



"WE GOT HIM, ALL RIGHT ENOUGH"

MADE IN BORNEO

BY LEO CRANE

BENSON is one of those chaps who lift their lives in their hands and go looking for wild animals. Most men are content and happy to allow the animal kingdom the free run of the jungles; but not so is Benson. He is a restless sort who must seek them, because there are menageries with empty cages.

Whenever you go into a circus-tent with the children and see a surly-looking beast glaring from behind inch bars, pacing the bottom of a den into ruts, snuffing and cursing the world in general, remember that once upon a time a chap of Benson's clan—perhaps Benson himself—faced that particular beastie when it was free and on its native heath. Behind each captive there is a story, and Benson is usually the star performer in the

tale. You will never hear the chapter when the beastie wins out and the glory is all with the jungle.

Benson can usually be found when a steamer makes port with wild livestock on the manifest.

"Of course," he said to me one night, "a man can get a line on beasts after a fashion. He can study a hyena, f'r instance, until he coppers the laugh down to a note, an' mebbe he can figger out what that note means. Simms Foraker claims he can tell when a zebra's in a good humor, an' mebbe he can; but for me, I never seen one that way, an' I ain't takin' no chances. The life-insurance folks don't cover no bets on my life, anyway, an' so I'm tryin' to live just as long as I can, to make 'em sorry.

"But a wild man—now say, there's a

study for your spare time. You've got to sit up nights figgerin' the dope on a wild man's characteristics, There ain't never been two of 'em alike. First, they're scarce; an' second—when ye do manage to snake one out by his hair he's different from the one ye had before."



Benson at this point proceeded to fill his pipe and to prop up his chin with his knees. You see, Benson was sitting on the deck—I should have told you that—with his back to the rail. It was one of those nights when the stars burn softly in a filmy sky, when the wind carries with it the damp scents of the sea. Now the rich odor of burning latakia arose from the fire-lined bowl of Benson's pipe. It was fairly alight, and he seemed diffident.

"Wild men—" I suggested.

"Ye can't be kind to a wild man," said Benson gravely. "He wouldn't understand it if you tried to be, an' besides, you'd be wasting your time. What a wild man wants is some one to take him in hand firmly, to be good to him, but determined; and at the same time it's my advice to the fellow who's contractin' for the job to watch both ends an' the middle for his white-ally, 'cause with a wild man times are mostly excitin', or just beginning to be such. You can believe me—I handled one wunst. It was this way:

"Simms Foraker and me was down on a jaunt near Borneo. That's the grand hang-out place for wild men. We had knocked around a goodish bit without getting a sight at anything. Now, don't go for to think that we was down there lookin' for wild men. No, we hadn't got to that stage at that time; but in case we rushed across a wild man who wasn't working overtime, and no orders ahead of him, why, we just allowed that we'd sign contracts for a season.

"Well, we heard of this chap a long time before we see anything of him. The natives along the coast had all sorts of battles with him. He was a toughish customer. He had nearly bludgeoned the brains out of one of their holiest head-men. Just about that time we comes along, lookin' wise, an' we hears this fellow is off on a small island—that he has a skiff, comes to the main-land, skurries around for things to his taste, gives the chap who protests the grand salaam with a club, an' fades away.

"Says Simms Foraker to me: 'Here's a fine fat wild man, an', sonny we're on.'

"An' with that we started building a trap for him.

"It would take too long to-night to tell ye how we got him, but we got him, all right enough. It took four men to hold him down while we slipped a rope anklet where anklets usually go—an' the calf of one man's leg in Borneo looks as if a dog had used it to cut

wisdom-teeth on—but we got him. Trust me an’ Simms Foraker to nab anything smaller’n a behemoth, an’ we’ll give that a trot to the post if any one speaks up that a prime specimen’s loose.

“He was a tidy sort of chap, this wild man. Darkish in the skin—in fact, he was a brunette coon—a short, squat one, a rakish bullet-head, kind o’ slantin’ to the nor’-nor’-east, an’ surmounted by furze. His eyes was weak an’ blinkin’. His arms were the wonderment, though. They were long, and hung down close to his knees. I’ll bet a month’s pay he could sit on a chair an’ pick pennies off the floor without straining a fiber. His shoulders were inlaid with bunches of knots, an’ these same knots worked like eccentric winches when he took it into that cacti head to get busy.

“He talked some gibberish, mostly excited, but we paid no attention to it. Simms Foraker said it wasn’t French, nor Portugee, nor Latin, nor none of them nigger tongues, an’ we were satisfied he didn’t know more’n we did as to what it meant. It sounded wild-mannish, all right. We got him on shipboard at length, an’ nailed him up in a slat cage ’tween decks.

“‘A fine busy trip for us,’ says Simms Foraker to me, on the side. ‘That chap’ll fetch his weight in pure genoo-ine gold at the Lunnon docks. Oh, we’re the two wise body-snatchers, we are!’ says he to me. And I nodded an’ winked back at Simms Foraker all them fool sentiments.”

II

BENSON sighed. This was not one of his epic recitals. But he seemed to feel that, having started once, it should be finished, and so he went ahead.

“The first thing that worried us was the question of feedin’ him. There ain’t no sense in stickin’ the ship’s bill o’ fare in ’tween the

slats of a cage an’ saying ‘Oui! Oui!’ We tried him on raw meat, an’ he nearly had a convulsion. Fruits an’ grass stuffs made him feel so sick that he threw what he could at the waiter. After a while we learned that he was right partial to a mess of salt-horse and potatoes. He perked up amazin’ when he got fed a little. An’ every time I’d go near his habitation he’d begin the gibberish. Most impressive it was, an’ earnest, an’ I’d bow and smirk and blink at him till he’d get so crazy mad that he wound up by nearly biting holes in his face with fair rage. Simms Foraker said we needn’t mind, for all wild men acted like that at times.

“We got along all right for a time on that voyage. The weather it was hot, an’ we were kind o’ peekish and worn down. Most of the time me an’ Simms Foraker laid round on the deck, nights, with nothin’ on to speak of, growlin’ an’ swear in’ an’ comparin’ that part of the world with the rest of it, which was decent. I remember one hot night it got stuffy.

The atmosphere chased itself down one’s throat and dried there in blocks.

“I’ll just step down to see how his nibs is restin’,’ I says to Simms Foraker, ’an’ then I’ll come on deck with a pillow.

“‘Bring me one,’ says he drowsy-like.

“With that I departed to the ’tween-decks. I made the return journey to the side of Simms Foraker in just three leaps, all counted, touchin’ the high places.

“‘He’s gone!’ says I, breathless.

“‘Who’s he?’ asked Simms Foraker, not dreamin’ that anything radical had happened:

“‘Nibbsey!’ says I, shifting a glance on my shoulder to see if he was making up the deck.

“‘The wild man out!’ yells Simms Foraker.

“‘Right you are! He’s vacated his den for somewheres else. He’s loose, s’welp me!’

“‘By hokus!’ gasps Simms Foraker.

You can bet he was pale. 'Let's dig up the captain.'

"The captain was, if anything, worse scared than either of us.

"'Loose!' says he, incredulous.

"'Free as the air itself!' says I to the captain.

Go down there an' make sure of it, man,' orders that insane old captain to me.

"'What did you say? Go down there again?' I remarks, not knowin' whether I had understood him.

"'Sure!' he replies. 'Go down an' see if he ain't asleep on the floor, or curled up somewhere.'

"'Not while I can breathe up here,' says I. 'Whenever you want a sample of Hades coal—why, call on me an' I'll fetch it. But don't ask me to go below to trail that Borneo lunatic. I was there when he was nabbed, an' I see the whole thing.'

"'An' I was downright mad to think of it.

"'Well, where has he got to?' asks the captain gruffly.

"'That's for some one to find out,' advises Simms Foraker.

"'He's your wild man,' says the captain, weakening.

"'Not when he's loose,' says Simms Foraker patiently.

"'But I won't have a wild man runnin' loose about my ship!' screams the captain, suddenly getting his mad up.

"'Maybe if you'd tell him that, quiet-like, he'd come around an' be penned up like a nice little chap,' says Simms Foraker, getting his own sparker working.

"This was a stumper for the captain.

"We were all a bit on edge by that time. Each man knew the other was afraid, which wasn't none encouraging. We kept a weather-eye open, this way an' that, and a first-class 'Boo!' from the rear would have sent the bunch to the masthead. It weren't no

pleasant difficulty. It is the business of a wild man to be wild, an' we expected it of him. This hanging fire didn't agree with our meals. We stood around an' looked for him. Then we got nervous as wim-men. If he was going to come on, why didn't he come on? An hour passed away, while we shifted from one foot to the other, watchin' the retreat.

"'All right,' says Simms Foraker, who could get used to anything. He wanst lived for two weeks on broiled snake, an' got to like it. 'All right!' says Simms Foraker, determined. 'Now let him come on!'



"CAPTAIN! CAPTAIN! THAT
BORNEO MAN IS IN
MY GALLEY!"

"But, dang it all! he didn't come on.

"Then they turned on me," said Benson. "They said I was a fool, and a scare-head, and a mark. They were going to call me other names worse'n that, when there was a noise like a scuffle, an' a rush on the deck, an' a man comes up yelling. It was Samuels, the cook, an' he looked as if he'd got the call. His eyes were fair hanging out.

“‘Save me!’ he screams to us, waving signs with his hands like a deaf-mute. ‘Captain! Captain! That Borneo man is in my galley!’

“Right there it was a relief to me to know for certain that he was loose,” said Benson, digging at his pipe.

“‘In the galley!’ roars the captain, not stirrin’ an inch.

“‘He pitched me out quick as a flash, an’ ducked inside, an’ he’s barricaded himself.’

“Then the captain straightened up wonderful. ‘If he’s in that galley he can’t get away, so here you, Jenkins and Brown! Take a turn of a piece of rope through the galley-door handle an’ make fast somewheres. That’ll fetch him all tight an’ tidy.’

made fast, the only way for that wild man to get out was through a small port, and the captain set a man to watch that, with orders to beat the brains out anything that tried to climb through. Brown took first watch with a capstan-bar held ready. Then Simms Foraker and me took reg’lar breaths, an’ stood at ease.

“‘That’s all settled,’ says the captain now. ‘We’ve got him like a crab in a net.’ An’ the captain acted as if he had accomplished something.

“The captain was right. We had him, all right. When Brown got tired watchin’ Wilkens spelled him, an’ then Jones.

“‘He ain’t got no firearms in there, boys,’ says the captain, to hearten ’em up. ‘Only carvin’-knives, an’ cleavers, an’ such! Don’t be afraid.’ Which was comforting.”

III

Benson seemed inclined at this moment to take a rest. He proceeded to change his attitude with regard to the deck, which was hard, and he suggested that the subject was a dry one.

Away off on the quay was a place with lights. I sent the ship’s boy hustling to that place with a pail, and when he brought the pail back there was foam on the top of it. Benson appreciated this. When he had wiped his lips with the back of his hand and had heaved a hard sigh, he said:

“Say!” doubtfully, “ain’t you got nothin’ better to do than listen to yarns?”

“This will be a hummer, old man,” I told him.

“Well, don’t sign my name to it, ’cause the captain would blame me for a blabber. Call the ship the Mary Jane, or some such common name as that,

’cause we ain’t none too proud o’ this wild-man yarn, none of us, an’ as for Simms Foraker, he’d be that mortified he couldn’t ever enter a side-show again. You don’t want



“HE’S IN MY BUNK—THE DOUBLE-BLANKED SON OF A BORNEO STABLE-HAND!”

“Jenkins and Brown, when they realized the job weren’t none pleased. They went up the deck like heroes, though. I guess their hearts were beatin’ overtime a few, but they did it, s’welp me! Once the door was

to deprive an honest man of business d'ye?"

"Go on," I coaxed. "It's the shank of the evening, and wild men are scarce."

"You bet," agreed Benson solemnly, relighting his pocket-furnace. "Boreno's 'bout given out of first-class wild men. There's a poor sort o' second grade on the market, but they're unculled, an' the price ain't much to sneak of no more. A genooine, double-edged wild man, guaranteed to snarl an' yell, not to say chew a keeper every little while, would make the shows mortgage a three-hump camel. That's right."

Benson spat over the side reflectively. "Oh, yes," he remarked, with a little sigh, "wild men ain't frequent."

"What happened to this fellow in the ship's galley?" I asked.

"Hum-m-m! You see, every night has its dawn, an' with dawn comes arousin', wash-up, an' breakfast. Nobody thought o' breakfast on that ship. We were too excited over the possible maneuvers of the wild man, so we stood around, an' forgets breakfast clean. But dinner ain't a goin' to let a chap snub it without mentioning the subject. Painful subject, too, is dinner when there ain't none.

"Samuels, the cook, he stands idle like a carpenter on strike. There was strictly nothin' doin'. The captain, he was the last to cave in. Says he: 'See here, Mr. Foraker, I'd like somethin' to eat. Can't you call off that freak of yours?'

"Sorry, sir," says Sirnms Foraker, feeling real blue himself, 'but I don't know the signs.'

"The captain snorted, an' went on pacing up an' down the deck. Another half-hour went by slowly, and then there came floatin' out o' that galley the most delicious smells that you ever smelt. We stood around an' wondered what in the name of all the good cooks he was doin' in there by himself alone. An' these smells increased. Fine, wholesome, wide smells they were, almost enough to make

a beggar a meal, and calculated to drive hungry men mad.

"That's a Brunswick stew," said one of the men, sniffing.

"With gravy," added another.

"Brunswick nothin'! That's duff *a la* Borneo.'

"Smells a little wild to me," one of the critics said.

"As for me," says Samuels, the cook, 'I'm partial to some biscuit,' and he dived below into the extra stores to get it. We all nibbled a bit when he returned, an' we thought o' the free-lunch counters we had passed a while back.

"At last the captain got real desperate.

"We'll have to have him out of that," he says, gritting his big teeth. 'Wilkens, Brown, Jones, cast off that rope-lashing an' stand by.'

"They didn't like the order, but they was good men and true. The wild man heard them fumbling, an' he begins to mix up a few pots and pans inside there, which sounds horrible, like the last night of an iron-foundry. Wilkens, Brown, an' Jones weren't anxious to sleep near to that galley door when it was unfastened.

"The captain then divides the crew into two watches to stand ready, spelling each other, and to ketch him whenever he showed abroad. The captain hoped he would come out. No one dared go in after him. There was nothing to do but wait—an' wait on an empty stomach at that. The day spun along its usual stretch, an' we waited. Toward night the wild man began to yowl, like a dog what's lonely, an' this wasn't pleasant to hear.

"Still we waited. Then night comes, an' it gets as dark as the inside of your hat, an' still we was waiting. Along 'bout nine o'clock, when the men were downright tired out, some one made the terrible discovery that the galley door was open.

"Open it was, sure enough—wide

open. They made a skirmish, and the wild man wasn't there. Samuels installs himself inside, and piles things against the door.

"'I'll stand me ground,' he calls out to us. 'You do the figluin' an' I'll get dinner.'



"HE'S IN HIS CAGE, ASLEEP"

"Where did he go? That's what we wanted to have explained, 'cause we was outside the galley, with no door an' nothin' to pile against it, an' we wasn't wasting time 'bout dinner no longer. What we wanted was a barricade at least twelve feet high. That wild fellow was loose in the midst of us, an' the cold chills paraded up and down a chap's back in fours. The quieter he kept the worse we felt. If he had only yowled out, and threatened to fight! But he was a mysterious wild man.

"Along about an hour later, the captain says he thinks he'll turn in. The first mate is in charge o' the deck. The captain goes to his cabin, but in two minutes he's on deck again, calling for all hands.

"'What's wrong, sir?' asks the mate, rushin' up.

"'He's in my bunt—the double-blanked son of a Borneo stable-hand! He's in my bunk!'

"'Are ye sure, captain?' asks Simms

Foraker, cautious.

"'Sure!' The captain foamed at the mouth. 'Didn't I see his eyes? Didn't I feel his dirty hide? Here you, Martin, Williams, Smith! We'll just go down there an' rout him out.'

"'But Martin, Williams, and Smith had different ideas. They protested. They said they had not shipped to fight wild men of Borneo, an' they each an' every one backed water with the white fear showing in their eyes.

"'The captain was up against it for fair. There was no sense in hittin' Smith or Martin, or, for that matter, even Williams, 'cause the same feeling was in the whole dod-gasted crew, which was human, an' the captain knew it. He felt the same way himself.

"'What's to be done, Mr. Foraker?' asks the captain. 'Ain't I heard you say you'd handled wild men before?'

"'Never this kind,' says Simms Foraker, quite candid. 'This one can't be strictly called a wild man as yet, 'cause why—he ain't wild.'

"'The captain gasped, an' he choked. 'He ain't wild!' he screams out. 'He's wild enough for me!'

"'We might bar him in,' says Simms Foraker, 'like we did in the galley.'

"'But where'll I sleep?' moaned the captain.

"'Nice on deck these fine nights.'

"Then the captain gave way to the most elaborate, an' at the same time the most vicious, language that ever I hear. I've been around some, too, an' I've heard language so low that I couldn't understand what it meant, but this crop o' the captain's, it was superb. The words was short, middle-sized, and then a lengthy one that would just fair crash out an' land solid. My! My! the captain talked a spell. It came right up from his heart, too; you could see that. He wanted to let us know how he felt, an', by gum! he just did. I felt sorry for him, but I stood wide.

“Hold on!’ says Simms Foraker, when the captain was most violent. ‘You’ve got no right to kill a passenger, an’ that wild man’s a passenger.’

“Passenger be double-crossed!’ yells the captain. ‘He’s an animal! He’s freight! Loose freight at that! He’s a menace to the ship!’

“And with that the captain took his nerve in his hand an’ went into the cabin single. I admired the captain. But I didn’t go along—no! The captain was the bravest man among us—s’welp me, but he was! He went in there single, an’ no man stopped him. Five minutes later the captain reappeared, his face sorter blank, an’ he says, says he:

“That chap’s a spook, I believe. He’s gone!’

“Gone again!’ whispers back Simms Foraker.

“Can’t find a hair of him. Now, don’t let this get out among the men. We’ll make out he’s still down there.’

“Wonder where he is?’ whispered Simms Foraker to me.

“Bunked down in our cabin, for a dime,’ says I.

“We’re used to sleepin’ on deck,’ says he.

“I don’t care to sleep anywheres else,’ I says.

“One of us had better stand guard half the night,’ was his suggestion, an’ I agreed with him. We tossed a coin. Simms took the first watch. Then the night wore itself gray in the face, an’ dawn found us looking as if we had attended a wake.

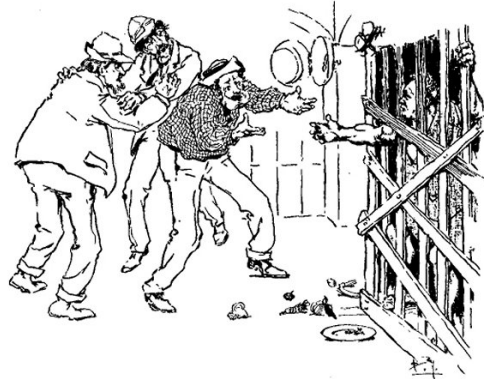
“Now,’ says the captain, ‘we’ll have a thorough search for that mystery o’ the Borneo slums.’

“They summoned all hands, issued orders an’ commenced. Williams was the first to start him. Williams went below to get some new rope. He was supported by Harrison and

Martin. They came tiptoeing back, their eyes bulgin’ out, an’ they whispers:

“He’s in his cage, asleep.’

“And, by hokus! so he was, sleepin’ like a baby.”



“THE SWEDE JUMPS, AN’ LETS GO ANOTHER PARCEL IN REPLY”

IV

BENSON wiped his forehead, and laughed to himself.

“See here, Benson,” I asked him, “have you been joking me?”

“Not a bit of it. That’s the true state of affairs as they was recorded. You can see for yourself, if the captain’ll let ye look at the log.

“Honest, that wild man was in his cage. It makes me laugh at times, an’ at other times it makes me creep. That wild man was a wonderful sort. You can just bet that we made a swift rush down there an’ double-slatted that cage in a hurry. Our Borneo friend woke up as we were hammering. He said something, an’ rolled over an’ went off to sleep again. You could hear him snore like a grampus.”

“And didn’t you have any more trouble with him?”

“Trouble! That was only the beginning. He didn’t try to get out again until we made Aden. He was quiet as a new-born lamb up to that time. We had to coal some, an’ the chap in charge o’ the job was a Swede. He heard we had a fine specimen of a wild man aboard, an’ he steps down to look him over. Simms Foraker an’ me went along. The wild

man was standin1 close to the bars, watching out.

“As we come up he lets out a lot of gibberish. The Swede jumps, an’ lets go another parcel in reply.

“‘What’s wrong with you?’ says Simms Foraker to the man.

“‘He says he wants to get out an’ see the Swede consul.’

“Simms Foraker turned blue in the face at this.

“Yes, the wild man got out, all right. We couldn’t get them bars down any too quick. He was a Swede cook that some ship had lost out in that Borneo quarter. He was a

nigger, all right, but he spoke a Swede language, an’ that was a dead language to me ’n’ Simms Foraker. He had bilked us for a ride to Aden, all right—no work, an’ a stateroom to himself.”

Benson leaned his head sadly on his hand and stared off to where the little lights gleamed on the quay.

“Do about it?” he snorted, a moment later, when I asked a pertinent question. “We were darned glad he didn’t have us pinched. We paid him twenty pounds in gold to call it square. That’s what we did. Don’t talk to me about wild men. It’s the tame kind that queers me!”