



The Golden Image of Sri Visaya

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(Continued from August Issue)

WHEN he awoke he could tell by the shadows that it was midafternoon, and he was angry with himself for sleeping so long. He must waste no more time, so he waded the river, and, in doing so, left the coconut trees behind him.

He was now on the edge of the jungle, and soon came to a small sawmill. The road ended here, but Pablo found a trail that had been used for logging and followed it to its end.

Here he found a tiny path that seemed to lead through the thick virgin forest in precisely the direction he wished to go straight inland—though this path was anything but *straight*. It made detours around logs and stones, and it was so narrow that the undergrowth touched him, on both sides.

He had never been in the forest before. How cool and dark it was; and how tall and straight were the trunks of the trees, their only branches growing far above him. But there were vines dangling from the limbs, and vines climbing the trunks, vines that clung closely and others that hung loosely—some going straight up the trunks, others curling around them—big ones, dainty ones—an amazing assortment of vines! And here and there above him were ferns, air plants and orchids. Through this mass of vegetation flitted bright colored parrakeets.

Pablo hoped that he would soon find a good place to spend the night, as he wanted to build his fire before it became too dark to collect fuel. For a while he hoped in vain—the tiny path led him on and on with the impenetrable forest like walls on either side of him.

It was almost dark when he finally found a small open space near a stream. Here he hurriedly built a tiny fire, put water and cornmeal in his can and set it on three stones over his little fire. While his dinner was cooking he gathered together some dry grass and ferns for his bed.

That night, corn tasted more delicious to him than any sweetmeats he had ever eaten. And fifteen

minutes after he had finished his meal he was fast asleep.

Next morning he awoke at dawn, ate the cold mush left from the night before, and started on his way. The tiny path led him on through the forest, across a number of streams, sometimes downhill, but usually upwards. Once on crossing a stream he was unable to find the path on the far side, but he waded up and down the stream, and finally found it again a hundred yards upstream.

Twice during the morning he came to small cultivated clearings. In the first of them he saw two men at work; but, at sight of him, they had run away. Strange for two men to run from one boy! But, he reflected, they probably thought some men were with him.

These men wore nothing but gee strings. "They must be the *infieles*, infidels," thought Pablo. And he was right. These few isolated people in the mountains were of his own race and spoke his own language; but they were not Christians and lived without contact with the government or with their more civilized neighbors near the coast.

In the second clearing was a house—empty apparently—with a few coconut trees growing around it. Pablo climbed one of the trees and got himself a young coconut. "If I had coconut trees, and someone took one, I wouldn't mind," he said to himself.

However, he walked very fast for some distance before he sat down to rest and enjoy his nut. After he drank the water from it, he chopped it open and cut the soft meat of the unripe nut out with the bolo that he carried in his belt. He would make this do for his luncheon, even though it was not enough to satisfy him.

After his rest he started on once more and soon came to a stream where his path seemed to end entirely. He spent a long time trying to find a continuation of it, but without avail.

There were only two possible things he could do; he could turn back, or he could clamber up the stream bed. He would not go back! So he started wading up the stream, climbing over stones and logs. This was really hard work. He kept looking to right and left as he went up, but no sign of a path could he see.

Finally, he came to the head of a stream. Above him was a ridge covered with grass and clumps of shrubs. After a short rest he climbed this ridge, the sharp edges of the tall, rank grass cutting his legs, arms and face.

On the other side of the ridge he found another small stream and started down it.



He had followed this stream only half an hour when he came upon an open grassy place in the forest; and there, beside the stream were five rude little shelters. In front of one of them a small black woman with kinky hair was sitting on the ground nursing a baby, while another kept up a small fire under a length of bamboo in which she was cooking something.

Pablo scarcely had a glimpse of them, because, just as he came into sight he stepped onto a stone which rolled over. The women looked up and fled into the forest.

"Negritos," said Pablo to himself. "I wonder if anyone is still at home." He looked into the little shelters, all flimsily built, and not high enough for even Pablo to stand inside. Indeed, not a soul was in the camp.

Perhaps he had just as well leave, too. Negritos,

he had heard, sometimes made a terrible poison to put on the darts they shot through their blowguns. He had better not take any liberties with them.

So he started down stream as fast as he could go. The stream had many tributaries and soon gave promise of becoming a river.

"This river must flow into the sea," reasoned Pablo, "and I want to go inland." So he turned up one of the tributaries and soon came to a small path, which he decided to follow.

It was now late in the afternoon; so, when Pablo found a supply of dry grass for his bed, and a big stone to give him a sense of shelter and protection on one side, he decided to spend the night there. He hung his sack on the limb of a bush and went back two hundred yards to a stream to bathe.

The water felt so good after the heat and fatigue of his day's hiking that he lay down in the stream with his head propped up on a stone, and just soaked himself for half an hour.

When he saw that it was beginning to get dark, he put some water in his can and started back to his camping place to make a fire and cook his corn.

But what was this chattering he heard ahead of him? He hastened forward and was aghast at the sight that met his eyes. There was a troop of monkeys sporting around his *bayon* which lay broken on the ground with the corn scattered hopelessly. One monkey was even then reaching into the sack for more corn, but found it empty, and seemed to scold his companions for their greediness in eating it up so fast.

Pablo's heart sank lower than his bare brown feet. He chased the monkeys away and sat down to review his plight.

Here he was in an uncharted wilderness in the interior of a big, big island, hungry as three bears and without a bite to eat. The only human beings he had seen since he left the little lumber mill yesterday were the two *infeles* and the negrito women.

And he realized then—for the first time—that he was not only desperately hungry, but that he was also absolutely lost.

When Pablo awoke next morning, a sunbeam was peeping through the foliage at him; and he soon became aware that something else, something human, was also peeping at him.