

## CHAPTER XXII

### What Befel The Brigantine At The Pearl Shell Islands

The vessel was the Parki, of Lahina, a village and harbor on the coast of Mowee, one of the Hawaian isles, where she had been miserably cobbled together with planks of native wood, and fragments of a wreck, there drifted ashore.

Her appellative had been bestowed in honor of a high chief, the tallest and goodliest looking gentleman in all the Sandwich Islands. With a mixed European and native crew, about thirty in number (but only four whites in all, captain included), the Parki, some four months previous, had sailed from her port on a voyage southward, in quest of pearls, and pearl oyster shells, sea-slugs, and other matters of that sort.

Samoa, a native of the Navigator Islands, had long followed the sea, and was well versed in the business of oyster diving and its submarine mysteries. The native Lahineese on board were immediately subordinate to him; the captain having bargained with Samoa for their services as divers.

The woman, Annatoo, was a native of a far-off, anonymous island to the westward: whence, when quite young, she had been carried by the commander of a ship, touching there on a passage from Macao to

Valparaiso. At Valparaiso her protector put her ashore; most probably, as I afterward had reason to think, for a nuisance.

By chance it came to pass that when Annatoo's first virgin bloom had departed, leaving nothing but a lusty frame and a lustier soul, Samoa, the Navigator, had fallen desperately in love with her. And thinking the lady to his mind, being brave like himself, and doubtless well adapted to the vicissitudes of matrimony at sea, he meditated suicide--I would have said, wedlock--and the twain became one. And some time after, in capacity of wife, Annatoo the dame, accompanied in the brigantine, Samoa her lord. Now, as Antony flew to the refuse embraces of Caesar, so Samoa solaced himself in the arms of this discarded fair one. And the sequel was the same. For not harder the life Cleopatra led my fine frank friend, poor Mark, than Queen Annatoo did lead this captive of her bow and her spear. But all in good time.

They left their port; and crossing the Tropic and the Line, fell in with a cluster of islands, where the shells they sought were found in round numbers. And here--not at all strange to tell besides the natives, they encountered a couple of Cholos, or half-breed Spaniards, from the Main; one half Spanish, the other half quartered between the wild Indian and the devil; a race, that from Baldivia to Panama are notorious for their unscrupulous villainy.

Now, the half-breeds having long since deserted a ship at these

islands, had risen to high authority among the natives. This hearing, the Parki's captain was much gratified; he, poor ignorant, never before having fallen in with any of their treacherous race. And, no doubt, he imagined that their influence over the Islanders would tend to his advantage. At all events, he made presents to the Cholos; who, in turn, provided him with additional divers from among the natives. Very kindly, also, they pointed out the best places for seeking the oysters. In a word, they were exceedingly friendly; often coming off to the brigantine, and sociably dining with the captain in the cabin; placing the salt between them and him.

All things went on very pleasantly until, one morning, the half-breeds prevailed upon the captain to go with them, in his whale-boat, to a shoal on the thither side of the island, some distance from the spot where lay the brigantine. They so managed it, moreover, that none but the Lahineese under Samoa, in whom the captain much confided, were left in custody of the Parki; the three white men going along to row; for there happened to be little or no wind for a sail.

Now, the fated brig lay anchored within a deep, smooth, circular lagoon, margined on all sides but one by the most beautiful groves. On that side, was the outlet to the sea; perhaps a cable's length or more from where the brigantine had been moored. An hour or two after the party were gone, and when the boat was completely out of sight, the natives in shoals were perceived coming off from the shore; some in canoes, and some swimming. The former brought bread fruit and

bananas, ostentatiously piled up in their proas; the latter dragged after them long strings of cocoanuts; for all of which, on nearing the vessel, they clamorously demanded knives and hatchets in barter.

From their actions, suspecting some treachery, Samoa stood in the gangway, and warned them off; saying that no barter could take place until the captain's return. But presently one of the savages stealthily climbed up from the water, and nimbly springing from the bob-stays to the bow-sprit, darted a javelin full at the foremast, where it vibrated. The signal of blood! With terrible outcries, the rest, pulling forth their weapons, hitherto concealed in the canoes, or under the floating cocoanuts, leaped into the low chains of the brigantine; sprang over the bulwarks; and, with clubs and spears, attacked the aghast crew with the utmost ferocity.

After one faint rally, the Lahineese scrambled for the rigging; but to a man were overtaken and slain.

At the first alarm, Annatoo, however, had escaped to the fore-top-gallant-yard, higher than which she could not climb, and whither the savages durst not venture. For though after their nuts these Polynesians will climb palm trees like squirrels; yet, at the first blush, they decline a ship's mast like Kennebec farmers.

Upon the first token of an onslaught, Samoa, having rushed toward the

cabin scuttle for arms, was there fallen upon by two young savages. But after a desperate momentary fray, in which his arm was mangled, he made shift to spring below, instantly securing overhead the slide of the scuttle. In the cabin, while yet the uproar of butchery prevailed, he quietly bound up his arm; then laying on the transom the captain's three loaded muskets, undauntedly awaited an assault.

The object of the natives, it seems, was to wreck the brigantine upon the sharp coral beach of the lagoon. And with this intent, one of their number had plunged into the water, and cut the cable, which was of hemp. But the tide ebbing, cast the Parki's head seaward--toward the outlet; and the savages, perceiving this, clumsily boarded the fore-tack, and hauled aft the sheet; thus setting, after a fashion, the fore-sail, previously loosed to dry.

Meanwhile, a gray-headed old chief stood calmly at the tiller, endeavoring to steer the vessel shoreward. But not managing the helm aright, the brigantine, now gliding apace through the water, only made more way toward the outlet. Seeing which, the ringleaders, six or eight in number, ran to help the old graybeard at the helm. But it was a black hour for them. Of a sudden, while they were handling the tiller, three muskets were rapidly discharged upon them from the cabin skylight. Two of the savages dropped dead. The old steersman, clutching wildly at the helm, fell over it, mortally wounded; and in a wild panic at seeing their leaders thus unaccountably slain, the rest of the natives leaped overboard and made for the shore.

Hearing the slashing, Samoa flew on deck; and beholding the foresail set, and the brigantine heading right out to sea, he cried out to Annatoo, still aloft, to descend to the topsail-yard, and loose the canvas there. His command was obeyed. Annatoo deserved a gold medal for what she did that day. Hastening down the rigging, after loosing the topsail, she strained away at the sheets; in which operation she was assisted by Samoa, who snatched an instant from the helm.

The foresail and fore-topsail were now tolerably well set; and as the craft drew seaward, the breeze freshened. And well that it did; for, recovered from their alarm, the savages were now in hot pursuit; some in canoes, and some swimming as before. But soon the main-topsail was given to the breeze, which still freshening, came from over the quarter. And with this brave show of canvas, the Parki made gallantly for the outlet; and loud shouted Samoa as she shot by the reef, and parted the long swells without. Against these, the savages could not swim. And at that turn of the tide, paddling a canoe therein was almost equally difficult. But the fugitives were not yet safe. In full chase now came in sight the whale-boat manned by the Cholos, and four or five Islanders. Whereat, making no doubt, that all the whites who left the vessel that morning had been massacred through the treachery of the half-breeds; and that the capture of the brigantine had been premeditated; Samoa now saw no other resource than to point his craft dead away from the land.

Now on came the devils buckling to their oars. Meantime Annatoo was still busy aloft, loosing the smaller sails--t'gallants and royals, which she managed partially to set.

The strong breeze from astern now filling the ill-set sails, they bellied, and rocked in the air, like balloons, while, from the novel strain upon it, every spar quivered and sprung. And thus, like a frightened gull fleeing from sea-hawks, the little Parki swooped along, and bravely breasted the brine.

His shattered arm in a hempen sling, Samoa stood at the helm, the muskets reloaded, and planted full before him on the binnacle. For a time, so badly did the brigantine steer, by reason of her ill-adjusted sails, made still more unmanageable by the strength of the breeze,--that it was doubtful, after all, notwithstanding her start, whether the fugitives would not yet fall a prey to their hunters. The craft wildly yawed, and the boat drew nearer and nearer. Maddened by the sight, and perhaps thinking more of revenge for the past, than of security for the future, Samoa, yielding the helm to Annatoo, rested his muskets on the bulwarks, and taking long, sure aim, discharged them, one by one at the advancing foe.

The three reports were answered by loud jeers from the savages, who brandished their spears, and made gestures of derision; while with might and main the Cholos tugged at their oars.

The boat still gaining on the brigantine, the muskets were again reloaded. And as the next shot sped, there was a pause; when, like lightning, the headmost Cholo bounded upwards from his seat, and oar in hand, fell into the sea. A fierce yell; and one of the natives springing into the water, caught the sinking body by its long hair; and the dead and the living were dragged into the boat. Taking heart from this fatal shot, Samoa fired yet again; but not with the like sure result; merely grazing the remaining half-breed, who, crouching behind his comrades, besought them to turn the boat round, and make for the shore. Alarmed at the fate of his brother, and seemingly distrustful of the impartiality of Samoa's fire, the pusillanimous villain refused to expose a limb above the gunwale.

Fain now would the pursuers have made good their escape; but an accident forbade. In the careening of the boat, when the stricken Cholo sprung overboard, two of their oars had slid into the water; and together with that death-gripped by the half-breed, were now floating off; occasionally lost to view, as they sunk in the trough of the sea. Two of the Islanders swam to recover them; but frightened by the whirring of a shot over their heads, as they unavoidably struck out towards the Parki, they turned quickly about; just in time to see one of their comrades smite his body with his hand, as he received a bullet from Samoa.

Enough: darting past the ill-fated boat, they swam rapidly for land, followed by the rest; who plunged overboard, leaving in the boat the



surviving Cholo--who it seems could not swim--the wounded savage, and the dead man.

"Load away now, and take thy revenge, my fine fellow," said Samoa to himself. But not yet. Seeing all at his mercy, and having none, he quickly laid his fore-topsail to the mast; "hove to" the brigantine; and opened fire anew upon the boat; every swell of the sea heaving it nearer and nearer. Vain all efforts to escape. The wounded man paddled wildly with his hands the dead one rolled from side to side; and the Cholo, seizing the solitary oar, in his frenzied heedlessness, spun the boat round and round; while all the while shot followed shot, Samoa firing as fast as Annatoo could load. At length both Cholo and savage fell dead upon their comrades, canting the boat over sideways, till well nigh awash; in which manner she drifted off.