

CHAPTER XXVII

In Which The Past History Of The Parki Is Concluded

Still days, days, days sped by; and steering now this way, now that, to avoid the green treacherous shores, which frequently rose into view, the Parki went to and fro in the sea; till at last, it seemed hard to tell, in what watery world she floated. Well knowing the risks they ran, Samoa desponded. But blessed be ignorance. For in the day of his despondency, the lively old lass his wife bade him be of stout heart, cheer up, and steer away manfully for the setting sun; following which, they must inevitably arrive at her own dear native island, where all their cares would be over. So squaring their yards, away they glided; far sloping down the liquid sphere.

Upon the afternoon of the day we caught sight of them in our boat, they had sighted a cluster of low islands, which put them in no small panic, because of their resemblance to those where the massacre had taken place. Whereas, they must have been full five hundred leagues from that fearful vicinity. However, they altered their course to avoid it; and a little before sunset, dropping the islands astern, resumed their previous track. But very soon after, they espied our little sea-goat, bounding over the billows from afar.

This they took for a canoe giving chase to them. It renewed and augmented their alarm.

And when at last they perceived that the strange object was a boat, their fears, instead of being allayed, only so much the more increased. For their wild superstitions led them to conclude, that a white man's craft coming upon them so suddenly, upon the open sea, and by night, could be naught but a phantom. Furthermore, marking two of us in the Chamois, they fancied us the ghosts of the Cholos. A conceit which effectually damped Samoa's courage, like my Viking's, only proof against things tangible. So seeing us bent upon boarding the brigantine; after a hurried over-turning of their chattels, with a view of carrying the most valuable aloft for safe keeping, they secreted what they could; and together made for the fore-top; the man with a musket, the woman with a bag of beads. Their endeavoring to secure these treasures against ghostly appropriation originated in no real fear, that otherwise they would be stolen: it was simply incidental to the vacant panic into which they were thrown. No reproach this, to Belisarius' heart of game; for the most intrepid Feegee warrior, he who has slain his hecatombs, will not go ten yards in the dark alone, for fear of ghosts.

Their purpose was to remain in the top until daylight; by which time, they counted upon the withdrawal of their visitants; who, sure enough, at last sprang on board, thus verifying their worst apprehensions.

They watched us long and earnestly. But curious to tell, in that very

strait of theirs, perched together in that airy top, their domestic differences again broke forth; most probably, from their being suddenly forced into such very close contact.

However that might be, taking advantage of our descent into the cabin, Samoa, in desperation fled from his wife, and one-armed as he was, sailor-like, shifted himself over by the fore and aft-stays to the main-top, his musket being slung to his back. And thus divided, though but a few yards intervened, the pair were as much asunder as if at the opposite Poles.

During the live-long night they were both in great perplexity as to the extraordinary goblins on board. Such inquisitive, meddlesome spirits, had never before been encountered. So cool and systematic; sagaciously stopping the vessel's headway the better to rummage;--the very plan they themselves had adopted. But what most surprised them, was our striking a light, a thing of which no true ghost would be guilty. Then, our eating and drinking on the quarter-deck including the deliberate investment of Vienna; and many other actions equally strange, almost led Samoa to fancy that we were no shades, after all, but a couple of men from the moon.

Yet they had dimly caught sight of the frocks and trowsers we wore, similar to those which the captain of the Parki had bestowed upon the two Cholos, and in which those villains had been killed. This, with the presence of the whale boat, united to chase away the conceit of

our lunar origin. But these considerations renewed their first superstitious impressions of our being the ghosts of the murderous half-breeds.

Nevertheless, while during the latter part of the night we were reclining beneath him, munching our biscuit, Samoa eyeing us intently, was half a mind to open fire upon us by way of testing our corporeality. But most luckily, he concluded to defer so doing till sunlight; if by that time we should not have evaporated.

For dame Annatoo, almost from our first boarding the brigantine, something in our manner had bred in her a lurking doubt as to the genuineness of our atmospheric organization; and abandoned to her speculations when Samoa fled from her side, her incredulity waxed stronger and stronger. Whence we came she knew not; enough, that we seemed bent upon pillaging her own precious purloinings. Alas! thought she, my buttons, my nails, my tappa, my dollars, my beads, and my boxes!

Wrought up to desperation by these dismal forebodings, she at length shook the ropes leading from her own perch to Samoa's; adopting this method of arousing his attention to the heinousness of what was in all probability going on in the cabin, a prelude most probably to the invasion of her own end of the vessel. Had she dared raise her voice, no doubt she would have suggested the expediency of shooting us so soon as we emerged from the cabin. But failing to shake Samoa

into an understanding of her views on the subject, her malice proved futile.

When her worst fears were confirmed, however, and we actually descended into the fore-castle; there ensued such a reckless shaking of the ropes, that Samoa was fain to hold on hard, for fear of being tossed out of the rigging. And it was this violent rocking that caused the loud creaking of the yards, so often heard by us while below in Annatoo's apartment.

And the fore-top being just over the open fore-castle scuttle, the dame could look right down upon us; hence our proceedings were plainly revealed by the lights that we carried. Upon our breaking open her strong-box, her indignation almost completely overmastered her fears. Unhooking a top-block, down it came into the fore-castle, charitably commissioned with the demolition of Jarl's cocoa-nut, then more exposed to the view of an aerial observer than my own. But of it turned out, no harm was done to our porcelain.

At last, morning dawned; when ensued Jarl's discovery as the occupant of the main-top; which event, with what followed, has been duly recounted.

And such, in substance, was the first, second, third and fourth acts of the Parki drama. The fifth and last, including several scenes, now follows.