

# **The Wreck of the Andromeda**

**by Harry Collingwood, 1851-1922**

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### **Illustrations**

7	„No, I guess it’s up to us to let the savages alone.“
16	„Our volcano has become active again!“



## **Chapter 1**

### **The Catastrophe.**

*Ting-Tong, ting-tong.* The clear, sonorous tones of the ship’s bell rang out melodiously upon the silence of the night—a silence which yet was full of sound, the sound of the trade-wind piping and shrilling weirdly aloft through the standing and running rigging, seeming to an imaginative ear like the wailing of the ghosts of drowned sailors, with, by way of bass, the deep, ever recurring roar and hiss of the bow wave as it swept away on either hand in a long line of star-spangled, phosphorescent foam.

The chiming of the bell was immediately answered by the peculiarly pitched cry of the look-out on the topgallant forecastle—“All’s well!”

“Four bells! my wheel,” said I to to my special chum, Jim Annesley, who, with me, had been keeping a look-out in the starboard waist. And with a “So long, old chap!” I left him and, springing nimbly up the poop ladder, made my way along the poop, past Mr Kennedy, the chief mate and officer of the watch, to the wheel,

where the seaman who had been “grinding water” for the past two hours, was waiting to be relieved.

“Sou’-west an’ by west, three-quarters west!” remarked the man whom I had gone to relieve, passing the course on to me as he surrendered the spokes of the wheel to my clutch, and “Sou’-west and by west, three-quarters west,” I responded, according to the usage of sailormen, as I took over the charge.

It was a glorious night. There was no moon, but the sky, where not obscured by patches of solemn-sailing trade cloud, was brilliant with myriads of stars which beamed down upon us out of the immeasurable heights of the dark blue vault with that soft, clear splendour which is seen only in the tropics. It was dark, yet not so dark but that I could catch under the foot of the foresail, a glimpse of the horizon; black, flecked here and there with patches of luminous foam, against the lighter blue-black of the spangled sky, when the ship lifted her bows on the crest of a sea. A remark made by the mate to his apprentice assistant, as the pair passed me on their way forward, after reading the dial of the patent log, told me that we were reeling off our eighteen knots, which was not bad, even for the ANDROMEDA, one of the very few sailing passenger clippers not yet crowded off the face of the waters by steam.

There was a good reason for this last fact, however. The ANDROMEDA and her sister ship, the ATALANTA, owed their existence to steam, being in fact, training ships in which embryo officers of the Inter-Oceanic Steamship Company were sent to sea to acquire a thorough practical knowledge of seamanship and navigation previous to appointment to the steamers. There were eight of us apprentices aboard the ANDROMEDA, of whom I was the senior; and the Company killed two birds with one stone, so to speak, by utilising their two training ships as combined passenger and cargo carriers between San Francisco and Australia. Very well it answered, too; for there was always enough imperishable freight, at a comparatively low figure, to fill the ships and make them self-supporting, while there were plenty of people who regarded the voyage as a yachting trip, more pleasant and less monotonous than the same voyage in a steam liner, while others took the round trip as a health-giving holiday. There were twenty-four such people aboard us now, our full complement, and a very jolly lot they were, taking them big and large. The only exception—if indeed one can call it such—was Miss Anthea Shirley-Winthrop, the eighteen-year-old daughter of Doctor Shirley-Winthrop. She was the most lovely girl I ever saw, but proud! She treated all men, even her own father, like dust beneath her dainty little feet; and she never looked *at*, but *through*, one—at something thousands of miles away. However, that is enough for the present about the passengers; those of them who are more particularly concerned with the extraordinary adventure I have set out to relate, we shall become acquainted with as we go on.

We were sixteen days out from ’Frisco, and seven from Honolulu, where we had called for a few hours to give the passengers a run ashore, and to lay in a stock of fruit. We sailed from ’Frisco on the afternoon of July 28th, 1914, and even then the mutterings of war were beginning to make themselves heard, although nobody seemed to dream of the tremendous cataclysm that was brewing. It was therefore with something like consternation that, upon our arrival at Honolulu, on August 6th, we learned that nearly the whole of Europe was involved, and especially that

Great Britain had declared war upon Germany. We fully expected that our passengers, most of whom were Americans, would abandon the trip, go ashore at Honolulu, and return home by the first steamer. But not a bit of it; they one and all returned to the ship a good half-hour before sailing time, "guessing" that they were not going to be cheated out of their holiday by all the Kaisers in creation, and "calculating" that there were plenty of British warships in the Pacific to keep the Germans busy without affording them any spare time to interfere with the ANDROMEDA. And so indeed it seemed, for during the seven days of our run from Honolulu we had been spoken by no less than five British cruisers, but—to quote the boatswain—had not so much as smelt a German.

Of course we were sailing with lights out, and skylight and scuttles carefully masked, but we felt that in doing so we were safe, since we were in a part of the ocean unfrequented by ships, while the look-outs on forecastle and in waist were doubled at night-time, and kept constantly on the qui vive.

Although the ship was reeling off her eighteen knots, running before a brisk north-east trade-wind, with royals set and studding sails abroad on both sides, she was steering as sweetly and easily as a little boat—as I could tell by watching a particular star which showed just clear of the head of the port main topgallant stunsail, and as I watched that star I was idly speculating upon the chances of our blundering into the clutches of a German cruiser, or commerce-destroyer.

Five bells chimed out, the look-outs responded with their usual wail of "All's well," and my thoughts had wandered away from the war to some other subject—I forget what—when with startling suddenness there came a yell, that was almost a scream, from the two look-outs on the topgallant forecastle, in which I seemed to distinguish the words "right under our bows." The next instant the ship stopped dead; a loud crunching, grinding sound arose forward; with the suddenness of the stoppage of the ship's progress I was forced hard up against the wheel, while the mate, who had been padding fore and aft the poop in a pair of felt slippers, and had just wheeled about on his way forward again, made a running stumble and then fell prone upon the deck with a heavy thud. At the same instant there arose aloft a terrific medley of rending, crashing, splintering and twanging sounds as the three topmasts carried away at the caps and, with all attached, fell forward upon the forecastle and the main deck in an indescribable raffle of splintered spars, torn canvas and tangled running gear. Then, with a heave, the ship rose and seemed to climb over some obstacle, the pounding of which against her bottom as she passed over it shook her from stem to stern. I could clearly trace our progress over the obstacle, by the crushing, thudding sounds of it against our hull, and when it came abreast of the wheel I distinctly saw, alongside, a great shapeless black mass, heaving and squirming in the midst of a welter of phosphorescent foam, and when, a moment later, we passed clear, it became evident that what I had seen was but a small portion of a much larger mass which rose ponderously to the surface from beneath our keel and went drifting away astern into the darkness.

Turning my gaze inboard I saw the mate sitting on the deck where he had fallen, with his right hand pressed to his forehead, as though he had been partially stunned, and was trying to recover his faculties. At the same instant the figure of the skipper, clad in pyjamas, rose above the level of the poop as he sprang up the ladder, shouting—

"Mr Kennedy! Mr Kennedy! Where are you, sir?"

"Here I am, sir," answered the mate, scrambling uncertainly to his feet. "Here's a pretty business, sir—"

"A pretty business indeed!" stormed the skipper. "Why, the ship is a wreck! What, in heaven's name, has happened, sir? Have we been in collision?"

"Yes, sir," I shouted—as the mate still seemed dazed and scarcely to know where he was; "we have run over a waterlogged derelict. I distinctly saw it over here to port as it drove astern."

"Is that Massey?" asked the skipper, coming toward me.

"Yes sir," I replied.

"Then put your helm hard a-starboard, and lash it," he commanded. "We will heave the ship to, if we can swing the lower yards, and find out the extent of the damage. Then, go for'ard and muster all hands. Back the fore-yard; tell the carpenter to sound the well and report to me here; organise a gang to clear away the wreckage; then, swing a lantern over the bows and see if you can discover what damage we have sustained. Cut away, now, and come back with news as soon as you can. And as you go, pass the word for Mr Owen," (the second mate) "to come to me."

"Ay, ay, sir," I answered, and departed upon my errands, to encounter on the poop ladder a stream of saloon passengers, clad in most unconventional garb, who were swarming up from below, intent upon being informed as to what had happened. They would have stopped me, for cross-examination, but, referring them to the skipper, I brushed past on my mission. I found the second mate and gave him the skipper's message, then went for'ard. There was no need to call the hands, for they had tumbled out of the fore-castle in a body, at the first crash, and were already, upon their own initiative, clearing the fore-deck of the worst of the wreckage. I shouted for the carpenter, and passed on to him the skipper's orders to sound the well, sent a gang of men aft to man the fore-brace and back the fore-yard, and then, entering the fore-castle, found and lighted a lantern which I caused a man to swing over the bows while I lay out on the martingale stays to get a good look at the damage, if any, done to our bows by the collision.

It was a terrible sight. As the bows lifted to the heave of the sea, I saw that, from the level of the water-line downwards, the stem had been twisted round until about five feet of the plating was bent over to port so that it made almost a right angle with the line of the ship's length, while the plates had been burst open, leaving a hole fully a foot wide, out of which the water was pouring with the dip and rise of the bows to the run of the swell. It was clear that the safety of the ship depended upon the strength of the fore bulkhead—which, luckily, extended from the keelson to the deck—and that, should it give way, the poor old ANDROMEDA must go to the bottom within a little while.

With this portentous news I hurried aft, to find that the carpenter had already joined the skipper, who had separated himself from the crowd of clamorous passengers and withdrawn aft to receive Chip's report, out of the passengers' hearing. It was that the ship was making water at the rate of about an inch a minute, the presumption being that the passage of the derelict under the bottom had opened some of the plate joints. Then I made my report, and the carpenter was told to open the fore-hatch and ascertain how the bulkhead was bearing the

pressure of the sea upon it. Meanwhile, a gang of men had started the pumps, while the rest, under the chief mate, who had by this time got over the effects of his fall, were busy clearing away the wreckage.

As soon as the carpenter had left us, the skipper turned to me.

“Now, Massey,” he said, “I have a job for you, of the utmost importance. If that fore bulkhead yields ever so little, it will soon be all up with the *Andromeda*. You will muster the rest of the apprentices, take charge of them, and start them upon the job of getting the boats ready for launching. First of all you will get hold of the chief steward and tell him my orders are that he is to open the lazarette and rouse out all the stores he and his men can lay hands upon. Cabin bread and water are the most important items; and, after them, tinned stuff and a small quantity of wine and spirits. The stewardesses will help by bringing the lighter articles up here, ready for placing in the boats. Then, get to work with the other apprentices upon the boats. Start all the water that is now in the breakers, and fill them afresh from the ship’s tanks. Take off the covers, and fold each up carefully and place it in the boat to which it belongs. Personally assure yourself that all plugs are in, and that each boat has not only a baler but also a bucket. See also that the full complement of oars and rowlocks is in each boat, also masts and sails; in short, make certain that the equipment of each boat is complete.

“By the time that you have done that, the provisions will be coming up, and you may begin to store them, seeing that each boat has a proper proportion of each, and not that one boat gets all the bread, another all the tinned stuff, and another all the wines and spirits. I want each boat to be independent of the rest. And don’t forget your sextant, nautical almanac and book of tables. I have decided to give you command of the jollyboat, if it should become necessary to abandon the ship. That’s all, I think. Cut away now, and get busy; and if you should think of anything useful that I have omitted to mention, do as you think best.”

With the usual “Ay, ay, sir,” to show that I comprehended my orders I hurried away, and, first of all, hunted up the chief steward, to whom I communicated the skipper’s orders. Then I went round the decks, got together my seven fellow apprentices, and we set to work with a will upon the boats. There were six of these, namely, the longboat, first and second cutters, jollyboat, and two smart gigs, to accommodate sixty-six of us, all told: the boat accommodation was therefore ample, even if we should be unable to launch the longboat, which was, for the moment, buried under a mass of wreckage.

We started with the two gigs, which were slung to the davits, one on either quarter. It did not take us long to get the covers off these and to give them and their gear a careful overhaul. By the time this was done, the provisions were beginning to come up on deck, and we soon had both gigs stowed and ready for lowering. Then came the two cutters. We stripped and overhauled these, and swung them outboard, ready for lowering, before replacing their gear or stowing their provisions. By the time this was done, much of the wreckage had been cleared away, and it was possible to get up mast and yard tackles to hoist out the jollyboat and the longboat. Meanwhile, the passengers, at the skipper’s earnest persuasion, had retired to their cabins, properly dressed themselves, and were busily engaged in putting together a few of their most valued possessions, upon the off-chance of finding room for them in the boats.

The dawn was showing when I had finished my job and reported progress. The carpenter had left a moment earlier, and I judged, not only from the serious look on Chips' face, but also from the posture of the ship herself, that the hours of the ANDROMEDA were numbered.

We were ready to quit at practically a moment's notice, while the ship promised to remain afloat for at least a couple of hours longer, the captain therefore gave orders for a good substantial breakfast to be prepared for all hands, to which we shortly afterwards did justice.

It was about nine o'clock in the morning when the word was passed for all hands to muster on deck, and a couple of minutes later saw the order obeyed, the passengers assembling on the poop, while the crew gathered in the waist. Then, all being present, the skipper stepped out and took up a position at the head of the port poop ladder where he could be seen and heard by all.

"Ladies and gentlemen, and you officers and men forming the crew of the ANDROMEDA," he said, "you will hardly need any words of mine to tell you that the hours—indeed, might almost say the moments—of this good ship are numbered. So far as it is possible for me to judge, she will continue to float for about another hour; but since, for the preservation of our lives, it is necessary to abandon her, and since the weather is just now as favourable as it is at all likely to be for the operation of taking to the boats, I have decided to carry out that operation forthwith, that it may be done without hurry or confusion.

"As you have no doubt noticed, the boats are safely afloat; there will therefore be room for everybody, and also for a very small quantity of personal baggage.

"The longboat, with a complement of twenty, all told, including twelve passengers, will be under my command. The first and second cutters, with a complement of fourteen each, will be commanded respectively by the chief and second mates. The jollyboat, with a complement of eight will be commanded by Mr Massey, the senior apprentice; and, finally, the two gigs, each with a complement of five, will be commanded by Mr Annesley and Mr Duncan, the two apprentices next in seniority. I have here in my hand a carefully prepared list giving the names of the crew and passengers to go in each boat, and, as I call them out, those names will be pleased to pass down into the boat designated.

"Before we go, however, I wish to tell you what my plans are—plans made after careful consideration and consultation with my first and second officers. The nearest inhabited land is some eight hundred miles distant, but it lies dead to windward; it is therefore useless to think of making our way thither. The next nearest is the Union group, practically a thousand miles away. This group is under British control, and it has the advantage of lying due south of us, so that, the prevailing winds being from the eastward, we ought to be able to fetch it under sail. Allowing the boats an average speed of four knots—and there will doubtless be frequent occasions when they will do more—we ought to accomplish the run in ten days. This, I know, is a long time for delicately nurtured women and children to look forward to being cooped up in open boats, but I am afraid it cannot be helped; we men will do everything we can to make it easy for them, and they must steel themselves to the ordeal.

"But—and I have kept this to the last—such a long sojourn in the boats may not be necessary. For, on our passage toward the Union group of islands, we shall

cross the track of one of our own steamers—the PARAMATTA—bound from Suva to Honolulu. She is due to reach the point where we shall cross her track, seven days hence, and I am sanguine in the belief that, with favourable weather and winds, we can arrive at that point in time to intercept her and be picked up.” (There was a little murmur of gratification from the passengers at this cheering news, and the skipper bowed and smiled encouragingly. He resumed.)

“I have only one thing to add, and that is, each boat is to regard herself as a separate and independent unit, and is to make her way to the spot named in the shortest possible time, and there await the coming of the Paramatta or the other boats. That is all I have to say, ladies and gentlemen, except that I pray God to take us all under His especial care and guidance and to grant us a spell of favourable weather.

“And now to get away in the boats as quickly as possible.”

## **Chapter 2**

### **Becalmed in the Jollyboat.**

With our sail set, and the boat heading to the southward in the wake of the two gigs, I now had leisure to take a hasty glance at the good ship which had, first and last, borne me safely over many a thousand leagues of ocean, and was now hastening to her last berth in the Pacific ooze.

“So ends Chapter One. What, think you, is to be the end of Chapter Two, Massey?” remarked Mr Oldroyd, one of two passengers who had left America to hunt kangaroos.

“If all goes well I hope it will end in our all being picked up by the PARAMATTA, this day week,” I said.

“If all goes well! Is there any reason why all should not go well?” asked Doctor Shirley-Winthrop, another American who, with his daughter, was in my boat.

“No,” I answered, “no particular reason; certainly not. But, of course, our position out here in an open boat, a thousand miles from the nearest land we can hope to reach, is precarious. So long as the weather holds, there will be little for us to trouble about. We have as much wind as we want, and no more, and it is blowing from the right quarter; moreover the sea is going down. If these conditions continue for the next seven days, we may hope to fall in with the PARAMATTA, and be picked up.

“But although under such conditions, practically the worst that we may expect is seven days’ exposure in an open boat, I am very glad you have asked that question, Doctor, because, as I said just now, our position is precarious. It depends upon the weather, than which, I suppose, there is nothing more uncertain. For example, we are heading to the south’ard, and are not more than about five degrees from the Line. Now, this breeze may hold until we reach the equator; but, on the other hand, it may not. I have known the equatorial calms to set in almost as far north as this, and if they should come to us early, our



progress will be retarded, and our chances of falling in with the PARAMATTA reduced. I want you all to bear these facts in mind, so that, should matters not go with us precisely as we wish, you may not be unduly disappointed.”

“Y-e-s, I understand,” remarked the Doctor slowly. “You mean we must not be too cocksure that everything is going to pan out just right?”

“Precisely,” I said. “What I mean is very exactly expressed by our old English adage—‘Hope for the best, but be prepared for the worst’.”

“Is there any sign of a change of weather?” asked the Doctor.

I took a look to windward, and all round the horizon. The sky overhead was a clear, rich ultramarine blue, paling away toward the horizon into a soft, warm grey against which the deep, sapphire blue of the sea ruled sharply in an unbroken circle, save where the tiny sails of the boats dotted it here and there. Solemn-moving trade clouds, like tufts of cotton-wool, came sailing slowly up out of the eastward, passing overhead, and vanishing beneath the western horizon, but nowhere, I was thankful to say, could I see any sign of change. True, the strength of the wind had moderated since our collision with the derelict, but that was all to the good, for the sea was moderating too, while we had just enough wind to enable us to show whole canvas to it comfortably. The two gigs were slipping away from us rapidly; they were smart boats, fast, whether under oars or sails, it was ideal weather for them, and they were only carrying five people each. We—the jollyboat—on the contrary were a sort of miniature longboat, built to carry, rather than for speed, yet in certain trim—which happened to be precisely our present trim—the little hooker had the knack of slipping along in a surprising manner. The two cutters, nearly as powerful as the jollyboat, and also built in a measure for speed, ought by good rights to be coming up with us, hand over hand, yet we were handsomely holding our own with them, if not actually creeping slowly away from them. As for the longboat, she was a slow coach; but if the breeze should freshen, she would be able to give an excellent account of herself.

“No,” I answered the Doctor, “there is no sign of a change, so we must just hope for the best, and be as considerate for each other as we can.”

There was just one drawback. The jollyboat had been stored, bottom-up, in the longboat for some time, her planking had become dry, and had shrunk, opening her seams, consequently she leaked like a basket, when she was first put into the water, necessitating the constant employment of one man as a baler; but as the hours went on she gradually “took up”, and matters became less unpleasant.

Meanwhile, I was busy thinking. Here we were, eight of us, in an open boat some thirty feet long by seven-and-a-half feet beam, and two of our number were young women. We were booked for seven days, at least, under these conditions, and, if nothing were done to remedy it, the complete lack of privacy would be horribly unpleasant for the two girls, to say nothing of the fact that there was absolutely no shelter for them in the event of bad weather. I called Wilkinson, the able seaman, aft, and turned the boat over to him, while Mr Mason, at my request, took a turn at baling to release Dartnell, the ordinary seaman. Then Dartnell and I, going for’ard, re-arranged the storage of the boat, clearing away the whole of the space forward of the mast. This space I covered in with the boat’s canvas coat, making a sort of tiny forecabin of it, the interior of which I arranged with rugs and spare coats so as to convert it into a small sleeping apartment screened off from

the rest of the boat. The result was not unsatisfactory; and I called the stewardess forward and showed her what I had done. She was thoroughly appreciative and intensely grateful, and shortly afterward I saw her obviously explaining matters to Miss Shirley-Winthrop. Then the two went for'ard together and disappeared, presumably re-arranging matters to their own liking. The result was that they were able to pass the night in privacy and some measure of comfort; but not a word of thanks or appreciation would Miss Shirley-Winthrop condescend to utter. Apparently, she regarded everything that was done for her as only what she was entitled to.

This, however, did not trouble me; I was not out to court her favour, and the feeling that I had done the best I could for her and my other female passenger was all the satisfaction I needed. Besides, I had things of more importance than the moods and humours of a spoilt young woman to think about, and the weather was one of them. As the day wore on the wind was dropping, and I feared a calm almost as much as I did a gale. When we abandoned the wreck the breeze was fresh enough to carry the boat almost gunwale-to, and there had been occasions when it was necessary to ease off the sheet to keep the water from lapping in over the lee gunwale, but these occasions had been growing steadily less frequent until by about two o'clock in the afternoon they had ceased, and by four o'clock the boat was sailing almost upright and our speed had dwindled to about three knots. The gigs, however, were making good headway, the leading gig having run out of sight, while the one next ahead of us was only to be seen occasionally, when we both happened to lift on the back of a swell at the same moment. In like manner we had gradually drawn away from the cutters, the nearest of which was by this time quite three miles astern of us, while the longboat was hull-down.

The aspect of the sky, too, was undergoing a subtle change. The blue of the zenith was no longer so clear and clean as it had been during the morning; it had lost much of its rich colour and had become quite of a pallid turquoise tint, indicating that it was being gradually overspread by a gathering haze, while the little tufts of trade clouds had noticeably diminished in number, were slower in their movements, and seemed to come to a pause on the western horizon and merge into a steadily-growing bank of vapour which had begun to form there. The result of this was a gorgeous sunset that evoked the admiration of my five passengers, although there was far too much fire and smoke in its composition to please me.

The wind was now dropping in so pronounced a fashion that there could no longer be doubt as to the spell of calm which I dreaded so much. Nevertheless, we carried on until close upon ten o'clock, by which time the sail was rustling and flapping to the mast with every motion of the boat, while the sheet hung slack amidships, and the boat no longer answered her helm. Then, reluctant though I was to do so, I had to order the dowsing of the sail and a resort to the oars; for if we were to intercept the Paramatta we must keep moving. There was no margin of time allowing us to lie idle until another breeze should spring up.

There were five of us in the jollyboat capable of handling an oar, namely, Messrs. Oldroyd and Mason, passengers, the two seamen and myself (Dr. Shirley-Winthrop confessed that he had never handled an oar in his life, but was willing to learn). But, of those five, it was necessary that one should always be steering,

while it was obvious that none of us could work an oar for any length of time without rest. I therefore arranged that two should pull and one steer, turn and turn about, in spells of two hours, Wilkinson, the A.B. and I taking the first spell, while Dartnell steered; then Oldroyd and Mason were to come on for two hours while the Doctor steered, and so on, ringing the changes in such a fashion that each of us who could handle an oar pulled for two hours at a stretch, and then, after a spell of rest, took a two hours' turn at the tiller.

It was weary, back-breaking work, pulling a heavy boat like the jollyboat with only one pair of oars, especially at the start when, although the wind had dropped, the sea was still "lumpy" and "sloppy". We managed to get on, however, after a fashion, doing an average of a trifle under two knots per hour. But I was greatly surprised and much puzzled, when sunrise came and revealed a clear horizon. Not one of the boats was in sight! The disappearance of the gigs I could easily account for; they were light boats, pulled easily, and would draw away from the rest of us like smoke as soon as it came to a question of taking to the oars. But where were the cutters and the longboat? Certainly not ahead of us. We had pulled industriously all through the night, without cessation; and assuming that they had done the same I could not conceive how it would be possible for them to overhaul us and pass out of sight ahead. And still assuming that they, like ourselves, had kept their oars going all night, I found it equally difficult to understand how we could have run them out of sight. I sent Dartnell, the lightest man amongst us, up to the boat's mast-head to take a look round, and he remained there a long five minutes, searching the entire horizon, but without success. Exceedingly improbable though it seemed, I at length came to the conclusion that the cutters and the longboat *must* be out of sight astern of us, and the idea came to me that perhaps it would be well to spare my crew a little by waiting for the laggards to overtake us and rejoin; but upon going over my previous calculations I found that we really dared not do it; we had not a minute to spare if we would intercept the PARAMATTA: and reluctantly I gave the word to "carry on" with the oars.

At eight o'clock that morning we piped to breakfast, and Miss Shirley-Winthrop and the second stewardess emerged from the nest I had rigged up for them in the eyes of the boat. As they came aft I ventured to express the hope that they had passed a comfortable night and slept well. Then, for the first time since I had been brought into contact with her, Miss Shirley-Winthrop looked *at*, instead of through and beyond me. She cast upon me a glance of scorn and contempt which ought to have withered me—but didn't—and remarked, with a toss of her pretty head—

"Comfortable! slept well! Surely you must be jesting at our misery, sir. How do you suppose it possible for any woman to be comfortable in a stifling little hole like that, or to sleep with the rattle of oars going on all night?"

"I am awfully sorry if you have passed a bad night," I said. "Of course I know that it is very different from the accommodation aboard the poor old ANDROMEDA, but it is the best that could be contrived, under the circumstances. And, if I may be permitted to say so, your 'misery' does not appear to have visibly affected either of you, thus far."

"I am sure it has not affected *me*," laughed the stewardess, "for I was very comfortable all through the night, except for the heat, while I was able to get some

quite long snatches of sleep. And this morning I feel fresh, and fit for anything. Is there anything I can do to help, Mr Massey?"

"Yes," I said, "there is. After breakfast I will teach you how to steer the boat by compass; and when you have learned, you will be able to release one man to snatch a little additional rest. And rest, I can assure you, is going to be valuable to us men, so long as this calm lasts."

I added the last remark chiefly to afford Miss Shirley-Winthrop an opening to volunteer her services also; but she said not a word, and did not appear to have heard my remark.

Breakfast over, we threw out the oars again and resumed our voyage. Oldroyd and Wilkinson doing the hard work while I coached the stewardess in the art of steering. Within half-an-hour the girl had so perfectly acquired the knack that I was able to leave the boat in her hands and stretch myself out for a brief nap. But, as I did so, I saw the Doctor's daughter shift over into the seat which I had vacated beside the stewardess, and before I dropped off to sleep she was getting Lucy Stroud to initiate her into the mysteries of steering.

"Good!" thought I. "The girl is all right at heart, I'll bet. What is the matter with her is that she has been thoroughly spoilt, from her babyhood up, and has never been thwarted. This little boat excursion is going to do her a lot of good, if I am not mistaken."

That day was a terrible day for all of us. The air was stagnant, not so much as the ghost of a catspaw wrinkled the oil-smooth surface of the swell. There was not a cloud in the whole of the vast vault that overarched us, but the rich blue was still dimmed, as on the previous day, by a haze which should have tempered the heat of the sun, but did not, on the contrary, it seemed somehow, to impart an added sting to his beams, which beat down upon us with such a virulence of scorching power that our arms, backs and shoulders, even where protected by our shirts, began to blister and smart cruelly. An hour at the oars was an hour of torment, and as I saw the oarsmen wincing at the chafe of their shirts upon their blistered skins, I was more than once inclined to bid them knock off. Yet each time reflection reminded me that away down there, some hundreds of miles to the southward, was the PARAMATTA rushing northward under the impulse of her powerful engines, and that if we wished to cross her path in time to intercept her—as most certainly we did—we must not waste a moment, though we should chafe our bodies raw in our eagerness. Even for the two girls, whose hardest work was steering the boat—a task which they had quietly but firmly taken upon themselves—the heat was excessively trying though they shared the protection of a handsome silk and lace sunshade which Miss Shirley-Winthrop had had the vanity—or the good sense, as things turned out—to bring from the ship with her. Yes, it was a terrible day for all of us; even when we were not exerting ourselves at all the perspiration streamed from us, and this resulted in a continuous, parching thirst which the meagre allowance of water that our resources permitted seemed to aggravate rather than allay. None of us took very much solid food, the intolerable smart of our scorched and blistered bodies set up a fever which robbed us of all appetite and induced a racking headache that drove us nearly crazy. Dartnell, the ordinary seaman, suffered to such an extent that we had to restrain him from going overboard in the hope that the comparative coolness of the sea

would afford relief. But we did the next best thing we could for him, we drenched him, clothes and all, with salt-water, as he sat in the bottom of the boat, and he declared so emphatically that the treatment had relieved him, that Wilkinson, Oldroyd and I tried it on ourselves. And it did afford us relief and comfort for a short time; but we paid for the relief in another way, for the salt-water stung our broken blisters until the smart tormented us even more acutely than our earlier sufferings had done.

Our miseries during the ensuing forty-eight hours were a repetition of those of the day I have described only in an aggravated form. Night, with the absence of the blazing, scorching sun, afforded us some measure of relief, and although we ached in every joint, and our shoulders, the backs of our necks, and our arms were covered with great raw, bleeding patches, where the blisters had burst and the skin had been chafed to rags by the friction of our clothing, we somehow kept the boat going all through the night. But about an hour before noon of the next day the last of us—myself—collapsed completely, and for the next thirty hours the jollyboat lay “as idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean,” with all the men aboard her, except the Doctor, delirious with pain and exhaustion. He and the stewardess got busy—the latter said that the Doctor’s daughter helped, too, until we began to show signs of returning consciousness. I don’t quite know of what Doctor Shirley-Winthrop’s treatment consisted, for he had no medicines with him, and the stewardess seemed to know little more about it than we did, although she helped the Doctor to treat us. All I know is that our raw places had been somehow treated or dressed, and had been bound up with soft material that had come from heaven knows where, that our delirium had vanished, and much of our pain and discomfort with it, and that upon investigation, our stock of fresh-water proved to be alarmingly low. I suspected that Doctor Shirley-Winthrop had used it unsparingly in his treatment of his patients; but be that as it may, I have scarcely a doubt that he saved our lives.

But to what end had he saved them? That was the question that now exercised me. For the morrow of the day upon which we recovered our senses was the day when the PARAMATTA was due to pass the spot for which we were aiming. And, as nearly as I could reckon it, we were at that moment close upon one hundred and eighty miles from that spot, with the weather still stark calm! One hundred and eighty miles in twenty-four hours! It could not be done—unless we happened to have a gale of wind behind us, of which at that moment there was no sign.

The more I thought of it the more clear to me did it become that it was useless to think of intercepting the PARAMATTA. Carefully I went over my calculations again, only to come to the conclusion that, if we were to take to the oars again and pull for all we were worth during the twenty-four hours, we should never get nearer to her than within about a hundred miles, after which the distance would begin to widen again, and go on widening.

Then, if we were to admit the impossibility of intercepting the PARAMATTA—and I could see nothing else for it—what were we to do? There was the outward-bound steamer from Honolulu to Suva, but we should miss her too, for according to her time table she was at that moment—there or thereabout—passing us, bound south, about one hundred and twenty miles away, and she would not be coming north again for another month. Also it would be useless to think of hanging about

where we were, in the hope of being seen and picked up by some passing craft, for we were in a part of the Pacific Ocean which is rarely traversed by craft of any description, save those of the Inter-Oceanic Steamship Company. Of course there remained the Union group of islands, due south of us, of which the skipper had spoken as an alternative to being picked up by the PARAMATTA. We could keep doggedly on as we were going, and if nothing untoward occurred, and our provisions and water held out, in time we should reach them. Yes, that was just the point: *would our provisions and water hold out?* I estimated that the Union group was still nearly nine hundred miles distant, and, taking the most favourable view of probabilities, I did not see any prospect of our being able to reach them in less than twelve days at the least. It might take us more than that; it would not be prudent to reckon on less. Then I took stock of our supply of food and water. Of the former I found that we had sufficient to last us, at our normal rate of consumption, a fortnight; but our water! Gauging it as carefully as I could, I made it just six gallons, the equivalent of one pint per day per head for six days!

I determined to take my companions into my confidence, and consult with them as to what should be our next move. Since it was impossible for us to intercept the PARAMATTA, they had a right to express an opinion upon the alternative to be adopted, whether we should continue to push southward in the hope of making the Union group, or whether we should—do something else.

I put the case to them, and I was relieved to find that, so far at least as two of them—Messrs. Oldroyd and Mason—were concerned, they too, had been thinking matters over, and were by no means surprised. Neither were the two seamen, nor the stewardess, though the latter had kept her surmises strictly to herself, waiting patiently for me to speak. It was only the doctor—and possibly his daughter, who apparently had nothing to say upon the matter—who had failed to grasp the significance of the disastrous calm, and all that it involved. He had been looking forward with the utmost confidence to being picked up by the PARAMATTA and it took a good deal of explanation to make it clear that we had lost that chance. When he grasped the situation, he said—

“Supposing, Mr Massey, you were alone in this boat, or—what amounts practically to the same thing—we landsmen were to say to you, ‘We know absolutely nothing about such matters as these, and are therefore willing to abide by a decision based upon your professional experience and judgment,’ what would you do?”

It was the very point that had been puzzling me; but it was one that had to be faced, and I had finally made up my mind upon it.

“I should be guided entirely by circumstances,” I replied. “The first and most imperative thing to be done is to cut down our allowance of water to the lowest possible limit. For the rest, we must be governed by the direction of the wind—when it comes. We are now in the belt of tropical calms, where absence of wind and frequent tremendous downpours of rain are common; but these spells of calm are frequently varied by light airs which come from any point of the compass, while more or less violent squalls are not infrequent. Now, we know where the Union group is. If the winds permit, we will try to make them, but if not, I believe there are clusters of islands at no great distance away down to the south-west. If we cannot make the Unions, our wisest plan would be to head south-west and try

to hit one of the islands of which I have spoken; for, by so doing, we should also have a chance of being picked up by one of the copra and shell traders that cruise among those islands.”

“I don’t see that we can do anything else,” remarked Oldroyd, appealing to the company.

“Most sensible thing, I think,” agreed his friend, Mason.

“Can you suggest a better plan, Doctor?” I demanded.

“Of course he cannot,” snapped his daughter. “He is a landsman, and knows nothing about the sea. But I am very sorry that Captain Cupples did not appoint us to one of the other boats. We should at least have been with an officer who would know what to do without consulting his passengers.”

Inwardly, I heartily shared the young lady’s regret, and was almost provoked into saying so; but I kept my temper, remembering all that the poor, spoiled beauty had to put up with; and replied, with the most cheerful smile I could muster—

“Very well, then; it is settled that we follow the procedure I have suggested. And, thank God! there is a little breeze coming to help us. D’ye see that catspaw away out there on the port bow, Wilkinson? Bend on the halliard and hoist the sail. We must utilise every breath of wind that comes to us; they are much too precious to be wasted.”

## **Chapter 3**

### **Weird Happenings.**

There were catspaws playing all round us now, and presently Wilkinson, standing up in the boat and shading his eyes with one hand, pointed away to the southward with the other, indicating a narrow line of rich ultramarine blue that stretched right along the southern horizon, with numerous catspaws of the same tint impinging upon the surface of the water between us and it, flickering lightly hither and thither for a few moments and then merging into each other until patches of blue an acre or more in extent became quite numerous, these in turn merging into each other and extending in every direction. Finally, one of these bigger patches of blue spread until it took the jollyboat into its gracious embrace, when with a slight preliminary rustling, the sail filled, the sheet tautened, and with a heel of about one strake to starboard, and a musical tinkling of water along our bends, we gathered way and began to “catch” in west-south-westerly direction at the rate of about two knots. Gradually the breeze grew stronger until within an hour we were doing four knots, with perhaps a bit over.

That breeze lasted all through the night and well into the morning of the next day, dying away about eleven o’clock in the forenoon. But I did not anticipate another long spell of calm, on the contrary, I was afraid that our next trouble would be that of too much wind, for with the dying away of the breeze a great bank of slatey-blue cloud began to gather and rise along the western horizon,

threatening a thunder-storm; and I knew from past experience, that in those latitudes a thunder-storm frequently breaks with furious wind squalls, dangerous to a small open boat.

The storm was slow to come, but it broke at last, about three o'clock in the afternoon, in the form—to my great relief—of just an ordinary tropical thunder-storm, without wind, but finishing up with a perfect deluge of rain which descended from the overcharged clouds in such torrents that by catching it in our outspread sail, we could re-fill our water breakers, to my intense relief. Of course, we also all got drenched to the skin—except Miss Shirley-Winthrop, who so far honoured me as to accept the loan of my “oily”—but that did not really matter, for the rain was tepid and the drenching was agreeable rather than otherwise.

The storm, and the succeeding downpour of rain, lasted until close upon sunset; but with the cessation of the rain there was no clearing of the sky, which remained lowering and overcast, with a closeness of the atmosphere that was almost suffocating, so that, despite our drenched clothing, we were all perspiring freely.

The darkness descended upon us with startling suddenness, that night, and when it came it was like being shut up in a tomb. The silence was profound, for the heavy rain had beaten the sea so flat that even the swell seemed to have subsided and the boat was as motionless as though afloat in a tank, while none of us seemed in the least inclined to be talkative. The smoothness of the water rendered the conditions ideal for rowing, but so oppressive was the humid heat of the night that the slightest exertion seemed a hardship, and I had not the heart to call upon anyone to toil at an oar, particularly now that we had abandoned hope of intercepting the PARAMATTA, while the replenishment of our water supply rendered extreme haste no longer of vital importance. So we just sat there, motionless, silent, panting and perspiring; too languid and inert even for the smokers of the party to fill and light their pipes.

At length Miss Shirley-Winthrop curtly announced her intention to retire for the night, and requested—though it sounded much more like a command—that the lantern might be lighted to enable her to make her way to her quarters in the eyes of the boat. This was done, and the young lady left us, with a brief “good-night” to her father, but ignoring the rest of us; and the stewardess went with her. Some ten minutes later the hurricane lamp was passed out of the little tent-like shelter forward and extinguished, it now being a matter of some importance to economise the oil.

But, as though the retirement of the young women had been a signal, then things began to happen. First of all, a faint, momentary gleam of bluish radiance, flickering out of the blackness low down in the southern quarter heralded the most magnificent display of sheet lightning that I ever beheld. It lasted for two hours or more, beginning with scarcely perceptible glimmers at intervals of about a minute, and increasing in brilliance and rapidity until at the height of its intensity the atmosphere seemed, for the space of about a quarter of an hour, to be one continuous shimmer of brilliant vari-coloured light.

And it was while this beautiful electrical display was at its height that the first really remarkable event of that extraordinary night happened. The silence that enveloped us was practically complete. But merely to make that bald statement



does not express the intensity of it. It was so profound as to be uncanny; it was as though nature was breathlessly awaiting some momentous happening; it seemed to have assumed a new quality and to have become tangible. And—so far at least as I was concerned—it so got upon one's nerves that when anyone moved, the sound seemed so startling that my impulse was to hit out savagely at the offender. Perhaps it was the highly-charged electrical atmosphere that was responsible for this curious nervous state; I don't know. But the others were evidently under the same influence, for it was noticeable that they were all exercising a painful restraint upon themselves to avoid movement or any action calculated to break the weird silence.

It was at the moment when matters had reached this stage that, suddenly, as with one accord, we all sat up and assumed an intent listening attitude, for, faint and apparently from far away, there had come to our ears a peculiar sound, a sound that could be separated into two other distinct sounds, namely, a low, weird whining, and the sound of rushing water. Starting to my feet, I stared into the far distance all round the boat, under the impression that a heavy and dangerous squall was approaching, for the sounds were increasingly distinct. I was prepared to perceive in some quarter of the heavens a distinct darkening of the already dark sky, and beneath it a pallid line of white lashed into a surge of phosphorescent fire by the scourge of the approaching squall. Evidently, Wilkinson and Dartnell, the two seamen, had the same idea, for they, too, scrambled to their feet and stared about them, while one muttered—"Squall comin'!"

But nothing of the kind anticipated was to be seen, although the sounds were rapidly growing in intensity, the whining sound having developed into the unmistakable howl of a furious wind.

"Do you see anything, Wilkinson, Dartnell?" I demanded, puzzled and not a little disconcerted.

"N-o, sir, I don't," answered both men, hesitatingly, at the same moment. Then—"Yes, by the Piper! I do, though," exclaimed Wilkinson; and as the man spoke we all three caught sight of it simultaneously—a mound of white water, circular in shape and some two or three fathoms in diameter, coming along up from the south and heading directly for us. I did not know in the least what it was, but instinctively I recognised it as something dangerous, and shouted—

"Out oars, men, and pull for your lives! Lively, now! Well done, Wilkinson, give way, man! Back water, Dartnell. So! Now give way both!"

Galvanised into sudden and intense activity the two seamen grasped the oars, tossed them into the rowlocks and, throwing all their strength into the action, got the boat going just in the nick of time. Some twenty seconds later the tornado—for that was what it was—went whooping and screaming and yelling immediately over the spot where we had been, its passage marked by the swirling, seething mound of phosphorescent water which it was churning up in its fury. Had we not got out of its path, that mound of water would have boiled in over the gunwale of our boat and swamped her, with the certainty that not one of us would have survived to tell the tale.

Within five moments the tornado had swept out of sight and hearing, and after about half an hour's desultory chat chiefly concerning remarkable phenomena that one or another of us had witnessed, we subsided into silence again, the

Doctor stretching himself out for the night upon the after-thwart, while Messrs. Oldroyd and Mason arranged themselves as comfortably as they could on the bottom-boards of the stern-sheets. The sheet lightning was by this time passing away, only an occasional flicker of it lighting up the scene for a moment, to be followed by steadily lengthening intervals of intense darkness. But the silence was no longer so oppressive, for far away down in the southern quarter there was the occasional low mutter of distant thunder, and I began to wonder whether the storm of the afternoon was to be repeated.

After a longer spell than usual of total darkness there came a brilliant flicker of sheet lightning, lasting for perhaps a second and a half, and before it vanished Wilkinson, the able seaman, who had resumed his former position in the bottom of the boat, started up and flinging out his right arm, yelled "Sail ho!"

The effect was electrical: the cry brought every one of us instantly to our feet, staring in the direction to which Wilkinson had pointed. But it was pitch dark again, and I found time to reflect.

A sail? It was absurd, of course, impossible. In a breathless calm, like that which had prevailed all through the afternoon, no sailing ship could have approached us; while if it had chanced to be a steamer that Wilkinson saw, we should have heard the beat of her propeller in that intense silence, as far as we could see her. Moreover, there were neither side nor mast-head lights visible. Again, if by a miracle a sailing ship *had* chanced to drift within our ken, she could not have come so rapidly but that we should have seen her long ago, when the sheet lightning was playing so vividly.

"You have been asleep and dreaming, Wilkinson," I said, reprovingly. "How on earth do you suppose a ship could get near us in such weather as this? What was she like?"

"She's a barque-rigged craft, Mr Massey," the man answered confidently. "About five hundred ton I'd put her down to be. She's about a mile off, out there, broad on our starboard beam, lyin' pretty near broadside-on to us, with her jibs hauled down and her courses in the brails. As to how she comes there, I can't say: all I know is that I seen her, as plain as ever I seen anything in all my life."

I was astonished, not so much at the amount of information which the man reeled off—for I knew that the practised eye of a seaman will catch a wonderful amount of detail even in a space of time as brief as that occupied by a flash of lightning—but at the character of the information, for he had accurately described the appearance of a ship precisely as she would most probably present herself under the somewhat peculiar weather conditions.

"There! did ye hear that, sir?" continued Wilkinson, as I stood staring out to starboard, silently digesting what the man had said, and trying to find an explanation of it.

"That" was something that sounded like a brief command uttered in a man's ordinary tone of voice, followed by other sounds which might have been those of a coil of rope flung down on deck, and next the faint squeak of a block-sheave on a rusty pin.

"Yes," I said, "I certainly did. But it is exceedingly strange. I cannot understand it. However, it is a chance that must not be missed. Pass along the hurricane lamp and let us show them a light. And out oars again, men. We'll pull aboard her; she

cannot get away from us so long as this calm lasts. Did she look English, think you?"

"Well—no, sir, I wouldn't say that she did," replied Wilkinson. "She sat high out of the water, as if she was in ballast, and looked to be badly down by the head."

"Ah, well," I said, "English or not, we'll go and have a look at her. Even if she should be a German, we shall be better off aboard her than drifting about in an open boat. Give way, lads. Now then,"—as I lighted the lamp—"to show them a light. If they are keeping anything of a look-out they cannot fail to see the lantern and to hear the thud of the oars in the rowlocks."

Standing up in the stern-sheets, with the tiller between my legs, while I held the lantern aloft, I headed the boat in the direction where we supposed the stranger to be, meanwhile keeping a bright look-out for an answering light, and momentarily expecting to hear a hail. But no answering light appeared, no hail came pealing out across the water, and I was beginning to doubt whether Wilkinson had not been dreaming after all, despite the sounds which I had heard, when a vivid flash of fork lightning streamed out from a point low down on the horizon, and at the same instant three voices—those of the Doctor, Oldroyd and Mason—exclaimed joyously—

"There she is!"

Yes; there she was, undoubtedly, almost directly ahead, showing up like a black silhouette against the background of sky illuminated for the fraction of a second by the lightning-flash. But what a queer-looking craft she was. True, I had only caught the ghost of a glimpse of her, for the light of the hurricane lamp which I held aloft somewhat dazzled my vision, but the thought that instantly came to my mind was that this was assuredly no present-day ship, or my eyes had strangely deceived me. Wilkinson had described her as sitting high out of the water, as though in ballast, and appearing to be badly down by the head. And, in a general way, that description corresponded with the impression which I had obtained of her appearance, but it would apply equally well to the ships portrayed in pictures painted during the reign of Queen Elizabeth! I had seen scores of drawings of such craft at one time and another, notably in an illustrated History of England; and unless my imagination was playing me a curious trick, the "ghost of a glimpse"—as I have called it—which I caught of the stranger during the brief illumination created by a flash of lightning had left upon my retina the image of just such another ship—short, squat, high-sterned, low-bowed, with three stumpy masts stepped close together, high-peaked bowsprit and spritsail yard, with spritsail hanging in the brails! Of course it was a trick of the imagination—it must be; no ship of that period could still be sailing the seas; but so vividly had that quaint image impressed itself upon me that I could not resist the temptation to question Wilkinson further.

"What countryman would you take her to be, Wilkinson?" I said.

"What countryman, Mr Massey?" he repeated. "Well, dashed if I think I could put a name to her, now that you comes to ask me. She ain't British—I'll swear to that. And, come to think of it, I'm not so sure that I'd call her European, either. Foreign-lookin' sort of craft she is, and all out o' trim, too. Sort of cross between an English barque and a Chinese junk, I'd say she was."

Now, coining from a man in Wilkinson's sphere of life, a man, moreover, without a shred of imagination, this description, quaint as it was, coincided fairly enough with the image which I still had in mind, and I felt more puzzled than ever. What on earth could the craft be?

"Well," I said, "whatever country she may hail from, I hope there will be somebody aboard understanding English. Because I shall want to arrange with her skipper to land us all somewhere on British territory. The Company will willingly pay. We ought to be well within earshot of her by this time, I should think," I continued. "Mr Mason, kindly hold this lamp for me, a moment, please, I'll try a hail."

And, raising my hands to my mouth, trumpet-wise, I yelled, at the full power of my lungs—

"Ship ahoy-y-y!"

As the cry pealed out across the water the two seamen rested upon their oars, listening for a reply.

But the moments passed, and none came, no answering light was shown, nor was there the faintest sound indicating the presence of a craft of any kind in the neighbourhood, although, some ten minutes earlier, I had heard—or thought I heard—the sound of a man's voice, followed by other sounds indicative of the proximity of a ship.

"Hang it all!" I exclaimed in perplexity. "This is queer—very queer. Why the mischief don't those fellows answer? Let us try again, all together. Now—one—two—three—ship ahoy-y-y!"

The combined shout, uttered in unison by six pairs of more or less stentorian lungs, was loud enough, one would have thought, to be heard a couple of miles off, in that breathless calm, but it proved as ineffective as my hail. The silence remained unbroken, save for the soft lap, lap of the water against the boat's planking.

By the light of the lamp, still held aloft by Mason, we gazed at one another in astonishment. What, in the name of all that was puzzling, did it mean? There were five of us in that boat, namely, the three male passengers, Wilkinson, and myself, each of whom was prepared to assert, unequivocally, that we had seen a ship at no great distance away—although I, for one, was still profoundly puzzled to know how she could possibly have got there: we had been pulling toward her for fully ten minutes, and ought now in all reason to be quite near her, yet we could get no reply to our hails, no indication of her contiguity. Why, according to my judgment, we ought to be close enough to her to hear a man speak in anything above a whisper, near enough to hear even a bare-footed man padding along her deck, near enough to hear the scrape of a match by a man lighting his pipe! And unless her crew had suddenly gone fast asleep, or died, they must see the light of our upheld hurricane lamp. The only explanation I could think of was, that her skipper must be one of those selfish, boorish, unfeeling wretches of whom one hears occasionally, who are inhuman enough to refuse succour to shipwrecked people and callously abandon them to the mercies of the sea. If the skipper of the craft for which we were searching chanced to be a fellow of that kidney it might be that, upon seeing our light, he had ordered his crew to take no notice of it, to ignore our hails, and carefully to refrain from making any sounds likely to betray

their presence to us. Yet that could scarcely be it, either, for glass-smooth though the water was, there was still enough swell running to cause a ship to roll, though ever so slightly, and a rolling ship meant rustling, flapping canvas, pattering reef-points, jerking sheets, squeaking parrals, kicking tiller chains, creaking spars, and all those other trifling sounds of ship-board to which one soon grows so accustomed as to become unconscious of them, yet which make themselves startlingly audible in a calm. Those sounds could not be hushed at the order of a surly skipper; yet not one of them could we hear.

“Let us try her once more, lads,” I said. “Now, then—one—two—three—ship ahoy!”

It was no good. The mystery ship simply *would not* respond, do what we would!

“Give way, men,” I ordered. “Pull a dozen strokes, and then lay in your oars and listen. We must lie close aboard her; and if she will not answer our hails we will hang about where we are until we hear or see something of her. Then we will pull alongside and insist on being taken aboard. Whatever else she may be, she is a sailing ship and cannot move until a breeze comes, so we are pretty sure of her, sooner or later. We must keep a sharp look-out all round, then if another flash of lightning comes some of us will be certain to see her. That will do, men. Way enough. Lay in your oars. We will remain where we are until daylight, at all events.”

The men laid in their oars—and sat upon them to prevent them from rattling with the slight rocking of the boat. Then we all sat rigid, silent, scarcely daring to draw our breath, so intently were we listening for some errant sound which should furnish us with a clue to the whereabouts of the ship we were seeking, while we stared hard in different directions into the blackness around, waiting and watching for a glint of light, or a flash of lightning which should reveal what we all so eagerly desired to see. But the minutes of watching lengthened into hours, with no faintest sound, no gleam of light, no further flash of lightning to help us; and when at length the pallor of a new dawn lightened along the eastern horizon and I was once more able to see my surroundings—for we had extinguished our light, with the two-fold object of economising oil and seeing better in the darkness—I found the rest of the men sitting with arms folded, fast asleep; while as for the strange ship, there was not a trace of her to be seen in any direction!

Was I greatly surprised? Honestly speaking I do not think I was. Perplexed—yes, profoundly so, for I firmly believed that I had caught a fleeting—a very fleeting—glimpse of a ship of some sort during that small fraction of a second when that last flash of lightning had illuminated our surroundings, and I felt even more convinced that I had really heard the sounds I have mentioned. Yet, on the other hand, it may all have been a mere trick of imagination suddenly aroused by Wilkinson’s cry of “Sail ho!”

But, it may be asked, why should Wilkinson have raised that cry if no ship was there? I think the circumstances might easily account for that. There we were, a party of castaways in an open boat with our thoughts naturally dwelling continually upon the idea of rescue. If, as I suspected, Wilkinson had fallen asleep as he sat there in the bottom of the boat, what more natural than that he should dream he saw a ship? And again, if he dreamed such a dream, what more natural than that he should shout “Sail ho!” and so awake himself, leaving him firmly

convinced that his dream had been real? As for the rest of us, the positive assertion of the seaman that he had sighted a ship, coupled with his circumstantial description of her appearance, would stimulate our imaginations, even to the extent of preparing us to believe, presently, when the next flash of lightning came, that we had seen her too. That was the explanation of the mystery which Doctor Shirley-Winthrop offered when we fell to discussing it, and it may have been the correct one.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Land Ho!**

As soon as the day had fairly come, we took the meal which we dignified with the name of breakfast; and then, since it was useless to remain where we were, Wilkinson and I manned the oars and got the boat moving, while the stewardess took a trick at the tiller, heading the boat south-west by compass.

The weather was still very unsettled. The calm continued as unbroken as ever, but now there was a long low swell creeping up from the southward that seemed to me to portend a blow from that quarter. The sky was overcast, dark and lowering, and distant objects showed up with startling distinctness, as was exemplified by the clearness and sharpness of definition of the fin of a shark sculling lazily along, which appeared at a distance of fully two miles from us away out on our starboard beam. The thunder and lightning had ceased hours ago, but from the aspect of the sky I anticipated a deluge of rain at any moment. We had discussed the problem of the mysterious ship, and the Doctor had propounded his own theory concerning it, after which the entire party had subsided into a gloomy silence, in accord with the weather.

Following upon a long spell during which not one of the party had uttered a word, Oldroyd, who occupied the seat next the stewardess, and who had been staring moodily and abstractedly ahead, suddenly broke the silence.

“Say, Massey,” he exclaimed, “what in the nation does that portend?” As he spoke, he pointed skyward and straight ahead.

Suspending operations for a moment, I turned on the thwart and gazed in the direction toward which he was pointing. I saw instantly what had attracted his attention.

Directly ahead, and about half-way between the zenith and the horizon, a big patch of cloud had assumed a particularly sombre hue, and was now writhing and working as though violently agitated by some internal commotion. At its darkest part it had developed a conical shape ending in a sharp point, directed downward toward the surface of the water. This sharp point, which was almost inky black, was behaving in the most extraordinary manner, extending and retracting rapidly, with a curious darting movement. At one moment, it would shrink until it was almost lost in the body of the cloud, the next it would dart forth again, its extremity agitated with a strange quivering movement. And every time that it

darted forward it seemed to project nearer to the surface of the water, which, I now observed, manifested a tendency to heap itself up into a mound, as though to meet it.

"I cannot say for certain," I replied, "for I have never before seen anything of the sort; but it answers pretty closely to a description I once read of the manner in which a waterspout is formed. See there. Watch that black tongue of vapour. Notice how it seems to be reaching down toward the ocean, nearer and still nearer every time. And see, too, how the surface of the water seems to heap itself up to meet it. Do you see that? There is now a distinct and growing mound of water piled up under it, and it is increasing in height every moment, while the tongue of vapour seems to be reaching down to touch it. Yes, that is a waterspout in the making, sure enough, and—ah! now the two have come together, and there is your fully-formed waterspout. Now, it will pay to watch that fellow and see where he is going, for we don't want him any nearer than half a mile, and waterspouts are occasionally a bit erratic in their movements in weather like this. Ah! thank goodness, he is heading to the nor'ard and won't come near us—"

"There is another, behind us!" suddenly remarked the doctor's daughter, in quite an ordinary, conversational tone, her interest in what was happening seeming to have caused her to forget for the moment her vast superiority to the rest of us. And it was surprising to note how sweet and seductive the tones of her voice could be, when she chose.

Yes, it was as Miss Shirley-Winthrop had said. While we had all been absorbedly watching the formation of a waterspout some seven or eight miles ahead, another had formed, about four miles astern, and upon glancing round we spotted two others close together, some six miles away. They all appeared to be moving in the same direction, namely northward; and since the pair last sighted were on our port beam, and were coming our way, we took to our oars again, to give them a wide berth.

"There'll be a breeze after this, Mr Massey, you'll see," hazarded Wilkinson. And he was right; for when, after about twenty minutes' heavy downpour, the rain ceased, a fiery little breeze came piping up from the southward which compelled us to close reef our one sail and carefully tend the sheet to save the boat from burying herself gunwale-under, with all hands sitting up to windward.

For the first half-hour or so we buzzed along merrily enough, reeling off a good honest six knots per hour; but by the end of that time the wind had kicked up a nasty short, vicious little sea that caught the boat on her bluff port bow and flew over her in such drenching clouds of spray that it became necessary not only to keep one hand constantly baling, but also to run the boat a point or two farther off the wind, so as to take the sea more nearly broadside-on. But as the afternoon progressed the wind steadily increased in strength and the sea gathered weight, became steeper, and broke more heavily; so that by about four o'clock it had become dangerous to sail the boat, and I was drenched with perspiration due to my efforts to keep her above water. At length—

"I am going to heave-to, Wilkinson," I said, "while there is daylight to see what we are doing. Another half-hour of this would swamp the boat. Lead the end of the painter aft and lash it firmly round all four of the oars, about their middle. Then drowse the sail and heave the oars overboard. We will use them as a floating

anchor to ride by and keep the boat head-on to the sea. Get that done at once; and I will then tell you what I further want done.”

It was the work of a few minutes; and when it was accomplished we found, to our satisfaction, that while the drag of the oars was just sufficient to keep the boat riding with her head to the sea, it permitted her to drive astern almost as rapidly as though she were entirely free; thus the sea no longer broke heavily over her and she rode practically dry, the canvas shelter rigged up for'ard serving to keep a lot of water out. Our next move was to strike the mast, secure the heel of it to the fore thwart, and rest the head of it in a crutch formed of a pair of stretchers lashed together and set up on the stern-sheets. The mast thus formed a sort of ridge pole for a roof which we began to extemporise out of the remaining portion of the boat cover, reinforced by the sail, and when at last we had got the whole strained taut and secured outside the gunwale of the boat to our satisfaction, the little boat was completely housed over with canvas, with the exception of some six feet of her stern-sheets. Thus, by crowding together a bit we were able to enjoy practically complete shelter from the weather, while—more important still—the seas that broke over the boat, later on—for it blew a whole gale that night—were kept out of her interior, such water as leaked through being baled.

By the time that our preparations were completed, the night was upon us, it was blowing heavily, a mountainous sea was running, and I give you my word it was trying to the nerves to stand up in the stern-sheets of that boat and look out over the canvas cover at the great on-coming hills of black water, towering high and threatening above us, their crests crowned with seething, phosphorescent foam, and to see that foaming crest leap at the boat and smother her for half her length in a swirling welter of sea-fire as it swept past her! But for our good canvas roof, the boat could not have lived half an hour after we hove her to; but the canvas saved us; for although the water came streaming through it every time a sea swept the boat, it was only for a few seconds at a time; and brisk baling kept the boat free and buoyant, if not exactly dry.

It was a wretched night for us, for we were all huddled together in the middle of the boat under our canvas protection, through which the water streamed down upon one or another of us every time a sea broke over the boat, and it was suffocatingly hot, while the place reeked with the odour of paraffin oil smoke—since we were compelled to keep the lamp burning in case its light should be needed in an emergency. It must have been a night of terror, too, for the passengers, and especially the women, for the wild leaps and soarings and the giddy downward plunges of the boat bore testimony to the height of the sea that we were riding, while the incessant thuds of heavy masses of water falling upon the canvas overhead and streaming through, were eloquent of the fate that only that thin sheet of canvas saved us from. As for me, I never closed my eyes for a moment all through that night, but sat there in the stern-sheets with Wilkinson and Dartnell coiled up at my feet, all three of us holding ourselves ready to act at a moment's notice, as circumstances might require.

It was while we were huddling together under the shelter of the canvas, breaking our fast as best we could, that we became conscious of a sudden gleam of sunshine striking through our sodden canvas roof; and, hastily scrambling from under cover, I looked abroad, to behold the cheering spectacle of a wide rift in the



sooty wrack away down on the eastern horizon, with a portion of the disc of the sun showing through it. As I gazed enraptured at the welcome sight the rift continued to widen, revealing a patch of primrose sky behind it merging into delicate blue above, the entire body of the sun appeared, darting his cheering beams athwart the indigo-hued, foam-crested procession of towering mountain waves, and at the same moment I became conscious of a moderating of the strength of the gale. Within the next five minutes the sky had practically cleared, great patches of deep, clean blue showing in every direction, while the tattered remnants of storm clouds were sweeping rapidly out of sight to the nor'ard. Every moment the seas were breaking less dangerously, and presently a little fleet of Portuguese men-o'-war, with their diaphanous sails spread, went driving past us. I dipped my head beneath the canvas cover and shouted joyously—

“Hurrah, good people! the gale is breaking, and before many hours are over our heads we shall be under way again, if all goes well.”

I sat watching the boat for another half-hour or so, noting all the time that the strength of the wind was steadily decreasing, and the seas breaking less dangerously, then, satisfied that the crisis was past, and the peril over, I turned the charge of the boat over to Wilkinson, who had slept through most of the night, and, stretching myself out on the bottom-boards of the stern-sheets, instantly sank into a state of blissful oblivion.

When they aroused me it was past noon, and everybody was clamouring for the mid-day meal, the task of serving out which, as well as all other meals, I had undertaken, from the first. The moment that a hand was laid upon my shoulder, sleep fled, but even as I opened my eyes I could tell, by the feel of the boat, that her motions were much less violent than they had been when I fell asleep. I scrambled to my feet and flung a hasty glance round the horizon. The sky was clear and clean, save for a big patch of light, dappled cloud in the north-eastern quarter; the sun was darting his beams fiercely down upon us; the sea, though still heavy, was no longer breaking dangerously, and the colour of the water had changed from indigo to a rich sapphire tint. The fine weather was returning.

While serving out the food and water—the allowance of the latter I had increased to a quart per day since the rain had enabled us to re-fill our breakers—and during the progress of the meal, I narrowly watched the behaviour of the boat and the run of the sea, and finally came to the conclusion that if the weather continued to improve at the same rate we might venture to get under way again before sunset. This sanguine view was confirmed, and about four o'clock in the afternoon I gave the order to haul aboard and unlash the oars, and to step the mast and set the sail. The wind had by that time decreased to such an extent that the boat would safely carry whole canvas, while the sea no longer broke, but there was still so heavy a swell running that every time the boat sank into a hollow her sail collapsed to the mast, completely becalmed under the lea of the great liquid hill to windward, to fill again with a sudden flap and a jerk of the sheet as we were lifted heavenward upon its advancing slope. To sail the boat under such conditions was rather nervous work at the outset, for there was scarcely time for her to gather way at each upheaval before she was becalmed in the next trough, losing way to such an extent that she was liable to fall off and get broadside-on to the sea to a dangerous extent; but after half an hour of such work I caught the

trick of humouring her through the calm spells, and then we managed better, although not doing more than a couple of knots per hour. Even the swell, however, grew steadily less dangerous with the passage of the hours; and by midnight the conditions had so improved that I felt I might safely turn the boat over to the care of the two seamen for the remainder of the night and secure for myself a little more much-needed sleep.

It seemed to me that I had barely lost consciousness when I was aroused by the touch of a hand, and the voice of Dartnell, the ordinary seaman, in my ear, murmuring—

“Mr Massey, Mr Massey! rouse and bitt, sir. *There’s land in sight!*”

“Land?” I repeated. “The dickens there is! Where away?” And, rising hastily but quietly from my recumbent position, so that I might not disturb any of the other sleepers, I seated myself on the thwart beside the speaker—to find that day had broken, that it was a gloriously fine, clear morning, with a nice brisk little breeze blowing, rippling the surface of the ocean into a multitude of sparkling wavelets, and that the boat was bowling merrily along, almost gunwale-to, over a sapphire sea heaving gently in long, low mounds of swell that came sweeping solemnly up from the southward.

“Where away is your land, Dartnell?” I repeated, peering out under the foot of the sail in the direction toward which the man was pointing.

“Out there, sir, broad on our lee bow,” answered Dartnell, in low, eager tones. “Wait till she lifts on the back of the swell, and you’ll see it—there ye are, sir. D’ye see it? That’s land, plain enough, or I never see’d none in my life.”

“Yes, you are right, Dartnell,” I replied, unconsciously raising my voice in my excitement as, the boat lifting, I caught a glimpse of a pale blue hummock, about three points on our lee bow, standing out sharply defined and clear-cut against the warm pallor of the north-western horizon. “That is land, sure enough. But it is a long way off—”

“Land?” exclaimed Oldroyd, starting up, and staring hard at me. “Did I hear you say something about land, Massey?”

“Yes,” I replied. “It is true. There is land in sight on the lee bow; but still a long way off. Not far short of thirty miles, I should say.”

“Pooh! what does that matter, so long as it is in sight?” he exclaimed, eagerly, starting to his feet. “Where is it? Show it me. The sight of a chunk of dry land is the thing I most want to see in the world, just now.”

I pointed it out, and then to the others, all of whom had by this time been awakened by our excited voices; and then all hands began to bombard me with questions, some wanting to know how long it would be before we could reach it, while others wanted me to give it a name.

But I could give no satisfactory reply to either question. As regards the first, I had to explain to them that it would depend upon whether or not the breeze held steady. If it did, we might hope to step ashore in another six hours—if, upon a nearer view of the island, it should seem safe to land there. With regard to the other question—that of giving the island a name—I was figuratively as well as literally “at sea”, for I had no chart to consult, while, to be perfectly candid, with the hazy knowledge of our whereabouts which I possessed, I had scarcely hoped to make a landfall so soon. Then the Doctor wanted to know what I meant by the

proviso—"if it should seem safe to land there," and I had to explain that certain of the Pacific islands were inhabited by savages who welcomed strangers to their shores chiefly as an addition to their larder. Oldroyd and Mason, however, quickly reminded me that they had brought their rifles and a goodly supply of ammunition and we soon agreed that, unless a hostile demonstration in overwhelming force should be made upon our approach, we would at least land and reconnoitre. Somebody remarked that there might be no savages; that the island might be uninhabited. But I felt it necessary to discourage any such hope, the island in sight was too big to be entirely without inhabitants.

Fortunately, the breeze held and the boat went buzzing along at a merry pace, yet the time seemed long before we felt that we had materially reduced our distance from the island. But as the minutes sped some of us at least were able to note those subtle changes in the appearance of the island which marked our steady approach. Originally a faint blue silhouette just showing clear of the horizon when the boat lifted upon the back of a swell, it might easily have been mistaken by a landsman for part of a cloud, of which we lost sight every time the boat sank into the trough. But as time passed on the outline of the silhouette grew more sharply defined, its colour deepened from pale, delicate blue to dove-grey, it towered higher above the horizon, and stretched for a greater length along it. Next came a subtle change of colour, the uniform hue of dove-grey deepening here and lightening there until the flat surface became broken up into distinct projections and recessions which, in turn, became further broken up into suggestions of hill and ravine as the all-pervading tint of grey began to melt into varying shades of green. The next distinct change of which we were conscious was when the flat, silhouette appearance broke up into a perspective of varying distances and the highest point of the island, shaggy with vegetation, towered high enough into the sky to remain visible even when the boat settled into the trough.

From the moment when the island was first sighted, I had been keeping my luff, my intention being to examine the weather side of the island first, thus I had continued to keep it about three points on our lee bow during the whole time of our approach. It was while we were getting our mid-day meal—the last, as we hoped, we should be called upon to take in the boat—that we first became aware of a sort of whiteness, like puffs of steam, showing at the southern extremity of the island, which was the extremity nearest us. These appearances occurred pretty regularly at intervals of about ten seconds, and by the time that the meal was over I had identified them as bursts of spray leaping high into the air with the impact of the swell upon the shore. As we stood on, the leap of the breakers and the bursts of spray became clearer, while at the same time they manifested a tendency to reach out athwart our hawse, suggesting the idea of a reef projecting from the southern extremity of the island. And such in truth it proved to be, though it was not the sort of reef I had at first supposed; that is to say, it was not an outcrop of rock jutting into the sea for a few hundred yards, but was, as we ultimately recognised, a barrier reef of coral bowing out from the southern extremity and enclosing a spacious lagoon on its south-western side.

Still holding my luff as closely as I dared, consistently with the free movement of the boat through the water, we came abreast of the southern point of the island somewhere about two o'clock in the afternoon, a mile and a half or so to windward

of it, and for another hour and a half we coasted along the south-western side of the island, with a wall of white surf and diamond spray leaping into the air at intervals of ten seconds on our lee. Then, quite suddenly, we sighted what we were looking for, namely, the break in the reef which invariably occurs, giving access to the lagoon and the shore. At the distance which we were from it, it was only barely distinguishable as the slightest perceptible break in the line of surf and spray, but I knew what it was in a moment, for I had been through just such a passage once before.

“There is the mouth of our harbour,” I cried, pointing to it. “A few minutes more, and we shall be through it and in smooth water—and safety, I hope.”

“Where?” demanded the Doctor. “You surely do not mean that little narrow gap where the surf is not breaking? Why, my good fellow, this boat will never pass through there. A swimmer, going through, could touch both sides at the same moment with his outstretched hands.”

“Yes,” I said, “it looks like it, I know. But you will find that there is width enough for a ship of the ANDROMEDA’s size to pass through.”

He was by no means reassured, however, and he presently showed how much confidence he placed in my statement, by calmly and openly kicking off his shoes.

We stood on as we were going, for about five minutes, until we were right up with and opposite the opening, then I put up the boat’s helm and bow square away, bringing the wind over the boat’s starboard quarter and necessitating a jib, which we safely accomplished. Now, running practically dead before the wind, the boat slid along in lively fashion—although she did not seem to be going as fast as when we were close-hauled—and the gap in the reef for which we were heading began to widen rapidly, while the thunder of the surf momentarily grew more deafening, until soon it was impossible to hear each other’s voices.

It was nervous work, running down before the wind, toward that leaping, spouting, raving turmoil of surf, in a deeply laden boat, with the swell catching her on the starboard quarter and doing its best to twist her off her course, and I saw more than one hand gripping the gunwale until the knuckles showed white through the skin; but, as I had assured them all, there was plenty of width in the gap, when we came to it, and in some twenty breathless seconds we slid through, to find ourselves in the smooth water of a lagoon about nine miles long, by about three and a half wide at its broadest part, which was just abreast the opening.

The change wrought by those twenty seconds consumed in the passage through the reef was, at least to those for whom the experience was new, amazing. Less than a minute before, we had been lifting and falling upon a swell some seven or eight feet in height from ridge to trough, while now we were sliding smoothly along over an expanse of water the surface of which was merely wrinkled into tiny wavelets by the soft breathing of the warm breeze. And now, with a feeling of safety to which we had all been strangers ever since that night when the ANDROMEDA had put an end to herself by cutting in halves a waterlogged derelict, we could gaze our fill and feast our eyes upon the glorious sanctuary to which a kind Providence had guided us.

For glorious it was, at least to the eye, whatever it might prove to be upon a closer acquaintance. First, there was the lagoon, an expanse of smooth water, protected by a breakwater of Nature’s own building, spacious enough, and

apparently deep enough, to form a safe anchorage for an entire navy. And beyond it rose the island, its southern extremity consisting of a rocky promontory some fifty feet high springing vertically out of the sea, from which, in a series of gentle undulations, the outline of the land swept upward to a bald white, flat-topped peak which was the summit of the island. To the left of the peak the land sloped downward again until it ended in a range of low cliffs, hidden now that we had entered the lagoon, but which I had noted during our run in toward the break in the reef. A long expanse of dazzling white sandy beach, fringed with thousands of cocoanut palms, formed the inner margin of the lagoon, and from the inner edge of the beach the whole island seemed to be densely covered with vegetation, of what kind precisely we could scarcely tell as yet, though some of it undoubtedly consisted of tall trees. But it was the variegated hues of the vegetation that most charmed the eye, for not only was there every conceivable shade of green, from that scarcely distinguishable from yellow to an olive tint that was almost black, while here and there were patches of vivid scarlet, many gradations of blue, crimson, mauve, pink and white. Truly it had all the appearance of an earthly paradise, and I most earnestly hoped that it might prove to be so indeed, for I feared that, unless the unexpected happened in the shape of a ship heaving in sight and taking us off, we were doomed to a rather prolonged sojourn upon that island. It was true of course that a ship might heave in sight at any moment, and one of our earliest tasks would have to be the provision of means to attract her attention, but I had my doubts as to the probability, for, according to the rough reckoning which I had been able to keep by means of my sextant and watch, the island was quite off the usual track of ships, while the absence of a trader's store on the beach was strong evidence of the truth of my suspicion that the existence of the island was practically unknown.

The next matter for anxiety was the possible presence of savages and the character of the reception they would accord us. That there would be natives of some sort, gentle or otherwise, I felt convinced; the island was much too large, and apparently much too desirable in every way, to be altogether without human inhabitants, and I directed the two seamen, who were sitting for'ard, to keep a sharp look-out, while doing the same myself, so far as the intervening lugsail would permit. Momentarily I expected to see a swarm of swarthy men, armed with spears and war clubs appear upon the beach, prepared to dispute our right to land; but as the moments sped the beach remained untenanted, nor could I detect any sign of canoes, or of huts or smoke. True, inhabitants might be lying in wait to ambush us, but the absence of canoes seemed to negative such a supposition; the jollyboat was too insignificant an object to have attracted attention while we were in the offing, and so have given the natives time to hide their canoes; while there were none on the beach when we entered the lagoon.

## **Chapter 5**

### **The Island.**

"There is something that I don't quite understand about this island," I remarked to the company in general as we continued to run in toward the beach. "It is, as you can all see, an island of considerable size, and of great fertility, judging from the dense growth of vegetation on it. It is unlikely that such an island should be uninhabited, yet I can detect no signs of any; and the absence of such signs makes me feel a trifle uneasy—"

"Why so?" demanded the Doctor. "If the island should prove to be uninhabited, the absence of such signs is the most natural thing imaginable, isn't it?"

"Assuredly," I assented. "But, the size and general appearance are all against the idea. And if there are inhabitants, why are they keeping out of sight, and why have they taken pains to conceal their presence? To me the matter has a rather sinister appearance—"

"To *me* it would appear that Mr Massey is afraid to land, now that he has brought us here," remarked Miss Shirley-Winthrop to the circumambient air.

"You have hit it exactly," I returned. "I certainly am a bit afraid of what would happen to you and Miss Stroud if, upon landing, our party were to be attacked and overpowered by a strong body of savages and all of us men slain. I am therefore going to take every reasonable precaution before I permit anybody to set foot ashore. I will examine every yard of that beach for sign of savages, if it occupies me until sundown to do it!"

The young lady turned paler when I hinted at the fate which might be hers, should she fall alive into the hands of savages, but she wrinkled her pretty nose into an expression of disdain and forbore to answer me.

"Lay aft here, Wilkinson, and take the tiller," I ordered. Then, as the man obeyed and seated himself on the thwart which I had vacated, grasping the tiller with his left hand and holding the sheet in his right, I continued—"Luff, and head the boat for the beach at the southern extremity of the bay. I will begin my examination there."

Leaving the seaman to handle the boat, I stepped over the thwart to where my bag was stored, and extracted from it my telescope, which I had been thoughtful enough to bring with me. Roughly focussing it, I brought it to bear upon the beach, and was gratified to find that, even at our then distance—about a mile and a half—I was able to discern such small objects as cocoanuts which had fallen ripe from the trees or been shaken down by the wind. "Excellent!" thought I. "By the time that we have arrived within a quarter of a mile of that sand there will not be so much as a human footprint upon it that this good telescope will not reveal."

During the boat's run to the southern extremity of the lagoon I carefully searched the beach, the shore adjoining it, especially the patches of grass land that occurred here and there between the growth of trees and scrub, and every gully and ravine that opened up during our progress, but never a sign of human presence could I discover; no, not even after, upon running right to the southern end of the lagoon, we hove about and stood to the northward and westward, skirting the beach at a distance of a scant quarter of a mile. At that distance the beach held no secrets from my telescope, there was not so much as a shred of dry weed stirred by the wind that escaped my ken; had there been human or other footprints, I must have detected them—indeed I did detect many footprints of the

gulls and other web-footed birds that wheeled and screamed about us and overhead—but none of human origin did I see; nor did my searching gaze find any track of canoes hauled up on or launched from the beach. The only discovery made during my inspection of that ten-mile length of beach was that it overlay a fringing reef of coral about half a mile wide over which the average depth of water was only about seven feet. This reef, by the way, imparted to the water which covered it a light blue tint, as though the water were diluted with milk, which exactly marked the boundary and extent of the reef.

I have forgotten one other important discovery we made, and that was that, about two miles from the north-western end of the lagoon we saw a little brook winding its way down the hillside to the beach; and after I had completed my inspection, we returned to this spot, landed, and, finding everything favourable, decided to camp there, at least for the night.

The day was by this time so far advanced that the sun was within a span of the western horizon when at length the boat gently grounded on the beach and all but the Doctor sprang out to help the women-folk ashore. As usual, Miss Anthea showed her contempt for the rest of us by choosing Dartnell, the ordinary seaman, to carry her the yard or two required to save her feet from getting wet, but the stewardess chose the first who came to hand, which happened to be myself. There was not much to be done; a few minutes sufficed for the transfer of our belongings from the boat to the spot selected for our camp, after which we hauled the boat as high up on the beach as we could induce her to go, secured her by her painter to an oar thrust deep into the sand; and then, while Wilkinson, Dartnell and I went to work to rig up a tent for the two girls, Oldroyd and Mason went off collecting fallen cocoanuts, the stewardess meanwhile collecting dry brushwood and making a fire.

By the time that the tent was rigged up to my satisfaction, tea was ready, and we all sat down round the fire—which, the night having fallen, was our only source of light—and thoroughly enjoyed the first hot meal since the abandonment of the ANDROMEDA. We had tea—made in an empty biscuit tin—hot soup, tinned beef, biscuits, of course, and finished up with cocoanuts, of which an abundant supply had been found close at hand. At the conclusion of the meal, the two girls retired to their tent for the night, while those of us who were smokers indulged in a few carefully husbanded whiffs during our discussion of plans for the immediate future. The discussion, however, was not very animated, for the welcome change from our cramped quarters in the boat to the spaciousness and luxurious softness of the greensward upon which we had pitched our camp, and the fact that for nine nights our rest had been much broken united to woo us to rest. Therefore, after unanimously deciding that the first thing to be done was to explore the island and settle the vexed question of inhabitants or no inhabitants, and arranging the order in which the night watches were to be kept, we men curled up in the long grass and surrendered ourselves to the oblivion of sleep.

It had been decided by the others that since I had been the chief sufferer from broken rest, mine should be the final watch, from four o'clock to six in the morning—the Doctor being absolved from duty of that kind upon the ground of ill-health, the boat voyage having told upon him pretty severely—and accordingly I slept soundly until I was called by Dartnell, who stood the watch preceding mine.

As, rubbing the sleep out of my eyes, I rose to my feet, in obedience to the seaman's call, I shivered, for the air was at that moment comparatively cool, while the fire had been permitted to burn itself out hours before. Taking the loaded rifle with which the watchers had been armed, and which had been transferred from one to the other with the change of watches, and receiving Dartnell's report that nothing of a disquieting character had occurred during his watch, I left the little group of sleepers and proceeded to the spot which had been chosen overnight as the most suitable post for a sentinel, taking my stand close to the trunk and in the deep shadow of a wide-spreading tree. It was very dark there, but in the course of a few minutes my eyes became accustomed to the obscurity and I was then able to see that the open spaces were flooded with the soft radiance of the star-studded sky, affording light enough for a keen-sighted person to detect at a considerable distance the presence of any moving thing of sufficient stature to show above the surface of the long grass. The only movement visible, however, was that of the wind ripples sweeping in orderly procession over the open grassy glades and the swaying of the foliage in the gentle breeze, while the only sounds were the soft whispering rustle of that same foliage, the tinkling murmur of the wavelets on the margin of the beach, and the low, continuous thunder, subdued by distance, of the breakers upon the barrier reef. Sight and sounds alike seemed but to emphasise the stillness and apparent security of the hour, and to tend toward a soothing and somnolent state of mind and body which I might have found irresistible but for the conviction which obsessed me that this lovely island must almost of necessity harbour other inhabitants than ourselves—inhabitants, maybe, as crafty and ferociously savage as those known to occupy certain of the islands at no very great distance from us. The minutes passed: no sight or sound occurred to stir one to greater alertness; and at length a faint pallor of the sky spreading rapidly upward above the undulating outline of the tree-clad ridges to the eastward, apprised me that another day, with its comparative immunity from danger, was dawning. My watch was over and, shouldering the rifle, I emerged from the shadow of the tree where I had spent the last two hours, and made my way through the long, dew-sodden grass to the spot where our camp was pitched.

As I did so I saw the two seamen, Wilkinson and Dartnell, rise and stretch their arms above their heads, yawn portentously, and scramble to their feet, staring about them as though scarcely realising as yet their whereabouts, their example being almost immediately followed by the Americans, Oldroyd and Mason. Then, as I joined the party, exchanging "Good mornings" with them and handing over the rifle to its owner, Miss Stroud, the stewardess, emerged from the tent, looking fresh and bright as the morning itself, and smilingly greeted us. In answer to our enquiries she informed us that she had enjoyed the most delicious night's rest within her experience, and that Miss Shirley-Winthrop was still fast asleep. By this time the Doctor, awakened by our voices, was also on his feet, and my announcement that I intended to indulge in a swim in the lagoon was greeted with acclamation and the statement that all the males of the party would join me. Dartnell was the only man who at all hung fire; he was a little dubious, suggesting the possible presence of sharks in the lagoon; but upon my reminding him of the narrowness of the passage through the reef, the swirling turmoil of waters that perpetually raged there, and the known aversion of sharks to pass such a barrier,



his hesitation vanished and he briefly announced that he would accompany us "and chance it."

We thoroughly enjoyed our swim, diving and sporting in the tepid waters for a good half-hour with all the abandon of schoolboys, finally scrubbing our bodies with the fine white sand, in lieu of soap, and rinsing them off with another plunge. Then I declared my intention to try for a few fish for breakfast, the jollyboat being fitted with a locker in which I had previously found four fishing lines with hooks and sinkers complete, the hooks, moreover, furnished with shreds of dry, shrivelled bait. Accordingly we launched the boat, and, Wilkinson and Dartnell accompanying me, went out to the edge of the fringing reef, which I thought a rather promising spot for sport, while the Doctor and his two fellow-countrymen plunged into the woods, intent upon finding fruit. Both expeditions were successful, half an hour's fishing resulting in the acquisition of four large rock cod and seventeen smaller fish, several of which bore a striking resemblance to red mullet, while a brace of them were gorgeously coloured with all the tints of the rainbow. As for the Doctor and his party, they had discovered bread fruit, loquats, custard apples, and several other varieties of fruit, some of which while exceedingly tempting in appearance were unknown to any of us and were consequently regarded with suspicion and therefore let alone. But, apart from these last, the "red mullet"—as we agreed to call them—the bread fruit, roasted in the ashes of the fire, and the custard apples, with tea, furnished forth such a luxurious feast that all fears of possible starvation vanished, while the humble cocoanut at once became a drug on the market, useful enough perhaps as a thirst-quencher but otherwise of little value.

"You look different men already," announced Miss Stroud, as we drew toward the conclusion of our meal. "Probably your bath this morning has had a good deal to do with the improvement in your appearance. I envied you all as I watched you sporting in the distance. I love swimming, but the beach is so open that there is no sense of privacy. However, if you men are all going off exploring to-day, as your conversation seems to suggest, perhaps Miss Shirley-Winthrop and I may muster up courage enough to indulge in a swim when you are all gone."

"But we are not all going," I returned. "Do you suppose we should for a moment dream of going away and leaving you two girls—to say nothing of the camp—entirely unprotected? Certainly not!"

"Oh, what a disappointment!" exclaimed Miss Anthea. "The stewardess—Miss Stroud, I mean—and I have been talking about it, and I had set my heart upon a swim."

"Then you shall certainly have it, if the matter can be compassed satisfactorily to yourselves," I said. "While we were fishing I noticed what I thought might prove to be a small cove at the northern end of the lagoon, suitable perhaps as a good hiding place for our boat—which I have no fancy for leaving on the open beach exposed to the possible gaze of enemies. It may also prove to be an excellent bathing-place for you ladies, affording you complete privacy. It is only about a mile from here. I will go at once, look at the place, and report upon it when I return."

"May I go with you?" asked Miss Stroud. "I have nothing else to do, and I am longing for a good walk."

“Assuredly,” I said. And, borrowing one of the rifles, we set off without more ado. I thought Miss Anthea regarded us rather wistfully as we started, but she said nothing; and she had been so consistently insolent to me from the first that I did not feel like inviting her to accompany us, and so perchance affording her an opening for further rudeness.

I enjoyed that walk amazingly, and was almost sorry when, in about twenty minutes, we reached the spot for which I was aiming. It was situated at the extreme northern end of the lagoon and, as I had more than suspected, was a small, rocky cove, nearly circular in shape, about one hundred fathoms across, with deep, clear, transparent water everywhere right up to the rocks. There was a level, rocky shelf, about six inches above the water’s surface, and about ten yards long, which would afford a splendid diving platform; and the whole place was so artfully concealed by Nature that it would afford an admirable harbour for the boat, while as a perfectly private and secluded bathing-place it was ideal.

“Here is your salt-water bath, ready-made for you by beneficent Nature; and I doubt very much whether human ingenuity could improve it,” I said. “What do you think of it?”

“It is simply perfect,” was the answer. “I am sure Miss Shirley-Winthrop will be delighted with it. But it is rather a long way from the camp, isn’t it? Do you think it will be safe for us to come so far, unprotected?”

“It will be, of course, provided there are no savages on the island,” I replied. “But until that question is settled, I am afraid you will have to put up with a protector. It will be a nice little easy job for the Doctor. But don’t stay in too long and get chilled. This cove is so situated that the sun only looks down into it for a short time each day and the water is cool.”

My companion promised circumspection, and, having completed our survey, we left the cove and were soon back in camp, where we found everything much as we had left it, except that Miss Anthea had developed a fit of ill-temper again, and at first flatly refused to accompany Miss Stroud on her bathing expedition. She relented, however, though somewhat sulkily, by the time that the boat was ready, and made one of the party; but it seemed that, as usual I was, in some unaccountable way, the cause of her ill-humour, for she simply ignored me when I addressed a chance remark to her, while she almost snapped Miss Stroud’s head off when the latter tried to engage her in conversation.

Arrived at the cove, we moored the boat in a secure spot; after which the two seamen and I set out upon our walk back, leaving the two girls to enjoy their swim, while the Doctor, armed with one of the rifles, mounted guard on the beach outside the cove.

It had been arranged that Oldroyd, Mason and I should devote the day to a preliminary exploration of the island, to be followed at an early date by one more thorough and detailed; our object being to gain in the first instance merely a general idea of the extent and principal features of our new home upon which to found a plan for a comprehensive survey, and it was agreed that, in order to carry out this first arrangement, the proper course to pursue would be to make our way to the summit of the peak, from which we expected to obtain a clear view of the whole of the island. In pursuance of this plan, the two Americans had employed the time of my absence in carefully overhauling their combined armoury, which

consisted of six excellent rifles and two double-barrelled shot guns, cleaning them, oiling their mechanism, and generally preparing them for service, and they were just putting the finishing touches to this labour of love when I reached the camp; there remained, therefore, nothing to be done but for me to get my telescope, don the bandolier of cartridges and shoulder the rifle which they placed at my service, and for us to set out.

It was about nine o'clock in the morning when we made a start, and as we estimated the summit of the peak to be about three miles distant we calculated that we ought to reach our destination in about two hours, allowing for the fact that we had a stiff climb before us. Our outfit for the occasion consisted of my telescope, a pocket compass belonging to Mason, a shot gun, carried by the latter, the two rifles with which Oldroyd and I were armed, and a few biscuits in our pockets. We made no provision for the quenching of our thirst, trusting to luck that we should find water somewhere on our way.

At the spot where our camp was pitched, the trees stood pretty widely apart, with little or no undergrowth, the chief impediment to rapid progress therefore, at least at the outset of our journey, consisted of the long, tangled grass, through which we found some little difficulty in forcing our way. We began our journey by closely following the right bank of the brook by the side of which we had pitched our camp, and for the first half-mile or so we made fairly satisfactory progress without encountering serious difficulties, our walk being rendered interesting by the variety and beauty, both in form and colouring, of the foliage of the trees, shrubs and plants which we encountered.

The brilliant and beautiful hues of the foliage and flowers that everywhere met our gaze were not the only objects to charm the eye. Here and there, at pretty frequent intervals, we came upon fruit-bearing trees and bushes in great variety, a few of which were familiar to one or another of us, but many of which none of us were able to recognise. There were, among others, the bread fruit tree in rich abundance, the loquat, the custard apple, a small orange almost identical with the mandarin, a small but very delicious purple grape, a fruit almost identical with the nectarine but much finer, the alligator pear, and the mango. We sampled some of the varieties as we went along, and found them admirable as thirst-quenchers, particularly the grapes and oranges, and we filled our pockets with the latter as a stand-by in case we should fail to find water—a precaution for which we thanked our stars before the day was over.

The vegetable world, however, by no means absorbed our exclusive attention, nor did it claim our exclusive admiration; the woods were alive with birds, many varieties of which were of the most brilliant plumage imaginable. Lizards were the only four-footed creatures we encountered, and there were no snakes, so far as we could see.

As I have already remarked, for the first half-mile of our journey the only obstacle we encountered was that caused by the long, tangled grass, through which at times it was a little difficult to force our way. But at the end of that half-mile we found the trees suddenly becoming set much closer together, while between them the grass gave way to a thick undergrowth of parasitic scrub which speedily became so dense that it was impossible for us to force our way through, unless we chose to hack a passage with our knives. We tried this, but the lianas

proved to be so strong and tough that we had to abandon the attempt, for the two-fold reason that we feared we should break our blades and because we recognised that, even if we escaped that misfortune, it would cost us days, instead of hours, of labour to reach the peak. We therefore retraced our steps a few yards, until we reached the brook, up the rocky bed of which we made our way with comparative ease. But it was fearfully hot work; for we were hemmed in on either hand by steep banks, the sides of which we could reach with our outstretched hands, while overhead the foliage arched us in, screening us from the sun's rays, it is true, but also shutting out the breeze, so that we seemed to be toiling and scrambling up an ever-winding course in the atmosphere of an oven, heavily charged with the all-pervading odour of rank, and sometimes decaying, vegetation.

After more than two hours' strenuous labour, we emerged, drenched with perspiration, from the intricacies of the wood to find ourselves in a vast open space, devoid of every vestige of vegetation, in the midst of which rose the flat-topped cone forming the summit of the peak. The ground was black rock, the surface shaped into curious folds and creases, giving one the impression that it had once been a thick liquid which had congealed in the act of flowing. And such an impression pretty nearly hit the mark, for Oldroyd, who generally knew what he was talking about, pronounced the rock to be lava, and the cone before us the crater of the volcano—extinct for ages, if one might judge by appearances. The bare lava extended sloping upward, for about a quarter of a mile, and then we came to a bed of scoriae forming the sides of the cone. These scoriae consisted mostly of masses of once incandescent rock that had been vomited forth by the volcano, mingled with pumice-stone and ashes. They formed a steep slope, and we soon discovered that they stood so insecurely that any attempt to climb the slope must be accompanied by great risk; for it was evident that the displacing of a single fragment might produce a veritable avalanche of débris; indeed the whole hillside seemed to be alive, falls of greater or lesser magnitude taking place at frequent intervals. Walking round the base of the cone, however, and keeping at a respectful distance from it, to avoid injury from a sudden fall, we at length found a spot where all the loose débris seemed to have come down, leaving the rock of the cone bare. The surface of the bared rock was very steep and smooth, but there were, nevertheless, projections enough here and there to render it climbable, we thought, and after considering it awhile we determined at least to make the attempt. We proceeded to clamber over the mound of fallen débris which lay at the foot of the slope—itsself a task of considerable difficulty involving frequent risks of a sprained ankle, not to say a broken limb—and after an arduous climb which consumed more than an hour, we found ourselves triumphantly occupying the summit.

The cone proved to be, indeed, as Oldroyd had asserted, the crater of a volcano; and a ghastly looking place it was. Its interior was, roughly, oval in shape, about a mile and three-quarters long by about half a mile wide. The flat, encircling crest upon which we stood averaged perhaps thirty yards in width, though there were places where it shrank to a tenth of that. Its surface was, in places, very crumbly and treacherous, so much so that at one spot Mason, who was rather a venturesome beggar, narrowly escaped being precipitated to the bottom of the interior—down into which he was gazing—through the soil crumbling away

beneath his feet. That interior was at least two hundred feet deep, with smooth, precipitous walls, and had he gone down, nothing could have saved him.

However, we were not up there to gaze into the crater of an extinct volcano, but to get some idea of the general characteristics of our island kingdom, which we proceeded to survey.

We were at this time standing on the south rim of the crater; and the whole of the southern part of the island was open to our view. It had been a whim of mine to make of my telescope a sort of range-finder by focussing it accurately upon various objects at different known distances, and then to scratch those distances on the slide, and I now—as often aforetime—found my scale of distances useful. I discovered that the southern extremity of the island was just ten and a quarter miles from where I stood, while the eastern side was four and three-quarter miles, and the western side exactly six miles away. There was not very much to see on this southern side of the island, except that the land undulated gently upward everywhere toward the peak. The lagoon was of course the principal object in the picture, and a magnificent expanse of water it looked from that height, the whole of it being in sight. But I could find no sign or trace of inhabitants to the southward, though I scanned every bit of it in search of smoke; nor could I descry even so much as the loom of land anywhere along the southern half of the horizon.

Our inspection of the southern part being complete, we walked round the rim of the crater to take a peep at the northern part, and here we found considerably more to occupy our attention.

In the first place we immediately noticed that at the north-western extremity—distant exactly ten and a half miles—there was another lagoon, much smaller than the southern one, being about three and a half miles long by about a mile and a half wide. Unfortunately, the inequalities of the ground shut out our view of the greater part of the beach, but I saw no canoes on that portion of it which was visible, nor were any to be seen on the lagoon; yet I felt convinced that if indeed there were savages on the island, that lagoon would be the place at which to look for them. With the help of my telescope I searched the neighbourhood of the second lagoon for smoke, indicating the presence of natives, and once or twice I almost believed I could detect such signs; but the wavering of the air, due to rarefaction, was so great that I could not be at all sure; and when my companions in turn, using the telescope, examined the spot, they could not find such appearances as I described.

## **Chapter 6**

### **The Mysterious Tower.**

The existence of a second lagoon was not the only discovery which we made that day.

Looking down upon that portion of the island which lay to the northward and north-westward of the crater, our gaze was arrested by the appearance of a sheet

of water—a lake, in fact—the nearer extremity of which, according to the scale of distances scratched upon the draw tube of my telescope, was just two miles and a quarter from the spot upon which I stood. This lake was an irregular oblong in shape, its trend being in a north-westerly direction, and I made its length to be, as nearly as might be, two miles, with an extreme width of about a mile and a quarter. It appeared to have no beach, properly speaking, the only semblance of such a thing being a narrow strip of bare soil, here and there, which I estimated could not be more than a couple of yards wide, while, generally speaking, the margin, thickly clad with vegetation, sloped quite steeply down to the water's edge, from which I deduced that the lake would probably be fairly deep. Oldroyd suggested the idea that it might have been at one time a subsidiary crater to that upon the lip of which we were then standing; but I rather doubted this, as the telescope revealed no signs of lava or scoriae anywhere near it. There seemed to be no outlet or overflow of any kind for its waters, so far as we could see; on the other hand we caught glimpses, here and there, of a small stream, the general trend of which seemed to suggest that it probably discharged into the lake.

It was while Mason was scrutinising the country generally through my telescope that the second and most important discovery of the day was made.

Dropping the instrument from his eye suddenly and turning to me in some excitement, he remarked—

“Say, Massey, you see that lake? Well, I want you to look down the slope towards it and concentrate your gaze upon a point about half-way between here and the near end of the lake, and then tell me if you see anything at all remarkable.”

I looked in the direction indicated, and presently caught a glimpse of something that caused me to rub my eyes and stare in amazement.

“Yes,” I said, “I see something that looks very much like—but no, of course it cannot possibly be. Let me have the glass for a second or two, please.”

Mason handed over the instrument, and there, quite clearly, sharply, and unmistakably defined by the lenses, I caught the object to which my attention had been directed. Rising just clear of the tops of the trees by which it appeared to be hemmed in was a circular mass of masonry of perhaps some twenty feet in diameter. Only a short length of about four feet of the structure revealed itself, but, viewed through the telescope, there could be no doubt as to its character; it was, beyond all question, the timeworn and dilapidated summit of a circular tower, for not only was the regularity of its shape clearly revealed but I could even distinguish the irregular forms of some of the larger stones of which it was built. That it was a structure of some antiquity was suggested by the fact that tufts of grass and small bushes showed here and there growing from the joints of the masonry.

“Well, I’ll be shot if this isn’t the limit!” I exclaimed. “An old but well-built masonry tower, in the middle of an uncharted Pacific island! What next, I wonder!”

“Here, go slow! What is that you say?” cut in Oldroyd, who had been regarding Mason and myself with amazement. “Masonry tower—your grandmother! Let me have a look.”

“Ay,” said I, as I handed him the telescope. “Look for yourself, and welcome. And if, after you have looked, you don’t agree with me, I’ll give you leave to kick me into this crater.”

Oldroyd took the instrument and stared long and steadily through it. He handed back the glass, saying quietly—

“I guess you’ve won, Massey. The stakes are yours. The thing is undoubtedly a masonry structure of some sort, and certainly looks like the top of a tower. But how in the nation did it get there, and who built it? That’s what gets me! Not savages, I dare swear; the workmanship appears to be too good for that. And, if not savages, who, then? Let’s go down and have a near look at it.”

“Ay; let’s,” returned Mason. And forthwith the pair turned to walk round the lip of the crater toward the spot where we had made our ascent.

“Stop a bit, you two,” I remonstrated; “not quite so fast, if you please. The ascent of this cone is rather too stiff a job to be lightly undertaken a second time; and while I am here, with the whole island spread out before me, I intend to make a map of our domain. The opportunity is too good to be wasted. I shall not be long. There is not very much to sketch, and half an hour will about see me through.”

In general shape the island roughly represented a scalene triangle with somewhat bulging, slightly indented sides. The trend of a line drawn from its southern to its north-western extremity—these points forming two of its three angles—was North-West by North, the distance along that line between the two points being, as I subsequently ascertained, exactly twenty and a half miles. The two lagoons and the lake, with the peaks, formed the only prominent features of the island, the southern lagoon—our lagoon, as we soon came to call it, being the most prominent feature of all, apart from the peak. The peak formed, approximately, the centre of the island; the lake lay to the north-west of it—and the mysterious tower stood about midway between the peak and the lake.

Slightly within the half-hour which I had allowed myself for the task, my map was finished, saving for such additions as might result from future discoveries; and then arose the question of how best to make our way to the tower. It was already after two o’clock in the afternoon, which left us a scant four hours in which to reach our destination and return to camp before dark; and after some debate we arrived at the conclusion—a wise one, I think—that the time was too short, and that the expedition had better be deferred until the morrow.

This settled, we made a start upon our return to camp, after I had satisfied myself that there was no land visible in any direction from the peak.

We reached the camp about half an hour before sunset, to learn that its occupants were beginning to feel a trifle uneasy at our prolonged absence; indeed, at the moment of our arrival the menfolk had just started a discussion as to the desirability of instituting a search party for us. To speak more correctly, it was the Doctor who broached the subject to the two seamen; but the latter were all for leaving us to find our own way back, which they were sure we should do unaided.

Everybody was anxious to hear a full and detailed account of our day’s wanderings, and our adventures, if any; but, hot and unusually fatigued, we felt that a swim in the sea before dinner was a necessity, we therefore hurried down to the beach, and in a few minutes were disporting ourselves in the calm waters of the lagoon. And it was as we reached the beach, prior to our plunge into the sea,

that we experienced a pleasant little surprise; for there, partially hauled up on the sand, we saw a serviceable, well-made raft of bamboo, which the two seamen of the party, Wilkinson and Dartnell, had amused themselves by constructing during the day. The raft was some sixteen feet long by about eight feet wide, and consisted of a sort of mat of bamboo, firmly and ingeniously lashed together with long, tough, pliant "monkey-rope" or lianas, of which there was an abundance in the woods, close at hand. Furthermore, the raft was fitted with a pair of paddles, also ingeniously constructed of bamboo; and although the contraption sagged so much in the middle when she was manned by a crew of two persons that the twain had to sit in some four inches of water, she would serve admirably for fishing from, which was what her designers intended her for; thus obviating the necessity for continually withdrawing our boat from her place of concealment.

Our dinner, that night, was a feast of Lucullus compared with what our fare had been during the boat voyage; for we had oysters, discovered and gathered by the two girls in the boat creek while bathing, crayfish from the same source, "red mullet," caught by the seamen while making an experimental trip on their raft, roasted bread fruit, bananas fried in the lid of a biscuit tin, and a sumptuous dessert of fruit, the whole washed down with tea!

The principal topic of conversation, both during the dinner and afterwards was, naturally, our day's exploration and the discoveries we had made. And, also naturally, the discovery which excited the greatest amount of interest was that of the mysterious round tower. The announcement was received with more than a shade of incredulity but when we had succeeded in convincing our audience that the structure undoubtedly existed, their interest and enthusiasm—particularly that of the Doctor—knew no bounds. He insisted that a pilgrimage to the tower must, without fail, be made on the morrow.

"I should not be surprised," he said, "if this tower were to afford proof that, ages ago, long before Christopher Columbus was born or thought of, certain groups of these Pacific islands were occupied by a race of people possessed of an intellect, a refinement, and a civilisation falling not far short of that which we Americans enjoy to-day."

This expression of opinion was sufficient to stimulate our curiosity and enthusiasm, and it was there and then resolved that on the following morning, immediately after breakfast, the entire party should set out for the tower, with the object of subjecting it to an exhaustive examination, even if such examination should entail the sojourn of the expedition at the building for two or three days, or even a week.

We had no anxieties concerning provisions or water, for we had already assured ourselves that the forest abounded with nutritious fruits, to say nothing of vast flocks of pigeons, while as for water, we had seen a brook flowing down the hillside and pursuing a course which promised to carry it not very far from the spot occupied by the tower, we therefore decided to travel light, carrying with us nothing but a little tea, a can or two of condensed milk, our rather primitive cooking utensils, our small stock of crockery, and of course our weapons and ammunition.

Then arose the question of the route to be taken. My sketch map was produced and studied, but naturally it helped us little or nothing. All it showed was that the



route which we had that day followed, namely, up the bed of the brook was, although rough and toilsome generally speaking, in the right direction, while experience had taught us that to cut a path through the forest must be the work of days, if not of weeks; no great amount of argument, therefore, was needed to convince us that the brook route, rough and toilsome as it might be, was the only one to follow, at least until a better one should be found.

With the knowledge of the impassable character of the forest, which we had already gained, fresh in our minds, we decided that the maintenance of a night watch over the camp was unnecessary; and accordingly at about nine o'clock, by which time our fire had died down to a heap of glowing ashes, we all turned in to get a good night's rest preparatory to the toil of the next day.

I was the first of the party to wake; and I lost no time in arousing the others.

Within half an hour after breakfast, we had packed our baggage, such as it was, divided it up among the males of the party, and were ready to start. My share consisted of one of Oldroyd's rifles, a full bandolier of cartridges, a tin of condensed milk in one pocket, and a packet of tea in the other. Oldroyd acted as pilot, leading the way, followed by the Doctor, who in his turn was followed by Mason, who had undertaken to look after Miss Stroud, or Lucy, as she insisted we should call her. I followed Lucy, and preceded Miss Anthea, who by some incomprehensible whim had chosen me, of all the party, to help her over the difficulties of the way! The rear was brought up by the two seamen, who carried between them our few pots and pans, and the boat's sail, to be utilised as a tent for the two girls.

Travelling at a moderate pace, for the sake of the girls, we reached the lava bed surrounding the crater shortly after noon, and at once availed ourselves of the period of rest which we felt to be our due, to take luncheon. Miss Shirley-Winthrop seated herself beside me at the commencement of the meal, quite as a matter of course, and accepted my little courteous attentions equally as a matter of course, with a charming air of appreciation that caused me to ask myself more than once whether I was really awake. She joined fully in the conversation, for the first time since we had known her, and that, too, so vivaciously and naturally that even her own father stared at her, while her changed attitude acted upon us all like a stimulant.

We took our time over the meal, for the mysterious tower was our goal, for that day at least, and as our road lay all down-hill, we knew that we should soon reach our journey's end. But when we had rested for about an hour and a half the Doctor began to manifest signs of impatience; we therefore rose to our feet and, making our way over the lava bed, worked round to the northern side of the cone, from which a fine view of the whole of the north side of the island was to be obtained. The summit of the tower, however, was not visible, our elevation being just insufficient to reveal it above the tops of the trees. The lake, of which we caught a partial glimpse, was a good guide, as was also the stream flowing into it, the source of which we found without difficulty.

We at the same time also found out something else, which was that the forest on the north side of the cone was more open than that on the southern half of the island. For some inexplicable reason the trees grew less thickly together, while the underscrub grew only in isolated patches, so that it was easy to make our way

through the timber without having to follow the rough, boulder-strewn bed of the stream. We were thus able to proceed with comparative rapidity, for where no scrub occurred the soil was covered with long grass, though of a fresher, greener, less tangled kind than that on the south side of the hill. Yet, although the going was easy, my companion of the morning still kept to my side, making free use of the support of my arm, and maintaining a continuous prattle upon the many strange and wonderful things which we saw in the course of our march.

And certainly we all began to feel that only now, since we had crossed the spurs of the mountain dividing the island into two nearly equal parts, were we beginning to learn what a wonderful place was our new domain. The more open, park-like character of the forest enabled us to see that the trees and shrubs of which it consisted comprised an immense variety of trees, some of which—the ceibas—were of enormous size, while the Doctor, who was something of a botanist, pointed out others which he assured us yielded timber of the utmost value to the cabinet maker. Fruit trees also were abundant, while the orchids were perfectly wonderful. Birds, too, seemed to be in greater variety here on the north side of the island, for we now saw, for the first time, great flocks of white parakeets; also several specimens of that curious bird, the hornbill. Lizards of several varieties were common, and we now found that they were not the only four-footed creatures on the island, for we saw several specimens of a creature not unlike a squirrel, but rather larger, the fore and hind legs of which on either side were connected by an extension of the skin which enabled them to convert themselves into miniature aeroplanes and to accomplish the most amazing leaps from tree to tree. The Doctor pronounced them to be flying foxes, though he was careful to explain that they did not actually fly, but merely—to borrow an airman's expression—vol-planned through the air. Last, though by no means least, we found that this part of the forest was the favourite habitat of many varieties of butterflies, some of which were the most beautiful things I ever beheld, while others were chiefly remarkable for their size, one specimen having a spread of wing of a full foot, as I subsequently ascertained.

Although we did not actually use the bed of the brook as a pathway, we took the stream itself as our guide, following its course as closely as the nature of the ground would permit. Our rate of progress was slow, for we frequently paused to admire the exquisite beauty of some butterfly, poised with outspread wings upon a flower, the nectar of which perchance it was sipping, or to gaze in wonder upon the amazing leaps of the flying foxes, and once to rescue a beautiful little sunbird from the meshes of a tough and huge spider's web, the owner of which had a black, hairy body as big as a thrush's egg, a pair of eyes that gleamed like red-hot coals, and a most villainously combative temper, for no sooner did I begin to free the unhappy sunbird from the toils of the web in which it had become entangled than the black brute came charging along the web, the hairs of his body bristling and his eyes blazing with fury, and he would certainly have attacked my hands had I not struck him to the ground and crushed him beneath my boot.

But at length, after a delightful saunter of about an hour through the forest, we emerged into an open space, ten or fifteen acres in extent, in the midst of which rose the mysterious tower, a massive block of rough masonry, some twenty feet in diameter and about ninety high. The structure was very old, for much of its

surface was moss-grown, while here and there tufts of grass, plants, and even shrubs of considerable size had taken root and were growing from between the stones. The top of it presented a ragged appearance, as though it were crumbling away, yet the tower as a whole, seemed to promise that it might still endure for ages.

I have spoken of the area in which the tower stood, as an open space; but this was only partially true; the space was entirely free of those lofty forest trees through which we had been making our way; on the other hand, however, it was densely overgrown by scrub, thorn and other bushes ranging from three or four feet to fifteen or twenty feet high, with here and there a few fruit trees of different kinds, interspersed with clumps of feathery bamboo and thickets of cane. So dense was this scrub that it was a long time before we were able to penetrate it; but we did so at last, to find that it formed a sort of belt round the tower, completely encircling it but leaving a clear, open area of grass about sixty feet wide all round it. Incidentally, while searching for a practical passage through this belt of scrub, we also discovered that the tower was only one of several structures, for in the course of our search we came upon the remains of five other buildings, completely buried in the undergrowth.

In the case of most of us the discovery of these ruins in such a situation would have excited little more than idle wonder, coupled perhaps with a little vague surmise; but so far as the Doctor was concerned the case was different; he was an enthusiastic antiquary, and he vehemently declared that the discovery more than recompensed him for all the trials and hardships he had recently suffered, and that, even were a ship to heave in sight on the morrow, he would never quit the island until he had thoroughly examined every one of the ruins and fathomed the mystery of them.

The tower, which at the first glance seemed a commonplace structure enough, was a mystery in itself, when we came to examine it. The jambs and lintel of the doorway each consisted of a single block of stone, of so regular a shape that no doubt they had been hewn, although every indication that such was the case had vanished long ago through the action of the weather. The doorway was a trifle over five feet high to the underside of the lintel, but one suspected—what afterward proved to be the truth—that in the course of ages the soil had gradually drifted in and reduced the height. The opening measured only some three feet wide at the top, but from that point the jambs sloped away from each other, so that at the ground level the doorway was quite four feet wide. In the very centre of the tower there rose a cylindrical shaft of solid masonry, some six feet in diameter, round which wound a corkscrew stairway leading to a platform at the summit. The stone steps, although deeply worn, were solid and substantial, and the stairway itself had originally been lighted by circular holes about a foot in diameter pierced through the four-foot thickness of the walls. These holes, however, were now so choked with rubbish that little or no light penetrated, therefore, to start with, the stairs had to be negotiated with circumspection. Apparently the sole purpose of the tower was to afford a look-out over the surrounding country; but the puzzle consisted in the question; Who on earth could have wanted a look-out so badly as to build such a tower to obtain it?

That no human foot had traversed that stairway for years, perhaps for ages, was manifest directly we entered the building, for we found it in complete possession of a multitude of birds and bats, the former of which had built their nests so close together upon every stair that it was impossible to ascend without treading upon them, while whole rows of bats hung head downward from the rough underside of every step. Our attempt to ascend to the top of the tower was the signal for an indescribable disturbance, the birds raising a frightful clamour and seeming at first strongly disposed to dispute our passage; but upon finding that we would not be denied they finally flew up the stairway into the open air; the bats, on the contrary, took not the slightest notice of us; nor did we at first attempt to disturb them, since they were not in our way.

When, after ruining some hundreds of birds' nests on the steps and in the circular apertures in the walls, presumably intended for the admission of light, we reached the summit, we were more puzzled than ever to find a reason for the erection; for while, admittedly, a fine view of the northern half of the island was to be obtained from the platform at the top, it was certainly not as fine as that obtained from the lip of the crater, or even from the bed of lava which surrounded the cone. This, however, did not discourage the Doctor, who felt assured that the people who built the tower must have had some good and sufficient reason, and that that reason would be made clear through a thorough exploration of the structure and the adjacent ruins.

## Chapter 7

### **We make several important Discoveries— including Savages.**

Having at length satisfied—or, more correctly speaking, stimulated—our curiosity by ascending to the platform at the top of the tower, we busied ourselves in making arrangements to camp upon the open grass space surrounding the base of the tower, this open space being, it will be remembered, hemmed in on all sides by a belt of scrub so thick and impenetrable that we had had the utmost difficulty in finding a way through it; these conditions seeming to render our camping ground almost ideally safe, even should there be savages upon the island, as to which I was still a little uneasy, although we had as yet been unable to detect any sign of their presence. Our preparations were soon made, and the sun was still half an hour above the horizon when we sat down to a sumptuous meal consisting of roast bread fruit, roast pigeons, several kinds of delicious fruits, and tea. The two girls, fatigued with their unwonted exertions, retired to their tent soon after darkness fell, but the rest of us sat round the embers of our camp fire, chatting for an hour or more, and making plans for the immediate future. As for me, I was determined to devote the next day—and as many more days as might be necessary—to the completion of my survey of the island; for I knew that it would be impossible to rest content before I had settled the question whether our party

constituted its sole inhabitants. Upon learning my decision Mr Oldroyd volunteered to accompany me, while his chum, Mason, undertook the charge of the camp during our absence.

The chirping and twittering of the birds in the tower, as they bestirred themselves at the approach of dawn, awakened those of us who were sleeping in the open, and with one consent we arose and sallied forth, intent upon making our way to the brook and, if a suitable place could be found, indulging in the luxury of a fresh-water bath. We passed out through the encircling belt of scrub by the same intricate passage through which we had entered, and which, upon careful inspection, we found to be so perfectly adapted for our purpose, and with so artfully concealed an entrance, that we at once decided to leave it as it was, without improvement, except to widen it slightly here and there.

We found a satisfactory bathing-place, within a quarter of a mile of our camp. It was at a spot where the stream, tumbling over a rocky ledge some twelve feet high, fell into a rock basin, about seven feet deep and thirty feet across, while immediately beneath the fall there was a smooth, narrow ledge of rock, by standing upon which one obtained a perfect shower bath. We enjoyed our dip amazingly, carried a bucket of clear, sparkling water back to camp for culinary purposes, and found the girls up and busily engaged in collecting wood for the breakfast fire. We relieved them of this duty, and the Doctor forthwith guided them to the spot where we had bathed, and left them to their own devices. By the time that they reappeared, breakfast was ready, and we sat down to the meal.

According to programme, Oldroyd and I left the camp upon our exploring expedition immediately after breakfast, carrying with us as weapons a rifle for protection and a shot gun wherewith to supply the requirements of the table; we were taking no food, for we knew that the forest was capable of supplying all that we needed.

Taking the winding stream as our guide, we followed along its left bank for about two miles, proceeding leisurely and affording ourselves ample opportunity to observe the novel sights that frequently presented themselves, and to examine the various trees and plants which we met with. My companion hailed from Virginia and seemed to know something about the culture and cure of tobacco, and it was to this knowledge that we were indebted for the discovery that tobacco is indigenous to the island. We found about an acre of it, growing wild and apparently flourishing, in an open space alongside a big bend in the stream, and after submitting it to a careful examination my companion pronounced the leaf to be of the finest quality he had ever seen, while at the same time capable of considerable improvement by a judicious course of thinning out and cultivation. This was a find of value, for our stock of tobacco, meagre to start with and hoarded with the utmost care, was already approaching exhaustion. Happily for those of us who indulged in the "weed" the plants were practically at the ripening stage; some of the leaves indeed were already mature enough to be picked, and we spent a couple of hours prospecting the patch, plucking such leaves as were ready, and spreading them out to dry.

Resuming our journey we decided to leave the stream and take what we believed would be a short cut through the forest, partly to save distance, and partly to obtain the materials for our lunch. This decision, while it achieved both its objects,

resulted in our making another valuable discovery; namely, that of a species of liana, very thin, being about the diameter of ordinary whipcord, and quite as tough and pliant. This we foresaw would be of the utmost use to us, for we had no cordage at all, apart from the boat's equipment, while if these lianas but retained their strength and pliancy after being cut and dried, we should be able to make from them all the cordage we might need. We cut a length of about a hundred feet and hung it in a tree to dry, in order to test this, intending to leave it there until our return, or even later, if need were.

It was about an hour after noon, when, quite unexpectedly, we emerged from the forest to find ourselves on the margin of the lake for which we had been making. We struck it at its south-eastern extremity, and quite close to the spot where the stream we had been following discharged into it. At this spot there chanced to be a small strip of sandy beach—the only bit of beach anywhere around the lake, as we afterward found. We decided to camp there for the luncheon hour and cook the food we had secured on the way.

While cooking and partaking of our lunch we had an opportunity to study the lake and verify our previous impression of it.

It was of very irregular shape, consisting of a number of small bays separated by headlands; and everywhere, excepting at the small strip of beach which we had chosen for our camping place, the ground sloped steeply, indeed in some places perpendicularly, down into the water; the banks ranging from two or three feet to as much as thirty feet in height. The land all round about it was covered with forest trees, the multi-coloured foliage of which presented a magnificent appearance in the brilliant light of the afternoon sun. The water was clear as crystal, and, upon tasting it, it was found to be quite fresh and palatable. A few gleaming, silver shapes flashing out of the water here and there at intervals and falling back with a splash, told us that there were fish in the lake, and Oldroyd and I thereupon resolved to make it our business to return at an early date, construct some sort of a raft, and test the capabilities of the lake as a source of supply to the general larder.

Luncheon over, we resumed our journey, making our way along the north-east margin of the lake, and intending to follow the opposite side upon our return journey. We found the forest fairly open, as we went, and were accordingly able to proceed without much difficulty; but we found so many objects, animate and inanimate, inviting our attention, that our progress was really slow. For instance, about a mile from the spot where we had camped for luncheon, we came upon an open patch of swampy ground, the whole surface of which was covered with reeds, some of which were as much as twenty feet high, and thick in proportion, while others, three to four feet long, were only about a tenth of an inch in diameter. They grew perfectly straight, and resembled hollow canes, their chief characteristic being lightness combined with rigidity. Oldroyd cut and examined one as we continued our walk. After splitting it lengthwise and so demonstrating that it had no interior joints like those of the bamboo, he remarked—

“Say, Massey, how long do you think it will be before we are taken off this blamed island?”

“Ah!” responded I. “I wish I could tell you. I have worked out its position; and so far as my memory serves me, I believe it to be uncharted; which means—strange

as it may sound to you—that we are its actual discoverers, and that it is unknown to the rest of the world. So it may be years before a ship, blown out of her course, happens upon it, especially as sailing ships are becoming rarer every day, while steamers have their regular ‘lanes’ which they follow with undeviating exactitude. True, a wandering whaler may drift within sight of it and shift her helm to get a nearer look; but that is about our only chance, I fear, and it may be years before that happens.”

“Then,” said Oldroyd, “I guess it is up to us to hoard our ammunition as if every cartridge was a diamond, instead of blazing it away upon birds for lunch and dinner, isn’t it?”

“I have thought so more than once when I have seen you and Mason blithely popping away,” said I; “but I didn’t like to mention it, seeing that the ammunition is your own.”

“Not so, my son,” retorted Oldroyd. “Under the existing circumstances I guess that our souls are about all that we can claim as strictly our own. Everything else that we possess, including our intellects, our knowledge, our labour, ay, and our very lives, belong to the community, and must be expended if need be for its benefit. Don’t you agree with me?”

“I do, most certainly,” I assented; “but I am by no means sure that the others will.”

“I guess Mason will,” asserted Oldroyd; “and I believe the Doctor will, too. I’m not prepared to answer for the two sailormen; you will probably be the best judge as to their views upon the subject; but if there is any doubt about the matter, they must be brought to see it as we see it; there must be no such thing as private property or independence of action among us so long as things are with us as they are. And that brings me to the point suggested by the discovery of these reeds. As I said just now, we have to hoard our every cartridge, in view of the fact that a time may come when they will be needed for the defence of our lives. No more of them must be expended in shooting birds for food. That does not mean, however, that we are to cut birds out of the menu but simply that we must learn to get them by means of bows and arrows, or blowpipes, or something of that sort. Now, the smaller kind of these reeds will make perfect shafts for arrows, while the bigger ones will make admirable blowpipes, and I feel sure that among all the trees on this island we shall find some, the wood of which will serve as bows, while, in the absence of anything more suitable, I guess those thin, tough lianas might make passable bowstrings. What we have to do now is to look-out for a suitable kind of wood out of which to make bows.”

I was very glad to hear talk like this, because it chimed in so accurately with my own views. True, not very much ammunition had thus far been fired away; perhaps not more than a dozen cartridges altogether, but I had grudged every one of them, and was more than pleased that the proposal to economise should have come from one of the two who owned the ammunition.

Skirting the swamp, we in due time reached the north-western extremity of the lake and, still pushing on, arrived, quite unexpectedly, about an hour later, at the edge of a range of practically perpendicular cliffs, from which we looked down into a great basin-like depression some six miles long by about four miles wide. Its general shape was that of an oval with more or less deeply indented sides, and its

longer axis ranged about North-West by North. Its western side was occupied by the lagoon which we had previously seen from the lip of the crater, and which we now found to be about three and a half miles long by about a mile and a half wide at its deepest part. The outer boundary of the lagoon was a coral reef, with a narrow opening in it at the point where the lagoon measured its widest.

The cliffs, upon the verge of which we stood, seemed to average about two hundred feet in height and, as I have said, were practically vertical. They were composed of grey rock, which Oldroyd suggested was probably limestone, and although the cliff-face was everywhere very rugged, it was much too steep to tempt us to essay the descent, even had we been disposed to do so. But we had no such disposition; for our first glance down into the basin showed us that it was inhabited, and that, too, by the savages whose presence on the island I had all along feared. At the base of the cliffs there was a sort of irregularly shaped plateau, about a mile wide at its widest part—which happened to be almost immediately below where we stood—tapering away to nothing at either extremity. This plateau was under cultivation, the greater part of it being devoted to Indian corn, while the remainder, consisting of perhaps one hundred acres, at its farther extremity, seemed to be under sugar cane. Beyond the outer extremity of the plateau the ground sloped gently away to a sandy beach; and this ground was cut up into some two hundred garden plots, planted apparently with vegetables and fruit trees of various kinds, while each plot had its own hut in the centre. Almost every plot had two or three workers on it—whom my telescope revealed to be women—while the small bare space around each hut constituted the playground of the children, these ranging in number from a solitary child to as many as half-a-dozen. Some of the huts seemed to have no children belonging to them. Some seventy or eighty canoes of varying sizes lay drawn up on the beach, while a score or so were dotted about the surface of the lagoon, the occupants seeming to be engaged in the rather difficult sport of spearing fish. Through my telescope I saw that these natives were light in colour, and seemingly very shapely of form, if one might judge by the women. What their features were like I could not make out.

“Ah!” I exclaimed. “There are the savages, sure enough. I could not believe that an island of this size could be without inhabitants. Now, the first point that we have to settle is: are those savages likely to be hostile to us, or friendly? If the latter, well and good; but if the former, it means trouble.”

“Sure!” agreed Oldroyd. “But how do you propose to do it?”

“Well,” said I, “we are both armed. What is to prevent our going down and opening a palaver with them?”

Illustration:

„No, I guess it’s up to us to let the savages alone.“<sup>44</sup>

“I guess there are two or three objections to that,” returned Oldroyd. “First, how are you going to get down? Where is your road? I don’t see any. Next, to open a palaver successfully with savages, it is desirable to have presents to offer them—beads, brass wire, lengths of printed calico, knives and what not—and we have none. Next, supposing we should find a way down into that basin, like as not those squaws would take fright and bolt, screaming, to their huts or the beach,



scare the men into rushing to their arms, and bring the whole crowd upon us, hot-foot and out to kill. Then what chance would we have? We could account for half a dozen of them, no doubt, but would that stop the rush? It might: but then again, it might not, and if it didn't, you and I, Massey, would be simply overwhelmed and wiped out by force of numbers.

"No, I guess it is up to us to let those savages alone. Seems to me that the basin is their home and that they seldom or never leave it. The whole of its interior is cultivated, but I haven't seen a sign of cultivation anywhere else about the island. Have you? No, I guess not. Very well, then; that seems to point to the conclusion that they either can't or don't want to leave the basin, that they seldom or never do; and that, even if they do, it is improbable that they venture so far as the tower. They seem to be satisfied with their old basin; let them keep it, and we'll make use of the rest of the island. Perhaps neither party will ever encounter the other, and thus there will be peace. Besides, we shall have the pull of the savages, in that we know of their presence, and consequently shall be on the watch, while so long as they keep to the basin, they will not suspect our presence."

There was something to be said in favour of this view; but, on the other hand, to adopt Oldroyd's plan would be to leave ourselves continually in a state of suspense. Anyhow, I was determined not to return until I had subjected the cliff-face to a careful examination, to see whether any road out of the basin existed. If not, its absence would be a strong argument in favour of Oldroyd's suggestion that the savages never left the basin; in which case it might be best for us to accept his plan, but, if we should find that there was a road, or even a practicable footpath up the face of the cliff, we must return to the others, report our discovery, and consult as to what steps should be taken to meet the situation.

Oldroyd agreed with me, and we set off on our tour of exploration, going first in a north-westerly direction, and taking care to expose ourselves as little as possible. Our examination was painstaking and thorough; not a bit of the cliff was skipped; and the result was that when the sun set we had accomplished less than a quarter of our task. This involved a night's absence from our friends at the tower; but that did not matter, since the contingency had been foreseen and provided for. Allowing ourselves only just time enough to do it, we used the last quarter of an hour of daylight to retire into the forest far enough from the cliff-edge to prevent the possibility of the light or smoke of our fire being seen from the basin, and then went into camp for the night.

The following day was devoted in part to the examination of the remaining portion of the cliff-face, on no part of which did we discover anything resembling a path, much less a road; therefore, as our examination had been thorough, when we took what Oldroyd termed the "home trail" we did so with the fixed conviction that the savages never left their basin—unless in their canoes, by way of the passage through the reef—and that we therefore need not trouble as to the possibility of being interfered with.

Wending our way leisurely through the forest, on our return to the tower, a distant glimpse of which we were able to catch occasionally when we came upon an open space, we kept a sharp look-out for trees, the timbers of which might prove useful for bows, and we found several, from two or three of which we lopped branches suitable for experimenting with. We also touched again at the swamp,

and cut a quantity of reeds of different dimensions, with the view of testing their usefulness for several purposes which suggested themselves. We had no difficulty in finding the long length of liana which we had cut, and which also was intended to experiment with, and this I coiled round my body, noting with much satisfaction the fact that it was as pliant as ever, while its weight was negligible. Our last call before reaching "home" was at the tobacco patch, where we spent a good hour or more gathering additional leaves and spreading them to dry.

The afternoon was well advanced when, at a distance of about a mile from the tower, we unexpectedly came upon the two girls of our party who, it appeared, were out on a little expedition on their own account, seeking fruit. They greeted us cordially enough, and turned back with us; but on this occasion Miss Anthea, for some reason, resumed her icy manner to me and attached herself to Oldroyd, leaving me Lucy Stroud. That, however, did not trouble me in the least, for Lucy was always genial, always ready to make the best of things, and always reliable, which was more than could be said of the other.

Nothing of importance had happened during our absence; unless it could be said to be important that the Doctor, after subjecting the tower and the ruins to a rigorous examination, had come to the conclusion that the tower—and probably some at least of the other buildings as well—had been connected with some religious cult, and that it would be well worth the labour of opening up if, as he strongly suspected, there were chambers underneath, which had become blocked and hidden by the débris of ages. They had indeed begun work that morning, the two seamen having undertaken to plait baskets of twigs, wherewith to remove the rubbish, while the Doctor and Mason were engaged in fashioning pickaxes out of certain giant thorns which we had noticed in the forest, on our way down from the mountain.

In this way we almost automatically became divided into three sets; the Doctor, Mason, and the two seamen forming one gang, devoted to the task of excavating the tower; Oldroyd and I another, whose duty it was to provide generally for the needs of the party; and the two girls, who undertook the domestic arrangements.

Oldroyd was keen upon the substitution of bows and arrows for shot guns in the provisioning of our larder, and before sunset, upon the day of our return from the Basin—as we decided to call the savages' settlement—he had peeled two of the branches which he thought suitable for bows, and had hung them up to dry, while, at his suggestion, I dissected a short length of the liana and found it a tough, smooth, thin bark enclosing a number of threadlike but very strong ligaments embedded in pith. Then, also at Oldroyd's suggestion, I took another length, stripped it of its bark, and set the pith with its enclosed fibres to steep in the river, to see what would happen. The next day, finding that the wood was soft and amenable to the knife, we both got to work, and by mid-day had whittled out a couple of very promising-looking bows, each about five feet in length. We hung them up to dry, hoping to increase their elasticity, which was nothing very wonderful to start with. Our next work was to make arrows out of our reeds, which we did by heading them with hard, sharp thorns, any quantity of which could be obtained in the forest. We also tried in the same way to make spears out of the larger reeds, and succeeded very well. An attempt to make blow pipes was a failure—or rather, I ought to say that our attempt to use them after making them

was a failure, as neither of us seemed able to acquire the knack of driving the darts with energy enough to render them effective.

The next scheme to which Oldroyd and I turned our attention was that of testing the capabilities of the lake as a source of fish supply. Two things were necessary for this, a raft and fishing tackle, the first of which had still to be constructed, while the fishing tackle was down at the big lagoon, aboard our boat; we therefore decided to commence operations by making the journey to the lagoon for the fishing lines, and, incidentally, obtaining a supply of salt-water fish; and after gathering a supply of fruit to last our companions for the day, we set off. The journey to and from the lagoon was accomplished without incident, and in a shorter time than hitherto, now that we knew the way; and about mid-afternoon we returned to the camp by the tower, carrying two fishing lines, and an abundant supply of salt-water fish which was much appreciated that night when it was served up for dinner.

On the following day Oldroyd and I set off for the swamp, taking the tobacco patch on our way and spending a couple of hours there, plucking tobacco leaves, laying them out to dry, and turning over those previously plucked, which Oldroyd declared were curing satisfactorily. Upon leaving the tobacco patch we began to look-out for the tough lianas, a quantity of which we cut and carried with us to the lake beach, where we deposited them. Then we went on to the swamp and cut as many of the biggest reeds as we could carry, repeating the process until we had accumulated what we considered a quantity sufficient for our purpose. This done, we began the construction of a raft, laying the reeds side by side until we had a row of them about eight feet wide by twelve feet long, which we bound together in the form of a mat, with the lianas, doubling the latter and passing them under and over each reed until we had the whole held compactly together. Having completed one mat, we began another, precisely similar, except that this time the dimensions were reversed, the second being eight feet long by twelve feet wide. Then we placed the second mat crosswise on top of the first, lashed the two firmly together, and found that we had a light, strong and easily handled raft, capable of supporting not only our two selves, but two more like us. That completed our day's work; but we returned next day, and, following the plan adopted by Wilkinson and Dartnell when making the paddles for their raft, we made a similar pair, thus completing our outfit for the navigation of the lake. Being anxious to test our novel craft at once, and having brought our fishing lines with us and some bait, we launched and pushed off into deep water, when, as a reward for our pains, we soon had a dozen of as fine trout as one need wish to see. We should probably have continued had we not received a scare. Oldroyd and I were fishing from opposite sides of the raft, and had our lines down, when my companion felt the tug which told him that he had hooked another fish. He began to haul in his line, and presently saw the squirming shape of the fish on his hook, with a frequent silvery flash which told him that the creature was doing its best to shake itself free from the barb in its jaws. Then, when the captured trout was within ten feet of the surface, Oldroyd was startled by seeing a great yellowish-green shape—which he solemnly declared was at least ten feet long—dash at the captured trout and snatch it off the line, carrying away trout and hook together, and giving such a tremendous jerk to the line that the American was all but dragged off the raft into the water. The water of

the lake was translucent, permitting objects to be seen even at considerable depth. Oldroyd therefore had a clear, though only momentary view of the robber, a giant pike, he assured me. And when the thing happened we were discussing whether there remained time to indulge in a swim before returning to the beach! Needless to say we abandoned the idea, and took care to give our friends warning to the same effect.

When we got back to camp, we found that the two girls had made a discovery of considerable value. Finding themselves with spare time upon their hands, they had gone off for a ramble in the forest, in the course of which their attention had been attracted toward certain objects hanging from the branches of some of the trees. They were cocoons, a few of which they brought back with them. Lucy, who as a child had kept silkworms, soon assured herself that they had stumbled upon a prize worth having, for upon proceeding to unwind one of the cocoons she found a veritable silk, finer and stronger even than that of the silkworm, and of a beautiful creamy white colour, several yards of which she had already wound upon a bobbin cut by Mason from one of our useless reed blow pipes. The Doctor, too, was interested in a mild way in the discovery, although he could scarcely be persuaded to think or speak of anything but his projected excavation of the ruins, and what he hoped to learn therefrom. But he happened casually to mention that he had often, as a child, watched his grandmother manipulating a spinning wheel, whereupon Mason, who had a genius for mechanics, first extracted a description of the wheel, and then vowed that he would make one like it. He succeeded, too, after some three weeks of arduous labour, during which the Doctor was plunged into the depths of despair owing to the defection of his chief assistant and the consequent delay in the work of excavation.

Meanwhile, Oldroyd and I devoted ourselves zealously to the gathering and curing of our crop of tobacco, and the completion of our bows, arrows and spears. The bows, after being thoroughly dried and seasoned, proved a conspicuous success, becoming very tough and elastic, and so strong that it taxed our muscles to the utmost—until one grew accustomed to the work—to draw a three-foot arrow to its head. The exertion of so much strength, however, proved to be unnecessary, at least for hunting purposes, for we found that an arrow so discharged often passed clean through the body of a bird and was lost, we therefore made lighter bows for hunting, and a complete set of stronger ones for use in the—as it then appeared—unlikely event of war. We also made two still lighter bows for the girls, who thereafter frequently undertook to supply the larder while we men were engaged upon more arduous work.

Our experiments with the lianas resulted in a great success, for, after leaving a length steeping in water until we had forgotten all about it, we discovered, when we eventually stumbled upon it by accident, that the pith had all dissolved away, leaving nine long unbroken filaments, as fine as the thinnest sewing cotton and as strong as packthread. These filaments, when dried, were capable of being converted into cord or rope of any required thickness, and of being woven—as we afterward found—into a fine, strong serviceable cloth. This was important, for our clothing, especially that of the men, was showing signs of wear, and we were all wondering how we should meet the difficulty. Here again, Mason came to the rescue, for no sooner was it established that the liana filaments and the silk were

of real value than he undertook to construct a hand loom—of sorts—and actually made good his promise after some three months of strenuous work; again plunging the Doctor into the depths of despair.

Meanwhile, although Mason's frequent and lengthy defections delayed the excavations in the base of the tower, those excavations proceeded so effectively that about the time when the American proudly presented his loom to the two admiring girls, the original stone floor of the tower was laid bare, and in it was found a large loose slab, upon raising which a flight of stone steps was revealed, leading, as we subsequently discovered, to a series of subterranean chambers hewn out of the solid rock.

## **Chapter 8**

### **The Subterranean Temple, and its Wonders.**

The discovery was a tremendous stimulus to our curiosity, the result of which was that all hands of us, excepting of course the two girls, devoted every moment of our spare time to the clearing away of the rubbish which had accumulated upon the steps. There was not very much of this; by the end of the day, therefore, we succeeded in reaching the bottom of the flight, only, however, to find ourselves confronted by what at first appeared to be a face of solid rock, but which, upon closer inspection, the Doctor pronounced to be undoubtedly a stone door, the joints between which and the surrounding rock we eventually found after a careful scraping away from the surface of the dust of ages. We found that the door had been hewn out of a solid block of granite, a pair of pivots having been also formed, and fitted into sockets in the stone jamb, permitting the massive door to swing open and shut. To get the door open, however, was a work of time and such great labour that, to start with, it demanded the combined strength of the six men of the party, dust having gathered in the hinge sockets and there become indurated. By dint of patient washing and raking out of the indurated dust, however, and freely anointing the pivots with melted fat, we at length got the door to work so easily that by the exertion of all our strength any one of us men could make it revolve, while it would also yield to the united efforts of the two girls.

This doorway, with its curious stone door, gave access to what may be described as the landing of another flight of steps; but such a landing and such a flight of steps as I am quite sure none of us ever dreamt of finding on a Pacific island. The landing was ten paces wide by fourteen paces long, and it formed the head of a flight of no less than eighty-three steps of the same width as the landing. The rock roof of this landing chamber was about eight feet high and, like the walls, had been dressed smooth, these last being decorated with paintings in panels representing, presumably, some of the religious ceremonies of the unknown people who had been at the trouble to excavate the rock chambers, of which this was the vestibule. The paintings were admirably done, somewhat in the style of those found in the ancient temples of Egypt, and the colouring was, for the most part,

quite bright and fresh looking. To add to the remarkable character of the place, it was furnished with four massive and beautifully wrought brackets of bronze, two projecting from each of the side walls, supporting grotesquely shaped lamps of the same metal.

Descending the eighty-three well-worn steps which led from the landing down seemingly into the bowels of the earth, we noted, by the light of our torches, that the side walls of the stairway were decorated in a similar manner to those of the landing above and, like them, were fitted with brackets supporting lamps, at intervals. Oldroyd and I, who happened to be together during this interesting tour of exploration, registered a vow that, if we could obtain the necessary oil, those lamps should be once more lighted if only for the space of a few hours.

Arrived at length at the bottom of the long flight of steps, we found ourselves in what had the appearance of an anteroom to another chamber. This anteroom measured about sixty feet square by perhaps twelve feet high; and its walls, like those of the landing and the long flight of steps, were decorated with paintings, the subjects depicted being of such a character as to suggest that the temple, of which this chamber was undoubtedly an adjunct, must have been dedicated to some savage equivalent of the goddess Aphrodite. This chamber had been at one time illuminated by no less than twenty lamps, suspended in two rows from the ceiling.

The wall of this anteroom, opposite the foot of what we soon grew to call The Grand Staircase, was pierced by a rectangular opening reaching from floor to ceiling, and about eight feet high. It was veiled by a curtain of some heavy velvet-like material, rose-pink in tint, but so covered with exquisite embroidery that very little of the ground material was visible. The embroidery depicted a female figure clad in a gorgeously embroidered robe, and with a kind of coronet on her head. Gold and silver thread was lavishly employed in the decoration of this beautiful curtain, as well as silks, apparently of the most brilliant hues, together with what we at first took to be a great many large coloured beads, but which we afterwards discovered were uncut precious stones!

The sight of this superb piece of handiwork made us gasp with astonishment; and before any of the rest of us had recovered from our amazement the Doctor sprang out in front of us and, raising his hands in entreaty, exclaimed—

“Let no one touch that curtain, I beg, until I have first examined it. You all see what a beautiful thing it is, and, if it is at all possible, it must be preserved. But it must be—oh, I don’t know how many hundreds of years old, so old indeed that it may crumble to pieces at an unwary touch; therefore please let me examine it first. Mason and—yes, you, Massey, bring your torches and hold them at about a foot from the curtain—no nearer, lest you set it on fire.”

Obedying the Doctor’s behest, Mason and I advanced and stationed ourselves on either side of him while he stooped down and gingerly took the corner of the curtain between finger and thumb. To his loudly expressed delight, the fabric did not crumble away at his touch, on the contrary, it appeared to be in such an excellent state of preservation as to bear handling freely. This fact being demonstrated, the worthy Doctor proceeded to investigate the method of the curtain’s suspension, clambering up on my shoulders to do so, when it was found that this wonderful specimen of the handiwork of an unknown people was sewn to a number of bronze rings which travelled upon a bronze rod, permitting the

curtain to be drawn aside from the aperture in the wall which it veiled. With the most tender care the Doctor coaxed the supporting rings along the rod until we found ourselves staring into a chamber so vast that the light of our torches failed to illumine it.

The Doctor was the first to enter, turning as soon as he had passed through the doorway and bidding the torch bearers to follow; and we immediately had a demonstration of the extraordinary size of the chamber in the deep, hollow reverberations which accompanied the Doctor's speech. It sounded like the voice of a man speaking from the bottom of a deep well, and so uncanny was the effect that the two girls started back with little ejaculations of terror. We menfolk, however, were not so easily affected, and pressed forward, holding our torches high, the girls, reassured, following closely.

But even when all the torch bearers were inside, so vast was the space that only a few square feet of the adjacent walls were revealed, the remainder of the chamber being plunged in impenetrable gloom. We were therefore compelled to examine it foot by foot, thus eventually discovering that it was circular in shape, about three hundred feet in diameter, and of unknown height, the roof or ceiling towering high out of reach of the feeble light of our torches. There were evidences, however, that provision had been made to dissipate this obscurity upon certain occasions, for although the light of our torches failed to reach the roof, it dimly revealed the existence of a sort of chandelier containing a group of twenty large lamps, suspended from the centre of the roof, while other lamps—to the number of forty, we afterward ascertained—were suspended at intervals all round the central chandelier in a circle half-way between it and the circular wall.

This circular wall, like those of the anteroom and the Grand Staircase, was decorated with paintings depicting human figures in the foreground of a landscape; but, unlike the other decorations, we presently discovered that it formed a continuous picture, representing a procession of some hundreds of male and female figures, the males each bearing what appeared to be a basket of fruit, while the females carried large bouquets and garlands of flowers. The painting was executed with a considerable amount of artistic skill, and revealed a wonderfully perfect knowledge of the human anatomy, while its subject threw an almost complete light upon the personal appearance, mode of dress, and religious ceremonies of a truly remarkable unknown people. Judging from the painting—as its excellence justified one in doing—these one-time inhabitants of our lonely little Pacific island were a fine race of people, the men well proportioned, with regular, intelligent-looking features, while the women must, as a whole, have been beautiful. They were apparently a fair-skinned race, scarcely darker than a Spaniard, the women being represented as distinctly fairer than the men.

Following this picture in its course round the circular wall of the chamber, and examining it at leisure by the light of the torches, we arrived at a point half-way round the wall and immediately opposite the doorway by which we had entered, and here we came upon what I had been for some time expecting, and what indeed the flickering light of our torches had partially revealed, namely, a recess in the wall, a sort of shrine, containing a life-size female figure, standing, clad in a single garment of thin, semi-transparent material having the appearance and texture of silk, of a most beautiful deep sapphire colour, the neck, hem, and edges of the

sleeves bordered with a band, some nine inches wide, of embroidery in gold, silver, and coloured threads, thickly encrusted with uncut gems, of such marvellous beauty that it threw the girls into ecstasies of delight and admiration, in which latter emotion we men shared. And the figure was worthy of the garment, being exquisitely carved—in wood, we subsequently ascertained—with a skill and attention to the minutest detail, which, beautifully painted as it was, rendered it startlingly lifelike. But perhaps the most remarkable peculiarity about the figure was its extraordinary resemblance to the Doctor's daughter, the features, complexion, and colour of the hair and eyes being—as nearly as the dim light of the torches revealed—the same! So striking was the resemblance that it was impossible to avoid noticing it, the Doctor himself remarking—

“Why, Thea, it is your very self! If you were to don that robe and stand up there, I guess nobody would know the difference. We must take that statue away with us when we go, and fix it up in the hall of our house at home; it will comfort mamma to go and look at it when you are away visiting!”

But Miss Anthea happened to be in one of her most disagreeable moods that day, and turned scornfully away from her father, without deigning to answer him.

A large and finely sculptured altar stood in front of the recessed figure, but there was no sign that a fire had ever been kindled upon it, the Doctor therefore came to the conclusion—which the painting on the wall seemed to corroborate—that the offerings presented to this unknown goddess probably consisted entirely of fruit and flowers.

The recess or shrine containing the figure was sunk in an elaborately sculptured projection standing out some six feet from the face of the circular wall, and in each side of this projecting mass of rock there was an opening, veiled by a handsome embroidered curtain, very similar in character to that which veiled the main entrance to this extraordinary subterranean temple—for such it undoubtedly was. These two openings, or doorways, gave access to a long passage stretching away into the heart of the rock in the rear of the statue. For a distance of some three hundred yards we paced this passage without making any discovery; then we were brought to a standstill by a fall of earth and stone which blocked further progress. After such wonderful discoveries as those which we had made it was natural that we should desire to know what lay beyond that fall of rubbish, and it was decided to clear the stuff away, so the original party of excavators got to work again on the morning following our discovery of the subterranean temple. But Oldroyd and I had several other matters to attend to; there was the daily supply of food for the party to be provided, countless yards of lianas to be cut and put to soak, there was our crop of tobacco to secure, oil to be obtained by some means or other before our dream of seeing the subterranean temple properly illuminated could be realised, in short, there were so many things to be done that we scarcely knew which to begin upon first. Finally, after paying a visit to our tobacco field and finding that the crop of plucked leaves was not yet quite cured, we tackled the lianas and, in the course of a week, obtained a quantity quite sufficient, as we believed, to supply our immediate needs. Then we returned to the tobacco field, picked out all the leaves sufficiently cured, and bound them in bundles of convenient size for future use.



Our next care was to provide the oil with which to fill the temple lamps. This we believed we should be able to do without difficulty, for during our fishing excursions to the big lagoon we had already discovered that a certain part of it was swarming with a species of fish so oily as to be scarcely eatable, and it was from this fish that we hoped to obtain our supply. Accordingly on a certain day Oldroyd and I bade farewell to the rest of the party, announcing that we expected to be absent about a fortnight, and taking our bows and arrows and some empty meat tins in which to store the oil, we set out for our original camping ground on the shore of the lagoon. Arrived there, we put in a strenuous twelve days of fishing and oil extracting, and so returned to the tower with our tins full of oil, and a good supply of smoked and fresh fish.

Naturally, we lost no time in testing the value of our oil for illuminating purposes, and were gratified to find that, with wicks formed from the pith of a rush which grew in the neighbourhood of the swamp, it answered very well, affording a fine, clear, brilliant flame, the only drawback to which was that it gave off a disagreeable odour.

Meanwhile, during our absence the excavators had not been idle, and the first news to greet us was that the passage had been cleared, and had been found to terminate in a ruined building on the other side of the stream, distant about half a mile from the tower; this building having undoubtedly been—according to the Doctor—the abode of the priests who had served in the queer but wonderful subterranean temple. This surmise was based not only upon the size of the building but also upon the fact that it contained no less than forty cells or small sleeping apartments built on opposite sides of a long corridor, as well as several other and larger apartments, the biggest of which had the appearance of having been used as a refectory. The discovery of this building was most advantageous to us; for though, as a whole, the structure was a weed-grown ruin, the cellar in which the subterranean passage terminated was intact, as were several of the cells; and these last we at once cleared of dust and rubbish, with the view of inhabiting them during the rainy season, the approach of which we were now anticipating.

One way and another, we found so many modes of occupying our time that seldom had any of us an idle moment, yet, busy though we were, Oldroyd and I somehow found time to clean and carefully trim every one of the lamps not only in the great circular temple itself, but also those in the anteroom, on the grand stairway, and on the landing above; and, this done, we proceeded to light them all, and to treat ourselves and the rest of the party to a full and comprehensive view of the beauties and marvels of the wonderful place. And if those beauties and marvels had excited our admiration when viewed by torchlight, affording such inadequate illumination that they were guessed at rather than seen, what shall be said of them when they were lit by a hundred large lamps?—for that was the exact number which went to the lighting of the landing, the stairway, the anteroom, and the great circular temple itself. The effect upon the painted walls with their innumerable figures was beautiful and wonderful beyond description; and we could but gaze silently and admiringly as we pondered from whence had come the people capable of executing such marvellous work, and, still more, by what fate they had been obliterated.

It was while the temple was illuminated and the first real inspection of it was in progress that a further discovery was made which, while it seemed at the moment to be comparatively unimportant, was destined by a curious chance to exercise a vital influence upon the fortunes of the entire party. The discovery was that of a small chamber behind the recess, or shrine, in which stood the figure of the goddess. There was no furniture in this chamber, save a large chest, or coffer, constructed of some exceedingly hard wood, black with age, elaborately and exquisitely carved on its four sides and its cover, and bound at its angles with great bands of metal which ultimately proved to be bronze, chased all over in a graceful pattern of intricate, flowing curves, as were also its massive bronze hinges. The lid was not locked or fastened in any way, and—perhaps naturally expecting that so handsome a receptacle would be found to contain something especially choice—the coffer was quickly opened, when it was found to contain several very beautiful, richly embroidered and jewelled woman's garments, which seemed to have been intended to furnish a change of robes for the enshrined figure. Owing to the perfectly dry air of the subterranean chambers, aided possibly by the almost hermetically tight fit of the lid of the chest, the garments—of which there were nine complete sets—were in a state of perfect preservation, and after they had been opened out and duly admired, particularly by the two girls, they were carefully re-folded and returned to the custody of the chest.

It was about a week after this discovery that we had reason to believe the long-expected rainy season was actually at hand. Hitherto, the weather had been perfect, from the moment of our arrival upon the island; that is to say, the trade-wind had blown steadily all day, springing up about eight o'clock in the morning as a gentle breeze, gradually freshening to half a gale about one o'clock in the afternoon, and then as gradually moderating until by about half an hour after sunset it fell to a flat calm, succeeded, about an hour later, by a land breeze which blew with varying intensity until about half an hour after sunrise the next morning; this breeze, by the way, only reaching about a mile and a half into the offing, where it gradually merged into the trade-wind, which blew night and day over the surface of the surrounding ocean. And all this while the rich, brilliant, ultramarine blue of the sky continued to be softly dappled with cotton-wool tufts of trade cloud coming up out of the eastern horizon, sailing solemnly, one after another, across the sky, and settling away below the western horizon, a few of them casting their shadows upon the island as they swept over it, but never a one of them bringing so much as a drop of rain in its skirts. This long continued absence of rain was at first a source of wonder to me, for I could not understand how, under the circumstances, the verdure of the island retained its perennial freshness as it seemed to do; but the explanation came upon the first night when Oldroyd and I camped out in the open, upon the occasion of our exploration of the northern end of the island; for when we awoke in the morning it was to find our clothing saturated with dew, while every bough, every leaf, and every tiny blade of grass was dripping with it.

But now, about the time before mentioned, a change seemed to be coming over the spirit of our dream; for upon turning out on a certain morning to take our usual dip before beginning the labours of the day, the first sensation of which we became aware was that of a strange lethargy, as different as darkness is from light

from the feeling of briskness, vigour and abounding vitality with which we were wont to spring from our leafy couches every morning. We were all affected by it in an equal degree, and for a few moments we were all, I believe, subject to the same fear, namely, that this unwonted disinclination to move and bestir ourselves was the forerunner of some malady, peculiar, perhaps, to the island at a certain season of the year. But upon our emergence into the open air—for we had by this time made the cells of the ruined building our night quarters—we perceived that it was due in great measure, if not entirely, to a change of weather which had occurred during the night. The sky was no longer the cloud-flecked clear, transparent blue to which we had grown accustomed, but of an uniform dirty white, streaked here and there with patches of smoky grey, except away to the eastward, where the newly-risen sun appeared as a shapeless blotch of yellow radiance imperfectly showing through the unbroken curtain of vapour which obscured the heavens. And there was no sign of the regularly recurring trade-wind, or indeed of any wind at all, for every twig and leaf hung as motionless in the stagnant, stifling air, as though wrought in metal, while the boom of the surf breaking upon the reefs came to our ears with startling distinctness.

“Ah!” remarked Oldroyd, gaspingly, as he wiped the perspiration from his already streaming visage, “I guess this means that the rainy season is coming at last. Now, it is up to you and me, Massey, to make tracks for the tobacco patch, the first thing after breakfast, and to bring in every leaf that is sufficiently cured to make it worth while; for a downpour of rain will just spoil them all; and we shall need every ounce we can save, if we are not to go short before the ripening of next year’s crop. So, hustle, lad, hustle; get a move on you, and look lively about it.”

Strangely enough, however, no rain came all through the day, but the atmosphere grew hourly more suffocatingly close, until it seemed possible to get enough air for our parched lungs only by taking great gasping gulps of it, as men do when at the point of suffocation. And all the while, the perspiration streamed from us until our scanty clothing was saturated; while, as for work, the mere exertion of moving our limbs seemed almost too much for us. Yet by setting our teeth and keeping grimly at it all day Oldroyd and I contrived to save the remaining portion of our tobacco crop, a task that under ordinary circumstances we could have accomplished easily in a couple of hours!

With the arrival of sunset we were treated to a picture of such gorgeous, sombre magnificence as I, in all my experience of the tropics, had never beheld. The whole of the western sky seemed to be ablaze, while, to add to the wonder of the scene, the blazing heavens were broadly streaked with great bands of dun, smoky cloud intermingled with blotches of blood-red and purple-black. This fiery display lasted for only a few minutes, the vividness of the colours faded even as we gazed at them spellbound, and presently all had become a jumble of dull, smoky, brownish grey that quickly changed to black, and the night, breathless and dark, with an Egyptian darkness that could almost be felt, fell upon us, and we groped our way to the interior of the ruin, and lit the lamps, the added heat of which, trifling though it actually was, made the breathless atmosphere more unbearable than ever.

There was nothing to keep us from our beds, that night, therefore with one accord we sought our couches early, animated by the fervently expressed hope

that we might find relief in sleep, for we were all labouring under a feeling of the extreme languor and exhaustion. But although my couch of dry ferns and grass was sufficiently soft and comfortable to lure sleep to my pillow of heaped vegetation in the course of a minute or two upon ordinary occasions, it refused to come to me, that night; the very walls of the cell which formed my sleeping chamber seemed to exude heat, as the walls of an oven, while not a breath of air came in through the great unglazed aperture at the head of my couch, which served as a window, and I missed, and deeply resented the absence of, the usual soothing swish and sough of the wind in the branches and foliage of the trees which surrounded the ruin at no great distance.

At length, however, nature asserted herself, and I was slowly sinking into a condition of restful unconsciousness when I was startled into broad wakefulness again by a flash of light that for the fraction of a second illuminated my cell with a brilliance more intense, it seemed to me, than the radiance of the noontide sun, while my ears were deafened by a crackling crash so violent that I felt the masonry of the stone floor beneath my bed quiver and vibrate with the terrific violence of it. This was almost instantly followed by another flash and thunder-clap, the flash and the clap synchronising so accurately that I knew the storm must be immediately overhead; and then for a few moments the flashes of lightning with their accompanying peals of thunder, followed each other so rapidly that the whole island seemed to be on fire and at the same time in process of being rent to pieces—so paralytically awful was the sound of the crashing thunder. Then, while the lightning continued to blaze and the thunder to shake the ruin to its foundations with its terrific crackling detonations, the rain splashed down with a roar like that of a cascade, and in an instant the whole surface of the island was covered with rushing streams of water, while the atmosphere became a downpouring deluge through which the darting flashes of lightning showed as through crinkled glass.

What with the roar and rush of the rain through my window, the crash of broken branches and falling trees outside, and the deafening peals of thunder, it seemed impossible for any other sounds to reach my ears, yet now and then methought I could catch fragments, as it were, of sound from the inside of the ruin which suggested that my immediate neighbours on my right and left were in a plight similar to my own; but I could do nothing to help them. I therefore stood, as I had been caught, near the window of my cell, with the wind wildly scuffling all about me and the rain lashing me from head to foot, yet feeling through it all a curious, detached sense of enjoyment, for at last I was once more pleasantly cool and it was no longer an effort to breathe.

The hurricane lasted until dawn; then with the uprising of the sun the clouds suddenly broke to windward and went sweeping in a wild scurry of tattered fragments across the sky until the last shred of them had vanished, the rain ceased, the sky resumed its usual tint of deep, rich, crystalline blue, the wind dropped with startling suddenness, the sun poured down his scorching beams upon the saturated earth, which gave forth its superfluous moisture in the form of great clouds of steam, and within the space of an hour everything was again as it had been upon the island from the moment of our landing, save for the sodden interiors of the cells that happened to be on what was the weather side of the ruin

when the storm burst, and for the uprooted trees that met our gaze here and there when we sallied forth, and the innumerable broken twigs and branches that were everywhere to be seen.

Although it scarcely seemed so at the moment, this brief hurricane was the herald of the rainy season on the island, for thereafter, for the space of some three months, scarcely a day passed without rain, more or less; sometimes it amounted to no more than a short, sharp five-minute shower just before sunrise—a sort of “pride of the morning”—while at other times we were treated to a whole day’s steady downpour.

## **Chapter 9**

### **The Beginning of Trouble.**

Meanwhile we had all been busy in our several ways, for the most part doing everything in our power to improve our condition and make life as pleasant as might be during our involuntary sojourn upon the island. Doctor Shirley-Winthrop was the only drone in our hive, although I am quite certain that it would have been impossible for anyone to persuade him that such was the case; on the contrary, every word and action of his bore eloquent testimony to the fact that he enjoyed the comfortable assurance that the work upon which he was engaged was the only work which really mattered, or was of any actual value; the labours of us others were merely expended upon the common, humdrum task of keeping the community alive. And what was this important work upon which the worthy Doctor was engaged, it may be asked. On nothing less than an accurate survey of the tower and its subterranean adjuncts, and the careful copying of the paintings on the walls! He was convinced—and no doubt he was so far right—that the tower, the subterranean temple and its approaches, were the relics of a dead and gone highly civilised and cultured people who had existed unknown and unsuspected upon that island, and had vanished in some unaccountable way; and he felt it to be not only his duty but his privilege to discover everything he could about them, and in due time to communicate his discovery to the world. It was a congenial task, which he pursued with enthusiasm, and he was ably seconded in it by Mason when that ingenious individual’s services were not requisitioned for the production of some article, the possession of which our steadily-growing needs demanded. For the rest, the two girls had by this time not only assumed the entire control of the domestic arrangements of the party, but they also employed their spare time in spinning their silk into thread, weaving it into cloth on the loom with which Mason’s ingenuity had provided them, and finally converting the cloth into sorely needed garments. And here it may be mentioned that our lengthened sojourn upon the island, our mutual dependence upon each other, and the natural and primitive style of our lives, was fast working a most important change and improvement upon Miss Anthea Shirley-Winthrop’s character. Her insufferable pride and hauteur were being rapidly toned down. She was treated

with precisely the same amount of respect and consideration as was accorded to Lucy Stroud, and no more; her occasional outbreaks of petulant temper were met by silent but none the less unmistakable marks of disapproval, and very soon she was made to realise that if she wished to be treated as a rational person, she must behave as such. There was no room on the island for people of the spoiled-child variety, and, to do her justice, commonsense brought recognition of this fact and a corresponding improvement of character and behaviour. I believe I was one of the first to profit, for at the outset of our intercourse she had regarded me merely as one of the crew of the ship, and consequently in some sort as a person whose services she—or rather her father—had bought and paid for, and who therefore might be treated with that contemptuous indifference which ill-bred people consider a proper attitude toward dependents of every kind. But by the time of which I am now writing all that sort of behaviour was a thing of the past; fate and circumstance had put us upon an equal footing, and we had come to understand each other so far as to have insensibly slipped into the habit of addressing each other by our Christian names. Oldroyd and I were still the chief foragers of the party, although the two girls made it a rule to take an hour's walking exercise each day, during which it was their custom to gather enough fruit for the daily needs of the party; while, as for the two seamen, they had built a huge stack of timber on the summit of the peak, to serve as a signal bonfire, should a ship heave in sight, and they took it in turns to spend the day on the summit, maintaining a continuous look-out.

I have said that Oldroyd and I still continued to play the rôle of chief foragers of the party, by providing fish and flesh—or rather fowl—for the community. As has always been stated, the island was rich in bird life, some three or four varieties of which afforded most acceptable additions to our larder, and these we now invariably brought down with our bows and arrows, in the use of which we had eventually become so expert that we thought nothing of the feat of bringing down a pigeon on the wing.

Of course foraging for the larder occupied but a limited portion of our time, much of which remained for other occupations. And these occupations were not long in presenting themselves. For example, there was our tobacco patch to be looked after. The quality of our first crop was so good that those of us who smoked indulged in the habit to the full, with the result that long before the next crop was ready our stock began to run short, and we were obliged to retrench. Naturally, this suggested an extension of the patch, and Oldroyd and I spent a good deal of time cleaning and hoeing some two acres of fresh ground and sowing it, also in thinning out the existing patch, rooting up the most unpromising plants so as to give additional room and air to the rest. Then, shortly after the cessation of the rainy season, we—or, rather, Oldroyd—made two important discoveries, the first of which consisted in the finding of a few scattered specimens of the cotton plant, while the other was the discovery of a bush very similar in nature and appearance to one which flourishes in certain districts of South Africa, from the leaves of which the Boers brew a concoction which they call "hunger tea", from the fact that it has somewhat the taste of ordinary tea while it is provocative of a good healthy appetite. Our first business after these important discoveries was to prepare another patch of ground for the reception of the cotton plants, and then to

transplant them; and our next carefully to gather and dry the leaves of all the "hunger tea" bushes we could find. These occupations, with a visit to the lagoon and the lake four days each week, for fish, sufficed to keep Oldroyd and myself so busy that we had very little time to spare for companionship with the others.

Thus far we had neither seen nor heard anything of the savages who dwelt in the basin at the north-western extremity of the island, we had never paid a second visit to the edge of the basin or gone nearer to it than the northern end of the lake, not having had occasion to do so; and so far as danger was concerned, so completely had the idea of it in connection with the savages become dissociated from our minds that whenever either of the girls, or both of them, proposed to accompany us on our excursions to the lagoon or the lake for fish, as they now sometimes did, declaring that they required a little change from the ordinary routine of their daily lives, we never dreamed of saying them nay.

The first hint of possible danger from the savages came to us one afternoon when Anthea, in her frankest and most genial manner, informed Oldroyd and me that if we would promise to be good boys and take the utmost care of her, she might be tempted to accompany us to the lake, whither we were bound to procure a supply of fish. Of course we gave the promise, for when the girl was in an agreeable mood she was delightful company; and shortly afterward we started off, visiting our tobacco patch and cotton fields on the way, where we found the plants progressing as satisfactorily as heart could wish.

Arrived at the lake, we launched our raft, got aboard, and at once headed for a tiny bay about half-way down the lake which we had discovered to be the favourite haunt of a species of trout the flesh of which was of a peculiarly fine and delicate flavour. Our destination reached, we anchored the raft with a "killick", or large stone, at a spot about a hundred yards from the western shore, baited our lines, and began to fish. We had but two lines on the raft, and as Miss Anthea elected to take an active part in the proceedings, Oldroyd willingly surrendered his line to her and, stretching himself at full length along the middle of the raft, smoked at his ease.

The fish were biting freely that afternoon, and we had already, between us, landed upward of a dozen, Oldroyd unhooking Anthea's fish for her and re-baiting her hook when just as he had again performed this service and was settling back into a recumbent position, Anthea cried out in a low, tense voice—

"Jack—Paul—look! There is a man peeping at us through the bushes on shore." As she spoke, she lifted her hand and pointed. "Ah!" she added, "he is gone, now. I believe he saw me pointing."

"A man!" we both exclaimed. "Where?"

"You see that bush with the beautiful purple convolvulus blooms upon it? Well, he was crouching behind that bush and peering at us through its parted branches. I saw his face distinctly; but when I raised my hand and pointed, he disappeared, and I saw the parted branches spring together as he vanished."

"Are you quite sure?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied, "I am quite sure."

Oldroyd looked at me and signed with his lips the word "savages." I nodded.

"You are quite sure, I suppose, that it wasn't Mason, or—or—one of the sailors?" suggested Oldroyd.

“Sure! As sure as that I am sitting here,” answered Anthea, quite composedly. “I guess he is one of the savages who, you say, live in the big basin over yonder.”

I sprang to the painter and began to haul up the killick.

“Out paddle, Oldroyd,” I said, “and head for the shore, I’m going to look into this.”

“I guess not, my son,” answered Oldroyd. “If there really was a savage there—which I don’t doubt,” he hastily added as Anthea turned upon him with a hint of lightning in her eye—“likely as not there will be a dozen or twenty more with him; and we have only our bows and arrows. What could we do against a crowd like that?”

“Shove me ashore, if you please,” I returned. “I mean to see for myself whether there is any sign of a savage having crouched behind that bush. If there is, it is important we should know it beyond doubt. But I don’t want you two to come with me; on the contrary, as soon as I am ashore I want you to paddle as hard as you can to the landing place, and then hurry Anthea to the tower.”

“No, Jack,” interposed Anthea, “I won’t have it; you shall not do it. Head for the beach, Paul,” she ordered, seizing a paddle and beginning to use it.

“But, Anthea—” I began to protest.

“I don’t care,” she interrupted, vehemently plying her paddle; “Paul is right; the savage I saw may have twenty—or fifty—more with him, and if you were to land, you would just get killed, and—no, you shall not land—or, if you do, I will land with you!”

“All right,” I said. “Of course that settles it. We will make for the beach and—give me the paddle, please, Thea; I am stronger than you, and we must return to the tower without loss of time. But we will take our fish with us, so while Oldroyd and I paddle perhaps you will kindly string our catch upon that length of liana.”

We reached the beach without further sight or sound of the savage, or savages; and then, while Oldroyd stood on guard, with his bow bent and an arrow fitted to the string, I hauled up the raft, secured her, and removed the fishing lines so that they might not be stolen. I more than half anticipated an attack while we stood there exposed upon the open beach, but nothing happened, and when we had made everything as secure as possible we started off for the ruin, Oldroyd leading with bent bow, cautious step, and eyes that searched every tree and bush along the path; Anthea going next, carrying our catch of fish; and I, also with bent bow, bringing up the rear, walking backward for the most part and, it must be confessed, every moment expecting to see a party of savages break through the scrub and come howling at us. But nothing untoward happened, and in due time we reached the ruin and safety, unmolested.

The news that a savage had been seen in what we had come to regard as our own exclusive part of the island was productive at first of excitement, which yielded to a feeling of doubt as to whether Anthea had not been mistaken, especially as neither Oldroyd nor I had seen anything alarming. But Thea stuck to her guns and was so certain that she had seen a strange face peering out at us through the bushes that incredulity in its turn yielded to conviction, and a council of war was held as to what steps should be taken for our protection. The thing we had most to fear was a rush from ambush and the capture of the ruined monastery—if such it was—by assault. True, the ground all round the building, for



the space of nearly a quarter of a mile was for the most part open, being encumbered only here and there with small, detached patches of scrub; but even these were numerous enough and bulky enough to permit of small bodies of men taking cover behind them, and so creeping near enough to cover the remaining open ground in a rush, we therefore proceeded to destroy these by piling dry twigs and branches round them and setting them on fire, and then breaking down and carrying away the charred remains. We managed to complete that task before dark, after which we felt safe, comparatively speaking, with absolutely open ground all round for a full quarter of a mile. Then Oldroyd and Mason got out their firearms, gave the weapons a thorough cleaning and oiling, loaded them, and arranged them at various strategic points round the building, each with its little pile of ammunition, while the rest of us overhauled our bowstrings, fitted new where necessary, and proceeded diligently to add to our stock of war arrows. Finally, although we were doubtful as to the likelihood of an attack that night, we arranged a system of watches, the sentinels took up their appointed positions, and those not on duty retired to rest.

The night passed without alarm or disturbance; and while we sat at breakfast next morning another informal council of war was held, at which the question of our future proceedings was discussed. Among other points raised was that of the nomination of one of our party as a recognised head, or leader, who should take command, arrange a plan of campaign, and issue orders for the conduct of every member of the party, who should be bound to obey him. This suggestion was made by the Doctor, and was supported by the others of the party, all of whom seemed inclined to think me the proper person for the post. But while declaring myself willing to accept the responsibility, I felt bound to explain that I had had no actual experience of fighting, and knew nothing of war tactics, while both Oldroyd and Mason had mingled with savages on more than one occasion and must have acquired a considerable amount of knowledge as to the best method of dealing with them, I therefore proposed that one of them should take the position of captain. To this, however, both demurred, pointing out that, being a shipwrecked party, they had hitherto regarded me, a sailor, as the one most competent to assume the direction of affairs, and that in their opinion it would be unwise to make any alteration at the present juncture. Finally it was decided that I should continue to be regarded as in command of the party, with Oldroyd and Mason as my lieutenants, both of whom very heartily promised unreservedly to place their knowledge and experience at my disposal.

Breakfast over, Oldroyd, Mason and I climbed the tower, to reconnoitre the face of the country, and further to discuss a plan of operations. With my telescope I examined the open country in sight, but nowhere could I detect any sign of savages, although we were all agreed that unless Anthea was mistaken in supposing that she had seen the face of one peering at her on the previous day—as to which we were by this time a little doubtful—the savages, once apprised of the presence of strangers upon the island, would lose not a moment in ascertaining where those strangers had located themselves, how many they were, and any other particulars. We were equally agreed that it was of vital importance for us to discover as much as possible regarding the movements of the savages and their intentions. With regard to the savage seen—or supposed to have been

seen—by Anthea on the previous afternoon, Oldroyd and Mason were of opinion that, if the man was not the figment of Miss Shirley-Winthrop's imagination, or a trick of light and shadow momentarily assuming the semblance of a human countenance, he would track us first to the beach, and thence to the ruined monastery, probably lurk within sight of the ruin until darkness closed down, discovering all he could about us, and then make his way back to his friends, to report. They further agreed that the savages, having preparations to make, would not move before daylight.

But I was never a patient individual; if there was going to be war I wanted to know exactly where the enemy was, how many of him there were, and all about him. I therefore proposed that I should take a double-barrelled sporting gun and a pocketful of buckshot cartridges and, making a wide *détour*, go out upon a reconnoitring expedition, pushing forward, if possible, as far as the Basin itself, with the general object of gaining information. Oldroyd and Mason, however, would not hear of it; they were in agreement with me as to the desirability of obtaining information, but I had had no experience of savage methods of warfare, and knew not what dangers to guard against; and so, therefore, for me to undertake the adventure would be tantamount to throwing away my life without any useful result. They, on the other hand, were accustomed to mingle with savages, they knew the tricks and peculiarities of the average native and how to deal with him, both in war and in peace, and if the proposed expedition must be undertaken—and they agreed that it was in every way desirable—one or the other of them was the proper person to undertake it. To this argument I had no reply. Accordingly it was agreed that Oldroyd should go, since he knew the country and the best route to the Basin; and five minutes later he quietly set out, without saying anything to the others. As Mason and I bade him farewell at the base of the tower I reminded him of the existence of the subterranean passage from the tower to the monastery, pointed out to him that if he failed to effect an entrance of the one he might succeed with the other; and then, after we had watched him out of sight, we set to work with a will to strengthen our fortress by barricading its two entrances—that at the tower and the other at the ruin—as effectively as possible.

There was plenty for all of us to do, in view of the possibility that the savages, if they attacked us, might choose to fight the fight of "sit down", that is to say, to beleague us in the hope of starving us out; therefore the two girls undertook to maintain a watch, the one from the summit of the tower and the other from the roof of the monastery—both being of course strictly cautioned not to allow themselves to be seen, while Mason and I, with the two seamen, went from point to point of our defences, strengthening them where necessary, until by mid-afternoon we had done everything that was possible. We then had time to feel anxious about Oldroyd, who had been absent long enough to have made his way to the Basin and back, if he had not been detained.

It was not, however, until nearly nine o'clock that night that our adventurous friend turned up, and then he had a sufficiently exciting story to tell.

"When I left you fellows, this morning," he said, addressing Mason and me, "I started off by way of the left bank of the stream, for a distance of about a mile, until I came to the elbow in which the tobacco patch is; and here I struck away from the stream, past the outer edge of the cotton plantation, heading for the

western shore of the lake, my object being to find the bush from behind which Thea believed she saw—”

“There is no question of ‘believing’,” interrupted Thea. “I *did* see him, as plainly as I see you now.”

“Precisely,” agreed Oldroyd, “you *did* see him, without a doubt; for in due time I found the bush and, behind it, the fellow’s form where he had crouched in the long grass, watching us. From there his trail was easy enough to follow, for he appeared to have been at no pains to obliterate it. Of course I followed it, to ascertain his subsequent movements. It led close along the shore of the lake until it reached the cotton field, and here the fellow must have lain perdu in the grass for some time—doubtless watching us as we landed from the raft—for here again his ‘form’ was distinctly marked. Ultimately he followed us close up to this building; and here again he lay watching for some time behind a clump of bushes which effectively concealed him. When he had seen all that he wanted—or, perhaps I ought to say, all that was possible—he crept away in the direction of the crater until he had got well in among the tall timber, where he went off in a westerly direction and it was only with difficulty that I could follow his tracks.

“I had gone some three or four miles, perhaps, and was in a part of the forest that I had not visited before, when suddenly a flock of parakeet took wing, some distance ahead of me, making a terrific row. They were alarmed at something, but what I could not guess; I knew it was not at myself, for I was too far away; moreover they flew toward me. I got behind the trunk of the nearest tree, and presently saw a man coming toward me. He was a savage, light in colour and not at all a bad-looking chap. He wore a full beard and moustache, and his hair was long, hanging down upon his shoulders. His clothing was a sort of short petticoat made of grass and bound round his waist by a belt of what looked like plaited grass. In one hand he carried a sheaf of half-a-dozen short spears with multi-barbed points, while in the other he had a war club the head of which—as big as my two fists—was spiked all over with what looked like shark’s teeth. He came forward noiselessly and with some caution, peering ahead and all round with his head thrust well forward.

“At first I imagined him to be alone; but presently, he turned, uttered a chirping sound like that of a bird, and others followed him, to the number of just two hundred and sixteen—for I counted them. But you can bet your bottom dollar that I wasn’t going to stay behind the trunk of that tree, with the almost certainty of being spotted by one of the sharp-eyed cusses. I just subsided into the long grass and crept for all I was worth until I had got well out of the track of the crowd, and there I lay, scarcely daring to breathe, until I reckoned that they had all gone past.

“At length, when I calculated that the last of the party must have put about a mile between himself and me, I rose first to my knees and then to my feet, and looked about me. And, will you believe me, sir, I had scarcely straightened out the kinks in my backbone when—*whizz*—there came a spear at me from nowhere in particular, clipping my best stetson off my head and sticking kerplunk in the trunk of a tree about two yards behind me!

“The fashion in which I disappeared from view would have done credit to the slickest ghost you ever saw; but I noted the direction from which the spear had come, and I calculated that it was from the lower branches of a certain tree, the

top of which I could just see from where I lay hidden in the long grass, and at once, very cautiously, I began to circle round, on hands and knees, toward that tree. It took me a good half-hour to make a quarter of a circle, at a distance of about eighty yards, and then I came to a good big bush, thick enough to afford me perfect cover. Here I halted and, getting to my feet, managed to part the boughs until I got a clear view of the tree I suspected as the lurking place of the wily foe. And I guess my suspicion was dead right; for there, perched astride one of the lower branches, was the cuss I was looking for.

“Well, I guess I don’t need to tell you in detail exactly what happened to that savage, it will be enough to say that he will not trouble anybody any more. Having satisfied myself of this, I took up the trail of the rest of the party, using every precaution to make sure that none of the departed cuss’s friends were coming along the back trail to see what had become of him. This made slow work of my going, but I was anxious to avoid further trouble, moreover every yard might be bringing me nearer to those whose track I was following, and I did not want them to hear the report of my gun, and perhaps return to find out what the disturbance was about, it was therefore within half an hour of sunset when I next sighted them. And where do you suppose they are?”

“At a rough guess, I should be inclined to say they are surrounding this ruin, as near to it as they can get without being seen,” I replied.

“That is precisely where they are. But—and this is the most important point, so far as we are concerned—they are evidently in ignorance of the existence of the subterranean temple and the passages connecting this ruin with the tower, for the latter is well outside the extreme boundary of their enveloping camp—there are not enough of them, you see, to encompass the whole of the ruins and the tower; therefore I am convinced that by using the passages and the exit by way of the tower, we may, with ordinary care, contrive to keep ourselves supplied with provisions and water until—as Massey graphically puts it—further orders.”

“Will they attack us, think you, or, having invested this building and, as they believe, shut us in, will they try the game of starving us out?”

“The later, I should imagine, decidedly,” answered Oldroyd. “My experience of savages is that—with the exception, perhaps, of the Zulus—they never fight for the mere pleasure of fighting or unless it seems impossible for them to achieve their object in any other way. If any other way than fighting seems feasible, they will generally adopt that way.”

## **Chapter 10**

### **The Attack.**

Although we were all persuaded that Oldroyd’s view of the situation was correct and that we need not fear any attempt on the part of the savages to carry the ruined monastery by assault, at all events until we had been, as they would suppose, starved into a condition which would render us incapable of effective

resistance, we were of course too prudent to neglect any precaution; accordingly our system of watches of the preceding night was continued, two of us doing sentry go on the flat roof of the building for four hours at a stretch. The Doctor was anxious to take turn with the rest, but with diplomacy on Oldroyd's part we convinced him that his services were not necessary and persuaded him to give the night to sleep. With the two girls we were less successful, they simply refused to accept our dictum that they could very well be dispensed with, and insisted in joining one or another of us on the roof, until, recognising that they were both fully determined to "do their bit," we gave in and allowed them to do their regular turn with us.

On the first night of our investment by the savages my turn of sentry go was from six o'clock until ten, after which barring excursions and alarms, I was free for the remainder of the night. But I was exceedingly anxious to see for myself the enemy's arrangements and his methods of action in general, therefore when at ten o'clock I was relieved, instead of going directly to my cell, I obtained possession of a loaded rifle, dropped a few cartridges into my pocket, and made my way down to the basement of the building, and thence, by way of the subterranean passage, to the tower.

The most critical point in the passage from the ruined monastery to the tower was perhaps that where it became necessary to raise the loose slab of stone in the paved floor of the tower, thus uncovering the aperture at the head of the first flight of steps leading to the subterranean regions. For if by any chance an enemy happened to be occupying the base of the tower at the moment when one of us attempted to pass through the aperture, the chances were greatly in favour of instant detection. Yet detection was not necessarily inevitable, for the central column of masonry which supported the winding stairway leading to the top of the tower, and the stairway itself, effectually hid the slab from any one who might happen to be standing just inside the doorway, keeping watch upon the exterior surroundings, while as for sound, we had taken measures to render the opening and closing of the aperture noiseless.

We did not anticipate the presence of an enemy in the base of the tower; there had not been one stationed there a few hours earlier, when Oldroyd had joined us by way of the subterranean passage, and there was no particular reason why one should be stationed there now; but I neglected no precaution when I reached the critical spot, with the utmost care and silently I raised the slab, crept out, lowered the slab into place again, and noiselessly passed round the central column, and reached the doorway of the tower. A glance showed me that my precautions had been needless, the open doorway, framed by the blackness of the pierced wall, showed nothing more alarming than the view of a patch of vegetation dimly illuminated by starlight and surmounted by a narrow strip of brilliantly starlit sky.

But although the base of the tower held no enemy, it was possible that a sentinel might be posted at no great distance outside, I therefore stole on tiptoe to the opening and from its darkness peered intently about me. So intense was the darkness of the interior of the tower that the starlit landscape outside seemed by comparison to be brilliantly illuminated, every shrub, every bush, every tree, nay even the blades of grass that gently waved at my feet in the soft night breeze showed up distinctly, and had there been a human figure within my ken I must at

once have detected its presence. But there was not; it was evident that the savages had no suspicion of the existence of a means of communication between the ruin which harboured our party, and the tower, and the latter was therefore left unwatched. I listened for any sound which might indicate the proximity of a human presence, but could hear nothing, I therefore stepped cautiously into the open and, again peering about me, made my way along the winding path which led through the encircling belt of shrubs to the open country beyond.

My object in venturing forth thus alone in the darkness was of course to obtain a personal view of the number and dispositions of the enemy. But the tower from which I had just issued and the beleaguered ruin were on opposite sides of the brook, which I must cross before I could reach the enemy's camp, I therefore turned southward, following the course of the stream, until I had put about a mile between myself and the tower, when I waded across to the opposite bank and headed toward the spot where I guessed the main body of the enemy to be. My progress was naturally slow, for I was pitting myself against savages, who, all the world over, are credited with the possession of faculties sharpened to an abnormal degree, and who are known to depend to a very large extent for safety upon their keenness of sight, hearing and scent. The rustling of a leaf or twig without sufficient reason, the slightest unaccountable movement, even an odour so faint as to make no impression upon the nostrils of the civilised man, suffices to put the savage on the alert and warn him of possible danger. It was therefore imperative that I should advance as cautiously as though I were stalking a startled deer; but at length the scent of wood smoke reached my nostrils and I knew that the end of the first part of my journey was near.

Dropping upon hands and knees, I crept forward inch by inch, availing myself of every scrap of cover, until at length through the twigs of a bush I caught sight of a dull red glow, some twenty yards distant. I was still staring at this and the ground in its immediate vicinity, when a little draught of wind swept past, fanning the expiring fire into a momentary flicker of flame, by the light of which I saw a number of recumbent figures, more than half concealed by the grass in which they lay, while, some ten yards farther on, I caught a glimpse of an upright figure standing with his back toward me, and consequently facing in the direction of the ruin wherein our party was lodged.

The necessity to make my every movement with circumspection rendered the encirclement of the enemy's position a long and tedious business, but I accomplished it at last, the result of my observations being the discovery that the savages, to the number of some two hundred, had so completely invested the monastery that it would be impossible to leave the building and pass through their lines without being detected and captured. It was evident they intended to follow the dictates of prudence by fighting the fight of "sit down"—in other words, to keep us penned up until hunger and thirst should compel us either to surrender or to attempt to force our way out by means of a *sortie*, for I saw nothing to indicate an intention to storm the building in the hope of carrying it by a surprise attack; on the contrary, everything seemed to point to the fact that they were prepared to remain quietly where they were just as long as need be, and not to strike a blow except in self-defence. I accomplished the circuit of the encampment as the signs of coming dawn appeared in the sky, and effected my retirement undiscovered,

entering the tower at the moment when the first ray of the rising sun smote the summit of the Peak and turned it to gold. I returned by the way I had come, through the subterranean passage, taking care to secure the moveable slab so that it could not be raised from without, and rejoined the rest of my party before any of them was aware of my absence.

The maintenance of a sufficient supply of food and water for our little company was now our chief anxiety, for we knew that the savages were dependent, like ourselves, upon the adjacent woods and the neighbouring stream for everything. It was a matter demanding careful consideration, but an hour's discussion solved the problem. We argued that the savages would do their foraging in the day time, possibly despatching messengers to the Basin from time to time to fetch such articles of food as fish, corn, meal, etcetera, as the woods did not provide. Furthermore, we judged that since the country to the north and west of the ruins was comparatively flat, while that to the south and east was steep and rugged, they—if they were at all like other savages, averse from the performance of unnecessary labour—would confine their foraging operations to the first named part of the island, which was capable of supplying their every want. The conclusion was that we must carefully confine our foraging to the southern and eastern portions of the island. Of course it would be as necessary for us as for the savages to do our foraging by daylight, since it would be difficult if not impossible to find a sufficiency of the right kinds of fruit in the dark, to say nothing of the birds, an important part of our diet; but we believed this difficulty might be overcome by sallying forth by way of the tower before daylight, and returning after dark, by which means we hoped to avoid encountering the savages or being detected by them. As for water, an adequate supply of that was easily managed, since we all so well knew the way from the tower to the stream that we could go to it at night and bring in as much as we needed while the whole force of the savages would be on the alert to prevent any of us from stealing out of the ruined monastery. This plan we adopted, with satisfactory results, although it involved a lot of night work for the menfolk of our party. In this way a full week passed, without inconvenience to us, except that the two girls were deprived of their daily walk, for it would have been madness for them to venture beyond the shelter of our four walls, and fortunately they had sense enough to know it, although both of them attempted once or twice to wheedle Oldroyd and myself into taking them with us. Also we—or rather, Mason—kept the simple savages on the alert, day and night, and induced in them an indisposition to stray very far from the neighbourhood of the ruins by making frequent feint attempts to break through their cordon, always taking care not to venture far enough away to get caught, and effecting a timely retreat under cover of the bows and arrows of the two seamen, who, having become, by assiduous practice, very fair shots, thus contrived to put some half-dozen of the savages *hors de combat*.

It was on the ninth day of our investment that the first signs of impatience on the part of the savages became noticeable. Mason, who was in command during the absence of Oldroyd and myself—who, as usual, had gone out foraging—was on the roof of the monastery, reconnoitring preparatory to another feint on his part to break through, when he caught a glimpse of a savage face peering at him through a bush on the outskirts of the open ground surrounding the building. Lucy Stroud

was on the roof with him, and he at once sent her for my telescope, and examined the ground, with the result that he eventually discovered some twenty savages concealed behind convenient bushes, all staring at the monastery. He kept those twenty well under observation for nearly half an hour, at the end of which he saw them, as at a preconcerted signal, back carefully away until they supposed themselves to be out of range, when they calmly rose to their feet and walked to the shadow of a large tree, where, squatting on the ground in a circle, they engaged in an animated discussion which had all the appearance of being a council of war. He informed us, that night, when Oldroyd and I returned, that the council—if such it was—lasted nearly an hour, that the savages spoke in turn, using a vast amount of gesticulation, the meaning of some of which he believed he had guessed at pretty shrewdly, and that, if he was right, the subject of discussion was a proposal to storm the building. He was of opinion that the members of the council were by no means unanimously in favour of active measures, the elders among them seeming to counsel patience, while the younger men seemed to advocate immediate action. Of course this was all pure surmise, and Mason may have been mistaken in his interpretation of the gestures of the several members of the supposed war council, but in any case what he had seen seemed to portend action of some kind, and it was decided that no one should leave the building next day, a decision the more easily come to inasmuch as we happened to have a sufficiency of food to last forty-eight hours.

We were all on the alert that night, for Mason's report had led us to expect an attack sometime in the small hours of the morning; but contrary to our anticipation, the night passed quietly, nothing happened, and when at length morning came and we were once more able to get sight of our surroundings, a careful reconnaissance from the top of the tower revealed the fact that the savages were acting pretty much as usual. Later in the day, however, signs of greatly increased activity on the part of the enemy became visible; the two girls, who had undertaken to maintain, between them, an uninterrupted watch from the summit of the tower, reported that a party of about fifty had been observed to leave their camp and proceed in the direction of the Basin, returning some four hours later, laden with spears and war clubs, and accompanied by a large number of women bearing baskets containing supplies of fruit and fish, which they left at the camp, the women then departing with the empty baskets. This seemed to indicate that at last decisive action of some sort had been determined upon by the enemy, and we made our arrangements accordingly.

With nightfall our real anxieties began, for we could not know whether the activity displayed during the day was the prelude to an attack, or whether it was merely a demonstration made with the object of keeping us perpetually on the alert and thus eventually tiring us out: furthermore, if an attack was actually intended we had no means of knowing at what hour it would take place. It might occur at any moment, though we rather anticipated that it would probably be deferred until the small hours of the morning, when human vitality is at its lowest and fatigue most strongly asserts itself. Our preparations, however, were complete before nightfall, and an incessant watch was maintained from the roof of the monastery. Of course it would have been the easiest thing in the world for us to have avoided a fight altogether by the simple device of retiring to the subterranean



chambers and shutting ourselves in; but there were several good reasons against that, the chief of which was that, since the savages had chosen to assume the offensive, we must first demonstrate our superiority to them, after which it would probably be possible to establish amicable relations upon terms advantageous to ourselves.

The hours passed, slowly enough; Oldroyd, Mason and the two seamen being stationed, one at the middle of each of the low parapets that surrounded the flat roof of the monastery, each man reclining with his back to the parapet, snatching such sleep as might be possible, but with his weapons to his hand, ready for use at a moment's notice, while I paced wearily round and round, keeping a strict watch upon the belt of scrub that surrounded the open space on all sides of the building. The silence remained profound, being emphasised rather than broken by the sullen, continuous low thunder of the surf upon the distant reefs and the sibilant hum of the myriads of insects that inhabited the neighbouring woods; it was very dark, all the darker for the shadow of those same woods and the overhanging Peak, the last rearing itself blackly into the black sky, like a wedge, and blotting out about a sixth-part of the starlit firmament. Yet, dark as it was, the star-sheen was just sufficient for one to distinguish the open ground from the black mass of the surrounding scrub, and it was upon this faintly defined open ground that I kept my eyes fixed as I slowly traversed my beat, pausing at intervals to take a longer look.

It was during one of these pauses that I seemed to detect a subtle difference in the aspect of our surroundings. The belt of scrub that bounded the open space on all sides of the monastery was quite regular in outline—we had seen to that; but now it appeared to me that it presented in places a jagged appearance, portions of the scrub projecting here and there.

I took my night glass and studied these projections with the utmost intentness, and as I did so a certain passage in "Macbeth" flashed into my mind; the belt of scrub was stealthily drawing nearer to the walls of the beleaguered building; already I could detect detached portions of it here and there, each detached portion having behind it, I could not doubt, one or more savages creeping inch by inch, stealthily towards us.

I waited, patiently watching, until there could no longer be a doubt as to the correctness of my surmise; waited until it was possible to distinguish those detached masses of scrub with the unaided eye, then I gently roused my four companions, explained to them in a whisper what I had discovered, and pointed out to them the screening patches of scrub behind which lurked the wily savages. This done, four of us went to a lamp which we had burning in a bucket on the roof, fired four big handfuls of prepared tow, and dropped one each over the wall on to some bonfires we had built beneath. These last, being dry, instantly kindled, and a minute later were blazing up and crackling fiercely, sending up a thin smoke, it is true, but casting a yellowish glare all over the open ground and revealing the detached masses of scrub with startling distinctness.

The savages now sprang to their feet with blood-curdling yells and, brandishing their spears, started at a run to cover the intervening distance, a dozen or more gangs of them, each numbering about twenty men, carrying long pine poles, the branches of which had been lopped off to within about a foot of the trunk, which

they evidently intended to use as scaling ladders. They came on from all four sides at once, casting their spears as they ran; and for a minute or two I thought that things looked rather bad for us. We lost not a moment in getting our bows and arrows into action, and although our every shot told, we utterly failed to stop their rush until Oldroyd and Mason seizing their shot guns, loaded with buckshot, began to blaze away at the ladder bearers, in more than one instance arresting the whole gang at a single discharge. Then, indeed, whether it was the flash, the report, or the amount of damage done, we could not say—perhaps all three played their part—the mob came to a halt, with cries of consternation and, after standing for nearly a minute, spellbound, while we continued to pepper them severely, turned short round and fled, leaving nearly a quarter of their number on the ground. There was only one exception to this. He was a fine-looking fellow; wearing a sort of coronet of shells bound round his head, with several scarlet feathers attached to a kind of necklace, from which, since he seemed to be the only man so adorned, I drew the inference that he was the chief of the band. He seemed to be not in the least dismayed by the discharge of the guns or the slaughter of his comrades; he appeared to be animated by a kind of berserk rage and continued to advance while his comrades were flying, hurling his spears with marvellous strength and precision while he gave utterance to the most extraordinary cries of ferocity and defiance. He arrived within some twenty yards of the wall before one of the seamen, seizing a rifle, brought him down with a bullet through his chest. This ended the fight, for that night at least, the savages retiring to their camp discomfited.

Scarcely was the fight over, when the two girls made their appearance on the roof, bearing a liberal supply of a very refreshing and delicious cooling drink which they had learned to compound from the expressed juices of certain fruits mingled with cocoanut milk. They eagerly enquired whether either of us had been hurt, and, receiving a reply in the negative, proceeded to serve the draught which they had prepared, and then quite obediently went to bed again.

## **Chapter 11**

### **Anthea raises the Siege.**

With the coming of the dawn we discovered, as we had expected, that the savages had removed their dead and wounded, with one exception, and that was the man who, during the hottest of the fight, had refused to retire when the rest had fled stricken with dismay at the effect of our firearms, and whose mad rush had only been stopped by a bullet fired by one of the seamen. He lay not more than twenty yards from the foot of the south wall of the monastery, apparently just as he had fallen, and he at first appeared to be dead. But as we stood gazing at him, he flung up one arm and clutched the wound in his breast, as though the smart of it had pierced through his state of unconsciousness. It was evident that some of the savages had seen the movement, too, for on the instant a shrill cry

went up, and presently a band of about fifty of them emerged, fully armed, from the sheltering scrub and advanced at a rapid run, with the clear intention of carrying him off. Now that I saw him in clear daylight, however, I was more convinced than ever, from his appearance, that he must be a man of importance, the eagerness of the savages to save him going a long way to confirm me in that opinion. But, if as I suspected, he was a chief—possibly the chief—of the tribe, it would be well worth while to secure him, if only to hold as a hostage; I therefore shouted to Wilkinson to follow me and, hastily explaining to Oldroyd my determination to bring the wounded man in, dashed down the steps leading from the roof, and made my way outside the building just as a double report from the roof apprised me that the two Americans had opened fire upon the advancing savages. Without waiting to see the result, I rushed toward the wounded man, while a dozen spears hurtled about my ears, seized him by the shoulders as Wilkinson came up and laid hold of his legs, and together we bore him into the building, while the two Americans held the advancing savages at bay and finally drove them off with further losses.

We carried him to an empty cell and set him down, and Wilkinson hurried away to fetch the Doctor, while I stood by and watched the wounded man.

I judged him to be about twenty-eight or thirty years of age, about five feet ten inches in height, splendidly made, with fine, shapely but rather slender limbs, quite passably good-looking, his complexion a pale olive, scarcely darker than my own sunburnt features, and his hair, beard and moustache were jet black. The man was conscious now, and stared enquiringly into my face, as though trying—I thought—to read his fate there. I smiled encouragingly at him, patted him on the shoulder and said—

“It’s all right, old chap, don’t worry; we won’t hurt you.”

Of course he could not understand my words, but I think the tones of my voice must have been reassuring, for he nodded gravely, said a few words, and then pointed to the wound in his chest. I again nodded encouragingly, and was about to essay further speech when the Doctor entered, accompanied by Wilkinson. Walking straight up to his patient, he bent over the savage, knelt by his side, scrutinised the wound, and then ordered the seaman to bring hot water, and a soft towel.

“The trouble with us,” remarked the Doctor, while waiting for Wilkinson’s return, “is that we have no drugs, antiseptics or dressings of any description. The utmost that I can do for this man is just to wash the wound and cleanse it as best I can, and leave Nature to do the rest. It is a pity, for the wound ought to be dressed, though ever so roughly, if only to exclude possible impurities, but—”

“Would an old shirt be of any use, doctor?” I asked. “Well,” was the somewhat hesitating answer, “it would be better than nothing.”

I went for the shirt, such as it was; and when I returned I found Wilkinson also back, with hot water, and a nice soft clean towel, with which the Doctor was carefully washing the wound. When he had done this he took the shirt from me, inspected it, and finally began to tear it into strips from which he formed pads and bandages. Twenty minutes sufficed him to do all that it was possible to do, when he left the patient, instructing Wilkinson to remain and see that the man was not disturbed, as sleep was now the best thing for him. The Doctor had been very

gentle in the handling of his patient, but, notwithstanding, he must have caused the poor chap considerable pain, yet the savage never once winced, or betrayed the smallest evidence of discomfort, apart from a profuse perspiration.

When I rejoined the rest of the party they were about to sit down to breakfast, while Shirley-Winthrop was doing his best to satisfy the curiosity of his questioners as to the condition of the patient and his prospects of recovery. I arrived in time to hear Lucy Stroud offering her services as nurse, to the Doctor, and he, good simple man, was cheerfully accepting them, when I intervened with a very decided negative, saying—

“No, certainly not; the man must not be permitted to see either of you girls, on any account whatever.”

Breakfast over, Oldroyd and I started out upon our daily duty of bringing in the necessary supplies of food and water for the day's consumption. Naturally, we exercised extreme caution in our movements, for we had no desire to fall into the hands of our pertinacious enemies, nor did we wish them to discover by what means we entered and left the ruins. But we had little fear on the score of either contingency for, if I have not already done so, I will explain now that the ruins which we inhabited were situated on the right bank of the stream from which we drew our supply of water, while the tower from which we made our exit was on the left bank, the subterranean passage connecting the two passing beneath the bed of the stream. Moreover, the two buildings—the tower and the monastery—were about half a mile apart, the latter being hemmed in and closely watched by the savages, who evidently had no idea that any means of connection between the two existed, for, thus far, we had been unable to discover that even the most cursory observation of the tower was being maintained. This, and the further fact that the tower was encircled by a belt of high bushes, through which only one intricate and almost secret passage existed, enabled us to leave the tower, even in broad daylight if need were, with very little risk of discovery.

On this particular day we were rather longer than usual. The girls had by this time taken upon themselves the entire duty of preparing our meals, therefore after handing over to them our booty, Oldroyd and I made our way to the sick man's cell to see how he was progressing. Upon entering the cell we learned from Dartnell, who was now on duty, that the patient had only awakened from a somewhat lengthy sleep a few minutes previously, and seemed to be asking for something, though the seaman could not understand what it was. Oldroyd diagnosed the want as that of water, we therefore sent Dartnell away to fetch some, and also a bunch or two of grapes, that we had brought with us fresh from the woods that morning, and upon receiving these the wounded man partook of them eagerly, at the same time making signs which we easily understood were those of gratitude. When he had finished eating, the poor fellow seemed inclined to sleep again, so we left him.

It was natural, I suppose, that after we had left the wounded man, our conversation should turn upon the difficulty of exchanging ideas between people, each ignorant of the other's language. I had already recognised that, having now actually come into contact with the savages, it was highly important that we should be able to converse with them and make ourselves understood, but I could not see how it was to be done, and said as much to my companion. Oldroyd,

however, assured me that the difficulties were not nearly so great as I seemed to imagine, and he went on to explain his own simple method. It consisted in selecting some object known to both parties, naming it in English, and then, by signs, inviting the other to name it in his own language. We agreed to try the plan with our patient, as soon as he was well enough; and, I may say that we found it answered so excellently that by the time that the savage was completely recovered, he, Oldroyd and I were able to make ourselves fairly well understood in a general way.

A week elapsed, during which our particular ruin remained as beleaguered as ever by the savages, although no further attempt was made to storm the place. The time began to hang rather heavily on the hands of some of us, and particularly was this the case with the girls. The Doctor was still busy with his researches, while as for Oldroyd and myself, we soon found a new interest in our endeavours to establish a mutual understanding between our prisoner and ourselves. We had already ascertained from him that his name was Kilau Minga, and had taught him to name us both. But the only occupation of the girls was to prepare the food of the party. At length, by way of a joke and in order to vary the monotony a little, Thea took it into her head to descend to the vault of the temple and, with Lucy as her accomplice, remove from the coffer therein the nine sets of robes which we believed were intended as changes of raiment for the wooden goddess. These she conveyed to her own cell and, on a certain night, when we believed both girls had retired to bed, she startled and amazed us all by bursting in upon us, arrayed in the most gorgeous of the robes, with her beautiful hair streaming loose in golden waves over her shoulders and far below her waist.

For a moment or two we were all stricken dumb by the exquisite picture and—so far at least as I was concerned—by the marvellous resemblance which she now presented to the goddess of the niche.

The apparition of her, thus apparelled, inspired me with a sudden idea. For days I had been wondering if it might be possible to induce the savages to raise the siege and leave us once more free to roam the island at our pleasure, and now I believed I saw how it might be done.

“By Jove! Anthea,” I exclaimed, “you are the very image of the goddess in the temple down below. And see here, I have an idea—”

“Really?”

“Yes, *really*. This persistent siege of the ruins, and the necessity for us all to be keenly watchful is daily growing more monotonous and irksome. Now, I have been trying to hit upon some scheme whereby the savages may be scared, or induced to raise the siege, and the appearance of Miss Shirley-Winthrop in that splendid robe has given me the idea for which I have been groping.

“The savages who now inhabit this island, and their progenitors, have probably been here for hundreds of years. Whether or not they are the descendants of the people who built the tower and excavated the wonderful temple beneath it, I cannot say—”

“But I can,” interrupted the Doctor. “I assert unhesitatingly that they are not. The people who constructed the temple, and carved the beautiful image of the goddess which stands in the niche, were a highly intellectual people, a people of refined and cultivated taste—as is evidenced by the paintings which still adorn the

walls of the subterranean temple; and they must have possessed something more than the mere rudiments of civilisation. The people who now hold the island are savages, pure and simple. They cannot have descended from them. The descendants of a people capable of producing such beautiful things as we have seen in the temple could never have degenerated into mere savages."

"Um!" I remarked; "that rather knocks my scheme on the head. You think, then, Doctor, that the savages outside have no knowledge of the goddess of the Temple—not even by tradition?"

"No, I won't go so far as to say that," answered the Doctor. "They may possess more or less hazy legends of such a being."

"Well," said I, "at all events let me explain my idea to you all; you will then see what you think of it."

There was a murmur of assent, and I proceeded.

"Seeing Miss Shirley-Winthrop in that robe suggested to me the idea that it might be a good plan for her to show herself, just as she is, at the top of the tower, some night—to-night, if you like; it is full moon and it would be an excellent night for such an apparition. From the summit of the tower she will be in full view of the savages investing us; and if there is any legend or tradition among them relating to the goddess down below, they may perhaps be led to believe that her reappearance at this juncture indicates her displeasure at their conduct in beleaguering us, and they may thus be induced to abandon the siege and retire to their own end of the island. What do you think, Doctor?"

"Candidly, I have not very much faith in it," answered the Doctor. "To begin with, these people may never have heard of the goddess. And if they have, it is safe to say that not one of them has ever seen the figure, therefore Anthea's resemblance will count for nothing; the effect—if any—would be just as good if Miss Stroud were to personate the goddess. Finally, neither Anthea nor Miss Stroud knows a word of the savages' language, so how would they express their displeasure?"

"By action, of course," answered Anthea. "Now, you just watch me."

So saying the girl drew herself erect and stood for a short time with her hands clasped easily before her while she gazed contemplatively skyward. Then she glanced downward and a frown of displeasure wrinkled her smooth brow; she shook her head slowly; then, stamping her right foot angrily, she threw out her arm and waved it imperiously, as though ordering her audience to disperse, repeating the action several times. Finally she turned to us all with a smile, and addressing her father, asked—

"How was that, poppa? Do you think that would fetch them?"

"Upon my word I believe it would, my dear," answered the Doctor. "It was excellently done, and I think the savages would understand it. At all events, there can be no harm in trying. What say you, gentlemen?"

"I agree with you, Doctor," answered Oldroyd. "It certainly was admirably and expressively done. I don't see how the savages could fail to understand the meaning, and if they have ever heard of the goddess I believe the performance would result in complete success."

Mason and I similarly expressed ourselves. "There is only one point remaining to be settled," I added, "and that is—are you willing to do it, 'Thea?"

"Yes, certainly I am," answered Thea. "I would do much more than that in order to gain freedom to leave the ruins whenever I pleased, unmolested. But you must go with me, Jack. I dare not go up there alone at night."

"I think we need not discuss the matter further," I said. "Thea understands exactly the effect which it is desired to produce, and I believe she is capable of producing it. The only thing that remains is to put the experiment to the test, and the moment is as favourable as could be desired; the moon rides high, the sky is cloudless, and it is almost as light as day outside. Shall we go at once, Thea?"

"Yes," she answered, "I am ready."

We reached the summit of the tower without adventure and, crouching low, made our way to the point at which I wished Anthea to take her stand. The parapet had here crumbled away so completely that the platform constituting the roof of the tower was left entirely unprotected, and by standing there the entire figure of the "goddess" would be revealed, which I deemed highly desirable; moreover, it directly faced the moon, the rays of which would fall full upon Anthea's figure.

Approaching within about six inches of the edge of the platform, Anthea assumed the pose which she thought appropriate for the opening scene of our little comedy, and stood thus, motionless, for nearly ten minutes—without apparent result. I was beginning to think that the savages were maintaining a less strict watch than we had believed, and that our experiment was about to end in failure, when a startled exclamation down below revealed the fact that Anthea's gorgeously glittering figure had at last attracted attention. The exclamations of astonishment were repeated in various tones, culminating finally in a shout which carried with it a note of terror. Then Anthea permitted her gaze slowly to decline from the cloudless heavens to the earth beneath, and the pantomimic performance began. She made it more elaborate than she had done in the first instance, but it was splendidly done, and, what was more to the point, it was completely effective, for she did not desist until the enemy—who had punctuated her impassioned gestures with groans, howls and shrieks of dismay—hurriedly snatched up their weapons and scant belongings and started at a run in the direction of the Basin.

When the last of the savages had disappeared Anthea turned to me with sparkling eyes and laughing lips.

"Oh! Jack," she exclaimed, "I wish you could have seen it—but you couldn't, of course, could you? It was really *too* funny for words, and I could hardly help laughing, and so spoiling the whole show. The wretches were frightened stiff at the first sight of me—I am sure they must have heard of me before, for I noticed that each man, as he pointed me out to the others, exclaimed 'Taana! Taana!' which I believe is the name of the figure downstairs. I think the terror at my appearance must have been succeeded by a feeling of delight, at least that was how I interpreted their cries and their gestures. But when I frowned and shook my head at them they flung themselves down on the ground, groaned most dreadfully and beat the earth with their fists. Then they rose up on their knees and lifted their hands appealingly to me, upon which I made signs to them to go away immediately, which they did—at least I suppose they did. Do you think they really *have* all gone, Jack?"

"I really don't know," I said. "But I'll soon find out."

“How?” enquired my companion, briefly.

“By paying a visit to their camp.”

“Oh, yes, of course,” exclaimed Thea, eagerly. “Let’s.”

“Let’s?” I reiterated. “Does that mean that you propose to accompany me?”

“It is just as safe for me as for you.”

“No, it is not,” I returned; “and for this reason. If any of the savages still remain in their camp, the worst that they are likely to do will be to make a prisoner of me. That will not matter very much, for I believe that, if captured, I could contrive somehow to get away from them. But if you, in that robe, were seen with me, the whole effect of what you have just accomplished would be destroyed. You would be recognised as just a woman, and not the goddess that they now believe you to be, and they would make a prisoner of you also. How would you like that?”

“Well, of course I shouldn’t like it.”

“Very well, that settles it. We will not go,” I announced with decision. “And now let us get back to the others. They will be wondering what has become of us.”

Great satisfaction was expressed when, upon our return to what we called the “dining-room,” we announced our belief that the experiment had been crowned with complete success. Thea was complimented and thanked by the entire party for the skill with which she had played her part, and the young lady retired to her room in high feather. We men sat for nearly an hour longer, discussing the probable future conduct of the savages toward us, and then, sanguine but by no means certain, drifted to our respective cells.

I was tired, but the excitement of the night’s adventure had keyed me up to such a pitch that I could not sleep. I lay, twisting and tossing upon my bed—such as it was—until the dawn came stealing in through the open window, revealing the roughness of the masonry which formed the walls of my cell; then I rose and, stealing past the doors of the other sleepers, made my way into the open air, by which time the first rays of the rising sun were gilding the summit of the crater.

I made my way boldly and at once to the late camping ground of the savages, for I felt confident, from what Thea had told me, that the savages had indeed retired; and such I found to be the case, for, apart from the trampled and beaten-down grass and the ashes of their watch-fires, there was nothing to show that they had ever been there. Once satisfied of this, I returned to our ruin and gave the good news to the inmates, who were by this time astir.

## **Chapter 12**

### **The Goddess Taana and Kilau Minga.**

We were just about finishing breakfast when Dartnell, who was keeping a look-out on the roof, came down and reported—

“There’s a dozen of them natives outside, sir. They’re not armed, but they’ve got baskets of fruit and fish on their heads, and they’re signallin’ to know if they may come alongside.”



“Right!” I said. “I’ll go up and see them.”

“Fruit and fish, eh? Sounds like a peace offering, doesn’t it?” remarked Oldroyd. “I’ll go with you, Massey.”

“And I—and I,” added some of the others, the girls included.

“No,” said I; “certainly not. The natives must not see either of you girls, so please keep out of sight. As for the others, there is no reason why you should not show yourselves, if you care to come.”

With that, the entire party of us, the girls excepted, went up on the flat roof of our domicile and from thence beheld the party of natives reported by Dartnell. There were a dozen of them, all men, and fine, stalwart fellows they were, well-made, and not at all ill-looking. They had placed their baskets before them at their feet; and now, upon our appearance, one of them stepped forward, pointed first to the baskets, then to us, and finally to the base of the wall and uttered a sort of interrogative “Eu?”

The man’s meaning seemed plain enough; I nodded, and signed that they might bring their baskets forward, which they immediately did, placing their offering on the ground below where I stood. Eleven of the twelve then retired a few yards and, drawing up in line, appeared to be awaiting further developments, while the twelfth—he who appeared to be the leader of the party—began signing to us a communication which Oldroyd and I eventually interpreted as an enquiry of some sort in reference to our prisoner. We waited patiently until the fellow seemed to have completed his enquiry, and then I uttered, interrogatively—

“Kilau Minga?”

The savage nodded his head vigorously, and appeared to be highly gratified at his success.

“I think,” said I to Oldroyd, “it is clear enough that our friend down below there is anxious to get definite information regarding his chief. Do you think it would be wise to take him to Kilau Minga and let him see for himself how the patient is progressing allowing the two of them to have a chat together and exchange confidences?”

“Yes, I believe it would,” agreed Oldroyd. “I think the effect would be distinctly good.”

“What say you, Doctor?” I asked, “is your patient well enough to endure the ordeal of an interview with one of his own people?”

“Oh yes,” answered the Doctor. “A brief interview will not hurt him; on the contrary, it may be distinctly beneficial.”

“Good!” said I. “Then I will go down and admit our friend from outside.”

That interview was satisfactory. The native who had initiated the enquiry fearlessly and unhesitatingly accepted my invitation to enter our ruin, followed me confidently, and displayed delight when he saw his chief not only alive but well cared for and on the road to recovery. A long conversation passed between the two, in the course of which I had no difficulty in distinguishing that the new-comer was relating the incident of Thea’s performance of the previous night—indeed I heard the name “Taana” uttered several times. Kilau Minga appeared to be impressed by what he heard; he put a number of questions to his visitor, to whose replies he listened in awe-struck amazement; and I gathered that he approved of the raising of the siege.

Oldroyd and I escorted our visitor to the door, where the man treated us to another long pantomimic performance the purport of which we gathered to be, first, an expression of deep gratitude for our care of the chief, and, next, a request for permission to repeat the visit. The first we accepted with due dignity, and graciously accorded the second, the departure of the party being marked by many eloquent signs of amity and good-will.

We were all gratified at so satisfactory a termination of our little war. Mason was the only one not completely satisfied. He questioned whether the rest of us were not taking the peaceful protestations of the natives rather too much for granted, pointing out that savages were almost invariably treacherous and untruthful, regarding deception as legitimate for the gaining of an end. He was inclined to suspect the sincerity of our particular savages; he regarded their conversion as much too sudden to be genuine, and urged caution until the natives should have demonstrated their honesty. He was so earnest in his protests, and his arguments were so reasonable, so solidly based upon common sense, that we could not ignore them; and for a week or so we observed our former precautions; but by the end of that time we were all—Mason included—so convinced of the needlessness of those precautions that we practically abandoned them.

One result of the changed relations with the natives was that we no longer had to forage for our larder, our late enemies keeping us amply supplied every day with fruit, fish and birds in pleasing variety.

Matters progressed thus for about a week; and then, on a certain day, an element of variety was introduced by the inclusion of four women in the party who brought the daily tribute of fruit, etcetera, to our larder. The man whom we had by this time come to recognise as the leader was also present, and when the contents of the baskets had been delivered, as usual, this man led forward the four women and gave us to understand, by signs, that they also requested permission to see the chief. We gathered from the signs of the introducer—who, by the way, had conveyed to us the information that his name was Naqua—that the four women were Kilau Minga's wives, and as we saw no reason for refusing their request, we permitted the interview. Upon being introduced into Kilau Minga's chamber they rushed forward and, throwing themselves upon their knees beside his couch, seized his left hand, one after the other, and pressed it against their foreheads; then, settling back upon their heels, with little cries of delight at seeing him again, they poured forth a torrent of eager questions, which the poor fellow answered as well as he could in face of incessant interruptions. He appeared to be explaining the nature of our treatment of him, frequently indicating the Doctor, who was present, and who was visibly embarrassed by their constant manifestations of gratitude.

The interview lasted about half-an-hour, and then, at a sign and a word from Kilau Minga, the quartette rose to their feet, bent over the chief, again pressed his left hand to their foreheads, and somewhat reluctantly withdrew. Naqua remained a minute or two longer, apparently to receive certain instructions, and then he also withdrew, the whole party prostrating themselves before us by way of farewell, and then retiring into the forest, voicing a low, murmuring chant as they went.

Having by this time come to the conclusion that we had no cause to fear further interference we resumed our mode of life, save that, since the daily gift of fruit,

fish and birds continued, there was no need for us to forage for ourselves. Oldroyd and I spent a good deal of our time with the chief, studying his language and imparting to him a knowledge of ours, with the result that by the time that Kilau Minga had completely recovered, we three were enabled, with the help of occasional sketches, to communicate with each other with a considerable amount of freedom.

Interesting as Oldroyd and I found the study of the islanders' language, the presence of Kilau Minga in our midst grew increasingly embarrassing as he progressed toward recovery. It was no part of our policy to introduce him into what I may term the intimacy of our family circle, and especially was I anxious to conceal from him, and the natives generally, the existence of the two girls for as long as possible—although we all foresaw that this concealment could not be prolonged indefinitely; we therefore watched the chief's progress toward recovery with the keenest interest, since we were all anxious to send him back to his own people at the earliest date possible. Meanwhile, I had been thinking out a little scheme having for its object the strengthening of the impression made upon the native mind by Thea's nocturnal appearance upon the top of the tower. This scheme ran upon parallel lines with the one to which I have just alluded; and the first to whom I mentioned it was Oldroyd, who gave it qualified approval. I broached it to Thea, since it could only be carried out with her co-operation, and she at once consented.

At length the Doctor pronounced his patient to be sufficiently recovered to need no further professional care, and to be fit to return to his people. The man's delight was plain when he was given to understand that he would be free to leave us and return to his home. And he was not only delighted at the prospect of rejoining his own kith and kin; he was also intensely grateful for the care which we had taken of him and the humanity with which we had treated him.

At this point Oldroyd—who had a genius for the acquisition of languages and was far ahead of the rest of us in the facility with which he was able to converse with Kilau Minga—diverted the conversation into another channel by enquiring whether Naqua or any of the other natives who had visited the chief during his illness had made any mention of a remarkable apparition which had revealed itself one night on the top of the tower, and the appearance of which, we supposed, had led to the abandonment of the siege of the ruins by his people.

"Yes," answered the chief, he had been informed of the circumstance; and he, in common with the rest of his people had interpreted the manifestation as an indication of the goddess's displeasure at their attack upon the white people. He asked whether we, too, had seen the apparition; to which Oldroyd replied that we had; and, not only so, we had discovered among the ruins a temple dedicated to the worship of the goddess, for it contained an image of her, precisely as she had appeared on that memorable night.

Kilau Minga was moved at this news; his countenance betrayed awe, amazement, fear and a suspicion of incredulity. His voice sank to a whisper, and he glanced about him apprehensively as though he momentarily expected that the goddess would appear and visit with condign punishment the bold intruder who stood on what he evidently regarded as holy ground.

"It is the great goddess Taana, without a doubt!" he murmured. "None of us have ever seen her—until now; nor have we been told that she ever appeared to our forefathers. Neither do we know whereabouts her temple is, although it has been diligently sought for, time after time. But we know that it exists somewhere on this island; and we have a legend concerning Taana, that ages ago, the people rebelled against her rule and slew her priests because they had ordered the punishment of certain chiefs who had transgressed the law; whereupon the goddess disappeared, the mount yonder vomited forth fire and smoke, and the solid earth shook so terribly that many of the buildings standing near Taana's Tower were destroyed—as you may see them this day. And the legend goes on to say that Taana will some day return to the island; and that when she does, all will go well with us if we will but obey her laws—which we certainly will."

"I think you will be wise to do so," remarked Oldroyd. "I also think it possible that Taana may have returned to the island; for the apparition which we saw upon the tower the other night precisely resembled the image in the temple; indeed it might well have been the same, so exactly like was it."

Kilau Minga nodded abstractedly; he was thinking hard. Presently he looked up and said, hesitatingly—

"My lords, might I see the temple of which you speak—and Taana's image, before I go back to my own people?"

"Have you the courage to enter that sacred place?" demanded Oldroyd.

"I have the courage, yes, I have the courage," answered the chief. "I have never knowingly disobeyed any of Taana's laws, so why should she be angry with me?"

"Good!" returned Oldroyd. "Then you shall see both the temple and the image. I will get torches; then you shall come with us."

On his way to procure the torches, Oldroyd tapped at Anthea's door and gave her the warning for which she had been waiting. He was not long absent, for our preparations had already been made, in anticipation of the moment, the only time needed being what sufficed for Mason to light the lamps in the temple, and for Anthea to mount the pedestal in place of the image, which had been removed; a few minutes later, therefore, Oldroyd returned, with torches.

Oldroyd led the way, followed by Kilau Minga; the Doctor, Mason and I bringing up the rear, each carrying a lighted torch. The chief gazed about him curiously as we traversed the long subterranean passages, and it was not difficult to see that, despite his recent declaration of courage, he was oppressed by a sense of distinct perturbation.

We reached the end of the passage and Oldroyd halted before the curtain which marked the entrance to the temple. Turning to Kilau Minga, he whispered impressively—

"You are still sure that you have the courage to face the image of Taana?"

The chief hesitated for a moment before answering. Then, drawing a deep breath, he replied, with a perceptible quaver in his voice—

"Ye-es, I—I—have the courage."

"Then—enter!" responded Oldroyd, drawing aside the curtain and revealing the interior of the temple, brilliantly illuminated by the lamps which Mason had lighted immediately before joining us. At the last moment, however, Kilau Minga's

courage seemed to fail him; he hesitated, and beads of perspiration bedewed his forehead, trickling down his cheeks.

“Come, and fear not,” murmured Oldroyd, grasping the man’s hand and gently leading him through the doorway. The chief, obeying the impulse of Oldroyd’s hand, followed, his eyes, protruding with awe and amazement as they slowly travelled round the spacious interior, marking the paintings upon the walls. Then, suddenly, as his gaze reached the niche containing the pedestal and he saw Anthea standing there motionless, clad in the magnificent, glittering robe which she had worn upon the occasion of her appearance on the summit of the tower, he dashed his torch to the ground, and fell upon his face, shivering violently and uttering low, piteous moans of terror.

“Nay, fear not, my friend,” said Oldroyd, laying his hand reassuringly upon Kilau Minga’s shoulder. “Rise and look upon the goddess. See, she smiles upon thee!”

Slowly the chief lifted his head until his eyes met those of Anthea, and lo! a miracle had happened, for the figure which he had believed to be only an image, was alive and as Oldroyd had said, was smiling benignantly upon him!

As the eyes of the two met Anthea, who was acting her part splendidly, raised her hand and beckoned the quaking man to approach, which he did, his movements and his whole attitude and aspect betraying the mingled feelings of reverence and fear which gripped him. Hesitatingly he approached until he stood close before her; she beckoned me to stand beside him, whereupon she stooped and, bending forward, took the chief’s hand in one of hers and mine in the other, and joined them together. Next, waving me aside she beckoned Oldroyd forward, repeating her action of joining hands, and so on, with the Doctor and Mason. Then, drawing herself to her full height, she gravely signed to us to retire, which we forthwith did, returning by the way we had come, to the cell which Kilau Minga had occupied during the period of his sojourn with us—for we had decided that we would preserve the secret of the passage from the temple to the tower.

When we stood once more in the chief’s cell, Oldroyd turned to Kilau Minga and said—

“Well, my friend, you are a favoured man indeed, and should be happy this day, for not only have you seen your goddess, but she actually came to life in order to express her will to you. Do you understand what that will is?”

“I do,” answered Kilau Minga. “The will of Taana is that I and my people shall be the friends of the white lords; and I swear that it shall be so. Ay, it shall be so indeed, for, if my lord Massey wills, he and I shall be blood-brothers, after which war between my people and his will be impossible.”

“Right!” I exclaimed. “That is agreed.”

“Then a day shall be set for the ceremony to be performed at my village, in the presence of my people and yours,” said Kilau Minga. “And now,” he continued, “if my lords will, I leave them and go back to my own people.”

Rather more than a week elapsed after the departure of Kilau Minga from among us, during which we heard nothing of him—although the daily offering of fruit, fish and birds was maintained with the most scrupulous regularity. Then, on a certain morning Naqua presented himself with a message from the chief, inviting

us all to accompany the messenger to the native village in order that the ceremony of blood-brotherhood might be performed in the presence of all the people.

There seemed to be no reason why the act should be delayed; but when we proceeded to discuss the matter, a difficulty arose through Anthea, who calmly announced that she intended to go with us, to witness the ceremony. Now this announcement, sprung upon us without a moment's warning, must have been made through sheer, downright perversity on the girl's part, for she was aware of our anxiety to keep secret from the natives, as long as possible, the fact of her and Lucy Stroud's presence among us; furthermore, there was always the danger that Kilau Minga, or some other keen-eyed native might detect the startling resemblance between her and the revelation of Taana that had been vouchsafed to them. In vain did we reiterate all the arguments that we had often before advanced in her hearing; she refused to be moved by them, and in the end we must either yield to her whim, or defer the performance of the ceremony indefinitely. The reasons against the latter course were so obvious that they scarcely needed to be mentioned to insure their rejection, the only alternative, therefore, was to let the minx have her way, and take our chance of what might be the result.

This settled, we who were going to the village set out under the guidance of Naqua, who made no attempt to conceal his astonishment at the fact that we had a woman among us; but—to do Anthea justice—she had contrived to metamorphose her usual appearance so effectually that we were no longer haunted by the fear that she might be recognised as the impersonator of the goddess Taana.

Our way led for some distance down the right bank of the stream, as far as our tobacco patch—which I was glad to see was flourishing; but at this point we crossed the stream to its opposite side and struck off in an almost due westerly direction, leaving the lake on our right hand. We found ourselves following a beaten path through the long grass—which we had certainly never noticed before—and between the trees, for a distance of some three and a half miles, at the end of which we arrived at the mouth of a cavern cunningly concealed, either by art or by nature—or, possibly by a combination of both—by a dense clump of bushes. Coming to a halt here, Naqua gave an order to his followers, who at once plunged into the cavern, returning a minute or two later with a plentiful supply of torches.

This cavern was natural for some six or eight yards of its length from the entrance, but beyond that it was evidently artificial, for it was here rectangular in section, about ten feet wide by eight feet high, the walls, roof, and floor being smooth and everywhere showing the marks of the tools with which it had been hewn. For a length of a few yards from the entrance the floor seemed to be practically level, but beyond that point it began to slope downward at an inclination of about one in twenty, which made it easy and comfortable to traverse.

For several minutes my companion and I maintained silence, and I was beginning to puzzle my brains as to how I should end the awkwardness of the situation when Anthea, glancing up at me, said—

“Do you think it will be very painful, Jack?”

“Do I think *what* will be very painful?” I retorted.

“Why, the—the—ceremony of blood-brotherhood,” answered Thea.

“Good Heavens!” I returned, “how should I know? I haven’t the foggiest notion of how the ceremony is performed, or in what it consists.”

“But I have,” asserted Thea. “I’ve read about it somewhere, I’m sure. They will cut a gash in your body, somewhere, and a similar gash in the chief’s body, and the blood of both will be allowed to mingle. That is the ceremony whereby two men are made blood-brothers. You must take care that they do not cut through an artery, or you will bleed to death—or you would if I were not there. But I’ve brought plenty of bandages with me in case—you know.”

“And do you mean to tell me that that is the reason why you insisted on coming?” I demanded.

“Why, yes—partly,” was the answer.

“And pray what was the other part,” I asked.

But the only reply I received was a shrug of the shoulders which lightly pressed against my arm.

“Thanks, Thea; you are a real little brick, and a good chum! It was kind of you to think of those bandages.”

The hand I patted gave a distinct jerk, and for a moment I thought it was about to be snatched away, but it was not. There was a moment’s silence, and then my companion replied, in tones as casual as my own—

“Oh, that’s all right; I just happened to think of them, that’s all—just as I should, of course, if it had been anyone else; so please don’t flatter yourself that you are especially favoured.”

With this remark the conversation came to a close, not another word passing between us until, after a passage of about three-quarters of a mile, we emerged into daylight once more and found ourselves at the southern extremity of the plateau beneath the cliffs which Oldroyd and I had reconnoitred shortly after our arrival on the island. Allowing my thoughts to revert to that day, I wondered how it was that neither of us had on that occasion spotted the hole in the cliff-face from which we had just emerged; but upon glancing around I soon discovered the explanation in the fact that the exit was so artfully concealed in a sort of recess in the cliffs that it could not be seen from above.

## **Chapter 13**

### **The Chief and I become Blood-brothers.**

Glancing around at our surroundings as soon as we were fairly clear of the tunnel I found that we had come out on the plateau at the point of division between the part planted with Indian corn and that devoted to sugar cultivation, a pathway which divided the two leading to the slope upon which was built the village. Along this pathway Naqua now led the way, our view being restricted by the tall sugar canes on our left and the scarcely less tall Indian corn on our right, to a narrow strip of the lagoon right ahead. But when, some ten minutes later, we reached the outer edge of the plateau, at which the cane and mealie fields came to

an end, an exclamation of delight escaped my companion at the charming prospect which met our view, for there, stretching away to our right for a distance of some four miles, on the gentle slope which descended from the plateau to the beach, lay practically the whole of the native village. Every garden had its little orchard of from one to two dozen fruit trees, the remainder of its space being devoted, in about equal proportions, to the cultivation of vegetables and flowers; and as it now happened to be the early summer time of the year, with most of the fruit trees in full bearing and the flowers in full bloom, the general effect was exquisitely beautiful.

A pathway about ten feet wide ran all round each plot, dividing it from its neighbours on every hand, and Naqua now led us along these paths, winding now to the right and anon to the left, affording us an excellent view of the unfenced gardens as we passed them, while, as I presently noticed, we were heading in a general direction toward the centre of the village. This, so far as Oldroyd and myself were concerned, was our second glimpse of the place, but whereas on our former view of it each garden had its little gang of busy workers, there was now not a soul to be seen except the little groups of happy, care-free children who were playing about in the bare space—apparently devoted to them—in front of every hut.

But this somewhat remarkable circumstance was explained when, after about half an hour's walk through the village, we arrived at what appeared to be its centre. This was a large, rectangular open space, the middle of which was occupied by what I concluded must be the village temple, for it was a structure about two hundred feet long, by some fifty feet wide, and twelve feet high to the eaves of its steeply sloping thatched roof. It was built entirely of wood, walled in on all four sides, the western end wall being pierced by a doorway some eight feet wide by about twelve feet high, above which was a large square window opening in the gable-ended roof. There were also ten large window openings in each of the side walls, affording abundant light and fresh air to the interior of the building. Like all the other structures in the village, it was neatly thatched with palm leaves, but, unlike the huts, every inch of the surface of its walls was profusely decorated with deeply cut carved scroll-work patterns of a most elaborate and intricate character, the building in its entirety presenting a distinctly novel and beautiful picture. I estimated that it was spacious enough to accommodate every adult inhabitant of the village without crowding, a surmise which presently proved to be correct.

Thus far, as I have said, neither man nor woman had been seen during our passage through the village, but now it was not difficult to understand the reason, for as we approached the big building we became aware of a low, subdued hum, like the hum of a huge swarm of bees, rising from it, which, as we drew still nearer, became identifiable as the low murmured conversation of a great crowd of people. The talk seemed to be in full blast as we arrived at the door of the building, but with the entrance of Naqua at the head of our little party it stopped so dead that, to make use of a well-worn expression, one might have heard a pin drop.

The building was full—though by no means uncomfortably so—of people, men and women, grouped indiscriminately together, the women apparently outnumbering the men in the proportion of about two to one. They were attired, as



usual, in the scantiest of raiment—with one notable exception, namely, that every one of them, men and women alike, wore a great garland of flowers round the neck, while the women had, in addition, flowers stuck here and there in their elaborately dressed hair.

The interior of the temple—for such we now saw it undoubtedly was—was even more elaborately decorated with carved work than was its exterior, especially as regarded its east wall, which was that immediately facing the door. The central position of this wall—which, gable-shaped, measured at its highest point some thirty feet from floor to roof—was occupied by a female figure about fifteen feet high, standing erect and facing toward the interior of the building. It was carved in high relief, and despite the crudity of its design it bore a certain general resemblance to the beautifully carved effigy occupying the niche in the splendid temple beneath our tower which I thought could be scarcely accidental. It was surrounded by a scroll-work design, also carved in high relief; the effect of the whole being quite beautiful. And before the figure there stood an altar, also finely carved, heaped high with flowers.

But I was accorded little time in which to note details, for Naqua led our party straight up to the far end of the building, along a kind of aisle about eight feet wide which divided the congregation into two parts—every eye being turned upon us as we progressed, while low murmurs clearly indicative of astonishment and admiration, greeted the appearance of Thea, who clung tenaciously to my arm—until we arrived before the altar, on one side of which—as we could now see—stood Kilau Minga, surrounded by half a dozen elderly men whose garb, consisting of a long, white robe reaching to the feet, led me to surmise that they were priests. The chief, like everyone else, wore a garland of flowers round his neck; and when Naqua had placed us all in position on the other side of the altar, facing the congregation, one of the priests stepped forward and, taking a garland from off the altar, approached and placed it about my neck. The priests then, leaving Kilau Minga, ranged themselves behind the altar, and the elder of them delivered a short address which, so far as I could gather the sense of it, was a declaration of the duties, privileges and responsibilities of blood-brotherhood. The address, which lasted about ten minutes, was followed by a kind of chant, led by the priests and joined in at certain intervals by the congregation, at the conclusion of which Kilau Minga was led forward to the front of the altar by one of the priests, while another took me by the hand and led me to my appointed position beside him, placing me on the chief's left. The chief priest, as I took him to be, then approached us both, holding in his right hand what looked like a long, narrow shell, and signed to me to bare my right arm, which I did by rolling my shirt-sleeve up to my shoulder. Next, grasping us both by the wrist in such a manner as to bring the chief's left arm into close touch with my right, he asked if it was our will that we should become blood-brothers, and upon our replying in the affirmative, he raised the shell in his hand and swiftly slashed the edge of it across our arms, some four inches below the elbow, inflicting wounds from which the blood flowed freely. Grasping the two wounded arms, the priest pressed them firmly together in such a fashion that the rounding of them formed a little channel into which the blood from each wound flowed, thus mingling. Still pressing our arms together, the priest turned to the congregation, calling upon them to behold the intermingling of

our blood, to which the assembled villagers responded with a great shout, causing the rafters of the temple to ring. The wounds were allowed to bleed until the blood overflowed the channel formed by our two arms and began to drip upon the floor, when two other priests stepped forward and quickly and deftly dressed the gashes by applying a sort of poultice of leaves enclosed in a bandage of coarse linen, which presently stopped the flow of blood. While this was being done the chief priest delivered another brief harangue, which was followed by what I supposed to be a hymn. This brought the proceedings to a close, for with the ending of the hymn the congregation proceeded to file out of the building in a very orderly and decorous fashion.

We—that is to say Kilau Minga and our own party—waited until the last of the congregation had passed out through the open door, when the chief, taking me in brotherly fashion by my unwounded arm, intimated that a banquet was prepared for us in his house, in honour of the occasion, which he trusted we would grace with our presence. This invitation I passed on to the others, who cordially accepted it. We accordingly formed a little procession, Kilau Minga and I leading while the others fell in behind us, and in this fashion we marched out of the building—to find, as soon as we passed out through the doorway, that apparently the entire congregation had formed up outside to greet us and—as I shrewdly surmised—to get a nearer view. The greeting was certainly a very hearty and friendly one, and as I glanced round at the fine, stalwart forms and resolute faces of the men the thought occurred to me that their friendship was cheaply purchased at the cost of a small gash on the arm and the loss of two or three ounces of blood.

Kilau Minga's house was situate at no great distance to the northward of the temple, and we reached it in the course of a few minutes. It occupied a plot of ground of exactly the same dimensions as all the others, but the house itself was considerably bigger than either of the others, consisting apparently of two large rooms, with an annex, which I conjectured to be a kitchen, attached to its rear. Its exterior was also more elaborately decorated than either of the others. I noticed that, as in the other houses we had passed, its floor was raised some two feet off the ground, which I at first supposed was done for the purpose of keeping out the rain in the wet season, but upon my mentioning this idea to my blood-brother he informed me that it was not so, but the houses were built in this fashion to exclude ants and other pests from the interior, and he showed me how this was managed by stepping each of the main posts in a pool of water, which the ants could not cross.

Upon entering what appeared to be the chief apartment of the house we were much surprised to discover that some at least of the refinements of civilised life were by no means unknown. There were, for instance, a table, several chairs and a sort of couch in the room, while the floor was covered with beautifully fine matting. The interior walls were decorated with carvings which, in the present case, consisted of pictures of hunting and fishing scenes; while, immediately opposite the main entrance door there hung suspended from stout pegs, a formidable war club, the head of which was studded with sharks'-teeth; several spears, with barbed heads made from the bone of some animal much bigger than

any that I had seen thus far on the island; and a pair of beautifully carved canoe paddles.

The table which was innocent of a cloth of any kind, was laid for eight, namely, the seven of us from the tower and as I correctly supposed, Kilau Minga. But the "laying" was primitive, consisting merely of eight "plates"—as I imagined them to be—formed of great flat shells, somewhat like the shells of an oyster, while the centre-piece was a great nautilus shell containing flowers, of which these people seemed to be particularly fond.

At a sign from Kilau Minga we sat, I being on his right, with Thea next to me. The party being seated, the chief uttered a call, whereupon two women entered, one of them bearing upon a roughly-made wooden dish a bounteous supply of roast fish, while her companion bore upon a similar dish a quantity of roasted bread fruit cut in slices. These comestibles were first offered to Kilau Minga, who signed the women to begin with me, which they did, passing round the table and ultimately returning to the chief, who was last served. There were, as might be expected, neither knives nor forks, nor anything in place of them, and I was for a moment rather nonplussed as to how to help myself, until Oldroyd, perceiving my difficulty, remarked—

"Use your fingers, old chap; they were made long before forks came into fashion."

This was sensible advice, and I acted upon it, the others following my example.

The next course consisted of roasted birds cut into convenient portions, accompanied by a dish of yams; and this was followed by a service of fruit of various descriptions, some of them new to us. Thus far we had been offered nothing to drink, but after the fruit had been passed round for the first time two other women entered, one of whom carried a wooden tray upon which were arranged a number of drinking cups formed of cocoanut-shells set in beautifully carved wooden stands shaped like birds' claws, while the other bore a large, handsomely-shaped earthen jar containing an amber-coloured liquid which gave forth a wine-like and distinctly inviting fragrance. This was served to us in the cocoanut-shell cups aforesaid, and proved to be exceedingly palatable, its flavour being somewhat similar to that of Chianti; indeed we christened it by that name without further ado.

This concluded the banquet, which we all agreed reflected great credit upon Kilau Minga in his character of host; and then, as we rose from the table, the chief invited us to go down to the beach to inspect the fleet of canoes.

These we found to be very clumsy, indifferently-modelled craft, ranging in length from about sixteen feet to forty feet over all, with a beam of from three to four feet. They were each made out of a solid tree-trunk; and when I asked for details of their construction I was informed that, after selecting a suitable tree and felling it, the builder proceeded first to shape it in accordance with his requirements and his personal views on the subject of naval architecture; and when the log had been shaped to his satisfaction he proceeded to hollow it out, first by building fires along its top length, and so gradually charring the interior wood away, and then completing it by cutting away the remaining wood. The mention of cutting naturally raised the question of tools, whereupon the chief led us to a part of the beach where several men were engaged in laboriously constructing a canoe, when

we saw that they were using rude axes and adzes, the heads of which consisted of large shells, somewhat like oyster shells, possessing the valuable property that one edge was almost as keen as a razor, and so extremely hard that it was almost impossible to injure it. This particular craft was only just began, the log indeed being, so far, only of very rudimentary shape: I therefore took it upon myself to offer, chiefly by means of sketches on the sand, certain suggestions for the improvement of the model, these consisting for the most part in the fining of the lines, fore and aft. These suggestions were received with respect and eagerness, and were—as I subsequently learned—carried into effect, with satisfactory results to the owner.

The afternoon was by this time well advanced, and it behoved us to make a start if we wished to reach home before darkness overtook us; we therefore took leave of our host who, in bidding us farewell, explained that the morning's ceremony not only made him and me blood-brothers but also created me a chief second in power and authority only to himself. He was at much pains also to make us clearly understand that war between his people and ourselves was henceforth impossible, and he wound up by saying that, since we were now friends, he and his people hoped that we would all, or as many of us as felt so inclined, visit the village as often as we pleased, staying as long as we pleased, and being assured of a hearty welcome from everybody. This was handsome treatment, and we responded by assuring the chief that we would not fail to call, from time to time.

The conclusion of peace with the natives upon so firm a basis and such satisfactory terms was a source of the utmost satisfaction to us all, and especially to the girls, for we felt that we could now go over the island, individually or collectively, without fear of molestation; moreover it was a pleasant change as well as—we all agreed—an act of sound diplomacy to visit the village from time to time and so cement the good relations between the natives and ourselves.

One result of our increased intercourse with the natives was the discovery that they possessed not the remotest knowledge of the use of sails, due in part no doubt to the fact that they were without the means to manufacture sail cloth. They had looms of a sort, it is true, but they were small, clumsy and very primitive machines, capable only of turning out narrow strips of a coarse kind of cloth, made from the fibre of a certain plant, and produced with the utmost difficulty at a vast expenditure of time. I was seized by an insatiable longing to teach our new friends the art of sailing, and with this object I one day took Wilkinson and Dartnell, the two seamen, down to the cove where our boat still lay concealed, and, rigging her, sailed her round to the smaller lagoon, to the delight and admiration of the natives. It was the first time they had beheld a craft more scientifically modelled and constructed than their own canoes, and it was amusing to watch the eagerness with which they examined every detail of her, and their wonder and admiration generally. But what, after all, appealed to them most strongly was the fact that she could be made to go from any one point to any other by the power of the wind alone. Like most savages, they were by no means enamoured of hard work, and the paddling of their crudely modelled canoes was hard work, without a doubt; it is not to be wondered at, therefore, that every mother's son of them expressed anxiety to be taught the new art without delay, while Wilkinson and Dartnell were so eager to impart instruction that they

suggested the boat should be left at the village, under their charge, for greater facility of instruction. And to this proposal I innocently enough assented, not in the least foreseeing what would be the outcome of it.

The enlightenment came about a fortnight later when, upon visiting the Basin to see how matters were going generally, I was accosted by Wilkinson and Dartnell, our two seamen, who somewhat sheepishly informed me that they had decided to settle permanently on the island and to marry—and would I be pleased to tie the knot for them.

“Settle on the island! Marry!” I ejaculated. “Why, men, what on earth can you be thinking about? What has happened to put this folly into your heads?”

“Beggin’ your pardon, Mr Massey,” returned Wilkinson who had assumed the rôle of chief spokesman, “but where do the ‘folly’ come in? To us two sailormen it looks to be the most sensible thing we can do. Are we ever goin’ to get a chance to leave this here h’island? It don’t look much like it, do it, sir? We’ve been ashore here now—well, gettin’ on for the best part of a year, accordin’ to my reckonin’, and not so much as the ghost of a sail have hove up above the ’orizon durin’ the whole of that time. And we—Dartnell and I—argues that if no ships have come along durin’ that time, they ain’t likely to come along at all. And if no ships comes along, how are we goin’ to get away? Are we to go in the boat? I reckon not. I doubts if there’s e’er a one of us as ’d care to go through such another time as we had in her; no, not if we was certain sure of comin’ out all right at the end. You as’t the Doctor, Mr Massey—and his darter—as’t Mr Oldroyd and Mr Mason, and hear what they says about it.

“Very well, then; what Dartnell and I says is this: if we can’t get off the h’island we’ve just got to stay on it; and if we’ve got to stay on it we might as well settle down and be comfortable—and that’s what we’ve made up our minds to do. We’ve got up alongside of a couple of fine handsome gals who seems quite agreeable to be spliced, and we’ve been talkin’ to the chief about it and, so far as we can understand ’im, he’ll be glad enough to have us—in fact he’ve promised to give each of us a plot of land and all the help we wants to build our two houses—and that’s just about clinched it.”

“But,” said I, “you surely have not given as much consideration as you ought to this idea of yours. Your decision appears to have been very hastily arrived at. You have only been among these savages about a fortnight, and yet here you are talking seriously about marrying and settling down among them—throwing in your lot with them for the remainder of your lives. I think you scarcely realise the seriousness of the decision. Suppose, for instance, that a ship *should* come along—as one may any day. Would you, under such circumstances, still decide to remain on the island, or would you not rather jump at the chance of returning to civilisation? Have you no relatives at home whom you would be glad to rejoin?”

“No, sir, we haven’t,” was the answer. “Dartnell and me are both of us h’orphans, without kith and kin, so far as we knows of, so there’s nothing of that sort to make us want to get back to the old country. And what else is there to make us want to go back? We’re both of us just plain, common sailormen, with nothin’ ahead of us but a sailorman’s life if we was to go back, and that’s a hard enough life. But if we settle down here among these people—who, beggin’ your pardon, Mr Massey, ain’t by no means such savages as you seems to think ’em—

what do we get? Why a life of ease and comfort; no hard work—no turnin' out in the middle of your watch below to go aloft and reef taups'ls in a gale o' wind and gettin' wet through, mayhap, while doin' it; no standin' at the wheel for a couple o' hours at a stretch with the icy wind freezin' the very marrer of your bones; no two hours' stretch on the fo'c'sle-head keepin' a look-out on a pitch-black night, with the spray flyin' over yer with every pitch of the ship into a head sea; no toilin' at the pumps in a leaky old hooker; no mates hazin' of a man night and day if he don't happen to do things to their likin'!"

I could not but admit that, looking at the matter from the two men's point of view, they had made out a fair case; yet it seemed unnatural that Englishmen—even of the comparatively uneducated class to which Wilkinson and Dartnell belonged—should seriously contemplate throwing in their lot and allying themselves by marriage with a people who, whatever their good points, were just heathens and savages; and I did not hesitate to say as much in pretty plain language to them. But I soon saw that the men had made up their minds to go their own way: they disclaimed any intention to desert us, assuring me that they would consider themselves as much as ever under my orders in all essential matters—although they did not hesitate to remind me that the wreck of the *Andromeda* made free men of them, and they wound up by saying that if I declined to “splice” them, they must get a priest to do the job, but that they would very much prefer that one of us should do it.

I returned to the ruins, to find that everybody excepting the Doctor was absent. As for Shirley-Winthrop, he was still busy, pottering about down below in the temple, laboriously engaged in sketching the paintings on the walls. And very beautifully he was doing it, too, for he possessed great artistic skill, and it happened that among the contents of his daughter's trunk a sketch block and a box of water-colours had been found: the Doctor therefore was happy, despite the fact that he was compelled to work by the inadequate light of a single smoky, evil-smelling lamp. He was too deeply absorbed in his work to give anything like the concentrated attention I desired to what I had to say; also he was of too unpractical a turn of mind to be of much assistance to me, therefore after patiently listening for a little while to a learned dissertation as to the probable origin of the people who had built the temple and produced the paintings upon its walls, I left him to pursue his labours, undisturbed.

## **Chapter 14**

### **A Derelict.**

It was while the affairs were in this tranquil condition that one of the natives who, by arrangement between Kilau Minga and myself, had been set to maintain a daily watch for ships, from the summit of the crater, came down to the ruins, while we were all sitting down to breakfast, exclaiming—

“Lord, there is something floating afar off yonder—” pointing away to the eastward; “but whether it be what you call a ‘ship’ I know not, for it has no sails.”

“A steamer, then, without a doubt,” I exclaimed, springing to my feet. “What does she look like, Simba? Did you see smoke issuing from her?”

“Nay, lord, I saw no smoke,” was the reply. “It may be a canoe, but, if so, it must be very many times bigger than the biggest of ours.”

“No sails—and no smoke! What the dickens can it be?” I ejaculated. “About how far away is she?”

“About as far distant as that end of the island,”—pointing northward—“is from what my lord calls the look-out,” replied the man.

“Good! then she ought to be visible from the top of the tower,” I exclaimed, in English. “I’ll get my telescope, and shin up aloft to have a look at her.”

“And I’ll go with you, if you have no objection,” remarked Oldroyd.

“Objection?” I exclaimed; “of course not. Come along, old chap.”

It took us but a few minutes to reach the summit of the tower, when, scanning the sea to the eastward, we caught sight of the object reported by the native; and a few minutes later I had her sharply focussed in the lenses of my telescope.

“A large ship—totally dismasted,” I reported to Oldroyd, as with my eye glued to the eye-piece I carefully scanned the picture there revealed, and noted details. “Lying low in the water, and with a heavy list to starboard. The wreckage of her spars floating alongside, still attached to the hull by the shrouds, backstays and so on. I see no sign of life aboard her—nor can I make out any boats at her davits. Looks to me like a derelict—abandoned in a panic, possibly, when she was dismasted. Would you care to have a look at her? There you are, then,”—as I handed over the telescope. “Put it in my room, please, when you have finished with it. I am off down to the Basin. I mean to board that craft; there may be no end of things aboard her which would be of incalculable value to us. Well, good-bye, and—take care of the girls if anything should happen to me.”

“You bet I will!” returned Oldroyd, emphatically. “But—say,” he continued, “nothing is likely to happen to you, eh?”

“No,” I answered, “certainly not. Still—one never knows. Good-bye, once more.” And, so saying, I dashed at full speed down the broken stairway, avoiding, by a miracle, a headlong dive from the top to the bottom, and so into the open.

There was no apparent need for extreme haste, yet so impatient was I to get aboard the hulk that when at length I reached the Basin I was streaming with perspiration. Arrived there, I seized the first man I happened to encounter, and sent him careering through the village with instructions that every male above the age of fifteen was to betake himself to the beach forthwith, carrying with him food and drink sufficient for the whole day, and any axe or other tool he might possess. I next called upon Kilau Minga, telling him what I had done, and why I had done it, whereupon, like the good fellow that he was, he at once announced his intention to go with me, believing that, owing to my still imperfect knowledge of the language, he might be helpful in interpreting my wishes to his people. Then, from there, after the chief had secured enough food and “wine” to serve us both for the day, we wended our way down to the beach, where my twelve boatmen were patiently awaiting me, and where also some fifty or sixty other men had already turned up. Others, however, were momentarily arriving, a few singly, but mostly in

groups, and in about twenty minutes there were fully two hundred men awaiting orders. These, with the tools of various descriptions which they had brought with them we hustled into the twenty biggest canoes of the flotilla, and, with six of my own men, and Kilau Minga in the jollyboat, leading the way, we proceeded to sea. Inside the lagoon there was little wind, merely a light air from the eastward, but as we ran before it toward the passage it freshened somewhat, and when we arrived off the northern extremity of the island there was wind enough to need a wary eye on the lee gunwale while carrying whole canvas. The canoes had as yet no sails, and they therefore paddled directly to windward, while we in the boat worked up in the same direction, making short tacks, finding that by doing so—and by “carrying on” to such an extent that two men were kept continually busy baling the water that came in over the lee gunwale—we were just able to keep pace with the canoes.

It took us the best part of three hours to reach the ship, and when we did so she was rolling so heavily that it was a job to get alongside and scramble aboard without injury to the boat or the canoes. But we managed it, half of our number boarding the hulk while the other half remained in the small craft, to take care of them.

A hasty glance satisfied me, when I got aboard, that the vessel was derelict, boats and crew being alike missing. Nor was I able to get much information by visiting the captain’s cabin, for upon abandoning the ship he had taken her papers and nautical instruments with him. All that I was able to learn, in fact, during that first hasty look round, was that the craft was named the AMY TRENTON, hailing from New York, that she was a comparatively new wood-built ship, of about fourteen hundred tons register, and that, before coming to grief, she had been barque-rigged. Hunting about, I found the sounding rod without much difficulty, and sounding the well, found that she had nearly eight feet of water in her. I did not attempt to lift the hatches just then, to ascertain the character of her cargo, for she seemed to be reasonably buoyant, considering the amount of water in her, and the bold idea had come to me of attempting to tow her to the island, instead of rifling her out there at sea. And this, I thought might be done, for wind and sea were alike in our favour. But of course it would be useless to attempt to tow a big lump of craft like that with such a mass of raffle as was attached to her, towing alongside. I therefore set my boarding party to work in the first instance cutting through the lanyards of the rigging, and in about twenty minutes I had the satisfaction of seeing the whole of it—masts, yards, canvas and rigging—drive clear.

Our next business was to look for something by means of which we could tow the hulk, and this we found in the shape of a fine, stout hawser, almost new, stopped securely down on the roof of the forward house. Cutting this adrift, we passed one end of it over the bows through a fairlead and down into the boat. To this we bent on, at intervals, convenient lengths of warp to serve as towlines for the canoes, and then, having paid out the whole length of the hawser to its bare end, we took several turns of the latter round the windlass-bitts, making all secure with a stout seizing, when, our preparations being complete, I sent all hands back into the canoes and the boat, and, directing them, through Kilau Minga, what to do, arranged the canoes in pairs on each side of the hawser, each of them being



secured to it by a length of warp, and bade them paddle ahead for all they were worth, the jollyboat, with the far end of the hawser aboard, and her sail set, taking the lead, while I stationed myself at the wheel, with Kilau Minga on the forecastle-head to convey orders to the towing craft, as might be required.

The towage of such a big lump of a hulk as the AMY TRENTON, waterlogged as she was, proved a most formidable undertaking, even with two hundred strong men toiling at the paddles; we found her at first very heavy on our hands, but at length, when we had got her fairly round, stem-on to wind and sea, matters improved so far that we were actually able to give her steerage-way; and finally, after some eight hours of strenuous toil, we triumphantly took her in through the opening of the reef and grounded her upon the beach.

## Chapter 15

### Our Prize.

The days that followed this momentous event in the annals of our island story were busy ones for me, for with the coming of the hulk upon the scene the complexion of things generally was altered, very much for the better.

The first thing was to give the wreck a thorough overhaul, and see what she contained that might be of use to us; and as a preliminary to this I had her pumped dry and hauled broadside-on to the beach, when, as I had more than half suspected, it was found that her leaks, wherever they might have been, had taken up, and that she was making no more water. This done, we made a start by opening her lazarette, which we found still well stocked with provisions of various kinds, including such welcome additions to our larder as hams, bacon, sardines, tinned sheep tongues, potted meats and fish, potatoes, wines and spirits in cask and bottle—in short everything that is usually to be found in the lazarette of a well-found ship, and nearly all of it in perfect condition. All these we divided as evenly as we could into two parts, giving one half to the natives and keeping the other for ourselves. The only exception to this rule which we made was in the case of the wines and spirits, the whole of which I caused to be transported to the ruins, believing it best to keep everything of that kind out of reach of the natives.

Having emptied the lazarette, we next took off the hatches and investigated the contents of the holds. These we found to consist largely of machinery of various kinds, notably among which were the complete equipment of a saw mill and a smithy, several lathes, and other tools. With these at our command we were able to see our way to build a craft of suitable dimensions to convey our party in safety and comfort to any destination we might choose, and this, we all agreed, must be our first consideration. The hulk, indeed, was better than a gold mine to people circumstanced as we were, for in addition to the matters already named, there was her well stocked medicine chest, her carpenter's chest, a dozen modern rifles, fitted with bayonets, a dozen navy revolvers, and a considerable stock of ammunition for both kinds of firearm; there were also several cases of ready-made

clothing both for men and women, from which we were able handsomely to replenish our scanty wardrobes.

The first thing to be done was of course to get everything out of her and properly sorted out ashore, then we should know exactly what our resources were.

To do this, our first requirement was a raft upon which to float everything across the short space of water between the hulk and the beach; and this we constructed by requisitioning from the natives four of their biggest canoes, arranging them abreast with a space of about a foot between each two and building upon these a platform, the materials for which we obtained by taking the two deckhouses to pieces.

This, and the handling of the cargo, was of course very heavy work, but Kilau Minga placed the resources of the tribe at our disposal, and with the strength thus available, supplemented by the employment, under my supervision, of the winches, windlass, tackles, etcetera, belonging to the ship, we managed excellently.

It cost us rather more than two months of arduous labour to discharge the ship and stack the cargo upon the beach, by which time the hulk, now empty, was once more afloat and standing high out of the water. Should we, now that the hulk was afloat, keep her so, ballast her with such portions of her cargo as were of no use to us, jury-rig her, and attempt to sail her to some port from which we could obtain passage home—or should we break her up and build a craft to suit ourselves?

There was something to be said in favour of either plan. If the first were adopted, we should have a fine big ship, with comfortable and ample accommodation for all. But to effect a jury-rig such as would enable us to put to sea with a reasonable hope of coping with bad weather, and of reaching our destination, would tax our resourcefulness to its limit; it would take a long time to do it as it ought to be done; and, then we should need a strong crew to man and handle the ship. The last difficulty we might overcome if a sufficient number of the natives could be induced to accompany us; but would they? This question could only be answered by referring it to Kilau Minga. And if a sufficient number could be prevailed upon to undertake the voyage, how were they to be returned to the island—as they would desire to be—without betraying its position to the outer world? I could find no reply to this question; and merely to suit our own convenience, we should hardly be justified in “giving away” its whereabouts and so introducing the many vices which accompany intercourse with the usual stamp of white trader.

The adoption of the second alternative—that of building a craft to suit ourselves—would involve the expenditure of, probably, more time than the first, but the labour would be somewhat lighter; and when finished the boat would be handy enough to be worked by Oldroyd, Mason and myself, even if by that time Wilkinson and Dartnell had not grown tired of their island life.

The entire party, girls included, discussed the matter at length one night, after dinner; and the conclusion was that the best plan would be to build a craft for ourselves.

The next thing was to prepare the working plans; and here I found that I should have to rely upon my own knowledge and judgment, for my companions disclaimed all pretensions to knowledge of naval architecture; on the other hand

they both admitted they possessed something more than a mere smattering of mechanical knowledge, and they agreed eagerly to my suggestion that they should—with the help of the natives, of course—undertake the erection of a saw mill and a smithy.

I took pains in thinking out the design of the proposed craft. The chief considerations to be studied were three; namely, safety, comfort, and room enough to stow away all the provisions we were likely to require. There were subsidiary ones also, as, for example, a fair turn of speed under sail, and weatherliness—that is to say, the ability to turn to windward against a foul wind. Also, she must be easy to handle, since there were only three of us to be reckoned upon for working her.

These requirements, I concluded, might all be met in a craft of forty-two feet in length on the water-line, with a beam of fourteen feet, which would give us a good, sturdy seaworthy boat, roomy on deck and below, with a cabin high enough to stand upright in, and permitting of the provision of a stateroom which should secure complete privacy for the two girls. The correct rig for a boat of those proportions would be that of a cutter; and I decided that while I was about it I would make the boat as yachtlike as might be; that she should be, in fact, modelled very much upon the lines of a cruising cutter-yacht.

I set to work, and ultimately, after many alterations, produced a drawing which I believed would not only meet our requirements, but would be staunch enough to face any weather, even to a hurricane. I was busy over the drawings for a full week, getting everything to my liking, and then I was ready to start work forthwith.

And now our troubles began in earnest, for the natives, while willing to help, had not the most hazy idea of what we were aiming to do, nor could we enlighten them, apparently, try as we would. Consequently mistakes were being continually made, and much of the work had to be undone and done over again. But, after nearly three weeks' hard work we got our keel shaped, scarfed, planed up and erected in place, and I flattered myself that our most formidable difficulty was overcome, particularly since Wilkinson and Dartnell unexpectedly came forward and proffered their services.

The accession of these two seamen made a vast difference to us, both in our rate of progress and in rendering our work less arduous, for we soon discovered that constant association with the natives had enabled them to acquire a better knowledge of the language than either of us others could boast, and they were therefore valuable in the matter of giving directions. The attachment of the sternpost to the keel was a comparatively simple affair; then came the shaping, bolting together, and erection of the frames, and within four months of starting work the skeleton of the craft was complete and we were able to form some idea of what she would look like, while even the natives seemed at last to grasp the notion of our intentions.

Thus far, ever since the beginning of our ambitious enterprise, we had been favoured with glorious weather; but now, about the time when all the timbers were in position and we were attaching the deck beams, there came a day when the sun rose as a mere shapeless ball of light into a sky no longer brilliantly blue, but overspread with a thick veil of haze; the trade-wind failed to blow, and the atmosphere became so suffocatingly close and hot that even the natives were

overcome by it and could scarcely be induced to make the slightest exertion. We white men persevered for a time; but at length, when the moment arrived for us to knock off for breakfast, Oldroyd suggested that we should treat ourselves to a day's holiday, pointing out that it was scarcely worth while to incur the serious risk of sun-stroke for the sake of forwarding the work to the extent of only a few hours, so it was arranged that instead of resuming work we three should pay a visit to the ruins and see how the Doctor and the girls were faring—for now that we were so busily engaged at our shipyard we seldom saw them more often than once a week, namely, on Sundays, when we made a point of spending the day with them.

Accordingly we dismissed our native working party, and set out to walk the seven miles that lay between the scene of our labours and the tower.

Our progress was slow, for even walking threw us into a profuse perspiration, while so dead was the atmosphere that merely to breathe seemed difficult. True, it was all up-hill from the beach to the tunnel through which access was gained to that part of the island outside the boundaries of the Basin, as was also the passage through the tunnel itself, but we consoled ourselves with the assurance that, once in the tunnel, we should find it cooler, as was usually the case. On the present occasion, however, we were disappointed, for inside the tunnel it seemed hotter than in the open air.

Our emergence from the upper end of the tunnel was marked by a blinding flash of lightning, almost instantly succeeded by a deafening crash of thunder, and when we presently recovered sight and hearing we found that during our passage through the tunnel the atmosphere had thickened and darkened to such an extent that it was as dark as our brief, tropical dusk, while a cool—almost cold—wind from the westward had sprung up and was blowing in fitful gusts.

In cool wind we put on speed; but we had not left the tunnel ten minutes when there occurred another terrific flash of lightning, accompanied—not followed, this time—by an explosion of thunder that caused the island to tremble; and before its rumblings ceased down came the rain in cataracts, drenching us to the skin. For a quarter of an hour the lightning, thunder and rain flashed and bellowed and poured with the utmost violence, while the firmament continued to darken so that, tramping through the forest, as we now were, we were only able to make our way with the utmost difficulty. Then, all in a moment, the rain, the wind, and the lightning ceased, and there ensued a breathless pause, unbroken by any sound save that of the patter of water dripping from the trees to the ground, and the gurgling rush of innumerable little runnels formed by the rain. This intense silence continued for perhaps three minutes, when a low whining, moaning sound became audible, rapidly increasing in intensity until, with a weird, shrieking roar the hurricane burst upon the island; and in an instant we were being driven along at a run by the power of the wind, while the air became thick with whirling leaves, twigs and branches torn from the swaying, writhing trees.

“Get under the lee of the biggest tree you can find,” I shouted to my companions; “it is dangerous to remain in the open—”

At this point in my adjuration something smote me a terrific blow on the back of my head and for an instant I was conscious of reeling forward; then my senses left me.

The next thing of which I was conscious was a murmur of voices, which presently began to impress me as being vaguely familiar. Gradually the voices became recognisable as those of Doctor Shirley-Winthrop and his daughter; and I began to understand that they were discussing the condition of someone who had been hurt. Finally I realised that the discussed individual was none other than myself; that the Doctor was advancing with considerable emphasis the assurance that no complications were to be feared, and consequently there was no ground for undue anxiety; and that he was, with equal emphasis, protesting against what I gathered to have been an unreasonably protracted watch at my bedside, on his daughter's part. He closed the discussion by remarking—

“And now, I'm going to get some hot water to bathe this young man's broken head, and to re-dress it; after which I shall insist upon your going to bed, young woman. I'm not going to have two patients on my hands if I can help it.”

The words reached my consciousness without at first conveying any definite meaning, as though it were the continuation of a confused dream—which indeed I at first believed it to be, for I was still hovering upon the border line of unconsciousness; so near it, indeed, that I did not for the moment recognise that I was myself the subject under discussion. But as the conversation proceeded recognition gradually came to me and I strove to shake off the lethargy which held me; but the effort was too much, and I lapsed into unconsciousness again.

A painful, smarting sensation at the back of my head, accompanied by a feeling of warmth and wetness, and a gentle patting of some soft material on the seat of my discomfort aroused me from my condition of oblivion, and I opened my eyes, wondering where I was and what had happened to me. The first thing of which I became aware was that it was night, for there was a lamp burning, partially illuminating the more distant portions of the apartment in which I found myself. I was in a sitting position on a bed of some sort, supported by someone against whom I was leaning and who was industriously engaged in bathing my smarting head with warm water from a basin held by Anthea.

As my gaze wandered to her and the light of recognition dawned in my eyes, Thea uttered a little cry of delight, and exclaimed—

“Oh, pop, his eyes are open, and I believe he knows me! You *do* know me, don't you, Jack?”

“Yes,” I mumbled; “you are Anthea. I've been dreaming about you.”

“You have? Oh, Jack, please tell me what your dream was.”

“Certainly not!” came the Doctor's voice, authoritatively. “He must not be allowed to talk—not yet a while, anyway, excepting to answer my questions. How do you feel, Massey? Am I hurting you?”

“No, thanks,” I answered. “What has happened?”

“An accident, my boy; that's all,” replied the Doctor. “Nothing serious; just knocked the senses out of you for a time; you will soon be all right again.”

The dressing of my wounded head was rapidly proceeded with, Anthea taking the Doctor's place and supporting me while her father deftly applied lint and secured it in place with a bandage. Meanwhile I was vainly striving to remember how I had come to be in my present condition, but memory just then refused to respond, and presently I said—

“But, Doctor, I want to know what has happened to me. Please tell me in as few words as you will, but please tell me.”

“You are in competent hands, and that is all that you need know at present. What you have to do is to get well as quickly as possible, and to take your food and medicine like a good boy. And, by the bye, Anthea, speaking of food, I want you to go to Lucy and see if that broth is ready. If it is, bring about a quarter of a pint and give it to him. Then sleep will be the best medicine for him—and for you, too.”

The broth—I learned later—was the first nourishment I had taken since my accident. Feeling strangely weak and exhausted, I sank into a dreamless, refreshing sleep.

## **Chapter 16**

### **A Midnight Scare.**

From that moment my progress was rapid, thanks—in part, so I was told—to my vigorous constitution and perfect state of health, but chiefly, I know now, to the skill and care of the Doctor and to the devotion of his daughter.

For three days after my return to consciousness no one was allowed to see me; on the fourth this restriction was removed, and Oldroyd and Mason were admitted for a few minutes. They were delighted to see me again, and to hear of the progress I was making; and they briefly recounted the circumstances of my accident. My memory of everything up to that moment had by this time returned; I distinctly recollected the gale that had sprung up, and the blow upon the back of my head, which I now learned had been inflicted by the fall of a heavy branch torn from a tree by the wind. For the moment my two companions, buffeted by the furious wind, and drenched by the rain, had failed to notice I was no longer with them; but upon discovering my absence they had fought their way back and found me prostrate, bleeding profusely from a wound in the head. To carry me from that point to the ruins—a distance of three miles or more—must have been a task of almost Herculean difficulty to those two devoted men, harassed as they were by the force of the gale; but they managed it somehow, and turned me over to the Doctor. This story Oldroyd and Mason had jointly told me in a somewhat hurried manner, persistently ignoring several attempts on my part to interrupt them, for I was anxious to know how matters were going at the shipyard. It was not until nearly a week later that I was permitted to learn that the hurricane had played havoc down in the Basin, unroofing and at least partially wrecking nearly half the houses in the village, driving the hulk upon the beach almost high and dry, and—worst of all—demolishing our work upon the new cutter so completely that most of it would need to be done again! Had I learnt this a few days earlier, the disappointment of it would have retarded my recovery, but, thanks to the watchfulness of the Doctor and his daughter, the intelligence was not permitted to reach me until I was strong enough to battle with the feeling of depression

occasioned by it. Even so, my anxiety to know the worst and to see for myself the extent of the damage done was so great that it was hurriedly arranged I should be carried down to the shipyard upon a stretcher, on the following day; and the stretcher having been knocked together with a piece of canvas firmly nailed to a couple of poles, Oldroyd commandeered a party of natives to bring the contrivance up to the ruins and carry me down to the Basin upon it.

It was a sorry sight that met my gaze when we emerged from the tunnel, and the native village lay before me. The inhabitants had got to work on the morning after the hurricane broke, and much of the minor damage was already repaired, but a great deal still remained to be done, some thirty to forty houses being without roofs, while I counted nine that had been to all intents and purposes demolished.

But it was not until we reached the beach that the catastrophic effect of the hurricane upon the fortunes of us white folk became apparent. The hulk, lying broadside-on to the beach, was almost high and dry; and—worst of all—the framework of our new cutter was reduced to a confused heap of wreckage, much of it so splintered and broken as to be valueless.

To do a second time, what had already been once done was a wearisome task; yet it was not altogether without its advantages, for the collapse of the framework had revealed here and there certain defects, not important enough to merit serious consideration, but quite worth rectifying, now that we had the opportunity, and we rectified them accordingly.

I think we were beginning to slow down a little in our work when we started our building operations for the second time; the climate had got into our blood, infecting us with a disposition to ask ourselves and each other—“What need is there for all this hurry? Let us take things quietly, our work will be of all the better quality if it is not rushed,”—when an event occurred of a sufficiently alarming character not only to dissipate any tendency toward slackness but to spur us to a condition of such concentration and activity as we had never yet manifested since our arrival at the island.

We had reached and passed the point of progress at which we had arrived when the hurricane intervened to destroy all our efforts, and had just begun the operation of planking-up, when, late on a certain night, when we had all retired to our several cells and were fast asleep, we were startled into alarmed wakefulness by loud subterranean rumblings, accompanied by violent earth tremors which set the ruined monastery rocking like a ship riding a ground-swell, while several crashes distinctly heard above the rumbling sounds, apprised us that masonry was falling here and there. With one accord we sprang from our couches and rushed to the ancient refectory, which had now become our common living room.

Glancing round to see whether or not we were all present, my eye encountered Anthea's, and she instantly rushed up to me and exclaimed—

“Oh, Jack, what is it that is happening?”

“It is an earthquake,” I answered. “We must all get into the open at once. Out there we shall be comparatively safe; in here we are liable to be overwhelmed at any moment. Come!” And, snatching Thea by the hand, I made a dash for the door, rushed along the passage, down the steps, and so into the open air, the others following close upon my heels.

Illustration:

„Our volcano has become active again!“

Once there, it dawned upon us that the earth tremors had ceased. It was a glorious night; there was not the faintest breath of wind, the moon, nearly at the full, rode high in a sky bare of the smallest shred of cloud, and the only sound audible was the roar of the surf upon the reefs enclosing the two lagoons, which seemed to me to be unusually loud just now. I made a remark to that effect to Oldroyd who was standing near me.

“Yes,” agreed Paul, “it is unusually loud; I noticed it the moment that I got outside. And it is not so much on account of the stillness of the air that we hear it so distinctly; it is because, as I believe, the surf is just now unusually heavy, due, doubtless, to those earth tremors that have startled us so confoundedly and sent us scuttling out here at this unearthly hour. But I think the ’quake is over, don’t you? Mightn’t we as well get back to our beds?”

“You may, if you like, Paul,” vouchsafed Thea; “I shall not; I shouldn’t feel safe in that stupid old monastery again; I should be afraid of being buried alive there. You will stay with me, won’t you, Jack?”

“Certainly, if you wish it,” I replied. “Where are the others? The air seems unusually close to-night; don’t you think so, Oldroyd?”

“I certainly do,” was the response. “And there is a peculiar odour in it, too.”

“It smells as if someone had been burning matches,” suggested Thea.

“Matches!” ejaculated Oldroyd, coming to a halt. “Yes, that is it; sulphur—and something else. And, by Jove! look there! That explains it. *Our volcano has become active again!*”

He pointed upward, as he spoke, to the crater, a bare mile away; and, sure enough, a thin column of smoke, tinged on its underside with a ruddy glow, was rising slowly into the air.

“Does that mean further danger, Jack?” asked Thea, thrusting her hand within my arm and clinging to me, as if for protection.

“I don’t know,” said I. “What do you think, Oldroyd?”

“Guess I wouldn’t care to say decidedly one way or the other,” was the reply. “If it doesn’t develop any further activity I believe we needn’t greatly worry. But who is to say whether it will, or will not? Let’s ask the Doctor what he thinks about it. Does he know anything about volcanoes, Thea?”

“I believe he knows something about everything,” answered the girl. As she spoke she withdrew her hand from my arm and walking up to her father said—

“Poppa, do you see that the volcano has become active again! Jack and I—and Paul—want to know whether that means fresh danger for us. What do you think?”

The Doctor studied the appearance of the crater carefully for a full minute or more. Then he answered—

“No; not immediately. The eruption is, so far, very mild. But volcanoes are not to be trusted. I would suggest that our wisest course will be to remove to the Basin, for the time being, and throw ourselves upon the hospitality of Jack’s blood-brother, until we can judge more clearly how the volcano is going to behave.”

“An excellent suggestion,” declared I. “We will carry it out forthwith. Only there is no need for us to claim hospitality from Kilau Minga, or anybody else. There is



accommodation enough for us all aboard the hulk, and we shall be a lot safer there than here. The earthquake will not have hurt her, I'll be bound. But by Jove! has it hurt the cutter, I wonder! It will be bad luck for us all, if it has."

We saw no signs of damage from the earthquake, no fissures in the earth, not even so much as an overturned tree, as we made our leisurely way down to the Basin that morning; and even when we reached the village such damage as had been done might easily have escaped our notice, had it not been pointed out, and upon arrival at the shipyard all I could discover, after a rigorous examination, was that a few of the keel blocks, upon which the skeleton of our new craft rested, had been slightly displaced; this, was soon put right, while, as for the hulk itself, it was absolutely uninjured. This was in the highest degree satisfactory; but the earthquake was a warning to us all that still worse things *might* happen; it completely dissipated the tendency to slackness that had been insidiously laying hold upon us, impressing upon us the urgent necessity for haste; and we resumed our ship-building operations with renewed vigour. And while we five men—for Wilkinson and Dartnell still showed no sign of a renewed desire to desert us—toiled in the shipyard, the girls were equally busy upon the task of converting the hulk's spacious cabin into a really comfortable habitation for us all; so that when Oldroyd, Mason and I went aboard that night, thoroughly tired out by a hard day's work, we agreed that the change of quarters was distinctly advantageous.

With the stimulus upon us of a possible repetition of the earthquake, involving disastrous results to our labours, we toiled strenuously, day after day, from dawn to dusk, until at length a day arrived when our cutter was so near completion that the only thing needed to make her ready for launching was three coats of paint applied to the interior of her hull. We were engaged on the first of these when, on a certain afternoon, one of the men from the look-out came rushing breathlessly down to the Basin with the startling news that a great canoe, with masts but no sails, and with smoke issuing from a short, thick mast in her middle, was in sight and heading toward the island!

Scarcely able to believe that I had heard aright, I dropped what I was about, hurried aboard the hulk to get my telescope—and, incidentally, to communicate the good news to the Doctor and the girls—and, calling to Oldroyd to accompany me, set off hot-foot for the crater, that being the nearest point from which a view of the stranger could be obtained since she was coming up from the southward.

"Of course," said I to my companion, as we hurried through the village, "the craft is a steamer, and the 'short, thick mast' with smoke issuing from it is her funnel. But I am curious to know what she is, and what she is doing in these waters. She cannot be a liner, for we are far away from all liner tracks, and even if she should prove to be a trader, I can scarcely understand what can be the business which would bring her into this out-of-the-way part of the ocean. The only reasonable explanation which occurs to me is that she may be a man-o'-war."

"In which case," remarked Oldroyd, "all our troubles will be over."

"Oh, they will be over in any case if she should touch at the island, or even if she should pass near enough to be signalled," said I. "If she does not send a boat ashore to investigate, you may be certain that every glass aboard her will be turned upon the island as she passes; and I will find means to make our presence known. If it were not that she is probably by this time so near that it would be too

late to send the boat out to intercept her, I would do so. But—no,” I continued, as a thought suddenly occurred to me, “that would scarcely be a wise thing to do. She may prove to be an enemy.”

“An enemy?” repeated Oldroyd. “What do you mean?”

“Why,” said I, “she may be a German, although I don’t think it very likely.”

“A German—here!” exclaimed my companion. “Oh, no; that is rather too unlikely. Why, what do you suppose your cruisers would be about to allow a German to be at large in the Pacific? No, I have no fear of that.”

“Well,” said I, as we entered the tunnel that led from the Basin to the other part of the island, “we shall know in the course of another hour at the utmost. I wish I had thought to ask that look-out how far distant she was when he sighted her.”

“A goodish way off, I guess,” returned Oldroyd. “You may bet that the fellow started down to report on the instant that he saw her, and these natives have wonderfully keen sight. Haven’t you ever noticed it?”

“I have,” I agreed. “But the man would naturally sight her first when she topped the horizon or, in other words, when she would be some fifty or sixty miles away; and I doubt if he could make out at that distance such details as he described.”

“I believe he could,” contended Oldroyd. “And, assuming that he did, how long would it take a steamer of average speed to travel, say fifty miles? At least three hours, wouldn’t it? And I guess it will be barely an hour since he left his post: and it will take us about the same time for us to get there. We shall be in plenty of time to make all the observations you require, and to take such steps as you may consider necessary. You’ll see.”

The instant that we reached the ridge our glances fastened upon the stranger, at that moment some twenty miles distant, and heading direct for the island. Without wasting a moment I brought my telescope to bear upon her.

## Chapter 17

### The SEEADLER.

We waited there, seated in the long grass, for nearly three-quarters of an hour, with the telescope bearing all the while upon the stranger, before it became possible to distinguish details with anything approaching to definiteness. Then the first fact to reveal itself was that she was undoubtedly a merchantman, but of what nationality I was unable to determine. There was a time, not so very many years ago, when it was possible for a sailor to make a shrewd guess at the nationality of a ship by noting certain details connected with her build and rig, but that was when ships were built of wood, and when each nation had its own well-defined ideas in the matter of naval architecture; and even to-day the rule holds good, more or less, so far as wooden ships are concerned. But it is different where the iron or steel ship is concerned, especially if that ship happens to be a steam vessel. In this case the national characteristic has almost if not completely vanished, a standard model having apparently been adopted by most of the ship-

building nations which renders the determination of a ship's nationality from her appearance almost an impossibility, to say nothing of the fact that nowadays ships are often built in one country to sail under the flag of another. So it was that in the present case the only thing of which I could be certain was that the stranger was a merchantman—or that, at all events, she had originally been built as such. But, if a merchantman, what could she be doing in this out-of-the-way quarter of the globe, was the question which I repeated to myself.

We were not to be kept much longer in suspense, for when the stranger had arrived within about a mile of the entrance to the southern, or bigger, lagoon—the lagoon in which we castaways had originally landed—her engines were stopped, she rounded to, broadside-on to the island, fired a gun, *and hoisted the German naval ensign!*

“A German!” exclaimed I. “Well, I am not very greatly surprised; somehow there has been a lurking suspicion in my mind that it might be so, from the moment when I got my first glimpse of her. I can't explain why it was so; intuition, I suppose. Yet even now I can't understand her, by a long way. She is flying Germany's naval flag, but I'll swear she was never built for a man-o'-war; she is a merchantman from truck to water-line—a combined cargo and passenger carrier, without a doubt, for I can make out a tier of passenger cabins amidships, and that long poop of hers probably contains others. All the same, she is an armed ship now, for there is a gun mounted on that same poop; ay, and another on her fore-deck; and she seems to be full of men. Now, what the dickens can she be? A privateer? No; privateers do not fly the naval ensign; moreover they are not permitted nowadays. Still—I wonder whether the fact of privateering being illegal would be recognised by Germany. She did not show much respect for the law of nations when she overran Belgium, did she?”

“She certainly did not,” agreed Oldroyd. “But what is it that you have in your mind, Massey? Do you think the fact that yonder steamer is a German will affect us?”

“That is just the question that is worrying me,” answered I. “According to every law of humanity the skipper of that ship ought—even though his country should be at war—to take us off this island and land us at the first civilised port it may be convenient for him to call at. But—will he? That is the point. You see, we don't even know whether the war is still on. If it is not, of course we are all right; but if it is—well, it may be prejudice on my part but I've no great belief in Germans. And I think the war is still on, otherwise why is that armed merchantman under the German naval flag? Ah! by Jove! that must be it,”—as enlightenment flashed into my mind—“she is a commerce-destroyer; that is to say, a privateer under another name.”

“You are probably right, Massey,” concurred Oldroyd. “But, even so, how will that affect us? We are not Germany's enemies—unless of course America has taken a hand, which I do not believe. Even you—the only Englishman among us, can scarcely be regarded as an enemy, for you are not in the naval service.”

“That is true,” I agreed. “Yet somehow the idea that we should all go down to the beach to meet that boat which I see they are just about to lower, and ask them to take us off does not appeal to me. If those fellows are really commerce-destroyers, as I very strongly suspect them to be, they are just pirates, under another name, a

lawless crew to whose tender mercies I should be very reluctant to commit Thea and Lucy."

"By Jove! yes," exclaimed Oldroyd. "I was wondering what the dickens you were hesitating so confoundedly about, but now I understand. No, we must take no risks, so far as the girls are concerned. But what do you suggest? Are we to keep discreetly out of those fellows' way, and let them leave the island without making any effort to, come to an understanding with them?"

"No—no—wait a moment; let me think; an idea has just suggested itself to me which may prove to be a way out of the difficulty. Those Germans are sending a boat ashore, as you see. Why they are doing so I cannot as yet surmise. It may be that it is merely curiosity that is prompting them. If this island is not laid down on their charts—as may be possible—they will very probably be curious to discover what its resources are, and whether it is worth annexing—they are great on annexation, you know. Or they may be short of water, and hope to be able to fill up here.

"Now, my idea is this. I propose to go down alone toward the beach, approaching the landing party as nearly as I can without being seen, in the hope that I may gather some idea of what their intentions are. Then, having done that, I will return to the Basin, and we will see if we cannot concoct a plan for the capture of the ship. That will be a lot better than trusting ourselves to the honour of a crew of pirates."

"Excellent!" exclaimed Oldroyd. "But you never told us that you have a knowledge of the German language."

"Didn't I?"—with a laugh. "I suppose that was because I haven't any such knowledge."

"Then, how do you propose to find out what the German's intentions are?" demanded Oldroyd.

"Oh, just by watching them and noting their movements," said I. "One can learn a lot that way."

"Yes," agreed Oldroyd; "but not nearly so much as by listening to their conversation. Now, Jack, your plan is a good one—so far as it goes, but it doesn't go far enough. I have a scheme worth two of yours, and it is this. I understand German, so we will both go down together, and I'll do the listening part while you do the watching. Then, perhaps, we may learn something worth knowing."

"Good!" said I. "We'll do it. But we ought to let the others know our intentions, otherwise they may get uneasy and, coming out to look for us, run foul of the exploring party which those fellows are pretty sure to send up in this direction. I wish now that we had that look-out fellow with us who brought the news; he would have been very handy to carry messages for us."

"He would," agreed Oldroyd. "But what about the other chap? He will be up there still, won't he? Take a squint through your telescope and see if you can spot him."

I did so, and soon made him out, apparently watching us intently.

"Yes," I said; "there he is, and he seems to be keeping an eye upon us."

"Good man!" remarked Oldroyd. "Then, let us get behind that clump of bushes, where we cannot be seen from the ship, and I'll signal to the fellow to come down while you watch him through your glass to see whether he observes my signals."

We did so, Oldroyd waving his pocket-handkerchief vigorously with a beckoning motion while I watched the man through my telescope. He seemed to catch the signal almost immediately, and after a pause of about a minute, as though considering what it might mean, he threw up both hands, by way of an answering signal and set off at a run down the slope of the mountain.

"That will do with the handkerchief," I said. "He has seen it, and is coming."

"Right-o!" remarked Oldroyd. "He'll be here in about a quarter of an hour. Now, Massey, I guess the proper thing to do will be for you to write a note to Mason, telling him what we propose to do, and giving him instructions how to act in certain eventualities. Isn't that so?"

"Yes," I said. "But the trouble is that I have neither pencil nor paper. Have you?"

"You bet," returned Oldroyd, groping in his pocket. "Here are both, a memorandum book and a pencil, found by me one day in a drawer of the skipper's stateroom. I was investigating on the off-chance of finding something likely to be useful, and I happened upon these and pocketed both. Now, fire away with your screed to Mason. Better tell him, among other things, that we may be absent all night. And let him send us along a few sandwiches and a bottle of wine."

I wrote a fairly long letter to Mason, giving him what small measure of information we had so far been able to acquire, telling him what our immediate plans were, and instructing him how to act under every contingency I could think of; adding also Oldroyd's message touching refreshments. By the time that I had finished, the native was standing by my side.

We gave him his instructions, dismissed him, and then turned in earnest to the business in hand. By the time that we got back to our post of observation the boat which the Germans had lowered was so near the passage through the reef that we could only see her at intervals through the spray of the surf; but as we continued to watch we saw her shoot through the passage into smooth water, when, somewhat to our amusement, we noted that she also was flying the German naval ensign, trailing from a staff erected at her stern. But, as Oldroyd remarked, the Germans love ceremony, and never miss a chance to indulge in it.

"In the present case," said he, "it is doubtless done duly to impress the inhabitants of the island—should there be any."

Watching the boat for a few minutes after she had entered the lagoon, I saw that she was now paddling slowly toward the beach, and that those in her were taking soundings, which seemed to suggest that perhaps the German skipper might be contemplating the possibility of bringing his ship into the lagoon. Well, so much the better for us! it was precisely what I could have wished.

But it was high time for us to be moving, if we desired to be on hand when the boat should reach the beach, so we set off, cutting across the spurs of the volcano until we reached the stream, the almost dry bed of which we were wont to use as a pathway when going to and fro between the ruins and the big lagoon, and which we now followed on our way to the beach.

It will perhaps be remembered that at the spot of which I am now speaking the woods came down the hill side to within a very few yards of the beach, leaving only a narrow strip of grass between the two; by following the bed of the stream, therefore—which led us down to the site of our original camp—we could keep under cover until within a few yards of the water's edge, and thus avoid being seen

from the lagoon. Arrived at this spot, we once more got a glimpse of the boat, which had by this time reached the beach at a point some two miles from our lurking place. She had landed two men, armed with rifle and bayonet, who were walking slowly in our direction, while the boat kept them company at scarcely more than oars-length from the beach. One of the men was tramping through the dry, heavy sand: he seemed to be scrutinising the sand in search of footprints, while his companion, several yards distant from him, was wading through the long grass, evidently keeping a wary eye on the woods at no great distance on his right. Also I now saw that the boat carried what I took to be a machine-gun mounted in her bows, with a man crouching behind it, apparently ready to open fire at a moment's notice. The spot where they had first touched the shore was plainly indicated by the German flag, which, staff and all, had been removed from the boat's stern and firmly planted on the grassy slope, a few yards inshore from the beach. So we were now standing on German soil; a few more square miles of territory had been added to the German empire!

Slowly the boat approached us, the two men ashore performing their allotted tasks, while the officer in charge stood up in the stern-sheets, peering keenly about him, now seaward at the ship, and anon at the tree-clad slopes on his right sweeping upward to the naked crater with its trailing column of brown smoke. Evidently, like ourselves, upon our arrival at the island, they were seeking for signs of possible inhabitants.

At length the strangers reached the point at which the rivulet, near which we were lurking, flowed into the lagoon, and here they again unconsciously imitated us by beaching the boat while all hands but one of them landed, as we had anticipated they would. The officer in charge of the boat spoke a few sharp words to his men, which we were not near enough to hear distinctly, but which, from his gestures, we judged to be orders, and then, ascending the stream for a few yards, he tested the water by tasting it. It was deliciously cool and sweet, as we well knew, and an eloquent gesture assured us of his satisfaction at the discovery. Facing round toward the boat's crew who, with the exception of the man behind the machine-gun in the bows of the boat, were all ashore, he shouted an order to them—which Oldroyd immediately translated to me—to get the two casks out of the boat, roll them up to the stream, fill them and return them to the boat; adding that he and "Karl" were going a short distance inland to explore, but that the others were on no account to leave the beach. He then called to "Karl"—who proved to be a petty officer—to accompany him, and, both of them fully armed, the pair started to climb the grassy slope which led upward to the wood.

"That craft in the offing is short of water, which is one reason—if not the reason—for her calling here," I remarked to Oldroyd.

"Ah!" he returned, "how do you know that?"

"Easily enough," said I. "The fact that they have brought a couple of casks ashore to be filled, shows that they are down to pretty nearly their last drop. Now, having found that there is good drinking water to be had here, the skipper will bring his ship into the lagoon to fill up his tanks; and I intend that when she goes out again it shall be under my command, with the rest of the party occupying her best cabins, of course."

“Good for you, old son!” commented my companion, in a cautious whisper. “But how are you going to manage it? There are eleven men with that boat, and probably fifty or sixty more in the ship. Those are long odds, you know; but of course you may count upon Mason and me to back you up in any practicable scheme.”

“Yes, I know,” said I. “Of course I recognise that the odds against us are tremendously heavy, and those fellows are evidently much too cautious to be easily caught unawares; but I’ll find a way to do it, somehow, though it will take a bit of thinking out. Now, let us follow those two, and see how far they go. I don’t want them to get as far as the ruins, if it can be helped, because, if they do, they can scarcely avoid detecting the signs of occupation which we have left behind us.”

“True for you, Jack,” returned Oldroyd. “But I don’t think you need fear. Those ruins are a good four miles away, and most of the distance up-hill. Neither of those chaps is in condition to walk that distance in such heat as this.”

Moving with caution, following the Germans closely, but keeping a few yards to the right of them, and interposing the trunk of a tree between ourselves and them whenever it could be done, we continued to keep within earshot of them without betraying ourselves; and this was the more easily managed since the men we were stalking moved and talked noisily, making no effort to conceal their presence. We soon learned that, again like ourselves, they had jumped to the conclusion that the island was uninhabited and that there was therefore no need for special caution; and this conviction we determined to confirm, so far as might be in our power. We also learned that the name of the ship in the offing was the SEEADLER; that her commander was named Traub; that the lieutenant ahead of us was named Kautsky; and that his companion rejoiced in the not inappropriate name of Wolff. Something was also said about certain prisoners on board, but precisely what it was Oldroyd could not catch, as we were at that moment passing a spot where the trees were rather farther apart than usual and we could not get near enough to the pair to hear all that was said. The conversation was desultory and fragmentary, and we did not get it all, but we heard enough to satisfy us that my conjecture as to her character was correct; she was indeed a commerce-destroyer which had slipped out of some unnamed German port, several months before, and succeeding somehow in evading the British Fleet, had made good her escape to the Atlantic, where—and subsequently in the Pacific—she seemed to have met with considerable success, plundering and sinking many ships without—as we gathered—giving very much consideration to the matter of their nationality. In plain language the SEEADLER was neither more nor less than a pirate, perpetrating her atrocities under the shelter of the German naval flag. These particulars we gathered in the course of a two-mile walk toward the crater and back again to the beach, during which the Germans conversed scrappily when not gorging themselves with fruit, while we watched and trailed them in the most approved manner of the Boy Scout. We followed down to the beach, watched them shove off and head for the passage through the reef, and then betook ourselves to our former watching place, on the look-out for further developments. The wind being free enough to permit it, the boat set a big lugsail on her passage back to the ship, accomplishing the trip in less than an hour. We saw her run alongside, saw the barrels of water hoisted out of her, saw her hoisted to the davits, and then, as

I fully expected, the SEEADLER got under way, swept round with her bows pointing toward the passage through the reef, entered the lagoon, and came to an anchor as nearly as possible in the centre of it at the moment when the sun touched the western horizon. Some minutes later it was night, and the stars were shining.

“Well,” said I, as I closed my telescope with a snap, “there she is, safe enough—for to-night, at all events. And now we may get back to the Basin. I dare say our friends there will be curious to hear what we have to tell.”

“You bet they will,” agreed Oldroyd. He spoke as one thinking profoundly. I allowed him to think on, waiting patiently for his thoughts to translate themselves into speech, which they did, a few minutes later; but there was nothing at all helpful in his utterance. It took the form of a simple question.

“Well, Jack,” he at length said, “what do you think about it? Have you formed a plan, yet, for the capture of that ship?”

“I have two under consideration,” said I, “but I cannot make up my mind which to adopt. They are different. If I could only know how long a stay those fellows intend to make I could see my way a good deal more clearly.”

“No doubt,” agreed my companion. “But of course you can’t know that, can you?”

“No, I can’t,” said I. “One can only surmise. And the fact that they have annexed this island—which I take to be the meaning of that flag planted down there by the lagoon—leads me to fancy they will not leave before they have made at least a rough survey of the place, which will occupy two or three days. If they do this, their survey party will probably consist of two or three officers—of whom the skipper will doubtless be one—and perhaps half-a-dozen men. Now, I can see no objection to their exploring the southern end of the island as exhaustively as they please; but they must not be permitted to pass to the northward of the crater, because if they do they will almost certainly discover that the island is inhabited; and such a discovery will put them on their guard and make our task all the more difficult.”

“Sure!” agreed Oldroyd. “But how do you propose to prevent that happening?”

“By calling in the assistance of Kilau Minga and his people,” said I. “We must have a strong body of natives up here, whose business it will be to capture the survey party at the first favourable moment after they pass to the northward of the crater, if they get so far. The Germans will doubtless be armed to the teeth, and there may possibly be a fight, but I think that may be avoided by the adoption of precautions.”

“But,” objected Oldroyd, “how is the capture of the survey party going to help us? You estimate that it will consist of less than a dozen men, the capture of whom will not weaken the Germans to a material extent, while it will certainly put the remainder on their guard.”

“True,” I agreed; “and that is one of the weak points of the plan. But, to counterbalance that, we shall have the skipper in our power; and the capture of him and one or two of the other officers will cause search parties to be sent out to see what has become of them; and those search parties must also be captured. They, too, will be led by officers; and I am reckoning that their capture, together with that of the skipper and such officers as he may have with him, will so denude



the ship of her executive that she will be unable to put to sea again. Also, I am reckoning that the loss of these two parties will cause a third party—a very strong one—to be landed; and their capture will so weaken the crew that it will be comparatively easy to carry the ship by a *coup de main*.”

“Y-e-s,” agreed Oldroyd, doubtfully; “y-e-s. But you’ll admit it’s a pretty desperate plan, with plenty of holes in it, any one of which may cause failure. And the biggest of the lot seems to me to be that the scheme is based upon the supposition that the Seeadler will remain at anchor in the lagoon for several days. Now, let us suppose for a moment that she doesn’t—that, on the contrary, she fills up her water tank to-morrow, and goes to sea again before sunset. How then?”

“In that case,” said I, “there is nothing for it but to adopt my alternative plan, which is to attack her in canoes to-night, or rather, in the early hours of to-morrow morning. But it will be a desperate adventure, and is certain to result in great loss of life, even if we should succeed in taking the Germans by surprise, which I do not believe possible; for unless their officers are born idiots they will see to it that a strict watch is maintained during this, their first night in a strange anchorage.”

“Are you dead sure of that?” demanded Oldroyd. “Why should they keep a more strict watch to-night than, say, two or three nights hence? From the scraps of conversation passing between the two men we followed, I got the impression that they were convinced that this island is uninhabited. And, if so, what have they to fear? Why should they keep a watch at all?”

“Simply because it is customary even in port, to keep an anchor watch,” I replied. “And even if we assumed—as you do—that those two men are convinced that the island is uninhabited, you may bet your last dollar that an anchor watch will be kept aboard the SEEADLER to-night.”

“How many men usually constitute an anchor watch?” asked my companion. “Half the crew as when at sea?”

“Oh, dear, no,” I replied. “I don’t know what the custom is in the German navy, or in the British navy, for that matter, but aboard a merchantman a couple of hands are usually considered sufficient, and they are relieved every two hours. It is not unlikely that half-a-dozen hands, distributed about various parts of the ship, will be as many as the Germans may consider necessary, anchored as they are in the middle of a lagoon, with never a sign of a canoe, or of human presence anywhere.”

“Precisely,” agreed Oldroyd, with animation. “You and I are beginning to see the situation through the same coloured glasses. Here is a ship, moored in a safe harbour. The weather is fine, with not the slightest sign of danger from it. Also, as you say, no canoes in sight, and no sign of inhabitants, savages or otherwise. What is there to fear? Nothing! An anchor watch will be kept, you say. All right: I’ll take your word for it; and I’ll concede that for the first few hours, the men on watch may keep fairly on the alert. But the hours pass and nothing happens. What is the result? The watchers grow careless; the night air makes them sleepy; why shouldn’t they sleep? There is nothing to fear, no earthly reason why they should remain awake; they take a good look round at sea and sky; everything is serene—and ten minutes later they are tucked up in some snug corner, sound

asleep. Now, is not that a quite possible state of affairs on board the SEEADLER to-night?"

"Possible," I admitted, "but hardly probable, I should say. So much will depend upon the character of the discipline maintained. If it is good—that is to say, strict—your picture is not in the least likely to be realised. If on the other hand it is bad, well, it may be; that is all I can say."

"Of course," agreed Oldroyd. "At what time will the moon set to-night? About ten-thirty, isn't it?"

"There or thereabout, within a few minutes," I replied.

"Very well," continued Oldroyd. "Now, what is likely to happen on board the German? I guess it will be something like this. Up to about midnight the watchers will remain fairly alert. After that, nothing happening to keep them on the alert, they will gradually get slack, until, about two or three o'clock in the morning, all pretence at keeping a watch will be at an end, and it ought to be a comparatively easy matter for a dozen or two of us to steal on board, surprise and overpower the watch, help a hundred savages to climb the side, and then capture the crew in detail, either in their cabins or as they come out on deck."

"Exactly," I agreed. "You have got the hang of one of my plans to a nicety; and while we have been talking the conclusion has been steadily forcing itself upon me that it is the right one. The other might answer very well if we could be certain the Germans will remain here for a few days, as I still think they will. But, as you have put it—suppose they don't. In that case we lose our chance, for to attack her openly in broad daylight would be madness. And we must not lose our chance, Paul; no; we mustn't risk it. The proper thing to do is to attack to-night, and we'll do it. I'll get hold of Kilau Minga at once and discuss the matter with him. I wonder what sort of a show his people will make in a fair and square stand-up fight!"

## Chapter 18

### The Canoe Expedition.

As we passed through the village, on our way to the hulk, we called at Kilau Minga's house, and broke ground by informing him that the ship, of whose arrival he had already been apprised, was an enemy, and that her crew had already proclaimed their intention of seizing the island, by planting their flag on the margin of the big lagoon.

"I will send a man to pluck it out and bring it to me," remarked the chief, simply.

"That will do no good," observed Oldroyd. "They will put another there. Besides, it is not merely the planting of a flag in the soil of your island that is the trouble. They will take possession of the island, send a number of their own people here to occupy the land, and those people will either drive you away or make slaves of you."

"They shall not do that," asserted Kilau Minga. "I and my people will kill them."

"You can't, there will be too many of them; they will fill the island," said Oldroyd. "No, if you do not want your island to be taken from you, and yourselves enslaved, there is only one thing for you to do. Jack and I have been talking it over, and we have made a plan. This is it,"—and Paul proceeded to outline the scheme which we had decided upon while returning to the Basin.

The chief listened with profound attention, and when Oldroyd had finished Kilau Minga just nodded his head approvingly. "Yes," he remarked, "the plan is good, *very* good. It shall be done."

"Are you sure that your people will fight—that they will not be afraid and run away when they hear the noise of the firearms?" demanded Oldroyd.

My blood-brother laughed heartily at the suggestion. "We might have been, had we never seen or heard firearms before," he acknowledged; "but, not now. My brother,"—indicating me—"has shown me what they are, and what they can do, and we shall not be afraid. It is the enemy who will have reason to be afraid."

"Right, old man!" exclaimed Oldroyd. "That's the proper spirit to show at a moment like this. Now, you must muster your men; tell them what we have told you, and order them to get their weapons and canoes in order—and see that they do it. When you are satisfied that everything is ready, come to the hulk, and we will tell you exactly what is to be done. We shall have completed our plans by then."

When we reached the hulk, we found the rest of the party impatiently awaiting our return, anxious to obtain the fullest particulars of what we had seen and done. Even the Doctor was shaken out of his abstraction, for once in a way, and was alert and eager. When we explained that we had arranged to attack the ship that night, he became positively chirpy.

"All right, boys," he said; "then I'll go with you. I confess that I am not much of a fighter, and should probably be a hindrance rather than a help if I were to attempt to join in the tussle; but from what you have said I calculate that a few heads will be broken in the course of the scrimmage, and that is where I shall be found useful."

As the rest of us talked with growing animation, Anthea became silent and lost her colour; but now, when her father announced his intention to accompany us, she brightened up again, exclaiming with a smile—

"That's right pop; I'm glad to hear you say that; you'll sure be wanted. And I'll go with you. I can help too."

"You'll come with me!" exclaimed the Doctor, in consternation. "But, my child, you can't. The deck of a ship upon which a fight is raging is no place for a woman."

"Will *you* be there while the fight is raging?" demanded his daughter.

"Well—er—no—not exactly," stammered the Doctor. "But I shall be close at hand, with all my paraphernalia, in a canoe, a few yards away from the actual fighting."

"Sure!" agreed Thea; "and I shall be there with you."

The Doctor flung up his hands in despair. "Explain to her, Jack, that what she proposes is impossible," he besought. "She'll not listen to me."

“Did you ever know her listen to me, sir, or pay the slightest regard to my wishes?” I retorted.

The little witch came to my side and slid her hand coaxingly under my arm. “Oh, Jack, how can you say so?” she exclaimed. “I do as you bid me—sometimes. Let me have my way just this once—*please*.”

“You will have it, I guess, whatever I may say to the contrary,” I retorted. “But, please listen. If you are determined to carry out this mad proposal, it must be on the clear understanding that you keep well away from the ship until the fighting is over, and don’t come alongside before I give you permission.”

“I will see to that, Jack, you needn’t be afraid,” struck in Lucy, at this juncture. “I shall be going, too.”

“You, too!” I reiterated, with a gasp. “Well, you girls are simply past understanding, that’s all I can say.”

“True, Jack, you don’t understand us now—but you will, some day,” whispered Thea, as she gave my arm a little squeeze before leaving me to rejoin her father.

We sat down to dinner, and in the intervals of eating and drinking continued to discuss our plans until we had got them exactly to our liking; then I insisted that everybody should turn in and get a few hours’ rest and sleep to fit them for our great adventure. They all protested that they were much too excited to sleep, but I was firm in my insistence, and at length I managed to get rid of the Doctor and the two girls, Oldroyd and Mason keeping me company for an hour longer, which time we spent overhauling and oiling our revolvers and making them ready for action. While we were thus engaged Kilau Minga turned up to report that, so far as his people were concerned, everything was ready, and all that he now required was our final instructions, which we gave him, describing our plan of action, explaining the character of the resistance we expected to meet with, and generally putting the situation in its entirety as clearly as possible before him. Fortunately for our prospects of success we were now able to understand each other pretty well, and I was glad to see that this savage chief, albeit quite unaccustomed to fighting, displayed a remarkably intelligent comprehension of our plans; his determination to carry them out was patent to us all.

When at length Kilau Minga rose to leave us, Oldroyd, Mason and I accompanied him out on deck and saw him over the side, after which the two Americans left me to my own devices, and retired to their respective cabins.

It was a perfect night for our purpose. There was little wind, and the trifle that was stirring was off the land; thus we should have smooth water for our canoe trip round from the one lagoon to the other, while any slight unavoidable sounds which we might make when approaching our quarry would be swept away from instead of toward her. The moon, in her first quarter, hung large and yellow within a finger’s breadth of the western horizon, casting a long, thin, wavering reflection across the water from the horizon to within a few fathoms of the hulk’s side, while the innumerable stars shed a soft mellow radiance over the scene that afforded us all, and indeed more than all the light we needed. Not a sound was to be heard save the deep thunder of the surf on the reef, a mile and a half away, and the gentle swish of the ripples on the beach. It was a night picture of perfect peace that met my gaze, whichever way I turned, and quite naturally, as it seemed to me,

I contrasted it with the scene which was to be enacted in the big lagoon a few hours later.

As I stood there smoking meditatively, leaning with crossed arms upon the hulk's poop rail, the moon's lower edge touched the distant horizon line, dipped behind it, and in a few minutes the planet had sunk out of sight, leaving behind her a curious sense of chill and loneliness. I straightened myself, gently knocked the ashes out of my pipe, and started pacing the main deck to and fro.

The minutes seemed to drag themselves out to an unconscionable length, but at long last the moment arrived for which I had been waiting, and, walking noiselessly on slippered feet, I entered the store room, lighted the ship's riding lantern, and carried it up on the poop, depositing it upon the rail where it could be seen by every eye in the village. This was the signal to indicate that the hour for action had arrived, and a few minutes later moving forms were beginning to muster on the beach abreast the hulk. Going to Oldroyd's, Mason's and the Doctor's cabins, I touched each sleeper on the shoulder and whispered in his ear that it was time to rise.

Moving silently and stealthily as ghosts, that we might not awaken the girls—whose mad project to accompany us we were determined to defeat, if possible—we four men assembled, a few minutes later, in the main cabin, from whence we crept out on deck and descended into the canoes, which by now were waiting for us alongside; Oldroyd, Mason and I going in one of the big canoes full of fighting men, while the Doctor, with a big bundle under his arm, entered a smaller and lighter craft. Kilau Minga was in command of the canoe which carried us three white men, and upon learning from him that everything was in order and ready I instructed him to give the signal to start, which he did, by paddling ahead as leader of the flotilla.

This flotilla numbered, in all, twenty canoes, ranging in size from craft of forty feet in length, carrying crews of twenty paddlers, down to the Doctor's canoe paddled by six lads who were too young to fight. The weapons with which the natives had armed themselves consisted of a single long spear with a multi-barbed point and a formidable war club, its heavy head closely set with sharks'-teeth spikes, one weapon of each kind being carried by every native; and as I estimated that our force must consist in all of fully two hundred fighting men the thought occurred to me that the Germans were in for a pretty rough time.

We crossed the lagoon and passed out through the gap in the reef in single file, the natives paddling so silently that not a sound was to be heard save the lap of the water against the sides of the canoes, and the deep breathing of the paddlers. We progressed at a good pace, although I had so timed the start that we should arrive alongside the ship about three o'clock in the morning without needing to call upon the natives for undue exertion, for I was anxious they should reach their destination fresh and in good fighting condition.

The wind, which, earlier in the night, had been a mere breathing, had strengthened to about a four-knot breeze, but this was an advantage to us, rather than otherwise, for it slightly cooled the air while, still blowing off the land, it made a fair wind for us across the smaller lagoon to the open water outside, upon reaching which it became possible for us to slip along close under the lee of the cliffs until we should reach the reef forming the outer boundary of the lagoon in

which the German's ship lay at anchor. The weather still held beautifully fine, and the water was smooth, save for the long, low undulations of the Pacific swell, over which the canoes rode buoyantly. The sky was unclouded and the stars, beaming down upon us with that soft lustre which is never to be seen outside the tropics, afforded us all the light we needed, if not indeed rather more than would be quite welcome when the moment came for us to steal up alongside our quarry.

Outside the smaller lagoon our flotilla formed itself in column of fours ahead, and in this fashion headed southward, close under the shadow of the western cliffs. The distance we had to travel was some fourteen miles, and we were no sooner in open water than I saw that we should be in ample time. The journey was uneventful, excepting that for about half of the distance we were joined by a school of porpoises which played around the canoes, darting along beside us, shooting ahead, rushing athwart our bows and occasionally leaping to a height of some six or eight feet out of the water, their antics affording us an agreeable diversion, for the water was brilliantly phosphorescent—to my great regret—and it was interesting to look over the side of the canoe down into the black depths of the water and see the creatures, their bodies gleaming like molten silver, speeding along beneath us.

As we drew up abreast the barrier reef of the big lagoon, the porpoises left us, alarmed, perhaps, by the thunderous roar of the surf upon it, and their departure was a relief to me, for I was beginning to fear lest they should accompany us into the lagoon, in which case their gambols could scarcely fail to attract the attention of a wakeful look-out—should there be such an individual—on board the German, and thus render it impossible for us to approach undetected.

Passing in through the entrance in single file, the canoes ranged themselves close up alongside the inner edge of the reef, affording us an opportunity to reconnoitre the enemy before proceeding to the attack. By the phosphorescent light emitted by the surf breaking on the outer edge of the reef, and streaming over it in shimmering swirls of luminous foam, I was just able to distinguish that it was now a few minutes past two o'clock in the morning, which was the moment of arrival that I had planned; thus far, therefore, all had gone well; but the critical time was still to come. A mile and a half away from the spot where we now lay, as it were in ambush, the dark form of the SEEADLER stood out indistinctly from the almost equally dark background of the hills beyond her, and bringing my telescope to bear I saw that she was lying stern-on to us, which might or might not be an advantage according to circumstances. There was no glimmer of light to be discovered anywhere aboard her, but that was only what might be expected at that early hour of the morning. She was not even showing a riding light; which meant nothing, under the circumstances. We were too far distant from her for human forms to be distinguished on her deck by the starlight; but I looked long and intently in search of such a faint spark as might indicate that a look-out was endeavouring to keep himself awake by the stimulus of a pipe or a cigar, but I could see nothing; we could only hope, therefore, that under the influence of the quietude of the night and the apparent absence of danger from any source, the watch—if such had been set—was calmly and soundly sleeping.

There seemed to be nothing to wait for, no reason for hesitation; the moment appeared to be propitious; I therefore gave the word to advance, and, in

accordance with a previous arrangement, the natives in our canoe faced about, by this simple action converting from stern to bow the end of the canoe in which I and my companions sat. We headed straight for the ship in single column of line ahead, our canoe leading, and the others following close enough in each other's wake for an order to be passed along the line without raising the voice much above a whisper, and now that the moment had arrived for the most profound silence and the utmost caution it was wonderful to note how noiselessly the natives handled their paddles; not the faintest splash threatened betrayal, but silently as shadows we slid athwart the smooth, starlit surface of the lagoon until, about a quarter of an hour after leaving the inner edge of the reef, our canoe floated into and was absorbed by the deep shadow cast by the SEEADLER's overhanging counter, with the other canoes grouped about but not touching her.

Thus far all had gone well with us; I had kept my gaze immovably fixed upon the ship from the moment when I gave the word to advance, and had failed to discover a sign of movement or of life aboard her; and now, while I was wondering by what means we could climb the high, smooth side of the ship, we discovered that, by a most lucky chance, somebody aboard had been doing a little washing on the previous day, and had dropped over the stern a pair of trousers and a shirt, attached to a rope's end, to rinse in the water all night.

Here was the means provided ready to my hand, and I lost not an instant in availing myself of it. Up I went, and in a few seconds was somewhat breathlessly scrambling in over the taffrail, to find myself standing on the spacious poop of the ship. I was in my stocking-feet, having left my boots behind in the hulk, and was therefore able to move freely and noiselessly about the deck; but Oldroyd, Mason and Kilau Minga were following me, so before proceeding to reconnoitre I turned to help them, and a minute or two later all three stood beside me. A gun—apparently a 6-inch—with its shield and other paraphernalia was mounted amidships, some twenty feet away; and beyond it a big skylight occupied the middle of the poop, up to which we crept and crouched behind it for a moment to consult, and arrange our next movement. Of one thing we were already certain; there was nobody on watch at this end of the ship, or we must at once have seen him; and this encouraged me to hope that the watch on the other portions of the ship might be equally lax. This was the next point to determine and accordingly, leaving Kilau Minga to get the rest of his people out of the canoes, and to conceal them as best he could abaft the skylight, the two Americans and I crawled forward toward the fore end of the poop and the ladder which we counted upon finding there.

Moving rapidly but noiselessly, we traversed the length of the poop and, peering over its forward edge, found ourselves looking down upon the after well deck, with the saloon superstructure as its forward boundary. The middle of this well deck was occupied by the after hatchway, with the mainmast springing from the deck about midway between it and the saloons. Accustomed as our eyes now were to the starlight it was plain there was no one moving on the deck below us, we therefore crept down the poop ladder and looked about us.

My first glance was directed to the bulkhead forming the front, so to speak, of the poop, and here I found, as I had expected, a door. It was open and, feeling my way cautiously along a passage some ten or twelve feet long, I found myself in a fairly spacious cabin, the darkness of it just relieved by the starlight filtering down

through the skylight in the deck above. There were staterooms on both sides of the cabin, and they were occupied, for I could hear snoring, deep breathing, and restless movements. That afforded me all the information I needed for the moment; therefore I groped my way out on deck again, briefly informed my companions of what I had discovered, and returned to Kilau Minga, who was rapidly getting his people out of the canoes and up on deck. I explained that I wanted twenty men to stand guard over one of the cabins, and these I led forward, directing them to arrange themselves equally on either side of the passage leading to the cabin, and on no account to allow anyone to pass out on deck. Then I rejoined Oldroyd and Mason, who had usefully employed the interval in assuring themselves that no sleeper occupied any of the shadowy corners of this part of the ship.

Leaving the after well deck, we ascended to the upper deck, upon which the saloon staterooms were built, and devoted ourselves to a scrutiny of these. There were sixteen of them—eight on either side of the structure—with what we afterward discovered to be a bar, with a snug little smoke room forward of that. The staterooms were two-berth rooms, and, the doors being open, it did not take us long to discover that every one was occupied. Passing on to the smoke room, we discovered how it was that we had been permitted to get aboard unchallenged, for here, coiled up on the cushions, sound asleep and snoring, were two seamen who obviously constituted the anchor watch. To slip out on deck while Oldroyd and Mason mounted guard over the pair, secure a couple of belaying pins to serve as gags, and enough rope to bind the pair hard and fast was the work of a few minutes; and upon my return the two Americans tackled the bigger of the twain while I attended to the other. It was no time for standing upon ceremony. I therefore drew one of my revolvers, gave my man a smart enough tap on the head with the butt of it to stun him, and then proceeded to gag and lash him up as scientifically as I knew how, the two Americans proceeding on similar lines. My next act was to return aft to Kilau Minga, obtain from him forty men to mount guard over the staterooms we had just scrutinised, including two to watch the pair in the smoke room, and then, with my two companions, go on to the captain's cabin on the navigating bridge, taking care to provide ourselves, on the way, with the wherewithal to render harmless anyone there.

Thus far we had found sleepers wherever we went, but as we entered the captain's cabin—a little incautiously, perhaps, our success up to the present having rendered us a trifle careless—a figure clad in pyjamas rose up on the couch opposite the door and demanded in German—

“Hullo! Who is it? What do you want?”

By way of answer the three of us leapt at him, and while I gripped the man tightly by the throat to prevent him from raising an outcry and giving the alarm. Mason caught him in a bear-like embrace about the shoulders, effectually restraining his efforts to get to his feet, and Oldroyd pressed the cold muzzle of a revolver barrel to his head as he muttered—also in German—

“Silence, as you value your life! Will you surrender, or must I blow your brains out?”

I relaxed my grip upon the fellow's throat sufficiently to permit him to reply, and he gasped out—



“Surrender? What do you mean? Who are you? Have the prisoners risen and taken the ship?”

“You shall know everything in good time, old chap,” answered Oldroyd. “Meanwhile the question is—Do you surrender?”

“You are American!” exclaimed the man, in English. “There are no Americans among—”

“My good man,” remonstrated Oldroyd, relapsing into his mother-tongue, “*will* you stick to the point and answer my question, or must we adopt rougher measures with you.”

“But who *are* you?” persisted the German. “Surely—”

“Clap the belaying pin into his mouth and gag him,” exclaimed I. “We have no time to spare for this sort of business. And, Mason, pass the bight of that rope over his head and—”

“Stop! stop!” gasped the man. “I surrender, since it appears that there is nothing else for it. But—*Himmel!*—tell me who you are, and what it all means.”

“Yes, yes; by and bye; all in good time,” answered Oldroyd, soothingly. “What you have to do just now is to be a good boy, and keep a quiet tongue in your head. Now, Jack,”—turning to me—“what is the next thing to be done?”

“If Mason will kindly remain with this gentleman and see that he does nothing foolish, you and I will finish our explorations,” said I.

Mason readily agreed to mount guard over Captain Traub—for such our prisoner proved to be—adding a kindly word of warning to the man to behave himself if he did not desire to be summarily knocked on the head; and Oldroyd and I thereupon proceeded by way of the fore-deck to the fore-castle, where we found the crew sleeping peacefully. A strong guard of the natives was posted at the door of this apartment, with instructions to permit no one to leave the place before I gave the word; and we were then ready to complete the operation of taking possession of the ship.

## Chapter 19

### Capture of the SEEADLER, and End of the Adventure.

My first act now was to return to Traub’s cabin, and question him as to who were the prisoners, mention of whom had escaped him during our first interview; how many of them there were; and where were they confined? The man at first manifested a disposition to be sulky and uncommunicative, but we quickly demonstrated to him that we were in no mood to waste time, or to put up with any nonsense; and he presently informed us that there were one hundred and twenty-six Englishmen on board who had been taken out of four British ships which had been captured, plundered and sunk by the SEEADLER during her cruise, and that these men were now confined below in a part of the after-hold which had been

converted into a sort of strong room for their accommodation. The key of the strong room he now handed over to me.

Our next proceeding was to return to the cabin under the poop, light the lamp which hung in the skylight, arouse the inmates of the staterooms adjoining, and acquaint them with the fact that they were prisoners, at the same time affording them a glimpse of the native guard, with their formidable spears and war clubs, which we had placed over them. We carefully searched those staterooms for weapons, but found none, one of the party, a sub-lieutenant, informing us that it was the practice to deposit all arms in the big dining saloon down below; which was the reason, he ruefully explained, why they surrendered without attempting a blow in self-defence.

We crowded these people, twenty in all, into five of the staterooms, locked them in, and returned to the staterooms on the upper deck amidships, the occupants of which we secured in a similar manner, bidding them dress, and then marching them all aft to the poop cabin, locking as many as we could into the staterooms, and confining the remainder in the main cabin. Finally, we entered the forecabin—the atmosphere of which was poisonous—and ordered the crew to come out on deck, one at a time, when each man was taken into custody by a couple of natives. As in the case of the officers, we warned these men of the extremely serious consequences which would attend any attempt at resistance, but they were a ruffianly crowd and when they were all out on deck one of them shouted to the rest to make a fight for it. A few of them were foolish enough to respond to this call, and for two or three minutes the fore-deck became a scene of considerable confusion. It was soon over, however; but the result of the brief scrimmage was a tale of five killed and fourteen more or less seriously wounded, all Germans. The remainder, completely cowed by the sight of the casualties and the fierce looks and threatening gestures of the natives, marched aft as quietly as lambs, several of them begging to be put beyond the reach of the savages.

The time had now arrived for the release of the British prisoners. I took a lantern, lighted it and, accompanied by Oldroyd, descended by way of the open after hatchway to the prison described by Traub. It was strongly constructed, consisting of a bulkhead reaching right across the ship, framed with two thicknesses of three-inch planking nailed to stout upright stanchions, the whole interior face being plated with sheet iron. In the middle was a door, similarly constructed, the opening being a bare foot wide, so that but one man could pass at a time, and even then only with difficulty, if he were inclined to be corpulent. In the upper part of the door there was a small opening, about four inches square, which seemed to be the only means of ventilating the place, and the stench which issued from it afforded one a pretty clear idea of what the state of the interior must be.

I inserted the key in the lock, turned it, and threw the door open—to be met by a gust of foul air that set me gasping. But there were fellow-countrymen of mine in there, to be freed without delay, so I raised the lantern and entered. The deck was covered with recumbent forms huddled up in attitudes eloquent of acute discomfort, and all, it seemed to me, awake and restless. As I entered several sat up and greeted me with a volley of oaths, while two or three gasped a cry for water—“For God’s sake bring us a drop of water to drink!”

"Lads," I shouted, "I am an Englishman, and it is my happy privilege to tell you that I and my friends have captured this ship, and that you are free. Come out of this filthy hole and go up on deck, where you can get a breath of fresh air, and all the water you need. I want this place in which to confine the officers and crew of this ship. Steady now, please don't crowd; you'll get on deck all the quicker if you go quietly." But my remonstrances were useless; the poor wretches were mad with eagerness to escape from that noisome den, and it was distressing to see how suffering had destroyed the Englishman's innate sense of chivalry, causing the strong to hustle aside the weak. Meanwhile Oldroyd, outside, was doing his best to maintain some sort of order, at the same time cautioning the surging crowd against interfering in any way with the natives.

The German crew were loud in their protestations against our cruelty in forcing them to enter the noisome den from which we had just released the Englishmen; but we hustled them in, reminding them that the place had been deemed good enough for their prisoners, and that therefore there was no justification for complaint now that they were going to be allowed to sample its comforts for themselves. But the place was in such an indescribably filthy condition, owing to the fact that, despite their most urgent entreaties, the Englishmen had not been allowed to clean it out, or to leave it for any purpose since their first entrance, that I told our prisoners they should be provided with everything necessary to give it a thorough cleansing as soon as daylight arrived, and with that they were obliged to be satisfied. Moreover, it was no very great hardship for them, since the fore-castle which they had just vacated was in little better condition.

Rejoining Mason for a moment, I learned from him that Traub had evinced a disposition to be troublesome during our absence: we therefore put the fellow in irons, locked him in his own cabin, and then, our possession of the ship being now complete, we proceeded to interview our released fellow-countrymen.

They consisted of the crews of two steamers which had been captured and sunk by the SEEADLER in the Atlantic, and one steamer and a sailing ship which had met the same fate in the Pacific, and the captains of these vessels had a long story to tell of the cold-blooded, cruel callousness to which they had been subjected—some of them for more than two months—resulting in the death of no less than seventeen of their numbers; but there is no need to horrify and disgust the reader with the details of the Germans' neglect. In return I briefly related our own story, in which, as might be expected, they took a lively interest. When I went on to state the plans which I had been formulating from the moment when I had become aware of the true character of the SEEADLER, they at once pledged themselves and their crews to afford me all the assistance I might need; but they begged that they might first be permitted to have a run ashore and to spend a few days on the island in order to recruit their health after their long confinement below. To this proposal I, later on, agreed—with certain reservations—after consulting Kilau Minga as to his views on the subject; with the result that no sooner had the sun risen than a strong party of the released prisoners went ashore and, taking the necessary materials with them, set to work to rig up a camp on the spot where we had camped when we first landed.

I was not greatly surprised when, about mid-day, Thea and Lucy made their appearance on the beach. I was ashore at the time, for, as a matter of fact, I more

than half anticipated their coming, and wanted to be there to receive them. And I was also by no means surprised to learn that when the girls awoke in the morning and discovered that we had quietly slipped away without affording them the opportunity to accompany us, Thea had been furiously indignant with us all, her father included; indeed her indignation had not evaporated when, seeing them approaching, I hastened to join them; but when she learned that the ship was in our possession, that there had been no fight worth mentioning, and that none of us was hurt, her frowns soon gave place to smiles of happiness.

That was a busy day for all hands. The arrangements for the safeguarding of our prisoners and the establishing of a camp ashore wherein the freed crews of Englishmen might recruit for a few days prior to our departure from the island kept us fully occupied until darkness set in; but the results were worth all the trouble; for not only had we rendered it impossible for the Germans to recapture the ship, but our English friends rapidly recovered their normal health and strength.

Finding, upon enquiry, that Wilkinson and Dartnell were still determined to throw in their lot with the islanders, we decided that, the cutter being now so very near completion, we would finish her off and put her into the water, for their convenience, and this was done on the fourth day following that of the capture of the SEEADLER. The spars, rigging and sails of the boat also being ready, we not only launched her, but also ballasted her, rigged her, bent her sails and made a trial cruise round the island, with the result that she far surpassed our most sanguine expectations. We certainly had no opportunity of testing her in a gale, but her behaviour in ordinary weather was so satisfactory that, had it been necessary, I would unhesitatingly have undertaken a voyage across the Pacific in her.

The task of getting the cutter afloat and into sailing trim accomplished, our next job was to prepare the SEEADLER for the voyage to Sydney, whither I had decided to take her. An examination of her bunkers satisfied us that she had more than enough fuel for the trip, the practice of the pirates having been to fill up from the ships she captured, before sinking them, whenever the weather conditions were sufficiently favourable; but she had run short of water in consequence of an unsuspected leak in her main tank, hence her visit to our island. With the appliances which she carried, however, the stoppage of the leak had proved a simple matter, her own engineers having indeed effected the repair before her arrival. There was nothing left for us to do, therefore, but to re-fill the tanks, and the ship would be ready to sail at any moment. With the strength we now had at our disposal this was a simple matter; and while we were doing it the Doctor hurriedly completed his self-imposed task of copying the paintings on the walls of the temple, not forgetting to transfer to his daughter's trunk the robes of the goddess Taana which we had found in the coffer. He also insisted on taking the figure of the goddess herself, and the embroidered curtains of the temple; and we accordingly packed them carefully in canvas and transported them down to the ship, late one night, after the natives had all returned to the Basin.

Finally, the liberated Englishmen, by this time recovered from the effects of their confinement in the pestiferous atmosphere of the prison chamber, spent an entire

day ranging the island in search of fruit, of which they gathered a quantity sufficient to last us during the voyage.

This brought the time round to exactly a week from the day on which we effected the capture of the SEEADLER; and this day we, the original party of castaways, spent among our friends, the inhabitants of the Basin. I gave Wilkinson and Dartnell the compass which we had brought with us to the island in the jollyboat, also a chart from the SEEADLER's stock, upon which I laid down the position of the island, so that in the event of them ever desiring to leave the island, they might have the means by which to find their way to civilisation. We also of course left intact the machinery which we had erected, and which the natives had by this time learned to use, as also all the tools taken out of the hulk, these matters meaning to their new owners, a distinct progress toward civilisation.

When at last it came to the point, the parting with these simple, amiable savages proved to be rather an ordeal for both parties, for on our side our intimate contact with them after the conclusion of peace had revealed the sterling qualities of their character, while they had grown to regard us as beings only a little, if at all, inferior to gods. A strong bond of mutual respect and esteem had insensibly bound us together, and the severing of it was painful, even to us who were eagerly anticipating an early reunion with those we loved. As for the natives—and especially Kilau Minga - they did not attempt to conceal or restrain their grief, but followed us, every soul of them, to the entrance of the tunnel, wailing their regrets and imploring us to return to them some day; and to pacify them I gave them my solemn promise that, so far as I was concerned, I would do so, should circumstances permit. At the mouth of the tunnel we spoke our final farewells and parted, they to return to their homes, and we to take our final walk across the island to the big lagoon. We were a silent party for the first half of the way, for our thoughts were dwelling upon all that had happened since the day when we first set foot upon the soil of this unknown island; and it was not until we crossed the ridge and saw the SEEADLER riding at anchor in the lagoon, with steam up and Blue Peter flying at the fore, that smiles of happy anticipation again shone in our eyes and upon our faces.

A boat was waiting for us when we reached the beach, and hardly had we left the shore when a small jet of steam issuing from the bow of the ship told us that the officer in charge had started the steam windlass and was "heaving short". By the time that we got alongside the cable was "up and down" and the anchor ready for tripping, therefore, while the others climbed the poop to take a last look at the island, I straightway ascended to the bridge and took charge, ordering the boat to be hoisted to the davits and the gangway secured. These orders given, I rang "Stand by" to the engine room, and gave the order to break the anchor out of the ground, and ten minutes later we steamed out through the opening in the reef and were rolling and pitching on the long Pacific swell as the sun sank below the horizon in a blaze of purple and golden splendour.

Five days later we arrived and anchored in Port Jackson harbour about breakfast time, and as soon as the meal was over I communicated with the naval authorities, told them my story, and asked for instructions. The reply was quickly forthcoming, in the form of a prize crew from the flagship, who took possession of the SEEADLER and transferred her German crew to safe quarters ashore.

My next business was to call at the offices of the Inter-Oceanic Steamship Company to make my report, and here I learned, to my consternation and profound regret, that I was the first bearer of authentic news of the ANDROMEDA disaster, none of the occupants of the other boats having ever been heard of. A long cable message was at once drafted and despatched to San Francisco, giving terse particulars of the wreck and the names of the survivors; and on the following day a reply came to hand instructing me to return to 'Frisco by the first of the Company's steamers available, after I had concluded my business connected with the capture of the ship. Meanwhile the remaining members of the party had taken up their quarters in one of the most comfortable of the many comfortable hotels which Sydney boasts, and there I joined them. They were naturally anxious to be with their friends at home without delay; but, upon learning the nature of the instructions which I had received, they determined to await the arrival of the boat which was to take me back, and all return together.

The agents of the Company informed me, a day or two later, that as a result of enquiries instituted by them on my behalf, they had learned the welcome news that a very handsome sum as prize money would eventually accrue to me from the capture of the SEEADLER, but that the proceedings in connection with the award would probably be somewhat protracted, and they therefore very handsomely undertook to handle the business for me. And I may say here that they fulfilled their promise so effectively that when the matter was eventually settled I found myself, for so young a man, quite well off.

It only remains to add that we, the sole survivors of the ANDROMEDA wreck, had a very happy journey across the Pacific in each other's company, during which Anthea and I spent many an hour promenading the starlit deck. And in the course of those promenades I obtained so clear an insight into the dear girl's true character that her prophecy—that some day I should learn to understand her—became abundantly fulfilled, and I am now looking forward to the day when she will be my wife.

As for the Directors of the Inter-Oceanic, they were most complimentary. They had nothing but approval for my conduct all through the adventure, and they showed their approval in a very practical manner by cancelling the short residue of my indentures and appointing me fifth officer in one of their finest ships, to which they at the same time appointed Lucy Stroud as chief stewardess.

As for Oldroyd and Mason, we correspond regularly: and the latest news of them is that as soon as the war is over they intend to make another trip to Australia, and that it will be made in my ship.

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