

"Mister Alloss"

By HENRY PHILIP BROAD

In the regiment from which he had retired after five and twenty years of service, he had been called Walrus, on account of the hirsute adornments on his florid ball of a face; and in the soft palaver of the Filipino, Walrus had become *Alloss*. As *Mr. Alloss* he was known to every man, woman and child in barrio Santa Maria, where he made his home. Three times a week he would go down to the post exchange, three miles away, to make his purchases at the army stores. He would trudge down the dusty, coconut-bordered road in his old khaki suit and battered Stetson, a basket swinging from his arm—as unlike his Philippine surroundings as could be imagined.

They always took him the better three-fourths of the morning, these visits to the post exchange. Not that he did not start early enough; he set out regularly at seven, but progress to town was not easy. From their nipa huts the Filipino mothers would nod to him and smile, and he would stop at one dwelling or another and inquire into little Serafin's condition, whether the chills and fever had gone down, and how wee Mariquita had spent the night. Sometimes Lady Marta, the well-to-do widow, would beckon to him. Laboriously he would ascend the steep bamboo stairs and have a look at little Anita's English composition. More than once it would be: "Them ideas are not bad at all, Anita. But them letters!" And his pudgy freckled hand would trace a model letter, to the voluble admiration of his numerous onlookers.

Then down into the street once more, and from many a dilapidated abode that could not be called a house, and yet was a real home, a small tot would scuttle forth, and another and another, as innocent of garments as on the day of their birth. He would stop in his lumbering gait and talk to the smallest and dirtiest of them, stroking with his sunburned hands the straight black hair, patting the small brown faces with flat little noses, the while digging into the

recesses of his khaki coat where lemon drops apparently generated spontaneously. Then he would wave to someone whose shack was set far back in the coconut grove that bordered the road, too far to go for a chat. So he would make a loud-speaker of his two hands and shout: "Hello, there, Mariano! How are them nuts coming on?"

It would be nine o'clock by the time he reached the exchange. Nearly always, too, there were some officers' ladies there and he had to wait, but that did not bother him. He had a way of greeting the ladies, removing his hat with one hand and receiving it with the other as it described a sweeping downward curve, and the ladies liked it, for they always smiled. And the quartermaster would allow him to have a look at the new stores. He would feast his Irish eyes on the tin-foil wrapped bacon, the pyramids of tinned goods in colorful wrappers, and the delicious glow of the oranges and apples.

He would make his purchases, chat a little with the sergeant, add up and go. Once only had he had a little difficulty, and that with a new quartermaster sergeant, just arrived in the islands and therefore knowing it all. Looking askance at *Mr. Alloss*' stock of goods, he had said: "Now, Sergeant Walrus, tell me, what in blazes do you do with all them things you get here? Six cans of milk again today! Why, man, you had twelve last time! Day before yesterday, that is!"

"You should worry, young man! I pay for it, don't I? My United States Army pension's as good as the next fellow's, eh?" He had taken the heavy basket from the counter, and was making ready to go. But the other was not yet satisfied.

"You are registered a single man, Walrus. So don't you tell me you use all the milk yourself, not saying anything about the other things." *Mr. Alloss* put down his basket and looked at his officious interlocutor who went on: "I'm under

the regulations, you know! We must check up on people like. . . like you, Walrus! Tell me now, what do you do with them things? Sell 'em, eh? Sell 'em to the civilians?"

Anger shot through *Mr. Alloss*. Then he calmed down and put a hand on the trim, chevroned sleeve of the young man. "You know damn well I don't even sell a toothpick! Never have. The Captain knows, and that ought to be enough for the likes of you! Want to be smart with me, eh?"

The other shrugged trim shoulders: "Still, that does not tell me what you do with all the stuff, you old codger!"

Mr. Alloss slowly picked up his basket. "Well, if you just got to know. . ."

"Sure would like to know!"

"Listen, then: It's for my children!"

The other man roared: "Now, Walrus, that's the best I ever heard! Your children! And you a single man! Walrus, for shame!"

Holding his sides, which seemed in imminent danger of splitting, he asked between spurts of laughter: "So you have children, Walrus? And how many have you, say?"

"Fifty-three of 'em, Sergeant, fifty-three!"

Adding, as he closed the door: "And plenty more coming!"

If *Mr. Alloss*' progress had been slow in the morning, it held no comparison with his progress back from the post exchange. First of all, he wended his way to the market. It was a flimsy bamboo-and-iron structure near the seashore where, in their wooden stalls, Filipino women sold their wares. He knew all the women, especially the older ones, and they hailed him with undisguised delight.

"Ay, Mister Alloss! *Que tal, Mister Alloss?*"

He would shake hands with them, talking to them in a queer jumble of a language that had once been Spanish. Then he had to listen to Lady Ramona's whispered complaints about her son-in-law, who abused her so; to Lady Amalia's detailed particulars about her latest grandchild's laborious advent. More than once he scratched his bald shining pate during the conciliabula with the rest of them, pondering

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solutions of their troubles. Then he would select his vegetables, buying from one today, tomorrow from another, so as to cause no ill-feelings among them. But bananas he invariably purchased from Lady Stanislawka.

Stanislawka! The very name conjured up youth and freshness and he saw himself again, a trig young warrior, just come from the homeland, and Stanislawka, the brown beauty! Those wonderful days! But the years had slipped by, unmercifully, as years have a way of doing, and Stanislawka, if still brown, was no longer a beauty. But that had not kept her from raising a huge family, by two Filipino husbands, and she and her earthwhile lover had remained good friends. That and no more; for unlike so many of his former companions whom the Islands had retained, he had remained single. He knew the people, he liked them; he had of his own free choice made his home among them; yet at the thought of marrying he had balked. He was not the marrying kind, anyway, he reasoned; it would never do.

At a side booth, after a hearty chat with the lady of his youth, he would purchase a dozen or so native gingerbreads of the fanciest shapes, fat little pigs with pink-icing snouts, horses with flags in place of tails. That would be just the thing for Carlito, who had a touch of t. b., or for Sebastian, the lame boy, or for poor Filomena with the hare lip. Fifty-three of 'em? Why, there were more than twice that many in the barrio now!

He would pile the *dulces* on top of the already over-flowing basket, or stuff them into his gaping pockets. Then, sweeping his hat to the women in the stalls with the same incongruous yet captivating grace as he had to the ladies in the post, he would move on.

Home? No, not yet. He had to take a drink first, over at Johnny's bar. A glass of beer, in this hot country, would not do anybody any harm. So, with the basket pulling heavily at his arm, he would make for the gaily-painted, two-storied frame building at the corner, push open the door with his knee and get his glass of beer; one, sometimes two, never three. Too

much money. He would sit and chat with the elderly owner of the place, or with a couple of sailors who were making a day of it while their vessel was in port. At last, wiping the foam from beard and mustache with the back of his hand, would finally stalk from the barroom and



Mr. Alloss returns from market

trudge homeward.

The nearer he came to home, the lighter grew the burden. The tots would scuttle forth from their dwellings again, a little less naked than in the morning, and their young voices shrill with excitement and expectation, would cut into the

stillness of the fiery hot torenoo.

"Hello, el Mister Alloss! Hello

He would plant himself before the legs.

"Hey, there, Pedro! A apple for the 1. she's got the beriberi. Here, young Marg. a orange for you!" To another: "Say, Lu. that sore sure ain't looking right good to me. Come and get some zinc ointment." "Ah, Lady Maria!" to a buxom young woman who was spreading out some baby linen on a hedge t dry "and how is the new baby? Wait a minut The pudgy hand would delve into the fastness of the basket and hand the young mother two or three scarlet-labelled cans of milk.

Thus it would always be, on Wednesday, Monday and Friday; and noon would not be far off when he got home.

Home was the wooden cubicle he had built himself, of packing cases, covering the "Stow away from boilers" and the "X.X. Brand Soap" with a color worthy of the luscious surroundings. The house stood flush with the road; age-old mango trees swayed dignifiedly behind it. It was not a grand home—oh, no—just two rooms, one that held his narrow army bed, his army locker, and an old *aparador* for his clothes, then the smaller room, his company room, as he called it, with oil stove and table so ingeniously attached that he could cook and eat without getting up. There was also the ice chest in this room, and under the table the round padded box for Sally, the cat. For Sally's benefit, too, the square small opening at the right of the door ethat permitted her to come and go as her felin fancy directed.

One morning late in May, when he returned from town, Mr. Alloss became aware from a distance that something was amiss at his house. Sally was wailing pitifully from within. Small wonder, he found. Sally's little exit had been obstructed, someone had placed a board against it from the inside. Kittredge, surely, or Deniston—up to their tricks! That some poor asses could not take care of a monthly check Each time they came into town from their littl

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She exploded again into uncontrollable sobs and wringing of hands and stampings of feet, till he could not help but remonstrate firmly, yet soothingly: "The neighbors, child! They might hear you!" Whereupon she stopped abruptly, turned her tear-stained eyes upon him and whispered hoarsely: "No, no neighbors! Nobody must know where I am, nobody..." and went on, hands joined in pitiful imploration: "You help me, Mr. Alloss? Good Mr. Alloss, you help me?"

"But, girlie, you must tell me how!" He sat down on the locker, beside her. She threw off the fringed scarf from her shoulders. The heat in the small room was intense. Then she turned to him and said in a broken stammer: "I have run—run away from home." He said nothing. Instead he began to stroke her arm. Run away from home! She was not the first, nor the last to run away from home! Many had run away from home. He knew. He edged a little bit nearer.

"My father," she said, "wants me to marry... an old, old man... old Eusebio... and he will beat me if I don't! He beats me, Mr. Alloss!" She peered at him through eyes splashed with tears.

Deep pity filled him. He withdrew his hand from her arm. Beating a child! Unconsciously he rolled up his sleeves, ready to fight. And who, he wanted to know, was that brute of a father, that skunk not fit be mentioned? His eyes glittered like angry blue flames. "He is my stepfather. He beat my mother, too; now she's been dead for more than a year."

"He keeps a stall in the market, not far from Lady Stanislawa's where you always buy your bananas. I've seen you many times, Mr. Alloss." She put a crumpled tiny kerchief to her eyes. "He is terrible to me... I do not know what to do... Mr. Alloss! Last night he said that I must go to old Eusebio's house this morning and... I stay there! I—I could not. I know old Eusebio! So, very very early this morning I slipped away from the stall in the market and came here to you, Mr. Alloss! You are a good man, Mr. Alloss! I have no one but Mariano, my sweetheart, and his boat will not be in until Monday or Tuesday. I wanted to hide so that no one could find me, till he comes. You will help me, Mr. Alloss, surely?"

"I wish I knew how!" he said, scratching his head. It was getting uncommonly hot in the house, he felt.

She fanned herself with the fringed scarf. Let me stay here with you, Mr. Alloss. Just a few days until Mariano comes back. I'll look for you. But no one must know. Oh, please let me stay with you, please! I cannot go back to my father. Have pity on me, have pity! This morning, coming here, I hid in the trees. And when I knew the women had gone down to the shore to do their washing, I ran in here."

"So you think nobody has seen you come in?" With bated breath he waited for her answer.

"I am sure no one has."

He heaved a sigh of relief. He surely was in a pickle, he was! There he sat on the locker, purple from heat and perplexity, thick drops of sweat standing on his furrowed white brow. What to do? What to do for the poor child? He resumed scratching his head for ideas.

All of a sudden, from the company room, came a violent protest from the oil stove; like all things sensitive it has resented being ignored so long. Mr. Alloss rushed out headlong, and so did the girl.

"Let's have a bite first," he said when the stove got quiet. Eat first, and the thoughts come trooping, someone had said once. "Here, niña, this is good American chow. Come, it will do you good." She fell to with the easy appetite of the young. But Mr. Alloss was far too upset to eat. He kept on scratching his glossy bald pate and wondered and wondered how the devil he would get out of this.

For under no circumstances must she be seen, either at his house or coming out of it; under no circumstances. Mr. Alloss knew what he meant when he laid no claim to sanctity. He hoped no one had seen her come in, he thought. Lord! Now it was up to him to see that no one saw her go out.

At the tiny sink she was standing now, cleaning up after the meal, placing pots and pans on their shelf on the wall. She had removed her scarf and the gauzy hempecloth of the tight bodice more revealed than concealed the youthful form. The firm shoulders, spanned with glowing golden silk. The tiny curl on the round, strong nape. The arms, dimpled and young. Mr. Alloss standing there by the door saw her now as she really was. No, no longer a child—a young woman. In a flash he saw that he must not remain here any longer; and in the same flash he saw a way out of the dilemma.

Not a saint, Mr. Alloss was yet a man of honor. With a swift motion he took from its nail

the battered Stetson hat, gra... from the back of a chair. Ou... perhaps from sheer perturbation, he picked up the now empty market basket. She, intent upon her work and otherwise too much engrossed in her own matters, took no notice of him, and he had to go to her. Very lightly, very tenderly he touched the plump shoulder. She spun around, facing him with surprise. "I have to go to town, girlie," he said, eyes fastened on the Stetson in his hand "I... I forgot... I have an important engagement." But she looked at him, uncomprehending. So he said it once more, and slowly her eyes began to fill. He patted her hand and made her listen to him as he rambled on in a husky, subdued voice: "Be sure no one sees you when you come out of here—except Mariano. He knows me, you say? Well, I'll write him a letter. He will understand."

He wiped his forehead. How hard it was to make her understand! "So you see, little woman, you stay here... stay right here! And leave the door well locked! Two days and

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...ing, then
 "And... and, he sputtered as she wrung his hands in gratitude, "here is chow for you—enough; and on the shelf are some magazines to look at."

"But what about you, Mr. Alloss?" She queried as he drew nearer to the door. "What do you mean—you go away?"

"I must! I absolutely must!"
 Before him, under the scorching midday sun, lay the road; and nowhere a sign of anyone. They were all taking their siestas. Blessed siesta! They would not see him go to town at this inordinate hour. He did not want anyone to know that he was not also taking his siesta. Safely in town, he first went to the post office. Slowly, painfully, unobserved, he wrote the

...mailed it...
 way for Johnny's bar. For an honorable way to get out of the... would get drunk—gloriously or ingloriously did not matter. Plenty of beer and a... tuba would put him just where he wanted... He'd remain there all afternoon; and in the evening, when the sailors would come on shore—leave, he would start a fight. Easy enough, with the beer and the tuba in him. He would make it a lively fight, they would take him to the police station, and he would refuse to be bailed out even if his barrio friends, hearing of it, were financially able to offer bail, which he much doubted. So he would have to spend the night there, two nights, this being Saturday. Mariano would be back on Monday.
 It worked fine.

...ing of the...
 spirits would bring misfortune... and even the children's children of all who were engaged in the carving out of the chamber. For the evil spirits never forget, Señor.
 For a long time after I finished telling Don Sebastian of the evil spirits he sat silent, and I wondered if he, too, was afraid of the tigbalang; but at last he arose and made the sign of the cross, and I could see that he was not afraid. Then he addressed me, saying: "Juan, I do not fear these spirits. They will not harm me, nor those who help me carve the chamber in the rock. Heed you well my words. Tomorrow, after the siesta, there will occur a rainstorm, and a bolt of lightning will destroy that tree."
 He pointed to a huge sampalok tree which stood at a distance of some fifty meters from the house.

How the "Tigbalang" Fought the Waterworks

(Continued from page 9)

But the laborers soon lost courage, for every night they were harassed by the matanda sa punso, and frequently the tigbalang appeared. Many were the strange and frightful happenings. The laborers began leaving, surreptitiously at first, and then openly. Don Sebastian grew very wroth. I, Señor, never lost faith in him; so great was my admiration for him that I would have faced death in his service. Juan Jaralar is not a coward, Señor; I was young then, the hot blood of youth and adventure was in my veins. Besides, Señor, it is doubtful if the wrath of the spirits could have been as bad as that of Don Sebastian.

One day Don Sebastian called me to the great house at the edge of the bondok where he then lived, and I sat facing him on the veranda even as I now face you, Señor; and after he had spoken of other things, he said to me: "Juan, do you trust me?" "Absolutely, Don Sebastian," I answered.

"But there are those who do not, eh?"
 "They are afraid of the spirits."
 He nodded, and for a long time was silent; lost in contemplation of the great difficulties which faced him. Finally he arose and looked

at me frowningly, and I could feel the power of his spirit as he spoke.

"And you, Juan, are you afraid?"
 I knew not what to say, Señor. Of course every sensible man is afraid of evil spirits. One would be a fool to deny that. And, anyway, it was useless to lie to Don Sebastian; for by looking in a man's eyes he could tell whether or not he was speaking the truth.

"It is well known that there is danger, Don Sebastian," I said. Then I arose and looked in the great man's eyes, and he knew that I would not run away like those others. Laying a hand on my shoulder, he said: "Juan, you are a brave man." Ah, Señor, I know not his exact meaning to this day, but that was the proudest moment of my life.

"Come then, Juan," he commanded, "and tell me more of these evil spirits, and of how they frighten my laborers."

And so, there on the veranda of the great house, I told Don Sebastian of the anger of the spirits of the bondok and how they were attacking the laborers at night, and how they were determined to avenge themselves upon those who were destroying the great rock of San Juan del Monte, which has been the home of the tigbalang

"Go you to the laborers and tell them of my words; tell them that I do not fear the evil spirits. Say to them that the evil spirits are jealous, but that they cannot harm us, because this project is pleasing in the sight of God. An tell them that the destruction of the sampalok tree is the sign by which they may know the good spirits, more powerful than those of the bondok, are helping us in our work."

So I went to the laborers and told them the words Don Sebastian had bidden me. Many of them scoffed, saying: "How can Don Sebastian, being but a man, foretell the time an place a lightning bolt will strike? If he can do this, then he too must be a sorcerer, or witch. But I explained to them that the good Don Sebastian had but prayed for the lightning strike the great sampalok tree, and that fulfilment of his prophecy would be merely a sign that God was pleased with the work in which we were all engaged.

There was much muttering among the laborers, but their curiosity was aroused, and they at last agreed to stay and see if the words of the master came true, and if so, to continue their work.

Don Sebastian went down to the sampalok tree at sunset, carrying strange looking bags, and candles. Far into the night he knelt pray-

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