

CHAPTER XXVIII

Suspicious Laid, And Something About The Calmuc

Though abounding in details full of the savor of reality, Samoa's narrative did not at first appear altogether satisfactory. Not that it was so strange; for stranger recitals I had heard.

But one reason, perhaps, was that I had anticipated a narrative quite different; something agreeing with my previous surmises.

Not a little puzzling, also, was his account of having seen islands the day preceding; though, upon reflection, that might have been the case, and yet, from his immediately altering the Parki's course, the Chamois, unknowingly might have sailed by their vicinity. Still, those islands could form no part of the chain we were seeking. They must have been some region hitherto undiscovered.

But seems it likely, thought I, that one, who, according to his own account, has conducted himself so heroically in rescuing the brigantine, should be the victim of such childish terror at the mere glimpse of a couple of sailors in an open boat, so well supplied, too, with arms, as he was, to resist their capturing his craft, if such proved their intention? On the contrary, would it not have been more natural, in his dreary situation, to have hailed our approach with the utmost delight? But then again, we were taken for phantoms,

not flesh and blood. Upon the whole, I regarded the narrator of these things somewhat distrustfully. But he met my gaze like a man. While Annatoo, standing by, looked so expressively the Amazonian character imputed to her, that my doubts began to waver. And recalling all the little incidents of their story, so hard to be conjured up on the spur of a presumed necessity to lie; nay, so hard to be conjured up at all; my suspicions at last gave way. And I could no longer harbor any misgivings.

For, to be downright, what object could Samoa have, in fabricating such a narrative of horrors--those of the massacre, I mean--unless to conceal some tragedy, still more atrocious, in which he himself had been criminally concerned? A supposition, which, for obvious reasons, seemed out of the question. True, instances were known to me of half-civilized beings, like Samoa, forming part of the crews of ships in these seas, rising suddenly upon their white ship-mates, and murdering them, for the sake of wrecking the ship on the shore of some island near by, and plundering her hull, when stranded.

But had this been purposed with regard to the Parki, where the rest of the mutineers? There was no end to my conjectures; the more I indulged in them, the more they multiplied. So, unwilling to torment myself, when nothing could be learned, but what Samoa related, and stuck to like a hero; I gave over conjecturing at all; striving hard to repose full faith in the Islander.

Jarl, however, was skeptical to the last; and never could be brought completely to credit the tale. He stoutly maintained that the hobgoblins must have had something or other to do with the Parki.

My own curiosity satisfied with respect to the brigantine, Samoa himself turned inquisitor. He desired to know who we were; and whence we came in our marvelous boat. But on these heads I thought best to withhold from him the truth; among other things, fancying that if disclosed, it would lessen his deference for us, as men superior to himself. I therefore spoke vaguely of our adventures, and assumed the decided air of a master; which I perceived was not lost upon the rude Islander. As for Jarl, and what he might reveal, I embraced the first opportunity to impress upon him the importance of never divulging our flight from the Arcturion; nor in any way to commit himself on that head: injunctions which he faithfully promised to observe.

If not wholly displeased with the fine form of Samoa, despite his savage lineaments, and mutilated member, I was much less conciliated by the person of Annatoo; who, being sinewy of limb, and neither young, comely, nor amiable, was exceedingly distasteful in my eyes. Besides, she was a tigress. Yet how avoid admiring those Penthesilian qualities which so signally had aided Samoa, in wresting the Parki from its treacherous captors. Nevertheless, it was indispensable that she should at once be brought under prudent subjection; and made to know, once for all, that though conjugally a rebel, she must be nautically submissive. For to keep the sea with a Calmuc on board,

seemed next to impossible. In most military marines, they are prohibited by law; no officer may take his Pandora and her bandbox off soundings.

By the way, this self-same appellation, Pandora, has been bestowed upon vessels. There was a British ship by that name, dispatched in quest of the mutineers of the *Bounty*. But any old tar might have prophesied her fate. Bound home she was wrecked on a reef off New South Wales. Pandora, indeed! A pretty name for a ship: fairly smiting Fate in the face. But in this matter of christening ships of war, Christian nations are but too apt to be dare-devils. Witness the following: British names all--The *Conqueror*, the *Defiance*, the *Revenge*, the *Spitfire*, the *Dreadnaught*, the *Thunderer*, and the *Tremendous*; not omitting the *Etna*, which, in the Roads of Corfu, was struck by lightning, coming nigh being consumed by fire from above. But almost potent as Moses' rod, Franklin's proved her salvation.

With the above catalogue, compare we the Frenchman's; quite characteristic of the aspirations of Monsieur:--The *Destiny*, the *Glorious*, the *Magnanimous*, the *Magnificent*, the *Conqueror*, the *Triumphant*, the *Indomitable*, the *Intrepid*, the *Mont-Blanc*. Lastly, the *Dons*; who have ransacked the theology of the religion of peace for fine names for their fighting ships; stopping not at designating one of their three-deckers, *The Most Holy Trinity*. But though, at Trafalgar, the *Santissima Trinidad* thundered like Sinai, her thunders were silenced by the victorious cannonade of the *Victory*.

And without being blown into splinters by artillery, how many of these Redoubtables and Invincibles have succumbed to the waves, and like braggarts gone down before hurricanes, with their bravadoes broad on their bows.

Much better the American names (barring Scorpions, Hornets, and Wasps;) Ohio, Virginia, Carolina, Vermont. And if ever these Yankees fight great sea engagements--which Heaven forefend!--how glorious, poetically speaking, to range up the whole federated fleet, and pour forth a broadside from Florida to Maine. Ay, ay, very glorious indeed! yet in that proud crowing of cannon, how shall the shade of peace-loving Penn be astounded, to see the mightiest murderer of them all, the great Pennsylvania, a very namesake of his. Truly, the Pennsylvania's guns should be the wooden ones, called by men-of-war's-men, Quakers.

But all this is an episode, made up of digressions. Time to tack ship, and return.

Now, in its proper place, I omitted to mention, that shortly after descending from the rigging, and while Samoa was rehearsing his adventures, dame Annatoo had stolen below into the forecabin, intent upon her chattels. And finding them all in mighty disarray, she returned to the deck prodigiously, excited, and glancing angrily toward Jarl and me, showered a whole torrent of objurgations into

both ears of Samoa.

This contempt of my presence surprised me at first; but perhaps women are less apt to be impressed by a pretentious demeanor, than men.

Now, to use a fighting phrase, there is nothing like boarding an enemy in the smoke. And therefore, upon this first token of Annatoo's termagant qualities, I gave her to understand--craving her pardon--that neither the vessel nor aught therein was hers; but that every thing belonged to the owners in Lahina. I added, that at all hazards, a stop must be put to her pilferings. Rude language for feminine ears; but how to be avoided? Here was an infatuated woman, who, according to Samoa's account, had been repeatedly detected in the act of essaying to draw out the screw-bolts which held together the planks. Tell me; was she not worse than the Load-Stone Rock, sailing by which a stout ship fell to pieces?

During this scene, Samoa said little. Perhaps he was secretly pleased that his matrimonial authority was reinforced by myself and my Viking, whose views of the proper position of wives at sea, so fully corresponded with his own; however difficult to practice, those purely theoretical ideas of his had hitherto proved.

Once more turning to Annatoo, now looking any thing but amiable, I observed, that all her clamors would be useless; and that if it came to the worst, the Parki had a hull that would hold her.

In the end she went off in a fit of the sulks; sitting down on the windlass and glaring; her arms akimbo, and swaying from side to side; while ever and anon she gave utterance to a dismal chant. It sounded like an invocation to the Cholos to rise and dispatch us.