



NATIVES OF NEW GUINEA.

STRAIGHTFORWARD.

CHAPTER V.

WHETHER the unusual sight of a boat puffing forth smoke terrified the inhabitants of the coast, or what cause prompted them to remain in concealment, could not be decided; but all the next day, the *Dart* proceeded on its course without impediment.

Once, indeed, a canoe came in sight, but no signs or gestures of encouragement could induce the occupant to alter his first intention of paddling hastily toward the bank, and hiding himself and the canoe in the reeds.

Smoke had occasionally been seen ascending at some distance from the river, but the high bank had prevented the discovering party from ascertaining whether it proceeded from an inhabited dwelling.

"We must land soon to get food," pronounced George Holt, who had undertaken the post of steward; "it won't do to depend on the tinned provisions as we have done lately, yet this swampy ground does not promise much."

At that moment a cry of "House ahead, and natives running away," was heard from Perran on the watch.

Every one was now on the alert.

Just below a bend of the river, and almost overhanging the high bank, stood the dwelling. It was raised on posts about six feet from the ground, and seemed to be entirely deserted, the inmates being distinctly seen flying to the woods with their bows and arrows.

"Monkeys, Missis, ain't they?" asked Molly, regarding with considerable suspicion the almost unclothed creatures.

The *Dart* anchored as near to the bank as seemed safe; and Perran, Mr. Crane, and Cap-

tain Mostyn, finding that no human being was to be seen, rowed to shore — George carefully keeping watch the while. A felled tree with notches on it leaned against the house, serving as a rude staircase. This with some difficulty they mounted, entering a vast gable-ended erection something like an English barn.

Stone hammers and hatchets lay about — for these natives do not possess, nor know the use of, iron.

On the walls hung

netted bags filled with bones and shells. Of furniture there was none, but a row of skulls was placed, evidently as a ghastly ornament, on the ledge of one wall.

Leaves strewed thickly on the floor seemed to have formed the beds of the inmates.

"Here is something at last," said Captain Mostyn, investigating the contents of a bag hanging on the wall. "Sago, man" — for Perran did not recognize the substance within. "These trees all round are sago palms. Your wife will be glad of this addition to her stores, and we will leave some beads as payment for what we take."

"Do you think it would be safe to signal to 'Lisbeth and Molly to come ashore?" asked Perran; "they would like to see this queer house, and the natives seem to have gone clear off."

"Well, I think they might," was the answer; "we are all armed."

But just as Perran was going to give the signal the engineer met him, and drew him back.

"Come here," he said; "here's been ugly work."

The house was divided down the centre by a partition, and on one side, at the extreme end farthest from the river, lay what looked like a heap of bark.

"Dead, but still warm," said Mr. Crane, as the three men stooped over the body of an old man. "See, they have killed him to prevent his falling into our hands."

Yes, a stone hammer lay by his side; with that the poor fellow had had his brains knocked out. He was lame, it seemed, and unable to fly with the rest.

"The tender mercies of the savage!" said Captain Mostyn. "Come along, Perran, I've had enough of this place; it is hard to think