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# OFFICER AND MAN

From "The Tapu Of Banderah and Other Stories"

By Louis Becke

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The anchor of her Majesty's ship *Hannibal* was underfoot and the captain on the bridge, and Rear-Admiral Garnet had shaken hands with the last of the "leading" Fijian white residents, who always did the welcoming and farewelling when distinguished persons visited Levuka, when Lieutenant Bollard approached him and intimated that "a person" from the shore had just come alongside in a boat and desired to see "his Excellency on private and important business."

"What the devil does the fellow want?" said the Admiral irascibly, not a whit softened by the "his Excellency" style of address; "I'm going on the bridge, and can't see any one now; we can't delay the ship and get into a mess going through the passage."

"Told him so, sir; but he says he wants to see you upon an important—a most pressing matter."

"Oh, well! Confound him! Let the sentry show him to my cabin, and tell Captain Bracely I shall be up in five minutes."

The "person," conducted by the sentry, was shown into the cabin, where the Admiral, without taking a seat or offering one to his visitor, inquired with a cold, cautious politeness born of much experience of island visitors with "important and private Service matters of great urgency," what he might be pleased to want?

The stranger was a short, fat, coarse-looking man with little pig-like eyes and scanty tufts of black beard and whiskers growing in irregular patches on his cheeks and chin, like clumps of gorse on clayey banks. He was dressed—in a manner—in an ill-fitting black cloth suit imported from Sydney. His hair was very black and shiny, plastered down over his temples and beautifully parted at the back of his bullet head. Altogether he was an unpleasantly sleek, oleaginous creature, and as he stood bowing and smirking with a catlike grin, the Admiral felt an almost irresistible impulse to kick him out of the cabin. Notwithstanding his haste, however, he began to recollect the man as an individual who had been introduced to him a few days previously at some municipal function.

"Can't recollect the fellow's name," he muttered to himself. "I wonder what the devil the creature wants! Got a complaint against the Consul very likely—every one has a complaint against a Consul—it's a disease in the South Seas. Confound their twopenny-halfpenny squabbles!" Then the little fat man, with another servile grin, spoke.

"I wish, your Excellency, to see you upon a matter which I think, as a loyal subject, it is my duty—my painful duty—to bring under your notice."

"Thought as much," said the Admiral to himself. "Some row about a trader insulting a native teacher, or *vice-versa*." Then smothering an exclamation of impatience, he said—

"What is it, sir? I have no time to lose. By the way, who are you, sir?"

"My name, your Excellency, is Obadiah Howl-man. I had the distinguished honour, your Excellency, of showing your Excellency over the grounds of the new Mission College. I was the contractor for the erection of that ornament to our little town." And again the oily creature smirked and bowed and did the invisible soap business.

"Surely *you* are not a missionary, sir?" asked the Admiral, with undisguised contempt.

"I am not, your Excellency. That is, I am not yet an ordained labourer in the Vineyard, your Excellency; but I hope soon to be one. Meanwhile, all the time that is left to me from my business (I am a storekeeper and contractor) is given to the cause of spreading the Light I was once a lost soul, your—"

"I see, I see," interrupted the Admiral, with ill-disguised disgust and open impatience, "but do, for Heaven's sake, tell me what is your complaint. I am due in Sydney on the tenth of this month, and the ship is already under way. As it is, we shall have to stop outside the reef to let you get into your boat."

"I am aware of it, your Excellency, and I should not have ventured to detain you, but this is a very serious matter—I may say, a criminal matter. When I had the honour of meeting your Excellency, on the occasion of your Excellency's visit to the College, I would have spoken of this matter then; but my poor, weak nature was so torn by conflicting emotions that I *could* not. And for the past two nights have I struggled and wrestled in spirit, and sought Divine guidance. 'Tis indeed hard for one man to reveal the sins and wickedness of a fellow-sinner—knowing that we are all but weak vessels. But yet in this case it is my bounden duty as a loyal—"

"Go on—go on, for Heaven's sake! What on earth is the matter? And what the deuce do you want?"

"Your Excellency, I wish, in all sorrow and tribulation of spirit, to give you information as to the whereabouts of a deserter from her Majesty's Navy."

"What do you mean, sir? None of my men are missing, and if any were, I'd tell the Fijian police about it, and not delay the *Hannibal*," and with a curt nod the Admiral turned on his heel and was about to leave the cabin, when the man stepped forward and interrupted him, saying—

"One word more, your Excellency. There is in connection with this case—"

"The reward. Yes, of course. I forgot all about that. If there is a deserter from any of her Majesty's ships living ashore here, you will get the usual reward, I have no doubt. But really, sir, this is a matter that you must arrange with the police when the next man-of-war comes here, or go to the Consul"—and then, *sotto voce*—"or the devil, confound you!" and the Admiral more than ever felt inclined to kick his visitor out.

"You quite mistake me, Admiral Garnet I have no wish to claim an earthly reward for doing my duty to my Queen and country. Since I have lived in these islands the Lord has prospered me in my worldly affairs, and I am in a position far above taking payment in money for doing my duty. I am, I trust, walking in the Light, and do not want to obtain wealth—which is but of this world—for performing such duty."

"Well, well, I am sure I beg your pardon, Mr. Howlman. But now I really cannot talk any longer here, so please do not keep me. At the same time if there is a deserter here I don't see what business it is of yours to interest yourself in his capture. Don't you think you have enough to do to look after your store, and contracting, and your *alleged* missionary business, without running after deserters?" And inwardly the Admiral cursed his visitor for a meddling ass. He was in a hurry to get to sea, and yet this fellow might make it necessary for the ship to be delayed till the deserter was apprehended.

"My humble connection with missionaries, Admiral, has taught me that, at whatever cost to my own feelings, my duty as a loyal subject must, next to my duty as a Christian, be performed honestly."

"Oh, yes, yes. That's all right, I meant no disrespect to the missionaries. Many of the *gentlemen* engaged in missionary work in these islands have rendered very valuable services to her Majesty's ships on many occasions," and then to himself, "and given us a devil of a lot of trouble as well."

"Now, sir," the Admiral resumed, "having explained that the Consul or police will attend to this deserter, you will allow me to say 'Good-day.'"

"One moment more, sir," and a spiteful green lit up the little piggish eyes. "I desire, as a British subject, to speak to you privately on this matter, and to you alone. There are reasons—very particular reasons—why her Majesty's Consul or the Fiji police here cannot deal with this case."

"Oh, well," sighed the Admiral resignedly; "sit down, Mr. Howlman. I see I am in for it, and so I'll send for my secretary and—"

"Cannot this matter be arranged without a third party?"

"No, sir; it CANNOT!"

The Admiral said this with so much emphasis, and rang the bell with so much force at the same moment, that the sentry almost jumped into the cabin to see what was the matter.

"Pass the word for Mr. Hayling to come to my cabin, and to the captain that I shall not be with him for ten minutes yet. Ten minutes will do your business, Mr. Howlman, eh?"

"Certainly, your Excellency," and an evil smile crossed the man's repulsive features.

The marine saluted, the secretary appeared, and the Admiral, nodding towards Mr. Howlman in anything but a friendly manner, growled: "My secretary, Mr. Hayling. This is Mr. Howlman, Mr. Hayling; he has a communication to make about a deserter. Now, sir, proceed."

"This," said the man, producing a photograph and laying it on the table, "is a portrait of a person named George Barcom, who, I have every reason to believe, was a sergeant of marines on the *Flycatcher* when she was on this station five years ago."

"Take charge of that photograph, Mr. Hayling. Go ahead, Mr. Howlman."

"This man, after deserting from the *Flycatcher* at a place in this group called Yasawa, managed to make his way to the island of Niuafoou, where at that time I was in temporary charge of the Christian Cultivation Association's trading station. He came to the island in an open boat from the Yasawa Group, and was not suspected until quite recently."

"Deuced long time finding him out. But proceed, sir."

"Guilty as the man was of the crime of desertion, I must yet, perforce, say that he behaved himself very well. He was kindly received by the King Tepuaka (a very earnest seeker after the Light), and all went well for the space of four years."

"Well, what happened then? Five minutes left," and the Admiral looked at his watch.

"My story will soon be told, your Excellency. The man, who calls himself George Barcom, gained the affections of Tuilagi,{\*} the youngest daughter of the King. She, although not a seeker after the truth, was yet beginning to display some interest in the teachings of Christianity, and was an exceedingly comely young woman." Here Mr. Howlman clasped his fat hands together and cast up his eyes. "But her father, at my suggestion, objected to their union. One night Barcom and the poor, misguided girl were missing. They had fled in an open boat to another island called Anuda—one of those dark places of the earth where the good seed has not yet been sown."

\* *Tuilagi*—"Queen of the Sky"; a name common in Polynesia.

"And what was the nature and reason of your objection to their marriage?" said the Admiral quietly.

"I had every reason by this time to believe that the man was a deserter, and in my capacity as a preacher of the Gospel—though not ordained as such—I——"

"Confine yourself to the subject, if you please," interrupted the Admiral, with a mingled look of impatience and disgust. "You are not a missionary, you tell me, and I'm hanged if I'm going to listen to a sermon in my own cabin just now. Yet I have already given you as much of my time as if you were one. But don't trespass on my good nature too much."

"I thought it my duty to interfere and prevent such a wicked and improper marriage. And, your Excellency, this carrying away the young woman against her father's wishes was very detrimental to the progress of the Mission work. As I have said, she was beginning to evince a certain concern for her soul——"

"Confound it, man! why will you so persistently harp upon irrelevant matters that do not, as far as I can see, possibly concern what you really want to tell me? Have you a brief to speak for the missionaries? I am acquainted with the principal *gentlemen* (again he emphasised the word) who conduct mission work in the South Seas, but I'll be hanged if I ever heard your name before—not even as a house-builder, or whatever your vocation is." And then, with a quick glance at the cunning visage of Howlman, he added, "I suppose you knew this young woman very well—perhaps were a particular friend of hers?"

Mr. Obadiah Howlman coughed. "Hm—er. Well, your Excellency, my dear wife, who has now departed to her rest—an indeed well-earned rest—when alive, took much interest in this young girl, and, before she was called away, besought me to cherish and protect her. And, as time went on, there *was* formed, I may say, an attachment between this young creature and myself—that is, of course, such an attachment as could exist between a young woman of this kind, yearning for instruction, and her spiritual adviser and guide."

"Yes, yes; I quite understand, Mr. Howlman. Mr. Hayling has notes of your statement, and the photograph. Now, if you will kindly keep your own counsel on the matter, you will hear in due course that we have arrested this man, and then, I think, you will be satisfied."

Then turning to his secretary, the Admiral said, "The *Spitfire* is due at Levuka about the 8th. Write a letter to Commander Arness, and tell him to call at Anuda and arrest a deserter from the marines, calling himself George Barcom, and who can be identified by this photograph. He is the only white man on the island, so this Mr. Howlman says, and there should be no difficulty in finding him. That will satisfy you, I presume, Mr. Howlman?"

"Quite, sir, I assure you. I have done my duty and——"

"Good-day, sir. You will just have time to get into your boat and get ashore while we are in smooth water, and before we start the engines."

The Admiral did not seem to notice the little fat man's outstretched hand. The secretary bowed him out of the cabin, holding the photograph in one hand and his notebook in the other. Neither of them liked his look well enough to shake hands with him.

The Admiral, however, did not give the order to start the engines immediately, for the sentry, in accordance with orders received from the secretary, waited till Mr. Obadiah Howlman was at the foot of the accommodation-ladder, and then called out, "Hold on that boat a minute or two; the Admiral wants to send a letter ashore."

For twenty minutes Mr. Howlman waited impatiently in the boat, and then a big, official-looking letter was handed down the ladder to the boatman, addressed: "O.H.M.S.—Commander Arness, H.M.S. *Spitfire* care of H.B.M. Consul, Levuka, Fiji."

Mr. Howlman smiled to himself with the satisfied air of a man who has done his duty. He knew the contents of the letter, and recognised through its envelope the hard cardboard of the photograph of George Barcom enclosed therein. There was also a smaller note, addressed to Commander Arness by name, and marked, "Private letter."

Five minutes later the *Hannibal* steamed through the passage, and shaped a course for Sydney.

The *Spitfire* was steaming full speed E.S.E. from Levuka. On the bridge was Commander Arness talking to the navigating lieutenant, a young and almost effeminate-looking officer.

The land had just been sighted, and lay right ahead.

"Will there be daylight enough left for us to get there and have this wretched thing over, Carteret?" asked

Commander Arness.

"Plenty, sir, if this weather keeps up and you don't want to stay there more than a couple of hours."

"No. Two hours should be ample time. This letter from Hayling explains the whole business," and he handed, the lieutenant the despatch from the Admiral's secretary, which duly set forth that the *Spitfire* was to take on board a certain white trader living on Anuda—otherwise, Cherry Island—and bring him prisoner to Sydney. His wife was to be returned to her father at Niuafou. The last paragraph in the letter was to this effect—

"Be careful to identify beyond doubt this alleged deserter. The Rear-Admiral has received this information at the instant of sailing, and he is by no means certain that the statements of his informant can be depended upon. A photograph of the reputed deserter is enclosed herewith. The Admiral thinks that Mr. Carteret may know the man, as he was serving in the *Flycatcher* five years ago."

"This rascal Howlman has informed upon the poor devil for spite," said the Commander; "here's a private note from Hayling to myself about the fellow."

The lieutenant took the note and read—

*"My dear Arness,—Just a line on my own account. Be careful what you are doing in this business. The fellow who informed is a sort of hanger-on to the missionaries here. They don't think much of him, but seem to put up with the swab as a necessary evil. He confessed that jealousy had something to do with the matter, and I could see the Admiral wanted to kick him out of the cabin. Make sure that this man Barcom is a deserter, or there will be the devil to pay if he should prove to be an American citizen, or anything of that kind.—Yours, CHARLES Hayling."*

"You see why they have left the matter to us, Carteret. You were on the *Flycatcher* five years ago, and the Admiral thinks you may be able to identify this fellow. Of course Barcom is not his name."

Mr. Carteret at this moment was very busy with the chart, over which he bent his head a moment, and then turned sharply to the man at the wheel, who was not out of earshot.

"Keep your course," he said sharply; "why don't you attend to your steering!" Then he turned to the commander: "I beg your pardon, sir; you were saying?—"

"I was saying that you ought to remember such an incident as a sergeant of marines deserting from the *Flycatcher* when she was down here five years ago."

"I do remember it. The man's name was Charles Parker."

"Is that the man?" And Arness handed him a photograph of a man dressed in white ducks and a straw hat, evidently taken by an amateur.

Carteret looked at the photograph for fully a couple of minutes before he answered slowly—

"No, I don't think that this is the man."

A few hours later the *Spitfire* had steamed in close to the land, and a boat was lowered. In this boat were Lieutenant Carteret, a sergeant of marines, with three privates and half a dozen bluejackets.

"I have force enough to take a boat-load of deserters," remarked the lieutenant to his commander, as he descended the poop ladder on his way to the boat.

Commander Arness laughed. "Oh, well, you know the natives might take it into their heads to resist his arrest. But be careful what you are doing: make perfectly sure that he *is* the man. You don't know what complications might arise if we carried off the wrong person."

The moment the boat touched the shore, she was surrounded by a crowd of friendly, brown-skinned islanders, who seemed delighted to see the strangers.

"Any one of you fellows speak English?" asked Mr. Carteret

"Yes, sir," and a big, burly fellow with a fine open countenance advanced to the officer. "Me speak English, and plenty more men here speak it, too. What you want, sir?"

"Any white men living here?" asked Carteret quietly.

"Oh, yes—one, a very good man; his name is Joajai" [George].

"Take me to his house," said the officer. "I want to see him."

In a few minutes Mr. Carteret and his marines were being conducted up a steep and rugged path towards the white trader's house, which was situated quite apart from the native village, while the bluejackets were left in the boat, remarking to each other that this white man was a most cursed unfriendly sort of a chap not to come down to the beach when he saw a man-of-war's boat ashore.

"Don't you be such a fool, Tom," said the coxswain to one of the men. "You're always a-jumpin' at conclusions too rapid. Just you wait a bit and see. It's my belief that this chap has been up to something, and the marines have gone with Carteret to scruff him and bring him aboard. I saw the sergeant had a pair of darbies, and what do you suppose that Carteret's come ashore with a regular escort for?"

A ten minutes' walk and Lieutenant Carteret and his men, guided by a number of natives, reached the white man's thatched dwelling, which stood amid a grove of banana and bread-fruit trees. When within a few yards, the lieutenant saw a tall, graceful young native girl, clad in semi-European style, advance to the open door, and then with a terrified exclamation withdraw again.

"That is Tui,\* Joajai's wife," said one of the natives, pointing to the girl, who now again appeared, and, with her full dark eyes dilated with alarm, timidly held out her hand to the officer and murmured something in the native tongue.

\* *The diminutive of Tuilagi.*

"She speaks English, but she is afraid of the men with the guns," explained the native guide.

"Where is your husband?" said Lieutenant Carteret, motioning to the girl to seat herself, and the marines to stand back.

She only shook her head, and turned inquiringly to the natives who accompanied the officer.

"The white man is away on the other side of the island, sir. He be here in 'bout one half-hour," said the English-speaking native. "Suppose you like, sir, I send some one go tell him come quick?"

Carteret hesitated a moment, then answered "No." Then turning to the sergeant of marines, he said, "Let your men fall still further back, sergeant This is a delicate matter, and I don't want this confounded crowd of natives, many of whom understand English, to hear what I have to say to this woman. Send a man down to the boat, and tell the coxswain that I shall have to wait for some time. If the ship makes a signal, the boat can go off and tell the captain that I shall have to wait; then she can come back for me."

All this time the trader's young wife sat trembling upon a rude couch that stretched across one side of the room; and her eyes never left the officer's face for an instant, save when for a moment she gave a terrified glance at the rifles and bayonets of the marine escort.

The moment that the marines had fallen back the lieutenant stepped forward and took the young woman by the hand.

"Tui," he said hurriedly, drawing her to the further end of the room with firm but gentle hand, and speaking so low and without motion of his lips that none but she knew that he spoke at all, "for God's sake and for mine and your husband's, do not be frightened, but listen to me and do exactly as I tell you."

Still trembling like a startled fawn, the girl raised her lustrous eyes to the young officer's face. His earnest, sincere manner and expression of deep concern seemed to reassure her, and though her bosom heaved and her breath came in quick, short gasps, she turned her face to him in the confidence of dawning hope.

"Who are you, sir, and what do you wan' my husban' for?"

"Tell these natives to go," said the lieutenant "Have no fear. I am your husband's friend; but, *be quick!*"

Still, with a wondering look upon her beautiful face, the girl advanced to the door, said something in the island tongue to the crowd of curious natives, and then gently closed the door.

"This is a rum go!" said the sergeant of marines to himself, as he saw the door shut to. "What the devil has the girl been doing? Are the bracelets for her, I wonder?"

"Tui," said Lieutenant Carteret, the moment they were alone, "time presses. You speak English so well as to thoroughly understand that which I am now about to tell you?"

"Yes, sir," she answered, standing before him with clasped hands, "I think so. A white woman who is dead now taught me to read and write English, and my husban' always talk English to me."

"Good. Then listen to me, my girl. I am Lieutenant Carteret, of H.M.S. *Spitfire*—that ship out there—sent here with the ship's police to arrest a deserter from the *Flycatcher* on this station five years ago. This is the man's photograph. He is said to be your husband, and calls himself George Barcom. Now, when I was an officer of the *Flycatcher*, I knew a man named Charles Parker—her face went a deadly pallor—"who deserted the ship at the Yasawa Group in Fiji. I can, without doubt, identify this man. But, Tui, I have looked at this photograph when it was held in the hand of my captain, and said that this is *not* the man whom I knew as Charles Parker. But look at it yourself and tell me—is this the photograph of your husband, and is this man on this island?"

With shaking fingers she took it from him, looked at it, and then raised her face to the officer.

"Is this the doin' of a man called Obadiah Howlman?"

"Yes," answered the lieutenant, "it *is* the work of Obadiah Howlman. He brought this photograph to the Admiral only a few days ago."

A savage gleam came into her eyes. "The brute! I kill him for *this* some day!"

"That will not save your husband, my girl," said Carteret; then he waited a moment and added, "whatever it might do later on."

Suddenly the girl's dark eyes filled with tears, and she laid her hand on the officer's sleeve.

"What is to be done, sir? For God's sake don' you take my husband from me, sir."

"*This* can be done. You have seen this photograph. You say that it is not that of your husband, don't you? But, Tui, I must do my duty, do you understand? I must see your husband."

"And you are the man whose life he saved—for now I 'member your name and the story he told me long ago—you who say you are his friend, you would do this thing, you who in the ship gave him money so that he might—"

"Wait, my girl, till I have finished; then you will understand. Listen now. I will remain here, and you will yourself find your husband and bring him here to this house so that I may see him. Bring him here quickly, and by some way that my men cannot see his face. And then, Tui, when I have spoken to him, then for your sake and for his sake I will lie, and swear he is not the man I have been sent to take. Then, when my ship has gone, you—you and he—you must promise me this, Tui—must leave this island as quickly as possible; so that when Obadiah Howlman sends another warship here—as he will do—they may not discover that I am a liar and have been false to my duty."

"Oh, sir, is this true? Surely you would not tell a lie to a poor native girl like me?"

"Go, my girl"—and Carteret placed a kindly hand on her shoulder—"go quickly to Parker—I know very well that he is not far off. *He* will believe what I say."

For a moment she gazed intently into his face, as if she would read his soul; and then seizing his hand pressed it to her lips, and went out by the door that opened at the rear of the house.

Then the lieutenant opened the front door and walked slowly across to where the marines were standing.

"Take your men out of sight, sergeant. I don't want this fellow frightened until I know who he is. If he's the

man we want, we'll have no trouble in getting him. I've induced his wife to go and bring him."

Whistling softly in an unconcerned manner, he turned back and stood at the door of the house and waited there for perhaps ten minutes, until he saw the girl returning with a white man, who appeared to be ill and weak, for he had on a heavy top-coat, and a shawl wrapped round his neck in such a way that his features were almost entirely hidden.

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Lieutenant Carteret allowed the man and woman to enter, and then followed, closing the door after him.

As soon as he was inside, the white man threw off his muffler and turned towards the officer.

"You must take me, sir," he said, speaking calmly. "I cannot let you do this for me. I know, sir, that you cannot help yourself."

"No, by Heavens! Parker, I cannot take you. You jumped overboard and saved my life. I tell you, man, that I *can't* do it. Do you think I can ever forget that awful thirty minutes, nearly six years ago, when you kept me afloat off the Bampton Shoal? Now, Parker, just listen. I have a plan; the whole thing is arranged as soon as we leave here. But you and your wife *must* get away from this island soon after the *Spitfire* leaves. That infernal sweep, Howlman, will be sure to send another man-of-war after you——"

"Listen to me, sir. I, too, have a plan. You shall not ruin yourself for me. You are only a very young man, sir, and have the world before you. I dread nothing but the temporary separation from Tui here. To me my arrest means only dismissal from the service and a couple of years in gaol; and likely enough, I shall get back here again without much trouble."

"No, I——"

"Don't waste time, sir. Call the escort, but for God's sake, sir, do the thing quickly; look at my girl, sir, and let me get away before I break down too, and act the coward. If you don't call the escort at once, I will."

"You madman, Parker," began Carteret, and then Tui threw her arms round her husband.

"Are you tired of me?" she sobbed. "Is this how you would leave the woman who loves you, and who will be the mother of your child?"

The deserter caught her in his arms, and looking over his shoulder at the lieutenant, said, "For God's sake, sir, don't wait. Call in your men and get it over."

"Parker, for Heaven's sake take this chance. I tell you, man, that I have no fear for myself. I don't care a straw about the Service if this is discovered."

"Stand aside, sir. I'm not the man to let you sacrifice yourself for me——" And unloosing his wife's arms from his neck, he advanced to the door.

"Very well; it is your own fault."

The next instant the lieutenant threw open the door.

"Sergeant, bring your men here."

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Half an hour later Lieutenant Carteret reported to Commander Arness.

"I have brought the prisoner on board, sir. He is a man named Charles Parker, and was sergeant of marines on the *Flycatcher*?"

"Very good, Mr. Carteret. What have you done with his wife?"

"She refused to leave, sir, and when we brought the man away, went off to the other side of the island."

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When the *Spitfire* reached Sydney, Charles Parker was duly tried by court-martial, and in consequence of the friendly exertions of the principal witness against him, Lieutenant Neil Carteret, was let off lightly. He was dismissed from the service, and sentenced to imprisonment in a Sydney jail for eighteen months.

When his time had expired, he managed, after a few months of waiting about in Sydney, to work his way back to Anuda Island. And scarce had the boat touched the beach when he was seized by the welcoming arms of his native friends and carried ashore.

"Is it well with my wife, O friends?" he asked.

"It is well with her," they answered; "in a little while we will take you to her, but first let us tell thee of that which has befallen her on this island."

Then they told him.

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"One day after the warship had gone," they said, "there came here a trading schooner from Niuafou. On the ship were Tepuaka, the King of Niuafou—the father of thy wife—and many of his men. And with him there came also the little fat white man named Opataia [Obadiah]. All those men that came with Tepuaka, the King, were *lotu* [Christians]. No sooner did they land, than Tepuaka and his friend, the fat little white man, Opataia, walked to the house of his daughter, thy wife, Tui, but all of his men he bade remain here in the village.

"'See,' said one of these men of Niuafou to us vauntingly, 'see what has come to pass! Tuilagi refused to take for her husband the good and pious man Opataia, but fled with this common white man, who is no better than a heathen. And then what comes? This bad white man is caught by his countrymen and put in a prison with chains upon his body. So now the King comes for his daughter, for even now is Opataia willing to take her, though she is but of little worth, to my mind.'

"While they spoke thus to us, Tepuaka and his white friend had gone to thy house, and there did Tui, thy wife, meet them with smiles to hide what lay in her heart.

"'Get thee ready, thou wicked woman,' said her father roughly to her; 'get thee ready quickly to leave this heathen land and return to thy own country, where thou shalt be wife to this good man, Opataia, who desires thee still.'

"'It is well, my father,' said Tui; 'but yet leave us now for a little. Surely if this man desires me for his house he can speak to me with his own mouth, and not through thine.'

“So her father went without the house, and Opataia, the white man, remained with Tui.

“Then said the evil-faced white man to Tui: 'For the wrong that thou did'st me by running away with that evil white man do I forgive thee, for I love thee well.' And then he put his arms about her, and sought to embrace her after the manner of a lover.

“And then from beneath her gown did Tui take out a little gun that fires six bullets; and as the fat man, Opataia, pressed her to his bosom and heeded not what she did, she placed the mouth of the little gun to the side of his fat head. Then she said—

“‘This do I, dog, for the husband of whom thou hast robbed me,' and then there came a flash and a cry, and the white man sprang to his feet and fell forward on his face—dead.

“Then Tui ran from the house. She fled from her father and came towards the village, and Teapuaka the King followed her with death in his face.

“‘Kill her!' he called to the men of Niuafoou.

“But then we men of Anuda sprang to her aid with our clubs in our hands, and she ran into our midst and called to us to save her from her father.

“So there was much talk, and then her father's wrath began to subside, for we made him many presents of food for his journey back, and he went away in peace.

“That is all. And see, Jaojai, hither comes thy wife with her son in her arms to welcome thee home.”

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK OFFICER AND MAN \*\*\*

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