

Edward Barry

By

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***Free*editorial** 

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CHAPTER I.

"EDWARD BARRY—'DEAD BROKE.'"

A wild, blustering day in Sydney, the Queen City of the Southern Seas. Since early morn a keen, cutting, sleet-laden westerly gale had been blowing, rattling and shaking the windows of the houses in the higher and more exposed portions of the town, and churning the blue waters of the harbour into a white seethe of angry foam as it swept outwards to the wide Pacific.

In one of the little bays, situated between Miller's Point and Dawe's Battery, and overlooked by the old-time Fort Phillip on Observatory Hill, were a number of vessels, some alongside the wharves, and others lying to their anchors out in the stream, with the wind whistling through their rain-soaked cordage. They were of all rigs and sizes, from the lordly Black Ball liner of a thousand tons to the small fore and aft coasting schooner of less than fifty. Among them all there was but one steamer, a handsome brig-rigged, black-painted and black-funnelled craft of fifteen hundred tons, flying the house flag of the Peninsular and Oriental Company. Steamers were rare in Sydney Harbour in those days (it was the year 1860), and the Avoca had pride of place and her own mooring buoy, for she was the only English mail boat, and her commander and his officers were regarded with the same respect as if they and their ship were the admiral and staff of the Australian squadron.

Leaning with folded arms upon one of the wharf bollards, and apparently oblivious of the driving sleet and cutting wind, a shabbily dressed man of about thirty years of age was looking, pipe in mouth, at the mail boat and the sailing vessels lying in the stream. There were four in all—the steamer, an American whaling barque, a small brig of about two hundred tons flying the Hawaiian Island colours, and a big, sprawling, motherly-looking full-rigged ship, whose huge bow ports denoted her to be a lumberman.

The man put his hand in his pocket and jingled together his few small remaining coins; then he turned away and walked along the wharf till he reached the side of a warehouse, the lee of which was sheltered from the wind and rain. He leant his back against the wall and again handled the coins.

"Seven shillings and two coppers," he said to himself, "and a waterman would want at least three shillings to pull round here from the Circular Quay in such nasty weather. No, Ted Barry, my boy, the funds won't run it. But that brig is my fancy. She's all ready for sea—all her boats up with the gribes lashed, and the Custom House fellow doing his dog-trot under the awning, waiting for the skipper to come aboard,

and the tug to range alongside as soon as this howling gale takes off a bit. I'll wait here for another hour and watch for him."

Sitting under the lee of the wall, he again filled his pipe and began to smoke placidly, scanning with a seaman's eye the various vessels lying alongside the wharves.

Work had ceased for the day, the lumpers and longshore men had gone to their homes, and the usual idlers and loafers, which are always to be found in the immediate vicinity of shipping, or sitting about on the wharf stringers, fishing, had been driven away by the inclemency of the weather, or were gathered in small parties in the bars of the numerous public-houses near by. Now and then a seaman would be seen either returning to his ship or hurrying along the wharf towards the city with his coat collar turned up to his ears, and his hands thrust into the capacious pockets of his heavy jacket; the whole scene was miserable and depressing.

Presently a policeman appeared, walking slowly along under the shelter of the warehouse walls. He too was enjoying the luxury of a pipe, for there was no danger of running across the sergeant on such a day as this. As he drew near to the man who was sitting down he gave him a quick but apparently careless glance—a wharf policeman has a natural distrust of a man who keeps hanging about the stores and warehouses, doing nothing, or standing out in the open, exposed to the rain. But the guardian of the peace was satisfied that the object of his brief scrutiny was no loafer or possible burglar, and bade him a civil "Good-day," to which the man at once responded.

"It's beastly weather, isn't it?" said the official, as he leant against the wall, evidently disposing himself for a chat.

"It is indeed," replied the other, "and it's getting dirtier still over there to the south-east."

"That's pleasant for me. I don't get relieved until midnight, and this beat here is none too pleasant a one on a dark night, believe me."

"So I should imagine. I'll be glad to get back into the city as soon as I can; but I'm waiting here to see if I can get aboard that little brig over there. Do you know her name?"

"Yes. She's the *Mahina*, a South Sea trader. But I don't see how you can get off to her, there's no waterman here, and none of her boats will come ashore—I can tell you

that much for certain. The captain is on shore looking for men, and those who are aboard won't be given a chance to put foot in a boat."

"Why, anything gone wrong aboard?"

"Rather! There's been a lot of trouble with the men, though there hasn't been any court work over it. The captain and mate are holy terrors—regular brutes, I'm told. Six of the hands swam ashore a few nights ago and got clean away, poor beggars. You ain't thinking of joining her, are you?"

"Indeed I am. I want a ship pretty badly. I'm broke."

"Well, don't ship on *that* craft, young fellow, take my advice. Are you dead, stony broke?"

"Pretty near, all but a few shillings. And I find it hard to get a ship—that is, the sort of ship I want. I've been in the South Sea trade a couple of years, and I like it."

"Ah, I see. Well, you know best, mister. I daresay you'll see the *Mahina's* captain coming down the wharf before it gets dark. He's a little, dark-faced, good-looking chap, with a pointed beard. I wish you luck, anyway."

"Thank you," said Barry, as he returned the policeman's good-natured nod and watched him saunter off again towards the end of the wharf.

Half an hour later five men appeared, all walking quickly towards the spot where Barry was still patiently waiting. The man who was leading he at once recognized as the captain of the brig—the four who followed at his heels were common seamen by their dress, and ruffians of the first water by their appearance. Each carried a bundle under his arm, and one a small chest on his shoulder; he was evidently the wealthy man of the lot.

Stepping out from under the shelter of the wall, Barry stood in the centre of the path, and waited the captain's approach.

"Are you in want of hands, sir?" he asked, touching his cap. The master of the brig gave him a swift, searching glance from head to feet, and then without answering the inquiry he turned to his followers.

"Go on to the end of the wharf. Hail the brig to send a boat ashore, and then wait for me." His voice was clear and sharp, but not unpleasant. The four men shuffled off, and the moment they were out of hearing he addressed himself to Barry.

"I've just found all the men I want, but I could do with another—if he is anything better than such things as those," and he nodded contemptuously at the figures of the four seamen. Then with lightning-like rapidity of utterance he asked, "You're not a foremast hand?"

"I want to ship before the mast," was the quiet answer.

"Got a mate's or second mate's certificate?"

"Yes; both."

"Last ship?"

"The *Tawera*, brig, of Tahiti."

"Ha! You're used to the Island trade, then?"

"Pretty well."

"Willing to ship as mate or second mate?"

"Yes, and no. Willing enough in one way, and not liking it in another. I'm hard-up, have no clothes, and should cut a sorry figure on such a smart-looking brig as yours when I haven't even a donkey's breakfast[1] to bring aboard if I shipped before the mast. And I'm not the man to stand guying, especially from beauties like those who were here just now."

Again the captain's keen, dark eyes flashed—this time in a semi-approving manner—as he looked at Barry's bronzed face and tall, square-built figure. He stroked his carefully trimmed pointed beard and thought for a few moments.

"I want a chief mate for the *Mahina*; the one I have now is seriously ill and cannot live more than a day or two. When can you come aboard—to-night?"

Barry shook his head impatiently. "I told you, sir, that I have no clothes but those I stand up in——"

"Can you get what you want right off if I advance you ten sovereigns?"

"Five will do—or three if you have a slop chest aboard."

"The *Mahina* is a trading vessel (though I'm going to have a try at pearling this trip) and carries a general store from a needle to an anchor aboard; but at the same

time, although you can get what you want in the way of clothing, you may want money for other purposes. Are you willing to come aboard to-night, and take first mate's duty?"

"Yes."

"Then take these"—he took two five pound notes from his pocket-book and placed them in Barry's hand. "This is Saturday, and the shops keep open till late. But I rely on you to be here on this wharf not later than midnight. My mate, whose place you will take, is very ill, my crew are a troublesome lot—six of them have deserted, and the rest of them would clear out to-night if they could. I shall look out for you, and send a boat when you hail."

"I shall be here sooner, if you wish it," replied Barry, "but I do not want all this," and he gave back one of the bank notes. "I don't owe a cent to any one, but I have some gear of mine in pawn."

The captain waved it back courteously. "Keep it, sir; keep it—we sail early on Monday morning, and you will not be able to get on shore again."

"Thank you," laughed Barry. "I've no doubt I can find use for it." Then he added, "My name is Barry."

"And mine is Rawlings. I hope we shall pull together, Mr. Barry," this with a pleasant smile as he buttoned up his overcoat. "Ha, there is my boat, and I must take my gaol-birds on board. Good-afternoon. I shall look for you about twelve o'clock."

Then with a polite inclination of his head he stepped out towards the waiting boat, and left his new chief officer to pursue his way into the city with a light heart.

[1] A now almost obsolete nautical expression for a mattress staffed with straw.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAYNARDS.

A quarter of an hour's walk through the dimly lighted and squalid streets which intersect Miller's Point and Church Hill brought Barry out into the glare and noise of

the lower part of the principal thoroughfares of the city, which, boisterous as was the night, was fairly thronged with the poorer class of people engaged in their Saturday night's shopping.

Pushing his way through the crowd in no very gentle manner, for he was both wet and hungry, he at last reached a respectable-looking second-class hotel at the corner of George and Bridge streets. The house was much frequented by men of his own position in the merchant service, and, as he walked into the comfortable parlour and stood by the fire to warm himself, he was greeted by all the occupants of the room—four decently dressed mates or second mates.

"You look pretty wet," said an old red-faced man, moving his chair further away from the fire, so as to give the newcomer more room; "why didn't you take your oilskins with you when you went out?"

Barry laughed with the utmost good-nature. "Because Uncle Levi Harris down the street is taking care of them for me, Mr. Todd. And he's got my watch and chain, and my sextant and some other things as well."

The four men—mere casual acquaintances of a few weeks' standing—gave a sympathetic murmur, and then one of them in a deep, rumbling kind of voice, and without even looking at Barry, inquired if he could "do with a change of togs?"

"Much obliged to you, Mr. Watson," replied the young man, "but I'll be all right now. I've got a ship, the skipper has given me an advance out of his own pocket, and as soon as I get my watch and other things out of old Levi's I'm going up the town to buy some clothes."

"You ain't going into a pawnshop yourself, are you?" inquired Todd. "Don't you do it, young fellow. Why, the skipper as give you the advance might see you going in, and chuck it up in your teeth again some day."

"Aye, that's true," said another; "men like us can't run the risk of being seen even looking in at a pawnshop window."

"Well, as I can't get any one to go for me, I must go myself," said Barry, who was quick to perceive that his companions thought nothing of a man having to avail himself of a pawnbroker's shop, but did think it exceedingly improper to be seen entering or leaving one.

"Leave it till Monday morning," said another. "I'll get one of the hands aboard my hooker to go for you if you give me the tickets."

Barry shook his head. "I've promised to be aboard to-night, and we sail early on Monday morning."

"Humph! That's a corker," said the man with the rumbling voice; "there's no getting out of that;" then rising from his seat he walked to the door, opened it, and then turning his head, said, "Just come here a minute, mister, and I'll tell you how we might manage it."

Barry followed him out into the passage and then upstairs into his bedroom.

"Look here," said Watson as he struck a match, lit a candle and then his pipe, and speaking amidst a cloud of smoke, "you don't know much of me, and I don't know much of you, but I do know that you're one of the right sort. I could see you were getting pretty well pushed, although you have always kept a stiff upper lip. Now, look there. There's my chest. Help yourself to some dry togs—they'll fit you right enough. Then go out, and do all you want to do, and if you have time come back here and we'll have a glass of grog together. If you haven't—why, it don't matter. I've been on *my* beam ends often enough, I can tell you."

Barry put out his hand. "Thank you, Mr. Watson. If you'll lend me a suit of clothes, I'll feel grateful. I've only those I stand up in, and I'm feeling jolly cold. But I've a good suit or two in pawn with my other gear, and I'll be back here with them in half an hour."

Without another word Watson opened his sea chest and threw a collection of clothing upon the bed.

"There's shirts, collars, ties, and everything else you want in the chest, and boots under the bed. Blow out the light when you've finished, lock the door, and leave the key in the bar, and if you're on for a yarn when you come back, you'll find me downstairs with old Billy Todd. Welsh rarebit at ten o'clock."

Then refusing to listen to Barry's thanks, he went out to rejoin his companions.

Immediately he had finished dressing himself in his new friend's clothes, Barry rolled his own up in a bundle, locked the room door, and hurried down into the bar, where he left the key as directed, and had some coffee and a sandwich or two instead of supper, for he was anxious to return as quickly as possible, and then make his way down to the *Mahina*.

The pawnbroker's shop was less than ten minutes' walk from the hotel, and stepping briskly along he soon reached its doors, entered, and went directly to the

open counter instead of availing himself of one of the dirty, ill-smelling little confessional boxes wherein hapless creatures confess their poverty to Poverty's Father Confessor, mine uncle.

Producing his tickets, a young Hebrew gentleman at once gave him his immediate attention, and one by one the articles were brought and delivered to him, after repayment of the money loaned and interest, which transaction took four pounds out of the ten he possessed. His watch and chain were the last to be produced, and as he was winding up the former, before placing it in his vest pocket, he heard a voice proceeding from the nearest confessional box, speaking to one of the assistants, which caused him to start and then listen intently. It was a voice he remembered well—clear, refined, but tremulous with age.

"I can assure you," it said, "that it was bought in Calcutta fifty years ago, and cost two hundred rupees."

"Vell, my good sir, it doesn't madder nodings to me vat it cost. I dell you dot ve don't advance nodings on dose dings. Ve cannot fill up dis blace mit such rubbish."

"Will you buy it, then? Will you give me three pounds?"

"Vy don't you say dree dousand! Now I dell you vat I vill do, so as to have no more droubles mit you, ven I have mine pizness to addend—I vill give five shillings for it."

"Will you, you sweep!" shouted Barry, striking the wooden partition a blow with the side of his clenched hand; and then to the astonishment of the pawnbroker and his assistants, and the people in the shop, he seized his parcel, and pushing open the partition door kicked vigorously at the "confession box."

"Open the door and come out of this place, Mr. Maynard," he cried—"I'm Ted Barry!"

In an instant the door was opened, and a little, pale-faced, white-moustached man came out. A faint cry of astonishment escaped his lips.

"Come, sir, take my arm," quickly said the seaman, who saw that the old man was trembling with excitement; "let us get out of this before we have a crowd round us."

"Yes, yes, Mr. Barry," was the eager reply, "do let us get away. I feel so upset; and then, too, your voice gave me a shock—no, no, not a shock, my boy, but a

surprise, a pleasant surprise," and he pressed his arm closely to Barry's. "Rose, poor Rose will be delighted to hear I have seen you."

"Where is she?" asked Barry quickly.

The old man halted and looked piteously into his face.

"She is near here, Mr. Barry. We are poor, very poor now; she is serving in a draper's shop."

An exclamation of pity that he could not repress burst from the seaman's lips. Then he pulled himself together again.

"Let us sit down somewhere for half an hour if you can spare me the time," he said. "See, there's a good place," and he indicated a large, brilliantly lighted restaurant on the opposite side of the street. "I've had no supper. Will you come and have some with me, and we can have a chat?"

"Yes, yes; of course I will, my dear boy. But I must not stay long. I always wait for Rose to see her home, and must be outside the shop at nine o'clock."

"It is now a little past eight. We will have something to eat; and then—if you will allow me to come with you—I should like to see Miss Maynard. This is my last night on shore. My ship sails early on Monday."

"She will be delighted to see you, poor child; delighted and yet distressed to hear that you are leaving. She has never forgotten you, and we have often wondered why you have not written to us for so long. 'Tis quite a year."

Barry's face flushed with pleasure, but he made no reply. Entering the restaurant, he chose a table in a quiet corner, and ordered some supper. Then for the first time he was able to observe the thin, pinched face and shabby clothing of his companion. "Poor old fellow, and poor little girl!" he said to himself, and then, being a man of action, he at once went to the point that was uppermost in his mind.

Placing his big, sun-tanned hand on that of the old man, he said somewhat nervously,—

"What you told me just now about your changed circumstances has distressed me very much. Will you, for the sake of our old friendship when I was chief officer of the *Maid of Judah*, accept a small loan from me? Do not refuse me, please. I assure you it will give me the greatest happiness in the world," and then disregarding the old

gentleman's protestations with smiling good-humour, he forced the money into his hand, and went on volubly, "You see, sir, it's only a trifle—six pounds—and of no earthly use to me, especially as I'm off to sea again. So pray do not refuse me."

"Mr. Barry ... my dear boy ... you are indeed a generous friend, and a friend in need, but"—and here the tears stole down his withered cheeks as he tried to smile—"I know your good-nature too well. I was always, as my poor wife used to say, a stupid old man, but I am not so stupid as not to know that had matters gone well with you, I should not have met you to-night where I did. No, no, I cannot take all this hard-earned money from you; but if you will lend me thirty shillings——"

"Sh! sh! my dear sir, you are entirely mistaken. I am not rolling in wealth, I admit; but at the same time I'm not in want of money, and have a good ship. And then," he added in the most unblushing manner, "I only went to the pawnshop to redeem these things here for a friend of mine, who couldn't go for them himself. Now here's our supper, and if you say another word about that wretched money you'll spoil my appetite, which at present is a remarkably healthy one."

"Then God bless you, my dear boy. Rose will herself thank——"

"If you say a word about the matter to Miss Maynard in my presence I *shall* be put out," said Barry with unmistakable emphasis.

As they ate their supper, Barry, whose spirits seemed to become brighter every minute, led the old man to talk, and he soon learnt of the misfortune that had befallen him—an unfortunate copper mining investment had stripped him of almost every penny in the world, and from comparative affluence he had fallen into almost deepest poverty. Too old to obtain employment in his former profession—that of an architect—and too proud to ask for assistance from any of his friends who might have helped him, he at last succeeded in securing a miserable weekly wage as clerk in a shipping firm, where his knowledge of foreign languages was of value. For some few months he and his daughter managed to keep their heads above water; then came sickness and consequent loss of his clerkship, and increasing hardships to be endured in their poor lodgings in the poorest quarter of the city. Rose Maynard, with aching heart, saw him rapidly sinking into despondency as their funds became lower and lower with each rent day. What could she do to help? Against her father's wish, she had written to his sister in England, and told her of his position. The sister, a wealthy maiden lady, had sent a 5 pound note and a long letter to her brother full of indignation at his "criminal carelessness" and suggesting that Rose was quite old enough to go out as a governess to some "well-connected family, or, failing that, as companion," and winding up with the intimation that the money enclosed had been

sent "out of sisterly regard, though destined for a far worthier purpose—the restoration fund of St. Barnabas's Church."

Barry ground his teeth and muttered something under his breath. He had often heard Rose Maynard speak of her aunt Martha, who was evidently not a lovable person.

"It hurt us terribly," continued Mr. Maynard, "but our necessities were pressing, and I decided to keep the gift. Rose, however, begged me not to use it till the following day. Then she went out. She was only away for a few hours, and on her return I found she had obtained a situation in a draper's shop at thirty shillings a week. That very day I returned my sister's gift, urging her to use it for the 'worthier purpose.' Rose, who cannot help being mischievous, was in such high spirits that she added a postscript, asking her aunt to be sure to send us six copies of the free parish magazine containing the announcement of her princely donation, as it would interest people in Australia; and the wilful girl enclosed sixpence for postage."

"Bravo, Rose——Miss Maynard!" cried the seaman, leaning back in his chair and laughing heartily.

"Since then we have managed to get along fairly well, but a month ago Rose contracted a low fever, and had to remain at home until the beginning of this week. She is quite recovered now, thank Heaven, and this afternoon, as I was turning over some of the little articles we had saved when our home was broken up, I came across this curiously carved ivory tobacco-box. It belonged to my father, who told me that he had paid two hundred rupees for it in India. Surely, I thought, I can either sell or pawn it for a few pounds, so that when Rose comes home to-night I can give her a pleasant surprise. But, as you know, I was bitterly mistaken; and yet I was about to take the man's offer, when I heard your voice. See, here it is."

The box was certainly an exquisite specimen of Indian carving, and, as Mr. Maynard said, of great antiquity.

Barry looked at it admiringly for a minute or two, and then said,—

"Do not offer it to a pawnbroker again. I should think it is worth at least twenty pounds. There is a famous collector in Sydney—a Colonel Maclean; do you know him?"

"No, I have never heard the name."

"I know him very well; he visits every ship that comes from the South Seas, in search of rare curios. Take or send this to him. He is a wealthy and liberal man, and will give you its full value, or three times as much if he wants it badly." Then he gave Mr. Maynard the address.

Their supper being finished, and it being nearly nine o'clock, Barry paid the bill out of his remaining seven shillings, and left his parcel under the care of the waiter.

The draper's shop was just closing as they reached it; presently one by one the employees came out and stood under the awning, gazing with apprehension at the rain and soaking streets.

"Here is Miss Maynard, sir," said a young woman pleasantly to the old gentleman, as a tall, slenderly built girl, closely wrapped up in a serge overcoat, stepped out of the shop and looked eagerly up and down the street. In another moment she was at her father's side, her sweet, pale face smiling into his. Barry was standing a little distance away.

"Come, Rose, come. I've such a pleasant surprise for you, my child," he heard her father say, as with the girl on his arm he pushed through the little crowd to where his companion was waiting. "Here she is, Mr. Barry."

"Oh, I am so glad, so glad to see you again," was all she could say in soft, trembling tones as his hand closed around hers, and simple as were the words, they thrilled the man's heart.

"Glad indeed," echoed her father, "glad indeed, my child," and then his next words sent a chill of misery through her; "but sad to say, we meet but to part, and to part almost immediately, for he must leave us before ten o'clock to go on board his ship, which sails on Monday. So let us make haste home, Rose, so that we may at least bid him farewell in a better place than the open street."

Their lodgings were but a few doors away, and in a few minutes all three were seated in the dingy little combined dining and sitting-room, which, with two bedrooms, formed their "furnished apartments." There was, however, a bright wood fire burning in the grate, and this gave the place an aspect of cheerfulness. The table was laid for supper, and Mr. Maynard, whose thin little face was flushed with excitement, after divesting his daughter of her cloak, placed a kettle on the fire. Then he turned to her with an expression of dismay.

"Dear, dear me, Rose. I have quite forgotten to buy the coffee. And to-morrow will be Sunday. How very thoughtless of me!"

Seizing his hat and umbrella, he bustled off.

"Poor father is quite excited, Mr. Barry," said Rose with a faint smile, "but he won't be more than ten minutes. He is housekeeper now.... I suppose you know all that has happened to us since——"

"Yes, yes," said Barry hurriedly, as he rose, and coming over to her took both her hands in his, and looked into her pale face. "Oh that I had only known of his misfortunes six months ago, when I could have helped you. Rose, dear Rose——"

"Don't, don't," she said brokenly; "why do you come to us now, when for a year you have never written? I said to you just now that I was glad to see you. It is not so. Your coming has made me very, very unhappy—for I was trying to forget."

"For God's sake, Rose, hear me. I cannot now tell you all that has happened to me, for your father will be here presently, and my personal honour is pledged to my captain to be on board to-night, and so I must hurry away at once and it will be impossible for me to come ashore to-morrow. But you shall have a letter from me in the morning, that will tell you all, and clear me in your eyes, dear."

The man's eyes glowed with the passionate sincerity of his words, and she uttered a sob of joy.

"Oh, Ted, Ted, if you only knew how I have suffered! I could not understand it ... it was killing me. If it were not for poor father I should have been glad to die. And now you are going away again. Oh, what does it all mean? I feel dull and stupid, and cannot think——" then a burst of tears.

"Hush, little woman. To-morrow my letter will help you to forget the unhappiness I have unintentionally caused you. There, look up, dear Rose, and listen. I hear your father coming. I cannot again part from you without telling him of my love for you."

"Ted! I shall be the happiest woman in the world then; for then I can talk of you to him when you are at sea. How many long, long months this time, Ted?" and she smiled through her tears.

"Not many, I hope, dear—not more than six, I hope."

Mr. Maynard's step sounded on the landing, and in another moment he came in.

"Here it is, my dear——" he began, and then he stopped suddenly. "Crying, my child? Poor little girl, you are done up, and weak as well."

"Indeed I'm not, father. I feel lovely and strong. See," and she sprang to him, and threw her arms around his neck, to his intense amazement.

Then Barry spoke out straightforwardly.

"Mr. Maynard, ever since we came out together in the *Maid of Judah* I have loved Rose. And to-night I ask your forgiveness for not having told you so two years ago. But I was waiting till I got a ship of my own."

The old man gently disengaged his daughter's arms and held out his hand to the seaman.

"God bless you, my boy; why didn't you tell me before? Surely her happiness is my first care. And I've guessed it all along."

CHAPTER III.

THE BRIG *MAHINA*.

Ten o'clock had just struck when Barry returned to the hotel, with a heart as light as that of a boy, and walking into the parlour found it occupied by his friend Watson and the three others.

"Here I am, you see, Mr. Watson, just in time for a yarn and smoke before I leave. Will you give me your key, please?"

"Aye, aye, sonny," said the rumbling-voiced mate, taking it from his pocket. "Hurry up. Welsh rarebit in five minutes."

Hastily changing his borrowed clothes Barry then went into his own room and packed his one bag, which he at once carried downstairs. Fortunately he owed the landlord nothing, and though he had but three shillings in the world, his face indicated nothing but a supreme content when he rejoined the old mate and his companions.

The Welsh rarebit and its liquid concomitants having been duly disposed of, Barry rose and told his friends that as he must be on board his new ship by midnight, and then had to write a letter, he must leave them. Then he shook hands all round, each man wishing him luck.

Watson came to the door with him. "Got all you want, sonny? Anything I can do for you?"

"Yes, come into the side parlour here, and I'll tell you my yarn before I write that letter. I've a full hour, and I can do both in that time."

"Aye, aye," said Watson in his deep voice, as he seated himself.

"Well, here it is—the yarn I mean. I came out here to Sydney two years ago, chief officer on the *Maid of Judah*. There were a lot of passengers. One family—an old gentleman, his wife and daughter and myself got pretty thick."

"Count of the daughter?"

Barry nodded. "Yes. The skipper was a lardy-da sort of a beast, and fell foul of me on account of talking to her too much—so he told the girl's mother—who was a silly, brainless sort of a woman, and thought him a perfect gentleman—I knew him to be a beast. Between the two of them they made trouble enough for me, though the old gentleman stuck to me, and didn't believe in the skipper. And anyway the girl liked me best, you see."

The old mate nodded. "I've seen a lot of skippers like that. The way women—married women travellin' alone especially—takes to such swabs is agin Natur'. I don't understand it—never could."

"Well," resumed Barry, "one day, after we reached Sydney, the skipper and I came to blows—over the girl. I asked for leave—told him I was going ashore to see the Maynards. He said something foul about the girl, and so I dropped it into him—knocked him off the break of the poop on to the main deck. He was nearly killed. I got two months' gaol."

Rumbling voice nodded again. "An' o' course the gal wouldn't recognise you again. Don't tell me. I know something about women."

Barry smiled. "But *she* isn't one of that sort, Mr. Watson. Both she and her father used to come and see me—the mother hated me. Of course, when I came out, the owners of the *Maid of Judah* wouldn't have anything to do with me after spoiling the beauty of their curly-headed pet skipper, and so I was stranded for a bit. But I soon got a berth as mate on a brig called the *Tawera*, trading between Tahiti, Valparaiso, and Sydney. Used to write to the girl (whose mother had died meantime) and was putting by money. Then I got into another mess."

"Women?" queried Watson, puffing solemnly at his pipe.

"No," answered Barry hotly; "didn't I tell you that I used to write to *her*? I'm not one of that sort."

"Beg pardon, sonny. I'm an old fool. But what was the mess?"

"I left the *Tawera*—like a blind fool—at Tahiti, and sailed for the Paumotu Group on a pearl-shelling cruise in a cutter. We ran ashore on a reef off Ahunui, and lost nearly everything of course—I was half-owner—and lived on the Paumotus for nearly a year before I could get away to Auckland. Then I came to Sydney—best place for another ship, you know—but couldn't get one. Had to pawn all my gear to keep myself going. Didn't care to go and see her—you know, under the circs—afraid of the old woman, who I didn't know was dead. So I booted it around trying to get a ship. And now comes the curious part of my yarn; I had hardly got a ship, when I—just after I left you this evening—met Mr. Maynard. He's broke, lost all his money in a mine or something. She—the girl I mean, had to take a berth in a draper's shop. But I've seen her, and everything's all right, and I'm as happy as a sandboy. Let's have something to drink. I must hurry off aboard, and write a letter to her."

"Steady, boy. Steady about drinks," and the old man put his hand on Barry's knee. "I'll have a drink with you with pleasure, but I'll pay for them. I don't suppose you got much of an advance, did you now? And how much have you left?"

Barry laughed, and then told the old mate his story in detail, and confessed to having but three shillings left.

"Mr. Barry, you're a gentleman. I hope the girl is one of the right——"

"She is one——" began Barry.

"There, that'll do, my boy. I'm sure she is; a girl who sticks to her father in that way will make the two ends and bight of a good wife. Now, look here. I've a hundred or two in the Bank of Australasia here, and if you want a tenner—aye, or two—you can have it straight away; the landlord will cash a cheque for me."

Barry gripped the old sailor's hand.

"You're a 'white man' as they say here in Australia, a white man to the backbone! And I thank you sincerely, very sincerely, but I don't want it. But I'd like you to know Miss Maynard. Here is the address, I'm writing to her to-night, as soon as I get aboard, and I'll let her know you are coming. I had no time to tell her a heap of things—all

about our being cast away on the Paumotus, and all the rest of it. Now I must be off—it's past eleven, and I have promised to be on board at twelve. We sail at daylight." Then he gave his friend some particulars about the brig.

Watson shook the young man's hand warmly, and they parted.

Half an hour later Barry was standing on the wharf hailing the brig. A boat at once pushed off from her side and pulled in. The wind by this time had already decreased in violence, but it was still blowing strongly, though the sky was fairly clear, and a few stars were showing.

Jumping into the boat, which was manned by four native sailors, and steered by a thick-set, powerful white man, who was wrapped up in a heavy coat, and who bade Barry a gruff "good evening," she was quickly slewed round, and in a few minutes was alongside again. No lights were visible on deck, but Captain Rawlings was standing in the waist smoking a cigar.

"Ha, here you are, Mr. Barry," he said pleasantly, shaking hands with his new officer; "come below with me, please. Mr. Barradas, hoist in the boat as quickly as possible. Mr. Barry, this is Mr. Barradas, my second mate."

Following the captain, Barry entered the cabin, which was large and well lighted. A native steward was in attendance; at a sign from Rawlings he brought decanters of spirits and two glasses, and placed them on the table.

"Take a drink, Mr. Barry. Let us drink success to our voyage."

"Thank you," said Barry, and Rawlings clinked his own glass against his in a friendly fashion. Then as he set his glass down the captain, still smiling in a pleasant manner, said, "That is your cabin there, Mr. Barry; the steward will put your things in. And now you'll be surprised to hear that I've decided to get under weigh at once, instead of waiting for daylight. Steward, tell Mr. Barradas to get ready to heave up."

Barry's face expressed his astonishment and disappointment—astonishment that the captain should choose a dark and boisterous night to take his departure, and disappointment at his thus being prevented from writing to Rose Maynard and sending his letter ashore. Rawlings was quick to note the change in his face, and his own features, too, underwent a sudden transformation.

"I expect my orders not to be questioned, Mr. Barry," he said, in a sharp, imperious tone.

"Certainly not," assented Barry, "I am merely disappointed at being unable to write a very important letter. That is all, sir."

The captain's smile was back in an instant.

"Can you do it in a quarter of an hour?" he asked.

"Less than that—ten, five minutes will do. I can scribble a few lines at once if you will allow me. But how can I get it ashore?"

"Oh, the Custom House fellow—the tide-waiter will take it for you. I'll put him ashore in the dinghy as soon as we begin to heave up. Be as quick as you can, please. Steward, bring writing gear for Mr. Barry, quick."

Whilst Barry hurriedly scribbled a few lines to Rose telling her that the brig was putting to sea at that moment, and that he would write her fully at the first available opportunity, Captain Rawlings paced to and fro in the main cabin, waiting.

"Ah, finished already. The tide-waiter is asleep in his cabin, and I said I would not disturb him till the last moment. But I'll wake him now."

"Thank you," said Barry, handing him the letter. "Shall I go for'ard now, sir?"

"If you please," answered Rawlings politely.

The moment Barry left the cabin the captain opened the letter, read it, smiled contemptuously, and closed it again. Then he too went on deck, and walked aft.

"Are you ready, bos'un?" he said to a man who with two others was standing by the dinghy davits on the port side.

"Yes, sir."

"Then lower away. And, here, put this letter in his pocket. Take him well up into the middle of the wharf, and lie him down somewhere under shelter."

Just as the windlass pawls gave their first clink the dinghy was lowered, and in a few seconds shot out from the brig's side. Reaching the wharf steps, one man jumped out and held the boat, whilst the other two lifted out the inanimate figure of the Custom House officer, carried him up the wharf, and laid him down under the shelter of a housed-in donkey-engine. Then one of them, the boatswain, thrust Barry's letter into the man's breast-pocket, and the two left him. In less than ten minutes the boat was alongside again and being hoisted up.

As the brig's forefoot came over her anchor Rawlings, who gave his orders very quietly, waited for a favourable moment. A gust of wind canted her head away from the shores of the little bay, and in a few seconds her anchor was a-trip, and under her fore and main topsails and headsails only the *Mahina* wore round, and began to slip through the water.

As soon as the anchor was secured Rawlings came for'ard and stood beside his chief mate, watching the shore lights.

"That'll do, Mr. Barry. We're all right now. With this westerly we won't run foul of anything coming up the harbour. Leave a couple of these native chaps here on the look-out; they can see through a stone wall."

In less than an hour the brig was between the heads, and then Rawlings told Barry to make more sail, and gave the helmsman his course, E.N.E.

As the mate called out to the hands to loose the topgallant sails, and half a dozen men sprang aloft, the captain turned to Barry.

"Oh, I had quite forgotten those gaol-birds. Bos'un, bring a light. Come with me, Mr. Barry, and," he added, "bring one of these with you," as he took a belaying-pin out of the rail.

Wondering what was now afoot, Barry followed the skipper to the deck-house, the after part of which was used as a sail locker. The door was locked.

"Hold that light up, bos'un," said Rawlings quietly, as he took a key from his pocket, and opened the door. "Now then, men, come out, and look smart about it."

One by one the four rough fellows whom Barry had seen on the wharf in the afternoon came out. The tallest of them, with a sullen look at the captain, muttered something under his breath.

"None of that, now," said Rawlings, and quick as lightning he dealt the man a smashing blow on the head with the iron belaying-pin. He fell full length upon the deck and lay there motionless. Rawlings looked at him with calm unconcern. "Take him for'ard," he said in drawling tones to the other three, "and take warning too. Let me see one of you but look sideways at me or any of my officers, and you'll get a surprise. Off you go."

Shortly after four bells had struck, as the chief mate was seated on the skylight smoking his pipe, and thinking of the unnecessary violence of Captain Rawlings, Barradas, who had the watch, stopped in front of him.

"Don't you care about turning in?" he asked civilly.

"No, I don't feel a bit sleepy; in fact, I'll be glad when it's eight bells."

The second mate nodded, took a couple of turns up and down the deck, and then stopped again. "What do you think of the *Mahina*? She can sail, eh?"

"She does seem very fast."

"Fastest vessel in the Pacific for her size, but a bit overmasted. Think I can give her the royals now—the wind is taking off, and sea going down fast." Then, after he had given the necessary orders, he began again.

"Heard you were mate of the *Tawera*, mister."

Barry nodded.

"Then you're used to kanakas and their ways"—this half questioningly, half affirmingly. "These chaps here—most of them, anyway—are kanakas. Good sailor men too. Better than those —— swabs we had to shove in the sail locker until we got to sea. But I daresay we'll knock some work out of them."

"Did they try to run away, then?"

Barradas grinned. "We didn't give 'em the chance. We're short-handed as it is."

"I heard that half a dozen of your men had bolted," said Barry.

"Did you? Why, who told you? Oh, the wharf policeman. Yes, that's right enough; we did lose six men. They were six of our best men, too—Penrhyn Islanders," and then he quickly moved away, and thrusting his hands in his pockets seemed deeply interested in the man who was loosing the fore-royal.

Presently Rawlings came on deck, and said to Barradas—

"Poor Tracey is dead. He breathed his last a few minutes ago." And then he addressed Barry.

"My poor mate is dead, Mr. Barry."

Barry jumped up in astonishment. "I'm sorry to hear that, sir. And I had no idea he was on board."

"Yes, poor fellow," replied Rawlings quietly, "he refused to go ashore, in fact pleaded so hard with me, that I could not resist his wishes. He hated the idea of dying in an hospital, so I gave way to him."

"What was his illness?"

Rawlings hesitated a moment, and then answered, "I might as well tell you, though only Mr. Barradas and myself are aware of the cause of his death. Two days ago he shot himself in a fit of depression. I had two doctors off at once to see him, but they both told me that he could not possibly live, and that even to move him ashore would hasten the end. Now, will you come below?"

With a curious, but yet undefined feeling of dissatisfaction Barry went below with the captain, who, taking off his cap, opened the door of one of the state-rooms, and motioned to his chief officer to follow.

Lying in the bunk of the state-room, which was well lit up, was the figure of a man, who, when Rawlings lifted the sheet which covered his face, was handsome even in death and appeared to Barry to have been about thirty years of age. Round the forehead and upper part of the head was a bandage. This Rawlings lifted and showed Barry a bullet hole in the left temple. Then covering up the dead man's face again, he stepped out into the main cabin, and motioned Barry to a seat.

"Sit down, Mr. Barry. You must listen to me for a few minutes, and I shall now quickly explain to you one or two things that may have appeared somewhat strange to you since you joined the ship. I have had a very great deal of trouble, trouble that my officers have shared with me. But I must tell you the story in detail, painful as it is for me to relate it; indeed, neither Barradas, myself, nor the boatswain, the only three remaining out of the ship's original company, care to speak of it, for death and disaster have followed us throughout.

"When that poor fellow Tracey joined me in Honolulu as mate he was accompanied by his wife, a young Australian lady, to whom he was deeply attached. He was anxious to pay for her accommodation during the cruise, but to this I would not consent. And I saw he was simply overjoyed at her being allowed to sail with him.

"I bought this vessel intending to run her among the Marshall and Caroline Islands in the usual trade—you know: coconut oil, turtle shell, and sharks' fins. After leaving Honolulu we cruised among the eastward islands and did well—so well that

we nearly filled the ship. Then we stood away for the Carolines, and on our way ran into Port Lêle on Strong's Island, to wood and water. It was after we left there that Tracey lost his wife. Poor girl, her end was a terrible one."

He sighed, and then resumed. "A very terrible end—she was lost overboard. But let me tell the whole story.

"Whilst we were lying at anchor at Lêle we met an old trader there, with whom Tracey and myself frequently spent an evening. One night, when we were talking together over various matters, the old man, who was very ill at the time, told us that he had a secret to reveal, if we made it worth his while. Knowing him as I had for many years as an honest old fellow, I listened with interest to what he had to say, and in a few minutes he had satisfied Tracey and myself that he knew of the existence of one of the richest pearling grounds in the Pacific; and provided he could find partners who would deal squarely with him, he would disclose the exact locality. His poverty had prevented him from buying a vessel and returning to the island, which was only a week's sail from Lêle; but as the years went by, and his prospect of buying a vessel seemed as far off as ever, he determined to seek the aid of others. As a proof of his statements, he not only showed us a dozen or so of splendid pearl shells, but also a score or two of magnificent pearls. Some of these he entrusted to me to sell for him in Sydney. I have, at his request, kept a few for myself. Let me show them to you."

Going into his cabin, he presently returned with six or eight pearls, all of which were certainly splendid specimens. Placing them on the scarlet table-cloth he pushed them over to Barry to examine.

"They certainly are beauties. I've seen larger and better in the Paumotus when I was in the *Tawera*," said Barry, "but anyway, that lot is worth 400 pounds or 500 pounds."

Rawlings nodded. "Well, to cut a long story short, we came to an agreement with the old man, whereby I was to find divers, and provide all working expenses, boats, and the necessary gear, and to receive one-half of all the shell and pearls found. Tracey was to stand in with us, too—old Gurden and myself were each to give him one-tenth.

"Taking the old man on board—the poor old fellow was not only in feeble health, but was childishly anxious to, as he said, 'smell the smell of a big town again'—we left Strong's Island for Sydney. From the very first Gurden became weaker, and on the fourth or fifth day out he told us that he did not believe he would live through the night. We tried to cheer him up, but he only shook his head, and requested us to commit to paper the exact bearings of the patches of the pearl-shell beds on the lagoon

he was doomed never to see again. This was done, and he then requested that as Tracey's wife had nursed him during the time he was on board, that what would have been his share of the profits of our coming venture should be given to her, as he had not a relative or connection in the world. Early in the morning he had breathed his last.

"We buried the old fellow that afternoon, and almost immediately afterward dirty weather came up from the northward, and by nine o'clock we were driving along under an ugly sky at a great rate. Tracey was below, turned in, and I was on deck with Barradas, who had taken the wheel for a few minutes to allow the man who was steering to lend a hand at some job on the main deck. Just then, poor Alice Tracey came up from below, walked aft, and stood at the stern with her hand on the rail, looking at the brig's boiling wake; this was a frequent habit of hers. Neither of us took any further notice of her after she had remarked that the cabin was very stuffy—we were running before the wind at the time. About five minutes later I went for'ard, and just as Barradas was giving up the wheel again, he noticed that Mrs. Tracey had disappeared. He gave the alarm in an instant, for he knew she had not gone below again, and must have fallen overboard without a cry.

"In bringing to, to lower a boat, our decks were twice filled, and this caused much delay. Poor Tracey nearly went mad, and both he and the boatswain searched for her all night in two boats, while we burnt every blue light on board, and then kept a flare going till daylight—all without avail. We were then about five miles west of Pleasant Island, and Tracey had a wild hope that his wife, who was a splendid swimmer, might have kept herself afloat and succeeded in reaching the land, which is densely populated. To please him I sent the boats ashore, and made inquiries from the natives, but of course there was not the slightest hope. She must have hurt herself when she fell, and sunk at once, or else she could not have failed to have been seen or heard by one of the two boats.

"The rest of the voyage was sad enough in all conscience, for Tracey was never the same man again. The crew, too, began to get the idea that we were to be an unlucky ship, and eventually became gloomy, discontented, and finally almost mutinous. I dropped a good many of them at various islands as we came along, but picked up others in their places—just the sort of men I wanted for divers and boat work. At Levuka I shipped six Penrhyn Islanders—the best divers in the Pacific—but the other fellows contaminated them, and they too bolted from me in Sydney. Poor Tracey took all our misfortunes very much to heart, for, in addition to his grief at the loss of his wife, he imagined that we should find ourselves forestalled when we reached Providence Lagoon. He had been very quiet and depressed for some days, but I never imagined that his mind would become unhinged. However, one night he locked himself in his cabin and shot himself."

"Poor fellow!" said Barry, with genuine sympathy.

"I feel his loss most keenly, I can assure you," resumed Rawlings, laying down his cigar, and sighing as he stroked his pointed beard. "Well, all that could be done for him was done, but, as I have just said, the doctors gave no hope from the first. When he became conscious—which was early on the following day—and was told that he had no chance of life, he took it very quietly, but begged me to let him remain on the ship and not send him ashore. He had an absolute horror of dying in an hospital, he said. Both of the doctors said it was just as well, so I yielded to his wishes. And then, besides being my chief officer, he was a personal friend, and was largely interested with me in this pearl-shelling venture, though he had no share in the brig."

Barry nodded. "Hard lines."

"Hard lines, indeed. And now you will see how I was situated. Poor Tracey urging me almost with his dying breath to put to sea, my solemn promise to him that I would do so the moment I could get men to replace those who had run away, and my own anxiety—all these things tended to irritate and upset me. To get men at the Government shipping office meant a delay of perhaps three or four days, to obtain a suitable man as mate might have meant a week. During this time poor Tracey's death would have still further complicated matters and hindered the *Mahina* from putting to sea. I had picked up those four loafing scoundrels you saw me bring aboard only an hour or two before I met you; and, just before I did meet you, I had decided to give Tracey's berth to Barradas, and promote the boatswain to second mate. However, I did meet you, and very glad I am of it, for I am sure we shall pull together."

"I am sure of it," answered Barry, who now felt a sympathy for the man.

"I must tell you," added Rawlings presently, with a smile, "that I am not much of a navigator, and as Barradas is no better I shall rely on you, as I did on Tracey."

"Certainly, sir."

After a few minutes' more conversation, in which Rawlings outlined his plans for the trading and pearling operations, and showed Barry a large scale chart of Arrecifos Lagoon in the Caroline Islands, which was the brig's destination, the two men parted for the night.

Immediately after breakfast on the following morning the brig was laid to, the crew ranged upon the deck, and the body of her former chief officer was carried up from the cabin by two native seamen and committed to the deep.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. BILLY WARNER, OF PONAPÉ.

Ten days after leaving Sydney the *Mahina* had rounded the south-eastern end of New Caledonia, and was steering a northerly course between the New Hebrides Group and the great archipelago of the Solomon Islands for Arrecifos Lagoon. During these ten days Barry had had time to study Captain Rawlings and the rest of the ship's company, and had come to the conclusion that there was some mystery attached to both ship and crew. The latter, with the exception of the boatswain, who was a dark-faced, ear-ringed Greek, and the four new hands brought on board by the captain, were all natives of various islands of the Equatorial Pacific. Seven of the twelve, with two of the white men, were in Barry's watch; Barradas had the rest. Among Barry's men was a stalwart young native, much lighter in colour than the others, very quiet in his demeanour, but willing and cheerful. His name, so he told Barry, was Velo, and he was a native of Manono, in the Samoan Group. For the past four or five years he had been wandering to and fro among the islands of the Pacific, his last voyage being made in a luckless Hobart Town whaleship, which he had left at Sydney in disgust and without a penny in his pocket. Like Barry, he had been attracted to the *Mahina* by the fact of her being engaged in the island trade, and indeed had only joined her two days before Barry himself. His cheerful, ingenuous manner, combined with his smart seamanship, made the chief officer take a great liking to him, and even Barradas, gruff and surly and ever ready to deal out a blow, admitted that Velo was, next to the boatswain, the best sailorman of all the crew.

On the second day out the strong westerly had failed, and was succeeded by light and variable airs, much to Rawlings' anger. Walking the poop one day with Barry, he gave vent to such a sudden outburst of rage and blasphemy at the little progress made by the brig that the chief officer gazed at him in astonishment. However, on the morning of the fourth day, a steady breeze set in, and Rawlings' equanimity was restored. His anxiety to make a quick passage was very evident, and when the vicinity of the Northern Solomons was reached, and continuous and furious squalls were experienced almost every night, he would refuse to take in sail till the very last moment, although both his mates respectfully pointed out the risk of carrying on under such circumstances, for, besides the danger to the spars, the islands of the Solomon Group were but badly charted, and the currents continually changing in their set. But to these remonstrances he turned an impatient ear.

"We must push her along through the Solomons," he had said one dark night to Barry as the *Mahina* was tearing through the water under the hum of a heavy squall, quivering in every timber, and deluging her decks with clouds of spray which, from there being a head sea, leapt up from her weather bow as high as the foretopsail. "I want to get into Arrecifos Lagoon as quickly as I can, even if we do lose a light spar or two. I'm no navigator, as you know, but I know the Solomons as well as any man, for I've been trading and nigger-catching there for six years at a stretch—a long time ago; and out here, where we are, we're safe; there's a clear run of six hundred miles, free of any danger. So the old skipper of the *Black Dog* used to tell me—and he knew these parts like a book."

Presently, as he leant back on his elbows against the weather rail, he added in an indifferent tone of voice, "At the same time, I believe there is no cause for hurry. But perhaps Tracey has imbued me with some of his fears that some one else might get there before us, and either get the pick of the shell, or perhaps skin the whole lagoon out altogether."

Northward from the lofty, verdure-clad Solomons the brig sped steadily onward, leaving behind her the fierce, sweeping rain squalls, and the swirling currents, and mighty ocean tide-rips, whose lines of bubbling foam, seen far away, often caused even the native look-outs to call out "Breakers ahead?" and then she sailed into the region of the gentle, north-east trade wind, till the blue mountain-peaks of Ponapé the beautiful showed upon the sunlit sea far to windward. And here the scarcely won trade failed, and by nightfall the *Mahina* lay floating upon a sea of glass, and Rawlings paced the deck the best part of the night, savagely chewing at his cigar and cursing at the delay.

Both Barry and Velo knew from the appearance of the sky that the calm was certain to last three days at least, and possibly ten days or a fortnight; so on the following morning, when at breakfast, the former suggested to Rawlings that the hands might give the ship a coat of paint outside.

"Hardly worth beginning it," said the captain. "We're bound to get a breeze some time this morning."

Barry shook his head. "I'm afraid not, sir. I know of calms about these parts lasting three solid weeks, and judging from the look of the sky and the thick haze hanging over Ponapé I think we can safely count on this one lasting for three days at the very least. But even if it runs into a week or ten days there is one good thing about calms here—the current sets north-east at a great rate, two knots an hour at least."

Rawlings cursed under his breath, and then moodily assented to Barry's suggestion.

"Very well, Mr. Barry, just as you please. But I hope you are mistaken about the calm continuing. It's too hot to last long, I imagine."

Soon after breakfast the hands set to to paint ship, and worked steadily on until a little before seven bells, when Barry heard one of the crew, a Gilbert Islander named Billy Onotoa, call out excitedly—

"Te bakwa! Te bakwa! Roria te bakwa bubura!" ("A shark! a shark! look at the big shark!")

The native (who was one of the smartest men on board), without asking permission from his officer—permission which he knew would be readily granted—jumped on deck and dived below into the fo'c'sle for the shark-fishing tackle which every Gilbert Islander carries with him when at sea. Rawlings and Barry, who were both on the after-deck, went to the rail and looked over and saw that there was a very large grey shark swimming leisurely to and fro under the staging on the port side where the men were painting. Just then Barradas came on deck and joined them.

"Holy mother!" he exclaimed. "What a devil! He's half a fathom broad across his shoulders. And he's hungry, too; look how the pilot fish are running round the ship. That's a sure sign he has an empty belly. If he wasn't hungry they would cruise alongside him, quite close."

As he spoke Billy Onotoa emerged from the forescuttle and was met by the Greek boatswain, who angrily bade him get back to his work again, and tearing the heavy shark hook and its tackle from his hand, flung it overboard.

The dark, expressive eyes of the native, usually so pleasant and smiling, flashed resentfully, and he bent his head in sullen silence as he moved slowly towards the bulwarks.

"Mova quicka, you dam blacka dog!" said the Greek savagely, and raising his foot he gave the man a heavy kick.

Like lightning Billy Onotoa spun round, his sheath knife flashing in his right hand, and the lust of blood in his eyes; in an instant the two were struggling madly together.

Barry, Barradas, and one of the white seamen sprang forward and endeavoured to separate them, but the rest of the Gilbert Islanders leapt to the aid of their countryman, and in less than a minute the deck was filled with a group of struggling men. The Greek, who was a man of enormous strength, had been quicker than his assailant in the use of the knife, and had already stabbed the Islander twice in the shoulder, whilst Billy, who was a much smaller man, had driven his own weapon through the Greek's right arm, his countrymen meanwhile trying their best to use their knives upon the boatswain without hurting either the two mates or the white sailor, who were striking out all round with their clenched fists, shouting to the natives to desist.

At last, however, the two principals in the combat were separated by Velo the Samoan, who, seizing the now maddened Billy Onotoa by both feet, dragged him out of the *mêlée*, and lifting him in his arms threw him down the foreescuttle, whilst Barry quietened the Greek by a blow on the jaw, which sent him reeling across the deck with his blood-stained knife still clutched tightly in his hand.

Barradas, who, like Barry, had kept his temper throughout, had yet managed to receive a terrible knife slash—intended for the Greek—across his temple, and, blinded by the flow of blood, staggered across the deck towards the open gangway, missed his hold of the stanchions, and pitched headlong overboard.

Velo leapt after him with a cry of alarm. "Quick, Mr. Barry! Stand by! The shark!"

Barry and several of the men rushed to the side to assist Velo in rescuing the second mate. They were not a moment too soon, for as the Samoan, who had grasped Barradas by the hair and was holding his head out of water, was swimming toward the staging under the main chains, the shark suddenly appeared under the counter, swimming high up on the surface. Barry saw in an instant that one of the two men in the water was doomed unless swift measures were taken. Jumping on the rail, he leapt overboard, feet foremost, and landed on the monster's back.

There was a swirl and rush of foam, and then a cheer from the crew as the shark darted off in terror, and Barry quietly swam alongside again and clambered on deck, together with Velo and his brother officer.

Then, before dinner, he went forward, examined and dressed Billy Onotoa's wounds, Rawlings standing beside him and eyeing the native in an unsympathetic and forbidding manner.

"The boatswain is badly hurt, Mr. Barry," he said suavely, "and as you are such a good surgeon, perhaps you will leave this damned kanaka and attend to him."

Barry turned on him with a subdued fierceness. "I'll attend to the scoundrel presently, Captain Rawlings, though he doesn't deserve it. He is a downright sweep—like all his ear-ringed kidney. He had no right to kick this man, who is one of the best and smartest men aboard. I gave him a clip on the jaw, and when I've dressed his arm and he is able to turn to again I'll give him another if he tries to start any of these tricks again."

Rawlings smiled pleasantly. "My dear Barry, don't excite yourself. The boatswain is, no doubt, a bit of a bully, and does not understand these natives as you do. But, at the same time, he is a good sailor man, and erred, as Marryat says in one of his novels, 'through excess of zeal.' So do not be too harsh."

"I have no inclination to be 'harsh' with any man, Captain Rawlings. You are the master of this ship, and I am only your chief officer. I take my orders from you, and I look to you to support me in maintaining the necessary discipline. But I tell you plainly that the native crew on this ship are a different class of natives to which you have been accustomed in the Solomon Group and the New Hebrides. They will not take a blow from any man—white or black. And whilst I know my duty to you as master of this brig, I warn you that there will be bloody doings if the boatswain ever again lays his hands upon one of the Gilbert Islanders. They are ripe for mutiny now."

Rawlings flicked the ash off his cigar.

"We don't want any trouble like that, Mr. Barry, do we? And I shall give Paul a good dressing down, and tell him to be careful in future. I have the utmost faith in your judgment, Mr. Barry, and I want everything to go on pleasantly."

Barry nodded, and then went aft and attended to the Greek's wounded arm. This occupied him for nearly half an hour, and then as he was entering his cabin to change his clothes, which were torn and blood-stained, Barradas stopped him and held out his hand.

"Mr. Barry, you are a brave man. You saved my life, for if you had not jumped on to the shark I should have been taken. Velo told me so just now. He said that he might have been safe, but that I was on the outside and that the shark would have had me in his jaws if you had not jumped overboard."

Barry took the Spaniard's hand, "That's all right, Barradas. There was nothing much in what I did; I've seen natives do the same thing for amusement—it's the best way out of scaring a shark if you haven't a rifle handy. Come in and have a smoke before dinner."

All that day the brig continued to drift steadily to the north and east, and at sunset she was within eight or ten miles of the land. The native crew, although they had continued their work quietly after the fight, were evidently much dissatisfied, and when at six o'clock they all marched aft and demanded to speak with the captain, Barry was not at all surprised. Rawlings, however, was furious when the steward asked him to come on deck and see the men. Seizing his revolver, and calling to Barradas to follow him, he sprang up the companion; Barry met him half way.

"Don't come on deck, sir, with a pistol in your hand, I implore you. The men are certainly angry and discontented, but a few quiet words from you will settle the matter; they simply want you to promise them that the boatswain will not attempt to 'haze' any one of them again. If you appear before them with a weapon in your hand they will take charge of the ship. These Gilbert Islanders are as good men as you will find anywhere in the South Seas, but they are quick-tempered and hot-blooded. I know them—you don't."

With a muttered curse the captain threw his revolver back on to the cabin table, and then followed his chief officer on deck. The native crew were awaiting him. Velo stepped forward as spokesman, and doffing his cap asked that Billy Onotoa, whom Barradas had put in irons, should be set free.

"This man Billy," said the Samoan quietly, but with determination, "mus' not be kep' in irons. The bos'un kicked him and made him get mad. Why is Billy put in irons, and the bos'un who stab him twice no put in irons?"

A murmur of approval came from his dark-skinned companions, who were watching Rawlings' face with intense interest.

"Tell them that you'll have his irons taken off," muttered Barry, in low tones; "if you refuse them there'll be the devil to pay."

The captain appeared to consider for a minute or so, as he walked to and fro; then he turned and faced Velo.

"Well, men, I don't like to have any disturbance on my ship. Billy Onotoa is a good man, but he's no sailor not to take a kick or a lift under the jaw in good part. The bos'un himself told me he was very sorry that he lost his temper, but you must remember that Billy drew his knife on him."

"Yes, sir," answered Velo pointedly, "but that was because the bos'un kicked him—American fashion; if the bos'un had hit him in the eye, English fashion, Billy would not pull out knife."

"Well, that'll do, Velo. I don't want any jaw from you. Mr. Barradas, please set the man free. Go for'ard, men."

The natives obeyed him silently, much to Barry's relief, for he read and understood the danger that lay under their apparently quiet manner. Barradas went for'ard and liberated Billy, who, badly wounded as he was, at once turned to again as if nothing of any importance had occurred.

All that night the calm continued, and when at midnight Barry came on deck, he found the ship had drifted in so close to the land that the breaking surf on the reef was plainly to be heard—not more than three miles away, and too close to be regarded with indifference with such a strong current, and in a dead calm.

He had almost decided to lower and man one of the whale-boats and begin towing the brig to the eastward so as to clear the southern horn of the projecting reef, when he heard the sound of oars through the darkness, and then came a loud hail.

"Ship ahoy, there!"

"Hallo, who are you?" he cried.

"White trader from Ponapé."

"All right, come alongside." Hastily calling the captain, Barry showed a light in the waist to the advancing boat, and in a few minutes she came alongside. She was manned by a crew of semi-nude, woolly-haired Solomon Islands natives, and was steered by a big, rough-looking white man with a flowing red beard.

Jumping on board he shook hands with Rawlings and Barry and introduced himself.

"I'm Bill Warner; these chaps here are my Pleasant Island boys. I've had a —— row and fight with the Ponapé natives, and had to clear out to save my —— skin. Where are you bound to, captain? Give me and my boys a passage. I don't care where the hell you're going to, so long as I git somewhere away. And, say, mister, give me suthin' to drink."

Rawlings smiled pleasantly. "Certainly, Mr. Warner. Come below, and let your men come on deck. They are not dangerous, I hope."

The moment the new arrival heard Rawlings' voice he stared, and then gave a hoarse, snorting laugh as he again grasped the captain's hand.

"God strike me dead, Jim Rawlings! I wouldn't have reckernised yer only for yer voice. Why, what the hell——"

Rawlings laughed boisterously. "Delighted to meet you again, old comrade. Mr. Barry, this is Mr. Bill Warner, an old Solomon Island shipmate and friend of mine. Come below, Warner, and tell me what has gone wrong."

The big man saw a warning glance in Rawlings' dark eyes, which he took in quickly, and the two descended below.

They remained talking together for nearly two hours, and then at four bells Mr. Warner staggered up on deck, and with a vast amount of hilarious profanity and blasphemy called his boat's crew together and addressed them in their own tongue.

"The captain of this ship is my friend. We are going with him to a new land. We must stand by him when the time comes, for there may be throats to cut." Then he added in English, "And now you can all go to hell until the morning. I'm going to sleep."

So saying, he flung himself upon the skylight, and in a few minutes was snoring in a drunken slumber.

Rawlings sauntered up on deck a few minutes later, and stood watching the progress of the brig through the calm and glassy water, for Barry had lowered one of the boats, and the crew were towing her clear of the outlying horn of the reef. The wild, half-naked savages who had just come on board were sitting or lying on the main-deck, smoking or chewing betel-nut, while their boat was towing astern.

"How are we getting along, Mr. Barry?" said the captain pleasantly.

"Pretty well, sir. Once we are clear of that long stretch of reef we need no more towing. But it is just as well to be on the safe side, for there's no bottom here at ninety fathoms."

Rawlings nodded. "Just so. We don't want to get piled up on Ponapé, Mr. Barry." He took a turn or two along the deck, and then with his hands in his pockets inclined his head towards the sprawling figure of Mr. Bill Warner.

"Not at all a bad fellow, Mr. Barry; but rather too fond of the wine when it is red, or gamboge, or green, or any other damned colour. He and I were shipmates some years ago in the Solomon Island labour trade. He has, it seems, had a quarrel with the natives of Ponapé, who attacked him, and he and his crowd had to clear out to save

their lives. I've told him that I'll give him a passage to Providence Lagoon with us. His natives, he tells me, are good men, and I daresay they'll prove useful to us."

The mate gave a curt assent. "I daresay his natives will prove useful, sir. As for the man himself, I don't think he will be much of an acquisition, if he is to be judged by first impressions. He's as drunk as a pig, and I don't wonder at the Ponapé natives wanting to get rid of him, for in my opinion he's nothing better than a drunken, swaggering bully. Why, the fellow carries a brace of pistols in his belt. No decent trader does that."

Rawlings held up his hand deprecatingly. "Don't be too hard on poor Warner, my dear Barry. He's not as bad as he looks. I'm sure you'll get to like each other by-and-by. Good-night."

"Good-night, sir," replied Barry courteously. "I think we had better keep on towing until daylight."

CHAPTER V.

VELO, THE SAMOAN, PROPHECIES.

The advent of Mr. Billy Warner of Ponapé with his entourage of sixteen truculent, evil-faced Solomon Islanders was not regarded with enthusiasm by the chief officer and the native crew of the *Mahina*.

Warner himself was an insolent, overbearing ruffian of the first water, and yet strangely enough his retinue, whom he at times treated with the most savage brutality, were intensely devoted to him, and every one of them would have cheerfully given up his life to protect the drunken, foul-mouthed, and unmitigated scoundrel who knocked them about one day and fraternised with them the next.

Velo, who, though a Samoan, was the acknowledged leader and mentor of the native crew—men who mostly came from the Equatorial Islands of the South and North Pacific—was quick to convey his impressions of the newcomers to Barry, and expressed his fears for the future.

"Trouble will come to us through these black men, these woolly-haired eaters of men's flesh," he said to the mate in Samoan, on the following evening. "One of them—he with the hare-lip—can speak Fijian, and this evening he was boasting to me

of all that his master hath done, of the men he hath killed, not only in the islands to the south, but here in Ponapé."

"They're a bad lot, I believe, Velo," answered the mate in English, "but you and the rest of the men must try and avoid quarrelling with them."

Velo nodded. "Aye, but they are rude of speech, and will scarce move out of our way; and our men from the Gilbert Islands are quick to anger. Trouble will come."

Trouble did come, and much sooner than even Velo had anticipated.

At ten o'clock on the morning of the fifth day the calm still continued, but there was a faint, fleecy wall of cloud to the north-east which Barry knew meant wind in a few hours. Ponapé was still in sight about forty miles distant.

The ship was very quiet, for the heat was so intense that beyond washing down decks the crew had done nothing since sunrise, and the watch were lying down under the topgallant foc's'le, smoking and mending clothes. On the main-hatch was Warner's whaleboat, and sitting around her were the savage crew, chewing betel-nut and expectorating the scarlet juice in every direction. Mr. Warner himself was aft, showing Rawlings the mechanism of a Vetterli rifle. Early as was the hour he was already half-drunk, and every now and then would stagger against the rail or knock against the wheel or skylight flaps.

Presently he stumbled along the deck towards Barry, and holding the rifle in his left hand clapped the officer on the shoulder with his right.

"You're a mighty solemn-faced cuss, young feller," he said, with drunken hilarity; "have a drink with me, and don't be so —— high and mighty. I'm a damned good sort when you know me—ain't that so, Jim Rawlings?"

"A very good sort indeed," answered the captain suavely; "but a bit too convivial too early in the day."

"You be damned and let me be; don't try to put on frills, Jimmy, my boy," and still clutching Barry's shoulder he grinned insolently at Rawlings, whose dark, handsome face paled with sudden passion as he turned away with an exclamation of anger.

By a sudden movement he freed himself from Warner's grasp, just as the latter repeated his invitation to him to come below and have a drink.

"I don't want to drink with you or any one else when it is my watch on deck," he said shortly.

Warner's coarse face grew purple with rage. "You don't say so! Why, who the blazes are you any way? Don't you try to put on airs with me, young feller, or you'll get hurt."

Boiling with anger as he was, the mate made no answer, and Warner, with a snort of contempt at him, went below. In a minute or two he reappeared with his pipe and a large plug of tobacco in his hand.

"Here, Tagaro, you rabbit-faced swine," he called, "come aft here and cut me up a pipe of tobacco."

Tagaro, the huge savage with a hare-lip, jumped up from the main-hatch where he was squatting and came aft, his hideous red lips twisting and squirming like the tentacles of an octopus as he masticated a mouthful of betel-nut. Taking the pipe and tobacco from his master he sat down cross-legged beside the companion. Barry eyed him for an instant with anger and disgust. He returned the look with an impertinent grin, and then coolly spat out a stream of the acrid scarlet juice half-way across the clean, white deck.

This was too much for the officer. His face whitened with rage, and striding up to Warner he pointed to the befouled whiteness of the deck. "Tell that nigger of yours to get a swab and clean up that mess in double quick time," he said, trying to steady his voice.

"Swab it up yourself," was the insulting reply; "reckon it's about all you're fit for."

A second later Mr. Billy Warner went down on his back with a crash as Barry caught him a terrific blow on the chin, and then spinning round on his heel he dealt the hare-lipped nigger a kick in the side that cracked two of his ribs like pipe-stems and doubled him up in agony.

In less than half a minute pandemonium seemed to have broken loose, for Warner's natives made a rush aft crying out that Barry had killed their white man and Tagaro. They were met by the officer, two of the white seamen, men named "Joe" and "Sam Button," and several of the Gilbert Islanders, who beat them back with belaying-pins. Joe, who was an immensely powerful man, knocked three of them senseless with successive blows on their woolly pates, and his comrades did equally as well. Then Rawlings darted on deck, followed by Barradas, and threatening the

Solomon Islanders with their revolvers, succeeded in relieving Barry and his men, and driving their assailants up for'ard, where they were met by the watch below, who at once attacked them, and again the two parties began another struggle, using their knives freely.

Then it was that Barry's influence over the native crew was made manifest to the captain. Followed by Velo and big Joe he sprang into the midst of the half-maddened crew, and by blows, threats, and entreaties to his own men, managed to effect a separation before murder was done, Rawlings and Barradas aiding him by striking out right and left with belaying-pins, for the chief officer kept calling out to them not to fire.

The whole affair did not last more than ten minutes, and as soon as the ship was quiet, Barry urged the captain to send Warner's men below into the main hold. This was done, though the savages at first refused to go until they were satisfied that their master was not dead. They were allowed to go aft and see him. He was sitting up and barely able to speak, for in falling he had struck his head heavily. Rawlings gave him some brandy, which he drank, and then, supported by two seamen, he was taken below to recover.

Barry then explained the cause of the disturbance to the captain and Barradas, both of whom said that he could have acted in no other way.

"We shall want a couple of doctors soon if we have any more of this cursed business," said Rawlings. "Here's the boatswain badly hurt; Billy Onotoa, who you say is a good man, with a couple of knife holes in his hide; Warner's head man with two stove-in ribs, and Warner himself with a bad head; and now there's three or four more of these black and brown devils cut about. Curse the whole thing!"

"I'm not at all sorry about that blackguard's head," said the mate, with some degree of irritation; "he deserved all he got from me—much more than that poor devil of a nigger of his."

"Come below, Mr. Barry," said the captain, seeing that his officer resented his tone; "I don't think a drop of good brandy and water would do any of us any harm."

"Certainly, sir," he answered, his good temper at once asserting itself; "and, look over there—there's the breeze coming at last."

Before eight bells struck the vessel was slipping through the water before a fresh, cool breeze; the Solomon Islanders were allowed to come on deck, and Barry paid a round of visits to the wounded men, including Mr. Billy Warner, who freely cursed

him and frankly assured him of his intention to "take it out" at the first opportunity that offered after the ship reached Arrecifos.

"Right you are," was the reply, "but it will pay you better to leave me alone, I think."

That night, however, the captain and Warner had a conversation, which resulted in the red-bearded scoundrel coming up to the mate and professing sorrow for what had occurred—his excuse of course being that he was drunk at the time, and did not remember what he was saying. Barry accepted his apologies coldly, but avoided the man as much as possible without being actually uncivil to him.

The Greek was soon fit for duty again, and although the crew went about their work willingly, it was evident that they had a deep distrust of all the officers except the chief. Warner and Rawlings daily grew more intimate, and it was very evident to Barry that they knew a great deal about each other, for at times, especially when he had taken too much to drink, the former would address the captain in such an insolently familiar manner that his dark, handsome features would pale with suppressed passion, though he appeared not to notice the man's manner.

As the days went by the chief officer spoke less and less to those living aft, though Barradas made several renewed efforts to break through his reserve; but finding that he met with no response he gave up all further attempts, and attached himself when off duty to Rawlings, the Greek, and Warner.

CHAPTER VI.

IN ARRECIFOS LAGOON.

Just after midnight, three days later, Velo, the Samoan, who was on the look-out, came aft to Barry and said,—

"E manogi mai le fanua" ("The smell of the land has come").

"Good boy, Velo," replied the mate; "keep a sharp look-out, for on such a night as this, when the sea is smooth, and the land lies low, we shall not hear the sound of the surf till we are right on top of it."

An hour or two later Barry called Rawlings, for right ahead of the brig there was a low, dark streak showing upon the sea-rim, which they knew was the outline of one of the palm-clad islets on the south side of Arrecifos Lagoon. At daylight the *Mahina* ran through the south-east passage, and dropped her anchor in thirteen fathoms, close to the snowy white beach of a palm-clad islet, on which was a village of ten or a dozen native houses. There was, however, no sign of life visible—not even a canoe was to be seen.

Immediately after breakfast the boats were lowered, and a brief inspection made, not only of some of the nearest of the chain of thirteen islands, which enclosed the spacious lagoon, but of the lagoon itself. The islands were densely covered with coco palms, interspersed here and there with lofty *puka* trees, the nesting-places of countless thousands of a small species of sooty petrel, whose discordant notes filled the air with their clamour as Rawlings and Barry passed beneath, walking along a disused native path, while the two boats pulled along the shore. The village was found to be abandoned.

After examining the nearest islands, and deciding upon a spot whereon to build a station, the two white men returned to the boats, which pulled out towards the centre of the lagoon. Half a mile due west from the centre of the south-east islet the deep blue water began to lighten in colour, till it became a pale green, and the coral bottom lay dearly revealed at a depth of five fathoms.

"This is one of the patches mentioned by Gurden," said Barry, after carefully taking bearings, and studying a rough plan of the lagoon which had been given him by Rawlings; "let us try here first. Billy Onotoa, and you, Tom Arorai, go down and see."

Billy and a countryman—a short square-built native of the Line Islands—let go their oars, picked up their diving sticks, and were over the side in an instant; but even before they were half-way down the other natives in the boat, who were intently scanning the bottom, cried out that they could see "plenty pearl shell." The truth of their assertions was soon proved by the two divers returning to the surface, each carrying two pairs of splendid shells as large as dinner plates.

Rawlings' dark eyes sparkled. "What do you think of that, Mr. Barry?"

"If the rest of the patches in the lagoon have shell like that, there is a huge fortune in it—shell such as that is worth 250 pounds a ton. A fortune indeed—even if not a single pearl was found."

Rawlings breathed excitedly. "But there are plenty, plenty. We can be certain of that. Let us get back to the ship as quickly as possible, and get ready to start work,"

and seizing the steer oar, he bade the men give way, not with an encouraging word, but a savage oath.

Barry looked at him in astonishment and disgust combined. The man's usual smiling, self-complacent manner had disappeared, and he now seemed a prey to emotion, his face alternately paling and flushing with excitement, and Barry saw that his whole frame was trembling. By the time the boats came alongside the brig, however, he was restored to his usual self.

Barradas, Warner, and Paul, the truculent-looking Greek boatswain, were on the main-deck as Rawlings ascended.

"Well?" said Barradas inquiringly.

"It's all right," answered Rawlings in a low voice, as if he feared to speak aloud; "we shall be well repaid for all——"

"Sh!" said the Greek warningly as Barry's head appeared above the rail, and both he and the second mate turned away and busied themselves with their duties.

Telling the steward to see that the hands had dinner a little earlier than usual, Rawlings called Barry, the second mate, and the boatswain below to discuss their future operations. In the hold were two large boats which had been bought in Sydney, with pumping gear and diving suits, and it was decided to at once hoist the former out, though as the water appeared to be so shallow it was not thought likely that the latter would be used, the natives asserting that they could get more shell by diving in their own fashion. Barry, from his previous experience of pearl-shelling in the Paumotus, was to have practically the entire control of the natives and charge of the boats, and the choice of a permanent anchorage was also to be left to him, and also the selection of a site for the shore station, where houses were to be built by the native crew, so that they might live on shore when bad weather prevented them from diving. A quarter of a mile from where the brig lay anchored was a sandbank covered with a low, dense scrub about three feet high. The beach was the haunt and laying-place of huge green turtle, and the scrub the nesting-ground of countless myriads of sea birds. The spot at once suggested itself to Barry as being a suitable place for "rotting out," *i.e.*, allowing the pearl oysters to be exposed to the sun till they opened and could be cleaned. Here Rawlings, Barradas, or the Greek could receive the shell from the boats, spread it out to "rot," search for the pearls within, and then send it off to the ship to be further cleansed, weighed, and packed in boxes, timber for making which had been brought from Sydney for the purpose.

But Barry, being of the opinion that a better anchorage could be found off the largest island on the western side, which was also well timbered, and would be best suitable for a shore station, suggested that he should make an examination of the place.

"It is twenty miles away, and will take you two days," said Rawlings; "why cannot we stay where we are? Besides that, the big island is inhabited, so Gurden said, and the natives are a lot of savages. Why can't we make our station here on the south-east islet?"

"For several reasons, sir," replied Barry. "In the first place we shall have to study our native divers. They will not be satisfied to live on this little islet here just ahead of us, for although there are plenty of coconut trees on it, it is little better than a sandbank, and when bad weather comes on they will get dissatisfied and sulky, and when they become sulky they won't dive. Now that big island, so Gurden told you, is much higher than any of the rest; it has not only plenty of coconuts, but groves of breadfruit as well, and there are several native wells there. If we remained here, I am afraid that our men would be continually grumbling. Every now and then some of them would be running away—a breadfruit grove and plenty of fresh water would be attractions no kanaka ever born could resist. And then there is another thing to be considered. These natives of ours won't live together with Mr. Warner's Solomon Island niggers; the place is so small that they would be bound to begin quarrelling again."

"My boys won't interfere with them," said Warner sullenly; "and besides that I've arranged with the captain. I'll pick on a place for my crowd."

"Very well, Mr. Barry," broke in the captain, "whatever you suggest I will do; only let us get to work as quickly as possible."

"I think, sir, that after dinner I had better take one of the whaleboats with four or five hands and two days' provisions, run down to the big island, and see what it is like."

All these matters being arranged, Rawlings invited his officers to drink success to the future.

Immediately after dinner Barry picked five men to accompany him. Each man took with him a Snider rifle and a dozen cartridges, in case of their being attacked by the natives. At two o'clock they left the ship, hoisted the sail, and stood away for the island, which was just visible from the deck.

Soon after Barry had left Captain Rawlings and Warner entered the main cabin with Barradas, and told the steward to send the boatswain down.

For nearly half an hour they spoke together, now in low, now in excited and angry voices, and Mr. Edward Barry would have been deeply interested in their conversation could he have but heard it, inasmuch as he was the chief subject.

"I tell you," said Rawlings, in a cold, sneering tone, as he leant over the table with his chin resting on his hands, and looking at Barradas—"I tell you that it will have to be done before we can take this ship into port again."

"Mother of God!" said Barradas passionately, "he is a good fellow, and I won't do it. No more such bloody work for me, Rawlings."

Rawlings picked up his half-smoked cigar from the table, and puffed at it in silence for a few seconds. Then he laid it down again, and his black eyes gleamed with suppressed fury as he looked at the Spaniard. But he spoke calmly.

"And I tell you again that no one of us will ever be safe. If he lives, something will come out some day—it always does, my brave and tender-hearted Manuel. You and I have been lucky so far in smaller matters, but this is a big thing, and we have to look to ourselves."

"Yes," said the Greek, with savage emphasis. "Mus' we all tree be hung like dogga, because you, Manuel, have no pluck? Bah! you coward!"

"Don't you call me a coward, you dirty, ear-ringed Levantine thief!" and Barradas sprang to his feet. "Take it back, you mongrel-bred swine, or I'll ram my fist down your greasy throat!"

"You fools—you cursed fools!" said Rawlings with a mocking laugh, as, rising to his feet, he pushed Barradas back into his seat, and then turned furiously upon the Greek. "What the do you mean by insulting Manuel like that? you must take it back," and, unperceived by the Spaniard, he gave the man a deep, meaning glance.

The Greek, who had drawn his sheath knife, dashed it down upon the cabin floor and extended his hand to the second mate.

"I take it back, Barradas. You are no coward, you are brave man. We are all good comrada. I never mean to insult you."

Barradas took his hand sullenly. "Well, there you are, Paul. But I say again, I want no more of this bloody work;" and then looking first at Rawlings, then at the Greek, and then at Warner, his dark; lowering face quivered, "come, let us understand each other. I swear to you both, by the Holy Virgin, that I will be true to you, but this man must not be hurt. Sometimes in the night I see the face of that girl, and I see the face of Tracey, and I see and feel myself in hell——"

Warner laughed hoarsely, but Rawlings' foot pressed that of the Greek.

"There, that will do, Manuel; let us say no more about it. I yield to you. We must take our chances."

Barradas sighed with relief, and held out his hand to Rawlings.

"You won't play me false?" he inquired.

"I swear it," said Rawlings, first pressing the Greek's foot again, and then standing up and grasping his officer's hand.

"And I too," said the Greek, extending his own dirty, ring-covered paw; "as you say, he is a good man, and perhaps he can do us no harm. And we mus' all be good comrada—eh? Come, Mr. Warner, let us all joina the hand."

Then, after drinking together in amity, they separated.

But whilst Barradas was for'ard, and Rawlings was pacing the poop, the ear-ringed Greek came along with some of the hands to spread the after awning. As the seamen carried the heavy canvas up the starboard poop ladder the Greek walked up near to Captain Rawlings, who was on the port side, and said quickly, as he pretended to busy himself with the port boat falls—

"Both of them will have to go—eh?"

"Yes," answered Rawlings savagely, "both of them. But Barradas must go first. We will want the other to take us to Singapore. If I could navigate we could get rid of

them both before we leave here. As for that drunken, red-bearded pig, we'll keep him with us. Those niggers of his will be useful to us later on—they will wipe out these cursed Gilbert Islanders for us when the time comes. And wiped out they must be, especially that fellow Velo and the four white men as well. They are altogether too fond of my intelligent ass of a chief officer, and must be got rid of."

The Greek grinned. "And I shall be the first to put my knife into the throat of that kanaka dog, Billy Onotoa."

CHAPTER VII.

ALICE TRACEY.

The whaleboat, with Barry and five hands, skimmed fleetly over the smooth waters of the lagoon before the lusty breeze, and three hours after leaving the brig she was within a quarter of a mile of the shore of a narrow little bay, embowered amidst a luxuriant grove of coco and pandanus palms. Presently Velo, the Samoan, who was standing up in the bows keeping a lookout, called out that he could see the houses of a native village showing through the trees, about two or three miles away to the right.

"And I can see three people coming along the beach, sir," he added presently, pointing to a spot midway between the village and the little bay for which the boat was heading.

"Well, three people can't do us any harm, Velo, so we will run into the beach and wait for them," said Barry. "Is it clear water ahead?"

"All clear, sir—not a bit of coral to be seen anywhere, deep water right into the beach. Fine place, sir. And look at all those breadfruit trees—just in back a little from the coconuts."

In another five minutes the boat ploughed her stem into the hard white sand, and the men jumped out.

"Three of you stay in the boat and keep her afloat," said Barry. "You, Velo, and you, Joe, come with me. We'll have a look around here and then walk along the beach and meet those three natives."

Taking their rifles with them, the mate, with Velo and the white sailor Joe following him closely, walked up the beach and entered the forest of coco-palms. Every tree was laden with fruit in all stages of growth, and at Barry's request Velo at once climbed one and threw down a score or so of young drinking-nuts.

Throwing some to the men in the boat, Barry and his companions drank one each, and then set out to look about them. Although the island was of great length, it was in no part more than a mile in width from the lagoon shore to the outer ocean beach, and the thunder of the surf on the reef could be heard every now and then amid the rustle and souging of the palm-trees.

"It's nice to smell this 'ere hearty smell, sir, ain't it?" said Joe to the officer. "It seems to fill yer up inside with its flavorance."

Barry smiled. "It does indeed, Joe. I love the smell of these low-lying coral islands."

Apparently encouraged by his officer's polite reply to his remark, Joe (who was in the second mate's watch) began afresh.

"I hope; sir, you won't mind my loosenin' my jaw tackle a bit; but I'd be mighty glad, sir, if you could let me come with you in the boats when we begins the divin'."

"I'll mention it to the captain, Joe. I'm quite agreeable."

"Thank you, sir," said the sailor respectfully.

This Joe was the man whom Rawlings had felled with the belaying-pin, and although when he first came on board Barry had conceived an unfavourable impression of him and his three companions, subsequent observation of the four had made him feel that he had done Joe at least an injustice, for the man, despite his sullenness and a rather quarrelsome disposition, was a good sailor and no shirker of work. During the voyage from Sydney, Barry had scarcely had occasion to speak to this man more than half a dozen times, but whenever he had done so Joe had answered him with a cheerful "Aye, aye, sir," and obeyed his orders promptly, whereas a command from Rawlings, Barradas, or the Greek was received in sullen silence and carried out with a muttered curse. The reason for this was not far to seek. Barry was a rigid disciplinarian, but never laid his hand on a man unless provoked beyond endurance, whilst the captain, Barradas, and the Greek boatswain were chary of neither abuse nor blows—too often without the slightest reason. Consequently Joe and his three shipmates—who recognised him as their leader—had developed a silent though bitter hatred of all the officers except Barry—a hatred that only awaited an

opportunity to take vengeance for past brutalities. All four of them, so Velo told Barry one night, had served a sentence of three months' imprisonment in Sydney for broaching cargo, and had been picked up in a low boozing den by Rawlings just after their release, and brought on board the *Mahina* without the knowledge of the shipping authorities. To Barry, who had had a long experience of deep-sea ships, this type of men was familiar. He knew their good points as well as the bad, and knew how to manage them without resorting to either threats or force, and consequently the four "gaol birds," as Rawlings persistently called them, had conceived a strong liking for the quiet-mannered, yet determined chief officer—a liking that was not confined to themselves alone, but was shared by the native crew as well.

For some little time the three men pursued their way in silence, and then Joe again spoke.

"I don't want to shove myself into other people's business, sir; but I'd like to tell you something now I has the chance to do it."

"Go ahead, Joe," replied his officer good-naturedly. "What is it?"

"Well, sir, it mightn't mean nothin' at all, and it might mean a good deal; but it's struck me and my mates that there's something wrong about the skipper, and from what we has seen and heard we believe they means some sort of mischief to you."

Barry stopped. "What makes you think that, Joe?"

"Lots o' things, sir. Why, lots o' times Sam Button and Sharkey has seen him talkin' quietly with the Greek when you were below asleep, and I've seen him confablatin on the quiet with the second mate and the bo'sun—all three together—and if you chanced to come up they'd either quit talkin' or pretend to just be having a yarn about nothin' in partikler. I believe, sir—and so does my mates and Velo—that they means mischief o' some sort to you."

Barry mused. "I can't make things out at all, Joe. To tell you the truth there is something mysterious about this ship—something that does not satisfy me; but what it is I cannot tell."

"Aye, aye, sir; that's it. *There is* something fishy goin' on, I'm certain. And now here's somethin' else you ought to know—somethin' about this red-bearded, nigger-drivin' swab of a Warner. I know the cove, though he doesn't know me."

"Ah!" said Barry with quickened interest, "what do you know of him, Joe?"

Taking his pipe out of his mouth and speaking very slowly the seaman repeated his last words.

"I know him, sir, now, though I didn't when he first came aboard with his crowd o' bloody cannibals. But when you give him that knock-out lift under the jaw the other day, me and Sam Button, you will remember, helped him down into the cabin and laid him in his bunk, hopin' the swab was dead. The skipper told us to open his shirt at the neck, as he was a-breathin' so bad, and when we opens his shirt I sees a ship tattooed across his chest—then I knew where I'd seen that there chap with the red beard and that partikler tattooing before. It was the picture of a Yankee man-o'-war with her name over it—*The Franklin*, and I reckerlected when I'd seen it last—about nine year ago in Fiji."

"Go on, Joe," said the officer, as the man hesitated.

"Right, sir; but now I might as well tell you how I did come to see it. I was bummin' around in Levuka lookin' for a ship, havin' just done four months' hard, when I meets a petty officer belonging to a gunboat, who asked me if I wanted a week's job. He was scourin' all round the place to pick up sailor men, so me and about half a dozen more chaps was taken off on board the gunboat. She had been cruising in the Solomon Islands, and a lot of her men died from fever. Then when she was coming back to Fiji she got caught in a hurricane and dismasted, and sailed into Levuka under jury-masts, and us chaps were set to work to help refit her for the voyage to Sydney. And the first thing I saw when I got aboard was this here chap Warner, who was washing himself up for'ard with a sentry standing over him and his leg irons lying on the deck ready to be shackled on again as soon as he had finished washing. I noticed his big beard, and partikler noticed the ship on his breast. I asked one of the bluejackets who the chap was. 'Bloomin' slaver and cut-throat,' says he. 'We collared him off Bougainville in his cutter. He's the chap that shot over thirty niggers on San Christoval in cold blood two year ago, and we're taking him to Sydney to try and sheet it home to him.' So that's what *I* knows about Mr. Warner, sir. And he's hand and glove with the other chaps."

"Thank you very much for your confidence, Joe," said Barry. "I believe the man is an out-and-out villain, but I shall be on my guard now, more than ever."

Then once more they turned their attention to their quest.

A very brief inspection of the land in the vicinity of the little bay satisfied Barry that it would answer admirably for a station. All around were thousands upon thousands of coco-palms, and further back were some hundreds of huge jack fruit trees—a species of breadfruit bearing fruit of irregular shape, and containing large seeds. The brig could be moored within fifty yards of the beach so deep was the water, and fresh water for the ship's use could easily be had, Velo assured him, by sinking in the rich soil among the bread-fruit grove.

Just as they emerged out into the open again, and came in sight of the boat, one of the men in her called out to Velo that the three natives they had seen were women, and that one was dressed like a white woman!

"A white woman!" cried Barry, and running down to the boat he looked along the beach at the three advancing figures. One of them certainly was dressed in European clothing.

"That is very queer," said Barry to Joe. "Hallo, they've stopped."

The women had ceased walking, and were now standing close together, evidently talking. Then the two brown-skinned, half-nude figures sat down on the sand, and the third came on alone towards the boat; she was walking slowly, and apparently with difficulty.

"Let us go and meet them," said Barry.

Putting their rifles into the boat, he, Velo, and Joe at once started, and the moment the woman saw them coming she waved her hand to them; then toiling wearily up to the top of the beach, she sat down and leaned her back against the bole of a coconut tree, but still continued to beckon with her hand.

"She's done up, sir," cried Joe, as they broke into a run.

In less than ten minutes the three men were close up to her, Barry leading. Then she rose to her feet again, and with outstretched hands came to meet him, and Barry saw that she was a young woman of about five-and-twenty, and her features, though tanned by a tropic sun, undoubtedly those of an European.

"I am so tired," she panted excitedly, as Barry took her hand, "and I have hurt my foot running to meet you. I was afraid you——"

She ceased, and would have fallen had not Barry caught her. Then, overcome by excitement and physical pain, she began to sob.

Barry lifted her up in his arms and carried her back to the tree again. "There, sit down again, and don't try to talk now," he said kindly; "why, what is this—your foot is covered with blood." Kneeling beside her he lifted her bare left foot, and saw that the blood was welling from a fearful gaping cut, right under the arch.

"I trod upon the edge of a *foli* which was buried in the sand," she managed to say, and then almost fainted with pain.

Hastily binding his handkerchief around the wounded foot, to stay further loss of blood, Barry again lifted her in his arms, and carried her down to the boat, which had pulled up, and was now abreast of them.

"I must get your foot washed and bound up," he said, as he laid her down in the stern, and made a pillow of his coat.

Unable to speak from the intense pain she was enduring, the woman only moaned in reply, as Barry and Velo washed her foot with fresh water, and cleansed the cut carefully—making sure by probing it with a pocket knife that no piece of *foli*[1] shell or stone was left in the wound. Satisfied that all was right, Barry bound up the foot again with Velo's cotton shirt, which he tore into strips.

The woman thanked him feebly, but as she again seemed inclined to faint, he gave her some strong brandy and water. She drank it eagerly, and then laid her head on the pillowed coat again, but quickly raised it when she heard Velo calling to her two companions, who, overcoming their fear, had now approached nearer to the boat, and presently they both came up, trembling in every limb.

"They want to know if she is dead, sir," said Velo, who could understand a few words of what they said.

Barry made a kindly gesture to the strange, wild-looking creatures, who were young and handsome, to come and look. They did so, and the moment they saw their mistress they jumped into the boat and crouched beside her, patting her hands and smiling at her affectionately.

It was now nearly sunset, and time to decide upon quarters for the night, and as there was an abandoned native house within a few hundred yards of where the boat lay, it was at once taken possession of.

"I cannot take you on board the ship to-night," said Barry to the women, "and I don't want you to talk too much when you are so weak, but tell me this—will there be any danger if we sleep on shore here in that old house?"

"None whatever; there are but two hundred natives here, and you need have no fear of them—all the rest were carried away by an Hawaiian labour ship two months ago," she replied faintly.

"Then we shall try and make you comfortable for to-night. We have plenty of sleeping mats in the boat. Now I must lift you out again."

By this time fires had been lit by the men, and supper was being prepared by Joe; the two native women and Velo had made a comfortable bed for the injured woman, a quantity of young coconuts husked by another sailor lay on the ground, and when Barry laid his charge down upon her bed of mats the scene was quite cheerful as the blazing fires sent out streams of light across the waters of the sleeping lagoon.

"Now you must try and sit up and eat something and drink some coffee," said Barry as he placed some biscuit and meat and a tin mug of coffee beside the woman. "There, lean your back against the water-breaker. Are you in much pain now?"

"Not so much, thank you," and as she tried to smile Barry could not but observe that she was a remarkably handsome woman, with clearly cut, refined features. Her speech, too, showed that she was a person of education.

Barry seated himself near her, and began to eat; the two wild-looking native women sat near by munching the biscuits given them by Joe; and Joe himself, with the rest of the crew, were grouped together at the other end of the hut.

"Will you have some more coffee?" said Barry presently.

"No, thank you, but I feel much better now. You have been very good to me."

Seeing that she was much recovered, although her face was still drawn and pale, Barry put his first question to her.

"You are in great distress, and are not yet strong enough to talk very much; but will you tell me how you came to be living here, and how I can help you?"

She clasped her hands together tightly, and tried to speak calmly. "My story is a very strange one indeed. I was landed here by an American whaleship five months ago. She brought me from Ocean Island. I came here in the hope that my husband—if he is alive—would come here. But I fear he is dead—murdered;" and the tears began to steal down her cheeks.

"Murdered! Is he a trader in this group?"

"No; he was captain and owner of a trading vessel, a small brig. I was with him. One night, when I was on deck, I overheard two of the officers and a man who was a passenger plotting to seize the ship and get rid of us both. They discovered me, and one of them threw me overboard to drown."

"Good Heavens! What was the ship's name?"

"The *Mahina*."

Barry's heart thumped so violently that for a moment or two he could not speak; then he said hoarsely—

"My God! Who are you? What was your husband's name?"

"John Tracey! And you, who are you? Why do you look like that? Ah, you know something. Quick, tell me. Is he dead?"

There was a pause before Barry could bring himself to reply. The woman, with pale face and quivering lips, waited for his answer.

"Yes. He is dead."

Mrs. Tracey bent her head and covered her face with her hands.

"I knew it," she said, after one sob. "I knew I should never see him again—that they would murder him as they tried to murder me. Will you tell me how you knew it?"

"I saw him lying dead in Sydney. I was told that he shot himself in a fit of melancholy. He was lying on board the *Mahina*—and the *Mahina* is here at anchor in this lagoon. I am the chief officer."

"And the captain?"

"His name is Rawlings."

"Ah!—he is one of them, he was the passenger; and who are the other officers?"

"Barradas, a Spaniard, and a Greek."

"Paul, the boatswain! He it was who threw me overboard. Now tell me all you know about my husband. See, I am not crying. My grief is done. I will live now to take vengeance on these cruel murderers."

Barry was about to send his boat's crew out of hearing, but Mrs. Tracey begged him not to do so.

"Let them stay. It can do no harm; and if they are men, they will help me."

"I think you are right, Mrs. Tracey. And here is my hand and solemn promise to do all in my power to retake the *Mahina*, for now I begin to suspect that your husband did indeed meet with foul play."

[1] A *foli* is a huge mussel, with an edge as keen as that of a razor.

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. TRACEY TELLS HER STRANGE STORY.

Mrs. Tracey listened with the most intense interest to Barry's account of his first meeting with Captain Rawlings, of the strange, mysterious midnight sailing of the *Mahina* from Sydney Harbour, and of the story of her husband's suicide as related by the captain to his newly-engaged chief mate on the following day, when he came on deck and said that Tracey was dead.

"It may be that my poor husband did indeed take his own life," she said, "but I do not believe it."

"Yet why should they—Rawlings and the others—have spared him so long?" inquired Barry.

"Neither Barradas nor Rawlings were navigators," replied Mrs. Tracey quickly.

"Ah, I see," and the chief officer stroked his beard thoughtfully; "but yet, you see, Rawlings would have sailed without a navigator on board had he not met me on the wharf that night."

"Perhaps so—yet I do not think it. He has the cunning of Satan himself."

"Indeed he has, ma'am," broke in Joe. "Why, sir," turning to Barry, "the night we sailed he drugged the Custom House officer and flung him into the dinghy. Then

when you was for'ard heavin' up anchor the Greek and two of the native chaps took him ashore, and chucked him down on the wharf."

"The scoundrel!" exclaimed Barry, thinking of the letter he had written to Rose Maynard that night. "But how do you know this?"

"I been tell Joe jus' now," said one of the native seamen; "de captain give me an' Billy Onotoa ten shilling to take that man ashore with the bos'un. An' he say if we tell any one he kill us by an' by."

"The ruffian!" muttered Barry.

"Now that you have told me your own story, Mr. Barry," said Mrs. Tracey excitedly, "let me tell you mine from the beginning, and show you how this heartless wretch has imposed upon you from the very first. The tale he has given you is a tissue of lies, interwoven with a thread of truth."

"I can well believe it now. Many things which have hitherto puzzled me are now clear enough."

"Nearly two years ago," began Mrs. Tracey, "my husband owned and sailed a small cutter of thirty tons, trading among the Marshall and Caroline Islands. His headquarters were at Jaluit, in the Marshall Islands, where he had a store, and where I lived whilst he was away on his cruises. During the seven years we spent among these islands I would often accompany him, for it was very lonely on Jaluit—only natives to talk to—and he would sometimes be away many months at a time.

"On our last voyage in the cutter we called in at Port Lêle on Strong's Island. Old Gurden, the trader there, and my husband had had business dealings with each other for many years. He was a good-hearted but very intemperate man, and several times we had taken him away with us in the cutter, when he was in a deplorable condition from the effects of drink, and nursed him back to health and reason again. On this occasion we were pleased to find him well, though rather despondent, for he had, he said, an idea that his last carouse had 'done for' him, and that he would not live much longer.

"That evening the old man told us the story of his life. It was a truly strange and chequered one. When quite a young man he had been flogged, and then deserted from H.M.S. *Blossom*, Captain Beechy, in 1825, and ever since then had remained in the South Seas, living sometimes the idle and dissolute life of the beach-comber, sometimes that of the industrious and adventurous trader. My husband was interested, for he liked the old fellow, who, in spite of his drunken habits, had many excellent

qualities. For myself he always professed the greatest regard, and that evening he proved it.

"After he had finished his story he turned to my husband, and said—

"'You and your wife have always been true friends to drunken old Jack Gurden. Now, tell me, did you ever know me to tell a lie except when I wanted to get a drink and hadn't any excuse?'

"We both laughed, and said we knew he was a truthful man.

"Did you ever hear me talking about a lagoon full of pearl shell—when I was mad with drink?' he inquired.

"We laughed again, and said that he had done so very often.

"Ah,' he said, 'but it is true. There is such a place, and now that my time is coming near, I'll tell you where it is, and you, Mrs. Tracey, who have nursed the old drunken, blackguard beachcomber, and asked him to seek strength from God to keep off the cursed grog, will be one of the richest women in the world. I wrote it all down four or five months ago, in case when you came back here you found I was dead.'

"Thereupon he handed my husband a number of sheets of paper, on one of which was drawn a rough plan of Arrecifos Island, or, as he called it, Ujilong. The rest contained clear and perfectly written details of the position of the pearl-shell beds."

Barry nodded. "He had lived there, I suppose."

"For quite a number of years—from 1840 to 1846. He married one of the native women there. There were then over seven hundred natives living on these thirteen islands, and Gurden said he could quite understand why the richness of the pearl beds were never discovered by white men, for no ship had ever entered the lagoon within the memory of any living native of the place, and not once in ten years did the people even see a passing ship send a boat ashore."

(That this was true, Barry knew, for he had often heard trading captains speak of Arrecifos and Eniwetok as great chains of palm-clad islets, enclosing lagoons through which there was no passage for ships.)

"The natives themselves had no idea of the value to white men of the beds of pearl shell, and as a matter of fact Gurden himself at that time did not think them of much value. Later on, after he left the Island and visited China, he spoke to several

merchants and traders there, and tried to induce them to send him back to the lagoon with a crew of divers, but as he was usually drunk when he called on them, no one would listen to him. His story was merely regarded as the fiction of a drunken sailor.

"My husband did not so regard it. He had never been to Arrecifos, but knew something of it by its native name of Ujilong and its chart name of Providence as a place of very few inhabitants—the group takes its name from the island off which you are anchored—living on a number of low islands covered with coconuts.

"'Let us go there and you can pilot me in,' he said to Gurden.

"The old man agreed with alacrity. Taking him on board, we sailed the following morning, and reached this place five days later. He took us in safely through the south-east passage, and the moment we landed he was recognised and welcomed by the people as one returned from the dead.

"We remained in the lagoon for three months, and during that time Gurden and my husband, aided by the willing natives, obtained ten tons of magnificent shell, and more than a thousand pounds' worth of pearls. Those which Rawlings showed you were some of them; I suppose he found them in my husband's cabin after he was murdered. He had often shown them to both Rawlings and Barradas on board the *Mahina*, for he was, as I will show you later on, the most unsuspecting and confiding of men.

"Convinced that there was indeed at least some hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of pearl shell to be obtained if he could secure experienced native divers from the equatorial islands—for these people here are not good divers—my husband decided to go to Honolulu, sell the cutter and the pearl shell we had obtained, and then with the money he had in hand, which amounted to about 1,100 pounds, buy a larger vessel, secure a number of good divers, and return to the lagoon, on one of the islands of which he intended to make his home for perhaps many years. Arrecifos, he knew, did not belong to any nation, and both he and old Gurden thought that the British Consul at Honolulu would give us what is, I think, called a 'letter of protection,' whereby a British subject hoisting the English flag upon one of the Pacific Islands can, with the approval of a naval officer, and the concurrence of the native inhabitants, purchase it, and get protection from the English Government.

"He wished Gurden to remain until we returned, but the old man said it would be too lonely for him, but that if we took him back to Strong's Island he would be content to await our return there. The long voyage to Honolulu, he thought, would be too much for him, and beside that he wished to return to Strong's Island, if only to say

farewell to its people with whom he had lived for so many years. After that he would be content to end his days with us on Arrecifos.

"Returning to Strong's Island, we landed Gurden, and after a long and wearisome voyage reached Honolulu; my husband sold the pearl shell for a thousand pounds—about half its value—and the cutter and the rest of the cargo for 600 pounds, bought the *Mahina*, and at once began to fit her out and ship an entirely new crew, for the nine men we had with us on the cutter wanted to remain in Honolulu and spend their wages. Undoubtedly some of these men talked about the lagoon and discovery of the pearl shell, and were the primary cause of the misfortunes which were to befall us.

"One morning Manuel Barradas came on board, and asked my husband if he was in want of a chief mate. He was, and being satisfied with the man's appearance and qualifications, at once engaged him, and then Barradas said he knew of a very good man as second mate. This was Paul, the Greek.

"A few days before we sailed, Barradas told my husband that he had met a former acquaintance of his, who would like to take passage in the brig for the entire cruise, merely for the pleasure of visiting these little-known islands, and that he was prepared to pay liberally. In the evening Barradas brought his friend on board, and introduced him as Mr. Rawlings. My husband and he had quite a long talk. Rawlings was himself a sailor, and had made, he said, a good deal of money as recruiter in the kanaka labour trade between Fiji and the Solomon Islands; but was tired of idling away his time in Honolulu, and thought that among the Caroline or Marshall Group he might find an island whereon he could settle as a trader.

"My poor husband fell into the trap devised for him by these three men; Rawlings came on board as passenger, and we sailed direct for Strong's Island to pick up Gurden. To our great sorrow we found that the old man was dead and buried—had died a week previously. He had made a will leaving all of his share and interest in the venture to me.

"To a certain extent Barradas had my husband's confidence, but neither he nor Rawlings knew either the name or position of this place—whatever other information they had gained from our former crew. They had, however, thoroughly ingratiated themselves with him, and though he had not actually revealed to them the name or position of Arrecifos, they knew pretty well everything else concerning it.

"After leaving Port Lêle, we steered south-west for the Ellice Islands, where my husband knew he could obtain a crew of divers (we could get none in Honolulu), and then, besides divers, he also intended to engage about ten or a dozen families of Ellice Islanders to settle down here permanently, for the British Consul had given him a

temporary 'letter of protection,' and authorised him to hoist the English flag on Arrecifos Lagoon, but had yet strongly advised him to proceed to Sydney and lay his case before the commodore of the Australian squadron, who, he said, would no doubt send a warship to Arrecifos and take formal possession of the place as British territory. This advice my husband decided to follow. He also meant to buy some diving suits and pumping gear, for Gurden had said that he believed the best shell in the lagoon was to be obtained at a depth of eighteen fathoms—too deep for the ordinary native method of diving. You can imagine my delight when he told me that we should be going to Sydney, for that town is my native place, and it was there that we were married seven years ago. And we would often talk of what a beautiful home we would make here in the course of a few years."

Here her fast-falling tears choked her utterance, and Barry bade her rest awhile. She obeyed him, and for some ten minutes or so no sound broke the silence but the ever restless clamour of the surf upon the outer reef, and now and then a whispered word, exchanged between the native seamen, who, seated at the other end of the house, regarded her with their dark eyes full of sympathy.

"We made a direct course for the Ellice Islands," resumed Mrs. Tracey, "and met with light winds till we were near Pleasant Island, when it began to blow steadily from the north-west. We sighted Pleasant Island just before dark, and at half-past eight we could see the lights of the native villages on the shore. That evening my husband had turned in early, for he was not feeling well, and complained of a severe headache. I remained with him till half-past nine o'clock, and then, seeing that he had fallen asleep, I went on deck for some fresh air, for the cabin was very hot and stuffy.

"No one was on the poop but the man at the wheel—an Hawaiian native. Barradas was somewhere on the main deck, for I heard his voice talking to some of the men.

"I had brought on deck a rug and my pillow, and telling the man at the wheel to call me at four bells, if I were asleep, I lay down at the back of the wheel-house, so as to be out of the way of the officer of the watch and out of sight. I had been lying down for about ten minutes, and was wide awake, when Paul, the Greek, came aft and told the helmsman to go for'ard and stay there till he was wanted.

"In a lazy sort of a way I wondered why the second mate should do this, as it was not his watch on deck; but in another minute or so I heard Rawlings' voice.

"Where is Manuel, Paul?"

"He's coming in a minute,' replied the Greek; 'are you sure the skipper is asleep?'

"'Yes,' answered Rawlings, 'and she is with him. There's no fear of her coming on deck—damn her!'

"What did they mean? I thought. Why should Rawlings, who always was most horribly polite and sweet to me, mean by using such an expression about me? I had not long to wait, for presently Barradas joined them, and the three began talking together.

"'Can't we make an end of the thing at once, and settle them both together?' said the Greek in his vile jargon.

"'Don't be a fool, Paul,' answered Rawlings savagely; 'we don't want to run our necks into a noose needlessly. We want something more than the ship. We want to find out the name of the island and where it is before we can do anything like that. And if we found it out to-night, and settled him and his wife, how are we to get to the lagoon without a navigator?'

"'True,' said Barradas; 'but have you had a good look through his cabin for the plan old Gurden gave him?'

"'Yes, several times,' he answered.

"'Perhaps she has it,' said Barradas.

"'Not she,' said Rawlings impatiently; '*he* doesn't suspect us; why should he give it to her? No; he has put it away somewhere where only a careful search would find it, and that search can't be made just now. And we don't want it now. When we do want it, I can find it. Now listen to me, and I'll show you how we can do the thing properly.'

"A wild impulse to rush past them, rouse my husband, and tell him of the murderous plot that was brewing against his life and mine for a moment or two held possession of me, Mr. Barry; but I resisted it only through fear of their seeing me; would to God I had acted upon that impulse, for I believe the crew would have stood by us.... But I lay perfectly quiet, and listened while that smiling fiend Rawlings unfolded his dreadful scheme of treachery and murder to his fellow villains.

"They could do nothing, he said, until the brig arrived at Sydney. Then after my husband (whom he called a 'silly, unsuspecting ass') had seen the commodore, bought all the stores and trade goods needed for the native divers, and also the diving suits and pumping gear, he (Rawlings) would find a man capable of navigating the vessel, and then, he said, with a laugh that sent a thrill of terror through me, 'we can get rid of him and his wife with little trouble, once we are at sea again. They will, I think, both

fall overboard soon after we leave Sydney—eh, Paul? And then, my friends, we shall find Gurden's chart and written description of the lagoon easily enough, and with a navigator on board we shall continue the voyage, and sail to the fortune awaiting us.'

"How can you get such a man without exciting wonder in the captain's mind?" said Barradas.

"Leave it to me, my dear, doubting Manuel," replied Rawlings in his mocking voice.

"At that moment four bells struck, and another native sailor came aft to take the wheel, and I, after waiting for a minute or two, and hearing no further talk, concluded that Rawlings and the Greek had left the poop, and only Barradas remained.

"I rose and peered cautiously around the corner of the wheel-house, to see if I could escape below without being observed, and then the Greek suddenly sprang on me from behind, grasped me by the waist, and carrying me to the rail, flung me overboard.

"When I came to the surface the brig was quite a hundred yards or more away from me, and I could only dimly discern her through the darkness. I raised my voice and screamed and screamed again, but in a few minutes she had disappeared into the night; and then I tried to give my soul to God, for I knew that the cruel wretches—one of whom had thrown me overboard—would not try to save me.

"How long I continued swimming I cannot tell you—it might have been only a few minutes, it might have been an hour or more, for I am a good swimmer—but suddenly I saw a light quite near, and I cried out, so I was told afterward, 'For God's sake, save me!'

"When I regained consciousness I found myself on board a little cutter bound from Pleasant Island to Ocean Island, a hundred and twenty miles away. The master and owner of the cutter was a German trader living on Pleasant Island. He treated me most kindly, and when we arrived at Ocean Island, and I lost my reason for many weeks, nursed me like a mother, and delayed his return to Pleasant Island till I recovered, so that I could go back there with him, and live with his wife and family till some whaling vessel called there, and I could get a passage to some port in China or Japan.

"But I had no desire to go there. I knew that if my husband had escaped the murderous designs of Rawlings and his fellow criminals that he would return to Arrecifos, and to Arrecifos I determined to go, even if only to die. Whaleships, so my

rescuer told me, frequently called at Ocean and Pleasant Islands on their way to the North-West Carolines and Japan, and I decided to remain on the lonely little spot and wait for one.

"Six weeks after I landed on Ocean Island the *Golden City*, of New Bedford, called there. I went on board, and told the captain so much of my story as I thought necessary, and asked him to land me in Arrecifos. He did so, and gave me a stock of food and clothing materials. God bless that man with long, narrow leather-hued American face, and his kindly grey eyes; I shall never forget him.

"He landed me here five months ago. The people knew me at once, and made me very welcome. I told them that I did not know if my husband were alive or dead, but had come here to wait. The affection they cherished for old Gurden was very strongly shown when I told them of his death, and I am now living with the relatives of the woman he married here so many years ago.

"When your boat was seen sailing down the lagoon this afternoon the natives were very frightened, fearing that another 'man-stealing ship,' as they call the Hawaiian labour vessels, was making a second raid upon them, for the village on the little island where you are anchored was surprised by the crew of one of these vessels in the night, and every adult person, male and female, seized, handcuffed, and carried on board. It is now deserted. The people, as well as myself, knew that if my husband had returned that he would have sailed his ship right down here to this end of the lagoon where he had anchored previously, instead of lying under the south-east islet. Most of them, therefore, at once took to the bush to hide themselves, and begged me to come with them. But I was determined to come and meet the boat, for I had a hope that I might possibly hear some news of the *Mahina*, and I feared that perhaps the boat would only remain a short time, and return to the ship before I could get to her. I did not even stay to put on my one pair of boots, but set off at a run; these two young women coming with me, poor creatures, although they were dreadfully frightened. When within half a mile of where you landed I stepped upon a hidden *foli*, and gave myself this terrible cut."

Barry took her hand between both his and pressed it sympathetically. "Poor lady. You have indeed suffered. Now listen to me, and I will tell you what I propose doing to outwit these infernal ruffians and restore to you your husband's ship. The heartless scoundrels, pirates, and murderers! They shall themselves work for your good. Joe, and you, Velo, come closer. These men, Mrs. Tracey, will stand to us, and so I think will every other man on board."

"Indeed we will, sir," said Joe.

"Now this is my plan," said Barry.

It did not take him long to explain it, and then one by one each man of his boat's crew took his hand and that of Mrs. Tracey, and swore to be true to them both.

CHAPTER IX.

"ALLA GOODA COMRADE."

Just before breakfast on the following morning, and when a thick tropic mist lay low and heavy upon the waters of the lagoon, Barradas, who was walking the poop, heard the sound of oars, and called the captain.

Rawlings came up from below just as the boat came alongside, and Barry jumped on deck.

"Well, Mr. Barry?" he said pleasantly. "You are back sooner than I expected. What news?"

"Bad, sir, yet not so bad as it might have been. We were attacked by the natives, who seem to be well armed, for they kept up a constant fire on the boat till we were out of range. She was struck in a dozen places, but fortunately none of us were hit."

"Curse them!" said Rawlings, with a savage oath; "are they going to stop us from diving?"

"Oh no, I don't think they will trouble us in that way. If they do we can easily beat them off. But there's not much chance of their letting us land on the big island and making that our headquarters."

"Then what shall we do?" asked Rawlings, chewing his cigar, and angrily pacing the deck.

"Stay where we are and work the lagoon from this end," replied the mate; "we have three months' work here, within as many miles of us, and I believe we can fill the ship about here, without going near the lee side of the lagoon. Yesterday afternoon we

could see the shell lying on the bottom anywhere in from four to six fathoms." (This part of Barry's story was quite true.) "And," he added, "that low, sandy island astern of us will do splendidly for a rotting-out station. Our boys will soon put up some coconut leaf houses. It's handy too—almost within hailing distance."

Rawlings' equanimity was at once restored. "Ah, that is good news about the shell anyway. Ready for breakfast, Mr. Barry?"

During breakfast Barry, with a secret delight at the fiction, gave Rawlings, Barradas, and the Greek an account of the manner in which he and his men were attacked. The Greek, who had been examining the boat, and who would have the job of repairing the damage done by the bullets of the savages (fired at the boat when she was empty by Joe and Velo), suggested to Rawlings that later on the whole crew should make a night attack on the native village, and, as he expressed it, "wipa outa the whole lota of the —— niggers."

"What's the use of our doing that?" said Barradas gloomily; "as long as they don't interfere with us again, we might as well leave them alone."

The Greek snapped his jaws together like a shark, and then grinned.

"I tella you the God's trutha. I would as soona shoota a kanaka as I would shoota a rat."

"So would I, mister," broke in Warner; "and if the skipper gives the word, I guess these niggers of mine can jest wipe out the whole hell-fired lot of crawlers that beat you off. Give my crowd fifteen Sniders and a hundred rounds each and you see and smell more dead and stinkin' kanakas lyin' around on these here beaches in forty-eight hours than you ever saw in your life. I'm right in for this sort of work."

Barry looked at him, trying to veil his contempt and disgust for the ruffian under the guise of indifference.

"There'll be no need, I think, Captain Rawlings, for you to employ Mr. Warner's fifteen——"

"Sixteen there would be, mister, if you hadn't booted my best man and broke his ribs when he was sitting down peaceable and filling my pipe."

Barry put the curb upon his rising temper, and ignoring Warner's remark was again addressing himself to the captain, when the Greek again interfered.

"By Goda! what Mr. Warn' say quita true. I agree wis him; I say that if any dam kanaka interfera with your business the besta thing to do is to puta the bullet into him."

"Then you had better keep that to yourself," said Barry pointedly; "if these kanaka sailors of ours heard you say that, they would turn rusty on us, and cause a lot of trouble."

"Quite true, Mr. Barry," said Rawlings suavely; "but Paul doesn't mean altogether what he says."

The Greek was about to make an angry protest when he met a glance from the captain's eye—vicious, angry, and warning.

But Barry was making his points, and was keenly observant. "I may as well tell you all," he said with apparent bluntness, looking at each of the four in turn, "that if I am to have these men turned over to me, when we begin diving, that I won't have any interference. If you, bos'un, and you, Barradas, begin to knock them about when I'm boss of them—as you have done hitherto—they'll bolt, every man jack of them. And besides that *I* won't have it."

"I'll see that you have no interference, Mr. Barry," said Rawlings quickly; "and I'm sure that Mr. Barradas and Paul will bear in mind what you say."

"I won't meddle with the men under your charge, Mr. Barry," said Barradas. "I know my duty, and don't want to be told about it." He spoke sullenly, but more at the captain than to Barry.

"Of coursa nota," broke in the Greek with an amiable smile—"of coursa we will nota meddle with the men; we are alla gooda comrade, thanka the gooda Goda."

For a moment or two a wild desire to seize the treacherous scoundrel by the throat possessed Barry, but fearful of betraying himself he rose and went on deck.

In the afternoon the brig was brought in close under the islet, sails unbent, and some of the deserted houses occupied by the native divers. At Barry's request Joe was appointed overseer, and was to live on shore with them. The islet itself was not more than two miles in length, and was connected with the next one by a reef which was dry at low water; and in fact the whole chain of the thirteen islands were joined to each other except where the deep-water passage into the lagoon broke the continuity. It was therefore possible, at low water, to walk from the south-east islet, which the natives called Ujilong, to the big island visited the previous day by Barry, and which,

so Mrs. Tracey told him, was named Tebuan. The intervening islands were, like Ujilong, uninhabited, though on all of them houses were standing—they had all been deserted after the raid made on Ujilong village, and the inhabitants had fled to the security afforded them by the dense jungle on Tebuan.

Warner and his savage followers, much to the satisfaction of the chief mate and the rest of the crew, were not to take part in the work. In the first place none of them were able to dive; in the second there was still a smouldering animosity between them and the native crew, and only Barry's strong influence prevented them from settling old scores by a sudden attack upon the *kai-tagata*, (man-eaters), as they termed the Solomon Islanders.

Within an hour's distance from the north end of the south-east islet was another of larger dimensions, upon which Warner's natives took up their quarters, their amiable master remaining on board the *Mahina*, ostensibly to assist Rawlings but really to keep himself comfortably drunk and enjoy the society of the Greek, who was a man after his own heart, and, like himself, capable of any unheard-of atrocity.

Work was begun on the following morning by Barry with the two boats, each carrying a crew of six men, all eager for the enterprise, and rejoicing in being under the command of the one white man on board for whom they felt a respectful attachment and admiration.

Before sunset, so plentiful was the pearl shell, and so easily obtainable—for the depth of water ran but from four to six fathoms—that more than half a ton was brought on board and placed on the main deck ready for Rawlings and Barradas in the morning.

Day after day the work continued, the native divers exerting themselves to the utmost to obtain as much shell as possible, while Rawlings, the second mate, and the boatswain, opened it, searched every bivalve for pearls, and then after it was "rotted out" packed the shell into boxes and stowed it into the hold.

At the end of the first week six tons were in the hold of the *Mahina*; and although no pearls of any great size had been found, many thousands, ranging in value from 10 pounds downwards, and a vast number of "seed" pearls as well, were shown to Barry by Rawlings as the result of the week's work.

"Of course, Barry," said Rawlings genially, "I intend, as I said before, to let you stand in with me. I quite recognise that you are something more to me than a mere chief officer at 15 pounds a month. You are doing all the hard work and are entitled to share in my good luck."

"And I, as I have told you, Captain Rawlings, do not want anything more than that to which I am entitled," replied Barry quietly; "I am anxious—most anxious—to see the *Mahina* with a full cargo under her hatches."

"And that will be accomplished within four months, at the rate we are going on at now," said Rawlings, with his usual sweet smile; "the men seem to be working uncommonly well under your supervision."

"They *are* working very hard indeed. And I think I can get them to continue at it until the brig is filled. But now and then we must give them a few days' liberty."

"Certainly, Mr. Barry," replied the captain affably. And then motioning his chief officer to a seat, and calling the steward to bring the spirit stand, he offered his cigar case to his officer.

"Let us take a quiet little drink and a smoke, Mr. Barry. Now, tell me; what do you think the past week's work amounts to? You are an experienced man in the pearling business; I know nothing about the matter practically."

"I think that the shell we have obtained so far will bring over a thousand to fifteen hundred pounds in Singapore or Hongkong. And the pearls you have shown me will certainly bring another thousand—in London you would get fifteen hundred for them."

Rawlings' eyes sparkled. "Then in fact, as we are going on now, we are getting shell and pearls to the value of, say, 2,000 pounds a week at least?"

"Yes, about that," answered Barry carelessly; "but I daresay that when we get on to the big six fathom bed in the middle of the lagoon—which I am leaving until we have worked out those near by—that we can count on getting about three thousand pounds' worth of shell and pearls every week for three or four or five months at the very least. I have never seen such rich patches in all my experience; and I shall not be surprised if we get some very fine pearls. For instance, I can point you out two or three shells now in the boats, all of which, I think by their appearance, will contain big pearls." Stepping to the rail, he called out to Velo—

"Pass up those three big shells, Velo."

Barradas, Warner, and the Greek joined them, and watched the shells being opened. The first contained two very large pearls, but their value was greatly discounted by their irregular shape, but even these were worth 30 pounds or 35 pounds each; the remaining two were then opened, and an eager "Ah—ah!" of delight

burst from Rawlings when there was revealed in each a pearl of exquisite beauty and shape, and of great size.

"In Tahiti a local buyer would offer you a hundred pounds each for pearls such as these," said Barry, as after wiping them with his handkerchief he handed them over to the captain; "in Auckland or Singapore you would be offered more." Then, apparently no further interested in the subject, he went to his cabin to change his clothes for supper.

On the following Saturday—ten days after diving operations had commenced—the men, at Barry's request, were given three full days' liberty. Some of them wanted to make a fishing excursion, others to hunt for robber crabs at night-time on the adjoining islets, others to attend to the *puraka*[1] plantations of the deserted village. And as Barry himself thought, he said, that he might shoot a wild pig or two, he decided to remain on shore until the following Monday with the men.

Rawlings, whose whole soul was in the work of searching for the pearls, did not offer to accompany him, much to Barry's satisfaction, for he had a certain object in view. He had himself taken possession of the best of the native houses in the deserted village, and Joe and Velo had put it in good order, and were to share it with him at night.

At sunset Barry and his men left the brig and rowed ashore, and as soon as they landed, the natives, at a word from Velo, lopped off the lateral branches of a tall pandanus palm, and collecting numbers of fallen and dried coco-palm branches built them into a pyramidal shape from the foot of the tree to its top.

"Light it," said Barry.

Velo struck a match, and applied it to the base of the pyramid. In an instant it flared up, and in a few minutes a great pillar of fire was roaring and crackling, sending showers of sparks high in air, and lighting up the shore and lagoon for a mile around.

Rawlings and the others, who were examining pearls under cover of the poop awning, by the aid of half a dozen lanterns, took but little notice.

"They mean to enjoy themselves to-night," said Rawlings. "Well, they deserve to, they are working well."

"Yes, sir," said the native steward respectfully, as he placed a bottle of brandy and glasses on the skylight; "those men they tell me to-day that they would make a big fire to-night, because they have liberty. That is native fashion, sir."

"Ah, I see," said Rawlings carelessly, dropping another pearl into a cigar-box which was placed between himself and the others.

As soon as the fire had burnt out, and only the faintly glowing bole of the pandanus palm remained, Barry, accompanied by Velo and Joe, set out along the beach towards the chain of islets trending north and westward. Both Velo and Joe carried bundles on their shoulders, in addition to their rifles and ammunition, and as they walked they talked freely with their officer.

"You are sure that Mrs. Tracey would see that ere fire, sir?" inquired Joe.

"Certain, Joe. The reflection could be seen forty miles away, and Tebuan is only twenty. The island at which we are to meet is only fifteen miles from here along the beach and reefs, and if she started as soon as we did, we should meet her there long before midnight."

The seaman chuckled. "The poor lady will be mighty pleased to see us again, sir, won't she? I do 'ope, sir, as how it won't be long before we settles up with them bloody-minded pirates."

"Not until the brig is full of pearl shell, Joe. Then we shall act—swiftly and suddenly. You have been careful not to let your three mates know anything, I hope."

"Not I, sir," answered the seaman earnestly; "not a word will I say until you give me the word to do so. And they will stand to us, sir, never fear, for they all likes you; and Sam Button and Sharkey want very bad to be let come in the boats with us."

"We must be careful as yet, Joe," replied Barry. "I have no doubt that Sam and Sharkey and Peter will help us when the time comes, but I don't want to raise any suspicion. And we must keep this business dark from them until the time does come for us to act."

"Aye, aye, sir," assented the sailor; "and even if they sided with the skipper, we needn't have no cause to fear. The natives is with you to a man, sir. I can see that easy enough—they just follows you with their eyes like a dog does its master."

Barry nodded and smiled contentedly. The native crew were, he knew, devoted to him, and could be relied on to preserve the secrecy so essential to the fulfilment of the plans he had in view.

The tide was falling fast, and the connecting reef between the islands was dry, so that Barry and his two companions had no trouble in crossing from one to the other, carefully avoiding the islet on which Warner's natives were living. For nearly three hours they marched on in silence—sometimes along the hard, white sand of the inner lagoon beaches, sometimes by narrow paths running parallel with the outer iron-bound coast, where the slow, sweeping billows curled themselves, to break with a sound like muffled thunder upon the black wall of reef fringing the silent shore. At midnight they reached a little island of not more than a mile in length and half a mile in width. In the clear starlight night they saw the figures of six persons coming towards them on the beach.

Barry struck a match, held it aloft for an instant, and then called out—

"Are you there, Mrs. Tracey?"

"I am here, Mr. Barry," and followed by three stalwart men and the two young women who had formerly accompanied her at their first meeting, Mrs. Tracey, although still slightly lame, ran to him and shook his hand warmly.

"We started immediately we saw your fire," she said, "but came across the lagoon in canoes, instead of walking. Now come with me. There are several empty houses here, just over the brow of the beach, and in one of them there is a midnight supper for us all—crayfish, baked fish, pork, and chickens, and young coconuts to drink."

The two native women leading the way, the whole party soon gained the houses, which stood in a thick grove of giant jack-fruit trees. A bright fire was blazing out in the open, and spread out on the matted floor of the best of the houses was the midnight supper.

"We are quite safe here," said Mrs. Tracey as she bade Barry be seated; "this fire cannot be seen from the ship, can it?"

"No," answered the mate; "and I took care to let Rawlings know that I would let some of the men come down as far as the middle island to hunt and fish, so even if he does see the fire he will conclude it has been lit by them. Now tell me, are you well?"

"Well, indeed. And happier, far happier, than I have been for long, long months. I was overjoyed to see your signal, and to know that all was going well, and that I

should see you to-night. Now let me bring my native friends to shake hands with you; the two girls, Paní and Toea, you have seen before; the men are my bodyguard."

"And a fine bodyguard they are," said Barry as he shook hands with the three men, who then, with smiling and interested faces, sat down at the farther end of the house with Velo, Joe, and the two women.

"I have brought you some things which will be useful. In one bundle are provisions—all the best delicacies that the steward and I could find, and tea, coffee, sugar, and condensed milk. And I did not even forget a teapot."

"How kind of you!" she said. "The little provisions the captain of the *Golden City* gave me are quite exhausted. I am an Australian born and can't exist without tea, so do let me make some tea now. There is a native well here among the jack-fruit trees, with good water."

"The other bundle contains calicoes, prints, and all that sort of gear, with two pairs of canvas shoes—the smallest I could get—you mustn't cut your feet again, you know."

"How thoughtful you are!" she said, touching his hand gently; and then she asked artlessly, "Are you married, Mr. Barry?"

"No; but I hope to be when we return to Sydney. I'll tell you the story by and by, Mrs. Tracey, if you care to hear it."

"Of course I shall," she said brightly, "and I shall see her too, shan't I?"

"I hope so," answered Barry, with a smile. "But we may have a long spell here yet before we can settle up matters with Rawlings and the others and get possession of the *Mahina*."

"I will wait patiently. Now let me see about the tea, and then we'll have a long talk. You'll stay all night, won't you?"

"And all to-morrow as well. The men have three days' liberty, and Rawlings thinks I am going pig-hunting to-morrow."

As they ate their supper Barry told her all that had happened since he had seen her: of the richness of the pearl beds then being worked, and of the suspicions of Joe and Velo that Rawlings and his fellow conspirators intended some mischief against

him. Then when he mentioned Warner and described his appearance and Joe's recognition of him, she started—

"Warner! His name is not Warner. He is Billy Chase, an American. I know all about him, and that which Joe has told you is perfectly true. He was brought to Sydney for trial in the *Alacrity*, surveying sloop, about ten years ago, and I have often heard my husband speak of him as one of the most blood-stained ruffians in the Pacific. We heard that he had, through want of evidence against him, escaped hanging with a sentence of seven years' imprisonment; and then about a year and a half ago some one in Honolulu told us that a man supposed to be the infamous Billy Chase had turned up in the Carolines with fifteen or twenty 'niggers'—as they call the Melanesian natives in these parts—and settled down as a trader. It must be the same man, and no doubt he is an old acquaintance of Rawlings'."

"No doubt whatever, Mrs. Tracey. No doubt but that the whole precious quartette are steeped in villainies, and there is no doubt that they have now reached the end of their tether, and that with God's help we shall bring them to a reckoning. But we shall have to act with caution, for this man Warner, or Chase, with his crew of bloodthirsty savages will certainly fight for the cold-blooded villains who murdered your husband and tried to murder you."

"I cannot say—I am not Christian enough to say—that vengeance is God's. If the power of vengeance lay in my hand now I would use it," she said, excitedly.

Barry remained silent for awhile, until her emotion had subsided. Then he said gravely—

"There is no fear of Rawlings coming to Tebuan. That idea of mine of firing at our boat was a happy one, and although Joe here is the only white sailor in the secret, the other three on board will stand to us when the time arrives. As for the native crew, they have sworn to help us, and when I am out with them in the boats they often laugh at the way we are fooling the captain. I have promised them, on your behalf, a hundred dollars each as a bonus, when we reach either Sydney or Singapore."

"You think of everything, Mr. Barry," she said gratefully. "Now let me tell you that I too have been working. Every day since I saw you the Tebuan people have been diving for me, and I think we must have quite two or three tons of shell. The pearls we have found I brought with me to show you. There is a coconut-shell nearly half full—some are simply lovely.... And, now I think of it, I won't show them to you—I shall keep them for your future wife."

That was indeed a happy night for Barry, Mrs. Tracey, and their native friends. No one cared to sleep, for there was much to be talked of, and plans arranged for future meetings. Once every week Mrs. Tracey was to await Barry and Velo at the little island, and each were to report progress.

Early in the morning Velo, Joe, and Barry set out on a pig hunt, accompanied by the three male natives from Tebuan, leaving Mrs. Tracey to "keep house," as she called it, on the little island, and look over the treasures brought to her from the ship.

Late in the afternoon the hunters returned with their spoil—three gaunt, fierce-looking wild pigs; and then after a meal had been cooked and eaten, the white man and woman bade each other good-bye for another week.

[1] A gigantic species of the tuber called "taro" by the Polynesians (*Arum esculentum*).

CHAPTER X.

A REPENTANCE.

More than three months had passed away, and the shapely hull of the *Mahina* was eighteen inches deeper in the water than when she first anchored in the lagoon. During all this time fine weather had prevailed, and the boats had been constantly at work, the crew, however, being given plenty of liberty to rest and refresh themselves, by wandering about the nearer islands—fishing, pig-hunting, and bird-catching, or lying about, smoking or sleeping day or night, upon the matted floors of the houses of the little native village nestling under the grove of breadfruit-trees.

But whilst matters in regard to the pearling operations had gone on without interruption, there had been several collisions between Warner's Solomon Islanders and Barry's men, and worse followed.

One day a diver named Harry, a fine, stalwart young man, belonging to Arorai, one of the Gilbert Islands, was found lying dead on the inner reef of the lagoon. He had gone out crayfishing the previous night, and should have returned long before

daylight, but his absence was not noticed until Barry called to his men to turn to and man the boats for the day's work.

Billy Onotoa—the native who had been stabbed by the Greek—at once asserted that Harry had been killed by Warner's men.

"Choose well thy words, Tiban of Onotoa," said Barry sternly, addressing Billy by his native name and in his native tongue; "how dost thou know that this man hath been slain by the man-eaters?"

"Come and see," replied Billy quietly.

The dead man lay upon his back on a mat in one of the houses, and turning the body over, Billy Onotoa beckoned to the white man to draw near.

"Place thy hand here and feel his backbone," he said; "see, it is broken in the middle. And it hath been broken by a club such as the 'man-eaters' use, for there is the mark of the blow on the skin, and the bruised flesh. This man was stooping, and an unseen enemy sprang upon him from behind and broke his back with a blow from a club; then was he cast into a deep pool to drown amid the surf. How else could such a strong man die?"

Barry examined the man's body and was quickly satisfied that his backbone had been broken by a violent blow.

"Justice shall be done upon the slayer of this man," he said, turning to his boat's crew who stood around with vengeful faces; "but not yet is the time for it. So make no loud complaint, and make no quarrel with the 'man-eaters.' When the time comes, it will come suddenly."

"*E rai rai! E rai rai!*" ("It is good!") answered the natives, smiling grimly and patting Barry on the hands and shoulders; "we will wait for the word to strike."

That morning when he reported the death of Harry to Rawlings he watched Warner's coarse, bloated face.

"It's a most mysterious affair. He was picked up on the reef quite dead. The poor fellow's back was broken—the bone was crushed to a pulp," he said.

"Guess a crayfish nipped him by the big toe, and he kinder turned a back somersault and landed on his spinal collums," said Warner, with a brutal laugh.

Barry made no reply. How did Warner know that the man had been out crayfishing when not a word had been said about it? He rose from the table without further remark and went on deck, for the boats were awaiting him alongside. As he passed the main-hatch he caught sight of the hideous face of the savage Togaro, the man whose ribs he had broken. He was squatting on the hatch, and gave the officer a malevolent glance.

"Ah!" thought Barry, "that explains how that fellow Warner knew that poor Harry was out crayfishing. I suppose that black brute himself is the murderer and came off on board early this morning with the news."

Later in the day he found his surmise to be correct. Two or three of his own men always remained on board at night to keep anchor watch, and one of them told him that that morning at daylight Togaro had paddled off in a canoe and had at once gone below to Warner's cabin and remained there for nearly half an hour, emerging on deck with a bottle of gin—a present doubtless for his murderous work in the night.

That day's fishing was particularly successful, for the divers began work upon a new bed of shell, most of which were of great size and contained some magnificent pearls. Five especially huge oysters were opened by Barry himself in the presence of his men, and from them were taken seven pearls, each one larger than any yet previously obtained.

Knowing that his men were as true as steel to him, the officer showed them to each man in turn, and then handed them to Velo.

"These seven pearls are worth much money," he said, speaking in the native tongue to the men, "and shall not be handled by the man who slew the white woman's husband, for they are hers, and Velo shall himself give them to her. But cast the shells overboard."

As the days went by, and the waters of the broad lagoon shone and sparkled under a cloudless vault of blue, the work went steadily on, and in the hold of the brig, tier upon tier of cases, packed tightly with shell, were firmly stowed for the voyage to Singapore—shell worth over eight thousand pounds, and night after night Rawlings would turn out the pearls upon the scarlet cloth, and discuss their value with Barry and the other two officers.

"Six thousand pounds, you say, Mr. Barry," said the captain, rolling the gleaming, iridescent things softly to and fro with his small, shapely brown hand, whilst the Greek drew deep sighs of pleasure as he watched.

"At least that, sir," answered Barry, puffing at his pipe; "I have given you the lowest estimate of their value. If they bring nine thousand I shall not be surprised. As for the little box of seed pearls, they don't amount to much; the whole lot will not sell for more than two hundred and fifty pounds."

"Poor Tracey!" said Rawlings thoughtfully; "I must endeavour to find out by advertising in the London and colonial newspapers if he has any relatives. I should like to acquaint them with his death, and send them all of what would have been the poor fellow's share had he lived."

Barry's face never moved, but his right hand clenched tightly under his jumper; for Mrs. Tracey had told him that her husband had told Rawlings all about his family, and about a quiet little village called East Dene on the coast of Sussex, where he had been born.

"It is very generous of you," said Barry stolidly; "and if you can't find out anything about his people, you may about those of his wife."

"I shall do my very best in both cases," replied Rawlings. "It will give me infinite pleasure to discover either his or his wife's relatives."

"Did he leave no letters or papers of any kind which would give you a clue?" asked Barry carelessly.

"Absolutely nothing. And, although we were on the most intimate of terms, he never spoke of his family—neither did his wife, poor little woman."

The mate rose slowly from his seat. "Good-night all. I'm going ashore and turning in. I think another fortnight will see us a full ship."

Just as Barry had taken his seat in the dinghy and the crew were about to push her off Barradas came to the gangway.

"I'd like to go ashore with you, Mr. Barry, if you don't mind, and stretch my legs along the beach."

"Certainly," answered the mate coldly, as he hauled the boat alongside the ladder again. Barradas descended and took his seat beside him in silence.

For many weeks past Barry had noticed that the second mate had sought every opportunity possible to talk to him, but he had, while being perfectly polite to him, repulsed the man's overtures. On several occasions the Spaniard, when Barry was

sleeping on board, had come into his superior officer's cabin under the plea of talking about matters connected with either the ship or the boats, and each time Barry had let him see that he was not anxious for his company. In fact, he had had a hard struggle to conceal his abhorrence for the man, but for the sake of the great interests at stake he endured his visits, but gave him no encouragement to talk about anything else but the ship's business, and then with a curt "good-night" the men would part, and Barradas would walk the main deck muttering and communing to himself till dawn. Then he would resume his daily work with a sullen face and in moody silence.

The night was ablaze with the light of a glorious moon, floating in a sky of cloudless blue, as the two men stepped out of the boat and walked up to Barry's native house. Barradas was breathing quickly and heavily, and every now and then he would take a quick glance at the mate's grave, impassable face.

"Will you come in and sit down for a few minutes?" said Barry with cold civility.

"No, thank you," and as the Spaniard struck a match to light his pipe Barry saw that his swarthy face showed pale in the moonlight and that his hand trembled; "I don't want to keep you from your sleep. You have had a hard day's work in the boats, and I have done nothing."

He waited for a moment or two, but Barry did not repeat his invitation. With his hands in his pockets he was gazing out upon the moonlit lagoon, apparently oblivious of his subordinate's presence.

"I think I shall take a walk on the path running along the outer beach," said Barradas presently in an awkward, constrained manner.

Barry nodded. "Just so. But there's nothing much to see except the graves of two of the crew of a whaleship who were buried at the end of this island about four or five years ago. If you follow that path you'll come to the place in about half an hour. Don't lose your way when you're coming back. I'll keep the boat ready for you to take you aboard again."

Again Barradas looked at him as if he would like to say something more, but Barry's cold, set, and repellent face forbade it.

"Well, I think I'll go that far, anyway," said the Spaniard, and then he added nervously, with a half-appealing look to the chief officer, "I suppose you're too tired for a yarn and a smoke?"

"I am," replied Barry with studied coolness and without moving his face.

The second mate raised his dark and gloomy eyes and looked at him furtively; then, with something like a sigh, he turned quickly away, and walked along the winding path that, through the jack-fruit grove, led to the next island.

Barry turned and watched him, and presently Velo, stripped to the waist, came out of the hut and stood beside his officer.

"Shall I follow him?" he asked in the Samoan language.

"Yes," replied Barry quickly in the same tongue, "follow him and see where he goeth. There may be some mischief doing, for this man hath for many days tried to thrust himself upon me. It may be that we have been betrayed ... But, stay, Velo, I will come with thee."

Entering the house, he threw off his canvas shoes, belted his Colt's revolver around his waist, and in a few minutes he and Velo were following in the track of the Spaniard.

Every now and then they caught a glimpse of him in the bright and dazzling moonlight as he trudged steadily along the white sandy path. Once he sat down on the bole of a fallen coco-palm, leant his chin upon his hands, and seemed lost in thought. Then he rose again and set off at a rapid walk.

At the north end of the little island he came to a stop, for further progress was barred by the wide channel separating Ujilong from the next island; the tide was flowing, and the connecting reef was covered by three feet of water. He stood awhile, looking about him, and then turned toward a cleared space among the coco-palms, where a low, square enclosure formed of loosely piled blocks of coral stood clearly out in the moonlight; in the centre of the square were two graves, one of which had at its head a cross roughly hewn from a slab of coral stone.

The Spaniard leant with folded arms upon the wall, and for some minutes intently regarded the emblem of Christianity; then, stepping over the wall, he walked up to the graves, took off his cap, and knelt beside the cross, bending his head reverently before it.

Hidden behind the boles of the coco-palms Barry and Velo watched and listened, for now and then a sob would escape the man as he prayed and made the sign of the cross. Suddenly he laid himself down upon the grave, placed his outspread hands upon the foot of the stone, and the listeners heard him weeping.

"Mother of Christ, and Jesus Most Merciful, forgive me my sins," he cried, rising to his knees and clasping his hands. "Here, before Thy cross, I plead for mercy. Holy and Blessed Virgin, help and save me, for no longer can I bear the guilt which is on my soul."

Again he bent his head and prayed silently; then he rose, put on his cap, stepped over the low wall, and set off almost at a run towards the village.

Barry and Velo followed him till he reached their house. Here for a moment or two he stood before the entrance as if in doubt. Then he went inside and called—

"Where are you, Mr. Barry?"

"Here," said Barry, stepping forward. "What is the matter, Barradas? You look ill. Sit down."

"Yes, I will sit down, for I have something to tell you—something that I should have told you long ago. I will make a clean breast of it all—before I go mad. Mr. Barry, your life is in danger. Rawlings and the Greek mean to murder you before the brig reaches Singapore."

Barry drew an empty case up to the rude table and sat down.

"I don't doubt it," he said quietly. "Now tell me, before you go any further, the true story of Tracey's death."

"As God is my witness, I will tell you all—all. Tracey was not mate; he was captain and owner."

"I know all that—have known it for some time, but I want to know how he died."

"Rawlings shot him. One day in Sydney Tracey came on board unexpectedly and found him in his cabin making a tracing of a chart of this lagoon. I heard them quarrelling, and then heard a shot. When I ran below Tracey was dead—Rawlings had shot him through the head. That was two days before you came on board. But let me tell you all—from the very beginning."

"You had better go on board now," Barry said to Barradas half an hour later. "I will trust you to help me to undo some of the wrong you have done," and he held out his hand.

The Spaniard bared his head. "And I swear to you that I will be true to you and Mrs. Tracey, body and soul. When will you let me see her?"

"Very soon now, Barradas. But, as I have just said, we will have to so plan everything that nothing must go wrong. All the white seamen will stand to us to a man, but as yet Joe is the only one who knows of the existence of Mrs. Tracey and the true story of the *Mahina*. As for the native crew, they are simply burning with anxiety to help me take possession of the brig. But that cut-throat Warner and his natives have to be considered. You say that they are coming on board to stay as soon as the ship is ready for sea?"

"Yes, that was the decision come to by Rawlings and Warner the other evening."

"How many of them have rifles?"

"Only about half a dozen, but all of them have fantail tomahawks and clubs."

Barry mused. "I wonder what is Rawlings' object in taking Warner and his cannibal savages away? He doesn't like Warner—in fact, I'm sure he's afraid of him."

"I believe this"—and Barradas held up his clenched hand—"I believe that Rawlings' plan is this: After you—and myself too, most likely—have been disposed of, Warner and his men will surprise and murder all the native hands and the four white sailors. None of the Solomon Islanders can speak one single word of English, and therefore could not possibly prove a source of danger to Rawlings, Warner, and the Greek when the ship reached Singapore."

"We shall get to windward of them all, Barradas, before we are clear of this lagoon."

"May the blessed Saints help us!" said the repentant Spaniard piously, as once more he shook hands with his superior.

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTAIN RAWLINGS PROPOSES "A LITTLE CELEBRATION."

Day after day the work of gathering its hidden wealth from the bottom of the lagoon went on. Once at least in every week Barry managed to communicate with Mrs. Tracey, personally or by letter, telling her how matters were progressing, and asking her to be patient.

"In a week or two," he wrote, "we shall have possession of the brig—without bloodshed, I hope. Now that Barradas is with us I feel less anxiety. Whether they suspect him or not we cannot tell, but the steward said that they (Rawlings and the Greek) certainly have a secret understanding of some sort concerning Barradas. He (as well as Barradas himself) believes they have planned to murder him as they first planned to dispose of me. But they are closely watched, not only by the steward, but by Barradas himself, who plays his part of 'the good comrade' well. Heaven forgive the man for his past crimes, for he is, I know, deeply penitent. Your supposed death weighed heavily on his mind. When he came to my house that evening and unburdened himself to me, and I told him that you were alive and living on this very island, he sobbed like a child and besought me to bring him to you. In the intensity of his excitement he wanted to set off and walk round the lagoon to Tebuan to meet you, and I had some little difficulty in restraining him. He left me to go on board, looking like another man. He is of an impassioned, excitable nature, but we can count absolutely upon his discretion not to do anything which would imperil our plans. Now, good-bye. I trust you are well, and that it will not be long before we meet again. We are all working hard for you, and hope to soon see you in possession of your ship, and the *Mahina's* white wings spread for Sydney."

This letter was brought to Mrs. Tracey by a Tebuan native, who had received it from one of Barry's men at the usual rendezvous. She opened it with an exclamation of pleasure and read it through. Then, with her hands lying upon her lap, she gave herself up to thought. Her two attendants, the girls Paní and Toea, watched her with their full, lustrous eyes as they sat on a mat in the centre of the house smoking their cigarettes of strong, black tobacco. Without all was silent, save now and then when an occasional footfall would sound on the path in front of the quiet dwelling as some native returned to the village from the beach, carrying a string of fish or a basket of sea-birds' eggs for the evening meal. Straight from the open door the lagoon lay shining under the light of myriad stars, its placid waters undisturbed by even the faintest ripple, for the trade wind had died away with the setting of the sun, and the

fronds of the long belt of palms fringing the inner beach hung as still as if they had been carven out of stone.

Presently the white woman raised her face, and a smile parted her lips when she saw how intently the two girls were regarding her, and they too responded to her glance with smiles, for to them "Alisi," as Mrs. Tracey was called by the people of Tebuan, was not only a mistress but a friend—a friend who spoke their own harsh, guttural language as well as one of themselves, a friend whose dead husband had been the friend of old Gurden, whose memory was still cherished by every grown person in Arrecifos as the white man, the white man who had lived so long among them, and who had married one of their own people. And because of this, and for her own sake, the people loved Alice Tracey, and not a man of the now scanty population but would have given up his life for her.

"Alisi," said Paní, the younger of the two girls, coming over to her mistress, sitting down beside her, and placing her shapely little brown hand on the white woman's knee as she gazed into her face, "is it well with thy friend the white man, Parri (Barry)?"

"It is well, little one," answered Mrs. Tracey, putting her arm round the girl's naked waist; "all is well with him, and here, in this writing which he hath sent me, he sayeth that the time is drawing near when the evil captain of the ship and those with him shall be crushed and broken."

Paní's eyes glistened. "Oh, would that I could be there to see it all, for there will be a great fight! He is a great man this Parri, and hath kind eyes and a strong, handsome body.... Alisi?" and the girl turned her pretty brown face on one side and looked inquiringly into Mrs. Tracey's eyes.

"Paní?"

"Alisi, dost love Parri? Will he be thy man[1] when thou leavest us?"

"Nay, how can that be, little one? Did I not tell thee and Toea long ago that he loveth a woman who dwells in my own land, and who awaiteth his return from the sea?"

Toea threw away her cigarette and swiftly settled herself on the other side of Mrs. Tracey, pushing aside Paní in mock jealousy, and, taking her mistress's hand, hugged it to her full and rounded bosom.

"Alisi? tell me. Will Parri be thy man?"

"*Gao!*" and Mrs. Tracey flicked Toea's ear. "Be not so silly ye two. Have I not said that Parri is bound to another woman? He careth nought for me, and it is not the fashion in my country for strangers to wed."

"Hath he told thee that he cares not for thee?" enquired Paní.

"Foolish child. He is my friend—not a lover. And my husband is but dead a little time."

"How can he be thy friend and not thy lover?" persisted Paní. "Thou art a fair, good woman and he a strong, fine man. Surely he will be thy man and think no more of this woman who liveth so far away. Hast ever borne a child, Alisi?"

Mrs. Tracey sighed, and then smiled again. "Never."

"Ah, that was because of some witchcraft, for thy husband who is dead was a strong, thick man, and thou art one who should bear many children. Some evil person hath practised witchcraft on thee. But thou wilt be wife to this man Parri and bear him children. Old Tuna—she who was mother to Gurden's wife—hath told us that this Parri will be thy man."

A vivid flush dyed Alice Tracey's cheeks. "Tuna talks foolishly. I tell thee both that there is a girl fair to look upon to whom this man is bound, and that he careth nought for me but as a friend."

Paní shook her head gravely. "Tuna is a wise old woman, she can do many things. She can foretell when death cometh, and can see many things in the night; she can make the barren woman fruitful and can bring the rain. And she hath said that this man Parri will be thy husband, and——"

Mrs. Tracey rose quickly. "Tell me not such foolish things! Come, let us walk upon the beach a little time ere we sleep."

Barry received an answer from her the following evening.

"I am so glad to know," she wrote, "that all is going well, for at times I cannot help a feeling of dread taking possession of me, especially if I am alone for any length of time, and sometimes I am afraid to sleep, for I have such dreadful dreams about these men, Chase, the Greek, and Rawlings. The two girls, Paní and Toea, are, however, a great comfort to me, and if all goes well I shall ask you a favour. I want to take one of them away with me in the *Mahina*.... Do you know how I spend my time, or most of it? Very much as you do during the day, watching the natives bringing in the shell and trying to imagine how many go to a ton. Then at night-time I am the grand dame of Tebuan. I light up my mansion of thatch, and all the women of the village come in and gossip for an hour or two with me, the men sitting outside in a circle. Last night I divided two hundred sticks of the tobacco you sent me among them, and in return they honoured me with a dance. Am I not very childish? I am sure you will think so, but then I feel so much happier every day now in spite of the horrible dreams which sometimes torment and make me miserable.

"We have, I should say, quite forty tons of beautiful shell here now, either cleaned, or rotting out at various places on the beach. Last week the people told me that they were diving three miles from here, and could see the brig's masts quite distinctly. I warned them to be careful. As for the pearls, I am afraid I must show them to you after all, I am so tired of looking at them by myself. There are over sixty now for the necklace—nearly every one of which is a perfect match with the rest. I have them apart from the others in a box of soft white wood which Paní made for me, and I have called the box 'Rose Maynard's Dot.'

"Now I must tell you some other news. Yesterday two ships were seen a long, long way off to the westward. I have no doubt but they are the first of the sperm whalers making south again towards New Caledonia and the New Hebrides. We are sure to see several more, and if any of them come within eight or ten miles, I could have a letter sent off for you—it would perhaps get to Sydney long before the *Mahina*—and just imagine how delighted *some one* would be to hear from you."

So Barry wrote two long letters, one to Rose, and one to Watson, telling them both that he hoped to see them in less than six months. To Watson he told the whole of the strange tragedy of the *Mahina*, and of the marvellous escape of Mrs. Tracey.

"Do not tell Miss Maynard all these horrors," he added; "it would only cause her intense anxiety, and I have only said that Mrs. Tracey's husband is dead, and that she is returning to Sydney in the brig. I am in hopes we may run across a man-of-war; if

so I can get rid of these gallows' birds for a time, at any rate, before they are brought to trial. Good-bye and good luck."

He sent the letters down to Tebuan by Velo that night, and then work went on with renewed energy—Barry with the boats, Rawlings and the Greek amid the stench of the decaying oysters on the sandbank; and Barradas, silent, grim, and determined, attended to the brig, and began to prepare her for sea again, assisted by the four white seamen.

Then came the time when the divers ceased from work, and the last boatloads of shell were landed on the islet; for the little brig had as much as she could carry with safety stowed in her holds, and was deeper in the water than she had ever been since the day she was launched.

And that evening, whilst Rawlings and the boatswain were ashore at the village, bathing in fresh water from a native well, Barradas and the steward were quietly at work in the trade room, opening a case of Snider carbines, quickly cleaning and oiling the breeches, and then passing them, with an ample supply of cartridges, into the eager hands of Joe and Velo, by whom they were carried into the foc's'le, and given to those others of the crew then on board. Each man received his weapon in silence, and hid it under the mats of his bunk.

"When is it to be, Velo?" asked one of the divers.

"It may be to-night," replied the Samoan. "Be ye ready when the time comes."

Returning to the trade room the empty case was nailed up again, and another full one lifted on top of it. In the main cabin itself there was a stand of twenty rifles with cutlasses, but these were not disturbed for the time, as the absence of even one would most likely be noticed by Rawlings' eye.

After they had finished their bath the captain and Paul, carrying their towels in their hands, strolled up to Barry's house. He had just lit his lamp, and with a native sailor helping him was packing up his traps, for this was his last night on shore.

"Ah! putting your house in order, Barry?" said Rawlings blandly.

"Yes, just straightening up a bit, and getting my gear ready to take it on board," he replied.

"We must have a little bit of a celebration tonight, I think," resumed Rawlings, "and let the men have a final fling too. They have worked splendidly under your management; and our success is largely due to you."

Barry nodded. "Yes, they've worked very well indeed. And I think we might have a bit of a celebration, as you suggest. Let us say tomorrow night. I'm a bit too tired tonight, and at daylight I'll start off with Velo and shoot a couple of pigs for the men. They'll think a lot of that."

"Quite so! A first-rate idea, Mr. Barry. They can have the whole day and night to themselves." Then after a pause he began to discuss with his officer the probabilities of the future—the return of the *Mahina* and the establishment of a permanent pearling station on the lagoon.

Barry listened, now and then making a suggestion of his own, for which, as usual, Rawlings thanked him effusively.

"And you think, Mr. Barry, that this lagoon can be fished for many years?" he inquired.

"Certain. It would take us four or five years as we have been working, without touching the deep-water patches. The bottom of this lagoon is paved with shell. There are hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of shell in it yet, let alone the pearls."

The Greek's greedy eyes lit up and his white teeth set. "Ah, ah, ah!" he said pantingly.

"Well, we will have our celebration to-morrow night, Mr. Barry," said Rawlings genially.

"Yes, we will wind up everything by a good time to-morrow night," answered the mate with unusual warmth, as after some further talk he walked down to the boat and went off on board with them.

Just before supper he strolled along the main deck. Barradas was in the waist leaning over the bulwarks, smoking and watching the movements of some large fish in the phosphorescent water. He raised his head as the mate came near, and looked at him inquiringly.

"Not to-night," said Barry in a low voice, as he passed; "but is everything ready?"

The second mate nodded.

"Let the men go ashore if they wish."

"We could do it now—easily," muttered Barradas, as the mate again passed him.

"No," said Barry quickly; "to-morrow night will be best. I have something on shore which must be attended to. But I'll be back early in the afternoon."

As soon as supper was over Barry turned in, telling the steward to call him at daylight. Rawlings and the others sat up late, but their talk did not disturb him, for he was really tired, and meant to get a good night's rest to fit him for the work he had in hand on the following day and night.

[1] Synonymous for husband.

CHAPTER XII.

BARRY AND VELO DISCOURSE ON MARRIAGE.

At daylight Barry came on deck, and after a cup of coffee and a biscuit he and Velo, each carrying a rifle, set out in the dinghy with two hands in her, towards one of the islands on the north side of the lagoon. Here, in full view of those on board the brig, they drew the boat up on the beach, leaving the two native sailors in charge, and then struck off into the palm grove, walking steadily on till they reached the centre of the island.

"Let us wait here, Velo," said the officer; "this is the place where a messenger from Mrs. Tracey is to meet us."

Laying their rifles down they sat under the shade of a great jack-fruit tree, whose wide-spreading branches towered even higher than the lofty coco-palms which surrounded it. For nearly an hour they waited, listening to the ceaseless hum of the surf upon the outer reef as the long, swelling billows rose, curled their green cress, and broke upon the rocky barrier of living coral. Overhead the blue vault of sky—where it could be seen—was unflecked by a single cloud, and the bright, blazing sun

sent shafts of yellow light through the leafy aisles of the island forest as it rose higher and higher, and dried the cooling night dew which lay upon leaf and bough, and verdant undergrowth and soft, tufted moss. Westward from where they sat the wide waters of the unruffled lagoon stretched clear for twenty miles—a sheet of shining blue and green—with here and there a streak of molten silver on which flocks of snow-white sea birds lay floating lazily. Four or five miles away on the port hand the little *Mahina* loomed high up out of the water, like a ship of two thousand tons.

Barry, with his pipe in his mouth, lay on his back, looking contentedly up into the blue dome above, thinking of and picturing to himself the "love lit" eyes of Rose Maynard which would greet him on his return; of the poverty in which she and her father existed, and the joy which would be his when he took them from their squalid surroundings. They would all go to Pfahler's Hotel—that was the swagger hotel in Sydney—and whilst he and old Mr. Maynard "trotted around" and enjoyed themselves, Rose, sweet Rose, and Mrs. Tracey would fuss about over the coming wedding and buy the trousseau and all that sort of thing. Of course Mrs. Tracey would fall in love with Rose at sight—that was a foregone conclusion—and would perhaps live with her when he was at sea. For he would go to sea again—to work for Alice Tracey, who might perhaps give him a share in Arrecifos and its riches. What a lucky devil he was after all!

He flung out his arms and stretched himself with a contented sigh and an unconscious smile.

"Parri," said Velo, speaking in Samoan, "thy thoughts are pleasant?"

"*Moni, moni, lava*,[1] Velo," he replied with a laugh; "pleasant indeed, for I was thinking of the woman I love."

Velo's dark eyes lit up and he nodded approvingly. "And she loves thee, Parri. I have seen it in her eyes. Ah, she is good to look upon indeed. May she bear thee many children."

Barry was puzzled for a moment, then it flashed upon him that Velo was upon the wrong tack.

"Whom dost thou mean, Velo?" he asked.

"Whom but she whom thou wilt see presently—the wife of the dead captain," replied the Samoan, elevating his brows in astonishment.

"Nay, not she, Velo; though as thou sayest she is a fair, good woman. But she is but a friend; the woman I love liveth far away in Sini." [2]

Velo puffed at his pipe in silence for a few seconds ere he answered.

"But this woman Alisi loves thee, and she and thee are *mau tonu*, [3] together. If thou dost not take her to wife she will be shamed in the eyes of all men."

The white man laughed again. "Not in the eyes of all men, Velo; the customs of us Englishmen are different from those of thy people. This woman is nothing to me and I am nothing to her but a friend. The ship is hers, and I am her servant, pledged to her service—that is all."

Velo shook his head. "Thou art more than a servant to her; thou art her *toa* (champion), and we all have said from the first that she and thee would wed."

Again Barry laughed amusedly. "Thou wouldst marry me to her against my own will, Velo."

"She is beautiful, and a widow, and a fitting mate for a strong man like thee," replied Velo energetically. "I have seen many white women, but none so good to look upon as her. And she is a widow."

"What has that to do with me? Did I make her a widow?"

"Do not mock at me, Parri," answered the Samoan with grave respect; "but because she is a widow and thou art working for her to overcome her enemies, it is but right and proper that thou shouldst make her thy wife."

"And what of the woman in Sydney to whom I am pledged?"

"*Totogi lona aiga*," [4] said Velo. "If she be young and handsome she will find another lover, and can have no cause of complaint against thee if thou dost compensate her."

Barry had a strong sense of humour, so he said he would think the matter over, whereat Velo seemed well pleased, and relapsed into silence for a few minutes. Then he began again.

"Parri, I would like to tell thee of a little thing which is in my mind."

"All right, Velo, go ahead," said Barry in English, as he sat up and filled his pipe; "what is the 'little thing'?"

"Only that I desire the girl Paní for my wife."

"That will be all right, Velo," said Barry lazily; "but why marry a woman of this wild place when there are better in Samoa?"

"Richer, but not better," said Velo, "and she is to my mind, and if I am to stay here on this island I shall need a wife."

"True, Velo, very true. I did not think of that. If the girl is willing you shall have her."

"She is willing. I am a fine man. How could she refuse me?"

"Very well, Velo. You shall marry her, and I will be the parson when I become captain of the *Mahina*, which will be to-morrow."

Velo smiled contentedly, and then the two men sprang to their feet as a native, clad in his armour of cinnet, stepped silently out of the undergrowth and beckoned to them to follow him.

He led them through the forest till they reached another cleared space, where, lying or sitting about under the trees, were the whole population of Tebuan, with Mrs. Tracey in their midst.

All of the men were armed with spears and clubs, and were clothed from head to foot in armour of coconut fibre; they all sprang to their feet with a babble of excitement as the white men drew near, but at a sign from Mrs. Tracey they at once stilled their voices, and sat quietly down again.

Mrs. Tracey, now thoroughly recovered from her accident, and her cheeks flushed with excitement, listened eagerly to Barry for some minutes, then she beckoned the expectant natives to gather round her, and spoke to them in their own tongue.

"To-morrow night, my friends, all will be well. This white man is my good friend, and will restore me to my husband's *kaibuke* (ship), and ye shall see the two white men who murdered him, and cast me into the sea, bound with links of iron, hand and foot. And when that is done, then shall I give to every man of Tebuan a rifle, and as many bullets as he can carry, and five hundred sticks of tobacco. And every woman and child shall take whatever her eye desires—red and blue cloth, and beads, and biscuit, and rice; for ye have been my good friends—friends when I was sick, and distressed, and poor."

A murmur of approval broke from the wild, savage-looking people, and one by one they came and shook hands with Barry, and then quietly dispersed to fish and hunt, Mrs. Tracey warning them not to show themselves anywhere on the inner beach, for fear they might be seen from the ship.

Barry remained talking to Mrs. Tracey for another hour or so, until Velo and some of the Tebuan men appeared carrying a large boar which they had shot. This was at once sent off to the boat, as well as four or five turtles, which had been captured.

"Good-bye till to-morrow night, then," said Barry, holding out his hand. "Now remember, when you see two fires lit on the south-east islet you and your people can start. On the beach you will find our two whaleboats, with some of the hands awaiting you. They will bring you all on board without making any noise. You and these two young women can hide in the sail-room; the men will be taken care of by Velo and our men until I want them."

"I will not fail to remember every word, Good-bye once more."

At three o'clock in the afternoon Rawlings saw the dinghy leisurely returning to the brig. She was pulling in close to the shore, whilst Barry and Velo were walking along the beach, rifles in hand, looking out for a shot at a chance pig. Barradas heaved a sigh of relief when he saw them, for his nerves had been at a tension for many days past, and he feared that something fatal to Barry's plans might occur at the last moment.

[1] "True, very true."

[2] Sydney.

[3] Truly bound.

[4] "Compensate her relatives."

CHAPTER XIII.

"THE LITTLE CELEBRATION" COMES OFF.

Very smart and clean did the *Mahina* look as the dinghy ran alongside and Barry stepped on deck. Her newly-painted sides shone snow-white in the bright tropic sun, and her decks had been scrubbed and scrubbed again and again with soft pumice stone till they were as smooth to the touch as the breast of a sea-bird. Aloft, her brightly scraped spars and carefully tended running and standing gear matched her appearance below, and even the cabins had been thoroughly overhauled and repainted. The two large boats used during the pearling operations yet lay astern; for Barry, who, as Mrs. Tracey said, "thought of everything," had his own reasons for delaying to hoist them inboard.

"Leave them till the last thing to-morrow morning," he suggested to Rawlings, "as the men are having liberty to-day."

"You fellows must cook that pig and the turtle on shore," said Barry to some of the crew who were leaning over the rail looking into the boat; "we don't want a dirty mess made on the decks now."

"Aye, aye," responded Joe, and one of the other white seamen, jumping into the dinghy, followed, at a sign from Velo, by two or three natives. She pushed off from the side, and was rowed ashore with Velo in charge. The two whaleboats were already on shore with some of the crew, and their nude, brown-skinned figures could be seen walking about on the beach, or gathering a last lot of coconuts for the voyage. At dark the dinghy returned, having left Velo on shore to superintend the feast, which the men were to eat on shore.

But before then, and while it was still daylight, and Rawlings was below, and the Greek on the poop, Barry and the second mate were standing on the topgallant foc's'le, looking up and apparently scrutinising the condition of things aloft.

Barry was speaking. "Watch me to-night. When you see me rise from the table after supper is over, I'll collar Rawlings, and you must tackle the Greek. The steward will be behind him to help you, but you must see that he doesn't get out his knife. He's as strong as a buffalo. Don't hurt him if you can help it. I have leg-irons and handcuffs all ready in my berth. We'll get all the help we want in a few seconds—before either of them know what has happened. Warner will be too drunk to offer any resistance, and our men and Mrs. Tracey's people will tackle his niggers if they show fight. They are coming on board to-night. Are you clear, Barradas?"

The Spaniard gave an affirmative gesture. "Quite clear, Mr. Barry. Trust me to settle the Greek. But be careful of Rawlings, he always carries a derringer and might put a bullet into you before you could get your hands on him."

"Don't be afraid of that, Barradas. I'll get him by the throat so suddenly that he'll have no chance to use it. The only thing I feel anxious about is that Velo and Joe and our natives will be able to dispose of Warner's niggers without much bloodshed, and——"

He ceased, for he saw the boatswain coming towards them, and then he added in his natural voice, as he ran his eye up and down the fore stay—

"Well, perhaps so, Mr. Barradas, but give me wire any day for standing gear; it's better in every way to set up, and looks neater."

Then he went aft again, and sat on the skylight smoking his pipe, and now and then looking shorewards through the fast-gathering darkness. He had told Velo not to light the two signal fires until it was quite dark.

Presently Rawlings, dressed as usual in a natty, spotless white duck suit, and smoking a cigar, came up from below.

"It's dark, isn't it?" he said genially, as he took a few brisk turns up and down the poop, and taking off his wide, soft hat of *fala* leaf, he let the cool night breeze play upon his head. And as he walked past the light of the lantern hanging from the centre of the awning, just over the skylight, and Barry noticed his clean-cut handsome features, and calm, smiling face, he ground his teeth together, and thought of the Nemesis that in so strange a way was so soon to overtake the heartless little fiend.

"Well, Barry, my dear fellow," said the captain, "I suppose you are just as glad as I am that the work is over at last. After all our troubles we have had most excellent luck, have we not?"

"Yes, you have had splendid luck so far, Captain Rawlings—extraordinary good luck."

"For which I am largely indebted to you, Barry. Your judgment, knowledge, and resourcefulness are, I can assure you, very fully appreciated by me. You have been the guiding spirit in the whole affair; and, to be perfectly candid with you, my dear fellow, I don't know how I should have managed without you. Our native crew are so devoted to, and have worked so splendidly under you that I intend to give every one of them a handsome present. And, although you once refused to accept anything from me, I shall indeed feel hurt if you will not now reconsider your former decision. It will add considerably to the pleasure I feel at this moment."

"The native boys certainly do deserve a handsome present from the owner of the *Mahina*," replied the chief officer, emphasising the word "owner." "They have worked with an energy that I alone, perhaps, can understand. And I can assure you that, with every facility to steal, not a single pearl has been taken by them. Their honesty is above suspicion."

"I am sure of it, my dear fellow," answered Rawlings effusively, "and they shall be treated properly by me, I can assure you. Twelve thousand pounds' worth of pearls——"

"Say sixteen," said Barry; "my estimate of their value is based on the price they would fetch in the colonies or Singapore—not London or Amsterdam."

"Just so. Well, sixteen thousand pounds' worth of pearls, and thirty thousand pounds' worth of shell is a big haul in less than six months. But you have evaded my suggestion about your own—what shall I call it—bonus, lucky-penny?"

"I can only repeat to you that I cannot accept anything from you," replied Barry quietly, though his hands were twitching to catch the handsome, plausible little scoundrel by the throat and strangle him there and then.

Rawlings flung out his hands with a pained expression and sighed. "You are too proud to accept a present from me, a gift to which you are well entitled and which I have sincere pleasure in offering. A thousand pounds will be nothing to me——"

"For God's sake, stop!" and Barry turned away fiercely. "I tell you that I want nothing from you."

Rawlings looked at him quietly with the faintest flicker of a smile. "Ah, I won't offend you again, my dear fellow. I'm afraid that I'm a bit too impulsive, and that you are too proud a man even to listen to a well-meant and kindly suggestion for your own benefit."

Barry swung round and looked at him for a moment. Rawlings met his glance with a calm, unperturbed countenance, as cigar in mouth and with his hands in his pockets he leant against one of the awning stanchions. Fearful of betraying himself by an outburst of temper and perhaps ruining everything, the mate did not trust himself to speak again, and was glad when Rawlings said—

"Ha, here is Warner coming alongside with his people. You'll find that both he and his natives will cause us no trouble this time, Mr. Barry. The man himself is really not a bad-hearted fellow, but his drinking habits are very disgusting and lead him into

mischief. However, he is sorry for what has occurred and has promised me not to offend again."

"He certainly is brute enough when sober, but he's fifty times worse when he's drunk," said Barry. "I daresay, though, that he has some good in him, or else his niggers wouldn't let him knock them about in the manner he does."

The captain laughed. "Yes, every one has some good points. Poor Warner is simply his own enemy. By the way, he now wishes me to land him at Guam, in the Ladrões, so we won't have his company all the voyage."

Presently Warner came aft, nodded to Rawlings, and held out his hand to the chief officer.

"Shake hands, mister. Guess I've been a bit of a hog, but I'm sorry. It's all the fault of the whiskey."

Concealing his disgust, Barry took the proffered hand of the treacherous ruffian and made some commonplace reply; then the three began talking about the ship and her cargo.

Suddenly a bright flame lit up the black line of palms on the island, and then another, as two fires shone brightly out upon the beach, and continued to burn steadily.

"Ah," said the Greek, who just then came on deck, "the kanakas will have gooda time to-nighta—pork, turtle, biskeet, feesh, everythings. They are alla gooda comrade to-night too," and he showed his teeth in a hideous grimace which was intended for a friendly smile for the chief officer.

Supper was late that night on board the *Mahina*; for Mosé, the brown-skinned Manhiki steward, was, aided by the cook, preparing such a supper as had never before been seen on the brig—at least so he told Rawlings, who had cheerfully agreed that eight o'clock was not too late. And at half-past seven Rawlings himself came below to see the table and Mosé's ideas of decoration.

"Why, Mosé, you're quite an artist," he said as he went into his state-room. "Keep the lager as cool as you can. Put half a dozen bottles and some hock on the poop with some wet towels round them. We'll be up late to-night."

"Yes, sir," answered the man, and as he turned away a grim smile for a second flitted across his swarthy features.

Eight bells struck, and as Rawlings, Barradas, and the Greek took their seats, Barry came out of his own cabin and sat at the for'ard end of the table. Rawlings was opposite to him, and the Greek and Barradas also faced each other, Warner being on the same side as the Greek.

As the steward brought in the turtle soup there came the strains of a wheezy accordion from the main deck, and then three or four voices joined in a native chorus, broken now and then by a laugh, and the sound of naked feet stamping time to the music.

"Hallo," observed the Greek with his usual grin. "Billy Onotoa and the other fella on boarda are hava a bita singa-songa and danca too."

"Let them enjoy themselves to-night," said Rawlings pleasantly. "And, steward, send them up a couple of bottles of grog. When the rest of them come aboard they shall have half a dozen between them. It won't hurt them once in a while."

The grog seemed to have a rapidly stimulating effect on the men on deck, for the "harmony" began with renewed vigour; and amid it all, as Billy Onotoa and four others of his shipmates thumped their feet, and slapped their bare chests and chanted their song louder than before, the two boats from the shore came silently alongside, filled with two score of naked figures and the remainder of the brig's native crew, Joe and one of his mates with them.

Velo took a quick glance along the deck. None of the Solomon Islanders were visible, they all having taken up their quarters in the main-hold on top of the cases of pearl shell, where they had spread their rough mats of coconut leaf. Two of the hatches were off, and Veto looking down at the savages saw that they were sitting or lying about smoking or chewing their inevitable betel-nut.

"Stand by to clap on the hatches," he said quietly to Sam Button.

The white sailor obeyed him promptly, for Barry had told him to take his orders from the Samoan; so he and three native seamen took up their places, two on each side of the hatch coamings. Then Velo stepped to the port side and called to Joe in a whisper—

"It's all right, Joe. You can all come aboard in a minute, but let Mrs. Tracey and the girls come first."

Mrs. Tracey and Paní and Toea clambered up over the bulwarks, and Velo noiselessly conducted them to the sail locker in the deck-house and bade them remain

there for the present. Then, cutlass in hand, he crouched before the door and listened to the murmur of voices from the cabin.

Rawlings was in such excellent spirits that he could not refrain from "chaffing" his chief officer upon his want of appetite, and kept pressing him to drink.

"My dear Barry," he said, "you really want livening up. You have worked too hard altogether, and seem a bit run down. Come, if you won't drink lager, try a glass of hock."

"Yesa," said the Greek, with the grin that was so intolerable to the man he meant to murder, "you have worka too harda, Mr. Barry. Ah! when we get to Singapore you will feela betta; there is fine prawna curry there in Singapore—make you feel stronga. Make you feela you wanta come back quick to Arrecifos, and finda more pearla."

Barry looked up wearily, but for the twentieth part of a second his eye met that of Mosé the steward, who slipped behind the Greek's chair and filled his glass.

"No, thank you," he said to Rawlings, "I won't drink anything just now. I have a bit of a headache. I'll sit on the transoms a bit, and get a breath of fresh air from the stern port."

"Guess it isn't on account of the liquor you've drunk, mister," said Warner, with a sneering laugh. He himself had been drinking freely and, despite warning glances from the captain, he had several times rudely insisted upon Barry drinking with him, and the officer's refusals had evidently aroused his brutal temper.

"I tell you that I don't want to drink anything," he said quietly.

He rose from his seat and walked toward the stern, but as he was passing Rawlings his left arm shot out like lightning and seized the captain by the throat; and at the same instant Barradas, rising to his feet, leant across the table and struck the Greek a fearful blow between the eyes. There was no need for the steward's help—the man went down like a stone dropped into a well.

And then came a rush of naked feet and wild cries, and an English cheer from Joe and the white seamen as the cabin was filled with the excited crew and their island allies.

Warner made a desperate dash towards the companion, and by sheer strength fought his way out through the white and native seamen with his fists, striking out right and left, and felling a man at each blow. Calling loudly upon his Solomon

Islanders, he gained the deck, where he was met by Billy Onotoa, who presented a Snider carbine to his breast. Dashing the weapon aside the American struck the Gilbert Islander a blow on the chest which sent him reeling across the deck, and still shouting for Togaro and the rest of his followers to come to the rescue, he reached the main-hatch, which he found covered, and in the possession of a dozen of the Tebuan people.

There was nothing of the coward about him. Unarmed as he was he leaped into the midst of them and wresting a hatchet from one of their number he set to work, dealing out death at every blow, while from beneath came the cries of his imprisoned followers. But great as was his strength he had but little chance amongst so many, and presently a boy of fifteen dealt him a blow with his tomahawk across the small of the back which severed his spine. He fell with a groan on the blood-stained hatch.

In the cabin Rawlings lay gasping upon the cushioned transoms with Barry standing over him; the Greek had been dragged up into a sitting posture, and placed with his back against a cabin door, whilst Barradas proceeded to handcuff and leg-iron him. Then, together with Velo, who was carrying another set of irons, the second mate came towards Barry and Rawlings.

"This fellow's pretty little hands and feet are too small for them," said Barry; "carry him up on deck, you Velo, and Joe, and wait till he comes to. Then lash his hands athwartships behind his back, and take him and the Greek ashore. Keep a good look-out over them, and see that they have water to drink when they ask for it. They will swing at the gallows for their crimes. Let us be as merciful to them as we can; but for God's sake take them away from here quickly; their very presence poisons me. Barradas, come here ... give me your hand. You have stood to me manfully. Now I must go on deck and see to Warner."

"He is dying, sir," said one of the white seamen who just then entered the cabin; "some of the Tebuan natives cut him down, but not until he had killed three of them. His niggers are safe under the main-hatch."

Followed by Mosé the steward and big Joe, Barry ran on deck. On the hatch were three dead or dying natives, and Warner lay upon the deck with his head against the coamings.

"Bring some lights," cried Barry to the steward, as he knelt beside the wounded man.

"I guess that lights are just what I want, young feller," said Warner faintly, with a grim smile. "That darned kanaka boy just drove his hatchet inter my back, and I reckon I haven't much lights or liver left."

Barry tried to examine the man's wound, but the American stayed him.

"Let me be, mister. I meant to do for you, and would have done it later on. But I'm wiped out and don't want to make a song. Is Jim dead?"

"No," replied Barry, "he is not dead."

"Mister, you are a darned good sort. Me and Jim meant to do for you."

"Don't talk about that, Warner. I have no enmity against you. And I don't think you have long to live."

"That is so, mister. I guess I'm about done. I'd like to see Togaro and the rest of my niggers before I slip, if you have no objections."

Barry motioned to the crew to take off the hatches and let the Solomon Islanders come on deck to see their dying master. Then with a few kindly words he left him to return to the cabin, and watched Rawlings and the Greek being carried on deck in irons.

Mrs. Tracey, who had followed, overtook him at the companion way and touched his arm.

"Thank God, it is all over, Mr. Barry." Then her tears began to fall.

Barry raised her hand and touched it with his lips. "All over, thank God. Now will you come and speak to Barradas?"

She followed him below.

Barradas was sitting at the table with his hands over his eyes.

Mrs. Tracey placed her hand upon his shoulder, and said softly—

"As Christ forgives us all, so may He forgive you, Manuel Barradas; and so may He forgive those who ..."

Barry stole swiftly up on deck and left them praying together.

CHAPTER XIV.

BARRY HOISTS THE FLAG OF ENGLAND.

Warner, or, to give him his right name, Chase, did not live long after Barry returned on deck. His wild followers were clustered round him, some stroking his hands and feet, others gazing into his face with silent concern. Togaro, the leader, himself had his dying master's back supported on his outspread hands, trying to staunch the flow of blood.

"Mister," said Chase faintly as the chief officer again bent over him, "I'm darned sorry."

Barry could not help taking his hand and giving it a kindly pressure; in two or three minutes the man had ceased to breathe, and his body was carried below into the main-hold to await burial on shore on the following morning; then Joe returned and reported that Rawlings and the Greek were safely secured in one of the huts with half a dozen of the Tebuan people guarding them.

Meanwhile Mosé the steward had carefully removed all traces of the struggle from the cabin, whilst the native crew quickly washed down the ensanguined deck and removed the three dead men, so that Mrs. Tracey should not see them. Presently she appeared followed by Barradas, her face still wet with tears.

Placing a chair for her on the after-deck, the chief officer told her in as few words as possible of the fight on the hatch and the death of Warner and the three natives.

"We must at once consider what is to be done with Warner's people," he added. "To land them at any of these islands would only mean further bloodshed."

"Indeed, yes," assented Mrs. Tracey; "the Tebuan people would take a quick revenge for the lives of the three men he killed. We cannot consign them to the mercy of these natives—for no mercy will they have. Can we not keep them on board until we can land them on some islands where they will at least be safe?"

"That certainly is what we should do; but I must consult with Barradas and Velo. The difficulty is this: if we leave Velo with six of the Gilbert Islanders behind us to protect your interests on Arrecifos we shall be seven men less on board, and these Solomon Islanders are not for one moment to be trusted. We cannot put the poor

devils in irons to swelter in the hold; and yet, to prevent them from suddenly rising and getting possession of the ship, we shall have to be constantly on our guard, and our crew will be obliged to go armed day and night. Only six years ago a party of seven Solomon Islands natives massacred the entire crew of an Australian trading barque—seventeen altogether. But here are Barradas and Velo. Let us hear their opinion."

"I think, sir," said the Spaniard after he had heard his superior on the question under discussion, "that we cannot do anything else but keep them aboard; we can't leave them here to be slaughtered by the Tebuan people. Now, most of them come from Bouka, at the north end of Bougainville Island, and Bougainville lies right in our track for Sydney. That they will be dangerous passengers I know; but if they are disarmed and well watched and the captain and the Greek don't get speech of them, we need have no fear."

Velo shook his head. "It would be running a great risk," he said; "these sixteen men have no regard for life, and unless they are kept heavily ironed the brig will always be in danger of capture. And if they find they have no chance of surprising and murdering every one on board, they will not hesitate to set fire to the ship and be burned with her."

Barry, however, believed with the second mate that the crew would be able to manage, and so, much to Mrs. Tracey's satisfaction, it was decided to keep them on board and land them at some part of Bougainville.

Then, exhausted by the events of the day, Mrs. Tracey retired to her cabin, leaving Barry and the Spaniard to snatch a few hours of sleep on deck under the awning.

At daylight the two big boats were sent off, manned by some of the Tebuan people, to bring up the shell collected by Mrs. Tracey, as Barry did not care about sailing down in the brig and there was still much to do on the south-east islet. Then the whaleboats were loaded with stores and sent ashore; for Mrs. Tracey and Barry had decided to take possession of Arrecifos by virtue of the Protection Order (given to Tracey in Sydney by the commodore) which had been found in Rawlings' cabin, together with all the other papers belonging to the dead captain. Velo with six men was to remain, and with the help of the willing Tebuan people continue to dive for shell, and await the return of the brig in six months' time.

So at nine o'clock the red ensign of England was run up on a flag pole in the centre of the little village amid the cheers of the crew—cheers which were bitter to the ears of the two men who were lying, bound and guarded, in one of the native huts,

awaiting to be taken on board again, and Barry nailed a copy of the Protection Order on the bole of a stately coco-palm, handing the original to Velo for safe keeping and telling him how to act in the event of a British man-of-war entering the lagoon. Then Mrs. Tracey, standing beside Barry, addressed the people who had been so faithful to her, urging them to remember that Velo was "a true man" to her, and that they must protect and care for him, for he would that day be married to Paní, according to the fashion of white people. Toea would go with her mistress to Sydney and remain with her for perhaps a year or more.

"So that she may comfort me in my loneliness," said Mrs. Tracey; "for my husband is dead and I have no child, and it will be good for me to have Toea, so that I may hear the sound of the tongue of Ujilong and think of ye all. It may be that Toea and I shall come back with this our friend Parri"—she smiled into Barry's eyes—"when the ship returns; it may be that she and I will live in Sydney for a while and not return till twenty moons have passed. But return I shall."

An old, bald-headed warrior, grasping his spear in his right hand, thrust its point deeply into the ground, stood up and spoke.

"Alisi, this is a great day. The ship which was stolen from thy dear husband is thine again, and the white men who killed him and tried to kill thee are, as thou saidst they would be, bound in links of iron. That is well. But there are some things of which thou hast not spoken and of which we would know, out of our love."

"Tell me, old Roku."

"It is pleasing to us that this man Velo of Samoa is taking Paní to wife. He is a good man and true to thee and the white man Parri. But we of Tebuan would see thy own wedding feast ere the ship saileth."

A vivid scarlet dyed Mrs. Tracey's cheeks as a roar of applause burst from the assembled people. She put her hand to her throat and tried to speak.

"What is it, Mrs. Tracey?" inquired Barry.

"Nothing of any importance, Mr. Barry," she said hurriedly, but trying to force a smile and speak with unconcern. "I—I have been telling them that you will marry Paní and Velo to-day, and that all going well, Toea and I will return to Arrecifos certainly within two years."

Old Roku, the father of Toea, stood quietly holding the staff of his spear and awaiting her reply.

"Roku," she said at last, trembling as she spoke, "say not such things to me. This man Parri is my good friend, but hath no desire to wed me, nor do I desire to wed him. And even if we were both of a free mind such a thing could not be, for he is betrothed to another woman."

Roku slapped his naked chest in derision. "Alisi! what is that to thee? Thou art a great woman and can command. What is any other woman to thy will but as a dried leaf which falls and is swept away by the wind? This man Parri and thou must wed, else shall we of Ujilong be sore in heart. No child hath drawn at thy breasts——"

Mrs. Tracey held up her hand, her voice choking with shame in fear that Barry might understand what was being said. "Say no more, Roku. I tell ye all it cannot be. See, here in these boxes are the rifles and the tobacco for the men and the red and blue cloth and the many-coloured beads for the women and children, as was promised."

The old man thanked her for the gifts, but sat down as if disappointed at the rest of her remarks. Then a second man arose and made a demand that filled Mrs. Tracey with fear. Where were the black men whose master had slain three of the Tebuan people?

"What would ye have with them?" she asked quickly.

"Give us three of them for the three of our people whom they slew," was the instant reply.

"That I cannot do, neither would Parri here consent even if I were willing."

An ominous murmur of displeased astonishment broke from the natives. Surely, they asked, they had a right to these three men. Why should three of their own people lie dead with gaping wounds and the man-eaters escape without punishment? Would that be fair and just?

"What answer can I give them?" she asked of Barry after translating their demand. "We cannot give up three of the Solomon Islanders to be murdered, but we must do something to please them."

They conversed on the matter for a few minutes, and then Mrs. Tracey spoke again.

"These are Parri's words. These black men will be taken away in a ship, for Parri hath pledged himself to them. And not they, but their master who is dead, was it who killed the three men of Tebuan. But yet so that we may part with naught of soreness

between us will I make provision for the wives and blood relatives of the three men who died in helping me to gain back my ship. This is my gift: three thousand sticks of tobacco, three large bags of biscuit, nine matted bags of rice, three muskets, a keg of powder, and a thousand round bullets—all these to be divided."

The munificence of the gift was too much for the native mind to resist, and to Mrs. Tracey's pleasure, old Roku, speaking for the people generally, said they were well pleased and would now "have no anger in their hearts against the black, man-eating strangers."

She decided to return to the ship with about ten or a dozen natives and see her present handed over to them by Barradas, leaving Barry to follow later on; for he had yet another task before him—the burial of Chase.

A little before noon a boat left the brig, carrying the man's body, which was in a hastily made coffin. Under Barry's direction a grave had already been dug in the little cemetery on the end of the islet, and here he was buried, the officer reading the service with Joe and two other of the white seamen standing beside him.

Then he returned on board again.

CHAPTER XV.

FAREWELL TO ARRECIFOS.

Barradas and Mrs. Tracey met him as soon as he stepped on the deck, which was covered with loose sticks of tobacco, ship biscuit, bags of rice, etc.—the present intended for the relatives of the dead men—which were being passed over the side into the other boat, where the eager, excited Tebuan people received every article with shouts of approval.

"Why, you have got along splendidly," he said, with a smile to Mrs. Tracey, whose dainty little hands were stained and discoloured with counting out tobacco, and whose perfect oval face was flushed with her exertions, as, sitting down on deck and leaning against Paní, she held her hands up before him with a laugh.

"Indeed we have! Mr. Barradas opened the tierce of tobacco, and Paní and Toea and I dug out the nasty sticky layers with sheath knives. I *think* we counted out three thousand sticks; but we got a little bit confused, so perhaps there are rather more."

A smile—the first that they had ever seen on his face—lit up the swarthy features of the Spanish mate. "I think there's nearer four thousand than three, madam."

"Oh well, never mind, Mr. Barradas. We mustn't be *too* particular," she said merrily, "but I *should* like some hot water to clean my hands. Please tell the steward. When is the wedding to be, Mr. Barry? The bride that is to be is very nervous, and, in fact, says she'd rather Velo married her in native fashion. But I'm not going to let her disappoint me. Big Joe is to be *her* best man, and the bridegroom is to be 'supported' by Mosé the steward."

"I'll be ready in half an hour, Mrs. Tracey," replied Barry; "the Church Service is in my pocket, as it is."

"Ah!" and her eyes filled. "How wrong and childish of me to forget! You must forgive me; ... but I am not myself. You have just come from the presence of death, and my first words to you are a jest. Do not be angry with me. I am not so heartless ..."

A quick glance at her face showed Barry that she was on the verge of hysteria. "Come, Mrs. Tracey, come below."

"Yes, take me below—quickly, please," and she rose tremblingly to her feet. "I am very silly, am I not? I——"

The mate swept her up in his arms as if she were a baby and carried her below.

"Poor little woman," he said pityingly to himself, as he laid her down in her own berth; and then he added aloud, "You are overwrought and done up, Mrs. Tracey. Rest awhile, and you will soon feel better."

"Yes," she answered, trying hard to control herself from giving way altogether; "I shall be all right presently."

Motioning to the two native girls to attend her, he closed the cabin door and went on deck and joined Barradas.

"Manuel," he said, addressing his subordinate for the first time by his Christian name, whereat the Spaniard's cheeks flushed with pleasure, "we shall have to hustle along and get things done if we are to get to sea to-morrow. Poor Mrs. Tracey is not quite herself, as you can see, and until she is a bit recovered I don't want to worry her about some matters which must be attended to before we heave up. But meanwhile we can get to work at other things. Rawlings and the Greek will have to be confined in

the sail-locker—there is nowhere else where we can put them with any degree of comfort. So turn to some of the hands and get it made as clean as possible. I am in hopes that we may meet a man-of-war somewhere in the Solomons; if so I can get rid of them, for a time at least."

Barradas made a gesture of assent, and at once set to work to fit up the sail-locker for the reception of the two prisoners. In half an hour his task was completed, and then Mrs. Tracey came on deck, dressed in a flowing gown of white muslin, and accompanied by Toea and Paní.

"Here we are, Mr. Barradas," she said with a smile; "where is big Joe? I must tell him what to do. And where is Mosé; and where is the bridegroom himself?—ah! there he is, and quite nicely dressed, too. Tell Mr. Barry we are quite ready, please.—Come here, Velo, and promise me you will be good to my little Paní."

"I promise," said Velo gravely, taking the white woman's hand and pressing it to his forehead.

Then Barry, calling all hands aft, made Paní and Velo stand side by side on the after-deck as he read the marriage service, and the simple ceremony was soon over.

"Ring the bell like blazes!" shouted Barradas as soon as the last words of the service were uttered, and big Joe and a native sailor raced together to ring the ship's for'ard bell; then the two six-pounders on the main-deck were fired by Mosé, and the marriage ceremonies of Velo and his pretty Paní were over.

"Now then, get ashore with your wife, Velo," said Barry laughingly to the faithful Samoan; "perhaps Mrs. Tracey may come and see you and Paní this evening."

"Of course I shall, Velo," said Mrs. Tracey, whose dark eyes were dancing with pleasure; "Toea and I mean to sleep ashore to-night with the Tebuan people, and come on board early in the morning. And I have some presents for little Paní."

An hour before sunset the two boats and a fleet of canoes returned from Tebuan with the pearl shell collected by Mrs. Tracey. It was hoisted aboard in baskets of coconut leaf and stowed in the main hold, and then the day's work, as far as the crew were concerned, was over.

Before supper, Barradas, Mrs. Tracey, and Barry sat together in the main cabin and examined the pearls—those which she had herself brought on board and those taken from Rawlings' cabin. Then it was that Barry showed Mrs. Tracey the seven largest pearls yet obtained.

"I kept these, Mrs. Tracey, to give to you personally," he said simply; "I did not want Rawlings or the Greek to touch them. I wanted to give them to you unsullied by the touch of their hands."

"How kind you are!" she murmured softly as, bending her head, she moved the beautiful gems to and fro under her hands upon the scarlet tablecloth, then raising her dark hazel eyes to Barry she dropped them suddenly with a blush, for both men were regarding her with undisguised admiration.

After supper she and Toea were taken on shore, and at once went to Velo's house (which was that formerly occupied by Barry). The Samoan and his wife received them with delight, and in a few minutes the house was filled with native women and girls who came to see the box of presents brought for Paní. Then, surrounded by the women, Mrs. Tracey went away to sleep for the last time in the house occupied by old Roku and Gurden's connections—the people who had been so kind to her during those first long, weary months on Tebuan.

At six o'clock in the morning Barry came ashore in the whaleboat, followed by the dinghy, which was to convey the prisoners on board. They were at once handed over by their native guards to Joe and his boat's crew, who assisted them down to the dinghy, and then pulled off to the ship.

Barradas received them at the gangway, and, taking no heed of the murderous looks and savage curses of the Greek, saw that they were placed in the deck-house and a sentry put over them. Their leg-irons, he told them, Barry intended to remove once the brig was clear of the land. Rawlings made no reply, but the Greek broke out afresh with a torrent of curses, and suddenly raising his manacled hands he brought them down upon the Spaniard's cheek and cut it to the bone. In another moment Joe would have felled the brute, ironed as he was, to the deck, but Barradas sternly struck aside his arm, and without a word of anger calmly went below and got the steward to stitch together the gaping wound.

On shore the people of Tebuan were clustering around the white woman and Barry as they stood together beside the flag-pole from which the red ensign of England streamed out to the lusty trade wind.

Velo, ever faithful Velo, wrung Barry's hand again and again, for proud as he was of being placed in charge of the island, his distress at parting from him was very great.

"There, good-bye once more, Velo. Don't work too hard, and, if a man-of-war comes, be sure you go on board and give the captain that letter. Come, Mrs. Tracey, we must be going. See, Barradas is already hove short, and waiting for us."

Helping Mrs. Tracey into the whaleboat, Barry followed, and grasped the long steer-oar.

"Give it to her, men, there's the brig breaking her heart to get away."

The light boat shot out like an arrow, and was soon alongside, and Mrs. Tracey was met at the gangway by Joe and another white seaman, both dressed in new duck suits given them by Barradas.

But instead of going into the cabin Mrs. Tracey waited at the gangway for Barry.

"I want to welcome the new captain of my ship," she said with a smile, as she held out her hand to him.

"Thank you, madam," and Barry raised his hat to her in such a formal manner that she laughed again, and asked him if he was afraid of the brig's owner, and Joe winked atrociously at Sam Button, and said in a loud whisper—

"He's a lucky cove, e' is, Sam. W'y 'e can marry the howner for the arskin'. I can see it in 'er eye, stickin' out a foot."

"Man the windlass again, Mr. Barradas," and Barry with a happy smile sprang on the poop, and himself took the wheel.

"Aye, aye, *Captain Barry*."

Up came the anchor from the coral bed in which it had lain for so many months, and ten minutes later the *Mahina* was slipping through the smooth water of the lagoon towards the passage. Another hour, with every stitch of her white cotton canvas shining bright in the glorious noonday sun, she was dashing over the long mountain swell of the North Pacific, and heading south before the brave north-east trade wind.

At noon the watches were picked, and then the captain ordered the Solomon Islanders to be brought on deck. They came up one by one with the expectation of being at once shot. Togaro, the leader, who understood and spoke a little English, glared resentfully at Barry when the latter ordered him to step out from the rest and listen to what he had to say.

"Togaro," said the captain, "I don't want to keep all your fellows down there in the hold, and no harm will be done to any of you if you obey orders. If you do as I tell you, then I will put you all ashore at Bouka in about two or three weeks from now. Now this is what you must do: eight of you can stay on deck at a time to help the

sailors; the other eight must stay below. If any one of them tries to come on deck without permission he will be shot. Do you understand?"

The savage nodded.

"And as you are the boss, you will be shot too. Do you understand that?"

"Me savee, cap'en," replied Togaro, turning to his companions and translating Barry's speech. They grinned approval, and each one promised to faithfully obey the captain's orders, and as a proof of their honesty one of them descended into the hold and reappeared with three or four tomahawks and some knives which they had concealed among the cases of shell.

"That's all right, Togaro," said Barry as the weapons were passed over to Joe; "if you and your people are good fellows, you shall have these tomahawks and knives back again when we get to Bouka. And if you work well you'll get plenty of *kai kai*; if you don't, you'll feel hungry all the time. Steward, serve them out pipes and tobacco and tell the cook to give them a good square feed right away—the poor devils must be pretty hungry by this time."

"Captain Barry," said Mrs. Tracey to him as he rejoined her on the after-deck, "you ought to be an admiral. How easily you did it all! Look now! There are those dreadful savages sitting down as quietly as if there had never been any trouble with them. I won't have the slightest fear of them in the future."

"I don't think there will be any danger to be apprehended from them now. Togaro, the leader, and myself had a little difference once——"

"I know. Velo has told me all about it——"

"And he'll be careful in the future. He's a thundering savage though, and I've no doubt but that he murdered poor Harry. However, bygones must be bygones now. We want no more bloodshed."

"No indeed," she said with a shudder, "but what has occurred was no fault of yours. You are, I am sure," she added impulsively, placing her hand on his arm, "a merciful man, as well as a brave one. Your wife that is to be will be a happy woman, Mr. Barry."

For thirteen days the little *Mahina* ran southward under cloudless skies and over softly swelling seas till Bouka was sighted, and Togaro and his men prepared to be landed in a little bay fringed with coco-palms growing around a half-circle of snowy beach. They had all behaved well, and each man, ere he got into the boat which was to take them ashore, insisted on shaking hands with Barry and every one else on board. They were landed at sundown, and by dark the *Mahina* was again slipping over the long Pacific swell with the light of myriad stars illumining her snowy canvas and shining upon her spotless deck.

CHAPTER XVI.

EXIT RAWLINGS AND THE GREEK.

At daylight one morning, a week after leaving Bouka Island, the *Mahina* was lying becalmed off Nitendi, one of the islands of the Santa Cruz group, and just as Barry came on deck for his coffee the look-out called to Barradas—

"Sail ho, sir, right astern!"

Barry ran aloft, and there six or seven miles astern was a schooner-rigged steamer. Barradas, who had followed him, knew her at once.

"That's the *Reynard*, sir—one of the Sydney squadron patrolling the New Hebrides. I've seen her pretty often, and know her well."

"Ah, we're in luck, Manuel. There's a chance now of getting rid of our prisoners—for a time at least. She's steaming this way, and will be up to us in another hour. Get the whaleboat ready and hoist our colours."

There was no need for the *Mahina* to signal that she desired to communicate with the warship, for the latter steamed steadily along till she was abreast of the brig, and then stopped her engines and waited for Barry to come aboard.

In a few minutes the master of the *Mahina* was on the quarter-deck of the *Reynard* talking to her commander, a clean-shaven, youthful-looking officer.

"Come below, Mr. Barry, and tell me your story in detail," he said politely. "I will do all I can to assist you, if it was only for the pleasure of hearing that that scoundrel, Billy Chase, is no longer in the land of the living. And I must compliment you upon your good-nature and sound judgment in carrying back his natives to Bouka. I wish there were more trading captains like you in the distressful South Seas."

Lieutenant-Commander Martyn listened with intense interest to Barry's strange story, from the time he came on board the *Mahina* in Sydney Harbour till the *Reynard* was sighted.

"It is a perfect romance," he declared, "and you'll be quite a famous man in the history of the South Seas. Now as to your prisoners. As you have made the request I'll take them from you. My orders from the Admiral are to follow out the High Commissioner's instructions 'to maintain order and arrest all suspicious persons within the jurisdiction of the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific,' and these two fellows you have on board your vessel certainly come within the category of 'suspicious persons'—to put it mildly. I am bound to Noumea, New Caledonia, and from there I can send them on to Sydney or Fiji for the trial—wish I could dispose of them both in the good old-fashioned style, by dangling them from the end of the yard-arm. Now as to this other man, Barradas. He seems to have made all the amends possible in his power, but nevertheless he certainly was their accomplice in the piracy of the vessel. This may mean from two to five years' imprisonment for him—unless," he added carelessly, "he runs away before you get to Sydney."

Barry rose, when the commander bade him be seated again. "Don't go just yet, Mr. Barry. Take another whiskey-and-soda with me, and then I'll go aboard your ship, take over the custody of those two anointed scoundrels, and"—here he smiled—"ask to be introduced to the heroine of your strange tale."

He touched the bell on the table and gave the necessary orders to the sentry, and in a few seconds the boatswain's whistle called away one of the boats which, with the commander and a junior lieutenant, left the *Reynard*, together with Barry, who was in his own boat, but went alongside the *Mahina* first so as to receive the naval officer with all due ceremony.

Stepping on the deck, Commander Martyn returned Barry's salute in the usual naval manner—as if he had never before seen him in his life—and asked to see the ship's papers. He was conducted to the cabin, and the ship's papers and all other necessary documents bearing upon John Tracey's rights of possession of Arrecifos laid before him for examination.

"Everything is quite right, Mr. Barry," he said formally. "Now please hand over your prisoners to Lieutenant Jenkins, who will take them away immediately."

Then the coxswain of the man-of-war's boat and two bluejackets entered the sail-room, and Rawlings and the Greek were brought out, handcuffed, and helped down over the side into the boat. Neither of them looked at Barry, nor he at them, until their backs were turned to him. Not once during the voyage had he spoken to them, and now, though he did not know it, he saw them for the last time.

"Now, Mr. Barry——" and the naval officer turned to him with a smile.

The captain of the *Mahina* tapped at Mrs. Tracey's cabin door.

"Captain Martyn, of the *Reynard*, would like to be introduced to you, Mrs. Tracey," he said.

The door opened at once and Alice Tracey met the officer with outstretched hand. "And I am very pleased indeed," she said with a bright smile as Martyn bent low over her hand. He had no idea that he would see so beautiful a woman in the cabin of a South Sea trading vessel.

"Yours is indeed a strange, sad story, Mrs. Tracey," he said as he sat down beside her, "and the master of this vessel" (Barry had discreetly gone on deck) "seems to have acted in an exceedingly brave manner throughout. He looks—and of course he is—a very plucky fellow and a perfect type of the British seaman."

"He is indeed! He is like my poor husband"—her voice trembled—"who was also a perfect type of an English sailor."

The commander of the *Reynard* and Mrs. Tracey remained chatting together for nearly a quarter of an hour; he, delighted to meet an educated and refined white woman under such strange circumstances, and she listening with a secret pleasure to his praises of "Mr." Barry—for, like all naval officers, Commander Martyn could not address or speak of a merchant skipper as "captain."

Then "Mr." Barry came down and he and the naval officer and Mrs. Tracey drank a glass of champagne together, and exchanged various promises to meet again when the *Reynard* came to Sydney at the end of her cruise.

"This meeting with you, Mrs. Tracey, is the only pleasurable incident of a detestable cruise, I can assure you," said Martyn as he bade her farewell; "the *Reynard* is a beast of a ship and we are employed on beastly work; in fact I'm nothing better

than a London sergeant of police detailed off for duty to watch 'the criminal classes' in Southwark or the Borough Road. Wish to goodness, however, that I was there now instead of stewing in these wretched islands—chasing slavers we can never catch and assailed by the Australian newspapers as 'lazy, la-de-da "haw-haws."' Wish I had one of those newspaper fellows on board the *Reynard* to show him how the much-maligned naval officer doing patrol work in the South Seas manages to live and keep his men from rank mutiny. Now, good-bye once more. Hope we'll all meet in Sydney soon."

Shaking hands with Mrs. Tracey, he and Barry went on deck and took a few turns together.

"She's a sweet little woman, Mr. Barry," said the naval officer impulsively; "her soft, velvety eyes are like those of a girl I know in the old country—near Swanage way. You're not a married man, are you?"

"No," replied Barry, with a laugh; "but I hope to be within a week or so after this little brig drops her mud-hook in Sydney harbour."

"Ah! I thought so! And you deserve her! By Jove, you do! It's the 'brave knight and the beauteous woman' story over again, with the South Seas for a setting. And she *is* a beautiful woman! Good luck to you both! Wish I could come to the wedding; but as I can't you must just accept my best wishes and all that sort of thing, you know. And now I'll have something to write about to the little girl in Dorset. Good-bye, here's my boat alongside."

He grasped Barry's hand vigorously, and with his sword clattering on deck and nodding a good-bye to Barradas and Joe, who stood at the gang-way, he descended the ladder and jumped into the *Reynard's* boat, which at once pushed off.

A quarter of an hour later Barry and Mrs. Tracey stood watching the gunboat as with the black smoke pouring from her long, yellow funnel she cut through the glassy water on her way to Noumea. Long before noon only a faint line of smoke on the southern sea-rim was visible.

That night as the brig was moving quietly through the water, and Barradas had just relieved Joe (who was now second mate), the captain came and stood beside him,

and began to speak to him in low but earnest tones. The Spaniard listened intently, but shook his head every now and then in dissent.

"I won't do anything like that, Captain Barry! I won't run away like a coward. I am a Catholic and have vowed to the Holy Virgin and the blessed Saints that I shall lead a better life. And I cannot begin that better life by avoiding the punishment that I should endure. No, sir, I will stick to the ship and be a man, and not a coward."

"Barradas," said Barry earnestly, placing his hand on the Spaniard's shoulder, "think again. Whatever harm you have done to Mrs. Tracey has been amply atoned for. The law may recognise that, or it may not. The captain of the man-of-war himself thinks that it would be as well for you to leave the ship before we get to Sydney. And remember that I and Mrs. Tracey, who are your sincere friends, will have to appear against you. This would be distressing to us both, Manuel."

"I am prepared to suffer for what I have done, captain," answered the Spaniard quietly, "and when I come out of prison I shall come to you and Mrs. Tracey and ask you to forget that I was Manuel Barradas, the fellow-criminal of Rawlings and the Greek, and ask you to only remember that I have tried to undo some of the wrong I have done."

"As you please, Manuel. But in me you will ever have a firm friend, even though you will force me to be an accuser."

CHAPTER XVII.

BARRY RECEIVES A "STIFFENER."

One day, nearly a month after the brig had spoken the *Reynard*, old Watson walked into the big room of the Sydney Merchants' Exchange, as he had done the first thing every morning for some weeks, and scanned the "arrivals" board. For the letters which Barry had written to him and Rose Maynard had come safely to hand nearly six weeks before.

Almost the first notice that met his eye was this:—

"Brig flying Hawaiian Islands and British colours entered 8.45."

The old man tossed his hat up to the ceiling, and gave a loud hurrah.

"Hallo, Watson, what's up?" said a seafaring friend named Craig, whom he ran up against at the door and nearly knocked down, in his eagerness to get out again.

"That brig I was looking out for has just come in. Her skipper is a friend of mine, and although he's been mighty lucky, I've rotten bad news for him, and wish some one else could tell it to him. Damn all women, I say!—leastways, all those who don't stick to the man who stuck to them."

"What's wrong, Watson?"

"Damn them all, I say!" repeated the old sailor in his deep, rumbling tones. "Here's as fine a sailor man as ever trod a deck coming into port to find the girl that was sworn to him another man's wife! Isn't that enough to make a man say 'Damn all women!' including the bad with the good?—not that this one is one of the bad lot, though."

"If I was served like that I'd make it mighty hot for the man who cut me out," said Craig, as they descended the steps of the Exchange, and by mutual intuition walked across the street to the nearest hotel.

"There are circumstances, and circumstances, Tom Craig. This girl is as good a little woman as ever put foot in shoe leather, but she had no grit in her, and that's the whole secret. Come in and take a drink, and I'll tell you the whole yarn before I go aboard and see the young fellow. I've got a letter for him—from her—in my pocket. It'll be a regular stiffener for him, poor chap; but if I'm any judge of a man he'll not make a song about it."

Entering a sitting-room of the hotel, the two men seated themselves at one of the tables and ordered drinks; then Watson, wiping his florid, heated face with his handkerchief, pulled out a letter from his breast-pocket and banged it down upon the table.

"That letter, Tom Craig, was written by a broken-hearted woman to the man she loves in her own weak-hearted way, if you understand me. And I have to give that blarsted letter to one of the best chaps that I ever met. And I don't like doing it, Tom Craig, I don't like doing it."

"Why don't you post it?"

"Because I can't. Didn't I tell you I'm going off to see him now? He knows that I know the girl who promised herself to him, and the first thing he will ask me will be

about her; and then I'll have to tell him she's been married this six months to an old fellow, old enough to be her grandfather, poor child."

"Matter o' money, I suppose?"

"Matter of keeping body and soul together, Tom. It was this way. This young fellow and the girl were sweet on each other a long time ago, when her father was one of the big bugs of Sydney, but the girl's mother wouldn't have no sailor man courting her daughter. So there was a hitch for a time, and Barry—that's his name—was forbidden to see her again. He went off to sea again, got a berth as mate in the Tahiti trade, and when he came back to Sydney found that his girl and her father were close upon starving. The old man had lost all his money and the girl was earning a living by serving in a draper's shop—close by here, in George Street. The young fellow had precious little money, but he gave the old man all he had except a few shillings—something like six quid. Mind you, Tom Craig, the girl told me all this herself."

"He must be a good sort of a chap, Watson."

"Good! He's solid gold. Well, as I was saying, he did what he could for the old gentleman and the girl, and the same night as he met them he sailed. But before he did sail he gave the girl's father the address of some scientific old swab who he thought would buy some damned ebony or ivory carving that they wanted to sell. See?"

"I can see how it's coming out, Watson," replied his friend. "I know of just such another——"

"Shut up. I'm not sitting here to listen to any yarns of yours, Tom Craig. Well, as might have been expected, this old scientific fellow, Colonel Maclean, takes a fancy to the girl and asks her to take the billet of secretary to him. She took it—took it to help the old father who was getting shakier and shakier every day, and wanted all sorts of attention and nursing.

"I used to go and see them pretty frequently—at first just on account of this young fellow Barry who I had taken a liking to, and then because I liked the old man and the girl herself, whose voice was as sweet as the note of a thrush. She used to talk to me about Barry and made no secret of her loving him and all that.

"Well, one evening, I found she was in great trouble. Her father had had a paralytic seizure, and there were a couple of swell doctors attending him, and in the sitting-room was this old scientific bloke, Colonel Maclean, twirling his moustache and saying how very distressed he was and all that. He was mighty civil to me and took me down to Pfahlert's Hotel, where we had a drink or two, and he told me that he

was deeply interested in Miss Maynard's welfare. Of course, I saw in a moment what he was driving at, and tried to do my best for Barry, saying that we (Miss Maynard and me) expected to see him back in a month or two, when they would be married.

"'Oh, indeed,' says the swab, 'how very interesting! I know Mr. Barry personally and have bought some very valuable ethnographical specimens from him. *Good-night*, Mr.—er, Mr. Watson.'

"Well, the next time I called at Miss Maynard's rooms I found that she and her father were gone—gone to Colonel Maclean's house, so the landlady said. I footed it out there and asked to see her. She came downstairs and met me, crying.

"'My father will never rise from his bed again, Mr. Watson,' she says, 'and I have promised to marry Colonel Maclean to-morrow. Here, take this, please,' and she hands me this very identical letter which I've just shown you, Tom. And married she was the very next day."

"It wasn't your fault, anyway, Sam," observed Mr. Craig, as he drank off his brandy-and-soda.

"Who said it was?" inquired the old mate indignantly; "I wasn't in charge of the girl, was I? But what has given me such a smack in the face is this, Tom; about a month after she was married I got a letter from Barry telling me all about his adventures—and damned queer adventures they are—and enclosing one to Miss Maynard."

"What did you do with it, Sam?"

"Posted it to her—to 'Mrs. Maclean, Carabella Villa, Darling Point,' and I got this," said Watson furiously, hauling another letter out of his pocket and reading it to his friend:—

"'Mrs. Maclean thanks Mr. Samuel Watson for his kind note and the letter enclosed received yesterday. In reply to Mr. Watson's sympathetic remarks concerning Mrs. Maclean's father's health, Mrs. Maclean is sorry to say that there is no improvement. Colonel Maclean wishes Mr. Samuel Watson to understand that the letter enclosed to his wife requires no answer.'"

Craig grinned. "That's the correct kind of letter to write to excuse a dirty trick, Sam. It's got the true, rotten, swell twang about it."

The old mate sighed. "Maybe, Tom, maybe. But I don't believe she wrote it naturally—from her heart, like. I believe that her husband made her write it. He has a cold, hard face, and she's but little more than a child. But it's hard on this young fellow."

"It is hard, Sam. But there's lots o' women in the world, and I daresay he'll find another just as good before a month o' Sundays. Come, buck up, old man; what'll you have? Same again?"

"No more for me, Tom; I'm off aboard to see him. And I feel as if I was a blarsted sheriff telling a man that he was to be hung."

Craig slapped his friend on the back as they rose from their seats. "He'll get over it, Sam, never fear. When the heart is young, as the Bible says, it doesn't care a damn for anybody. And if he's getting good money he'll soon forget all about the girl; for he'll see plenty more just as good as her. Anyway that's my experience, Sam."

Bidding his friend good-bye, Watson, with a gloomy brow, walked to the Circular Quay and hired a water-man to take him down the harbour to the *Mahina*.

"There she is, sir, over there in Neutral Bay," said the boatman as he rounded Fort Macquarie.

Half an hour's pull brought them alongside, and the old man jumping on deck at once made his way into the cabin. Barry was seated at the table, getting his papers ready and waiting for Mrs. Tracey.

Springing to his feet he grasped Watson's hand and shook it warmly, but at once discerned from the expression on the old man's kindly face that there was something wrong. Before he could frame a question, however, Watson blurted out that he had bad news.

"Anything the matter with Miss Maynard or her father," he asked quietly.

"The old gentleman has had a paralytic seizure; but it's not him I had in my mind." Then he hesitated.

"Go on, man, what is it?"

"The girl is married—married Colonel Maclean about two months ago."

Barry's face paled under its bronze, but he said nothing for a few moments. Then he motioned his friend to a seat.

"Sit down, Watson," he said quietly; "it is bad news for me, and news I never dreamt of hearing. Tell me all about it. Steward, bring us something to drink."

The red-faced old mate looked at him with a certain admiring sympathy, then he laid his hand on his shoulder.

"You're one of the right sort. Now I'll tell you the yarn, but first of all she gave me a letter for you. Here it is."

The captain of the *Mahina* took it from him, opened it, and read it with an unmoved countenance. Then without a word of comment he passed it over to Watson; it contained but a few lines:—

"DEAR TED,—Try to forgive me. Perhaps in after years I will try to forgive myself. I could not bear to see my father suffer. Weak and unstable as water as I am in some things, my duty and affection for him conquered my love for you.—ROSE."

Lighting a cigar, he leant back in his chair and listened to Watson's story. When it was finished he got up and held out his hand.

"Thank you, Watson, for all you tried to do for me. It's a bitter pill to swallow, but I'll get over it in time, like everything else."

Watson could not refrain from a sigh of relief. He had feared that Barry would cut up roughly.

"That is so," he said, "but it's a hard knock for you. Now I've lots of other news for you. First of all I got your letters from Arrecifos safely. The *John and Pauline* whaler put them ashore at Levuka, and I can tell you I went to bed with a bad head that night."

"What did you do with Miss Maynard's—I beg her pardon—Mrs. Colonel Maclean's letter?"

"Posted it to her, and this is what I got in reply," and he showed him the note he had exhibited to his friend Tom Craig.

Barry read it with a smile of contempt. "What's the other news, Watson?"

"Ah, now I have something that will astonish you. Rawlings and the other chap are dead."

"Dead!"

"Aye, both of 'em."

"How do you know?" said Barry quickly.

"The *Eclipse*, man-of-war, brought the news from Noumea last week. Here's the account of it," and he spread a newspaper out on the table, and pointed to an article headed—"Tragedy in the South Seas."

"Wait a moment," cried Barry excitedly, as springing from his seat he tapped at the door of Mrs. Tracey's cabin. "Come out quickly, please."

The door opened and Mrs. Tracey, without waiting for an introduction, first shook hands with the old mate. "You are Mr. Watson! I guessed who you were the moment you came on board, and I heard your voice. Now what is the matter, Captain Barry?"

"Read this, Mrs. Tracey," he replied, spreading the paper out on the cabin table. Stooping beside him they read it together:—

"Just as the *Eclipse* was leaving New Caledonia, the gunboat *Reynard* arrived, and reported having spoken the Hawaiian brig *Mahina* in the vicinity of the Banks' Group. The acting master informed the commander of the gunboat that he had on board in confinement two men who, some months previously, had murdered the captain of the brig, and seized the vessel. By the aid of some natives, the chief officer succeeded in retaking her, and the two men were over-powered and placed in heavy irons. Commander Martyn, of the *Reynard*, consented to take charge of them, as the brig was deeply laden, and likely to make a long passage to Sydney. They were at once transferred to the gunboat, which then proceeded on her voyage to Noumea.

"About a week afterwards one of the two, a powerfully built Italian or Greek, who was of a sullen and savage disposition, was relieved of his irons for half an hour by the doctor's orders, and placed on deck with his companion, as he complained of a severe pain in his chest. This was evidently a ruse, for while the sentry's back was turned for a moment the Greek seized his fellow pirate (who was in irons) by the waist, and leapt overboard with him. They sank immediately, the Greek, no doubt, having determined to drown with the other man.

"Fuller particulars of the seizure of the brig, and her recapture, will be looked forward to with interest on her arrival here. It is stated that she has a cargo of 'golden-edge' pearl shell worth over 40,000 pounds."

Mrs. Tracey shuddered, and covered her face with her hands. "Heaven forgive them their crimes," she murmured.

Barry could not help a certain feeling of relief. Both he and Mrs. Tracey had looked forward to the trial of Rawlings and the Greek with the utmost aversion; for heartless villains and murderers as they were, their probable death at the hands of the law haunted Mrs. Tracey like a nightmare, and Barradas himself had a growing horror of the coming time, for on his evidence alone Rawlings would certainly be hanged.

"I must tell Barradas," said Barry; "steward, send the mate here."

The Spaniard came below, heard the news in silence, bent his head and crossed himself, and quietly went on deck again. He knew that in a few hours, or a day or so at most, he would be arrested, but knew that his conduct since the murder of Captain Tracey would go largely in his favour, and that in both Barry and Mrs. Tracey he had friends. As for attempting to escape, he had put the thought away at once and for ever the night he walked to the little island cemetery.

"Are you ready to come on shore, Mrs. Tracey?" inquired Barry as the mate left the cabin.

"Quite ready, captain," she answered with a light smile, "and see here. Look what I am taking with me," and stepping into her cabin she returned with the white wooden box which contained "Rose Maynard's Dot."

Barry rose to the occasion, like the man he was. "You must keep those pearls, Mrs. Tracey. The woman for whom you intended them is married. I only heard of it

just now." He spoke very quietly, but Mrs. Tracey could detect the shame that he felt in making the admission.

"I am so sorry——" she began, and then with sudden passion she flung the box away. "How could she? I hate her! I hate her! She must be a wicked, worthless——"

She gave him a glance which told Barry her secret, and then with an hysterical sob passed him and entered her cabin, and as Toea shut the door old Watson looked at Barry, and the faintest flicker of a smile moved his lips.

Then stooping down he picked up the box of pearls and placed them in Barry's hand.

"My boy, I think your happiness lies in there—in that cabin. She loves you."

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON BOARD THE NEW BARQUE.

Three months had come and gone, and one warm summer's evening as Barry was dressing for the theatre one of the hotel waiters announced "Captain Watson."

"Come in, old man," cried Barry cheerfully, and he opened the door to his visitor. "Sit down there and smoke while I put on my togs, then we'll have a long cool drink. Phew, it'll be a roaster this evening."

"Going out dining?" inquired the rumbling-voiced old man.

"No, to the theatre. I'm taking Mrs. Tracey. How is everything getting on on board?"

"Right as can be. Came in to see if you'd come down to-morrow and have a look at her."

Barry nodded. "Right you are, Watson: and I daresay that Mrs. Tracey will come too. She takes a lot of pride in the new ship I can tell you."

"Just so. And you'll find that the new ship will be even a better sailer than the *Mahina*."

For the *Mahina*, had been sold a month or so before, and in her place had been bought a smart little barque of double her tonnage.

She was to sail for Arrecifos in a few days, and old Watson had joined her as chief mate, for poor Manuel Barradas was in prison, having received a sentence of two years' imprisonment for his share in the seizure of the brig. And here, as this story draws near to an end, let me tell what became of him. After twelve months of his sentence had expired he was, through the persistent efforts of Barry and his friends, set at liberty, the judge who had tried him being one of some hundreds of people who petitioned the Crown on his behalf. Before another year had passed he was back in Arrecifos Lagoon, in charge of the station, which he took over from Velo at Barry's desire; the faithful Samoan being tired of living on shore, and for long, long years Barradas remained in Barry's employ on the island, happy and contented and with his mind at rest.

The hotel in which Barry was living was quite near the wharves of the Circular Quay. He had taken up his quarters there after the *Mahina* had been sold, for as old Watson was an active and energetic chief officer there was no need for him to live on board the new vessel. During the time he had been living on shore he had met Mrs. Tracey frequently; for he acted as her business agent, and she relied upon him with the most implicit confidence. When he suggested that the brig should be sold and another vessel bought she eagerly acquiesced on the one condition that he would take command.

"Of course I will," he said, "and very glad to do so, Mrs. Tracey. She is a beautiful little barque and not a bit too big. You will see how she can sail when you pay a visit to Arrecifos next year."

"I almost wish I were going this time, Captain Barry. Till next year seems a long, long time to wait, and what I should do without Toea to talk to I can't imagine. I suppose I shall grow more reconciled by and by."

"You will make many friends, Mrs. Tracey."

Her cheeks reddened slightly.

"Friends! No, not friends—merely people who want to know me because I am rich. And I don't want to make friends. The other afternoon a Mrs. Bell-Lovatt and her

two daughters called to see me, and Mrs. Bell-Lovatt simply gushed over me for half an hour and made me feel quite sick with her odious flattery. I knew the girls when I was at school in Melbourne, but I've never seen them since and had no wish to see them again."

Barry laughed. "You'll have to put up with a good deal of that sort of thing, I fear. Even I, myself, have discovered that I unknowingly possessed heaps of friends. When I go into the Exchange now, a dozen or more men—shipowners, brokers, and others—insist on shaking hands with me and asking me to dinner. When I was in Sydney last and was badly in want of a berth no less than three of these very men metaphorically kicked me out of their offices when I applied to them. But now that I am agent and manager to 'the rich Mrs. Tracey' they can't find words to express their admiration of my talents and all-round virtues."

"Ah, well. We must not mind these things, I suppose. But I wish I were a man—I should at least escape being called upon and kissed by 'catty' women like Mrs. Bell-Lovatt."

Not once since he returned had Barry caught sight of the woman he had hoped to call his wife, and as the days went by he thought less and less of her and more of Alice Tracey. And his would indeed have been a hard, unimpressionable nature not to have yielded the influence she was surely, but slowly, exercising upon him. She honestly tried to attract him, and now that he was a free man she did not mean to let him go away to sea again without trying to let him understand that she would feel the loss of his society very much.

"If he cared for me ever so much he wouldn't tell me," she thought to herself, "he is that sort of man, I'm sure. If I had no money it would be different. Ah, well, I must wait."

Old Watson, in his own quiet way, was helping matters on; for he conceived quite a sincere admiration for the young widow, and one day he bluntly told Barry that she was "only waiting to be asked. And there'll be a hungry crowd hanging around her once you are away at sea, my boy."

"She's too rich a woman for me to think of, Watson," he said, with a laugh.

This was said on board the barque when they were at dinner, and Mosé, the steward promptly imparted it to Toea when she one day came to look at the new ship, and Toea of course repeated it to her mistress, who said nothing but smiled wisely.

Leaving his hotel Barry drove to Mrs. Tracey's apartments in Macquarie Street, where she soon joined him, looking very charming in a dainty evening dress of yellow silk.

"How do I look, Captain Barry of the barque *Arrecifos*?" she inquired.

"As beautiful as the barque *Arrecifos* herself," answered Barry promptly, "and no more beautiful ship was ever launched."

"Oh, how nice of you to pay me such a compliment!" she laughed as a vivid blush dyed her face. "I really wish Mr. Watson were here to see me too; for he, too, has been ministering to my woman's vanity. He says quite a lot of nice things to me, the dear old fellow."

"Yes, I know he admires you intensely," laughed Barry, "and he makes no secret of it either. He's as simple as a child in some things, but as honest as the day."

In a few minutes they reached the theatre, just in time to see the curtain rise on the first act of "King John." The play was one which interested them both, and until the end of the first act neither of them troubled to look about them. Then Barry, turning to speak to his companion, pointed out to her on the opposite side of the house a striking figure of an old man with white hair—the premier of the colony.

"Yes, I see him; what a fine, powerful face!"

Barry for the moment made no answer, for suddenly he found himself looking into the pale face of a tall, slenderly built woman seated beside a man he knew—old, white-mustached and of a generally military cut. He dropped his eyes at once and turned his head quickly away, but not so quickly that Mrs. Tracey saw his forehead mantle momentarily.

"Poor little Rose," he thought, "I'm glad she didn't see me." Then he saw that Mrs. Tracey, who was looking straight before her, seemed to have suddenly become white.

"Are you not feeling well?" he asked; "the theatre is very hot."

She gave him a swift, penetrating glance. "It is very hot," she said in a low voice. "Do you mind if we leave?"

"Frankly, no," and Barry stroked his beard, and something like a smile came into his eyes; "I don't particularly care about staying." Then he bent his head closer. "There are some people here——"

"I know," she interrupted softly, "and it hurts you to see her."

"Not a bit," he said earnestly; "but, you see, it might not be very pleasant for her to see me—might spoil her enjoyment a little. And as I know the man too, I'll have to bow if we meet going out."

She placed her little gloved hand on his arm.

"Then let us go," she said softly.

When they reached the vestibule, Barry stopped.

"It is not quite nine o'clock. Would you care to come to the Lyceum and see Rignold in 'The Ironmaster'? A cab will take us there in five minutes."

"Do you really want me to go?"

"Very much indeed. Come."

They descended the stairs together, and entering a cab drove off, Alice Tracey's dark eyes sparkling like diamonds as she looked into Barry's calm, collected face.

But not a seat could be obtained, much to Barry's annoyance; then he laughed. "There's nothing worth seeing at any of the other theatres. What is to be done? Would you care to come for a drive round to Lady Marquarie's Chair? The *Arrecifos* is lying just near by in Woolloomoolloo Bay. It's a pretty drive."

"Oh yes. It will be lovely to be out in the cool, fresh air."

The cabman took them to the Chair, from where they had a good view of the stately little barque as she lay upon the silent waters in a flood of moonlight.

"Let us walk down to the edge of the water and hail old Watson—just to give him a surprise."

"Indeed I have a very great mind to go on board—may I?" she asked as he helped her out of the cab.

"Why not? He'll be off his head with delight. And then I'll get big Joe and some of the hands to pull us round in the boat to the Circular Quay. Here you are, cabby. You need not wait."

Old Watson's astonishment when he heard the captain's hail and saw him and Mrs. Tracey standing on the rocky shore just abreast of the ship may be imagined. In a few minutes he and two hands jumped into the boat and pulled her ashore.

"Well, well, to be sure, this is a surprise, Mrs. Tracey! why——"

"Mr. Watson, don't talk now. Wait till we are on board. I've come to show you my dress."

The old mate uttered his deep, rumbling laugh, as the boat pushed off and quickly drew up alongside. Then, after the steward had brought him and the captain a brandy-and-soda each and a glass of wine for the fair owner of the *Arrecifos*, he discreetly went below out of the way under the excuse of writing a letter or two, and left her and Barry on deck under the awning.

They sat talking together for some time—of the people in Arrecifos, of Barradas, and of the days on the old *Mahina*. Then when Barry spoke of the barque's approaching departure she became silent.

"I shall miss you very much, Captain Barry——" she began and then she stopped. He looked at her and saw that her eyes were filled with tears.

"You do me a great honour to say so," he began, and then her eyes met his again; in a moment he took her hand and bent down towards her.

"I don't want you to go," she whispered.

Barry's answer was to slip his arm round her waist and draw her head upon his shoulder.

An hour later old Watson, still pretending to write, heard them descending the companion way. He stood up, as Mrs. Tracey, her beautiful face radiant with smiles, came in on Barry's arm.

"Mr. Watson," she said laughingly, "this ship is to proceed to Arrecifos under the command of *Captain* Watson; Captain Barry will remain in Sydney."

"To marry the owner," added Barry, as he looked into her dark eyes, and drew her slender figure towards him.

THE END

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