

CHAPTER XXV

Peril A Peace-Maker

A few days passed: the brigantine drifting hither and thither, and nothing in sight but the sea, when forth again on its stillness rung Annatoo's domestic alarm. The truce was up. Most egregiously had the lady infringed it; appropriating to herself various objects previously disclaimed in favor of Samoa. Besides, forever on the prowl, she was perpetually going up and down; with untiring energy, exploring every nook and cranny; carrying off her spoils and diligently secreting them. Having little idea of feminine adaptations, she pilfered whatever came handy:--iron hooks, dollars, bolts, hatchets, and stopping not at balls of marline and sheets of copper. All this, poor Samoa would have borne with what patience he might, rather than again renew the war, were it not, that the audacious dame charged him with peculations upon her own private stores; though of any such thing he was innocent as the bowsprit.

This insulting impeachment got the better of the poor islander's philosophy. He keenly resented it. And the consequence was, that seeing all domineering useless, Annatoo flew off at a tangent; declaring that, for the future, Samoa might stay by himself; she would have nothing more to do with him. Save when unavoidable in managing the brigantine, she would not even speak to him, that she wouldn't, the monster! She then boldly demanded the forecastle--in

the brig's case, by far the pleasantest end of the ship--for her own independent suite of apartments. As for hapless Belisarius, he might do what he pleased in his dark little den of a cabin.

Concerning the division of the spoils, the termagant succeeded in carrying the day; also, to her quarters, bale after bale of goods, together with numerous odds and ends, sundry and divers. Moreover, she laid in a fine stock of edibles, so as, in all respects possible, to live independent of her spouse.

Unlovely Annatoo! Unfortunate Samoa! Thus did the pair make a divorce of it; the lady going upon a separate maintenance,--and Belisarius resuming his bachelor loneliness. In the captain's state room, all cold and comfortless, he slept; his lady whilome retiring to her forecastle boudoir; beguiling the hours in saying her pater-nosters, and tossing over and assorting her ill-gotten trinkets and finery; like Madame De Maintenon dedicating her last days and nights to continence and calicoes.

But think you this was the quiet end of their conjugal quarrels? Ah, no! No end to those feuds, till one or t'other gives up the ghost.

Now, exiled from the nuptial couch, Belisarius bore the hardship without a murmur. And hero that he was, who knows that he felt not like a soldier on a furlough? But as for Antonina, she could neither get along with Belisarius, nor without him. She made advances. But of

what sort? Why, breaking into the cabin and purloining sundry goods therefrom; in artful hopes of breeding a final reconciliation out of the temporary outburst that might ensue.

Then followed a sad scene of altercation; interrupted at last by a sudden loud roaring of the sea. Rushing to the deck, they beheld themselves sweeping head-foremost toward a shoal making out from a cluster of low islands, hitherto, by banks of clouds, shrouded from view.

The helm was instantly shifted; and the yards braced about. But for several hours, owing to the freshness of the breeze, the set of the currents, and the irregularity and extent of the shoal, it seemed doubtful whether they would escape a catastrophe. But Samoa's seamanship, united to Annatoo's industry, at last prevailed; and the brigantine was saved.

Of the land where they came so near being wrecked, they knew nothing; and for that reason, they at once steered away. For after the fatal events which had overtaken the Parki at the Pearl Shell islands, so fearful were they of encountering any Islanders, that from the first they had resolved to keep open sea, shunning every appearance of land; relying upon being eventually picked up by some passing sail.

Doubtless this resolution proved their salvation. For to the navigator in these seas, no risk so great, as in approaching the

isles; which mostly are so guarded by outpost reefs, and far out from their margins environed by perils, that the green flowery field within, lies like a rose among thorns; and hard to be reached as the heart of proud maiden. Though once attained, all three--red rose, bright shore, and soft heart--are full of love, bloom, and all manner of delights. The Pearl Shell islands excepted.

Besides, in those generally tranquil waters, Samoa's little craft, though hundreds of miles from land, was very readily managed by himself and Annatoo. So small was the Parki, that one hand could brace the main-yard; and a very easy thing it was, even to hoist the small top-sails; for after their first clumsy attempt to perform that operation by hand, they invariably led the halyards to the windlass, and so managed it, with the utmost facility.