

CHAPTER XXIII

Sailing From The Island They Pillage The Cabin

There was a small carronade on the forecastle, unshipped from its carriage, and lashed down to ringbolts on the deck. This Samoa now loaded; and with an ax knocking off the round knob upon the breech, rammed it home in the tube. When, running the cannon out at one of the ports, and studying well his aim, he let fly, sunk the boat, and buried his dead.

It was now late in the afternoon; and for the present bent upon avoiding land, and gaining the shoreless sea, never mind where, Samoa again forced round his craft before the wind, leaving the island astern. The decks were still cumbered with the bodies of the Lahineese, which heel to point and crosswise, had, log-like, been piled up on the main-hatch. These, one by one, were committed to the sea; after which, the decks were washed down.

At sunrise next morning, finding themselves out of sight of land, with little or no wind, they stopped their headway, and lashed the tiller alee, the better to enable them to overhaul the brigantine; especially the recesses of the cabin. For there, were stores of goods adapted for barter among the Islanders; also several bags of dollars.

Now, nothing can exceed the cupidity of the Polynesian, when, through

partial commerce with the whites, his eyes are opened to his nakedness, and he perceives that in some things they are richer than himself.

The poor skipper's wardrobe was first explored; his chests of clothes being capsized, and their contents strown about the cabin floor.

Then took place the costuming. Samoa and Annatoo trying on coats and pantaloons, shirts and drawers, and admiring themselves in the little mirror panned in the bulk-head. Then, were broken open boxes and bales; rolls of printed cotton were inspected, and vastly admired; insomuch, that the trumpery found in the captain's chests was disdainfully doffed: and donned were loose folds of calico, more congenial to their tastes.

As case after case was opened and overturned, slippery grew the cabin deck with torrents of glass beads; and heavy the necks of Samoa and Annatoo with goodly bunches thereof.

Among other things, came to light brass jewelry,--Rag Fair gewgaws and baubles a plenty, more admired than all; Annatoo, bedecking herself like, a tragedy queen: one blaze of brass. Much mourned the married dame, that thus arrayed, there was none to admire but Samoa her husband; but he was all the while admiring himself, and not her.

And here must needs be related, what has hitherto remained unsaid.

Very often this husband and wife were no Darby and Joan. Their married life was one long campaign, whereof the truces were only by night. They billed and they cooed on their arms, rising fresh in the morning to battle, and often Samoa got more than a hen-pecking. To be short, Annatoo was a Tartar, a regular Calmuc, and Samoa--Heaven help him--her husband.

Yet awhile, joined together by a sense of common danger, and long engrossed in turning over their tinsel acquisitions without present thought of proprietorship, the pair refrained from all squabbles. But soon burst the storm. Having given every bale and every case a good shaking, Annatoo, making an estimate of the whole, very coolly proceeded to set apart for herself whatever she fancied. To this, Samoa objected; to which objection Annatoo objected; and then they went at it.

The lady vowed that the things were no more Samoa's than hers; nay, not so much; and that whatever she wanted, that same would she have. And furthermore, by way of codicil, she declared that she was slave to nobody.

Now, Samoa, sad to tell, stood in no little awe of his bellicose spouse. What, though a hero in other respects; what, though he had slain his savages, and gallantly carried his craft from their clutches:--Like the valiant captains Marlborough and Belisarius, he was a poltroon to his wife. And Annatoo was worse than either Sarah

or Antonina.

However, like every thing partaking of the nature of a scratch, most conjugal squabbles are quickly healed; for if they healed not, they would never anew break out: which is the beauty of the thing. So at length they made up but the treaty stipulations of Annatoo told much against the interests of Samoa. Nevertheless, ostensibly, it was agreed upon, that they should strictly go halves; the lady, however, laying special claim to certain valuables, more particularly fancied. But as a set-off to this, she generously renounced all claims upon the spare rigging; all claims upon the fore-mast and mainmast; and all claims upon the captain's arms and ammunition. Of the latter, by the way, Dame Antonina stood in no need. Her voice was a park of artillery; her talons a charge of bayonets.