

## Soothing the Savage Sulu Breast

Finnegan and Considine Say It With Music

By PERCY A. HILL

The colonel of the United States regiment that had relieved the Spanish garrison in Sulu and taken up headquarters at Jolo was really worried. He wasn't getting enough fighting out of the Moros, who preferred to welcome Uncle Sam with a treaty proposal; and his "single men in barracks" were not growing into plaster saints. Not exactly; Kipling says they never do. Goodness knows he had issued enough stern orders, spread enough official taboos around; but his men were honing for a fight, in the absence of which life in walled-in Jolo resembled very much the prosaic round of existence in a medieval monastery.

The colonel's men were no monks, none of them—not even the regimental chaplain. Now, to crown the bitterness of the weary grind during several months that could only be distinguished from one another on the calendar, Finnegan and Considine were gone. The dregs of the cup were indeed many, the colonel's cup was full and overflowing with impotent awe. Chinese bootleggers had been trying, the wiles of feminine Jolo had perhaps been worse, but Finnegan and Considine's disappearance was the breaking

point. The colonel expressed his frank opinion of the situation, but this opinion will not be printed—not in the colonel's language. Suffice it to say that the colonel was an old Indian campaigner.

With Finnegan and Considine, it had happened this way.

Attached to headquarters was, of course, the regimental band, to officiate at guard mount and occasional parades and concerts.

Now the trade of an army bandman seems to exist an inordinate thirst. To know why, try the piccolo for half an hour. Finnegan and Considine were not immune to this thirst. Finnegan blew the trombone and Considine the cornet. Bunkies and comrades, they were acknowledged by common acclaim to be the chief ornaments of a band that prided itself on being the best in the Philippines. Finnegan, naturally, had an unquenchable thirst, even without the aggravating circumstance of winding the trombone. Considine's thirst was hardly less than Finnegan's. Their mutual opinion of Volstead, had he then been active in the vineyard of the Lord, could have been best expressed by heaving a brick.

The simultaneous visits of the army postmaster and a popular, though reticent, whiskey merchant to Jolo, eventuated in an impromptu and unofficial holiday for the musicians. Finnegan and Considine not only fuddled themselves with copious and frequent draughts of old Mount Vernon, they invited the entire band to the seashore for a picnic. By sunset, every man was so happily and thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the picnic that none could have played *Annie Laurie* on a bet. Fortunately, they had not brought along their instruments. Once before, when they had brought them along, eluding the eye of the German bandmaster, they had closed their festival program with a free-for-all fight in which Finnegan waded into the mêlée armed with a clarinet and a cymbal—much in the manner of a Roman gladiator. What little discretion the men cared to take account of, had since advised leaving the instruments behind.

This time there was no battle.

Night came on anon, after a gorgeous sunset over the opalescent seas of Sulu; but the band lay *hors de combat* on the sandy beach, in total oblivion of retreat and call to quarters, blown by unsteady buglers green at the task.

It was full nine of the clock before Finnegan and Considine, true authors of this military delinquency, awoke. Whereupon they put their wits together. They decided to return to barracks, get out the trombone and the cornet, return to the beach and serenade their snoring fellow-bandsmen, and perhaps extend the unexpected pleasure to the whole vicinity. A generous remnant of the picnic stock helped them to screw up courage enough to raid the barracks. They did this successfully and returned to the beach.

There they began their unholly duo. The music not only had the effect intended, of getting the others awake; it showed the guard

that the bandsmen were out of bounds, and brought that force and the officer-of-the-day on the run. Considine's wits would have been too slow for this situation. Finnegan's were not. Hearing the guards' footsteps pounding behind him, Finnegan grasped his dismayed bunkie by the arm and took summary command. With their instruments and sundry squat bottles of what was left of the picnic, the two troubadours beat a hasty retreat down the Jolo shore and left their comrades to face the sentence of "a month and a month's" alone.

They came upon a light *vinta*, drawn up on shore out of reach of the tide, and sheltered by a clump of bamboo. Finnegan knew what to do. Placing their plunder aboard without further ado, with a mighty heave they launched this craft, and, finding paddles on her, drew off some few hundred feet into a depth of water that was too much for the *vinta*-less guard. Tipping a bottle, Finnegan and Considine congratulated themselves. Then they took up their instruments and blew forth a lusty blast that at last resolved itself into *Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep!*

For the moment, Finnegan and Considine were ace-high with themselves.

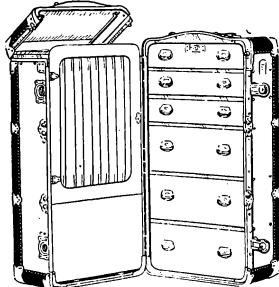
But not with the guard, who were frantic. No other craft was available, to pursue the min-

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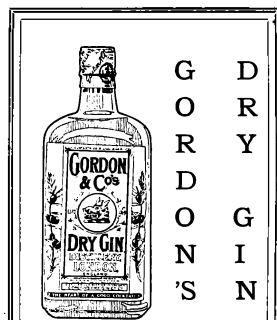
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streets; coaxing and abjurations alike fell upon deaf ears. For a full half-hour Finnegan and Considine roared the echoes in the adjacent town and the single-umbered beach with excruciating strains of many melodies—with none to say them nay.

Suluanos paid no attention. Under the urge of *alak* the crazy *Americanos* were likely to do anything. But the colonel, interrupted at his evening poker game, vowed the pair to a speedy courtmartial and a stiff sentence of posthole digging when they could be finally rounded up. They at last laid down their instruments, to return to the principal business of the day. Getting to their feet for their bibulous purpose, they promptly tumbled down again. They saw that the vinta rocked too much in the groundswell, so they hoisted sail to steady her a bit. They did not really intend to sleep—not only truly, but most perilously, rocked in the cradle of the Sulu deep.

*Deus affavit.* God sent His wind.

During the remainder of the night, a gentle breeze from the south blew the vinta along. When morning came "up like thunder," as morning does come in the Far East, the vinta was approaching the Pangutarang islands—a good 50 miles from Jolo and the irate colonel.

A pick-me-up helped the men's headaches. After they took in sail, for the blue combers were breaking on a steep forbidding shore only a little distance ahead. Finnegan and Considine were worried, not knowing where they were nor how they came to be there. For the moment they were as little children, but not of the kingdom of heaven. They were, in fact, two desperate men whose picnic was over but whose troubles had just begun.

On drifted the vinta, the anger of the breakers intensified.

Again Finnegan acted, with Considine following suit. They seized the oars, and with lugubrious efforts and copious perspiration they managed to steer the vinta toward a point where the breakers seemed lowest. Either by lucky chance or the faithful dispensation of a merciful power, they were able to reach the water at the stern, where her cargo of men, Mount Vernon and brass was stowed, was caught up by a groundswell circling the shore and hoisted bodily into a lagoon of comparatively quiet waters. Finnegan, Considine and the horns were none the worse for the experience, save for a generous splash which did no harm.

A few moments' padding and the men were able to beach the vinta on a shore of microscopic shells and sand of dazzling whiteness.

It was a beautiful shore.

But it seemed to be also a deserted shore, and Finnegan and Considine were consumed with hunger. They likewise had a burning desire for water. A small spring eventually furnished them the water. But against all the canons, and despite the fact that the region is really and justly famed for its luscious and abundant fruits, the shore where our heroes landed was bare of any verdure whose leaves, flowers or tubercles even a famished man would eat.

The sail was dragged ashore and a rude awning made of it. Hungry as they were, Finnegan and Considine slept the tropic day away. Toward sundown they awoke, the gnawing at their middles unabated. Hardtack would have been angel food to them then. In this extremity Finnegan again decided to eat.

An idea came. No thought of returning to Jolo, even if they might guess within 90 points of the compass the direction they had come; and they might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb; so they set off on an adventure inland, carrying along their instruments.

They happened to have landed on the main island of the Pangutarang. It is a long rugged ridge, heavily forested. After prodigious struggles through the lush vegetation, spiny creepers and thick virgin jungle, they emerged into a half-obliterated path. They followed this some distance, meeting no signs of habitation, for the principal settlements of the island are on the north shore.

Exhausted at last and equally discouraged, they flung themselves down in a little clearing

at the foot of a balet tree. Here Finnegan fathered another wonderful idea. If the mountain would not come to Mohammed, then Mohammed would go to the mountain. If they could find nobody to give them a meal, why not call somebody? So on the still jungle air rose the plaintive sentiment, *Homs, Sweet Home*—an intuitive selection of Considine's, most appropriate for the occasion. Warming to their task, they put full force into the good old anthem and sent its reverberation weaving over the wooded ridge. After a solemn libation, they indulged themselves with an encore of the same appealing melody.

This was rubbing the lamp to some purpose. A man, evidently a chief, with three others following, presently appeared at the rim of the clearing.

This chief was dressed in pantaloons of what had once been white cotton drill. He sported a blue jacket with tarnished gold trimmings. His headgear was a red *cudmanin* arranged like an Indian *potong*. For arms he carried a filigreed spear and a serpentine kris, balanced off with an old-fashioned pistol. His followers were more modestly arrayed, but still well armed with kris and spear.

It would be difficult to say which of the two parties was the most astonished, the Moros, to see the white Christians in their bawliwick, or the minstrels, to behold the gent called up by their music. But in spite of his fierce aspect, the old datu seemed a benevolent chap. He pointed out to sea and tried the bewildered *Americanos* in Spanish. Their vocabulary in this noble medium being limited, they fell back upon the universal sign language, which seemed to get over with the datu well enough.

Approaching them, he gingerly tapped the trombone. Considine countered with a grin from ear to ear, and, pointing pathetically with his mouth and midriff, signified a complete vacuum by tightening his belt. The trio of followers got this quickly, they began murmuring to the datu. Finnegan, seeing it was his move next, gave the preliminary *cap*, and Finnegan and Considine raised their instruments to their parching lips. The heart-striving prophecy of a *Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight* rolled over the hill, with all the variations of the period.

At the first enthusiastic blast the datu and his retainers stepped back, involuntarily placing themselves on guard and posing their weapons. But as the concert proceeded its hilarity restored their confidence, they broke down into uncontrollable fits of laughter. The hungry troubadours had made good. Not only had they tickled savage ears, they had tickled savage risibilities as well; their conquest was complete.

Now Filipinos are musically inclined, there is hardly a Christian community in the islands that does not have its band and orchestra. But it must be remembered that the brass horse, the hoarse tuba, the hautboy and the mellow *bornbardino* were all introduced by the Spaniards and adopted by the natives who yielded to conversion by the evangelizing friars. The usual method was for the *padre* to arrange a *velada*, in which the fairest daughters of his flock took star concert parts and for which he could make an admission charge. With a fund thus in hand, the instruments for the parish band would be bought in Manila. Pending their arrival the good *padre* would make judicious selection among the young men of his village, and when the instruments came an immediate distribution was made of them. At the same time the announcement was made that the first band practice would take place the next week.

Pandemonium naturally reigned in that aspiring village for the intervening seven days, but at the very first practice some semblance of harmony, for which the Filipino has a remarkable talent, was always achieved. Within a few weeks the *padre's* new band could play anything it could get the notes for, while at least some of its members would be composing marches dreamed out of the ancient legends of the race.

However, these innovations were not accepted by the *Indios*, the *Indians*, the *Indonesians*. They knew the guitar, the flute, the sardrum and the clashing gongs and cymbals. The datu of Pangutarang and his men knew these. But the blare of the trombone and the piercing arias of the modern cornet were new to them, and doubly appreciated from the *American* strangers.

The concert over at last, Datu Akob and his men led the way along a path that the visitors gratefully followed. An hour's hiking ended at a bamboo stockade around a cluster of spider-legged thatched huts, over which a grove of coconuts waved their rustling fronds. Toward the shore stretched a line of other huts, and along the land and partly over the water.

Entering the compound at the invitation of Akob, Finnegan and Considine were greeted with the yelping of numerous mongrel hounds and the spicy garlic smeller of the evening meal, already in the course of preparation. Lights were soon produced, Datu Akob led his guests into the largest and most imposing of the huts and bade them be seated. He proffered cigars, which were accepted with gusto, and he hastened with many hand-clap commands the serving of supper. This was boiled rice, chicken fried in coconut oil—since the Moslem everywhere

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spurns pork and its fat—and half a dozen varieties of native fruits. Finnegan and Considine did ample justice to the culinary art of Datu Akob's wife and women.

Meanwhile a hundred curious spectators foregathered in the house, awaiting the soiree promised them. Some squatted on their hunkers, Malay fashion; others huddled together, standing, and gossiped in whispers; while in the background the women and slaves were silent and busy with serving and clearing away. On the outskirts of the assembly loomed the pangulo of Lapanan, an outlander to Akob's tribe, whose gaudy jacket and business-like kris comported with the general demeanor and furtive eye of the fanatic.

After the postprandial cigarettes, Datu Akob tapped upon Finnegan's trombone as a signal for a little entertainment. Lifting his instruments to position, Finnegan and Considine gave the three harmonious blows which are indispensable preliminaries to concerts by army bands. They are a survival of the first military bands of Wallenstein, handed formally down the years; an acknowledgment of the invincible and his rather, the Holy Ghost. Then Finnegan and Considine burst into "Souls of El Capitan!" In the house was crowded before, it now became packed to the limit. Its posts and joists creaked with the increasing weight of delighted humanity. With the first notes the crowd had shrunk back in fear, just as Akob and his men had done in the clearing. As the march proceeded, the crowd prepared for flight; then the listeners reassured one another and resolved to hold their ground, come what might.

They soon burst into mirth. They yelled and laughed and shrieked with merriment, and evidenced the unrestrained emotion that the Malay always does evidence—when he evidences any at all. Datu Akob and his family convulsed. One moment he would feebly signal Finnegan and Considine to stop, and the next he would wave frantically for them to keep it up. The triumph surmised that in the clearing by the greater audience it had. Sacops in finery, slaves in shorts, women in loose trousers and sarongs, and children in the apparel of nature, congregated in a dense hilarious mass.

Loud demonstrations of pleasure followed the first number: Finnegan and Considine responded with *My Coal-Black Lady* and *I Guess I'll Have to Telegraph My Baby*. They, like Tupper himself, were singing for their supper, or at least giving the nearest substitute for song they had in stock.

That night's concert in Pangutarang was a howling success in more ways than one. When the *Americanos* would rest, shells of tuba would be passed around; there was no want of appreciation of this piece of the coconut, nor the prof of appreciation.

Lapanan gazed on the exhibition with unutterable envy. He too desired court minstrels. For more than an hour Finnegan and Considine smoked and drank and played, played, drank and smoked, amid a continual hubbub of excited palaver and comment. At last the hour grew late and the audience slunk away; the musicians congratulated themselves upon the

happy outcome of their adventure. They were now provided with sleeping mats. Under the soporific influence of the tuba, they sunk into the dreamless sleep that rewards the well done.

After breakfast next morning Datu Akob proposed that they settle down and marry in his village, their position to be that of permanent court minstrels. Finnegan, whose eye had been roving among the many winsome young *Moras* the evening before, embraced the proposition with eagerness; the thoughts were upon the ultimate consequences of their escapade. For the next few days they were well fed and lodged, but an armed young Moro, lent to them as a guide, assumed the rôle of a sentry rather than that of a helpful mentor. This care on Datu Akob's part annoyed the men greatly. They sought every day of making their escape from Pangutarang and trying to get back to Jolo, but this feat required more than the mere desire to risk it, and their trombone and cornet might now better have been good Krag rifles. Under different circumstances the life might have had its appeal: the tuba, the attention of the beautiful women, and the plentiful meals. But the knowledge that they were being kept as prisoners, turned them against their worthy host and the easy alliances of his numerous court.

They lounged and loafed, not without pleasure, it is true, but also not without anxiety; and soon they could no longer put the wanted zest into their nightly efforts to make their escape.

At last Lapanan invited them for a sail in his vinta. No sooner were they safely in the craft than loud calls and protestations from shore told them something was amiss. But their audacious abductor's men hastily raised the matting-sails on the twin shears of the vinta and stood out to the west, for Lapanan—pursued, of course, by Akob and a force of his cursing, nonplussed warriors.

Here was adventure indeed.

Finnegan and Considine lay low in the belly of the vinta, to escape random bullets and shots from the clumsy lantakas mounted in the bows of Akob's warcraft, and Lapanan's vinta soon distanced the boats from Pangutarang. Instead, however, of going to Lapanan, *Pangulo* Lapanan took the kidnapped minstrels to Kap, a smaller settlement, ruled by Lapanan's uncle, *Hadji* Assan. Here again the concert of victory was staged, and again universal approval and the rabid envy of possession followed. Finnegan and Considine were as famous as harem beauties designed for a Moro holiday. They were soon in the toils of the mutual jealousies of the two bands, *Pangulo* Lapanan's and *Hadji* Assan's. The upshot was that the partisans of the *hadji* fell upon those of the pangulo and forced them to sail away to meet the kindled wrath of Datu Akob, who at last they did, towing to the inevitable, and with both fear and envy in their hearts; such is the volatility of Moro character.

Yet it was not Akob's men they feared, it was the auspices: their luck with Finnegan and Considine told them a spell was working.

To be troubadours to the *hadji* of Kab was a welcome change from Pangutarang for Finnegan and Considine. The tuba was headier, the

food better, and the women, rated virgins all, far prettier. All was merry enough for a time, but the causes of anxiety were not removed.

From Lapanan the *sceop* of still another island leaped off the situation. He made a surprise landing one night at Kap, and the *hadji*'s men, repulsed, were forced to turn over the American minstrels to him as their new master. Another saltwater voyage through the night, concerts at a new court, and more entangling alliances—in accordance with the practice, if not the intent, of the *datu*, who encourage widespread paternity.

Where the wandering minstrels would finally have brought up, Heaven alone knows. However, Datu Akob, smarting under Lapanan's treachery and his ill appreciation of Pangutarang hospitality, took his swiftest vinta, went from Lapanan to Jolo, and reported the whole affair to His Highness *Jamalu* Kiram II, the Sultan. In turn the Sultan communicated with the fuming colonel of the—U. S. Foot, who was still petulant over the disappearance of his star musicians and the stagnation of the regimental band. Learning how Finnegan and Considine were being periodically abducted from court to court, and the lesser Sulu chieftains, the colonel loaded Company B into two commodious vintas and dispatched them under orders to fetch the musicians back to headquarters. With this expedition Datu Akob went along as guide. In due time Finnegan and Considine were apprehended. The surprise came just at the moment between national hymns and ragtime, in which they were looking a shell of tuba in the face and daring the stuff to do its worst.

A bevy of *Moras* were looking admiringly on. They abode by the Koran themselves, but it was jolly that their friends the *Americanos* did not. At this felicitous interval, arrived the captain and men of Company B.

Nothing could have been more inconsiderate. Finnegan and Considine were summarily degraded from their envied posts, bundled off, with their precious instruments, to the vintas and taken to Jolo and the colonel. This was satisfactory to the colonel, and not, indeed, lacking in compensations for Finnegan and Considine. But it by no means gave Datu Akob assurance that the adventure might not later be repeated—and possibly not at Pangutarang. He proposed to make matters certain, and did so by bottling up the horns. When nobody was looking, he filled the necks of the trombone and the cornet with liberal plugs of beeswax. If he could not have American minstrels at his own court, then no other chieftain could have them at his. Whether a paler progeny in certain northern Sulu hamlets has, in this day, an unwanted predilection for the slide trombone and the cornet, deponent saith not. He does say that Finnegan and Considine's immediate occupation upon their return to Jolo was the digging of many postholes. But time went on, the gallant—U. S. Foot departed Jolo long, long ago. Finnegan and Considine, not to mention the colonel himself, have no doubt gone to the soldier's reward. Gabriel has two more boon companions.

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