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Class C: <sup>SECOND</sup> PRIZE  
1929.

C74

Island Life in the Pacific

Pro Patria

It was evident that something out of the ordinary was happening, from the excited manner of the noisy crowd of natives gathered on the shore. Out in the calm water of the lagoon, the men were wading towards the shore dragging heavy nets, and the women and children were waiting until they came close enough for them to swim out on boards and spear the fish.

Suddenly, over the low ridge behind the shore, two children raced, shouting "The traders, the traders!" Matsui, the boy, was a yard or two in front of his sister, whom everybody called Fuzz, because that was the name given her by an English trader, and she was so proud of it that she would own no other! Laughing and panting, they came up to the crowd, and pointed over to the opposite side of the island. Immediately there was a stampede, and the whole crowd disappeared in search of the traders.

The brother and sister did not join in this rush, but seizing two of the spears that the women had dropped, they dashed into the water and were soon stabbing at the fish that the men had brought in.

The men had nearly finished their

work, and were hurrying now, for they too, wished to see the traders.

Their work completed, they rushed away, with Matsui close on their heels, but Fuzz, seated on a low mound of sand, remained behind, deep in thought. She was rapidly nearing her twelfth birthday, and so her thoughts somewhat naturally on what her mother had told her the day before, concerning the time when she must have more of her body tattooed. Small as she had been, she remembered the time when they had done her legs, and how she had struggled and screamed, and most of all, how it had hurt. But when she grew frightened, she calmed herself with the thought that Matsui would, when he was seventeen, have to be tattooed down his arms and back.

At that moment, over the ridge came a white man, one of the traders, followed by a noisy crowd of chattering natives. Matsui seized Fuzz, and dragged her away from the excited people. They ran to their hut, smeared their bodies well with coconut oil, to prevent them from catching pneumonia, and dived into the warm water, swimming like fish. They knew there would be no sharks in the lagoon, for they had all been brought in with the other fish. They climbed on to the coral reef which surrounded the lagoon, and Matsui opened a small tin box which he had been holding in his hand all the time he was

swimming. Inside were some biscuits, a string of beads, and a small penknife. Fuzz was delighted with the beads, and arranged them carefully round her neck, while Matsui tested the sharpness of his knife on his fingers, and emitted a sharp 'Ow!' when it cut him. They sat on the reef, eating the biscuits and watching the men on shore bargaining, till the sudden tropical darkness fell, when they plunged once more into the sea, and swam silently to shore, crept up to their hut, and lay down to sleep.

In the morning, Matsui awoke to find his mother mending the hut, for a storm which had not awakened him and Fuzz, had made a hole in the roof. His father was sitting watching, his thick-lipped, flat-nosed face looking extremely fierce.

Meanwhile Fuzz had awakened, and smeared herself with coconut oil. She waited until Matsui had done the same, and then they both ran over the beach into the lagoon. They could not stay long, however, for their mother soon called to them to fetch some fish for breakfast. Other than help prepare the meals, Matsui and his sister had little work to do, and, though it was too hot in the afternoon, they could play in the evenings, when it was a little cooler.

Their only real excitement was when the traders came, but between whiles they managed to get a good deal of fun in life, especially when collecting coconuts from their father's palms, to make copra. They were always

cheerful, and nearly always playing, yet  
always ready to help when it was needed.

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Books Consulted

'Life and Laughter 'Midst the Cannibals' by  
Clifford Collinson.

'Life in the South Seas' by A and C. Black.

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