THE KANAKA SURF

The tourist women, under the hau tree arbour that lines the Moana hotel beach, gasped when Lee Barton and his wife Ida emerged from the bath-house. And as the pair walked past them and down to the sand, they continued to gasp. Not that there was anything about Lee Barton provocative of gasps. The tourist women were not of the sort to gasp at sight of a mere man's swimming-suited body, no matter with what swelling splendour of line and muscle such body was invested. Nevertheless, trainers and conditioners of men would have drawn deep breaths of satisfaction at contemplation of the physical spectacle of him. But they would not have gasped in the way the women did, whose gasps were indicative of moral shock.

Ida Barton was the cause of their perturbation and disapproval. They disapproved, seriously so, at the first instant's glimpse of her. They thought--such ardent self-deceivers were they--that they were shocked by her swimming suit. But Freud has pointed out how persons, where sex is involved, are prone sincerely to substitute one thing for another thing, and to agonize over the substituted thing as strenuously as if it were the real thing.

Ida Barton's swimming suit was a very nice one, as women's suits go. Of thinnest of firm-woven black wool, with white trimmings and

a white belt-line, it was high-throated, short-sleeved, and brief-skirted. Brief as was the skirt, the leg-tights were no less brief. Yet on the beach in front of the adjacent Outrigger Club, and entering and leaving the water, a score of women, not provoking gasping notice, were more daringly garbed. Their men's suits, as brief of leg-tights and skirts, fitted them as snugly, but were sleeveless after the way of men's suits, the arm-holes deeply low-cut and in-cut, and, by the exposed armpits, advertiseful that the wearers were accustomed to 1916 decollete.

So it was not Ida Barton's suit, although the women deceived themselves into thinking it was. It was, first of all, say her legs; or, first of all, say the totality of her, the sweet and brilliant jewel of her femininity bursting upon them. Dowager, matron, and maid, conserving their soft-fat muscles or protecting their hot-house complexions in the shade of the hau-tree arbour, felt the immediate challenge of her. She was menace as well, an affront of superiority in their own chosen and variously successful game of life.

But they did not say it. They did not permit themselves to think it. They thought it was the suit, and said so to one another, ignoring the twenty women more daringly clad but less perilously beautiful. Could one have winnowed out of the souls of these disapproving ones what lay at bottom of their condemnation of her suit, it would have been found to be the sex-jealous thought: THAT

NO WOMAN, SO BEAUTIFUL AS THIS ONE, SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO SHOW HER

BEAUTY. It was not fair to them. What chance had they in the conquering of males with so dangerous a rival in the foreground?

They were justified. As Stanley Patterson said to his wife, where the two of them lolled wet in the sand by the tiny fresh-water stream that the Bartons waded in order to gain the Outrigger Club beach:

"Lord god of models and marvels, behold them! My dear, did you ever see two such legs on one small woman! Look at the roundness and taperingness. They're boy's legs. I've seen featherweights go into the ring with legs like those. And they're all-woman's legs, too. Never mistake them in the world. The arc of the front line of that upper leg! And the balanced adequate fullness at the back! And the way the opposing curves slender in to the knee that IS a knee! Makes my fingers itch. Wish I had some clay right now."

"It's a true human knee," his wife concurred, no less breathlessly; for, like her husband, she was a sculptor. "Look at the joint of it working under the skin. It's got form, and blessedly is not covered by a bag of fat." She paused to sigh, thinking of her own knees. "It's correct, and beautiful, and dainty. Charm! If ever I beheld the charm of flesh, it is now. I wonder who she is."

Stanley Patterson, gazing ardently, took up his half of the chorus.

"Notice that the round muscle-pads on the inner sides that make most women appear knock-kneed are missing. They're boy's legs, firm and sure--"

"And sweet woman's legs, soft and round," his wife hastened to balance. "And look, Stanley! See how she walks on the balls of her feet. It makes her seem light as swan's down. Each step seems just a little above the earth, and each other step seems just a little higher above until you get the impression she is flying, or just about to rise and begin flying . . . "

So Stanley and Mrs. Patterson. But they were artists, with eyes therefore unlike the next batteries of human eyes Ida Barton was compelled to run, and that laired on the Outrigger lanais (verandas) and in the hau-tree shade of the closely adjoining seaside. The majority of the Outrigger audience was composed, not of tourist guests, but of club members and old-timers in Hawaii. And even the old-times women gasped.

"It's positively indecent," said Mrs. Hanley Black to her husband, herself a too-stout-in-the-middle matron of forty-five, who had been born in the Hawaiian islands, and who had never heard of Ostend.

Hanley Black surveyed his wife's criminal shapelessness and voluminousness of antediluvian, New-England swimming dress with a withering, contemplative eye. They had been married a sufficient number of years for him frankly to utter his judgment.

"That strange woman's suit makes your own look indecent. You appear as a creature shameful, under a grotesqueness of apparel striving to hide some secret awfulness."

"She carries her body like a Spanish dancer," Mrs. Patterson said to her husband, for the pair of them had waded the little stream in pursuit of the vision.

"By George, she does," Stanley Patterson concurred. "Reminds me of Estrellita. Torso just well enough forward, slender waist, not too lean in the stomach, and with muscles like some lad boxer's armouring that stomach to fearlessness. She has to have them to carry herself that way and to balance the back muscles. See that muscled curve of the back! It's Estrellita's."

"How tall would you say?" his wife queried.

"There she deceives," was the appraised answer. "She might be five-feet-one, or five-feet-three or four. It's that way she has of walking that you described as almost about to fly."

"Yes, that's it," Mrs. Patterson concurred. "It's her energy, her seemingness of being on tip toe with rising vitality."

Stanley Patterson considered for a space.

"That's it," he enounced. "She IS a little thing. I'll give her five-two in her stockings. And I'll weigh her a mere one hundred and ten, or eight, or fifteen at the outside."

"She won't weigh a hundred and ten," his wife declared with conviction.

"And with her clothes on, plus her carriage (which is builded of her vitality and will), I'll wager she'd never impress any one with her smallness."

"I know her type," his wife nodded. "You meet her out, and you have the sense that, while not exactly a fine large woman, she's a whole lot larger than the average. And now, age?"

"I'll give you best there," he parried.

"She might be twenty-five, she might be twenty-eight . . . "

But Stanley Patterson had impolitely forgotten to listen.

"It's not her legs alone," he cried on enthusiastically. "It's the all of her. Look at the delicacy of that forearm. And the swell of line to the shoulder. And that biceps! It's alive. Dollars to drowned kittens she can flex a respectable knot of it . . . "

No woman, much less an Ida Barton, could have been unconscious of the effect she was producing along Waikiki Beach. Instead of making her happy in the small vanity way, it irritated her.

"The cats," she laughed to her husband. "And to think I was born here an almost even third of a century ago! But they weren't nasty then. Maybe because there weren't any tourists. Why, Lee, I learned to swim right here on this beach in front of the Outrigger. We used to come out with daddy for vacations and for week-ends and sort of camp out in a grass house that stood right where the Outrigger ladies serve tea now. And centipedes fell out of the thatch on us, while we slept, and we all ate poi and opihis and raw aku, and nobody wore much of anything for the swimming and squidding, and there was no real road to town. I remember times of big rain when it was so flooded we had to go in by canoe, out through the reef and in by Honolulu Harbour."

"Remember," Lee Barton added, "it was just about that time that the youngster that became me arrived here for a few weeks' stay on our way around. I must have seen you on the beach at that very time--

one of the kiddies that swam like fishes. Why, merciful me, the women here were all riding cross-saddle, and that was long before the rest of the social female world outgrew its immodesty and came around to sitting simultaneously on both sides of a horse. I learned to swim on the beach here at that time myself. You and I may even have tried body-surfing on the same waves, or I may have splashed a handful of water into your mouth and been rewarded by your sticking out your tongue at me--"

Interrupted by an audible gasp of shock from a spinster-appearing female sunning herself hard by and angularly in the sand in a swimming suit monstrously unbeautiful, Lee Barton was aware of an involuntary and almost perceptible stiffening on the part of his wife.

"I smile with pleasure," he told her. "It serves only to make your valiant little shoulders the more valiant. It may make you self-conscious, but it likewise makes you absurdly self-confident."

For, be it known in advance, Lee Barton was a super-man and Ida Barton a super-woman--or at least they were personalities so designated by the cub book-reviewers, flat-floor men and women, and scholastically emasculated critics, who from across the dreary levels of their living can descry no glorious humans over-topping their horizons. These dreary folk, echoes of the dead past and importunate and self-elected pall-bearers for the present and

future, proxy-livers of life and vicarious sensualists that they are in a eunuch sort of way, insist, since their own selves, environments, and narrow agitations of the quick are mediocre and commonplace, that no man or woman can rise above the mediocre and commonplace.

Lacking gloriousness in themselves, they deny gloriousness to all mankind; too cowardly for whimsy and derring-do, they assert whimsy and derring-do ceased at the very latest no later than the middle ages; flickering little tapers themselves, their feeble eyes are dazzled to unseeingness of the flaming conflagrations of other souls that illumine their skies. Possessing power in no greater quantity than is the just due of pygmies, they cannot conceive of power greater in others than in themselves. In those days there were giants; but, as their mouldy books tell them, the giants are long since passed, and only the bones of them remain. Never having seen the mountains, there are no mountains.

In the mud of their complacently perpetuated barnyard pond, they assert that no bright-browed, bright-apparelled shining figures can be outside of fairy books, old histories, and ancient superstitions. Never having seen the stars, they deny the stars. Never having glimpsed the shining ways nor the mortals that tread them, they deny the existence of the shinning ways as well as the existence of the high-bright mortals who adventure along the shining ways. The narrow pupils of their eyes the centre of the

universe, they image the universe in terms of themselves, of their meagre personalities make pitiful yardsticks with which to measure the high-bright souls, saying: "Thus long are all souls, and no longer; it is impossible that there should exist greater-statured souls than we are, and our gods know that we are great of stature."

But all, or nearly all on the beach, forgave Ida Barton her suit and form when she took the water. A touch of her hand on her husband's arm, indication and challenge in her laughing face, and the two ran as one for half a dozen paces and leapt as one from the hard-wet sand of the beach, their bodies describing flat arches of flight ere the water was entered.

There are two surfs at Waikiki: the big, bearded man surf that roars far out beyond the diving-stage; the smaller, gentler, wahine, or woman, surf that breaks upon the shore itself. Here is a great shallowness, where one may wade a hundred or several hundred feet to get beyond depth. Yet, with a good surf on outside, the wahine surf can break three or four feet, so that, close in against the shore, the hard-sand bottom may be three feet or three inches under the welter of surface foam. To dive from the beach into this, to fly into the air off racing feet, turn in mid-flight so that heels are up and head is down, and, so to enter the water head-first, requires wisdom of waves, timing of waves, and a trained deftness in entering such unstable depths of water with

pretty, unapprehensive, head-first cleavage, while at the same time making the shallowest possible of dives.

It is a sweet, and pretty, and daring trick, not learned in a day, nor learned at all without many a milder bump on the bottom or close shave of fractured skull or broken neck. Here, on the spot where the Bartons so beautifully dived, two days before a Stanford track athlete had broken his neck. His had been an error in timing the rise and subsidence of a wahine wave.

"A professional," Mrs. Hanley Black sneered to her husband at Ida Barton's feat.

"Some vaudeville tank girl," was one of the similar remarks with which the women in the shade complacently reassured one another--finding, by way of the weird mental processes of self-illusion, a great satisfaction in the money caste-distinction between one who worked for what she ate and themselves who did not work for what they ate.

It was a day of heavy surf on Waikiki. In the wahine surf it was boisterous enough for good swimmers. But out beyond, in the kanaka, or man, surf, no one ventured. Not that the score or more of young surf-riders loafing on the beach could not venture there, or were afraid to venture there; but because their biggest outrigger canoes would have been swamped, and their surf-boards

would have been overwhelmed in the too-immense over-topple and down-fall of the thundering monsters. They themselves, most of them, could have swum, for man can swim through breakers which canoes and surf-boards cannot surmount; but to ride the backs of the waves, rise out of the foam to stand full length in the air above, and with heels winged with the swiftness of horses to fly shoreward, was what made sport for them and brought them out from Honolulu to Waikiki.

The captain of Number Nine canoe, himself a charter member of the Outrigger and a many-times medallist in long-distance swimming, had missed seeing the Bartons take the water, and first glimpsed them beyond the last festoon of bathers clinging to the life-lines. From then on, from his vantage of the upstairs lanai, he kept his eyes on them. When they continued out past the steel diving-stage where a few of the hardiest divers disported, he muttered vexedly under his breath "damned malahinis!"

Now malahini means new-comer, tender-foot; and, despite the prettiness of their stroke, he knew that none except malahinis would venture into the racing channel beyond the diving-stage. Hence the vexation of the captain of Number Nine. He descended to the beach, with a low word here and there picked a crew of the strongest surfers, and returned to the lanai with a pair of binoculars. Quite casually, the crew, six of them, carried Number Nine to the water's edge, saw paddles and everything in order for a

quick launching, and lolled about carelessly on the sand. They were guilty of not advertising that anything untoward was afoot, although they did steal glances up to their captain straining through the binoculars.

What made the channel was the fresh-water stream. Coral cannot abide fresh water. What made the channel race was the immense shoreward surf-fling of the sea. Unable to remain flung up on the beach, pounded ever back toward the beach by the perpetual shoreward rush of the kanaka surf, the up-piled water escaped to the sea by way of the channel and in the form of under-tow along the bottom under the breakers. Even in the channel the waves broke big, but not with the magnificent bigness of terror as to right and left. So it was that a canoe or a comparatively strong swimmer could dare the channel. But the swimmer must be a strong swimmer indeed, who could successfully buck the current in. Wherefore the captain of Number Nine continued his vigil and his muttered damnation of malahinis, disgustedly sure that these two malahinis would compel him to launch Number Nine and go after them when they found the current too strong to swim in against. As for himself, caught in their predicament, he would have veered to the left toward Diamond Head and come in on the shoreward fling of the kanaka surf. But then, he was no one other than himself, a bronze. Hercules of twenty-two, the whitest blond man ever burned to mahogany brown by a sub-tropic sun, with body and lines and muscles very much resembling the wonderful ones of Duke Kahanamoku. In a

hundred yards the world champion could invariably beat him a second flat; but over a distance of miles he could swim circles around the champion.

No one of the many hundreds on the beach, with the exception of till captain and his crew, knew that the Bartons had passed beyond the diving-stage. All who had watched them start to swim out had taken for granted that they had joined the others on the stage.

The captain suddenly sprang upon the railing of the lanai, held on to a pillar with one hand, and again picked up the two specks of heads through the glasses. His surprise was verified. The two fools had veered out of the channel toward Diamond Head, and were directly seaward of the kanaka surf. Worse, as he looked, they were starting to come in through the kanaka surf.

He glanced down quickly to the canoe, and even as he glanced, and as the apparently loafing members quietly arose and took their places by the canoe for the launching, he achieved judgment. Before the canoe could get abreast in the channel, all would be over with the man and woman. And, granted that it could get abreast of them, the moment it ventured into the kanaka surf it would be swamped, and a sorry chance would the strongest swimmer of them have of rescuing a person pounding to pulp on the bottom under the smashes of the great bearded ones.

The captain saw the first kanaka wave, large of itself, but small among its fellows, lift seaward behind the two speck-swimmers. Then he saw them strike a crawl-stroke, side by side, faces downward, full-lengths out-stretched on surface, their feet sculling like propellers and their arms flailing in rapid over-hand strokes, as they spurted speed to approximate the speed of the overtaking wave, so that, when overtaken, they would become part of the wave, and travel with it instead of being left behind it. Thus, if they were coolly skilled enough to ride outstretched on the surface and the forward face of the crest instead of being flung and crumpled or driven head-first to bottom, they would dash shoreward, not propelled by their own energy, but by the energy of the wave into which they had become incorporated.

And they did it! "SOME swimmers!" the captain of Number Nine made announcement to himself under his breath. He continued to gaze eagerly. The best of swimmers could hold such a wave for several hundred feet. But could they? If they did, they would be a third of the way through the perils they had challenged. But, not unexpected by him, the woman failed first, her body not presenting the larger surfaces that her husband's did. At the end of seventy feet she was overwhelmed, being driven downward and out of sight by the tons of water in the over-topple. Her husband followed and both appeared swimming beyond the wave they had lost.

The captain saw the next wave first. "If they try to body-surf on

that, good night," he muttered; for he knew the swimmer did not live who would tackle it. Beardless itself, it was father of all bearded ones, a mile long, rising up far out beyond where the others rose, towering its solid bulk higher and higher till it blotted out the horizon, and was a giant among its fellows ere its beard began to grow as it thinned its crest to the over-curl.

But it was evident that the man and woman knew big water. No racing stroke did they make in advance of the wave. The captain inwardly applauded as he saw them turn and face the wave and wait for it. It was a picture that of all on the beach he alone saw, wonderfully distinct and vivid in the magnification of the binoculars. The wall of the wave was truly a wall, mounting, ever mounting, and thinning, far up, to a transparency of the colours of the setting sun shooting athwart all the green and blue of it. The green thinned to lighter green that merged blue even as he looked. But it was a blue gem-brilliant with innumerable sparkle-points of rose and gold flashed through it by the sun. On and up, to the sprouting beard of growing crest, the colour orgy increased until it was a kaleidoscopic effervescence of transfusing rainbows.

Against the face of the wave showed the heads of the man and woman like two sheer specks. Specks they were, of the quick, adventuring among the blind elemental forces, daring the titanic buffets of the sea. The weight of the down-fall of that father of waves, even then imminent above their heads, could stun a man or break the

fragile bones of a woman. The captain of Number Nine was unconscious that he was holding his breath. He was oblivious of the man. It was the woman. Did she lose her head or courage, or misplay her muscular part for a moment, she could be hurled a hundred feet by that giant buffet and left wrenched, helpless, and breathless to be pulped on the coral bottom and sucked out by the undertow to be battened on by the fish-sharks too cowardly to take their human meat alive.

Why didn't they dive deep, and with plenty of time, the captain wanted to know, instead of waiting till the last tick of safety and the first tick of peril were one? He saw the woman turn her head and laugh to the man, and his head turn in response. Above them, overhanging them, as they mounted the body of the wave, the beard, creaming white, then frothing into rose and gold, tossed upward into a spray of jewels. The crisp off-shore trade-wind caught the beard's fringes and blew them backward and upward yards and yards into the air. It was then, side by side, and six feet apart, that they dived straight under the over-curl even then disintegrating to chaos and falling. Like insects disappearing into the convolutions of some gorgeous gigantic orchid, so they disappeared, as beard and crest and spray and jewels, in many tons, crashed and thundered down just where they had disappeared the moment before, but where they were no longer.

Beyond the wave they had gone through, they finally showed, side by

side, still six feet apart, swimming shoreward with a steady stroke until the next wave should make them body-surf it or face and pierce it. The captain of Number Nine waved his hand to his crew in dismissal, and sat down on the lanai railing, feeling vaguely tired and still watching the swimmers through his glasses.

"Whoever and whatever they are," he murmured, "they aren't malahinis. They simply can't be malahinis."

Not all days, and only on rare days, is the surf heavy at Waikiki; and, in the days that followed, Ida and Lee Barton, much in evidence on the beach and in the water, continued to arouse disparaging interest in the breasts of the tourist ladies, although the Outrigger captains ceased from worrying about them in the water. They would watch the pair swim out and disappear in the blue distance, and they might, or might not, chance to see them return hours afterward. The point was that the captains did not bother about their returning, because they knew they would return.

The reason for this was that they were not malahinis. They belonged. In other words, or, rather, in the potent Islands-word, they were kamaaina. Kamaaina men and women of forty remembered Lee Barton from their childhood days, when, in truth, he had been a malahini, though a very young specimen. Since that time, in the course of various long stays, he had earned the kamaaina

distinction.

As for Ida Barton, young matrons of her own age (privily wondering how she managed to keep her figure) met her with arms around and hearty Hawaiian kisses. Grandmothers must have her to tea and reminiscence in old gardens of forgotten houses which the tourist never sees. Less than a week after her arrival, the aged Queen Liliuokalani must send for her and chide her for neglect. And old men, on cool and balmy lanais, toothlessly maundered to her about Grandpa Captain Wilton, of before their time, but whose wild and lusty deeds and pranks, told them by their fathers, they remembered with gusto--Grandpa Captain Wilton, or David Wilton, or "All Hands" as the Hawaiians of that remote day had affectionately renamed him. All Hands, ex-Northwest trader, the godless, beach-combing, clipper-shipless and ship-wrecked skipper who had stood on the beach at Kailua and welcomed the very first of missionaries, off the brig Thaddeus, in the year 1820, and who, not many years later, made a scandalous runaway marriage with one of their daughters, quieted down and served the Kamehamehas long and conservatively as Minister of the Treasury and Chief of the Customs, and acted as intercessor and mediator between the missionaries on one side and the beach-combing crowd, the trading crowd, and the Hawaiian chiefs on the variously shifting other side.

Nor was Lee Barton neglected. In the midst of the dinners and lunches, the luaus (Hawaiian feasts) and poi-suppers, and swims and

dances in aloha (love) to both of them, his time and inclination were claimed by the crowd of lively youngsters of old Kohala days who had come to know that they possessed digestions and various other internal functions, and who had settled down to somewhat of sedateness, who roistered less, and who played bridge much, and went to baseball often. Also, similarly oriented, was the old poker crowd of Lee Barton's younger days, which crowd played for more consistent stakes and limits, while it drank mineral water and orange juice and timed the final round of "Jacks" never later than midnight.

Appeared, through all the rout of entertainment, Sonny Grandison, Hawaii-born, Hawaii-prominent, who, despite his youthful forty-one years, had declined the proffered governorship of the Territory. Also, he had ducked Ida Barton in the surf at Waikiki a quarter of a century before, and, still earlier, vacationing on his father's great Lakanaii cattle ranch, had hair-raisingly initiated her, and various other tender tots of five to seven years of age, into his boys' band, "The Cannibal Head-Hunters" or "The Terrors of Lakanaii." Still farther, his Grandpa Grandison and her Grandpa Wilton had been business and political comrades in the old days.

Educated at Harvard, he had become for a time a world-wandering scientist and social favourite. After serving in the Philippines, he had accompanied various expeditions through Malaysia, South America, and Africa in the post of official entomologist. At

forty-one he still retained his travelling commission from the Smithsonian Institution, while his friends insisted that he knew more about sugar "bugs" than the expert entomologists employed by him and his fellow sugar planters in the Experiment Station. Bulking large at home, he was the best-known representative of Hawaii abroad. It was the axiom among travelled Hawaii folk, that wherever over the world they might mention they were from Hawaii, the invariable first question asked of them was: "And do you know Sonny Grandison?"

In brief, he was a wealthy man's son who had made good. His father's million he inherited he had increased to ten millions, at the same time keeping up his father's benefactions and endowments and overshadowing them with his own.

But there was still more to him. A ten years' widower, without issue, he was the most eligible and most pathetically sought-after marriageable man in all Hawaii. A clean-and-strong-featured brunette, tall, slenderly graceful, with the lean runner's stomach, always fit as a fiddle, a distinguished figure in any group, the greying of hair over his temples (in juxtaposition to his young-textured skin and bright vital eyes) made him appear even more distinguished. Despite the social demands upon his time, and despite his many committee meetings, and meetings of boards of directors and political conferences, he yet found time and space to captain the Lakanaii polo team to more than occasional victory, and

on his own island of Lakanaii vied with the Baldwins of Maui in the breeding and importing of polo ponies.

Given a markedly strong and vital man and woman, when a second equally markedly strong and vital man enters the scene, the peril of a markedly strong and vital triangle of tragedy becomes imminent. Indeed, such a triangle of tragedy may be described, in the terminology of the flat-floor folk, as "super" and "impossible." Perhaps, since within himself originated the desire and the daring, it was Sonny Grandison who first was conscious of the situation, although he had to be quick to anticipate the sensing intuition of a woman like Ida Barton. At any rate, and undebatable, the last of the three to attain awareness was Lee Barton, who promptly laughed away what was impossible to laugh away.

His first awareness, he quickly saw, was so belated that half his hosts and hostesses were already aware. Casting back, he realized that for some time any affair to which he and his wife were invited found Sonny Grandison likewise invited. Wherever the two had been, the three had been. To Kahuku or to Haleiwa, to Ahuimanu, or to Kaneohe for the coral gardens, or to Koko Head for a picnicking and a swimming, somehow it invariably happened that Ida rode in Sonny's car or that both rode in somebody's car. Dances, luaus, dinners, and outings were all one; the three of them were there.

Having become aware, Lee Barton could not fail to register Ida's note of happiness ever rising when in the same company with Sonny Grandison, and her willingness to ride in the same cars with him, to dance with him, or to sit out dances with him. Most convincing of all, was Sonny Grandison himself. Forty-one, strong, experienced, his face could no more conceal what he felt than could be concealed a lad of twenty's ordinary lad's love. Despite the control and restraint of forty years, he could no more mask his soul with his face than could Lee Barton, of equal years, fail to read that soul through so transparent a face. And often, to other women, talking, when the topic of Sonny came up, Lee Barton heard Ida express her fondness for Sonny, or her almost too-eloquent appreciation of his polo-playing, his work in the world, and his general all-rightness of achievement.

About Sonny's state of mind and heart Lee had no doubt. It was patent enough for the world to read. But how about Ida, his own dozen-years' wife of a glorious love-match? He knew that woman, ever the mysterious sex, was capable any time of unguessed mystery. Did her frank comradeliness with Grandison token merely frank comradeliness and childhood contacts continued and recrudesced into adult years? or did it hide, in woman's subtler and more secretive ways, a beat of heart and return of feeling that might even out-balance what Sonny's face advertised?

Lee Barton was not happy. A dozen years of utmost and post-nuptial possession of his wife had proved to him, so far as he was concerned, that she was his one woman in the world, and that the woman was unborn, much less unglimpsed, who could for a moment compete with her in his heart, his soul, and his brain. Impossible of existence was the woman who could lure him away from her, much less over-bid her in the myriad, continual satisfactions she rendered him.

Was this, then, he asked himself, the dreaded contingency of all fond Benedicts, to be her first "affair?" He tormented himself with the ever iterant query, and, to the astonishment of the reformed Kohala poker crowd of wise and middle-aged youngsters as well as to the reward of the keen scrutiny of the dinner-giving and dinner-attending women, he began to drink King William instead of orange juice, to bully up the poker limit, to drive of nights his own car more than rather recklessly over the Pali and Diamond Head roads, and, ere dinner or lunch or after, to take more than an average man's due of old-fashioned cocktails and Scotch highs.

All the years of their marriage she had been ever complaisant toward him in his card-playing. This complaisance, to him, had become habitual. But now that doubt had arisen, it seemed to him that he noted an eagerness in her countenancing of his poker parties. Another point he could not avoid noting was that Sonny Grandison was missed by the poker and bridge crowds. He seemed to

be too busy. Now where was Sonny, while he, Lee Barton, was playing? Surely not always at committee and boards of directors meetings. Lee Barton made sure of this. He easily learned that at such times Sonny was more than usually wherever Ida chanced to be--at dances, or dinners, or moonlight swimming parties, or, the very afternoon he had flatly pleaded rush of affairs as an excuse not to join Lee and Langhorne Jones and Jack Holstein in a bridge battle at the Pacific Club--that afternoon he had played bridge at Dora Niles' home with three women, one of whom was Ida.

Returning, once, from an afternoon's inspection of the great dry-dock building at Pearl Harbour, Lee Barton, driving his machine against time, in order to have time to dress for dinner, passed Sonny's car; and Sonny's one passenger, whom he was taking home, was Ida. One night, a week later, during which interval he had played no cards, he came home at eleven from a stag dinner at the University Club, just preceding Ida's return from the Alstone poi supper and dance. And Sonny had driven her home. Major Fanklin and his wife had first been dropped off by them, they mentioned, at Fort Shafter, on the other side of town and miles away from the beach.

Lee Barton, after all mere human man, as a human man unfailingly meeting Sonny in all friendliness, suffered poignantly in secret. Not even Ida dreamed that he suffered; and she went her merry, careless, laughing way, secure in her own heart, although a trifle

perplexed at her husband's increase in number of pre-dinner cocktails.

Apparently, as always, she had access to almost all of him; but now she did not have access to his unguessable torment, nor to the long parallel columns of mental book-keeping running their totalling balances from moment to moment, day and night, in his brain. In one column were her undoubtable spontaneous expressions of her usual love and care for him, her many acts of comfort-serving and of advice-asking and advice-obeying. In another column, in which the items increasingly were entered, were her expressions and acts which he could not but classify as dubious. Were they what they seemed? Or were they of duplicity compounded, whether deliberately or unconsciously? The third column, longest of all, totalling most in human heart-appraisements, was filled with items relating directly or indirectly to her and Sonny Grandison. Lee Barton did not deliberately do this book-keeping. He could not help it. He would have liked to avoid it. But in his fairly ordered mind the items of entry, of themselves and quite beyond will on his part, took their places automatically in their respective columns.

In his distortion of vision, magnifying apparently trivial detail which half the time he felt he magnified, he had recourse to MacIlwaine, to whom he had once rendered a very considerable service. MacIlwaine was chief of detectives. "Is Sonny Grandison a womaning man?" Barton had demanded. MacIlwaine had said nothing.

"Then he is a womaning man," had been Barton's declaration. And still the chief of detectives had said nothing.

Briefly afterward, ere he destroyed it as so much dynamite, Lee Barton went over the written report. Not bad, not really bad, was the summarization; but not too good after the death of his wife ten years before. That had been a love-match almost notorious in Honolulu society, because of the completeness of infatuation, not only before, but after marriage, and up to her tragic death when her horse fell with her a thousand feet off Nahiku Trail. And not for a long time afterward, MacIlwaine stated, had Grandison been guilty of interest in any woman. And whatever it was, it had been unvaryingly decent. Never a hint of gossip or scandal; and the entire community had come to accept that he was a one-woman man, and would never marry again. What small affairs MacIlwaine had jotted down he insisted that Sonny Grandison did not dream were known by another person outside the principals themselves.

Barton glanced hurriedly, almost shamedly, at the several names and incidents, and knew surprise ere he committed the document to the flames. At any rate, Sonny had been most discreet. As he stared at the ashes, Barton pondered how much of his own younger life, from his bachelor days, resided in old MacIlwaine's keeping. Next, Barton found himself blushing, to himself, at himself. If MacIlwaine knew so much of the private lives of community figures, then had not he, her husband and protector and shielder, planted in

MacIlwaine's brain a suspicion of Ida?

"Anything on your mind?" Lee asked his wife that evening, as he stood holding her wrap while she put the last touches to her dressing.

This was in line with their old and successful compact of frankness, and he wondered, while he waited her answer, why he had refrained so long from asking her.

"No," she smiled. "Nothing particular. Afterwards . . . perhaps . . . "

She became absorbed in gazing at herself in the mirror, while she dabbed some powder on her nose and dabbed it off again.

"You know my way, Lee," she added, after the pause. "It takes me time to gather things together in my own way--when there are things to gather; but when I do, you always get them. And often there's nothing in them after all, I find, and so you are saved the nuisance of them."

She held out her arms for him to place the wrap about her--her valiant little arms that were so wise and steel-like in battling with the breakers, and that yet were such just mere-woman's arms,

round and warm and white, delicious as a woman's arms should be, with the canny muscles, masking under soft-roundness of contour and fine smooth skin, capable of being flexed at will by the will of her.

He pondered her, with a grievous hurt and yearning of appreciation--so delicate she seemed, so porcelain-fragile that a strong man could snap her in the crook of his arm.

"We must hurry!" she cried, as he lingered in the adjustment of the flimsy wrap over her flimsy-prettiness of gown. "We'll be late. And if it showers up Nuuanu, putting the curtains up will make us miss the second dance."

He made a note to observe with whom she danced that second dance, as she preceded him across the room to the door; while at the same time he pleasured his eye in what he had so often named to himself as the spirit-proud flesh-proud walk of her.

"You don't feel I'm neglecting you in my too-much poker?" he tried again, by indirection.

"Mercy, no! You know I just love you to have your card orgies. They're tonic for you. And you're so much nicer about them, so much more middle-aged. Why, it's almost years since you sat up later than one."

It did not shower up Nuuanu, and every overhead star was out in a clear trade-wind sky. In time at the Inchkeeps' for the second dance, Lee Barton observed that his wife danced it with Grandison--which, of itself, was nothing unusual, but which became immediately a registered item in Barton's mental books.

An hour later, depressed and restless, declining to make one of a bridge foursome in the library and escaping from a few young matrons, he strolled out into the generous grounds. Across the lawn, at the far edge, he came upon the hedge of night-blooming cereus. To each flower, opening after dark and fading, wilting, perishing with the dawn, this was its one night of life. The great, cream-white blooms, a foot in diameter and more, lily-like and wax-like, white beacons of attraction in the dark, penetrating and seducing the night with their perfume, were busy and beautiful with their brief glory of living.

But the way along the hedge was populous with humans, two by two, male and female, stealing out between the dances or strolling the dances out, while they talked in low soft voices and gazed upon the wonder of flower-love. From the lanai drifted the love-caressing strains of "Hanalei" sung by the singing boys. Vaguely Lee Barton remembered--perhaps it was from some Maupassant story--the abbe, obsessed by the theory that behind all things were the purposes of God and perplexed so to interpret the night, who discovered at the

last that the night was ordained for love.

The unanimity of the night as betrayed by flowers and humans was a hurt to Barton. He circled back toward the house along a winding path that skirted within the edge of shadow of the monkey-pods and algaroba trees. In the obscurity, where his path curved away into the open again, he looked across a space of a few feet where, on another path in the shadow, stood a pair in each other's arms. The impassioned low tones of the man had caught his ear and drawn his eyes, and at the moment of his glance, aware of his presence, the voice ceased, and the two remained immobile, furtive, in each other's arms.

He continued his walk, sombred by the thought that in the gloom of the trees was the next progression from the openness of the sky over those who strolled the night-flower hedge. Oh, he knew the game when of old no shadow was too deep, no ruse of concealment too furtive, to veil a love moment. After all, humans were like flowers, he meditated. Under the radiance from the lighted lanai, ere entering the irritating movement of life again to which he belonged, he paused to stare, scarcely seeing, at a flaunt of display of scarlet double-hibiscus blooms. And abruptly all that he was suffering, all that he had just observed, from the night-blooming hedge and the two-by-two love-murmuring humans to the pair like thieves in each other's arms, crystallized into a parable of life enunciated by the day-blooming hibiscus upon which he gazed,

now at the end of its day. Bursting into its bloom after the dawn, snow-white, warming to pink under the hours of sun, and quickening to scarlet with the dark from which its beauty and its being would never emerge, it seemed to him that it epitomized man's life and passion.

What further connotations he might have drawn he was never to know; for from behind, in the direction of the algarobas and monkey-pods, came Ida's unmistakable serene and merry laugh. He did not look, being too afraid of what he knew he would see, but retreated hastily, almost stumbling, up the steps to the lanai. Despite that he knew what he was to see, when he did turn his head and beheld his wife and Sonny, the pair he had seen thieving in the dark, he went suddenly dizzy, and paused, supporting himself with a hand against a pillar, and smiling vacuously at the grouped singing boys who were pulsing the sensuous night into richer sensuousness with their honi kaua wiki-wiki refrain.

The next moment he had wet his lips with his tongue, controlled his face and flesh, and was bantering with Mrs. Inchkeep. But he could not waste time, or he would have to encounter the pair he could hear coming up the steps behind him.

"I feel as if I had just crossed the Great Thirst," he told his hostess, "and that nothing less than a high-ball will preserve me."

She smiled permission and nodded toward the smoking lanai, where they found him talking sugar politics with the oldsters when the dance began to break up.

Quite a party of half a dozen machines were starting for Waikiki, and he found himself billeted to drive the Leslies and Burnstons home, though he did not fail to note that Ida sat in the driver's seat with Sonny in Sonny's car. Thus, she was home ahead of him and brushing her hair when he arrived. The parting of bed-going was usual, on the face of it, although he was almost rigid in his successful effort for casualness as he remembered whose lips had pressed hers last before his.

Was, then, woman the utterly unmoral creature as depicted by the German pessimists? he asked himself, as he tossed under his reading lamp, unable to sleep or read. At the end of an hour he was out of bed, and into his medicine case. Five grains of opium he took straight. An hour later, afraid of his thoughts and the prospect of a sleepless night, he took another grain. At one-hour intervals he twice repeated the grain dosage. But so slow was the action of the drug that dawn had broken ere his eyes closed.

At seven he was awake again, dry-mouthed, feeling stupid and drowsy, yet incapable of dozing off for more than several minutes at a time. He abandoned the idea of sleep, ate breakfast in bed, and devoted himself to the morning papers and the magazines. But

the drug effect held, and he continued briefly to doze through his eating and reading. It was the same when he showered and dressed, and, though the drug had brought him little forgetfulness during the night, he felt grateful for the dreaming lethargy with which it possessed him through the morning.

It was when his wife arose, her serene and usual self, and came in to him, smiling and roguish, delectable in her kimono, that the whim-madness of the opium in his system seized upon him. When she had clearly and simply shown that she had nothing to tell him under their ancient compact of frankness, he began building his opium lie. Asked how he had slept, he replied:

"Miserably. Twice I was routed wide awake with cramps in my feet. I was almost too afraid to sleep again. But they didn't come back, though my feet are sorer than blazes."

"Last year you had them," she reminded him.

"Maybe it's going to become a seasonal affliction," he smiled. "They're not serious, but they're horrible to wake up to. They won't come again till to-night, if they come at all, but in the meantime I feel as if I had been bastinadoed."

In the afternoon of the same day, Lee and Ida Barton made their

shallow dive from the Outrigger beach, and went on, at a steady stroke, past the diving-stage to the big water beyond the Kanaka Surf. So quiet was the sea that when, after a couple of hours, they turned and lazily started shoreward through the Kanaka Surf they had it all to themselves. The breakers were not large enough to be exciting, and the last languid surf-boarders and canoeists had gone in to shore. Suddenly, Lee turned over on his back.

"What is it?" Ida called from twenty feet away.

"My foot--cramp," he answered calmly, though the words were twisted out through clenched jaws of control.

The opium still had its dreamy way with him, and he was without excitement. He watched her swimming toward him with so steady and unperturbed a stroke that he admired her own self-control, although at the same time doubt stabbed him with the thought that it was because she cared so little for him, or, rather, so much immediately more for Grandison.

"Which foot?" she asked, as she dropped her legs down and began treading water beside him.

"The left one--ouch! Now it's both of them."

He doubled his knees, as if involuntarily raised his head and chest

forward out of the water, and sank out of sight in the down-wash of a scarcely cresting breaker. Under no more than a brief several seconds, he emerged spluttering and stretched out on his back again.

Almost he grinned, although he managed to turn the grin into a pain-grimace, for his simulated cramp had become real. At least in one foot it had, and the muscles convulsed painfully.

"The right is the worst," he muttered, as she evinced her intention of laying hands on his cramp and rubbing it out. "But you'd better keep away. I've had cramps before, and I know I'm liable to grab you if these get any worse."

Instead, she laid her hands on the hard-knotted muscles, and began to rub and press and bend.

"Please," he gritted through his teeth. "You must keep away. Just let me lie out here--I'll bend the ankle and toe-joints in the opposite ways and make it pass. I've done it before and know how to work it."

She released him, remaining close beside him and easily treading water, her eyes upon his face to judge the progress of his own attempt at remedy. But Lee Barton deliberately bent joints and tensed muscles in the directions that would increase the cramp. In

his bout the preceding year with the affliction, he had learned, lying in bed and reading when seized, to relax and bend the cramps away without even disturbing his reading. But now he did the thing in reverse, intensifying the cramp, and, to his startled delight, causing it to leap into his right calf. He cried out with anguish, apparently lost control of himself, attempted to sit up, and was washed under by the next wave.

He came up, spluttered, spread-eagled on the surface, and had his knotted calf gripped by the strong fingers of both Ida's small hands.

"It's all right," she said, while she worked. "No cramp like this lasts very long."

"I didn't know it could be so savage," he groaned. "If only it doesn't go higher! It makes one feel so helpless."

He gripped the biceps of both her arms in a sudden spasm, attempting to climb out upon her as a drowning man might try to climb out on an oar and sinking her down under him. In the struggle under water, before he permitted her to wrench clear, her rubber cap was torn off, and her hairpins pulled out, so that she came up gasping for air and half-blinded by her wet-clinging hair. Also, he was certain he had surprised her into taking in a quantity of water.

"Keep away!" he warned, as he spread-eagled with acted desperateness.

But her fingers were deep into the honest pain-wrack of his calf, and in her he could observe no reluctance of fear.

"It's creeping up," he grunted through tight teeth, the grunt itself a half-controlled groan.

He stiffened his whole right leg, as with another spasm, hurting his real minor cramps, but flexing the muscles of his upper leg into the seeming hardness of cramp.

The opium still worked in his brain, so that he could play-act cruelly, while at the same time he appraised and appreciated her stress of control and will that showed in her drawn face, and the terror of death in her eyes, with beyond it and behind it, in her eyes and through her eyes, the something more of the spirit of courage, and higher thought, and resolution.

Still further, she did not enunciate so cheap a surrender as, "I'll die with you." Instead, provoking his admiration, she did say, quietly: "Relax. Sink until only your lips are out. I'll support your head. There must be a limit to cramp. No man ever died of cramp on land. Then in the water no strong swimmer should die of

cramp. It's bound to reach its worst and pass. We're both strong swimmers and cool-headed--"

He distorted his face and deliberately dragged her under. But when they emerged, still beside him, supporting his head as she continued to tread water, she was saying:

"Relax. Take it easy. I'll hold your head up. Endure it. Live through it. Don't fight it. Make yourself slack--slack in your mind; and your body will slack. Yield. Remember how you taught me to yield to the undertow."

An unusually large breaker for so mild a surf curled overhead, and he climbed out on her again, sinking both of them under as the wave-crest over-fell and smashed down.

"Forgive me," he mumbled through pain clenched teeth, as they drew in their first air again. "And leave me." He spoke jerkily, with pain-filled pauses between his sentences. "There is no need for both of us to drown. I've got to go. It will be in my stomach, at any moment, and then I'll drag you under, and be unable to let go of you. Please, please, dear, keep away. One of us is enough. You've plenty to live for."

She looked at him in reproach so deep that the last vestige of the terror of death was gone from her eyes. It was as if she had said,

and more than if she had said: "I have only you to live for."

Then Sonny did not count with her as much as he did!--was Barton's exultant conclusion. But he remembered her in Sonny's arms under the monkey-pods and determined on further cruelty. Besides, it was the lingering opium in him that suggested this cruelty. Since he had undertaken this acid test, urged the poppy juice, then let it be a real acid test.

He doubled up and went down, emerged, and apparently strove frantically to stretch out in the floating position. And she did not keep away from him.

"It's too much!" he groaned, almost screamed. "I'm losing my grip. I've got to go. You can't save me. Keep away and save yourself."

But she was to him, striving to float his mouth clear of the salt, saying: "It's all right. It's all right. The worst is right now. Just endure it a minute more, and it will begin to ease."

He screamed out, doubled, seized her, and took her down with him. And he nearly did drown her, so well did he play-act his own drowning. But never did she lose her head nor succumb to the fear of death so dreadfully imminent. Always, when she got her head out, she strove to support him while she panted and gasped encouragement in terms of: "Relax . . . Relax . . . Slack . . .

Slack out . . . At any time . . . now . . . you'll pass . . . the worst . . . No matter how much it hurts . . . it will pass . . . You're easier now . . . aren't you?"

And then he would put her down again, going from bad to worse--in his ill-treatment of her; making her swallow pints of salt water, secure in the knowledge that it would not definitely hurt her. Sometimes they came up for brief emergences, for gasping seconds in the sunshine on the surface, and then were under again, dragged under by him, rolled and tumbled under by the curling breakers.

Although she struggled and tore herself from his grips, in the times he permitted her freedom she did not attempt to swim away from him, but, with fading strength and reeling consciousness, invariably came to him to try to save him. When it was enough, in his judgment, and more than enough, he grew quieter, left her released, and stretched out on the surface.

"A-a-h," he sighed long, almost luxuriously, and spoke with pauses for breath. "It is passing. It seems like heaven. My dear, I'm water-logged, yet the mere absence of that frightful agony makes my present state sheerest bliss."

She tried to gasp a reply, but could not.

"I'm all right," he assured her. "Let us float and rest up.

Stretch out, yourself, and get your wind back."

And for half an hour, side by side, on their backs, they floated in the fairly placid Kanaka Surf. Ida Barton was the first to announce recovery by speaking first.

"And how do you feel now, man of mine?" she asked.

"I feel as if I'd been run over by a steam-roller," he replied. "And you, poor darling?"

"I feel I'm the happiest woman in the world. I'm so happy I could almost cry, but I'm too happy even for that. You had me horribly frightened for a time. I thought I was to lose you."

Lee Barton's heart pounded up. Never a mention of losing herself. This, then, was love, and all real love, proved true--the great love that forgot self in the loved one.

"And I'm the proudest man in the world," he told her; "because my wife is the bravest woman in the world."

"Brave!" she repudiated. "I love you. I never knew how much, how really much, I loved you as when I was losing you. And now let's work for shore. I want you all alone with me, your arms around me, while I tell you all you are to me and shall always be to me."

In another half-hour, swimming strong and steadily, they landed on the beach and walked up the hard wet sand among the sand-loafers and sun-baskers.

"What were the two of you doing out there?" queried one of the Outrigger captains. "Cutting up?"

"Cutting up," Ida Barton answered with a smile.

"We're the village cut-ups, you know," was Lee Barton's assurance.

That evening, the evening's engagement cancelled, found the two, in a big chair, in each other's arms.

"Sonny sails to-morrow noon," she announced casually and irrelevant to anything in the conversation. "He's going out to the Malay Coast to inspect what's been done with that lumber and rubber company of his."

"First I've heard of his leaving us," Lee managed to say, despite his surprise.

"I was the first to hear of it," she added. "He told me only last night."

"At the dance?"

She nodded.

"Rather sudden, wasn't it?"

"Very sudden." Ida withdrew herself from her husband's arms and sat up. "And I want to talk to you about Sonny. I've never had a real secret from you before. I didn't intend ever to tell you. But it came to me to-day, out in the Kanaka Surf, that if we passed out, it would be something left behind us unsaid."

She paused, and Lee, half-anticipating what was coming, did nothing to help her, save to girdle and press her hand in his.

"Sonny rather lost his . . . his head over me," she faltered. "Of course, you must have noticed it. And . . . and last night, he wanted me to run away with him. Which isn't my confession at all . . . "

Still Lee Barton waited.

"My confession," she resumed, "is that I wasn't the least bit angry with him--only sorrowful and regretful. My confession is that I rather slightly, only rather more than slightly, lost my own head.

That was why I was kind and gentle to him last night. I am no fool. I knew it was due. And--oh, I know, I'm just a feeble female of vanity compounded--I was proud to have such a man swept off his feet by me, by little me. I encouraged him. I have no excuse. Last night would not have happened had I not encouraged him. And I, and not he, was the sinner last night when he asked me. And I told him no, impossible, as you should know why without my repeating it to you. And I was maternal to him, very much maternal. I let him take me in his arms, let myself rest against him, and, for the first time because it was to be the for-ever last time, let him kiss me and let myself kiss him. You . . . I know you understand . . . it was his renunciation. And I didn't love Sonny. I don't love him. I have loved you, and you only, all the time."

She waited, and felt her husband's arm pass around her shoulder and under her own arm, and yielded to his drawing down of her to him.

"You did have me worried more than a bit," he admitted, "until I was afraid I was going to lose you. And . . . " He broke off in patent embarrassment, then gripped the idea courageously. "Oh, well, you know you're my one woman. Enough said."

She fumbled the match-box from his pocket and struck a match to enable him to light his long-extinct cigar.

"Well," he said, as the smoke curled about them, "knowing you as I know you, and ALL of you, all I can say is that I'm sorry for Sonny for what he's missed--awfully sorry for him, but equally glad for me. And . . . one other thing: five years hence I've something to tell you, something rich, something ridiculously rich, and all about me and the foolishness of me over you. Five years. Is it a date?"

"I shall keep it if it is fifty years," she sighed, as she nestled closer to him.

GLEN ELLEN, CALIFORNIA.
August 17, 1916.

Footnotes:

{1} See Dibble's "A History of the Sandwich Islands."