



IT TAKES ALL KINDS

By
Louis Bromfield



Harper & Brothers Publishers

NEW YORK and LONDON

1939

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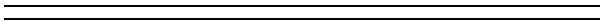
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FIRST EDITION

H-O

The story BETTER THAN LIFE was originally published serially under the title of AND IT ALL CAME TRUE and is

*published in England under the title of IT HAD TO HAPPEN.
The story MCLEOD'S FOLLY was originally published
serially under the title of YOU GET WHAT YOU GIVE.*

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The individual stories contained in this volume are presented
as separate eBooks.

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VII

That Which Never Returns

THE captain paused for a moment on the edge of the deck, his face turned upward in the dim tropic darkness. He was young, much younger than the lean, middle-aged man who stood at the rail of the little schooner, and he appeared anxious and troubled. Bendham, the older man, seemed only bored; so listless and so indifferent that the boredom was like an illness.

“I oughtn’t to go ashore,” said the boyish captain.

“Go ashore,” said the older man wearily.

“The river is rising, sir. What will you do if she breaks her moorings?”

“She won’t. We’re safe behind the point. I’ve moored in this spot before—a hundred times.”

“I don’t like to leave you, sir.” The “sir” he added out of deference to Bendham’s age and his position as owner of the schooner, and grudgingly too out of respect for the older man’s superior experience as a navigator in this part of the world.

Bendham’s boredom vanished in a sudden gust of rudeness. “My God, man, I knew every eddy in this river before you were born.”

The captain, snubbed, descended the short ladder and sprang into the dory. Bendham remained at the rail watching the little boat making its perilous way across the rising water toward the distant settlement.

“My God, won’t they ever leave me alone?” and he felt the thought so intensely that he spoke it aloud, savagely.

He was alone now save for his wife who lay asleep below deck and the Malay who had remained on board to serve him. On his mat, the Malay sat aft on the little schooner, and Bendham was aware that the yellow man was watching him, just as one becomes aware of being watched by a cat of whose presence one is altogether ignorant. Even the Malays seemed different, he thought. Once he had liked and understood them. Now he was aware that he distrusted them and that they disliked him. He could not understand a change like that.

He turned to the Malay. “Go to sleep,” he said in the man’s own dialect. “I shan’t need you. Go below deck.”

The Malay silently rolled up his mat and disappeared down the companionway with the naked tread of a cat and Bendham felt a quick sense of relief. He was alone on the deck.

He was hungry for solitude. “I am,” he thought, “like a sick animal”; yet there appeared to be nothing the matter with him. It was no tropical fever, for he knew all the varieties of fever from long experience. He had no appetite but then, even as a boy, he had never had an appetite in weather like this. Yes, he was like a sick animal which wanted to hide away and die. It was the worst of all sicknesses—an illness of the nerves.

It was hot, horribly hot, with the menace of fresh, torrential downpours in the air. The atmosphere, he thought, must nearly have reached the point of saturation. It was difficult to breathe. In the dim light of the moon he looked about him at the raging river filled with grass, uprooted saplings, wrecked

bamboo huts and coconut palms. The river would rise, he calculated, for perhaps another forty-eight hours, and no more than that. Never in all the years of his experience had it risen higher.

On both sides of him lay the long black lines of the shore. He knew what was there—a solid wall of dripping jungle, broken only by the squalid settlement with its score of twinkling lights. Now and again the moon came from behind the ragged storm clouds and turned the churning river to molten silver.

The insects became intolerable, whole clouds of them of a million sizes and shapes, buzzing and whirring, attracted through the moist night by the schooner's lights. He went inside a kind of tent made of netting which had been erected by the Malay so that he could remain on deck, because he found it impossible to sleep or even to breathe below deck. It was near the bow among the crates of plant specimens he had been collecting during the past six weeks.

Inside the little tent there were two deck chairs and a rattan table with several glasses, a fresh bottle of whisky, a bottle of soda water, a shaded oil light with the wick turned low, and a bowl of rapidly melting ice from the American refrigerating machine below deck. "Oh," he thought, "I travel in luxury now—different from the first time I saw this river." And then bitterly, he thought, "So what!"

He lifted the netting quickly to prevent the insects from entering and slipped inside. He poured himself a drink and put no ice in it. Ice made you hotter rather than cooler. Then he lay back in the deck chair drumming the edge with his long, lean, brown fingers. He was a long, thin man with a handsome narrow head covered with graying, curly black

hair. His skin was yellow tan, a color acquired permanently before he was thirty-five from fevers and long exposure to the sun. He was lean and tough with unquestionable powers of resistance; but he was neat, too, nervous and too well controlled, one of those men who by instinct and long habit never betray an emotion, and so turn knotted and tense in their very souls.

The night was still and yet not still. There was no sound produced by man, but a million sounds made by nature itself—the monotonous buzzing of insects, the gurgling sounds of the river, the bump of an occasional log against the side of the schooner. Once there was the wild cry of a panther somewhere in the jungle and almost immediately the solitary scream of a monkey. He was aware of a wholly primitive world all about him, filled with creeping, crawling, flying, climbing and swimming things—a primitive world in which eating and sleeping, reproducing and escaping death were the beginning and the end—a world, he thought, with a queer sense of relief, which was with all its savagery, simple. He had known it once intimately. He had lived that kind of life. Why, he asked himself, was it impossible to recapture it? Twelve years was not a long time.

For twelve years had passed since he went back to England, a rich man, and during those twelve years he had grown richer and richer, and life oddly enough had grown more and more unsatisfactory. He could not say why wealth had not made it simple. His whole existence had on the contrary grown steadily more intolerable and now, when he could endure it no longer, he had come back again to that world where he had made his fortune before he was thirty-six. That primitive world was unchanged. He was here in the

midst of it. He had come halfway round the world to satisfy the horrible nostalgia, yet he could not find his way back. It stood apart, a long distance off, mocking him. Somewhere along the way he had gotten tangled in stocks and shares and the responsibilities and conventions of another world.

He felt suddenly that he was stifling and that the only thing which could save him would be to find himself alone in a cave of ice where there was no other life but his own. If he could be alone again, alone in the world with nothing save his own health and spirit, as he had been at twenty-two, he might recover the thing which had gone away forever, that something—he could not say what—which had given him courage and direction. And then immediately he felt cold and chilled by the kind of chill which was altogether new in his long experience with fevers. He took another drink, raw whisky this time, and became agonizingly aware again of the roar of the insects. It seemed to fill all the world, growing louder and louder, intolerable and suffocating. He extinguished the lamp and waited for a time, only to discover that it was not the lamp which attracted the insects. The air itself was filled with them. The sound was unescapable. He decided to drink himself into unconsciousness. “Otherwise,” he thought, “I will go mad.”

2

And then he saw the light. He did not know how long he had been sitting there when he heard the sharp, sudden clamor of mongrels in the settlement on the shore. The lights one by one had gone out until there were now but two or three and one of them was moving. It was no will-o'-the-wisp, for it moved evenly on the low ground by the river

below the settlement, in a straight line. Someone was walking there, carrying a light. There was nothing unusual in that. He could not say why it fascinated him. "Perhaps," he thought, "I'm a little drunk." He looked at his watch. It was two o'clock in the morning.

In his imagination he saw the settlement, a cluster of houses swarming with natives and in the midst the squalid house of the Portuguese governor. Through the roar of insects he heard the dogs barking again. He thought, "Perhaps it's Mason and the crew coming back. Why can't they leave me in peace?" Alone! But he wasn't alone! Below deck lay Jenny sleeping quietly through the intolerable night. His wife. She was always there, young, pretty, calm, a perfect wife. Yes, damn her, a perfect wife, thinking only of him. He could hear again her voice as she stepped off the pier at Singapore, "I thought I'd surprise you, darling, so I came by the Canadian Pacific." And before he could answer she had kissed him in that way of hers, so strange and passionate in a woman so soft, gentle and well-bred, a way which filled him with distaste, because it made him feel that she was always trying to gain possession of him, or at least of that part of him which he meant to surrender to no one. And yet his body was weak: nearly always he yielded, and afterward was sick in his spirit, because, with passion spent, he knew she had won again.

He closed his eyes. Why had he not put her at once on the P and O boat and shipped her home? Why had he not escaped then and there her awful devotion, that dreadful singleness in her determination to be a perfect wife? There she was below deck, sleeping calmly through the intolerable heat and damp as if she were in her own bed in her father's house beside the

quiet river in Devon. She never complained. She was never in the wrong. You could never put your finger on what she did, saying, "It is this," or "It is that which makes me hate her." Even these dreadful nights had no effect upon her. She did not fall ill. She did not mind the insects. No, she belonged to a different, intolerable breed, and she was spoiling his solitude by bringing with her a part of that life which he wanted so desperately to escape. So long as it clung to him he would never find his way back. But then once, long ago, he too had slept unaware of heat and discomfort. Perhaps it was only because she was young.

He thought, "I must not let her become an obsession. I must not blame her for everything." But he kept having thoughts which frightened him again with the suspicion that he was going mad.

When he opened his eyes again he saw that the light was no longer moving along the shore. The dogs were no longer barking and the light was on the water, and he knew now it was not Mason and the crew returning, for the light did not move with the steady roll of the dory; it bobbed and flickered and slithered from side to side. It was, he knew, a native craft, light as paper, and he wondered what mysterious and urgent errand could have engaged so fragile a craft on such a night. But the sense of his own misery overpowered his curiosity. He did not rise from his chair to follow the movements of the light which came toward him like a will-o'-the-wisp across the surface of the swollen river. He simply closed his eyes, still vaguely aware of the buzzing of insects which was like distant thunder. His thoughts slipped backward over the past leading him to wonder, "If I had done this or that, would it have been different? Would I have grown less tired and sick

of everything? I am rich. I am successful. I have a beautiful wife. I need only children to have everything and I am not sure that I want to bring children into this lousy world.”

And after a long time, in the midst of his brooding, he was startled suddenly by the sound of something bumping gently against the side of the schooner. He thought at once, “It is a log,” but a log would have struck the schooner and slipped past on its way to the sea, and this sound continued bumping gently and irregularly. Then he remembered the bobbing craft and the will-o’-the-wisp, and a sudden wild excitement took possession of him. It was as if twenty years had suddenly slipped from him and he was a young man again on the deck of a dhow, waiting on the edge of the jungle, pistol in hand, with every nerve throbbing.

The long, thin brown hands clasped the edge of the deck chair and his body stiffened with the effort of listening. His heart beat more rapidly and he was aware suddenly that he was alive again as he had once been. The whisky filled him with a pleasant fuzziness, and he knew that in the profound depths of his soul danger, even death, was a matter of indifference. The great thing was that he felt alive again, for the first time, he thought, in years and years, since the night he had said good-bye to Albertine de Jongh and the old life on the edge of the jungle clearing.

The light bumping sound continued and through it he heard another sound, that of footsteps on the ladder. They climbed upward and presently he heard someone walking on the deck, coming toward him. The moon had disappeared again under a black cloud and it was quite impossible to distinguish anything through the swarms of insects gathered on the netting.

The steps came directly to the little canopy of netting, which was lifted suddenly with the quick, experienced gesture of one who had lived long in the tropics, and he was aware in the faint light from the dimmed lamp of a figure dressed all in white linen. It wore jodhpurs made of linen and a linen jacket, a topi with a veil to protect the face from the swarming insects. But the figure, despite the clothes, was not that of a man. It was female, round, voluptuous, even fat. Under the jacket he discerned the heavy modeling of the large overflowing breasts.

A hand threw the veil up over the helmet with a gesture unmistakably feminine and hauntingly familiar. It was impossible to discern the features but a voice said, "Hello, Jim," and the world ceased any longer to have reality. He felt violently ill.

The sound of the voice, like the will-o'-the-wisp, and the footsteps sent him backward years and years. Someone who seemed not to be himself, said, "Tina, for God's sake."

And almost at once he was certain that he was mad or delirious. This fat, coarse woman could not be Tina. Yet Tina's voice answered him, "I was staying with the governor. I heard you were here." It was a warm, husky voice with the faint accent which was neither Dutch nor French nor Russian. There was no other voice like it in all the world, and no other accent. It did not astonish him that he recognized her thus: he would have known that voice and accent anywhere. She spoke casually, as if they had seen each other for the last time only yesterday instead of twelve years ago.

And in a second he relived a whole decade of his existence that was past forever—nights on the river, nights in the bar of the Raffles Hotel in Singapore, the Hotel des Indes in

Batavia, nights in Sumatra, in Macassar, in Samarang, and nights on that ancient schooner *Artemis*, long since bleaching her bones among the muck and mangroves of an island not a hundred miles from where he sat.

He heard her saying, "Will you offer me a drink?" and recovered himself. He turned up the light and looked at her for a long time in silence. He saw then how shockingly fat she had grown. The voluptuous curves had all swelled into pure corpulence. The face was puffy and badly painted. The sensuous mouth had gone shapeless. She smiled at him cynically and displayed two gold teeth he had never seen. Only the eyes were unchanged, fine, brilliant and exciting. For a second he felt again the faint warmth of a flame which once had nearly devoured him. But the warmth was not for this woman but this woman's eyes and husky voice and for something which was a memory—the memory of Albertine de Jongh, part Dutch and Russian and French, but one-eighth Malay. It was the Malay which in the end had claimed her body. "Staying with the governor." He knew what that meant and he knew the governor, a fat, greasy, Portuguese with a green skin.

She did not seem to resent his examination. She looked at him smiling, "Yes, I have changed," and she lighted a cigarette with all the indifference of a Malay. "But so have you. Life is like that."

He asked a banal question, "Did you bring a boatman?"

"No, I came alone." She nodded her head toward the settlement. "He was drunk, so I came secretly. He is very jealous."

"You're a fool to come alone on this river."

She looked at him in an odd way. “We’ve been through much worse than that together.” She treated the rising river with scorn.

And again he saw not this fat woman but the Albertine de Jongh of years before with a fine, beautiful body, tanned by the sun—his woman but his companion too, as good as any man on an adventure. He knew that body but not this one. For no reason at all he thought of his wife, young, blond and cool below deck, so protected, and soft and luxurious. That was what his spoiled body wanted now—not Albertine, this fat monument to lechery.

The visitor sat down and the deck chair creaked beneath her weight. She seemed to find nothing unusual in her strange midnight visit. It was as if they had parted only yesterday.

3

It was not easy to recapture the past. It was not easy to grow used to each other once again and sit talking like old friends, because they had been so much more than friends. It was not easy for Bendham to sit there opposite this fat Malay woman with the fine eyes and warm voice thinking all the while of Albertine de Jongh as he saw her for the first time in the bar of the Hotel des Indes. But for the eyes and the voice, he would have believed this was another woman and been indifferent, but he kept seeing the eyes and hearing the voice, and they kept bringing back not only unwelcome visions of Albertine de Jongh on the deck of the *Artemis* or swimming naked on a white coral beach, but of wild dark rivers and native villages and brilliant sunlight and a light sky filled with stars. It was not easy and they felt their way toward each other in little banal questions and speeches. But it was easier

for her. She appeared to accept what had happened as inevitable, and in him there still lurked fierce rebellion and despair.

She said, "You. You have done well for yourself. I've followed your career from time to time, when I came across English papers. You must be very rich."

"I am very rich. And you?"

She took a drink of whisky before answering him. "Me—I still have a little of what you gave me."

"I'll see that you have more."

She laughed, "No. I don't need more." And he thought that she looked at him with scorn but he could not be sure. "I have all I need. I'm going to quit him when the next boat comes in." She nodded toward the settlement. "He doesn't know it. He won't know until I've gone. Then I'm going to Penang."

Dimly he saw that although the Malay in her had claimed her body, it had not claimed her mind. Inside the fat, painted body, behind the fine eyes the mind was a European mind and it knew where to strike to hurt him most. She was telling him that she was satisfied with her life and was, in a way, happy, that at least she had peace, and she was telling him that all his money meant nothing to her. She had found something which you could not buy.

"And then what?"

"I shall take a house and grow old and die."

"Peace," she was saying, "Peace. I have Peace." She did not even resent his having paid her off and left her twelve years before when he left the East to become a power, a rich man in London, to settle and marry and become a personage. Power! Wealth! Personage! The words were bitter in his

thoughts. He kept seeing the rubber plantation at Anao and the veranda and Albertine de Jongh and felt again the pang and the misgiving he knew on the day he rode through the opening in the jungle saying good-by forever to the old life. He remembered how he had turned to look back for the last time with a sudden sickness at leaving. He saw her again standing there on the veranda, perfectly still, not moving, not speaking, not calling after him but silent and rigid, resentful at his going, but silent. In that moment too the Malay had taken possession of her. He wondered, "What if I had turned back then instead of going on."

"You stopped writing to me," he said. "I was afraid you were dead."

"I read that you had married." She shrugged her fat shoulders like a French woman. "After that ... besides it was all finished."

"No," he said. "Things like that are never finished."

He heard the haunting husky voice again, beautiful against the drone of the insects. "When I heard you were on board this schooner I had to see you once more—for the last time. We shan't meet again. I wanted to see you." She hesitated for a moment and he had the impression that she meant to say more and checked herself. By the light of the oil lamp he saw a look in her dark eyes that sent a wave of warmth through him. They were so near to each other for an instant and then immediately so remote.

She laughed, "So I got Portago drunk. He won't wake until noon tomorrow. And I came." She lighted another cigarette. "Maybe I shouldn't have come." Looking away from him she said, "I didn't come to annoy you. I don't want any money. I shan't ever bother you again—ever."

He did not answer her and she said, “You look ill and tired. Fever?”

“No. No fever. Not, at least, fever of the body.”

“You ought never to have come back to the tropics. You can’t stand it.”

He burst out fiercely, “Why not? I’m as good as I ever was.”

“No, Jim. Neither of us are, but that isn’t what I meant.” After a silence she said, looking at him sharply, “Why did you come back?”

He asked himself what she was driving at. “I came back to look out for my properties,” and as if he had forgotten, “to collect plants. They’re all there in those boxes on the deck. They’re for a museum.”

“Collect plants,” she repeated in a voice gentle but tinged with acid. “That’s a good name for what I’m doing too,” and she nodded again toward the settlement. “Collect plants. We all have to do something until it’s time to die.”

4

Presently she smiled and said, “I passed Patna three months ago, so near that I saw the *Artemis*. She was half-buried in the mud. The mangroves are growing over her. There’s not much left of her but a skeleton.”

A skeleton. He did not answer her. He thought, “A skeleton.”

She continued, “I spent Christmas at the Hotel des Indes. It’s just the same. Old Vermaeren is the same, balder and fatter, a little.”

No, he thought, it was impossible. Everything had changed. “Balder and fatter.” And he decided to abandon his plan of revisiting Batavia.

But she continued, maddeningly, to dredge the past, dragging up memories which he had meant to die. “I see by the papers that you made a fine match—a woman young, pretty, distinguished—as it should have been. You were meant for that. I was never good enough for you.”

“My God. Good enough for me!”

“No, not in that way. I went with you as far as I could go. I’d only have spoiled things. A Eurasian is beyond the borders and I was too well known in this part of the world. Everybody knew I was your woman. I keep imagining you at great dinners. People in hotels cluster and whisper when you pass—‘there goes Bendham, the great rubber magnate.’ You’re a great man, Jim. I always knew you’d be. But I couldn’t go with you. I went as far as I could.”

He was aware that she was bringing back their old intimacy in spite of anything he could do, and he kept fighting against it. She was, in a strange way, insinuating her gross, painted self between him and the pretty gentle woman below deck. No matter how he struggled she was taking possession of him. He wanted to ask her if he seemed changed, but he dared not risk it. Time and change creep on so slowly that one is unaware of them. You could only see it if you had avoided mirrors for ten years.

“I heard that she is with you,” she said, and looked at him sharply.

“Yes, she is below deck. She minds nothing—not even this heat.”

“A good wife. She never annoys you. Wonderfully faithful and devoted.”

How did she know that? How could she know that Jenny was like a parasite liana? Devoted, faithful, unscrupulous, pure and sensual—that was it. She was the worst thing a woman can be—puritan and sensual.

Suddenly his nerves gave way and he burst out violently, “What are you trying to do to me?”

She answered him calmly, “Nothing. I’m interested, curious. That’s rational—even if I am a Eurasian, I’m a woman. I’m glad you found a good wife to care for you.”

“Oh, she cares for me. She never allows me out of her sight.” And at once he was ashamed of the outburst and the bitterness. He began suddenly to hate this gross, tawdry reminder of his past. She would not change now. It was too late. She would change no more than old Vermaeren at the Hotel des Indes, or himself. She could no more change than the skeleton of the *Artemis* could turn itself once more into a living ship. You could not go back. He wanted her to go.

“I don’t ask to meet her,” she was saying. “But I should like to see her,” she laughed, “from a safe distance. Are you bringing her ashore?”

“Not here.” He had meant to stay here. He had meant to take her ashore, but now he could not stay. He could not escape soon enough. If only Mason and the crew would return he could leave at once. If only this awful woman would go and leave him in peace instead of sitting there, gross and dreadful, a mockery of himself and all his life and ambitions. His nerves cried out, but he betrayed himself only by the tenseness of the lean fingers. If only she would stop looking at him in that prying way, seeing inside him all the

disgust and despair and yearning which he was determined to conceal. It was the damned native in her which gave her that power. As she grew older the Malay blood claimed her.

With a great effort he gathered control of himself, "Don't stay, Tina. Go back to the settlement."

She smiled, "Across this river?" And he knew she was mocking him again. He did not answer her. He wished the river would swallow her up. "I don't mind going. I'm not afraid," she added, speaking slowly. "I'm not afraid of anything. I'm satisfied. I've seen you again."

And as she rose he heard another voice, clear, fresh and cool, calling, "Jim, Jim, where are you?" and was aware that the worst thing of all had happened. Jenny had wakened and was coming to look after him, as if he were a child and she the nurse.

Tina looked at him sharply and he did not address her. He answered the other woman, his wife, "I'm here. It's all right. You can go back to bed."

But it was too late. Tina was determined to see the other woman. She had lifted the netting and Jenny was moving toward her. The wife wore a night dress of pale crepe de Chine, embroidered and lacy with red Morocco slippers and a lacy little jacket. She looked pretty and young—so much younger than himself or Tina. The two women, it seemed to him, could not have been more different. For an instant it seemed to him that as they stood facing each other, they were symbols of his two lives and he knew that in the end he belonged to the gross adventurous one, fearless and defiant like a man, to whom all life, even to the end as a fat old woman in Penang, was an adventure. He had always

belonged to her since that first night so long ago in the bar of the Hotel des Indes.

With a great effort he said, "This is my wife," and to Jenny he said, "This is Miss de Jongh, an old friend. She heard I was here and came out to see me."

The two women bowed and the wife, if she suspected anything, behaved perfectly. She always behaved perfectly, damn her. She was always civilized and well-bred. He thought now that her perfection would drive him mad. Suddenly it was the other woman, gross and horrible, whom he wanted to stay on the schooner. He heard his wife inviting Tina to stay the night.

"No," said Tina, "your husband thinks I should leave."

The wife protested but Tina said, "No, I must return. There are good reasons." And again she nodded toward the shore and the Portuguese governor. He said nothing but stood dumbly, watching a comedy which he felt was vile and disgusting.

The insects buzzed and the damp heat was like a blanket. Bendham thought, "I hate them both. I can bear it no longer."

Then he saw Tina lifting her flabby bulk, with extraordinary expertness, over the rail to the ladder. He moved to the rail and found that his wife, the soft, white pretty wife he hated, was there before him. Tina slipped from the ladder to the frail, bobbing craft with a wonderful dexterity. He could see her white figure dimly in the light from the ship's lantern.

"You must come again," his wife was saying.

"I think not," said Tina. The little craft bobbed off on the churning river. A solitary monkey screamed on the distant

shore, and again the thought occurred to Bendham that these two women were symbols of his two lives. The one was gone now, moving across the river toward the settlement, slipping always farther and farther from him, never to return. The other, beside him, was there forever, until he died. He could never escape. And for the last time he heard Albertine de Jongh's golden voice. She called out, "Good night," and disappeared.

He felt a sudden mad impulse to push his wife into the swollen river. It was so easy. His head buzzed and he heard her saying, "Jim. What are you doing? For God's sake what's the matter?" and the sound of her voice restored his sense of reason. He was holding her by both arms with the grip of a vise. He released her suddenly and put his hands over his eyes.

"Jim, my poor Jim. Come to bed. What you need is sleep. You haven't slept for days."

She began to stroke his head gently but he stepped away from her, aware that he hated her with an unbearable intensity. The touch of her white, pretty hands filled him with loathing.

"Go away," he said dully. "Go away."

She tried to persuade him but he shook her off with such savagery that she withdrew to a little distance and stood looking at him.

"Do you hear me?" he cried bitterly. "Go below for God's sake and your own. Get out of my sight. I want to be alone."

Silently she disappeared down the companionway and as he turned he saw that the bobbing light had reached the shore. The dogs began to bark again distantly. The light disappeared and he was alone. There were only the insects, millions of

them, buzzing and roaring all about him. He could not breathe.

5

In the morning when Mason and the crew returned they found Mrs. Bendham on the deck with the Malay. She was hysterical and fainted when they told her that Bendham had not come ashore at the settlement. There was no trace of him on the schooner. The body was never found.

The European newspapers printed biographies of James Bendham and long eulogies of his career, relating how he had gone to the East as a boy to build up the great rubber plantations which now supplied half the world with rubber. It was, they pointed out, a romantic career ranging from a boy's adventurous poverty to the fabulous wealth and success of a great capitalist. He had vanished from his schooner-yacht a few weeks before he was destined to receive a peerage.

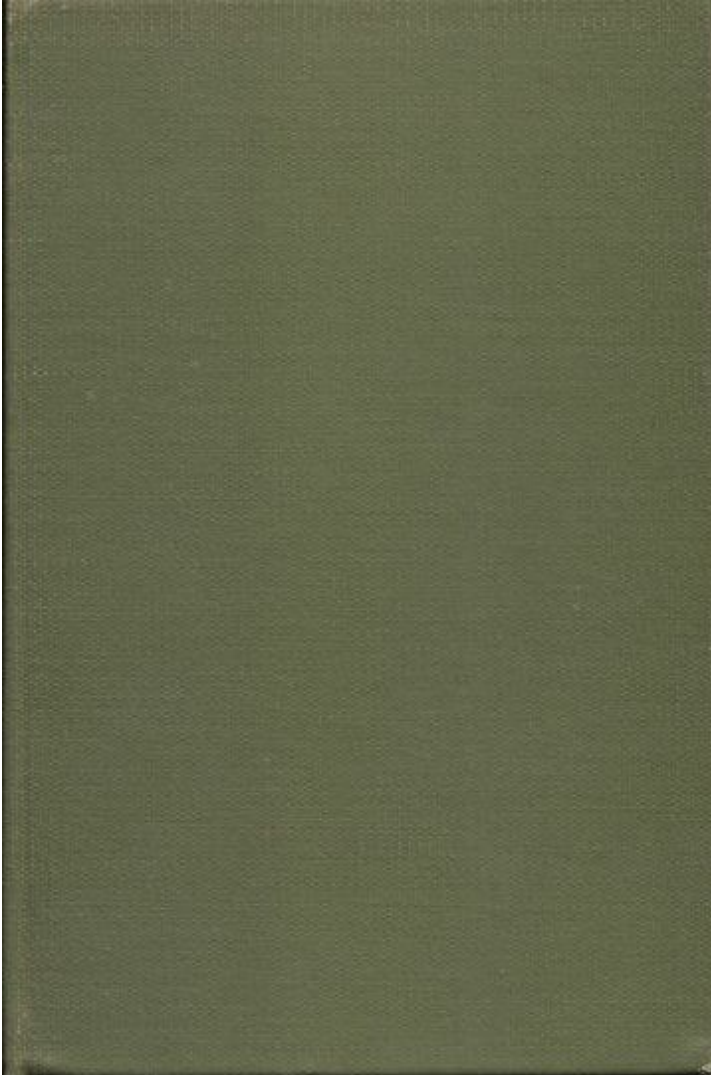
But none of the eulogies concerned themselves with the soul of Bendham.

In the settlement among the natives a strange rumor came into existence. They said that Madame de Jongh, the governor's woman who had disappeared, was a witch and that she had gone out in the middle of the night to destroy the great Tuan Bendham on his own ship. Among themselves they said that he had done her a great wrong twelve years earlier and that she had avenged herself.

And in the bar of the Hotel des Indes, Albertine de Jongh, who was on her way to Penang to grow old and die, sat on a high stool and conversed in her golden voice about old times

with old Vermaeren, the proprietor, who had grown even fatter and balder than when she had last seen him.

“He was not made for that life,” she said. “He was not meant to grow old. He belonged to me always. He could not bear to lose that which never returns.”



[The end of *That Which Never Returns* by Louis Bromfield]