

JIMMY GOGGLES THE GOD.

BY H. G. WELLS.

"It isn't every one who's been a god," said the sunburnt man. "But it's happened to me, among other things."

I intimated my sense of his condescension.

"It don't leave much for ambition, does it?" said the sunburnt man. "I was one of those men who were saved from the 'Ocean Pioneer.' Gummy! How time flies! It's twenty years ago. I doubt if you'll remember anything of the 'Ocean Pioneer'?"

The name was familiar, and I tried to recall when and where I had read it. The "Ocean Pioneer"? "Something about gold dust," I said vaguely, "but the precise——"

"That's it," he said. "In a beastly little channel she hadn't no business in—dodging pirates. It was before they'd put the kybosh on that business. And there'd been volcanoes or something, and all the rocks was wrong. There's places about by Soona where you fair have to follow the rocks about to see where they're going next. Down she went in twenty fathoms before you could deal whist, with fifty thousand pounds in gold aboard, it was said, in one form or another——"

"Survivors?"

"Three."

"I remember the case now," I said. "There was something about salvage——"

But at the word salvage the sunburnt man exploded into language so extraordinarily horrible that I stopped aghast. He came down to more ordinary swearing and pulled himself up abruptly.

"Excuse me," he said, "but salvage!" He leaned over toward me. "I was in that job," he said. "Tried to make myself a rich man and got made a god instead. I've got my feelings.

"It ain't all jam being a god," said the sunburnt man, and for some time conversed by means of such pithy but unprogressive axioms. At last he took up his tale again.

"There was me," said the sunburnt man, "and a seaman named Jacobs, and Always, the mate of the 'Ocean Pioneer.' And him it was that set the whole thing going. I remember him now, when we



Drawn by H. Pruett Shaw.

"IT AIN'T ALL JAM BEING A GOD."

was in the jolly-boat, suggesting it all to our minds just by one sentence. He was a wonderful hand at suggesting things. 'There was forty thousand pounds,' he said, 'on that ship, and it's for me to say just where she went down.'

"It didn't need much brains to tumble to that. And he was the leader from the first to the last. He got hold of the Sanderses and their brig—they were brothers, and the brig was the 'Pride of Banya'; and he it was bought the diving-dress—a second-hand one with compressed-air apparatus instead of tubes and pumping. He'd have done the diving, too, if it hadn't made him sick—as it does many people—going down. And the salvage people were mucking about with a chart he'd cooked up, as solemn as could be, at Starr Race, a hundred and twenty miles away.

"I can tell you we was a happy lot aboard that brig, jokes and drink and bright hopes all the time. It all seemed so neat and clean and straightforward, and

what rough chaps call a 'cert.' And we used to speculate how the other lot, the proper salvagers, who'd started two days before us, were getting on, until our sides fairly ached. We all messed together in the Sanderses' cabin—it was a curious crew, all officers and no men, and there stood the diving-dress waiting its turn. The younger Sanders was a humorous sort of chap, and he saw something funny in the confounded thing's great fat head and its stare, and he made us see it too. 'Jimmy Goggles,' he used to call it, and talk to it like a Christian—ask if he was married, and how Mrs. Goggles was and all the little Goggleses. Fit to make you split. And every blessed day all of us used to drink the health of Jimmy Goggles in rum, and unscrew his eye and pour a glass of rum in him, until instead of that nasty mackintoshiness he seemed as nice in the inside as a cask of rum. It was jolly times we had those days. I can tell you—little suspecting all the disappointment that was a-coming.

"We weren't going to throw away our chances by any blessed hurry, you know, and we spent a whole day sounding our way toward where the 'Ocean Pioneer' had gone down, right between two chunks of ropy gray rock-lava rocks rising nearly out of the water. We had to lay off about half a mile to get a safe anchorage; and there was a row who should stop aboard, I remember; and there she lay just as she had gone down, so that you could see the top of the masts, that were still standing, quite distinctly. And I went down on Friday morning, directly it was light.

"What a surprise it was! I can see it all now quite distinctly. It was a queer-looking place and the light was just coming. People over here think every blessed place in the tropics is a flat shore, and palm trees and surf, but it's a lot more varied really. This place, for instance, wasn't a bit that way. Not common rocks that were, undermined by waves, but great curved banks like ironworks cinder-heaps, with green slime below and thorny shrubs and things just waving upon them here and there, and the water glassy, calm and clear, and showing you a kind of dirty gray-black shine, with huge flaring red-brown weeds spreading motionless, and

crawling and darting things going through it. And far beyond the ditches and pools and the heaps, was a forest on the mountain flank, healing again from the fires and cinder showers of the last eruption. And the other way, forest too, and a kind of broken—what was it?—amphitheater of black and rusty cinders, rising out of it, and the sea in a kind of bay in the middle.

"The dawn, I say, was just coming, and there wasn't much color about things, and not a human being but ourselves anywhere in sight up or down the channel, except the 'Pride of Banya' lying out beyond a lump of rocks toward the line of sea.

"Not a human being in sight," he repeated, and paused. "I don't know where they came from, not a bit. And we were feeling so safe, that we were all alone, that young Sanders was a-singing. I was in Jimmy Goggles, all except the helmet. 'Easy,' says Always, 'there's her mast.' And after I'd had just one squint over the gunwale, I caught up the bogey and almost tipped out as old Sanders brought the boat round. When the windows were screwed and everything was all right, I shut the valve from the compressed-air belt in order to help my sinking, jumped overboard feet foremost, and down I went—for we hadn't a ladder. I left the boat pitching, and all of them, no doubt, staring down into the water after me, with all their eyes, as my head sank down into the weeds and blackness that lay about the mast. I suppose nobody would have bothered about a look-out at such a desolate place.

"Of course you must understand that I was a greenhorn at diving. None of us were divers. We'd had to muck about with the thing to get the way of it, and this was the first time I'd been at all deep. It feels damnable. Your ears hurt beastly. I don't know if you've ever hurt yourself yawning, or sneezing, but it takes you like that, only ten times worse. And a pain over the eyebrows here—splitting. And a feeling like influenza in the head. And it isn't all heaven in your lungs and things. Going down feels like the beginning of a lift, only it keeps on. And you can't turn your head up to see what's above you, and you can't get a fair squint at what's happening to your feet, without bending down something painful. And being deep, it was



Fruett Share

Drawn by H. Pruett Share.

"SHOT DOWN AS I WENT UP."

dark, let alone the blackness of the ashes and mud that formed the bottom. It was like going down out of the dawn back into the night that had just passed.

"The mast came up like a ghost out of the black, and then a lot of fishes, and then a lot of flapping red seaweed, and then I came with a kind of dull bang on the deck of the 'Ocean Pioneer,' and the fishes that had been feeding on the dead rose about me, like a swarm of flies from road stuff in summer time. I turned on the compressed air again—for the suit was a bit thick and mackintoshy after all, in spite of the rum—and stood recovering myself. It struck coolish down there, and that helped to take off the stuffiness a bit.

"When I began to feel easier, I started looking about me. It was an extraordinary sight. Even the light was extraordinary—a kind of ruddy-colored twilight, on account of the streamers of seaweed that floated up on either side of the ship. And far overhead just a moony, deep green-blue. The deck of the ship, except for a slight list to starboard, was level, and lay all dark and long between the weeds, clear except where the masts had snapped when she rolled, and vanishing into night toward the forecastle. There wasn't any dead on the decks, most were in the weeds alongside, I suppose; but afterward I found two skeletons lying in the passengers' cabin, where death had come to them.

"It was curious to stand on that deck and recognize it all, bit by bit—a place against the rail where I'd been fond of smoking by starlight, and the corner where an old chap from Sydney used to flirt with a widow we had aboard. A comfortable couple they'd been, only a month ago, and now you couldn't have got a meal for a kitten off either of them.

"I've always had a bit of a philosophical turn, and I dare say I spent the best part of five minutes in such thoughts before I went below to find where the blessed dust was stored. It was slow work hunting—feeling it was for the most part, pitchy dark, with confusing blue gleams down the companion. And there were things moving about; a dab at my glass once, and once a pinch at my leg. Crabs! I kicked a lot of loose stuff that puzzled me, and stooped and picked up a thing all knobs and

spikes. What do you think?—backbone! But I never had any particular feeling for bones. We had talked the affair over pretty thoroughly, and Always knew just where the stuff was stowed. I found it that trip. I lifted a box on end."

He broke off in his story. "I've lifted it," he said. "As near as that! Forty thousand pounds' worth of pure, unsullied gold! I shouted inside of my helmet as a kind of cheer, and hurt my ears. I was getting confoundedly stuffy and tired by this time—I must have been down twenty-five minutes or more—and I thought this was good enough.

"I went up the companion again, and as my eyes came up flush with the deck a thundering great crab gave a kind of hysterical jump and went scuttling off sideways. Quite a start it gave me. I stood up clear on deck and shut the valve behind the helmet to let the air accumulate in the suit and carry me up again. That's how it's done, you know. I noticed a kind of whacking from above, as though they were hitting the water with an oar, but I didn't look up. I fancied they were signaling me to come up.

"And then something glided down by me, something heavy, and stood a-quiver in the planks. I looked, and there was a long knife I'd seen young Sanders handling. Thinks I, he's dropped it, and I was still calling him this kind of fool and that, for it might have hurt me serious, when I began to lift and drive up toward the daylight.

"Just about the level of the top spars of the 'Ocean Pioneer,' whack! I came against something sinking down, and a boot knocked in front of my helmet. Then something else—struggling frightful. It was a big weight atop of me, whatever it was, and moving and twisting about. I'd have thought it a great big octopus or some such thing if it hadn't been for the boot. But octopuses don't wear boots. It was all in a moment, of course. I felt myself sinking down again, and I threw my arms about to keep steady, and the whole lot rolled free of me and shot down as I went up——"

He paused.

"I saw young Sanders's face, over a naked black shoulder, and a spear driven

through his neck, and out of his mouth and neck what looked like spurts of pink smoke in the water. And down they went, clutching one another, turning over, and both too far gone to leave go, and in another second my helmet came a-whack, fit to split, against the niggers' canoes. It was niggers! Two boats full!

"It was lively times, I tell you. Overboard came Always with three spears in him. There was the legs of three or four black chaps kicking about me in the water. I couldn't see much, but I saw the game was up at a glance, gave my valve a twist, and went bubbling down again after poor Always, in as awful a state of scare and astonishment as you can well imagine. I passed young Sanders and the nigger going up again, and in another moment I was standing in the dim again on the deck of the 'Ocean Pioneer.'

"Gummy, thinks I, here's a fix! Niggers! At first I couldn't see anything for it but stifle below or stabs above. I didn't properly understand how much air there was to last me out, but I didn't feel like standing very much more of it down below. I was hot and frightfully heady, quite apart from the blue funk I was in. We'd never reckoned with these beastly natives, who as you know are pretty well like the Papuan devils. No doubt they'd been stalking the brig at the very time we'd been setting about diving. It wasn't any good coming up where I was, but I had to do something. On the spur of the moment, I jumped over the side of the brig and landed among the weeds, and set off through the darkness as fast as I could.

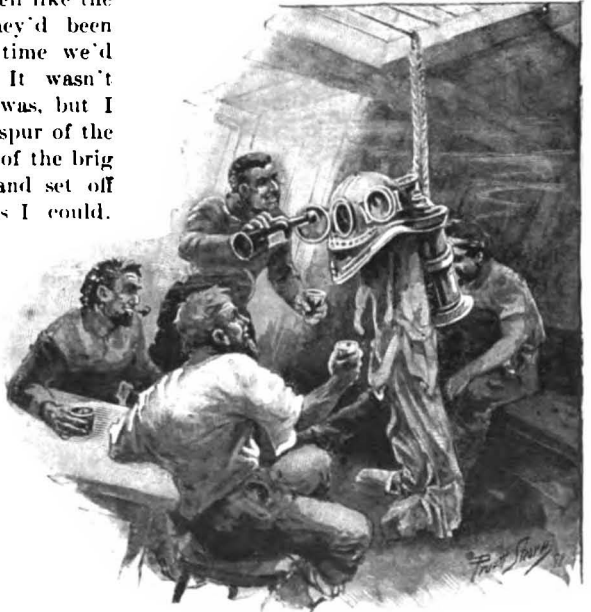
"I stopped once, and knelt and twisted back my head in the helmet and had a look up. It was a most extraordinary bright green-blue above, and the two canoes and the boat were floating there very small and distant, like a kind of twisted H. And it made me feel sick to squint up at it, and think what the pitching and swaying of the three meant.

"It was just about the most horrible ten minutes I ever had, blundering about in that

darkness, pressure three atmospheres, sick with funk, and breathing nothing as it seemed but the smell of rum and mack-intosh. Gummy!

"After a bit I found myself going up a steepish sort of slope. I had another squint to see if anything was visible of the canoes and boats, and then kept on. I stopped with my head a foot from the surface, and tried to see where I was going, but of course nothing was to be seen but the reflection of the bottom. Then out I dashed. Directly I got my eyes out of the water I saw I'd come up on a kind of beach near the forest. I had a look round, but the natives and the brig were both hidden by a big hummucky kind of heap of rubby and twisted lava. The constitutional fool in me suggested a run for the woods. I didn't take the helmet off, but I eased open one of the windows, and went on out of the water. You'd hardly imagine how clean and light the air tasted.

"Of course with four inches of lead in your boot soles and your head in a copper knob the size of a football, and after thirty-five minutes under water, you don't break any records running. I ran like a plow-boy going to work. And half-way to the trees I saw a dozen niggers or more, com-



Drawn by H. Pruett Share.

"USED TO DRINK THE HEALTH OF JIMMY GOGGLES."

ing out in a gaping, astonished sort of way to meet me.

'I just stopped dead and cursed myself for all the fools out of London. I had about as much chance of cutting back as a turtle. I just screwed up my window again to leave my hands free, and waited for them. There wasn't anything else for me to do.

'But they didn't come on very much. I began to realize why. 'Jimmy Goggles,' I says, 'it's your beauty does it.' I was inclined to be a little light-headed, I think, with all these dangers about and the change in the pressure of the air. 'Who're ye staring at?' I said, as if the savages could hear me. 'What d'ye take me for? I'm hanged if I don't give you something to stare at,' I said; and with that I screwed up the escape valve and turned on the compressed air, until I was swelled out like a blowing frog.

'Regular imposing it must have been. I'm blessed if they'd come on a step; and presently one and then another went down on their hands and knees. They didn't know what to make of me, and they were doing the extra polite. I had half a mind to edge back seaward and cut and run, but it seemed altogether too hopeless. A step back and they'd been after me. And out of sheer desperation I began to march toward them up the beach, with slow, heavy steps, and waving my blown-out arms about in a dignified manner. And inside of me I was singing as small as a tomtit.

'But there's nothing like a striking appearance to help a man over a difficulty, as I've found before and since. People like ourselves, who're up to diving-dresses by the time we're seven, can scarcely imagine the effect of one on a simple-minded savage. One or two of these niggers cut and ran, the others started in a great hurry trying to knock their brains out on the ground. And on I went as slow and solemn and sly-looking and artful as a jobbing plumber. It was evident they took me for something immense.

'Then up jumped one and began pointing, making extraordinary gestures to me as he did so, and all the others began sharing their attention between me and something out at sea. 'What's the matter

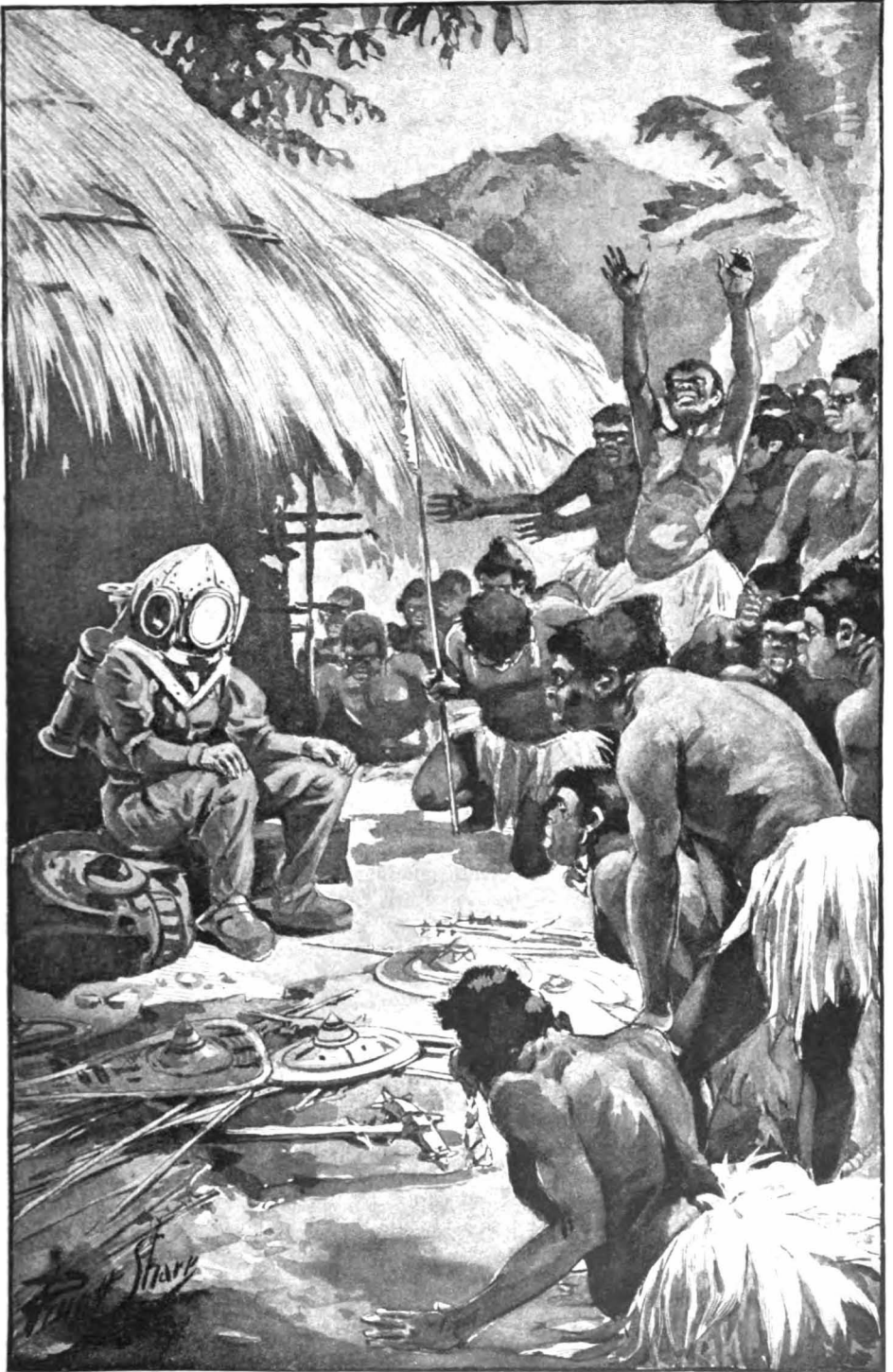
now?' I said. I turned slowly, on account of my dignity, and there I saw, coming round a point, the poor old 'Pride of Banya,' towed by a couple of canoes. The sight fairly made me sick. But they evidently expected some recognition, so I waved my arms in a striking sort of non-committal manner. And then I turned and stalked on toward the trees again. At that time I was praying like mad, I remember, over and over again, 'Lord, help me through with it.' It's only fools who know nothing of dangers can afford to laugh at praying.

'But these niggers weren't going to let me walk through and away like that. They started a kind of bowing and invoking dance about me, and sort of pressed me to take a pathway that lay through the trees. It was clear to me they didn't take me for a British citizen, whatever else they thought of me, and for my part I was never less anxious to own up to my nationality.

'You'd hardly believe it, perhaps, unless you're familiar with savages, but these poor misguided, ignorant creatures took me straight to their kind of joss-place, to present me to the blessed old black stone there.

'By this time I was beginning to sort of realize the depths of their ignorance, and directly I set eyes on this deity I took my cue. I started a baritone howl—'Wow-wow,' very long on one note—and began waving my arms about a lot, and then very slowly and ceremoniously turned their image over on its side and sat down on it. I wanted to sit down badly, for diving dresses ain't much as wear in the tropics. Or, to put it more precisely, they're a sight too much. It took away their breath, I could see, my sitting on their joss, but in less than a minute they made up their minds, and were hard at work worshipping me. And I can tell you I felt a bit relieved to see things turning out so well, in spite of the weight on my shoulders and feet.

'But what made me anxious was what the chaps in the canoes might think when they came back. If they'd seen me in the boat before I went down and without the helmet on—for they might have been spying and hiding since over night—they would very possibly take a different



Drawn by H. Pruett Shore.

"THEY WERE HARD AT WORK WORSHIPPING ME."

view from the others. I was in a deuce of a stew about that for hours, as it seemed, until the shindy of the arrival began.

"But they took it down, the whole blessed village took it down. At the cost of sitting up, stiff and stern, as much like those sitting Egyptian figures one sees as I could manage, for pretty nearly twelve hours I should guess at least, on end, I saved my life and secured the situation. I don't think any of them dreamed of the man inside. I was just a wonderful leathery great joss that had come up with luck out of the water. But the fatigue! the heat! the beastly closeness! the mackintoshiness and the rum! the perpetual anxiety and the fuss!

"They lit a stinking fire on a kind of lava slab there was before me, and brought in a lot of gory muck—the worst parts of what they were feasting on outside, the beasts!—and burned it all in my honor. I was getting a bit hungry, but I quite understand now how gods manage to do without eating, with the smell of burnt-offerings about them. And they brought in a lot of stuff they'd got off the brig, and what I was a bit relieved to see, the kind of pneumatic pump that was used for the compressed-air affair, and then a lot of chaps and girls came in and danced about me something disgraceful.

"It's extraordinary the different ways different people have of showing respect. If I'd had a hatchet handy, I'd have gone for the lot of them, they made me feel so wild with them. All this time I sat as stiff as company, not knowing anything better to do. And at last when nightfall came, and the wattle joss-house place got a bit too shadowy for their taste—all these here savages are afraid of the dark, you know—they built big bonfires outside and left me alone in peace in the darkness of my hut, free to unscrew my windows a bit and think things over, and feel just as bad as I liked.

"I was weak and hungry, and my mind kept on behaving like a beetle on a pin—tremendous activity and nothing done at the end of it, come round just where it was before. There was the treasure down there in the 'Ocean Pioneer' and how one might get it and hile it somewhere safe and get away and come back for it. And there was the

puzzle where to get anything to eat. I tell you I was fair rambling. I was afraid to ask by signs for food, for fear of seeming too human; so there I sat and hungered until very near dawn.

"Then the village got a bit quiet and I went out and stole some stuff like artichokes in a bowl and some sour milk. What was left of these I put away among the other offerings, just to give them a hint of my tastes. And in the morning they came to worship, and found me sitting up stiff and respectable on their previous god, just as they'd left me overnight. I'd got my back against the central pillar of the hut, and, practically, I was asleep. And that's how I became a god among the heathens—a false god, no doubt, and blasphemous, but one can't always pick and choose.

"Now, I don't want to crack myself up as a god beyond my merits, but I must confess that while I was god to these people they were really extraordinarily successful. I don't say there's anything in it, mind you. They won a battle with another tribe—I got a lot of offerings I didn't want through it—they had wonderful fishing, and their crop of pourra was exceptionally fine. And they also counted the capture of the brig among my benevolent proceedings. I must say I don't think that was a poor record for a perfectly new hand. And, though perhaps you'd scarcely credit it, I was the tribal god of those beastly savages for pretty nearly four months.

"What else could I do, man? But I didn't wear that diving dress all the time. I made 'em rig me up a sort of holy of holies; and a deuce of a time I had too, making them understand what it was I wanted them to do. That indeed was the great difficulty—making them understand my commands. I couldn't let myself down by talking their lingo badly, even if I could speak at all, and I couldn't go flapping a lot of gestures at them. So I drew pictures in the sand and sat down beside them and hooted like one o'clock. Sometimes they did the things I wanted all right, and sometimes they did them all wrong. To be sure, they were always very willing.

"All the while I was puzzling how I could get the confounded business settled.

Every night before the dawn, I used to march out in full rig and go off to a place where I could see the channel in which the 'Ocean Pioneer' lay sunk, and once even, one moonlight night, I tried to walk out to her, but the weeds, and rocks, and dark clean beat me. I didn't get back till full day, and then I found all those silly niggers out on the beach praying their sea-god, to return to them.

And then came the missionary. It was in the afternoon, and I was sitting in state in my outer temple place, sitting on that old black stone of theirs, when he came. I heard a row outside and jabbering, and then his voice speaking to an interpreter. 'They worship stocks and stones,' he said, and I knew what was up in a flash.

'I had one of my windows out for comfort, and sang out straight on the spur of the moment. 'Stocks and stones!' I says. 'You come inside,' I says, 'and I'll punch your blooming head.'

'There was a kind of silence, and more jabbering, and in he came, Bible in hand, after the manner of them. I flattered myself that me sitting there in the shadows, with my copper head and my big goggles, struck him a bit of a heap at first. 'Well,' says I, 'how's the trade in calico?' For I don't hold with missionaries.

'I had a lark with that missionary. He was a raw hand, and quite outclassed with a man like me. He gasped out who I was, and I told him to read the inscription at my feet if he wanted to know. Down he goes to read it, and his interpreter, being of course as superstitious as any of them, took it as an act of worship and plumped like a shot. All my people gave a kind of howl of triumph, and there wasn't any more business to be done in my village after that journey, not by the likes of him.

'But of course I was a fool to choke him off like that. If I'd had any sense I should have told him straightaway of the treasure, and taken him into Co. A child



Drawn by H. Pruett Share.

"WELL," SAYS I, 'HOW'S THE TRADE IN CALICO?'"

could have seen the connection between my diving-dress and the loss of the 'Ocean Pioneer.' A week after he left, I went out one morning, and saw the 'Motherhood,' the salvers' ship from Starr Race, towing up the channel and sounding. The whole blessed game was up, and all my trouble thrown away. Gummy! How wild I felt! And guying it in that stinking silly dress!"

The sunburnt man's story degenerated again.

"Think of it!" he said; "forty thousand pounds' worth of gold!"

"And so," ventured I, "the salvers got it. And the missionary, I suppose, helped them."

"Oh, yes, bless him! And he pledged his reputation there was a man inside the god, and started out to see as much with immense ceremony.

"But there wasn't—he got sold again. I always did hate scenes and explanations, and long before he came I was out of it all—going home to Banya along the coast. No clothes, no money, nothing. And just a squeak of eight thousand pounds in gold. But the natives cut up rusty, thank goodness, because they thought it was him had driven their luck away."