast so no doubt you have heard of the disaster that has overtaken the ketch.

The *Vanapa* arrived here last night with the cargo and mail and a report from Shafto to say that after leaving Kanibo under sail on the 5th of last month he struck heavy weather and got

on a sand bank outside Port Romilly. The vessel was smashed up very badly and strained and he had great difficulty in getting the wreck into port in a water logged condition. I wish he had let her sink. He also encloses a report from the shipwrights enumerating the repairs needed to put the vessel in a seaworthy condition and their estimate of the cost amounting to £1200. About 130 sheets of the new copper have gone. Also the whaleboat and davits, false keel and practically everything that could be shifted and the rest is strained.

By the same mail I had a letter from Burston giving me the tip to nurse our resources to the utmost limit—practice rigid economy and earn all I possibly could as I must look to the earnings of the ketch to provide means to carry on with for some considerable time to come! The company has no cash at all and Burston frankly states that they don't know where to go for the balance (£100) of Stewart's account for the repairs of the ketch that were done last year! £100 looks a trifle in the light of the twelve hundred now needed to put the vessel into the water and I can imagine only too vividly the consternation in Melbourne when they get Shafto's letter. Of course it is our finish and now is the time for all the rats to hunt cover—which they will assuredly do.

For my part I'm through. It is the end of my section and here's where I get off. The Almighty has been having a game with me for some years now and even the most humourous practical jokes are apt to pall in time—especially when you find yourself invariably cast for the part of 'he' and provide the joke. . . . if the Almighty has been amusing himself by trying exactly how much I can stand he can stop now because I'm prepared to admit that this is the limit. He has spoilt a good joke by going too far and now I am beyond providing further amusement because I am totally indifferent to what is to happen next. The directors can sell the wreck of the vessel and liquidate the company or do anything they dam please for all I care. I shall write and say so. Shafto had the sense to write his report to them direct as he couldn't communicate with me and he sent me a copy of his letter and copies of the shipwright's reports and estimates—which shows he knows what is the proper action to take. . . . However his report is a very good one and covers the ground. I do not mean to go into Port. Things would fall to pieces this end then and we would get it going and coming. . . . Of course it has thrown us out here very badly. I have 50 boys at Kanibo that Shafto was to have paid off on his way back and the problem is what to do about that. Then I am down to 70 head of labour here and was awaiting the ketch to get more recruits. All the

new buildings are awaiting thatch which the ketch was to have brought—it would take labour I haven't got to cut grass at Bagama for roofing—I simply can't spare a boy.

As it is I must let the new clearing go and also Tewu and Bagama and the Ogamobu cocoanuts. It is taking me all my time to keep the rubber in order.

Anyway it does not matter much—we are gone up in any case. It is only a question of time now before we crash. For myself I am in a pleasing state of indifference and do not intend to raise a hand to save us even if the Almighty could again bluff me into thinking I could do it—which he can't—my leg has been pulled once too often. I am sitting—or lying—down to it and letting things go past. . . .

After this (and more) it comes as a surprise to find the next letter (dated one month later) written on the ship on the way to Sydney.

It was no use posting in Brisbane as we still have the mails aboard—including the letters I wrote at Kikori a million years ago. So I will post this in Sydney and you will get them all together.

I had to come into Port after all! So my intention to sulk like whatsername in my tent did not come off. A few days after the *Vanapa* left the *Minnetonka* (government launch) came up bearing letters from Seymour Williams [M.T.A. Manager], Bertie and Louden which made it evident that I must get into Port hot foot. Arthur was clearly making himself very active ostensibly in the interest of the company but actually, of course, quite the opposite and had Bertie and Seymour Williams bluffed. He got them to insist on Shafto's instant dismissal and also got possession of the engine and lathe and generally was having a fine free hand. Once I knew Shafto was sacked it left me no option but to get in at all costs and also the Board was wiring 'When can Robinson get in' and other frantic S.O.S. wires so it was very evident that I had got to go.

Captain Hurley—the traveller chap who is filming New Guinea—gave me a lift back in the *Minnetonka* and I got in before the *Vanapa* and the mails after all.

I was lucky in getting in touch with Shafto, Stewart, Captain McDonald and everyone concerned right away and straightened things out in three days. I had the engine and lathe removed back to Napa Napa in charge of Stewart—that put a neat spoke in Arthur's wheel—and arranged for the safe keeping of the vessel, got specifications for repairs 30% below the original quotation and by the time the *Marsina* turned up I was all clear

so I decided at the last moment to come down and talk to the Board. I don't know what will happen when I see them and things are so uncertain that you had better wait till I know how things are going. If I go back I think you and Di had better come with me—I will make enquiries about Plem's schooling when in Melbourne. . . .

His meeting with the Board is not reported but some arrangement was made and he returned to Port Moresby in November, bringing with him Irene and Di, took delivery of the refitted *Varoe*, and everything started again. Shafto presumably left the country for he does not reappear.

Irene Robinson at Ogamobu

Irene Robinson was 38 when she arrived to live at Ogamobu Plantation. She was a small dark woman with a loving expression which did not, however, indicate that she was prepared to tolerate any deviation from very strongly held convictions about what was Right or should be done.

Her letters to her mother and her sisters cover almost month by month the years from 1921 to 1929 and deal with domestic affairs. Except for the effect of the Navigation Act, which increased their isolation by cutting off the monthly steamer, the rubber boom which filled them with hope that at last they would enjoy an income from the plantation, and the depression which sent them away, there are few references to general events. The housekeeping was closer to that of her pioneer grandmother at Port Elliot, South Australia, than to that of her girlhood or her wealthy sisters in the 1920s, though there is a greater disparity perhaps between the 1920s and now than between the 1840s and the 1920s. She had had in Adelaide a gas stove (but preferred the wood stove); a gas iron (but the Mrs Potts irons were used when the wood stove had been lit); she had the services of grocer, baker, and butcher (who all delivered to the back door), and a Chinese greengrocer who called once a week. She had an ice chest and a telephone. She lived in a brick house, and the trams ran past the top of the street for visits to the dentist and Town. She tended her fruit and vegetable garden, and no bought cake, biscuits, jam, tinned fruit, pickles, or goods from a delicatessen, ever darkened her table. All underclothes were made, and embroidered, by hand, and no garment was sent to the rag bag or the Poor until it had undergone at least three incarnations. She had a washwoman who came weekly and a Lady Help who lived in the house, but a firmly-held family axiom was that a good housewife never asked anyone to do anything that she couldn't do herself.

Even so she soon found conditions on a tropical river called for resources Mrs Beeton and her mother had never contemplated and she applied herself to deal with them without pause or question.

A letter, written early in March 1921, incidentally describing the passage from Port Moresby, covers the general situation. At this time Percy was running the *Varoe*, and Irene and the 7-year-old Di travelled with him. Hiagi and Vagi were, I think, from Hanuabada, and as well as being trusted crew were friends of the family.

(23rd Jan. 1921) . . . this long spell in Port has given us an opportunity to collect up all the properties available in the town, that we required. I have got a copper and some smaller tubs and lots of plants and seven lovely three months old ducks and three fowls but we are going to eat them as they are too small to breed from. Also we have got a fine tall brass lamp to which we are going to fix a wicker shade. Also an aceteline lamp like a billy can to which Percy and Vagi have affixed a gadget which holds a white gas globe so that it looks quite nice. It makes no heat and only a little smell which as compared with the smell of bilge is as nothing. Also Percy has got a plough and hames and trace chains for the mule and a rickshaw that was brought here in the year one and has never been used and will come in handy if only for the wheels. Di's pony also comes with us and a thin plain grey kitten—now all we want is a dove and a giraffe or two and we would be the Ark all over again. I forgot to mention 2,000 feet of hardwood flooring for the front verandah at Oga and the diningroom—the present floor is palm and rather gives me the willies with its unevenness. As we are taking six months stores and tradegoods and a lot of cargo for the Gov. station and at least thirty passengers and 100 cases of kerosene the resources of the ship will be somewhat strained—however there is always room on ships and we will be nicely ballasted in case it is rough going across the gulf.

(4th April 1921) We left Port Moresby on March 9th about—with as full a load as you could imagine. Lots more than what I told you was piled on at the last moment, including two missionaries (Butcher and Schlenker), and a goat and a kid, *two* horses, 12 fowls, 7 ducks, 1 dog, 1 cat, Mrs Leaver & grandson aged 1 year, Di and Me, the Robinson, 5 crew, 15 recruits for the plantation & 33 passengers and their boxes, and a number of tons of rice for which we had to wait. So far I don't find we have forgotten anything vital though I did have to send hastily for common salt under the impression that I had forgotten it.

We had a good run the first two days and as the baby was good the weather fine Mrs Leaver was not sick—she is a kindly Irish common person—not much older than me but quite elderly. The night we got to Orokolo was the worst I have ever experienced on the *Varoe*, which is saying a good deal. We got there just before dark hoping to land the missionaries and their goods and leave about eleven and get to the Varoe [river] entrance at daylight. The best laid plans etc.! The first bad luck of the day was that the kid (the young goat not Mrs Leaver's) which was not tied up jumped overboard and the sea was already

too rough to go back for the poor little thing—it was brown with a black face and it looked so pathetic in the water but it was not worth enough to make the possible danger to the ship worth while. Di wept and Mr Butcher looked very sad but behaved very decently about it. Orokolo I might tell you is the open sea with no pretense at protection of any kind and by the time we got there the sea was quite high and to add to our discomfort a huge Gubu [cyclone] came up and we had wind and rain first from one side and then from the other all night with the boat rolling and pitching and tossing. Very soon the awning, only duck as canvas was too expensive, began to leak and drove us all below—yes all except poor Mrs Leaver who by this time was so frightfully sick she didn't care if she got wet or not, the thought of the cabin made her worse. She had a thick kapok mattress and rugs and two umbrellas and the baby was good all night. In the morning she was wet through and so bad I felt at my wits end to know what to do with her but I forced her down into the cabin, undressed her and dried her with Percy's bath towel—the only dry one—and made her take neat brandy which she had refused all night and by the time we got away and into smooth water about 11 o'clock she was all right.

You cannot imagine what that cabin was like! The scene absolutely beggars description. I put Di up on one of the bunks on top of all the personal impedimenta of the passengers—white—and she slept all night. I managed to clear the big bunk till there was a space about 3 feet by 4ft 6 in which Percy and I crouched or camped or got—I cannot say slept. The missionaries lay on the floor. Poor Mr Schlenker I shall never forget the sight of him. He was frightfully sick and did not want to get wet so he retired into the little W. there is just room to—manage and no more and I unclosed one eye as he was staggering out with his glasses in one hand and his dental apparatus in the other and a more dejected person I have never seen—afterwards he snored so I think he must have slept.

I was glad when the morning came. Vagi and Percy and Di were the only people not hors de combat—I wasn't sick but very faint & afraid to move—even Heagi was sick and was very much ashamed of it poor old man. Vagi was up all night with the horses. The deck got slippery and the poor things could not keep their feet. When the weather looked bad Percy had put a sling under the big one just in case and lucky too, as he must have gone overboard if it hadn't been there and it would have been impossible to sling him if it had been left till the worst time. The ducks enjoyed it thoroughly and looked quite spruce and

nice in the morning. Vagi is very funny—whenever he has done some extra special stunt he asks me for something—on this occasion he came to me the next morning and after a long tale about the horses and ducks and fowls he asked for a tin of milk. Just as I write he brought up a wire cover that he has put new wire on and after much talk as to the difficulties he had to contend with he ends up—‘Sinabada you give me tin of meat’—I think he estimates his own rate of pay in relation to the difficulty he has had in doing the job. Percy says that Vagi really prefers to sign on at a low rate of pay and then make it up in asking for things! He is awfully nice to Di and she talks to him for hours and he makes her all sorts of things. Last trip it was boats and this time propellers and they made several and sat up on the top deck buzzing them like two children. I have just told him that I was telling you about him and he suggested that perhaps you could send him a kangaroo dog some day.

We left the hated Orokolo about ten o'clock after landing the missionaries and their goods and much hand shaking and asseverations of mutual esteem etc. etc. By twelve o'clock we were in sweet calm water and had almost forgotten that such a night had ever been and at four we arrived at the Varoe entrance and had to wait a couple of hours for high tide but it was quite calm and most enjoyable and we came in and anchored off Kanibo without a hitch. Ah Matt came on board with a sad face—he had sent the canoe up to Oga the day before to get tobacco and food for himself. Incidentally he had sent the eggs too so we only got a dozen which was a disappointment. The next day all the sago had to be loaded on board in the dinghy which was a slow job. We had a run ashore and did not get bitten by anything—there was no fruit and the old drake had died and as I have only a young drake I shall have to eat the ducks eggs for a while at least—if they ever lay.

Two days later they arrived at Ogamobu:

They slung the two horses up and put them on the wharf and they got to their feet and walked off as though they had not spent five days on their feet. The fowls had to stay in their coop all night but we let the ducks out and they were all quite happy and ate and drank and cleaned themselves and of course found a piece of iron to squeak their feet on all night. The house was pretty dirty but I just made the beds clean and the next morning we all set to work. Mo, the cook, and Gatauna the house boy who has insinuated himself into the job by his niceness and

readiness to do whatever there is to be done, worked like trojans taking up the mats and scrubbing and sweeping the walls and killing the beasts that were harbouring under the mats. They think I am quite mad to mind the creatures and when I call them all *gai-gai* which means 'snake' they say 'No this one no bite you—'e much too fright'. Eobe and his henchman whose name is Solomoni made a fowls house under the kitchen with some of the priceless wire netting we brought up with us and the poor fowls *were* glad when they were put in it. They stretched their legs and began to find insects at once. I kept them shut up for three days and now we let them out every afternoon and they race about eating insects by the thousand. They are just getting over their moulting and will soon be fine birds.

Should Plymouth rock hens have long legs? There is one that has a hen's face and such long legs I fear it may be a cock after all. Three cocks, one old good one, one young one with some alien feathers in his tail and one dreadful one with lots of white about him and a mean looking face—eight hens and one suspected of masculine tendencies! Quite a nice beginning.

The cows had been in the garden again but as they had already eaten everything but the pomegranates and poincianas they had done no harm. The night we arrived, however, they came in and ate all the tops of the granadilla plants I had brought from Kanibo—I do love cows! Oh yes! especially when there are three of them and two bulls and no milk.

Altogether we had a very nice trip though it rained every night and we had to roll up our beds and get down to the cabin. This time the cabin was almost empty so we could leave the bunks bare to put the blankets on when we had to go down. We went right round the Fly and as far as Maderi where we went ashore and had lunch with Beech the manager in Mr Freshwater's absence. He is married to a native woman—he brought her out and introduced her to us and then she disappeared and did not appear again till we said goodbye. The child of the marriage is a poor little piebald. A nicely behaved girl of ten—she has been taught with the Freshwater's little girl and Di said she talked beautifully and they had a good play together and Di collected a granadilla, some bananas and a pocket full of seeds of various sorts. Never have I seen anything like the colours of the hibiscus and crotons—they are all planted in rows—everything is in rows in this country—they think because their plantations have to be in rows that their gardens should be too. I *won't* have rows in the flower garden!

The cannas there are too glorious—heads a foot long of the palest pink. Beech said they had gone off but I never saw such

brilliant colours nor such a variety except at the Botanic Gardens. Zinnias grow wild all over the garden and heaps of other things. Dracinas of all shades of colour planted in hedges some with the loveliest red berries on them. I got a bundle of hibiscus cuttings but Beech would not part with one of his milking cows which was what we had gone there for but he gave us a jar of butter just made and I had to wash the milk out—oh it was lovely. We have just finished it and I think it was the nicest thing I have ever eaten. It was quite cool all the time we were away and we had firm butter all the time. Once Di said 'Look, I have helped myself to butter and I haven't spilt a drop', but this time it wasn't like that.

While we were ashore Heagi went in the dinghy to a village up the river where the wonderful lemons Percy told us about were. When we got back to the boat he had got some. Spherical and bright yellow with the true lemon skin and inside. Also he got a bag of wild oranges and some plants of the latter and cuttings of the former and I shall also plant seed. I am going to make marmalade of them singly and together. I have plenty of pots and some sugar that should have been left at Kanibo and was packed in our box by mistake. Incidentally they have not sent the sherry that Dr Hars prescribed for me and the whisky so let us hope that was not sent to Kanibo by mistake. It is very irritating that this should have been missed as during our long absence from the plantation our store was opened and a bottle of brandy and one of gin taken and the two kinds of vermouth used in the manufacture of cocktails almost emptied. The poor man is the decentest of creatures except for this one failing and though no use as manager he is invaluable for odd jobs and as a species of white boss boy. He made me a lovely chair while we were away—a sort of superior deck chair—most comfortable and all out of bush timber—sawn and planed and rubbed smooth.

After we left Maderi we landed the remaining passengers at their homes and got a few boys and then went up the Bamu River. In the upper part it is even more beautiful than the rivers in the Delta. The bush is more varied and there are more birds—in one place we saw a flock of hornbills, hundreds of them all sitting about on the trees in easy range of a gun and just talking their absurd talk and flapping about from tree to tree. It was a wonderful sight and most unusual—even the boys were impressed by it and gazed with longing eyes at so much good food being wasted on the bush.

We stopped once and got some bamboos—I thought it was the small black kind, they looked small by comparison with the rest of the jungle—but when they came on board they were the

enormous kind with joints a foot long and as big round as a leg. It took such a long time and made such a fuss that I refrained from screaming out when I saw a staghorn fern on a dead tree—quite a new one to me—the sheath was pale green and from the top sprouted huge fern-like fronds while from below the sheath a fine hair-like growth came. The tree was quite a foot through and the leaves of the sheath must have been more than that long and the fronds at the top quite three feet long. I feel sorry now that we did not get it as it was quite a new one and being on a dead tree overhanging the river would not have been difficult to get. Percy says now if I liked it so much why didn't I say but you know what it is like trying to make them stop when they are going and boats are far harder to manage than motors! No doubt there are plenty up the Kikori river but we have not seen them.

I got some coleus cuttings and two lovely pumpkins at a village—I will send you a few seeds—they may not be any good but I never tasted such a nice one.

We left the Bamu on Saturday morning at the screech and I got up so as to do it comfortably in the river instead of waiting till we were in the rough sea—however I need not have worried as it was a most lovely day with no sea and just enough wind from the right quarter to buzz us along so fast that we got to Goaribari soon after lunch instead of at dark as we did last time we came across. It was a most lovely run and the sea breeze drove away all the Fly river flies and we ate our evening meal in peace. Vagi shot some pigeons that night—the tops of the mangrove trees were white with them. Heagi said 'All the same you put calico to dry!'

While we were in the Bamu Vagi shot two lovely black and white ducks and they had to be par-boiled as they came in late in the evening and in the night the cat got at them—tore the wirecover to pieces and *ate* a whole duck. Oh if I wasn't savage! What I suffered from those vile animals. The box of earth was on the deck but do you think the cat would go near it—not she—my leather cushion was the spot she chose! Poor Peter [the fox terrier] is such a perfect gentleman that he could not bear to transgress his training and use the deck—consequently he ran about like a small boy in the same circumstances and fidgetted till I nearly went mad. Every time the boat went near shore he whined to get off and have a run and one morning he and Di and Gatauna went ashore at a village where there was a nice beach and he had a good run. Di looked too funny—completely surrounded by small black boys—she gave them little bits of tobacco and then began to pick up seeds and odds and ends on

the shore and they all followed suit and soon she had her frock full of all sorts of entrancing things which she brought aboard.

On the next day which was Sunday and the Better the Day the Better the Deed Heagi went ashore at a village and returned with a most howling mob of recruits and their relations. They are given a rami and singlet and it is most amusing to see how the white singlet stands out against the jungle and mud. At this place there were so many boys that the singlets looked like snow on the desert [*sic*]. Then we went across to another place and got as many more—fifty in all, with wives, children and goods. I don't think the boat would have held many more and the noise was terrific.

We anchored about twenty miles from home because the river current and tide were both against us and during the night—the first we had had without rain—the sandflies bit me on the left eye and the forehead and the next day I looked most awful.

We spent the whole day at the station while Percy signed on the fifty odd boys and it was very nice to sit down to a decently appointed table on a chair and eat a 'social' meal.

We got home here in time to make the beds and have a meal but there was still enough light to look at all the seeds and cuttings I had planted before I left. Nearly all the cuttings I brought from Port Moresby are growing but very few seeds were up. The reason things 'won't grow in this country' is that the method of throwing the seed down and leaving it to come up if it wants to is no more successful here than anywhere else. It was so dry here when we got back that some cucumbers had come up and withered off *for want of water!* Now I never expected to say that about this place but it is a fact. I had a nice seed bed made and planted with all sorts of seeds and only at the edge where it was sheltered and shaded did anything come up. To Di's great joy the globe amaranths that she brought from Port have come up handsomely—none of her others though at which she was very annoyed until she found that mine had not come up either. Now I have got some boxes under the verandah and have planted parsley and cabbage and onions to transplant.

Percy had a path cleared to the creek at the back of the house and we have made a lovely duck pond there. The ducks had to be put in the water forcibly and won't go unless they are driven by at least three people but I mean to make a collection of all the ferns on the place there and soon it will be quite pretty. There is a huge tree trunk over the creek and we have already planted the bamboos we got in the Bamu there and I shall have a hedge of coleus. We have made a strong hardwood pergola on the south side of the house—forty feet long to grow the

granadillas over and I am going to have an old canoe inside it and have caladiums and bignonias and so on in it. The new steps come up out of the pergola and I am going to have a hanging garden of orchids all round the porch landing. The verandah floor is partly finished and is most lovely but of course I have not got the house half finished yet nor the boys trained into regular habits yet. Mo is a good cook and I have done very little in the kitchen beyond gravy and little things and the marmalade which is very nice indeed. Of course the sewing problem still confronts me. Thank heaven Percy has so many things that only his socks need attention.

Armile, Eobi's wife, washes and Mo irons. She is a horrid person and washes vilely but if I don't like a thing I just put it back in the beautiful clothes basket Percy bought me. The furniture we got in Port is disposed about the house but it still looks rather sparsely furnished as it is so large but there is plenty of room to move about and lots of space for the boys to sweep so that they don't knock anything over. I do need a sewing machine most badly and will get one as soon as I can. In the mean time as you well know I sew strongly by hand and quickly. Mrs Woodward has a machine and anything I like to take up to Kikori I can do on hers.

I will close up this letter as it alarmingly large and write another if I have time. I could go on writing for years in this strain but I must try and write some sane and correct letters to other people.

As the letters continue food is never, as it were, far below the surface. Descriptions of fruit, accounts of food given and received, failures and successes in the vegetable garden, and a continuing obsession with the poultry yard. Hawks, snakes, sore eyes, moults and thefts; and bite-by-bite descriptions of meals which resulted in spite of these hazards; the cows and their calves and reports of accidents or the misdemeanours of the cow boy.

August 1922. Oh if you could see this day. We have had nearly a month of most beautiful fine dry cool weather and now the south east has come back with redoubled fervour and there is a strong cold wind blowing with fierce showers that drive right into the verandah to the house wall. I am desperately sorry for the labour but they are all toiling as hard as they can so as to finish their tasks and get into their nice warm smoky smelly houses. They are on the hill at the back of the house so I can see them. I like it when they are working near the house as the fowls go after them and get stuffed full of lizards, frogs, scorpions,

young rats and insects of every description. I only got three chickens from my first hen through a chapter of accidents but they are lusty little appetites and roam all over the place with their mother who is so fierce that she ran after me and bit me on the leg. Two more hens are sitting on 11 and 12 and two ducks on 6 and 8 and two more ducks in the bush much to my annoyance as what with Baidam's fierce dogs and about 100 hungry Goaribaries as well as their wives and children (not 100 women but it sounds like a million children when they all start howling) the poor mother duck does not stand much chance of bringing in a large family. However I have made a chicken run under the house and as soon as they appear with any offspring they shall be firmly lodged in there till they have forgotten their bush nests. One duck has been very ill but after much treatment she is beginning to recover and the sixth duck is the only one going about with the two huge drakes with the exception of an ancient dame we brought up from Kanibo and as she will not stand any of the drakes attentions the one remaining lady is having a very busy time. She does not appear to mind in the least.

I shall not be satisfied till I have fifty fowls. They get plenty to eat about the place and all the sago they can eat and a little rice at night. Percy laughs at me because I say if I fatten them up they will be ready for Christmas—he says we are sure to starve as we have only a bull that is being fattened for Christmas and a little bush pig that is having all the spare milk so as to be ready for Christmas (I mean to cure the hams) and the shooting boy always bringing in pigs and cassowaries and iguanas—though I can't bring myself to eat these as they look too much like snakes or crocs. Gatauna has a gun licence now and can always be relied on for a couple of pigeons and a bird for soup if he is given five cartridges and sent out after breakfast. It means that I have to get lunch as we have signed off Mou who was too disagreeable to be born and ill most of the time. I have two other boys—one for the house and one for the cows but the cow boy has plenty of time for gardening so with careful management I can get quite a lot of time to myself for Di's lessons and sewing and writing. It is quite hard work making three people do their work properly and I am on my feet a lot and out in the garden with an umbrella. . . . I have been making the most delicious puddings out of native sago. We have our own gang making it and I get it when it is quite fresh and make jellies and treacle sago and snow pudding and we all enjoy the feeling that it is costing next to nothing and is very nice. Cream makes everything nice—I can make just enough butter to keep us going but I keep

tins in the store room. I would sooner eat rather nasty home made butter than tinned—it tastes so greasy.

There is an account of the pig that was being fattened for Christmas in another letter:

We have a little baby pig which the shooting boy brought in from the bush alive and Di and the pig run races in the driest part of the place. It is about as big as a pug dog and it charges everything it sees, fowls, ducks, Peter, the working boys and rushes at Di and props when it reaches her and tears off again after something else. It is really very funny. It drinks milk till its sides bulge and then lies down and pants. Di said one day 'Oh mother you ought to come and see the pig it has got its front feet in the trough and is standing on its tip toes with its hind legs.' It outgrew the chicken coop where we put it at first so I had a lovely little yard made for it under the shade of a palm and out of wirenetting which is a most precious possession up here, so that it could see out and with a new house with an iron roof. Would you believe it—it *hated* it and charged round and round the six feet square space with grunts and squeals worthy of a much larger person. After it had done this for a few hours it set its wits to work and examined every inch of the fence until it found what looked like a weak place and it charged it and rooted up the ground till it did get out. Di caught it (how she can touch the horrid bristly little thing I don't know) and made a boy mend the place but in the night it found another and was not there in the morning. Great was the wailing until it was found back in its old home!

The pig is not mentioned again but the letter describing the Christmas activities had no room for pigs:

For my part I enjoyed it but I worked so hard I have not recovered from it yet. Like everything else in this country it began and ended with tragedy. Preparation began on Wednesday 20th when we went up to the station where Percy had to obtain Mr Woodward's [the Resident Magistrate] consent to giving the boys a 10/- advance of wages to buy glad rags for the party. The *Varoe* had arrived on the Sunday before with Mr P. very ill with a touch of pleurisy following on a bad cold with fever. The wharf was in course of construction and the *Varoe* required to use blocks and tackle to lift things and in the middle of this work Eobi, head carpenter and man of all work, asked Percy if he could go to his house as his little girl was dying. Of course

it was frightfully inconvenient but Percy let him go and Vagi and Heagi on the boat did his work. Well we went to the station and got the necessary permission and coming back in the heat of the day at lunch time because we had so much to do we found a huge crowd of women round Eobi's house and his voice lifted in wild lamentation. The poor little girl had died while we were away. Percy was so thankful he had let Eobi go. I had done everything I could for the child and I was beginning to be a bit fed up with giving out things and getting no results and her mother saying I was trying to poison the kid and refusing to let her eat the medicines I gave her. The poor little thing was eleven years old and only about as big as Di. She got thinner and thinner and I think now she had hookworm. I felt dreadful about her dying though, as of course I couldn't help feeling that there might have been something more I could do and it didn't seem a very good omen for a happy Christmas. However Eobi spent about £5 on food for a feast and put 10/- in her hands 'to take with her', and all night they rowed her body about the river with lamps and fires in the canoes and in the morning they buried her in several yards of new white calico, and the next day the poor boy turned up to work with a very sad face but otherwise composed.

On the Thursday and Friday the boys were sent up in detachments to get their advance from the station—all of which meant management and more thought processes. To save time I cut up the dungaree into ramis and Di broke the tobacco. As well as all this Percy had to make use of the *Varoe* to go up to the limestone hills about two miles up the river and get the limestone already quarried out and stacked against her coming. It is for the new road so that we shall not have to wade in mud next south-east season. Naturally this made Percy more busy because though he did not have to go with the boat he had to tell them where to put it when it did come. All this was accomplished and the stone laid on the road where it was most needed. Of course when the boys had got their money they were mad to spend it—they have no pockets but money seems to burn holes in things other than pockets. On Thursday night we traded with them till eight o'clock and when we finally got rid of them we were ready to drop but we had whiskeys, Di too, and baths and dressed in dinner clothes and ate and undressed and went to bed. The next day, Friday, I got up at six and I didn't stop working till nine at night. As early as that there were eager boys with a few more shillings to spend and while feeding the fowls, cooking the breakfast, and attending to sick boys and sore leg boys, I was dispensing tinned meat, kuku, [tobacco] and dabua

[cloth] and I had the pocket of my pink bath robe full of money. Percy got back from the fall-in about eight and we had breakfast and I went straight into the kitchen and cooked till half past one. I made biscuits, mincemeat, pies, puddings and the Christmas cake was a perfect beauty. We had been short of flour so long I just revelled in it but oh heavens how hot it was. The bosom of my print dress was wet and sticking to me and my hair was wet rats tails with the hair pins sticking out at right angles or falling down my back and making me think it was a scorpion at the very least. It was so hot that I thought the bull would be bad before we could eat it the next day though it was not dead yet, and I was planning to slay the Aird Hill drake and the lame duck in case they should be needed.

Of course there was more trading to be done all the afternoon and poor Mr P. far too ill to do more than just sit about and long for you to sit down and talk to him. When we went to bed I was so tired I was benumbed. I waked in the night to feel a lovely cool breeze and rain coming gently down and the next day broke cool and cloudy and stayed fairly cool all day.

Among other things on Friday I superintended the washing and soaking of haricot beans that Percy had got for the boys' Christmas. The first thing I did on Saturday was to get them washed again and fresh water put on them. It is amazing how quickly things ferment in this country. If I had not had them washed first thing they would all have gone bad as some I had put to soak in a basin for use were quite high when I found them about 10 o'clock.

At half past ten Percy shot the bull. I did not witness the event but I heard the shot. Between breakfast and that time we had all been busy trading in the store. It is amazing how those 90 odd boys made their 10/- spin out—you wouldn't have thought it possible it could last so long. Lots of bush boys came up too and spent 2/- on tobacco which I regarded as a species of gate money to the feast.

About 12 o'clock word was brought that the beast was skinned and hung up. We went down—rather too soon as they had not finished extracting the entrails—however they were all beautifully clean and wonderful and the lovely yellow fat in huge quantities rejoiced me. I waited on the ration store verandah while they finished and then showed them where to see it. My experience of buying my own meat in the shop came in most handy and when it was sawn down the back bone and then quartered and the two beautiful hindquarters put on the table for me to take what I wanted I nearly cried to think I could eat so little of such a beautiful animal. The boys had made a

thick mat of cocoanut leaves by the beast and on it they had piled all the innards. Not one scrap was thrown away—even the gall bladder was carefully put in a tin for medicine. The boys had been retrieving all the tins from the house for weeks to catch every last drop that ran out. The beans were all boiling on a long fire Percy had made them make and stacks of wood beautifully chopped were all ready for the roasting. There were twenty nice bright new kerosene tins filled with beans, onions, sweet potatoes and salt and when they had been boiling about an hour slices of meat were put in and cooked a little more—the Goari's like their meat rare!

Well, I faced these two hindquarters on the table and I took Percy's sharpened hunting knife and I ripped out the undercut steak as though I had been a butcher all my life. Then I cut through the meat of about twenty inches of sirloin and a boy sawed through the bone. One side for me and one for Mrs Woodward. All this was put in a tub and carried straight up to the house. Baidam came along just then and said 'You want these pieces taken up to the house?' and I said 'No Baidam I have taken all I want except all that fat inside.' His face of incredulity was ridiculous. He said 'What about Station sinabada?' I said 'Oh I have got hers too.' Then he broke down and said 'What! You give all this good meat to the Goaribaris? What for you no take plenty? More better I send you up one leg'. At last I convinced him and he stood gazing at me with astonishment to think that I was willing to leave it.

By the time we got back to the house it was nearly two o'clock so all meaty as I was I set to and trimmed the meat and cut the steak into sizeable pieces for the night. It must have been about six lbs of steak or perhaps more. Then we had lunch—soup and bread and jam and tea. I had had a whiskey before lunch.

I had just changed into a half dirty white frock when the dinner party arrived. Mr and Mrs Woodward and Mr Panton, a weird little Scotch person in charge of the 'Natalight Company'. Their place is about half way to the Fly River and he came in to pay off boys and stay for Christmas—he has a wife and family in Sydney.

Well we had afternoon tea and whiskey and Christmas cake—the whole time I was going backwards and forwards to the store or the kitchen—then the Mission boys turned up with mangoes and they had to have some food and be sent to Baidam to get a piece of meat for William the Samoan teacher in charge of the station. The boys were all very good and worked very hard, and really listened when I spoke to them and did what

they were told promptly. They set the table quite well and shifted the round table into a corner and put a bunch of fern on it, and when I came in from a brief act as hostess the dining room was quite nice. I had a silver mug of pink cannas and the alleged silver supplied by the Kikori Company for the use of their managers was polished as well as it would go. I had done the glasses and it looked quite bright.

Then we all went and dressed. The menfolk in white dinner jackets and shirts and collars and ties and waistcoats. Mrs Woodward in black and me in a pink muslin—quite new and quite decent although I made it out of 9/6 worth of remnant bought at Anderson's ages ago. When I dressed I went out to the kitchen and gave Gatauna final instructions and he was jolly good—dinner went off without a hitch.

We began with cocktails and hors d'ouvres, which I had made in the morning. Then we went in to dinner—by the way the beautiful Mr Leonard had arrived just at the correct time in the correctest of clothing and was a little less uninteresting than usual under the stimulus of a few drinks. We had oyster soup, fried (it has to be) steak, potatoes, pumpkin and beans. Mr Woodward hadn't tasted beef for two years, and Mr P. hadn't been in a house for Christmas for twenty-two years. We had beer, lots of it, even Di, and Di ate as much as anyone. Then we had Capegooseberry pie (grown on the place), mince pies (which were, as usual, not eaten) and pineapple jelly made with sago, and cheese straws served with the coffee outside. All the lamps burnt well and all the boys were on the alert and no one spilt their glass, which is unlucky, and the only thing that happened was that Di in an excess of zeal broke a wine glass, but fortunately one of ours and not one of Mrs Woodward's that I had borrowed.

Percy played the gramophone and I tried to make Mr Woodward talk and succeeded—no one has even done this before. All the men danced with Di, who was in a new dress Mrs Woodward made for her for a present. We had a frightful record of bagpipes that Percy had got in a job lot a million years ago and he played this for Mr Panton and he nearly cried with joy—or whiskey. About ten we went down to the parade ground and fired off a few crackers and watched the Goaribaris dancing and playing their drums—they were too full to do much so we came back and had more whiskeys and they left about twelve.

The next morning I waked at six as usual but I turned over and went to sleep again and let the fowls go on squawking for food. We had breakfast at eleven and afternoon tea lunch at three and then got dressed and went down to Mrs Woodward's party.

We went in style on the *Varoe* but alas for Vagi the engine wouldn't start and we didn't get down there till after seven and the poor woman began to think we weren't coming. However, they couldn't start without us as I had her cocktail glasses all carefully polished and ready for the table. We had a most festive evening though the cocktails were too strong for my liking. She had roast beef and plum pudding with rum burnt on it and Di got the shilling—much to her surprise. We danced and I continued the good work of making Mr Woodward talk but Mr Panton got rather too uplifted and I was too tired. We didn't get home till after three and poor Di was asleep and had to be carried home which knocked Gatauma out—he has a diver's heart—and he hasn't been any good since.

On real Christmas day we managed to make a little Koi-koi [pretence] for Di in the morning and she had two stockings with the usual rubbish in them, which she loved, and Percy got her a new bridle from Port which turned out to be made for the largest size Clyde stallion of leather about an inch thick with an enormous and heavy bit. It has to go back.

I haven't told you the tragedy that finished off the Christmas. Three or four days before the bull was to be killed Percy had them brought over from the north block so that the beast would not be heated when the day of his execution arrived. The two bulls and two calves have been over there for some months now and the boy goes over now and again to look at them and see they have no cuts that need tarring. Well the bulls and the heifer calf came over and the next day the boy was sent over for the 6-months bull calf and it was understood that he had brought it by everybody. When all the festivities were over and Baidam was at work again on the north block he came in to say that he had found the poor little calf stuck in a drain and dead. Of course had the usual plantation work been going on Baidam would have found the poor little thing before it died but all work was at a standstill for nearly a week and so now we have lost next Christmas's bull.

The twelve days of Christmas were completed by an event in the boss boy's family. Baidam was an immensely tall Kiwai, middle-aged and with a dignity which deserved and received respect. He and Percy worked together for many years and both found the association rewarding.

On the Sunday after Christmas:

Just as we were finishing lunch Bauo came in and said that Baidam had come. Percy was rather annoyed and went out

saying 'Can't you let me have Sunday to myself?' and Baidam in his most ingratiating manner said that nothing would have induced him to disturb the Sabbath peace except that he wanted materials to make a feast as Arona's wife had that morning had a baby girl and as he was now a grandfather 'more better I make feast'. We knew nothing of the coming event so it was quite a surprise to us. Baidam's wife has just been most dreadfully ill and a month ago Baidam was bitten by a snake and nearly died so they are having an exciting time. Last trip of the *Varoe* Baidam went for a holiday to Kiwai Island and brought back a boy who used to work here before. When I say 'a boy' it is only because it is the custom—he was a useful old person and could make axe handles and do odd jobs of carpentry so Percy said he could stay. He had only been here a few weeks when he caught this sickness that is prevalent here—a species of influenza with pleurisy—and died, leaving behind him here a small boy 'modder belong him die a long time no sisters, nobody'. Now Baidam tells Di that he is going to adopt him to be a husband for Arona's daughter. As he has already another allegedly adopted son who is his exact counterpart they are rather a large household.

Of course presents had to be produced and Di had to be sent down to the ration store with the keys for them to get rice and biscuits and tinned fish. I supplied eight tins of meat, some onions and a tin of curry powder and two out-grown frocks of Di's for the baby to be wrapped in, and a tin of talcum powder, and promised to make it a dress. Bauo brought Micky [the pony] and Di sped down to the ration store and then on to Baidam's house and saw the baby, which she said was quite pink and asleep and dressed in one of its mother's dresses, and then she came back carrying on Micky an enormous bunch of bananas which Baidam had sent me because I had given him a present.

In March 1923 she recorded a Great First after describing the visit of the 'oilfields people' who had been 'prospecting all over the landscape'.

They got in last week—about five men all hungry for the sight of some white faces other than their own and after doing a round of visits in this metropolis they are speeding to Port in all haste to see if they can catch the southern mail. . . . We have really been quite gay because at the same time these oil men have been at the station two women have been here! Imagine it! Four women all together in one room in this district—the first time it has happened in the history of the place—not to mention Di who made five! Mrs Woodward has been quite ill, in her

husband's absence on a long patrol.* She came and stayed here a few days and is on the mend now. News of her illness reached Mrs Lett who was visiting her husband's new sawmill down near Kanibo. As the Government launch was down there bringing a patrol officer as near to walking distance of Port as possible Mrs Lett put on her hat and taking Mrs Chester, the sawmill manager's wife, by the hand, they got into the launch and came up to see if they could do anything for her. No white man on the launch—only natives, and about seventy miles to travel where they had never been before in their lives. Both of them well under thirty and very pretty and dressed in the prettiest of print dresses. Doesn't it strike you as being queer that girls can do such things? When you think what sheltered quiet lives we had as girls you can realise how it amazes me.

In another letter she comments on the changes in the younger generation:

Thank heaven I have no boys to be anxious about. Girls are quite bad enough. I want to say this though you may not agree with me—Don't you think that the having of large ideas—as you say A. has—is not peculiar to him but is the idea of the present generation? I think it is one of the results of the war and the boosting and adulation the soldiers got. No one seems to me to have a normal way of looking at things. Here is an instance of what I mean. I asked Mrs Wills, who lives in Port, if she would try the shops there and send me some calico of a thin soft kind suitable for underclothes up here. She could not get any in Port so sent me some of her own that she had had up from Sydney to make herself some princess petticoats of. Of course it was lovely of her to send me some of her own stuff but it is fine enough for first baby clothes and cost 6/6 a yard. Now she spoke of it as quite ordinary! That is the point I want you to see. She is the same generation as A. and she couldn't see anything peculiar in spending all that on material for underclothes which is unsuitably *good*. This gilding the lily is the fashion apparently and if one of the young things has it then they all will!

Referring to a reported remark by a fourteen-year-old she said:

If she had made the remark about 'being as naughty as they like' I should have said 'Oh no you won't, you'll be as *good* as

* This was Woodward's patrol to the Samberigi from January to March 1923.

I like' which is no doubt what you did say. I think it is the fashion for girls to think it funny to be naughty. I have been forced to read some American newspapers and most of the stories are about denisons of gehanna who ask millions of senseless questions and do the foulest acts and their parents are depicted as *laughing* at them—they *may* but, in the vernacular 'I don't think'.

Though as a general rule her letters were cheerful and goodhumoured and the topics chosen to interest her reader, once or twice she let off steam and later letters are full of apologies for her weakness.

April, 1923. I feel I really must apologise for blowing off like that but Dora says in her letter 'I don't see how ever you bear it'—well sometimes I don't and that was one of the times. Now I have another one—you say that letters always come at your busiest time well what about this. Last week Percy was ill with fever, quite ill but is better now except for two hot and cold teeth. We had no rain for ten days and the tanks were empty which meant no wash and the boys all the time up and down the road carrying water. I thought I had the house nicely fixed: Gatauna, who has signed for another year, in the kitchen and doing the ironing. Karara who is signing again, housemaid and helping with the washing, his brother as gardener and one Borome as cowboy and outside help. This kid can talk English after a fashion and though a fool is willing enough. We worked for a week like clockwork—the house nice, kitchen nice, the garden 'coming good' as Baidam puts it and the cows properly cared for and fowls water tins and perches scrubbed and cleaned. Then Gatauna and Evea got V.D. which is the unmentionable complaint that is more or less rife in these parts. Could you think of anything *more* trying to happen in ones kitchen! Well before this happened I had arranged a party for Sunday and had to carry it through myself with the aid of Karara and Borome. The party was a great success but on Monday morning I was tired out, and the mail came on washing day and here I am having to write my letters in a hurry again as the mail goes by the 'Vailala' which will be at Kikori to take away the oilfields prospectors and their gear. The mail brought news that the *Varoe* got caught in a gubu but Percy had no communication whatever from his agents in Port about the matter which makes him very anxious and we haven't the least idea when she will be out with our orders and trade goods and money for a big pay off tomorrow for which we have neither money, nor trade and no tobacco in the ration or trade store and none at the Govt. station nor at Aird Hill. *And* it has been *so* hot! The thermometer

was 93° three days running in the middle of the day which is very high for here. Di is seedy still but I think is better now. It is cooler and we have had rain—it is the rain that keeps it cool here. I forgot to say that our precious puppy was ill too but is a little better and will not die I hope.

When news did come it was that poor Mr P. had died of blood poisoning and that the *Varoe* had lost a mast in the gubu. Although it was the beginning of the south-east season they all went in to Port Moresby and had such a bad trip that Irene said, when she was back in Ogamobu, that she 'would rot in her tracks' rather than venture out in that season again. She wrote from Port Moresby:

Anyhow here we are—I won't say enjoying ourselves as I loathe living on the boat and Percy must be here to keep his eye on things and I wouldn't go anywhere without him and anyway the Hotel is impossible and the boarding house worse. We are getting nice fresh meat and butter and baker's bread and hope to be leaving next week. Di and I go for a swim in the baths every morning and I go in to see Mrs Wills most days and I do enjoy a chat with someone different. Percy is busy up at the Agent's office disentangling the frightful muddle amateurism and inefficiency have got the affairs into. We have got all our boots mended and Di's mysterious affliction has been diagonised by the doctor (an old goat) as something harmless though it will take a time to get it right. I still have my toothache as the dentist has left and the itinerant one will not be here for two months. However necessity being the mother of quack medicines I have purchased for 1/- a 'bottlerstuff' in the nature of dental cement and I have plugged up the hole with it and cotton wool. It has lasted two days already and I can now eat without swallowing the filling and getting acid substances into the tooth which caused an ache which rendered meals a torture. If it starts to ache again I shall pull out the cotton and wash it out and start again. I don't think anyone who has their own teeth should live in the bush.

This palliative was effective for three months:

I have had a bad time with this pestilential tooth—it abscessed and I had two days awful toothache and then I did a bit of amateur dentistry and progged about with a crochet needle till I managed to make an outlet in the tooth and the abcess broke and now I can syringe the tooth out and it has stopped aching. My face is all over pimples as a result of the abcess having no

outlet but now they are getting better so I hope my troubles in that way are over for a time at least.

Her ailments are only mentioned in passing:

I think I told you how a large baulk of timber fell on my thumb—well now I have my old enemy back again—neuritis. I don't think my hand was improved by sewing stiff canvas for several deck chairs, nor yet with nailing on canvas to several others, nor by making Di a pair of shoes out of an old white felt hat but nothing hurts it so much as writing of course. I have to write so it can just shut up hurting though now and then I have to put down my pen and screech. I find Elliman's embrocation ('rubmedicine' as it is known as) if you dab it on when your palm gets hot greatly relieves the pain.

We have been having a busy time round the house. P. suddenly decided that he could put new seats into our chairs just as well as Mr Butcher who is too busy just now to attend to it. Well now it is done. The cane (mina) was brought in from the bush and cleaned and scraped and peeled by some very small boys. They are called the cockroach gang and get 5/- a month and do all the odd jobs. Some of them are hardly any bigger than Di in fact the Keberi cook boy is not as tall though he is broader—they are boys from a new village that has never signed on before and are nice friendly people, most domesticated. They bring their wives and babies up to show me—the babies are darlings but the women so frightened that they hardly look human—it is a sign of great trust in you to show your womenkind. One of the babies was alleged to be sick so I gave it a little dose of olive oil and plenty of sugar and a handful besides. Di saw it first taking a tentative lick of the sugar and then a little drink from its mother and so on till the sugar was finished when it proceeded to lick its hand up to the elbow till there was no more sugar and then licked its mother too in case it might have left some there.

To return to the cane workers. Eobi and Solomonni did the actual weaving with Percy standing over them making them do it evenly and not native fashion. The four Canadian chairs look as though they had just come from the shop and the four Austrian bentwoods though not so elegant are quite serviceable and better than a piece of board and a cushion. During the time it was being done one of the chair cushions (with tie on creton covers) disappeared but so far we have not discovered anything else missing.

The other great work of the moment is the clearing of all the

swamp near the house. P. has had a raised road put through it and apportioned it out for native gardens. This is a scheme that he was laughed at over nearly five years ago and now it is accomplished he is very pleased. The boys have all gone mad over gardening and I can hear voices down there now although it is Sunday and a lovely day which is usually sacred to fishing or finding bush food. The new road goes through the youngest rubber over to the bush where there is a track to the station. This is going to be made into a road so that it can be used for horses. The prisoners are going to do the actual work but P. has to supervise and lay out the road. In the meantime we have been over a couple of times and found lovely plants. It is a most fascinating place. The trees are so huge and the undergrowth so dense that it is quite darkish. We found lots of pitcher plants in a swampy place—it was filled with sago palms which have rows of prickles like darning needles all over them so we could not go far there. However Di found the pitcher plants and in her excitement she stepped in a soft place and went in up to her knee and left her shoe behind when she pulled her leg out. I had to get it—it was full of water when I finally succeeded in getting it so it was lucky I was quick. We only stayed there long enough to get the pitcher plants as the mosquitoes found us—huge beasts that bite as though they were going to take a piece out of your skin. Have you ever seen a pitcher plant? These we found were nearly as big as teacups and some long and narrow with the most beautifully arranged lip which made it quite impossible for anything to get out once it had got in. In fact you couldn't pour out all the sticky liquid so that no amount of wind could empty it completely. Some of them were growing out of the end of the leaves but others were growing in bunches as big as your head. I don't know if I ever explained that it is not natural to the Goaribaris to make gardens. They live on sago and fish and crabs and very much prefer to wait till the industrious Kiwais or Korekis have made the gardens and then go and steal the fruits of it. The government have a great scheme for teaching them to make gardens and Mr Butcher is helping in it and they are slowly succeeding but the success is beginning to show better since Percy introduced hoes into this place and taught the boys to use them instead of 16 in. knives. While we were away in Port this time they stole forty hoes and we hear now that 'My word, these Goaribari gardens 'e come good now'. This was Baidam who was down there getting boys and who has done more to teach them gardening than the Government and Mr Butcher rolled in one. Incidentally I have profited by the craze as while the swamp was being cleared P. had four boys

carrying black ground up here for my garden and when the boys knew I was going to grow food they did the carrying with a better grace. They think I am mad to grow flowers that don't make any food and they hate carrying heavy weights at any time. Now my vegetable garden is full of it and we have had radishes and lettuces for weeks. The carrots are coming good and the silver beet is enormous. The ducks like it better than we do but as it is all netted in they can't get at it and I pick it for the shut up ducklings.

The letters of the last few months of 1923 are strained. They are filled as usual with domestic details, she made little stories of events in the poultry yard, and the misdemeanours of the cattle, to entertain her sisters but it is as though she is wrapping her house and garden and kitchen about her. She describes the contents of every mail bag and comments for pages on incidents told her in the letters she received. The Butchers from Aird Hill had been away on leave, her friend Mrs Woodward had moved away, and the new Magistrate's wife was not congenial.

I am blue moulded for a chat to someone. Percy is too busy to get away to the Butchers and I hardly feel like going 12 miles by canoe on my own. The new station people are a terrible disappointment. She belongs to that class that when I sent her a basket containing eggs and a bottle of milk and some huge seporas [limes] and all filled in with the most heavenly cannas and any other flowers I had, she wrote back and said 'you really shouldn't trouble.' I nearly cried, as I could, from that one bone, construct the whole skeleton. She is perfectly friendly and P. finds Mr Bastard quite easy to do business with which is the main thing. She has not yet been to see me though they have been here two months and have received most cordial invitations. I feel I have done everything I should do except perhaps leave cards.

Di was her main comfort and was generally at the forefront of her anecdotes:

I have been meditating lately on the subject of how many of our desires as children we get fulfilled when we grow up and I have come to the conclusion that it is something at any rate to see ones children getting what one longed for oneself. Gattie and I always longed for ponies and even if I did not have one myself it is a great satisfaction to me to see Di so perfectly happy on Mickey and chasing all over the plantation with two white dogs behind. The new roads Percy has just had made are the

greatest boon to her and she can now ride in four different directions and be away about two hours riding all the time. Her latest exploit is mustering cattle. The bull came over to visit the big cow Bertha. It was most fortunate that the repairs to the bridge had only just been completed when she elected to require him. She still has her calf running with her and getting the milk in the day time. The bull ramped and roared round and frightened the labour—Baidam and Percy are quite as much frightened but they don't show it so much. At the same time Fairy produced her long-expected calf—a lovely little heifer which as it was born on Trixie Poole's birthday is called Trixie. I am wondering what the boys will make of it as Bertha is 'Borse' and Fairy 'Feh' and Pansy 'Panus', and May is only mentioned as seldom as possible as it seems that word is a rude one in their language. When the bull had been here long enough we decided to send Bertha's calf over with him as he showed a tendency to bunt the new calf.

During the morning I missed Di and presently she came in glowing and pink with excitement. She had been down to see the cows—bulls are nothing to her—and found the boys (about 10) messing about so she sent for the saddle and bridle and had Mickie caught while they were coming and then got on him and directed operations. She was hoarse with shouting and as she said 'I used all the language Father does when he wants anything done quickly'. She beat the bull on the nose and cut Bertha out of a mob on the bridge, which is only six feet wide, and made the boys drive her away while she held the bridge against the bull and the calf while the fence was erected. Then she rushed Bertha over to the south block where a new bridge has just been built in readiness and waited there while they made a fence. Bertha is the most infernal old devil of a cow and knows everything. Unfortunately for Di's exploits Percy was ill and could not see that the fences were strong. Natives make a fence that will stand up but no more. Anyway next morning she was still there bawling away and Gatauna went and milked her. At nine o'clock the bawling ceased and we suspected trouble and sure enough she had walked through the fence and gone back to the north block bridge where we hoped the fence was strong. However it was Saturday when the boys have a short task and can start when they like and knock off when it is finished which is sometimes at nine o'clock. Percy always makes a point of not making a boy do anything if his task is finished so we concluded to leave them till Monday and then have good permanent fences made and make them obey. About three o'clock the bull discovered the weak spot in the fence and walked through with

the calf and there we were back where we started from. Of course it was the most pouring awful wet weather we have had since June—the last kick of the South East.

This letter flows on to an account of a visit from Judge Murray, 'very tall and grand and not looking nearly so old as before his trip to England', his secretary Leonard Murray and Mr Champion, the Government Secretary. 'We had a jolly morning—it is apt to be exciting to have visitors when one has spoken to no one but one's family for over a month'. While the others went to look at the rubber Irene took Mr Champion round the garden and carefully pointed out all the plants she had raised from seeds taken from the public gardens in Port Moresby (for which he was responsible) and he gratified her with unstinted praise of the garden and of the native plants she had transplanted from the bush.

We mutually promised each other plants—he hibiscus cuttings and a young tulip tree and me bush plants and a rooted d'Albertis and several others. I have often thought of taking him in some things but when you don't know a person it is rather difficult to barge into his office with a tin of plants and explain what they are and sit back and be offered some of his in return. Now I have done the offering on my own stamping ground and he politely offered his in return I feel that honour is satisfied and cards exchanged.

Presumably Bertha and the bull roared all through the tea party but they do not come into the letter again. Bulls were one thing but bad-tempered house boys were quite another matter:

Did I tell you that I have a good cookboy at last. His name is Koe and he was on the boat with Mr P. and is one of the nicest natives I have ever had to do with—clean and nice looking and well trained. He is coming back by the next *Varoe* and I shall then have Gatauna as laundry and odd boy and Karara as cow and garden boy and I can kick Ivia out—he is a vile scoundrel. The other night Di was superintending him getting the bath and she called to him to bring some more hot water and he was mad and came in banging the kettle about and swinging the hot water all over the floor and some went over her bare feet. Luckily it was not boiling but it hurt her and one has to be so terribly careful over all sorts of hurts up here. I was so mad that I went out to the kitchen and beat him in the face with my fists—I don't think it hurt him at all but it has done them all such a lot of good that things are running very smoothly now. The reason I was so mad was that the boy had

had a bad cold and I let him lie up for a whole week and the next week gave him only the very lightest work and fed him with medicines and white man's food and all the time the tanks were low and we were carting water Di and I did with one small bath between us and now when the tanks are full and he is quite recovered he does a thing like that. I have always hated the brute but I am going to see to it that he works till the *Varoe* comes back. You can see from this instance what a fierce watch you have to keep over blacks—you *can't* be kind to them if they are his sort or else they just think they own the earth.

The letter written on 29 December 1923 reveals the source of the strain and also the 'stiff upper lip' convention which ruled both Irene and Percy.

This is your Christmas and New Years Card! I could wish that it had a gilt horseshoe with a blue truelover's knot or perhaps some forget-me-nots on it but such as it is, without a poem or anything, I hope it will convey the correct idea to you and Willie of my wishes for your New Year.

I had no letter from you by the dreadful mail that came up on the 8th of December so I suppose there will be two from you by the mail that we hope to get about the 10th of January. As I cannot answer a letter I have not yet received I will tell you our news in all its badness and in due course if I don't feel my ear burning I shall think you must be a hard hearted person.

To put it shortly the Kikori Plantation Proprietary Ltd is in liquidation which means that unless a miracle happens that the show has gone bung and we have lost every bean and bit of work that we have put into it and all through no fault of our own. Mr Blain's and Mr Miller's deaths were a hard knock as their relations could not afford to keep their interests going. There is no work for the *Varoe* to help things along and the conditions of trade and commerce especially in rubber are so bad that no one wants to put their money in it especially in this country where the Administration is so farcical that it is the laughing stock of the rest of the tropical world.

We got a bald radio on the 8th December and have had no word of any sort since then and though we have expected the *Varoe* hourly she has not come so we have just stopped thinking and are marking time until a mail comes up from the Delta. Of course things may not be as bad as we think but in this country they are usually worse so we are expecting the worst to happen. However I feel quite calm about facing life in the south again and as I never did mind housework the thought does not fill me with any horror. Of course I shall be grieved at leaving my

lovely garden, this beautiful place and the dogs but I shall always have it in my mind's eye and as in Broken Hill I could always see the river through the galvanised iron. I try not to think of the bush creeping in to the plantation and destroying the efforts of ten years in a single season but I know it will be a nightmare to me all my life.

As far as we know we shall be down quite soon—we should have had to come in any case as Percy is in a very bad state of health and needs a change of scene far more than Di or I do. . . . to ask Bob to keep Plem with her until we come down as it is out of the question that she should go back to school under the circumstances. I am sorry she should not have another year but a little home life will not be bad for her and she can help knock Di into shape before she has to go to school.

My only plan is to take a house and get the furniture spread out and make a comfortable place for Percy to get quite well in. We hope we can get a seaside house but if not will take anything for the time being. It is no good doing anything yet about a house as we don't know when we are coming. We have a couple of months stores here and kind Mrs Butcher has asked me to get anything we want from her so we cannot starve even if the *Varoe* does not come. We have only about twenty boys left on the place so it should give Percy a rest but of course not to his head. We have been out of reading matter for weeks and but for the painful tripe that we have been able to borrow Percy would have been in a very bad way. I am sewing furiously at clothes to save me work when I have housework to do. I have enough materials to keep me busy and I have cleaned and oiled the old machine until it is working quite well. It is very hot so I shall have my writing table put outside when I get a lot of machining to do so that I shall not melt altogether. Di is quite useful at turning the handle but among other things I shall be glad to get south for it is my old simple machine that starts at the beginning of the seam and does not need about a mile of cotton before it will start at all.

We went to the Butchers the day after Christmas and came back yesterday. The change has done us all good and they are so kind and nice that their companionship is a change in itself. Di had such a lovely time with the two dear little youngsters that she is longing for school. Poor child—she is just beginning to feel the need for companionship of other children as the novelty of this place has just about staled for her.

Of course we feel all unsettled but I am keeping on planting things in the garden and have only just got some bulbs I ordered ages ago. However I have made a pot full of caladiums and

already they have two lovely leaves up and will soon look pretty. The cannas are a bit off after a long spell of dry weather but we have had some lovely rains so they will soon come on again. The cucumbers are still fruiting and the next lot beginning to run all over the ground. I have planted corn all among them and it is beginning to look quite pretty.

Later. We have just heard from the station that the mail is leaving at 10 a.m. tomorrow so I must finish off now as I have two more to write.

This is a very boresome letter but I will do better next time.

Implicit in the next two letters is the conflict between her homesickness for Adelaide and her sisters, her pride in her establishment, and her devotion to her husband and his interests which were totally in Ogamobu. The first does not mention the liquidation until page 9—appropriate paragraph by paragraph comments on the letter she had received, a description of a sunset on the river, and the awning on the new canoe 'so that we needn't hold up umbrellas', and, at last, via the disappointing new cook boy, she touches on business affairs.

We went along nicely with the new boy Ko though I discovered that he did not know as much about cooking as I had taught Gatauna. Just as I had got him into my ways the news came about the liquidation of the Company. We decided that we would pay him off on the first opportunity of sending him home. We were left without news of any sort for two months and last week the 'Sir Arthur' came out with much needed stores—the bag of flour has kerosene spilt on it—and news and urgent requests for Percy to go into Port. We decided for him to go and Di and me to stay here and sew. He will return as quickly as possible with money to pay off everybody and then after closing this house as well as possible we will go south. You can imagine I would be busy myself with my letters and less than a week to answer them, and as all Percy's white suits and shirts with neckbands and his collars have not been used for six months they were bright yellow and had to be washed—and this is the opportunity that Ko takes to get the unspeakable complaint making it impossible to have him near the house. Then Karara took over his work at my request—he being signed off and only working casual—very casual too—and took occasion to steal some quinine tabloids out of Percy's bottle where he puts his week's supply so that he will know how often he has forgotten to take by how many are left in the bottle at the end of the week. On my upbraiding him in the mildest terms 'Karara! Suppose you want quinine you ask me and I will give you some

—no good you taken them out of Taubada's small bottle' what must the mad ass do but get 'too much wild—'e no want work' and clear out leaving poor old Gatauna to do everything and it ironing day and very hot at that. He came back this morning so I addressed him without mildness this time and in my fiercest voice and now he is working quite well. But Gatauna had too much to do for two days and is crawling round looking miserable. He has varicose veins in his legs which make them ache so he cuts them with a piece of glass till they stream with blood and then he turns the tank tap on them—not my idea of the correct treatment for the complaint but as I don't know any other and it seems to relieve him I have to let him do it. He is a nice old creature but is not strong and has that sort of heart weakness that makes everything he gets much worse than other people get it. His time finishes at the end of next month which is just about the time we expect to be going to Port. I shall make him go to his village for a spell and if we come back send a message to him to come out here again just as odd boy. He is so useful and can do everything a little bit and is so nice and clean looking—I don't think I could get on without him.

Percy went to Port alone leaving Irene and Di at Ogamobu for a month, and returned in modified triumph. He and two others had taken over Ogamobu and, though he had reservations about his partners, if the gamble came off he would have a third share instead of a thirteenth. The main thing for him was that he would be able to continue at Ogamobu where his heart and interests lay. Somehow he found money to send Irene and Di to Adelaide for five months and wrote a weekly diary to her. He described the week's activities on the plantation, reported on the health and well being of the hens, ducks, dogs, cattle, garden and himself. Gatauna was looking after him with the aid of Suki, who was about ten and bustled about wearing a soldier's cap which came over his ears and not much else unless he was permitted to wear a clumping pair of worn-out boots. Gatauna's health was still troublesome and, as Irene was away, he called in a sorcerer who effected a cure by removing a black pig and 'other odds and ends' from his stomach, though Percy thought the less sympathetic treatment under his regime might have contributed. Arona's little daughter (born at the famous beef Christmas) died mysteriously. The south-east season was exceptionally wet and on occasions the rain gauge had to be emptied three times a day to prevent it overflowing and the labour gangs were unable to go out in the field for six days. 'They were not unoccupied however' said Percy mysteriously and it was not until Irene returned in October (with both daughters) that she discovered what they had been doing.

We had a good trip out here on the whole. Of course the *Varoe* is not run for my comfort when I am on her these days but knowing the boat I managed to make us all as comfortable as possible. Mr and Mrs Blyth came out to Kikori with us. She is a one time Church of England missionary and quite middle-aged before she was married. He is a member of the British Aristocracy and quite mad but a very good magistrate and a very friendly person. I hope they will be here some time as I am sure we will get on well together. Mrs B. is so nice to the girls and has a passion for ducks and chickens just as we have—also dogs. We started the bush exchange when they hadn't been here a week. I gave her a rooster in exchange for a sitting hen. Then she gave me a tin of tea and I gave her its equivalent in seeds. I sent her a cooked forequarters of sucking pig and she sent back a bag of sweet potatoes and pawpaws for the fowls (we ate them). Now we are trying to work out how many ducklings now, are worth a drake in four months' time. We have great fun over it and write lots of notes to each other.

We had a most wonderful home coming as we actually got up to the wharf without anybody seeing us and Di leapt off the boat as soon as she touched and flew up to the house and *surprised* Percy at his after breakfast pipe. I think a child's joy in a surprise is above every other joy and by the time Plem and I arrived, somewhat more decorously, the mix up of Dogs, Di and Dad had subsided only to start again.

Well, my dear, I don't know if you would be bored if I told you in detail what Percy had done to the house in my absence but I can tell you that he removed everything out of the house that had one time caused me to grouch. All the goro floors are replaced by hardwood and brand new mats. New walls and ceiling of doubleplaited sago mats which have no chinks on them and are a shiny brown and look lovely. The kitchen has an iron roof and a sawn timber floor and the back verandah has an adzed goro floor which is easy to keep clean.

The only thing I could find to complain of was that Gatauna had broken down and gone mad and had done no washing for weeks so poor Percy had no clean clothes at all and everything in the basket was black with mildew. To finish up Gatauna—he wouldn't work and ran away and had to be sent to goal and signed off and there I was with the whole house to straighten up and tons of washing and no boys. However we got a new cowboy and Di taught him to milk and we weaned all the calves at the same time and the cowboy had worked in a house and knew how to wash so between us we got the clothes washed and Plem and I ironed like mad.

I had to make the bread too and we were short of flour. When it became certain that Gatauna was no more good Percy did a most generous action and gave me Mauki, his head carpenter whom he had nicely trained in my absence. He had been for four years with Dr Leigh the maniac who is in charge of the native hospital in this district and handsome is as handsome does, I now respect him, for a nicer mannered boy than Mauki I have never come across. Now after a month of fierce work on my part the house is running smoothly again. Mauki is cook and my helper. His wife does the ironing, his boy Woibi runs all the messages, gets cocoanuts, digs worms for the sick rooster, minds the baby of three while his mother is working and draws two biscuits a week as his pay. Then Kiari is the cow-boy, sweeper, washerwoman and a perfect beast unless kept well under. All this costs 35/- a month and food and tobacco. I still have all the cooking to do but Mauki can make the porridge and I am teaching him to make the bread which is a job I hate above all others as it has to be made at nine in the evening and then stirred up and put in the tins at six in the morning and is ready to bake at eight just when you want the fire low to make the toast for breakfast. You don't know what a lot you are saved by having a sainted baker to call every day. I *like* a wood stove better than gas as I haven't got to get the morning tea so it is no hardship to go without gas but I would like the butcher and baker to call.

She had sent some of her furniture and other household possessions from Adelaide and the crates arrived at Ogamobu six weeks later.

No one could half imagine what a joy it is to me to have my own properties around me. I really have felt like a homeless wanderer until now but the sight of my ancient possessions makes this place a home. The oval olivewood table is by my bed—my workbasket is by my chair on the verandah in the best draught, the book case is full of books of a most respectable order of binding (all shabby ones are in a camphorwood chest on the verandah), the hair mattresses are on the beds proclaiming themselves by their square corners that even Plem's making can't spoil. My sewing machine stands outside the dining room door looking its comfortable old shabby self. The greatest boon I brought up is the bellows. It didn't take Mauki five minutes to savvy their usefulness and now the stove knows smoky fires no more as long as he has time to blow it. Even his woman can use it and these women are the most abominable fools. The thing that caused the greatest laughter is the old family egg stand. Kiari

laughed so much when he saw it that he had to be sent out of the kitchen and Mauki explained to Di that he did not mean to be rude but that in his village they did not have them. I had to keep my countenance quite free from a hint of a smile. When he was sewing the binding on the coir matting I told him it was made of cocoanut—he gravely untwisted a bit and found some semblance to the cocoanut he knew and said in tones of deepest respect that ‘White men know *too* much’.

Now I must stop. I have to fold the clean clothes off the back verandah, aided by Plem a not unmixed blessing, feed the thousand chickens and ducks and get them all shut up for the night and then go and get dinner with nothing much better than herbs to get it with and then have a bath and see that the table is well-made before telling them to bring on the tinned stuff if that is what we are going to have. We had a bush turkey and yorkshire pudding for lunch and it was jolly nice.

The presence of the Blyths at Kikori made a great deal of difference to Irene. Mr Blyth liked company and arranged several picnics during the year, once even taking the girls on a two-day patrol. Irene found it necessary to explain why she had been unable to chaperone them—‘I hope you will not be shocked’. The first picnic was to Ututi:

On the Saturday morning we were down at the wharf at nine o’clock as instructed, and they turned up at ten without Mr Butcher for whom they had been waiting, and Mr Blyth in a very morning after the night before mood. However we all talked and made jolly and I enjoyed it. The river is far too magic for my pen. I never saw so many blues and greys and glimpses up side rivers of the mountains in the distance and huge expanses of water like glass with every possible thing reflected in it. The hills begin to rise about a mile up and though the river is very wide the banks are steep with the vegetation as it were set on edge so that you look at the tops of the trees. Miles of monstrous bamboo looking like feathery grass and lots of flowering trees and different trees to our delta jungle. At one o’clock we landed at U-too-ti which is the jumping off place for the ends of the earth. It was here the government made a base camp when Staniforth Smith was lost in the bush beyond. They use it for a camp now when they are going up to the Samberigi Valley and have a good rest house there. We were just setting out the lunch when one of the police said ‘Sail o’ just as if it were nothing to think of another boat up there and in the beautiful distance there was Mr Butcher’s launch coming along. He arrived at Kikori after they had gone and wasn’t going to be done out of

the party. His contribution was the most enormous pineapple I have ever seen. We had a very pleasant lunch I thought but Mr Blyth did not like sitting on the floor and though he was not actively disagreeable he was unhappy so we did not stay long after we had finished lunch. It is a most beautiful place—the villagers had left in a body when we came ashore and the only people we saw was an ancient man and the village policemen. They were building a new dubu—a huge place quite sixty feet long—built in a series of arches getting lower and lower as it reached the back. It was splendidly built and the clever way they make use of forest logs to support their cross pieces is a wonder. Not a nail in it of course and every joint tied with split cane. It is quite a place to have been—I think Mrs Woodward is the only other white woman that has ever been there and without a doubt if we had tried to go even six years ago we should have found ourselves as part of the evening menu of the village dinner. I really wish the plantation were there—fifteen miles more would not make much difference—I never saw such soil or such growth—tobacco plants were just growing about anywhere and they are things that need a very rich soil.

Mr Blyth has been so delightful to us and taken us out on short patrols of one day which we have enjoyed enormously. Oh! such lovely places we have seen. I couldn't describe them but my soul was filled with beauty even if my head *was* ringing with the noise of the engines. Twenty miles up above us the rivers are more lovely than ever—and huge. West of us, about ten miles, he took us up a narrow river with high banks to a little village perched on top of a high knoll—the water is clear and green and so deep we had to tie up to the bank as they hadn't enough chain for the anchor to reach the bottom. Up one stretch of water we saw high hills—unexplored. I did want to go on and see round the next bend of the river.

The girls have just had an adventure . . . off they went the next morning at 7 o'clock eating a ham sandwich as they ran down the road and they did not get back till two days later. They had a most lovely, time and went all over Goaribari and were met by hundreds of friends there—old working boys and customers at the store who gave them presents of fish and little bits of cooked sago and showed them all their most cherished possessions of skulls and weapons. Mr Blyth was quite hurt that the job of showman was quite taken out of his hands by some old pot who greeted Di like a long lost brother. She ran all through the dubus and past the sacred curtain where no woman is supposed to go till a long black arm gently pulled her out

and told her it was too dark there for her to see. An example of native tact.

In August 1925 they were visited by G.A. Loudon who had acquired a two-thirds share in the plantation.

Mr Loudon came out on the *Ballingarra* and we enjoyed his visit enormously. All my culinary efforts were a great success and the duck was prime—the meat on the breast was nearly two inches thick and as tender as possible and I made quite passable apple sauce with pumpkin mashed and flavoured. Of all my preparations not one went amiss and he went away feeling very pleased. The plantation surpassed his wildest expectations and he affirms that he never saw such growth and that the place as it stands is worth £45 an acre and in two years' time should be worth four times that.

We are to start tapping in October or as soon as the factory is built. Percy has two pit saws going full blast for the buildings thereby saving £100 by using local timber instead of importing it. Of course he is frightfully busy training the boys and the weather is very wet and the road very muddy. He has a lovely pile sawn already 4 × 4 hardwood. A beautiful red wood that takes a polish like mahogany. He has just built Di a little room on the back verandah with the same wood and it is oiled and looks so pretty.

You cannot imagine what a weight it is off our minds to have the O.K. of an expert put on the place. The feeling of security for the future is a lovely thing, 'the glorious privilege of being independent'. Of course the girls don't notice it but already the load has slipped from Percy's mind and although it is too soon to talk of any figures or make any plans the feeling is there all the time that we are no longer working off a dead horse. By Christmas the wolf will have been finally routed and we should be able to feel that his income is all ours, as it were, and dividends, if any, extra. The place will be self supporting by then. Of course Mr Loudon is an optimist but I cut all his figures in half and even *then* it is more than I ever expected to get off the place.

By November the rubber expert had arrived and marked trees of sufficient girth to be tapped, and presently three carpenters came to build the factory.

On the 18th a strange boat came up with a young man on board for here to open up the rubber. His name is O'Regan and he went to the war and is quite a decent person. Considerate

in the house and polite to the girls and so deferential to me that I feel at least eighty years old. He is much impressed with the rubber and has marked 7,000 trees for tapping and has a small gang at work and is actually making rubber—about £5 worth a day already.

He brought the news that the carpenter was leaving in the *Varoe* a day or so after he left so I had time to get the house ready. I made Percy's office into a bachelors quarters—it has a separate entrance to the road and also to the bathroom etc. The boat didn't turn up till the 30th and when it did come there were *three* men. Two of them were workmen so Percy turned the new boss boy out of his new house and put them in there and the boss Mr McDonald came up here. A large fair person—amusing and full of energy. They only come in to meals and in the evenings we play Mah Jong or the gramophone and all go to bed about nine o'clock. It is very hard work for me as I have no cook boy and make bread every night to send down to the two carpenters. They all brought stores so my pantry is full. The shooting boy has been bringing in plenty of birds and of course they like them best. Mr McD. is a very appreciative eater and it is quite a pleasure to see the victuals disappearing. However the worst feature of it is that we have just had a drought—only two inches of rain last month and that all fell on one day. It has been very hot and the garden looks rotten to me.

It is so amusing to us to see this district become the fashion. Here we have four white men on the place and last Saturday Mr Blyth arranged a party for Armistice day and we sat down twelve to dinner. The second in command at Kikori [G.F.W. Zimmer] has only been here a few weeks when he is ordered back to Port and we are sorry—a nice man—air force hero with the Legion of Honour, and D.F.C. and a Palm Leaf. Mr Blyth is of course a soldier—English standing army and in the South African war too; and these two men here are both soldiers. In the afternoon the 'big Sitimer' turned up with Mrs Blyth on board and Captain and Mrs Clay. You can imagine it was a very jolly party. Mr Blyth sent the launch up for us at 6 o'clock and took us home at eleven.

The steamer *Hancay* brought Mr and Mrs Clarke, the L.M.S. missionaries at Port Moresby out in a long promised visit to the Aird Hill people and this morning they came over and visited us with the Smiths and if you can believe it there were actually twelve white people on this place at once and they tell us that there is another visitor at Kikori with letters from H.E. who is expected momentarily to take him back. Mr Blyth and Percy affirm that they are starting for the Samberigi Valley—60 miles

up the river and only approachable at this time of year—next week so as to get away from the crowd here.

The girls are having a very jolly time and Di is getting *far* too much notice taken of her but is enjoying it very much. The carpenters will be gone by the end of next week and any work there is left to do Percy will have to do himself. The smoke house is nearly finished and they have built us a new rice and sago store and mended several chairs and Mr McD has promised me a lot of odd jobs round the house if they have time which I hope they will. We have two leaks in the iron roof and while I can bear leaks in the leaf roof over the verandah quite comparatively calmly—the leak on the dining table in the iron roof makes me ‘too much wild’.

We went up to see Mrs Blyth yesterday and had a good chat and I feel so much the better for it. All these men bore me to death—I would so much rather consort with women. Plem had a quite nice birthday and Di made a fine heap of presents by making a huge basket of flowers with a note from the horses, a basket of kittens with a note from the cat, a bunch of bush fruit with a note from the hornbill (the latest alleged pet) and six handkerchiefs from herself. The notes were vilely written and foully spelt but quite clever and the idea all her own and carried out without a word from anyone. Mr McDonald contributed a pound of nails which he said was the only thing he could spare out of his kit. It is intensely amusing to be entertaining a carpenter who wears silk pyjamas and goes to his bath in a marocain kimona—he is a fat boisterous sort and the hardest kind of worker. We don't mind him but I am praying that Percy will last out till he is gone.

In March she wrote to a niece:

I can't understand anyone being bored—you'd think we would have all the opportunities we required up here to get bored but it isn't so. Something always seems to crop up to startle us out of our chance of boredom. We run along quietly and peacefully for weeks—interesting little happenings keeping us going and then something a bit bigger happens and jolts us out of any likelihood of peaceful boredom. Yesterday we had one of our most disastrous days after weeks of orderly going. The first thing in the morning (6.15 a. m.) a boy came up to say the white pig had piccaninnies—four and she had killed them all. Mrs Blyth came up to lunch and we had a jolly day—a lunch fit for anyone—cold pigeon with cocoanut cabbage salad with a dressing made with separator cream, stewed dried peaches and cream, and

almonds and raisins. Early in the afternoon the shooting boy brought in a young cassowary. After Mrs Blyth had gone Di found the jersey heifer calf with its neck broken and in the evening Plem found Mrs Puss with two kittens one of which was deformed and had to be destroyed. We all went to bed depressed and this morning the boss boy came tearing up saying that his son [Arona], the second boss boy, was close up dead. He has a very bad cold that is going about which is almost like whooping cough. Armed with the thermometer I went down—terrified as to what I should find—pneumonia or what not, but fortunately his temperature was only 102° and he had a nasty attack of malaria on top of the bad cold. As I had been there myself I heartened them all up and put a wet cold handkerchief on his brow and set his pretty frightened wife to fanning his head. Such a clean self-respecting bed of mats and pillows with spotted red print cases and a sheet made of blue print. He is such a nice boy—huge and handsome and commanding—it was piteous to see him laid low and obeying his wife whom he usually rather hectors. When I got back I sent him down the sleep prescription that Dr Moulden gave me when I had influenza and a white blanket and a jug of tank water, and scolded poor Baidam, his father, for talking about Pouri Pouri and frightening the women. I wish you could have heard me! You would have thought he was a small meek person and I was six feet high and fierce at that instead of the reverse being the case. About an hour after I got back another boy came up to say the white pig was dead. Well I hope that ends the disasters for the time being.

Percy started building the superintendent's house yesterday and we hope it will be ready before a man arrives as these basket work houses are no place to entertain strangers. It is quite a job getting all the materials for a house together when you have to get it from cellar to garret, as it were, out of the bush. However he has some very good boys now who can do a little skilled work if well looked after.

Percy lasted out the carpenters but O'Regan did not last much longer. Irene does not mention him again and her remark about 'Basketwork houses' is her only reference to this experience of strangers in the house. Plem's letters are less inhibited. Even allowing for her 16-year-old intolerance, it is clear that the recurrence of alcoholic celebrations every time a ship brought supplies, and the aftermath, shocked Irene and roused in Percy all his patriarchal instincts.

The *Varoe* brought out Mr MacAlpine to give a report on the place. He is the recognised rubber expert of this country and

has been here for thirty years and knows all the conditions all over the place. He reports most favourably on the plantation and says it is a most valuable property and that no other man in the country could have held down the multiplicity of jobs Percy has and done all he has to make the place what it is. Isn't it nice to have a few flowers thrown occasionally! I am pleased and naturally I like the little Scotch man who says it. He is a jolly nice little man—hardly as tall as I am and plainer than most. He has a charming voice and a fund of anecdote of the early days that would keep one interested for years.

4 May 1926. I think I told you that Percy was going to Port and I was to be left a lonely widow with Mr MacAlpine in charge of the place. Well he was away a month and we really had a very pleasant time as Mr MacA is a most entertaining person . . . The last 10 days of the time we were out of nearly everything—no tobacco or rice for the boys—very little in the trade store and hardly anything in the pantry—no flour or sugar except for brown from Kikori. When the *Varoe* finally arrived there was 1 tin of meat and only 5 cartridges. All the news Percy brought back is good. The place is to go on as before with an assistant for the rubber work. Mr MacA. is staying on till a young man arrives to put him in the way of the work before he leaves. He is most enthusiastic about the place. At the present price of rubber (2/4 to 2/6 we are shipping £200 worth a month off 7000 trees which is 70 acres of the 300 odd which should all be in bearing in the next two years. Even if the price were to fall to 1/6 we could still pay well when in full bearing. The present trees are improving all the time and Mr MacA. says they are far superior to any in this country. He has opened up most of the plantations himself so is in a position to know what to expect from young trees. According to him the place should be quite self-supporting by next Christmas and after that pay dividends. It is nice to think we own a third share in it isn't it? I can't quite believe it yet. We are putting in another 200 acres at once as, if they should decide to float into a larger company in two years time, by the time the old trees are thoroughly proved the extra trees coming on would increase the capital value of the place. The rubber is going away in neat little boxes now of white wood weighing about 80 lbs. They are about 2 ft cube with 'Ogamobu No.1 sheet' stencilled on them. It is so wonderful to have freight to send away! We will be able to talk turkey to the boats coming out this way very soon. At present they are most cavalier in their treatment of us and just bring what there is room for after everyone else's stuff is on board. This time the carbide was not shipped and I borrowed some from Kikori and

we are able to use one lamp at night which doesn't nearly light up the place so I have to sit like a lady all the evening instead of getting on with sewings and things as I can't see by kerosene light.

I hope this letter is intelligible. All the grouches in the house have been poured over my head during the writing of it including a dog fight just behind my chair and the groans of the poor cook boy who is really very ill. He got up at four o'clock and began to get the morning tea. I was awakened by him fumbling in the china cupboard in the dining room when the cups are kept in the kitchen. He had to be persuaded back to bed as he had got it firmly fixed in his mind that someone had told him to get the tea. Two Dover's powders and a cup of tea have quieted him down now and I hope he will be better tonight.

Two months later, in July, she wrote again about 'the cook boy' but with no clue as to whether it was the sick one.

I have a good cook boy but he is such a wily thief that we are sending him away by the first opportunity and I shall have another change round in the work and put the nice Kara in charge of the kitchen and get a new sweeping boy. I have two to chose from among the labour and even if the work does not get done so efficiently it will be better than having a thief in the house. He actually changed the store key off Plem's ring for one of a similar pattern that belonged to the tool cupboard and it was not discovered for 24 hours and we have no means of knowing how many odds and ends of trade he abstracted in that time. Two other locks have been interfered with one of them being Percy's strong box. There is only one key to that so he could not possibly have opened it and had he taken money Percy would have known as he is so tidy with it but he often has as much as £100 and a boy might take a dollop of £10 and it would not be missed for some days what time it would be scattered about the country. It is most unusual to find a calculating thief among these people—they are pilferers and pickers up of unconsidered trifles as a rule.

We are having a wet, wet time just now. 26 in. of rain the first week of July! No one got drowned though the river was very high but oh! the colds and coughs and 'copina i sisi' which translated means 'skin is sore' and means anything from fever to the usual disinclination to come out on a cool morning. We have had an epidemic of mumps too for over three months. From 3 to 10 boys a day and when I had no iodine I made them pepper plasters and tied them on with a strip off an old red crepe curtain

—they looked so funny up under the new house sewing thatch with their heads tied up. Well when I thought it was all over the shooting boy got it and as he is Di's especial charge I said 'Oh you paint him'. I had iodine by this time and so she did and caught it from him. She wasn't bad—only on one side and rather white faced for a few days. The swelling made her look curiously stupid as her eyes were rather dull and I realised what a lot of stupidity gets put down to fat people because of their fat cheeks when probably they are as smart as the next.

Don't believe that fires don't interest me! Oh no! At this time of year they are my one thought. How to get enough wood cut and dried to bake the bread and do the ironing *properly* is the August problem. However I will say that we have had less trouble this year than ever before—partly because these boys from the Delta [Purari] know more about what wood burns and what only smokes. The Goaribari's whole life is spent in the smoke of their fires and they are quite used to it but these boys cry like anything at the smoke. I don't because my glasses protect my eyes also from onions.

The *Varoe* brought our new man and his wife out last trip. Their name is Drummond—so simple and nice after all the Mac's and O's we have been tormented with. He is an Edinburgh man—soldier, lanky and slow moving and she is a little dark English woman from Kent. She is of the class of a superior shop girl but is very practical and not afraid of anything. She is keen on dogs and cats and fowls and a vegetable garden and we have found a nice flat in the swamp below their house where we mean to try once again to grow some food. She is a great sewer and makes her husband's shirts—more than I'd ever do for a husband. Their house is not quite finished but one room is done so they are sleeping there and eating with us and we find them quite pleasant and easy to get on with. She is full of praise of the house—in 9 years spent in this country she has never had one so big or so well built and she is putting up with all the shortcomings in the matter of finishing the house with her living there in a way I admire. Somehow I feel less homesick now she is on the place—it makes more public opinion and relieves me of some of the necessity of teaching the girls *everything*. Mrs Blyth is very good but we don't see a great deal of her at this time of year when the weather is so bad. The 2nd officer at Kikori, Mr Chance, a fellow South Australian, and a perfectly decent person though boring, is being married next month and there is talk of Dr Leigh and his wife settling at Veru about four miles down the river—gov. hospital it will be. They have tried it at several places but none are central and this is another

try and I don't think it will come off myself but if it does we shall all have to keep calling books there will be so much society!

Tapping began again when the worst of the wet season was over and Irene's October letter announced:

We got 1,000 lbs of rubber in our first month's tapping in spite of 24 inches of rain. Of course it doesn't begin to pay expenses but it is a good start. Now we are getting fair weather again, thanks be, we should get good returns and as long as the price stays at 1/6 or more we are paying. Of course our expenses are more in proportion when only tapping 10,000 trees than they would be in tapping the whole 30,000. The tappable trees are scattered so that the tasks only contain a small number of trees compared with the number a boy can tap when all the trees in a row are ready. There are 300 acres of rubber at the back of the house of which about 40 acres is taken up in swamps or winding creeks. Percy is putting in almost as much again this year partly on old cocoanut areas and partly on a new area at the back—beyond the present back line which was originally cleared in 1919 and has been allowed to go under scrub again. It was never planted so nothing was lost but it is a wilderness of second growth, creepers and grass. It will be a heart breaking task to get it cleared and lined as it is all up and down in the steepest hills and the ground is so fertile that the grass grows literally with a whizzing sound.

There is a gap in the sequence of letters between October 1926, and June 1927, but the events are recorded by Plem who was just eighteen. Her November letter to a friend is written in the family stiff upper lip tradition in which no fancy feelings are permitted to expose themselves to the public gaze nor to interfere with practical commonsense. Reading the account after forty-seven years memory is shocked by the detachment which could write plain facts and omit any hint of the emotions which remain in recollection still.

Towards the end of October Irene fell ill with influenza. While she was still in bed and running a temperature Mrs Drummond had a seizure of some kind and died. 'We thought she was in a fit, and would come to and all night we put hot water bottles and rubbed her with whisky. We sent for Mr Smith, the missionary, and when he came next morning, he said he was afraid she had been dead some hours. They took her to Aird Hill and had a proper funeral.' When Irene was up Plem got influenza and then Irene had a relapse 'what time Di careered about and fed the fowls and Father'. Then Di became seriously ill 'with jaundice and influenza and gastric malaria which sounds a most imposing list to lodge in one thin

12-year-old'. Perhaps there is no other way to write of the suspense and blackness of that time; the anxiety and anguish are better left between the lines. Irene and Di left for Adelaide by the next boat and Plem remained to

look after Father because he is unconscienceless about looking after himself. When Mother comes back of course depends on Di's health. She may recover with the sea voyage enough to go to school when the term begins, or she may have to have treatments or go as a day girl and be coddled. Mother is saying now she will be back by the March or April boat but I am not thinking of how long she will be away at all. I am at once petrified and looking forward to keeping house. I'll be frightfully busy until I get it organised and I haven't a doubt that the boys will play up on me, but there it is. I was 18 on the 12th and it's high time I was learning something new. Of course Mrs Blyth is not far away and I can ask her things if necessary. I have seen Mrs Chance twice since I last wrote and I think we are going to be quite friends. Mr Chance is going away on a three-month patrol in a few days now*, and we have fixed up that Mrs Chance is to come and spend a few days with me every now and then. Father is going to be frantically busy with more planting up at one end of the plantation, and 6 houses under construction about 3 miles up hill and down dale the other end so I shall probably get blue moulded for talk. However there are a batch of kittens imminent, and puppies fairly imminent, and some ducks going to hatch, and my blue handkerchief linen into which I am going to put some careful work, and tons of other sewing. So that if the store, and the sick boys and the house don't altogether occupy my time—oh not to mention the butter making and the garden!!! I feel bowed to think of it. My birthday was funny. Mother had given me my present while I was ill. Two books 'Septimus' and 'Simon the Jester' by W.J. Locke. So there was nothing for me on the breakfast table. After breakfast Di called me into her room and gave me a camiknicker in tarantulle to work and a set of three doileys in linen. I was thrilled by the camiknickers as I have been dying to ascend from bloomers and singlet, and Mother tells me I may make some more of some more tarantulle in the drawer. It was a pouring wet day and we were rather afraid that Mrs B. and Mrs C. wouldn't come. However they did. Mrs B. brought me the most

* With Healy to the Mobi River from December to the middle of January 1927. It was while he was away that Mrs Chance became so frighteningly ill.

beautiful sponge cake, pink on one side and white the other, and iced with white and little yellow dooby things. It really was a thing of beauty and a joy for ever (even if it did taste just very slightly like burnt milk. She would have been so mad if she'd known), and a pot of Jergens crushed roses talc powder. It was nice of her because I hadn't expected her to do anything. Mrs C. brought me some bath salts. The poor thing she's brought up heaps—and there's only a pull the string shower bath!

She sent to Irene what she believed were cheering accounts of her cooking ventures:

The meals are certainly edible and occasionally interesting. Last night we had a thing called sausages in ambush and the name tickled Father so that I don't think he tasted it at all. It was rather nice. Roast potatoes stuffed with sausage. I made the Christmas cake yesterday. It looks and smells beautiful but alas I forgot the flavouring. Still it tastes of fruit and I am going to put a very strongly flavoured icing. Father and Mr Drummond were most kindly enthusiastic about the uniced one we cut, so I suppose its all right because they are the only ones who'll eat it.

However Father refused Mrs Blyth's dinner invitation, and last night we ate Alphonse* who justified his existence by being most delicious and a ceremonial very heavy tinned plum pudding, and to-day Father said 'Is it Christmas day to-day or tomorrow?'

The plantation house was built on a rise about half a mile from the river and had a view across the vivid garden, across the coconuts, to the river and its distant dark bank. The unexplored mountains cut the sky to the north and east. To the south, between the government station and Ogamobu, there was a creek which wound through the jungle and the plantation and acted as a conductor of any passing traffic sounds. Two miles away they could hear the grung-swish of paddles and estimate the size of the canoe (was it from the sawmill and perhaps bringing a mail bag or a party of customers for the store?) and developed a fine ear for the engines of the different vessels. When a ship was due and suspense mounted 'every hornet was a steamer and every rustle of the cocoanut leaves was an engine' wrote Plem on one occasion. She described the sail—oh—the call which told that a ship had been sighted.

We had run out of tobacco and fowl's food (eggs) and had nothing but sardines, steak and kidney pies and frankfurter

* The drake that looked like the King of Spain.

sausages in the store (all of which I loathe) and no onions. And the shooting boy would shoot nothing but pigs. So on Friday you can imagine how thrilled I was to hear a perfectly terrific 'Sail-o' which the boys kept up for about five minutes. First about three voices down at the wharf, then about 30 more down there and they were heard by the lining gang, and they were heard by the gang further out and what with the echoes and the voices in the distance and the close up ones its most thrilling. So Father sent a boy up for the mail, which we thought was the southern mail because the southern boat arrived in early in the week. But the boy came back in about an hour with *no* bag! H.R.H. Captain (mud) [coastal ticket] Jack Dean refused to give it to him. About an hour later down she came. Do you know what was in it? One Stores Price List. 1 lot of invoices. And 2 letters for Father!!! When the cargo was tallied up—1 case missing. The groceries, Father's tobacco and the Saturday Evening Post!! . . . It appears that the *Morinda* was expected on Sunday at 12 noon, and the *Vaimauri* left at 9 o'clock, went 10 or 12 miles and anchored until next day!!! And that was why there was no mail!!!

In January 1927 she wrote to Irene:

On Friday at 4 o'clock I heard something and by $\frac{1}{4}$ past it was distinctly an engine. It was like the *Laurabada* only a thump instead of a boom. Of course I was frightfully thrilled, and I woke Father and he was too, He is missing you, and I don't think he ever stops wondering what you are doing at the moment. And he is far worse than Mrs Blyth about reckoning up mails. He said yesterday though, that having someone left to fill up the gap, he didn't miss the family half as much. Which was very nice of him.

We thought the engine stopped at Kikori and about five minutes later there was Mr Drummond walking up the road with the weirdest man, about 6 ft 4 and a roughneck from roughneckville. Then two more and the boys told us that it was a canoe from the sawmill. So we thought it was a coincidence and still expected mail. But the engine was in the canoe (which father says is about 40 ft by 6 feet and decked, with an iron roof.) and although only 6 h.p. makes far more noise than the *Laurabada*. Their names are Mustard (!) and Christie and Sanders and they are recruiting boys and waiting for some more men and then they are going to look for gold up the Purari River. Mustard is the man who found the Yodda,* and he looks like

* Which I now doubt.

pictures of Christ only very dirty. Perhaps its his reddish gold whiskers. They came to the store and bought recruiting trade and also tea and meat from us. I was in my bath and Father would call through the curtain at me asking me if we could let them have this and that. I felt rather mean but I palmed off the things like pig's feet and irish stew on them in the dozen of meat they had. Father interposed his frame between them and me and the door and wouldn't let me even see them which was rather mean. However we gave them a pumpkin and some pineapples and the next morning I sent down some milk and a dozen eggs, and would have sent down a loaf of bread this morning, only they left too soon. Mr Drummond was most surprised that we didn't fall on their necks (which were probably dirty) and ask them all up to stay, and told me three times in case I didn't hear at first, that they were 'decent fellers' and had such interesting yarns to tell. But we didn't bite. We have discovered that he is interested in history and can be quite interesting when talking of it. But he thinks the League of Nations a lot of rot and Austen C. a fool. So we keep off political subjects, and natives, and our white neighbours. The 'party' on Armistice night fed him up with them and he has come round to our ideas about O'Regan only worse.

As Miss Mary Wyatt says 'Christmas comes but once a year' and I add 'Thank God'. It was far far worse than last year's. At 10 to 9 Mr Blyth arrived to pay the boys, and at 11 I was in the thick of the fray. Father had had to give out the silver as well as the notes all except about £1.10, and the boys with silver wouldn't come up and for an hour or so it was really hectic. At 1 we had lunch and at 2 we were all at it again. Father and Mr B. signing things and me storing. At 6 we shut the store firmly in the faces of at least 42 boys. The Gopi boys got 10/- each and their faces of joy were a pleasure to behold. Every one of them bought the same things. A rami, a singlet, a sling bag, a mirror, a tin of meat, 3 lbs of rice and three sticks of tobacco and all felt like Croesus and beamed at me happily.

The store had become Plem's responsibility. It was a large room built as an annex to the house with a strong counter between the customers and the stocks of kerosene, lamps, knives of various sizes, fish lines and hooks, tobacco, meat and tinned fish, and sugar. There were white beads (coloured ones were not in favour) calico, canvas bags, belts, and Mother Hubbard dresses made by Irene and Plem, cotton blankets and singlets. She bought as well as sold. Bundles of sago, fish and pawpaws and occasional native artefacts. She described on one occasion how she reluctantly resisted temptation when offered yellow Bird of Paradise plumes. She bought

armshells which were part of the brideprice and sold them back to aspiring bridegrooms. It was difficult at first to convey the distinction between the fish, pawpaws and sago—food—and the rats and young crocodiles which were also food by local custom. The store became a place to visit as time and the government patrols accustomed the villagers to the presence of the aliens, and she spent quite a lot of time with parties of sightseers.

I had a new experience in the store the other day. A whole tribe of bushies came up with armshells to buy beads. About twenty men and boys and a few women. I was busy cutting off lumps of beads and marking armshells, sweating every pore and half asphyxiated by the smell when I heard a queer thump flump flump from the back of the store. The women walked away over from there to the furthest corner away and the men turned their heads and shrugged their shoulders but moved up closer so I couldn't see. I looked and presently saw that the noise was a boy falling on the floor. And there he lay all sprawled with his head under him at the most broken angle. My heart did a little thumping while I thought of death or fits, so I called Kabaro to bring water (which he didn't) because I came to the conclusion that he had fainted. And started round the cupboard-counter to go and investigate all the bushies quite quietly moved over so that short of pushing their bare bodies I couldn't get out. So I said 'What's the matter with him has he got a sore leg?' (in Motuan) and they smiled and one boy said 'No he's mad' which alarmed me a bit. Though the word Kavakava is used for foolishness too. So I wasn't quite as eager to go and administer first aid. Then one of the boys stalked over casually and pulled the fainted boy's head from under him by grasping a handful of hair. And presently the boy climbed up and sort of swayed and a small boy was deputed to lead him outside and down to the wharf. And when I pursued my inquiries about did he often do it and if so why they all laughed. After they had gone I asked Kabaro and when he could control his mirth he said 'You know dis boy 'e no come along store beforetime. He see 'm altogeder billycan and knife and beadie and 'e no savvy think'. Fainted with wonder in fact. So they were quite right in not letting me go to him, because perhaps he'd have died to find me, I mean a white person, too close.

Another letter describes a different experience:

At afternoon tea we saw coming up the road about twenty natives and two village policemen. So I went out and found they were from one of the 'educated' villages down in the delta, not

Goaribaris at all. So we started trading and presently one of the V.P.s came round the counter and poked his head under to see what was there! Absolutely against the rules (of etiquette in a Lady's Store). I happened to have a slab of tobacco in my hand about 4" by 12" so I flourished it and said 'Shoo' or words to that effect, and he didn't move, so I pushed it closer, thinking he'd give way and he didn't. And it got him the most resounding slap in the face. I felt surprised because I wasn't angry with him and didn't mean to touch him; and then I felt rather alarmed because with no Man in the House I didn't want to start anything and a village policeman is a man of weight. Nothing of this showed on my face of course (at least I hope not) and then I nearly yelled with mirth. My dear that policeman's face was a picture. His look of surprise and astonishment. Surprise at being slapped, and astonishment at a Sinabada slapping a village policeman, and all the onlookers were gasping looking first at the slapper and then at the slappee. So I said that it was obvious that he didn't know Ogamobu fashion and started breaking up the tobacco which some kind soul bought. Would you believe it, but my stock went up 100%. They kept announcing what wonderful things I kept in the store and how cheap, and what a charming place Ogamobu is, they admired the fowls and absolutely overwhelmed me with assistance when I wanted one of them to open a case of lamps and produced three more £1 notes. One of them was extremely tattered and I asked why, and they said that they had left it in the house and a dog came and ate it. So I said they must be very rich if they could feed their dogs on money, and did the dog like it or did it have a tummy ache? They laughed politely, not loudly because then I might think they were being rude but enough to show that they appreciated my marvellous wit. My only sign of noticing all this crawling was to present them handsomely with newspaper, and when I was quite sure they had no more money I hooshed them out. As I was shutting the door the slapped one looked at me dolefully and shook his lamp. It was empty you will be surprised to hear. He said his money was finished and he couldn't sleep peacefully at night unless he had this very small lamp alight so that he could see the ghosts if they came. He didn't actually crawl on his tummy but he gave that impression, so I gave him a little and he bade me farewell with tears in his eyes.

Irene returned to Ogamobu in April, leaving Di at school in South Australia. A friend she had made on the ship coming back came to stay at Ogamobu and cheered them all.

We had eggs all last month while Mrs Lawes was here which made the house-keeping easy. We had such a jolly time and were really sorry to see her go. She was interested in everything and though it rained the whole month we got out a few times. Last week was fine and Mr Blyth lent us his motor dinghy with a boy to run it. We went over to Aird Hill and Mr Butcher was delightful and gave us a lovely time. We saw all his new dam and dynamo to run his electric light and cinematograph and charge the cells of his magnificent radio—none of them are running yet as he is short about forty feet of cable and had to send to Sydney for it. We came home via one of the prize villages of the district and were brave enough to go ashore with no white man! We didn't stay long but I was determined she should be able to say she had seen a village. She was very proud of herself after we got home but she hated doing it. I did too as I loathe village natives—the clean washed plantation ones are none too savory but the smells of the genuine unwashed is not at all pleasing.

The flowering Cassia trees are out in all their glory. The pink, rose scented, not quite as good as last year and the yellow one more lovely than ever—from the verandah we look into a mass of grey stems, pale green leaves and long racemes of light yellow flowers hanging like laburnum and big fat brown bees having a lovely time among them. The petals are falling all the time and the ground is yellow. We have had vile winds blowing like billio for about ten minutes blessed coolness and then stopping dead and making it hotter than ever. The winds blow the thatch about so that the roof leaks when the rain does come.

Irene's last two letters to her sisters make no reference to the suspense and worry they were all feeling as Percy prepared to try once more to rescue his venture.*

January 1929. Percy is off to Port again next week and I suppose we will get through another possible two months without dying of boredom any worse than we did the last time. Prospects for success are a lot better now than they were then so I am just going to carry on as though everything is O.K. There are 25 boys working on the place under Arona's orders with an inspection from the Government *once a week!* Of course it is a rotten waste of money as the boys are doing about half, if not less, the work they should do with daily inspection and proper

* An account of the fluctuations of the rubber market and the effect on the finances of Ogamobu Plantation has been given on pp. 00-00.

fall-in in the morning. They are doing some work, of course, and though Arona is as good a boy as there is, he is only a native when all is said and done and cannot be expected to have authority over the boys unless backed up by a white man continually. His house got burnt down the other night. I was waked by hearing Mauki shout—a quarter of a mile away—and knew there must be something up so I got out and there was a huge fire. Of course I thought it was the factory and I wouldn't wake Percy till I was sure so I bumbled up and down the verandah trying to find a good place to see, without a light, till I ran into the partition instead of the door. I then took hold of myself and put on shoes and a dressing gown and with the glasses in one hand and my torch in another I walked down to the front gate and found to my relief that it was not the factory nor the smoke house, nor the tool store, nor the copra house, nor the three big boys' houses. I thought it was the three boss boys' cottages so I waked Percy and he insisted it was the big houses. However I convinced him it wasn't and we went down to the gate again. The flames must have been fifty feet high with a straight column of smoke and sparks as high again—there was no wind and only a light air that blew the sparks over the river. We could hear cries of 'Orbor, orbor' which means water in Goaribari, and hear the handles of rubber buckets clashing. I could hear Kara's voice above the shouts so knew he was on the roof of the house he sleeps in which is the nearest this way and shut off the view of the house that was burning. We did not go down as they were doing well by themselves and had Percy gone they would have stopped doing it their own way and expected him to direct operations as fire fighting is not one of his specialities they were better without him. The whole thing didn't last half an hour and in the morning—it was just getting light when the fire was put out—Kabaró came up at a quarter past five and got us tea. It seemed it was only Arona's house that was burnt and Mauki's and Kara's houses on either side—not ten feet away—were scorched but not burnt. It was a wonderful achievement on the boys' part to save them. You know they build themselves houses of saplings which last till they fall down and never get burnt—in the dubus they have dozens of fires and I only know of two that got burnt near here, unless they were condemned by the government. This house is built in Percy's best style—pit sawn hardwood, perfectly level, adzed palm floor and walls and a properly constructed roof with a good pitch and thick thatch, nailed throughout with 4 in. nails and with an iron fireplace and it has to burn down. The total cost of the house is under £30 but it is the awful effort of re-collecting

the materials out of the bush to rebuild it that irks one. This rotten liquidation has scattered our good boys far and wide and the pitsaw gang is lost and a new one will have to be trained. Arona lost a lot of his 'somethings'—everything in the kitchen, pots and pans and native tobacco hanging up to dry and food. He saved all his bedding and mats and Kara tells me everyone has lent him something till he can get new. They are such self-respecting people that it seems a shame they have suffered and I have to harden my heart against giving him things as, as I said before, he is only a native and the only way they can learn to be careful is to suffer for not being.*

I simply must, though it is Saturday morning and lots of work waiting to be done, sit down and tell you of the exciting night's rest we had last night. I think I told you of all my poultry losses in the last four months and how full-grown hens have been taken and a duck and all its setting of eggs and four other settings of duck's eggs and one of fowls. We have been up several times in the night when the fowls squarked and haven't found anything but last night after we were all in bed—about 10 o'clock I heard the white duck, who has seven fine ducklings, give a shrill squark and I heard Percy's bed creak so I got out and went towards the noise by a different way—torch in hand and slippers on, but no dressing gown and I afterwards found my nighty had a split in the back. Percy appeared from the other side, torch in one hand and gun in the other. I went to where I knew the duck slept and there was a handful of her nice white feathers on the ground and all her sleepy babies scattered about and sticking out of a hole below the wired yard, where I had put some cocoanut husks to stop shut-in chicks from getting out, was about two feet of snake or iguana. I screamed at Percy and took his torch and he fired at it. It happened that this hole was under some raised nests in which poor old Boxie was setting and on top of the boxes were my poor new rooster and four hens sleeping. When the gun went off there was a wild turmoil. They all shot straight up in the air—only about four feet below the kitchen floor—and for a few seconds the air was full of fowls, feathers and screeches. Percy says Boxie bit him in the face and I know one fowl ran between my legs and with a snake around you can imagine how I felt. I thought it was the tail end of the snake so I tore round to see if he could get another shot from inside the chicken house and there the snake was lying along the board that keeps the wire down and rapidly pushing itself

* This rigorous principle, I may add, was applied equally firmly to everyone regardless of race, creed or relationship.

through a hole the other end of the house. Plem went to get another cartridge and of course had to go into the trade store for one, and of course the box was empty and she had to open a new one—a hard job at any time and she says she just tore the box limb from limb and the cartridges scattered all over the floor—she came back with one, remembering to shut the door behind her, and in the mean time I had rushed to the workshop and seized a ram bar thinking I might stop its progress by holding it down. I have often seen the boys weilding these bars but never knew how heavy they were till I tried to put it on top of the snake—crouched under the low house the while, torch in hand. When Plem brought the cartridge I skipped out as I didn't want to be shot and went round the side where Percy was and held his torch and my own while he fired at a fine bulge of snake coming through the hole. Then Piper appeared on the scene and pulled and tugged at the snake with encouragements from Percy while I got a nice longhandled rake and Percy and Piper pulled it out and into the middle of the yard. You can imagine this second shot being fired with Percy crouched nearly double under the floor and me holding the torches in one hand and my nightgown well up with the other. I laugh when I think of it now and Plem twittering in the back ground willing to do anything for anybody as long as she didn't come too close to the snake. When we got it stretched out it was a whopper—it was a job to get it stretched as Piper kept on killing it and the snake contorted itself into bunches. At this juncture Arona and Kara and another boy appeared and Percy said 'Put your foot on it Arona, I want to measure it'. Arona wasn't having any so got a stick and the horrible tail writhed out from under it. I then became conscious of my almost nudity so I went in for the measuring tape and got Percy's dressing gown and came out. The beastly thing wouldn't go straight and the boys wouldn't touch it so I let the sleeve of the dressing gown come over my hand and got hold of it but it was like trying to hold a piece of lively wire. At last we got it comparatively straight and it measured 12 ft 6 in. long and 12 in. round and was a dark olive green with iridescent blue and pink on its white tummy and the markings underneath looked like fish scales. I bravely trod on it and it was as hard as a piece of rope. The first shot had killed it as it was the head I saw first, just drawing back from biting the duck—these snakes though big in the middle have the most horribly insignificant heads and it actually had the bones of a full grown fowl inside it 'a long time' as Kara put it. We think it was a python but 'snake' is good enough for me and I like it now it is well dead. It has cost me quite £10 worth of poultry.

The boys dragged it away in a loup of cane and gave it to the Goaribari boys to eat and Kara says it filled two kerosene tins and that the boys waked up and cooked it and ate it there and then. He also said 'My word too much grease—all the same butter'. The only casualties were two motherless chickens which got squashed when the snake pushed through the hole where they were sleeping.

The last letter from Ogamobu is from Plem, dated 22 May 1929.

. . . We have been packed and waiting for a boat since March 11th. Father arrived back from Port on that date and said the 'Jean L.' would be out in a week. We waited one week, we waited two weeks, we waited three weeks, during the fourth week one day at afternoon tea it teemed with rain. Just when the rain was at its heaviest we heard foot marks and there was Mrs Blyth with two wet strangers. Namely Mr and Mrs Jefferson who were sent out to take over the plantation and store respectively. They had come on the *Papuan Chief* a day early. They said the Jean L. was coming in a fortnight. The first week we were all busy with the handing over. Then we started waiting. We waited another four weeks. Then the *Chief* was due. So with our 24 packages we went up to Kikori. She did not turn up on her due day. We slept at Kikori. The *Vanapa* turned up a fortnight late and going to Daru. An hour later the *Chief* turned up. Relief.

You will notice a deathly silence on the Jeffersons. One incident (which happened two hours after they arrived) will suffice to show you their respective natures.

Dinner just over.

Mrs Jefferson (to mother) May I go out and get some water for the dog?

Mr Jefferson (loud and clear) Yes go on its your house.

Postscript

After forty-six years I was able to make a Rip van Winkel return to Kikori—flying in three hours the journey that used to take three days in the ketch. Aird Hill raised its head above a map of dark jungle holding the winding brown delta rivers as Bevan would have seen it if he had had the balloon he longed for. At the airstrip a small crowd of sightseers with a sprinkling of Europeans was there to meet the plane but they came the mile or so from the station by truck. A short walk through the bush led to the launch which took me up river to the motel and my first sight on the river was a dug-out canoe powered by an outboard motor instead of the standing paddlers.

But the river was the same beautiful aloof implacable timeless body of moving water. It is difficult not to attribute to it some entity—an inscrutable power above and beyond the attempts of man to use it. The succession of baffled ventures could perhaps be explained because they were based on an assumption that the river belongs to the place whereas actually the place belongs to the river.

Kikori is now the headquarters of a subdivision of the Gulf District and covers the same area as the old Delta Division except for part of the north (which has become the Southern Highlands District) but now reaches west to the Gama River. Kikori station is administered by an Assistant District Commissioner and has a hospital, a bank, and a radio-telephone link with Kerema. The map in the office shows that in place of exploratory or pacific patrols he supervises schools and medical aid posts up the Paibuna, the Omati, and Turama, and up to Nawagera in the north.

It was said that the area is one of negative growth and that the amalgamation of villages is not only because they are clustered round the schools and medical aid posts but because there are just not as many people. This fall in the population is attributed to heavy recruiting before the war and an even heavier call on all the able-bodied men to work as carriers and labourers wherever the army needed them. Many did not return to the district—in Port Moresby there is a large settlement of what are now called Gulf people (instead of the earlier distinction between Gulf and Delta people) where a generation is growing up quite detached from the life of their parents' villages. This can be seen (by me at least) as part of the migration from the west which was moving along the coast long before recruiters and armies came to speed it.

There was a period in the 1950s when it must have seemed that the district was at last going to become a rich and rewarding place. The Australasian Petroleum Company (A.P.C.) set up a base at Middletown (where the Sirebi joins the Kikori) and was servicing four rigs in 1955, spending £3 million a year, and employing a labour force of 'thousands'. Their fleet of twenty vessels, numerous launches, motorised barges and canoes, and helicopters, brought traffic to the river; flying boats and amphibious float planes landed in the reach between Kikori and Ogamobu; there was a motel; three trade stores (two of which sent trade vessels round to the villages); and near Aird Hill a company set up a factory to make kutch (an ingredient of plywood glue) from mangrove bark to supply a plywood factory at Bulolo. There was talk (and a survey party in 1957) of 'the proposed vast hydro electric aluminium project. We understand that the suggested dam site is above the Hatha Gorge on the Upper Purari River . . . a possible smelter site . . . at Hall Sound or a shallow water approach up the Kikori river to a delta site in the Aird Hills area . . .'. Ogamobu continued to tap rubber, run its trade store and a saw mill, and act as a recruiting depot.

This thriving scene changed from 1959. The kutch factory ran out of funds; the A.P.C. moved its base to Puri (forty-eight miles east) where a flow had been struck; the government station establishment was reduced with the transfer of headquarters to Kerema; and the General Manager of the British New Guinea Development Company, in his report of his annual visit to Ogamobu in 1961, said 'Socially and actively the Delta has stepped back twenty years in time to become a remote outpost'. Ogamobu had been paying its way though the rainy climate interfered with the production of latex. The same 1961 report mentioned that the property had returned an average cash profit of £9,035 p.a. over the past six years. Recruiting became difficult and farther afield and the withdrawal of the A.P.C. reduced the trade store profits. In addition, rubber trees do not regenerate the bark indefinitely and by 1963 there is a reference to the 'advanced senility' of the trees. The factory and smoke house and the equipment installed in 1924 was still in use 'their condition remains a credit to the care with which they have been maintained'. It was estimated that the replacement of engines and buildings would cost 'around £A6,000'. The only reference to new rubber planting is in 1959 when the old homestead site in River block was planted with rubber seedlings.

Eventually the British New Guinea Development Company ceased to operate the property and leased the area to a series of tenants. Judging by appearances it does not seem to have had the hard work, care, and attention needed to keep the jungle out.

The lease is held at present by an Australian who is married to a member of the Kairi people who originally owned the land. There is a plan under consideration that the government should resume the property, return it to the Kairi who, with the aid of Development Bank funds, would work

it on a co-operative basis. I hope the Kairi have their land again but I doubt whether they will produce rubber.

There is a mission teacher at Aird Hill and a crocodile farm. The mission land at Veru, where Mr Butcher planted the oil nut palms (since chopped down) is the site of a Vocational School run by the United Church, where they teach the boys motor maintenance, net fishing and gardening and the girls cooking and sewing. The net fishing produces quantities of very fine fish and a large freezer has been installed. Again the problem is transport. The history of the Civil Aviation Department's efforts to establish a service to Kikori runs parallel to all the other ventures. Qantas ran an Otter Amphibian float plane landing on the river, and Catalina flying boats came in sometimes—but mudbanks kept shifting and a Catalina crashed. When it was proposed to keep in contact with the Highlands by a sub-station at Lake Kutubu an airstrip was built near Ogamobu but was soon flooded and condemned. The present strip is near the station and while I was there it was reduced, because it had soft spots, to receiving only light planes. So what about the fish industry? Some optimist has suggested a fish cannery.

The motel, whose owner has timber interests in the district, is in a grove of 10-year-old balsa wood trees and plans have been made to plant 300 acres in a co-operative venture with the Irimuku people. Balsa is in demand for making medicated toothpicks and at least will not present the same transport problems as fish.

This is a superficial summary of a disappointing story—disappointing because all that endeavour should have built something enduring. But on whose terms? Perhaps it is one piece of the earth which is resisting exploitation.

Notes

Chapter 1

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- 3 Patrol Report 15/18–19.
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- 7 Patrol Report 4/22-23.
- 8 Patrol Report 9/22-23.
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Chapter 5

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- 10 Patrol Report 17/23-24.
- 11 Patrol Report 14/24-25.
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Chapter 6

- 1 Patrol Report 43/16-17.
- 2 Patrol Report 12/18-19.
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Chapter 8

- 1 In December 1916 the Station Journal refers to an inspection of Bagama (Hunter & Co.) and in October 1916 to the visit of Captain and Mrs Hunter to Kikori. The captain of the *Merrie England* was named Hunter and I can only surmise that Kikori Plantations Ltd bought Bagama when Captain Hunter died in 1917 (*Annual Report* 1916-17). It must have been abandoned before 1924 as I have no recollection of it as part of Ogamobu.

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Index

- Abaura, 1
Abavi, R., 48
Active (launch), 45
Ah Matt, 199
Ah Wong, 182, 185
Aidia, Paibuna R., village, 45, 61
Aimaha, 61, 125
Aird Hill(s): crocodile farm, 250; kutch factory, 249; mission station, 52, 60, 243, 249; Samoan teacher at, 60, 209; villages, 45, 60n.
Aird R., 10, 62
Aiwai, constable, 48
Aiwasa, constable, 48
Alele R., 84
Amnesty, 137, 143
Anglo-Persian Oil Co., 80
Aparanigi, sacred stone, 92
Apewa, Aird R., village, 61
Apiopi, cargo cult, 85
Armistice Day celebrations, 230, 240
Arona (raronā), 187, 212, 224, 232, 243, 246
Arsenical 'compound 914', 83
Arrows, 136
Asanu, village, 114
Attack Bend, Kikori R., 57, 60
Aubaigai (Aipikai), Purari R. delta, village, 64
Auboroma, village, 67
Aumokoal, 160, 170
Aure R., 78
Auro R., 52
Austen, Leo, 74, 80, 114, 141
Australasian Petroleum Co., 249
Avisonimi, Turama R., people, 115, 131
Aworra R., 46, 50
Axes, stone, 25

Bagama plantation, Kikori R., 148n., 152, 172; Siaki's village, 59, 65
Bagemo of Dadebi, 128
Bahi Creek, Turama R., first govt camp, 127
Baidam, 149, 157, 171, 187, 205, 209, 211, 214, 217, 232

Baker, G.M. Massey-, 21, 43, 80
Ballingarra, steamer, 229
Balsa wood, 250
Bam, constable, 49
Bamboos, 201, 203, 227
Bamu R., 12, 21, 57, 184, 201
Bananas, 25
Bauo, 212
Bara people, 94
Barikibi, Veru R., 66
Barnes, patrol officer, 87
Baroe, Purari R., 16
Baroi R., 6, 75, 76, 80
Barton, Captain F.R., 12, 14
Baumu, Kikori R., village, 70
Baru people, Bell Point, 135, 138, 140
Basaki of Mogodio, Turama R., 140
Bastard, Leo, 81, 218; Mrs Bastard, 218
Bawi, Era R., village, 77
Beaver, Wilfred, 1, 21n.; search for Staniforth Smith, 21ff.; at Kikori station, 43; waterfall, 38, 120
Bebe, village constable, 116
Beech, Mr of Maderi, 200
Bell, L.L., 17, 20
Bertie, R.D., 180
Bisaravi people, 26
Bisia Creek, Turama R., 128
Bevan, Theodore, 3ff., 8, 57, 75, 248
Bevono Creek, Turama R., 128
Blackwood, Captain F.P., 3, 8
Blyth, A.L., 57, 75, 81, 84, 85, 132, 137, 225, 227, 228, 230, 240, 243; amnesty, 137; Gibu camp, 141; Goaribari-Baru raid, 138; Morigio report, 134; Turama R., 135, 136
Blyth, Mrs, 225, 230, 231, 235, 237, 239, 247
Boag, Dr F.L., 82
Borome, 214
Borebada, 50
Bounties Bills, Papua and New Guinea, viii
Boundaries, between Western and Delta divisions, 122, 137, 248

Index

- Bread, 226, 230
Breinl, Dr Anton, 50ff., 82
British New Guinea, 8; Territory of Papua, 14
British New Guinea Development Co., ix, 113, 152, 249
Brown, Lt, 11
Brown, L.N., 23, 40, 152, 168; transferred, 175
Brown, Mrs, 152, 161; Christmas party, 164, 165, 167
Buchanan and Charpentier, traders, 76
Burlingham, Mr, 180, 183, 186
Burroughs, S.M., 65, 125
Burston, S., 161, 193
Butcher, Benjamin, vi, 42, 52, 55, 60, 192, 197, 198, 217, 227, 243
Butcher, Mrs, 222
Butterworth, 177
Cane (*mina*), 216
Canoes, 51, 239, 248
Carbon tetrachloride, 83
Cardew, H.C., 18, 22ff., 45, 49, 57, 59, 67, 70, 75, 123, 126, 127, 144
Cargo cult, 85
Carne, J.E., 20, 43, 58, 80
Cassia alata, 81; distribution of seeds, 82
Cawley, F.R., 79, 116, 132
Chalmers, James, vi, x; death of, 10, 13, 42, 52, 68, 75
Champion, C., 101, 139
Champion, H.W., Govt Sec., 220
Chance, S.H., 79, 81., 116ff., 235, 237
Chance, Mrs, 237
Chenopodium, 83
Chester, Mrs, 213
Chinnery, E.W.P., 68, 70, 82, 122
Christie, goldminer, 239
Christmas, 205, 206, 210, 238, 240; cooking, 208, 209
Civil Aviation Dept, 250
Clay, Mr and Mrs E., 230
Clark, Rev. and Mrs J.B., 230
Coal seams, 16, 19, 43, 48, 80, 86
Constables: local, 57; village, 57, 61
Cost of patrols, 101
Coconuts, 58; native plantations, 85, 86; at Ogamobu, 145, 155; at Kanibo, 153; seednuts, 161; expert's report on, 169; copra, 179; cabbage, 231
Coffee plants, 191
Crocodiles, 51, 110, 128, 150, 153
Curnic(k) R., 76, 80
Customs tariffs, viii
Dadebi village, Morigio Is., 123, 128, 130, 135; men killed at Saragi, 131, 132, 139
Daly R., Northern Territory, 144
Dam building, 160
Daniell's Ethnological Expedition (1903-4), 12
Darai Hills, 47
Daru: government station, 10, 50; hospital, 82
Daru, constable, 49, 59
Daviri, village constable, 65, 71
Deburi, constable, 26
Dentistry, 215
Dikima people, 116
Dimabi, 148
Diseases: tropical, expedition to map distribution, 50ff.; hookworm, 83; mumps, 234; sepoma, 81; tinea, 55; venereal, 82, 83; yaws, 55, 82, 83
Dobi, village, 53
Donugu, village, 89, 91, 97
Domestic arrangements, 158, 166, 188, 196
Dopima village, 10, 61; 82, 125
Doriomo people, 122, 128, 132, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139
Drummond, Mr, 235, 238, 240
Drummond, Mrs, 235, 236
dubu: description of, 15; at Ututi, 228
Dubumubu, Aird R., village, 61
Dudley, W.C., 70, 109, 122
Eichorn, J., 17, 19
Ellangowan I., Fly R., 138
Emai of Dopima, 125, 127
Eobe, house boy, 200, 204, 216
Eobi, carpenter, 206; daughter's death, 207
Epidemics: whooping cough at Daru, 12; dysentery, 43; influenza, 129
Era Bay, 150
Era R., 57, 62, 64, 75, 76, 78; people, 137
Erawa R., 93; first patrol of, 101-8; river junction, 106
Erimuri (Eremere), Ututi Creek village, 66, 70
Evea, 214, 220
Evoi, cook boy, 151
Ewake, Ututi Creek village, 66
Faithorn, B.W., 101
Favenc, Mt, 17
Felling, 155, 157-8, 159; accidents, 148, 159, 160; fire, 161
Ferimi village, 91, 102
Flint, L.A., 88; Turama camp, 127
Fly R., 1, 12, 21, 50, 138, 147, 178, 200
Foi-i people, Mobi R., 116

Long Ago is Far Away

- Foraba people, 93
Freshwater, Maderi, Fly R., 180, 184, 200
- Gababari, Aird R., village, 44, 45, 60, 61
Gabadia, Morigio I., village, 132, 133, 134, 139, 140; peace ceremony, 142
Gaiberi, Sergeant, 44, 57, 66, 67, 82, 126
Gama R., 12, 46, 135, 136, 248
Gatauna, 199, 202, 205, 210, 211, 214, 219, 220, 223, 224, 225
Gauri village, Tiviri R., 76
Gebabari, *see* Gababari
Gia, 49
Gibidai, Morigio I., 109, 113, 115
Gibu Creek, Turama R., 136
Gigori village, Era R., 62, 63, 64, 78, 79
Gimini-Kairi people, 114
Goaribari I., 10, 12, 13, 109, 113, 122, 132, 228; people, 11, 12, 14, 15, 22, 46, 61, 123; Baru raid, 138; gardening, 217; on Ogamobu, 205, 210, 217
Gopi, Era R., people, 76, 77, 137, 240
Gori, of Morigio I., 134
Government policy, 74, 77
Grimshaw, Beatrice, 14ff.
gubu, 138, 198
- Hamiagi, mountain village, 92
Hancay, steamer, 230
Hanuabada, Port Moresby, 57
Haragu, Morigio I., village, 123, 129, 131, 135, 139
Harding, Professor, 113
Haricot beans, 208
Harse, Dr W.T., 201
Hathor (or Masuwer) Gorge, 17, 107; dam site, 249
Havoka, of Morigio, 133
Heagi, of Hanuabada, 150, 196, 198, 201, 202, 203, 207
Healy, C., 116
Hemmy, H.J., 3
Hennelly, J.P., 20, 47
Herbert, C.L., 61, 62
Herbert, Judge C.E., 21, 47
Henry, C., 50
Higinu village, Mati Creek, 71
Holmes, Rev. J.H., 68
Hombrom Bluff Experimental Gardens, 58
Hookworm campaign, 83
Hopimati, 71
Huntington, H.W., 70, 148
Hurley, Frank, 194
- Iari, village, Era R., 77, 82
Ianda, mountain village, 89
Iba, Omati R., village, 116
Iessu people, Omati R., 70, 114, 116
Ikinu I., Urika R., 82; hospital, 83, 84
Ikiru village, Kikori R., 60n.
Inai-i of Haragu, Morigio I., 135, 136, 137
Indentured labour, 145
Inu, village constable of Gabadia, 140
Iosiku village, Turama R., 137
Iowa village, Paibuna R., 109, 123, 125
Ipe of Dadebi, Morigio I., 123, 125
Ipikoi people, Era R., 76
Irimuku village, Kikori R., 66, 250
Ise Creek, route to Samberigi, 89
I-u people, 78
Ivaimu, Urama I., 61
Ivara village, Purari R., 78
- Jata, constable, 49
Johnston, H.L.C., 75, 77, 83, 85, 110, 111, 114, 115, 129, 131, 177
Jukes, J. Beete, 2
- Kabaro of Goaribari I., 241, 244
Kabidue, constable, 135
Kaiai (Keai) people, 24, 93
Kaimiri village, Purari R. delta, 51, 63, 64, 82, 85
Kairi people, Mati Creek, 249
Kairu, 61, 75
Kairuku, 50
Kamaia, constable, 104, 106
Kanibo, 85, 147, 168, 179, 182, 192, 199, 200, 201; trade store, 152
Kaoberi, Veru R., village, 66
Karara, 214, 220, 223
Kari of Dadebi, 131
Kari village, Mati Creek, 59
Kauma village, Turama R., 47
Keelan, J.F., 175
Keme village, Omati R., 61, 125
Kemp Welch Estates, 147
Keniogu, 96
Kerabi valley, 19, 93, 97
Kerema, 14
Kerewa, Goaribari I., 61, 124
Kesumubu village, Turama R., 136, 142
Kiari, 226
Kibau, sorcerer, 137
Kibeni people, 110, 111, 115
Kibiri people, Kikori R., 59, 60, 61, 216; arrest of, 59; village deserted, 60

Index

- Kikori Government Station: establishment of, 43; staffing, 75; plantation, 58; hospital, 82, 83, 235; Doriomo–Umadai visit, 137, 138
- Kikori Plantations Pty Co., vii, 145, 210, 221
- Kikori R., vii, 1, 3, 5, 19, 46, 57, 228, 248; Attack Bend, 57, 89; base camp, 46, 87, 88, 227; Cawley's patrol from Omati R. headwaters, 116; Staniforth Smith's expedition, 20ff.
- Kikori, launch, 122, 125, 128, 132, 134, 135
- Kimori of Ai-idia, 137
- Kirby, R.D., 62, 65, 76; last patrol, 67; death and the aftermath, 67ff.
- Kisi–Dubu village, 47
- Kismet*, launch, 132, 135, 138
- Kiwai I., Fly River, 2, 50, 184
- Ko(e), 220, 223
- Kohomeri of Bagama, 71
- Koikia of Paravi, Turama R., village constable, 141
- Komibati*, 58
- Komoi Creek, Turama R., 137
- Koperami village, Pepeha, 111
- Koriki village, 82; workers at Ogamobu, 217
- Koropenairu village, Purari R., 61
- Kuma of Nawagera, 117
- Kumukumu village, Aird Hill, 60, 61, 65, 67, 177
- Kuripi, hospital, Alele R., 84
- Labour regulations, 146
- lakatoi*, 2, 50, 57, 75
- Lambert, Dr S.M., 83
- Langdon, M., 3
- Lapi Creek, 95
- Latrine regulations, 83, 84
- Laurabada*, 239
- Leaver, Mrs, 197, 198
- Legends: Ro people, 92; Pepeha people, 114
- Le Hunte, Sir George, 11, 12
- Leigh, Dr F.B., 84, 226, 235
- Leonard, C.A., 77, 210
- Leprosy, 50
- Lett, Lewis, vii, 80, 131n.
- Lett, Mrs, 213
- Lever, Mr, Medical Assistant, 82
- Lever, Mrs, 167
- Limestone country, 46, 87, 93, 94; for roads, 207
- Little, W., 17, 19, 43, 80
- Lockwood, Mr, 113
- Loloki Copper Mines, 182
- London Missionary Society, vi, 10, 13, 42; Aird Hill station, 52; Urika station, 21
- Loudon, G.A., viiff., 152, 186, 194, 229
- Lote, engine boy, 138
- Mabuduan, 9
- MacAlpine, A., 232
- McDonald, Mr, 230, 231
- MacDonnell, S.G., 113
- MacGregor, Sir William, 8ff., 16, 19, 57
- MacKay, D., 16, 19
- Mackay–Little Expedition, 16ff., 75
- McKell, Major, 146, 147, 149, 153, 164
- Maderi, 185, 200
- Maiaki village, Urama I., 64
- Mai-meri, Era R., village, 64
- Maipua, Era R., village, 64, 76, 82
- Maira Estates Ltd, 79
- Marai, Sergeant, 96, 98, 133
- Marikopi, constable, 106, 107
- Marsina*, 178, 195
- Masuwer (or Hathor) Gorge, 17, 107
- Mati Creek, 59
- Matokora of Dikima, 116, 117, 120
- Mauki, 226, 227, 244
- Medicine chest, 81
- Memerimabu, of Udukarua, 119
- Mena Creek, 79
- Merrie England*, launch, 11, 12, 13, 14
- Middleton, S.G., 139
- Mina Creek, 76
- Minnetonka*, launch, 138, 194
- Mo, 199, 204, 205
- Mobi R., 34, 95, 116; patrol, 117ff.
- Moddamodda, Morigio I., 123
- Morari (Moreri), Tiviri R., village, 63; murder by Ututi Creek, Mati Creek and Irimuku people, 66
- Moresby Trading Agency (MTA), 179, 180
- Morigio I., 122, 126, 127, 132, 142; people, 57, 140; compensation for carriers killed, 143; camp, 138, (moved to Gibu Creek, 139); deserters from Ogamobu, 177
- Morinda*, steamer, 239
- Mogolovu village, 92
- Mubugoa village, Omati R., 60, 61, 110
- Mud, as fortification, 76
- Muimana, Keai village, 94
- Mullins, Mr, 177, 179
- Mumuriai, Kikori R., village, 70
- Mura Creek, 76
- Murau's village, 59, 60, 65, 66
- Murray, Hubert: Judge, 14; Acting Administrator, 14; 74, 82, 83, 124, 125, 127, 139, 220

Long Ago is Far Away

- Murray Mt, 19, 25, 89
Murray, Leonard, 20, 21, 47, 48, 220
Murray, G.H., 109
Mustard, A., goldminer, 239
Nabio village, Turama R., 129, 137
Nagora village, Omati R., 61, 130
Naino, village constable, Turama R., 136, 137, 140
Nakea, corporal, 119
Namai village, Goaribari I., 61
Nantau, Urama language, 76
Nanno of the Aua-Kiberi, 59, 71
Naopi, village constable, Morigio, 135
Natalite Company, 111, 113, 114, 210
Nawagera village, 116, 120, 248
Navigation Act, 196
Neabo I., Turama R., 132, 135
Nemedi village, Gama R., 136, 140
Nepou (Nepau) Urama I., 61, 64
Neuritis, 216
Nevi of Gababari, 44, 45
Niai village, 91, 103
Nipa palm, for thatching, 172
Nivani, launch, 133, 135
Obai, of Morigio, 134
Obera people, Darai Hills, 115, 129, 135
Oberi people, Komoi Creek, Turama R., 135
Obi people, Era R., 78
Ogamobu Plantation, vii, 57, 128, 144, 147, 229, 233; cattle, 200, 211, 219, 232; cockroach gang, 216; costs, 175, 179; deaths, 176; deserters, 176, 190; labour at work (1919) 175; native gardens, 217; new house, 187; and garden, 190, 200, 203, 222, 246; routine, 172; timber, 169, 228; track to station, 217; trade store, 145, 163, 183, 207, 208, 240; women's tasks, 189; wharf building, 170, 173, 206
Ogamobu Plantation Ltd, vii; earnings, 169
Oil search, 20; Anglo-Persian Oil Co., 80, 212; Australasian Petroleum Co., 249; and flow at Puri, 249; Maira Estates Ltd, 79, 80, 86
Oka, corporal, 139
Okani people, 89, 104
Oldham, E.R., 138
Omati R., 1, 8, 46, 57, 62, 70, 75, 109, 114, 123, 248
Omaumeri village, 81
Onimati, Sirebi R., village, 67
O'Regan, C., 229, 232, 240
Orokolo, 197
Owamu, interpreter, 139
Pai Inlet, 52, 53; village, 55, 61
Paibuna R., vii, 1, 2, 47, 62, 75, 109, 248; sago leases, 113
Pai-i-a village, Omati R., 115, 133
Papua Act, 13
Papuan Chief, steamer, 247
Panton, W.T., 113, 210
Papuan Courier, vii, viii
Paradeba, corporal, 127
Parua, 11
Paravi village, Gama R., 140
Patoa, constable, 75, 129
Patrols, purposes of, 61, 248
Pawria people, Purari R., 78
Pay-off, 183, 214
Pekai-i of Haragu, 135
Pepeha village, Paibuna R., 109, 111, 115, 137
Percy, Harry, 174, 206, 208, 210, 215, 220
Pia-ora village, Purari Delta, 61
Pigs, 159, 162, 163, 205, 206, 231; pig-buying, 165
Pigsties, 18
Pitcher plants, 217
Pit saw, 170, 171, 172, 173, 175, 229, 245
Poi-i-mabu of Foi-i, 117
Poimea village, Gama R., 136, 140
Poole, C.E. Lane, 78
Po-omu or Smoky Creek, Era R., 79
Port Moresby, 10, 147, 169, 182, 197, 215, 220, 230, 248; copper mines closed, 185
Poultry, 197, 200, 205, 245
Pratt, A.E., 17, 20
Pugini, corporal, 102, 106
Pundava: carrier, 48, 50; corporal, 128
Purari R., 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 16, 51, 57, 75, 84; anthropological study, 74; delta, 75; people, 45, 57, 76; gold seekers, 239
Puri, 249
Rainfall: records, 167; effect on rubber tapping, 175
rami, 136
Rarona (Arona), Baidam's son, 187
Rations, 157
Recruiting, 85, 145-6, 203
Remington, 22ff
Remora, steam launch, 147
Rentoul, A.C., 98, 131, 133, 135
Rice: bags, 22; condition of, 24; weight carried, 22, 89
Riley, Rev. E. Baxter, 14
Rivers, underground, 31, 32

Index

- Ro people, *see* Kaiai or Keai, and legend, 94
Robinson, Diana, 195, 198, 200, 202, 210, 211, 212, 215, 216, 217, 218, 220, 222, 228, 229, 231, 235, 236, 242
Robinson, Judge C.S., 12
Robinson, Plem, 195, 222, 225, 226, 227, 231, 232, 236, 237ff., 246, 247
Romilly, Port, 52
Rubber: boom, 196; cultivation, 192, 236; at Kikori station, 58; market, vii, viii, 233; at Ogamobu, 156, 233, 236; seeds, 58, 174; stumps, 174, 175, 177; tapping, 229, 230, 236, 249; old homestead block planted, 249
Ryan, Henry J., 22ff., 43, 57, 58, 59, 61, 76; patrol to west, 45ff., 59, 64; to Morigio, 124
Ryan, T.D., vii
Sabora, village, Aird Hill, 66
Sadlier, R., 3
Sago: at Kanibo, 153, 168, 199; distilled for alcohol, 113; drying, 160-1; for labour rations, 149, 151, 152, 164; inspected for commercial development, 114; grubs, 113; order to supply, 186; palms, 217; puddings, 205
Samberigi (Sambrigi), 29, 75, 80; patrols (Flint's) 88ff. (Rentoul's) 98-100, (Saunders's) 96-8, (Woodward's) 98-100; sacred stone, 92; seed planting, 96
Samia of Morigio, 133, 134, 135, 139, 140
Samia R., 19, 88
Sanders, goldminer, 239
Saragi village, Turama R., 131, 137
Saunders, H.M., 80, 88, 95ff., 115, 130
Sawmill, vii, 80, 81; at Manu Manu, 175
Schlenker, Rev. H.P., 197, 198
Sefton, T.L., 170
Seligman, Dr D., 12
Seni, village constable, Morigio, 133, 135
Sesa people, Era R., 78
Shafto, Mr, 180, 182, 183, 184, 186, 192
Shooting-boy, 165
Siaki of Mati Creek, 59, 61, 65, 71
Simpson, Mr, 152, 153, 157, 163, 168, 170, 174, 175, 180, 182, 183, 185, 189
Sirebi R., 3, 5, 19, 57, 60n., 67, 75; source, 94; Middletown, 249
Sisewa of Dadebi, 135
Sisiemi, people, 57
Smith, Rev. G. Moir, 236
Smith, Staniforth, 14, 17n., 20, 22, 46, 48, 227
Snakes: skins, 130; in the fowlyard, 245
Sogi-i, village constable, Kesumubu, 136
Sogomi, village constable, Turama R., 140
Solomoni, 200, 216
Sosogo village, Dikima, 116
Sports Day, 61
Staghorn fern, 202
Stanley, E.R., 169
Stevenson Scale, vii
Storry, patrol officer, 127
Strickland, R., 16, 20
Sugar cane, 25, 89, 96
Suguburu village, 93
Suki, 224
Swanson, Mr, 174, 180, 181, 182
Sweet potatoes, 25, 89, 96, 164
Tai-i, coxswain, 138
Taowara, 21
Tetimari of the Kibiri, 59
Thompson, W.H.H., 43, 57, 59; patrol to the west, 45ff., 47
Tiabrigi: village, 92, 96; creek, 103
Tinea, 55
Tiviri R., 8, 57, 76, 80
Toaripi people, 50
Tomkins, O.F., 10
Tornaros, Captain P., 41
Trade: between coast and inland, 58, 89, 95; between Tiabrigi, Mogolovu and NNE people, 93; between Webu, Okani and Dono, 104; by carriers on patrol, 116; tobacco as, 58, 89, 104
Trade store, 145, 163
Treloar, R., 85
Tugi people, 26, 91, 95, 97
Tugiri of Kari, 59
Turama Camp, Gibu Creek, 139ff.
Turama R., 1, 8, 12, 21, 46, 47, 57, 248
Tutakoi, Turama R., 136, 137
Ubuva village, Aird R., 45; people, 59, 77
Udukarua, village, 119
Ukiaravi, village, 6, 61, 75, 76
Umadai people, Turama R., 111, 122, 129, 132, 135, 140; govt camp, 131, 135; island, 128
Urama: people, 45, 64, 76; island, 52, 61, 62
Uria R., *see* Sirebi R.
Uri village, Purari R., 78, 79
Urika: Mission Station, 21, 63, 179; village, 51
Uture (Kiribari) massacre, 59
Ututi creek, 60, 65, 114, 227
Vagi, engine boy, 149, 150, 185, 196, 197, 198, 199, 202, 207, 211

Long Ago is Far Away

- Vailala*, ketch, 147, 214
Vailala R., 20; oil search, 20; people, 23
Vaimuru village, 45, 50, 52, 85, 150
Vaimauri, ketch, 239
Vanapa, ketch, 192, 247
Varoe, ketch, 113, 134, 135, 146, 152, 169, 174, 177, 180, 193, 196, 206, 207, 214, 215, 221, 225, 230, 232
Varoe plantation, 147
Venereal diseases, 56, 82
Veru R., 66, 84, 235; vocational school, 250
Village: book, 135, 136; constables, 57; cleaning and maintenance, 58; gardening, 217
Waga, 78, 79, 88
Wai-ou (Veru): people, 48, village, 45
Wai-wi Creek, *Gama R.*, 136; *Champion's* camp, 140; *Wame R.*, vii, 80
Weboda village, *Gama R.*, 140
Wariadai village, *Turama R.*, 63, 65, 111, 116, 122, 124, 131, 135, 137, 140; peace ceremony, 142
Whitburn (Whitbourne), Mr, at *Kanibo*, 162, 164, 168, 174
Williams, Arthur, 145, 147, 148, 151, 170, 177, 179, 180, 181, 192, 194
Williams, Mrs, 180
Williams, Claud, 145, 147
Williams, F.E., 74
Williams, Seymour, 194
Wills, Mrs S.A., 213, 215
Woibi, 226
Woodward, R.A., 61, 110, 148, 190, 209, 210, 211; at base camp 87ff.; in *Purari R.* area, 76, 81, 83, 87; on the *Turama R.* and *Morigio*, 123, 128, 129; with *Saunders* on second *Samberigi* patrol, 94ff.
Woodward, Mrs, 204, 209, 210, 211, 212, 228
Woodward's Junction, *Era R.*, 79
Yaws, 55, 82, 83; arsenical 'compound 914' treatment, 83
Zimmer, J.T., 169
Zimmer, C.F.W., 230

My mother Irene said once (rather smugly I thought) 'You girls have no education but you have been well brought up'. And for her generation that was about all most girls expected to be. Perhaps she was justified in her smugness for to bring up girls 'well' on an isolated Papua New Guinean plantation on a river was not the usual way most mothers did it. We had books sent from the Sydney Public Library each month, we were taught cooking and housekeeping, sewing and embroidery, and we wrote letters. No wonder Jane Austen and Fanny Burney were favourite reading. Their world had no trade store, no snakes, no mud, no rats in the rafters, but otherwise was just like ours.

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