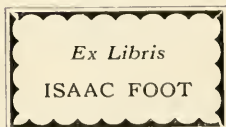


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BY LOUIS BECKE



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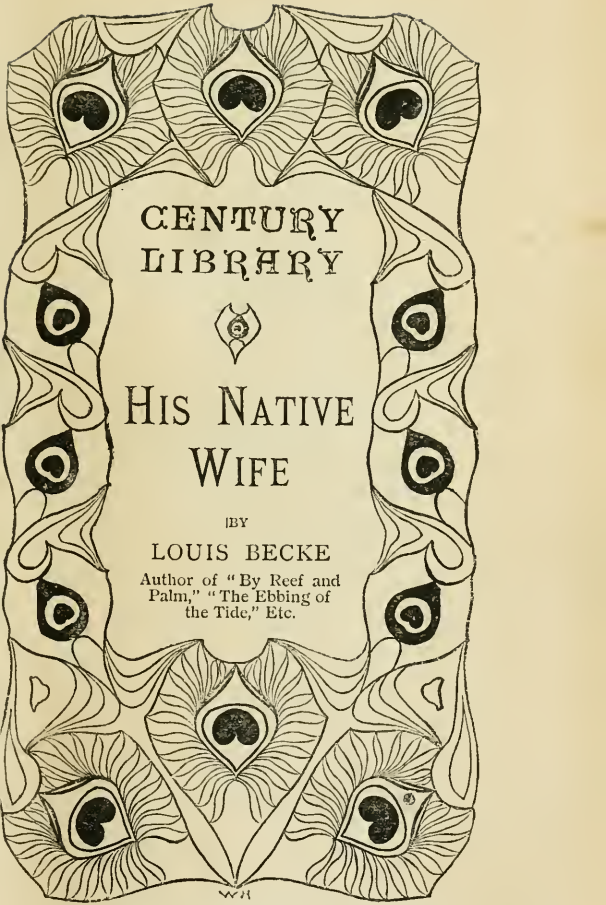




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HIS NATIVE WIFE, (PAGE 98)



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HIS NATIVE
WIFE

BY

LOUIS BECKE

Author of "By Reef and
Palm," "The Ebbing of
the Tide," Etc.

W.H.

LONDON: T. FISHER UNWIN

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“Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break and the wine runneth out and the bottles perish.”

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HIS NATIVE WIFE.



CHAPTER I.

CAPTAIN AMOS BENNETT SEEKS
A NEW SECOND MATE.

THE *Kellet Passmore*, of New Bedford, had just dropped anchor in the Bay of Islands, and Captain Amos Bennett came ashore to look for some new hands. But the skipper of the *Kellet Passmore* was pretty well known, and although there were plenty of

•§ His Native Wife

men, both whites and natives, to be had by any other whale-ship captain, there was none anxious to try his luck in the *Kellet Passmore*. It was far better, they argued, for them to do another month or two of solid loafing ashore, where there was plenty of cheap grog and where the charms of very unconventional Maori female society were so easily available, and wait for another whale-ship to come along, than to ship in the *Kellet Passmore*. For it was pretty generally known, from Talcahuana on the west coast of South America to Kororareka in the Bay of Islands on the coast of New Zealand, that Captain Bennett wasn't a nice man to sail with, and those who

His Native Wife 56

did sail with him, whether the *Kellet Passmore* met with bad luck or "greasy" luck, generally left her at the first port she touched at after a cruise, with broken noses, smashed jaws or fractured ribs, superinduced by knuckle-dusters, belaying-pins, and other cheerless incentives to industry wielded by the unsparing hands of Captain Amos Bennett and the after-guard of his ship.

Smoking an extremely long and very strong cigar, Captain Bennett slouched into the leading combined store and grog shanty which, in those days, was the rendezvous of everyone living in the Bay, and in amiable tones invited every one present to "come and hev suthin'."

§ His Native Wife

Some twelve or fifteen men, whites, Kanakas, and Maoris, who were loafing about the store in expectation of the captain's visit, accepted his invitation with sundry nods, pushes, and winks among themselves, and after drinking a stiff tot of what was known locally as "hell biled down to a small half pint," Mauta, a Tongan half-caste boat-steerer, respectfully asked the captain if he had had much luck on his present cruise.

This was Captain Bennett's opportunity, and for the following ten minutes he lied rapidly and artistically about the *Kellet Passmore's* wonderful luck in past cruises, but admitted that on the present one, since he had left New Bedford five months

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before he had taken but three whales, "princerpully," he said, "on accaount of some passengers I hev aboard who are in a h— of a hurry ter get up ter Ponapé in the Caroline group."

"Traders, Captain Bennett?" asked the storekeeper.

"No," replied the American, drawing up one of his long legs, clasping his lengthy arms around his knee and shutting his left eye, "mission'ries from Bosting, agoin' daown tew the Carolines tew save the ragin' heathen in his blindness from bowin' daown tew wood an' stone, and tew teach them tew charge a dollar each for a chicken tew the ungodly and Gentile sailor man."

The men laughed, and Captain Bennett, without moving a

• His Native Wife

muscle of his long, solemn visage, nodded to the store-keeper to fill the glasses again.

“No wonder you losa the whala, captain,” said a short, muscular Portuguese, who wanted a ship but had no intention of trying the *Kellet Passmore* with her present commander, “de dam missionara he bringa you bada lucka, eh?”

“Waal,” said Bennett, eyeing the speaker keenly through his half-closed eyes, “I won’t say that because it’s jest my own fault. Yew see, boys, it’s jest this way. These here people—a man and two females—are darned anxious tew get daown tew the Carolines, and the Bosting Board of Missions paid me five hundred dollars each for

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'em, to give 'em a passage in my ship. Consikently, although we saw whales often enough, I only lowered after 'em three times, when they was close to. Yew see, these here people hevving paid a big passage money, air entitled to get there ez quick ez I can take 'em."

An incredulous grin went round among the men, which Bennett affected not to notice, then he resumed by remarking that as he always liked to do the square thing he was going to count the fifteen hundred dollars passage-money as part of the ship's take.

"That sounds square," whispered a white sailor to a young, seaman-like man who sat upon a case at the further end of the

☞ His Native Wife

store. "He can't be a bad sort. I'm for one if he wants men."

"Lies," said the young fellow, "but don't let me stop you. I can tell you all about him though. He's the two ends and bight of a lying swab."

Having given those present two drinks each, Captain Bennett got to business, and lighting another cigar, asked them if any of them wanted to try their luck in the *Kellet Passmore*.

But although they drank his rum cheerfully and were willing to drink more, and listened with stolid complacency to his alluring inducements about a full ship in twelve months, he talked in vain.

Then the deep fountains of Captain Amos Bennett's nautical

His Native Wife 96

blasphemy were broken up, and having violently cursed each man separately and the lot collectively, and insinuated that they were not fit to tend cows, let alone kill whales, he withdrew to look for men elsewhere.

.

An hour or two later he strode down towards his boat with five Maori hands in tow. When close to the beach some one hailed him from the rear, and the leathern-visaged Yankee, chawing fiercely at his Manilla, slewed round on his heel and, with needless profanity, asked the speaker what the —— he wanted.

“I believe you want men, sir.”

“Not the kinder men bum-

His Native Wife

min' around here, anyway," snarled Bennett, recognising in the man who spoke to him the young fellow who had sat upon the box in the corner of the store; and then looking at the bronzed face and muscular figure of his questioner, he asked—

“ Air yew one of them Yahoos I was talkin' to while back? ”

“ I was there,” replied the young man quietly, “ but,” and he stepped directly in front of the American, “ if you call me a Yahoo you'll lose a good man for the *Kellet Passmore*, and get a hell of a bashing into the bargain.”

The skipper of the *Kellet Passmore* was no coward, but he knew he would stand a poor show with the man before him,

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and he wanted men badly. His thin face underwent some hideous squirmings and contortions intended for an amused smile.

“Young feller, yew hev some spirit ; I kin see that right away. Naow, I do want men, and yew want a ship, and the *Kellet Passmore* is jest——”

“Stow all that,” said the man coolly. “*I* know all about the *Kellet Passmore* and all about you, too. I’m willing to go in her for a cruise. I think it’ll take a smarter man than you to haze me, so don’t try it on.”

The audacity of this speech seemed to stagger the Yankee considerably, but he soon recovered himself.

“Yew air mighty smart, young

§ His Native Wife

feller," he said presently, in a low, rasping voice, and his thin lips parted and showed his yellow teeth; "and what sorter per-sition aboard of my ship may I hev the honour ev asking yew to take?"

"Any d——d thing you like. I hear you've got a lot of cripples for boat-steerers, and you can't get a better man than me."

"Do tell?" and Bennett grinned sarcastically, "then you'll be a darned different sort from any other Britisher that ever went whalin'. Been in the business long, young feller?"

"Ten years or so, off and on," was the impatient reply.

The skipper beckoned to his boat's crew, who lay upon their

His Native Wife §

oars waiting for him, to back on to the beach, then with a quick glance at the other man, he said—

“ Yes, come aboard, young feller ; I guess we’ll pull together. Seems to me your face is kinder familiar like tew me. What was your last ship ? ”

“ The *Wanderer*, of Sydney.”

“ Boat-steerer ? ”

“ No, not in the *Wanderer*. I was boat-steerer six years ago in the *Prudence Hopkins*, of New Bedford ; I was mate of the *Wanderer*. Got any more questions ? ”

Another attempt at a pleasant smile distorted Captain Bennett’s features. “ Waal, naow, see here ; this is surprisin’ ! Why, I cert’nly thought

§ His Native Wife

I reckernised yew. Yew was in the *Wanderer* in Vavau, daown in the Friendly Islands, 'bout a year ago. Why, I remember comin' aboard ev thar ship one day."

"So do I," nonchalantly replied the young man; "a couple of your hands—Kanakas—swam off to our ship from yours and you wanted to get them back."

"That's so, mister. I remember the circumstance *exactly*. Darned lazy cusses they were, too."

"Think so? *I* don't. We had them with us on the *Wanderer* for ten months; better men never struck a fish. *You* couldn't get anything out of them, though."

His Native Wife 56

“Mister, I could not. They belonged to the Matelotas Islands, in the Carolines, and when my second mate started to rouse 'em around and knock some of their darned Kanaka laziness out of them, they actooaly driv a knife inter him, and darned near killed him.”

“Served him d——d well right,” was the curt response.

The American captain kept silence for a while, and nought broke the silence save the sound of the oars as the boat swept quickly toward the *Kellet Passmore*.



CHAPTER II.

ON BOARD THE “KELLET
PASSMORE.”

IN a few minutes the boat ranged alongside, the five new Maori hands, preceded by Captain Bennett and the other white man, clambered up on deck, and the boat was about to be passed astern, when the skipper called to the mate.

“Mr. Herrera, I reckon yew kin’ keep the boat alongside. Thar’s goin’ ter be some changes aboard this ship in a few min-

His Native Wife §

utes, and thet boat's goin' ashore agin."

The mate, a dark-browed, black-whiskered man of thirty-five or so, whose regular features and olive complexion showed him to be either a Spaniard or a Portuguese, answered the rasping accents of the Yankee skipper with a soft, modulated "Aye, aye, sir," and nodding a "Good-day, sir," to the stranger, whom he could see was by his dress and demeanour no common seaman, turned away to execute his captain's orders.

"Come below, mister," said Bennett, leading the way down below.

There was no one in the cabin but the mulatto steward,

His Native Wife

who was laying the table, and the captain, taking his seat, motioned his visitor to another.

“ Yew was sayin’, Mr. —— ; I disremember naow ef yew told me your name ? ”

“ Barrington—John Barrington,” said the other, looking directly into Bennett’s eyes and stroking his well-trimmed, pointed beard.

“ Waal, Mr. Barrington, I ain’t agoin’ tew jaw long over this business. I want men—that’s what I came in here to this rotten hole fur. Waal, I’ve got five Maoris, and I reckon that’s all I will get. But I want a second mate.”

Barrington nodded, and still stroking his beard, waited for more.

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“Waal, look here. I rather think you’ll suit me, although,” and here the skipper scratched a bony cheek meditatively and squinted atrociously, “although yew air a Britisher, and——”

“And you’re a Down East Yank, used to Down East mates, and Dago second mates, and mangy greasers of all sorts. I’m a Britisher, as you say ; but if you don’t want me, why the blazes did you bring me aboard ? This rotten old crate of yours isn’t the only whale-ship in the Pacific !” and Barrington took up his hat.

“Sit daown, mister, sit daown, and don’t yew use sich vi’lent language,” and Bennett indicated by a backward jerk of his dirty thumb and another vil-

§ His Native Wife

lainous squint, a half-opened cabin door at his back, “thar’s females in thar, mister—females from Bosting,” and he grinned.

Barrington muttered an apology, not to the captain, but to the soft murmur of women’s voices that he now heard for the first time.

The hatchet-faced skipper pondered a moment, and then said briskly,

“Look here, naow, it’s no use either you or me backin’ and fillin’ in this ridiklous kinder way. My second mate wants to leave, an’ I ain’t too dreadful anxious to stop him—he don’t suit me by no means. Naow, yew want a ship an’ I want an officer. I ain’t got but two boat-headers in the ship

His Native Wife

worth a cuss ; so ef yew are willin', waal, I'm willin'."

"I don't want to make the cruise with you, I only want to get up to the Carolines. If you like to put me ashore anywhere near Ponapé, or Truk, or a little island called Lōsap, I'm willing to do second mate's duty aboard. I don't want a 'cut in' if we kill any whales between here and there—all I want is a passage to any one of the places I've named."

"Young man, ef yew want a free passage in this ship, I reckon yew hev got to pay for it."

"Just as you like ; I'm able and willing to pay ; but then, mind, I don't do a hand's turn aboard this ship if I pay my passage."

☛ His Native Wife

“What might be your objek, mister, in going daown thar at all, ef yew don’t mind my askin’?”

An angry reply was on the young man’s lips; but he stopped it.

“I don’t see how the devil it concerns you—if I go as a passenger—but I will tell you. I was trading down on Ponapé a little over two years ago, and got tired of it. I ran out of trade goods, and had no money to buy any. So I shipped again in the *Wanderer*, and the skipper landed my native wife at Lössap, where her mother’s people belong. She’s to wait there till I return. Then I’m going back to Ponapé, or Yap, or any other place where there’s money to be

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made. I've got no trade goods, but have money enough to buy some from the first ship that comes along."

Bennett considered a moment or two and then said, "Waal, young fellow, I reckon we can make a deal—whar do yew say yew want to go ashore?"

"Lössap, if you happen to hit it. That's where my wife is living; if not, Truk, or one of the islands thereabouts will do me. I'm bound to get a passage to Lössap from Truk in one of the big canoes that go there once a year."

"It's a deal, mister, I'll send my second mate ashore here, and be darned to him, and yew can take his place. Ef we don't get set too fur to the eastward by

☞ His Native Wife

the current—there's nothin' but ragin' calms and blarsted hurricanes up about there this time of the year—I'll land yew on Lössap."

"Right," said Barrington, "when you send the boat ashore here with your second mate, let your men get my chest from the store. It's all ready packed, and nothing to pay on it."

"Naow, thet's business. I kin see that yew an' me'll git along bully. Here, steward, bring us suthin' to drink, an' then tell Mr. Duggan I want him."

Having secured a man whom he was sure would prove a good officer, Captain Amos Bennett was now in a good temper, and in a few minutes after he had

settled with Barrington he had told him all about the voyage of the *Kellet Passmore* since she had left New Bedford, and the shortcomings of his crew. Then his natural inborn curiosity asserted itself again, and he began to question Barrington as to his reasons for leaving the *Wanderer*, “Which, fer a colonial whaler was most extror’nary lucky.”

Drinking off his grog, the young man put his hand inside his coat, drew out some papers and laid them on the table. There was an angry light in his eye, which the inquisitive American was not slow to perceive, and he began—

“Waal, I don’t want to pester yew onnesscessarily like, but I thought——”

¶ His Native Wife

Barrington interrupted him.

“That’s all right. I left the *Wanderer* in Sydney two months ago, and came over here to look out for another ship. Why I left her doesn’t concern you. I was not asked to leave her, as that will show you, Captain Bennett,” and he handed him a letter. “Do you know Captain Codrington? He’s a countryman of yours.”

“Rather think I did. He’s from daown my way—Martha’s Vineyard—an’ a real smart man, although he did take to whalin’ under the British flag,” and Captain Bennett gave an amicable snort, and took the paper offered him.

It contained but a few lines, saying that the writer, William

Codrington, regretted that Barrington had decided to leave the *Wanderer*, and urging him to reconsider the matter.

Just then the steward came in, and Bennett, handing the letter back, said—

“Whar’s Mr. Duggan, steward?”

“On deck, sir,” answered Herrera, the mate, who just then came in the cabin.

“Send him down then,” and an unpleasant look came over Bennett’s face.

The mate, as he turned to go, passed the half-opened cabin door on the starboard side. He pulled it to gently and, with something like a smile on his face, went on deck and called out: “Mr. Duggan, come below please.”

His Native Wife

In a few seconds a short, stout man tramped down the companion-way and stood in front of the captain.

“Mr. Duggan, yew don’t suit me, and I’m quite willin’ fur yew tew go ashore——”

“And I’m d—d glad to get clear of you and this rotten old hooker of a barque. You’re a lyin’ bully, and this ship ain’t fit for a white man to sail in.”

“Not fur a white-livered sort like yew, Duggan,” snarled back Bennett. “Why, yew ain’t fit fur anything better’n cod-fishin’.”

“He is too good and honest a man to remain on board this ship, Captain Bennett,” said a soft voice, and a young woman opened the cabin door that the

His Native Wife १७

mate had closed, and stepped into the main cabin.

Bennett dropped his eyes and made no answer.

“And so you are going, Mr. Duggan,” she said, “my sister and I will miss you very much. Good-bye,” and she put her white hand into Duggan’s huge paw.

“Good-bye, Miss Trenton, and God bless you, miss, and bring you safe home again.”

Almost ere Barrington could get more than a glance at the girl’s pale face and deep hazel eyes, she had entered her cabin again and closed the door, and the second mate was addressing his farewell remarks to the captain, the which, once he was assured that the young lady was

☞ His Native Wife

out of hearing, he concluded by consigning Bennett to flames and perdition in a vigorous but lucid manner. Then he tramped off on deck again, where the mate was awaiting him.

“Good-bye, Duggan,” said Herrera, holding out his hand, “I am sorry you and the old man can’t agree; but you and I part friends, don’t we?”

“Oh yes — yes. I’ve got nothing against you. You only knock the men about from force of habit; Bennett does it from pure natural cussedness. Well, anyway, I wish the ship luck.”

“Thanks. I don’t like Bennett much myself, but I like the old *Passmore*.”

“Especially when there’s a

His Native Wife 56

passenger like Kate Trenton aboard. Look here, Herrera, just you mind your bearings. You ain't a fit man for a girl like that."

The dark, handsome face flushed, and with a curt "good-bye" the mate walked away, and Duggan went down over the side into the boat and was pulled ashore.

By sunset the *Kellet Passmore* was underweigh again, heading for Tongatabu, in the Friendly Islands, where Bennett intended cruising for a few weeks before going to the northward.

.

Just before supper that evening, Barrington went below to get a pipe of tobacco. The lamp had not yet been lit, and

§ His Native Wife

the spacious cabin of the old barque was in semi-darkness. He was turning to go on deck again, when Captain Bennett, who was standing talking to some one, called him over and introduced him to the Reverend Hosea Parker.

“By God,” muttered Barrington, under his breath, “it’s that meddlesome Yankee Baptist parson that was always worrying Nādee about her soul,” but he put out his hand.

“How are you, Mr. Barrington? Is it well with you?” said the missionary, who always affected a Scriptural style or address. “’Tis indeed strange we meet again.”

“I’m all right, thank you,” said Barrington quietly, and

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then he added, "I did not imagine it was you and Mrs. Parker who were on board; I trust she is well."

"Well, I thank the Lord, Mr. Barrington, she will be here presently. And how comes it, Mr. Barrington, that we meet you here?"

"Oh, I'm getting back again. And may I ask the same question of you, Mr. Parker. How comes it that you are so far away from Ponapé?"

"It pleased Providence that the *Morning Star*, our missionary ship, should be cast away on Strong's Island a year back. My wife and I, who were then in America, thus had no means of returning to the Vineyard, save by a whale-ship."

§ His Native Wife

“Ah! I see,” and Barrington, who had no wish to hear any more, went on deck.

“Sez it was Providence ez wrecked that thar brig, does he?” said Captain Bennett to his new second mate, as he followed him on deck, “waal, ef that ain’t rich! Providence, hey? It was just because the darned wooden-headed galoot of a captain hed’n’t got sense enough tew try and tow her off when the current swep’ her again’ the rocks; instead of doin’ which he let go his anchor in ’bout a mile deep of water, right ’long-side the reef, and trusted to Providence. Consikently, when she swung round she bashed her starn inter pulp on the reef. I hain’t got no patience with

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creatures that get inter a hell of a mess and then start yowlin' 'bout the will of Providence and sich. It's jes' sickenin'."

.

Half an hour afterwards, when Barrington came down to supper, Helen Parker rose to meet him with extended hand. Her face was deadly pale, but the quick eye of José Herrera saw that her hand trembled and a deep rose colour momentarily flooded her face from brow to chin.

Some mere common-place escaped her as Barrington took her hand, and she said—

“This is my sister, Mr. Barrington. I have just been telling her that you and I were not strangers.”

§ His Native Wife

The hazel-eyed, curly-haired girl who sat by her, rose and shook hands with the new officer, and said, with a straight look at the tan-hided countenance of Amos Bennett—

“How do you do, Mr. Barrington? I am sorry Mr. Duggan has gone; but I hope I shall like you as much as I did him.”

The new second mate laughed, and even Bennett gave his cachinnatory snuffle; but Mrs. Parker kept her pale face bent over her plate, and did not raise it again till supper was over.

.
“I suppose,” said Barrington that night to Herrera, as the two sat smoking in the latter’s cabin for a few minutes, “that that

His Native Wife 56

pretty girl is going down to the Carolines to marry some pasty-faced Yankee missionary like the Reverend Hosea Parker."

Herrera, who lay out at full length in his bunk smoking a Manilla, raised himself on one elbow and looked searchingly at his fellow-officer, his black eyes shining and sparkling in the darkness.

"Not if I can help it, Mr. Barrington," he said.

Barrington was startled, but said nothing; and then, Herrera, still leaning his black bearded chin upon his hand, spoke again in his soft, finely modulated voice.

"Which, Mr. Barrington, think you, is the most beautiful of the two?"

His Native Wife

“I don’t know, I’m sure,” replied Barrington, carelessly; “both are good-looking.”

“Good-looking! Mother of God! Both are lovely—and, Senor Barrington, the wife of that ugly devil of a padre looked at you in a way that I would give five years of my life for her sister to so look at me. My friend, that woman is in love with you!”

“You are mistaken, Mr. Herrera,” said Barrington, coldly, “and I may as well tell you that I’ve got a wife—as good a girl as ever I want; and it’s not in my nature to run after any one else’s wife; and I’m going back to her now, poor little devil!”

The dark-faced mate laid back

His Native Wife 56

again and smiled softly to himself.

Presently he resumed, "I do not want to ask impertinent questions of you, but is your wife young and beautiful?"

Barrington nodded.

"Ah! Then you have no eyes for another woman. But tell me, Is it not a very wonderful thing that such a beautiful woman as the padre's—parson, as you call him—this padre's wife, should marry such a man? *Dios!* he is as ugly as a sunfish, and with no more brains."

"I daresay he's a good enough man in his way," replied Barrington; "but, as you say, he's got no brains."

The mate laughed. "And she cares no more for him than

❧ His Native Wife

she does for black Manuel, the ship's cook ! Truly, it is wonderful that so sweet a woman should marry a miserable little priest."





CHAPTER III.

THE WIFE OF THE REVEREND
HOSEA PARKER.

CERTAINLY, there was something to wonder about, for the Reverend Hosea Parker was about the last man in the world one would expect to see a lively and intelligent woman marry, for, while possessing features as homely as a stone jug, they were not nearly so expressive. Like a great many of his colleagues, however, he was not as bad as he

§ His Native Wife

looked, and honestly believed that Providence intended him for a great mission—*i.e.*, to convert the heathen from his blindness. Until the age of thirty or so he had, to use his own words, been “in the world, a worldly man,” earning a living as a compositor on a Boston religious newspaper largely devoted to alarmist statements about the vast numbers of South Sea Islanders who were hurrying to perdition for want of missionary effort. The confined nature of his occupation and a course of attendances at revival meetings, at one of which he fell down in a fit, had led to a serious illness, from which he recovered a “concerned” man. Six months

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afterwards he was accepted as a "labourer" in the mission field; and a natural, rough eloquence he possessed so worked upon the feelings of Helen Trenton, one of the young members of a Boston church in which he was preaching one Sunday, that she—in her turn—went into hysterics. On being brought to she found the Rev. Hosea Parker and her mother by her side in her parents' house, and they being very wealthy but pious people, requested the rugged-faced preacher to question her as to whether she was feeling "concerned." The result was that—while under a sort of mild religious mania—twelve months later she became Mrs. Hosea

•§ His Native Wife

and went out with him to the Caroline Islands. Six years' residence among the unconventional people of those parts convinced her that if her husband was intended for a saviour of souls she was not, and that Providence or the tropical climate had dealt very hardly with her in the matter of her complexion. After a short visit to her native city, she was now returning with her husband with a despairing feeling in her heart that she wasn't so good a woman as her Boston friends supposed her to be, and that the advent of a young English trader to Ponapé, where she was engaged in hopelessly "labouring" to instruct the native girls in

His Native Wife §

orthodox morality, had a good deal to do with it.

But that was three or four years ago, and the English trader had gone away out of her life altogether, when one day a whale-ship called in to buy turtle and poultry and let the crew indulge in the usual amusements common to whalers' crews in the North Pacific Islands.

That evening the Reverend Hosea Parker had told her in his solemn, wooden-headed manner that the captain of the whaler had informed him that he had lost one of his officers during the voyage, and had shipped Barrington in his place.

“And I really must say, Helen, that I am not sorry to

☞ His Native Wife

see that young man go away from here. His manner of life here is a standing reproach to us both, and I have wrestled hard for him, but without avail."

"He is no worse than most of the white men in these islands, Hosea," she had said timidly. "You must remember that by the native custom Nādee is his wife—just as much as I am yours. I am afraid, Hosea, that you and I are a little bit prejudiced against John Barrington."

Poor little woman! *She* wasn't prejudiced against the good-looking, devil-may-care English trader, but she included herself—merely as a salve to her wifely conscience.

The Reverend Hosea sat

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down and, placing his hands upon his knees, looked into his wife's face with the same expression he was wont to employ when reprimanding one of his native girl pupils for indulging in the forbidden pleasures of a heathen dance on the beach by moonlight.

“Have you possibly forgotten what that young man said to me when I called upon him with reference to the deplorable and wicked life he is leading?”

Mrs. Hosea had not forgotten. Indeed, she had been present and well within hearing on the occasion, and was not likely to forget the incident.

However, being a wise woman, she said nothing, and

•§ His Native Wife

when that evening Mr. John Barrington strolled nonchalantly up to the mission house to say good-bye to the Reverend Hosea, to whom, although he had always been at loggerheads with him, the trader bore no malice, pretty Mrs. Parker stifled her desire to cry, and said good-bye bravely enough. Then, when from the mission house verandah she saw the *Tuscana* slowly sail out of Jakoits Harbour, she went back into the sitting-room and, sobbing softly to herself, wondered what would have happened if she had met handsome Jack Barrington before the Reverend Hosea Parker had convinced her that she was a fitting colleague for him to help to

His Native Wife 50

save the souls of the "perishing" heathen in the Caroline Islands. And so, as she thought, the one man who could have been anything to her passed away out of her life, and his absence seemed to accentuate the personal homeliness of feature of the Reverend Hosea more and more every day, so much so that one day during the voyage back she told her sister Kate, who was coming out to the islands with her to stay, that she didn't care a straw about either the dull-minded man she had married or the heathen in whom he took such a useless interest.

The big hazel eyes of Kate Trenton opened in shocked surprise. The day had been

§ His Native Wife

close and sultry, and the *Kellet Passmore* was lying becalmed with the pitch bubbling up between her deck planking, and the two women felt half stifled.

“Poor Helen,” said the girl, stroking her sister’s face, “the weather has upset you. I know I feel it myself. Even Mr. Herrera is going about wearing a wide straw hat instead of his usual cap.”

“Kate,” and Mrs. Parker sat up on the lounge where she had been lying down endeavouring to read, “Kate, do you know that Mr. Herrera seems to take altogether too much interest in you. You surely would not be foolish enough to let yourself care for him?”

Kate Trenton turned her face

His Native Wife §

away for a moment or two from her sister's eyes, and made no answer, but her cheek reddened visibly.

Suddenly the older woman drew her down beside her.

“What a hypocrite I am, Kate, to talk like this to you. Of course I know you love him and he you, and——”

The girl put her hand over her sister's mouth.

“Hush, Helen, don't say that.”

“But I do say it, dear. Why shouldn't you? Don't make the horrible mistake that I have made—marry a man to please your parents and then meet some one that you like better.”

“Helen!” and Kate put

§ His Native Wife

her arms lovingly around her, alarmed at something that sounded dangerously like the first break of a sob in her voice, "surely, dear, you have never met any one whom you have cared for in that manner but Hosea?"

The mention of Hosea's name broke up Mrs. Parker's resolution never to tell Kate anything about the matter.

"Yes, I did," she whimpered, "and the horrible part of it was that he lived quite close to us, and although he and I met very often, I don't believe he ever gave me a thought, and when he went away the cruel wretch asked me if I would mind letting (sob) his wife stay with me (sob) until he came (sob) back for her."

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“Helen, what dreadful things you are telling me! What does it all mean? Who was this man?”

“I might as well tell you all about it, Kate,” she said wearily. “I don’t suppose I shall ever see him again, and I want you to see what a silly fool I have been about a man that I suppose would have made game about ‘the sky-pilot’s wife’ among his rough associates had he known that I cared for him.”

“Poor Helen!” and Kate Trenton’s hand stole into hers.



CHAPTER IV.

“ WE CANNOT PUT NEW WINE
INTO OLD BOTTLES.”

“ **H**E was, or rather had been, a mate on a Sydney whale-ship, but quarrelled with his captain”—her face flushed scarlet—“quarrelled over a native girl, and Barrington—that was his name—broke the captain’s jaw with a blow of his fist and then deserted. All this took place at an island hundreds of miles away from Ponapé. The ship sailed with-

His Native Wife 96

out him, and a few months afterwards he turned up at a native village about four miles from the mission ; he brought with him a young girl and an old hag. The natives took a great liking to him, and he lived with them for a month or so until a trading ship called. The captain sold him some trade goods ; and the next thing we heard was that the chief had built him a house—for himself and Nādee, his native wife.”

“Helen ! Surely you could never have cared for a man who would disgrace himself in that way, even had you been a free woman.”

Mrs. Parker laughed sarcastically.

His Native Wife

“ My dear Kate, when you have lived a few years in the islands you will hold different opinions about a man ‘ disgracing ’ himself.”

“ It *is* a disgrace, Helen,” said the girl hotly. “ Supposing one of our brothers married a coloured woman, what would you and I—what would the world think ? ”

“ In America or Europe, that he had shocking bad taste—in the South Sea Islands, that he meant to settle down and live decently.”

“ Helen ! How can you, a missionary’s wife, say such things ? What would your husband—— ? ”

“ My husband, Kate, is only a unit in a vast crowd of silly

His Native Wife 56

people who throw away millions of dollars every year in sending out people sillier than themselves to worry heathen people about their souls."

"Oh, Helen, Helen, is this the end of your once great hope? I remember how fervent you once were about coming out with Hosea."

"Oh, yes, so do I, Kate," she answered desperately, pushing back her hair wearily from her temples, "but I know better now. I wish mother and father hadn't been quite so pious. Then I would never have met and married that estimable blockhead, the Reverend Ho——"

"For shame, Helen."

"I'm sick and tired of it all,

☞ His Native Wife

Kate. If you were not with me I would jump overboard. Perhaps if I hadn't met that wretched man I would have gone on all right to the end in the laudable effort to put new wine into old bottles, meaning thereby cramming simple native minds with Boston-made theology."

"Helen," and Kate Trenton wound her arms round her sister's waist, "I'm so sorry, dear. Try and put this man out of your mind."

"Don't be such a little fool. Of course it's all finished long ago ; but oh, Kit, I was sorry to see him go. He was so different from every other man I have ever met. Hosea disliked him intensely."

“Quite right, too,” said Kate, stoutly; “how dared any man make love to you?”

“That is just what he did not do. He only came to the mission house occasionally, and Hosea talked such dreadful twaddle to him in that hideously stupid, dull voice of his that he was glad to get away.”

“What could such a man as he, Helen, have to talk about in common with your husband?”

“A good deal, Kit. He had a great influence over the natives, and Hosea was jealous and made no secret of it. Sometimes there would nearly be a quarrel,” and here she laughed, “and I would enjoy it—anything was better than listening to Hosea’s monotonous droning

❧ His Native Wife

about the perversity of some chief or other who didn't want Christianity, but did want square gin and axes and knives and muskets, and refused to cut down his harem to one. There, don't be shocked, dear, but just sit quietly and listen. It's such a relief for me to break out at last and let you see what a scandalous creature I am. But, oh, Kit, dear, just imagine what I have gone through for nearly six years. Night after night, to sit in the front room of the mission house and listen to Hosea droning out his translations of the Scriptures to our sleepy native servants ; then to go to bed and awake suddenly in the silence of the night and hear the droning of the surf—

His Native Wife 50

which was almost as bad as Hosea's—on the reef miles away. Sometimes I would get up and have a good cry and wish that I were dead. Perhaps if I had had a child to love, the life I lived would have been less horrible."

"Were there no other white men near you but that—that man?"

"Oh yes, several. But none like him. There were three or four traders on the island, ignorant, rough men, but they never came near the mission, except on one occasion when one of them named Paddy Kerr called on behalf of his colleagues to tell Hosea that he was a meddlesome fool, and that if he, or any of his native teachers,

His Native Wife

‘came foolin’ around their way teachin’ natives that all white men, excep’ those that come in the *Morning Star* missionary ship, was rogues,’ they (the traders) would duck Hosea in the lagoon.”

“The brutes,” said Kate Trenton, indignantly.

“Not a bit of it, my dear. There is a great deal to be said on both sides. We missionaries *are* a meddlesome lot, Kitty, and these English and American traders are *men*. Dreadful scamps, no doubt, many of them, but then they came here long before we did, and I don’t think it right for us to prejudice the natives against them.”

“Helen! How can you! I am afraid that this trader friend

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of yours has done you no good."

Mrs. Parker laughed contemptuously.

"He *has* done me good, Kit—he and the rougher men he was associated with. I went to the islands a religious pedant, and my narrow-mindedness and silly bigotry received some severe shocks. There, dear, I won't shock you any more. Did you hear what Captain Bennett said to Hosea last night at supper about baptism by total immersion?" and her eyes sparkled mischievously.

"No, Helen, I hate the man, and always get away from the table as quickly as possible."

"You shouldn't. He's very amusing. Hosea believes that

❖ His Native Wife

total immersion is an all-important preliminary to future salvation, and asked Mr. Herrera—a Catholic, I suppose—what his opinion was? ”

“ What did Mr. Herrera say? ” asked Kate, showing interest enough now.

“ Oh nothing, merely bowed, said he didn't know, and asked Bennett if he intended bending on a new fore-topmast staysail. I suppose he wanted to get on deck after you.”

“ Don't Helen.”

“ Never mind, dear. Well, then Hosea asked Mr. Duggan, who only shook his head in agony and nearly choked himself with a piece of meat ; then he asked Captain Bennett. ‘ Waal, sir, ’ said Bennett, ‘ may

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be yew air right and may be yew air wrong. Ez fur me, I was jest sprinkled in the or'nary way by old Parson Wicks, of Marblehead, an' I reckon my old mother thought I had jest ez much chance of salvation ez if I'd hev been anchored by the neck in the Mississippi fur a month.' ”

The younger woman smiled, but then looked at her sister in surprise. She had never heard her talk like this before, and never knew that her life had not been a happy one.

“Come on deck, Helen,” she said, presently. “I hear them hauling the yards round and can feel the ship moving again. I am so glad. The language that man Bennett uses to the crew

❧ His Native Wife

terrifies me, and I shall be glad when the voyage is over.”

They went on deck, and as the *Kellet Passmore* heeled slightly to the breeze that came rippling over the water, the mate came up to them, and, though he spoke to both, his eyes were for sweet-faced Kate Trenton alone.

“ We have got the breeze at last, ladies ; by to-morrow morning we shall be in the Bay of Islands. Captain Bennett and Mr. Duggan have quarrelled again, and we are going in there to try and get another officer in his place and some more men as well.”



CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST AND SECOND MATES.

THREE months had passed, and the *Kellet Passmore* had crawled lazily along from the coast of New Zealand to the Friendly Islands, and then from the Friendlies northwards and westward towards the Carolines, till one morning she lay in sight of the little island group of Lōsap.

The wind was light, so light

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that the old barque could scarce feel her helm as she rose and fell to the gentle ocean swell. The islands lay about three miles to windward—four small green spots of thickly-clustering palms, encircled by a wide sweep of reef some ten or fifteen miles in circumference. On the north-east horn of the reef was the main island of the four, a thick mass of cocoanut trees and pandanus palms ; and five miles away, at the extreme southern end, were the three smaller islets. These, too, were covered with vegetation—a dense and tangled fringe of low, light-green scrub, growing down to the beach, in the centre a few scattered clumps of coconuts, growing in twos and

His Native Wife 80

threes, lifted their stately plumes high above.

Presently, John Barrington, who knew the place well, came aft, and after a turn or two along the deck, stopped and looked over toward the land.

“Lovely little spot, isn’t it?” he said, turning to Mrs. Hosea and her sister, who were sitting close together in two deck-chairs.

Kate Trenton smiled and nodded; she had grown to like Barrington; but her sister, save for a faint pink flush that came and vanished quickly, took no notice of his remark, and bent her face down over her book.

Six weeks before, when she had met him first at the cabin

☞ His Native Wife

table, her heart had leaped at the sight of him, only to die away within her when she found that, either designedly or from utter indifference, he scarcely spoke to her beyond the requirements of common courtesy. And from that evening to the present time he had seldom spoken to her directly. But that “the little she-missionary,” as he used mentally to call her, had ever—at any time—given him a thought, John Barrington never suspected, and while on the island in the olden days, he had never been nervous or embarrassed in her presence, he was so now, simply because he felt that both she and her sister were beings so immeasurably above him in their thoughts and

His Native Wife 56

life, that they could not but regard him with that feeling of antagonism natural to educated and refined women who come in contact with men of loose habits and South Sea morals generally, like himself. And no one knew better than he did his own failings. Had she come to him in his island home and preached to him on the evil of his ways, he would have given her a very sharp answer ; but here, on board ship, it was a very different matter, and had she reproached him now about his past existence when he had lived near her and her husband at the mission station, he felt he would be utterly incapable of making any defence. Not that Mr. John Barrington was

§ His Native Wife

in the slightest degree ashamed of his manner of life as an Island trader, and indeed, he would express himself in very vigorous terms to the Reverend Hosea when that gentleman would make any allusion to the wickedness of white traders ; but at the same time he was conscious that he could not use the same arguments to a young and pretty white lady as he could to her husband.

“ Are we going to send a boat ashore here, Mr. Barrington ? ” asked Kate Trenton presently.

“ I think so, Miss Trenton, ” he replied, and then, as the girl came over near him and placed her hand on the rail while she looked at the nearing land, he

added in a lower voice and with a slight smile—

“ Mr. Parker wants Captain Bennett to let him go ashore and ascertain if the native chief will consent to a teacher landing here the next time the *Morning Star* missionary brig calls here.”

“ Why do you laugh, Mr. Barrington? Is not my brother-in-law doing his duty to his conscience? I know you don't like him—neither does Mr. Herrera; but I am sure you must feel he is a good man.”

Barrington was silent. He detested the jug-faced missionary most cordially, but wasn't going to say so to the girl.

“ I was not laughing at his desire to go ashore, Miss Trenton; but because of

His Native Wife

Captain Bennett's remark when Mr. Parker asked him to lower a boat."

"What was it?" said the girl with a bright smile, looking up into his face; "he's a horrible creature, but does say such amusing things. What did he say?"

Barrington, shutting his left eye and scratching his cheek, imitated the captain's "Down East" drawl to perfection.

"Want to go ashore, hey? Waal, I don't mind,' then, calling to the mate, 'Mr. Herrera, tell the third mate to get his boat ready. Mr. Parker wants to go ashore to indooce the natives to accep' the Gaws-pil, and I want to buy some hogs.'"

Kate smothered a laugh and turned away, and just then Captain Bennett slouched up on deck, smoking, or rather chewing, his inevitable cigar. "Howdy, ladies. Nice day, aint it? Mr. Barrington, I'm sendin' two boats away—the first mate's and your's; and ez I believe that yew intend to stay here, I'll feel obliged to yew if yew'll help Mr. Herrera tew buy some hogs for the ship."

Helen Parker raised her face, and Kate saw that she was deathly pale. Neither of them knew that Barrington intended leaving the ship so soon.

"Aye, aye, sir. I think I can do that. I know the people pretty well. They are a rough

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lot, but I understand their ways.”

“ He, he, he,” sniggered Bennett, who was disposed to make himself pleasant to his officer, who only a week before had made fast to and killed the largest whale they had yet taken. “ He, he, he ; so this is the island whar that nice young wife of yours ez livin’.”

A quick glance at Kate Trenton and her sister showed Barrington that they had heard ; they were both looking straight at him, wondering what his answer would be.

The answer he made Bennett was given in such a low tone that neither of them caught more than the last words, which

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were “and you mind your own—business.”

Then, with a black look on his face, Barrington went on to the main deck to see to his boat.

“Thet’s a most ontractable young man,” said Bennett to Hosea Parker, who had now come up on deck in readiness to go ashore; “he’s mighty tetchy about nothin’—why, most everybody daown in these parts marries native women. He ain’t got no call to git so mad——”

“He will be called to account for it some day, my friend. It is terrible to think that men like him, engaged in such a dangerous avocation, and who may be cut off by the hand of Provi——”

❧ His Native Wife

“Land alive, parson; yew do skeer me! I hope Providence ain't agoin' to cut off any of my young men—an' me with only two hundred and seventeen barrels of ile in the ship! Sech a possibility as thet jest gives me a cold chill daown the back,” and the skipper of the *Passmore*, with a grin on his face, shambled away below again to get some trade goods together with which to buy the hogs he wanted. Hogs are not a pleasant subject; but hogs meant a great deal to Captain Amos Bennett, and, indeed, everybody else on board the *Kellet Passmore*, for she was out of provisions.

The original crew of the barque who had sailed with her

from New Bedford, had deserted her either one by one or in batches at the various ports she had touched at, and when Bennett had put into the Bay of Islands there was scarcely one of them remaining on board. Those who had been shipped in their places were either Chilenos or Portuguese—men whom it would not have been safe for Bennett to have knocked about as he did those who had run away. The use of foul language and reflections upon their parentage they accepted as a matter of course from the captain—especially if a whale was lost or a boat stove in—but a blow was quite another matter ; and Bennett knew that as well as any one on

§ His Native Wife

board, and regulated his conduct to them accordingly. And then, in the first mate, Joseph Herrera, many of them had, if not a countryman, one whom they regarded as such; and Amos Bennett knew too, that under that smooth-featured, effeminate-looking face there lurked the spirit of a tiger, and that although the mate was quick to come to his aid and uphold his authority when there was any trouble with the crew, he was a dangerous man to insult or cross. Besides this, he was a good seaman, a splendid officer, and an able navigator—which latter Bennett was not. Therefore, he valued him, but at the same time secretly despised him as a “Dago,” and

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took a malignant pleasure in always letting Hosea Parker know that Kate Trenton was on deck "a-talking to that mate of mine," with the result that the pious Hosea would beckon her away and reprove her for wasting the officer's time.





CHAPTER VI.

KATE TRENTON.

AND Herrera, although he did his duty with a smiling face, and apparently took no notice of the daily mutterings of the crew about the bad food and the brutalities of the captain and the third and fourth mates, only bided his time. He had, from the very day that Kate Trenton had come on board, fallen violently in love with her pink and white beauty, and as the voyage wore

His Native Wife §

on had had plenty of opportunities of seeing her and talking to her alone. Long before the barque had let go the anchor in the Bay of Islands, Amos Bennett noticed that a curious change had come over his chief mate, who, always a reserved man, now seemed quieter than ever, and treated the pottery-faced Hosea Parker with such an affectation of respect that, while it did not deceive Bennett, convinced the missionary that Joseph Herrera, whom he at first considered a lost man—being a Papist—was about to be saved through his (Hosea's) instrumentality. And it suited the wily, handsome Bonin Island Portuguese to let him think so, for it gave him further

§ His Native Wife

chances to talk to the girl, and deepen in her the feeling of interest that he had aroused by his stories of the wild scenes and strange adventures he had passed through in his wanderings of twenty years in South Sea whalers.

So it was no wonder that one evening as the old barque slid softly along under her shortened canvas, and the watch on deck lay about, looking up at the star-spangled heavens, and the warm breath of the trade wind fanned Kate Trenton's cheek, that Herrera's chance came.

She was just about to go below, and stopping for a moment at the companion-way, held out her hand to the mate.

His Native Wife &c

“Good night, Mr. Herrera. I wish I could stay on deck. It is such a lovely night.”

His brown, sinewy, but shapely hand closed over hers, and his black eyes glowed and shone with passionate ardour.

“Good night,” he said, speaking in a voice scarce above a whisper, but still holding the girl’s hand, and then he drew her unresistingly to him and kissed her on the lips.

In another moment she had fled below, and José Herrera, with flashing eyes and his white teeth showing in a triumphant smile, paced the deck and talked to himself.

“Holy Saints above! She is mine now. And to get her I am ready for anything—even

to cutting the throat of the flat-faced Padre Parker.”

And then as the ship rippled along over the star-lit sea, he made up his plan of action. She did not intend to leave her sister, at least not for a couple of years, and in a couple of years a great deal might happen—she might meet another man.

From that evening José Herrera began to ingratiate himself with some of the crew. He did not mean to resort to violence to attain the object he had in view if it could be managed quietly ; if it could not—well, so much the worse for those who might oppose him. He simply meant to run away from the ship in one of her

His Native Wife

boats, and take Kate Trenton with him to his native land, the Bonin Islands. But to do this he would need the assistance of some of the crew. In a day or so more the *Kellet Passmore* would be at an island where he hoped to put his plan into execution. And so, never doubting for a moment his power over Kate Trenton, he went about his work quite satisfied that the girl would come away with him when the time came.

“We are sure to call off Truk,” he thought, “and it will be easy enough to get away in my boat to one of the islands in Truk Lagoon, and hide there till the ship goes off without us. I don’t think Amos Bennett would care to come and look

§ His Native Wife

for me and four other armed men, all of whom would willingly cut his lean throat rather than be taken back to the ship.”

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Just as Amos Bennett went into his cabin to pick out some trade goods to send ashore in the boats, Mrs. Parker opened her cabin door and came out, followed by Kate Trenton and the Reverend Hosea.

“Captain Bennett, my sister and I would like to go ashore with Mr. Parker.”

“Waal, ladies, ef I was yew I wouldn't,” said the captain, who was busily engaged in digging out cakes of tobacco from a small case with his pocket-knife; these here Loo-

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sap natives don't cotton much to strangers, and ef anything onpleasant occurred, why, I should feel myself to blame fur lettin' yew go in the boats. Yew see, ladies, these Loosap people air a very excitable lot, an' the least thing might make an onpleasantness between them and my boats' crews."

"Oh, Hosea, don't go," said Kate Trenton. "Mr. Barrington, too, was telling me this morning that, unlike most of the Caroline Islanders, these natives do not care for visits from strangers, and that when he lived here some years ago the whale-ships that called for fresh provisions had great trouble in inducing the natives to sell them anything."

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The Reverend Hosea, however, was not alarmed. Already he could see in the Society's magazine an account stating how "the Reverend Hosea Parker, the earnest and intrepid missionary, had planted the Seed at Lōsap," and, indeed, the honest man had any amount of a stupid, tactless courage.

"It is my duty, Kate, and, besides that, I have long wished to see these people and give them the Light. This is the island, too, that that unfortunate girl Nādee belongs to; perchance she may be here now, and——"

Mrs. Parker's mouth hardened suddenly at the mention of the name of Barrington's native wife, and she interrupted her husband.

His Native Wife §

“I am determined to go ashore. Both Kate and I would go mad, cooped up on board. If it is only to put my foot on the beach for a moment, and then be capsized in the boat coming out, I would go.”

“Waal, jest as yew please, ladies. If Mr. Parker is will-in', I don't object. Oh, is that you, Mr. Barrington? Here's the terbacker and other things. These here ladies are a goin' ashore with you an' Parson Parker.”

Barrington's face showed annoyance.

“It is a bad landing-place, Mrs. Parker,” he said. “What the devil did the women want to come for?” he thought.

“Is it?” she answered,

coolly. "Well, I'll take all risks. You don't look very pleased, Mr. Barrington, at having our company."

There was a sarcastic ring in the laugh that ended her speech, and Barrington was nettled, and showed it. He was not pleased at the prospect, for two reasons; the first was that the women might get drenched going over the reef; the second was that he did not want them to witness his meeting with his wife.

"Just as you please, Mrs. Parker; but in addition to the chances of us getting a wetting in going ashore and in coming out loaded up with turtle and pigs, I don't think you will like the people; they are very

His Native Wife 26

reserved and suspicious of strangers, and the women always retire till they are gone."

"Oh, what a shame!" said Miss Trenton, puckering up her dark eyebrows, "and I so wanted to see them; I am told that they are very handsome. Are they, Mr. Barrington?"

Barrington felt somewhat ashamed. Kate Trenton's innocent eyes, the reflex of her pure and innocent mind, always did make him feel ashamed when by any chance the talk turned upon native women. He thought that her sister disliked him strongly, and had given her a pretty bad account of him; else why did Mrs. Parker so pointedly avoid

❧ His Native Wife

speaking to him when they met on deck. So, with something like a woman's blush, he answered—

“Some of them are very handsome, Miss Trenton.”

“But few so handsome as Nādee?”

The second mate turned sharply and looked at the missionary's wife. She was sitting in the captain's chair, leaning her cheek upon one hand. There was a curious, defiant glitter in her eyes as she met his glance.

“D——n her!” he said, under his breath. “She wants to show me up again before her sister. Why the —— can't she leave me alone.” Then a quick feeling of anger came over him.

His Native Wife ❧

“As you say, Mrs. Parker, few are so handsome as Nādee; and few or none are as good.”

The colour died away on Mrs. Parker's face, and then, with a little sneering laugh, she rose and went into her cabin.

Something made Kate Trenton lift her honest brown eyes to Barrington's, and then she impulsively held out her hand to him. He took it quickly, pressed it, and then raising his hat to her, went up on deck.

“Dear little woman,” he said to himself. “I do believe she'd meet Nādee and not think she was such a terribly bad lot after all. By God, if I thought Herrera meant to harm Kate Trenton, I'd spoil his beauty.”

His Native Wife

In the Reverend Hosea's cabin his wife was savagely drying her eyes with her handkerchief when Kate entered.

“Are you ready, Helen?” she began; and then she stopped, and tears of sympathy filled her eyes.

“Helen, dear. We will not go. You look quite ill. What is the matter?”

“Nothing,” she answered, brusquely; “only that I'm a fool and only knew it thoroughly just now. Let us go by all means. I don't care a fig about the heathen, but I do want to go ashore, out of this miserable, stuffy cabin, and get a walk on the beach.”

The black beard and dark,

His Native Wife 50

handsome face of the mate appeared over the skylight.

“The boats are ready, ladies; Mr. Parker is getting quite impatient.”

“Come, Helen,” her sister said, in a whisper; “you will feel better soon.”





CHAPTER VII.

NĀDEE.

“’TIS a whale-ship, my mother, for when she lifts to the swell of the ocean I can see her many boats hoisted high up over the side.”

Nādee, standing out in front of the russet-thatched high-peaked house in the native village, leans her lithe young figure against the bole of a cocoanut tree, and shading her eyes against the glare of the

His Native Wife

morning sun with her little brown hands, looks steadily once more out eastward over the sea towards the ship.

“Come thou inside, child,” answered a voice tremulous with age, “who but thee, O one with little thought, would stand out there in the blazing sun to look at a ship. What hath the ship to do with thee?”

The girl laughed joyously at the question of old Tariva, whom she called mother, but who was really her grandmother and the only one of her blood alive; then she answered, still shading her eyes as she watched the ship.

“It may be mother, that my husband cometh. Who

His Native Wife

can tell? And twenty and five *mahins*¹ have come and gone since he left us, and he said that he would come again in twenty.”

“Foolish child! And does it take thee five moons to learn that he is a liar and thou a fool?”

The girl's head drooped, her cloud of wavy hair fell around her face, and she worked one of her bared feet slowly to and fro in the heated sand and broken coral pebble on which she stood. For a minute or so she made no answer, and then slowly walked towards the house, passed the opened door of thatch, and disappeared.

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¹ Months.

His Native Wife ୧୦

Within, an old woman with wrinkled face and snow-white hair falling in ragged tails down her brown and naked back, was seated cross-legged before a tiny fire of charcoal. With one hand she fanned the coals, and with the other stirred some liquid that bubbled and frothed in a halved coconut shell set in among the embers.

Softly but steadily the old grandam flapped the broad fan she held in her hand, and peered anxiously into the shell, and as she fanned she muttered and crooned to herself.

“Did I not tell her so . . . Jāki¹ is but as other white men. And the twenty *mahin*

¹ Jack.

His Native Wife

have passed and gone, and five more . . . Guk ! the girl is a fool. He hath wearied of her and will return not."

She lifted out the shell and set it beside her, for the heat had now began to crack and warp it ; then taking up another one from a number that lay beside her, she set it among the coals and poured back into it the liquid from the charred shell.

"Aye, they be all alike those white men . . . ah, it boileth again . . . Nādee, come thou and see to it. Thy eyes are better than mine."

No answer came from the girl, who, though the old dame knew it not, was seated with her back to the cane latticed

His Native Wife १७

side of the house, not ten feet away, crying softly to herself.

“Nādee,” again called old Tariva querulously, “hast not yet tired of baking thyself in the fierce sun, looking at the ship. Come, child, and see the oil I have made scented with *nudu* flowers and sandalwood. Dost think 'tis for my old white locks I make it, thou lazy Nādee?”

A sob answered her, “Nay, mother. But set it aside for a little time ; for my eyes are dimmed with the glare of the sun, and I fear the smoke of thy fire. And here, in the shade, it is cool for me to sit awhile.”

The old woman's lined and wrinkled face softened, and she

¶ His Native Wife

glanced towards the side of the house from whence Nādee spoke.

“Thou liest, child. ’Tis not the sun that hath hurt thy eyes; ’tis the foolish tears for the man who hath cast thee off.”

“Say not that, my mother,” and the girl’s voice, soft and low as it sounded, trembled as she caught her breath, “for though ’tis so long since, not one ship have we seen at Lōsap since he sailed. And it may be this one . . . for why should he cast me off, as thou sayest?”

“Why?” The old woman laughed scornfully. “Because of the wife of the Christ-man at Ponapé; the woman with the hair like the yellow of the

His Native Wife 96

setting sun; dost think thy beauty can compare with that of the Christ-woman?"

The girl sprang to her feet, and in another moment she stood in the open doorway, with her hands clenched.

"'Tis a lie, old Tariva! Thou art old and foolish. The wife of the Christ-man was nought to my white man."

The old woman's thin lips parted in a contemptuous smile, and her white teeth showed. Still fanning the embers with one hand she looked keenly at Nādee's working face.

"Why was it, then, that after the Christ-man and his wife came to Ponapé, that he went away from thee?"

The girl's hands unclenched,

§ His Native Wife

and a troubled look came into her face.

“He was wearied, he said, of the dull days, and longed to go out upon the ocean again in one of the ships that seek for whales. For that is the work that he hath done from his boyhood. And how could he take me with him?”

“*Tah!* lies, lies, all lies. Are there not many white men in these islands whose wives voyage to and fro with them in ships? Did not Siria, the daughter of Larik, and Nili, mine own sister’s child—she who is now dead—sail with their white husbands to the far off islands of the south?”

“True, mother,” said Nādee steadfastly, “but, see, those

His Native Wife 96

were trading ships. But never a woman goeth away beyond the sea-rim in a whale-ship. And did my husband ever tell thee lies? ’

“O foolish child, to so believe in one of strange blood. If he so cared for thee, why did he weary of thee so soon? I tell thee it was because of the Christ-woman.”

“Not so. It was because that he was poor and had but little goods wherewith to buy oil and pearl shell and tortoise shell, as did the other white men on Ponapé. And so, because that the days were dull to him he told me he desired to sail for two years in a whale-ship, so that he would

His Native Wife

get money in plenty ; and then would he return with all the things he desired and live with me always. But the beautiful Christ-woman had naught to do with his going.”

The old woman lifted the shell she was tending from off the fire, and brushing off the dust from the mat on which she sat, motioned to the girl to sit beside her.

“Come hither, little one and sit by old Tariva—thy mother’s mother, the only one that is left to thee of all thy people.”

Still with the troubled look in her lustrous eyes, Nādee, with another glance seaward at the white sails of the ship, stepped inside, and sat down beside the old woman, who,

His Native Wife §

drawing the girlish figure to her wrinkled old bosom, pressed her lips to her's in a silent, loving embrace.

“Only thou art left to me, little one; thou of all that were once so many; and because that I am so old, and will soon be with the silent ones,¹ and thou wilt be alone, do I wish to tell thee of some things.”

The girl's rounded arm encircled the old dame's skinny neck, and her little hand stroked her white locks, the while she laid her cheek, so young and full and tender, against her grandam's lined and furrowed brow.

¹ The dead.



CHAPTER VIII.

ONE OF THE OLD BOTTLES.

THERE was none to hear them talk. Save the old woman and the girl, the rest of the few people in the little village were away at work in their plantations or out fishing in the lagoon. Outside, the quiet of the palm grove was scarce broken even by the rustling of the breeze that swayed their branches to and fro. Sometimes, on the white blaze of shimmering beach that

His Native Wife 96

came to within a few fathoms of the open door of old Tariva's house, a swift black shadow would sweep by as some frigate bird skimmed past, flying down over the beach ere he took his mounting flight seaward to plunge with deadly aim and cruel beak into the blue depths of ocean beyond the barrier reef.

So, in silence, and still caressing the aged face, Nādee waited till the time-worn old Tariva chose to speak; but, even as she waited her eyes wandered out seawards again and again.

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“Turn thy back to the sea, little one. Let not the ship trouble thy mind yet awhile.

§ His Native Wife

When I have said all that which is within me, then, if thou carest to still look across the sea-rim for him who will never come, so be it, and I will have nought more to say.”

The girl faced round with a strange, wondering look in the depths of her great soft eyes. What was it old Tariva had to say? Thrice since the day that they had returned to Lōsap to await the coming back of her white husband, had her grandam spoken to her of Railik, the son of the chief of Lōsap, who desired her for his wife, and each time had Nādee, covering her face with her hands, shaken her head and said, “I will wait. The twenty months must first be

passed and gone ere I will talk of such things.”

And although old Tariva had given her some bitter words for her folly, yet she had not sought to force the girl's choice. Railik, fierce and turbulent as he was, dared not seize her and carry her off; for old Tariva was *ejon*, a strong witch, and had power to cause his limbs to wither and perish so that the skin would cleave to the bone and make him ugly to look upon in the eyes of all men if he tried to win the girl by force against her grandam's wish.

But yet — and Nādee, the white man's wife, knew it well — old Tariva favoured his suit, and though since that third

His Native Wife

time she spoke not again of the lying, faithless white men to her, she was for ever talking of the skill and cleverness in all things of Railik, he whom, of all the young men on Lössap was worthy by his father's name to have a wife in whose veins ran blood as good as his own.

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A minute had passed and yet the old woman had not spoken. She had placed her bony, claw-like hands upon the girl's smooth and rounded shoulders and her keen old eyes were bent upon Nādee's in a strange, wild look that filled her young heart with fear.

Presently there came to them a sound, as of the strong voices of men, made faint by distance.

His Native Wife §

“Heed it not, my Nādee,” said old Tariva in a low, mechanical voice, her eyes still fixed upon the girl’s face, “’tis but the men of Lōsap who only now see the sails of the ship.”

Breathing so that her bared bosom rose and fell in quick, panting strokes, and with eyes filled with terror, Nādee spoke in a voice like a whisper.

“What is it, O my mother, that maketh thee look so strangely upon me; thy eyes are as two moons shining through the blackness of the darkest night, and fill me with fear. Have I done aught wrong, and art thou about to cast *ejon*¹ over me?”

¹ Witchcraft, wizardry, religious belief.

¶ His Native Wife

As she faintly whispered the last words her eyes grew dim, misty, and slumberous.

“Nādee!” and the quavering tones of Tariva’s voice became strong and harsh as the call of the frigate-bird, “wake, child! There, see, my beloved; look now into old Tariva’s eyes; only do I cast *ejon* on those whom I hate,” and she took her hands from Nādee’s trembling shoulders; “but listen well to me.”

“Aye, my mother; but look not again with thy eyes into mine, for then my soul goeth out into darkness, and though I hear thy voice my heart and tongue sleep.”

A faint smile crossed the thin, old lips, and patting the

His Native Wife 56

girl's knee, she said in soft, purring tones—

“Fear not, my little bird. Strong am I to cast spells for good and evil over men and women; only against the *rebelli* (white people) am I powerless. And it is because that my *ejon* is of no avail against the white man that I now sit here and plead for thee to lay well to thy mind that which thou must know.”

“Mother,” and Nādee bent her head low down upon the old dame's lap, “would'st use *ejon* to harm my white husband?”

“Nay, child. For though I hate the *rebelli*, whether they be ship-men or Christ-men, yet would I bring thy husband

His Native Wife

back to thee, child of my child, and last of my race, ere I go out to the spirit land.”

“Why hate ye the white men, mother?”

A savage light leapt into the old woman's eyes and her white, even teeth snapped together like the jaws of a shark.

“Hate them! Aye, that do I. Would that I could live to see them wither and perish and be swept away as we of the sea-girt lands have withered and perished before them. Long, long ago, when my hair was as black, and my bosom as full and round as thine, my people were a great people, for, as thou knowest, my father was a great man on Ponapé, and the

His Native Wife §

land he ruled stretched from Jakoits on the north to Metalanien, near unto the strange stone houses that were built by the Unknown Men.¹ He it was who sailed in two great canoes to this little island of Lössap, a twenty days' journey, and slew half the men and would have slain all but that his eyes were taken with the beauty of my mother, who, as she fled along this beach now before us, fell, and would have been thrust through, only that my father beat back the bloodied hands of those who pursued her. And so, because she pleased him, he spared the lives of all those men of Lössap who

¹ The mysterious and ancient ruins on Ponapé, in the Caroline Islands.

His Native Wife

still lived, and took her to wife. Ah ! those were the days when we were strong.”

“ Tell me more, my mother.”

“ Aye, child,” answered Tariva, who was speaking of those olden days with a set purpose, and noting how eagerly Nādee listened ; “ those were days when the quick, hot blood of youth ran lusty and strong in my father’s veins, and save for the two or three white sailors who dwelt under the protection of T’Nanakin, the king of Jakoits, we of Ponapé knew naught of the *rebelli*. Brave men, though, were *those* white men, for sometimes when a ship lay becalmed, they led our people out in the dead of night and slew all on board,

His Native Wife 50

and returned to the shore laden with riches.”

The girl shuddered as she caught the fiery gleam and sparkle in old Tariva's sunken eyes, but yet listened intently, leaning her chin upon the palm of one hand.

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“And then the days and months and years went by, till there came to Metalanien the first of the Christ-men, in a white-painted ship. Well would it have been had my father and T'Nanakin, the king of Jakoits, done unto this ship as they had done unto others, but the *ejon* of the Christ-man was too strong, and he fooled my father and T'Nanakin both with his cunning words.”

§ His Native Wife

“ How so, my mother ? ”

“ In this way, child. All men love to hear of that which is strange and new ; and this Christ - man told my father cunning lies of a man-god who was greater than all the gods of Ponapé, and who had sent him—the cunning Christ-man—to Ponapé to tell my father to forswear the old gods and follow the god of the Christ-man.”

“ Aye, mother, my husband hath spoken to me of this Christ-God.”

“ What said he, Nādee ? ”

“ But little, mother. ’Twas long ago, when the beautiful Christ-woman—the wife of the Christ-man, whom my husband called a meddling fool—came

His Native Wife 56

to our house with her husband and talked with mine. Something they said to him of myself and the wrath of the Christ-God it was that angered him, and though he spoke softly because of the yellow-haired woman, who sat by me with her hand clasped around mine, yet he was hot with anger against the mean-looking man who said the Christ had sent him to save me from perishing.

“ ‘Go,’ he said, speaking in the tongue of the white man, ‘thou to thy trade, and leave me to mine. Come not here to me in mine own house and seek to poison the heart of my wife against me. She is to me my wife by the custom of the land, and I want no man such

96 His Native Wife

as thee to come between us.' And then the woman rose and bade me farewell and said to the Christ-man, her husband, 'Leave them. Why should we seek to make trouble between them?' So, though they came again to my husband's house, the woman's husband spoke no more to mine of the Christ-God and the lake of fire into which He casts his enemies."

"*Ahe!*" resumed the old woman, "'Twas that, the great sea of fire which is in the bowels of the earth, that made the heart of T'Nanakin turn white, and he became eaten up with the *ejon* of the Christ-God. And day by day the power of the head Christ-man on the Christ-

His Native Wife 96

ship grew stronger and stronger. One day it came about that T'Nanakin and my father and other chiefs went to visit the ship, and the next day two of them were seized with an illness from which many of the shipmen had died. T'Nanakin, who loved these men, went to the Christ-wizard and besought him to save his men. And see, my child, how silly are some men and how clever others: for this wizard soon put terror in the heart of T'Nanakin, and said—

“ ‘If these men die it is the will of the Great Christ-God, who hath sent me to tell thee to cast away thy gods of wood and worship Him. Beware, O chief, and delay not, lest some-

☞ His Native Wife

thing terrible befall thee, and the lake of fire swallow up thee and thy people.'

“The two men died, and then in every house in every village some one was seized by the strange illness from the Christ-ship, and many hundreds died. And then 'I'Nanakin with his chiefs humbled himself to the Christ-wizard, and said, 'Thy gods are greater than mine. Let this sickness go away from my people and I will do as thou wishest—I will be a Christ-man.' Then the white wizard and three other wizards who were with him rejoiced greatly and made much of 'I'Nanakin, and gave him many presents and clothed him with new black garments, and

His Native Wife 50

a high black covering for his head, such as is worn by these Christ-men in their own country. In two days all of his people swore faith to the Christ-God; but my father and his people did not, for they had heard of the sickness and no one of them would go near the white men. Then T'Nanakin, who had cast away his father's gods for the new *ejon*, sent word down saying, 'Come up and be a Christ-man, or thou and thy people will be seized with a deadly illness and die, and be cast into a lake of red fire, where they shall yet live again for ever.' But my father would not go.

“So T'Nanakin and my father quarrelled, and one night,

His Native Wife

when all in our village lay asleep, the canoes of T'Nanakin crept down and killed all that would not be slaves to him and the white wizard, and then, we who were conquered knew that the *ejon* of the white man's God was greater than that of ours.

“ For two moons T'Nanakin's men sought out and slew all those opposed to the new faith, and no smoke arose in our country save that which came from the burning houses of my father's people ; for we fled to the woods—all that were left of us—and lived in hiding. Then came the time when many died of hunger, and Kanka, my father, and all the men who were with him died under the knives of T'Nanakin's men, who

His Native Wife ९८

had found out our refuge. And then my mother, taking me with her, fled with some few other women and children, of whom I was one, to the island called Pākin, close to the mainland ; and there we lived till I was taken to wife by a man of Pākin, and there thy mother was born to me. She, too, like myself, was taken to wife by a man of Pākin. At thy birth she died, and with her last words besought me to take thee to this land of Losap, where we would be well cared for by those of our blood. But I lived on at Pākin, till both my husband and thy father were dead, and thou wert a grown girl. Then came this Jāki of thine, who took us to live with

§ His Native Wife

him at Ponapé. And I know he will never come back to thee ; so wait no longer, my child, but take Railik for thy husband. He is a clever man and hates the white men as much as I hate them.”

The girl covered her eyes with her hands but said not a word.

“ See, child, there is yet another thing. Thou sayest that the fair-faced white woman, the wife of the hog-faced Christ-man, is nought to thy husband. Now I, that am very old, know many things, because of the *ejon* I have learnt ; and I tell thee, foolish one, that if she be nought to him, he was much to her. And it was because she looked at him with her eyes like the blue sea, and made him ashamed

His Native Wife ୧୦

of thee, that he wearied of thee and went away.”

Nādee bent her head still lower and then wept silently.

“Nay, weep not, little one,” went on old Tariva mercilessly, “what does it matter? Thou hast no child for men to point at and jeer and say, ‘see the child of the man who fooled its mother.’ And yet it is hard for one so young and handsome as thee to be cast aside for another.”

“Nay, mother. He may not come back to me; but not because of another woman.”

“Thou fool. Didst thou not see that in less than a year after he had gone that the white wizard woman sickened and pined for him, and then fol-

❧ His Native Wife

lowed him to his own country in the white-painted wizard ship. Is it not true? ”

“ Mother,” said Nādee, in a whisper, “ she took her husband with her.”

Old Tariva laughed contemptuously : “ Twas but a trick. She cares not for her husband, and I have seen her turn her face from him when he spoke to her. ’Tis thy white man she loves. Now listen, child, to me. I tell thee that by this time she hath killed the dull-faced Christ-wizard and is wife to thy white man in her own land. He did but fool thee when he spoke of coming back.”

She ceased and looked at the bowed figure of Nādee, who had buried her face in the old dame’s

His Native Wife ୯୦

lap and was sobbing convulsively.

Tariva, muttering to herself, stroked the black waves of hair tenderly, and waited. She had won, and Nādee, the child of her heart, would forget this false white man and marry Railik, and then she, old Tariva, would have given to her all that land on Lōsap which was hers of right, for had it not belonged to her mother in the olden days ?

Suddenly the sobs ceased and Nādee rose to her feet and went to the door. For a moment or two she looked out over the blue expanse of ocean that lay before her tear-dimmed eyes ; but the ship had gone, she had passed round the south horn of

His Native Wife

the reef and was hidden from view for the time.

Then, with a smile struggling through her tears, Nādee turned and spoke.

“It shall be as thou wishest, my mother. I am indeed a fool. When it pleases thee, take me to Railik’s house.”

Then she stepped out, and with a choking sob threw herself down on the grassy plot at the back of old Tariva’s house, and lay there silent with her face in her hands.





CHAPTER IX.

IN THE BOIL OF THE SURF.

WHEN within a mile or so of the principal village of the main island, the *Kellet Passmore* backed her main-yard, and the two boats pushed off from her side, the lantern-jawed skipper calling out to Herrera to get back as quickly as possible as the wind showed signs of dying away and he was suspicious of an easterly gale coming down and catching him in such an awkward place.

•§ His Native Wife

“There’s a darned big swell rollin’ in too, naow,” he added, “an’ I ain’t too dreadful anxious to keep foolin’ around here with sich a current settin’ us inshore.”

In Herrera’s boat were the two ladies, the stolid-faced Hosea, and the usual crew; in Barrington’s himself and the crew only, and a box containing the trade goods for barter with the natives.

For some ten or twenty minutes or so the boats pulled side by side until they got within a few hundred yards of the reef, then Barrington’s drew ahead. There was not much of a sea on, but the passage through the break in the reef was very narrow, and as Bar-

His Native Wife 90

rington knew the place well his boat was to go first.

“Look, Miss Trenton,” said the mate, pointing to the white line of beach in front of them, “take your first view of a South Sea Island village, and see the natives swarming down to the beach to meet us.”

Kate, with her eyes dancing with excitement, answered him with a bright smile and then gave a little scream.

“Oh, Helen, look at Mr. Barrington’s boat.”

The second mate’s boat had just swept over the reef, bow down in front of a roller, and in the midst of a seeth of white foam, and wild cries from the swarm of natives on the beach, she landed right in their midst.

§ His Native Wife

Herrera, with a quick look astern, waited for another sea to come, determined to go in on top of it, instead of waiting for a lull and pulling in quietly. He saw that there was a clean run in, once he got over the edge of the reef, and he wanted to show Kate Trenton that Barrington was not the only man who could take a boat in over the reef on top of a sea.

At a sign from Herrera the crew shipped the oars and took out broad-bladed native paddles—Barrington's boat had gone in with oars apeak—and waited for the word.

“Give it to her, boys!”

The five paddles struck into the water and the light boat sprang forward in front of the

His Native Wife ९०

advancing sea. In another ten seconds, with the two women and Hosea holding tightly to each other in terrified silence and Herrera straining at the steer-oar, she was darting like an arrow through the water, in front of the boiling, hissing surf.

Suddenly, amidst the wild rush and bubble of the snow-white spume that frothed past the gunwales with lightning speed, Herrera uttered a savage oath ; right ahead of him lay a round knob of coral, just showing its pink and blue top above the surface of the water. With a fierce strain at the steer-oar, he just shaved past it, but in another moment the boat broached to, rolled over, and filled.

☛ His Native Wife

Before a canoe could be launched, Barrington, with a curse upon the mate's vain folly, had sprung back into his boat, and was pulling out to save them. Already, though, the sweeping back-wash had carried boat and people out towards the edge of the reef again.

“Pull, you sons of devils, pull,” said Barrington to his crew, as another sea came hurtling in with curling top, “the women will be drowned !”

But that sea nearly half-filled his boat, and by the time they got way on her again the capsized boat had been swept down by the current right into the thundering surf that broke on the reef on each side of the

narrow passage. Fifty yards away Barrington saw two of Herrera's crew and the Reverend Hosea, who was supported by them, swimming down with the current towards shallower water, and further out in the blue rollers, he saw the black head of Herrera, keeping himself afloat, and holding up Kate Trenton. Then, almost at the same moment that he caught sight of the white face of the missionary's wife clinging despairingly to a jagged mass of coral, not five fathoms away, another roaring sea leapt down upon his half-filled boat and fairly smothered her.

“Two of you to the mate, boys,” he called to the Maori crew, “the rest of you stick to

☞ His Native Wife

the boat," and then he struck out towards the drowning woman, who, with the strength of despair, still clung to the coral boulder, which was about two or three feet out of the water, and so saved her from being smothered by the seas which rolled by on either side. Just as he reached her a roller, higher and swifter than the others, tore away her weakening grasp, and holding her in his arms they were buried beneath ; when they came to the surface he saw that she was still alive, but nearly unconscious.

For nearly five minutes Barrington, with the blood welling from a fearful cut on his head, drifted seaward with the woman.

His Native Wife 90

He knew the canoes would be along presently, for already, although strange noises filled his brain from the blow he had received and the blood blinded his eyesight, he could hear the cries of the natives close by.

He had twined his right hand into the woman's hair, and held her in front of him as he struck out with his left. Then, as he still partly drifted, partly swam seaward, away out from the sweep of the seas—for they were now beyond the reef—with dulled brain and blood-filled eyes a thought ran through him that smote his heart with a deadly chill. He knew he was bleeding badly and knew that the sharks are quick to answer to the smell of blood.

§ His Native Wife

“God help us,” he muttered thickly; “what can I do?” Then his senses left him.

. . . .

Away out on the *Kellet Passmore*, Captain Amos Bennett, from the fore-topsail yard, had seen Herrera’s boat broach-to and fill, had seen Barrington’s meet with a like fate, and had cursed all missionaries unto the tenth generation.

“Waal, I’ll be goldarned! Two boats capsized and ez like ez not stove in,” and he threw his cigar down on to the deck for’ard with another curse after it; “and perhaps some of my men injoored.”

“Hope the women and the parson ain’t hurt,” said the fourth mate, who had just come

His Native Wife 56

up aloft and stood beside him.

“Darned ef I care ; their passages are paid,” was the snorting reply ; for the worthy Bennett — although he didn’t mean what he said—was in a very bad temper.

And, just then, as he gave orders for another boat to be lowered, the breeze died away so suddenly and suspiciously that he hurried down below to look at the glass. He was back on deck in a minute.

“Never mind the boat, Mr. Briggs. There’s plenty of canoes to pick up the darned fools, and there’s going to be h——l to pay in another five minutes here. Stand by the braces, and look spry we don’t

§ His Native Wife

get caught aback. Darn all parsons, I say.”

In another ten minutes the first puffs of the coming easterly struck the old barque. She heeled over to it, and then as the whistle of it passed away stood up again on an even keel ; but only for a few seconds, as the short, savage puffs settled down into the droning hum of a heavy squall.

.

Two hours later, under close reefed fore and main-topsails, she was running before the storm, with a sea like mountains chasing her and banging against her old, square stern and wallsides.

“Guess we won’t heave her to among these reefs between

His Native Wife ❷

Loosap and D'Urville's Island, Mr. Briggs. Let her go as she is, an' we'll get under the lee of Truk until this darned easterly blows its guts out. Then I reckon we'll hev to come back and pick up Mr. Herrera an' Mr. Barrington and them Gawspil folks."

And so, with the drone of the easterly singing through her cordage, and the swash of the mountain seas swirling up against her weather-beaten sides, the old whaler plunges and splashes westward, running dead before it, and is lost to sight and no more heard of in this story.



CHAPTER X

UNDER THE PALMS.

A SWARM of brown, half-naked men and women rushed to the beach to meet the returning canoes, and as they stood and waited a savage, roaring gust swept through the dense palm-grove at their backs, and whipped up great clouds of the white, clinging sand, and carried it far out seawards.

“Haste, haste, my children !” and Sru, the chief of Lössap, a great, broad-shouldered native,

His Native Wife 50

naked save for his thick girdle of banana fibre, sprang into the water and looked anxiously at the three canoes as they sped shoreward in face of the rising storm.

A wild cry went up from the assembled people as the first canoe swept in through the boiling surf and ran her sharp bows upon the beach, and the wet and naked rowers sprang out ; and Herrera, holding Kate Trenton in his arms, was seen seated amidships with two of Barrington's boat's crew.

Too exhausted to speak, he motioned to the women to take her ; and then, staggering on his feet like a drunken man, he sought to discover something of Barrington and the others ; but

☛ His Native Wife

a blinding, stinging rain-squall had obscured the two other canoes from view ; and then he was half carried away by some natives to the shelter of the chief's house, where the women had already taken Kate Trenton, and with kindly hands and pitying words were bringing her back to life again.

In the second canoe were two of Herrera's men, for their boat had been hopelessly stove in, and after them came Barrington's boat, "swum in" by natives and the rest of his crew ; the third canoe was yet out amid the tumbling breakers a quarter of a mile away, but showing up now and then a black spot amid the white seeth of swirling foam.

His Native Wife ၆၀

“Ha!” cried Sru, “Railik my son hath cause to be last; for, see, there are yet three more of the *rebelli* swimming in the shallow water near to his canoe—the current hath swept them far down. Even now do I see the three heads above the water.”

.
And away out in the canoe, Railik, with his long black hair streaming out to the gale, saw them too, and urged his men to paddle hard. Ten minutes before he had picked up Barrington and the missionary’s wife; and as a whiff of spray smote him fiercely in the face, he shook the water from his eyes and glanced down to see if the woman was yet alive, as

❧ His Native Wife

she lay in the bottom of the canoe with her head supported by a native boy. Up for'ard, lying on his back with the blood still flowing from his head, was Barrington. Presently he sought to rise, and placed one hand on the gunwale of the canoe.

“Nay, stay thou quiet, Jāki,” said the native who paddled on the bow thwart and whose feet were placed one on each side of the white man's body, “try not to rise, for should I miss but one stroke of my paddle then does the canoe fill, and thou and the white woman be drowned.”

Another sea swept by them with an angry hiss, and the canoe buried her outrigger deep

His Native Wife 50

down, and Railik, with his left hand grasping the steering-paddle, bent down and scooped out the water with a half-dozen quick strokes of the wooden baler. Then in another minute the canoe shot alongside the three struggling men—two of Barrington's crew and the missionary.

“Ha!” cried Sru, turning to his people, “he hath them.”

And then those who watched saw the canoe, now sunk deep in the water, head for the shore, as with a wild cry of triumph, heard even through the hum of the wind and the thunder of the surf, the half-nude paddlers sent her flying to the beach.

A swarm of natives crowded

☞ His Native Wife

round as Railik, panting hotly for his breath, stood up, and cast his paddle on the sand.

“How many hast thou?” said Sru.

“Four, oh father Sru—three men and one woman. And see, he there who hath the bloodied face is Jāki—the woman is his wife!”

A sudden silence fell upon the crowd of natives, but no one spoke.

Then, muttering something in a savage undertone to his crew, the chief's son, without another glance at the people he had saved from death, strode away towards the village, and his father told those about him to carry Barrington and the white woman to his house.

His Native Wife ㊦

“Tend them well,” he said, “for when the storm is ceased the ship will come back for them. So, give them all to eat and drink, and then in a little while, when their strength has come back, will I ask of this dog Jāki how it is he bringeth back a new wife.”

Held in the arms of a tall, slender native girl, who looked pityingly down upon her trembling figure, Helen Parker opened her lips and spoke.

“Where is Jāki?” she said.

A woman who stood close by pointed to a number of men who were helping Barrington up over the brow of the beach.

“Thy husband is there. He is badly hurt and like to die.

❧ His Native Wife

Who art thou that speaks our tongue ? ”

“ I am the Christ-woman from Ponapé. Take me to my husband. ”

And leading her by the hands the girl and woman walked with her to the chief's house, and pointed to the figure of Jack Barrington, who lay upon a mat with some native women bandaging his head.

She stood over him for a moment trying to speak ; but her voice failed her. At last she spoke.

“ Thank God, Mr. Barrington, you are alive. The natives tell me my husband is badly hurt. Where is he ? ”

No answer came, and then looking into the ghastly, pallid

His Native Wife ९७

face of the man she loved, she forgot all, and, kneeling beside him, took his face in her hands and kissed him again and again.

.

Railik, speeding along through the groves of coconut and bananas towards the dwelling of old Tariva, took no heed of the crash and roar of the storm that now seemed to shake the island to its foundations. He knew that even if the few people who lived in the village on the little island with Nādee and the old woman had left it with the intention of seeing the boats land from the ship, they would have returned to their houses again in the face of such a wild sea as was now breaking

§ His Native Wife

over the connecting reef that lay between their village and the main island. No canoe could cross the lagoon now, and to walk round by way of the beach on the lee side would take them many hours. So, on he pushed, through the fast-gathering darkness and the clashing and tearing of the countless palm tops above him and the frightened shrieks of the sea birds, and the growling thunder of the mighty seas as they dashed against the barrier wall of coral rock to pour like cataracts along its level top into the shallow waters of the lagoon.

Then, when he came within sight of the tiny village of four houses, he lay down in the darkness and waited. He wanted

His Native Wife ९०

to see Tariva alone, and would watch for her.

One by one the fires were lighted in the houses, and then he caught a glimpse of Nādee as she passed out of Tariva's house to one that stood about fifty yards away.

Springing to his feet he glided through the swaying wind-tossed palms till he reached the back of the old woman's house, and looked through the cane lattice-work of its walls.

“Tariva,” he called, “’tis I, Railik. Come thou outside, so that we may talk ; for I be in haste.”

In a few seconds he saw her figure coming towards him, her white hair blowing and whipping about her face as

§ His Native Wife

she peered out into the darkness.

“Here, mother,” and he put out his hand.

She took it in silence, and then they walked together till they reached a great *nudu* tree, behind the buttressed trunk of which they stood for shelter.

“Now is the time come for thee, Tariva, to prove thy friendship to me, and give me Nādee.”

“That would I have done long since ; but the girl waited for her white husband ; but, see, here do I show my friendship for thee ! Only but a little time since we talked together, and to-morrow did I mean to bring her to thee, for now she believeth that her husband will come not back.”

His Native Wife ୧୦

Railik laughed. "Mother, he hath come back."

"Then why, O Railik, dost thou come here to fool me? How can I give her to thee if Jāki hath come? Dost think thou can'st force her *now*?"

"Mother, listen. But little time have I to talk, even of such a matter as this: for I must haste back. See, now, and then tell me if I am not wise. Two boats came from the ship and both were overpowered by the seas and the people in them cast out."

"Good," answered the old dame, "would they were all eaten by the sharks."

"Then I and four others in my canoe, and Sirra and Tasa in their canoes, went out to

§ His Native Wife

them—and it came about that I saw that two of the *rebelli* were washed outside the reef apart from the others, and lo, they were a man and a woman—and the man was Jāki. Just was he, and the woman with him, about to sink, when we dragged them in ; for he had a great wound in his head.”

“ Ahé, and the woman ? ”

“ She was as one dead. And I, mother, when I saw the face of the white man, would have let him drown, but those with me said, ‘ Nay, hurt him not, dost thou not see ’tis the husband of Nādee ? ’ So, though I would have struck my paddle into his brain, I feared to do so. But, tell me, hath not the Christ-woman I have heard thee speak

His Native Wife ୯୦

of hair like the yellow of the sun ? ”

“ Aye,” said the old woman quickly, clutching his wrist, “ and was it she who was with him ? ”

“ And was not the man—her husband, the Christ-wizard—little and dark, with a face ugly to look upon ? ”

“ Aye, little and dark, with hair black as night.”

Railik laughed. “ See how I remember these things that thou hast told me. Now, as Jāki and the woman lay in the canoe I knew she was the Christ-woman thou hast so often told me of, and then I had no wish to do him harm, for I knew that she was wife to him, even as thou hast told Nādee she would be.”

§ His Native Wife

“ Ah,” and the old woman ground her teeth, “ the lying white man. Why did'st thou not cast them over again ? ”

“ So we turned shoreward,” went on Railik, “ and as we rose to the sea I saw Sirra and his men take up another woman and a man from the sea, even as I had done ; and as we crossed over the reef we saw three more *rebelli* struggling in the shallow water between the reef and the shore. And when we came to them I saw that two were shipmen and the other a little dark man with a smooth face.”

“ The Christ-man ? ”

“ Aye, the Christ-man. And then I knew that the woman who lay in the canoe was not wife to Jāki, and while the

His Native Wife ९०

thought of Nādee was hot within me, and my men helped in the two ship-men, I sprang into the sea as if to save the Christ-man and——”

“ Ah ”—and the old woman’s eyes glistened.

“ And took him by the hair and dived with him, and struck his head against a rock beneath so that he died quickly. This did I because I told those with me that Jāki had now a new wife.”

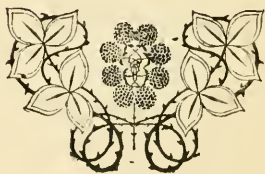
“ Thou art both brave and wise, my son. I can see what was in thy mind.”

“ That to-morrow thou shalt bring Nādee and show her the white woman and Jāki sitting together in my father’s house, and say, ‘ See, thy white man

☞ His Native Wife

with his new wife—the Christ-woman from Ponapé.’”

“Good,” said the old dame, pulling his face down to hers and embracing him, “now go, and leave what else is to be done to me.”





CHAPTER XI.

A CONVERT THROUGH LOVE.

THE storm had nearly ceased, and although the wind was yet high and the branches of a hundred thousand graceful palms thrashed and bent and swayed wildly to its whistling note, overhead the blue sky was unspotted by a single cloud.

Kate Trenton awoke as she lay upon her couch of mats in the house of Sru, the chief, and looking out through the opened

His Native Wife

window up into the star-spangled heavens thanked God that her life had been spared, and that He had spared José's too.

She rose softly and looked at the three sleeping figures that lay near her. That which was nearest was her sister, and Kate, taking a rude oil lamp in her hand, sank on her knees beside her, and with tears welling fast to her eyes scanned the pale face of the sleeping woman, and then touched lovingly the bright hair that clustered about her temples.

“Sleep, sleep, dear Helen,” she murmured, and then she moved silently away again to the little window and gazed out past the wildly tossing plumes of the coconut grove that encompassed the house, at the rearing, leap-

His Native Wife 80

ing billows that thundered with a dulled but savage symphony upon the black line of reef half a mile away.

“Poor Hosea,” she said, and then her tears fell fast. “He had so often said that he would willingly give his life if need be for his work, and now to think of him lying out there,” and she turned away from the window with a sob, and covered her face with her hands.

For nearly an hour the girl lay upon her couch till the light of the lamp paled in the silent house, and the grey light of the dawn stole through the serried boles and crowns of the countless palm trees. Drawing over her shoulders, with a strange, happy feeling in her

His Native Wife

heart, a seaman's pea-jacket, which she had found placed beside her couch and knew was Herrera's, she walked noiselessly over to the wicker door, stepped outside, and sat down upon a great, flat slab of coral.

"He loves me! he loves me," she kept saying to herself, with a whispering, joyous laugh, "and I love him. How can I help loving him; he is so good and brave."

A step on the gravel made her look up, and the man who was in her heart stood beside her, with his black, passionate eyes looking into hers.

"It is very cold, Mr. Herrera," she murmured, "and I have your coat. But I am going in again now. I only

His Native Wife ५०

came out because I could not sleep with the dreadful sound of the surf, and——”

She stopped, and then as she was about to rise he sank at her feet, and seizing her hands in his covered them with kisses.

“Kate, Kate! Do not go just yet. I love you. See, sweet one, there is no one here to hear us. Do you think that I have been sleeping? No! I have been lying there beside Barrington watching you, and waiting for the moment when I could come to you and tell you that I love you. Love you, Kate! Holy Saints forgive me; but yesterday I cursed the poor padre, because I thought he would come between us. And I, with the

His Native Wife

devil in my heart to get you, would have run a knife into my own father before that should happen.”

Trembling, partly with joy and partly with fear at his passionate words, Kate Trenton let him draw her to him, and then he kissed her again and again.

“See, Kate,” and the man’s voice shook as he turned her face to him and looked into her honest eyes, “I, José Herrera, swear to you by the soul of my mother, and my belief in heaven and hell, that if you will marry me, I, too, will become one of your faith—that would I do if my mother rose from her grave and cursed me ”

His Native Wife 96

“José”—and there was a happy trill in her voice—“I am so glad . . . because I love you.”

Then, as the sound of footsteps sounded near them on the pebbly path, she glided away from him inside the house, and the first mate of the *Kellet Passmore*, picking up the jacket she had dropped, walked round to the little window, and tapping softly on the cane-work side, held up the garment in view.

A white hand and arm came out of the gloom of the still darkened room, and Kate Trenton's fingers touched his bearded face.

“Good night,” she whispered.

“Good night,” he said in a

☛ His Native Wife

low voice; "I will see you again soon, sweet Kate."

Then he walked quickly away to the beach.

Forty-eight hours before José Herrera had talked with his boat's crew on board the barque, and had promised each man a hundred dollars the day they landed him and Kate Trenton at Guam.

"God is good to me," he said, piously crossing himself. "Two days ago I was ready to kill the poor padre, and run the lives of five men into danger on a long boat voyage. And now the poor padre is dead, and there is no need for me to commit a crime."

Then, as he had no tobacco to smoke, he sat down on the

His Native Wife 56

cool sand watching the paling stars, and wondering when the *Kellet Passmore* would turn up again.

“*Dios,*” he said, clasping his small, sinewy hands around his knees, “Kate and I may be married in a month from now if we touch at Guam. And touch there we shall, if I run the ship ashore in the night.”





CHAPTER XII.

HIS NATIVE WIFE.

WITH the first red streaks of sunrise through the palm-grove, came the murmur of voices and the tramp of naked feet about the gravelled path that led to the chief's house, and Helen Parker awoke to her sister's kiss.

“Kate,” and the pale face lightened up as she drew the girl to her bosom, “I have had such a long sleep, and feel so well and strong,” and then her

eyes wandered over to where Barrington lay with José Herrera sitting by his side.

“Will he die?” she whispered. “How horribly white his face is?”

“Die? Silly Helen! No, dear; but Mr. Herrera says that the cut in his head is something terrible, and that he will be very weak for a long time from loss of blood,” and then Kate laid her cheek to Helen’s, “but we will nurse him in turns, dear. I would be so miserable if he died, Helen, for José—I mean Mr. Herrera—told me that not only did he save your life, but his and mine too, for, before swimming out to you, he told two of his men to go to our aid.”

☞ His Native Wife

Helen pressed her hand, and again she glanced at the pallid features of the sleeping man, and José Herrera nodded and smiled reassuringly.

“Helen,” and Kate’s arm stole round her waist, “don’t weep, dear. It was his wish to die at his post. It is such men as he who win the crown of glory for the cause of Christ.”

Helen Parker shuddered, and then a hot flush dyed her face ; she had not been thinking of her dead husband as Kate imagined, but of the man who had all but given his life for hers.

.

The tramping sound of naked feet on the gravelled paths around the house increased, and

His Native Wife §

Herrera rose and came over to them.

“The native women are bringing baskets of food and placing them outside,” he said to Kate; “they are very anxious to come inside and talk to you both, but Sru, the chief, has forbidden them to make any noise. He thinks you are still asleep. Would you like to come outside for a little? They are getting us something to eat, I can see.”

Moving very quietly so as not to awaken Barrington, Herrera opened the door, and Helen and Kate followed him outside and faced the crowd of natives who sat awaiting them. A little apart from the rest, seated on a mat fringed with

•§ His Native Wife

scarlet parrot's feathers, was Sru, the chief; behind him, his wife and Railik his son.

A murmur of approval broke from the people as Helen stepped across to the chief, and spoke to him.

“We thank thee, Sru of Lössap, that thou and thy people, have saved us from death.”

“Sit thou there, Christ-woman, thou and the other woman, and the dark-faced ship man,” and the chief pointed to where, among the rest of the whaling gear saved from the boats, the four line tubs were placed side by side; “sit thou there, and while my women get ready food for thee to eat, let us talk.”

They sat down and waited

His Native Wife ❧

for him to speak, and Herrera who, although he could not speak the language, knew by the chief's manner that something was wrong, looked anxiously around for his and Barrington's boats' crews. Not one of the men was to be seen.

.

Suddenly, with a fierce scowl at Helen, the chief raised his huge, brawny arm, and with his open palm struck the mat upon which he sat.

“Christ-woman, why came ye here?”

The rude, rough words—so different from what she expected, started and alarmed her.

“Why such angry words to those who have been cast upon

His Native Wife

the beach by the waves, O Sru."

"'Tis to thee alone I speak, thou stealer of women's husbands. See," and he sprang to his feet, and pointed to the oars, lances, and harpoons that lay piled together by the tubs, "there be all the things that were taken from the boats. Now listen, and make the dark-faced ship-man by thy side understand my words. Presently, when ye have eaten and drank, shall my people fill the one boat that is unbroken with food and water, and then shall ye all get to the boat and go away from my land and seek the ship again. But the white man Jāki shall stay."

Utterly at a loss to account

His Native Wife 86

for the chief's angry words and inhospitable manner, Helen answered him—

“Why to me alone, O Sru of Lössap, is thy anger turned? And how am I a stealer of women's husbands?”

“Is not Jāki the husband of Nādee?”

An agony of shame for the moment overcame her. She knew how prone the native mind was to suspicion, and hastened to explain.

“He is not my husband. My husband is dead but yesterday.”

And then, in as few words as possible, she told how it was that she and her husband came to take a passage in the whaler, and then asked the chief if he

His Native Wife

did not know that her husband was dead.

He listened to the end, and then answered coldly :

“What lies are these? Are we fools? Are not every one that were in the boats alive and well but Jāki? Thou dost but say this for fear of thy life, thou cunning Christ-woman. Old Tariva knoweth of thy love for the husband of Nādee, and hath told us.”

For a minute she was too dazed to speak, and then a young girl who sat directly in front of her took up a small piece of broken coral and tossed it at her feet contemptuously.

“Thou stealer of women’s husbands!” she said with a

His Native Wife 80

mocking laugh, and then came a chorus of gibes and jeers.

Herrera, with a red gleam in his eyes, sprang up, and in another moment Helen had fainted in her sister's arms.

Lifting her up, Herrera carried her back to the house and laid her down.

Kate followed him in, and splashing her face with water she soon revived.

“What is wrong, dear? Why is that dreadful-looking man so angry?”

“For God's sake don't ask me now, Kate. Mr. Herrera, we must leave the island at once; our lives are in peril else. The chief says that as soon as we have eaten something we must go away;

☛ His Native Wife

and that he will provision the boat.”

“*Dios!* Is the man mad?”

“No, no,” said Helen, hurriedly. “I know the cause of it all. A fierce old woman named Tariva, who was once at Ponapé, and hates the missionaries bitterly, has poisoned his mind against us—me in particular. We must go, Mr. Herrera. I know our danger. She is a terrible woman, and would have great influence over these Lōsap natives,” and then she added in calmer tones, “Leave me here, please. I cannot face those women again, but they will offer no harm to either Kate or you. Go, Mr. Herrera, I beg of you, and see to the boat.”

His Native Wife 86

The mate, with a sympathetic grasp of her hand, turned to go. "Do not fear, ladies. We will be safe enough in the boat, and even if we miss the ship we can run down to Truk, with this wind, in thirty hours."

The moment Herrera stood outside two of his boat's crew met him, and he learned that the four Maoris had told them that they had been asked by the natives to remain on the island ; but that all the others, except Barrington, were to go, or they would be killed.

"All right, boys, let the Maoris stay—we don't want them. Where are Pedro and Tom, and the boatsteerer?"

"Down at the boat, stowing her with baskets of food. She's

☞ His Native Wife

about a mile farther down on the beach.”

“Very well, go down and lend them a hand. Here! take the oars down to the boat, and pull up here as quick as you can. I will stay with the ladies.”

Picking up the oars the men walked quickly away along the beach, and Herrera saw with astonishment that there was not a native about. They had all gone into their houses, and seemed to show the most utter indifference to the movements of the white people.

He sat down on one of the line tubs, and presently Kate Trenton, her face pale with excitement, joined him.

“Helen is coming presently,”

His Native Wife ❧

she said, and she sat beside him and placed her trembling hand in his.

.
Slowly Barrington opened his eyes and gazed stupidly around him. A raging thirst and a sound of some one sobbing had roused him from his death-like sleep, and in a faint voice he called for water.

“Thank God !” murmured Helen, and raising his head on her arm, she placed a young coconut to his lips.

He drank, and then with a heavy sigh sank back on the rolled-up mat that formed his pillow, and closed his eyes again.

She knelt beside him for a few moments with her hands

§ His Native Wife

clasped tightly together, and then bent down and kissed him—for the last time.

Then came the sound of the crunching gravel outside, and the doorway of the house was darkened by two figures, but she heard nor saw them not, as she sobbed out her heart over the unconscious man.

.

“See, Nādee, see thy white husband and the Christ-woman for whom he hath cast thee off,” and then old Tariva slipped a knife into the girl’s hand. As Nādee sprang forward Helen raised her face ; and then the knife flashed and sank deep down into her heart, and stilled it for ever.

.

His Native Wife 50

A wild, shrieking laugh made Kate Trenton and José Herrera spring to their feet, to see a hideous old woman with long, snow-white hair, standing at the door of the chief's house, and the next moment a young girl, as fair-skinned almost as Kate herself, stepped outside.

Again that awful screeching laugh rang out, and the hag took Nādee by the hand and led her out in full view of the village. Then she spoke.

“ See, O men of Lōsap. See the red hand of Nādee. Hold thou it up, my wood-dove, and let them see the blood of the Christ-woman who stole thy lover from thee with her strong witchcraft.”

And Nādee, with blazing

§ His Native Wife

eyes and panting bosom, held up the bloodied knife.

.

At sunset the whale-boat, with Kate's head pillowed against her lover's bosom, was fifty miles away ; and Jack Barrington awoke to find bending over him the calm face of his native wife.

THE END.

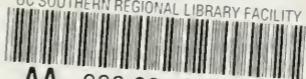
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