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THE STRANGE ADVENTURE OF JAMES SHERVINTON

By Louis Becke

T. FISHER UNWIN, 1902

LONDON

The Strange Adventure of James Shervinton and Other Stories . .

By

Louis Becke

Author of "Breachley, Black Sheep,"
"By Reef and Palm," etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON
T. FISHER UNWIN
PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1902

CONTENTS

[*CHAPTER I*](#)

[CHAPTER II](#)
[CHAPTER III](#)
[CHAPTER IV](#)
[CHAPTER V](#)
[CHAPTER VI](#)
[CHAPTER VII](#)
[CHAPTER VIII](#)
[CHAPTER IX](#)
[CHAPTER X](#)
[CHAPTER XI](#)
[CHAPTER XII](#)
[CHAPTER XIII](#)
[CHAPTER XIV](#)
[CHAPTER XV](#)
[CHAPTER XVI](#)

Illustrations

[*Titlepage*](#)

[*Sailing Across the Lagoon to his Station*](#)

[*The Man Tematau Came to the Door*](#)

[*Met Me With Outstretched Hand*](#)

[*Hand Shot out and Grasped Me by the Throat*](#)

[*Krause Lay on his Back in the Centre of The Room*](#)

[*Directed My Steps Towards the Great Open-sided Moniep*](#)

[*Fishing As if Nothing Unusual Had Occurred*](#)

[*I Spread the Chart out on The Table*](#)

[*I Hurried Down to the Beach*](#)

[*Two Good Coatings of Red Lead*](#)

[*Accompanied by Thirty Or Forty Canoes*](#)

[*Began Their Flying-fish Catching*](#)

[*She Came Boldly on*](#)

[*How We Escaped Broaching to*](#)

[*I Could Not But Admire and Envy*](#)

[*Carrying Nets and Fish Baskets*](#)

[*I Waited Until My Hand Was a Bit Steady*](#)

[*A Glorious Silver Moon in the Sky*](#)

[*Saw a Barque Lying on the Reef*](#)

[*He Had Sailed*](#)

[*At Last We Reached the Ship*](#)

[*Lifting Us up on the Summit of Its Awful Crest*](#)

CHAPTER I

The night was close and stifling, and the dulled bellowing of the surf on the weather side of the island told me that the calm was about to break at last, and in another hour or so the thirsty, sandy soil would be drenched with the long-expected rain, and the drooping palms and pandanus trees wave their wearied branches to the cooling trade-wind once more.

I rose from my rough bed of cane-work and mats, and, lighting my pipe, went outside, walked down to the beach, and seating myself on a canoe, looked out upon the wide expanse of ocean, heaving under a dark and lowering sky, and wondered moodily why I was ever such an idiot as to take charge of a trading station on such a God-forsaken place as Tarawa Island in the Gilbert Group.

My house—or rather the collection of thatched huts which formed the trading station—stood quite apart from the native village, but not so far that I could not hear the murmur of voices talking in their deep, hoarse, guttural tongue, and see, moving to and fro on the beach, the figures of women and children sent out to see that the fleet of canoes lying on the beach was safe beyond the reach of the waves which the coming storm would send in sweeping, endless lines across the outer reef to the foot of the coco-palms fringing the low-lying, monotonous shore.

The day had been a more than usually depressing one with me; and I had had many depressing days for the last four months. First of all, ever since I had landed on the island, nearly half a year before, I had suffered from bad health. Malarial fever, contracted in the gloomy, rain-soaked forests of New Ireland and New Britain, had poisoned my blood, soured my temper, and all but made me an old man at seven-and-twenty years of age. Violent attacks of ague, recurring with persistent and diabolical regularity every week for many months, had so weakened me, that although I was able to attend to my business and do justice to my employers, I felt that I should never live to see the end of my two years' engagement unless I either shook off the fever or was enabled to leave the torrid regions of the Equatorial Pacific for a cooler climate—such as Samoa or the Marquesas or Society Islands. The knowledge, moreover, of the fact that the fever was slowly but surely killing me, and that there was no prospect of my being relieved by my employers and sent elsewhere—for I had neither money, friends, nor influence—was an additional factor towards sending me into such a morbid condition of mind that I had often contemplated the idea—weak and ill as I was—of leaving the island alone in my whaleboat, and setting sail for Fiji or Samoa, more than a thousand miles distant.

Most people may, perhaps, think that such an idea could only emanate in the brain of a lunatic; but such things had been done, time and time again, in my own knowledge in the Pacific, and as the fever racked my bones and tortured my brain, and the fear of death upon this lonely island assailed me in the long, long hours of night as I lay groaning and sweltering, or shaking with ague upon my couch of mats, the thought of the whale-boat so constantly recurred to me even in my more cheerful moments, when I was free from pain, that eventually I half formed a resolution to make the attempt.

For at the root of the despondency that ever overpowered me after a violent attack of ague there was a potent and never dormant agent urging me to action which kept me alive; and that was my personal vanity and desire to distinguish myself before I died, or when I died.

For ten years I had sailed in the South Seas, and had had my full share of adventure and exciting episode, young as I was, as befell those who, in the "sixties" and "seventies," ranged the Western and North-Western Pacific. But though I had been thrice through the murderous Solomon Group as "recruiter" for a Fijian labour vessel—"blackbirders" or "slavers" these craft are designated by good people who know nothing of the subject, and judge the Pacific Islands labour trade by two or three dreadful massacres perpetrated by Englishmen in the past—I had "never done anything."

And to have "done something" in those days meant something worth talking about, something that would give a man a name and a place in the ranks of the daring men who had spent nearly all their lives in the South Seas. Little Barney Watt, the chief engineer of the *Ripple*, when the captain and most of the crew had been slaughtered by the niggers of Bougainville Island, had shut himself up in the deck-house, and, wounded badly as he was, shot seventeen of them dead with his Winchester, and cleared the steamer's decks. Then, with no other white man to help, he succeeded in bringing the *Ripple* to Sydney; Cameron, the shark-fisher, after his crew mutinied at Wake Island, escaped with his native wife in a dinghy, and made a voyage of fifteen hundred miles to the Marshall Group; Collier, of Tahiti, when the barque of which he was mate was seized by the native passengers off Peru Island and every white man of the crew but himself was murdered, blew up the vessel's main deck and killed seventy of the treacherous savages. Then, with but three native seamen and two little native girls to assist him, he sailed the barque back safely to Tahiti. And wherever men gathered together in the South Seas—in Levuka, in Apia, in Honolulu, in Papeite—you would hear them talk of "Barney Watt," and "Cameron," and "Jack Collier."

Should I, "Jim Sherry," ever succeed in doing something similar? Would Fate be kind to me and give me a chance to distinguish myself, not only among my fellows, but to make my name known to that outside world from which in a fit of sullen resentment I had so long severed myself?

As I sat on the mat-covered canoe, moody yet feverish, the first squall of rain came sweeping shoreward from the darkened sea-rim, and in a few minutes my burning skin was drenched and cooled from head to foot. Heedless of the storm, however, I remained without moving, watching the curling, phosphorescent breakers tumbling on the reef and listening with a feeling of pleasure to the rush and seethe of the rain squalls as they swept through the dense groves of coco-palms behind me.

Presently I rose, and walking over to my boat-shed, which was but a few yards distant, I endeavoured to close the rough wooden doors so as to prevent the rain from blowing in and flooding the ground. But my strength was not equal to the task, for a puff of more than usual violence not only tore the handle of the door from my hand, but blew me inside the house. Feeling my way in the darkness along the boat's side, I reached

her stern, where I was sheltered, and searched my saturated pockets to see if by any chance I had a box of matches, so that I could light my boat's lantern and have a look round the shed. I found a few loose ones, but so wetted as to be useless, and was just about to return to my dwelling-house in disgust, when I heard my name called softly, and a hand touched my knee.

"Who is it?" I said, greatly startled that any one should be in the boat-shed at such a time.

"'Tis I, Niâbon, the Danger Island girl; and Tematau lieth here on the ground near me. His master hath beaten him so that he is near to death. And we have come to seek aid from thee."

I knew the speaker, but did not question her any further at the time, beyond asking her if he whom she called Tematau could rise and walk to the house. She replied in the affirmative, but the injured man was so weak that the girl and I had to support him between us and grope our way over to the house in face of the furious wind and driving rain. The moment we were inside we laid the injured man down, and I struck a match and lit a lamp, whilst Niâbon shut and locked the door, not against any possible intruders, but to keep out the rain and wind. Then, before doing anything else, I went into the store-room and got the woman a change of clothes—a rough, ready-made print gown such as the native women occasionally wear—and a warm rug for the man, who was wearing only the usual *airiri* or girdle of long grass, and then, changing my own sodden garments as quickly as possible, Niâbon and I gave our attention to her companion.

The poor fellow had been fearfully beaten. The whole of his back, arms, and thighs were in a dreadful state, and the rain had caused the wounds to bleed afresh. But the worst injury was a deep cut on the face, extending from the lower left eyelid to the lobe of the ear, and exposing the bone. My surgery was none of the best, but I succeeded at last in sewing up the wound satisfactorily, the patient bearing the pain without flinching, and pressing my hand in gratitude when I told him I could do no more. As for his other injuries, the girl assured me that she herself would apply proper native remedies in the morning; and, knowing how very clever these natives are in such matters, I attempted nothing further beyond giving the man a glass or two of grog and a tin of sardines and some bread to eat.

"Niâbon," I said to the girl, whose face was stern and set, "thou, too, must eat and then lie on my conch and sleep. I will sit here and read my book and watch the sick man, for the fever is in my bones to-night and I cannot sleep. So eat and rest."

She shook her head. "Nay, I feel no hunger, Simi,* and I would sit here with thee if it offend not. And then when the cold seizeth thee at the time when the dawn pushes away the night I can boil thee thy coffee."

* *Jim-pronounced Seemee.*

I was somewhat surprised that she knew that at dawn I usually had an attack of ague, for she lived ten miles away, and seldom even met any of the natives of the village where I was stationed, though she was well known to them by reputation. However, I was too ill and wearied at the time to think anything more of the matter, so after thanking her for her offer to sit up and attend the unfortunate Tematau I lay down on a cane lounge in the room and watched her making a cigarette.

"Shall I fill thy pipe, Simi?" she asked me as she approached me in a manner so self-reliant and unconcerned, and yet so dignified, that physically and mentally exhausted as I was I could not but feel astonished. For to me she was nothing more—as far as her appearance went—than an ordinary native woman, although I had quite often heard her name spoken in whispers as one who had dealings with the spirits and who had supernatural protection, and all that sort of stuff.

"No, thank you, Niabon," I replied, unintentionally speaking in English, "I must not smoke again tonight."

She smiled and seated herself on a mat beside my couch, then rising suddenly she placed her hand on mine, and said as she looked into my eyes—

"Why do you speak Englis* to me, Simi? Who has been tell you I understan' Englis'?"

"No one, Niâbon. I did not know you could speak English or even understand it. Who taught you?"

"I shall tell thee at some other time," she replied in the Tarawa dialect, and then pointing to the figure of her companion she said she was sure a smoke would do him good. I gave her a new clay pipe, which she filled, lit, and placed in Tematau's mouth. He drew at it with such a deep sigh of satisfaction that the woman's stern features relaxed into a smile.

"My blessing on thee, Simi," said the man, as he blew a stream of smoke through his nostrils; "in but a few days I shall be strong, and then there shall be but one white man alive on Tarawa—thysself."

Niâbon angrily bade him be silent and make no threats; it would be time enough, she said, to talk of revenge when he was able to put a gun to his shoulder or a hand to his knife.

"How came this thing about?" I asked her presently.

"The German sent Tematau away in his boat to one of the little islands at the far end of the lagoon to gather coco-nuts, and bade him hasten back quickly. Tematau and those with him filled the boat with husked coco-nuts, and were sailing homewards in the night when she struck on a reef and tore a great hole in her side. Then the surf broke her in pieces, and Tematau and the other men had to swim long hours to reach the shore. And as thou knowest, the north end of the lagoon hath many sharks, and it is bad to swim there at night even for a little time."

"Bad indeed, Niâbon," I said, with a shudder; "'tis a wonder that any one of them reached the shore."

She smiled mysteriously. "They were safe, for each one had around his neck a cord of black cinnet interwoven with the hair of a sea-ghost. So they came to no harm."

She spoke with such calm assurance that I carefully abstained from even a smile. Then she went on—

"When they reached the white man's house and told him that the boat was lost he became mad with rage, and seizing a hatchet he hurled it at Tematau and cut his face open. Then as he fell to the ground the German seized a whip of twisted shark-skin and beat him until he could beat no longer."

Then she went on to tell me that the unfortunate man was carried to the house where she lived, and she, knowing that I should be well able and willing to protect him, decided to bring him to me. The only difficulty

that presented itself to her was that the people of the village in which I lived, though not exactly at enmity with the natives of the north end of the island, were distinctly averse to holding any more communication with them than was absolutely necessary, and a refugee such as Tematau would either be turned back or kept as a slave. For, for nearly fifty-five years internecine feuds had been kept alive among the various clans on the island, and had caused terrible slaughter on many occasions. Whole villages had been given to the flames, and every soul, even children in arms, massacred by the conquering party. The advent of white men as traders had, however, been of great advantage to the island generally in one respect—the savage, intractable inhabitants began to recognise the fact that so long as they warred among themselves the white man would be averse to remaining among them, and consequently for the four years previous to my arrival on Tarawa there had been no tribal battle, though isolated murders were by no means uncommon. But owing to the white men's influence an amicable arrangement was always arrived at by the contending parties, i.e., the relatives of the murdered man and the aggressors.

It was for this reason that Niâbon had brought the injured man to my village by a very circuitous route, so as to avoid meeting any of the people. Once he and she were inside my house to claim my protection there would be no further difficulty. She had succeeded in getting her companion into my boat-shed unobserved, and when the storm burst was patiently awaiting darkness so that she might bring the man to me.

That was her story, and now I will relate something of the woman herself and of the white man of whom she had spoken, the German trader Krause.

CHAPTER II

When I first landed on Tarawa, this man, whose name was Krause, according to the usual custom among us traders, called to see me. He was a big, broad-shouldered, good-looking fellow, and certainly was very civil and obliging to me in many ways, although I was an "opposition" trader; and a new man is never welcome from a business point of view, no matter how much he may be liked for social reasons, especially in the God-forsaken Equatorial Pacific, where whilst your fellow-trader is ready to share his last bottle of grog and his last tin of beef with you, he is anxious to cut your throat from a business point of view. Krause, however, did not seem to—and I honestly believe did not actually—entertain any ill-feeling towards me as a rival trader, although I was landed on the island with such a stock of new trade goods that he must at once have recognised the fact that my advent would do him serious injury, inasmuch as his employers (the big German trading firm in Hamburg) had not sent him any fresh stock for six months. Like most Germans of any education whom one meets in the South Seas, or anywhere else, he was a good native linguist, though, like all his countrymen, he did not *understand* natives like Englishmen or Americans understand wild races. He had no regard nor sympathy for them, and looked upon even the highly intelligent Polynesian peoples with whom he had had much dealing as mere "niggers"—to study whose feelings, sentiments, opinions or religious belief, was beneath the consideration of an European. But although he thus despised the natives generally from one end of the Pacific to the other, he had enough sense to keep his opinions reasonably well to himself, only expressing his contempt for them to his fellow traders, or to any other white men with whom he came in contact.



I SAILED DOWN THE LAGOON TO HIS STATION IN MY WHALEBOAT.

[To face p. 12

A few weeks after my arrival on the island I paid him a visit, sailing across the lagoon to his station in my

whaleboat. On reaching his place I found that he was away from home on a trip to one of his minor outlying stations, and would not return till the evening. Somewhat disappointed at missing him, I got out of my boat with the intention of at least resting in one of the native huts for half an hour, so as to be out of the intense heat and glare of a torrid sun, when one of Krause's servants came down and said that the trader's wife would be glad if I would come to her husband's station and there await his return.

Glad to accept the invitation, for I was weak and tired out from fever, and ready to lie down almost anywhere out of the sun, I walked wearily along the beach and entered the house.

To my intense surprise, there came to meet me at the door, not the usual style of native wife one generally sees in most traders' houses—a good-looking young woman with a flaming blouse, and more flaming skirt of hideously coloured print, and fingers covered with heavy gold rings—but a slenderly-built pale-complexioned woman of apparently thirty years of age, dressed in a light yellow muslin gown, such as the Portuguese ladies of Macao and the Mariana Islands wear. The moment I saw her I knew that she had but a very slight strain of native blood in her veins, and when she spoke her voice sounded very sweet and refined.

"Will you not come inside and rest, sir?" she said in English. "My husband is away, and will not be back until about sunset; he will be very disappointed to have missed you."

"Thank you, Mrs. Krause," I replied; "I think I must accept your invitation, as I feel a bit shaky, and it has been so very hot crossing the lagoon." "Very, very hot, indeed, Mr. Sherry," she said, as she motioned me to enter the front room; "and I know what malarial fever is; for I once lived at Agana, in Guam, and have seen many people who have come there from the Philippine Islands to recruit. Now, lie down there on that cane lounge, beside the open window, and let me bring you something to drink—something cool. What would you like? There is lager beer, there is very cold water from a canvas water-bag, and there is some hock."

I gratefully took a long drink of the cold water, and then, instead of lying down, seated myself in a wide cane chair, and began to talk to my hostess, who sat on the lounge a few feet away, and now that I had an opportunity of closer observation, I saw that she was—despite her pallor and worn appearance—a woman of the very greatest beauty and grace.

It was so long since I had even talked to a white woman, even of the commonest class, that I could not but be insensibly attracted to her, and when in a few minutes she smiled at something I said about my longing to get away to Samoa, even if I had to sail there alone in my whaleboat, the faint flush that tinged her cheek seemed to so transfigure her that she looked like a girl of nineteen or twenty. She talked to me for nearly an hour, and I noticed that although we conversed principally about the Line Islands, and the natives, and of our few white neighbours scattered throughout the group, and their idiosyncrasies—humorous and otherwise—she hardly ever mentioned her husband's name, except when I asked her some direct question concerning him, such as the number of his outlying stations, was he fond of fishing or shooting, etc.

In some way I came to the conclusion that she was an unhappy woman as far as her relations with her husband went; and without the slightest reason whatever to guide me to such an inference, felt that he, and not she, was to blame; and even as we talked, there was unconsciously taking possession of me a dislike to a man from whom I had experienced nothing but civility and kindness. Just as she was leaving the room to attend to her household duties, the man Tematau came to the door, carrying a string of freshly-husked young drinking coco-nuts. At a sign from his mistress, he opened one and brought it to me, and then leaving a few beside my chair, took the remainder down to my boat's crew.



**THE MAN TEMATAU CAME TO THE DOOR CARRYING A STRING OF
FRESHLY-HUSKED COCO-NUTS**

[To face p 14.

"That is Tematau, my husband's head boatman," said my hostess in her soft tones, as she watched him walking down to the beach; "he is so different from these noisy, quarrelsome Tarawa people, that I am always glad to have him about the house when he is not wanted in the boats. He is so quick, and yet so quiet."

"I thought he did not look like a Tarawa native," I said, "and I saw that he is tattooed like a Samoan."

"He has lived in Samoa for a great many years, and is very proud of that tattooing, I am sure. He is a native of Danger Island, a long way to the south-east of this group, and came here about a year ago with a girl named Niàbon." She hesitated a little. "I suppose you have not heard of her?"

"No, I have not. Who is she?"

"They—that is, the natives generally, and some of the whites as well—call her 'the Danger Island witch woman.'"

"Oh, yes," I exclaimed, "I *have* heard of the 'witch woman,' but that was when I was trading at Gallic Harbour on Admiralty Island. There was a poor fellow there, Hairy Willard, who was dying of poison given him by some chief, and I remember quite well his wife, who was a Tahitian, telling me that if the witch woman of Danger Island was near she would quickly render the poison innocuous."

Mrs. Krause's dark eyes lit up with undoubted pleasure—"I must tell her that—"

"Is she living on Tarawa, then?"

"Yes, in this village, and she is in the house at this moment. She would like to speak to you. Do you mind her coming in?" "Indeed, I shall be very pleased." My hostess stood at the table for a few moments, with her face averted from me. Then she turned and spoke to me, and to my astonishment I saw that she was struggling hard to suppress her tears. I rose and led her to a seat.

"You are not well, Mrs. Krause," I said. "Sit down, and let me call one of your servants."

"No, please do not do that, Mr. Sherry. But I will sit down, and—and I should like to ask you a question."

She was trembling as she spoke, but suddenly whipped out her handkerchief, dried her tears, and sat up erect.

"Mr. Sherry, you are an Englishman, or an American—I do not know which—but I am sure that you are a gentleman and will truthfully answer the question I ask. Will you not?"

"I will, indeed, if it is in my power to do so," I replied earnestly.

She placed her hand on mine and looked at me steadily.

"Mr. Sherry, you and I have been talking on various matters for more than an hour. Have I, in your opinion, given you the impression that I am mentally deranged? Look at me. Tell me—for I am an unhappy, heartbroken woman, whose life for two years has been a daily torture and misery—what you *do* think. Sometimes I imagine that what my husband says *may* be true—and then I collapse and wish I were dead."

"What does he say, Mrs. Krause?"

"He says that I am mad, and he says it so persistently that—oh, Mr. Sherry, I feel that before long I *shall* go mad in reality. It is only this woman Niàbon who sustains me. But for her I should have run out along the reef and drowned myself a year ago. Now, tell me, Mr. Sherry, do you think it possible that owing to the continuous strain upon me mentally and physically—for I am really very weak, and had a long illness two years ago when my baby was born—that my mind has become unhinged in any way?"

"I think, Mrs. Krause," I said slowly and very emphatically, "that your husband himself must be mad."

She wept silently, and then, again averting her face, looked away from me towards the wide expanse of the lagoon, gleaming hot and silvery under a blazing sun.

"I wish that what you say were true, Mr. Sherry," she said presently, trying bravely to suppress her tears, "and that my husband were indeed mad."

She rose, extended her hand to me, and tried to smile.

"You will think that I am a very silly woman, Mr. Sherry. But I am not at all strong, and you must forgive me. Now I must leave you."

"But am I not to see the famous witch woman, Mrs. Krause?" I said half jestingly.

"Oh, yes. She shall come to you presently. And you will like her, Mr. Sherry, I am sure. To me she has been the kindest, kindest friend." Then she paused awhile, but resumed in a nervous, hesitating manner, "Niaban is sometimes a little strange in her manner, so—so you must not mind all that she may say or do."

I assured her that I should be most careful to avoid giving any offence to the woman. She thanked me earnestly, and then said she would find Niàbon and bring or send her to me.

Just as she went out I heard some one tapping at the latticed window near which I was sitting. Looking out, I saw the face of the man Tematau, who was standing outside.

"May I come in and speak with thee, gentleman?" he said in Samoan.

"Enter, and welcome."

He stepped round to the front door, and as he entered I saw that he had stripped to the waist; his hair was dressed in the Samoan fashion, and in his hand he carried a small, finely-plaited mat. In an instant I recognised that he was paying me a visit of ceremony, according to Samoan custom, so instead of rising and shaking hands with him, I kept my seat and waited for him to approach.

Stepping slowly across the matted floor, with head and shoulders bent, he placed the mat (his offering) at my feet, and then withdrew to the other side of the room, and, seating himself cross-legged, he inquired after my health, etc., and paid me the usual compliments.

As he spoke in Samoan, I, of course, replied in the same language, thanked him for his call, and requested him to honour me at my own place by a visit.

Then, to my surprise, instead of retiring with the usual Samoan compliments, he bent forward, and, fixing his deep-set, gloomy eyes on mine, he said slowly—

"Master, I shall be a true man to thee when we are together upon the deep sea in thy boat."

"Why dost thou call me 'master'?" I said quickly, "and when and whither do thee and I travel together?" "I call thee 'master' because I am thy servant, but when and whither we go upon the far sea I know not."

Then he rose, saluted me as if I were King Malietoa of Samoa himself, and retired without uttering another word.

"This is a curious sort of a household," I thought. "The mistress, who is sane enough, is told by her husband that she is mad, and fears she will lose her reason; a native who tells me that I am to be his master and travel with him on the deep sea, and a witch woman, whom I have yet to see, on the premises. I wonder what sort of a crank *she* is?"

I was soon to know, for in a few moments she came in, and instead of coming up to me and shaking hands in the usual Line Island fashion, as I expected she would do, she did precisely as my first visitor had done—greeted me in Samoan, formally and politely, as if I were a great chief, and then sat silent, awaiting me to speak.

Addressing her in the same stilted, highly complimentary language that she had used to me, I inquired after her health, etc., and then asked her how long she had been on the island.

She answered me in a somewhat abrupt manner, "I came here with Tematau about the time that the white

lady Lucia and her husband came. Tematau is of the same family as myself. And it is of the blood ties between us that we remain together, for we are the last of many."

"It is good that it is so," I said, for want of something better to say, for her curious eyes never left my face for an instant. "It would be hard indeed that when but two of the same blood are left they should separate or be separated."

"We shall be together always," she replied, "and death will come to us together."

Then she rose, walked quickly to the open door, glanced outside to see if any one was about, and returned to me and placed her hand on mine.

"This man Krause is a devil. He seeks his wife's death because of another woman in his own country. He hath tried to poison her, and the poison still rankles in her blood. That is why she is so white of face and frail of body. And now she will neither eat nor drink aught but that of which I first eat or drink myself."

"How know you of this?"

"I know it well," she answered impressively, "and the man would kill me if he could by poison, as he hath tried to kill his wife. But poison can do me no harm. And he hateth but yet is afraid of me, for he knoweth that I long since saw the murder in his heart."

"These are strange things to say, Niābon. Beware of an unjust accusation when it comes to the too ready tongue."

She laughed scornfully. "No lie hath ever fouled mine. I tell thee again, this man is a devil, and has waited for a year past to see his wife die, for he married her according to the laws of England, and cannot put her away as he could do had he married her according to the native custom."

"Who hath told thee of these marriage laws of England?" I asked.

"What does it matter who hath told me?" she asked sharply. "Is not what I say true?"

"It is true," I said.

"Ay, it is true. And it is true also that she and thee and the man Tematau and I shall together look death in the face upon the wide sea. And is not thy boat ready?"

Her strange, mysterious eyes as she spoke seemed to me—a physically weak but still mentally strong man at the moment—to have in them something weird, something that one could not affect either to ignore or despise. What could this woman know of my desire to leave the island in my boat? What could the man Tematau know of it? Never had I spoken of such an intention to any person, and I knew that, even in my worst attacks of fever and ague, I had never been delirious in the slightest degree. A sudden resentment for the moment took possession of me, and I spoke angrily.

"What is all this silly talk? What have I to do with thee, and for what should my boat be ready?"

"Be not angry with them, Simi, for there is nought but goodwill toward thee in my heart. See, wouldst have me cure the hot fever that makes the blood in thy veins to boil even now?"

"No," I said sullenly, "I want none of thy foolish charms or medicines. Dost think I am a fool?"

"Nay," and she looked at me so wistfully that I at once repented of my harsh manner—"nay, indeed, Simi. Thou art a man strong in thy mind, and shall be strong in thy body if thou wouldst but let me give thee——"

"No more, woman," I said roughly. "Leave me. I want none of thy medicines, I say again."

"Thy wish is my law," she said gently, "but, ere I leave thee, I pray thee that in a little way thou wilt let me show thee that I *do* mean well to thee."

I laughed, and asked her what medicine or charm she desired to experiment with upon me.

"No medicine, and no charm," she answered. "But I know that because of many things thy mind and thy body alike suffer pain, and that sleep would be good for thee. And I can give thee sleep—strong, dreamless sleep that, when thou awakenest, will make thee feel strong in thy body and softer in thy now angry heart to Niābon."

"If you can make me sleep now, I'll give you twenty dollars," I said in my English fashion.

She took no notice of my rude and clumsy remark, though she had good reason to be offended.

"Simi," she said, "shall I give thee sleep?"

"Ay," I replied, "give me sleep till the master of this house returns."

She rose and bent over me, and then I noticed for the first time that, instead of being about thirty-five or forty years of age, as I had judged her to be by her hard, clear features and somewhat "bony" appearance externally, she could not be more than five-and-twenty, or even younger.

She placed her right hand on my forehead, and held my right hand in her own.

"Sleep," she said—"sleep well and dreamlessly, man with the strong will to accomplish all that is before thee. Sleep."

Her hand passed caressingly over my face, and in a few minutes I *was* asleep, and slept as I had not slept for many weeks past. When I awakened at sunset I felt more refreshed and vigorous than I had been for many months.



**KRAUSE HAD JUST RETURNED IN HIS BOAT, AND MET ME WITH
OUTSTRETCHED HAND.**

[To face p. 22.]

Krause had just returned in his boat, and met me with outstretched hand. His welcome was, I thought, unnecessarily effusive, and, declining his pressing invitation to remain for the night, I left, after remaining an hour or so longer. I noticed that immediately Krause arrived the girl Niâbon disappeared, and did not return.

That was my first meeting with her, and I did not see her again till the evening of the storm, when she brought Tematau to me.

CHAPTER III

We, Niâbon, Tematau and myself, were undisturbed by any visitors during the night, for the storm increased in violence, and, as daylight approached, the clamour of the surf upon the reef was something

terrific. About four in the morning, however, there came such a thunderous, sudden boom that the island seemed shaken to its coral foundations, and Niâbon declared that the storm had broken.

"That is what the people of the Tokelau Islands call *O le fati le galu*—the last great wave, that gathering itself together far out on the ocean, rushes to the reef, and curling high up as the mast of a ship, falls and shakes the land from one side to the other."

The girl knew what she was talking about, for from that moment the fury of the wind sensibly decreased, and half an hour later we were able to open the door and gaze out upon the sea, still seething white with broken, tumbling surf?

Walking down to my boat-house, I found that the boat herself was not injured in any way, though most of the roof had been blown away. Then feeling that my usual attack of ague was coming on, I returned to the house, and found that Niâbon had made my coffee.

I drank it, and then wrapped myself up in a couple of blankets in readiness for the first touch of that deadly, terrible chill which seems to freeze the marrow in the bones of any one who is suffering from malarial fever. Niâbon watched me gravely, and then came and stood beside me.

"Mr. Sherry," she said, this time speaking in English, "why don't you let me give you some medicine to cure you of that fever? I *can* cure you."

"I believe you can, Niâbon," I replied; "you certainly mesmerised me when I was at Krause's station that day, and I awakened feeling a lot better."

"What is 'mesmerise'?" she asked quickly.

"Sending any one to sleep, as you did me."

"I can always do that," she said simply, "and so could my mother."

"Can you make me sleep now?"

"Not just now. Wait till the col' fit has gone. And then when you are wake up I shall have some medicine ready for you, and then you shall have no more fever."

My attack of ague lasted about half an hour, and left me with the usual splitting headache and aching bones. When I was able to turn myself, I saw that Niâbon was seated beside Tematau dressing his lacerated back with some preparation of crushed leaves. She heard me move, turned her head, and smiled, and said she would be with me in a few moments. Although my head was bursting with pain, I watched her with interest, noting the tenderness with which her smooth, brown fingers touched her companion's body. When she had finished she rose, carefully washed and dried her shapely hands, and came over to me.

"Give me thy hand," she said in the native dialect, as she knelt beside my couch.

I gave her my left hand. She clasped it firmly but softly, and then the fingers of her right hand gently pressed down my eyelids.

"Sleep, sleep long."

As I felt the gentle pressure of her hand down my face, my throbbing temples cooled, and in a minute, or even less, I sank into a dreamless and profound slumber.

When I awakened it was past nine o'clock, and I found that my own two native servants, who slept in the village, had prepared my breakfast, and were seated beside Tematau, talking to him.

"Where is Niâbon?" I asked.

They told me that she had gone away in search of some plant, or plants, with which to compound the medicine she was making for me. She returned early in the forenoon, carrying a small basket in which I saw a coil of the long creeping vine called '*At 'At*' by the natives, and which grows only on the sandiest and most barren soil.

"Have you been sleep well, Mr. Sherry?" she inquired.

"Indeed I did sleep well," I replied, "and, more than that, I have eaten a better breakfast than I have for many weeks."

She nodded and showed me the contents of her basket, and then seating herself at the table, ate a small piece of ship biscuit and drank a cup of coffee. It was then that I noticed for the first time that she was, if not beautiful, a very handsome woman. Her face and hands were a reddish brown, darkened the more by the sun, for I could see under the thin muslin gown that she was wearing, that her arms and shoulders were of a much lighter hue, and I felt sure that she had some white blood in her veins. Her hair was, though somewhat coarse, yet long, wavy, and luxuriant, and was coiled loosely about her shapely head, one thick fold drooping over her left temple, and shading half of the smooth forehead with its jet-black and gracefully arched eyebrows. This is as much as I can say about her looks, and as regards her dress, that is easy enough to describe. She invariably wore a loose muslin or print gown, waistless, and fastened at the neck; underneath this was the ordinary Samoan *lava lava* or waist-cloth of navy blue calico. Her gown, however, was better made, and of far better material than those worn by the native women generally; in fact she and Mrs. Krause dressed much alike, with the exception that the latter, of course, wore shoes, and Niâbon's stockingless feet were protected only by rude sandals of coco-nut fibre such as are still worn by the natives of the Tokelaus and other isolated and low-lying islands of the Equatorial Pacific.

After making and smoking a cigarette she set about compounding my fever mixture by first crushing up the coil of '*At 'At*' and then expressing the thick colourless jelly it contained into the half of a coco-nut shell, which she placed on some glowing embers, and fanned gently till it began to give off steam. Then taking half a dozen ripe Chili berries, she pounded them into a pulp between two stones, added them to the '*At 'At*', and stirred the mixture till it boiled.

"That is all, Simi," she said, as she removed the shell from the fire, and set it aside; "when it is cool enough to drink, you must take one-fourth part; another when the sun is *tu'u tonu iluga* (right overhead), and the rest to-night."

I thanked her, and promised to carry out her instructions, and then said—

"Why do you talk to me in three different languages, Niâbon? I like to hear you speak English best, you speak it so prettily."

Not the ghost of a smile crossed her face, and she replied in Samoan that she did not care to speak English to any one who understood Samoan, or indeed any other native language. "I am a native woman," she added somewhat abruptly, "and English cometh hard to my tongue."

I said nothing further on the subject, fearing I might vex her, although I felt pretty sure that she was *not* a full-blooded native. However, I had no right to worry her with questions, and if she preferred to be thought a native it was no business of mine.

As soon as my medicine had cooled a little, I took my first dose. It tasted like Hades boiled down, and made me gasp for breath. Then Niâbon bade me wrap myself up in all the rugs and blankets I could procure, and undergo a good perspiration, assuring me that I should have no more attacks of the dreaded ague after the second dose. Calling one of my native servants, a big hulking native named Tepi, to come and roll me up presently, I first went over to Tematau, and asked him how he was doing, and as I stooped down to examine his head, and see if the dressing was all right, a heavy booted footstep sounded outside, and Krause walked in.

One look at his face showed me that he was labouring with suppressed passion, though trying hard to conceal it.

"Good morning," I said without advancing to him; "take that chair over there, please. I just want to look at this fellow's head for a moment."

He stalked over to the chair I indicated and sat down, and a sudden spasm of rage distorted his face when he saw Niâbon. She was seated at the further end of the room, her chin resting on her hand, and looking at him so steadily and fixedly that he could not but have resented her gaze, even if his mind were undisturbed by passion. Tematau, too, turned his head, and shot his master a glance of such deadly fury that I murmured to him to keep quiet. I rapidly revolved in my mind what course to pursue with our visitor, who, though I could not see his face, was, I felt, watching my every movement.

"That will do," I said to my patient in the island dialect, which Krause understood and spoke thoroughly; "lie down again. In a few days thou wilt be able to walk."

"By God, he's going to walk *now*," said Krause, rising suddenly, and speaking in a low, trembling tone. I motioned to him to sit down again. He shook his head and remained standing, his brawny hand grasping the back of the chair to steady himself, for every nerve in his body was quivering with excitement.

"What is the matter, Mr. Krause?" I said coldly, though I was hot enough against him, for he was armed with a brace of navy revolvers, belted around his waist. "Won't you sit down?"

"No, I won't sit down," he answered rudely.

"Very well, then, stand," I said, seating myself near him.

Then I pointed to the pistols in his belt. "Mr. Krause, before you tell me the business which has brought you here, I should like to know why you enter my house carrying arms? It is a most extraordinary thing that one white man should call on another armed with a brace of pistols, especially when the island is quiet, and white men's lives are as safe here as they would be in London or Berlin."

"I brought my pistols with me because I thought I might have trouble with the natives over that fellow there," he said sullenly, pointing to Tematau.

"Then you might have left them outside; I object most strongly to any one marching into my house in the manner you have done."

He unbuckled his belt, and with a contemptuous gesture threw the whole lot outside the door.

"Thank you, Mr. Krause," I said, "I feel more at ease now, so will you kindly tell me the object of your visit?"

"I've come to get that swine Tematau. I pay him. He is my man. I shall tolerate no interference. I shall take him back to Taritai" (the name of the village where he lived) "if I have to fight my way out of this village of yours and kill fifty of your niggers."

"Steady yourself, Mr. Krause, and don't say 'your niggers' so emphatically. In the first place I have but two native servants, not fifty, but either of those two would very much resent your calling him a 'nigger.' You know as well as I do that to call a native of this island, or of any other island of the group, a nigger, is so grossly insulting that his knife would be out in an instant."

"Ah, you and I have different ideas on the subject," he said sneeringly; "but that does not matter to me at the moment. My paid servant has absconded from my service, and I have come to get him. That is plain enough, isn't it?"

"Quite. But I am an Englishman, Mr. Krause, and not to be easily bluffed because a man comes stamping into my house with a brace of pistols in his belt."

"I did not come here to argue. I came here for that nigger—my property."

"Your *property*! Is the man a slave? Now, look here, Mr. Krause; you have used the man so brutally that he is unable to stand on his feet. He and the girl——"

"I don't want the girl, and I daresay you do," he said, with a sneering laugh that made me long to haul off and hit the fellow between the eyes; "she's a nuisance, and if I ever again see her prowling about my house and practising her infernal fooleries on my wife, I'll put a bullet through her. But the man I *will* have."

"Stop!" I cried warningly, as he took a step toward the sick man, "stop, before you run yourself into mischief. Listen to me. I have but to raise my hand and call, and you will find yourself trussed up fore and aft to a pole like a pig, and carried back to your village."

"Out of my way," he shouted hoarsely, as with blazing eyes he tried to thrust me aside.

"Back, man, back!" I cried. "Are you mad? The natives here will kill you if you attempt to force——"

"And I'll kill you, you meddling English hog," he said through his set teeth, and, before I could guard, his right hand shot out and grasped me by the throat, and he literally swung me off my feet and dashed me

against the centre posts of the house with such violence that I went down in a heap.



**BEFORE I COULD GUARD, HIS RIGHT HAND SHOT OUT AND GRASPED
ME BY THE THROAT.**

[To face p. 32.]

When I came to a few minutes afterwards, Tepi was supporting me on his knees, and Niâbon was putting some brandy to my lips. The house was full of natives, who were speaking in suppressed but excited tones. I swallowed the brandy, and then, as Tepi helped me to rise, the natives silently parted to right and left, and I saw something that, half-dazed as I was, filled me with horror.

Krause lay on his back in the centre of the room, his white duck clothes saturated with blood, which was still welling from three or four wounds in his deep, broad chest. I went over to him. He was dead.



KRAUSE LAY ON HIS BACK IN THE CENTRE OF THE ROOM. . . . HE WAS DEAD.

[To face p. 34.]

"Who hath done this?" I asked.

"I, master," and Tematau placed an ensanguined hand on mine.

"And I," said a softer voice, and Niâbon's eyes met mine calmly. "Tematau and I together each stabbed him twice."

As soon as I was able to pull myself together, I desired all the natives but three of the head men to leave, and then, after the unfortunate German's body was covered from view by a large mat, I asked the principal man of the village to tell me what he knew of the tragedy.

"I know nothing," was his reply. "Niâbon can tell thee."

Niâbon, in response to my inquiring glance—I was shaking from head to foot as I looked at her, but her calm, quiet eyes as she looked into mine restored my nerve—spoke clearly.

"The German dashed thee against the centre posts of the house, Simi. Then he drew a little pistol from his breast and shot at me, and the bullet struck me on the neck. See," and she showed us a still bleeding score on the right side of her neck, where a Derringer bullet had cut through the flesh. "And then he sprang at Tematau, but Tematau was on his feet and met him and stabbed him twice; and, as he fell I too stabbed him in the breast."

"This is an evil day for me," I said to the three head men, "and I fear it will prove an evil day to the people of this village, for the wife of the man who lies there told me that a ship of war of his country was soon to be here at this island. And how shall we account for his death?"

Niâbon bent forward and spoke—

"Have no fear, Simi. Neither thou, nor Tematau, nor the people of this village, nor I, shall come to any harm from the German fighting-ship. For when it comes thou and I, and Tematau, and Tepi, who know of the blood let out this day upon the floor of thy house, will be far away. And when the captain of the fighting-ship questioneth, and sayeth to the people, 'Where is my countryman?' the people will shake their heads and say, 'We know not. He and his wife, and the Englishman, and Tepi, and Tematau, and the witch woman Niâbon have gone. They have sailed away to beyond the rim of the sea and the sky—we know not whither.'"

I listened with all my faculties wide awake, and yet with a strange sense of helplessness overpowering me. Then Niâbon made a swift gesture to the head men. They rose, and lifting the huge body of Krause, carried it away.

She came to me and pressed her hand on my forehead.

"You are tired," she said in English. "Lie down."

She took my hand and led me to my couch beside the window and then bent over me.

"Sleep, sleep long. For now the time is near and thou must have strength."

CHAPTER IV

I slept well on towards four o'clock in the afternoon, and when I awakened I found the house deserted by all but my man Tepi, who was seated cross-legged near me with a cup containing my fever mixture beside him.

He held it up to me silently.

Even before I raised myself to drink I felt that I was a stronger man, physically and mentally, than I had been six hours previously, and my veins no longer seemed as if they were filled with liquid fire. I drank the mixture and then looked about me, and saw that every ensanguined trace of the tragedy which had occurred a few hours before had been removed. The coarse and somewhat worn matting which had covered the floor had been taken away and replaced by new squares, and the room presented the usual neat and orderly appearance in which it was always kept by Tepi and my other servant.

"Master," said Tepi, "art hungry?"

"Aye," I replied, "I would eat; but first tell me of the dead man. Who hath taken him away?"

The man, instead of answering me in a straightforward manner, bent his head and muttered something I could not hear.

I jumped off my couch and went outside, and the first person I ran against was my cook, an old grizzled fellow of about sixty years of age named Pai. He was carrying a freshly-killed fowl in his hand, looked at me in an unconcerned manner as if nothing had occurred, and asked me would I have it broiled or boiled.

"As you will," I said impatiently. "Tell me, Pai, whither have they taken the dead white man?"

He made a peculiar and significant gesture—one that is not often used, but when it is it implies that certain matters or things must not be further alluded to, but must be for ever buried in oblivion. I put my hand on his tough, naked, and wrinkled shoulder, and again repeated my question.

"I know of no dead white man," he replied, looking me steadily in the face, and yet answering me in his usual respectful manner. Then he sat down beside the low stone wall surrounding the house, and began to pluck the fowl, casually remarking that it was fat for its age.

Somewhat puzzled at the reticence of my servants, I walked across my compound towards the native village, which, as I have before mentioned, was some distance from my house, and as I walked I felt at every footstep a renewed bodily vigour, and almost unconsciously I took out my pipe, filled it, and began to smoke with an enjoyment denied to me for many months.

The day was gloriously bright and cool, and the westering sun on my right hand shone on a sea of the deepest blue, whose placid bosom was dotted by a fleet of canoes with their mat sails spread to the now gentle trade wind, cruising to and fro catching flying fish. This seemed strange to me, bearing in mind the events of the past few hours. The death of a white man, even from natural causes, was of itself generally a matter of such importance to the natives of any of the mid-Pacific isles, that their daily avocations were suspended, and the house of the deceased man would not only be surrounded on the outside by a circle of people sitting on their mats and awaiting their turn to enter and express their condolences with his wife or children, but filled inside as well.

The first houses I passed on the outskirts of the village were occupied only by women and children, who all gave me their usual cheerful greeting of *Tiakapo, Simi!* ("Good-day, Jim") and one or two of them added a few words of congratulation upon my improved appearance, and then calmly went on with their work, such as mat-making, mending fishing nets, cooking, etc., but no one of them gave the slightest indication of even having heard that anything unusual had occurred.



I DIRECTED MY STEPS TOWARDS THE GREAT OPEN-SIDED "MONIEP."

[To face p. 36.]

Crossing the village square—if it could be so called—I directed my steps towards the great open-sided *moniep*, or council house, from which came the sound of many voices, talking in the vociferous manner common to all natives of the Gilbert and Kingsmill groups. As I drew near I saw that there were about twenty men seated inside, smoking, card playing, or making cinnet for fishing lines by twisting up the strands of

coco-nut fibre on their naked thighs. As they heard my footsteps on the gravel, their conversation dropped a little, but they all gave me *Tiakapo!* as usual, invited me to enter and sit down and smoke, and then went on with either their work or their pastime.

"Now," I thought, as I sat down on the mat brought to me, "I shall get these fellows to tell me the meaning of all this reticence about the disposal of Krause's body."

For some minutes I smoked in silence and took the opportunity of looking at my hosts. They were all either middle-aged or old men, and were all known to me personally, especially one old bald-headed fellow named Kaibuka—"The Ship."

In his younger days this Kaibuka had acquired an evil reputation for being the instigator and leader of cutting-off attacks on whaleships and trading vessels, and his performances had gained him such *kudos* and respect from his savage associates that now in his old age he was the most influential of the three principal head men of the whole lagoon. Like all the others present, he wore but the usual *airiri*, or girdle of grass, round his loins, and his dark reddish-brown body was covered from head to waist with the scars of wounds received in earlier years. Each of his ear-lobes, pierced in infancy, had from long years of continuous distention by means of rolls of pandanus leaf, become so pendulous that they now hung loosely upon his shoulders in two great bights of thin flesh as thick as a lead pencil, though one of them had twisted in it a long stick of tobacco and a spare pipe. He was not, however, a bad-looking old ruffian, and his shining bald head, still perfect teeth, and extremely Jewish cast of features gave him quite a distinctive appearance from the younger men, whose long coarse hair, cut away across the forehead and hanging loosely down on their shoulders and backs, made their fierce, savage faces appear as if they looked at you from a moving frame of black. They certainly were a wild-looking lot, but their appearance somewhat belied their dispositions—at least as far as I was personally concerned. We had always got along very well together both socially and in business, and I was well aware that whilst they disliked and mistrusted Krause they placed implicit confidence in me.

Putting down my pipe on the mat beside me, I told old Kaibuka that I desired to talk to them.

There was a dead silence at once.

"*E rai rai*" ("Good"), he said.

"Kaibuka," I said, "hath the dead white man been taken to his wife?"

He looked stolidly at me for an instant, and then answered with an air of intense surprise.

"Dead white man! What dead white man, Simi? I know of none. We saw no dead white man!"

"Aye, we know of none," echoed the others in unison.

I began to feel both angry and uncomfortable, and showed it: but for the moment I was too puzzled to do more than stare at them each in turn. They looked straight before them as if their faces were so many stone jugs—they had about as much expression.

Again I addressed myself to Kaibuka.

"Why do ye make this pretence? Thou thyself, Kaibuka, and thou, Berau, were, with many others, in my house when his dead body lay on the floor. Why are ye all so silent? And whither have the girl Niâbon and Tematau gone?"

This time I got an answer—to my last question, at any rate.

"Niâbon and Tematau have gone across the lagoon in a canoe. They desired to talk with the white man's wife. In a little time, as darkness falls, they will return to thee."

"Did *they* take the dead man with them, then?" I persisted.

The old fellow met my inquiring glance quite calmly. "I know of no dead man, Simi."

I glared angrily at them all round, and then for a moment wondered if they were all crazy or I alone was wrong in my head. I was rising to my feet with an exclamation of anger at their obstinacy when the old bald-head motioned me to stay. Then at a sign from him all the others gathered up their *impedimenta* and quietly went off in various directions, leaving us alone.

"Simi," he said, coming swiftly over and crouching in front of me, "be wise. Ask no one of the white man who was here yesterday; for no one will tell thee but Niâbon. There is death in store for many, many people, if ye heed not my words. Go back to thy house, and be patient and wait, and ask naught of any one but Niâbon of what is past. Wouldst thou see this land soaked in blood because of *one* man?"

He spoke in such curious, whispered tones, and kept his keen hawk-like face so close to mine that I saw he was in deadly earnest.

"Promise me, Simi. Promise me to rest in thy house and wait for Niâbon."

"As you will, I shall wait."

I walked slowly back to my house and took a stiff glass of grog to steady my nerves, which were beginning to feel a little upset.

"It's time I got out of this place," I thought, as, lighting my pipe, I went down to my boat again and busied myself in taking out all her fittings, examining and replacing them again.

When I returned to the house for my supper it was quite dark, and just as my lamp was lit Niâbon entered.

CHAPTER V

Thinking it would be wiser to refrain from asking her any questions until she had at least rested a little—for she seemed to be very weary—I said nothing to her but a few words of welcome, and bade my servants lay

the supper, then told her that I was sure she was both hungry and tired. She replied that she certainly was tired, having come on foot from Taritai to save time. The canoe with Tematau was to follow on later in the night when the tide turned, and when there would be more water on the upper sand flats of the lagoon.

"Very well, Niâbon," I said in English, "now sit down and drink a cup of tea and eat a little. Then we can talk."

"I have many things of which to tell thee, Simi," she said, "for I have been speaking long with the wife of the man Krause, and——"

I told her that it would please me better if she first ate something. She at once obeyed, but instead of sitting at the table with me she seated herself on a mat near me, and Pai waited upon her whilst big Tepi attended to me. Only once did she speak during the meal, when she asked me if I had had any recurrence of either fever or ague, and she was undoubtedly pleased when I said that I had not, and that another course or two of her medicine would, I believed, care me. She smiled, and told me she would make more of the mixture that evening.

After eating a very slight sapper she made herself a cigarette and sat and smoked until I had finished my pipe. Then she came a little nearer to me, and I felt ashamed of myself for not having asked her if her neck gave her much pain, for I now noticed that the neck and front of her dress were blood-stained. She made light of the wound, however; said it was but skin deep, and would be healed in a few days. But I insisted upon her letting me see for myself. She consented somewhat unwillingly, and I saw that she had had a very narrow escape, the heavy bullet from Krause's Derringer having scored her neck pretty deeply and made a wound nearly two inches long. She had, however, she told me, had it attended to by Mrs. Krause, who had done the very best thing that could have been done to a superficial injury of the kind—painted it liberally with Friar's Balsam, which though causing intense pain for a few minutes, had quickly stayed the flow of blood and prevented any inflammation from setting in.

"Is Mrs. Krause well, Niâbon?" I asked as I readjusted the bandage.

"She is well."

"And she knows how her husband died?"

"She knows how he died, but knows not whose were the hands that dealt the blows. And, Simi, it is well that she does not know, for I am her friend, and it would grieve her did she know all."

I thought a moment or two before answering—

"How can the truth be kept from her, Niâbon? There are many people who know 'twas thee and Tematau who slew him."

"*She* will never know, Simi," she asserted earnestly; "there is but one man who could tell her, and him she will not ask."

"Who is that?" I asked wonderingly.

"Thyself."

"Why should she not ask me? Her husband met his death in my house. I saw his body lying at my feet. Dost think she will fail to question *me* if others whom she may ask remain silent?"

"She will ask thee no questions concerning him. His death hath taken away from her a terror by day and bad dreams at night that for two years hath wrung her heart and weakened her body, which is but frail. Have pity on her, Simi, and say nothing to her when thou seest her of her dead husband. He is gone; and yet, although she wept when I told her he was dead, and she knelt and prayed for his spirit which has gone beyond, I know well that now some peace hath come into her heart. And I have given her sleep."

As she spoke she turned her strangely sombrous and liquid eyes to mine in such an appealing glance that I could not resist her magnetic power, strive as I would.

"I will do as you wish, Niâbon," I said, falling weakly into English again. "You are a strange girl, but I am sure that you mean well, not alone to me, but to that poor heartbroken woman. But you must tell me the meaning of all this strange silence on the part of the people of this village. Why do they deny the death of Krause? How *can* they conceal it? It cannot possibly be hidden. There is a German man-of-war coming to this island soon—Mrs. Krause herself told me—and how will these people account to the captain for his death? You and Tematau, who together killed him, cannot escape. And if I am questioned—as I shall be—what can I do? I cannot lie about a murder."

"It was no murder, Simi," she said steadily, and I felt that the girl was but right in her assertion; "it is no murder to strike and kill, and kill quickly, he who would slay the innocent and unoffending. That man was a devil."

"What have you done with him, Niâbon? He might have been the devil you say he was; but he was a white man, and it is my place to see that he is buried as Christians bury the dead. He used me roughly, but——"

She placed her hand on my knee, and her very touch subdued my excitement.

"Simi, the man is dead, and not even a strand of his hair is left on earth. No one can ever question thee, or Tematau, or me, about him. He is gone, and even his name is already vanished from these people among whom he has dwelt. Dost not understand me?"

"No, I do not understand, Niâbon," I said more gently. "How can his name be vanished when but a few hours ago he was alive and well. Tell me, in plain English, what you mean by saying that no one can question you and Tematau and myself about the manner of his death?"

"Because, Simi, thou and I and others shall be far away from here when the man's countrymen come in the fighting-ship."

"I wish to Heaven we were far away at this moment," I said impatiently. "I am sick to death of the place, and don't want to find myself a prisoner on board a German man-of-war on suspicion of being concerned in Krause's death."

She again repeated her assurance that I should never be questioned.

"Where is Mrs. Krause now?" I asked.

"At Taritai."

"Niâbon"—and I placed my hand on her head—"you must not keep me in the dark about some things. I want you to answer me truly some questions. And, though I do not know why, I have this moment resolved to leave the island as quickly as possible. Would you come with me?"

"Yes, Mr. Sherry. Of course I am coming with you," she answered in English. "I told you that you and I and some other people would soon be together upon the sea. And I will answer any question you ask me. I don't want to deceive you. Why should I try to deceive you?"

As she turned her full, soft eyes up to my face, I saw in them such undoubted sincerity that I felt it was not possible for me again to doubt her.

"No, I am sure you will not deceive me, Niâbon. And I want you to tell me straightforwardly the meaning of all this mystery. First of all, what has been done with the German's body? where is it buried?"

"In the sea. It was taken far out where the water is very, very deep—three hundred fathoms—and the mats in which it was wrapped were weighted so heavily with stones that it took six men to carry it down to the canoe."

"Why was this done? Why was he not buried on shore?"

"I will tell you, Mr. Sherry. It was done so that when the German man-of-war comes here, no trace of him will ever be found;" and then she told me frankly the whole story, and the meaning of the strange silence of the natives.

Krause, she said, after his savage attack upon Tematau, had told his terrified wife that he meant to bring back Tematau, and kill Niâbon. After drinking heavily all night, he had started off alone in the morning, armed with a brace of revolvers and a Derringer pistol. He at first tried to get some forty or fifty of the Taritai young men to accompany him, and make a regular marauding expedition upon my village; but though they were eager to go with him and engage in battle with their old enemies, Niâbon, assisted by the more cautious head men, succeeded in dissuading them, and finally Krause went off alone. He travelled along the inner beach of the lagoon, and as soon as he reached my village marched boldly up to my house, boastfully calling out to the natives that he had come to take Tematau out of the Englishman's house, alive or dead—a few minutes later he himself was dead.

A hurried consultation was at once held by the head men, and it was resolved to dispose of Krause's body so effectually that no trace of it would ever be found, and every man, woman, and child in the village of Utiroa was sternly warned not only against even alluding to the manner of his death, but even admitting that he had even been seen by any one of them on that particular day. Hastily wrapping the dead man in mats, the body was taken out to sea, and sunk as Niâbon had described.



THE FLEET OF CANOES BEGAN FISHING AS IF NOTHING UNUSUAL HAD OCCURRED.

[To face p. 48.]

Then the fleet of canoes from the village began fishing as if nothing unusual had occurred, and after they had been out some hours they were met by eight or ten canoes from Taritai, which were also engaged in fishing. The moment they were within speaking distance the Taritai men inquired whether Krause had fulfilled his threat, and carried Tematau away. The Utiroa people affected great surprise, and said that they had seen nothing of him, but that most probably he had thought better of doing such a foolish and offensive thing, and had returned to Taritai again. The two fleets of canoes remained together for some little time, discussing Krause, and then one of the Taritai men frankly admitted that he (Krause) had tried to induce them to make a raid on Utiroa, but that Niâbon and the head men had set their faces against such a wicked

act of aggression.

"It is well for him then that he did not come to Utiroa to-day," said old Kaibuka's son gravely. "Such a man as he is not wanted in our town. So keep him at Taritai."

In the meantime Niâbon and Tematau had set out for Taritai to acquaint Mrs. Krause of the tragedy which had occurred. The moment they entered the village they were surrounded by natives, who eagerly inquired when Krause was returning—had he driven Tematau out of the Englishman's house? etc., etc. Both Niâbon and her companion expressed surprise—neither they nor any one else in Utiroa had seen Krause, they said, and Tematau had come with her to ask Mrs. Krause to try and induce her husband to let him leave his service. The natives accepted their story without the slightest doubt, and the two went on their way to the white man's house.

As soon as she and Mrs. Krause were alone Niâbon told her the cause of her visit and the steps which had been taken by the head men of Utiroa to conceal her husband's death, so that when the German warship arrived and found him missing, the people of Utiroa could not be, even after the most searching investigation, connected with his disappearance. Mrs. Krause quite agreed that a wise course had been taken, for were it proved that her husband had been killed in Utiroa, the man-of-war would certainly inflict a terrible punishment on the village, as was usual with German warships' procedure in the South Seas.

Then at Niâbon's suggestion she summoned the head men, and told them that her husband had not reached Utiroa. Something must have happened to him. Would they send out and search for him, and if they found him, urge him to return, as Tematau had come back, and there was now no occasion for him (Krause) to offend the people of Utiroa by entering their village armed.

The head men were only too willing, and at once sent out search parties, and when Niâbon was coming back, she met two of them, who told her that they had been to Utiroa itself, but not one single person had seen anything of the white man, and they were now returning along the weather side of the island to search for him in the thick jungle, where they imagined he might have strayed and lost himself.

"So that is why these people here have acted so strangely, Mr. Sherry," she concluded. "It would be terrible for them to be all killed, and the village burnt. For the Germans are very cruel. I have seen them do very, very cruel things."

"I think the Utiroa people have done right. The German brought his death on himself. But I fear that the secret must come out some day. The Taritai people will surely suspect something."

"No. No one of the Taritai people will ever know. By this time to-morrow they will all say that he has been drowned when crossing one of those narrow channels between the islands on the weather side, for there are many deep pools, and the coral sometimes breaks under the pressure of a man's foot. And so they will think he has fallen in one of those pools, and his body carried out to sea, or into the lagoon, and eaten by the sharks."

Her emphatic manner reassured me.

"Well, it is a bad business, Niâbon; but it cannot be helped. But I shall get away from here as soon as possible."

"I am glad. And Simi, there is yet one other thing of which I have not yet spoken. It is of Lucia."

She always called Mrs. Krause by her Christian name, as did the natives generally.

"What of her?"

"She desires greatly to come with us in the boat. And I pray thee to be kind to her, else will she die here of loneliness and terror."

CHAPTER VI

This was a pretty astonishing request, and for a few seconds I gazed blankly at the girl.

"Good Heavens!" I said, "she must be mad to think of such a thing! And I should be as equally mad to even entertain the idea of taking her with me in a small boat on a voyage of more than a thousand miles."

"Nay, she is not mad, Simi. And she hath set her heart on this. It would be cruel to leave her to die."

"And to take her away would be still more cruel," I cried. "Such a long, long voyage is a hard and dangerous venture even for strong men—men who should be both good navigators and good seamen. But a weak, delicate woman—oh, it's all sheer nonsense, girl."

She put her hand on mine, and the moment I felt her warm touch, my impatience ceased. I would argue the thing out with her, I thought, and soon convince her that it would be impossible. Impossible—folly, utter folly. I must not think of such a thing for a moment. And yet—and yet—I rose from my seat, walked to the window, and then turned to Niâbon.

"'Tis a mad idea," I said, trying to speak angrily, and failing lamentably. "'Tis you alone, Niâbon, who hath made her ask me to do this."

"That is not true, Simi," she replied quietly, "Yet when I spoke to her of our voyage, her heart's wishes came to her lips, and I knew that she would ask to come with thee, even as I know that thou wilt not leave her here to die."

I could make no answer for the time. What was coming over me, that I could listen to such a suggestion with patience? What a strange influence did this girl Niâbon possess that I, a sensible man, felt she could and would make me yield to her wishes, and let a sickly, delicate woman like Mrs. Krause accompany me on a voyage that presented nothing but danger. The fever must have weakened my brain, I thought.

But then, on the other hand, Mrs. Krause was a free agent. She had no children. Her husband had just been

killed. I, the only other white man on the island to whom she could look to for social intercourse at long intervals, was leaving the island. Her mind had been tortured, and her life made miserable by her brute of a husband. Could I, as a *man*, leave her among a community of naked savages to fret out her life? She wished to come with me. Well, I should tell her of the dangers—aye, and the horrors—of such a voyage as I was bent upon. I should conceal nothing from her—nothing, absolutely nothing. I should tell her of how the wife of the captain of the ship *Octavia*, from Sydney to Singapore, had seen her husband die, and the famishing crew of the boat which had left the burnt ship, drag his body from her with savage curses and threats, and—

“Simi.”

“What is it, Niabon? What would you have me do? Why do you tempt me to let this poor, weak lady accompany me on a voyage, which will, most likely, end in death to us all?”

“There will be danger, but no death,” she replied dreamily, turning her face away from me towards the sea, and slowly extending her arms; “and thou, Simi—thou shalt gain thy heart's desire. For I have seen it all, even as I see it now.”

“My heart's desire! Tell me what is my heart's desire?”

I stepped up to her and placed my hand gently on her head, and, bending down, saw that her eyes were closed.

“My heart's desire, Niabon? tell me what is my heart's desire,” I said again, and as I spoke I caught my breath, and tried hard to steady myself.

“Fame, Fame! The praise of men for a great deed! This is thy heart's desire, Simi. To do such things as were done by the three men of whom thou dreame—”

“What three men?” I whispered, and in an instant there flashed through my mind the memory of the daring deeds of Jack Collier of Tahiti, of tousle-headed Barney Watt of the *Ripple*, and big Cameron of Honolulu. “Who are the three men of whom I dream?”

She pressed her hands to her bosom, and then turned her face, with her eyes still closed, to mine.

“I do not know, Simi. I cannot see beyond as I can do sometimes; for I am tired, and many other things are in my mind. But yet I can see one man of the three whom thou dost so often think.”

“Tell me, then,” and I knelt beside the girl and looked upwards to her face—“tell me of one man of the three. What is he like?”

“Simi, oh, Simi, be not too hard with me; for though I can see many faces, they are new and strange to me. And they quickly become faint and dim, and then vanish—but the sound of their voices seem to beat upon my closed ears—and I cannot understand, Simi, I cannot understand.”

I took her hand in mine and pressed it gently. I did not want to torment the poor girl, but I did want to know something more of the one man of the three of whom she had spoken.

“Can you tell me of the one man, Niâbon?” I said gently. “Is he young and strong, and of good looks?”

“He is not young, but is strong, and his eyes are deep-set and stern; and a great red beard flows down upon his broad chest; his feet are covered with boots that come to the knee, and he carries a stick in his hand, for he is lame.”

I started. I *knew* whom she meant—it was Cameron of Honolulu, and had the man been there himself, in his rough rig-out, and leaning on his heavy stick as he walked, she could not have described him more clearly!

“No more shall I doubt you,” I cried. “I will do all you wish.”

She made no answer, but sat with eyes still closed, and her bosom gently rising and falling as if she were asleep. Fearing that I should do her some harm if I endeavoured to rouse her from what seemed to be a trance, I went softly away, and with a strange feeling of exaltation tingling through my veins, took down my roll of charts from my book-shelf, and opening out No. 780—one of the four sheets embracing the North and South Pacific—studied it carefully.

“I shall do it, I shall do it,” I said aloud, and already I fancied I could see my boat sailing into either Levuka or else Apia Harbour, fifteen hundred miles away, and hear the cheers, and see the flags run up by the ships in port, as I stepped out of my boat on to the beach to report myself to the British Consul—“Jim Sherry, master and owner of a twenty-eight feet whale-boat, from Tarawa Island, in the Gilbert Group.”

It *would* be an achievement, and I should become as well known as Cameron. But—and here my vanity received a check—Cameron sailed fifteen hundred miles in a poorly equipped dinghy, and yet succeeded in reaching Jaluit in the Marshall Islands, whilst I should have everything in my favour as far as equipment went.

But I would do more than Cameron did, I thought. If I reached either Samoa or Fiji safely, I would go on across to New Caledonia, and possibly from there on to the east coast of Australia! That would be something that had never yet been done by any one in a small boat, and would make me famous indeed!

That night I was too excited to think of sleeping, so remained up and worked at a new jib I was making, taking care to avoid any noise, for I found that Niâbon was now really asleep, and I did not want to disturb her.

She did not awaken till nearly midnight, just as Tematan returned. He handed me a note. It was from Mrs. Krause, asking me, if it would not be inconvenient to me, would I come to Taritai in the morning, as she greatly wished to see me on a matter of importance. I smiled at Niâbon as I read it, for I could easily guess what it was that the lady was so anxious to see me about.

I started off as soon as it was daylight, and on reaching Taritai village found Mrs. Krause expecting me, early as it was. She was pale, but yet, I imagined, looking better than she had when we last met. She went into the subject at once.

“Mr. Sherry, will it not be possible for you to let me go with you in the boat?”

“Yes, you can come. But I tell you frankly that we may never see Samoa or Fiji, for the risks of such a long voyage must necessarily be very great, even if we have fine weather all the way.”

Her face lit up with pleasure. "It is kind of you. And you will not find me troublesome. I should go mad if I were left alone here, for Niâbon has always been such a friend to me. Whenever my husband was away, she came and stayed with me."

This allusion to her husband, I could see, pained her, and therefore, although I knew that several parties were out in search of him, I did not mention his name to her.

"Mr. Sherry," she said presently, "I have a suggestion to make. One of the boats belonging to this station was lost, as you know, not long ago, but there is another, a large one, which was sold to some natives. Would you like me to send for her, and if you like it better than your own, I think we could buy it back."

I knew the boat well enough by sight. She was half-decked, and although not a beauty to look at, was certainly a much better and safer boat than my own for a long voyage. I decided to inspect her, and my hostess at once despatched a man to the village where the boat was then lying with a message to the chief to bring her to Taritai. I told Mrs. Krause that if the boat was seaworthy she would certainly be far preferable to my own, and that I would buy it from the natives. And then, much against my will, I had to ask her what she intended doing with her husband's property when she left the island.

"That is one subject upon which I want your advice. Will you look at his account-books, and tell me his position with the firm in Hamburg?"

Krause had kept his books very methodically, and after taking stock of the little trade goods that were still unsold, and counting his cash, I was able to tell her pretty exactly how he stood. There was about £200 due to him altogether.

"What would you advise me to do?" she asked.

"As far as the house and all that is in it is concerned, you can do nothing but leave it under the care of the head men of Taritai. They will undertake the responsibility, and hand the station over to the first German ship that calls."

"There will be a man-o'-war here soon, the *Elizabeth*. At least, we heard that she was likely to come here some time this year."

I said she would be doing wisely if she remained on the island, and got the man-of-war captain to settle up Krause's affairs; but she shuddered and looked at me in such fear that I said no more, beyond remarking that as her husband had left no will—at least, as far as she knew—I feared she would have trouble in getting the amount due to him at the time of his death. She would probably have to go to Sydney, where there was a branch of the firm he was trading for.

"I don't want the £200," she said vehemently. "I have a little money of my own—about twenty dollars—and one cannot well starve anywhere in the South Seas. I am young and can work. I could earn my living by making Panama hats if I could find nothing else to do."

CHAPTER VII

"Twenty dollars is not much of a stand-by in a town like Apia or Levuka," I said gravely, as I looked at her now animated features. "Living there is very expensive—as I know to my sorrow—and unless you have friends at either place, you would have to go to an hotel in the first place."

"I am not afraid, Mr. Sherry. And I am not jesting about the hat-making. All of my mother's family were very expert at it, and quite often I have seen as much as twenty-five or thirty Mexican dollars paid for one of our hats. We could have sold ten times the number had we been able to have made more."

"Where was this?" I asked, with interest.

"At Agana, in the Marianas. My father lived there for many years. He was a very poor man, and had a hard struggle to get along with such a large family. So we all had to help him as much as we could. He was an Englishman named Arundel, and was in some Government employment in Rangoon. I do not remember exactly what it was, but think he was connected with maritime matters, for I remember that he had many nautical books, and used to go away frequently in the Government steamers to Perak and Singapore. I can scarcely remember my mother, for she died when I, who was the youngest of the family, was about six years old. But I think she was of Dutch-Javanese parentage, for sometimes she would speak to us children in both languages, and I remember her being very dark. Soon after she died, my father—who was always of a restless disposition I suppose—either gave up, or lost his employment in Rangoon, and taking us with him, settled on Tinian, in the Marianas, where he had something to do with cattle. But we did not remain there permanently; we were always moving about from one island to another—sometimes we would be living at Saipan, sometimes at Rota, and sometimes at Agana, in Guam. At this last place—which I love dearly—we were very happy, although we were so poor."

She stopped somewhat abruptly, and added that it was at this place she had met Krause, who came to the Marianas from Manila, on behalf of his firm, who had a large establishment at the latter city.

"I should like to see the Marianas—or the Ladrões, as we traders call them," I said. "There is a very dear friend of mine now living at San Anlaccio in Guam——"

"What is his name?" she asked quickly.

"José Otano. He was mate of a New Bedford whaler."

"I know him, I know him," she cried excitedly, "he and his mother, and his two sisters—Nicolacoa and Maria. Oh, how I should love to see them again! I remember going to San Anlaccio with my father and an elder sister, and staying there for two or three months. My father was buying cattle for *tasajo*, and we lived with the Otano family. They were very kind to us, and we three little girls used to ride together on the water buffaloes, and one day their brother José, who I remember was a sailor, had to come and search for us, for we

were lost in a great swamp between Punta de los Amantes and the stone cross of Padre Sanvitores.”

“Those are the people,” I said, feeling pleurably excited myself that we should have mutual friends. “I have often heard him speak of his mother and two sisters. And often, very often he has urged me to pay him a visit, and settle down with him. He says that I should not want to leave the Marianas once I could see what a beautiful country it is.”

“No, indeed! Ah, Mr. Sherry, 'tis indeed a beautiful country. I wonder if I shall ever see it again! My father, two brothers, and three of my sisters died of fever just before I married Krause, and there are but two of us left now—myself and another sister who is married to the Spanish doctor at San Ignacio de Agana. Oh, shall I ever see her face again?”

Her eyes sparkled, and her pale face flushed as she bent towards me with clasped hands: “Oh, the mere thought of it makes me feel a young girl again.”

“Why should you not?” I began, then I ceased speaking, and walked up and down the room thinking, and I felt my cheeks flush as a project, daring enough, came to my mind.

“Have you a big sheet chart of the Pacific—the large blue-backed one?” I asked.

“Yes, there it is in the corner beside you, with some others. But it is old.”

“It will do.”

I spread it out on the table, and weighted down each of the four ends by means of books, so as to get a good view.



I SPREAD THE CHART OUT ON THE TABLE.

[To face p. 62.]

"Come here, Mrs. Krause, and look."

She came over to me, and then her thin little hand followed my forefinger as I made a pencilled mark on the chart to the south-east.

"Here is Tarawa; here is Apia in Samoa, nearly fifteen hundred miles distant. Here is the island of Ovalau in Fiji, about the same distance. Do you see?"

"Yes, I see."

"And here, north-west from Tarawa, is your home on Guam—more than two thousand miles away. 'Tis a long, long way—but it could be done."

"A long, long way indeed." She lifted her eyes to me—and then she placed her hand on mine. "Why do you smile, Mr. Sherry; and yet why say 'it could be done'?"

"Let us sit down and talk the matter over quietly;" and I led her to a seat.

"Why should we go to Fiji or Samoa?" I said quickly, my blood afire with my new project. "There is nothing to draw you thither, is there?"

"Nothing. I know no one at either place. But you——"

"I! It matters but little to me where I go. But I am sick to death of this island, and long to be doing something. I am a man without a home, without ties, a wandering South Sea deadbeat—no friends."

"You must not say that," she said softly. "I am sure you have many friends. Just now you spoke of one—José Otano."

"Aye, I did; but I meant friends in Europe, in the outer and greater world—people who care for, who even give me a passing thought."

"That is sad, indeed. Oh, it must be sad to be alone, quite, quite alone in the world. And I am very, very sorry for you, Mr. Sherry."

The deep ring of sympathy in her voice warmed my heart to the little woman.

"Mrs. Krause," I said—and I spoke quietly, "you are a brave woman, else you would not dare to come with me in a small boat to so distant a place as Fiji or Samoa. But will you be braver still, and risk your life in a still more dangerous enterprise?"

"I will, indeed, Mr. Sherry. I have no sense of the fear of death—none, absolutely none," she replied.

"Then let us give up the idea of Fiji," I cried, catching her hand, "let us go to the north-west—to Guam, to your own home."

"Oh," and she gave a low gasp of pleasure. "Oh, yes, indeed, it will be a wonderful voyage."

"Yes, if we ever get there," I said. "But we can try."

"You will not fail. Of that I am as sure as I am of my own existence."

Again we turned to the chart, and were poring over it together when the messenger returned to say that the natives had arrived with the boat. I hurried down to the beach, and saw the native owners, and then the boat itself, which, after very little trouble, I bought for ten muskets, a couple of tierces of tobacco, and a hundred fathoms of red turkey twill. Then, after giving them some instructions, I went back to the house.



I HURRIED DOWN TO THE BEACH, AND SAW THE NATIVE OWNERS, AND THEN THE BOAT ITSELF.

[To face p. 64.]

"Well, Mr. Sherry, what do you think of the boat?"

"Fairly well, Mrs. Krause. Anyway, I've bought her, and if you look out of the window, you'll see the crew getting her under way again to sail her over to Utiroa. Now I must get home, for there will be much to do. The first thing that I must get done is to alter my own boat's mainsail and jib, and make them large enough for my new ship, whose sails are quite rotten. Then I shall make an extra new suit as well. I'll set Niâbon to work to-night."

"Ah, let me help! *Do*. It would give me such real pleasure."

"Indeed, I shall be very glad of your assistance. I can cut out the new suit, and you and Niâbon sew them. It will only be very light material, but, for all that, may make your fingers suffer."

"I don't mind if it does—neither of your sail-makers will grumble," she said brightly. "When shall I come?"

"To-morrow. I'll send the whale-boat for you. You will find mine an untidy house, and Tepi a great cook—as far as size goes. He stands six feet."

And so with a laugh, and lighter hearts than had been ours for many a long day, we said goodbye till the morrow.

CHAPTER VIII

As soon as I arrived at Utiroa village with my new boat, I had her hauled up above high-water mark, close to the boat-shed, and then turned her over so as to get a good look at the bottom in the morning. Then without telling either Tematau or Niâbon the reason for my purchase, I bade them open my trade-room door, and in a few minutes we were engaged in paying the late owners their tobacco, guns, ammunition, and bolts of turkey twill. They were well satisfied with the price I paid them, especially when I supplemented it with the gift of a case of biscuit and a case of tinned Australian meats, of which I had an ample stock. They were very much disposed to remain in the house and give my servants their view of the cause of Krause's strange disappearance, which was—as they had previously told me—that he had been seized and devoured by an enormous reptile, half eel and half turtle, which had been known to swallow not only human beings, but such trifles as double canoes, groves of coco-nut trees, etcetera; but on my telling them that I was very tired and wanted a quiet house, they retired to the native village to spend the night.

Calling Niâbon and Tematau to me, I told them why I had bought the boat. They both seemed very pleased, but somewhat to my astonishment showed no surprise at the change in my plans; and for a moment or two a swift suspicion crossed my mind.

Did they—or Niâbon at least—*know* that it was Mrs. Krause who had brought this boat to my notice? Had Mrs. Krause said anything on the matter to Niâbon herself? I determined to ask.

“Niâbon,” I said in English, which Tematau also understood fairly well, though he never spoke it, “tell me truly—did you or Tematau ever speak to Lucia of this boat which I have just bought?”

“No, never, Mr. Sherry,” she replied calmly, and the quiet dark eyes met mine with such an expression of truthfulness that I was instantly ashamed of my transitory suspicion. “I have never spoken to her about this boat, and never has Tematau, I am sure.”

“Oh, well, it was a very lucky thought of hers,” I said; “we have now a boat that will be much better than my own, which I must try and sell, for we shall want money, Niâbon, we shall want money badly in the strange country to which we are going, and I have but little.”

“Kaibuka and the head men will buy the other boat, I think.”

“How do you know?” I said in surprise, for I had never even been approached on the subject of selling my boat.

“I will ask them to buy it,” she replied, with a smile. “I will go to them now, if you wish. How much money do you want?”

“The boat is worth two hundred dollars, but I will take one hundred. If they cannot give me one hundred dollars I will take no less—but because they and I are good friends, I will give it to them freely, for it will be of no further use to me.”

“They will buy the boat,” she said confidently, and lighting her cigarette, she went out.

A quarter of an hour later she returned, accompanied by old Kaibuka and another head man. Each of them carried a small bag of money, which they handed to me, and simply observing that it was the price of the boat, sat down and waited for me to count the coins. I found there were two hundred dollars.

“There are one hundred dollars more than the price I asked,” I said, pushing one-half of the money apart. “The boat is well worth the two hundred; for she is but new, and cost me more than that. But one hundred is all I asked for.”

Hawk-eyed Kaibuka—one of the most avaricious old fellows I had ever met with in the South Seas—shook his head and said I was trying to wrong myself. The people would be glad to get such a fine boat for two hundred dollars, and that if he and the other head men announced that I had parted with her for a hundred dollars, the entire population of Utiroa would arise as one man and curse them as mean creatures; also they (the people) would refuse to use the boat, and he, Kaibuka, would be regarded as a hog—a man devoid of gratitude to the white man who had been kind to and had not cheated them.

“Take the money, Mr. Sherry,” said Niâbon in English; “they are glad to get the boat; and if I had said you wanted five, instead of one hundred dollars, they would give it. I would *make* them give it.”

“Very well, Niâbon. I'll take it. But as it is more than I ought to expect under the circumstances, I will give them half a tierce of tobacco as a *mea alofa* (a gift of friendship).

“That means that you give them a hundred and twenty-five dollars' worth of tobacco as a present,” she said, with an amused smile, “and so you sell your beautiful boat for seventy-five dollars.”

“Never mind my extravagance, Niâbon,” I said, in the same spirit; “the one hundred and twenty-five pounds of tobacco in the half-tierce, which only cost me a quarter of a dollar a pound, is better given away to these people than left here to rot.”

“Indeed it is,” she replied, as she watched Tepi and Pai roll out the half-tierce of the beloved tobacco from my trade-room into that in which we were sitting; “these people here will never forget you.”

As soon as old Kaibuka and the other head man had left—each after taking a stiff glass of grog—and the house was again quiet, Niâbon, Tepi, and I set to work to take stock, they calling out the various articles of my trade goods whilst I made out the list. We worked at this throughout the night, had an early breakfast, and then went at it again, and by nine o'clock the work was over, and I knew how I stood with my employers financially.

It was pretty satisfactory, considering the short time I had been on the island; for with my salary of ten pounds a month, and the five per cent, commission I was allowed on all the goods I sold, there were over three hundred pounds due to me. Then, in addition to my cash takings, which came to over three thousand dollars, I had bought over a hundred tons of copra (dried coco-nut) at a very low price, paying for it with trade goods—muskets, rifles, ammunition, tobacco, and liquor—on which latter article my esteemed employers made something like a thousand per cent, profit. Of course I had had a big pull over Krause, whose stock of trade was almost exhausted when I landed, whilst I had come ashore with half a schooner-load. But apart from this, it was a fillip to my vanity to think that even if Krause had had his store packed from floor to roof with trade, the natives would rather have come to me than to him, for as I have said, they all—even those

in his own village of Taritai—disliked him for his domineering German-like manner, and his contemptuous disregard of their feelings, whilst I was *persona grata* with them from the day I landed. But I had never yet, in all my ten years' experience of the South Seas, either seen, or heard, of any "Dutchman"—as we English and American traders call all Teutons—who was liked by the natives.

I closed up my account-books, and, lighting my pipe, considered the situation. Firstly, I was certainly breaking my engagement with my employers by leaving the island without giving them "due notice of one month"; but as I could only communicate with them once in eight months, when they sent a ship round the group, that particular item in my agreement did not disturb my mind to any great extent. Secondly, there was a nice little sum of money due to me—over three hundred pounds—which in all probability I should never get if I awaited my firm's good pleasure to pay me, unless I went to Sydney and brought legal pressure to bear on them. Would not I be perfectly justified in paying myself my salary and commission out of the money in my possession? They would certainly look on me as an ass of the first water if I did not—of that I was sure. But again, I must not leave it in their power to say that "Jim Sherry had bolted from Tarawa," and had not acted squarely with them.

Niâbon, I knew, could both read and write English fairly, so of course could Mrs. Krause. The latter would be at Utiroa in a few hours, and instead of starting them at sewing sails I would get them to make an exact copy of every entry in the station books from the day I took charge to the day we left the island. This copy I would leave behind, and take the books themselves with me. The idea was a good one, and later on I was glad it occurred to me.

The whaleboat was my own, and as I thought of her, I felt pleased that my employers, who were as mean as Polish Jews, would not get to windward of me as far as she was concerned. I had bought her from the captain of an American whaler, intending her for my own personal use and pleasure as a fishing boat, naturally expecting that the firm would provide me with a boat for trading purposes, *i.e.*, to send around the lagoon and collect copra. The boss supercargo, however, who had drawn up the agreement, refused to do so, on the grounds that I had a boat already, and I was too weak and too racked with the damnable pains of fever to make more than a brief protest against what was certainly a very mean trick. But I had now sold her to the natives, and old Kaibuka was not a man to be trifled with. If any supercargo or captain of the firm endeavoured to claim her as property belonging to Utiroa Station, there would be such a blazing row that the firm would not forget it—they could never again land a trader on the island.

I decided to at least take a hundred pounds out of the station cash—less than a third of the amount due to me. This, with the two hundred dollars I had received from old Kaibuka, would make seven hundred dollars—something better than poor little Mrs. Krause's twenty, I thought with a smile. And I meant that she—if we succeeded in reaching Guam—should land there with five hundred American dollars, not Chili or Bolivian half-iron rubbish, but good honest silver.

At noon Mrs. Krause arrived in my old whaleboat, which I had borrowed from the new owners, and sent away at daylight, and whilst she and Niâbon set to work at copying the books, I, with Tepi, began cutting out the new suit of sails from a bolt of light but very strong American twill—just the very stuff for boat sails, as strong as No. 1 canvas and four times lighter.

That was the first of eight or ten very pleasant days we spent together, it taking us all that time to complete our preparations; for after the sails were finished I had to rig the boat anew, caulk her decks, and make a proper cabin amidships for the two women. This would have taken me more than another week had it not been for a couple of native boatbuilders, whom old Kaibuka had sent to me. They were good workmen, though neither had ever handled such a thing as a plane or saw in his life—everything was done either with a hatchet or a *toki*—a plane-iron or a broad chisel lashed to a wooden handle in such a manner that it was used as an adze.



THEN I GAVE HER TWO GOOD COATINGS OF RED LEAD FROM KEEL TO ABOVE WATER LINE, AND, ABOVE THAT, PAINTED HER WHITE.

[To face p. 74

Then I gave her two good coatings of red lead from keel to above water-line, and above that painted her white. The people from whom I had bought her told me frankly that she was a poor sailer, and I quite believed them, for she was altogether too heavily built for her size—her timbers and planking being of German oak. Her mast, too, had been placed too far for'ard, and so I shifted it eighteen inches or two feet further aft. But heavy and clumsy-looking as she was, I was sure she would prove a good sea boat, for she had great beam and a corresponding floor—in fact, rather too much for her length. However, when I had finished with and launched her, we made a trial trip over to Mrs. Krause's station, and I was well satisfied with her. She sailed much better than she did formerly, owing to the mast being further aft, and her new mainsail and jib, though smaller than the old ones, setting better.



WHEN I HAD FINISHED AND LAUNCHED HER, WE MADE A TRIAL TRIP OVER TO MRS. KRAUSE'S STATION.

[To face p. 72

On our reaching Taritai, Mrs. Krause sent for the head men and told them that she was now satisfied that her husband was dead. What did they think? she asked. They replied that there could be not the slightest doubt of it. Every islet of the whole chain encompassing the lagoon had been searched, but not the slightest trace of the missing man had been found. He was dead.

Then she told them that as I was leaving the island, and she did not care to remain now that her husband was dead, she had decided to go away with me and my party. The trading station itself, and all her late husband's property, she would leave in their care, to hand over to the captain of the next German ship that came to take away the copra and oil that he had bought. And as it might be many months before a ship did come, she would pay them in advance for their caretaking; and also leave a letter with them for the captain, asking him to make them a further present, as she knew they were good men and would be true to their trust. Let them, to-morrow, come and choose from the store goods to the value of two hundred dollars.

The head men were delighted, and one of them, in his exuberance, expressed the sorrow they all felt at her leaving them; but no doubt, he said, she and I were going to some island where there was a missionary, so that we might be married according to the customs of white people. Perhaps, however, we would return.

The poor little woman turned scarlet, and I shot a furious glance at the offender, and sharply told him that he was talking like a child instead of a grown man, and that his words had hurt the lady greatly. He put his hand over his eyes and collapsed. Then after a little further talk with them, we sent them away, and I arranged with Mrs. Krause to send the whaleboat for her on the following morning; for, all going well, we should start at sunset.

Before I left her, she asked me, with a nervous tremor in her voice, to read the letter she had written, and if I thought it would do, or needed to be altered in any way. It was a letter which I had suggested she should write and leave with the head men. It was addressed to "The captain or supercargo of any ship belonging to Messrs. G—, of Hamburg," and contained but a few lines, stating that her husband, "Ferdinand Alexis Krause, left this station on the 27th July last for Mr. James Sherry's station at Utiroa village, and has not since been seen, and although a most careful search has been made, no trace of him has been found, and the natives are of the opinion that he was drowned between here and Utiroa in crossing one of the channels between the islets. As I am not equal to the task of carrying on my late husband's trading business, and an opportunity of leaving the island presents itself to me, through the kindness of Mr. Sherry, a trader here, I have placed this station in the care of the head men. I have given them two hundred dollars in trade goods, and trust you will be so satisfied with their integrity and their care of the property I have entrusted to their charge, that you will make them a further present. I make no claim whatever on the money due to my husband, and will feel glad if you will see that it is sent to his relatives in Germany."

"That will do very well," I said, as I took her hand; "now, goodbye till to-morrow evening, Mrs. Krause. By this time to-morrow we should be getting under way. And, do you mind?—I have called the boat the *Lucia*—in fact I've painted the name on both bows."

"Indeed, I am very proud. And why don't you call *me* Lucia, too, Mr. Sherry? Every one else does."

"Very well," I said, with a laugh, "I will talk Tarawan to you: Tiâkâpo, Lucia."

"Tiâkâpo, Simi;" and her voice was pleasant and sweet to hear, although the word *tiakako* meant nothing more than "good-night."

CHAPTER IX

Everything was ready at last, water, stores, arms, and ammunition, and the boat, with mainsail and jib hoisted, was lying just abreast of the station, in charge of Tematan and Tepi, surrounded by canoes.

In the house with me were Mrs. Krause and Niâbon; and Kaibuka and his head men, who had come to take formal charge of the station, and to bid us farewell. I handed old Kaibuka letters to be given to the supercargo of the firm's next vessel, presented him and his colleagues with a new musket each, together with powder and bullets, and a small case of tobacco, and then we all went outside, and I locked the door formally, and handed him the key. He took it, unlocked the door, went inside a few steps, and then it was locked a second time, the key twisted in one of his pendant ear-lobes, and the ceremony was over. Then we all trooped down to the beach together, got into a canoe, and went on board.



THE LITTLE CRAFT BEGAN TO MOVE THROUGH THE WATER . . . ACCOMPANIED BY THIRTY OR FORTY CANOES AND NATIVE BOATS UNDER SAIL.

[To face p. 78.]

Shaking hands with old Kaibuka and the rest of the natives who swarmed around us to say farewell, I told Tepi to lift the anchor, and in another five minutes the little craft began to move through the water towards the reef, accompanied by thirty or forty canoes and native boats under sail, all packed with natives of both sexes, shouting their farewells, and wishing us good fortune.

By sunset we had crossed over the wide, submerged reef, which for twenty miles runs due north and south on the lee side of Tarawa Lagoon, and hauling up to the wind just as darkness fell, we soon lost sight of our island friends, though we could still hear them shouting our names—"Simi," "Niâbon," "Lucia," for some little time after.

The night was dark, but fine, and the light southeasterly breeze sent us along at about three knots over a very smooth sea. Tepi was standing for'ard on the lookout, for fear we might run into any fishing canoes from Taritai, Tematau was busying himself about our miniature galley, my two women passengers were rearranging their little cabin, and I steered.

"Well, here we are at last, Mrs. Krause ——," I began.

"Lucia, please."

"Here we are at last, Lucia, then. I'm going to run along like this all night, until we get to the little island at the north end, and then put these gruntors ashore," and I pointed to half a dozen pigs which were lying tied up on the deck. They had, with about fifty or sixty fowls, been presented to us by the natives, and as we should have given great offence by not accepting them, we had to endure their company for the present. Then all around us, stowed in every conceivable place, were bundles of young drinking coco-nuts, husked and unhusked, taking up a great deal of room, and weighing heavily, and three or four rolls of sleeping-mats, presented to Niâbon, were wedged into the cabin. All this collection would have to be either got rid of entirely or largely reduced, so I decided to bring up at the little islet of which I had spoken, and overhaul and re-stow the boat by daylight.

"Look astern," cried Lucia, as I shall now call her; "isn't it pretty? And see, there is another fleet ahead of us, and much nearer."



THE CANOES WE HAD LEFT BEHIND US HAD BEGUN THEIR
FLYING-FISH CATCHING.

[To face p. 80.]

The canoes we had left behind us had begun their flying-fish catching, and a long line of brightly burning, isolated flames was lighting up the sea all around, revealing the dark bodies of the fishers, with four paddles sending each canoe through the water, while in the bows stood a fifth, sweeping the water deftly with a scoop net attached to a pole twelve feet in length, his movements guided by a huge torch or flare of dried coco-nut leaves, held aloft by a naked boy standing on the canoe platform amidships. It was indeed a pretty sight, for at times the long line of fires would make a graceful sweeping curve, and then almost unite in a circle, then again open out with a fan-like movement, and advance once more. We watched the fleet astern a little while, and then found ourselves in the midst of the one we had seen ahead. There were over fifty canoes, all manned by Taritai people. They hailed us vociferously, wished us good luck, and as we sailed through their blazing lines of fire they threw so many flying-fish on board that not only the decks were covered, but hundreds, striking against the mainsail, fell into the cabin, and lay there like moving bars of brightest silver.

"*Tiàkako, Simi! Tiàkapo, Lucia! Tiàkapo, Niàbon!*" they shouted to us, as we drew away from them, after throwing them some tobacco.

By daylight we were abreast of the islet, and due north of us could just see the tops of the coco-nuts on Apaian Lagoon showing above the sea-line, ten miles distant, and then, to our annoyance, the wind died away, and there was every indication of there being a dead calm till the evening. However, it could not be helped, so we pulled in right up to the beach, and let the two women step ashore to get breakfast ready. Tepi, picking out the youngest and fattest of the pigs, knocked it on the head, and cutting the thongs of the others tumbled them over the side. They soon recovered themselves, and went off. Then followed a massacre of a dozen of the fowls, the liberation of the rest, and the throwing away of the greater portion of the heavy coconuts. The bundles of mats I threw ashore to Niàbon, as they would be useless to shield us from the rain which might fall during our stay on the island, and then we set to and washed down decks, made everything snug, and went ashore for breakfast, well satisfied with our work, and with the fact that the boat was six inches higher out of the Water.

The islet, though small, was unusually fertile for so low-lying a spot—it being in no part more than fifteen feet above high-water mark—for in addition to the inevitable coco-palms, which grew thickly from the water's edge, there were hundreds of fine trees, among them being some noble and imposing jack-fruits, whose broad, bright green branches were almost level with the crowns of the palm-trees, their roots embedded in a rich, soft, black soil, formed by the fallen leaves of hundreds of years, mixed with decayed coral detritus.

Niàbon had spread the mats in a shady spot, and we all made a simple but hearty breakfast of grilled fowls, biscuit, and young coco-nuts. Then we lit our pipes and cigarettes of the good, strong black tobacco, and watched a shoal of fish leaping and playing about the boat, which, with loose, pendant cable, lay floating on a sea as smooth and as shining as a polished mirror.

The island, so Niàbon told me, had not been inhabited for a great number of years, though it was occasionally visited by natives for the purpose of collecting the ripe coco-nuts, and turning them into oil, and sometimes the white traders, living on Apaian, would stop there when they were on their way to Tarawa and

Maiana Lagoons. The name of the island, she said, was Te Mata Toto ("The Bloody Eye"). "Why such a name?" I asked. "I will tell you some other time," she replied; "not now, because I do not want Tepi to hear me talking about the place. With Tematau it would not matter, for although he knows the story, he is not a Tarawa man, and has nothing of which he need be afraid."

We sat talking together for some little time, and as I looked at Lucia I could not but wonder at the marvellous manner in which she was recovering her health and strength. Her pallor, once so very manifest, had disappeared, as well as her languid step, and at this moment she was merrily reproving Tepi for smoking a pipe so old and dirty and so short in the stem that it was burning his nose.

The big man grinned, and said it was a lucky pipe. For when it was white, new, and long, and he was smoking it for the first time, he, with two other men, was fishing from a canoe, it fell from his mouth into the sea, and before he could dive for it was swallowed by a *kura* (rock-cod).

"How know you?" she asked.

"Because my mother found it in the belly of one of those we caught, when she was cooking it," he replied promptly.

Presently Niâbon, who knew exactly to the smallest detail where everything was stowed in the boat, told him to look in one of the stern lockers for the fishing tackle, where he would find a small hand casting net, with which he and Tematau could go catch some grey mullet, while she, Lucia, and myself, walked round the island.

Bringing my gun with me—for there were great numbers of small golden plover flying past us towards the sand patches now being revealed by the ebbing tide, we started off, Niâbon leading, and conducting us directly towards the centre of the islet, which was less than three-quarters of a mile from shore to shore, and was the northernmost of a chain of five or six, almost connected with each other at low water, and forming the northern horn of the lagoon. A short walk brought us to a small cleared space, enclosed by some heavy timber. The ground was devoid of any foliage with the exception of some straggling, thorny bushes, growing up between the layers of what seemed to be a solid bed of coral slabs cast up by the action of the sea during heavy storms long years before.

"It was once a deep hole and was used as a well, long, long ago," said Niâbon, "but the bones of seven white men lie there under the stones. Their bodies were thrown into the well, and then for two days some of the people of Tarawa threw stones upon them till the hole, which was five fathoms across from its sloping banks, and a fathom and a half down to where the fresh water lay, was filled, and only a flat surface of stones was to be seen. Come, let us get away to the other side, for the air here is hot and foul from the smell of the damp soil underneath these big trees. It is never dry, for the sun cannot get to it."

We gladly followed her, and soon reached the other side of the island, which faced the lagoon, of which we had a glorious view as far as eye could see. Then Niâbon told us the story of the well—a story that, horrible as it was, was but a counterpart of many such tragedies which had taken place all over the North and South Pacific, more especially after the settlement of New South Wales, in 1788, and when sandal-wooding and whaling brought hundreds of ships into the South Seas, the former being too often manned and commanded by some of the greatest ruffians who ever dangled from the end of a rope.

The story was told to her by old Kaibuka, who himself had participated in the massacre, which had been planned and executed under the direct supervision of his father, his uncle, and himself. And it was not the only such affair in which he had been concerned—not on Tarawa alone, but on the neighbouring lagoon of Maiana. From Niâbon he had concealed nothing of his past life, and I honestly believe could not have done so had she wished otherwise, for the old fellow showed his respect and fear for her and her powers of "seeing beyond" to the same degree as did every other one of his people—man, woman, or child. Niâbon imagined that this particular case of cutting-off occurred about forty or fifty years previously, for Kaibuka told her that although he was young at the time, he was yet a full-grown man; but as he could not even guess at his present age, she had no very reliable data.

This island, he told her, was called Te Mata Toto (The Bloody Eye of the Land) from its being the northern eye or point of the lagoon, from which a watch was always kept in olden times to give warning to the inhabitants of the large villages on the opposite side of the approach of their hereditary enemies—the people of Apaian. The moment a fleet of canoes were seen crossing the ocean strait which divides the two islands, signal fires, always kept in readiness, were lit, and the villages would prepare to resist the invaders, who sometimes, however, would content themselves with an assault on the outpost stationed on the little island. As they generally outnumbered the defenders by ten to one, there was usually but one result—every one of the garrison was slaughtered, and the victors, after stripping the dead bodies of their valued armour of coconut fibre, and destroying their canoes and houses, would return to Apaian satisfied. For this reason—i.e., the many sanguinary encounters which took place on the little island—it was given its ominous name.

One day Kaibuka was sent to command a party of ten men who formed the garrison and who were keeping a keen watch—for a raid was again expected—when a small, square-rigged vessel was seen heading for the island.



SHE CAME BOLDLY ON AND DROPPED ANCHOR CLOSE TO THE SHORE.

[To face p. 84.]

She came boldly on, and dropped anchor close to the shore, lowered a boat, and five men came on shore. They were all armed, and at first were cautious about advancing up the beach to Kaibuka and his men, but seeing that the latter possessed no firearms, they came on, and Kaibuka, throwing down his club and spear, walked down and shook hands with them in a very friendly manner, and was at once addressed by one of them in the Gilbert Island tongue, though he could not speak it very well. He told Kaibuka that the ship was going to China, and that he was a passenger; that he had been living on Temana (an island far to the southeast) but had tired of it, and so, when the ship called there to get some food, of which she was badly in want, he came away with her, the captain, in return for his services as interpreter, promising to give him a passage to the island of Makin, where were living four or five white men. He then asked Kaibuka if there was any drinking water on the little island, and any food—of any kind whatever—to be obtained.

The white men were at once taken and shown the well, at which they were very pleased, and two of them went back to the ship for water-casks, the others remaining on shore bartering with Kaibuka's people for some fish, a turtle, and coco-nuts, paying for them in tobacco and knives, and promising them a keg of rum if twenty turtle and a boat-load of full-grown coco-nuts were brought them within a few days. Turtle, however, were scarce, but Kaibuka said that there were a good many captive ones in the turtle ponds at the main village, and he would send over for some. And then his brain began to work. He suggested that two or three of the white men should go with his messenger; but they were too wary, and made excuses, which Kaibuka took in seeming good part, saying it did not matter, but that he would send a man over at once to his father to tell him to bring as many turtle as could be obtained. The captain and interpreter were satisfied with this, and returned on board, declining to let any of the curious natives come with them—on the plea that they would be too busy repairing some water-casks which they hoped Kaibuka and his men would help fill in the morning.

Then the young chief called to his messenger.

"Tell my father and my uncle that I can see but seven men altogether on the ship, but each one carries a gun, pistol, and cutlass, and two are always on guard. Tell him, too, to bring some turtle and fish, and let some young women who can dance well come with him as well. But my uncle and some of our best men must follow in their canoes at night, and make no noise. They must land and hide in the bush, and stay there till my father speaks."

Early on the following morning the captain again landed, and was pleased to find Kaibuka's father, accompanied by some unarmed men and eight or ten handsome young women, awaiting him on the beach. He had, he said, brought but five turtle that day, but would fetch an equal number or more on the morrow if they could be obtained. The captain was pleased. Fresh food, he said, he was very anxious to obtain, as they had nothing on board but salt beef and mouldy biscuit. He gave old Takai (Kaibuka's father) some tobacco, and a knife, and said that the young women might go on board and dance for the amusement of the sailors. This was exactly what the old man desired, for he could, from them, obtain definite information as to the condition of affairs on board the ship, for it was very evident that the captain was determined not to be led into fancied security by the friendly demeanour of the natives, but meant to keep himself and crew well prepared to resist a surprise.

During this time the young Kaibuka and the interpreter—the white man from Temana—had become quite friendly, and that evening, whilst the young women were still on board, he came on shore alone, and calling Kaibuka aside from the other natives, said he wanted to speak to him privately. As soon as they were alone, he boldly avowed his intention of capturing the ship, and murdering all the other white men if Kaibuka and his people would assist him. The matter, he said, could be easily done. He and some other white men—two of whom were now living at Makin Island—had once stolen a ship when they were prisoners in Van Diemen's Land, had killed five or six soldiers and some of the crew, and sailed away with her to Fiji; and they had got much plunder from her.

"What is to be got from *this* ship?" asked Kaibuka, who had heard this particular story from some traders and knew it to be true.

"Casks and casks of rum, and kegs of powder and bullets, hundreds of muskets, swords, knives, and axes and beads—all that man can want—for this ship is going to a far-off cold country to barter these things for furs."

Kaibuka then inquired what share of the plunder he and his people should have if they captured the ship.

Half, replied the white man. Half of everything that was in the ship's hold and in the cabin, except some small square boxes of silver money—ten in all—for which he (Kaibuka) would have no use. And he could have two of the four big guns on the deck if he wished; but the ship herself was not to be harmed, nor any of her sails or rigging taken away. And Kaibuka would lend him two or three men to sail her to Makin, where he (the white man) would reward them well, and where they could remain till some ship brought them back to Tarawa.

"It shall be done," said the young man; "come with me to my father and his brother, so that we may talk together."

The murderous plot was soon arranged between the three, and the treacherous convict went off on board again to tell the unsuspecting captain that the old chief was anxious that he (the master) would let some of his men come on shore in the morning with axes and cut down a very large tree growing near the well. It was too great an undertaking for the natives with their poor tools—it would take them a week, but the sailors could do it in half a day. Old Takai wanted the tree cut down so as to build a large canoe.

The poor captain fell into the trap, the interpreter assuring him that the natives would not dream of attempting any mischief. Were not some of the young women still on board? he asked, which was a proof of the amicable intentions of the old chief and his people. Furthermore, he added, all the men had that night returned to the mainland to secure more turtle, and only the young women, a few boys, and the chief himself remained on the island.

Early in the morning the captain came on shore with three men, to fell the tree, leaving two only on board, with orders to be on their guard if he fired a shot, or they suspected anything was wrong. The interpreter accompanied him, and to show his confidence in the islanders he ostentatiously, but with seeming carelessness, threw his arms down at the foot of a tree, remarking to the captain that the old chief and boys and women seemed rather frightened at the sight of four armed white men, who also carried axes. Somewhat unwillingly the captain and his men followed suit, and then even permitted the children to carry their axes for them.

The interpreter walked on ahead with the old chief, apparently talking on nothing of importance, but in reality telling him with great glee of how he had succeeded in lulling the captain's suspicions. Presently the whole party reached the thicket in which the well was situated, and as the path was narrow they had to walk in single file, the children who were carrying the axes falling behind. And then suddenly, and almost without a sound, thirty or more stalwart savages, led by the young Kaibuka and his uncle, leapt on the unsuspecting white men, who in a few seconds were clubbed to death before even they could utter a cry.

"Now for the two on the ship," cried the renegade to young Raibuka; "go, one of you women, down to the shore, near the ship, and cast a stone into the water as if at a fish, and the women on board, who are watching, will kill them as easily as we have killed these."

As he turned, an axe was raised and buried in his brain, and he pitched head foremost down the bank into the well—dead.

"Let him lie there," said one of the leaders; "throw the others after him, and wait for two more."

The two poor seamen on board the ship were ruthlessly slaughtered by the women in a similarly treacherous manner, their bodies brought on shore, thrown down into the well with those of their shipmates and the renegade, and the whole depression filled with sand and coral slabs, till it was level with the surrounding soil.

Whilst this was being done by one lot of savages, another was looting the vessel of her cargo of trade goods, which was rapidly transferred in canoes to the mainland. Then, as her capturers feared to set fire to her, knowing that the blaze would be seen by the natives of Apaian, ten miles away, they managed to slip her cable, after cutting a large hole in her side at the water-line. Long before sunset she was still in sight, drifting on a smooth sea to the westward; then she suddenly disappeared, and nothing was ever known of her fate, and of the awful ending of her hapless captain and crew, except what was known by the perpetrators of the

massacre themselves.

Such was Niâbon's story of *Te Mata Toto*, and both Lucia and myself were glad to get away from the immediate vicinity of the tragedy, and return to our camping place near the boat, where we found both Tematau and Tepi awaiting us with some fine mullet, which I supplemented later on by a few plover. In the afternoon, whilst the women slept, the two men and myself cleaned our firearms, and attended to various matters on the boat. At sunset the breeze came away freshly from the old quarter—the south-east—and by dark we were at sea again, heading due north for Makin, the most northerly of the Gilbert Group, which was eighty miles distant, and which island I wanted to sight before keeping away north-west for the Caroline Archipelago, for there was a long stretch between, and I was not too brilliant a navigator.

CHAPTER X

However, we were not to see Makin Island, for about midnight the wind chopped round to the north—right ahead—and by daylight we had to reef down and keep away for the south point of Apaian, in the hope that by running along the east coast for a few miles we might get shelter. But we found it impossible to anchor owing to the heavy sea running; neither could we turn back and make for our former anchorage, which was now exposed to the full strength of the wind and sweep of the sea. We certainly could make the passage at the north end of Tarawa—near the Island of the Bloody Eye—and run into the lagoon, where we should be in smooth water; but we did not want to go back to Tarawa, under any circumstances—my own pride, quite apart from my companions' feelings, would not let me entertain that idea for an instant. To attempt to beat back round the south point of Apaian, and get into Apaian Lagoon would be madness, for the sea in the straits was now running mountains high, owing to a strong westerly current, and the wind was steadily increasing in violence; and even had it not been so, and we could have got inside easily, would either Lucia or myself have cared to avail ourselves of its security. For Bob Randall, the trader there, would be sure to board us, and Bob Randall, one of the straightest, decenterest white men that ever trod in shoe leather, would wonder what Mrs. Krause was doing in Jim Sherry's boat! He and I had never met, but he knew both Krause and Mrs. Krause. No, I thought, that would never do.

All this time we were hugging the land as near as we could, first on one tack, then on the other, hoping that the weather would moderate, but hoping in vain, for the sky was now a dull leaden hue, and the sea was so bad, even in our somewhat sheltered situation, that we were all more or less sea-sick. I got my chart and studied the thing out. Sixty miles due south of us was Maiana Lagoon—a huge square-shaped atoll, into which we might run, and have the boat plundered by the natives to a certainty. That was no good. No, if the gale did not moderate, there was but one course open to me—to run before it for Apamama, a hundred and thirty miles to the S.S.E., which meant two hundred and sixty miles of sailing before we laid a course for the N.W. And then the delay. We might be tied up by the nose in Apamama Lagoon for a week or more before we could make another start. I rolled up the chart, wet and soddened as it was with the rain beating on it, and angrily told Tematau, who was steering, to watch the sea, for every now and then the boat would plunge heavily and ship a caskful or two of water over the bows.

"We are in a bad place here, master," he replied, quietly; "'tis the strong current that raiseth the high sea."

I knew he was right, and could not but feel ashamed of my irritability, for both he and Tepi had been watching the boat most carefully, and I there and then decided what to do, my ill-temper vanishing when I saw Mrs. Krause and Niâbon bailing out the water which had come over the hatch coamings into their cabin.

"This is a bad start for us, Lucia," I said cheerfully; "we can't dodge about here under the lee of the land with such a sea running. I am afraid that there is no help for us but to make a run for it for Apamama. What do you think, Niâbon?"

She looked at me with a smiling face, and rising to her feet steadied herself by placing her hands on the after-coaming of the hatch. Her thin muslin gown was wet through from neck to hem, and clung closely to her body, and as her eyes met mine, I, for the first time in my life, felt a sudden tenderness for her, something that I never before felt when any woman's eyes had looked into mine. And I had never been a saint, though never a libertine; but between the two courses, I think, I had had as much experience of women as falls to most men, and I had never yet met a woman who seemed to so hold and possess my moral sense as did this semi-savage girl, who, for all I knew, might be no better than the usual run of Polynesian girls with European blood in their veins. But yet at that moment, I felt, ay, I *knew*, though I could not tell why, that she was *not* what she might well have been, when one considered her past environment, and her lonely unprotected situation—that is, lonely and unprotected from a civilised and conventional point of view; for with the wild races among whom she had dwelt since her infancy, she had always met with full, deep, and ample protection, and love and respect—and fear.

"Thou art the captain, Simi," she said in Samoan, "and thou alone canst guide us on the sea. And I think, as thou dost, that we must sail before the storm to Apamama; for when the wind comes suddenly and strong from the north, as it has done now, it sometimes lasteth for five days, and the sea becomes very great."

"'Tis well, Niâbon," I answered, with a laugh, meant more for Lucia than for her; "we shall turn the boat's head for Apamama, and lie there in the lagoon in peace till the gale hath died away."

And then we wore ship, and in another hour were racing before the gale under the jib and an extemporised foresail of a mat lashed to two short oars, the lower one fast to the deck, and the upper one, eighteen inches or so higher, to the mast stays. This lifted the boat beautifully, and made her steer ever so much easier than had I tried to run her with a close-reefed mainsail, for the lopping seas would have caught the boom, and either capsized us or carried the mast away, and yet I had to keep enough canvas on her—jib and mat foresail—to run away from the toppling mountains of water behind us. I had never had such an experience before,

and hope I may never have one like it again. Every few minutes we would drop down into a valley as dark as death, with an awful wall of blackness astern, towering over us mountain high, shaking and wavering as if it knew not the exact spot whereunder we, struggling upward, lay helpless in the trough, awaiting to be sent to the bottom if we failed to rise on the first swelling outlier of the black terror astern.



HOW WE ESCAPED BROACHING TO AND FOUNDERING IN THAT WILD GALE WILL ALWAYS BE A WONDER TO ME.

[To face p. 96.]

How we escaped broaching to and foundering in that wild gale will always be a wonder to me, for the boat, although she did not ship much water, seemed so deadly sluggish at times that looking astern made my flesh creep. All that night we went tearing along, and glad enough we were when day broke, and we saw the sun rise. The wind still blew with great violence, but later on in the morning the sky cleared rapidly, and at nine o'clock, to our delight, we sighted Apamama a little to leeward, distant about eight miles, and in another hour we raced through the north passage and brought-to in smooth water under the lee of two small uninhabited islands which gave us good shelter. From where we were anchored we could see the main village, which was six miles away to the eastward, and I quite expected to see visitors coming as soon as the wind fell sufficiently to permit of boats or canoes beating over to us, and determined to give them the slip if possible, and get under way again before they could board us and urge me to come and anchor on the other side, abreast of the village.

My reasons for wishing to avoid coming in contact with the people were shared by my companions, and were based on good grounds.

The ruler of Apamama, King Apinoka, was, although quite a young man, the most powerful and most dreaded of all the chiefs of the islands of the mid-Pacific, and he boasted that in time he would crush out and utterly exterminate the inhabitants of the surrounding islands unless they submitted to him, and for years past had been steadily buying arms of the best quality. He had in his employ several white men, one of whom was his secretary, another was a sort of military instructor, and a third commanded a small but well-armed schooner, and it was his (the king's) ambition to possess a steamer, so that he could more easily and expeditiously set out on his career of conquest. The revenue he derived was a very large one, for the island contained hundreds of thousands of coco-nut trees, and all day long, from morn till night, his subjects were employed in turning the nuts into oil or copra, which he sold to trading vessels. A thorough savage, though he affected European dress at times, he ruled with a rod of iron, and he had committed an appalling number of murders, exercising his power and his love of bloodshed in a truly horrifying manner. For instance, if one of his slaves offended him, he would have the man brought before him and order him to climb a very tall coco-nut tree which grew in front of the king's house and throw himself down. If the poor wretch hesitated, Apinoka would then and there shoot him dead; if he obeyed, and threw himself down, he was equally as certain to be killed by the fall—sixty feet or more. Wherever he went he was surrounded by his bodyguard, and his haughty and domineering disposition was a general theme among the white traders of the Pacific Islands. To those captains who supplied him with firearms he was liberal to lavishness in the favours he conferred; to any who crossed him or declined to pander to him, he would be grossly insulting, and forbid them to ever come into the lagoon again.

His house was a huge affair, and contained an extraordinary medley of articles—European furniture, sewing machines, barrel organs, brass cannon and cannon-balls, cuckoo clocks, bayonets, cutlasses, rifles, cases and casks of liquor, from Hollands gin to champagne, and fiery Fiji rum to the best old French brandy. His harem consisted of the daughters of his most notable chiefs, and occupied a house near by, which was guarded day and night by men armed with breechloaders, who had instructions to shoot any one who dared to even look at the king's favourites.

And yet, strangely enough, the very people over whom this despot tyrannised were devotedly attached to him; and many trading captains had told me that he was "a real good sort when you got to know him." One of these men a few years later conveyed Apinoka and five hundred of his fighting-men to the neighbouring

islands of Euria and Axanuka—two of the loveliest gems of the mid-Pacific—and witnessed the slaughter of the entire male population, Apinoka sparing only the young women and the strongest children, keeping the former for himself and his chiefs, and the children for slaves. As might have been expected, there were always plenty of renegade and ruffianly white men eager to enter into his service, in which they could give full fling to their instincts of rapine and licentiousness.

I had never seen Apinoka nor any of his European hangers-on, and had no desire to make his or their acquaintance, so I anxiously watched the weather and had everything ready to get under way the moment we could do so with safety. But though it was smooth enough inside the lagoon, the wind continued to blow with undiminished violence, and even had it moderated there was such a terrific sea tumbling in through the narrow passage, that it would have been a most risky undertaking to have attempted to beat out against a head wind, with such a heavy, sluggish boat. Had I known what was to happen I should have risked it ten times over.

At noon, whilst we were having our midday meal, Tematau, who was standing for'ard, scanning the eastern shore of the atoll, said he could see a boat coming towards us, beating up under a reefed mainsail and jib.

"It is one of Apinoka's boats, Simi," said Niâbon, "for there is no trader in Apamama; the king will let no one trade here."

"Well, we can't help ourselves," I said, as I looked at the boat through my glasses; "she is beating up for us—there is no doubt about that. I daresay we shall get rid of them when they find out who we are."

Niâbon shook her head, and by their faces I saw that both Tepi and Tematau did not like the idea of our awaiting the coming boat.

"What can we do?" I said, with childish petulance. "We cannot go to sea in such weather as this, and get knocked about uselessly."

"Master," said big Tepi gravely, "may I speak?"

"Speak," I said, as I handed my glasses to Lucia—"what is it?"

"This master. These men of Apamama be dangerous. No one can trust them; and they will be rude and force themselves upon us, and when they see the many guns we have on board they will take them by force, if thou wilt not sell them at their own price."

"Let them so try," I said, in sudden anger at the thought of a boatload of King Apinoka's crowd of naked bullies coming on board and compelling me to do as they wished: "I will shoot the first man of them who tries to lay his hand on anything which is mine."

Tepi's black eyes sparkled, and all the fighting blood of his race leapt to his cheeks and brow, as he stretched out his huge right arm.

"Ay, master. And I too desire to fight. But these men will come as friends, and their numbers and weight will render us helpless in this small boat. Is it not better that we should hoist the anchor and run before the wind to the south passage, gain the open sea, and then come to anchor again under the lee of the land until the storm is spent?"

His suggestion was so sensible that I felt annoyed and disgusted with myself. Of course there was a south passage less than ten miles distant, and we could easily run down to it and bring to outside the reef, and either lay-to or anchor in almost as smooth water as it was inside. But I would not let Lucia or Niâbon think that I had forgotten about it; so I spoke sharply to poor Tepi, and told him to mind his own business. Did he think, I asked, that I was a fool and did not know either of the south passage or my own mind? And so I let my vanity and obstinacy overrule my common sense.

"Get thy arms ready," I said to Tematau and Tepi, "and if these fellows are saucy stand by me like men, I shall not lift anchor and ran away because Apinoka of Apamama sendeth a boat to me."

Now, I honestly believe that these two men thought that there would be serious trouble if I was so foolishly obstinate as to await the coming boat, when we could so easily lift anchor, rip down the lagoon, and be out through the south passage and in smooth water under the lee of the land in less than an hour; but at the same time they cocked their eyes so lovingly at the Sniders and Evans's magazine rifles which Niâbon passed up to me that I knew they were secretly delighted at the prospect of a fight.

Niâbon said something in a low voice to Lucia, who then spoke to me, and said nervously—

"Please do not think I am a coward, Mr. Sherry. But do you not think it is better for us to get away?"

"No, I don't," I answered so rudely that her face flushed scarlet, and her eyes filled with tears; "I shall stay here if fifty of King Apinoka's boats were in sight." And as I spoke I felt a strange, unreasoning fury against the approaching boat.

I picked up an Evans rifle—we had two on board—filled the magazine, handed it to Niâbon, told her to lay it down in the little cabin, out of sight, with the other arms—three Snider carbines, my breechloading shotgun, and three of those rotten pin-fire French service revolvers—the Lefauchaux. My own revolver was a Deane and Adams, and could be depended upon—the Lefauchaux could not, for the cartridges were so old that twenty-five per cent, of them would miss fire. Years before, at a ship chandler's shop in Singapore, I had bought twenty of these revolvers, with ten thousand cartridges, for a trifling sum, intending to sell them to the natives of the Admiralty Islands, who have a great craze for "little many-shooting guns," as they call repeaters; but the cartridges were so defective that I was ashamed to palm them off as an effective weapon, and had given all but three away to various traders as curiosities to hang upon the walls of their houses.

As the boat drew near I saw that she was steered by a white man, who sailed her beautifully. He was dressed in a suit of dirty pyjamas, and presently, as the wind lifted the rim of the wide Panama hat he was wearing, I caught a glimpse of his features and recognised him—Florence Tully, one of the greatest blackguards in the Pacific, and whom I had last seen at Ponape, in the Carolines. As he saw me looking at him, he took off his hat and waved it.

"That is 'Florry' Tully, Jim," said Lucia. "I have often seen him. He is the man who shot his wife—a native girl—at Yap, in the Carolines, because she told the captain of a Spanish gunboat that he had been selling

arms to the natives."

"I know the fellow too," I said; "the little scoundrel used to be boatswain of Bully Hayes's brig, the *Leonora*. Hayes kicked him ashore at Jakoits Harbour, on Ponape, for stealing a cask of rum from the *Leonora*, and selling it to the crew of an American whaler."

CHAPTER XI

Five minutes later the boat, which was crowded with natives, went about like a top, and then Tully—as fine a sailor man as ever put hand to a rope—brought her alongside in such a manner that I could not but admire and envy the little blackguard's skill.



**AND THEN TULLY . . . BROUGHT HER ALONGSIDE IN SUCH A MANNER
THAT I COULD NOT BUT ADMIRE AND ENVY HIS SKILL.**

[To face p. 102.]

The boat itself was kept in fine order, and was painted like all the king's miniature fleet—white outside, and bright salmon inside. One glance at his boat's crew showed me that they were all armed—in a flashy melodramatic style, like the Red Indians of a comic opera, each naked native having a brace of revolvers buckled to a broad leather belt around his waist, from which also hung a French navy cutlass in a leather sheath. They were all big, stalwart fellows, though no one of them was as tough a customer to deal with as our Tepi, who eyed them with undisguised enmity as he caught and made fast the line they heaved aboard.

Little Tully, red-headed, red-bearded, unwashed, and as dirty generally as a pig from his own County Down, jumped on board and extended his filthy paw to me effusively.

"Wal, now, I jest am surprised to see you, Jim Sherry," he said with the "Down East" drawl he affected—he called himself an American—"why, we haven't seen one another fer quite a stretch. Naow, tell me, where air you from and where air you goin'?" "From Tarawa, and bound to Taputeuea" (an island a hundred miles to

the south), I replied curtly, my temper rising, as suddenly catching sight of Lucia and Niâbon, he stared rudely at the former, then grinned and held out his hand to her. She touched it coldly with ill-disguised aversion.

"Why, you too, Mrs. Krause! Wal, this is surprisin'. And where are *you* goin'? Where's the boss?" "Mr. Krause is on Tarawa," she replied quickly, "and he has chartered Mr. Sherry's boat to take me to Drummond's Island" (Taputeuea), "where there is a German barque loading for Samoa." The latter part of her remark was quite true, and Tully knew it.

"That is so, the *Wandrahm*. She's been lying there nigh on four months. And so you goin' ter Samoa, eh? Wal, I wish I was goin' there myself; but I've got a rosy berth here—I'm boss of King Apinoka's fleet of trading boats, an' live like a fightin' cock."

I was about to ask him to have a glass of grog, just out of mere civility and island custom, when Tematau and Tepi made a sudden movement, and turning, I saw that they were trying to prevent three or four of Tolly's boat's crew from coming on board.

"Tell your men to keep to their boat, please," I said sharply. "My two men don't understand the ways of these Apamama people, and they'll be quarrelling presently."

"Why, certainly, Jim," he said, with such oily effusiveness that I longed to kick him over the side; "but there ain't no need for your men to be scared. My crew on'y want to hev' a bit of a gam{*} with yours—thet's all."

* *Whalemen's parlance for gossip.*

He told his men to stay in the boat, but I saw him give them a swift glance, and prepared myself for the next move. Tepi was watching him keenly; Tematau went for'ard and began splitting kindling wood in a lazy, aimless sort of a way, but I knew that he, too, was ready. Still I felt that we were in a tight place—three men against ten, exclusive of Tully. However, I tried to appear at my ease, and asked him to have a drink. Niâbon passed us up a half-bottle of brandy, two tin mugs and some water.

My visitor tossed off his liquor, and lit a cigar, offering me another.

"This is a fine lump of a boat," he said, running his eye over the deck, and then trying to peer into the little cabin; "you wouldn't care about sellin' her, I guess."

"No," I replied, "not now, at any rate. Must fulfil my charter first. But I am open to an offer when we come back from Drummond's Island. I suppose you want her for the king."

"That is so. He's keen on getting better and bigger boats than those he has, and will sling out the dollars for anything that takes his fancy—like this one will. Won't you run down with her now, and let him have a look at her? It'll be a lot better than lyin' up here, and the king wants to see you."

I detected the suppressed eagerness in his voice as he made his request, and pretended to think for a few moments, blaming myself for my folly in not clearing out when we could have done so easily.

"No," I said slowly, as if I had considered the matter, "I think we'll lay here for to-day anyway. But I don't see why I could not run down early to-morrow. Do you think the king could spare me about fifty fathoms of 1 3/4 inch line? I want some badly."

"Of course—I'll give it to you myself. But I partickler want you to come back with me rightaway, ez Apinoka will jest be ragin' mad with me if I go back by myself. You see, he's going away to the south end of the lagoon at daylight on a fishin' trip."

"Well, I'll run down to the town in the morning and wait till he returns," I said, inwardly boiling at the man's persistency. "A day or two days' delay won't matter to me, and I think I'll put the boat up on the beach and get a look at her underneath—I think some of her seams want caulking. That will take one day at least, and then we might just as well be lying high and dry on the beach instead of being half-drowned outside, running before this northerly."

The little devil was disappointed—that could be seen by his face—and I was also pretty sure did not believe my talk about the rope I wanted and the caulking to be done. But I was now burning with anxiety to get rid of him and his boatload of naked bullies. Once they were well away from us, I would get up anchor and make sail for the south passage and get to sea again.

"Well, just as you please," he said sullenly, as he helped himself to another brandy. "I suppose I must get back." Then he asked me if I had any rifles to sell.

"No. We only have enough for ourselves. Oh, where's the water? Niâbon, some water please."

He started and looked hard at the girl. "Is that there gal the witch woman?" he asked quickly, staring at her steadily. "Niâbon' you called her, didn't you? Where is she goin'?"

"With Mrs. Krause," I said shortly.

"Great Caesar's sea boots! Apinoka and his people know all about her. He'll be mighty glad to see her. She's denied good-lookin' too. Why, I thought——"

He jumped to his feet and told his boat's crew that "Niâbon" was on board, and in an instant every one of them was staring at her and calling out her name, and one of them, bolder than the rest, made a gesture to her to get into the boat. I pretended not to notice it, and Niâbon herself told them that we were all very tired and wanted sleep, but that in the morning she would talk with them all at the village—when we came to see the king. They seemed satisfied, but a deal of whispering went on—and I felt certain that had Tully given them the word, they would have there and then rushed us and captured the boat.

"Wal, I must be goin'," said Tully at last; "when do you think you'll be down? The king will be mighty vexed at not seein' you to-day."

"It's only eight miles across," I said carelessly, "so I daresay we'll be there about seven in the morning, before breakfast. But," I added, to allay his suspicions, "the weather may take up a bit this afternoon; if it does, I'll come along rightaway, after we have had a sleep."

He said that the chances were that it would take up, as the wind was hauling more to the eastward, which meant rain, and once rain fell the wind would fall too.

We had a third drink, and I passed a couple of bottles of square-face oyer to his crew, and then, to our intense satisfaction, Tally went over the side into his own boat, which at once pushed off, and in a few minutes was slipping over the lagoon towards the big village, Tolly waving his dirty Panama hat to us as he stood grasping the steer oar. I almost fancied I could see him grin evilly at me.

"Simi," said Niàbon as she watched the receding boat, "let us get away from here quickly. That man Florry means ill to us, for I saw his eyes gleam when, as Lucia sat down on the mats under which the rifles are hidden, he heard them rattle together."

Tepi and Tematau joined her in her assertion that Tully meant mischief and would seize the boat for the king, who would have no compunction in resorting to violence or murder to achieve his object, especially with a man like Tully to cary out his wishes. Tepi also said that once the king knew that Niàbon was on board he would use every effort to gain possession of her. Then, too, the firearms we carried were a further incentive to treachery—the king's mania to increase his stock of arms and ammunition being well known.

"Very well," I said to Lucia, "I'm quite as anxious as any one of us to get away. Let us wait, however, till Tully's boat is well down the lagoon."

"Master," said Tepi, "do not delay. See, the wind is falling, and rain—much rain—is close to from the east, and the rain killeth the wind. And this is a heavy boat to move with oars."

He was quite right, for, as Tully had said was likely, the wind was not only falling, but was going round to the eastward. The sooner we got out of Apamama Lagoon the better.

"We'll loose the mainsail then," I said to Niàbon, "and we'll get away. But we won't hoist it yet. We'll up anchor and drift until the rain comes—it will be on us in a quarter of an hour, and Tully won't be able to see anything of us till we are abreast of the passage; and we may get out to sea without any one seeing us at all."

We got the anchor up, and with mainsail and jib all ready for hoisting, let the boat drift, and in another quarter of an hour a dense rain squall came down on us from the eastward with just enough wind in it to send us along at a smart pace as soon as we hoisted our sails. In less than an hour we were pretty close to the passage; for, although we could not see it owing to the rain, we felt the force of the swift current running out, and could hear the subdued roar of the dangerous tide-rips. Tematau was for'ard, holding on to the fore-stay and peering ahead. Suddenly he gave a cry of alarm and shouted to me to luff.

It was too late, for almost at the same time we struck with a crash, and the current, catching the boat's stern, slewed her round broadside on to the reef, where she lay hard and fast, though shaking in every timber as a wall of water, hissing like a boiling cauldron, formed against her starboard side.

Bidding the women sit quite quiet, we let go main and jib halliards and got the sails inboard—no easy task under the circumstances. The water was not very deep, less than three feet, and every moment was decreasing in depth as the tide rushed out. This was fortunate for us in one respect, for we could at least see what damage had been done when she struck and possibly make it good; but on the other hand we should have to stick where we were till the flood tide, and I was horribly afraid of the rain clearing off and revealing us to the natives.

However, there was no use in meeting trouble halfway, so we waited patiently for half an hour, when the reef became bare and we could make an examination of the boat's bottom—on one side at least. It did not take us long to discover that no great harm had been done—she had struck fairly stem on to a patch of growing coral, which was better than hard rock—and beyond carrying away a bit of her false keel, and deeply scoring the bow planking, there was nothing else we could see at which to grumble.

I was considering what was best to be done—the whole five of us could not even move so heavy a boat an inch—when to my disgust the rain suddenly cleared, and I saw that we were aground on Entrance Island, with a native village staring us in our faces less than a quarter of a mile away! And almost at the same moment we saw ten or a dozen men walking over the reef towards us. Through my glasses I saw that they were carrying nets and fish baskets, and I felt relieved at once; the moment they saw us they dropped their burdens and came on at a run. None of them were armed.



THROUGH MY GLASSES I SAW THEY WERE CARRYING NETS AND FISH BASKETS.

[To face p. 110.]

CHAPTER XII

"They are some of the king's fisherfolk," said Tepi, scanning them closely; "that is their village, Only fishermen and two of the king's pilots live here. I have heard them spoken of many times."

"Then they are just the very fellows we want," I said to Lucia; "there's enough of them, with us, to put the boat off this ledge into the water again. They'll be here in a few minutes. Niâbon, do you think we can be seen from the king's village? I can see the houses there quite plainly."

"I fear so, Simi," she replied.

"Then we must make these fellows who are coming to us work hard. I'll pay them well for it if they get us afloat again in another hour. Let me do all the talking. Take my glasses and let me know the moment you see a boat coming. We must not be caught here like this; and the tide won't turn for another hour at least."

There were eleven natives, and when they were close to I noticed with satisfaction that most of them were sturdy, well-built fellows. They came up to us, and we all shook hands, and before even asking them to help me, I inquired if they would like some grog to dry their skins.

Lucia had a quart bottle of Hollands all ready, and in less than five minutes it was empty, and our visitors said I was a noble-minded and thoughtful man.

"Friends," I said, "behold me and my friends—and this our boat cast upon the reef like a stranded porpoise. Wilt help us float again, so that we may get to the king's town to-night and sleep in peace? And I shall pay every man twenty sticks of rich, sweet tobacco and four bottles of grog between thee."

My munificent offer was received with acclamation, though at first they wanted a preliminary smoke and gossip, but I bade them hurry.

"No time have we for talk now, friends," I said, jocularly slapping one of them on his brawny shoulders; "'tis but this morning the king sent a white man to me in his own boat to bid me welcome; and, as we hurried down the lagoon, that devil's rain sent me astray, so that the boat was caught in the current and swept down into the passage, where we struck, as thou seest."

My explanation was quite satisfactory, and they went to work with a will, lightening the boat—after a first and fruitless attempt to move her—by taking out all our water, stores, &c. We were but fifty or sixty feet away from the edge of the channel; and in half an hour, by our united effort, had dragged her half the distance, when Niâbon beckoned me to her.

"There are two boats half-way down the lagoon," she said in a low voice: "one is that of Tully, and they are using both sails and oars. See, they are plainly in sight."

I jumped back again amongst the natives. I knew that they would have already seen the coming boats had they not been toiling so hard, so I called to Niâbon to open another bottle of grog and serve it out.

"Hurry, hurry, O strong men," I cried, as we moved the boat another foot astern, "else shall I be laughed at by the king's white men, for two boats are coming. And instead of twenty it shall be forty sticks of tobacco each if ye get this boat in the water before the king's men are here to laugh at me."

The poor beggars were working like Trojans, their naked bodies streaming with perspiration, as Niâbon held out to each of them half a pannikinful of raw gin, which was tossed off at one swallow. Then both she and Lucia, who was now on the reef, began digging the promised tobacco out of a case with sheath knives.

"Don't bother to count the sticks!" I cried, as the boat made a sudden move and was kept going for nearly a dozen feet. "Toss out about half of the case and be ready to jump on board and get under cover."

At last, with a yell of satisfaction from the natives, the stern post was seen to be over the ledge of the coral, and then with one final effort the boat went into the water with a splash like a sperm whale "breaching."

"Now, in with everything," I shouted to Tematau, as one glance showed me the two boats, now less than half a mile away, coming along at what seemed to me to be infernal speed.

Tematau and the natives made a rush at the boxes of stores, bundles of sails, water breakers, and everything else, and tumbled them on board anyhow, Lucia and Niâbon taking the lighter articles from them and dropping them into the cabin, so as to give us more deck room, whilst I ran up the jib, and big Tepi the mainsail.

"Take all the loose tobacco there, my friends," cried Niâbon to the fishermen, who with panting bosoms stood looking at us as if we had all gone mad, "and here are the four bottles of *rom*."

One of them sprang to the side of the boat just as I, feeling every moment that I should drop with exhaustion, pushed her off with an oar into deep water. And then we heard a chorus of yells and cries from the two boats, as we eased off the jib and main sheets, and Niâbon put her before the wind. Then *crack! crack!* and two bullets went through the mainsail just below the peak, and I heard Tolly's voice shouting to me to bring to again.

"Come aft here, you two," I cried to Tepi and his mate; "get out the guns, quick. Sit down in the cabin and fire, one on each side of me."

I did not speak a moment too soon, for the leading boat suddenly lowered her sail, took in all her oars but two, and began firing at us at less than three hundred yards, and every bullet hit us somewhere, either in the hull or aloft. Then they took to their oars again, and I saw that unless we could knock some of them over she—and those in the second boat as well—would be aboard of us in a few minutes, for there was now but little wind and the strength of the ebb tide was fast slackening.

Tematau and Tepi each fired two or three shots in quick succession, but missed, and then a very heavy bullet struck the side of the coaming of the steering-well in which I was seated, glanced off and ploughed along the deck, and the second boat now began firing into us with breechloading rifles of some sort.

"Let me try," I said to Tematau, clambering out of the well into the cabin. "Go and steer, but sit down on the bottom, or you'll be hit."

Niâbon handed me my Evans' rifle in the very nick of time, for at that moment Tully stood up in the stern sheets of his boat and, giving the steer oar to a native, began to take pot shots at Tepi and myself. I waited until my hand was a bit steady, and then down he went headlong amongst his crew. I knew I could not possibly have missed him at such a short distance.



**I WAITED UNTIL MY HAND WAS A BIT STEADY, AND THEN DOWN HE
WENT HEADLONG AMONGST HIS CREW.**

[To face p. 116

"Good!" cried Niâbon exultingly, as both Tepi and myself fired together and three of the native paddlers who were sitting facing us, rolled over off their seats, either dead or badly wounded, for in an instant the utmost confusion prevailed, some of the crew evidently wanting to come on, and the others preventing them. By this time the first boat was within easy pistol range the other, which was much larger and crowded with natives, being about forty yards astern of her, but coming along as hard as she could, two of her crew in the bows firing at us with a disgusting kind of a foreign army rifle, whose conical bullets were half as big as pigeon's eggs, and made a deuce of a noise, either when they hit the *Lucia*, or went by with a sort of a groanlike hum.

"Take this," I said to Niâbon, giving her my Deane and Adams pistol, "and do you and Tepi keep off those in the nearest boat if they come on again."

But she waved it aside, and seizing Tematau's carbine, stood up and sent her first shot crashing through the timbers of the boat.

"Quick, Tematau," I cried, "get another rifle and fire with me at the second boat. Let ours come to the wind—it matters not."

Picking out one of the two fellows who were shooting so steadily at us from the bows of their boat, I fired and missed, but another shot did for him, for he fell backwards and I saw his rifle fly up in the air and then drop overboard.

This was enough for them, for the steersman at once began to slew her round, and then he too went down as a bullet from Tematau took him fair and square in the chest, and we saw the blood pouring from him as he fell across the gunwale. In another ten seconds they were paddling away from us, leaving the other boat to her fate.

"That is enough," I cried to Tepi, who I now noticed for the first time was bleeding from a bullet wound in the left arm, which had been hurriedly tied up by Lucia, "that is enough. Put down your gun. There is now no one in the second boat shooting at us."

"They are lying down in the bottom," said Niâbon, "we can see them moving, but some have dived overboard, and swum ashore. See, there are four of them running along the reef."

"Let them go, Niâbon," and then I turned to Lucia. She was deathly pale, but had all her wits about her, for although she could barely speak from excitement, she had some brandy and water ready for us.

"Thank you," I said, as I poured a stiff dose into the pannikin, and taking first pull, passed it on to Tepi and the other man. "Now we must have a look at that boat. We can't leave wounded men to drown."

The wind was now very light, but the boat was so near that we were soon alongside and looking into her. There were three dead, two badly wounded, one slightly wounded man, and one unhurt man in her. The latter looked at us without the slightest fear, even when Tepi, picking up a carbine, thrust the muzzle of it almost into his face. Niâbon gently took the weapon from Tepi's hand, laid it down and waited for me to question our prisoner.

"Is the white man dead?" I asked.

"Ay, he died but now. The bullet went in at where the ribs join."

To make sure that Tally was really dead I got down into the boat. He was lying on his face and was dead enough, though he had evidently lived until a few minutes previously.

I jumped on board the *Lucia* again, and looked anxiously around. There was still a light air, but the tide was now setting in, and I did not want our boat to be carried back into the lagoon again. Then I turned to the prisoner, and asked him if he could tell me why he ought not to be shot. He made a gesture of utter indifference, and said he didn't care. Did I think he was a coward, he asked? Could he not have swum ashore? The king would kill him to-morrow.

Pitying the poor wretch, I gave him a pipe, tobacco, and matches, and told him to help my men put the dead and wounded men on the reef, as I wanted the boat. The people at the fishing village, who had been watching the fight throughout from a safe distance, were within sight, so telling the prisoner he must go to them and get them to carry their dead and wounded up to the houses before the tide covered the reef again, I sent him off with Tematau, Tepi, and Niâbon. Their gruesome task was soon done, and the boat rid of her ensanguined cargo; then as soon as she came alongside again, I called Niâbon on board, and telling her to steer, went into the smaller boat and took the *Lucia* in tow.

As we slowly crept out through the passage, we saw the fisher folk come down to the reef, and, lifting up the three dead men, carry them away, others following with the wounded. It was not a pleasant sight to see, nor even to think of, now that it was all over, and so we none of us spoke as we tugged at the oars.

We got outside at last, and then ceased towing, as a light air carried us well clear of the outer reef. Coming alongside, we stepped on board, after having pulled out the boat's plug. Then we watched her drift astern to fill.

At dawn when I was awakened, after a good four hours' sleep, Apamama was thirty miles astern of us, and we were running free before a nice cool breeze, steering N.W. for Kusaie Island, the eastern outlier of the Carolines, eight hundred miles away.

The two women had not heard me move, and were both sound asleep, their faces close together and their arms intertwined.

CHAPTER XIII

We were thirteen long weary days between Apamama Lagoon and Kusaie, whose misty blue outline we hailed with delight when we first sighted it early one afternoon, forty miles away.

Calms and light winds had delayed us greatly, for as we crawled further northward, we were reaching the limit of the south-east trades, which, at that time of the year, were very fickle and shifty. Not a single sail of any description had we seen, though we kept a keen lookout night and day; for, after being ten days out from Apamama, I began to feel anxious about our position and would have liked to have spoken a ship, fearing that the current, in such calm weather, would set us so far to the westward that I should have difficulty in making the island if we once got to leeward of it.

Day after day had passed with the same unvarying monotony—light winds, a calm, then a brisker spell of the dying trades for a few hours, or a day at most—then another calm lasting through the night, and so on.

But our spirits very seldom flagged, and we contrived to make the time pass somehow. Lucia, whose face and hands were now browning deeply from continuous exposure to the rays of a torrid sun worked with Niâbon at dressmaking, for she had brought with her half a dozen bolts of print; and, as they sewed, they would sometimes sing together, whilst I and my two trusty men busied ourselves about the boat—scrubbing, scraping and polishing inside and out, cleaning and oiling our arms; or, when a shoal of bonita came alongside, getting out our lines and catching as many of the blue and marbled beauties as would last us for a day or two. But our chief relaxation, in which the two young women always joined us, was two or three hours of "sailors' pleasure" i.e., overhauling all our joint possessions, clothing, trade goods of all sorts, and carefully restowing them in the boxes in which they were packed.

Tepi's wound by this time was quite healed—the bullet had gone clean through the fleshy part of his arm, and then struck an oar which was lashed to the rail. He had got a nail from me and drove it through the lead into the wood—to be preserved as a memento of the fight.

On the evening of the day on which we sighted the blue peaks of beautiful Kusaie, the sky began to look ugly to the eastward, and at daylight it was blowing so hard, with such a dangerous sea, that I decided not to attempt to enter the weather harbour—Port Lelé—though that had been my intention, but to run round to the lee side to Coquille Harbour, where we could renew our fresh provisions, spell a day or two, and be among friends, for I knew the people of Kusaie pretty well.

We got into the smooth water of Coquille just in time, for no sooner had we dropped anchor at the mouth of a small creek which debouched into the harbour through a number of mangrove islets, than it commenced to blow in real earnest, and terrific rain squalls drenched us through and made us shiver with cold.

The natives, however, had seen us, and presently, as soon as the rain ceased, three canoes appeared, each manned by five men. They welcomed us very heartily and urged us to come to the village—which was less than a quarter of a mile away. We were only too delighted to get ashore again after thirteen days' confinement on our little craft, so hurriedly packing a couple of boxes with dry clothing, and some articles for presents for the people, we put on the cabin hatches, made everything else snug on board, and half an hour later were all in the chiefs house, warm and dry, and telling him and his family as much about ourselves as we thought advisable.

As soon as it could be cooked, they brought us an ample meal of hot baked fowls, pigeons, and fish, with a great quantity of vegetables—taro, yams, breadfruit, and sweet potatoes. The very smell of it, Tepi whispered to me, made his teeth clash together!

We remained with these hospitable people for four days. There was nothing that they would not do for us—no trouble was too great, no labour was aught but a pleasure to them. They brought the *Lucia* round to a small sandy beach near the village, discharged her, carried everything up to the houses, and cleaned her thoroughly inside and out, and then put her in the water again for us. When we bid them farewell and sailed, the boat's deck was covered with baskets of freshly-cooked food and a profusion of fruit, and Lucia and Niâbon were accompanied on board by every woman and girl in the place, some of whom wept unrestrainedly, and begged them not to venture their lives in such a small boat, but to remain on the island till a ship touched there, bound to the islands of the further north-west.

Before finally parting with our kind friends I gave them twenty pounds of tobacco, which, though we had still four hundredweight left, was still our most valuable trade article, and would have to be disbursed carefully in future, and Lucia gave the chief's daughter a very handsome gold ring of Indian manufacture, though at first the girl declined accepting so valuable a present.



THERE WAS A GLORIOUS SILVER MOON IN A SKY OF SPOTLESS BLUE.

[To face p. 122.]

We lost sight of Kusaie within ten hours, for we had a slashing breeze, which carried us along in great style, and all that night we sat up, none of us caring to sleep, for there was a glorious silver moon in a sky of spotless blue, and the sea itself was as a floor of diamonds.

Niâbon and Lucia, I must mention, had insisted on standing watch ever since we had left Apamama, and they certainly helped us a lot, for both could now steer very well, and took pleasure in it. The former, with Tepi, was in my watch, the latter was with Tematau, who, like all Eastern Polynesians, was a good sailor-man and could always be relied upon.

We had now sailed over a thousand miles; and every day—every hour I gained more confidence in myself, and the resolution to make one of the greatest boat voyages across the Pacific had been ever strengthening in my mind since the day I looked at Chart No. 780 in Krause's house at Taritai.

What could I not do with such a boat and two such men as Tepi and Tematau, after we had landed Lucia and Niâbon at Guam in the far north! We would refit the boat, and then turn our faces south once more, and sail back through the Western Carolines on to wild New Guinea—Dutch New Guinea, and run along the coast till we came to one of the few scattered Dutch settlements on the shores of that *terra incognita*. Tepi and Tematau would stick to me—they had sworn to do so—had told me so in whispers one bright night, as we three kept watch together and Lucia and Niâbon slept.

Niâbon! What a strange strange girl she was! I should find it hard to say goodbye to her, I thought; and then I felt my cheeks flush.

Say goodbye to her—part from her! Why should we part? Was I so much her superior that I need be ashamed of asking her to be my wife? What was I, anyway, but a broken man—a man whose father, my sole remaining relative, had nearly twenty years before told me with savage contempt that I had neither brains, energy, nor courage enough to make my way in the world, thrown me a cheque for a hundred pounds, and sneeringly told me to get it cashed at once, else he might repent of having given it to me to squander among the loose people with whom I so constantly associated. And I had never seen or heard from him, and never would. But I had that cheque still, for there always was in me a latent affection for the cold-faced, unsympathetic man who had broken my mother's heart, not by open unkindness, but by what the head gardener whisperingly told me (when she was lying dead, and I, sent for from college to attend the funeral, went to his cottage to see him) was "silent, invisible neglect, Master James; silent, invisible neglect. That's wot killed her." For the servants loved my poor mother—their opinion of my father they discreetly kept to themselves. So I had kept the cheque, for burning with resentment against him as I was at the time, I remembered the words of my mother's last letter to me, written with her dying hand.

"Try hard to please him, James. He is very cold and stern, but I am sure that, deep down in his heart, he loves you well."

That letter, with the cheque inside it, was now yellowed, and the writing faint, but I had kept them both. I would write to him some day, I had thought, and send him back the cheque, and my mother's letter as well, and then perhaps the hard old man would forgive me, and write and say "Come." But the years went by, and I never wrote, and now it was too late, after fifteen had passed. Very likely he was dead, and had willed his money to churches or hospitals, or some such charities, and I should always be "Jim Sherry, the trader," to the end of my days, and never "James Shervinton, Esq., of Moya Woods, Donegal."

Well, after all, what did it matter? I thought, as I held on to the forestay, and looked at the now paling moon sinking low down on our lee, as the glow of the coming sun tipped a bank of cloud to windward, with a narrow wavering ribbon of shining gold. I had nothing at which to grumble. My fifteen years of wandering had done me good, although I had not saved money—money, that in my father's eyes brought, before eternal salvation in the next world, primarily the beatitudes of some county eminence in Ireland and British respectability generally in this. Unless my father was still alive, and I could know he wanted to see me before he died, I should never go home—not after fifteen years of South Sea life.

Why should I not accept what Fate meant for me, and my own inclinations told me that I was destined for? I was intended to be "Jim Sherry, the trader,"—and I should ask "Niâbon, of Danger Island," to be "Jim Sherry's" wife. Why not. I had never cared for any woman before except in a fleeting, and yet degrading manner—in a way which had left no memories with me that I could look back upon with tender regrets. She and I together might do great things in the South Seas, and found a colony of our own. She had white blood in her veins—of that I felt certain—and where Ben Boyd, of the old colonial days, failed to achieve, I, with a woman like Niâbon for my wife, could succeed. Ben Boyd was a dreamer, a man of wealth and of flocks and herds, in the newly-founded convict settlement of New South Wales, and his dream was the founding of a new state in the Solomon Islands, where he, an autocratic, but beneficent ruler, would reign supreme, and the English Government recognise him as a Clive, a Warren Hastings of the Southern Seas. But the clubs of the murderous Solomon Islanders—the country of the people in which he had already planned out vast achievements on paper—battered out his brains almost under the guns of his beautiful armed yacht, the *Wanderer*; and the name of Ben Boyd was now alone remembered by a decayed village and a ruined lighthouse on the south headland of Twofold Bay, in New South Wales, where, in the days of his prosperity, he had erected it, as a guide to the numerous American and English whaleships, which in those times traversed the Pacific from one end to the other, and would, he imagined, eagerly avail themselves of the quiet, landlocked harbour to repair and recruit, and sell their cargoes of sperm oil. But they never came, and his dream was ended ere his life was gone.

Yes, I would ask her, as soon as I had an opportunity of speaking to her alone. It was true that she had once told me that she would never part from Lucia—and Lucia had often spoken to me of their plans for the future.

But, my vanity whispered, she would listen to me. She cared for me, I was sure, and would not long hesitate. We were certain to meet with at least one missionary going through the Carolines, and he would marry us. If we did not, it would not matter—there were half a dozen Spanish priests in Guam. Then after our marriage I would go on in the boat to Amboyna, where I had a business friend, a rich trader—a man who liked and trusted me, and who would give me a thousand, ay, two thousand pounds' worth of trade goods for my pencilled I.O.U. in his notebook. Then I would buy a little schooner, and sail with Niâbon to the islands of the

south-eastern Pacific, and begin trading. I would make Rapa, in the Austral Group, my head station, or else Manga Reva in the southern Paumotus—Niâbon should decide.

The low cloud to windward lifted, the red sun leapt from the sea-rim, and then I felt a soft hand on my arm.

"What are you thinking of, Jim? I called you twice, but you did not hear. I believe you were talking to yourself, for I twice saw you throw out your arm as if you were speaking to some one."

"I believe I was, Lucia," I replied with a laugh. "I was day-dreaming."

"Tell me, Jim," she said softly, so softly that her voice sank to a whisper.

"Not now, Lucia. Wait till we get to the next land." And then in all innocence I added, as I looked at her, "How bright and happy you look, Lucia! I think you grow more beautiful every day."

She lifted her eyes to mine for one instant, and I saw in them a light I had never seen before.

CHAPTER XIV

"Te fanua, te fanua! te fanua umi, umi lava!" ("Land, land! a long, long land!")

As we, the "watch below"—Niâbon, Tepi, and myself—heard Tematau's loud cry, we sat up, and saw a long, dark line pencilled on the horizon right ahead, which we knew was the great lonely atoll named Providence Island on the charts, and called Ujilon by the natives of the North-Western Pacific.

It was daylight of the sixth day out from Kusaie, and as I stood up to get a better view of the land I was well satisfied.

"We have done well," I said exultantly to Lucia, who was steering: "three hundred and forty miles in five days—with a two-knot current against us all the way!"



AT SEVEN O'CLOCK, JUST AS WE WERE ENTERING IT, WE SAW A BARQUE LYING ON THE REEF ABOUT HALF A MILE AWAY TO THE NORTHWARD.

[To face p. 128.]

I did not know my way into Ujilon Lagoon, for I had never been there before, so I now had some trouble in picking up one of the two passages on the south side of the great atoll. At seven o'clock, just as we were entering it, we saw a barque lying on the reef about half a mile away to the northward. She was a good lump of a vessel—apparently of about seven or eight hundred tons, and the remnants of some of her upper canvas still fluttered to the breeze. We could discern no sign of life about her, nor were any boats visible; but we had

no time to examine her just then, so sailed on across the lagoon, and, instead of dropping anchor, ran gently on to the beach of a densely wooded island, for the water was not only as smooth as glass, but very deep, the "fall" from the edge of the beach being very steep.

In an hour we had lightened the boat sufficiently to float her along a narrow waterway, which wound a sinuous course through the solid coral rock into a little basin or natural dock, where we could board her at either low or high water, without wetting our feet, though she had a clear fathom of water under her keel.

The lagoon seemed alive with large and small fish—none of which, Niâbon said, were poisonous, like two thirds of those of the Marshall Island atolls, and the beaches and sand-flats were covered with small golden-winged plover, who displayed not the slightest fear of our presence, letting us approach them within a few yards, then rising and settling down again. From where we were we could see but seven of the chain of fifteen islands which comprised the atoll; all of these were thickly covered with coco palms, bearing an enormous crop of nuts, and here and there groves of jack-fruit and pandanus broke the monotonous beauty of the palms by their diversity of foliage.

No traces of natives were visible, though I knew that there were a few—about thirty all told—for the redoubtable Captain Bully Hayes, who claimed Ujilon as his own, and whose brig was the first ship to enter the lagoon, had I knew established friendly intercourse with them. Two years before, I had met the famous captain at Anchorite's Islands—to the north of the Admiralty Group—when he had given me a description of Ujilon and its marvellous fertility, and had tried to induce me to go there with him with a gang of natives, and make oil for him. But although he made me a most liberal offer—he was a most delightful man to talk to, was the "South Sea pirate"—I did not trust him well enough, despite his merry, laughing blue eyes, jovial voice and handsome face, for he was a man who could be all things to all men; and the blue eyes sometimes went black, and the smooth, shapely hand that was for ever stroking the long flowing beard, liked too well to feel a trigger in the crook of its forefinger. So I laughingly declined his offer—even when, as an extra inducement, he pointed out to me a very handsome young Marshall Island girl, who would do the station honours for me at Ujilon.

"All right, Mr. Sherry," he said, "please yourself;" and then over another bottle of wine, he gave me some further particulars about the great atoll, and told me of how it had taken him two months to get into communication with the few inhabitants; and of the particular island on which their village was concealed amid a dense grove of pandanus palms. But that was two years ago, and I had forgotten much that he had told me. However, as I intended to remain at Ujilon for two or three days, it was likely that we might come across them—they were very quiet and inoffensive people, so there was no danger to be apprehended from a meeting.

By noon we had our temporary camp made comfortable, and were having dinner when five natives made their appearance—three men and two women—coming towards us in a canoe. They landed without the slightest hesitation, and sat down with us; but we found that they spoke the Marshall Island dialect, which none of us but Niâbon could speak, and she but slightly. However, we managed to worry along, and to our surprise learned that Hayes had been at the island in his famous brig, the *Leonora*, only a month before, and that for a year and six months previously, seventy Line Island natives had been working on the islands under the supervision of a white man, making oil for the captain, but most of them, and the white man as well, had left the atoll in the brig, for Hayes had been so well pleased with the result of their work that he invited forty of the seventy to come on board and go with him to Ponapé, in the Carolines, for a month's recreation and "feasting" on that beautiful island.



WITH FORTY OF HIS STURDY LINE ISLANDERS, AND SEVEN HUNDRED BARRELS OF COCO-NUT OIL, HE HAD SAILED.

[To face p. 132

So with forty of his sturdy Line Islanders, and seven hundred barrels of coco-nut oil, he had sailed; and now, said our five friends, he would soon be back—perhaps in two days—perhaps in ten, or twenty, or more, for how could one tell what the winds would be? He was a good man, was the captain, but hot and sudden in his anger, over-fond of women who were good to look at, and cruel to those who sought to cross his desire; but generous—always generous—and kind to those who were weak and ill, giving them good medicine and rich food; tins of the red rich fish called *samani* which came from his own country, and biscuit and bread such as white men eat. Ah, he was a good man was “Puli Ese” (Bully Hayes).

“Ask them about the wretched ship on the reef,” I said to Niâbon, repeating the first question I had tried to put to them, but which they did not answer, so eager were they to tell us about Captain Hayes and themselves; “ask them all about her—when did she run ashore, and where are the crew?”

Ah, the ship, the great ship! they replied. She had run up on the reef one night four moons ago, when the sky was bright and clear, and the wind blew strongly; and when in the morning they discerned her from the village, the white man had two boats manned to go to her assistance, but as the boats approached, two cannons fired heavy balls at them from the deck of the ship; and although the white man (Hayes's trader) tied his handkerchief to an oar and held it upright, the people on the ship continued to fire on the boats with the big cannons, and with muskets, and then, when one man was hit by a bullet and died quickly, the white man cursed those on the ship for fools, and turned the boats shoreward again, saying that those on board could perish before he would try to help them again. By sunset three boats, filled with men, had left the ship and sailed to the south. In the morning the white man (whom I knew from their description of him to be a well-known and decent South Sea trader named Harry Gardiner) boarded the ship and began to remove all that was of value on shore. Her hold was filled with all sorts of goods in barrels and cases, and when “Puli Ese” came, three months later, he was well pleased, not only for the seven hundred barrels of oil, but with the many things that had been gotten from the wrecked ship.

We promised our new friends to come up to their village—where they and about twenty of their fellow islanders lived with the remainder of Bully Hayes's Line Island contingent—on the following day, and sent them away with a few trifling presents. As they said they could walk back, and I wanted to have a look at the wreck, they cheerfully agreed to let their canoe remain with us.

About four in the afternoon, as the heat of the sun began to relax, I determined to set out in the canoe. Tematau and Tepi had gone across to the weather side of the island with my gun to shoot plover and frigate birds, of which latter, so the natives had told us, there were great numbers to be found on the high trees to windward. Lucia and Niâbon were resting in the shade, but the latter, when she saw me pushing the canoe into the water, asked me to let her come also.

“Yes, of course; and you too, Lucia. Won't you come as well?” I said.

“No, Jim. I feel very lazy, and I'm always so afraid of canoes,” she said with a smile, “and do be careful and

not be capsized; look at all those horrid sharks swimming about—I can see nearly twenty of them from where I am sitting.”

Both Niâbon and I laughed at her fears—the sharks were not man-eaters, as we knew by their black-tipped fins, though the species were dangerous when bad weather made the fish on which they preyed scarce; then they became vicious and daring enough, and would at times actually tear the oars out of the hands of a boat's crew. However, Lucia would not come, saying she would await the return of the men and pluck the plover which they were sure to bring back with them.

“Very well, Lucia,” I said, “we'll leave you to yourself. I *must* have a look at the barque, and find out her name. Wrecks have always had an attraction for me; and, besides that, I want to get a sheet or two of copper to nail over our stem, which was badly hurt when we ran ashore in Apamama Lagoon.”

In another minute or two Niabon and I started, she sitting for'ard and I aft. The wind had died away, and the surface of the lagoon was as smooth as glass, and, through the crystal-clear water, we could discern the glories of the gorgeously-hued coral forest below. Is there such another sight in all the world as is revealed when you look down upon the bottom of a South Sea atoll.

Ah, no, there cannot be! And here as I write, there is before me the cold German Ocean, heaving and tumbling; grey, grim, and sullen under a dulled and leaden sky, and snowflakes beat and beat incessantly upon the opened windows of my room. Out upon the moor there is a flock of snow-white seagulls, driven to land by the wild weather, and as I gaze at them, fluttering to and fro, their presence seems to creep into my heart, and their wild, piping notes to say, “You will go back, you will go back, and see some of us again; not here, under cold skies, but where the bright sun for ever shines upon a sea of deepest blue.”

For half an hour or more we paddled in silence over the smooth waters of that sweet lagoon, the bow of the canoe kept steadily on towards the wrecked barque; and as I looked at the graceful figure of my companion, with her dark, glossy hair flowing over her back and swaying to and fro with every stroke, and saw the graceful poise of her head, and the backward sweep of her two little hands as she plunged her paddle into the water, and withdrew it swiftly and noiselessly, I felt that I could not, I must not delay in asking her to be my wife. Not that her physical beauty had so wrought upon my feelings—I was above that, I thank God, and a level brain—but because I felt that I loved her, ay, honestly *loved* her, and that she was a good and true woman, and our union would be a happy one.

It took us much longer than we anticipated in coming up to the stranded ship, or rather to the inside edge of the reef on which she lay, high and dry, half a mile further to seaward. Taking my hammer and a blunt chisel—to prize off a sheet of copper—we made the canoe fast to a coral boulder, and set off across the reef, which gave forth a strong but sickly odour caused by the heat of the sun acting on the many-coloured and many-shaped marine organisms and living coral.

Niâbon, whose feet were protected by strong *takka* (sandals woven of coco-nut fibre), stepped lightly and swiftly on before me; I with my heavy boots crushing into the brittle, delicate, and sponge-like coral, startling from their sunbaths hundreds of black and orange-banded sea-snakes—reptiles whose bite is as deadly as that of a rattlesnake, but which hastened out of our way almost as soon as they heard our footsteps. Here and there we had to turn aside to avoid deep pools, some of which, though not more than ten fathoms in width, were as blue as the ocean beyond, their rocky walls starting sheer up from their bases to the crust of the reef.



AT LAST WE REACHED THE SHIP AND STOOD UNDER HER BOWSPRIT.

[To face p. 136.

At last we reached the ship, and stood under her bowsprit. She was standing almost upright, wedged in tightly between three huge boulders, one on her port, and two on her starboard side, and I saw that she had

struck with great violence, for just abreast of her foremast there was a jagged hole through which we could see into her lower hold. The natives had told us that there had been an unusually high tide when she ran ashore, and had it not been for her bringing up against the boulders, she might have torn her way over the reef into the lagoon, as she was under a strong press of sail, and the sea was smooth, and the stars shining brightly. Most of her copper had been stripped off by Hayes, but later on I found all I wanted by crawling under the bilge, and prizing off a few undamaged sheets.

"Let us find out her name before we go on board," I said to my companion. "She's a foreigner, I'm sure."

Walking round to her stern we looked up and saw her name, *Agostino Rombo, Livorno*, painted in white letters.

"Ah, I thought she was a foreigner, Niabon. I fancy we shall find a strong smell of garlic as soon as we get on deck."

Turning up along the port side, we soon found an easy way of getting on board, for just abreast of the mainmast Hayes's Chinese carpenters had cut down the main deck from the water-ways to the bilge, so as to give free access to the upper and lower holds.

We first examined the lower hold, which contained about two hundred tons of New Caledonian nickel ore, and which, valuable as it was, Hayes had not troubled about removing. In the 'tween deck there was nothing to show of what the main portion of her cargo had consisted—everything had been removed, and only great piles of dunnage remained, and I came to the conclusion that the *Agostino Rombo* of Leghorn had been bound from some Australian port to China with a general cargo, when her incapable skipper ran her ashore—to Bully Hayes's satisfaction and benefit.

Ascending from the dark and silent 'tween decks, where our footsteps and voices echoed and re-echoed as though we were walking and speaking in some mountain cavern, we ascended to the main deck into the fresh, sweet daylight, though the sun was now low down on the western sky, and the first thing that attracted our attention was a lengthy notice on the mainmast, carefully and neatly painted on a sheet of copper. And as I read it, I could but laugh at Captain Hayes's natural American business instincts, combined with his usual humorous mendacity—

"Notice to Wrecking Parties.

"I, William Henry Hayes, master and owner of the brig *Leonora*, of Shanghai, hereby notify all and sundry that the barque *Agostino Rombo*, of Leghorn, as she now lies on this reef, has been purchased by me from Captain Pasquale Lucchesi, and any person attempting to remove any of her deck-houses, spars, anchors, or cables, or certain nickel ore in the lower hold, are liable to be indicted for piracy. But all anchors, cables, and ground tackle generally may be removed on payment of 250 dols. to my native agent on this island."

From the main deck we ascended to the poop, and went below into the now darkening cabin, which we found was gutted of everything of value, except the captain's and officers' bedding, which had been tossed aside by Hayes and his crew, and which even the natives of Ujilon had regarded as too worthless to take away, though many a poor sailor man, shivering in northern seas, would have clutched at them as eagerly as a Jew pawnbroker would clutch at a necklace of pearls or a diamond-set tiara. The panelling of the main cabin was painted in white and gold, and presented a very handsome appearance, and on the door of every stateroom was an exceedingly well-painted picture of some saint renowned in history—evidently the owners of the *Agostino Rombo* were of pious minds. Underneath one of these pictures, that of St. Margaret of Hungary, was scribbled in pencil, "Maggie is my fancy. Frank Hussey, mate brig *Leonora*."

I scratched out the ribald words with my knife, and then we went up through the companion to the poop, and looked along the deserted deck, whose once white planking was now cracking and discolouring under the fierce rays of the torrid sun, to which it had been exposed for four months.

We sat down together on a seat, which was placed forward of the skylight, and gazed at the lofty masts and spars, which, denuded of all their running gear, stood out stark, grim, and mournful against the rays of a declining sun. On the fore-topgallant yard a frigate bird and his mate stood, oblivious of our presence, and looking shoreward at the long, long line of verdure clothing the islets four miles away.

"Simi," said Niâbon, clasping her little brown hands together at the back of her head, and leaning against the skylight, "we must return to the canoe ere the tide riseth, for, see, the sun is low down, and Lucia will think that some harm hath befallen us if we delay."

She spoke in Samoan, the language she generally used when we were alone, for she could express herself better in it even than in English, so she said, though both Lucia and myself had often told her, not bantering, that her English was sweet to hear.

"Heed not the sinking sun, Niâbon," I replied, in the same language, "the tide will not yet cover the reef for an hour or more, and the night will be bright and clear.... Niâbon, turn thy face to me."

I took her hand and drew her closer to me.

"Niâbon, I love thee. I have loved thee since the time when thou first saidst to me, 'Shall I give thee sleep?' And for ever since hast thou been in my mind. See, I have loved no other woman as I love thee, and it is my heart's desire to make thee my wife."

She drew herself away from me with blazing eyes.

"Thy wife, thy wife! Simi, what madness is this? Hast thou no eyes to see? Is thy mind so dull that thou dost not know that Lucia hath loved thee, and that even at this moment her heart acheth for thy return. Dost thou not *know*?"

"I care not for her but as a friend," I said hotly; "'tis thee alone I desire. Thou art always in my mind, and I will be good and true to thee, Niâbon; for I love thee well. Be my wife. Together thee and I——"

The angry light in her eyes died out, and she placed her cheek to mine.

"Simi, I care more for thee than for any one in the world, save Lucia, and Lucia hath all my heart and all my love. And she so loves thee, Simi—she so loves thee that it is her heart's desire to be thy wife.... Come, dear friend, let us return and forget all but that Lucia awaits."

She passed her hand softly over my face, pressed her lips to my forehead, and then I followed her down from the silent deck on to the reef, and thence onwards to the canoe.

CHAPTER XV

All that she said to me that night as we returned over the stilly waters of the lagoon to our companions, I cannot now remember; I only know that as she sat facing me, and I paddled slowly and dreamily along, I promised her, dully and mechanically, to tell Lucia that night that I loved her.

"And she and thee will be happy, very happy, Simi. Her heart went out to thee from the very first. And children will come to thee, and I shall see them grow—the boys strong and brave as thou art, and the girls fair and sweet as Lucia—and yet shalt thou have thy heart's desire, and be spoken of as a man who did a great deed... a great voyage... and all that hath been done by the three men of whom thou hast so often thought will be but as little compared with this voyage of thine. And she so loves thee, Simi; ah, she so loves thee."

The soft murmur of her voice enthralled, took such possession of me mentally and physically, that I know not what I answered except that I said again and again, "Ay, I love her, I love her, and I shall tell her of my love, and that she, and she alone, is my heart's desire."

How long we were in getting back to the island I cannot tell, but I do remember that it was quite dark, and both Niâbon and myself were paddling vigorously when we heard Tepi's load hail of welcome, and a canoe shot up on the beach, and Lucia came towards me with outstretched hands.

"Jim, oh Jim! I thought you were never coming back," she said.

I folded her in my arms and kissed her. "Lucia, dear, dear Lucia! Will you be my wife? For I love you," and then, scarcely knowing what I was doing, I strained her almost savagely to my bosom, and kissed her upturned face again and again.

"Jim, dear, dear Jim," and her soft arms were around my neck, "and I love you too! I have loved you almost from the day you first came to Taritai, and Niâbon has told me that one day you would tell me that you loved me... that some day you would speak... Jim dearest, bend down; you are so tall, and I am so little; ah, Jim, I am so little, but my heart, dear, is so big with love for you, that I feel that I could take *you* in my arms, and kiss you as you now kiss me. Jim, dear, I never, never knew what love meant till now."

A bright burst of flame illumined the beach, and Niâbon with a torch in her hand was standing at the water's edge.

"The night is fair and good, and the wind is from the east. Let us away, dear friends."

Her voice seemed to reach me as if from far, far away, though her dark face with the deep luminous eyes were so near, and, as she spoke, the boat, with Tepi and Tematau standing erect and waiting, grounded gently on the strand.

"Yes, yes, we shall sail to-night," I cried exultantly, as I again pressed Lucia to my heart, and showered passionate kisses upon her lips, "we shall sail, Lucia my dearest; on, and on, and on, to the north-west, my beloved, till we come to our journey's end, and you and I shall never part again, no never, never, my dearest."

"Ay, never, never shall ye two part again," cried Niâbon, casting down her torch; "man with the strong and daring hand, and woman with the fond and tender heart. Thy lives are forever linked together. Quick, give me thy hand, Lucia, my dove, my own, my own!" She sprang towards us, and took Lucia's hand in hers, and almost tore off her wedding ring, and then flung it far out into the lagoon.

"Sink, sink, thou ring of misery—thou golden circle which should have meant love and trust and happiness, but brought naught but hate and treachery and poison to her who wore it. Sink, accursed thing."

"Oh, Jim, Jim!" and Lucia turned her streaming eyes to mine, "it was my wedding ring, and when *he* gave it to me, I think he loved me, wicked and cruel as he was afterwards. Oh, Niâbon, Niâbon!" In a moment Niâbon's arms were around her. "My sweet, my sweet! thou art to me more than life," she whispered, "I love thee so, Lucia. I love thee so that I would die for thee! Heed not the ring, for now thou hast beside thee a good man—true, brave, and strong—one whose love will forever shield thee. Come, my dearest, come with me to the boat."

They went down the beach together, with arms around each other's waists, and their footsteps guided by the still-burning torch lying on the sand. I followed, and in another minute I had the tiller in my hand, and told Tepi to push off, as Tematau ran up the jib.

"How now for the passage?" I cried, as I slipped my arm around Lucia's waist, and her lips met mine, "how now for the passage, Tepi? Canst see? Canst see, Tematau?"

Niâbon placed her hand on mine.

"Have no fear, Simi. The wind is fair and the passage through the reef is wide, and the ship on the right hand is a good guide. See, her masts stand out clear against the sky. And give me the tiller, for thou and Lucia are tired. So sleep—sleep till the dawn, and Tematau and Tepi and I shall keep watch through the night. How shall I steer?"

"North-west, north-west," I muttered, as Lucia laid her cheek to mine, "north-west, but call me if the wind hauls to the northward."

She bent over Lucia and touched her face softly.

"Sleep, dear one, sleep till dawn," she said in a whisper, and then with a smile she turned to me.

"Simi, thou too art tired, and must sleep even as Lucia sleepeth now. See, her eyes are closed. How sweet and fair she is as she sleepeth! Ah, how sweet! So, let me touch thy face." She pressed her soft hand on my

brow, and then, with Lucia's head pillowed on my breast, I slept.

CHAPTER XVI

For seventeen days we made good progress to the north-west, though we met with such very heavy weather when between Minto Breakers Reef, and the island of Oraluk, that I had to run back to the latter place for shelter, and all but missed it. Although so small, it is very fertile, and the natives were very hospitable, Niâbon and Lucia being given a room in the chief's house, and I and my two men were given a house to ourselves, where we were very comfortable during our stay of four days, though unable to get about on account of the pouring rain, which hardly ceased for an hour. The chief's house was quite near to that in which we were quartered, so I spent a good deal of my time there, for although I cannot say that I was really in love with my future wife, her gentle endearments, and the happiness that shone in her dark eyes when I was with her gave me a certain restfulness, and I was well content.

We had long since decided as to our future. After our marriage she was to stay with her sister, or with my friends, the Otano's, on Guam, whilst I made my way to my friend at Amboyna, and got him to provide me with such an amount of trade goods that when I returned to Guam I should be in a position to at once begin trading operations either in the Marianas, with Guam for my headquarters, or else choose some suitable place in the Caroline Archipelago. The boat, I had no doubt, I could sell at San Luis d'Apra, or San Ignacio, and this I intended to do if a fair price was offered me. Then I would take passage in one of the Spanish trading schooners to Manila, and from there I could easily get to Amboyna; and all going well, it was more than likely that my friend would lend or sell me on easy terms, one of his own small trading vessels, for he had half a dozen or more employed throughout the Moluccas, and on the coast of the Phillipine Islands.

On the second day after our arrival on Oraluk, the rain cleared off for an hour, and I went over to the chief's house, and found Lucia conversing in Spanish with some native women who could speak it brokenly, for years before there had been a Jesuit mission on the island, but it had been abandoned, and the two priests, after a stay of five years, had gone back to Manila. Niâbon was not in the house—she had gone into the forest with some of the young girls, Lucia said, as she bade me come in and sit down.

"She is a strange girl, Lucia. She seems to love to be in the forest, or walking on the cliffs or mountain tops. I wish I knew the true story of her life."

Lucia shook her head. "She will not tell it, Jim, and I am sure she does not like to be questioned even by me. But yet she *has* told me a little, and there can be no harm in my telling you—I am sure she would not mind."

"No, why should she mind?"

"She told me that her very first memories of her childhood go back to when she was a child of six at Manhiki. She lived alone with her mother in a little hut quite apart from the other people. Even then she says she knew that her mother was a 'witch-woman' and was greatly feared by the natives, who yet came to her for charms and medicines. Who her mother was she does not know—but she is quite certain that she was a full-blooded Polynesian, though not a native of Manhiki. Her father she had never seen, nor had her mother ever made even the faintest allusion to him, and Niâbon herself had never dared question her on the subject. She told me, however, that she imagined he was a white man."

"I am almost sure he was," I said; "she certainly is not a full-blooded native."

"I am sure of it too. But she does not like to be thought anything but a pure native. Why, I cannot tell, and have never asked her her reasons."

"Is her mother still living?"

"I do not know and do not like to ask her. She told me that she, her mother, and Tematau had left Manhiki and wandered through the islands of the South Pacific for many years. Tematau she says is a blood relation. He only took service as head boatman with Krause so as to be near her, for from the very first day she saw me, she determined to live at Taritai. And we have always been the closest friends."

"I know she loves you very dearly," I said, as I rose to return to my house, for just then we saw Niâbon herself coming through the village accompanied by a number of young women.

We left Oraluk with a slashing breeze, which we held for eight days, the boat doing splendid work, and on the morning of the tenth day we sighted Guam, forty miles away, and looming blue against the sky line.

"Three thousand miles," I cried exultingly, "three thousand miles, Lucia—in fact, nearer three thousand two hundred."

Her dark eyes filled with tears as she pressed my hand and looked at the home of her childhood, and even Niâbon showed some trace of excitement as she bent her glance upon the great mound of land.

I opened our one remaining bottle of wine which had been reserved for this auspicious day, and we shared it between us, whilst Tepi and Tematau were each given a stiff glass of grog.

"Blow, good breeze, blow," I cried, "blow steady and strong."

"Blow, good wind, blow steady and true," echoed my two men, as I eased off the main sheet, and the boat went faster through the water, and made a seething wake.

As we were so well to windward of the island, I determined to head for Cape Ritidian, its north-west point, as from there I could easily pick up Port Taro-fofo, where, so Lucia assured me, we should find a pilot to take us down the coast to Port San Luis. Not having a chart of the island made it necessary for me to be cautious, but Lucia was quite sure that from Cape Ritidian we should have no trouble in running down the coast to Tarofofo—a port with which she was quite familiar, for she had been there on many occasions with her father. The anchorage was good, and there was a small town at the head of the harbour, where supplies could be obtained.

"That will do us nicely, then," I said; "we may as well spell there for a few days and get well rested. Oh, won't it be glorious to feel solid earth under foot once more after the last ten weary days!" "Oh Jim, the very thought of stepping on shore again makes my veins thrill. Oh, the great lovely green mountain forest, and the calls of the birds and the sweet sound of falling water—it is heaven to think of being there, in such a beautiful country after so many, many days upon the sea! Ah, you will love Guam, Jim! You cannot help it—it is the fairest, sweetest land in all the world, I think."

Her enthusiasm infected me to some degree, and bending forward to her, I whispered,—

"Is there a church at Tarafoto, Lucia?"

A vivid blush dyed her sweet face from neck to brow.

"Yes," she answered, so softly that I could scarce hear her, "there has always been a church there for a hundred years. It was once plundered and burned by pirates, so one of the priests told me when I was a child."

The breeze held good with us, and at four in the afternoon we ran in under Cape Ritidian and brought to half a cable away from the shore, which presented an aspect of the loveliest verdured hills and valleys imaginable, fringed with a curving snow-white beach, along which were scattered a few native houses, surrounded by plantations of bananas and papaw trees.

Presently a boat came off manned by natives dressed in very bright colours. They all spoke Spanish and at once offered to pilot us down to Tarafoto Harbour, which, they said, we could enter at any time, day or night; we accepted their services, and they came aboard, veered their boat astern, and by nightfall we came to an anchor in a small, but safe and exceedingly beautiful harbour.

Here more of the country people came on board, late as it was, and pressed us to sleep on shore, telling us that there were some very comfortable houses in the village, which was situated two miles up the Tarafoto river. Then one of the visitors recognised Lucia, and now invitations poured in upon us from all sides, and finally Lucia and Niâbon, accompanied by Tematau, went ashore with them, leaving Tepi and myself on board.

"Good-night, Jim dear," said Lucia, as she was about to get into the shore boat, "you will come on shore early, won't you? I don't like your staying behind, but you and Tepi will perhaps get a good night's rest now that three of us will be out of the way. I should never go to sleep if I stayed on board to-night. I am so excited."

I stooped and kissed her little upturned face, and in another moment she was in the boat, which at once pushed off into the darkness and made for shore.

"Good-night, again," both she and Niâbon cried, and Tematau also called out *Tiâkâpo!*

"Good-night, good-night," I shouted, swaying our boat lantern in farewell. "*Tiâkâpo, Tematau.* May you all sleep well."

They made some merry laughing response, in which they were joined by their hosts, and then Tepi and I were alone.

We put on the cabin hatches, spread out our sleeping mats and made ourselves comfortable for the night, and after half an hour's smoke, we fell asleep too tired to talk.

À little after midnight the cool breeze suddenly died away, and both Tepi and myself awoke almost at the same moment.

"The air hath grown hot, and is hard to breathe, master," said the big man "I fear a storm is near."

It had indeed become very hot and stifling, but on looking at the barometer, I saw there was no change, and so felt no concern, for we were in an excellent position, no matter how hard, and from where it might blow. In half an hour or so, a few heavy splashes of rain fell, then a sudden shower, which necessitated us lifting off the hatch and going into the cabin, and it was then that Tepi complained to me of a severe headache, from which I was also beginning to suffer.

I had just struck a match to take another look at the glass, when suddenly the boat began to tremble violently, and then gave such a sudden jerk at her cable that I fell forward on my face.

"*Mafuie! Mafuie!*" ("Earthquake! earthquake!") cried Tepi in terror-stricken tones, as he clutched the coamings and looked seaward. "Oh, Simi, look, look! The sea, the sea! We perish!"

May God spare me from ever seeing such another sight! A black towering wall of water was rushing towards the boat, and ere I could frame my lips to utter an appeal for mercy to the Almighty it was upon us, and lifting us up on the summit of its awful crest, hurled us shoreward to destruction. Then I remembered no more.



**AND LIFTING US UP ON THE SUMMIT OF ITS AWFUL CREST, HURLED
US SHOREWARD TO DESTRUCTION.**

[To face p. 153]

Two weeks later I awoke to life and misery in a wide, low-ceiled room. Tepi, with his arm in a sling, was bending over me, and sitting beside my bed were two padres.

"Where am I, good fathers?" I asked.

"In San Ignacio, my son," replied the elder of the two. "God has spared you and this Indian sailor of yours to render thanks to Him and the Holy Virgin for His mercy."

"And where are my friends—the two girls and Tematau? Tell me, Tepi! Tell me," I said, with a dull terror at my heart. "Why do you shake and hide your face?" Then I turned to the priests.

"For God's sake, tell me, gentlemen," and I clutched the hand of the one nearest to me.

"In Paradise, my son. They and three hundred other poor souls rendered up their lives to God thirteen days ago. Scarcely a score of people in Tarafoto escaped."

The shock was too much for me, and I fell back again.

As soon as I was strong enough for the journey I visited the scene, and was shown, on the spot where once the church had stood, a bare, grim mound. Underneath it lay all that was mortal of Lucia, Niabon, Tematau, and three hundred others, who had in one swift moment been sent to eternity that dreadful night. Some of the few survivors, who, under the direction of a priest, and the Governor of San Ignacio, were erecting a tall wooden cross at the foot of the great grave, led me to the site of the house in which my dear companions had met their deaths. Nine other people were in the house when it fell and buried the sleepers, and the agony must have been short for them all.

The tidal wave which accompanied the earthquake had hurled the boat and Tepi and myself for many hundreds of yards inland. I was picked up in the boat herself, stunned and severely injured. Tepi was carried into a rice field, and although his arm was broken, he at once set out in search of me, and the faithful fellow had come with me when I was carried in a bullock cart to San Ignacio, where the doctor and priests had brought me round after two weeks' dangerous illness.

Before leaving Guam I spent two months with my friend José Otano, who tried hard to make me stay with him. At his house poor Lucia's heart-broken sister came to see me very often, and I bade her farewell with genuine sorrow.

Then one day Tepi and I turned our faces once more to the islands of the south—and so the story of my strange adventure is told.

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