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THE NEW HAWAIIAN GIRL

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX

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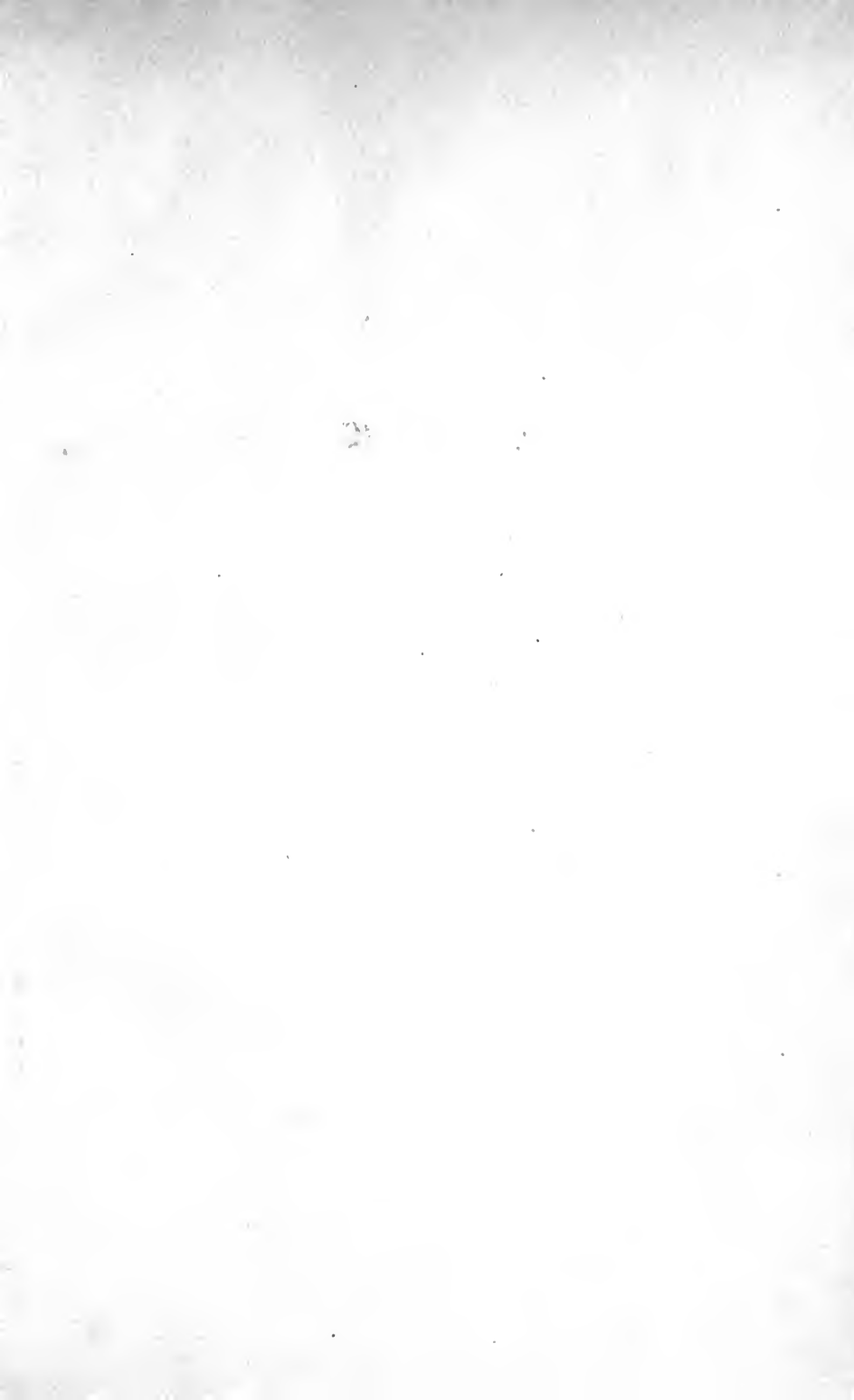
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THE NEW HAWAIIAN GIRL

A PLAY

BY

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY
JOHN PRENDERGAST



London

GAY & HANCOCK, LTD.

1910

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PROLOGUE

KAMEHAMEHA FIRST, of the Hawaiian Islands, conquered his foes in a great battle, driving them over the high mountain-peak known as the Pali—one of the famous scenic views of the world, and the goal of all visitors in Honolulu.

The Hula (pronounced hoola) was the national muscle and abdominal dance of Hawaii, and the late King Kalakua was its enthusiastic patron. The costume of the dancers was composed chiefly of skirts of grass. The Hula (so attired) is now forbidden by law. The Hula Kui is a modification of the dance, and exceedingly graceful.

Many charming young self-supporting women in Honolulu trace their ancestry back to Kamehameha with great pride. The chant is a weird sing-song which relates the conquests of the race.

It is the custom in Honolulu to present guests at feasts and festivals, or departing visitors, with long wreaths of natural flowers, and which are worn by men, as well as women, about the head, hat, and neck. These wreaths, called leis (pronounced lays), sometimes reach below the waist.

The flower-sellers are one of the national features of Honolulu.

THE NEW HAWAIIAN GIRL

Scene made to represent grounds at Hawaiian Hotel. Sort of open Cafe, or pavilion, with palms, vines, and tropic flowers. RALPH sitting alone with a dreamy air.

Enter ETHEL, in short travelling-suit—typical American girl—blonde and petite.

ETHEL.

O H, here you are. Your sister and your mother
Commissioned me, detective, sleuth, and spy,
To find the disappearing son and brother,
And tell him that the time is slipping by.
Our boat will sail in just two hours, you know.
Dear Honolulu, how I hate to go !

RALPH.

Don't mention it ; I shun the very thought.

ETHEL.

You see, this is the sort of thing one hears,
And don't believe, until one sees the spot.
We left New York in snow up to its ears ;
And now a Paradise ! the palm, the rose,
The Bougainvillea, and the breath of summer.

RALPH.

I tell you Honolulu is a hummer.
It pays for six long days upon the ocean
And those sad memories of a ship's queer motion.

ETHEL.

There's one thing, tho', that's disappointed me—
The much-exploited Honolulu maid ;
I haven't seen a beauty in the town.

RALPH.

They're thick as ripe bananas on a tree.
You have not been observing, I'm afraid.

ETHEL (*shrugging her shoulders*).

Oh well, tastes differ. I don't care for brown ;
At least for this pronounced Hawaiian shade.
I really can't imagine how a man
Could love a girl dyed to a chronic tan.

RALPH.

Some one has said, Love goes where it is sent.

ETHEL (*sadly*).

I think that true ; one cannot guide its bent.
But I must go ; and will you come along ?
Your mother said to bring you.

RALPH.

Not quite yet ;
I'll wait until that bird completes its song,
The last I'll hear, till many a sun has set.
Just tell the folks I'll meet them on the pier.
[*Exit* ETHEL, *looking disappointed*.]

RALPH (*sitting down in a reverie*).

A nice girl, Ethel ; but, by Jove, it's queer
The way a fellow's stubborn mind will turn
To something that he should forget. That face—
I saw once on a San Francisco street,
How well I do recall the time and place !
"A girl from Honolulu," some one said.
I wonder where she is now ! Married ? Dead ?

[*A silent reverie for a moment. Then speaks again.*
I planned this trip with just one crazy thought—
To look upon that strange girl's face once more.

That is the lunny project which has brought
The four of us to this idyllic shore.

[*Laughs and lights a cigar.*

My scheme was worked with such consummate care
That mother thinks *she* planned the whole affair.
Then she invited Ethel as her guest.

[*Silence for a moment.*

Well, sometimes mothers know just what is best
For wayward sons.

And yet, and yet, and yet,
Why is it one girl's face I can't forget?
Why is it that I feel despondent-hearted
In missing that fool hope for which I started?
Four thousand miles is something of a chase
To run to cover one elusive face
And then to *fail*.

[*Reverie. A chant is heard outside. The man listens. The chant ceases, and then a maiden slowly approaches, calling out her flower wares, which she carries in a basket; she wears several leis herself, on hat and neck. She does not observe man at first.*

(*Calls in a musical voice.*)

Leis, leis, royal leis, beautiful flowers in bloom;
Colours of splendour, fragrance so tender

Blossoms to brighten your room ;
 Leis, leis, royal leis, who buys ?

[RALPH *leans forward and says aside*,
 Eve and the serpent meet in Paradise.

[*He moves forward as the maid enters the doorway. Recognition shows in both faces. Then the maiden recovers her self-possession and starts to go.*

RALPH (*with sudden boldness and excitement*).

I'll buy you out, in case you then are free
 To stay awhile beneath this banyan tree,
 And tell me all about your lovely land.

FLOWER-GIRL (*with dignity*).

Your pardon, sir ; I do not understand.

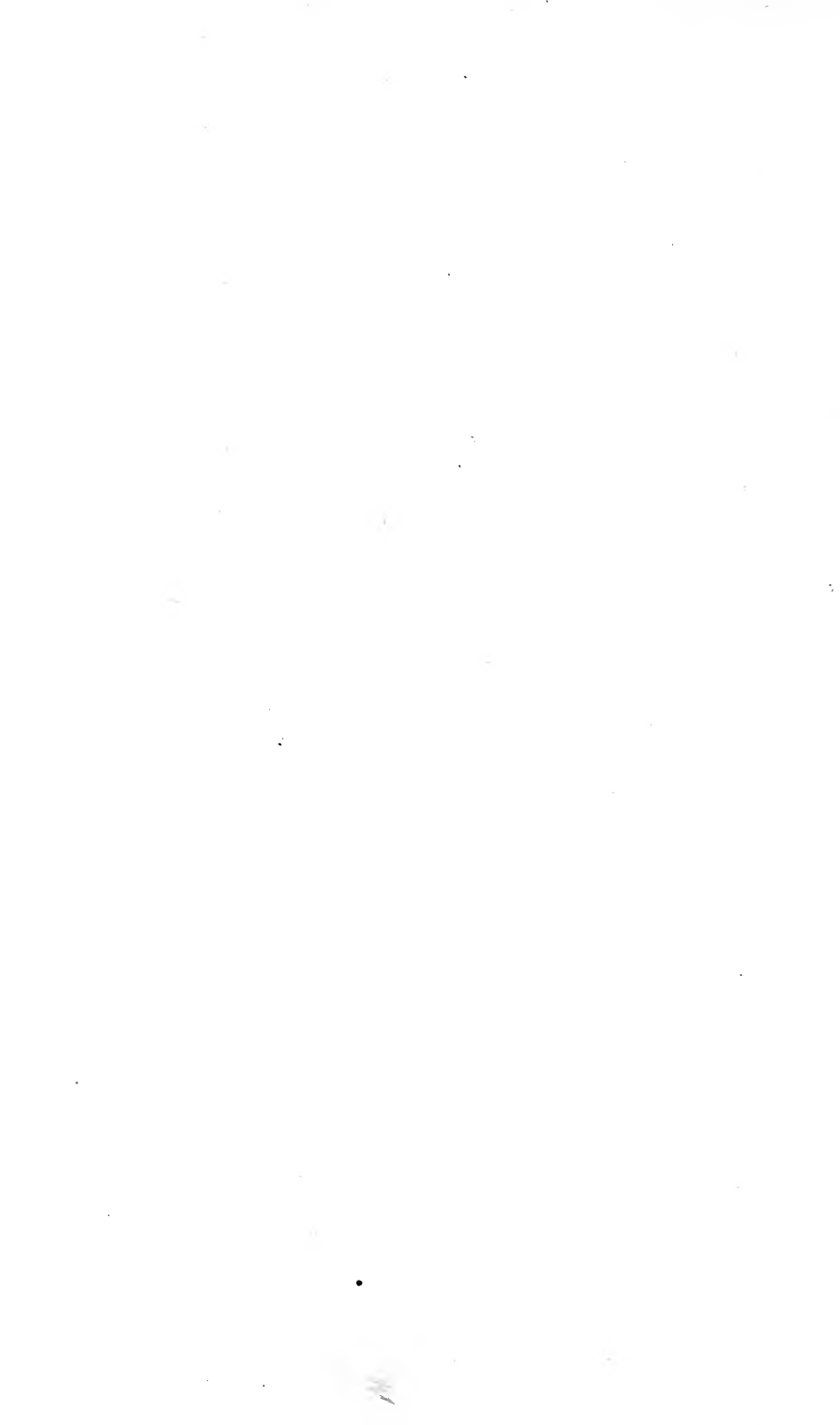
RALPH (*who seems drunk with exhilaration*).

Oh well, 'tis plain enough ; from realms of snow
 I landed here, some little time ago,
 A lonely orphan, without kith or kin.
 I need a friend.

[FLOWER-GIRL *gives him an indignant, surprised glance. Then speaks with quiet sarcasm.*

Well, they will take you in
 On Hotel Street. The Y.M.C.A. there
 Shelters all homeless youths within its pale.





RALPH (*shaking his head sadly*).

They wouldn't take *me* in. I am from Yale.

GIRL (*with mock sympathy*).

Oh, that *is* sad. Because no skill or tact
You might employ could ever hide the fact
From all the world, wherever you might be.
Now Harvard, Princeton, Stanford men, we see
And never know, until they speak the name ;
But Yale—it bears its brand.

RALPH (*reproachfully*).

You're making game
Of me, and of my college, cruel girl.

[*Approaches her excitedly.*]

Come, drop those flowers, and let us have a whirl.
I'll give you both the Yale Yell and the Boola,
If you will dance for me your famous Hula.

GIRL (*drawing back haughtily*).

I dance the Hula ? You mistake, my friend ;
You heard my chant, but did not comprehend
The meaning of it. Hark, while I repeat it.

[*Repeats the chant.*]

RALPH (*puzzled*).

I'm sure there's nothing in the world can beat it ;
But—er—the language is a little queer ;
I did not quite catch all the words, I fear ;
Besides, I'm so distracted by your face.

GIRL (*proudly*).

That chant relates the conquests of my race.
Though I am poor, and hawk about these leis
To earn my bread, yet in the olden days
There was no prouder family on earth
Than mine. But Polynesian pride of birth
Is quite beyond the white man's scope of brain,
And so perchance I speak to you in vain.

[*Takes her flowers and starts to go.*]

RALPH (*intercepting her*).

Great Scott ! but you are splendid when you're mad !
Now please don't go ; I'm really not so bad ;
I don't mean half I say.

GIRL (*turning blazing eyes upon him*).

Oh, all you men
Of pallid blood, again, and yet again
Have offered insults to our Island races.
I own we once were savage, and the traces

Of those wild days remain ; but, sir, go back
A little way, on *your* ancestral track,
And see what you will find. A horde of bold
And lawless cut-throats started many an old
And purse-proud race ; and brutal strength became
The bloody groundwork for pretentious fame
When might was right. If every royal tree
Were dug up by the roots, the world would see
That common mud first mothered the poor sprout.
Your race is higher than my own, no doubt ;
Then shame upon you, for the poor display
Of noble manhood that you make to-day,
Thinking each brown-faced girl your lawful prey.

[Turns her back upon him and starts to go.]

RALPH (*pleadingly*).

Oh, say now, let a fellow have a show.
I never meant to rouse your anger so ;
I only meant—I—well, you see the change
Of climate was so sudden ; and the strange
And gorgeous scenery, and your glorious eyes
Upset my brain. But you have put me wise.
I own that I had heard——

[Hesitates, and GIRL breaks forth again.]

Oh, yes, I know you heard
Wild tales of Honolulu ; and were stirred

With high ambitions to return to Yale
The envied hero of a wilder tale ;
You thought each maiden on this isle, perchance,
Wore skirts of grass, and danced the Hula dance ;
And gave her lips to any man for gold.

RALPH (*interrupting*).

Oh, 'pon my honour, I was not so bold.

GIRL (*ignoring, and with vehemence*).

You thought the old-time licence still prevailed ;
You did not know across the heavens had sailed
A beauteous star, in brilliancy arrayed,
The *Self-respecting New Hawaiian Maid*—
Who prides herself upon her blood and birth,
And holds her virtue at its priceless worth ;
And stands undaunted in her rightful place,
Snow-white of soul, however brown of face ;
Warmer in blood than your white women are,
And yet more moral in her life by far
Than many a leader in your halls of fashion.

RALPH (*gazing at her with admiration*).

I vow I like to see you in a passion.
Such royal rage ! Your forbear was, I know,
Kame-a-lili-like-kalico,



Or some such name ; who got in that great tiff,
And tumbled all his foes down off the cliff.
I feel I'm lying with them in the valley
While you stand all triumphant, on the Pali.

GIRL (*smiling and softened*).

You mean Kamehameha First, I'm sure.
Yes, I am of his line.

RALPH.

May it endure
Until the end of time ; for you are *great* ;
The world needs women like you.

[GIRL *turns to go*.

RALPH.

Oh, now wait !

I want some flowers ; please hang about my neck
A dozen leis ; and give me half a peck
Of nice bouquets ; then I will hire a band
And celebrate my entrance to your land.
I'll dance the Hula up and down the street,
And cry *Aloha* to each girl I meet ;
And if she frowns, and calls me cad, and churl,
I'll shout, Long live the New Hawaiian Girl—
Rah, rah, rah, Yale, Yale, Yale !

[*A Hawaiian Band is heard approaching.*

GIRL (*laughingly, as she hangs leis about his neck*).

Well, there's your band ; and, since you are so kind
 To purchase all my flowers, I've half a mind
 To favour you with, not the Hula, sir,
 But something more refined, and prettier.
 I'll teach it to you ; ask the band out there
 To play the Hula Kui dancing air ;
 Then follow all I do, and copy me.
 This is the way it starts. Now, one, two, three.

[*After the dance ends, RALPH approaches the
 GIRL with tense face, and speaks with
 great seriousness.*

Girl, tho' I do not even know your name,
 Yet here I stand, and offer you my own ;
 It was for you I came, for you alone
 Across the half-world. I have never known
 Forgetfulness since first your face I saw.
 In coming here I but obeyed Love's law.
 I thought it fancy, passion, or caprice ;
 I know now it is *Love*.

FLOWER-GIRL (*with emotion*).

I pray you, cease ;
 You do not understand yourself ; go, go.

[*Urges him towards Exit.*





RALPH (*seizing her hand*).

I will not go until I hear you say
That you remember, even as I do,
That brief encounter on the street one day.

[FLOWER-GIRL *turns her face away and tries to free her hand.*

RALPH (*exultantly*).

Oh, it is *Fate* ; and *Fate* we must obey.

[*Takes ring from his finger.*

Let the ship go ; but with my heart I stay.

[*Attempts to place ring on GIRL'S finger. She wrenches her hand free, and stands with both hands behind her as she speaks with suppressed emotion.*

The heart of every island girl on earth,
I think, hides one sweet dream, and it is this :
To one day meet a man of higher birth—
To win his heart—to feel his tender kiss—
And sail with him to some far-distant land.
This, too, has been my dream ; wherein your face
Shone like a beacon.

[*Repels RALPH as he starts forward.*

But I know your race

Too well, too well. I know how such dreams end.
You could not claim me in your land, my friend,
For colour prejudice is rampant there.

RALPH (*impetuously*).

But I will stay for ever here, I swear.

FLOWER-GIRL.

Nay, do not swear ; you would but break the vow,
As many another has. Our tropic sun
Affects men like a fever ; when 'tis run,
Then their delusions pass. Oh, leave me now ;
I hear the whistle of your ship—adieu.
Aloha oie—may God be with you !

Enter ETHEL *hurriedly*.

Come, Ralph, your mother and your sister wait
Quite frantic at the pier, lest you be late.
They sent me for you.

[*Exit* RALPH *with* ETHEL ; *he looks back and flings* GIRL *a wreath. GIRL smiles, and sings Hawaiian song, picks up the wreath and drops face in her hands, as curtain goes down.*







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