GABRIELLE OF THE LAGOON

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A Romance of the South Seas

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GABRIELLE OF THE LAGOON

A ROMANCE OF THE SOUTH SEAS

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"SAILOR AND BEACHCOMBER"

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PROLOGUE

Though it was night and there was no moon, a dim, weird light lay over the isle and pierced to the depths of the forests. It was in the Solomons, where the dark, picturesque surroundings of palm and reef, the noise of the distant surfs, made a suitable setting for anything unexpected. Even the silver sea-birds had weird, startled-looking eyes down Felisi beach way. And when the wild brown men crept away from the grave-side of one whom they had just buried in the forest, the winds sighed a fitting music across the primeval heights. But there was nothing strange in that; men must die wherever one goes, and it was a common enough occurrence in that heathen land where the ocean boomed on the one side and inland to the south-west stood the mountains, looking like mighty monuments erected in memory of the first dark ages. Across the skies of Bougainville the stars had been marshalled in the millions. It seemed a veritable heathen faeryland as the night echoed a hollow "*Tarabab!*" But even that heathenish word was only the tribal chief's yell as he stood under the palms conducting the semi-religious tambu ceremony. The tawny maidens and high chiefs, with their feather head-dresses, all in full festival costume, were squatting in front of the secret tambu stage, some mumbling prayer, others beating their hands together as an accompaniment. And still the dusky tambu dancer moved her perfect limbs rhythmically to the rustling of her sarong-like attire, swaying first to the right then to the left as she chanted to the wailings of the bamboo fifes and bone flutes. The orchestral-like moan of the huge bread-fruits, as odorous drifts of hot wind swept in from the tropic seas, seemed to murmur in complete sympathy with the pretty dancer. One might easily have concluded that Oom Pa, the aged high priest, was the "star turn" of the evening as he stood there enjoying his thoughts and performing magnificently on the monster tribal drum.

There was something fascinating and super-primitive about the whole scene. The very scents from decaying forest frangipani and hibiscus blossoms seemed to drift out of the damp gloom of the dark ages. The presence of civilisation in any form seemed the remotest of possibilities. Even the fore-and-aft schooner, with yellowish, hanging canvas sails, lying at anchor just beyond the shore lagoons, looked like some strange-rigged craft that sailed mysterious seas.

But as the assembled tribe once again wildly clamoured for the next dancer to come forward and exhibit her charms, a murmur of surprise rose from the back rows of stalwart, tattooed chiefs—a white girl suddenly ran out of the forest and jumped on to the tambu stage!

One aged chiefess who was busy mumbling her prayers looked up and gave

a frightened scream. Even the aged philosophical head-hunter Ra-mai, who had one hundred and eighty skulls hanging to his credit in his palavana hard by, gave a mellow grunt, so great was his surprise. A white girl, lips red as coral, hair like the sunset's gold, standing by his old *pae pae*! It was something that he had never dreamed of. The tawny maidens squatting beneath the coco-nut-oil-lamp-lit shades on the right of the buttressed banyans, lifted their hands in astonishment. For a moment the white girl stood perfectly still. All eyes were upon her. She stared vacantly as though she were in a trance. Then she moved forward a few steps, her feet lightly touching the forest floor as if she were a visionary figure veiled in moonlight. Only the sudden renewal of the wild clamouring and guttural cries of "*O la Maramam tambu, papalaga!*" ("A white girl will dance before us!") seemed to rouse her to her senses, reminding her of the reason she had responded to the swelling chorus of tribal drums.

The barbarian musicians had begun to bang and blow on their flutes in an inspired way as they urged her to dance. Her sudden hesitation was very evident to every onlooker. And as she stood there by the monster tambu idol, its big glass eyes agog and wooden lips stretched in hideous laughter, she had a strange, unearthly beauty. The winds sighed in the palms; she wavered like a blown spirit-girl that had been suddenly swept out of the night of stars into the midst of those Pharaoh-like chiefs. Some of those warriors watched with chin on hand, others stared upon her with burning eyes.

Those old chiefs and their women-kind had seen many strange sights and experienced many shocks since German, British, Malayan, Hindoo, Chinese and Dutch settlers had set foot on their shores; but still they were quite unprepared for the sight they witnessed that night. The handsome Malayo-Polynesian half-castes nudged their comrades in the ribs and murmured the native equivalent to "What-o!" To their delight, the white girl had mounted the *pae pae* and had begun to dance and sing. The whole tribe watched and listened, spellbound. The haunting sweetness of the melody seemed to bring all ears under its influence. It was something in the way of song that those wild people had never heard before.

Only the pretty faded blue robe falling down to her brown-stockinged ankles and the long tortoise-shell comb stuck in the rich folds of her golden-bronze hair told of her mortal origin. And there was no mistaking the reality of that indisputable bang on the heathen bandmaster's drum. That dusky virtuoso was certainly inspired by human passion.

Ra-mai, who was a kind of religious genius, dropped his festival calabash and rubbed his eyes, for the girl was swaying as though she were fastened on to the winds, her eyes wide open, staring upon him. The old priestly warrior swore, long after, that she was a spirit-maid whom he had loved a thousand years ago, and who had returned that night, as white as a deep-sea pearl, to show men how

great a priest and warrior he really was. But he was a poetical old fellow and had a high opinion of himself where female beauty and frailty were concerned. But if there was an element of surprise over her sudden appearance before them, the astonishment of these natives was intensified by her dramatic exit from their midst. Just as the guttural cries of the chiefs and the weird monotones of the chanting tambu maidens had caught the *tempo* of her dance, she gave a scream, stood perfectly still and stared on those wild men with a terrified look in her eyes. Then, before anyone could realise her intentions, she had leapt from the *pae pae*, had run away into the forest and vanished like a wraith!

The whole tribal assemblage looked into each other's eyes in astonishment. Such an exhibition of red betel-nut-stained teeth had never been seen in a midnight forest festival before, for they all stared open-mouthed.

"Tabaran [a spirit] from shadow-land!" said one.

"Not so. Didst see the light of vanity in her wondrous eyes as the young chiefs praised her beauty?" said another.

"'Tis a white girl suddenly up-grown and full of fever for love," said an old chief with wise wrinkles on his brow. And then yet another said: "Had it been a full-moon sacred festival, 'twould have been well to slay her for such boldness, the cursed papalagi!"

Then the festival broke up. And that night the handsome chiefs, and even the aged priests, tossed restlessly on their bed-mats as they lay in their village huts dreaming of a goddess-like creature who had flitted through their tambu ceremony like a dream.

CHAPTER I—ROMANCE'S FIRST THRILL

On the day following the tribal festival when the white girl had so astonished the heathen priests in the village called Ackra-Ackra a runaway ship's apprentice emerged from his half-caste landlady's wooden lodging-house. He was off for a stroll, for the tenth time or so, over the slopes that divided the banyan forests from the small township of Rokeville. He was stagnating and so had little else to do except to make the colour of the picturesque scenery harmonise with his meditations. He was a tall, handsome fellow, about twenty years of age. His brass-bound suit looked decidedly faded by the hot tropical sun, and the flannel collar of his only shirt had begun to look slightly grimy. All the same, he had that look of refinement which is inherited from good ancestors. A romantically inclined maid would have thought him extremely attractive. A bronze-hued lock seemed to ooze from beneath the rim of his cheese-cutter cap, for when funds were low in distant lands, and scissors scarce on ships at sea, his hair grew quite curly. One of his eyes was a deep blue and the other a golden-brown. This eccentric combination of colour may have had something to do with the romantic adventures that fell to his lot through his leaving ship in Bougainville. It was quite three weeks since he had made a bolt from his full-rigged sailing-ship in the harbour, consequently his cash in hand had seriously diminished. He had already become terribly sane whilst pondering over the natural consequences of being cashless.

Hillary L——, for that was his name, hated plantation work and all muscular endeavours that did not contain some element of romance. But still, he had long since realised, through his many adversities at the end of long voyages, that wherever one goes one must toil for a living, however romantic the scenery may appear.

"Blasted wicked world this! Wish white men could dress like the natives and chew nourishing nuts for a living!" he murmured, as he thoughtfully saluted the German official who was leaning against a dead screw-pine, on the top of

which blew the Double Eagle flag.

Hillary was no fool; he could always be polite at the right time and place. He'd been stranded, with fourpence-halfpenny or so in his possession, in about ten islands during the last twelve months, and he knew that if things got to the worst he could apply to the German consul for a free passage to British New Guinea or to Samoa. Hence his politeness. He was British to the backbone, and as the Teutonic official murmured that it was a nice day Hillary nodded and then lifted a cloud of the finest coral-dust with his offside boot. He could hear the German spluttering and coughing in a fearful rage, wondering why the hot wind had suddenly lifted so much dust. Hillary's contempt for anything in the German line was quite unaffected. The natives whispered: "Germhony mans nicer feller when he looker one way, but all-e-samee, he belonga debil mans."

The young apprentice was one of a type that commercially was not worth a tinker's dam. If he were a party to any scheme connected with finance, one could safely predict that that scheme was predestined to complete failure. But in the imaginative world Hillary could be pronounced a decided success.

It was the same wherever he went. The old sea-boots on the shelf of the seaport's slop-shop danced a jig on some ship far at sea; the oilskins swelled to visionary limbs as sailormen opened their bearded mouths and climbed aloft, singing the chanteys that he could distinctly hear as he placed his ear to the shop's dirty window!

The silk, blue-fringed chemise hanging on a nail by the oil lamp clung, as he gazed, to the limbs of some laughing girl; fingers travelling down the yellow keys of the second-hand piano mysteriously strummed out some melody that told of the briefness of life, youth and beauty. This poetical weakness was a veritable Old Man of the Sea on his back. But still, he was no fool, and, like most of his type, he could be strong where most men are weak.

As he turned round and looked on the desolate scene, and stared at the sunset out at sea, his face expressed an emotion that words cannot describe. The parrots rose in a glittering cloud as he stood their meditating, gazing on the small burial ground that he had suddenly stumbled across. It was where a few white men had been buried on the lonely beach-side, miles from the township. The crosses of coral stone were sunken very deep, the names nearly oblitered. "What a godforsaken, tragic place," he muttered as he read:

TO THE MEMORY OF
BILL LARGO, BOATSWAIN
DIED JUNE 3RD 1860

SPEARED BY HEAD-HUNTERS IN TRYING TO SAVE SHIP'S
COOK—THIS STONE IS RAISED BY THE CREW
OF THE S.S. "SALAMANDER" BOUND

FOR CALLAO

Everything seemed tragic in those parts. For as he wandered along the beach a voice startled him as a weird face suddenly poked out of the mangroves:

"Noice even'ng, matey?"

"Yes," responded the apprentice as he looked into the face of a sun-tanned remnant of a white man who stood by a fern-sheltered, thatched den. It was only old Adams, an ex-sailor, leading his Mormon-like existence. He was a kind of Solomon Island aristocrat of independent means. He was apparently attired in a wide-brimmed hat and beard only, for the climate is muggy in the Solomons. He *did* wear thin cotton pants, but they were so drenched with perspiration that they clung to his legs like a skin. He borrowed a shilling from the apprentice, shot a stream of tobacco juice seaward, then entered his hut, but before slamming the door behind him he looked back and said: "I'd git back to me ship if I was you; the Kai-Kai chiefs are on the b——taboo lay round 'ere, and they'd give their ears for that curly mop of yourn!" The door slammed. Once more Hillary was alone. As he walked away he could distinctly hear old Adams swearing at his four wives, who was apparently rushing round the hut looking for his clean shirt. They were dusky women, probably the daughters of tribal kings, and had given their birthrights to Adams so that they could be the wives of a noble papalagi. Such was the queer, mixed population of that solitary locality where the apprentice mooched along. And Rokeville, the shore township, was not much more dignified; but what it lacked socially was amply made up for by its Arabian-Nights-like atmosphere. Its one street, a silvery track made of coral dust, went winding down to the shore. And when the full moon peered over the ocean rim, touching with dim light the feathery palms that sheltered the tin roofs of the scattered coral-built houses, it looked like some staged faery town of a South Sea isle. Often by night some strange-rigged ship would hug the coast-line for hours while its crew of blackbirders crept ashore and kidnapped native men and women from the villages. Before dawn that stealthy craft had sailed away, crammed up to the hatches with cheap labour for the plantations and heathen seraglios of nowhere. By day things looked as real as possible. There was nothing faery-like about Parsons' wooden grog shanty, that stood, sheltered by three tall palms, at the head of the township. Through its ever-open doorway by day and night passed the German, Scandinavian, Norwegian and Yankee shell-backs, who drank strong

rum at the bar, banged their fists and narrated their Homeric deeds. That shanty was the commercial centre and stock exchange of Bougainville. It was haunted by about a dozen nondescript, aged Chinese, Dutch and Japanese seamen who wore pigtails, pointed beards or scraggy whiskers: on the brightest tropic day *they* succeeded in adding a touch of romance to the shore landscape, for when rum was scarce they leant their ragged backs against the palm stems and looked like old figure-heads from Chinese junks and Spanish galleons stuck up on end, till they spoilt the picture by pulling their tangled beards as they spat seaward. They also drank rum and existed, apparently, by watching the white seahorses charge the purple-ridged line of coral reefs that made the natural pier of that seaside resort. Consequently the young apprentice preferred the wild scenery of the mahogany forests and the blue lagoons where the brown maids dived, to the mixed society of that delectable township. To him there was something fascinating, almost poetic, about the mahogany-hued Papuans and Polynesians. But his ideals quite saved him from falling in love with a brown maid. And it must be confessed that the Solomon Isles was not an Olympian locality, where dwelt cold, passionless Hellenic beauties, and many a dusky Nausicaa and luring Circe had tempted bold sailormen to destruction by their songs and demonstrative exhibitions of their charms. But some of the maids were innocent enough, for as Hillary wandered by Felisi beach he caught sight of a tiny Polynesian baby girl. She was busy pulling wild flowers that grew amongst the thick tavu-grass. Her tiny body shone with a hue like a new Australian sovereign as sunset bathed her little figure with its hot light. Her alert, savage ears heard the apprentice's footsteps in the scrub. Just for a moment her thick curls tossed and sparkled among the tall fern-grass as she sped away into the forest as though she quite expected a white man to shoot her at sight!

"I wonder what I'll sight next; why, it's like some fairy spot," Hillary murmured as he watched the child disappear. Then he climbed over the reefs till he came right opposite the shore islets, where the natives swore their gods danced under the stars.

At this spot there happened to be a wide lagoon, and on the still waters, just where the mighty banyans leaned over and made a delightful shade, floated a canoe. "The very thing!" Hillary exclaimed. In a moment he was paddling about on the lagoon in the small primitive craft. Strange birds shrieked over his head, their crimson and blue wings flashing along as they resented his intrusion into their lovely solitude. Some had eyes like sparkling jewels and long, hanging coral-red legs and feet.

"What a bit of luck! I could paddle about here for ever!" was his comment as he swished the paddle, turned the prow of his canoe and went off full speed down the narrow creek-like passage that led to the wider stretch of water inland. "It's

like being alone on an uninhabited island," he thought. Suddenly a hush came over the waters. Only the solitary "Kai koo-seeeek!" of a parakeet disturbed the silence. So still was the water of the lagoon that he seemed to float about on a mighty mirror. The huge buttressed banyans reflected in the deep, clear water by the banks hung upside down, twisted shapes in an abyss of blue. He could even discern the flock of shrieking, sky-winging lories as their images went wheeling silently over the wooded heights, so clearly was the forest fringe reflected in the depths.

"Good Lord!" he gasped, as he stared on that shadow-world; and no wonder, for on the rim of the hanging cloud, high over the leaning trees of the reflected sky, sped an ornamental canoe! Its paddle was swiftly curling, like a fast-flying bird's wing. He nearly upset his small craft, so great was his astonishment, for, looking towards the bend where the banyans hid the expanse of inland water from view, he saw that the reflected figure in the canoe was real.

It wasn't the canoe but the paddler that made him exclaim. "It can't be an apparition with those hibiscus blossoms stuck in her hair," he thought as he rubbed his eyes and stared again. The blue robe, open low at the neck, was the apprentice's only excuse for his ridiculous idea in thinking that a beautiful princess of some unknown white race had suddenly appeared on the lagoon. She softly dipped her paddle and, shattering the blue sky and twisted boughs with one blow, came speeding towards him!

"Am I awake?" he muttered. She had waved her paddle, welcoming his presence as though she had known him for years. At first he hesitated, thinking that one word, one sign of recognition from him would make her vanish back into her native skies. But at length he too lifted his paddle and waved most enthusiastically!

As Hillary came closer he saw that there was sorrow in the girl's blue eyes, as needs there must be, since Beauty is Sorrow's legitimate child. A far-off gleam shone in them and glinted in her hair, which tumbled down to the warm white curves of her neck and round to her throat.

It was the pretty *retroussé* nose that looked so human.

Hillary took a deep breath and gazed again.

"Fancy meeting you here!" he said as in his embarrassment he pulled his dirty kerchief out of his pocket and wiped his face to hide his confusion; then, remembering, he hastily replaced the rag-like kerchief in his pocket.

"Fancy meeting you!" said the girl as she gave a silvery peal of laughter.

The young apprentice's heart began to thump. He stared into the girl's eyes as though she had mesmerised him. A wild desire thrilled his soul as she leaned forward, still paddling softly as she returned his gaze.

"Do you live here?—out here in the South Seas?" he murmured as he almost

dropped his cheese-cutter midshipman's cap into the water.

"Of course I do! Do you think I live up in the sky?"

"Shouldn't be surprised if you did," he responded, gaining his nerve. Then he told the girl that he thought she might have been a princess migrating or on tour in one of the intermediate steamers.

The girl stared at hearing this sally. The look that came into her eyes made the apprentice understand the cause of the girl's apparently bold familiarity. She was quite unworldly. She seemed to read his thoughts, for she ceased paddling and, looking almost seriously into his face, said: "I'm Gabrielle Everard. I've lived in these islands with Dad since I was a child. Dad took me away to Ysabel and Gualdacanar about a year ago."

"Did he really?" said Hillary as he metaphorically nudged himself to find her so pleasant and confidential.

"Mother dead?" he murmured as the sea-wind drifted across the waters, sighed in the shore banyans and blew the girl's tresses about her throat.

"Mother's dead, of course! Always has been so far as I can remember," she responded, looking into the young man's face intently, wondering why on earth his voice should sound so tender and concerned when he asked about her long-dead parent.

They paddled side by side. The strange girl's eyes had done a grievous thing to Hillary's soul. The feathery palms and old trees, catching the sea-winds, seemed to whisper cherished things of romance and long-forgotten lover to his ears. It took him that way because he was an amateur musician.

"What a beautiful voice you've got!" said he, as she dipped her paddle in perfect *tempo* to some wild melody that she sang in a minor key.

"Have I? Why, Dad says I've got a voice like a cockatoo!" she responded merrily.

"The wicked, unmusical old bounder!" said the apprentice; then he swiftly apologised.

"Oh, you needn't be so sorry that you've said that. I don't care a cuss!"

Once more Hillary metaphorically rubbed his hands. "Jove! What an original, fascinating creature the girl is, to be sure," was his secret comment. Had the young apprentice known that the girl before him had danced on a heathen *pae pae* (stage) and sang before those cannibalistic tribal warriors the night before, he would most probably have been more fascinated by her presence than ever!

"Gabrielle! Gabrielle! What a name! Beautiful!" he murmured to himself as the girl dipped the paddle and sang on. By now they had arrived near the sandy shore of the inland lagoon.

"Must you go?" he said.

"Well, yes; but I can easily see you again, can't I?" Hillary L—— made no

articulate response. "And this is the Solomon Isles, remote from civilisation, far away in the cannibalistic South Seas!" he murmured deep within his happy soul.

But mad as Hillary was, he half realised that the girl before him was more of a child than a woman. She laughed, even giggled a little, like a happy child. Only five years had passed since she had played with the native kiddies, who many times had persuaded her to dance and sing their heathen songs as they pretended to be heathen chiefs and chiefesses performing on a toy *pae pae*. She had revelled in those dances. But no one would have dreamed by looking at her that she was not a pure-blooded white girl. Her father had married a beautiful three-quarter caste girl in Honolulu, so Gabrielle had a strain of dark blood in her veins!

The young apprentice couldn't fathom the look in her eyes as he stared. Passion was just awakening in her soul, stealing like a tropical sunrise over the hills of childhood. To him she appeared like some spirit-creation that might at any moment take wings and fly away; so when she turned the prow of her canoe dead on to the soft sand and jumped ashore, he made a frantic dash and jumped, landing just behind her. He was determined to know when and where she would meet him again. But he had no need to fear; she did not fly away. She simply tied her canoe to a bamboo stem and, turning round, looked him full in the face with those glorious eyes that were to be for him two stars of the first magnitude. Then she placed her fingers in the folds of her hair and taking out one of the hibiscus blossoms, handed it to him, much to his surprise. He realised that it was more the act of a child than a woman of the world.

"I've read in books that girls give men flowers that have been fastened in their hair," she said. This remark and act of the girl's, and the look in her eyes, had a strange effect on Hillary's susceptible mind. He almost felt the tears well into his eyes. It was all so unexpected, and told him in some great poetry of silence what the girl's heart was made of, the utter loneliness of her existence and the way her childish dreams were flowing out to the great realities of life. He placed the flower in his buttonhole, then gazed on the girl as only an infatuated youth can gaze, and said: "Will you meet me here again, by this lagoon? Any day and time will do for me."

"I'm sure to be this way again," she said, and before the young apprentice could stop her she had flitted away under the coco-palms.

Before she got out of sight she turned and waved her hand. In his excitement he responded by waving his cap. Then she disappeared under the thick belt of dark mangroves by the swamp track that led inland in the direction of her father's bungalow.

"What a girl!" That was the only audible comment he made as the girl went out of sight. And where did she go? She ran away over the slopes that lay just

behind the township of Rokeville, back to her home and her trader father.

Old Everard, her parent, was a kind of freak too. He was a tall, clean-shaved, thin-faced man, with blue-grey eyes and a beaked nose; his mouth had a melancholy droop about it; the face in repose looked strong at times, but when he grinned and revealed his tobacco-blackened teeth it looked characterless, almost weak. At times he was extremely garrulous, at other times either reticent or insulting to anyone who might be unfortunate enough to come near him. Gabrielle seemed to be the only person in Bougainville who understood him. He didn't take much interest in his daughter, though she might have done so in him. All he did was religiously to exercise his parental control by sending the girl on his selfish errands, mostly for rum and whisky. At other times he demanded that she should attend to his comforts when delirium tremens shook his spine. He was an ex-sailor. Trailing from the mainyard of his ship whilst anchored off the Solomon Group, he had lost a leg, and during his convalescence in Honolulu had married, finally settling down in Bougainville.

His homestead was a three-roomed bungalow, and he kept things going by the money he had saved during his seafaring life; he was also interested in copra plantations at Bougainville and at Ysabel. His temperament was choleric. He was known in the vicinity by the nickname "Shiver-me-timbers." This cognomen was derived from the fact that he always stamped his wooden leg, making it shiver in his impatience, when he wanted a drink, consequently his wooden leg was never at rest. He looked like some wooden-legged Nemesis as he sat there that evening; and if any glamour still lingered in Gabrielle's brain from her chance meeting with the young apprentice, it was swiftly dispelled by the stumping of that wooden member as she rushed indoors.

Even a wooden leg would seem to have its part to play in the universe: there was something imperative about its tapping voice. That fate-like tapping had smashed up many of Gabrielle's young dreams; possibly that wooden leg was a soulless agent of the devil.

"Here's the whisky, Dad," said she, as the cockatoo looked down from its perch and shrieked: "Gabby-ell! Gabby-ell! Kai-kai-too!"

In a moment that weird symbol in wood, that represented all that was unromantic to her ardent soul, ceased its ominous "tip-e-te-tap-tap" as the old sailor looked up and spied his daughter.

"Thankee, thankee, kid!" he growled as he put forth his hand. Such was the domestic atmosphere that the girl had rushed back to.

After the young apprentice had waved his farewell to Gabrielle he strolled away under the palms. "Well, she's a beautiful creature. Who'd have thought of meeting her in this wild place? She's ethereal, too beautiful to make love to," he sighed.

Possibly the contrast between Gabrielle Everard and the Solomon Island mop-headed girls etherealised her natural beauty in his eyes. This was a fatal outlook for Hillary, considering the girl's impulsive nature and his chances in the love affair that he had unknowingly embarked upon. And possibly this outlook of his was the result of outward glamour having greatly influenced his indwelling life. He had succeeded in making himself the more unfitted to cope with his immediate surroundings by poring over such writers as Tolstoy, Walt Whitman, Rousseau and Ruskin. But still, these writers, with their mad denunciations and rhapsodies, had helped to awaken in Hillary's soul that adoration for the beautiful, that love for living art that nourishes a delight in God's work. The young apprentice did not digest the whole contents of those volumes; he was too young to grasp their full meaning, but his mind had grasped enough to make him a kind of derelict missionary of the beautiful. When the moods came to him he would bury his nose in the pages of Byron, Shelley, Keats, etc. And the influence gathered from those poets possibly filled his head with vague imaginings over beauty and innocence, feeding the fires of wild aspiration that cannot be realised in this world, and were never realised and acted up to by the poets who wrote the poems.

As he walked on thoughts of the strange girl on the lagoon *would* haunt his brain. He had quite made up his mind to secure a berth on the sailing-ship that was leaving for New South Wales in a few days, but Gabrielle Everard's eyes seemed to have magically changed the future for him.

It was almost with relief that he gave his arm to the drunken shellback who suddenly appeared from nowhere, struck him on the back and spat a stream of tobacco juice across Hillary's poetic vision, taking him completely away from himself. Then the shellback faded away, went off shouting some wild sea chantey as he rolled over the slopes, bound for the sailor's Morning and Evening Star—the distant light of Parsons's grog shanty. It was getting dark. That night Hillary seemed inspired. He sat outside the wooden building where he lodged and played his violin to the shellback, traders and natives who came over the slopes to listen. Mango Pango, the pretty Polynesian servant, grinned from ear to ear, showing her pearly teeth, as she danced beneath the palms that grew right up to the verandah of his landlady's homestead. Even the congregated sailormen ceased their unmelodious oaths as they pulled their beards and listened to his playing.

Hillary wasn't a master on the violin; his career had been too erratic for him to get the necessary practice to accomplish great things in instrumental playing. But still he could perform the *Poet and Peasant* overture and most of the stock pieces, besides playing heathen melodies that sent the natives into ecstasies of delight. His sailor critics swore that his extemporised sea-jigs were the most classical of compositions that they had ever heard. For when he played the South Sea

maids threw their limbs about in rhythmical swerves, till the soles of their pretty bare feet sometimes seemed turned toward the South Sea moon! Mango Pango, Marga Maroo and Topsy Turvy were dancing to their heart's content as the hills re-echoed the shellbacks' laughter and the wild chorus of *O, For Rio Grande* when the concert was disturbed. For notwithstanding the wild surroundings, the hilarity and awful oaths, piety roamed those savage isles.

As the strains of the *Poet and Peasant* overture trembled from Hillary's violin a tall, handsome savage, attired in European clothes, stepped out from beneath the palms and complimented the young Englishman on his artistic performance. He was an educated savage, and naturally conducted himself in public just as a late missionary from the North-West Mission School at Honolulu should do. He was certainly an attractive-looking being, possibly through his mother being a Papuan and his father a handsome Malayan. Even the shellbacks pulled their whiskers and beards, and put on their best behaviour as he stood there and spoke as becomes a Rajah and late missionary who has "saved" thousands of souls; for he studied the philosophy of the Psalms so that they might fit in with his views. And it might be mentioned at once that he did not allow idealistic views to disturb the nice equilibrium of his earthly requirements. When he was excited his speech lapsed into the native pidgin-English. But he spoke perfectly as he addressed Hillary, saying: "You play exceedingly well, young man, and your rendering of Spohr's concerto strikes me as superb. For perfect intonation and verve your performance outrivals the rendering by Monsieur De T——, whom I heard play it at the Tivoli, Honolulu." So spake the civilised heathen.

"'Ark at 'im! an ole kanaka missionary!" whispered Bunky Lory, the ordinary seaman.

"'Andsome cove with his whiskers on," said another, a Cockney.

There is no doubt that Rajah Koo Macka was a handsome type of man so far as the world's idea of what's handsome goes. He wore a fine moustache curled artistically at the ends; had fine teeth, ivory-white; and full, sensual, curved lips that were not a libel on his character. But his greatest asset was his magnetic, telescope-like eyes that could sight a sinfully inclined girl or woman miles off! Indeed he was a splendid example of a christianised heathen doing his best to be religious notwithstanding his inherently antagonistic principles. He had plenty of cash; he owned two or three schooners, and received a Government bounty for hunting down the white miscreants, those skippers who indulged in all the horrors of the black-birding slave traffic. He wore three medals on his ample breast, and besides the aforementioned bounty received a pension from some missionary society in London which had heard of his self-sacrifice whilst converting his heathen brothers from cannibalistic orgy and lust. And more, it was discovered, after many days, that he was a good and dutiful son to his old father

Bapa, who still dwelt in the Rajah's native village in far-away Tumba-Tumba, on the wild, God-forsaken coast of New Guinea. Such is a rough summary of the Rajah Koo Macka, whose ways were mysterious, more so than the wily Chinee! And though dead men may turn in their graves over the doings of men on earth, the apprentice only pulled the end of his virgin moustache, no prophetic breath of all that was destined to happen disturbing his equanimity.

CHAPTER II—THE CALL OF THE BLOOD

The day after the young apprentice had played his violin to the shellbacks and listened to the Papuan Rajah's eulogies over his playing, old Everard was sitting in his bungalow swearing like the much-maligned trooper. He was holding out his gouty foot whilst his daughter poured cool water upon it.

"What the devil are yer doing!" he yelled, as the girl, who had done exactly as she had been told to do, stood half-paralysed with fear over her parent's outburst. Then the ex-sailor picked the ointment pot up and rubbed the swollen foot himself. As Gabrielle looked on and mentally thanked her Maker that her father had only one foot, he finished up by grabbing a chair and pitching it across the room, careless as to what it might hit. A fierce look came into the girl's eyes, her face was hotly flushed. For a moment the old man opened his mouth in surprise, really thinking she meant to hurl the chair back at him. She looked for a moment like a beautiful young savage. Then she turned and rushed from the bungalow.

"Come back, you blasted little heathen!" roared old Everard as he stood up on his wooden leg; then he gave a fearful howl as his gouty foot gave him another twinge. His face was purple with passion. "I'll break her b—— neck when she comes back, I will. She's like her mother, that's what she is."

The ex-sailor's wild sayings meant nothing. He had been genuinely fond of his wife. Like most men who have choleric tempers, his hot words had no relation to his true feelings. Gabrielle's mother had been dead for many years. Although she had dark blood in her veins, she had been a very beautiful woman. Indeed an eerie kind of beauty seems to be the natural heritage of women who are remotely descended from a mixture of the dark and white races. And this striking beauty is

most noticeable in those half-castes who are descended from the Malayan types, a superstitious people, of wild, poetic, passionate temperament. There was some mystery concerning Gabrielle's mother: she had flown from Haiti to Honolulu in some great fear. Everard had met her because it was on his ship that she had stowed away; but she had never divulged the cause of her flight from the land where she had been born. All that Gabrielle knew was that her mother's photograph hung on her bedroom wall, a sad, beautiful face that gave no hint of her dark ancestry. Gabrielle had been the tiny guest who had unconsciously caused her natural host to depart from this life—for her mother had died during confinement. Gabrielle Everard felt that loss as she walked beneath the palms; but, still, she felt glad that her father's violence had inspired her with sufficient courage to beat a hasty retreat, careless of the parental wrath when she at length returned home again. "Perhaps he'll be so full of rum when I get back that he'll have forgotten," was her sanguine reflection. Then she pulled her pretty, washed-out blue robe tight with the sash, and murmured: "The old devil! Good job if he pegged out!"

As the girl's temper subsided the savage look on her face faded away. Like a gleam of sunrise across the lagoons at dawn, the laughing expression of her blue eyes slowly returned. The firm resolve of the lips also disappeared. Her mouth was again a rosebud of the warm, impassioned South, a mouth that easily claimed twinship with the beauty of the luring eyes, which looked warm with desire as the lips themselves. She wore her loose blouse very low at the neck, so low that the sun had delicately touched the curve of her breast. But she was only an undeveloped woman as yet. Her ideas of the great world were vague and shadowy. She knew little of what lay beyond her own surroundings, of men's ways, the terror of cities, human frailty, and the force and passion of human tragedies. All the ribaldry, the hints thrust upon her by the rough sailors since she had entered her teens, had been quite lost on her undeveloped mind. Her whole idea of life and its mysteries had come to her out of a few old books. They were books that had been left at her father's homestead by a ship's captain when Gabrielle was a child. This captain's ship had gone ashore in a typhoon off Bougainville, and its wreck could still be seen lying on the barrier reefs about a mile from the shore.

Who could foresee the wondrous potentialities that lay within the pages of those books which the old skipper had carelessly thrown aside?—what dreams they would some day awaken in a girl's heart, giving her strength to combat the desires that came with volcanic-like force on the threshold of womanhood? For, true enough, the heroes and heroines of those old books mysteriously leapt from the thumb-torn, yellow pages and seemed to struggle in their effort to help her regain her better self.

One book was Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*; another, Christina Rossetti's

poems; *The Arabian Nights* and Hans Andersen's fairy tales. That old captain (he must have been old by the dates in the books) had brought many valuable cargoes across the world, but he dreamed not that his most wonderful cargo was the magic in the books that he was destined one day to leave behind him in the Solomon Isles!

To a great extent old Everard's daughter was the embodiment of the principles and idealisms that were in those faded volumes: in her imagination Bunyan stood there beneath the palms, seeing God in those tropic skies; Hans Andersen drank in the mystery of sunset on the mountains, and Christina Rossetti laid a visionary hand on the tiny, shaggy heads of the native children who had rushed from the forest's depths and had started gambolling at Gabrielle's feet. She hastened on. "Awaie!" she cried to the dusky little creatures, who looked up at her in a bewildered way, as though they had seen a ghost. "Ma Soo!" they wailed, as they sped away, frightened, into the shadows of the forest. A wild desire entered Gabrielle's heart; she half bounded forward, as though to rush after those tiny forest ragamuffins. She felt like casting aside her civilised attire, so that she too might race off, untrammelled, into those happy leafy glooms. The cry of the yellow-crested cockatoo, the deep moaning of the bronze pigeons and iris doves in the bread-fruits seemed to feed her soul with unfathomable music. As she passed by a lagoon she saw her reflection in the still depths. The dark-toning water made her appear almost swarthy; her bronze-gold hair looked quite black. It was only a momentary glance, but that glimpse was enough to strike a wild feeling of terror into her heart, reminding her that she was connected by blood to the dark races.

At that thought her heart trembled: to her it was as though God had suddenly thumped it in some inscrutable spite. In a moment she had recovered. The strange dread of she knew not what vanished. Once more she gave a peal of silvery laughter, and even went so far as to wave her hand to the crowd of dark, handsome native men who were hurrying by on their way back from the plantations.

As she meandered along she began to think over all that had happened on the festival night when she had suddenly felt that strange impulse and astonished the natives by jumping on to the festival *pae pae* and dancing before them all. She rubbed her eyes. "I can't think that I really did such a thing; I feel sure it must have been a dream." Then she remembered that her gown was torn and one of her slippers lost when she had arrived home in her father's bungalow. "It must have been true. Fancy me doing such a thing! I wonder what *he* would have thought." So she reflected over all she had done. Then she began to reassure herself by recalling how she had often, when only ten years of age, danced on the *pae pae* with the pretty tambu maidens. And, as she remembered it all,

she gave an instinctive high kick and burst into a fit of laughter; then she said to herself: "I'm a woman now and really must not do such things!" She started running down the forest track, and as she passed by the native village the handsome emigrant Polynesian youths waved their hands and cried: "Talofa Madimselle!" One handsome young Polynesian, gifted with superb effrontery, ran forward and stuck a frangipani blossom in her hair. This by-play made the tawny maids who were squatting on their mats by the village huts jump to their feet and give a hop, skip and a jump through sheer jealousy.

Once more Gabrielle had passed on and entered the depths of the forest. Passing along by the banyan groves on the outskirts of the villages she suddenly came across a cleared space surrounded by giant mahogany-trees—a kind of natural amphitheatre. Between the tree trunks stood several huge wooden idols with glass boss eyes and hideous carved mouths. They seemed to grin with extreme delight at the adoration they were receiving from the twelve skinny hags and three chiefs who knelt and chanted at their wooden feet. Gabrielle stood still, fascinated by the weirdness of that pagan scene. Again and again the hags and chiefs jumped to their feet and prostrated themselves before the carved deities. "*Tan woomba! Te woomba, tarabaran, woomba woomba!*" they seemed to moan and mumble as the stalwart chieftains jumped to their feet, wagged their feathered head-dresses, thrust forth their arms and chanted into the idols' wooden ears. The largest centre idol seemed actually to grin with delight as it listened to the mumbling of the chiefs. Gabrielle stared, awestruck, as she listened, and the hags, leaping to their feet, danced wildly and shook their shell-ornamented *ramis* (loin chemises), making a weird, jingling music as the shells tinkled. Then they lifted their skinny arms and bony chins to the forest height and mumbled weird chants of death. Gabrielle had seen many similar sights in Bougainville, but never before had she quite realised the full meaning of that strange chanting, or of the sorrow that impels heathens to fashion an effigy with a fate-like grin on its curved wooden lips so that it could stand before them as some material symbol of the Unknown Power! As Gabrielle watched, two of the chiefs turned their heads, recognised her, and gave their sombre salutation: "Maino tepiake!" And still the hags chanted on.

Then Gabriello heard a faint mumbling coming from the belt of mangroves that grew by the lagoons near by. She was astonished to see six tambu maids appear, attired in full festival costume, which consisted of a kind of sarong fashioned from the thinnest tappa cloth. The girls had large red and black feathers stuck in their head-mops and Gabrielle knew by this that someone had died in the village and was being borne to the grave. They were walking slowly, carrying their mournful burden between them. It was an old-time tribal funeral. As the coffin-bearers arrived in front of the idols they laid their burden down.

Gabrielle instinctively crossed herself when she saw the wan face of the dead mahogany-hued Broka girl. It was a sad, curiously beautiful face, for death had toned down the old wildness of the living features. The reddish, coral-dyed hair had fallen forward on to the pallid brown brow and gave a pathetic touch to that silent figure. On the forehead was the plastered scarlet mud cross, a sign that the girl had died in maidenhood. She was stretched out on a long, narrow death-mat that had handles, something after the style of an ambulance stretcher, but fashioned in such a way that when the primitive hearse of dusky arms moved forward the corpse regained a sitting posture. The effect was gruesome in the extreme, for the head of the corpse, being limp, fell forward or wobbled as the mourners passed along the narrow mossy track. Through entering into the spirit of the proceedings Gabrielle at once gained the sympathy of those pagan mourners. For she too crept behind the procession as it moved along among the pillars of the vast primitive cathedral. The thick foliage of the giant bread-fruits, the buttressed banyans and towering vines, that ran here and there like symphonies of green, scented the forest depth. And when the wind sighed it seemed to be some moan from infinity, as though that moving procession and the forest itself stood on the deep inward slopes of some vast sea. Only the remote wide window, through which the stars shone by night and the sunsets marked the close of each tropic day, was visible between the colonnades of tree trunks, as there it shone—the far-away western horizon. Suddenly the procession stopped. The six tambu maidens had begun to chant an eerie but beautiful pagan psalm as they approached the grave-side; then they laid their burden gently down. The weeping hags and chiefs stood looking up into the branches of the tall coco-palm. It was there that the girl's body was to rest till her bones whitened to the hot tropic winds. Along one of the lower branches they had fashioned a grave-mattress of twigs and leaves, jungle grass and tough seaweed, the whole being fastened on to the branch by strong sennet. It was a weirdly fascinating sight as they stood there voiceless and began hurriedly to perform the last sacred rites over the dead girl. The tallest of the mourners, an aged chief, who had a naturally melancholy aspect, besides both his ears being missing, took a bone flute from his lava-lava and began to blow a weird *Te Deum.* Gabrielle could hardly believe her eyes as the tambu maidens started to whirl their bodies in perfect silence to the sound of the wild man's piping. Only the jingle of the *rami* shells, tinkling in exact *tempo* to the wailing fife (made out of the thigh-bone of some dead high priest), told her that those girls were whirling rapidly in the forest shadows. The hags and chiefs had already fallen prone on their stomachs, so that they could perform the lost mysterious rite. This rite necessitated them rising repeatedly to their knees so that they might take in a deep breath and blow their stomachs out, balloon-like, to enormous proportions. The contrast was weird in the extreme when their

bodies receded and subsided into a mass of wrinkles. This strange rite took about five minutes to perform. It was a rite that was supposed to blow the sins of the dead away ere the spirit entered shadow-land.

As soon as this ritual was completed two of the chiefs climbed the grave-palm and then, hanging in a marvellous way by their feet, they leaned earthwards and gripped the dead girl's coffin-mat by the sennet handles. One old woman (the mother probably) rushed hastily forward, and lifting the corpse's hand kissed it. Then the living limbs of the weird grave-elevators went taut as, still with their heads hanging downwards, they clutched the coffin-mat and slowly pulled the dead figure foot by foot off *terra firma* towards the sky! In a few moments the dead girl lay lashed to the bough of her strange grave, high up in the forest coco-palm. Suddenly the mourners had all vanished! Even Gabrielle felt some of the fright that haunted the souls of those wild people. They had hurried away because it was known that directly the forest wind blew across the new-made grave the soul of the dead departed for shadow-land and must not be tainted by the breath of the living. After seeing that sight Gabrielle hurried away also. She trembled as she stepped at last out of the forest shadows into the glory of the sunlight. She seemed to realise at that moment that the sun was the visible god of the universe, the rolling orb that woos the world, creating the green happiness of the woods and bills. She saw the migrating birds going south as she lifted her eyes. Perhaps she felt the winged poetry of the birds on their flight to the southward, hurrying away like symbols of our own brief days. Her eyes were very concentrated as she sighed and then jumped carelessly on to a springy banyan bough and began to sing one of her peculiar songs. Suddenly she ceased to sing, and a startled look leapt into her eyes as she turned her head. She had even let her swinging legs fall stiff so that the old blue robe might fall and hide her pretty ankles. Then she gave a merry peal of laughter that frightened the life out of a decrepit cockatoo. "Cah-eah! Whoo-cah!" it shrieked as it left its high perch and flapped away. Hillary looked up and threw a coco-nut at it and missed by a hundred yards. It was he who had disturbed the girl. As the apprentice stood before her she blushed softly, as though her bright eyes and face mysteriously reflected the sunset fire that shone on the sea horizon to the westward.

Hillary metaphorically rubbed his hands over his luck. He had strolled over the hills for no other reason than to get clear of his growling landlady, who had begun to give hints over delayed rent. Nor was the old half-caste woman to be blamed, for many white youths from "Peretania" arrived in the Solomon Isles crammed with hopes and promises and little cash! Besides, the evening was the only time fit for a quiet stroll without being charged by myriads of sand-flies and other winged, tropical things. Though Gabrielle had hinted to him that she generally took her walks by the lagoons, he had gathered that she was usually

busy at the twilight hours getting her father's tea, polishing his wooden leg, etc. Consequently, Hillary's face was aglow with pleasure as he approached the girl. In his confusion he lifted his cap and bowed as men bow to maids in civilised communities. Gabrielle, who was unused to such gallant manners, was delighted. She even gave a little nod in response. It was a most fascinating bit of "court etiquette" on her part, for she had learnt it from her French novels. Hillary, who had especially noticed and loved the girl's wild, rough, fascinating ways, was charmed at Gabrielle's tiny bit of "put-on." It would have been impossible to reproduce the expression of his face as he flung himself down in the fern-grass close to Gabrielle.

The girl who was again swinging to and fro on the banyan bough, looked sideways like a parrot on the apprentice's face, wondering why he looked so confused. Hillary always felt shy when she looked at him with those childish, big eyes.

"I'm going to clear out of this God-forsaken place soon," he said, as he found his voice. Then he continued: "It's marvellous how a girl like you can exist in this infernal hole, full of tattooed savages."

She only stared at him as he rambled on, and wondered why he attracted her so. Then she laughed like a child, and looking him straight in the face said: "You are very different to the other men I've seen round these parts." Hillary felt himself redden as she stared into his eyes; she looked critically for a moment and said: "Different coloured eyes too!" Then she added artlessly: "Do you drink rum?"

"On cold nights at sea," Hillary responded, as he stroked his chin and felt amused at the girl's remarks.

And still the girl sang on as he watched her. She looked like a faery child as she sat there swinging on the banyan bough, the music of her voice ringing some elfin tune into his ears. There was a look that reminded him of Keats's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*. Indeed, the apprentice half fancied that she was some visionary girl sitting there singing to him from a banyan bough in the Solomon Isles. And as the sea-winds drifted in and made a kind of moaning music in the ivory-nut palms their murmurings seemed to sing:

"I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful—a faery's child;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

"I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long,

For sidelong would she bend, and sing
A faery's song.

"I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried: 'La Belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!'"

A strange bird that neither knew the name of began to whistle its evening song and broke the spell. "I wish that damned bird hadn't come and spoilt everything," was Hillary's most emphatic mental comment. Gabrielle had stopped singing. "Do you love the songs of birds, Miss Everard?" he said as he looked at her and gave an inane smile.

"I do this evening," she replied, then quickly added: "It's the tribal drums, that horrible booming and banging in the mountains, that I hate to hear!"

"Fancy that!" said Hillary, somewhat surprised, as he listened to the distant echoes—it was the tribal drums up in the native village beating the stars in.

"I was just thinking how romantic that distant drumming sounded; the people in the far-off cities of the world would give something to hear that primitive overture to the night, I can tell you," said he.

"Fancy that! Why——" said Gabrielle, as she over-balanced and fell from the bough in considerable confusion at his feet. Hillary made a grab as though she had yet another sheer depth to fall.

"Oh, allow me!" he exclaimed, as he picked her novel up. The girl whipped her robe down swiftly and hid the brown, ornamental-stockinged calves that a few months before had been exposed by short skirts to the gaze of all those who might wish to stare. Gabrielle blushed as she rearranged her crimson sash. She was dressed in a kind of Oriental style, in a sarong, opened at the sleeves to about one inch above the elbows. The crimson sash was tied bow-wise at the left hip; a large hibiscus blossom was stuck coquettishly in the folds of her hair, making her small white ear peep out like a pearly shell. Her *retroussé* nose had a tiny scratch on it where a bee had stung her the day before.

"Why, you've scratched your arm!" exclaimed Hillary, taking advantage of the delicate situation by gently pulling back the sleeve of her sarong and boldly wiping a tiny speck of blood away from the soft whiteness that had been pricked by a cactus thorn. Gabrielle put on a look of extreme modesty, notwithstanding that she had danced on a heathen *pae pae* a few nights before.

"Your eyes are different colours, one brown and one a beautiful blue!" she suddenly exclaimed for the second time as she burst into a merry peal of laughter.

The young apprentice reddened slightly. "I can't help that I did not make

my own eyes, did I?" he said.

For a moment the girl stared earnestly at his face, then said: "Well, you needn't mind, really. I reckon they look fine!"

"Don't you get full up of wandering about this heathen locality?" said Hillary, changing the conversation. "Nothing but palm-trees, parrots, and brown men and tattooed women roaming about gabbling *tabak* and worshipping idols."

Gabrielle laughed. "Don't you care for the natives? I think they're amusing; especially at the festival dances," she added after a pause.

"Well, I don't object to the festivals; they're original and decidedly attractive. I was charmed by seeing a Polynesian maid dance like a goddess over a Buka village two nights ago."

"Fancy you liking to see native girls dance!" said Gabrielle, giving a roguish glance.

"Well, I do; there's something so fascinating and poetic in the way they do it all," Hillary responded.

Gabrielle readjusted the flowers in her hair, then said: "Would you like to see me dance?"

"Dear me, I certainly should!" exclaimed the young apprentice, his eyes betraying the astonishment he felt over her question.

"Shall I dance?" Gabrielle repeated.

"What! Now!" he exclaimed. He lit his cigarette twice over, wondering if she were laughing at him or really meant that she would dance there on the spot.

Before he could say another word Gabrielle had risen to her feet and was dancing before him. He blew his nose, coughed, put on an inane smile and then fairly gasped in his astonishment and admiration. Her tripping feet softly brushed the blue forest flowers and tall, ferny grass that swished against her loose robe. Hillary's embarrassment had changed to a tremendous interest in the originality of the dancer before him. He clapped his hands in a kind of obsequious way for an encore as she swayed in a most fascinating manner, her hair tumbling over her shoulders, her eyes shining, one hand holding up the fold of her sarong-like robe, just revealing her brown stocking above the left ankle. "Well, I'm blessed!" he breathed. She had begun to hum a weird melody; her right hand was outstretched, uplifted as though she held a goblet of wine and would drink a toast to some pagan deity.

He looked at the sunset; he half fancied that it had always been staring from the ocean rim, and would never set! And as he looked at the dancing figure she really did seem to hold a goblet in her outstretched hand—full to the brim—with the gold of sunset that touched the landscape and was glinting over her tumbling hair and eyes.

"The Solomon Isles! The Solomon Isles!" was all that he could breathe

to himself as she stared at him, a strange fixed look in her eyes. A cockatoo fluttered down to the lowest bough of the bread-fruit tree, looked sideways on her swaying figure, slowly flapped its blue-tipped wings in surprise and chuckled discordantly.

"Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay!" chimed in Hillary, as he clapped his hands, stared idiotically and felt like hiding behind the thick trunk of the bread-fruit.

"Well now! You dance perfectly!" he gasped. Gabrielle had ceased tripping. She looked embarrassed and had begun to coil up her tumbling tresses.

"Worth chewing salt-horse and hard-tack on a dozen voyages to have seen what I've seen!" was the apprentice's inward reflection.

"Do the girls in England dance like that?" she said in an eager, frightened way.

"Oh no, not as well as you've danced. Blest if they do!" said he. That last remark of hers made him realise that girl before him was half-wild and had danced before him as a child might ere it became self-conscious. "Fancy meeting a beautiful white girl, half-wild! It's thrilling! I wonder what will be the end of it," mused Hillary, as he stared on that strange maid whom he had chanced upon so suddenly.

Suddenly she said: "I'm no good at all; you may think I am, but I'm not."

"Aren't you?" murmured Hillary, somewhat taken aback.

"You're a clever girl. Not many girls can quote the poets and rattle off verses as you can. I suppose your father's an educated kind of man and has a good library?" he added after a pause.

Gabrielle's hearty peal of laughter at the idea of her father possessing a library made the frightened parrots flutter in a wheel-like procession over the belt of shoreward mangroves. Then she said: "Well, my father has got a lot of books, but they really belonged to a ship's captain—a nice old man who lived with us years ago, when I was a child." Then she added: "His ship was blown ashore here in a typhoon and when he went away he left all his books behind him in Dad's bungalow. I've learned almost all I know from those books." Saying this, she pointed with her finger towards the shore, and said: "From the top of that hill you can see the old captain's ship to-day: it's a big wreck with three masts. Father told me that the old captain often got sentimental and went up on the hills to stare through a telescope at his old ship lying on the reefs."

"How romantic! So I've to thank the old captain that you can quote the works of the poets to me," said Hillary. Then he added: "But still, you're a clever girl, there's no doubt about it."

"I'm secretly wicked, down in the very depths of me."

"No! Surely not!" gasped the apprentice as he stared at the girl.

Then he smiled and said quickly: "What you've just said is proof enough

that you're not wicked. You're imaginative, and so you imagine that you have limitations that no one else has. If anyone's wicked it's me, I know," he added, laughing quietly.

"I've got the limitations right enough, that's why I feel so strange and miserable at times."

"Don't feel miserable, please don't," said Hillary softly as he blessed the silence of the primitive spot and the opportunity that had arisen for his direct sympathy.

"You must remember that we all have our besetting sins, and that the majority of us think our besetting sin is our prime virtue," he said. "I've been all over the world but never met a girl like you before," he added in a sentimental way.

"I can take that as the reverse of a compliment," said Gabrielle, laughing musically.

"Believe me, Gabrielle, I would not say things to you that I might say in a bantering way to other girls I've met. I dreamed of you when I was a child, so to speak. It seems strange that I should at last have met you out here in the Solomon Isles, that we should be sitting here by a blue lagoon in which our shadows seem to swim together."

"Look into those dark waters," he added after a pause.

Gabrielle looked, and as she looked Hillary became bold and placed his hand softly on her shoulder, amongst her golden tresses that tumbled about her neck. And Gabrielle, who could see every act as she stared on their images in the water, smiled.

"It's a pity you're so wicked," said Hillary jokingly. Then he added suddenly: "Ah! I could fall madly in love with a girl, like you if only I thought I were worthy of you.—What's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing," said Gabrielle. Hillary noticed that she had become pale and trembling.

"Why, you've caught a chill!" he said in monstrous concern, though it was 100° in the shade and the heat-blisters were ripe to burst on his neck.

"Dad thinks everything that he does is quite perfect," Gabrielle said, just to change the conversation, for the look she saw in the young apprentice's eyes strangely smote her heart.

"Of course he does," said Hillary absently.

The girl, looking eagerly into his face, said: "You know quite well that you play your violin beautifully, I suppose?"

"I'm the rottenest player in the world."

The girl at this gave a merry ripple of laughter and said: "Now I *do* believe in your theory, for I've heard you play beautifully in the grog bar by Rokeville. You

played this"—here she closed her lips and hummed a melody from *Il Trovatore*.

"Good gracious! you don't mean to tell me that you hover about the Rokeville grog shanty after dark?" exclaimed Hillary.

Gabrielle seemed surprised at his serious look, then she burst into another silvery peal of laughter that echoed to the mountains.

Hillary looked into her eyes, and seeing that eerie light of witchery which so fascinated him, felt that he had met his fate.

"If I can't get her to love me I'm as good as dead," was his mental comment. Even the music of her laughter thrilled him. Then she rose from the ferns, and sitting on the banyan bough again started to swing to and fro, singing some weird strain that she had evidently learnt from the tambu dancers in the tribal villages.

"It seems like some wonderful dream, she a beautiful girl with flowers in her hair, sitting there singing to me," thought the apprentice.

Then she looked down at him, gave a mischievous peal of laughter, and said: "Oh, I say, you are a flatterer! I almost forgot who I really was while you were saying those poetic things about me!"

"Don't laugh at me, I'm serious enough," Hillary responded, as he looked earnestly at the swaying figure. Heaven knows how far Hillary might have progressed in his love affair had not the usual noisy interruption occurred at the usual crucial moment. Just as he felt the true hero of a South Sea romance—sitting there in a perfect picture of ferns and forest flowers, sunset fading on a sea horizon, dark-fingered palms bending tenderly over his beloved by a lagoon—with a rude rush out of the forest it came! It was not a ferocious boar, or revengeful elephant; it was a bulky, heavily breathing figure that seemed the embodiment of prosaic reality. It was attired in large, loose pantaloons, belted at the waist, a vandyke beard and mighty, viking-like moustachios drooping down to the Herculean shoulder curves.

"What the blazes!" gasped Hillary, as he looked over his shoulder and saw that massive personality step out from underneath the forest palms. The strange being wore an antediluvian topee and an extraordinary, old-fashioned, long-tailed coat. The atmosphere of another age hung about him. A colt revolver stuck in his leather belt seemed to have some strong link of kinship with the grim determination of its owner's mouth.

"What-o, chum! How's the gal?" Saying this, the new-comer put forth his huge, thorny palm and emphasised his monstrous presence by bringing it down smash!—nearly fracturing Hillary's spine.

"What-o, friend from the great unknown!" came like an obsequious echo from the young apprentice's lips as, recovering his breath, he saw the humour of the situation. Hillary well knew that it was wise to return such Solomon Island civility as affably as possible. At that first onslaught Gabrielle had jumped behind

Hillary's back when he had sprung to his feet. No one knows how long that newcomer had stood hidden behind the palm stems before he came forth. Anyhow, he rubbed his big hands together in a mighty good temper, chuckling to himself to think his presence should be so little desired. He bowed to the girl with massive, Homeric gallantry. Then, as they both stared with open-mouthed wonder, he put his hand up and, twisting his enormous moustache-end on the starboard side, courteously inquired the route for the equivalent of the South Sea halls of Olympus. It was then, and with the most consummate impertinence imaginable, that he gave them both the full view of his Herculean back and put forth his mighty feet to go once more on his way, bound for the wooden halls of Bacchus—the nearest grog shanty.

Such a being as that intruder on Gabrielle's and Hillary's privacy might well seem to exist in the imagination only, but he was real enough. That remarkable individual was only one of many of his kind who, having left their ship on some drunken spree, roamed the islands, seeking the nearest grog shanty, after some drunken carousal in the inland tribal villages.

As that massive figure passed away he left his breath, so to speak, behind him. It seemed to pervade all things, sending a pungent flavour of adventure over forest, hill and lagoon. Indeed, the faery-like creation into which Hillary's imagination had so beautifully transmuted Gabrielle—vanished. "Well, I'm jiggered!" he muttered. As for Gabrielle, she looked as though she was half sorry to see that handsome personality go. His big, grey eyes had gazed at her with an unmistakable, yet not rude, look of admiration. Indeed, before he strode away he gazed at Hillary as though with a mighty concern, as though he would not hesitate to redress wrongs done to fair maids who had been lured into a South Sea forest by such as he.

"Do you know him?" gasped the apprentice as the man went off; but the astonished look in the girl's eyes at once convinced him that the late visitor was a stranger to Gabrielle as well as to himself. It all happened so suddenly that he wondered if he had dreamed of that remarkable presence. But the frightened cockatoos still giving their ghostly "Cah! Cah!" over the palms were real enough. And as they both listened they could still hear the fading crash of the travelling feet that accompanied some rollicking song, as the big sea-boots of that extraordinary being beat down the scrubby forest growth as they travelled due south-west.

Gabrielle little dreamed as she stood there listening how one day she would hear that intruder's big voice again, and with what welcome music it would ring in her ears.

Gabrielle laughed quietly to herself as the intruder passed away and seemingly left a mighty silence behind him. She had seen many men of his type in her

short day, not only in Rokeville, but out on the ships that anchored in the harbour. She had also seen stranded sailors at Gualdacanar, at Ysabel and at Malaita, where her father had taken her on a trip a year or so before. Such men stood out of the ruck, quite distinct from the ordinary run of beachcombers, who were usually stranded scallawags, seeking out the tenderfoots who would stand them drinks in the nearest grog bar. Hillary saw that new-comer as some mighty novelty in the way of man; to the young apprentice the late intruder was something between a Ulysses and a Don Quixote. And Hillary's conception of the man's character was not far wrong. Anyway, he did not express his private opinion, for he looked up at Gabrielle and said: "Good Lord, what an awful being. Glad to see the back of him!"

It may have been that the late stranger's presence had turned Hillary's thoughts to his sailor life, for that massive being positively smelt of the high seas, of tornadoes and sea-board life on buffeting voyages to distant lands. Looking up at Gabrielle, he suddenly said: "I'm going aboard the schooner that is due to leave for Apia next week. I'm on the look-out for a berth. I suppose I sha'n't see you any more if I get a job?"

Everard's daughter gazed at the apprentice for a moment as though she did not quite know her own mind concerning his query. Then she sighed and said: "Must you go away to sea again?"

Hillary looked steadily into the girl's face. He could not express his thoughts, tell her that he would wish to stay with her always. What would she do were he to spring towards her, clutch her tenderly, fold her in his arms, rain impassioned kisses on her lips, look into her eyes and behave in general like an escaped lunatic? She might think he was mad!—race from him, screaming with fright, seeking her father's assistance, or even hasten for the native police. Such were the thoughts that flashed through Hillary's mind. And so, although he longed to do all these things, he only stood half-ashamed over the passionate thoughts that flamed in his brain as he gazed into the half-laughing eyes of the girl.

They sat and talked of many things. Hillary forgot the outside world. He half fancied he had been sitting there for thousands of years with that strange girl by his side. He spoke to her of scenes that were remote from Bougainville: of England, of London and the wide bridges over the Thames, and of the deep, dark waters that bore the tall ships away from the white Channel cliffs, taking wanderers to other lands. And as the girl listened she saw old London as some city of enchantment and romance, where cold-eyed men and women tramped down labyrinthine streets by dark walls. In her imagination she even fancied she heard the mighty clock chime the hour over that far-off city of wonder and romance.

"Fancy! And you've lived there! Actually seen the great palaces, the spires and towers that I've read of and dreamed about!" said Gabrielle. Then she added: "And you've seen the queen and the beautiful princesses?"

"Yes, Gabrielle, I have."

Then she said artlessly: "Weren't they sorry when you left England for the Solomon Isles?"

For a moment Hillary was grimly silent, then he said: "Well, they were, rather!"

Gabrielle's innocence and his own mendacity had broken the spell that home-sickness and distance had cast over him, the spell that had enabled him to picture to Gabrielle's mind the atmosphere of old London in such true perspective. Indeed, as he talked, Bougainville, with all its novelty and heathenish atmosphere, became some dull, drab reality and London a great modern Babylon of his own hungry-souled century. His voice as well as Gabrielle's became hushed. He was so carried away by his own vivid imagination that he fancied he *had* dwelt in some ancient city of smoky romance, and had seen a Semiramis on her throne, and Pharaoh-like peoples of a past age. It was only the eerie beauty of Gabrielle's eyes that awakened him to the reality that blurs man's inward vision. The girl had handed him a small flower which she had taken from her hair.

"Could anything be more innocent and beautiful," he thought as he placed that first symbol of the girl's awakening affection for him in the buttonhole of his brass-bound jacket.

Night had fallen over the island. "I must go," said Gabrielle. "It's terribly late."

"So it is!" Hillary moaned regretfully. Gabrielle hastily jumped into her canoe, fear in her heart over the coming wrath of her father. Hillary had intended to place his arms about her and embrace her before she went, but his chance had gone!

As he stood beneath the tamuni-trees and watched, she looked more like an elf-girl than ever, as her canoe shot out into the shadows of the moon-lit lagoon and was paddled swiftly away.

CHAPTER III—SOUTH SEA OPERA BOUFFE

Hillary hardly knew where he was going as he walked back round the coast, thinking of Gabrielle Everard and all that had upset his mind. When he at last arrived at his lodgings, the old wooden shack near Rokeville, he was tired out. Even pretty Mango Pango, the half-caste Polynesian servant-maid, wondered why on earth he looked so solemn as she gave her usual salutation: "Tolafa! Monsieur Hilly-aire!"

"Nasty face no belonger you!" said the cheeky girl as the young apprentice forced a smile to his lips, chucked her under her pretty, dimpled brown chin, and then went off into his room. It wouldn't have been called a room in a civilised city, unless a small trestle bed, a tub and fourteen calabashes and wooden walls ornamented with grotesque-looking Kai-kai clubs and native spears deserved that name. He could even see the stars twinkling through the roof chinks on windy nights, when the palms swayed inland to the breath of the typhoon and no longer let their dark-fingered leaves hide the cracks half across the wooden ceiling. But still, that mattered nothing to him; the companionship of his own reflections, away from the oaths of grog-shanty men, beachcombers on the shores, and surly skippers, and jabbering natives, made up amply for all the apparent discomfort of his apartments.

Pretty Mango Pango, the housemaid, was singing some weird native melody; it seemed to soothe his nerves as the strains, from somewhere in the outbuildings, came to his ears while he sat there reflecting. He thought of England, and wondered what his people thought over his long silence. He knew that they must by then know the truth, for his ship must have arrived back in the old country long, long ago without him. He thought of the wild life he was leading as compared with life in London. "It's like being in another world." Standing there by the window listening to the tribal drums beating in the mountains, he thought he saw the dark firs and palms for miles over the inland hills. And as he stared he felt the eeriness of the scene, and he remembered the ghostly figures that sailors swore they saw on those moon-lit nights, even when rum was scarce. As he thought of Gabrielle his brain became etherealised with dreams. He took out his dilapidated volume of Shelley's poems and read *The Ode to the West Wind*, and finally became so sentimental that he sat down and wrote this letter home:

> Dear Mater,—Forgive me for not writing before this. I ran away from my ship. Though the skipper smiled like an angel when you saw him, he turned out a fiend incarnate. I'm out here in the Solomon Isles. I often think of you.... You'd never believe the wonderful things I've seen, the experiences I've gone through, since I left you all. I couldn't stand Australia.
>
> First of all I must tell you that the natives here are inveterate

cannibals, but still they're not likely to eat me. I've got tough. The wonderful part of it all is this: I've met a most beautiful, eerie kind of girl here in the Solomon Isles. She comes up to all that I ever dreamed of in the way of beauty and innocence in human shape. I know, dear, that you will smile, that thousands of men have thought they had come across the one perfect woman; but it seems to me something to be thankful to God for that I should *really* find her! And living out here in these God-forsaken isles, too! Her father's not much of a catch in the way of prospects. But he's a retired captain and, I believe, is well respected by the population. I'm sure you would like Gabrielle if you saw her, and you will see her if I can manage it all.... It seems gross to have to mention business prospects after mentioning her.

Well, I'm making fine progress with my music. I've mastered Paganini's twenty-four Caprices. I've also composed some wonderful pieces. I know they're good....

I'm reading Shelley, Byron and Swinburne and Tolstoy's *Kreutzer Sonata*. The people here seem strangely to lack poetic vision. They are wonderful men, though, brave and truthful in their forcible expression at the concerts outside the Beach Hotel. It's a kind of Brighton Hotel, but the *prima donnas* are dusky. I was knighted by a tribal king the other night.

Kiss dear sister Bertha for me. Tell her to read Balzac's *Wild Ass's Skin*. It's a beautiful book. She must skip the chapters where the woman's silken knee comes in, etc., etc. Your affectionate, loving son,

Hillary.

Having penned the foregoing epistle, Hillary placed it in his sea-chest. Like many of his temperament, he wrote more letters under the impulse of the moment than he ever posted.

"It's early yet," he said to himself as he stared out of the window and saw the moonlight stealing across the rows of mountain palms to the south-west. He could hear the faint rattling of the derrick, where some schooner was being unloaded by night. That noise seemed to rouse him from his dreams. He lit his pipe and crept out of the door. A puff of cool ocean breeze came like a draught of scented wine to his nostrils; for it had passed over the pine-apple plantations and drifted down the orange and lemon groves. The pungent odours seemed to intoxicate him. But still he was feeling moody, so he started off over the slopes. He was off to the grog shanty. He knew that originality abounded in that drinking saloon and in the neighborhood of its wooden walls.

The grog shanty of Bougainville harbour was known by sailormen as far as the four corners of the world as the finest pick-me-up and dispeller of fits of the blues in existence. Indeed, that shanty was a kind of medicine chest, the magical chemist's shop of the Pacific. It was the *opéra bouffe* of South Sea life: it made the cynic smile, the poet philosophical, the madman feel that he must surely be deadly sane, and the ne'er-do-wells drunk with happiness. Indeed, the consequential, heavily moustached German consul, Arn Von de Sixth, had crept down the Rokeville highroad one night and seen such sights that German culture received a shock! He at once issued an edict that no native girls were to visit the precincts of the grog shanties after sunset.

But notwithstanding his strict orders the dances still went on. Indeed, as Hillary arrived in sight of the dead screw-pine that flew the Double Eagle flag the scene that met his gaze fairly astonished him. It was as though he was witnessing some phantom-like cinematograph show. A small cloud that traversed the clear tropic sky suddenly blurred the moon, sending lines of shadows over the shining spaces outside the grog shanty. This made the scenic effect look as though a covey of dusky female ghosts had rushed from the jungle and were whirling their semi-robed limbs in wild delight beneath the coco-palms. If the apprentice had any idea that the scene was supernatural it must have been swiftly dispelled by the sound of the wild chorus of a chantey coming from the hoarse-throated sailormen assembled outside Parsons's bar. Then the moon seemed to burst into a silvery flood of silent laughter that went tumbling over the dark palm groves, drenched the distant shore forests with pale light, and touched the dim horizon of the sea; it even lit up the bearded mouths of the shellbacks and revealed the brilliant eyes of the dusky ballet girls who had stolen down from the mountain villages. They had their chaperon with them in the shape of old High Chief Bango Seru. Those brown girls were his prize gamal-house, or tambu dancers. A mighty calabash was by his side. It was in that handy receptacle that he carefully placed the accumulating bribes that he demanded as payment for all that his dusky protégé did—and ought not to do! Parsons, the bar-keeper, poked his elongated, bald cranium out of the shanty's doorway and shook his towel violently. (It was the signal that no German official was in sight.)

Once more pretty Singa Mavoo and Loa Mog-wog lifted their *ramis* (chemises), revealed their nut-brown knees and swerved with inimitable grace. The Yankee nudged the German half-caste in the ribs till they both so roared with laughter that they fell down. It was a kind of miniature representation of the wine of the European music hall and *opéra bouffe* poured into one goblet so that the onlooker might swallow the draught at a gulp! Oom Pa, the aged high priest, was there. That fervent ecclesiastic had been unable to resist the temptation thrown out to him by the half-caste German sailors and grog-bar keepers.

There he stood, as plain as plain could be, his eyes alive with avarice, as he too winked, begged for a drink and solemnly pointed out the attractions of his two pretty, semi-nude granddaughters, who danced ecstatically, so that he might add his mite to the collection-box for the heathen temple fund down at Ackra-Ackra.

The most unimaginative of those onlookers breathed a sigh of admiration when two Malayo-Polynesian youths stepped out of the shadows and put forth their arms, looking at first like dusky statues, not only because of their perfect terra-cotta limbs and artistic pose, but because of their graceful erectness as their arms and legs moved with marvellous symmetrical precision. Even the night seemed astonished as a breath of wind came in from the seas and ran across the island trees. For now it seemed like a shadow-world peopled with puppets. The youths put forth their arms and dived up, up between the palms, coming down on their bare feet like dusky marionettes dropping softly from the moon-lit sky! Then the tambu maids began to chant and dance. Only the weird jingling of their armlets and leglets showed that they were really there in the shadows, as the shellbacks in their wide-brimmed hats looked on in silence.

"Tavoo! Malloot!" suddenly said a voice. The effect of those two words was magical. Every maid, dancer and onlooker had vanished! Only the palms sighed as though in sorrow of it all as a German official's white helmet hat came into sight far along the beach.

"Did I dream it all?" murmured Hillary. He rubbed his eyes; then he went across the sands to the spot where the dancers had done such wondrous feats. He stamped with his foot to see if there was some subterranean outlet through which the dancers could so mysteriously disappear. But all was solid enough. The moon still shone with its silent, religious light. Parsons flapped his towel three times from the grog-bar doorway. One could have sworn that the rough men in his bar-room had never left their drinks as they stood there solemnly pulling their beards, discussing old grievances in hushed voices. Not a breath of wind stirred the phantom-like palm groves outside; only the chants of the cicalas were faintly audible as they clacked down in the tall bamboo grass of the swamps and shore lagoons. Those old sailors and shellbacks looked the picture of honesty *till* they gazed meaningly into each other's eyes and drank on, sighed and sent the flames of the roof oil lamps flickering over their wide-brimmed hats. But even they gave a startled jump as something out in the silent night went "Bang!" It might have been the signal that any kind of horror was being perpetrated. But it was only a mighty thump on a tribal drum, somewhere up in a mountain village, telling the frightened inhabitants that all was well, that the last of the tambu maids had arrived safely, had entered the stockade gates and that their pagan world might rest in peace for the remainder of the night.

Even Hillary responded to the far-off voice of the tribal drum, for he turned

away and strolled back to his humble lodging-house. As he went over the slopes he saw Oom Pa staggering homeward with his mighty calabashes, minus his granddaughters, who had come down from the mountain villages. All was silent as he crept beneath the palms, passed under the verandah and entered his room. Even Mango Pango was snoring on her sleeping-mat in the kitchen, so late was it. And yet, as he looked out of his open window and yawned, he could distinctly hear the sounds of muffled drums beating across the slopes.

"Damned if there is not another heathen festival on somewhere," he muttered. It was true enough: the full-moon festivals were in progress, and down at Ackra-Ackra they were chanting and banging, and their sacred maids were dancing to the discordant music. Had Hillary known *who* was dancing at that moment on a tambu stage only two miles away he wouldn't have slept much that night. But he was oblivious to all that happened, so he fell asleep and dreamed of dusky whirling ghosts and fate-like drums that swept dancing maidens away into a shadowy pageant of swift-footed figures that bolted into the mountains and were seen no more.

CHAPTER IV—THE SOUL'S RIVAL

As soon as Gabrielle Everard had paddled across the lagoon and passed from Hillary's enraptured sight she pulled her little craft up on the sandy beach, hid it amongst the tall rushes and started off home. She stood for a moment hidden beneath the mangoes till three jabbering, hurrying native chiefs had passed by.

As she watched them recede from sight down into the gloom of the sylvan glades, she gave a sigh. "I hate to see those big tatooed chiefs; it's through them that I feel so wild at times, I'm sure. I simply curse that ancestor of mine who married a dark woman. Why, I'd sooner die than marry a dark man!" Then she added: "Pooh! Why should I worry? I'm white enough, since I feel such a dislike for them—but, still, I do like dancing and singing at times, I admit."

Then she thought of the young apprentice; his bronzed, frank face and earnest eyes rose before her memory. "He does look handsome; those odd-coloured eyes of his do fascinate me; but it's a pity he's not a passionate kind, who

would make love like those handsome chiefs do when they sing to their brides on the *pae paes* and tambu stages. But there, they're wild and can't control their passions as we do!" she added. She looked down into the lagoon at her image and blushed deeply at her own thoughts. "I'm getting quite a pretty girl—almost a beautiful woman," was her next reflection, as she noticed her large shadowy eyes and her full throat in the still water.

"Hallo, Ramai!" she exclaimed, as a graceful native girl suddenly stepped out of the bamboo thickets, stared with large dark eyes at her, then made as if to pass on. "Don't go, Ramai," said Gabrielle. The girl stared sphinx-like for a second, then moved on. "I go, Madesi, to pray, tabaran! Must go or die!" answered the strange maid as she turned round, then pointed her dark finger in the direction of the god-house that was situated somewhere in the taboo mountains.

"Your old god-houses! Do you really believe in them?" said Gabrielle, looking earnestly into the strange maid's serious eyes. For a moment Ramai stared, put her brown knee forward, made a magic pass with her hands above her head, and said: "The gods have spoken more than once to Ramai when the stars did shine in the lagoons and the caves by Temeroesi, and told the future. And am I not sacred in the eyes of the gods? For I am head singer at the tambu festivals, so are my love affairs good, and chiefs have died for that look from my eyes that would tell all that a woman may say."

"If I danced on the *pae paes* would I be loved too?" said Gabrielle almost eagerly.

"Pale-faced Marama, you no dance; the gods like not your kind!" Ramai answered almost scornfully. Then she glided away into the shadows on the other side of the track and disappeared.

Gabrielle burst into a merry peal of laughter. Once more she looked at her image in the lagoon and began to chant and sway and clap her hands rhythmically, just as she had seen the natives do. The deep boom of the bronze pigeon recalled her to herself as she stood throwing her shapely limbs softly to and fro. The songs of the birds seemed to remind her that she was no longer a child, and that such antics were a bit out of place now that she wore long dresses. She stopped dead, and put her hands into the folds of her hair that had fallen in a glinting mass to her shoulders as she shuffled her sandalled feet in the long jungle grass.

"I'm really getting awful," was her next reflection. The sun was lying broad on the western sea-line; it looked like an enormous, dissipated, blood-splashed face that would hurry to hide itself below the rim of the ocean, away from the violent wooing of the hot, impassioned, tropic day.

Gabrielle stared across the seas from the hill-top and half fancied that that great hot face grinned from ear to ear over all it had seen. A peculiar feeling

of fright seized her heart. In a moment she had turned and hurried away. She felt quite relieved as she sighted her father's bungalow beneath the shade of the bread-fruits. "It's late. Won't Dad swear! I don't care; men must swear, I suppose," she muttered as she plucked up courage and entered the small door of the solitary homestead.

The shadows of evening had fallen; the last cockatoo had chimed its discordant vesper from the banyans near by. The room was nearly dark as she opened the door; only a faint stream of light crept through the wide-open casement that was thickly covered with twining tropic vine and sickly yellowish blossoms. To her astonishment, she was received by her father with a broad smile of welcome. "Come in, deary, don't stand there! What yer frightened of—you *beauty*?" said old Everard, as his lean, clean-shaven face looked up at the girl in a warning way and he placed a forcible accent on the last two words.

"Who's here that he should be so affable?" thought Gabrielle.

Turning round, she was startled to see a tall figure standing by the window. In a moment she hurried to the mantel piece and, striking a match, lit the small oil lamp, scolding her father all the time for his discourtesy in allowing a stranger to stand in the darkness. As she turned and gazed at the visitor she almost gave a cry, so impressed was she by the appearance of the man before her. It was the handsome Rajah Koo Macka, the half-caste Malayo-Papuan missionary. He was attired in semi-European clothes, but with this difference—round his waist was twined a large red sash and on his head the tribal insignia of the Malay Archipelago Rajahship, which consisted of coils of richly coloured material swathed round and round to resemble a turban. He looked like a handsome Corsair who had suddenly stepped out of an Eastern seraglio. For a moment the girl stared in astonishment; the Rajah corresponded with her conception of what the grand old heroes of romance were like.

The Rajah took in the whole situation and the impression he had made at this first glance at the father and daughter. He swelled his chest and assumed his most majestic attitude, and then behaved as though he knew he had befriended the girl by being at her homestead at that opportune moment.

"My darter!" said old Everard, inclining his lean face and introducing the girl with a grin.

"Your daughter!" gasped the Rajah as he stared with all the boldness and brazen admiration that Hillary's eyes had lacked into Gabrielle's face. He was taking no risks, had no idealistic views about innocence and beauty to thwart his heart's desires—in a sense he had already captured her!

Gabrielle, recovering from that thrilling glance, blushed deeply. She stared at the dark moustache; it was waxed, and curled artistically at the tips. "What eyes!—luminous, warm-looking, alive with romantic dreams!" she thought.

The Rajah looked again at the girl. That second swift glance made her heart tremble with fright, but somehow she liked to see a man stare so.

"My darter 'andsome girl," gurgled old Everard, stumping his wooden leg twenty times in swift succession, as Gabrielle brought out the rum bottle. The business confab that had been going on between Everard and his guest ceased abruptly. The old ex-sailor took the Rajah's proffered cigar, stuck it in his mouth and gripped the ex-missionary's hand, with secret delight bubbling in his heart. That grip said to Everard: "Everard, old pal, I never knew you had such a bonny daughter. Never mind the business I came here about, I'll supply you with cash for rum!" The old sailor rubbed his hands. He knew that the man before him was wealthy, owned a schooner, and was boss of two plantations in Honolulu, where he had first met him. He put forth his horny fist and gave the Rajah the first familiar nudge of equality.

Everard was altogether worldly, but utterly unworldly in the great human sense of that phrase. He lacked the swift instincts that should have made him discern the truth and see how the wind might blow. His drunken eyes could not read the deeper meaning in the Rajah's eyes as that worthy glanced at his daughter. He could see nothing of the passion and lust that is so often in the hearts of the men of mixed blood in the dark races.

Even Gabrielle's half-fledged instincts of womanhood made her realise that the man before her did not exactly represent her preconceived ideas of what the old heroes of romance would look like could they stand before her in the flesh; the look in the Rajah's eyes as he gazed on her was rather too obvious.

That night as the three of them sat at the table and Everard roared with laughter over Rajah Macka's jokes, and giggled in delight at discovering that the Papuan potentate was such a fine fellow after all, Gabrielle's heart fluttered like a caught bird. Rajah Koo Macka had leaned across the table once and stared into her eyes in such a way that even old Everard had ceased his narrative concerning his own astuteness and, like the idiot he was, stared at the Rajah, the rum goblet still between his lips and the table. But the Rajah, noticing that swift look in the old ex-sailor's face, immediately recovered his mental equilibrium, and with astute cunning swiftly turned to his host and said: "I really couldn't help staring so. Why, bless me, Everard, this Miss Gabrielle is the dead spit of the Madonna, the glorious painting that adorned the sacred walls of my missionary home when I studied Christianity's holy precepts."

"Damn it! Is she?" wailed old Everard, as the artful heathen gent shaded his eyes archwise with one dusky hand and, staring unabashed with a long, reflective glance at Gabrielle, murmured in holiest tones: "Virginity! Virginity! O blessed word!"

Gabrielle certainly *did* look beautiful: the dying flowers in her bronze-

golden hair and her *negligé* attire (a much-renovated, washed-out blue robe and scarlet sash) added to the mystery of that sordid bungalow, as the dim candles and oil lamp burnt humbly before the unfathomable eyes of sapphire-blue. The deep golden gleam in their pupils seemed to expand as the night grew old. What a night of magic it was for her! The strange man from the seas thrilled her.

The old bungalow, lit up by two tallow candles and one oil lamp, the smell of rum, all vanished, and the dilapidated furniture and walls shone with a beautiful light, a light that came from that romantic presence! By an inscrutable paradox Macka was abnormally sensual and selfish, and yet truly religious! He spoke in low, sombre tones about Christ, of innocence, of the hopes of the living and of men when they are dead. Old Everard looked almost sane as he leaned his Dantesque face across the table and murmured "Amen." And as the girl listened the Rajah loomed before her imagination as some glorious representative of the chivalric ages who had stolen into their bungalow out of the hush of the great starry night. The very walls of the room faded away as she watched his eyes flash. It was the sudden tiny pinch on her leg as he stooped to pick up his fallen cigar that she couldn't quite place. It most certainly had no Biblical import in the books she had read. But still, "Why worry?" she thought, as she once more came under the spell of that look. And still old Everard looked round with insane eyes and thanked God for a Rajah's friendship; and still Gabrielle struggled against the fascination of that man of mystery. Though nature has fixed indisputable danger signals in the eyes of voluptuaries, liars, rogues and old *roués* so that they give themselves away in a thousand acts, women's blind eyes *will* not see!

All the old idolatry, the belief in his heathen gods, returned to Rajah Koo Macka that night. His mind was fired with superstition, much as Gabrielle's was by romance, as he stared upon her. Had not the gods of his boyhood far away in New Guinea spoken of such a one with midnight-blue eyes and the hue of the stars in her hair? And was she not before him drinking to his eyes as she held the goblet at his wish? Had not their lips met in secret before the white man's blinded eyes?

He even made a further advance in that predestined courtship, as planned by the gods, when he left the bungalow that night. In a way that is the special gift of voluptuaries, he managed to squeeze by her in the doorway, passing his arm about her with heathen artistry till she felt a strange thrill. Old Everard also received monstrous pressures of friendship as he put forth his hand and opened his insane-looking mouth at being so flattered. Then the old ex-sailor fell down in the doorway, dead drunk.

As soon as the Rajah got outside the bungalow he stood under the palms and looked back at that little homestead, a terrible fire gleaming in his eyes. The old superstition, deep in his heart's blood, asserted itself with that full strength

that is always triumphant when invested with the power of two creeds. "She's mine!" he muttered in the old Malayan language. He looked like an agent of the devil as he waved his arms and made magical passes. Then he gave a low whistle. Two stalwart Kanakas, with mop-heads and glassy eyes like dead fish, stepped out of the shadows and saluted the Rajah. "Talofa Alii, Sah!" said one, as he softly swung his strangling rope to and fro and muttered, "Oner, twoer, threer, fourer," at the same time ticking off each number with his dusky finger. They were kidnappers, members of his crew. In a moment they were all hurrying down towards the shore. As they stood by the coral reefs, the waves singing up to their feet, the Rajah rubbed his hands with delight, for there were five dark girls lying prone, half strangled, in his waiting boat.

They had just been caught while swimming in the enchanted lagoons at Felisi, where native maidens, at the tribal witchman's bidding, went in the dead of night to wash their bodies in the charm-waters that made girls so beautiful. Even as the Rajah and his kidnappers stood on the shore they heard the sound of a sharp, terrified scream come faintly on the hot winds across the hills. They knew that another victim had been caught in the thug-nets. It was easy enough too; for it was a happy hunting ground for the "recruiters" down Felisi beach way. In the dead of night native girls often ran along the soft, moon-lit sands like coveys of dishevelled mermaids, placing sea-shells to their ears that they might hear the songs of dead sailors and the far-off voices of their unborn children humming and moaning in the great spirit-land that is under the sea.

Gabrielle's heart thumped like a drum as she softly closed the door of the bungalow. She thought she must have dreamed it all. A handsome, god-like Rajah had gazed upon her as though she were a goddess—impossible! So thought the girl as she stumbled over a sordid reality—her father's recumbent form on the bungalow door-mat. He still lay where he had fallen. He was a big man, and so it was with much difficulty that she at length managed to pick him up and lay him down on the old settee. Then she sat down in the big arm-chair. She heard her father gurgling out some old-time sea-chantey, so faint that it sounded a long way off. The two tallow candles were burning low in their coco-nut-shell candlesticks. But still she sat there. The idea of going to bed seemed ridiculous after the wonderful thing that had happened. She was still trembling to her very soul over the Rajah's flatteries.

She thought of that secret pressure, the hot kiss, the deep meaning look in the flashing eyes. "He even spoke of God. Men seem to think more of God than women," she muttered absently. "I'm dark, a heathen at heart; I'd like to marry a handsome, dark man like that," she continued, as she began to beat her

hands to and fro. Suddenly she felt a pang at her heart, for she had begun quite unconsciously to hum a melody that she had heard the young apprentice play to her on his violin. Her limbs started to tremble; the old look came back to her eyes; the swarthy, half-fierce look had vanished. She tried to change her thoughts by humming on in that weird way. "I'm heathenish, I'm sure I am," she almost sobbed. Then a fierce feeling took possession of her as she realised her own unstable thoughts over the two men she had just met. For a moment she sat perfectly still, thinking—then she burst into tears.

Everard still snored on. Gabrielle ceased her tears, clapped her hands and laughed softly to herself. She had drunk a little rum and stuff that she knew not the name of that night. How could she help doing so. Had not the Rajah placed his lips at the goblet's edge and looked sideways in deep meaning at her as he drank a toast to her father? But it wasn't the rum that filled the bungalow parlour with mystery and changed the universe for her. She forgot the armchair in which she sat: it seemed that she sat on a lonely shore by night and stared at a blood-red sun that peered at her over the ocean horizon. Perhaps the Rajah had done this mysterious thing to her through his tender pressure. He knew! He knew! But still, he had no hint in his mind of the witchery of that girl's soul.

She rose from the arm-chair, her shadow dodged about the walls of the bungalow, then she peeped through the open casement. Night lay with its tropical mystery drenched with stars as she stared upward and then again across that silent land. She withdrew her head and placed a pillow under her sleeping father's head, then crept from the room, passing up the three steps that separated her from her own chamber. Her room was faintly lit up by the tint of moonrise on the distant mountains. "How silly of me to feel frightened like this," she murmured, as she swiftly lit the oil lamp. Her limbs still trembled. A feeling of intense sorrow had come over her. The apprentice's eyes rose before her memory again; she thought of the tryst by the lagoon, and it all seemed like some memory of a romantic opera she had seen and heard long years ago. Then she gave a startled cry: a shadow had run across the room. "How foolish of me to be frightened of my own shadow!" she said almost loudly to herself, as though she would seek courage by hearing her own voice. "I've heard that mother had nights of madness, when she thought a dark woman, blind, deaf and dumb, crouched under her bed and begged forgiveness for something she'd done." So she thought as she rushed to the window to get away from her thought.

But Gabrielle could not escape from that presence. She looked out on the wide landscape of feathery palms and pyramid-shaped hills to the south-east in a strange fear. Then she stared seaward in the direction of the dark-armed promontory, where she knew the native girls stood on their great god-nights, coiled their tresses up and dived into the moon-lit seas, so that they might swim

and beat their hands at the cavern doors where Quat and his vassal-gods moaned.

"I'm going mad too," she murmured, as she pulled her head in through the open window and began to undress. One by one she pulled off her sandals and ribbons. Then she heard a queer kind of sawing noise. "What's that?" she wondered. But it was only the regular intervals between Everard's snores in the silent parlour below. "It's Dad!" she murmured; and the sound of that deep bass snore soothed her soul as though it were the music of the singing spheres. She took off her blouse, undid the lace corsage, loosened the sash swathing till her semi-oriental attire fell rustling to her knees. "Am I so beautiful?" she murmured, as she looked half in fright and guilt at herself in the oval bamboo mirror. Her eyes sparkled like stars in the gloom as she peeped through her bronze-gold tresses. And still she swerved and swayed, so that the cataract of golden hair fell to her throat and again below the sun-tanned flush of her bosom. She thought of the Rajah, the warm look of his dark eyes. A strange thrill went through her. As though a dark figure ran across the moon-lit space just outside her window once again, a shadow whipped across the room. She hastily wrapped a robe about her, rushed across the room and stared through the vine-clad bamboo casement. The sight of the masts in the bay and the dim light of the far-off grog shanty by Felisi, where she knew sunburnt men from the seas spent the nights in wild carousal, dispelled her fears. She looked round her; then in some unaccountable fascination she stared in the mirror again. "I'm growing into a woman, getting quite beautiful!"

"I'm growing into a woman, getting quite beautiful!" came some exact echo of her words. She was startled; she swiftly glanced round the room; she could almost swear that she was not alone.

"What's that?" she muttered, as she heard the muffled sounds of beaten drums, so faint that it seemed that the barbarian rumbling came across the centuries.

"What's that!" re-echoed her own query. The echoes startled her more than the reality would have done. Thoughts of Ra-mai, the tambu dancer, of her gods and the terrors of the phantoms that haunted those whom the *tabaran* high priests had tabooed flashed through her brain. Her bedroom was faintly lit up by the light of the oil lamp that fell over the dilapidated furniture and on to her old settee bed. A swarm of fire-flies whirled and sparkled beneath the palms outside and then were blown through the open casement, right into the room! She swiftly placed her hands over her eyes, as one might at the sight of vivid lightning—a ghostly flash leapt across the room and seared her very soul! The hot night winds swept through the palms outside; she heard them moan as something leapt out of the night and clutched her heart with its shadowy fingers! In her terror she swiftly looked up at her mother's photograph, as though she would rush to the

dead for companionship. No help there. The faded eyes of that sad face only stared in immutable silence down from the frame on the wall, as though in some twinship of misery. Gabrielle dared not turn her head. She knew that something stood there watching her. Another gust of wind seemed to come from the stars and burst the half-closed casement open.

"Dad!" she cried in her terror, as she felt a hot breath against her face.

"Dad!" echoed the walls of her room in mockery.

"Who are you?" she managed to wail out.

"Who are you?" came the relentless echo.

She had just caught sight of her face in the mirror. Even the fear of that presence in the room was somewhat subdued, so unbounded was her astonishment at seeing the reflection that stared back at her from the bright glass—it was not her own face that she saw, but the face of a wildly beautiful, dark-blooded woman!

She stared again, paralysed with horror. The fiery eyes mocked her fright and astonishment. Then the expression changed: the face seemed to appeal and smile half sadly at the girl.

It was not a monstrous Nothing that gazed upon her. She turned to flee from the terrible presence. But in a second it had leapt out of the mirror—had sprung at her! So it seemed to the terrified girl; but the figure was standing *behind* her, staring into the mirror over her shoulders like some relentless, cruel Nemesis from her helpless past, a hideous thing that had searched for centuries—and found her at last!

Old Everard slept on. He heard nothing of the terrible conflict in the room three steps up, where his daughter struggled in the awful grip of that temptress who had found her—a woman from some long-forgotten forest grave in the Malay Archipelago.

It was not madness; nor did the struggle exist only in her imagination. The sheets were torn, the counterpane rent in twain, as that merciless phantom tried to overpower the girl.

Only those who have been true worshippers in the great Papuan tambu temples who have seen and heard the magic of the heritage rites, can guess what really happened in the girl's room. Only those who have experienced a like experience secretly know how she felt as she attempted to overthrow that deadly visitant. For a few seconds their two figures swayed in the dark. The oil lamp had been knocked over! Then the small door of the bungalow suddenly opened: Gabrielle had escaped. She ran out into the moon-lit night! Just for a second she stood under the windless palms, staring first one way and then another, as though she longed to leap over her own shoulders—escape from herself. Up the slopes she ran, and down into the distant hollows by Fallamboco. She passed the

derelict hut where the high priest dreamed before he died and was buried just in front of his front door. The broken, crumbling wooden idol still stood on his grave, its bulged glass eyes staring in immutable insolence as Gabrielle rushed by. She stopped by the lagoons at Felisi, where the huddled waters lay, the sacred waters that washed the beautiful bodies of the dead brides ere they were buried safe in the highest mahogany-tree of Bougainville.

She was not surprised when she stooped and gazed on her reflection in the waters and saw a second image beside her own in those silent depths. Standing there in her hastily donned night attire, her hair outblown, her chemise torn to rags at one shoulder, her blue robe clinging to her delicate figure, she looked around in despair. Only the mountains looked on silently as their giant stone heads seemed to stare like Fate across the desolate landscape and out to the moon-lit seas. She looked at the sky and groped in some blindness, lifting her hands in mute appeal. Some past heathen life possessed her. A crawling, half-human-shaped cloud blurred the moon's face, failing suddenly, like a dark hand. It was not a cloud to Gabrielle's changed eyes as the shadow fell over the weird landscape; it was a big thumb busily tattooing the sky, as one by one the dim constellations rebrightened on their darkened background.

She stood alert and peered over her shoulder, her face and eyes bright with startled delight—she heard the tribal drums beating.

Those sounds were real enough. Even the young apprentice in his room over the hills jumped as he heard the booming, then put his head out of his window and bobbed it back, startled like a frightened child.

Gabrielle recognised those sounds. The long, low-drawn chant was familiar to her ears. Softly they came, weird undertones drifting across the silence. Like a monstrous rat that had wings, something whirred across the sky and gave a wretched groan as it swept out of sight.

"Ta Savoo! Ta Savoo!" ("Come on! Come on!") said a voice beside her. A shadowy hand was laid upon her shoulder. The horror of that presence had already vanished. She startled the hills by bursting into a silvery peal of laughter; then away she ran, on, on, into the depths of the forest.

On the brightest tropic night the forest depths were dark with lurking mystery; the multitudinous twistings of the giant trees and their gnarled limbs, all thickly lichened with serpent-like vines, made a wonderful depth of brooding silence and unfathomable light, and in the moonlight looked like some mighty forest of twisted coral miles down under the sea.

White men would sooner walk miles than pass through those depths by night. "No, thank ye! No tabooed b—— heathen forest for me!" they said, as they gave a knowing glance. And none could persuade them. Old Sour Von Craut simply shrugged his shoulders, spread out his fat hands and intimated by raised

eyebrows that it was the most natural thing on earth to have found the dead beachcomber, with ears and eyes missing, in the forests behind Felisi beach.

Even Gabrielle stopped running, gave a startled moan and looked up in the dim light. Something screamed and gave a mocking laugh; it was a red-striped vulture. The girl saw the whitened bones of its eyrie as it stood up and flapped its wings. For it had made its nest amongst a dead man's bones, a grave up there in the palms of the tabooed forest. Just for a moment she crouched in fear, but not because of that sight over her head. An aged dark man with a large nose was passing along, not ten yards off, chanting to himself. It was Oom Pa, hurrying back from the festival outside Parsons's grog shanty. He had a bamboo rod across his shoulders, Chinese fashion, wherefrom his calabashes swung as he disappeared in the depth beyond. In a few seconds Gabrielle was off again. She had been that way before, so knew the near cuts to the villages and tambu temples. As she ran out of the bamboo thickets she caught a first glimpse of the hanging lamps. A breath of wind had swept through the forest, blowing the thick, dark leaves aside that made the natural taboo curtain to the festival spot. She saw the whirling figures of the tambu maiden dancers. She heard the weird music of the flutes and twanging stringed gourds. The chants only increased the wild feeling of savagery that was delighting her soul. She did not hesitate, but deliberately pushed aside the bamboo stems and stood in the presence of that secret midnight throng of sacred worshippers and the great tambu priests. For a moment the dark heathen men and affrighted women stared from their squatting mats in astonishment, the expression on their faces strangely resembling the carved surprise of the big wooden, one-toothed idol that stood six feet high, staring with glass eyes from behind the taboo stage. Even the dancing tambu maidens swerved slightly in their sacred movements, their steps put out of gear as Gabrielle, with hands uplifted, and eyes staring strangely, appeared before that *pae pae*.

The head priest coughed in astonishment; then he rose and wailed out: "Taboo! She is white, and such are tabooed by the gods!"

As he brought his club down with a crash, anger come into the dark eyes of the sacred chiefesses, who had leapt to their feet, all disturbed while they had been paying obeisance to the wooden Idol Quat (chief god of the skies). It was a specially private occasion, only the greatly trusted allowed to attend. One stalwart chief stepped forward as though he intended slaying the girl on the spot. Old Oom Pa, who had barely wiped the perspiration from his brow and flung down his calabashes of bribes, gazed with as much surprise as anyone on Gabrielle. Then, seeing that harm might come to the girl, he hastily stepped forward and said: "Hold, O chiefs; this papalagi has that in her eyes which tells she is under the influence of our gods. And, therefore, is she not one of us?" He swiftly turned

and said something in the guttural language of his tribe. Whatever he said was for Gabrielle's benefit, for it greatly calmed the fears of the huddled dark men and their women-kind. In a moment the fierce resentment towards Gabrielle changed to wild grunts of welcome. One aged priest who was grovelling on his stomach before the dwarf taboo idols that were receiving the sacred slanting moonbeams through the palms prostrated himself at Gabrielle's feet. The white girl looked round her like one who stared in a dream, then she gave a merry peal of laughter. The handsome, tattooed braves who stood leaning on the palm stems gave a hushed cry of admiration as they saw the girl standing, bathed in moonbeams, her hair wildly dishevelled, her eyes like stars, her arms as white as coral as she made mystical movements in a dance they did not know. The old priest, who was at her feet lifted his face and chanted some prayer to her eyes.

This act of the priest made the chiefs and chiefesses think that the girl was there by special decree of their *kai-kai* (sacred moon gods). In a moment the whole tribe had followed the priest's act, hod surrounded the girl and were moaning and grovelling at her feet.

"Tala Marama Taraban!" ("'Tis a spirit-girl!") they whispered in an awestruck voice as they lifted their chins and stared at the girl's vacant eyes. The peculiar stare of those wonderful blue eyes intensified their superstitious belief.

Two of the chiefs rose, nodded their heads, wailed, and said: "She has been here before, O brothers!"

The tambu maidens had now stopped dancing. The barbarian flutes had ceased their wailings, not a drum note disturbed the hush as the wild, swarthy men gazed on Gabrielle and the aged priest chanted into her ears.

The girl seemed to be dimly conscious of the reverent homage those wild men and women paid her as they fell on their faces before her. She looked down with a dream-like stare on their muscular brown bodies, on their richly shelled *ramis*, their red-feathered headgear.

"Savoo! Savoo!" ("Go on! Go on! Dance for us!") they almost whispered, as they turned their shaggy heads and peered into the depths of the forest, half in terror and pleasurable anticipation of what the girl might do.

For a moment Gabrielle swayed, clapped her hands softly as a prelude, then chanted. Then she swiftly glided towards the tambu elevation. In a moment the tambu maidens had jumped down, soft-footed, on to the mossy floor before the sacred erection. Gabrielle had leapt on to the stage! The skulls and skeleton bones and other gruesome ritual objects that dangled on boughs just above her head swayed to the hot night breeze, all tinkling weirdly as she stood for a moment in dreamy hesitation. Then she gave a silvery peal of laughter. She had begun to move hither and thither as though in a dream, swaying to and fro with

marvellous delicacy and grace. Never before had those chiefs seen so weird, so wonderful a sight or heard a voice chant their wild melodies with such strange effect. They all stared. Even the tambu maidens stood as though riveted to the forest floor in envious wonder. A drum began softly to beat out the tribal notes, "Too Woomb! Too Woomb!" in perfect *tempo* to the girl's shifting faery-like footsteps. Suddenly the aged high priest, Pooma Malo, fell prostrate before his tambu idol and began to chant, so great was his fear. The whole assemblage were trembling like wind-blown shadows. They had all noticed the silent, shadowy woman who stood beside the white girl on the *pae pae* mimicking her every movement, as it, too, bobbed rhythmically to and fro, moving its feet noiselessly behind her across that *pae pae* before them all.

Two of the tambu maidens and one dusky youth jumped to their feet and bolted off into the forest in fright. The giant wooden idol just behind the shadow-figure gave a wide carven grin from ear to ear as a shaft of moonlight fell across its hideous face. A handsome, plucky young chief stepped forward. He was adorned with the insignias and decorations of the fetish rites. He leapt straight on to the *pae pae*. Under the influence of the white girl's dance he too swayed his arms and chanted, as only men of his race can dance and chant.

Gabrielle looked up at him, a strange light in her eyes. He reminded her of the Rajah. She lifted her arms in response to the handsome young chief's gesticulations as he careened by her in the mystical cross-passes of the ritual dance. She lifted her mouth to his. The tribal chiefs saw the strange look of the girl's eyes and at once smothered the cry of "Awai! O lao Mia!" the old tribal exclamation that would express their innermost feelings. The elder priests stood open-mouthed, leaning against their idols in fear and trembling, as though they would ask their protection.

The impassioned warrior chief grew bolder, and held Gabrielle's delicate figure in a swerving embrace. His dark mouth came close to her ear, murmuring words of magic that she could not understand. Even the idol seemed to stare its surprise as he lifted one white arm and touched the soft flesh with his lips. And still the tambu flute-players blew on, for they too had come under the spell of that strange sight, where the two races clung together and chanted mysteriously to each other. Then the chief untwined his swarthy arms from that embrace and, falling forward on one knee, placed his lips to her feet. He was eager to press his extraordinary advantage. To kiss a maid's feet is the first act the happy warrior performs when a maid favours his presence on a tambu stage. But he found that her feet were covered. In a moment he had pushed her robe aside and had begun to remove one of her small, blue-bowed sandals.

Just for a moment the white girl's face seemed to betray the light of vanity over this act of the young chief. Then he lifted her foot once again, to his lips,

and immediately Gabrielle's expression changed. She stared around her in astonishment, looked with a dream-like stare back into the eyes of the giant warrior who was caressing her and at the swarthy men and women who stood under the coco-nut-oil lamps watching in front of the *pae pae* stage. They knew that the cry she gave was one of terror, for Gabrielle had awakened; her soul had been asleep.

The young chief who had danced with her suddenly cowered away from her side; then he jumped in the opposite direction as she leapt from the *pae pae*.

"Taboo!" whispered the astonished chiefesses as the wind sighed mournfully across the forest height and flickered the bluish flames of the hanging lamps.

"She would tempt our menkind!" yelled a deep-bosomed chiefess as she leapt forward, her head-dress feathers swaying violently.

One or two of the older chiefs put forth their dusky hands as though they would clutch her in their anger. In a moment Oom Pa lifted his dark fist and bade none touch her. Placing his tawny hand on his tattooed chest, just where his sun-tanned skin encased his thumping heart, he muttered solemn-sounding undertones that told the assembled tambu watchers to leave the girl to him.

Gabrielle looked round on those fierce-eyed men and women in terror. She saw that look in the eyes of old Oom Pa which told her that he, at least, had her welfare deep in his heart. The lines of tambu maidens divided, and moved back half in fright as Gabrielle made a dash and passed by them.

"Stay, O papalagi maid," said Oom Pa, as he too moved back into the recesses of the forest and, staying her flight, said: "O white maid, you come to tambu dance before, I knower you. I know, too, that you no belonger to our race." Then he rubbed his wrinkled face, looked at her sternly and proceeded: "Remember that great trouble may come to one who comer to our full-moon rites unasked. Savvy?"

Gabrielle nodded. She could not speak as she stood there trembling from head to feet. Then the old priest looked quietly in her eyes and said: "Tell me, O white maid, who was she with skin dark as the night, eyes like unto stars and cloudy, flowing hair as she dance on *pae pae* stage with you, mimicking you like a spirit-shadow?"

"With me!" exclaimed the girl in a startled, hushed voice, as she looked round into the forest depth in a great fear.

"Wither you!" reiterated Oom Pa. Then he said: "You knower not that such a spirit-shadow dancer with you and laugher when you place your lips 'gainst those of our taboo warrior? La Umano?"

So spake old Oom Pa, as the light of the moon and superstition lit up his wrinkled face. Before he could say more Gabrielle had fled in fear from his presence.

She had no recollection of the way of her flight back to her father's bungalow. Her feet went swiftly, like pattering rain, over the forest floor as she ran from her fear and shame. And only God knows the thoughts of her sad heart as she entered her father's homestead in the dead of night and crept into her little civilised bed to sleep.

Was it imagination? Well, whoever you may be, go to Bougainville, look into the wonderful eyes of those half-caste women who happen to have the blood of the white, Papuan and Polynesian races mixed in their veins, fall in love with such a one, hold her in your arms by night and watch for the shadow!—listen for the rustle of the old life that revelled in the magic of the tambu and maidia temples, the altars of heathen passion and enchantment.

CHAPTER V—MUSIC OF ROMANCE

On the morning following Gabrielle's terrible experience old Everard sat bathing his head in a calabash of sea-water. It considerably revived his numbed sense. Then he blew his nose fiercely and, stumping his wooden leg with tremendous irritability, sat down to breakfast. Suddenly, as he was munching, he looked up, wondering what on earth was the matter with his daughter. Her dress was torn, her face looked pale and haggard, her eyes full of drowsy fright and some haunting fear. She looked years older than when she had retired the night before. The expression on her face was one of infinite sorrow. The lips kept trembling. The old man, completely lacking in imagination, could see nothing of the pathos, the absolute wretchedness of the girl's expression. He summed up the whole business according to his own feelings.

"Did you drink rum last night?—get drunk? What's the matter?" said he, as he concluded by munching fast at his bread and toasted cheese.

"*You* were drunk," said the girl, squeezing the words out with an effort as her voice cracked.

"Wha' you think of Rajah Koo Macka, gal, eh?"

"Not much," she responded. Her mouth visibly twitched as she turned her eyes from the stupid, inquiring parental gaze.

"Nice fellow 'im; believes in God, Christ and in virginity. Rajahs ain't knocking about everywhere, Gabby old gal, either," he continued, as he gave a wink. Then he added: "It's wonderful how people who was once 'eathens seems to be the most relygous folk; they seems to 'ave a real faith in goodness 'o things, that's what it is."

Gabrielle still kept silent, hardly hearing at all as the old idiot rambled on in this wise: "'E's got ther brass too! Going to 'ire me to go on a pearl-hunting scheme in the Admiralty Group. 'E knows *I* know where the pearls are found. He he!"

Suddenly the man ceased his wild talk and looked at the girl quizzically for a second, then said: "Gabrielle, you're a woman now, don't yer feel like one?"

At this, to the old man's astonishment, the girl burst into tears.

"What on earth 'ave I said," he mumbled, as his eyes lost the bleared, rum-dim look, and he tapped his wooden leg. Something that slept deep down in his heart stirred in its long slumber: "Don't cry, girlie. Aren't you well?"

Even he saw the faint appeal of those violet-blue eyes.

"Who's torn your dress?" he said, as he struggled against the impulse that he felt, for he had put forth his arms to draw the girl to him. But he didn't do so.

Pouring a little more Jamaica rum into his tea, he swallowed it, smacked his lips and said: "Don't grissel. I'm not going to bully you for tearing your clothes. S'pose you've been arambling 'bout ther scrub at yer old games, admiring ther beauties of Nathure?" He pursed his lips and gave a cynical grin as he made the foregoing remark. Then he continued: "I saw you t'other day talking to that blasted runaway ship's apprentice, 'Illary, I think they call 'im. Do yer want to disgrace your old father by talking to ther likes of 'im, a damned penniless, stranded runaway apprentice, nothing but a fiddler with a shabby, brass-bound suit on!"

Then the old evangelical zealot of vagabon gospel and the best Jamaica rum put his big-rimmed hat on, looked at the clock and went stumping down the track by the palms to look after the Kanakas who were employed on the copra, coffee and pine-apple plantations.

As soon as the sounds of his stumping footsteps had died away the pretty native girl, "Wanga-woo," from Setiwao village, made her characteristic somersault through the front door. She had come to tidy the bungalow in her usual way. Even that nymph-like creature looked sideways at Gabrielle, noticed the pallor of her face and wondered at the absence of the usual cheery salutation that had always greeted her. It took the native child no time to tidy up. Then she ran outside the homestead and returned with her big market basket full of luscious tropical fruits: mangoes, two big over-ripe pine-apples, limes and reddish oranges lying on their own dark green leaves.

"You liker them, Misser Gaberlel? They belonger nicer you!"

The native child's voice and action cheered up Everard's daughter wonderfully. Then, as she lay down on the parlour settee to rest her aching head, she heard the little maid running away into the forest, back to her village, singing:

"Willy-wa noo, Woo-le woo wail-o,
Cowana te o le suva, mango-te ma bak!"

Then the sound died away and Gabrielle felt glad to hear it no longer, and lying there thinking and thinking, and softly crying to herself, she fell fast asleep, and slept through most of the hot tropical day. When she awoke sunset had already fired the mountain palms. As she sat on the bamboo seat by the door she heard her father's voice. She knew he was drunk; the rollicking, hoarse intonation of, his song was unmistakable as the sounds came nearer. He had been away to the plantations to see Rajah Koo Macka, who was supposed to be purchasing a lot of copra for cargo for his ship that lay off Bougainville.

In a moment the girl had made up her mind, had risen and run off into the forest. Sunset was sending its golden streams across the banyan groves as she passed under the giant trees that were smothered with huge scarlet blossoms. Already the koo-koo owl had stolen from the deeper shadows and was hooting forth its "To woo—to-woo-woo!"

"I wish I hadn't overslept," she murmured to herself as she felt a longing to see one of her own sex. For she had made up her mind to go around the coast to see Mrs. S——, the German missionary's wife. She was a cold-eyed white woman, this missionary's wife, but still, she was white. Gabrielle had thought to tell her of the terrible shadow that had come to her in the night, and had hoped for her sympathy and advice. She would have gone even then, but she knew that the white woman's residence was miles round the coast and it would be quite dark before she arrived there. She also remembered that Mrs. S—— was a terrible coward and would not venture from her husband's bungalow after dark on account of the rumours going about that *tabarans* (evil spirits) lurked in the forests when the tambu worshippers were chanting their sacred rites.

Even Gabrielle shivered in fright when she thought of the tambu worshippers and the strange look of fear on the faces of the dead who were found in the mountain forests after certain festivals. It was some kind of religious sect who offered terrible sacrifices to the *tabarans* and the ceremony was something after the style of the Vaudoux worship as described by M. de St. Mery in his work on Vaudoux cannibalistic fetishes in Haiti.

When those fetishes were in full swing they could hear the chanting away down in Rokeville during the silence of the night. "Ach!" the Germans would

say as they listened to the far-away shrieks in the mountain citadels: children being clubbed and offered up in thanksgiving song and frenzied dances at the altars of indescribable orgy. And the knowledge that such things happened within easy walking distance from her bungalow made Gabrielle careful about roaming too far after dark. She turned from the denser forest and made up her mind to go through the light jungle that separated her from the picturesque shores and lagoons to the south-west. As she ran along the silvery track she looked fearfully into the shadows of the huge buttressed banyans. Her imagination, vividly alive through her terrible experience the night before, made her fancy she heard something running swiftly beside her in the jungle. She suddenly stopped and trembled from head to feet as the sounds of running footsteps stopped also. "Dear God, what have I done?" she wailed out in terror. In a moment she had rushed off, and bounding over the logs of the deserted *dobos* (huts) came to the cleared spaces where the scattered ivory-nut palms grew. She looked round with relief as she thought of that dreadful hollow that had so strangely re-echoed her *own* footsteps. Again she ran off; her fears left her and she began to sing. The sight of the dotted huts of the native homestead on the far-away shore revived her spirits. The rich blue of the departing day shone on the horizon and seemed strangely to influence her thoughts. The sough of the winds in the palms near by had rich music for her ears as she listened. "What's that?" she murmured, as she stood perfectly still. It was not the sound of beating tribal drums this time: she leaned forward and listened again, as though her very soul would drink in that faint, far-off sound. It came again, softly, a wailing, silvery sound moving on the warm sea wind. No fear leapt into her eyes, no agitation came to her limbs. An intensely beautiful expression seemed to light up her face as her heart as well as her ears heard those sweet sounds. The very palms just over her head moaned a tender *con anima tenerezza* accompaniment as it came, a sweet-throbbing, long-drawn tremulous wail. Tears sprang into her eyes as she listened to the strain of melancholy in the thin silvery voice that drifted beneath the tropic stars. It was the "Miserere" from *Il Trovatore*.

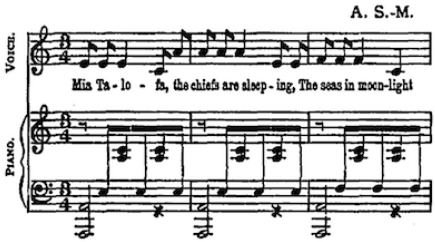
It was Hillary who felt the embarrassment of the moment as she ran out from beneath the palms. He had not really expected the girl to turn up that evening, although she had asked him to play his violin at that very spot so that she might chance to hear him. The apprentice felt a trifle foolish as he dropped his instrument and gazed at the girl. It struck him that he had been a party to a sentimental by-play out of some romantic novel or scene on the stage. He gave a sheepish grin that would have been quite out of place even had it been a stage performance. As for Gabrielle, she revelled in the romance of that meeting. She gazed into Hillary's eyes, more like a child than ever, as she sat there on the same banyan bough where she had first sung to Hillary when the Homeric

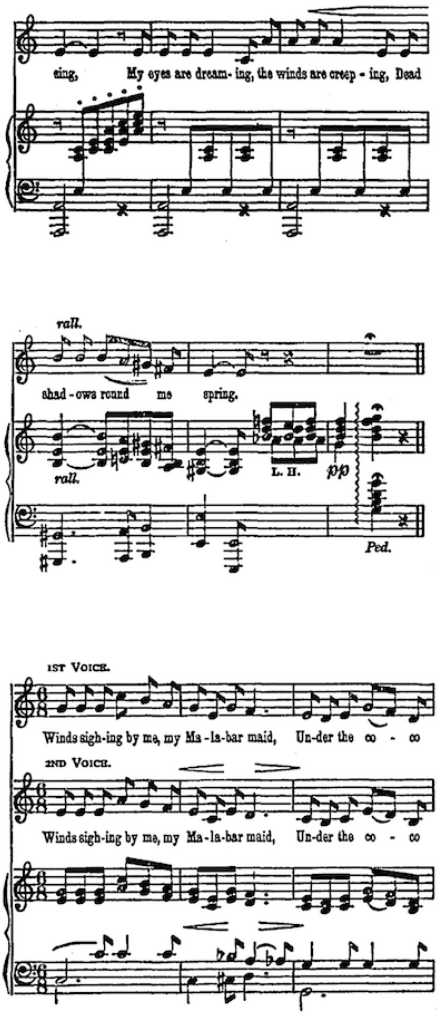
intruder had so suddenly disturbed them. As the apprentice looked at the girl he noticed how haggard she was. As though to ward off his critical gaze, she swiftly turned her head and murmured: "How romantic to hear you play your violin in the distance like that." Then she added coyly: "It's as though we are two passionate lovers meeting, just like they meet in Spain and Italy—you know, in the books," she added, as she gazed half sadly in the apprentice's face. Hillary tried to hide his true feelings by joking about her brown stocking. She laughed. Then as the darkness deepened Hillary became bolder and pressed his lips on her hand. The girl responded by pressing his fingers. He gazed steadily into her eyes; he wondered why they looked so beautiful and wild. He had noticed the same expression before. He did not stare with vulgar surprise; he simply pressed the girl's hand in instinctive sympathy. He knew that some fear haunted her soul. His love for Gabrielle had strangely blinded him to worldly things, but had gifted him with an inward sight that made him wonderfully sympathetic. Just for a second he felt a tremendous premonition of all that was coming to pass in his life through his affection for the girl by his side. In another moment his natural gaiety had returned. He half laughed to himself as he felt the wonder of all that he was experiencing in a place where white girls wore two expressions, laughed in one breath and stared in fright in the next.

Gabrielle was staring into his eyes as though she were asleep and yet had her eyes open. Her face was pallid; she had released her hand from his; she was still singing the song she had begun when her expression changed before the apprentice's astonished eyes.

"God! what is that weird, beautiful melody that you are singing, Gabrielle?" said he, as he came under the influence of her voice. All the European music that he knew was as nothing compared to the painful soul of melody that lingered in the strain that the girl extemporised.

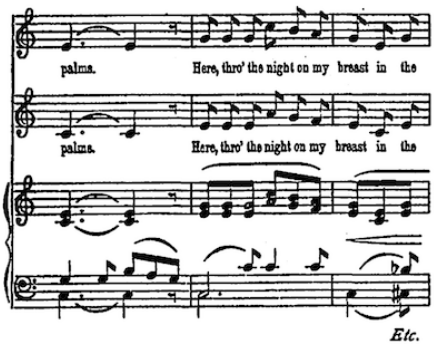
As she still sang and swayed by him in the shadows he swiftly opened his violin-case, but very softly, as though he feared to frighten the song away from her lips. He drew the bow gently, caressingly, *con tenerezza*, across the responsive strings and played.





[Transcriber's Note: Lyrics]

Mis Ta-lo-fa, the chiefs are sleep-ing,
The seas in moon-light sing,
My eyes are dream-ing, the winds art creep-ing,
Dead shad-ows round me spring.



Winds sigh-ing by me, my Ma-la-bar maid,
Un-der the co-co palms.
Here thro' the night on my breast in the ... Etc.

A. S.-M.

It was very late when Hillary walked back with Gabrielle to see her home. Even the shouts from the festivals of the heathen villages had subsided, only coming to their ears in dismal wails and tom-tom beatings. Gabrielle felt no fear of the dark forest as they hurried along the silver track with the big-trunked trees clearly outlined in the brilliant moonlight.

"You mustn't get nervous and allow your brain to have such curious fancies, Gabrielle," said the young apprentice as the girl clung tightly to his arm at the dodgings of their own monstrous silhouettes.

At length they arrived outside old Everard's bungalow. All was quiet.

"Good-night, Gabrielle," said Hillary, as he leaned forward, half inclined to say: "Dearest, may I kiss you?" During the last two hours, however, he had been too much worried about something that he knew not of to have made such headway in his advances. Notwithstanding his wish, he only took her hand and gazed into her eyes, and made her promise to keep the next appointment without fail. And she promised. Then he said: "Don't look so scared, he's asleep. Surely you're not afraid of your father like this?" Then he added: "I'll wait outside here and have a snooze beneath the palms till I think that you are fast asleep!"

Gabrielle didn't laugh at such a suggestion, as she might have done two nights before! Indeed, she pressed his hand in almost hysterical thankfulness. Hillary wondered why she should be so frightened, why she should look so delighted after looking so scared. "God in heaven! the girl's madly in love with

me!" was the delighted thought that flashed through his brain.

Gabrielle crept indoors. She heard her father's snoring as she softly opened her bedroom door and entered the room. She went straight to the small casement that opened on the feathery palms and distant moon-lit seas. She pushed aside the big hibiscus blossoms and peered down. Her heart fluttered with some half-fierce delight as she saw that form reclining beneath the palms: it was the penniless, stranded sea apprentice watching outside his South Sea princess's castle.

With some great light warming her heart Gabrielle crept into bed and fell fast asleep, and so another night passed. It was only in the morning that old Everard said: "Where the 'ell were yer last night? I wish ter blazes ye'd come back before it's dark. I'm damned if there wasn't a shadder a-knocking about 'ere last night!"

"No, Dad!" said Gabrielle.

"Yus!" said the old man with terrible vehemence. Then he added: "That old barman up at Parsons's is a blamed liar; he swore that the last case I bought was the best Jamaica rum. And yer don't see shadders after drinking ther best Jamaica, that yer don't!"

The old ex-sailor rambled on as he beat a violent tattoo on the floor of the bungalow with his wooden leg.

As for Hillary, he didn't get home till sunrise, so he slept till near midday.

"Papalagi! Maser Hill-e-ary!" roared Madame Tamboo, his landlady, as she banged his bedroom door with a ponderous bamboo stick.

"All ri'!" answered the sleepy young apprentice. Then he jumped up. He was out and about in two ticks, for he had slept "all-standing."

He couldn't keep calm that day. Mango Pango the maid-of-all-work, opened her bright eyes with delight as he paid her pretty compliments over her beauty. "Ah, what nice papalagi!" she said, as she looked sideways in the German mirror at her image. True enough, she had fine eyes and features that were quite different from those of the full-blooded Solomon natives. Like most Polynesian girls, she was extremely romantic and imaginative. She lifted her eyes towards the roof in childish ecstasy when Hillary laughingly admired her yellow stockings and told her that she reminded him of Cleopatra.

"Who Cleopatra?" Mango Pango said. Then Hillary told her a lot about the doings of Antony, who loved Cleopatra.

"She and nicer Antony still liver in Peratania England?"

"No, they're both dead," said Hillary mournfully.

"Oh dear! poor tings!" said Mango Pango sympathetically. Then she looked into the apprentice's eyes and said coquettishly: "Was Cleopatra a bery beautifuls woman, Mounsieur?"

"Most beautiful woman in the whole world, just like you," said Hillary.

So would they talk together; and the pretty native girl would laugh and smirk with the apprentice and wonder if she was as beautiful as he said she was, and if he really meant it when he told her that he longed to elope with her so that they could live on a desert isle together. Hillary little dreamed how one day he and that little native girl *would* travel across the seas together—in a stranger fashion than he jokingly anticipated.

After the noon sun had dropped and the fire-flies had begun to dance in the mangroves the apprentice put his cap on and strolled out on to the slopes to kill time. And pretty Mango Pango peeled potatoes, sang a melancholy Samoan song, dreamed of the handsome white papalagis and nearly wept to think she was so brown.

CHAPTER VI—THE DERELICT

Hillary was impatient during the interminable hours that passed ere he saw Gabrielle again. "Don't worry me, Mango," he said, as the pretty native girl stood on the verandah and blew kisses from her coral-red lips.

"He go mad soon; man who no get drunk am no gooder at all!" murmured Mango Pango as she ran off to obey the orders of her mistress.

It was the next night when Hillary was to reach the zenith of his dreams and happiness. Gabrielle had promised to meet him at sunset and go off in a canoe for a paddle round the coral reefs off Felisi beach. He was on fire with the idea. He could not sleep. His brain teemed with the thoughts of all he would say to Gabrielle when he declared his love. He determined to act his part well and be a worthy lover. She should not be disappointed in him. "I'll paddle her out to that derelict three-masted ship; that old wreck's the very place. I'll take her on board so that we shall be quite alone."

He thought of the light in Gabrielle's eyes. "Fancy me being the lucky one to receive her kisses! Wonderful! I know men get exaggerated ideas about the *one* woman who appeals to them—but Gabrielle!—it's excusable in me." So Hillary reflected as he heard the ocean surfs beating against the barrier reefs. It pleased him to hear the winds sighing mournfully through the tracts of coco-palms beyond his bedroom window. His brain became confused as he thought of the ecstasy of holding her in his arms. He sat down by the bamboo table and wrote off a poem.

He was so much in love that even the poem was good. He proudly read the verses over and over again, till they seemed more wonderful than anything he had read in the works of the great poets. "I'm a poet," said he. Then he stared in the mirror at his haggard face, just to see what the world's greatest lyric poet looked like. Placing his scribbled lyric amongst his valued property in his sea-chest, he once more continued to think over all that he would do when the sublime moment arrived. He thought of how he would hold Gabrielle in his arms. He would be no ordinary lover. He would rain impassioned kisses on her sweet mouth as he held her in his strong embrace. She should not escape him: the very fright that might leap into her eyes through his impassioned vehemence would only serve to feed the fires of all that he felt for her. He looked in the corner on his violin—his old love. How insignificant it seemed when compared to his new love. Yet he felt a slight pang of remorse as he realised how its strings had always responded to his moods. Would Gabrielle's heart-strings respond as readily? Are the heart-strings of women as perfectly in tune with a lover's ideals as violins are to the touch of the *maestro*? He heard the faint booming of the far-off seas sounding through his reflections as they stole across the quiet night. Then he opened his sea-chest and took out Balzac's *Wild Ass's Skin*. He gazed on the faded flower that had lain in the pages. Though it was limp and withered, it was glorified because Gabrielle had worn it in her hair. After that he fell asleep.

Next day the young apprentice became terribly impatient as the hours slowly passed. He was to meet Gabrielle at sunset by the old lagoon. It wanted half-an-hour before the sun fell behind the peaks of Yuraka when he eventually started off. Mango Pango wondered why he was so full of song, so carefully dressed. He chucked her under the chin, even praised her eyes, as he said, "Good-bye, O beauteous golden-skinned Mango Pango," then hurried out under the palms.

"He fool; he go meet dark-skinned, frizzly Papuan girl, I know! O foolish mans!" murmured pretty Mango as she readjusted the hibiscus blossoms in her bunched tresses and looked quite spiteful.

As the young apprentice hurried on, his Byronic neckerchief fluttering from his throat like a flag, his eyes twinkled with delight. The glamour Gabrielle had created in his head threw a poetic gleam over the rugged island landscape and on the brooding wealth of nature around him. The blue lagoons, nestled by the lines of ivory-nut palms, looked like petrified patches of fallen tropic sky that had been mysteriously frozen into bright mirrors. Then they seemed to break up into musical ripples of laughter, for a covey of bronze-hued, pretty native girls had modestly dived down into their blue depths as he suddenly emerged into the open. He distinctly saw the bubbles where they had disappeared, and he knew that they were all standing on the sandy bottom of the lagoon hastily slipping on

their loin-cloths before they boldly reappeared on the surface.

"Talofa! Papalagi!" said one as her shiny head bobbed on the surface, her eyes sparkling as she gazed shoreward and blew the apprentice a kiss as he was passing out of sight. Then he arrived on the lonely shore tracks. The Papuan birds of paradise looked like fragments of feathered rainbows haunting old shores as they floated over the sea. The orange-striped cockatoos, sitting high in the tall flamboyants and tamuni-trees, seemed to shout "Cockatoo-e whoo! Cock-a-too whoo! Make haste! Make haste!" as he approached. They rose in a glittering shower from their roosts, gave dismal muttering as they fluttered over his head, till, hanging their coral-red feet loosely, they resettled on the boughs of the tasselled breadfruits. It was a wildly desolate spot; not a sail specked the horizon as Hillary tramped along, singing to himself. Except for the solitary dark man who lay fast asleep in his outrigger canoe, that was becalmed a few yards beyond the coral reefs, he wandered in a world alone. Only the bright-plumaged birds populated the wooded promontories, cheeks and slopes.

As the young apprentice walked slowly along, making time, he repeatedly glanced seaward to see how low the sun was setting. Arriving opposite the alligator-shaped promontory at Nu-poa, he sighted the scattered palavanas of the small hut citadel, Ko-Koa. It was a fishing village; quite a score of canoes floated hard by on the lagoons. The romping heathen kiddies waved their paddles as he passed by. Their alert eyes seldom missed the passing of a papalagi. From out the thatched beehive-shaped homesteads, under the mangoes and mahogany-trees, rushed several old chiefs and their women-kind, who at once began loudly to lament the dearth of tobacco and gin and loose cash.

Attractive girls offered him their fabulous wealth of shells and fish in exchange for a silk handkerchief. "You got nice lady fren, papalagi?—one who 'av' gotter old pair stocking she no wanter?" said one coy maid whose soul yearned to attract some dusky Lothario's waning glances. But it was all innocent enough in a way. "Women are the same the world over, blest if they aren't!" he murmured, as he gave a bashful maid a small piece of red ribbon in exchange for her beautifully carved bone hair-comb, which she handed him with inimitable grace, for brown maids are very ambitious for the love of a white man. Some of the youths and maids were half-caste and three-quarter caste, a mixture of Polynesian and Melanesian. Armlets and leglets fashioned from the pretty treduca shells jingled as the girls romped round the apprentice.

Those girls of mixed blood were mostly of graceful deportment, many having fine, intellectual eyes. Neither did they possess the ungainly head-mop. Indeed, standing there under the distant palms of the lower shore, their wavy hair tossing to the sea-winds, they made a picturesque sight. And one might easily have imagined that they were tawny mermaids who had crept up the sands so

as to stand under the green-leafed palms to comb their tresses and wail luring songs. Hillary stood still for a moment and gazed on that enchanting scene of primitive life, fascinated. Out on the edge of the promontory sat yet another covey of semi-Papuan and Polynesian maids. It was not fancy; they were really singing mysterious songs as they sought to lure the sun-varnished native fishermen who paddled or sailed their buoyant catamarans over the wine-dark waters. Hillary bolted under the palms to escape the embarrassing attentions of both the cadging chiefs and those Solomon Island Nausicaas and Circes. It was not long after that he arrived by the side of the wide lagoon that Gabrielle would cross in her canoe if she kept the appointment. She would come by water, whereas he had travelled three miles, the long way round by the coast. As he stood by the lagoon it seemed to stretch before him like a beautiful mirror that reflected tall fern and palm trees. Even the bright-winged lories were distinctly visible as their shadows flitted across the sky. "Will she come? Is it all a dream?" thought he as his heart thumped heavily.

It seemed incredible to Hillary that he should really be standing there by that lagoon in the cannibalistic Solomon Isles, waiting to see a beautiful white girl paddle towards him across the blue waters. He had not waited long before round the bend of the lagoon, far off, came a ripple, quite visible on the waters; in another moment the curved, ornamental prow of a canoe appeared as the moving paddle leapt into full view. The sun was setting and the blaze shot right across the Pacific and touched the mountains to the south-east, sending transcendent hues and shadows down on to the lagoon waters and again into the forests.

Women play all sorts of tricks with credulous men and their instinctive love of beauty. True enough, Gabrielle was an artist in the delicate business of self-attire. She knew exactly where to place the blue ribbon at her throat and the crushed crimson flower in the crown of her hair so that it might appeal to the senses of a mere man. The blue and white flowers stuck in her tresses looked unreal, for her hair shone as though it had been set on fire by the hues of the sunset. Her robe might have been cut out of some burnished cloud material such as the angels wear. "Fancy! She's come!" murmured Hillary as the prow of the canoe softly swerved broadside on to the sandy shore. "Come on, dearest," he said. Gabrielle looked tired and was breathing fast through her haste in paddling across the wide lagoon. She looked very pale. "What's the matter, dear?"

"Father's drunk."

"Is he?" said Hillary, as he metaphorically brought his fist down and swept such an unromantic nuisance as a father off the face of the earth. Even Gabrielle looked up quickly as she heard him take a deep breath as he swept old Everard to dust, pulverised. He hadn't rehearsed through the feverish night all that he intended to do at that moment, and written a mighty poem, to be finally thwarted

by a drunken father.

Something kin to the fire that shone in the apprentice's eyes shone in Gabrielle's eyes also. She trembled, and obediently did all that he bade her do. In a moment they had taken hold of the prow of the canoe and between them dragged it for thirty yards over the shallows that separated the deeper lagoon waters from the sea. They were right opposite to where the Pacific waves gambol into a thousand creeks and coral caves. Without a moment's hesitation Gabrielle jumped into the canoe. "Be careful, dear," whispered the apprentice.

They lost no time in embarking. A trader was likely to pass at any moment, and Everard had threatened to "kick Hillary into the middle of next week" if he found that villainous apprentice hanging around his daughter. They could just hear the faint echoes of the tribal drums in the Buka-Buka mountains as their canoe shot silently out into the bay. They were off, paddling away together into the unknown seas of romance. Such was that world of rugged shore and dark blue waters to Hillary as he gazed up at the darkening sky. God had just lit the first star, and as he gazed upward it flashed into sight.

Gabrielle really *did* look like some beautiful visionary creature sitting there; and she was voiceless, as befits those who travel across tropic seas of love. The apprentice paddled a long time, then at last he could hear the faint monotones of the seas that were ceaselessly beating against the reefs and the big bulk of the wreck.

"Allow me!" he said. His voice trembled as he took hold of her hand firmly, as though he thought she might escape. The prow bumped gently against the hulks' side near the gangway. That big, three-masted derelict looked like some huge phantom ship as it loomed up there in the silent waters off Bougainville. "Come on, dear." Very carefully he placed his arms around her and step by step carried her up the ragged rope gangway.

Their heads were nearly up to the level of the deck, but there were still two more steps to climb. "Hold tight, dear," he whispered. His voice seemed to travel like an echo across the silence of the tropic night. Just for a second he gazed into Gabrielle's eyes, then he gently dropped her down on to the deck. At that moment reality returned; things took some definite shape; Hillary recalled time, the world and the far-off cities.

A drove of frightened rats went shrieking and squeaking down the alley-way towards the forecastle. The remnants of torn sail and tangled rigging flapped mournfully to the winds as they both slipped hurriedly across the warped deck. Hillary felt the ecstasy that is the highest attainment of mortal happiness. Had she wholly belonged to him, body and soul, he would not have been half so happy. He stared aloft at the tall masts and felt a mighty sympathy for that vessel lying there by the desolate shores of its last anchorage, for the jib-boom at the bow

seemed to point helplessly at the far-away horizon, to which it could never sail. "This way! Come on!" he whispered, as he gazed around in some mad thought that the ghosts of the old crew were enviously hanging round in their great off-watch.

They sat down in silence on the old form that was close against the poop, just by the entrance to the saloon. Immediately over their heads, by the deck rails of the now rotting poop, was the spot where the old captain had stood when he sailed the seas. As the apprentice looked upwards he suddenly remembered that he was on the very derelict that had once been the ship of the old skipper who had left the books at Everard's bungalow, the books from which Gabrielle had gathered her romance.

In his mind he saw that old derelict when it sailed the seas in its prime, when the figure-head with outstretched hands at the bows (now with one arm broken off and its emblematic, once beautiful face fast rotting) had bounded across the waves like a living thing, long before Hillary was born. The influence of the surroundings and the girl beside him stirred his fancy. In imagination he saw the old skipper standing on the poop watching the blue horizons and the starlight and moonlight that shone in another age, so far as his own brief run of years were concerned. In a flash he realised that out of all the cargoes the captain had jealously guarded in his long voyages it was the old books that had brought him solace in his cabin that had proved the most wonderful merchandise after all. Where were the imported pianos that had been shipped for the Australasian colonies, Fiji, Java, Callao and Shanghai? What had been their fate? They had been thumped and thumped to distraction and destruction while men drank their grog. Where were the cargoes of old grandfather clocks and German-made alarms? But more wonderful than all was the fact that Gabrielle sat beside him on that very ship, her heart aglow with the romance that she had gathered out of the pages of the old captain's books. True enough, that skipper never wrote the books, but he lived an adventurous life in the big world, and who will say that he may not have been wiser than the authors?

Hillary looked through the saloon port-hole just behind them and half fancied he saw a ghostly glimmer of the oil lamps that had shone in that saloon in the dusk of other days; he even saw the shadows of men moving about the cuddy table. But it was no ghostly pageant of the post at all, simply a stream of moonlight on the torn sail that waved to and fro as it hung from the main-yard and sent its shadow into the dark saloon.

The atmosphere that surrounded the wreck and the music of the wind in the decaying rigging affected Gabrielle also. Her old tom-boy demeanor, had completely vanished. Hillary only said, "Well Gabrielle," and she heard the music in those two words. For a moment they both forgot the world beyond that hulk.

Only the stars existed, and they shone into Gabrielle's eyes as their lips met. The passionate phrases that he had so carefully rehearsed, all the poetic vehemence of the night before, had faded. Not one mad vow escaped his lips. He only held her tenderly, as though he were afraid that she might crumble in his arms—fall as dust to his feet. Not an atom of passion come to ruffle the poetry of his feelings. For the young apprentice was *really* in love. Her hair touched his face. It thrilled him as music thrills dreaming men. "Gabrielle, you are very beautiful How strange that no man has claimed you before. For that, at least, I thank God."

The girl was silent. "Don't you believe me?" he added. He glanced swiftly at her face. It was deathly white. Hillary thought it was the rats scampering across the deck that had brought that startled look. Then Gabrielle burst into tears.

The apprentice thought little about those tears. He had felt a little like that too when he was really happy. If there was a wrong construction to be placed on Gabrielle's actions, Hillary was sure to hit on it. It was a natural consequence, since he had gathered all his knowledge of women from his books. To him all women were beautiful and good. He thought of them as leading sheltered lives. They were perfectly different from men. It had never occurred to him to try and explain the differences. His views about women, in fact, were quite conventional, touched with the theatrical glamour that is common enough in extreme youth.

And still the tears lingered in Gabrielle's eyes. No one can tell what the girl really thought and felt, excepting that she heard the simple note of sincerity in all that the young apprentice said and which cannot be written down. As for Hillary, the material world had passed from his sight. Gabrielle wept, but what did it matter? Weeping must be some natural attribute to real happiness. So he thought.

It may have been the noisy rats or the creak of the blown rigging that slightly dispelled the romantic atmosphere. "Even the ecstasy of insanity is denied men," thought Hillary as a haunting thought suddenly disturbed him. "She is weeping because I've frightened her. That's what it is. She's only a child after all—does not understand! I'm too passionate, too headlong in my way of making love. She's frightened of me and so she weeps." Suddenly his manner altered. He led her to the bulwark's side. The moon had already risen, and as they both leaned over, looking down into the dark waters, they could see their shadows in the silent depths below. Neither spoke; some fascination held them. As the apprentice looked at the girl's face her shadow-eyes seemed to glance sideways at him. He fancied that he saw something distorted in the movement of her shadow. A puff of wind seemed to drift down from the stars; the hair was outblown, the features unfamiliar. But it was only for a second; in another moment Gabrielle's full outline developed in the light of the tropic moon. There they were, Hillary

with his arm on the shoulder of the girl, who was still staring intently into the still water.

"Why did you sigh like that, Gabrielle?" he said. Then he looked on the western sky-line. The ghostly flush, the pale aftermath of the departed day, still lingered. Hillary vaguely recalled how near human happiness is to sorrow; he felt sure there was some sorrow in the girl's heart. Rajah Koo Macka had looked into Gabrielle's eyes; but he knew that there are many different ways in which a woman may look at a man. None knew better than he.

Gabrielle's eyes to-night held a different expression as she again scrutinised the young apprentice.

"Do you love me, Gabrielle?"

She responded by clasping his hand tightly and looking at him in some fright. Her voice was hushed and trembling as she replied: "I've got a feeling for you that I've never had before for anyone. I think I could die with someone like you." Saying this, she looked steadily into his eyes, and then added in a half-sorrowful way: "I wouldn't care if we jumped into the sea and died together; I'd be much happier if I were dead."

"Well now," said Hillary as she continued: "I'm a hateful girl; I've already told you I'm wicked; besides, I'm haunted by a shadow-woman: she follows me, curses me, but I can't explain it to anyone."

She became excited and raised her voice as he had never heard her raise it before. The apprentice rubbed his eyes. "Jump into the seas and die!" he gasped as he realised all that the girl had so passionately poured forth. "Not if I know it." Then he added: "What do you mean about a shadow-woman and being haunted by her?"

He looked steadily into the girl's pallid face, then gently pulled her towards him and folded her to his heart.

"You're only a romantic child. *I've* made you ill through my love-making. You don't understand. Some day, when you are a woman, you'll know how a fellow must feel, how he can really love such a one as you. Forgive me, Gabrielle, will you?"

The girl gently took hold of his hand and, looking steadily into his eyes, said: "Perhaps you are only a boy and it's *you* who do not understand. You are too good a fellow for me. Don't you believe it; you've not made me ill. It's something that I don't quite understand."

"But why be ill at all?" was Hillary's brief summing up after she had rattled this off. But still she ran on: "You'd never believe what happened the other night. I went mad, I think."

"Good Lord! You must not encourage such ideas. You've been dwelling with your own thoughts too much."

"I'm not mad, though you may think I am. I could easily prove to you that I'm haunted; you don't know the horrible things that happen to people of the Papuan race. I'm afraid that even you would turn against me if you knew of my terrible heritage."

"Terrible heritage!" gasped the apprentice, as he leaned over the side and hardly knew what he was saying or doing as he followed Gabrielle's stare as she too leaned over and looked down into the deep, silent waters. "Is she mad? Perhaps she is." Then he thrust the thought from his mind. "Phew! Rubbish! She's beautifully eccentric; if anyone's mad it's me!"

"Gabrielle, your father's continual bullying has made you ill—and a bit neurotic. Don't worry, I'll protect you." For a moment he was silent; the father had given him the pluck and the opportunity to say what he longed to say. "Gabrielle, why put up with a father's bullying? Let's both clear out of Bougainville; come with me! We can go away to Honolulu. I'll swear that I'll look after you well, never say one word that you may not wish me to say. I can easily make money by my violin playing."

Having blurted out the foregoing, Hillary almost trembled as he waited to see the impression his outburst had made on the girl. He watched Gabrielle's eyes. "I've gone too far again. How rash I am!" was his miserable reflection as she nearly swooned into his arms.

"I'll go anywhere in the wide world with you, Hillary," she said, to his unbounded delight and astonishment.

"Will you!" His eyes shone, his voice was almost shrill, like a happy schoolboy's over the possibilities of some childish scheme.

"How can we manage all these things you've mentioned?" said Gabrielle softly, as she glanced earnestly at the young apprentice.

It was not Hillary's imagination, it was all true enough; Gabrielle wanted to go at once—no delay!

Hillary knew nothing, guessed nothing of the cause of the girl's desire for hasty flight. He only saw that the light in here eyes was as sincere as death.

"The Solomon Isles! And now an elopement with a haunted, beautiful white girl," was his mental ejaculation.

If he had had the slightest hint of the real reason of Gabrielle's hurry, would he have hesitated? No! He would have flown with her that very night and never let her go back to the homestead behind the beach at Felisi. Neither the wreck, the stars nor the whisper of the beating seas hinted the truth to him. He looked shoreward across the straits. The night was so clear that he fancied he could see the smoke rising from the crater of Bangana, fifty miles away.

"Gabrielle, will you meet me by the lagoon again to-morrow night? We will then arrange everything, and you can tell me if you will come." Then he

added: "I can manage everything splendidly." He spoke enthusiastically and with assurance, as though he had had a large and successful experience of this kind of thing. Then he continued: "We can fly away to Honolulu, or anywhere you like from this cursed place—even to England."

Gabrielle was so affected and dazed by the apprentice's enthusiasm that she could only stare in the dusk at his flushed face and brightening eyes as he continued with his emotional tirade: "You don't know what I'll be to you, how I'll love you, dear. I'll write songs and music and dedicate all to you! I'll write poems——" Then he paused and exclaimed: "Gabrielle, I'm a poet—you don't know what I am! You don't know what I'm capable of achieving in this world if I had someone like you to encourage me."

Even Gabrielle forgot her vanity and felt some sad sense of shame over her own unworthiness, as he swore that the veriest vagabonds of the streets would aspire to fame if they had someone to inspire them beyond their unambitious selves. Hillary poured forth a flood of impassioned words; his eyes shone in his earnestness, and his lips trembled. Then he suddenly realised that his overwhelming flood of words might appear foolish to the girl. He stopped short. He watched her half in fright, wondering what impression he had made upon her.

Gabrielle replied by falling into his arms. She could not help feeling something of his almighty boyish sincerity. There in the friendly shadows she told Hillary that he had beautiful eyes. She laid her head on his lap so that he could gaze down into her eyes as their lips met over and over again. How it thrilled him when she said: "Hillary, my Hillary!" And while the torn rigging wailed and the deep waters boomed and resolved into gentle monotones against the derelict's wooden side she sat by him and sang. A silver sea-bird swooped over the deck and, sighting them there, gave a startled cry as it sped away.

"Gabrielle," he whispered, as he thought of all that he had rehearsed in his mind and of how little he had accomplished now that the girl was quite alone with him on that wreck. Then he softly pulled down the delicate blue neck-fringe of her blouse and exposed the whiteness of her warm throat. And Gabrielle, with an artless vanity that inspired his waning courage, gently let her head fall back so that he might touch, just once, the soft whiteness of her throat with his lips.

The apprentice reddened to the ears and blessed the darkness as he thought of his boldness and softly pulled the delicate folds together again. "I've done it now! She'll think I'm a terrible fellow," was Hillary's hasty reflection as the girl remained silent. Then he tried to excuse himself. "I've read of men doing that in novels and poems," he said in a semi-apologetic tone.

"So have I," replied Gabrielle; then she laughed softly. And Hillary wondered what wondrous deed of virtue he had done that God should shower such unbounded happiness on his head.

It was a perfect night in Gabrielle Everard's life. No shadow came to haunt the silence of those moments as she sat by Hillary's side. Only the shadows of the torn sails waving to and fro in the warm tropic wind fell from aloft to touch their happy faces. The soft confusion of Gabrielle's hair harmonised with the bright thoughts that floated in his mind. The smell of the rotting tarred ropes and the palmy fragrance of the south wind over the sea mingled together and formed a part of his sensations.

It was close on midnight when the apprentice remembered the flight of time, which passes with greater swiftness over the heads of lovers than of sad old men and women. Even the rats seemed to scamper and squeak in regret as they both rose and reluctantly crept across the silent deck. A slight breeze had sprung up from the south-east

"Make haste!" Hillary whispered as they arrived by the rotting bulwark near the risky rope gangway. The apprentice looked with apprehension out to sea when he noticed that the former calm expanse of ocean was slightly ruffled. "Quick! Quick!" he said, and then Gabrielle went over the side and trusted her weight to the taut gangway rope. "Thank God!" murmured Hillary, as she stepped from the swinging gangway into the canoe. Then to his infinite relief he noticed that the wind had dropped. Though she had embarked, he had still stood hesitating as to whether it was safe to venture back to the shore.

"I don't think it will blow, and it's only a mile to the shore," he thought, as the girl carefully took her place in the prow. The moon was just setting as the gangway swung back and Hillary stepped into the fragile craft. Then, like two ghosts, they paddled away, back to the mainland.

CHAPTER VII—WHEN THE STARS DANCED

The day after Hillary and Gabrielle's love tryst on the derelict off Bougainville old Everard sat in his bungalow rubbing his hands with delight. He had been over the slope in Rokeville "celebrating" at the grog bar, had been to the store and flirted with the trader's pretty half-caste daughters, and had tapped his wooden leg significantly as the schooner skippers heard how he'd done things in his day;

then he had returned home, full of the best Jamaica rum. It wasn't the rum, or the praise and encores of the shellbacks in Parsons's grog bar, or the surreptitious kiss he'd given pretty Mango Pango on his way home that made him so jovial; it was because he'd met Rajah Koo Macka, who was calling at the bungalow that evening. Already the shadows were falling over the mountains. He was still busily shouting directions to his daughter as though he stood on the fore-deck of that wondrous ship that had sailed all seas and found all that is considered impossible and absurd in this new day. He had artfully enticed Gabrielle to dress herself up, so that she might appear at her very best when Rajah Macka arrived.

"Put the flowers in yer 'air, and don't forget to put thet blue robe thing on," said the ex-sailor, as he critically surveyed his daughter and tapped his wooden leg to punctuate his appreciation. "That's it! That's it! You do look nice!"

Gabrielle's eyes were shining with pleasure as she listened to her Dad's praise. He so seldom praised her. Then she gazed into the bamboo looking-glass. Her vanity was excusable, for the scarlet and white hibiscus blossoms made the bronze-gold tresses shine as the sunset shines on a mountain lagoon.

"You're a good gal when yer like," said old Everard, little dreaming for whose eyes Gabrielle had so tastefully arrayed herself.

"Mitia, savee! Nicer ladie!" said the tiny Papuan maid, who at that moment arrived with her basket of fish at the door. The fish were all alive, splashing about in the grass-plaited basket, as frisky as the little savage maiden, who took her purchase money and sped away under the palms like a nymph of the wilds.

"You're as beautiful-looking as your mother was," said the white man as he sighed. Then he followed his sigh by taking a good pull at the rum bottle. Possibly the memory of his dead wife impelled the weak ex-sailor to take so many extra drops, for he was known to sit for hours like a man in a trance when folk sang certain old songs.

"That's right, tidy the place up! Put the green cloth on. Macka's mighty particular. Those civilised 'eathens like things just so," said the fuddled, idiotic old man. He was expecting the Rajah at any moment, for it was past seven o'clock and he had promised Everard to be at the bungalow before eight. It seemed incredible that the old ex-sailor could not see through such a one as the Rajah. But sailormen are not very wise when it comes to judging human nature. And it didn't want twenty-four jurymen to discern the sort of glance that lurked in the Rajah's eyes when he gazed at his women converts. Had the Rajah been correctly placed in an ethnographical classification, he would have been placed somewhere between the orang-outang and the lowest negro type. But circumstances had invested him with the power to act as a mediator between God and the souls of decent men and women. His outward life, his fleshy, handsome face were splendid assets. They stood him in good stead, giving him an extra distinc-

tion in the eyes of ignorant natives and even low-caste whites. Not the least of his stock-in-trade were the frock-coat, top hat, kid gloves, spotless patent boots, scarlet waistcoat and the turban swathing, the purchasing value of the lot being about twelve dollars in Beratania Street, Honolulu.

Old Everard gazed eagerly at the clock. "Time's getting on," he mumbled. And was Everard's daughter as eager over the Rajah's expected visit as her father? Not a bit of it! She hadn't the slightest idea of being in that dismal parlour when Macka arrived. She had made up her mind to make a surreptitious departure as soon as she had tidied up the room. She longed to meet Hillary again. She had been more than thinking about his proposal to fly to Honolulu, for she had planned everything in her mind. And if anyone could have peeped under her bed at that moment they would have seen a small carpet bag packed with those things that she valued. She had so often rehearsed the whole business and her sudden flight that she had several times looked fondly on her wicked parent, as she imagined his oats and distress to find her gone for ever.

"Where yer hoff to?" suddenly yelled old Everard. The girl had quickly snatched up her cloak and had bolted.

Her inward knowledge of Hillary's love for her tremendously minimised her fears over her father's wrath if he managed to catch her.

It was just dusk. One or two stars were already out when she opened the door and made the final bolt out of the front door into the night. She gave a startled cry—she had rushed straight in Rajah Koo Macka's outstretched arms!

Fate seemed to have planned that it should be so. The Rajah held the girl's hand tightly, almost fiercely, in his swarthy grip. A strange fire was burning in his terrible eyes.

"Miss Everard, Gabri-arle! Langi, O ke mako," he murmured, lapsing into his native lingo as he gazed steadily into the frightened girl's eyes. It was a masterful gaze, serpent-like in its malignant fascination. The girl bravely returned that gaze. The Rajah realised the struggle that was going on in her soul. His instincts told him the truth. Gabrielle wasn't the first. He knew why her face was pallid, why the cold beads of perspiration stood out on her brow, distinctly revealed to his gaze, as though the moon would shed its beams and show the pity of it all.

"Let me go! Do! Do!" she murmured in an appealing voice.

"Gabrie-arle! I've come, not to see your father but to see you, you, my lovelier whiter girl, lovelier, nicer!" he whispered, as in his emotion he reverted to the old pidgin-English of his boyhood, before he had joined the first missionary society in Honolulu. And still Gabrielle stared into those terrible eyes. Her lips half smiled as she struggled with herself. It was a terrible moment for her as she stood there, her frame trembling as she felt those two terrible rivals struggling to

strangle each other—the struggle of the white and the dark woman in her soul.

He whispered swift, passionate words: "I lover you, wine of my heart, stars of my soul, O voice of the waves, seas, night storm and darkness! O stars that are like the children of our souls to be!" he wailed, as he switched off into his beloved *verse libre*, so popular with his kind. He still held her in his clasp, just as so many helpless women had been held by the devil who reigns in tropic climes.

Gabrielle felt that the struggle was coming to an end. The cold perspiration stood in beads on her brow. She felt faint. And the devil, who always helps his own, sent a shadow across the silvery track by the ivory-nut palms. That shadow touched the small vine-clad verandah of the bungalow. Gabrielle's heart nearly stopped as she saw it, and its darkness fell over her own soul. Her horror was not to be wondered at, for the silhouette had taken human form as something rushed out of the thick jungle-growth hard by.

There was no real cause for Gabrielle's terror at seeing this particular object. It was nothing more than one of the Rajah's native servants, who had rushed from the bamboo thickets, thinking he had heard the Rajah call him.

All the foregoing and the Rajah's successful domination over the girl occupied about two minutes. He had rained kisses on her face, had whispered impassioned words in her ears, using the names of the Apostles and even the name of Christ to lure the girl back into the bungalow and her soul into darkness. Gabrielle felt as though she had had a paralytic stroke as he gripped her hand and pushed her into the front doorway of the bungalow. She could hardly believe her senses as she went half willingly forward. He was an old bird at the game; years older than Hillary. He had the father on his side too, and that was natural enough when one thinks of the way the world wags. Most men of the Rajah's type, by means of their successful hypocrisy, secure the father's help to buttress up their desires. Besides, the Rajah had no personal drawbacks, for he had no idealistic views, no sensitiveness about girlish innocence and what might be considered impropriety. So he was strongly equipped for furthering his requirements; moreover, he had the mighty power of the Christian creed and the glory of its apostles on his side, so far as hypocritical protestations could make them useful to him.

Old Everard was leaning over the table, swearing like a genuine 'Frisco shellback, as they entered the parlour.

"Thought you'd cleared out for the evening," said he, as he stared querulously into his daughter's face. He was too drunk to notice her terrified, helpless expression as he staggered to his feet. He had suddenly sighted Koo Macka, who stood erect, standing with all his grand insignias of Rajahship behind the girl. "Glad to see you, bully boy! Bless me soul, I thought that the girl had made a bolt, and blowed if she hadn't rushed out at hearing yer footsteps. She's a bit

gone on you already, eh? Nothing like a woman's ears when they want to hear!"

The old man gave Macka a friendly nudge and at once lifted a bottle and began to pour out a tumblerful of Parsons's best Bougainville Three Star.

So did the Rajah once more enter Gabrielle's home and gaze with his magnetic eyes at the girl on that very night when she had promised to meet Hillary!

The three of them sat down at the parlour table. For quite a long time Gabrielle sat like a sphinx, a dazed look in her eyes. The Rajah, who sat opposite her, noticed that look. But was he embarrassed? Not he! He simply rubbed his hands and gave an extra curl to his moustache. He had tackled very obstinate ladies in his time down in the native villages. And it was immensely gratifying to him to think that Everard was a kindly disposed white man and did not dine with a war-club by his side—as old chief Mackeroo did when the Rajah sought his wife for a convert. Blowing his hose in his handkerchief, he at once began business. Gabrielle quailed before his sinuous, reptilian-like glances. She was trembling, for she knew that she had met her master—and he knew that she had too. He was watching her as a cat watches a mouse. He saw her eyes roam in a furtive way to the door more than once. He knew that she was ready to spring at the first unguarded moment and fly out into the night.

Old Everard wondered why they both sat staring at each other. He suddenly burst into speech, and brought his fist down with a bang on the table. "Why the h—— don't you speak, blind me eyes?" he roared. He was decidedly drunk. Macka lifted his eyebrows and then looked at the old sailor and began to quote applicable Scriptural texts. His voice took on quite a melancholy wail, the old ecclesiastical drawl habit, as he remonstrated with the ex-sailor for roaring in such a rough manner at so sweet a girl. Everard relented, even apologised. Macka stretched forth his hand in a grandiloquent manner and forgave! About half-an-hour later the Rajah's hopes had returned: the girl was his!

For the stars had begun to dance before Gabrielle's eyes. She felt that he wasn't so wicked after all. And the reason for this sudden change in her was not far to seek. The Rajah had slipped some rum and opium into her tea, some kind of mixture that is still used prolifically by the natives who wish to dope artless girls, and sailormen too! "Tea's the thing! Good old papalagi's tea, wholesome drink," he had chuckled beneath his virile moustache.

"Whisky, I say!" Everard had wailed, as he stared with bleary eyes. But the Rajah would have none of it. He dearly loved tea, nothing to beat tea, he swore. That settled it. Everard told Gabrielle to make a pot of tea at once. But Gabrielle still sat at the table and wouldn't move, so Everard got up and made the tea himself and thought of how he would get his own back on his daughter when the Rajah had gone. Let it, however, be said that old Everard would never have made that pot of tea had he had the slightest hint of the consequences. But he

was a fool. The ex-sailor was not so much to blame: civilisation has shrivelled up the white man's God-given weapons of instinct, and so he stands to-day a slave to dull reason, and is positively nowhere when a native's cunning is concerned. It was only natural, therefore, that sinful old Everard should fall into every trap that the wily Malayan-Papuan, made for his daughter's destruction. As the hours passed things began to look brighter to Gabrielle. She forgot the night and all that she had intended to do. As for Everard, he got quite boisterous when she laughed, at last, at one of his antiquated jokes. And then, as the old man listened to the Rajah's mellifluous voice, he became so emotional that he forgot and wiped his nose on the edge of the best green tablecloth. "Dad!" whispered Gabrielle, in an awestruck voice over her parent's preposterous act in front of the twelve-dollar suit of clothes and jewellery from the Honolulu slop-shop.

The ex-sailor lifted his grizzled face and, staring with his bleary blue eyes, gave his daughter a half-apologetic look. Gabrielle reddened to the ears at the thought of her sudden good fortune. It seemed that the impossible was occurring. A Rajah of holiest soul looked fondly upon her and her late swearing old father sat there gazing into her face apologetically! It was more wonderful than any fairy tale or any novel she had read. She could have risen from her chair and sung; could even have snapped her fingers with derision at the phantom-woman who she half fancied was lurking outside the bungalow.

Gabrielle hardly spoke as the Papuan Rajah waved his hand and glorified himself in the eyes of his host and his daughter, expatiating on the virtues of Christianity and his own true belief. Old Everard said "Amen," opened his mouth in surprise and hung his head for shame as Macka chided him over his habitual drunkenness. The Rajah pointed his dark finger at the daughter, and said: "See yon sacred maid. White is she as the spotless snow on the mountains of Kaue. Art not ashamed, O white man, to set so bad example?" Saying this, the Rajah opened his prettily bound pocket Bible and in sombre tones read Scriptural passages till the old ex-sailor's heart quaked in fear of God's wrath and his own remorse over his treatment of his daughter. And still the dark missionary proceeded with his exhortations. "Art not ashamed, O man Everard?" "Yus, I ham," almost wailed the derelict representative of the great white races, as Macka continued his Scriptural denunciations in a sombre voice. Thus did Macka the half-caste missionary further his desires. But why record all that really happened that night? It is sufficient to say that Everard's eyes brightened as Macka's heart softened, until the brown man quite forgave the white man for his sins. Indeed that dim-lit parlour became a kind of confessional-box, whilst Everard fell on his knees and Gabrielle trembled in mighty trouble at her former wicked thoughts over so noble, so holy a missionary.

Then the Rajah bode Everard rise, and said: "O white Everard, think no

more of thy sorrows and thy sins; frailty is the great inheritance, it is the dark shadow that maketh the light to shine and so doth beautify human existence." Then Everard took another swill at the whisky bottle and most foolishly mixed his drinks. And still the heathen man meandered on, and murmured into the ex-sailor's ears: "O heed not the great pearl scheme that I wished you to venture upon; for I say unto these that I've other business on hand. And more, for the sake of thy friendship and contrite heart, and thy hallowed daughter" (he pointed with outstretched finger at Gabrielle), "I'll give thee double the sum that any pearl scheme may have brought thee."

So spoke Macka as he dropped into the Kanaka's usual Biblical style, since it was from the Bible that most of them derived their first lessons in our tongue. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that the heathen was considerably overcome by his own self-glorification. As for the white man, he said holy things, wailed out that he believed in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints and the sacramental drink of the best rum! Then the aged drunken idiot swallowed another tumblerful of whisky and fell forward on his knees.

Gabrielle began to think that she must be dreaming it all: that scene as she sat in the wicker chair watching. Then the noble Rajah sang weird songs. His voice was mellow and pathetically sweet, nicely tinged with tragedian-like sadness that lingered in Gabrielle's ears. It was all strangely blasphemous. Old Everard simply fell forward on the floor, holding the rum bottle tightly in his hand. Gabrielle and Macka laid him down comfortably on his settee. There he lay, his head forward, mouth dribbling, one arm dangling to the floor, so drunk was he.

Gabrielle cried softly to herself as she placed his head in a more comfortable position and bunched the pillow up. Then she turned aside in a terrible despair and gazed in mute appeal into those masterful eyes. "Let me escape," her lips mumbled, and her voice sounded far off.

It was no good; the man was relentless. He still moaned his beautiful words, whispering warm Malayan phrases into her ear. She did not understand his native tongue, but her instincts heard. The hour was late.

Gabrielle half heard the rustling of swift-moving feet outside the bungalow. A thick mist seemed to lie over the furniture. She felt that something had crept into the room, something terrible and not to be denied. A swarthy expression passed over her face as she leaned forward and listened, for once more she could hear the tribal drums beating somewhere across the centuries. It did not horrify her as before. Macka was there and his eyes had an all-powerful look: why be frightened in his masterful presence? But still she tried to struggle to her feet and rush out of the parlour door. For a moment she forgot and fancied she was standing on the derelict out in the straits. "Hillary! Hillary!" she wailed, as

she thought of the stranded apprentice and fancied she still looked into his eyes. Slowly the fumes did their work, fumes of opium and the drink slipped into her tea. She still heard the Papuan's voice; it was not a voice near her, it was a call coming across distant spaces. And still she struggled, as she called out the long-forgotten name of the missionary, one who had taught her in the mission-room from her earliest childhood. But no answer came, only the snores of her drunken father and the sounds of tribal drums a hundred years away. Then the lights burned low. Even the Rajah was overcome with heathenish emotion as she stood by the window and, lifting her face, looked out on the stars and in a strange way scraped her pale hands up and down the glass, as though she would tear aside the veil that divided her from freedom and the outer world.

And Hillary, who waited by the lagoon, walked up and down, up and down, full of hope, full of faith. And he was still walking silently on the silvery sands by the tossing seas, like a pale figure of romance, as dawn crept over the mountains and the stars went home. And still Gabrielle did not come.

CHAPTER VIII—HEATHEN LAND

In the morning old Everard awoke with a swollen head.

"Gabby! Gabrielle!" He shouted. Then, wondering why on earth the girl did not reply, he struggled to his feet, opened the door and went up the three steps that led into her bedroom. Her bed was neatly made—it had not been slept in. He was so puzzled about it all that he looked out of the small open window to see if she'd fallen out—notwithstanding that the window was six feet from the ground. Then he passed his hand across his brow and remembered Rajah Macka's visit. "Rajah Koo Macka!" he shouted.

"God damn it! I don't remember 'im going," he mumbled, as he stumped his wooden leg about the room till the bungalow shook, and began whimpering like a fretful child, nearly falling down with sudden dizziness. Recovering himself, he got into a frightful rage and began to roar mighty oaths. "Gabby! Gabby! I'll a-murder you! Where are you? Damn! My eyes! Ter 'ell with Macka! Ter 'ell with everything! Where are you?" Then he swung his wooden leg round, poked

it right through the velvet-lined screen that Gabrielle had so neatly lined, and gave a terrible oath.

Then he cooled down. The reaction had begun to set in. His brain began to reason over it all. He rushed outside, stumped about and stumped back again. "Where is she? What's it all mean? She's not the kind of girl to go off by night with Macka," were his reflections. All day long he called and called. Then he left the bungalow and roamed away to the native villages in search of her. He kicked up an awful commotion. The natives for miles thought a new kind of spirit with a wooden leg had escaped from shadow-land, for as they peeped from their hut doors they saw old Everard frantically waving his arms, shouting vehemently, swearing and calling out: "Gabby! Gabby!" He arrived back at his bungalow at dusk. "Gab!" he shouted. But she was still missing. The old ex-sailor realised all that Gabrielle had been to him in his desolate life.

He wept. He got terribly drunk and kept calling out: "Gabrielle! My Gab! Come back to your old father!" Then he mumbled in a self-soothing way: "She ain't really gone. Macka's so relygious. 'E wouldn't take 'er from me. No! P'r'aps she's gone to the b—— German's wife at K——, or the mission-room at Tombakao." Once more he got up and began to stump about. He seemed to go mad. He rushed again and again into the girl's bedroom, caught his peg-leg in the fibre mats and fell down. "It's 'er gown, 'er pretty gown," he wailed. The tears rolled down his cheeks. He actually put his lips to the girl's washed-out, torn garment and kissed it. Poor old man! He had never really found his true self. All the chances and virtues that might have been his had been shattered by gross surroundings.

After a while he cooled down again. "Who'd 'ave thought it! Who'd 'ave thought it!" he wailed. He returned to his parlour. The room looked dark and comfortless. A terrible suspicion was haunting his mind. But it was too late. His faith in Macka's supreme holiness had begun to slacken slightly. Old remembrances and God-given instincts that had been his in the long-ago, pre-rum days came back to him. But he sought the weak man's support, and poured fiery liquid between his trembling lips.

"Gabby! Gabby! Come to me! I'm ill, so ill!"

Then he jumped, and looked quite startled and sober. He'd never hurried so much in his life as he put the bottle down and, with his eyes gleaming with half-fearful delight, stumped towards the front door. Someone had knocked.

So great was his hurry that he stumbled as he rushed from the room. "She's come back, me dear gal, come to 'er old pa!"

He opened the door and stared at the form in the gloom for a moment, then swayed and fell down—fell in sheer misery and disappointment, for it wasn't Gabrielle who stood there—it was Hillary.

Hillary did not gasp or say one word that would suit the pages of a novel; he simply brought out the unromantic words: "God, what luck! He's drunk!"

The young apprentice swiftly leaned forward and picked up the old ex-sailor.

Hillary's whole soul was bursting to know why Gabrielle hadn't kept the appointment by the lagoon. He was delighted to see Everard drunk. It had flashed through his sanguine, hopeful soul that there had been a domestic rumpus and that was the cause of Gabrielle not turning up at the trysting-place, where he had waited all night.

He carried the old man as tenderly as possible into the parlour. The thought that he was really Gabrielle's father made him feel quite tender towards the drunken man. He'd never been in that parlour before. He looked round. Where was she?

"Gabrielle, your poor father's taken ill—it's Hillary who calls!" And then he stood holding the old man up, his heart thumping with the mighty expectation of seeing the girl enter the room, with secret joy at her father's blind, drunken eyes at such an opportune moment.

Hillary had come straight to Everard's bungalow determined to risk all, to defy the old man outright and get one glimpse of the girl's face and some kind of an explanation, even if he had to fight his way in. He called again: "Gabrielle! Gabrielle! Why don't you come?" But the expected rustle of her dress, the glorious look of surprise in her eyes at seeing him as she rushed into the room, all that his imagination anticipated, was only mocked by the echo of his own voice.

He sat the old man in the big arm-chair. Everard opened his eyes and stared like an imbecile at the youth.

"Where's my Gabby? Who the 'ell are you?" moaned the ex-sailor.

"I'm Hillary, Gabrielle's friend. I'm teaching her to play the violin; it will be a great help to her. She can make money by teaching, and be able to help you too," blurted forth the apprentice in that inspiration that comes to lovers who have rehearsed a thousand excuses for suddenly appearing before a prospective father-in-law.

Old Everard was too far gone with rum and grief to be interested in the commercial side of a prospective son-in-law.

"You're 'Illary! Violin! Play musick! You b—— villainous scoundrel! What have you done with 'er?" yelled the old man, as he struggled to his feet, a terribly vicious look in his eyes.

"Done with who? Where's Gabrielle?" Hillary shouted out in a voice that somehow managed to tell the old man that the youth before him thought that he *too* had a right to know where Gabrielle was.

In a moment the ex-sailor's mad passion subsided. He leaned forward and

stared into Hillary's eyes and saw the despair, the appeal, the light of sincerity and truth, everything that he had not seen in Koo Macka's eyes. In a moment the old man relented.

"Ain't yer seen 'er, kid? She's gone! Bolted with Macka, the Rajah! Find 'er, boy, find 'er for me. You can 'ave her, she's my Gabby!" wailed the despairing father.

Hillary's heart nearly stopped beating. He couldn't sum up courage enough to ask the old man to explain what he meant. He dreaded to hear something, he knew not what. Then the old man continued:

"God forgive me for thinking ill of you. *He* sent you 'ere ter-night to comfort 'er ole father."

Hillary still held the man's hand, to give *himself* courage as well as to comfort the old man.

"'Ave a drop er rum, boy?" said the old man. Hillary did not hesitate. He held the tumblerful of liquid to his lips and swallowed the lot. Everard clutched the youth's trembling hand and almost shed tears as the rum loosened the apprentice's lips and he told the ex-sailor all that he felt for his daughter. Even Hillary was astonished to find that saturnine old drunkard so tender-hearted, so friendly towards him.

After Everard had taken terrible oaths and sworn vengeance against the Rajah, he finished up by yelling into Hillary's ears that he would give Hillary, or anyone else, two hundred pounds if they could trace Gabrielle's whereabouts. Hillary took the distracted father's hand and said: "I don't want money; I only want to see Gabrielle, to bring your daughter back to you, and take her away from that man." The apprentice couldn't persuade himself to mention the name of the man who had apparently done him this great injury. Hillary had only seen the Papuan Rajah twice, but the man's face was as vividly before him as if he had known him for a thousand years.

At that moment he did not want Gabrielle's father to see his eyes. He felt ashamed that they should be dimmed with emotion. He was overcome by the feeling that he was the first to love and have faith in woman; the first to have idealistic views about honour and the ways of men; the first to run away to sea with fourpence in his pocket to fight the world, to aspire for fame and wealth, only to find himself sleeping out in a strange land—in a dust-bin with the lid on! But at the thought of Gabrielle's manner on the wreck, her tears, her eagerness to fly to Honolulu with him, the look in her eyes, his dark thoughts fled like bats from his brain, and once again hope reasserted itself.

Hillary took the old ex-sailor's hand and promised to stop the night with him. "Don't let us waste the time, it will be dark soon," said the apprentice. After a little rebellious talk Everard promised to drink no more, then putting on his cap

he went off as obediently as a child to make inquiries. And so Everard went down to Rokeville, while Hillary went off on a voyage of discovery into the surrounding villages. His faith in Gabrielle had by now completely returned. He knew that she had strange notions, and had many girl friends among the Polynesian natives who dwelt with the native tribes. He so far recovered his spirits that he even whistled as he went off down the track. He made straight for the native village of Ackra Ackra, where the great head-hunter chief Ingrova dwelt. It was near to sunset when he at length passed through the great forest of giant bread-fruits that divided the native villages from the south-east shore. As he entered the tiny pagan citadel the women and girls greeted him with their friendly salutations and the usual cries for *tam-bak* (tobacco).

The unlit coco-nut-oil lamps were swinging from the banyan boughs and flamboyants that sheltered the small huts and palavanas as he strode across the *rara* (cleared space). The shaggy-headed native women clapped their hands as he passed. Some of the elder tattooed men and chiefesses puffed their short clay pipes and stared stolidly upon him. Just by the village patch Maga Maroo, pretty Silva Sula and some more dusky flappers threw their brown-stockinged legs skyward with delight as the dusky Lotharios gave wild encores in a strange barbarian tongue. Even Hillary smiled as he saw the artless, picturesque vanity of the girls as they sported their fine clothes on the tiny promenade that was the lamp-lit Strand of their little forest city. He saw at a glance by those demonstrative exhibitions of European toilets, and fringed swathings of yellow and scarlet sashes, that the artful traders had been that way exchanging their trumpery jewellery and gaudy silks for copra and shells.

Arriving before the Chief Ingrova's palatial palavana, Hillary was pleased to find that the great chief was at home. As the big, muscular, mop-headed islander stood before him, he made numerous stealthy inquiries to find out if the chief had the slightest hint of the girl's whereabouts. But seeing that the chief was quite sincere in his protestations that he hadn't seen her for quite two weeks, Hillary at once told him that she was missing from home. Hillary had persistently had the idea in his head that Gabrielle might be hiding in one of the villages in fear of her father's wrath, for he could not help thinking that the old man had had a row with the girl and had deliberately kept that fact from him. The aged chief, who was a fine example of his race, swayed his war-club and wanted to go off in search of the missing girl at once. His eyes blazed with delight at the prospect of obtaining the head of the miscreant who had lured the girl from her home. The chief had a fierce idea of equity and justice; he was a stern disciplinarian in following the tenets of his religion, the code of morals laid down by his tribal ancestors. Indeed it was well known that he would not deviate from his ideas of honest finance by one shell or coco-nut. And it can be recorded that the mytho-

logical gods and legendary personages who were the great apostles of his creed were more to him in his inborn faith than the Biblical wonders of the Christian creed are to nine-tenths of the Sunday church-goers who worship at its altars.

Hillary listened silently to the chief's moralising and his loud lamentations over Gabrielle's absence from home and felt assured that the chief knew nothing about it. It was true enough, Ingrova had never heard of Macka, otherwise Hillary might have been considerably enlightened, for the old chief was usually friendly to the white men. The apprentice gave the chief a plug of ship's tobacco, then implored him to kill no one and secure no head for the adornment of his hut till he was quite certain that it was the head of the real culprit. Though Hillary was convinced that Ingrova had spoken the truth, he still nursed the idea that Gabrielle was somewhere in the vicinity of her father's home. He could not bring himself to believe that Gabrielle had really bolted or been carried off by the Rajah. The idea of such a thing had left his mind. He had thought of her manner on the wreck only an hour before. "A girl so innocent that I wouldn't utter a coarse word in her presence—she—go off with an abomination like that—a dark man—impossible!" had been his final summing up, and then in his vehemence he had kicked his Panama hat sky-high.

Hillary's face was flushed with the thoughts that surged through his head as he turned back and, gazing at Ingrova, said: "Look here, Ingrova, old pal, if you can find any trace whatsoever of the girl I'll give you a lot of money and my best grey suit of clothes, see?" The apprentice knew that he was offering the chief inexhaustible wealth by promising him a suit of clothes. For if a Solomon Islander has one weakness it is a heartaching desire to possess European clothes.

In a moment Ingrova's ears were alert; his deep-set eyes twinkled with avarice. He immediately rubbed his dusky hands together and, lifting one hand, swore allegiance to Hillary's cause. "I find girler if she bouter 'ere!" said he, bringing his war-club down with a terrific whack on the fallen bread-fruit trunk as they stood there in the silence of the forest.

"What's that?" The apprentice could hear approaching footsteps.

He rubbed his eyes. What on earth had happened to Ingrova? There he stood, stiff and erect, his arms crooked; he had suddenly undergone a wonderful transformation—looked like some gnarled old tree trunk that had been carved so as to resemble a man. For only the eyes blinked. At the sound of approaching footsteps he had swiftly succumbed to the old primitive instincts, and become, as it were, a part of the silent tropical forest.

Looking swiftly round, Hillary observed a dusky, wrinkled face and bright eyes peeping cautiously through the tall, thick ferns that grew around the spot where they stood. Ingrova's form immediately relaxed; it was no enemy who sought to club him; it was only the friendly face of old Oom Pa. It was very evi-

dent that Oom Pa had heard the speech of the Englishman, and knowing that the white missionaries disapproved of very many of the things his priesthood called on him to do in the performance of heathen rites, he had approached warily. Seeing that only one white papalagi was there, Oom Pa stepped forth from the thickets and forced his finest deceitful smile to his thin lips.

"Nice day," quoth Hillary.

"Verra nicer, papalagi," muttered the heathen ecclesiastic, after looking up at Ingrova, who winked and raised his tattooed brows to reassure the suspicious priest. Oom Pa prostrated himself in his most gracious manner before Hillary. In a moment he had risen to his feet, and standing with head inclined he listened to Ingrova, who had begun to tell him the cause of the white man's visit.

"Oo woomba!" said the priest, rubbing his chin reflectively, then said: "Nicer white girl's goner? She who gotter eyes like sky when stars walker 'bout, and gotter hair liker sunset on rivers?"

"That's her!" ejaculated Hillary dramatically. His heart thumped with hope. Oom Pa's manner made him think that Gabrielle was somewhere close behind him, hiding in the palms. The old priest winked and put on a wise look. Then he looked up and, shaking his head all the while that he spoke, he told Hillary that he had not the slightest idea as to the girl's whereabouts.

"I not know where girl is, but I knower you mean white girl who comes and jumper on *pae pae* and dance at festival, one, two nights. But she did fly away like beautiful *tabarab* (spirit) in forest."

"Dance on *pae pae* and run away into the forest!" said Hillary in surprise. "Good gracious! She's not the girl I'm looking for. It's a white girl I'm after, one who wears a blue dress, coiled-up tresses of gold that fall over her brow; she's white and beautiful. Dance on your damned *pae pae*! Phew!" said Hillary, putting his foot out and kicking vigorously.

Oom Pa also metaphorically kicked himself. He wondered what trouble his incautious remarks might cause both to himself and the girl. He swiftly realised that it was an unusual thing for a white girl to do a jig on a *pae pae*; he also knew that the white men might think that he had something to do with the girl's strange leaning towards his heathenish creed, and so would blame him for anything that might have happened to her. Consequently he at once put his hand to his brow, shook his head and intimated that he was "old fool" to make such a mistake.

Ingrova, who had immediately realised how near the priest had been to letting out that he knew something about Gabrielle, astutely changed the conversation and begged Hillary and the priest to enter his palavana. In a moment Ingrova had bent his stalwart figure and entered the low doorway of his rather palatial hut. Hillary and priest followed.

The apprentice, who had never been inside a primitive homestead, was surprised as he entered the gloomy, tightly thatched dwelling-place of Ingrova. It was sheltered by the branches of two huge bread-fruits, was conical-shaped and had a large domed roof. The rooms were spacious, about twelve feet from wall to wall. Each room was lit up by primitive window holes. These windows had no glass in them, but were fashioned of twisted, interlaced bamboo twigs in a clever ornamental style, making them look like casements that opened on to feathery palm-trees. Indeed, often by night one could have peeped through those casements and seen the festival maidens dancing on the village green while rows of coco-nut-oil lamps twinkled from the palm and bread-fruit boughs. As the apprentice stared round the room, the dim light intensified the surroundings. They *were* strange ornaments, no mistake about that. On the wooden walls hung the human skulls and bones of the sad departed. Noticing Hillary's curious stare as he regarded the beautifully polished skulls, many of which still had hair clinging to the bone, Ingrova waxed sentimental, stepped forward and took the smallest skull down from its nail. Pointing to the empty sockets with his dusky finger, the chief murmured in sombre tones: "Ah papalagi, 'twas in these holes where once sparkled like unto stars in the wind-blown lagoon the eyes of her who was my first *parumpuan* (wife)." Then he sighed, and continued: "'Tis true, O papalagi, that those eyes did once gaze and look kindly on him whom I did hate overmuch. But 'tis over now, these many years; and moreover, man, too, doth much which he no ought to do. And I say, O papalagi, does not the moon stare with kindness on more lagoons than one?"

As he said this the old chief made several magic passes with his forefinger, pushing it across and within the sockets as he sighed deeply. Then he proceeded: "Here, between these teeth, was the tongue that sang to me when my head was weary and mucher trouble did come to my peoples." At this moment the old warrior looked sadly through the doorway and sighed. Once more he put forth his hands and took down the remaining portion of that delicate skeleton. Hillary gazed in intense wonder. He noticed that the white bones were fastened together with finest sennet, joined with great artistic dexterity, not a bone being out of place. His thoughts about Gabrielle for the time being had vanished, as the mystery of that hut clung like a shroud about him. "What's that?" he murmured, as he gazed on the gruesome object that Ingrova held up before him. He felt shivery in the gloom, notwithstanding the tropical heat and the buzzing sand-flies.

As the two old hags who were squated on mats in the far corner of the room revealed their presence by giving a deep sigh, Ingrova proceeded: "Tis all that remains of her form, which I did lover overmuch. Look, O papalagi, here was her bosom; 'twas here that she gave unto my children nicer nourishing milk, children who now am great chiefs and chiefesses."

Saying this, the warrior ran his fingers down the curves of the dead woman's throat bones till he arrived at the tiny bones of the breast, then his finger swerved to the right, passed round by the ribs and moved downward towards the sharp white bones of the thighs.

"Good heavens!" was Hillary's only audible comment, as he inwardly thanked God that white people did not keep their dead so that they could be inspected like grim photo albums on visiting days.

Ingrova gently hung up those sad heirlooms of his past affections on their several nails again. Hillary, who by now had entered into the tragic spirit of the weird homestead, pointed to the various gruesome remains and asked Ingrova whose were the fourteen skulls that hung on a kind of clothes-line that ran across the room, close to the roof. Even old Oom Pa sighed as he watched Ingrova take down each bleached skull and solemnly point to the empty sockets, telling of bright eyes and gabbling tongues that once made music, sang songs, and knew laughter and tears. One had been a great high priest who had died at the hands of the white men sooner than swerve from the spiritual path that he deemed the right one. He was one of the old Solomon Island martyrs. Hillary noticed that this special skull was high-domed, revealing by its protuberance the reverence that man has for higher things, and also imagination. The teeth were perfect. Another was quite flat-headed, the hair woolly and the eye-sockets small. After much preamble on Ingrova's part, Hillary gathered that this skull belonged to the social reformer of the tribe. Yet another high-domed remnant had bulging bone brows, the skull being altogether curiously shaped. "Who was he, O mighty Ingrova?" said Hillary with a good deal of reverence.

Ingrova answered in this wise: "He was, O papalagi, the great witch-singer of these lands. It was in that little skull-hole where flamed the magic that sang unto us, telling the sorrow of the dying moons, and of the voices of wandering rivers and ocean caves. He looked through those holes" (here the chief pointed to the empty eye-sockets), "where stare the light of the stars, the sunsets and moonsets, when he did once stand beneath these very palms, by that doorway, and say to my tribe: 'Man am no long to live, and, too, his love and joy oft depart ere his body go its way. All things must die, though the corals rise and the palms stand for ever before the eyes of day, man's songs must cease and he got to sleep.'"

"Dear me! What a nice old fellow he must have been," muttered Hillary.

Ingrova had gesticulated and spoken in such a way that he almost saw the sorrow of the poet's long-dead eyes looking through the sockets of the skull.

"Well, if this is a typical Solomon Island homestead, I'd sooner go out visiting in dear old England," thought the apprentice, as Oom Pa suddenly prostrated himself on the prayer-mat and, turning over on his back, blew his stout, wrinkled stomach out with enormous breaths in some religious rite. Hillary made a

solemn face and, responding to Ingrova's appeal, placed his brow against a dead man's beard that hung by the window hole. It was with a feeling of considerable relief that he so graciously bowed when two pretty native girls suddenly rushed into the room and stared at him with wonder-struck eyes. His white face fascinated them. They were attractive-looking maids, their massive crowns of hair tastefully ornamented with frangipani and scarlet hibiscus blossoms. Threaded shells dangled from their arms. One had large earrings hanging from her artificially distended lobes. They were two of Ingrova's granddaughters. They at once proceeded to flirt with the apprentice, giving captivating glances from their fine dark eyes. And when he accepted a flower from pretty Noma, the tallest girl, he swiftly accepted a like offering from her companion, who had shot a jealous glance at her sister from her warm dark eyes. In the meantime, Oom Pa and Ingrova had met under the palms just outside the palavana.

Ingrova's eyes flashed with fire as old Oom Pa spoke close to his ear, for they liked not a white man to call in their village without asking. Though Ingrova was a brave chief, he too was a religious bigot, and his heart swelled with much devotion as he thought of what his gods would think to see the apprentice's skull hanging amongst his most sacred religious trophies. He felt that a skull adorned with dark bronze curls would be a prize worth securing. Oom Pa placed his dusky hand to his mouth, coughed and looked around to see that none heard; then he said: "I say, O mighty Ingrova, this white papalagi may seek our hidden idols and be after no maid at all. What think you?"

And Ingrova replied: "O mighty Oom Pa, favoured of the gods, did I not hear you say that you had seen such a one as this white maid?"

Oom Pa puckered up his wrinkled eyebrows and swiftly told Ingrova how a white girl had danced unbidden on his great tambu *pae pae* and then run away into the forest. On hearing this much Ingrova looked towards the palavan to see that the white man was not within earshot, and then, swelling his majestic, tattooed chest and shoulders, said scornfully: "It seemeth a grievous thing for a white maid to be missing, yet, I say, do not these cursed papalagi come into our bays on their ships and steal those we love, our wives, our sons and daughters, taking them to slavery, O Oom Pa?"

"'Tis as thou sayest," responded the priest. For a moment he reflected, then he looked up into Ingrova's eyes with deep meaning and said: "Methinks 'tis true that he seeks a white maid, for he who hath a leg of wood did pass this way, calling in strange tones to all whom he met; and mark you, O Ingrova, this papalagi who is there in your palavana hath one eye that is the colour of the day and one the hue of the night."

Ingrova at this wisely nodded, as though to say that he too had noticed this strange thing. Then Oom Pa continued: "To have such eyes must mean that he

is favoured by the gods of his own race, and so 'twere well that he should receive our friendship. And maybe, after all, 'tis the white man's god who tattoos the skies!"

Ingrova sighed deeply as he thought of the exquisite skull that might have adorned the walls of his palavana. Then he said: "'Tis well, Oom Pa, for the youth is to my liking." And as they both stooped and re-entered the palavana doorway the young apprentice little dreamed how inscrutable Fate had given him one eye blue and the other brown so that he might not be killed that day by a Solomon Island chief. Fondest affection seemed to beam forth from Ingrova's eyes as he looked at the apprentice. "Nice old heathen," thought Hillary, as the big warrior sighed in deep thought and then placed his hands with regret among the rare bronze curls of the apprentice's skull that *might* have been his. But to give them their due, both Oom Pa and Ingrova were relieved that things were running smoothly. Together they took Hillary outside that he might inspect the wonders of the village. As he crossed the tiny *raras* (village greens) the dusky maids placed their hands where their hearts beat and sighed over the beauty of his eyes and the wondrous whiteness of his face.

"Damn it all! I could take an interest in all this if I only knew where Gabrielle was," thought Hillary, as he looked on the strange scene of native life around him. Notwithstanding his sorrows, he could not help thinking how akin primitive life was to civilised life. "One blows his nose on a palm leaf and the other on a silk handkerchief," he murmured to himself. "Bless me, though it is a heathen village in the Solomon Isles, its dusky, tattooed inhabitants seem imbued with the same ideas and aspirations as my own people."

It was true enough: some of the tiny streets under the trees were clean and had large, well-built huts that were covered artistically with flowers of tropical vines. Other huts were small and very slovenly. Some of the maids had flowers in their hair and shining traduca shells hanging on their arms. Others wore tappa gowns, a few some remnant of European clothing, such as cast-off skirts, blouses, bodices and stockings. One or two wore only those undergarments that are frilled at the knees and succeeded in showing off their terra-cotta limbs in a most conspicuous fashion. Some had made real doors to their palavanas, whilst others still had doors that were made of old sacking. One played a cheap German fiddle while the kiddies on the *rara* danced with glee. In front of the native temple stood a monstrous idol, its big glass eyes apparently agog with laughter. And on a stump, facing it, stood the embryo parliamentary genius, Hank-koo, waving his skinny arms, beseeching the high chiefs to pass a law that would compel all the other chiefs to make their hut doors so that they opened inwards. "Why not have doors that open inwards when 'tis as well as opening towards?" he yelled, as he wiped his brow with a palm leaf. It was then that another fierce-looking

being jumped on to a stump. He too swore by Quat (first god of heathen land) that for a door to open outwards was indeed beautiful. "Can not a dying man's soul take flight with ease to shadow-land instead of being compelled to pull the door back ere departing hence?" And so the chiefs were always busy remaking doors that opened inwards or outwards, as they continually changed their minds over the virtues of such great things.

"Comer, papalagi!" said Ingrova, as he beckoned Hillary to return towards his palatial palavana. "All is wonderful that I have seen, O great Ingrova," said Hillary, as he stood once more outside the chief's homestead.

And then, as the chief leaned on his war-club, swelling his massive chest and bowing graciously, Hillary intimated that he must depart at once.

Indeed the apprentice was getting impatient. "It's no good hanging about here; this won't find Gabrielle," he thought, as he cursed the old skulls and the atmosphere of gloom that Ingrova's gruesome exhibition had cast over him. "Why should I be made melancholy through Ingrova's dead relatives? I don't bring out the bones of my dead aunts and old uncles to make men miserable." Such was his inward comment as he left the chief and hurried away. Thoughts of Gabrielle's strange disappearance returned to him with redoubled force. He recalled how she had touched his hand for the first time. And as Hillary passed along by the forest banyans and saw the deep indigo of the far distant ocean, he stared on the rose-pearl flush of the sea horizon. "What a fool I was! I could have easily persuaded her to bolt that night on the derelict," he thought, as he once more started on his way back to Everard's.

In due course he arrived back at Everard's bungalow. The old man was terribly upset when Hillary told him that he had heard nothing about his daughter's whereabouts. He trembled violently as he looked up at Hillary and said: "I've been up to Parsons's shanty: no one has seen Gabby, or heard of her. What can it all mean?"

Hillary made no reply. He did his best to cheer the old sailorman up. His unbounded faith in Gabrielle had returned. He recalled her innocent manner when she had offered him the little flower out of her hair when he had first met her on the lagoon. "No girl who gave a flower like that could do wrong," he thought. Not only would he not entertain the idea that a dark Papuan man could have influence over Gabrielle, but he also persuaded the father to make no inquiries about the Rajah.

"What proof have you got that the Rajah is the kind of man who would take advantage of any woman?" he inquired of Everard. Possibly he was influenced to make these remarks by a kind of Dutch courage. He imagined that there was far less chance of Everard's suspicions being true if he himself blinded his own eyes to the possibilities of what a dark man might persuade a white girl to do. Over and

over again he had recalled to memory Gabrielle's eyes as she had gazed into his own on the derelict ship. "No! Impossible!" thought he. "I've got boundless faith in Gabrielle; I feel certain she's only gone up to K——. She's probably stopping with the German missionary's wife and will be back to-morrow."

"Why the blazing h—— didn't you go there to K—— and see?" said the old sailor in a petulant voice, as he suddenly looked apologetically at the apprentice. He had gripped Hillary's hand gratefully in the thought that a strange youth should have such unbounded faith in his daughter.

"I've only just thought of Gabrielle's friendship with the missionary's wife at K——," said Hillary.

Then Everard suddenly remembered that he had already sent a native servant up to K—— to inquire.

All that night the old ex-sailor sat huddled in his arm-chair, crying softly to himself. He swore that he'd never drink again or hurt a hair of the girl's head if she returned safely home.

Hillary slept little. Once he walked into Gabrielle's bedroom, gazed on her tiny trestle bed and thought of all she had said to him. Then he was obliged to go out of doors and walk up and down under the palms in an attempt to stifle his grief. In the morning he helped Everard to get the breakfast. The old man spoke kindly to him and repeatedly muttered to himself about his foolishness in thinking the youth was such a villain because he happened to be stranded in Bougainville and hadn't a cent to bless himself with.

"What did old Ingrova say?" suddenly asked the old man, as he swallowed some hot tea.

"Oh, he had never even heard of Gabrielle."

"Never heard of her! The old liar!" almost yelled the old man.

Hillary turned beetroot-red. He swallowed some hot tea and nearly fell on the floor. "You don't mean to say Ingrova's fooling us?"

"Don't worry, boy, Ingrova's all right. I know 'im!" said Everard.

"Thank God!" muttered Hillary. For he had suddenly called up terrible visions of ferocious head-hunters dancing round Gabrielle's dying form.

Anyway, his fears were quite dispelled by Everard's manner and all that he proceeded to tell him. As the ex-sailor and the apprentice talked and then lapsed into silence over their own thoughts, the visitors began to arrive. It appeared that the grief-stricken father had been about telling all his friends that Gabrielle was missing from home. The first one to arrive at the bungalow after breakfast was Mango Pango. When Hillary opened the bungalow door she pretended to faint. Then she lifted her hands above her head and went on in a most dramatic fashion as Hillary explained to her that Gabrielle was still missing.

"Whater you do 'ere?" said the pretty Polynesian girl, as she looked out

of the corner of her eye as only a Polynesian maid can look without squinting. "I never knew that you knew Misser Gaberlielle," she added, as Hillary smiled. Then she went on in a terrible style, for she had known Gabrielle since she was a child. "O Master Hill-e-aire, she kill! Some one fiercer head-hunter gotter her and cutter her head off!" she wailed, as she rolled her pretty eyes and then looked at Hillary in a swift flash that said "No gooder you loving girler without head—eh?" Giving this parting shot, Mango Pango ran off home to follow her domestic duties. And then a batch of native women and two white men arrived outside the bungalow to inquire if Gabrielle had returned. After a deal of jabbering and unheard-of ideas as to the cause of the girl's absence, they put the coins in their pockets and went off mumbling. And still the old man gabbled on, saying: "How kind people are when folk are in trouble."

Hillary at last put on his hat and went off to make further inquiries. As he stood shaving himself before the mirror in the bungalow parlour, he thought of all that Gabrielle had told him about the haunting shadow-woman. He was half-inclined to tell the father of the girl's strange talk on the derelict ship out in the bay. Then he decided not to do so, thinking that the old sailor had quite enough trouble on his shoulders. Somehow the thought of all that Gabrielle had told him about that shadow-woman eased Hillary's mind. It gave him greater faith in the girl. He remembered the look in her eyes when she had sung the weird songs to him by the lagoon, and also in the forest once when they were parting. "Perhaps she's a bit eccentric, and that accounts for her strange absence," he thought. And the thought eased his mind and was more pleasant than the thoughts that had begun to haunt him. He recalled Rajah Koo Macka's handsome face. He also recalled how he had read that dark men had strange and terrible influence over romantic girls. He knew very well that Gabrielle was terribly impressionable. Hillary gave himself a gash with his razor as he thought of this, and his hands began to tremble. Then he hastily dressed himself and told Everard that he was off to make inquiries about Macka. "We don't know *who* he is; he might be anyone, and villainous enough to lure your daughter deliberately away, after all," said the apprentice, as he lit his pipe, said good-bye to the old man and went off to search and make inquiries.

It was nearly dusk when Hillary returned from the villages and going down to the beach by the grog bar came across a Papuan sailor who, he had been told, was an old deck-hand off one of the Rajah's ships.

The artful Papuan at first swore that he did not know Macka, shook his head and said: "Me no savee!"

Then Hillary took a handful of silver from his pocket and shook it before the Papuan's eyes and hinted that if he could tell him of anyone who *did* know about Macka's social position he would get well rewarded. In a moment the

native's manner changed. He took Hillary under the palms and told him a tale that fairly made the young apprentice gasp. And it was a story that would make anyone gasp.

It was from this native's lips that Hillary heard for the first time that Macka was an ex-missionary from Honolulu, and that he was a native from one of the coastal tribal villages of New Guinea, a tribal race who were the most ferocious and god-forsaken heathens in the Pacific world. The half-caste native sailor turned out to be a rather intelligent man. Indeed it appeared that he too was a converted heathen and had first got acquainted with Macka while attending mission-rooms in New Britain.

"Do you mean to tell me that the Rajah Koo Macka is a member of a religious society?" gasped Hillary, as the native took a nip of his tobacco plug and then grinned from ear to ear.

"It am so, boss!" said the man. Then the native continued: "'E am Rajah Makee and belonger misselinaries everywheres. 'E kidnapper too, and often taker Papuan girls, boys, men and women by nighter when no one looker!"

"What do you mean?" said the apprentice with astonishment, only vaguely realising what "kidnapper" meant. Then the native calmly proceeded to enlighten him, and in a few moments Hillary had heard enough to convince him that the noble Rajah would not only be likely to abduct Gabrielle from her home, but old Everard and himself too if he thought they'd fetch a few dollars in the slave markets of the Bismarck Archipelago or elsewhere.

So did Hillary discover that Rajah Macka was an inveterate cannibal, living on the flesh and weakness of people of his own race. For it appeared that he had sailed the Pacific for years, creeping into the bays of remote isles and kidnapping girls, boys, men and women till his schooner's hold was crammed up to the hatchways with a terrified human merchandise. He usually sold the girls to chiefs in the Bismarck Archipelago and New Guinea; the boys and men he disposed of in New Guinea for plantation work or to be fattened up for sacrificial festivals, the *pièce de résistance* of some mighty chief's cannibalistic orgy. Macka was not the only one who dealt in the terrible blackbirding trade; Germans, Dutchmen and even English skippers made it their prime stock-in-trade.

Hillary could hardly believe his ears as he listened to the character of the man who had been Everard's welcome guest. He took the native sailor into Parsons's grog bar, primed him well with drink and finally got all the information necessary to follow on the Rajah's track. He discovered that he was a native of New Guinea, that he possessed a tambu temple there and was known as the "great Rajah" for hundreds of miles in Dutch New Guinea because he had been well educated by his heathen parents, who had sent him to Honolulu to be initiated into the virtues of Christianity.

Though the sun was blazing down with terrific vigour from the cloudless sky, Hillary half ran as he stumbled across the tangled jungle growth on his way back to tell Everard all that he had heard about the Rajah. The native girls ran out of the little doors of the huts and begged him to give them one brass button from his apprenticeship suit. Crowds of native children, quite nude but for the hibiscus blossoms in their mop-heads and a wisp of a loin-cloth, rushed by the palms with loaded calabashes, crammed with fish caught in the shore lagoons. They were flying onward to the market village, the Billingsgate of the Solomon Isles; a place where shaggy-headed, sun-browned women exchanged shells for the fresh, shining fish. But Hillary had no eye for the scenes around him. He steamed like a wet shirt stuck out in the tropic sunlight as he hurried on; and the constellations of jungle mosquitoes and fat yellow sand-flies made their presence felt, driving their proboscis spears deep into his flesh, buzzing their musical appreciation to find he ate so well. The apprentice's heart was beating like a drum; already the tale that he had heard had upset his ideas over the cause of Gabrielle's absence. "Did she go off voluntarily with the Rajah, or had he kidnapped her?" That thought haunted him, tortured him. He stared towards the summits of the distant smoking volcanic ranges to the north-west and thought how they resembled his own heart, that was near to bursting with emotion, and how he too would like suddenly to shout his passionate desires to the sky. He sighed as he cut across the silver sands by the beach. He was going the long way round, for he dare not pass by the lagoon where Gabrielle had once sung to him.

He was nearly dead with fatigue when he arrived at the bungalow. "Found 'er, boy?" came the dismal query that always smote his ears when he returned to Gabrielle's home. Hillary simply shook his head and stared into the glassy eyes of the old man. Then he sat down and told the ex-sailor every word he had heard about Macka's schooner and his reputation as a clever kidnapper of native girls and men in the Pacific isles.

Old Everard jumped to his feet and hopped about on his wooden leg like a raving madman. Hillary tried to hold him down.

Crash! The old man had stabbed the screen four times with his wooden member. Crash! He had picked up his spare, best Sunday wooden leg and smashed all the crockery off the shelf.

"Don't be a fool! Everard! Everard! Don't go mad!" yelled Hillary at the top of his voice, as the demented sailor still smashed away.

"I'll save your daughter! I know where she is!" yelled the apprentice, as he endeavoured to stop the ex-sailor's demented yells.

The furniture of the bungalow and all the crockery were smashed before the mad old man calmed down. Then he took a pull at the rum bottle, sat down on the settee and recovering his breath stood up again and shouted: "Where's

the *Bird of Paradise*, 'is ship? 'Is ship—has it sailed?" yelled the old man. Then he shouted: "He's got her on the *Paradise*! He's got 'er, my Gabby! I see it all now! He's an old blackbirder. Not a Rajah! Not a godly missionary! By the holy Virgin, forgive me, forgive me for being a damned fool!" the old fellow moaned, as he recalled Rajah Macka's sombre voice and his exhortations when he had hesitated as to whether he'd give up drinking rum or no.

Then the ex-sailor looked at Hillary and yelled: "Go, you blamed fool! Go and see if the *Bird of Paradise* has sailed from the harbour."

In a moment Hillary rushed away over the hills. In an hour he returned to the bungalow and told Everard that the *Bird of Paradise* had not been seen in the bay of Bougainville since the night when Gabrielle had been first missing.

"She's sailed in the night! 'E's got 'er! 'E's got 'er! She's gone! She wasn't willing! 'E stole 'er, just like 'e steals native girls! Boy, don't worry. She's a good girl, she is—one of the best," said the distracted father, his voice lowering to a wailing monotone as he steadily beat his wooden leg on the floor in despair and hope.

"Of course she's a good girl," said Hillary. His heart nearly stopped beating at *that*, a thought he would not allow to haunt him.

"There's no time to lose, Mr. Everard. I'll get a berth on some ship that's bound to New Guinea. I'll find a ship. I'll stow away, I'll do anything to get there and find his tambu house and rescue Gabrielle from his grasp. I'll steal, I'll rob anyone if it is necessary." And as the apprentice said those things his eyes flashed fire, his face flushed with all the hope and the emotion that was in him.

"I've got money, I've been saving for years, saving for 'er, but she didn't know!" Everard suddenly exclaimed. Then he looked at Hillary and continued: "Get a schooner; hire one; I'll pay! I'll spend a thousand to get Gabby back and smash Macka up!" As he finished he brought his spare wooden leg down crash on the table. Then he gripped the apprentice by the hand. "Don't leave me yet, boy, I'm nervous. In the morning you can go out into the bay and see if you can 'ire a schooner. It's three weeks' sail to the New Guinea coast. Find out exactly where his blasted coastal village is. Get all perticulars about 'im."

"Do you really think he's kidnapped Gabrielle? It seems extraordinary in these enlightened times!" gasped the young apprentice, as he thought of Gabrielle on a three weeks' voyage with Rajah Macka, the ex-missionary.

"Don't think! She's gone! Where is she?" Then the old man roared with dreadful vehemence: "Why, damn it all, *I've* been in the slave-trading line! *I've* crept into the native villages by night and stolen the girls as they slept beneath the palms! Cloryformed 'em! Smothered 'em! Tied 'em hup! Shot the b—— chiefs as they rushed from their dens to save their darters and wives! *I* 'ave! *I* 'ave!"

"No!" That monosyllable expressed all the horror of which Hillary was ca-

pable over Everard's sudden confession and his private thoughts as to Gabrielle's fate on that schooner with Macka.

"It's retribution—that's what it is," wailed the old man.

Hillary took his hand and did his best to soothe him. Then he lit the oil lamp and sat down by the weeping ex-sailor.

"My Gabby's like 'er mother, beautiful gal, but she's 'aunted in 'er 'eart by them spirits of the Papuan race. 'Er mother seed a spirit-woman spring out from under the bed one night afore she died!"

"A spirit-woman!" gasped Hillary. Then he continued: "Do you mean to tell me that there are such things as spirit-women running about Bougainville?"

The old man looked vacantly into the apprentice's eyes for a second, then said languidly, as though, he was too grieved to talk: "I seed a shadder meself ther other night, 'ere in this very room!"

Hillary looked sideways at the empty rum bottles in the corner of the room, then back again at the old man's bleary eyes. "He's got a touch of the D.T.'s," thought the young apprentice.

Before midnight Everard lay in a drunken sleep. Hillary had made up a bed by the couch, but he couldn't sleep. The idea of the girl being really abducted nearly sent him mad. Then he thought of Gabrielle's strange talk on the hulk about shadow-women and of all that Everard had just told him about his wife's being haunted by similar shadows. The idea of the shadow-woman haunted his mind in an unaccountable way, although he was naturally sceptical about such things as ghosts and enchantments.

He sat by the small open window of the bungalow and, as the scents of the orange-trees drifted in on the cool night zephyrs, thought over all he had read about sorcerers, of the haunting shadow-figures that played such a prominent part in the love affairs of the medieval ages. Then he looked out of the window on to the moon-lit landscape and saw the tall, feathery palms; he even heard the rattling of the derrick of some schooner that was leaving before dawn. He thought of Mango Pango singing her old legendary songs in a chanting voice as she peeled spuds and chopped up the indigestible bread-fruit and tough yams for dinner, and finally summed up his belief in spirits in the one word "Rot!"

And as old Everard lay just by him, snoring with a mighty bass snore, he felt half sorry that he couldn't bring himself to believe implicitly that a shadow-woman *had* lured the girl away from her home and had stopped her from keeping the tryst.

"A shadow leaping about—preposterous! Sounds like Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Perhaps she's been reading that book, and told her father about it while he was under the influence of drink," reflected Hillary. He even brightened up as he persuaded himself that the girl's wild sayings and her evident terror had

all been brought about through reading that book. "She's under the influence of Jekyll—that's what's the matter with this Everard family. Why, bless me, it's all natural enough. I myself am out here in the Solomon Isles through reading books. I'd never have met Gabrielle, never heard of strangling shadows and that cursed Rajah Macka if it hadn't been for Captain Marryat, Fenimore Cooper and Stevenson."

The young apprentice began to brighten up considerably as he reflected over the whole business. Everard's snores sounded quite musical. He even began to think that if a terrible tragedy *had* occurred and Gabrielle was abducted and he was destined to go off and search for her across the seas, it was not so dreadful as nothing happening at all.

So he thanked God that he was in the Solomon Isles, living amongst tattooed natives and strange old ex-sailormen who saw shadows and evil enchantresses dodging about their bungalow verandahs or racing under the moonlit palms.

And as he pondered and listened to the faint, far-off thunder of the surf on the coral reefs off Felisi beach he heard the guttural voices of the German sailors singing a chantey as their grey tramp-steamer went out on the tide, bound for the Bismarck Archipelago. Old Everard was still wheezing heavily, and at last Hillary too fell asleep to the sound of that steady snore.

CHAPTER IX—THE HOMERIC SPIRIT

When Hillary awoke in the morning he found Everard in a most sober condition. "Boy, thank God you're here; I'm down in the mouth. I've been thinking." Then the old man looked wistfully at the apprentice and said: "You can't go off to New Guinea and rescue my Gabrielle from that damned villain on your own, can you?"

"No, I don't suppose I can," responded the apprentice, as he sipped his tea and eagerly drank in the old ex-sailor's words. He knew that Everard was a man of the world and a seafarer, although he was such a fool in his domestic affairs. He also knew that Everard knew more about hiring schooners than he did. Indeed Hillary had found it a hard enough job to secure the most menial berth on board

the boats. So he felt that to get a schooner to sail specially out of port on his behalf was a dubious prospect, to say the least.

"Look you here, boy, directly you're feeling fit go up to Parsons's bar and see if you can get in with some of the shellbacks. They're the men for us. Tell them you want to negotiate with a skipper who would go to New Guinea, and don't forget to say that you've got a man behind you who'll pay the necessary expenses for the whole business."

"Bless you! How good of you!" replied Hillary, as he gripped the old sailorman's hand, quite forgetting that he was Gabrielle's father and was thinking of his daughter and not of Hillary's prospects.

"Don't thank me, boy; it's my daughter, ain't it?"

"Yes; but it's good of you to give me the chance to hire a schooner to help get your daughter back again," said Hillary, as he realised the exact position and all that the girl's future welfare meant to him.

The old man took his hand and said: "You're a good lad, and I can see that you're as much interested in my daughter as I am."

"I am!" exclaimed Hillary fervently. Then at the old man's request he put his cap on and went off to seek some kindred spirit, someone who would help him to negotiate with a skipper who was likely to let his schooner out on hire. It wanted some negotiating too! Skippers don't let their ships out on hire every day.

"I'll make for the grog shanty; that's the only likely spot where something that no one expects to happen will happen," was his comment as he walked off.

Hillary seldom visited the grog shanty at Rokeville. Once or twice, as the reader may recall, he had gone to the shanty after dusk just to hear the sunburnt men from the seas sing their rollicking sea-chanteys.

The German consul, Arm Von de Sixt's edict that native girls were not to go near the grog shanties after dark was still being strictly ignored. Only the night before old Parsons had waved his signal towel and chuckled with delight at the bar door as the brown maids from the mountains performed Tapriata and Siva dances under the moon-lit palms in front of his secluded shanty. As everyone knows, this drew custom; and the sights the sailormen saw—the wild dances and rhythmical swerves of the girls—gripped their imaginations. Indeed the festivals outside Parsons's grog bar were so well known that as far away as 'Frisco, Callao and London sailors could be heard to remark after leaving some music hall: "Pretty fair show, but nothing like the dancing brown girls outside Parsons's grog bar in Bougainville!"

As Hillary came within three hundred yards of the grog shanty he could hear the faint halloas and chorus of oaths that mingled with the sounds of drunken revelry in the shanty. Someone was playing an accordion that accompa-

nied some hoarse voice that roared forth: "White wings they never grow weary." For a moment the young apprentice lingered beneath the palms, then realising that he had the whole afternoon before him, he turned away and went down to the beach. After walking about for some time he managed to get a native to row him out to some of the schooners that were lying at anchor in the bay. He went aboard two of them and asked to see the mate or skipper; but, as luck would have it, they were both ashore.

"Where's she bound for?" he asked of a sailor who was holystoning the schooner's deck.

"Barnd fer 'Frisco," said the man, as he stared at Hillary, and then asked him if he wanted a job.

"Not on a boat that's going to 'Frisco," said Hillary, as he looked over the side and beckoned the native to come alongside with the canoe.

Then he went over to the tramp steamer that lay near the promontory, and after a good deal of trouble managed to see the skipper, who, when he found that Hillary wanted a job, roared out: "If yer don't git off this b—— ship in two seconds I'll pitch yer off!"

And so Hillary bowed his thanks and gracefully withdrew into his native canoe. He had made up his mind to go back and visit the grog shanty. "Perhaps I'll see some skipper there, or at least someone who knows the way to get in with a captain who might sail for a price to New Guinea," was his reflection.

When he arrived once more on the beach off Rokeville he could hear the sounds of revelry in Parsons's grog bar going strong. It was getting near sunset, the busy drinking time. For the Solomon Island climate is terribly hot and muggy at times.

"I shall be glad to go into the bar and see men that laugh; it's better than mooching about in company with my own reflections," thought Hillary, as he walked up the grove of palm-trees that led to the beach hotel. As he approached the entry to the rough wooden saloon he was startled by hearing a mighty voice—a voice that sounded like the voice of some Olympian god. It was the voice of some man who was singing, someone gifted with a vibrant, melodious utterance. It was strangely mellow, for distance softened the gigantic hoarse-throated rumbling till it sounded peculiarly attractive, as though a woman sang in a man's heart.

As Hillary listened he felt confused. Where had he heard that voice before? Then he strode beneath the two bread-fruit trees that stood just in front of the shanty and, with strange eagerness, entered the little doorway, anxious to see the one who sang so loud and inspired the shellbacks to yell so vociferously.

As the young apprentice came into the presence of that motley throng of drinking seamen he stared with astonishment at the big figure of the man

who had just finished singing. Hillary had seen him before; there he stood, the Homeric personality who had so rudely intruded when he had been listening to Gabrielle's song by the lagoon. It was the huge sailorman who had disturbed him by inquiring for the nearest Solomon Island gin palace.

Hillary almost forgot his troubles as he stared on the scene before him. The big man was waiting for the chorus to cease before he proudly took up the solo with his vibrant voice. Heaven knows why the apprentice dubbed him "Ulysses" in his mind, for by his own account he was anything but an example of the Homeric hero—that is, if his own accounts of his faithlessness to his absent spouse, whoever she might be, were true. There he stood, one muscular arm outstretched, his helmet hat tilted off his fine brow, revealing his bronze curls, his eyes sentimentally lifted to the low roof of the shanty. He looked like some forlorn, derelict knight as, with one hand at his van-dyke beard, he began to roar forth the fourth verse:

"For I went down south for to see my Sal,
Singing Polly-wolly-doodle all the day.
For I'm off to Lousianna for to see my Susiannah,
Singing Polly-wolly-doodle all the way!"

And all the while he made gallant signs to the two pretty Polynesian girls who had rushed from the store hard by to see who sang so loudly and well. At the close of each verse he placed his hand on his heart and bowed to the girls in such a way that their awestruck eyes fairly shone in the sudden glory of it all. Heaven knows what land and among what people he had been reared in his youth, but it was certainly a bow that would not have shamed an actor in any courtly love scene. The traders and sunburnt shellbacks—a mixture of various nationalities, yellowish, whitish, greenish and olive-hued men, decorated with a multitudinous variety of whiskers and beards—stamped their sea-booted feet and thumped their rum mugs till the shanty vibrated to their hilarious appreciation.

Suddenly Ulysses caught sight of Hillary. For a moment he stared at the apprentice in surprise. Hillary became the cynosure of all eyes as the shellbacks looked over their shoulders at him. "You! You here!" he yelled. Then he strode forward and, bending himself with laughter, struck Hillary on the back with his open hand, nearly fracturing his collar bone.

"How's the gal! By the heathen gods of these sun-boiled Solomon Isles, she was a real bewt!" Saying this, he gave a massive wink, pushed his antediluvian helmet hat on one side, stood upright till his head bashed against the grog bar's roof and shouted: "Give the boy a drink. Hey there, you son of a gorilla potman, bring us a *deep sea* for two!"

In a moment the bar-keeper disappeared to obey that mighty voice. Bringing the drinks, he obsequiously placed them on the counter and asked for the wherewithal. The onlooking shellbacks rubbed their eyes and chuckled in their glee as Ulysses yelled: "Money! Damn yer cheek to think I pay drink by drink!" Saying that, he brought his fist down with such a crash on the bar that old Parsons without more hesitation ticked off the drinks on his big account slate that hung behind the bar and trembled in some fear.

Hillary buried his nose in the cool liquor. He wanted a drink badly, but not so much to quench his thirst as to drown his thoughts.

No presence in the world could be more welcome to the young apprentice than that of the big man standing amongst the motley crew of shellbacks. Those men were all Hillary's opposites, so far as temperament goes, and so all the more welcome to him in his sorrow. Nothing worried them. They were the grand philosophers of Bougainville, for each night they summed up the whole mystery of life and creation with an infallible certainty.

The supreme personality inside that grog bar was the giant stranger who had disturbed Gabrielle and Hillary in the forest and had now recognised the apprentice. Hillary's new-found friend, for such he turned out to be, had an individuality worth a thousand ordinary people. The very expression of his face was infectious as his eyes roamed over the bar and fathomed the weakness and strength of the faces round the room. Yes, Ulysses was a judge; only one glance and he knew which man was likely to stand a drink with the least argument. He had only been a visitor to the bar for a few days when Hillary appeared on the scene, and yet he was the acknowledged king of beachcomber-land. Parsons's bar echoed with wild songs, laughter and impromptu oaths of glee as he sang. Neither Hillary nor the shellbacks had ever heard or seen anything like him before. And the tales he told! He'd been everywhere! He swallowed half-a-pint of rum at one gulp. Then he took a large parchment chart from his capacious inside pocket, unfolded it on the bar and made the shellbacks and traders turn green with envy as he ran his huge forefinger along the curves and lines of the latitudes and longitudes of endless seas. He told of remote isles where pearls lay hidden that he alone knew. Millions of them! Then he looked unblushingly into the faces of those grizzly, sunburnt men as they stuck their goatee whiskers out in astonishment and, bending over his map once more, ran his huge forefinger up to the north-west, right up to Sumatra in the Malay Archipelago, and switched off to the Loo-choo Isles in the Yellow Sea. "Treasure hidden there," said he, giving a potent sidelong wink before he ran his finger, bang! right across the wide Pacific Ocean down to the Paumotu Group and onward south-west to the tropic of Capricorn. His descriptive ability was marvellous: with upraised forefinger and laughing eyes he described the weird inhabitants of remote uncharted isles and

the beauty of their native women. Even the astounded Polynesian maids sighed when his countenance flushed in some rapturous thought as he re-described the wondrous beauty of maids who dwelt on those remote isles of the wine-dark seas. He hinted of tattooed queens who had favoured his presence! He had ascended thrones! Discarded kings had sat, and still sat, forlorn in their isolation, cursing their heathen queens and the melancholy hour when Ulysses entered their barbarian halls. Not *one* Penelope but a score awaited *his* return.

"Well now! Who'd 'a' thought it!" was the solitary comment of the most garrulous shellback to be found within a hundred miles south of the line. That remark was followed by a critical glance at Ulysses' massive frame, his rugged, handsome face, the virile moustache and fierce-looking vandyke beard, to say nothing of the omniscient-looking eyes that flatly challenged anyone who would dare doubt their owner's veracity. Hillary took to him like a shot. He made up his mind to keep him in sight or die in the attempt. The young apprentice felt that it had been almost worth his while to have travelled the world if only to run across that magnificent vagabond. "He's the man! He'll find Macka, polish him off the earth and save Gabrielle. He'll hire a schooner if a schooner's to be hired on this planet!" reflected Hillary, and he wasn't far wrong in his swift summary of Ulysses' character. Then he took a moderate sip of his rum, for he had laid a half-crown on the bar and called for drinks, and Ulysses with inimitable grace had gazed admiringly into the apprentice's eyes, pocketed the change and treated him! This natural courtesy of the South Seas amused Hillary immensely. To him it was a true act of brotherhood; in its liberality it vividly illustrated the divine creed of "One-man-as-good-as-another."

As the night wore on the shellbacks and traders began to roll off from the precincts of the bar, some to their ships in the bay and some to their native wives. As the last stragglers went out of the doorway and the oil lamps began to burn low Ulysses lay down on the long settee. He had taken up his abode in the shanty—never asked the bar-keeper's permission, not he. He had simply taken possession of the bar by day and the settee by night. Hillary, who had lurked by his side through the whole evening, had quite thought to follow him home to his lodgings or back to his ship, for though Ulysses told much of his past he was extremely reticent about his present affairs, where he had come from or where he was bound for. Hillary was disheartened to find that he was stopping in the shanty for the night, but his need of that mighty personage made him determine not to be outdone.

A few old sea-dogs were still lurking about and arguing over their quart pots, talking softly as they saw Ulysses settle himself for the night. Hillary did not heed them, they were mostly muddled and not curious. Going straight up to the big man, he said softly: "I say, I'd like to speak to you outside for a moment,

if you've no objection."

It wanted a bit of pluck to make a bold bid to that huge adventurer.

Ulysses had nicely settled his recumbent form and closed his eyes when Hillary thus addressed him. For a moment the big face rested on the settee pillow, then slowly the head turned, the unflinching eyes stared hard at the young apprentice, the massive, curly head slowly lifted. Did the young whipper-snapper have the cursed cheek to want his change back? Such was the apparent thought that flashed through Ulysses' mind as his eyes fixed themselves on Hillary. But in a moment he saw the earnest expression in the young apprentice's face and with marvellous instinct gathered that Hillary's request was worth granting. "Any money in it?" he whispered in a thunderous undertone. For a moment Hillary looked abashed and rubbed his smooth chin thoughtfully. It was the last thing on earth he had expected to hear from that hero of the seas.

"Maybe there's a lot of money in it," he quietly replied. That reply acted like magic on Ulysses' weary limbs. In less than two minutes they had passed outside the shanty.

When they arrived outside the wooden South Sea pub the large, low yellow moon lay on the horizon, staring across the wide Pacific. The scene could not have been staged with better effect. The background of the mountains in Bougainville, the tin roofs of the township, moonlight falling on the sheltering palms and over the small doors of the huts, gave an individual touch to the whole scene. The landscape looked like some mighty oil-painting showing two men standing on a silent shore staring out to sea at the full moon. Then the two figures, engaging in deep conversation, once more began to walk to and fro.

As Hillary walked up and down with Ulysses he told the man all that troubled him, and begged his assistance in rescuing Gabrielle from the hands of a kidnapper.

"You don't mean that golden-haired girl that I caught yer with? The girl I saw swinging on the banyan-tree when I first had the enormous pleasure of spying on ye?" said Ulysses, as he towered over the apprentice till Hillary's five feet eleven inches appeared quite diminutive.

"Yes, that was Gabrielle, that's whom I'm talking about. She's missing! Gone! Stolen! He's got her, a blasted heathen missionary! He'll take her away to New Guinea and put her in his tambu harem in some devilish coastal town! He will sacrifice her purity to his filthy desires! God in heaven!"

For a moment his companion stared at the flushed face of the youth, who had waxed so grandiloquent as emotion got the better of him. Then he said:

"Are ye drunk, boy?" Then, without waiting for an answer, he smacked the apprentice on the back and looked into his eyes. Then he gave a loud guffaw that echoed to the hills and made Hillary look round in apprehension. Next he

swelled his chest, tugged his mighty moustachios and said: "Don't ye worry, lad, I'm yer man!"

Hillary was not wrong in his hasty summing up of that big man's character. Ulysses had a large heart notwithstanding his own strange confessions of far-off isles, discarded queens and melancholy kings.

"Blow me soul, by the heart of God, you've got it bad; it's in love you are," said he, as he laid his huge hand across his waistcoat, over his vagabond heart. Then, continuing he said: "So this Rajah Macka's boss of a plantation and owns a ship?"

"That's so," ejaculated the apprentice.

Ulysses immediately took from the folds of his red shirt a large parchment-like scroll, presumably his mysterious chart, and then opening it out at a spare page wrote down: "A b—— heathen Kanaka missionary owns a ship, got plantations, and most probably in possession of money too through being a blackbirder, and it is now herein written down, stated and agreed, between Samuel Bilbao and myself, that all the aforesaid cash and goods are due to the aforesaid Samuel Bilbao, by God;" And as the giant sailorman wrote on, he accompanied each word with a musical chuckle.

Hillary gazed at the man in incredulous wonder; but still, odd as it may seem, he began to feel a vast confidence in Ulysses' ability for doing anything that he set out to do. "Heavens, who ever saw such a human phenomenon off the stage?" was his reflection as he realised that the original being before him was certainly a master of his own actions. The apprentice instinctively saw that his new-found friend was invaluable as a leader in a forlorn hope, whereas a practical man who carefully weighed all possibilities to a nicety would be a "dead horse" and a bugbear to boot.

"What kind of a maid is this glorious girl of yours?" said Samuel Bilbao after a pause.

"Why, she's as white a girl as ever lived; only the vilely suspicious would think ill of her. I've never met a girl like her before!"

"Ho! Ho!" roared the sailor, who had been mightily in love on more than one occasion. Then, looking straight into the apprentice's face, he said in a hushed, sympathetic voice: "That all ye got to say for the poor girl?" Seeing how the wind blew, he at once became sympathetic. He too had loved and sorrowed, he said; and then he spoke soothingly and, patting the apprentice on the shoulder, said with tremendous solemnity: "How sad! Tell me everything, lad."

Hillary, who had imbibed rather liberally, became emotional, and after going into many details about Gabrielle and her disappearance suddenly blurted out: "She's a strange kind of girl too; she says she's haunted by a shadow thing, a woman, I think, some sort of a ghost."

Just for a moment Bilboa renewed his intense scrutiny of the apprentice's face, then roared: "By God! Abducted by a Rajah, whipped off to a tambu temple to be sacrificed at the altar of one by name Macka Koo Raja—and she's haunted!" The big man roared the foregoing so loudly that Hillary thought he would awaken the whole township! But still the sailorman yelled on: "God damn it, youngster, I've cuddled queens and princesses on a hundred heathen isles, but never has such a strange story come out of my wooing." Then he added swiftly: "Cheer up! I've had numerous abduction jobs both for and against: kings and queens have paid me in pearl and gold for such things, and never yet did I fail in finding a pretty maid's hiding-place or the weakness in a queen's virtue! I tell ye this—your Rajah Macka's done for! I'm his man." Saying this, he gave Hillary a quizzical look and continued: "You're sure the girl's not stealing a march on ye? She didn't run off on the abduction night in front of the Rajah, eh?" Before Hillary could give his emphatic assurance in reply to this query the sailorman gave a huge grin and said: "What's the dear old pa think of it all? Worried much? Got cash?" Whereupon Hillary at once told Bilbao how old Everard had promised to give anything up to a thousand pounds to anyone who would go to New Guinea in search of the girl.

The effect was magical: Bilbao's face flushed with rapturous thoughts; he blew clouds of tobacco smoke from his lips and chuckled: "I'm bound for New Guinea! Bound for a heathen, a Macka Rajah! Good old Macka—he's mine! He's destined to meet one by name Samuel Bilbao. I'll find him! I'll claim the girl too!" he added, as he nudged Hillary in the ribs and winked. Following this sally, he gave the apprentice a tremendous thump on the back and said: "Youngster, don't get down in the mug; come to Parsons's parlour in the morning and we'll see what's best to be done to secure the girl."

Then he took the apprentice back into the grog bar and called for drinks. "Git it down," said he, as Hillary hesitated over the fiery liquor. And there for quite one hour the huge man told of his mighty deeds far and near, and multiplied his credentials, so that Hillary might not go off seeking someone else for the position which he, Ulysses, knew he was especially suited for.

Before Hillary departed for home Bilbao impressed upon him to be at the grog bar on the following morning.

Hillary could never remember how he got back to his lodgings that night. All that he ever did know was that when he arrived in his small bedroom he imagined that Koo Macka lay helpless on the floor before his window. Mango Pango, and two natives who slept just by, and the landlady rushed in in their night attire to see what was the matter, and found Hillary singing, "O! O! for Rio Grande!" as he swayed a big war-club and smashed an imaginary Rajah Macka's head into pulp.

In the morning Hillary made a thousand apologies to his native landlady and to pretty Mango Pango. Mango Pango graciously accepted each apology, and grinned with delight to think that at last the young Englishman had taken to drink, and that fun was going to begin as the craving strengthened.

As soon as Mango Pango had given Hillary his clean shirt and breakfast he got ready and then once more left his diggings, bound for Parsons's grog bar. When he arrived the shellbacks were very numerous, for a schooner had just put into Bougainville, and the crews were standing treat.

Samuel Bilbao met the apprentice in his usual volcanic style.

"Where's yer fiddle, youngster," said he, as though Hillary had come to perform violin solos.

"Damn it! Left it at yer lodgings?" Then he continued: "Why, bless me, you ask me to help you find a Macka, and rescue a beautiful——" He stopped short, thinking it would not do to let the bystanders know everything, and continued: "Go and fetch your fiddle, boy."

Hillary felt little inclination to play a fiddle, but there was something about the personality of that man that told him that if he asked a favour he expected it granted.

He soon returned with his violin, and it was a sight worth seeing to watch Samuel Bilbao's face as Hillary obediently performed the songs that he asked him to play. And as Hillary played that strange man lifted and moved his hands in rhythmic style, half closed his big-lidded eyes, looking most sentimental, as he drank in the melody and huge sips of rum.

"Play that again! Bewtif-ool! You're a genius," he ejaculated, as the shellbacks who stood round looked into one another's eyes in wonder to see a man who had confessed to such a past almost weep over an English song.

All was going merrily as a marriage bell in heathen-land when one by name Bill Bark appeared on the scene. He was a big gawk of a fellow, and lived mostly by cadging drinks. Going up to Hillary as he stood in the grog parlour playing his instrument, he deliberately knocked his bowing arm upwards.

"That's a silly joke," said the apprentice quietly. Then, as the aggressor used several foul epithets, Hillary continued: "You're an awful fool if you really think that your disgusting language is more attractive to these men standing here than my violin playing."

At this gracious compliment, paid to the listening shellbacks, traders and the three pretty native girls, the rough audience blushed. It really *was* said so politely, so courteously, and reflected such credit on their musical taste that one or two of them took a huge sip from their glasses and bowed to Hillary.

Bill Bark felt extremely wild at the laughter that followed that invisible blush, and then once more knocked Hillary's bow-arm up, just as he had begun

to play again.

"Why not be pleasant, friendly like?—though you're not much of a catch, even to look at," said Hillary in quiet tones as he stopped playing once more.

"'Ain't 'e soft-o!" said Bill Bark, *sotto voce*, to three boiled-looking sailormen who sat on tubs itching to see a fight.

As for Ulysses, who was watching the whole proceeding quietly, his face was a study. He had not travelled the South Seas for nothing; he saw further ahead than all the brains of Bougainville put together. He was peering steadfastly into Hillary's eyes. He seemed to be quite satisfied with what he found there, for he gave a tremendous guffaw, smacked his big knee and chuckled inwardly. He knew! Old Samuel Bilbao knew; "Knock the ass's bow arm up again, Bill Bark! How dare he think your oaths are worse than his damned fiddling!"

Hillary noted the deep undertone of Ulysses's voice as he roared forth that demand to the loafer, and the apprentice felt gratified to hear the subtle note, for it told him that Ulysses, at least, knew that true pluck is always humble.

To Samuel Bilbao's immense delight, the loafer, Bill Bark, once more knocked Hillary's bow arm up again.

It seemed incredible! The audience in the grog bar had never seen anything so sudden before—Bill Bark's two front teeth were missing! The scene inside the shanty reminded one of an exhibition of statuary done in marble and terra-cotta clays, so thunderstruck were they all. It was the beards and whiskers that spoilt the statuesque effect. For who ever saw marble statues with soft whiskers?—or smoke issuing from black-teethed mouths that gripped short clay pipes? The shellbacks, traders, Polynesian maids, indeed all had sprung to their feet and were staring in astonishment at the crimson fluid that poured from Bill Bark's wide-open, astonished mouth.

Hillary was the only one who appeared calm. He was methodically placing his violin carefully by the bar counter so that it should not get damaged in the coming fray. He thought of Gabrielle, and cursed his luck, as he slowly took off his coat. It seemed terrible to him that he had to conform to the ways of a materialistic world when he believed Gabrielle was a prisoner in a slave-ship on the high seas. So bitter were his feelings that he could have picked his violin up before them all and smashed it to smithereens on the bar, just to relieve his feelings.

Ulysses solemnly led the way as the whole company followed in glee to see the fight between the apprentice and Bill Bark under the palms outside the bar. At last the giant umpire tossed his antediluvian helmet hat right over the highest bread-fruit tree and shouted: "Time, gents, time!" Bill Bark lay stiff on his back and looked straight up at the soft blue of the sky. And it was good to see the rapturous light in Ulysses' eyes as he stood there pulling his vandyke beard,

his outstretched moustachios stiff with pride. It is certain that the apprentice had successfully revealed to Bill Bark the force of one great truth, a truth that no travelled man will deny: that often quiet-looking young men in the South Seas have been found to be endowed with a wonderful gift for fist repartee and a fine ability for getting their own back and keeping their features intact.

Had the apprentice accepted all the drink that was about after that fight he would have undoubtedly died of alcoholic poisoning and gone out of the story altogether. As it was, he seemed to have entered the realms of enchantment. He played the fiddle as the shellbacks and beachcombers danced. He had never seen such a strange lot of men dance together before. They were certainly a mixed crew, and represented the adventurous, rum-loving individuals of all nationalities. They blessed Hillary's generous soul as he shouted: "Rum for six!" As they danced a jig on the bar floor they looked like some peculiar human rainbow of faded hues that had suddenly come out of the night of storm-stricken seas. It wasn't so much their eyes and rum-coloured noses as their skins that gave that peculiar impression. Yellow-skinned, tawny-skinned, greenish, brownish and bilious, saffron-hued reprobates they were. Some wore grizzled beards, some scarf-shaped beards knotted thickly at the throat and tasselled at the ears; billy-goatee whiskers abounded—and couldn't they dance too!

"Tumpt-er-te-tumper-te tump-te tump!" the sea-boots went, as Hillary, bunched up in the corner, fiddled away and the beards and caps tossed in the dim light of the oil lamps. Then the chorus came:

"Blow! blow! and damn yer eyes!
Haul the old gal by the leg!
And that's the way the money flies
When we're out with Joan and Meg!"

And still they danced on, their chests and brawny arms visible, for they had long since cast their coats aside, owing to the terrific heat. The native men and women peeped through the open doorway in delighted astonishment to watch the dancing sailormen with the tattoo on their arms and chests.

Sarahs, Betsy Janes and romantic maids of Shanghai and Tokio were deeply engraved on their sunburnt skin: women they had loved and who had jilted them. One old man danced mournfully, his chin bent forward as he contemplated the pretty tattooed maid on his own chest and hummed in a melancholy fashion as he thought of—what? The apprentice continued to play, inspired by the shifting scene. Slowly the room became obscured as though by a ghostly mist. Then a puff of wind came through the door and blew three of the dancers away!—old beards, sea-boots, legs and melancholy eyes suddenly crumpled up, all blown

away! Even the big substantial wooden bar faded and vanished like a dream!

When the apprentice awoke an hour or two later he found that most of his comrades slept. He took a deep drink from the water-jug, after which he realised that he must have had a good deal more to drink than was good for him.

CHAPTER X—THE WINE-DARK SEAS

On the evening of the day that followed Hillary's stand-up fight at the shanty he went off with Samuel Bilbao to visit Gabrielle's father.

"Must see the old man first, you know," said Ulysses, as he chuckled over the immense possibilities that loomed before his all-embracing vision. He saw money as well as wild adventure ahead: "A coastal native town in New Guinea! A beautiful maiden stolen, hidden away, abducted by a damned Macka Koo Rajah—and Samuel Bilbao hired to find her and pound old Macka to dust—splendid!" he chuckled, as he walked on under the palms, pulling his large viking-like moustachios.

Hillary glanced at the big man's flushed, happy face and thanked God that such hearts still existed, that men with Herculean frames longed to do unheard-of things quite outside the ordinary business of life.

Then, as Bilbao tugged his vandyke beard, chuckled and continued to roar over his own thoughts, Hillary said: "Do be quiet; don't for heaven's sake mention anything about your discarded queens and melancholy kings. You know Everard has been an old sailor and he consequently knows what men are." Then the apprentice added, in soft tones: "He might draw wrong conclusions as to your character and not be willing to trust you, you know."

The big face expressed massive disgust that such an ignoramus of a youth should dare advise such a one as he.

Hillary only smiled at seeing that look. He had read Ulysses like a book, and knew exactly how far to go.

"So here's where the old man's put up," suddenly said Bilbao, as they stopped. They had arrived outside Everard's bungalow and Hillary softly opened the door.

Old Everard struggled from his chair and immediately lit the oil lamp, for it was nearly dark.

"Well, boy, 'eard anything about my Gabby?" he mumbled, as he struck matches, never looking behind him, since he thought that Hillary had returned alone. Then, getting no reply, he turned round and looked straight into Samuel Bilbao's eyes. He stared at the giant sailorman for quite ten seconds, as though a vision had suddenly come before him. Then he said: "You!"

Bilbao stared also for ten seconds, then roared out: "By thunder, it's you!"

"Who?" echoed Hillary's lips, as he surveyed the two men and wondered what next was going to happen. The two men, Bilbao and old Everard, had gripped hands!

It appeared that Samuel Bilbao had sailed as boatswain under Everard when he had been chief mate of a full-rigged ship in the Australian clipper line, about eleven years before.

Hillary almost cursed that sudden recognition as the two men rambled on, and Bilbao shook his fist, bent himself double with glee and took monstrous nips of rum and whisky as he discussed everything, of the past and future, but the vital matter in hand.

But it turned out a good thing, for before the night grew old the big sailor had lifted his hand to the roof and in a thunderous voice had called all the tropic stars to witness that he would find Gabrielle and scatter Rajah Koo Macka's dust to the four winds of heaven. He swore to Everard and Hillary that he knew Macka (whether he really did know him at that time was something that was never known for a certainty).

"I know him, the old heathen kidnapper!" he roared, as Hillary and old Everard stared at the massive face with its vikingesque moustache stuck out like spears from the corner of his grim mouth. "Seen 'im off Tai-o-hae five years ago, when he abducted two princesses—twins—from O le Mopiu's royal seraglio!"

It was marvellous the change of atmosphere Bilbao made in Gabrielle's old home, as he thought over his plans, consulted his chart, ran his finger down the degrees and murmured: "Easy as winking!" Indeed, he made everything look so rosy that instead of Gabrielle's abduction being a tragedy it appeared a blessing in disguise.

And it can be truthfully recorded that though Samuel Bilbao held the advance of two hundred pounds in gold and notes in his mighty palm, and said that he didn't like taking money from an old pal, he really *meant* what he said. All the same, he gave a huge sigh of relief when he felt a mass of gold coins and notes safe in his capacious pocket. But it must again be admitted, in all fairness to Bilbao, that he could not go off and hire a schooner for a voyage to the coast of New Guinea to search for Gabrielle without some cash in hand.

After that little business matter was settled to the satisfaction of both parties, Bilbao looked at the old man and said: "Ah, pal Everard, she was a beautiful maid, well worth the money, this Gabrielle of yours." Then he continued: "I had great pleasure in meeting the girl, and introduced myself to her as she sat swinging on a bough in the forest not far from here: and didn't she sing to me! Lord! I think the girl fell madly in love with my handsome face. I little dreamed that I was being passionately wooed by my old shipmate's daughter."

Everard at hearing this large contortion of the truth only looked absently at the big man and said nothing. Then Ulysses said in a soft, sympathetic voice: "Ah, pal Everard, I can easily imagine how ye loved the gal, soothed her pretty face and made her love ye—eh, pal?"

"I did! I did!" wailed the distracted old man, his wretched heart quaking as he looked for a moment into Bilbao's keen blue eyes and dropped his own in shame.

Hillary, who had told Ulysses a good deal about Gabrielle's home life while he was under the influence of about four whiskies that Ulysses pressed upon him, gave his comrade a hasty pinch in the leg as he wondered what Bilbao might say next.

Ulysses only replied by a ponderous wink, right in front of Everard's eyes too! But the ex-sailor was too far gone to notice that. It took a good deal of persuasion to stop him from going on the voyage to New Guinea himself, if they were successful in hiring a schooner. "You'd better stay at home; the poor girl may return while we're away at sea, and what would she say at missing her dear old father," said Bilbao sympathetically.

The big man looked at the apprentice and gave another wink, and said: "We don't want no old pa with us, eh?"

Hillary responded by a vacant look; then, seeing Ulysses's broad, friendly smile, lifted his hand and smacked the giant on the back uproariously. Alas! even the apprentice was under the influence of drink.

Gabrielle's father sat huddled in his arm-chair; his wooden leg shivered pathetically as he mumbled: "So she's on the *Bird of Paradise*, my daughter, my Gabby."

As for Ulysses, when he heard the name of the ship he smacked his mighty knees and roared out: "Ho! ho! for a bottle of rum! The *Bird of Paradise*!" The adventurous sailorman had made all possible inquiries about the aforesaid vessel when it sailed from the straits, etc., and had calculated to a nicety when it would arrive in New Guinea. "There's no time to lose, by heaven!" he thundered, as he swallowed his ninth whisky and looked at the parlour clock. Then he shook Hillary, woke him up with a start and said: "Come on, lad, let's put the old man to bed; he's tired; it's the least we can do for him."

Before Everard fell to the floor they both lifted him and placed him comfortably on his settee. Drunk as the prematurely aged ex-sailor was, he looked like some bedraggled apostle as he lay there on his couch, his hands crossed, a smile on his lips, as though he still laughed to himself over Ulysses' wild jokes.

Then they both left the bungalow. If Hillary staggered slightly as he gripped Bilbao's arm, and thought that the coco-palms were doing a hushed step-dance on the moon-lit slopes of Bougainville, it must be taken into account that he had to be sociable. He could not very well stand like a mute as those reunited shipmates drank to the sprees of other days and finished up in wild farewells and sanguine toasts to the success of the venture they were engaged upon. As the apprentice softly closed the front door of the bungalow Bilboa said, "Wait a tick," and hurriedly returning into the parlour he picked up the whisky bottle and swallowed the remaining contents. He excused himself before Hillary by saying: "Ah! youngster, I had to drink once again to the success of our venture and to the pretty eyes of that girl; we'll find her, don't you fear."

"I know we will," replied the apprentice, as he clutched the big man's arm.

As they stole along under the palms Bilbao's heart fairly bubbled with mirth as he realised the possibilities of this new adventure. It would take him out on the seas again! It was evident that his present quiet life was palling upon him. No one knew why he was hiding from the arm of the law in Bougainville, and no one cared. All that can positively be stated here is that his heart was bursting to escape from the rough settlement where Germans drank lager and beach combers slept between their drinks. Such happiness was too much for him.

"Splendid!" he reiterated, as he brought his open hand down on Hillary's back. But Hillary cared not; his heart sang within him like a bird: whisky and his comrade's mighty belief in the success of all that they might undertake had made him entirely careless of the moment. "Go it, boy!" said Ulysses to the young apprentice, rattling the money in his capacious pocket, and Hillary joined lustily in the rollicking chorus of some Spanish chantey.

When they eventually arrived outside Hillary's lodgings Samuel Bilbao swore that *he* lived there. And Hillary? Well, he was so confused that he obsequiously followed Ulysses in at that worthy's kind invitation. And Mango Pango lay on her little bed-mat in the outhouse and could not believe her ears that night, as she mumbled to herself: "Surely not nicer Hill-eary shouting wilder song in ze middle night, up dere in his bedrooms?" And then the astounded Mango Pango heard no more, for Ulysses was comfortably fast asleep in Hillary's bed—while the apprentice slept on the floor.

In the morning Hillary's landlady fairly gasped to see so big and so handsome a man in her quiet young lodger's company. And as for pretty Mango Pango, she opened her eyes and stared at Ulysses as though God sat there in

front of her. And when Ulysses swallowed a quart of boiling tea and then sat her on his massive lap, her eyes shone like diamonds. Though Hillary's head felt a bit heavy after the preceding night's libations he could not help smiling as Samuel Bilbao kissed the Polynesian maid's dusky ear and whispered pretty things to her. And was Mango Pango abashed? Not in the least. It was very evident that Samuel Bilbao was smitten with that dusky maid's charms.

But all these recorded things are small enough compared with the great venture that they were entering upon. Even Ulysses realised that time was valuable and that many difficulties might beset their path before they could hire a schooner and keep their promise to Everard. And more, the young apprentice quickly gave Bilbao a hint that they'd better be off, and that Mango Pango's charms could wait till a later date.

That same day Ulysses went down to the beach and tried to get round all the schooners' skippers off Bougainville. But it turned out that none was willing to accept the fee Bilbao offered for the hire of a schooner, or to take him as passenger to the coast of New Guinea.

Just as Hillary and his comrade were getting dubious about their chances they heard that a schooner, the *Sea Foam*, was about to sail for New Britain and then on to Dutch New Guinea. In a moment Bilbao had hired a boat and was rowed out to the *Sea Foam*, which lay a quarter of a mile off, by the barrier reefs. Bilbao at once went aboard and interviewed the skipper, and found that he was a mean man and wanted more money than Ulysses possessed to alter his course or take Ulysses for a passage at all.

When Bilbao returned to Parsons's grog bar, where he had arranged to meet Hillary, he looked worried. It was evident to the young apprentice that he had entered heart and soul into the whole business. The fact was that he was anxious to clear out of Bougainville, and so the scheme in hand offered him all that he wanted: money, a change, and the forlorn hope and excitement that were meat and drink to his volcanic temperament.

"Don't despair, boy," said he to Hillary, "Bilbao never caved in yet while the world went round the sun." Then they both went back to Hillary's lodgings. Ulysses seemed deep in thought as they passed under the palms. Then he said to Hillary: "The chief mate of that *Sea Foam* is an old pal of mine."

"Is he?" said the apprentice, wondering what Ulysses was driving at.

"Yes, he is," responded Bilbao. Then he added: "I'm going out to see that mate, and I wouldn't wonder if the *Sea Foam* doesn't sail to-morrow night with you and me on board."

"Really?" said Hillary.

"Yes, really!" responded Bilbao, as he told his surprised comrade to get his traps packed ready to sail the next night.

"But didn't you say the skipper wanted eight hundred pounds?" said Hillary after a pause.

"We don't get all we want in this world," replied Ulysses, as he gave a massive wink.

When they eventually got back to Hillary's lodgings, the apprentice was so sanguine over Bilbao's hopeful outlook that he too felt quite cheerful. He opened his sea-chest and showed his big comrade Gabrielle's photograph. Ulysses stared at the face, smacked Hillary on the back, then kissed the photograph gallantly.

After that Hillary sat down in his room and fell into deep reflections over the mysterious disappearance of Gabrielle. Then he played his violin so as to soothe his own feelings. He was quite undisturbed by Bilbao. For that worthy had sneaked off outside beneath the palms so that he could woo pretty Mango Pango. Hillary heard shrieks of laughter coming from the dusky maiden's lips as Ulysses whispered heaven only knows what pretty things into her ears. Anyhow, Mango Pango fell desperately in love with Samuel Bilbao. And when he and Hillary left Mango Pango's kitchen that evening the young apprentice noticed that his comrade was full of glee over some new scheme that had originated in his versatile brain.

Mango Pango's eyes shone like fire as she waved her hand to Bilbao and behaved as though she'd known the giant sailorman since her earliest childhood.

"She's mine!—mine for ever!" chuckled Bilbao.

Hillary took little notice of Bilbao's wild utterances, but it was not long before he discovered that there was a good deal of meaning in all that Ulysses said, and also in the humour of his chuckles.

It would be a mass of wearying detail to tell all that occurred before Ulysses secured the *Sea Foam* so that they might sail straight for the coast of New Guinea without the charge for her hire unduly diminishing his private exchequer. It is sufficient to say that Ulysses made the very best of his old friendship with the chief mate of the *Sea Foam*. And perhaps it will enlighten the reader a good deal to know that the chief mate came ashore that night and had a long private conversation and multitudinous mixed drinks with Bilbao in Parsons's grog bar. Hillary stood aside as the two men spoke in very low undertones and Ulysses poked the mate in the ribs and showed him a handful of gold. Then the mate began to get jovial and gave Ulysses a receipt for several of the golden coins. Of course it was none of Hillary's business as to *how* the *Sea Foam* was to be hired. Ulysses had taken that part of the job on, and as an innocent girl's very life was at stake, what might appear to be a shady transaction in getting hold of the schooner was only a necessary part of the day's work, so far as Ulysses was concerned. He chuckled inwardly to see the mate's delight over the bribe he'd given him. But his success with the mate of the *Sea Foam* was as nothing when

he discovered that the *Sea Foam's* skipper was a terrible drunkard; and to make things easier still the skipper himself came into that very bar and, seeing Ulysses flush of cash, swallowed several good strong nips of rum at his expense.

"No, never!" said Skipper Long John (for such was the *Sea Foam* captain's name), as good old Samuel Bilbao spun his mighty yarns, telling of the wondrous deeds in his seafaring career. Still the skipper continued to drink, so that when at last he fell down on the floor of Parsons's saloon bar after drinking his nineteenth rum no one was surprised. What may have been the surprising matter of the whole business was this: That *same* skipper was arrested that *same* night for using bad language and insulting two Polynesian girls on the beach! No one *saw* the girls who had been so grossly insulted; all that was known about the matter was that the skipper was seen staggering about the beach that night, trying to hire some natives to paddle him out to his schooner, when he was suddenly seized from behind by two Herculean-framed members of the native police and taken off to the Bougainville *calaboose* (jail). It was rumoured long after that he was fined fifty dollars or two weeks' solitary confinement. How the poor old skipper took his hard luck is not known. Anyway, one can rest assured that he never dreamed that Samuel Bilbao knew the head of the native police force in Rokeville, and that whilst he languished in jail that worthy chuckled with delight over the success of his scheme; and the head of the native police was mightily pleased with the bribe he had received from Samuel Bilbao! So was the schooner secured.

It may seem wonderful how the thing was done. But the civil authorities in those parts and the owners in Sydney can vouch for it that the *Sea Foam*, with Samuel Bilbao on board as captain, sailed out of Bougainville harbour at midnight on 10th February, and no one knew for what port she had sailed.

Hillary half wondered if he was in the throes of some marvellous dream as he stood on the *Sea Foam's* deck just before she sailed. Ulysses was walking about the deck shouting orders to his willing crew. And the crew were singing their chanteys cheerfully as they thought over the conviviality of their new skipper, who had so generously primed them up with the best Jamaica rum. Not one tear was shed when they heard that their late skipper, Long John, had broken his leg and was lying helpless in the tin-roofed hospital at Silbar, in Bougainville. For such was the sad news Ulysses imparted when he had mustered them on deck and told them that he and the chief mate had orders to sail at once. There was not the slightest need to tell them verbally that he was henceforth their captain. The old boatswain saw the imperative command of those eyes and saluted the new skipper, and every man on board instinctively straightened his backbone. In a moment Ulysses had cast off his faded coat and pants and old boots. None wondered when he appeared on deck in the late captain's best sea-going clothes, and on his head the brass-bound, badged peak-cap that he had found in

the skipper's large sea-chest. Everything went well. The south-west trades were blowing steadily; no night could be more favourable for setting sail and clearing the harbour. "Set to! Haul the anchor up!" he roared.

When Hillary heard the rattling of the chain and saw the men aloft fisting the sail he rubbed his eyes. "It's another hopeless dream," he said.

Ulysses all this time was leaning over the gangway, peering down into the gloom, as he tugged at a rope. And as Hillary watched he saw that he was pulling something up that dangled in space; he had distinctly heard a musical voice that he was astonished to recognise. "Hold hard! Gently there, you son of a gun!" yelled Ulysses, as the deck-hands and the boatswain stood by grinning from ear to ear. And still three of the crew and Ulysses hauled carefully at the taut tackle, as they repeatedly looked over the vessel's side. "God damn it, slew her up! Mind her starboard leg! Over! Over there! Right-o! Up she comes! Gently, lads; gently does the trick! Let go!"

"God in heaven!" gasped Hillary, for out of the basket hauled up from the outrigger canoe that had just arrived alongside, plomp! down on the deck jumped pretty Mango Pango!

Hillary did not dream. There she stood, her pearly teeth visible by the light of the oil lamp in the gangway, her eyes sparkling as she laughed with glee, like some happy child. Ulysses had persuaded her to bolt from her mistress's kitchen and accompany him on that voyage out to New Guinea.

"Well, I'm blest! He can do anything he undertakes," said Hillary to himself, as he realised why Bilbao had chuckled so much when the two of them had last said good-bye to Mango Pango.

Before the moon was well up the *Sea Foam* had sailed, disappearing silently out of Bougainville harbour, bound for the great unknown, so far as the crew were concerned. Not a soul aboard the *Sea Foam* slept that night. When everything was snug aloft, and they were tacking before a steady breeze for the coral seas, Ulysses called all hands aft and served out rum. Several of the crew were Britishers, three were Kanakas, one a Jap and the other a nondescript nigger. The crew wondered what was going to happen next when they saw Ulysses at the cuddy table and Mango Pango installed at the head. And they too joined in the songs and laughter, as the glasses clinked and the late skipper's champagne disappeared. It was only the mate who did not seem to appreciate the wild hilarity on board. He was a bilious-looking fellow and looked terribly nervous as Ulysses roared at the top of his voice. The mate had already regretted his share in the scheme that had cast his late skipper into jail and installed Ulysses in his stead. He was unable to persuade himself that he would be acquitted by any jury when they learnt that he had sailed under the jovial orders of Captain Samuel Bilbao. Bilbao had smacked him on the back and sworn that everything would

be all right. "You've nothing to worry about; all you've got to do is to say that I came aboard this ship and proved my legitimate right to install myself as the new skipper." Saying this, Ulysses tried to ease the mate's mind by pulling from his pocket the late skipper's pocket-book and papers, also a note-of-hand that was presumably written in the late skipper's handwriting. This note stated that the care of the *Sea Foam* was to be given over to Captain Samuel Bilbao, who had instructions to sail at once. Such was the whole scheme, so far as Hillary could make it out. Anyway, though the mate became gloomy and sallow-looking as the days went by, Ulysses got redder in the face and even perceptibly fatter. It would have pleased the devoutest hearts could they have seen the modest decorum of Mango Pango's private cabin on the cuddy's port side. Ulysses had made the cabin-boy fix it up in quite artistic style. A little German bronze mirror swung to and fro by the small port-hole, pictures of Biblical subjects decorated the low roof and walls, and all the niceties that a maid might require were to be found in the quickly extemporised apartment.

It must be admitted that the first few days were monotonous and quite unromantic. For a bit of a wind came up and made the *Sea Foam* heave and lurch. This instability caused poor Mango Pango suddenly to rush from her chamber and groan with anguish as she knelt by the port-side scuppers. She was terribly seasick. Ulysses would give a ponderous, sympathetic wink as she rushed back to her bunk and closed the door of her cabin. Then the little Papuan cabin-boy, Tombo Nuvolo, would stand sentinel just by the saloon port-hole to see that no one quizzed or came near the modest maiden's abode. But Mango Pango soon recovered from her illness, and attired in her pretty blue robe, scarlet and yellow ribbon in her mass of coral-dyed hair, came out on deck to bask in the hot sunshine.

When Hillary sat down by her side and told her that the *Sea Foam* was bound for New Guinea, and that Ulysses and he were going in search of Gabrielle Everard, she opened her pretty eyes and mouth in unbounded astonishment and said: "Awaie!—Wearly! Going in searcher of poor Gabberlel who ams in New Ginner! Never!" And then, while she lifted her hands and uttered her quaint Samoan exclamations (she was born in Apia, Samoa) Hillary told her as much about the reason of the voyage and of all they had heard about Rajah Macka as he thought advisable.

Mango Pango was a real blessing to the apprentice; she was so full of childish vivacity, song and laughter that she dispelled his gloomy thoughts and made him quite cheerful at times. "Thank heaven that she was fool enough to be persuaded to come on this extraordinary venture," thought Hillary, as the girl performed a native step-dance while he fiddled, and didn't appear to trouble about her position in the least. Samuel Bilbao would stand by, his mighty viking mous-

tachios rippling to the sea-breeze as he sang some romantic strain and gazed admiringly on the dancing Mango Pango, who revelled in his praise. Heaven knows what Bilbao's alleged harem of island Penelopes would have thought could they have seen their absent Ulyssess' massive gallantry and the glance of his eyes as Mango danced by the galley amidships. It is true that several of the sailors made eyes at Mango Pango when Ulysses was having his afternoon nap in the late captain's cosy bunk. And it must be confessed that she didn't seem to take the sailors' advances as though she thought them amiss. But still, she behaved with considerable propriety, and only very slyly blew surreptitious kisses back to the aged bottle-nosed boatswain, Jonathan Snooks, who looked at the dusky maid and said more with his eyes than he should have done, considering that he had a wife in Shanghai and two more in 'Frisco!

What a voyage it was! Hillary thought of England, of his home. "What would the mater, the governor, my sisters and Uncle William think could they see me sailing across the coral seas to rescue a white girl from the heathen temple of a Papuan Rajah?" He would incline his eyes from the sky-line and look back on the deck of the *Sea Foam* to convince himself of the reality of it all.

"Don't stand there mooching about with that mournful look on yer ugly mug!" yelled Samuel Bilbao, as he stood there, nearly seven feet high, watching Mango Pango's five feet five inches dancing exquisitely beneath the shaded awning that he'd ordered to be rigged up by the cuddy's private deck. Then he yelled for the cook, demanding that worthy's presence aft to play the accordion and make up the *Sea Foam's* scratch orchestra for a song and dance. Ulysses began to play his bone clappers (he was a crack hand at the clappers). And it was a sight worth seeing as the crew stood obediently in a semi-circle, opened their bearded mouths and exercised their big, hoarse-throated voices to the full extent as they all roared the chorus of old Malayan sea-chanteys till far into the night. And if the pretty Samoan maid, Mango Pango, couldn't dance like a sea-faery, or mermaid, on the *Sea Foam's* deck, under the full brilliance of the tropic moon, then no one on the seas ever will be able to do so.

Even the remorseful, bilious chief mate opened his mouth, mumbling a belated melody when Ulysses put forth his long arm and conducted the chorus of—

"For I went down South for to see my Sal,
Singing Polly-wolly-doodle all the way."

Then he inclined his massive, curly head and, gazing sideways into Mango Pango's delighted eyes, he continued bellowing forth in such tones that the startled sea-birds far out of the night gave a frightened wail:

"Fare thee well, fare thee well,
Fare thee well, my Faery Fay;
For I'm off to Lousianna for to see my Susiannah,
Singing Polly-wolly-doodle all the way!"

So did Samuel Bilbao pass his spare time on board the *Sea Foam*. There were only one or two cases of insubordination amongst the crew. Ulysses discovered that they'd had several stand-up fights on grog nights. And he was in a fearful rage when he heard of it. For if he had one weakness, it was his mad love of being umpire at a stand-up fight.

Excitement did not always prevail on the *Sea Foam*; sometimes the atmosphere became quite subdued. Hillary would sit for hours dreaming of Gabrielle, Mango Pango dreaming of her late mistress and Ulysses presumably thinking about his melancholy heathen kings and forlorn queens. The weather became terrifically hot. Even the crew became subdued in the heat of that tropic sea. It was only when the stars came out and a tiny breath of wind swept across the calm sea that things began to liven up on board. The sound of a faint, far-off song of England would come from the forecastle. Then Bully Beef, the boatswain's pet dog, would look through the scuppers and bark like a fiend at the mirrored stars that twinkled in the ocean as the *Sea Foam* plopped and the rigging wailed. It was on such nights that Hillary, Mango and Bilbao would sit together and talk or sing.

One night as the sun was sinking and throwing magic colours over the western sky-line, and the hot winds flapped the sails, making a far-away musical clamour, Hillary sat by the cuddy door reading poems to Ulysses and Mango Pango. As the apprentice read out Byron's *Don Juan*, Ulysses stamped his mighty feet for an encore. Then he read them passages from *The Corsair*, till Samuel Bilbao, with hand arched over his blue eyes, fell into a poetic mood, as Hillary's musical voice rippled off:

"She rose, she sprung, she clung to his embrace
Till his heart heaved beneath her hidden face,
He dared not raise to his that deep-blue eye."

And when he read out the description of Medora and Conrad's sad farewell—

"Her long fair hair lay floating o'er his arms
In all the wildness of dishevell'd charms"—

Ulysses almost wept. Hillary seemed to draw the romance of the sea out of those

sparkling stanzas.

"Wish we had the cove who wrote those things on this venture," said Bilbao; then he added: "Is it all true? Who wrote 'em?"

"It's all written by Byron; and it's as true as gospel!"

"Byron? Is that the cove's name? I wish we had him here; he and I would hit it well, I know," muttered Ulysses. Then he leaned forward and sang a song to Mango Pango's pretty eyes, as the youth read on. It was a strange sight to see that romantic swashbuckler of the seas so interested in all that Hillary read, and to hear his critical comments. The highly coloured, rebellions poetry, written mostly by anæmic youth, did not appeal to Samuel Bilbao at all.

To him adventures came as a matter of course. To be on that vessel bound for New Guinea to rescue a maid in distress did not excite his emotions unduly; it was all in the day's work. Hillary often noticed this fact about Bilbao. The apprentice was astonished at the calm way he spoke of rescuing Gabrielle from the heathen's clutches; of killing Macka and sending his bleached skull, carefully packed up, to old Everard in Bougainville, as a substantial proof that he'd killed the man and rescued the daughter, and so had fulfilled the contract according to terms.

Hillary, as time went on, was inclined to be nervous and impatient, and Mango Pango became extremely superstitious and swore that every shadow was a ghost. As for Ulysses, he roared with laughter about Solomon Island shadows, and when Mango spoke about such things he told her she was "potty." It may have been Bilbao's liberality with the cases of champagne that were found down in the lazaret that upset Hillary's nervous system. And if he did take a little more than was good for him he was to be excused, for the weather was terribly muggy and hot at times. Anyhow, Bilbao often cheered him up when he was down in the mouth.

"Don't get down in the mug, boy; we're making headway quick enough. The Rajah and his damned ship are not so far ahead. We'll be in New Guinea before him yet."

But Hillary knew that Ulysses did not control the winds of heaven. And yet at times it seemed to him that these same winds were blowing in perfect sympathy with his wishes as the *Sea Foam* went racing before the steady breeze.

On the evening of the eighth day out from Bougainville a typhoon blew the *Sea Foam* leagues out of her course to the north-west. Ulysses roared forth his oaths as only *he* could roar, while the crew slashed away at the tackle, endeavouring to relieve the thunderous flappings of the torn sails. Two boats were washed away. The boatswain nearly wept when the huge sea came and washed Bully Beef, his pet dog, overboard.

"Lower the only boat we've got left to save your b—— dog," roared Bilbao,

as he stood on deck, his vandyke beard and moustache stiff, and rippling to port as the wind struck him and mountainous seas rose level with the bulwark side to windward. The chief mate, gazing aloft with sunken, socket-like eyes, seemed almost pleased with the idea that the *Sea Foam* might any moment turn turtle and so cut short his eternal fear about the jury's verdict if ever his duplicity got him into the clutches of the law. He was slowly fading to a shadow through all the worry that Bilbao had brought on to his trembling shoulders. Even at that early date a decided looseness in his brass-bound reefer packet was noticeable, clearly indicating the shrinkage of his once plump form.

Mango Pango, hearing the seas beating against the schooner's side, looked through the cuddy's port-hole, and seeing the wild confusion, as the crew slashed at the wreckage aloft while the schooner heeled over, cried aloud: "Awaie! Awaie! O tellible *matagai* (storm)! O Bilbalos, saver poor Mango Pango!"

"Don't cry, Mango, it's all right now," said Hillary, who had just crept into the cuddy from the deck, for he too had been taking a hand in the desperate work of that buffeted crew. In half-an-hour every man on board was thanking his lucky stars that the *Sea Foam* was still plunging along on her keel. Her storm-sails had been set and the taut jib-sails were just keeping her steady with head on to the seas after the first great onslaught of the elements. Though the wind had blown across the heavens with inconceivable velocity, not a cloud had smudged the face of the sky.

An hour before dawn the typhoon had quite blown itself out. Only the universal heave and tumble of the ocean swell told of the tremendous buffeting an hour before. The moon was sinking to the south-west. Ulysses, Hillary and the melancholy mate stood on the poop.

"Glad that blow's over," said Samuel Bilbao, as the mate's obsequious voice echoed his own thankfulness. Then they all stared seaward, for the look-out man on the forecastle head roared out: "Land on the starboard bow!" That cry caused tremendous consternation amongst all on board. It was evident that the *Sea Foam* had got many leagues out of her course. The mate put it down to the typhoon, and swore that it wasn't the fault of his navigation. Anyway, Ulysses gave him the benefit of the doubt. Even Mango Pango stood amidships on deck with the crew as they all huddled together and stared at the foam-flecked reefs of some strange isle that loomed up about a mile away to the south-south-west.

"What isle's that, for God's sake?" said Bilbao, as he got his chart out. For he had quite thought that he was far away from any islands.

"Can't make its reckoning; must be some small island off the Admiralty Group," said the mate in a hollow voice, as he leaned over Bilbao's arm and stared at the chart. Half-an-hour after that all hands stood by the anchor, for the *Sea Foam* was plunging dead on for the mighty burst of spray that rose high over

the barrier reefs. Then they once more stared in surprise, for quite visible to the naked eye lay the wreck of a ship, a steamer, on the reefs, over which the thundering seas were still breaking. It was easy enough to see that she wasn't lying calmly at anchor, because of the great white-ridged line of curling breakers that rose and went right over her listed decks.

"It's some tramp steamer run ashore," said the mate in a hollow, sepulchral voice; "a Dutch or a German boat, I think," he added, as he looked through the telescope.

An hour after Bilbao shouted: "Stand by! Let go!" and in a few moments the *Sea Foam* swung safely at anchor in a few fathoms of water to the north-west of the strange isle.

Hillary looked mournful enough as he thought of the delay.

"Don't you worry, it's all right; besides, there's sure to be a dead calm after that blow last night, and we may just as well lie here as anywhere else, eh?" said Bilbao as he rubbed his hands with delight. For his all-embracing mind had already conjured up visions of that wreck being possibly crammed up to the hatches with chests full of gold and a valuable cargo of pearls. All day long the *Sea Foam* lay off the island, as Ulysses stared through his telescope to see if he could discover signs of life on the derelict, or on the island. He wasn't taking any risks by going ashore, or going on that wreck before he was quite certain that no one was about. He knew it was quite possible that the original skipper of the *Sea Foam* had been released from the *calaboose* by the German consulate, and that he and the missing *Sea Foam* were already being followed up by the skipper in another hired schooner.

The sallow mate clutched Ulysses's arm and nearly dropped with fear as he too looked through the telescope. Then he wailed: "You know, Captain Bilbao, they might be after us and would just as likely be there on that island in wait, knowing what you are."

Ulysses only responded by shouting the irrelevant lines of some sea-chantey. Then he said, as he stared once more through the glass: "Must have all gone away in the ship's boats. There's no one aboard that wreck, I'll swear." His eyes brightened over his prospects.

Then he smacked Hillary on the back and shouted: "Don't be downhearted! I'm damned if we haven't anchored off a treasure-trove wreck! You and yer pretty Gabrielle will be able to keep one of the finest seraglios in the South Seas if all goes well."

Hillary couldn't help smiling at the big man's levity as he too looked towards the derelict and watched the grandly picturesque sight of the curling breakers beating against the hulk.

Every now and again, as dawn stole over the seas, they could hear the long,

low swelling roar and thunder as a big swell collided with the far-off barrier reefs.

"P'r'aps it's the *Bird of Paradise* run ashore, and cursed Macka's on that isle with Gabrielle, hidden in those palms," was the thought that struck Hillary. He was certainly impressionable, and if there was a peculiar construction to be placed on a commonplace incident, Hillary was just the person to do it. Even he realised the foolishness of his thoughts, for the wreck was that of a steamer, not a sailing ship. Samuel Bilbao got terribly impatient; the long tropic day seemed endless. He was awaiting the friendly dusk of evening before he lowered the boat and went forth to overhaul the wreck.

A quarter of an hour after sunset a boat left the *Sea Foam.* In it were Ulysses, the mate, two sailors and Hillary. After half-an-hour's hard rowing they softly beached on the silver sand of the isle, just where the wreck lay.

"*Salier!* A German steamer!" whispered the mate in subdued, frightened tone, as he slowly made out the big black letters on the grey-painted stern. Then the five of them softly walked round the sands on the shoreward side, where the sprays and seas would no longer drench them. All was perfectly quiet on the shore; only the noise of the incoming sea swell and the soughing of the high winds in the belt of mangoes and coco-palms disturbed the silence.

The derelict lay right over, her deck like a wooden wall on the shoreward side. In a moment Ulysses, the mate and Hillary had clambered over the reefs and climbed over the listed bulwarks. There was something uncanny about the silence of the mouldy-smelling saloon as the three of them crept into it and climbed along the listed floor. Ulysses went about his job as though he had done little else all his life than search wrecks on uncharted isles in the South Seas. Flash! flash! went his lantern as he went down into the lazaret hold and began to peer into all the likely places for treasure.

"What's that, O Maker of the Universe?" wailed the mate, as he nearly fainted and fell forward so abruptly that he almost knocked Hillary off his feet.

"What's what?" said Samuel Bilbao, as he flashed his lantern in the direction of the mate's pointing finger. "Why, it's a derned old tom cat!" said Ulysses as he flashed his bull's-eye lantern on a monster fluffy black cat. It looked at them all with its green, flashing eyes that had so frightened the mate and yawned! It was the ship's cat. There it lay, as plump as might be, and all round it were the bones of mice and rats that had evidently made the beast decide to stop on its old ship in preference to going ashore to catch the fierce, sharp-beaked cockatoos that swarmed on the isle.

As soon as the mate had taken a pull at his brass whisky flask and recovered his self-possession they continued their search. Bilbao went down into the main hold. Hillary and the mate held the taut rope as he swung himself down, down into those inky depths. After a deal of hunting and swearing Ulysses yelled out:

"Haul me up!" In a few moments his curly head appeared above the rim of the hatchway. Then he uttered a tremendous oath that harmonised with the look of disgust on his face. He had discovered that someone had been there before them and had evidently searched the hulk in a most drastic fashion, for they had emptied the hold and had cleared off almost every movable article of value. All Ulysses managed to find was one case of Bass's pale ale, a pair of the late skipper's sea-boots and a few mouldy articles of clothing under the bunks in the forecastle.

"By thunder, let's clear out of this!" said Ulysses as he looked into the eyes of the sallow mate and breathed his disappointment. Samuel Bilbao had really thought that at last he'd come across a prize. It was only natural he should think that a ship sailing across the South Seas should have some kind of valuable cargo on board. So many times had he sat in grog shanties and listened to wonderful tales told by old sailors who had found "treasure troves" lying about on the reefs of uncharted isles of the Southern Seas.

"Blimey! waiting all day long to search a bloomin' wryck hon an hiland, and only faund a five-shilling case of Bass's ale—and sour at that—and a bob's worth of old clothes," groaned the Cockney boatswain, as he expectorated viciously over the mate's head. They were standing on the shore again, almost ankle-deep in the shining coral sands. Bilbao and the two sailors who had watched on the shore while the search was on were looking up at the rigging, and the huge listed funnel when they received a shock.

"God in heaven, what's that!" said the mate so suddenly that everyone instinctively turned to make a bolt from some unspeakable horror.

Even Ulysses looked a bit startled as they all stood stiff, like chiselled figures, staring inland. There, before their eyes, not three hundred yards away, on a little hill, a dark figure was jumping about, whirling and waving its hands.

"Holy Moses!" said one.

"Gawd forgive me sins!" breathed another.

"It's a phantom of the seas—a nigger phantom," wailed the mate.

The figure was certainly a dark man, and perfectly nude; he was quite visible, for the moon was just coming up over the horizon to the south-west, sending ghostly fires on the wreck's broken masts and torn rigging and canvas.

"It's Macka!—gone mad! He's got Gabrielle Everard somewhere back there in those palms!" gasped Hillary.

"No!" said Samuel Bilbao before he had recovered from his astonishment and realised the obvious absurdity of the young apprentice's remark.

"Why, it's a maniac Kanaka!" said Bilbao, who had started coolly to walk up the shore so that he could discern the features of the leaping figure, that was still waving its hands and behaving generally like a frenzied lunatic.

"What the 'ell's the matter with ye?" roared Bilbao.

Still the figure danced, and only the echoes of Ulysses' big voice and the screech of disturbed cockatoos in the banyans responded.

In a moment the dark figure had bolted. In another moment Ulysses, Hillary, the boatswain and the two sailors had joined in the chase, all rushing like mad after the flying figure. Only the sorrowful mate stood still on the sands just by the wreck, his loose clothing flapping over his shrunken figure as though he was some mysterious scarecrow left there by the late crew.

Hillary led the way in that chase, Bilbao following just behind, yelling forth mighty bets as to the winner, his big, sea-booted feet stirring the silvery sands into clouds of moon-lit sparkle as he thundered behind the apprentice.

"It's Macka! It's Macka Rajah!" Bilbao roared, as he stopped a second and held his stomach, that heaved with a mirth which seemed considerably out of place at such a time. Suddenly the flying figure fell down. The white men, who were rushing down a steep incline, could not stay themselves, and in a moment they had all fallen on top of the gasping, terrified figure.

"O papalagi! Talofa! No kille me! Me nicer Samoan mans. Me shipwreck; savee mee!" yelled the frightened native, as he felt the full weight of the white men on his recumbent form. There was something so appealing and sincere in his voice and broken English that they all realised in a moment that the poor devil was not to blame for his lonely position on the island.

When all was safe, and they had led the trembling Samoan castaway back to the sands, the chief mate breathed a sigh of relief and gave the poor castaway a drink from his whisky flask.

It turned out that he was a Samoan sailor, one of the crew of the wreck that lay on the reefs. She had left Apia about six months before, bound for the Bismarck Archipelago, and had run ashore in a typhoon. The German crew had taken to the boats whilst the Samoan sailor had lain ill under the palms (just like Germans). And so he had awakened to find himself alone on the island.

"Where's all the cargo, and the skipper's property?" said Bilbao, as a great hope sprang up in his breast, for he thought that perhaps the native had taken them off the wreck and hidden them on the island. Then the native told them that about two moons after the wreck had been lying on the shore a fleet of canoes sighted her and came out of their course to the islands.

"They came one day, again next days and next days, for a longer times," said the castaway.

It appeared that Tampo, the Samoan, for that was his name, was too frightened to show himself to the Malabar natives, who toiled from sunrise to sunset in robbing the wreck of her cargo. The poor native well knew that many of the natives of the isles in the coral seas were inveterate cannibals. And he didn't feel inclined to take any risk of being cooked and eaten. He preferred to hide in the

tropical growth till a white man's ship sighted him or the wreck. And certainly he was wise in taking this course.

The castaway was delighted when Ulysses said: "Come along, old Talofa, get yer traps together, pack yer fig-leaf up and come aboard."

A few minutes after that the lonely isle was once more uninhabited. There was no trace of humanity excepting the wreck on the shore. And long before dawn flushed the east with its silver radiance the *Sea Foam* was flying with all possible sail set for the coast of New Guinea.

"It wasn't old Macka Rajah gone mad after all," said Bilbao to Hillary, as the apprentice stood dreaming on the deck in the morning.

"It wasn't a treasure trove on the reefs, crammed up to the hatchway with chests of golden doubloons and pieces of eight," Hillary retorted quietly. Even Mango Pango, that rival of how many sad heathen Penelopes, revealed her pearly teeth when she understood the meaning of Hillary's sally.

Samuel Bilbao only laughed, then said: "Boy, we're only about three or four days' sail from the coastal village where your Rajah Macka has bolted."

"Only three or four days before I know! Only three or four days before I see Gabrielle, and find out—what?" were some of the thoughts that flashed through Hillary's brain as Bilbao made that momentous announcement. And it was true enough: the *Sea Foam* was slowly but surely nearing the god-forsaken barbarian forest coast of the land where the ex-missionary and kidnapper was supposed to have taken Gabrielle Everard.

CHAPTER XI—KIDNAPPED

On the night when Rajah Koo Macka sat in old Everard's bungalow parlour and successfully threw dust in the ex-sailor's eyes and opium and rum in Gabrielle's tea, the Papuan half-caste's ship lay out in the bay of Bougainville, ready to sail at a moment's notice.

It may be difficult to believe that a white girl could be successfully kidnapped from her father's homestead, carried half-a-mile across thick jungle to the shore, thrown into a boat and rowed out to a ship that was ready to carry her off to New Guinea; but however incredible it may seem, that's exactly what did happen. And this business was accomplished by swarthy half-caste sailors

who were experts at the kidnapping game. These kidnappers were men who had devoted their lives to stealing and enticing ignorant native girls, youths, children and native men from the Solomon Isles and elsewhere by hundreds, nay, thousands, carrying the boys and men off to be sold as cheap plantation labour, and the girls for the seraglios of heathen chiefs (and sometimes seraglios of white men) in remote isles of the North and South Pacific. And it was easy enough to carry on the slave trade in those parts, for the German officials of Bougainville cared little for their prestige so long as they received a sufficiently large bribe from the slave skippers who prowled along the coasts of Bougainville and Guadacanar, etc. The old white-whiskered German missionary round at B—— made a tremendous fuss about the depredations of the tribal head-hunters who went off to the mountain villages to secure their terrible trophies, but the depredations of the kidnapping thugs, as they crept ashore and stole girls and youths from the villages, were broadly winked at.

And these remarks do not apply only to the Solomon Group, but also to islands as civilised as Samoa and Fiji. So Rajah Koo Macka and his type calmly carried on their hideous traffic almost in broad daylight. But still the Rajah, on the present occasion, felt that it would be a bit too risky to attempt to kidnap Gabrielle while the sun was up, since she was a sacred white maid. Old Everard was therefore honoured by that last visit from him under cover of night. For the Rajah was an experienced hand at the game. He had prowled round the isles of the Pacific from the Coral Sea to the tropic of Capricorn for years looking for good-looking native girls and men who would make profitable merchandise, and so had had many narrow squeaks, although he always carried a large assortment of religious tracts about with him to allay suspicion. One may easily imagine, therefore, that the Rajah did not look upon the kidnapping of a white girl as something very much outside the ordinary routine of his profession. Indeed, he well knew that white men by scores indulged in the blackbirding trade, sailing under the slave flag as they too prowled the Southern Seas kidnapping people of his race. And so, as far as the actual kidnapping of a white girl is concerned, he was only doing what the white men did themselves.

When at last old Everard lay in drunken insensibility on his settee the Rajah was master of the situation. His hired kidnappers were within call.

In the little that he had seen of Gabrielle he had realised perfectly that his old game of impassioned looks and hypocritical phrases were utterly useless where she was concerned. He soon realised that it was one thing to succeed in making a white girl fascinated by his handsome presence, but quite another to make her cast aside the elementary principles of her race. And so he had formulated his plans.

All that evening, while old Everard had been sitting in his arm-chair listen-

ing to the Papuan Rajah's sombre denunciations of his sinful habits, and Gabrielle stared at his swarthy, handsome face, fascinated by its assumed noble expression, three stalwart Kanakas squatted patiently, as they smoked, not twenty yards from Everard's bungalow. They were the forcible part of the Rajah's go-ashore retinue, all muscular men. And as they sat there they wondered how much longer the Rajah was going to keep them waiting for one cursed Christian white girl, when they had kidnapped hundreds of native girls and strong men in half the time. But their patience, that greatest of virtues, was at last rewarded. First the solitary heathen kidnapping thugs saw shadows slip across the dim-lit bungalow window. "Ugh! Me savoo!" said the big man of giant mirth, as he got his strangling rope ready in case the expected victim was obstreperous. As the three thugs got ready for the fray the first act of the wicked drama was in full progress inside the parlour. Gabrielle was already swaying and clutching at the air as she felt the influence of some terrible sleep creeping over her. She fell towards the window and clutched at the curtains in her endeavour to awaken her father. But it was too late! The old ex-sailor only smiled in his sleep; but he must have heard the terrified cry of "Father! Father!" since he muttered "Gabby, go ter sleep!" And she did go to sleep!

The Rajah had fixed things up in no time and then appeared outside the bungalow with the unconscious girl in his arms. As he laid her gently down beneath the palms, the kidnappers crept out of the jungle thickets, stretched out their neat little rope ambulance (always carried for intractable patients) and bundled Gabrielle into its folds.

While this was going on Gob, a dwarf, kept watch, and Rajah Macka kept his eyes on his Papuan retinue. They were men of his own race, and he knew their vile instincts, for was he not one of them? And so he took good care not to let the girl out of his sight. When all was settled, and Gabrielle lay insensible, secure in the thug-ambulance, they lifted her carefully and hurried across the slopes, passing by the lagoon where she and Hillary had embarked in the canoe to go out to the three-masted derelict. It was on that very night that Hillary and Gabrielle were to meet each other, and the apprentice had kept the appointment, only to wait in vain for the girl's appearance. But had he not in his usual impatience, walked a mile up the shore away from the trysting-place he could not have failed to see the kidnappers pass and so might have saved Gabrielle in a most dramatic fashion.

When Macka and his crew arrived on the shore they flung the girl into the waiting boat, and in less than an hour Gabrielle was a prisoner on board the *Bird of Paradise*.

Not even the violent bump of the boat against the vessel's side disturbed Gabrielle ere they carried her helpless form up the rope gangway and on to the

deck of the Rajah's ship. When she awoke, that same night, she could hardly believe her senses. She looked across the gloomy, dim-lit room and thought she'd overslept herself. She fancied she had fallen asleep in her father's parlour, for there was the settee in the corner—but why was he not on the settee? She noticed that it was still dark, only a dim oil-lamp burning, hanging strangely, it seemed, from the ceiling when it should have been standing on the table.

She rubbed her eyes and stared once more. Her bed seemed to move. What did it all mean? The settee was lined with blue plush; it should really have been a very shabby brown. She jumped to her feet and gave a scream as she spied the little port-holes on the starboard side just opposite her—she had realised the truth, that she was in the cuddy (saloon) of some vessel that was rolling along away at sea!

"Don't, Gabriel-ar-le, solawa soo!" said a voice very softly.

It was the skipper of the *Bird of Paradise*—Rajah Koo Macka. He had been asleep in the cabin just near and had leapt from his bunk at hearing Gabrielle's frightened scream.

"Where am I? Oh dear! Save me! What's it all mean?" Even Gabrielle laid her hand on her fluttering heart as she muttered those words in a weak voice at finding herself out at sea in a ship's cuddy instead of in the security of her home.

There was an intense note of appeal in the girl's voice, such a note as would have touched the heart of the vilest of men, but Macka never moved a muscle. He had stolen so many girls, men and youths, watched their tears, heard their heartrending appeals, and thrown their bodies over the vessel's side when they had died of terror and malaria down in the stinking, hot-fevered hold, that it seemed nothing awful to him to see a girl kneel before him and weep.

He was overjoyed that the girl was awake. He had quite thought that she had been doped too much and that there was a possibility of her never recovering sensibility again. As she stood before him, with the oil lamp swinging to and fro to the heave and roll of the flying ship, Gabrielle's eyes, which had been agleam with fright, suddenly changed, and shone with a new strength. She had realised, with a woman's unerring instinct, the uselessness of appealing to the man before her. As she steadily returned his gaze, the dark man saw the courage of her father's race.

A cowed look leapt into his face. Even in that swift glance he had realised that all would not go as smoothly as he had anticipated. To steal helpless Papuans, Samoans, Marquesans, Tahitian maids, to defile them, pitch them overboard when they were dead or dying, and amuse himself by revolver shots at the poor, floating, bobbing bodies was one thing; but to steal a white girl and defile her was quite another. That much he realised most forcibly, for before he could realise anything more than that Gabrielle had rushed out of the cabin and bolted.

She raced along the ship's rolling deck. She looked about her and called loudly in the dark, still hoping that one of the crew might be a white man. When she saw the fierce, mop-headed, dark-faced men rush out of the forecastle at hearing her terrified screams she almost collapsed in her despair. For one moment she stood still and gazed up at the bellying sails as they swayed along beneath the high moon. Nothing but the illimitable sky-lines gleamed around her. She heard the moan of the dark tossing ocean. She did not hesitate, not the slightest indecision preceded her act—splash! she had leapt overboard! It all happened in a few seconds. The Rajah and the mulatto mate at once gave orders for the crew to heave to and lower a boat. It seemed ages to the Rajah as the swarthy crew climbed slowly about like dusky ghosts, as though they had a century in which to fulfil his orders. At this moment the captain of the blackbirder (to give him his correct title) revealed his solitary virtue; he could see the girl's struggling form in the dark waters astern. Not a sound came from the girl's lips, only the tossing white hands were visible on the moon-lit waters—then they vanished—she had gone! In a second he had pulled off his coat and boots and plunged into the sea. The men of his race could swim like fish, and dive too, for they took to the water before they could toddle. Even as it was, the Rajah had to dive twice before he could grip hold of Everard's daughter. He had a tremendous struggle to get the girl back on board, for the sea was a bit heavy that night. When he did get her on deck the half-caste mate and the crew stared on her prostrate figure in astonishment. She had been kept from their sight till then.

Lying there on the hatchway, her white face turned towards the sky, she looked like some angel who had mysteriously fallen from heaven and lay dead before them. They were a superstitious lot, and several of them began to moan some heathen death chant. Even the Rajah was strangely influenced at seeing that pallid face, the drenched, dishevelled hair, the curved, pale lips. The bluish tropical moonlight bathed her form like a wonderful halo. He looked at the watching crew, a fierce light in his eyes. In a moment they had all gone, slinking away. "Awaie!" he said to one who, bolder than the rest, looked back over his shoulder. And then, as the crew obeyed the mulatto mate's orders to get the vessel under way once more, the Rajah lifted Gabrielle's prostrate form and carrying her into the cuddy laid her down on the low saloon table. Grabbing a decanter, he poured a small drop of spirit between her lips. Then he closed the door so softly that only the sudden disappearance of the stream of light on the deck from the lamp inside told that the door *had* been closed.

They were alone, he and she—the frail, helpless girl in the vile power of passion and hypocrisy. For a second the Papuan Rajah gazed around the saloon. Even he was startled by the look on the swarthy face that gazed back on him from the long mirror—his own reflection. Stooping over the recumbent form,

he gently rubbed her hands. They were cold and very limp. He began to think that it was too late, that she was dead. Gently pulling the wet bodice open, he slowly unfastened the blue strings of her underclothing. He gazed in silence on the curves of her breasts, which were faintly revealed to his eyes by the dim, swaying oil lamp. That fragile whiteness seemed to appeal even to him; the mute lips, the closed eyelids, the helpless attitude paralysed the dark cruelty of his natural self. And it is only, we must think, because God made all men, be they black or white, that he was loyal to the great trust that the irony of inscrutable Fate had placed in his hands—he of all men on earth.

The seas were beating against the vessel's side as she lay there. The vessel pitched and rolled as once more it started on its course, and as it rolled the girl's recumbent form moved and swayed to the lurch of the table. Her drenched bronze-gold hair fell in a mass to the cuddy floor, the brown-stockinged ankles fully revealed through the disarrangement of the soaking skirt.

Could anyone have peeped from the deck through the cuddy port-hole they would have seen the Rajah bending over the helpless girl. A strange fire flashed in his eyes as he gazed and gazed and gently rubbed where her heart lay. The gleam in his eyes died away, but still he watched, waiting anxiously. His face was set and wild looking. "Ar-a va loo!" ("She's gone!") he muttered. He tried to feel the pulse of the wrist, but he dropped it with a sigh. At last it came! His hand visibly trembled as he lifted her arms up and gently spread them away from her body. Then he put his ear to her heart and listened—there was a sound like a tiny echo coming from the remotest distance. Throb! throb! it came—Gabrielle's soul was hovering between heaven and earth—in more senses than one. Then the throb ceased as though for an eternity of time, but once more it came—throb! throb! throb! And before the Rajah was prepared for it Gabrielle's eyes were staring at him!

Instinctually the girl's helpless fingers half clutched the wet fringe of her loosened bodice. And, strange as it may seem, the heathen Papuan even *helped* her cold fingers to close the delicate folds.

The instinctive action of the girl told him more of her true character than a thousand dissertations on racial codes, morals and inherent virtue could have done. In a flash he had realised that if he wanted to gain her respect it had to be gained by astute cunning based on strict emotional principles. Recovering his embarrassment, he rolled his eyes and blinked—which is the equivalent of a blush in New Guinea folk. He was really pleased to see that she was recovering. Immediately flinging himself on his knees, he sobbed out: "Oh Gabriel-ar-le, Marsoo cowan, nicer beauty voumna!" In his excitement he had lapsed into execrable pidgin-English. He heard her sigh. He fondled her hand. "'Tis I who saved you," he murmured. He fancied that he was a hero. In his perverted ignorance

he saw Gabrielle no longer a kidnapped girl on his ship, but a maiden whom he had saved from the cruel seas. He was bold enough to press her hand to his lips.

Gabrielle watched him. She was terribly ill, too dazed to protest. She was alone on the seas with this man and what could she do? Her final response to his miserable hypocrisy was to burst into a violent fit of weeping.

For three or four days she was quite unable to move. It was only through the careful nursing of the Malayan cabin-boy, a frizzly headed, bright-eyed little fellow, that she was at last encouraged to take food. He was a child, and so he appealed to Gabrielle. The very innocence of his eyes as he stared in delightful curiosity at her golden hair and white arms when he crept in with the food to her bunk cheered her as much as she *could* be cheered under such circumstances.

Sometimes she would lie there helpless and think that she was mad, strange fancies floating through her brain. And sometimes Macka would step softly into the dingy saloon and play on the melancholy organ that he had once used in his tribal mission-rooms. His voice would tremble with passionate appeal and subtle seductiveness as he breathed forth Malayan melodies that haunted Gabrielle's ears. Those melodies had a terrible influence over the girl, and one night when the vessel was rolling wildly, being buffeted along before a typhoon, the girl screamed out from her bunk: "Stop! Stop! I'll go mad if you sing that strange thing again!"

Then the Rajah ceased as obediently as a scolded child and softly crept away. He knew the potent magic of those heathen Malayan melodies! He knew! He knew! And when he had passed out on to the vessel's deck Gabrielle called out: "Tombo! Tombo!" In a moment the little Papuan boy rushed into her cabin.

"Whater you wanter? Whater matter, nicer vovams?"

"Tombo, what's that shadow-thing that runs about the deck at night? I saw it through the port-hole last night." Then she said: "And I heard faint cries, wails. What was it? What does it all mean, Tombo?"

Tombo made no reply with his lips, but he softly nestled up against the girl and looked up into her eyes with terrible earnestness. Then he shook his head and said: "I looker after you, Misser Gaberlelle." Suddenly the boy rushed from the girl's side and out of the cuddy in fright.

Gabrielle listened and heard a scream: the Rajah had called the boy and, meeting him on the deck, had kicked him. The Papuan skipper had noticed that the kid was a bit too communicative with his kidnapped prisoner. Possibly he thought that the boy might let out the truth about the ship and give Gabrielle some hint as to why it sailed by night with all lights out, as it tacked on its course far off the beaten track of trading ships.

It was quite a week before Gabrielle ventured out of the small cuddy's berth and entered the saloon. Even when she did so she was apparently so weak that

she was obliged to secure the assistance of little Tombo, who held her hand as she wandered about. The Rajah immediately began his sinuous overtures and muttered violent protestations of love into her ears. At times the Papuan could hardly conceal his temper when the girl persistently pestered him with questions, asking him where the *Bird of Paradise* was bound for.

"You noa worry. You are all right. I take you across the seas and some days you go back to your peoples—when you lover me!" he would say, as he gave a look of deep meaning that the girl persistently pretended not to understand. He would not allow her to walk out on deck unless he were close by. His hungry eyes seemed ever on the alert. Probably he had a fixed idea in his brain that the girl would make another attempt to take her life. And still he swore most earnestly by the virtue of the Christian apostles that he had only kidnapped her from her father's homestead because of his overpowering love for her.

"You know not what men of my race love like, what we would do for a white girl such as you, Gabri-ar-le," he muttered, as he glanced sideways at her.

Gabrielle saw the look in those flashing eyes of his. She trembled as she realised how completely she was in his power, and how once she had been fascinated by his voice and his handsome mien. Even then, at times, she half believed that he had repented the wrong he had done her. And the girl was hardly to blame for her credulity, for he never tired of pouring his flamboyant rhetoric in Malayan *vers libre* into her ears. He had some mighty faith in his maudlin Mohammedanistic babblings over love, winds, seas, stars, night, God and death. He was as crammed with pretended artlessness as he was of villainy.

Sometimes the girl felt strangely calm. The religious element that brings faith and comfort to men and women in the direst moments of life was part of her special birthright. She became more resigned to her lot and even went so far as to read some of the old books that she had discovered in the cuddy locker. So did she endeavour to stifle her thoughts. Many, many times she thought of the apprentice. What did he think of her sudden absence from Bougainville, of her not turning up at the trysting-place by the lagoon? She thought of his impulsive nature. She guessed that he must have gone straight to her home to see what had become of her. She thought of a thousand things that he would do in his attempt to discover her whereabouts. She imagined how her father raved, and must still be raving, perhaps grieving over her disappearance. But she never dreamed of all that really happened after she had left Bougainville in the blackbirding ship. When she recalled the incidents of the old derelict lying on the rocks off Bougainville and of Hillary's boyish but earnest declaration of love she trembled in her anguish. She remembered the look in his eyes, the wild, fond sayings that had come spontaneously to his lips. Then she laid her head down on the cuddy table and wept bitterly.

One night when the *Bird of Paradise* had been at sea about two weeks the heat was so terrific that she implored the Rajah to let her sit out on deck. He was obdurate and would not hear of such a thing. "No, no, *putih bunga* (white flower)" was his only reply, as he lapsed into the Malayan tongue, speaking as though to himself. Then he walked away and disappeared forward. In a moment Gabrielle made up her mind and had slipped out of the cuddy, determined to go on deck and breathe the cool night air. She almost cried out as she rushed, plomp! into the arms of the half-caste mate. "Savo, maro, Cowan, bunga," whispered the burly mulatto, as he lost his mental balance at seeing the beauty of the girl. He caught her in his arms, clutched her flesh like some fierce animal, put his vile lips to her white throat and breathed hotly on her face. He tried to press his blubbery lips against her own. In a moment the girl had managed to release herself from that hateful clasp.

"What's the matter, my pretty putih bunga, marva awaya?" said Koo Macka, suddenly coming up, as the mulatto mate slipped hastily along the deck out of sight.

"Nothing is the matter; I simply felt ill, faint; I'm better now," said Gabrielle fearfully, as she swiftly realised that it would not do to make an enemy of the mulatto mate. For a moment the Rajah looked suspiciously around him, then he sternly ordered her to go back at once into the saloon.

And so it was that Gabrielle sat in her bunk that night and stared through the port-hole so that she might get a breath of the cool midnight breeze that drifted at intervals across the hot tropic seas.

The stars were shining in their thousands as she sat there watching and crying softly to herself. She could plainly see the bluish, ghost-like gleam of the horizon, far away, as she stared out of the cabin port-hole. It was then that she once more heard a mysterious wail coming from somewhere out in the silence of the night. Her lips went dry with fright as she gazed and listened in her terror. She distinctly observed a shadow slip across the deck. Then the wail came again and was followed by a deep, retching moaning and sounds of the hushed voices of men who were speaking in a strange language. "What does it all mean?" she muttered to herself, as once more her ears caught the indistinct utterances of agony. And still she listened and felt quite sure that what she heard was no trick of her imagination, but was some last appeal of helplessness to relentless men ere they strangled their victim. In the terror of all that she felt her overwrought brain became strangely calm. She sat quite still and watched in a dazed way, crouching in her bunk, her eyes peering through the port-hole. She gazed up at the swaying sails as they glided on beneath the stars. The wind had shifted to the south-west, for she saw the canvas veer and darken patches of starry sky as the yards went round and the crew aloft chanted some Malayan chantey. So weirdly bright was

the tropic sky that the rigging and the forms of the toiling crew were distinctly outlined with the decks, sails, spars. She could even discern the long cracks of the deck planks as the ethereal light of far-off worlds pulsed in the sky and sent a glimmer down between the masts and sails. A fearful curiosity overcame the fright she first felt as she saw three stalwart, mop-headed men standing by the lifted hatchway amidships. The scene was directly along the deck facing the cuddy's cabin port-hole from which she stared. The sight that met her astonished eyes made her tremble: the three swarthy, demon-like men were grabbing the bodies of the dead which were being passed up from the vessel's fetid hold! Some of the crew were down below busily pushing those limp, pathetic figures up to the outstretched hands of those on deck. Gabrielle knew they were dead bodies, there was no mistaking their limpness as the heads of the silent forms fell first in one direction then in another. And still they pushed up the limp bodies of dead native girls and youths, and one by one passed them along to that crew of sea-thugs, who carelessly pushed them over the bulwarks into the sea! Gabrielle distinctly heard the splash as they fell.

She half fancied that she heard long-drawn groans coming from the direction of the sea. Nor was she mistaken, for they pitched the dying overboard too! The crew of slavers were not over-sensitive in such matters.

The girl was still staring, dumbfounded, when the men softly closed the hatchway over that terrible drama of life below. Then she heard the dull thuds of the locks being secured and rammed home. They even placed the thick canvas covering over the hatchway again and so closed the cracks that mercifully had let a breath of fresh air into that breathing mass of shrieking merchandise—kidnapped native girls, men and women! As soon as Gabrielle saw those demon undertakers steal away into the shadows towards the forecastle she realised that it was no nightmare, no horror of an imaginary world that she had felt and witnessed. It was all real enough. In a flash her brain had realised all that it really meant. She remembered how her own father had talked about the horrors of the blackbirding ships, and how the huddled victims died in the fetid hold. She recalled how he had even confessed that he too had once dabbled in the slave traffic. And as she remembered she saw herself as a child again, listening in wonder at her father's knees as he proudly told his beachcomber guests of the "glorious good old blackbirding days."

After seeing that sight Gabrielle became seriously ill, mentally as well as physically. She lay sleepless through the night and longed for forgetfulness. The scene she had witnessed as they cast the kidnapped dead into the sea had completely horrified her. In her mind over and over again she found herself counting the dead bodies she had seen thrown overboard. It took her that way. She had often heard the mission men talk about the cruelty of the kidnapping business,

but it required such a sight as she had witnessed to make her realise the truth of what she had heard. True enough, it is hard for anyone to realise the horrors of the slave traffic till they see the actual results with their own eyes.

Possibly the great poet will never be born who could write the poem that would adequately describe the Brown Man's Burden so that the Western world could read and realise that the White Man's Burden is not the only one that men have to bear through spreading Western principles among the islands of remote seas.

Gabrielle got out of her bunk that same night and pushed every available article of furniture against her cabin door. She realised what she was in for. It was the first hint she had had that she was not the only wretched victim that trembled in fear on that ship. And as she lay sleepless, thinking of everything and of those trembling, terror-stricken girls and youths that made the cargo in the airless, fevered hold not twenty feet from her bunk, she half envied her own terrible position.

Next day when the Rajah noticed the look of horror in the girl's eyes as he rattled off his *vers libre* he retired as gracefully as possible and quickly arrayed himself in his most attractive attire of Rajahship.

He placed the rich, scarlet-hued turban on his skull. He tied the yellow waist-sash about him so that the bow fell coquettishly down at his left hip. He even cleaned his teeth with cigar ash and manipulated an artistic curl at the ends of his dark moustache. Then he proceeded to haunt Gabrielle again. He read the Bible aloud; he put such well-simulated sincerity into his melodious voice that Gabrielle rubbed her eyes and half wondered if she had dreamed that terrible sight of the night before. As she sat at the low cuddy table and the dark man sat right opposite her with the knees of his long, thin legs bunched beneath the table, she listened to his splendid lies. He went so far as to tell her how he had a great reputation for good works, of how he roamed the seas searching to redress the wrongs done to helpless girls, men and native women! He swore that his ship roamed the South Seas expressly to attempt to put down slave traffic! He knew! he knew! that the girl had some inkling of the kind of vessel she was on.

"Gabrielle," said he, "you knower not my troubles, and how when I do capture slave-ship I have to rescue the victims and put them down in the hold of this vessel till sucher time as I can take them to some isle where they can be safe till they are returned to their own people!"

"Could it be true?" was Gabrielle's inward thought, as she watched the man's face and saw nothing but the light of a proud achievement in his eyes. And it must be admitted that there was some truth in all that he told the girl about his reputation. For was it not well known from Apia to Dutch New Guinea that Rajah Koo Macka was a great Christian Rajah? And was it not true that he had

been in receipt of thousands of pounds that had been collected through the kind medium of Christian societies who were interested in the noble endeavour to put down slave traffic in the South Seas? And who can deny the fact that thousands of men and women in England had unconsciously contributed towards the expenses incurred by the Rajah in fitting out his ship, the *Bird of Paradise*, for the sole purpose of abducting natives and for following his monstrous inclinations.

And there he sat in his cosy cuddy, a splendid example of the civilised, converted Papuan invested with a hideous power by weak-minded charity-givers who saw no just cause for their charity in their own country.

The Rajah was a living libel on true missionary work and on the reputation of the missionaries themselves. With others of his profession, he had often let his helpless merchandise out on hire into the hands of wealthy half-caste and sensual white men. And when native girls gave birth to half-caste children soon after their arrival on the sugar plantations as far away as Brisbane, the innocent missionaries got the blame for what had happened to the girls who had been contaminated after leaving their native isles. But all this is only a detail in the Rajah's life. He was a genius in his way. No man living would have had the patience to talk and talk, and sing and chant as he did to his beautiful, helpless prisoner. God only knows how he got Gabrielle to believe in him again. Perhaps it wasn't so strange when one thinks of her tender years and the mighty pretence of the astute Rajah. Night after night he came to her and went on his bended knees. Sometimes he held the Bible in his hand, babbled over its pages and said: "O Gabri-ar-le, give thy purest love unto me and I swear on this divine book that I will take thee back unto thy father."

On hearing this Gabrielle's heart leapt with hope. "Perhaps he isn't all bad and has relented," she thought. Then she glanced steadily into the Papuan's eyes and said: "I swear that I will bear no ill-feeling towards you if you will only take me home again." Then with that wonderful instinct that women reveal when in such a grievous pass, she added: "I can easily say that I was washed out to sea in a canoe that night and that your ship picked me up, and then no blame will be attached to you; you may even be rewarded. Will you take me back to Bougainville?" Saying this, she looked earnestly into the heathen's eyes and continued: "Father was very drunk that night, you know; he heard or guessed nothing of all that happened; he wouldn't dream of the truth."

The man sat there silent, chin on hand, as he gazed steadily upon the girl. It was evident by the look in his eyes that he admired the clever way she had put the whole matter before him. Gabrielle mistook that look. Her heart fluttered. She felt like screaming in the ecstasy of hope that thrilled her in the thought that she might yet get back to Bougainville and see the young apprentice again. The man sat opposite her for a long while in thought, then he shook his head as

though in response to his own reflections. He gave a cruel smile as he noticed the expression of delight in the girl's eyes at the thought of getting out of his clutches. He rose to his feet and, giving her one of his lascivious looks, walked slowly out of the cuddy.

Gabrielle's hopes faded. The reaction set in. Her despair was terrible as loneliness came to her heart. She went into her dismal berth. She was now left quite alone, for little sympathetic Tombo had ceased to come near her. She well knew that it wasn't the little cabin-boy's fault; he was ordered to keep out of the way.

"He's a murderer, a cruel villain, a heathen—and once I thought he was a god among men, an apostle of beauty and truth." So ran Gabrielle's reflections as she sat alone and thought critically about the Rajah. She looked out of the port-hole. It was a brilliant moon-lit night. She saw the dark crew climbing aloft to reef the sails. She knew that the vessel had altered its course. The sight of everything depressed her terribly. There was something weird in the sight of those dark men toiling aloft as they sang their strange Malayan chanteys. She saw the shining clasp-knives between their teeth as their shadows dropped softly down onto the deck. Once more she heard the whistle blown to call the next watch. Then complete silence reigned. She had nearly gone off to sleep when once more she heard the wails and muffled screams. Though terrified at those sounds, she again peeped through the port-hole and watched. Again she heard the heart-rending moans. Again the awful dragging silence came as the hatchway was lifted. "Plomp! plomp! plomp! plomp!" She knew then that four more victims had been cast into the deep. She strained her neck and put her head right out of the port-hole. She saw the dusk of the burning tropic seas and the stars as the vessel kept steadily on its course, leaving the floating bodies in its wake.

The next day the Rajah came into the dismal cuddy several times and spoke to her, but she shrank instinctively from his presence. He noticed her manner and wondered. The girl's uncongenial attitude did not rhyme in with the plans he had so nicely mapped out. But determination was his great virtue. He made many attempts to ingratiate himself. "Why you no liker me now?" he said, as he looked at her. She made no reply. In his excitement he mixed his language up so much that Gabrielle could hardly understand what he said. His mixture of pidgin-English and broken Biblical phrases made a kind of musical potpourri of exotic sensuousness that haunted the girl's ears, reviving vivid memories of her own people and at the same time reminding her how far away she was from their protection.

"Gabri-ar-le, allow me," he murmured in his soft, insinuating voice, as he leaned forward and stuck a small red frangipani blossom in the folds of her hair. It was a bloom from the pots of flowers that swung to and fro from the cuddy

ceiling.

Gabrielle looked steadily at the man. A strange gleam was in his eyes. It was just after sunset. Already the eight members of the crew, who were devout sun-worshippers, had lain prone on the forecastle deck and murmured their dolorous chants to the last gold and purple glow of the departed day.

The stars were shining over the sea. It was almost calm. Every now and again came the muffled drum-like sounds of the heavy canvas sails that bellied out to the breath of the sleepy night wind, flopped, and fell loosely as the halyards rattled and the ship rolled to the glassy swell.

The Rajah had sat down at the low table, right opposite Gabrielle. His turban was tilted rakishly on one side. As he looked sideways, glancing poetically towards the deck roof, his firm, handsome, curved throat was certainly shown to advantage. He looked like some Byronic corsair. There was no denying that he was a handsome man of his type. He leaned gently towards Gabrielle, one hand on chin, continuing to gaze as though in sorrowful reflection over his shortcomings and the white girl's sorrow resulting therefrom.

"Gabri-ar-le, I lover thee. You know not the ocean of my soul, how dark it is since your eyes should be the stars to shine over its darkness. Wilt love me a little, O white maiden?"

He still had his eyes fixed upon her in rapt admiration, eyes that moved up and down her form.

She looked beautiful indeed as she suddenly rose, stood there in the dim light, attired in her sarong-like bluish robe, the divided sleeves of which revealed her rounded arms. The broad scarlet sash, tied bow-wise at the left hip, fell negligently almost down to her ankle. A hot breath of sleepy wind crept through the cabin doorway, wafting the rich odours of exotic flowers that hung all along by the cuddy port-holes on the starboard side. The ship's black cat suddenly whipped across the saloon, looked up into its master's face with its yellow, burning orbs and then disappeared like a shadow.

Gabrielle trembled as she sought to answer the Rajah's questions. She could faintly hear the tinkle of the weird *zeirung* as some dark man forward in the forecastle accompanied the mellow voice of someone who was singing a Malayan chantey.

"I felt that I liked you once, but I hate you now!" said Gabrielle impulsively. Then she added: "How could you expect me to like such as you, after all you've done?"

The Rajah gave a grin.

"I want you to take me back to my people," the girl almost sobbed. Then she rose and began stealthily to move away from his presence; she had noticed the flushed, half-wild expression on his handsome face. She saw the fixed look

of resolve in his eyes.

He swiftly put forth his hand and, catching hold of her fingers firmly, softly forced her to sit down once more in front of him.

For a moment he looked at her as though he was about to clasp her in his arms. Gabrielle's heart thumped. She noticed that he sat on the side near the open door and so barred her progress should she attempt to make a bolt. She heard the voice of the man at the wheel humming words of an unknown tongue just over her head out on the poop. She knew that the Rajah's mate was laid up with fever in the deckhouse amidships, and so she was quite alone with the Rajah.

"I know that I am only Pa-ooan. You no' like me 'cause I dark man, eh? Wilt lover me, canst thou deny me, O maid of mine heart?"

Gabrielle knew by his lapse into Biblical pidgin-English that he was in an excited, treacherous state of mind; she also realised that it was wiser for her to attempt to mollify him.

"I don't dislike the people of your race at all; it's the wicked way that you kidnapped me that makes me hate you. Won't you take me back to my people?"

Though she spoke with apparent calmness, her heart was thumping so violently that she half fancied he heard it beat. She instinctively knew why the man stared at her so. She noticed that he had not lit the hanging lamp in the usual way, either. Only the faint, flickering glimmers from the lantern that swung by the saloon door and the deck sent its gleams towards them. She could just discern the shadowy-like face of the Rajah sitting opposite her. His voice had become strangely soft and seductive, almost musical: "Do you lover me, one little much, pretty whiter girl?"

"I don't know," she whispered hastily in a hushed, frightened voice, hardly knowing what she *did* say, as she swiftly glanced around and realised her terrible helplessness in that cabin far away on the coral seas. No escape there for her! The glimmer of the seas outside the port-holes only gave her a deeper sense of loneliness, if that were possible. She heard the tramp! tramp! of the watch walking the poop just over their heads as they sat there.

"Let me go to my berth, I'm tired, I want to sleep," she said softly, as she hastily rose to her feet. The state of her feelings was obvious. The Rajah could almost hear the fluttering of the girl's heart in that soft, tremulous voice. Standing there with flushed face and her eyes staring with fright, she looked very beautiful. He put his hand out gently and leaned across the table towards her. In her fright she gripped his extended hand. Her hair had fallen down to her neck and shoulders, tumbling in a golden mass, as she lifted her hand and glanced wildly about her. It had been loosened from its neat coil by the flowers that the Rajah had stuck in the glossy folds. The heathen corsair's vanity was so profound that

he imagined the girl had deliberately made her tresses tumble in luring deshabille for *his* eyes.

A great fire leapt like a blown flame into the man's eyes. And Gabrielle noticed it. She began to move backwards, very slowly, step by step, in the direction of her cabin door. One of her hands clutched her robe tightly against her trembling figure, as though she would not have him see the way her stealthy feet were moving from his presence. He too had swiftly risen from the cuddy table and was moving with a stealthy, cat-like step towards her. It was like some tragic scene in a drama as she moved backward, her eyes fixed on him, and he followed step by step over the cuddy floor. The girl's pale face and frightened, alert eyes were reflected in the large saloon mirror as she crept round the table. His taller form sent a monstrous silhouette over the panelled walls, his turbaned head going right across the ceiling. And still she moved on.

Gabrielle had sought to mislead him as to her exact intentions. She made a rush, whipped into her cabin and slammed the door. Not till then did the Rajah realise his mistake in thinking that her tresses had fallen for his benefit.

A look of rage swept across his swarthy face at the way Gabrielle had baffled him. But he knew the way to play the game. In a second he had placed his mouth to the small grating circle that was in the top of her cabin door. "Gabri-ar-le, beloved mine, I do swear not to hurt you; let me comer in," he whispered. "Why you rush away from me like that?" he added in an injured tone. He did not wish to raise his voice. He knew there was a possibility of the girl screaming when she realised the full import of his wishes. He had no desire that the crew should know that he was a rank outsider so far as the white girl's affections were concerned. He had loved to walk the schooner's deck, his chest swelling with that pride that dark men feel when a white woman is theirs; he also knew that his Kanaka crew envied him his saloon quarters, where they knew the lovely white girl dwelt.

"Don't try to come in! You dare not! Leave me alone. I want to sleep," replied Gabrielle, as he continued softly and persistently to knock at the cabin door.

He heard the trembling note of appeal in her voice. "I swear by the gods of my land and the stars of your own that should you open the door and let me kiss your hand no harm shall come to you."

He heard Gabrielle smash something heavy against the door. It was the reply to his appeal. His voice took on a rougher tone, he was evidently getting impatient. "If you don't let me in I'll smash the door down; it's my ship!" he said in a threatening undertone, then swiftly added: "But, sweeter girl, if you let me in I swear to keep my promise."

Gabrielle glanced round her berth. Not a weapon was handy. She was

trembling. "Perhaps he speaks the truth," she thought.

"Won't you go? We'll speak to-morrow!" she said softly, as though she would appeal to his heart. Again he swore that he would not harm her.

Gabrielle looked in despair through the port-hole. For a moment she was half inclined to put her head out and scream. Then she thought of the hideous mulatto mate and the fierce Kanaka crew. She shuddered. What hope had she? Even as she realised the hopelessness of her position the Rajah's booted foot crashed at the door.

Gabrielle hardly knew what she was doing as she flung the door open. "I believe you," she said, as she stood there, just inside her cabin and gazed courageously into the man's eyes. For a moment he was taken aback, but in another moment he had responded by hastily stepping forward.

Gabrielle was quite unprepared for his sudden outburst, notwithstanding all that had happened. He took her hand in his own. He pressed warm kisses on the soft white fingers. He became almost incoherent as he talked and told her how he had dreamed of her and seen her image in the great magical lagoons in his native land.

"The gods said that such as you would be mine. Yes, Gabri-ar-le, long years ago before you were born."

He had seized her in a passionate clasp. The terrible magic of his vile personality began to work on the girl's overwrought mind. "Go away! Go away!" she pleaded. But still he wailed on about his old gods, their magic and the wonders of his country. For a moment he leaned against the frame of the cabin door as though he were about to depart, but he did not go. He leaned forward and began to murmur a weird Papuan chant. His voice was peculiarly mellow and sweet. There was something melodiously caressing in the strain. Just for a moment his eyes softened, as though his heart was influenced by the music of his lips. It was only for a second, though, ere the tiger beast of his nature returned and once more he gazed unabashed at the girl, as only the low order of the dark races can gaze. He touched her fingers. His dark hands had begun to creep in a caressing way up her arms. His burning eyes still stared relentlessly into the terrified eyes of the girl. He would not vary that glance, no, not for one second, as he stared on triumphant, magnetising her soul by the eerie fire of his own.

"My beloved, putih bunga!" he murmured, as he noticed the look of terror fading away from the eyes that had looked up so appealingly into his.

Gabrielle's face, ghastly pale but a moment before, now appeared strangely flushed, almost swarthy-looking. But even the Rajah looked startled as he saw the change in her expression, as she stood there dimly revealed by the light of the stars that gleamed through the little cabin's port-hole. Standing there framed between her bunk and the slanting beam of the bulwark, her tumbled hair about

her neck, she looked like some wonderful emblematic figure of spiritual beauty struggling against the temptation of passion. But still his hands stole stealthily up her arms and about her: now he softly touched the silky material of her blouse, his face within three inches of her own. His arms curved snake-wise over her shoulders. "Marlino sa wean, placer your lips to mine—quick, quick!" he whispered. His voice was hoarse with passion as he drew her near to him. "Putih bunga, mine! Ola savoo, beautiful!" he babbled. He felt the sighing heave and fall of her bosom. Gently but firmly he pressed her head slowly backwards, so that her face should be uplifted to his own. Even in the gloom he noticed that her eyes stared up at him as though in sleep. He leaned half fearfully forward and let his mouth touch her lips.

"Go! Go!" she wailed, as she tried to overcome the darkness that was sweeping her very life away. She fancied that a shadow had slipped out of the night to torture her soul. Again in some terrible rivalship of dark and mystery it sought to strangle her. She fancied she saw strange, wild eyes appealing to her, peering over the Rajah's shoulder; but it was only the Rajah's eyes she really saw.

He saw her eyelids quiver. He felt the wild throb of her bosom still; but he noticed that the limbs had ceased to tremble.

"She hath given herself unto me!" so ran a thought through his mind. He lost control of his acquired civilised astuteness and began to press impassioned kisses on her upturned mouth. He felt her arms clasp him in a responsive embrace.

"Putih! Mine!" he whispered, his voice hoarse with passion. Her scented tresses fell about his face. He fiercely pulled the fringe of her bodice open at the neck and pressed burning kisses on the whiteness of her throat.

"Don't! Don't!" she cried softly. But he held her the tighter; it was a merciless grip. She had begun to struggle. He was surprised at her strength as she suddenly put forth her arms, clutched him by the throat with one hand and with the other caught him by the shoulder and pushed. For a moment he made little effort to ward her off. Slowly, to her delight, she felt him going back, backwards towards her cabin door as she pushed in her frenzy. And still she struggled and still she felt his big form receding till his turbaned head was half-an-inch out of the door. She gave a smothered cry of delight; she was winning in that terrible encounter that was a struggle of life and death to her. Alas! she had not reckoned with the cunning of that Papuan kidnapper. He almost smiled as he allowed her to force him back yet a little more. Even she half wondered why she was winning so easily. Then out shot his hand; at last she had enabled him to reach and grip hold of the handle of the cabin-door that opened *outwards* into the saloon; in a moment he had pulled it to; crash! it went as he slammed it and pushed the bolt!

She and he were alone, shut in the cabin. They stood facing one another in the dusk, like two half-baffled figures. Only the stars faintly visible through the port-hole told of the ocean world outside as Gabrielle looked first at the dark form before her and then out into the night. She could not scream as he seized her in a tight clasp. Only a moment and she had ceased to struggle, was crying softly to herself as he pressed burning kisses on her face and drew her towards him.

He continued his love-making ill far into the night. Although the girl was completely in the Rajah's power, he still showed an unaccustomed restraint. Heathen though he was, he could, when occasion demanded, hold his passions in reserve. They would be gratified later, he told himself, as he gloated over the defenceless girl. She would be even more at his mercy in his native coastal village, in his own private dwelling.

And still the stars shone over the wide ocean-way of night. Only the sounds of the swelling sails and their muffled flop! flop! broke the silence, as the vessel rose to the swell and rolled like a helpless derelict on the silent tropic seas. Tramp! tramp! went the watch over head. Then someone in the forecastle began to sing; it came faint but distinct, some old Malayan chantey drifting aft as the wide wings of the wind moved across that great world of waters.

It was night-time, and three days after the Rajah's cowardly attack, when Gabrielle heard the Malayan sailors singing one of their weird chanteys in a cheerful voice. She at once looked through the port-hole of her berth, wherein she had made herself a willing prisoner, only allowing the Malayan cabin-boy Tombo to enter with her meals. She stared aloft. The vessel at that very moment was altering its course. She distinctly noticed the apparent movement of the stars as the dark canvas sails veered. Again she heard the gabble and hustle as the helm was put hard over. It looked just as though the moon had given a frightened skid across the sky. They had just let the hatchway down with a bang, had finished pitching the dead victims of the hold overboard. But still the Rajah shouted his orders. He was calling in a strange language. She tried to understand, but not a word was familiar to her. "What's it all mean? Are we there?" she wondered, as she looked round her in despair. She gazed to the southward. Her heart gave a tremendous thump as she sighted, a long, low line of dark coast to the starboard. Then she knew that at last the *Bird of Paradise* lay off the dreaded coast of wild New Guinea.

Words cannot describe the misery of Gabrielle's heart as she saw the coastline of that strange, rugged land and realised that when once she was ashore there she would be completely in the Rajah's power. It seemed to her that a great

shadow from that mountainous world swept across the sea and struck her soul with despair as a solitary cloud, like a castaway's raft, crept under the moon. Her hair fluttered to the cool night breeze, her fingers clutched the rim of the port-hole as she still stared towards that desolate, terrible coast-line. But had Gabrielle Everard been able to look astern and see across half-a-thousand miles what a sight would have cheered her despairing heart. She would have seen the *Sea Foam* dipping gracefully, bounding onward, travelling south-south-west across the coral sea beneath the tropic moon with all sail set, and Mango Pango dancing on deck, while the great Ulysses, with hand placed sentimentally on his heart, thundered out:

"Oh, I went down South for to see my Sal,
Singing Polly-wolly-doodle all the way!"

and Hillary, still full of romance and hope, playing the violin like some pagan god, accompanying each song the big man sang.

CHAPTER XII—IN NEW GUINEA

It was close on midnight when the *Bird of Paradise* dropped anchor off the coastal township of Tumba-Tumba. It was the Papuan kidnapper's native home on the coast of New Guinea, north-west of Astrolabe mountains.

"Keep near me, dear Tombo," whispered Gabrielle, as the little cabin-boy ran into the cuddy full of excitement at hearing the anchor go. Before the little fellow could make any response to Gabrielle the Rajah lifted his foot and with a straight kick impelled the boy forcibly out on deck again. Then he went away forward to give orders to the bustling crew. Two or three Herculean Dyaks stood with revolvers in their hands by the main hatchway. They had apparently thrown over all the dead bodies of the victims who had died in the hold. Gabrielle looked through the port-hole and saw half-a-dozen terror-stricken brown faces peep over the rim of the hatchway. She saw the clutching brown fingers of old men, girls and youths curled on the hatchway rim as the slaves struggled to get a

purchase and stare up at the blue, star-lit sky before the hatch was slammed down again.

She ran out on deck and stared shoreward in her despair. They were anchored about a quarter of a mile from the line of coral reefs that loomed afar, looking like grim, gnarled monsters of the sea, where the ridges lifted their wave-washed backs for miles and miles. There, before Gabrielle's eyes, were the wild coastal forests and mountains of a strange land. Away to sea on the starboard side she saw strange figures with mop-haired heads; some had curly, dishevelled hair, and their heads sticking out of the moon-lit water made them look like dusky mermaids, distinctly visible, as they crawled about searching for pearls on the reefs. They were not mermaids. They were simply Papuan women and girls and men searching for bêche-de-mer in the shallow waters.

"Solo bungo mass!" ("My flower of life!") whispered the Papuan skipper into her ear. He had approached her silently. She looked up into his face. The pallor of her own face, the despair in her blue eyes as they shone with intense beauty of sorrow, had no effect on the man before her. Indeed, her despair only increased his desire to get her completely in his power.

"Cannot I stay here? Must I go?" she said in a voice the appeal of which cannot be described. The swarthy man was staring shoreward at his native land, a half-wild look in his fiery eyes as he thought of the helplessness of the trembling victim who stood beside him. He only shook his head in reply, then gazed into her eyes in a way that struck terror to her soul. She knew that she must obey. She had no belongings to pack, and so in a few moments she was ready, standing like some helpless *condamné* awaiting the fall of the guillotine.

It was almost a relief to the girl's mind to hear the sudden clamouring just over the vessel's side. And as she looked over she saw dozens of strangely ornamented canoes and outriggers crammed with mop-headed, tattooed savages.

"Sowan! Tiki, soo, Rajah!" shouted the barbarian horde, as the Rajah looked down upon them, bowing grandiloquently in response to their savage salutations. For the Rajah was the one "quite civilised" man of their primitive heathen coastal township, and so looked upon with almighty respect by his fellows. It was a momentous event in the life of the population of the coastal village when the *Bird of Paradise* came in. The Rajah usually dropped anchor leagues away to the north, near the Bismarck Archipelago. It was there that he usually got the biggest prices for his freightage of trembling captives, destined for the slave markets of German and Dutch New Guinea. But the Rajah on the present occasion was in a mighty hurry to get ashore, so he had decided to take Gabrielle with him and leave his mulatto mate to sail the *Bird of Paradise* to the next port and dispose of his terrified human cargo.

When Gabrielle arrived under the cover of night on the shores of that bar-

barian hut city, and saw the savage-looking women and men staring at her, as tattooed *ridi*-clad chiefs shouted, "Cowan! to mita putih purumpuan! ('Welcome to the white girl!') she trembled in her terror, and even felt glad of the Rajah's presence as they mobbed her and pinched her white flesh deliciously. The population rushed out of their huts by hundreds. Hideous old tattooed chiefs (bare as eggs down to the loins, bone ornaments in their ears) moaned and blew with their blubbery lips as they spotted her whiteness. The deep-bosomed tawny women who stood beneath the sheltering ivory-nut palms by their huts stopped their unintelligible hubbub as the Rajah hurried her past.

"Cowan! The Rajah! The Soo Rajaaah!" they shouted, as they recognised that cultured heathen in civilised attire, the great squire, the lord of the manor in Tumba-Tumba. The news spread like wildfire. "Cowan!" ("Friend!") gabbled the girls, women and youths, as they rushed out of their small thatched homesteads to see the great Rajah and the beautiful *putih purumpuan.* The thick-haired half-caste Malayan girls, dancing beneath the festival palms, jingling their leglets and shell-threaded armlets, stopped chanting to see so unusual a sight. They laid their hands in a romantic way on their hearts and sighed out, "O wean soo loo," as a white girl with wondrous golden hair tossing to the breezes was hurried along a prisoner in the Rajah's loving grip.

On, on he hurried. The tropic moon cast a weird light over the barbarian world that was framed by distant mountains. Nothing but mighty brooding forest haunted with mystery and uncouth sounds came into view for miles and miles as Gabrielle was hustled along. And still she heard the low chanting salutations of "Cowan le soo!" floating to her ears. Then came the weird sounds of the tribal bone flutes and beating drums, and the sudden hush as she passed beneath the rows of hanging coco-nut-oil lamps of some festival ceremony. Those wild people had often seen the Rajah arrive from his blackbirding schooner with many a trembling victim looking up into his eyes for mercy, but never had they seen such a one as they saw that night. They marvelled at the glory of her eyes, the cataract of dishevelled hair, like the sunset on their mountains off Tumba-Tumba (so they said). Besides, all the previous victims were tawny-hued like themselves and had dark eyes, eyes that shone, delightedly sometimes, to hear the acclamations of admiring chiefs in the slave markets. But the girl before them looked wildly beautiful with some fright that they knew nothing of.

As Gabrielle Everard saw their repulsive, blubbery lips, the yellowish, hot-looking eyes, the animalistic bodies of the huge, pendulous-breasted, over-fed chiefesses, she felt a tremendous pang strike her heart, in the thought that somewhere back in the past she had kinship with them. As she heard the distant drums in the mountains a strange feeling came over her. She even clutched the man's hand beside her: she half fancied that those beating drums were the drums that

she had heard in the bungalow away in Bougainville when the shadow crept into her bedroom.

As they passed under the banyan groves they came to a large group of huts of various shapes and sizes. It was the Rajah's native village.

"Helaka!" murmured the *taubadus* (chiefs), and when they saw Gabrielle they looked with surprise and said: "Dimdim Wovou!" ("White foreigner!").

Gabrielle's bare feet were bleeding through contact with the sharp shingle by the shore reefs. But that didn't worry the Rajah, his only response to her appeal that he would go slower was to hurry faster than ever. He crossed the cleared village space and took the girl straight to his domestic tambu temple. "Tepiake!" grunted the *taubadas* as he passed through the thickly overgrown bamboo stockade. He had now arrived at his parental residence, a kind of palatial heathen hall, where his own people resided and held semi-Malayan fetishes and all that would remind them of their past in the Malay Archipelago. As Gabrielle stood before that big wooden building her heart sank. She was too weary to say much to the man beside her. She hardly noticed the fiendish-looking children about her and the ape-like being who ran out from the palms and danced with glee before her. She trembled as she looked at the Rajah's flushed face and noticed the change in his manner. She saw a look of command in his eyes, that she had only vaguely felt was there before. His walk had become majestic. The pleading obeisance she had received from him aboard the vessel had disappeared. He behaved like one who had complete authority over all around him and over her also. Her feminine instincts awoke, came to her assistance immediately. She felt that she was utterly alone in that awful haunt of barbarism.

"I'll die first!" was the secret resolution of her heart. She half hated herself to think she had once had her arms about him and had returned his embrace. He had looked so handsome, so god-like, as he swore by the Christian apostles and Jesus Christ. The tears started to her eyes as she looked at that sinister heathen homestead as it loomed before her by the light of a hundred tiny hanging coconut lamps. She thought of her father, the old bungalow in Bougainville and of Hillary.

The sounds of the barbarian drums seemed to make her realise with terrible vividness the almighty simplicity of the apprentice's love for her. She instinctively felt that, though the stranded apprentice had never mentioned the apostles or Christ's name, or even God, that he did not do so because God and Christ spoke for him in the great silence of his own actions. And as she remembered these things she stood still, her thoughts far away across the seas. She forgot the presence of the wild, staring people around her. Her spirit leapt into Hillary's arms, she looked into his eyes and asked him to die with her. The hordes of savages, the pagan huts, the feathery palms and distant moon-lit mountains slowly

dissolved, vanishing like the fabric of a dream. She did not hear the voice of the heathen missionary beside her as he spoke in his own tongue to the clamouring hordes, so intense were her thoughts as she dreamed of Hillary and all that she had lost.

Her despair was so bitter that she hardly cared what might happen as, like one awakening from a dream into the light of miserable reality, she mechanically turned her head as Koo Macka spoke to her.

"Solan putih bunga, my Gabri-ar-le," he muttered. Then he gripped her by the arm and led her under the thatched verandah and into his wooden ancestral halls.

A hideous, baboon-like woman fell on her knees before the Rajah and moaned out: "Solan, soo wa eala!" Then she gazed upon the girl and lifted her claw-like hands as though in approval. It was Macka's old mother. Then a ferocious-looking half-caste (Malayo Papuan) mop-headed old man rose from his stinking squatting-mat, hobbled forward and stared keenly at the girl as she stood beneath the tiny hanging lamps. He made hideous grimaces as he inspected her, touched her smooth arms, smelt her golden hair, put his dirty fingers between the folds of her torn blue blouse and stared at the whiteness revealed to his eyes through the divided material. And all the time that he gazed his mouth emitted betel-nut juice that dropped down on to his tattooed, hairy breast.

"Le putih purumpuan bunga!" ("O flower of beautiful whiteness!") he groaned out in his Malayan lingo. Then he too turned to Macka, and by his gesticulations revealed the enormous pride he felt that the Rajah should return to the palatial homestead with so wonderful a prize. The old Malayan chieftain was the Rajah's esteemed *bapa* (father). Though he was old and wrinkled, it was evident that he too had been handsome in his day. From that old *bapa* Macka had inherited the indescribable sensualism that had placed Gabrielle in her awful position.

"Cowan, wanoo, wanoo wooloo!" he seemed to shout, as he gazed with pride on his hopeful son. Even the Rajah recognised the results of his own virtues and swelled his chest, put his arms half up and gaped to hide the embarrassment of an invisible blush. And why shouldn't old *bapa* be proud of his son? Had he not listened to the pleadings of the German missionary at Astrolabe, who had come over from the isles of the Bismarck Archipelago?

"O great *bapa*," said the missionary, "take thee this little Macka, this small son of thine, teach unto him the Word of God, rear him up in the path of righteousness, so that he may follow the divine calling and teach thy people the beauty of the Western creed!"

And old *bapa*, listening to that good German missionary's advice, took his hand and said: "O white papalagi from over the *moan ali* (seas) I have listened.

And I say unto thee, that it shall be as thy godly words have said." Then immediately he called his son, little Macka, from his idol worship in the tambu temple, and, laying his tawny hand on the boy's head, said: "O my son, the Fates have willed on thy behalf that thou shalt go hence across the big waters to Honolulu and be educated like unto a noble white man. For, I say, it beseemeth good that thou shalt grow up and be one good missionary, so that thou mayst guide thy people in the path of the new righteousness."

So spake proud old *bapa*, who truly had his son's interest deep in his heart. The result was that soon after the German tramp steamer *Lubeck* sailed from Aru, up the coast, taking the boy Macka across the seas to Honolulu. And as the boy's years increased the missionaries marvelled that so bright a youth had come amongst them, for he was clever and became as one of them in learning. Soon Macka became head of one of the biggest missionary classes at K—— O——. But alas! with the development of manhood the old instincts, the passions developed in his race through centuries of tropical desire, burst into flame. They were not to be overthrown by the sad aspirations of a few old missionaries at Honolulu. Those kind, well-meaning men had endeavoured to change the spots on the leopard's back—in vain! For what was the inevitable result of their lifelong pilgrimage away from their native lands? This—there stood Macka once more, after all those years, back in his native village, the personification of the full-blooded heathen attired in Western garb, with a white girl trembling beside him, looking first into the eyes of the son, then into the eyes of the father. And still the drums beat on. And still far away over the seas old Pa Everard wailed through his delirium, "My Gabby! My Gabby!" till the asylum-keepers at Ysabel soothed his rum-stricken nerves.

"Ah! ah! koola, Cowan! my faithful son! Thou art indeed the joy of old *bapa's* soul!" And as the old father's eyes filled with tears of pride, and the hideous, bloated mother waved her skinny arms with joy, the Rajah bowed. For the Rajah was a good and faithful son, and had repaid his parents well from the proceeds of his exertions in the dangerous slave traffic.

The civilised blackbirding skipper well knew that the girl was now utterly in his power. He was in no hurry to further his wishes. Indeed he was the first to suggest to his old *bapa* that Gabrielle should stay with them till the final arrangements could be made that would chime in with his secret desires.

So Gabrielle Everard actually found herself living in the squalor of a Malayo-Papuan homestead on the coast of New Guinea. She was down with fever for the first three days. Then the Rajah came into her thickly matted chamber (mats denoted that the visitor was an honoured guest) and wailed forth his hypocritical vows.

He sobbed to see her lying ill. He said that if anything should happen to her

he would fade to a shadow and die. Then he rubbed his eyes with his big coat-sleeve, and opened a little bottle of medicine. The foolish girl, sick and weak, felt that perhaps the man had a heart after all—she drank! Then he whispered soft words into her ears, but she did not listen.

"Come on, putih bunga!" said he. She rose like one in a dream, and he led her away to the great tambu temple that stood right opposite Macka's ancestral halls. It was a wooden building, sheltered by enormous mahogany-trees.

Only the devil himself could adequately describe the deeper meanings of the ritual of the tambu houses in New Guinea.

The tambu house in which Gabrielle found herself was a low-roofed apartment about forty feet long and thirty wide, not more than twelve feet in height. Its rows of windows consisted of small circles cut in the wooden walls, something after the style of port-holes in a ship. It was lit by the artificial glimmer of coconut-oil hanging lamps, which seemed only to add to its shadowy mystery. These innumerable oil lamps, hanging from beams over the wide *pae pae* (stage platform), were for the prime purpose of revealing the attractions of the half-caste girls who regularly performed at the tambu fetishes. These girls were mostly Polynesians, Arafuras, Bugis, Dyaks and a bastard type of Chinese and Melanesian, mostly girls who had been brought to the coast of New Guinea by the black-birding ships when they had been children. Such was the mixed group of feminine frailty that was performing and dancing when Gabrielle entered the tambu temple. The stage walls were richly decorated with scarlet and white hibiscus blossom that hung on woven threads. The floors were thickly covered with ornamental matting. On the walls hung the revered fetish ceremonial implements and sacred taboo remnants, such as—skulls, old men's beards, dead maidens' hair, threaded human teeth and all that was weirdly suggestive of death and orgyism. The front of the wide stage was adorned by the hideous fetish idols. The middle figure was about eight feet high, had four arms, and seemed to be carved out of one solid lump of wood. It had one mighty yellow tooth issuing from the carven mouth, which leered in an everlasting grin that did not seem out of place when the grotesque dances were in full swing. A serpent-like thing was twined about its wooden arms and again round the waists of the two somewhat smaller images that stood one on each side of it. A look of agony was wonderfully expressed by the swollen veins on the chest, arms and forehead, as the fanged mouth of the strong embracing reptile gripped the right ear of that symbolical piece of New Guinea sculptural art. It represented some tragic legendary Malayan episode; indeed it was a kind of Laocoon of heathen-land; but instead of being clothed with those symbols of beauty that exalt a lump of carven insensate wood to a higher state, it was clothed with symbols of ugliness and lust. And the barbarian sculptor who had achieved this revolting but still artistic result had fashioned

the idol on the left-hand side with feminine attributes that were physically expressed from the full wooden lips down to the twisted ivory-nailed toes of the delicate feet. Notwithstanding the allegorical hint of sexuality in the huge middle figure (its hideous character was intensified by Nature's artless handiwork, for fat-bodied green palm worms crawled in and out of its stretched wooden lips), it was a truly wonderful bit of work; it stood there telling with an indisputable voice how strong a force man's passions often are.

Even the Rajah had the grace to stand between Gabrielle and that monstrous wooden trio as they passed them by. The Rajah was getting wary. A look in Gabrielle's eyes at times had told him that a fire smouldered in her soul. And once while on board his schooner she had lifted his set of crockery presented to him by the Astrolabe German Missionary Society (together with an illuminated address) and smashed them to atoms at his feet, calling him such names as he deserved. As for the tambu dancers who stood by the idols in a semi-nude state, armlets and leglets and threaded shells jingling on their moving limbs, they were as wonderful in their way as the South Sea Laocoon. For in some unexplainable way they did the very things that the idol so hideously expressed; yet they did not inspire an observer with that artistic admiration and feeling of terror which the idol inspired. Had it not been for the love of life that burns so fiercely in youth and her newly awakened love for Hillary—for Gabrielle still believed that he would cross her path again—she would have snatched up one of the barbarian scimitars that lay by the floor-mats of that hellish abode and dramatically ended her existence.

Koo Macka had fiercely gripped her by the arm as he led her along the centre transept. The rich scents that came from the abundant wreaths of exotic flowers on the walls and in calabashes on the floor made Gabrielle feel sick. A large, black-winged cockatoo, with its right foot chained to a small pedestal on which it stood, looked sideways at Gabrielle and started to yell its discordant language in a most vicious way as it snapped its big curved beak. It was evidently some sacred tambu bird, for the high priest gazed in horror as the bird flapped its wings, and glanced up and down at Gabrielle's white face and golden-bronze tresses that tumbled over her shoulders.

"Shut up!" yelled the Rajah. In a moment the bird closed its wings and seemed subdued. This obedience of the bird to the will of the Rajah made a great impression among the superstitious throng. The chanting maids and tambu chiefesses lifted their thick-lipped faces and shouted: "Cowan! Lao Rajahah! a loca Laki, putih bunga bini!" ("The Rajah has brought unto his people a beautiful flower-like wife!")

Hideous stout old cannibals lifted coco-nut goblets to their blubbery lips and forcibly expressed by hideous winks and squints their inward thoughts about

the white girl's beauty.

It must indeed have been a novel sight to see that bronze-golden-haired girl led towards the festival altars by their mighty Rajah Koo Macka. As to what the girl herself was thinking, she was utterly ignorant of the cause of the hubbub and the barbarian cheering around her. The liquor that had been forced between her lips had quite dazed her brain. As Macka's old *bapa* came forward from the front row of the squatting audience and led the tambu dancers up to the stage, Gabrielle only stared as one stares on a strange scene in a dream. She didn't move a muscle as rows of mop-headed Papuan, Malayan and half-caste girls stood in a row and then threw their limbs about till the treduca shells made music that harmonised with the lewdness displayed before her happily unconscious eyes.

It was only when the Rajah stepped forward, attired in full civilised costume that proclaimed him a member of New Guinea Rajahship, that the girl began to tremble. The large scarlet waist-sash, the magnificent, coiled-up turban and the robe that fell to his feet only made him appear the more terrifying to her eyes.

In a moment he had seized her by the wrist. And in her helpless terror she did all that he demanded of her—lifted her arms to the roof, chanted and sang a song with strange words in a strange tongue. Just by her side sat a raving old *tiki*-priest; he was the finest bit of hideousness extant; even the big wooden idol before which he repeatedly prostrated himself had pleasant features compared to that living representative of the tambu temple creed.

Directly he had finished his weird incantations and hollow-voiced acclamations he made the tribal sign to the handsome Rajah, who thereupon immediately stooped and kissed Gabrielle, first on the mouth, then on her feet, as he fell prone before her. Then he rose, looked into her eyes and began to chant. To his astonishment the girl looked up at him, a half smile on her sad face as she swayed her flower-bedecked form and began to swerve with inimitable grace to the tum-tum of the barbarian orchestra. She lifted her hands to the wooden ceiling, softly chanting an old Malayan melody that neither they nor she had ever heard before. The music of her voice seemed to hold the wild audience spellbound. And when the girl put forth her hands and responded in a wonderful way to the mystical passes of the Rajah's small, womanish hands, the whole motley crew waved their dusky arms in delight. The dancing maidens threw their limbs in envious rapture, and tried in vain to imitate the rhythmical grace of Gabrielle's trance-like movements. For all their wild acts, and the jingle of their brass and bone leglets and armlets as they made their wretched limb-tossings, their performance was as nothing compared to the white girl's wondrous grace.

As Gabrielle stopped and stared at the dusky horde of raised faces and tossing limbs beneath rows of hanging lamps, she seemed to awaken from her trance-like state. She raised her hands and gave a cry. The whole audience, who thought

that cry was an exclamation expressing some ecstasy of the moment, renewed their volleys of applause. Only the Rajah knew the truth, the meaning of that cry. He hurried forward, gripped the girl's hand, breathed hotly in her face and murmured, "Come, Bini, mine! Wife!" Then the Rajah gave a start. Above the guttural cries of the tambu marriage assembly one voice had begun to ring out shrill and clear. It was the voice of Maroshe, the Rajah's long-cast-off tribal wife. She had been a beautiful Koiari maid when the Rajah, who was ten years her senior, had first wooed her. But her feminine attractions had been cruelly brief. The girls of the Papuan races leap into full-blown womanhood at fourteen, and at twenty-five, sometimes earlier, have apparently reached old age, their brows and cheeks being seared with wrinkles. But Maroshe still had a remnant of the old fire gleaming in her fine eyes. But it was a fire that boded no good for the amorous Macka as she stood amidst the motley audience and yelled: "*Tao se cowana tumbi!*" (May the gods send thee twins!)

Macka heard that voice. It was the one voice on earth that could echo into the depths of his soul and awaken a tinge of remorse in him. Indeed, as he gripped Gabrielle's wrist he looked against his will across the tiers of uplifted dusky faces till his eyes met the magnetic glance of the scorned Maroshe. Again she held her hand mockingly aloft, and once more yelled: "*Tao se cowana tumbi!*" The tambu maidens ceased dancing, and stood with fingers to lips beneath the rows of hanging lamps. They knew Maroshe, and also knew that something in her voice revealed the fact that, after all, she still retained her old love for the Rajah. The huge wooden idol, its big eyes agog, was the only face that did not express the horror that seemed to transfix every heathen countenance.

Suddenly Maroshe waved her skinny hand thrice. Then at the sight of her late husband standing there with a new bride, and a white girl to boot, she lowered her wrinkled but still half-beautiful face and disappeared. Macka gave a sigh of relief to see her go.

Suddenly the audience seemed to be awakened from their horrified stupor. "Bang! To woomb!" It was the sound of a monstrous heathen drum banged twice only, somewhere in a mountain village.

Once more the Rajah gripped Gabrielle by the wrist. "Come, my pretty putih bunga!"

According to the ceremonial rites of the creeds of Tumba-Tumba, Gabrielle Everard was now Macka's wife. That orgy of lust, toddy and heathen seraglio chanting and dances was a genuine old-time New Guinea marriage ceremony.

Gabrielle hardly realised all that it meant for her. She placed her hand to her brow and stared as though she gazed on some strange sight afar off. The village priests and *darah tiki-tiki* enchanters and enchantresses beat their skinny breasts to show their appreciation of the bride's beauty. Such an honour had

never been theirs before; for had they not been the means of binding a beautiful white maid in marriage bonds to one of their own race.

Directly the Rajah got Gabrielle outside the tambu house he pressed hot kisses on her face. She struggled in that embrace. Her cries brought hordes of dusky, imp-like girls and mop-headed youths on to the scene. He desisted in his matrimonial advances. In a moment he had decided to take her to his old *bapa*.

As Gabrielle once more prepared to enter the Rajah's homestead, old *bapa*, and his hideous, baboon-like wife, rushed forth from the palms just behind, and threw wedding gifts of a suggestive nature upon the trembling girl. After they had been in the presence of old *bapa* for some little time, the Rajah altered his mind, and throwing his body on the sacred mats of his father's home expressed a wish to leave the parental roof and take his bride up to his own private establishment in the mountains (two miles off), a place where he had taken so many victims who had fallen under the lure of his university education and the glory of the Christian apostles.

As the Rajah once more went forth, taking his pretty *putih bini* up the little village track that led under the feathery palms and ivory-nut trees, he gazed upon Gabrielle's form as only Macka the ex-missionary could gaze. At last they arrived outside a large wooden building (made of thick, rough-hewn mahogany logs) situated on the lower slopes of the Tomba-Tomba Mountains.

The Rajah at once took Gabrielle within. Heaven only knows what the white girl went through before the Rajah realised that it was no brown woman he had in his vile power. There had been considerable trouble before he was finally vanquished and sent about his business; he had done his best before leaving to become friendly with the girl again. He knew by her desperate act in jumping overboard on the *Bird of Paradise* that she was quite likely to attempt to take her life again. The look in her eyes spoke volumes to him. He told off two of the old ki-ki chiefs, ordering them to keep strict watch over that wooden building where she was imprisoned. So the two barbarian sentinels grunted and smoked by the door and Gabrielle lay down on the thick sleeping mats and tried to rest.

On the second night the Rajah once more crept into her chamber. He fell on his knees. He swore she was his beloved spouse in the eyes of God and the heathen apostles of his own heathen land. He began chanting and making weird passes, swearing all the while that the idols of the tambu temple had been placed in the glow of the moonbeams and had spoken.

"They have teller me to come to thee. They say that you must giver yourself up to me and to my gods. You understand?"

Gabrielle looked in wonder at the man as he fell at her feet, groaning and wailing. He even wept. She saw the tears in his eyes.

"Gabri-e-arle. I lover th-ee. Thou art my own, my putih bunga," he repeated

over and over again. He pressed hot kisses on her face. But the girl struggled and overcame him. Then he diverted her attention and swiftly placed his old ki-ki drugs in her water goblet. Drugging was, and is, the highest art in New Guinea, and so he had little fear of the results not being according to his requirements. Then he went away. He had not been gone an hour before Gabrielle was startled by hearing the sound of jabbering outside the tambu door. She could distinctly hear a pleading voice, as though some native woman wailed and talked to the sentinels. Then the silence returned, but to her surprise the tappa curtains of her little chamber were suddenly thrown aside, and a strange-looking native woman stood before her. It was Maroshe, the late divorced! She held no stiletto in her hand. No malignant gleam of hatred shone in her eyes; only a weary look of sorrow as she stood before Gabrielle. The unexpected visitor fell on her knees and at once began to chant and mumble mysteriously, as though she thought Gabrielle understood all the magic of her land.

Gabrielle noticed the note of appeal in her voice. She at once took heart and bade her rise.

"What's the matter? What you want?" said Gabrielle, as she tried to speak to the wailing woman in pidgin-English and made many gesticulations. At last the white girl seemed to understand.

It was wonderful how swiftly the souls of two women of different races fathomed each other's secrets, peered into each other's eyes and read all that they wanted to read.

Gabrielle's sorrow had probably brought to the fore the old instincts with which Nature originally endowed the human races so that they might scent danger before it was actually upon them.

Maroshe it seemed could speak a little pidgin-English, and so the two women were able before long to understand the exact position of things. Then the native girl, for she was not much more than a girl, kissed Gabrielle's hands, fell prone and touched her feet in grovelling subjection. Tears came into Gabrielle's eyes as she realised the woman's sorrow and observed the swift glance of delight in her eyes as she heard that she, the white girl, was a most unwilling prisoner in the tambu marriage chamber. "I comer gain. Me goer now, nicer, whi ladi. You no putih bunga. Ah!" she said.

Before Gabrielle had realised that the woman was going, Maroshe had slipped out of the door. But she came again, and under circumstances that Gabrielle never cared to recall.

The next night the Rajah returned again to the solitary building by the mountains of Tomba-Tomba. He sent his chieftain sentinels away to their huts. He stooped his turbaned head as he entered the low doorway, and approached the girl with the old fascinating look in his fiery eyes. With the almighty deceit of

his race he told her he had relented, and would take her back to Bougainville. He made her heart leap with hidden delight as he talked. His voice seemed tender as a woman's as he poured forth his semi-Mohammedanistic *vers libre.* Again he knelt before her, as a bigot heathen might kneel before an idol, and stared into her blue, frightened eyes.

Gabrielle, as though in a trance, felt his caressing hands; they seemed shadow hands as his burning words crept into her ears. She heard the winds sigh outside in the mountain palms. She and he were alone.

"Gabri-ar-le! thou art more than life itself; the moon, the stars, thou art; and like unto the stars shall our children be!" he murmured in Biblical tones as he returned to the lingo of the old mission-room. Only the chantings of the cicalas in the ivory-nut palms disturbed the silence. Gabrielle felt the strength of those strong hands, the warm breath of those terrible lips. A mist came before her eyes; she heard the wild tribal drums beating across the centuries! The Papuan's voice sounded far off; a shadowy figure had whipped across the rush-matted floor as the lamps burnt dimly with a magic light. And still the drums were beating as though in impatient haste across the centuries. And still her soul struggled as she fearfully watched for that which her eyes had surely seen; then, once again, the tappa curtains that separated her chamber from the door that led straight to the jungle outside seemed to divide softly. She could not scream as that terrible thing peeped between the divided curtains, its burning eyes staring upon her. Its beautiful woman's head was faintly visible. The eyes gleamed with rapture as the enchantress from the past stared appealingly, beckoned to the white girl, nodded her dusky head and besought Gabrielle to do her bidding! Gabrielle stared wildly round. Only she and the terrible enchantress faced one another whichever way her eyes turned. She still peeped beneath the uplifted curtains—now she had begun to crawl on her belly like unto a serpent. Tears were in the shadow woman's eyes! And still Gabrielle heard the drums beating across the mountains, coming across the silent hills of sleep. And still the struggle went on. The phantom woman crawled slowly beneath the tappa curtain as the white girl watched. She noticed the beauty of the smooth, oily, terra-cotta-hued limbs, the curved, sensuous thighs. At last the visitant lifted her beautiful shadowy head, and began slowly to rise to her feet as the tappa curtain fell softly. She had entered Gabrielle's chamber! A shadow fell across the girl's pallid, terror-stricken face, darkening her eyes. She groped in terrible blindness, just for a moment, then pushed it from her. She recognised the terrible presence and recalled in a flash how she had mastered it when it had come to her in the dead of night in her bedroom, at her old home in Bougainville. She fell on her knees and prayed. She wrestled with the evil presence in an indescribable agony of spirit. And then, quite suddenly, the enchantress who had crept out of the jungle of the past gave

a wail—and vanished.

Gabrielle stared round her. The perspiration was dropping from her brow; she was trembling from head to foot. She was alone! The Rajah, too, had seen that look in her eyes and had disappeared. In a moment she had recovered her senses. She rushed into the little off-room where she slept, and in two seconds was hastily piling up the mahogany boxes and huge native clubs against the door, so that none could enter without her knowledge. Then she lay on her rush-matted bed and thanked God.

For now she realised instinctively, with a force amounting to certainty, that never again would she be haunted by this shadow woman—her dark ancestress from the past. Gabrielle knew that that struggle in the tambu house had meant for her a complete spiritual victory. The evil spirit had been exorcised.

Perhaps also it meant something more. Perhaps it symbolised a physical triumph over Rajah Macka and his heathen desires. Strange as it may seem, she no longer felt the same fear of him which had possessed her on board the ship. She was trying to persuade herself that, after all, he was only a grotesque heathen, eaten up with his own conceit. And these thoughts, or something like them, were stirring in her mind when she finally fell asleep.

Gabrielle had been a close prisoner in the private tambu house for just eight days before the Rajah came to her again. The girl had almost recovered from the shock of that terrible visitant from the past and the Rajah's advances. Indeed, she had bribed one of the sentinel chiefs by giving him a tortoise-shell comb from her hair, and so had received valuable information. She had discovered that there were several white settlers residing in the villages by Astrolabe Bay, some twenty-five miles round the coast. And so she had resolved to take flight at the first opportunity, and risk death in the wild coastal forest in a last attempt to secure the help of civilised men.

Sunset had sunk over the mountains as she sat hollow-eyed and miserable in her prison chamber. Gabrielle could hear the terrible tiki priests chanting and beating drums to their great god Urio Moquru, whose mortal power was represented in monstrous carven wood somewhere near the sacred banyans at the foot of the mountains.

Suddenly the Rajah entered her chamber. A fierce, unearthly look gleamed in his eyes. He did not approach her in his usual oblique fashion; he caught her by the arm and began to whisper fierce words in her ears:

"Bini mine! You are mine! I curse your race, curse your apostles, your Christ and all that you damnable Christians believe in!"

The girl stood trembling. What had happened, she wondered. A new feel-

ing of hope flashed through her misery as the man continued to blaspheme and rave.

Gabrielle knew nothing about the schooner that had anchored off the village of Tumba-Tumba that afternoon. But the Rajah knew. He had watched the obstinate tacking of the schooner for three hours that afternoon as it persistently hugged the coast. And his apprehensions had been increased when it had finally anchored within a quarter of a mile from the shore where his own vessel the *Bird of Paradise* lay. For the blackbirding craft had returned the day before from the Bismarck Archipelago, after disposing of its remaining living freight in the various slave markets. There was little doubt in Macka's mind as to *why* that craft was hugging the coast. He knew what white men were like in their wrath, and what they were likely to do when they discovered that a girl of their own race had been kidnapped in the same manner that they themselves had kidnapped thousands of natives. He knew that old Everard, drunkard though he was, would develop a mighty virtue when he discovered that his own daughter had met a kidnapping fate! He knew also that many of the Papuans and half-castes of the Solomon Isles had sailed with him on his blackbirding voyages, and so knew him for a blackbirder by night and a noble missionary by day. And, realising that those old shipmates of his would give him away for a bribe, he had come to Gabrielle with the intention of taking her farther along the coast. He was determined not to give her up after all his trouble and scheming.

"Gabri-ar-le, I comer you, for I wanter you to fly away from here. I go forth before dawn, we go together to Arfu where I have many friends and can make you great princess," said he, lapsing in his fright into the old pidgin-English.

A look of horror leapt into the girl's eyes.

"You promised—you know what you've promised about my going home to my father again?" she murmured.

The man turned his face away. Even he seemed ashamed as he turned aside and looked through the door out into the night. He put forth his hands in a pleading way: "Gabri-ar-le, you must, must come, I will——"

He said no more. He turned his head and then rushed to the door. What was that gabbling? A mob of curious natives, all excited and murmuring in a hubbub of expectation, were evidently coming up the track that led to the quiet tambu house.

"What's that noise? Who are you fetching here?" shouted Gabrielle, as she heard the sounds coming nearer and nearer.

Then he heard it again—it was a sound that came to Macka's ears like the trump of doom!—and to the girl's ears like the voice of an angel. It was the sound of a big voice shouting in her own tongue, the English language:

"By the gods of this b—— cannibal isle, I'll pulverise him to dust! Macka!

Macka! Where art thou, old missionary of the South Seas? I'm yer man!"

The Rajah turned a ghastly yellowish hue. He made a rush but he was too late—Gabrielle caught him by the coat and tripped him up. He fell headlong to the floor.

A mighty wind like the first breath of warning from a tornado seemed to blow as a hoarse voice, vibrant with pent-up emotion, said: "In there, say ye! You god-damned heathen!"

Gabrielle stared, petrified with astonishment; there before her stood the big rude man who had disturbed Hillary and herself when she sat singing on the banyan bough by the lagoon in Bougainville. If she was surprised, it is certain that Rajah Koo Macka was. He thought that the world had tumbled on his turbaned head as he fell. He struggled to his feet, and rushed outside the door of the tambu house.

"Stand up!" said Samuel Bilbao, confronting him quite calmly as he began to tuck up his coat sleeves. Hillary, who had made a rush for Macka, was stayed by Gabrielle's hand. She had rushed forward and leapt into his arms. The attitude of the big Britisher as he stood there, cool as a cucumber, as calm as though he stood on a village green in England preparing to exchange fisticuffs in a five minutes' contest, made every onlooker step back and form a half-circle behind Ulysses's back.

"Put your fists up, Macka mine! Old Macka the missionary!" yelled Ulysses, as he struck the clasp-knife from the man's hand and threw it, plop! like a tennis ball into the cook's hand. The rest of the *Sea Foam's* crew stood just behind, fronting the huddled natives in the shade of the stunted ivory-nut palms. Some had revolvers in hand ready to obey Bilbao their esteemed skipper's wishes.

The Rajah made a desperate rush towards the white man. He saw that his only chance was to escape through the throng that had encircled him as he stood there hesitating.

No mercy shone in the depths of those clear, grey, English eyes; no sympathetic gleam for the swarthy coward who defiled girls, kidnapped husbands, wives, lovers and children, yet had not the courage to stand up and protect himself from the fists of a white man.

Ulysses stood with shoulders thrown back, and as the winds from the mountains blew his yellowish moustache-ends backwards, till they almost touched his shoulder curves, he looked a veritable Nemesis in dungaree pants and dilapidated helmet-hat. But a more relentless Nemesis lurked in the shadows of the jungle, waiting to put the finishing touch to the Papuan Rajah's sinister career. It was Maroshe, his long-ago, cast-off wife, the Koiari maid into whose ears he had once breathed the sacred ritual vows, when he was in love with her.

She had been the most eager to give Bilbao the information he and Hillary

sought on first coming ashore in that village at sunset. She had quickly understood why the white men were so anxious to get information concerning the Rajah's whereabouts. She knew that they were seeking the white girl—her rival! The sudden turn of affairs had made her chuckle with delight. "The gods are kind to me," she had said to herself. She had intended that very night to creep into the Rajah's sleeping-chamber and deal with him according to the old prescribed rites of her creed, which had a special punishment for those who dare trample on a maiden's vows. She had followed Bilbao and the crew stealthily up the track. She even heard Gabrielle's astonished cry before she rushed into her own hut and made her secret preparations. And now she lay close in the shade of the jungle, prone on her belly like some half-reptilian, half-human creature, as she watched her old lover tremble before the glance of the stern papalagi. She held a goblet in her skinny hand; it was half filled with a dark fluid. On she crawled, hand over hand and knee over knee, nearer and nearer to the spot where Macka and Ulysses faced one another. She chuckled, half-woefully, at the thought of this dramatic opportunity which would give her her long-desired revenge. The Fates had willed it so. She had once really loved that man, and it would have been hard to have approached him whilst he slept in his old *bapa's* tambu house. And there he was, standing in the presence of the white girl whose beauty inspired her with courage to give him the sacred draught.

"Calre!" (Splendid!) she murmured, as her stiff limbs twinged and she began to hurry on, seeing the beautiful white girl standing there, her pretty month open, her blue eyes staring as the men of two races faced each other. Once more her wrinkled body moved on, softly brushing aside the scented frangipani blossoms and cinnamon grass. She was now within twelve yards of the trembling Macka. In a moment she had leapt to her feet, and made a running jump across the hollow village ditch that separated her from the two men.

"Holy Moses!" yelled Ulysses, as an apparition seemed to appear before him. He dodged, making sure that Maroshe was going for him.

Gabrielle, recognising the strange native woman who had come to her in the tambu house a few nights before, gave a cry of astonishment.

Hillary, who still held his coat in his hand, itching to get at Macka, and had just begged Gabrielle to let him go, gasped in wonder. He made sure that the figure that had leapt out of the jungle was the phantom creature whom he had heard Gabrielle talk about.

All the huddled Papuan, Malayan and Hindu bastard natives made a rush backwards into the thick jungle groves, and then stuck their chins out between the thick dark leaves, peering with awestruck eyes, half in fright and half in curious anticipation. They alone knew the true history of Macka's connection with the Koiari woman and of the awful potency of the sacred goblet that she

held in her outstretched hand. As for Macka, he stood transfixed with terror. His swarthy face had gone yellowish-brown! Indeed, as his eyes met those of the brown woman, he gazed with even greater despair into the savage, still half-beautiful face than he felt when he gazed upon Ulysses. Maroshe, standing there by the tall palm, her finger pointing towards the crescent moon, that looked like a gold feather over the mountains, her body clad in the ornamental shelled, *rami*, looked the part she had come to play in that night drama by the Tomba Tomba ranges. Her eyes shone like living fire. She lifted her dusky face till her chin stuck out. One hand held the goblet slightly aloft, with the other hand she pulled the wrinkled skin of her shrunken bosom and let it go back, click! and looked sideways at Gabrielle's full white throat in a meaning way. The venom of her hatred for the man before her made her appear terribly old.

Ulysses stepped backwards. He instinctively knew that that weird-looking woman had the prior right to deal with the Rajah at that particular moment. Step by step she approached, putting her knees far forward in a peculiar way. Even the night winds seemed hushed; not a leaf stirred on the tree-tops. She had begun the old tambu death chant. "Le rami lakai Putih se lao, darah! Cowan ma saloe!" she wailed, as she chanted the words of an eerie Malayan fetish melody.

The crew of the *Sea Foam*, the natives, children and feather-head-dressed chiefs, all watched, spellbound; yellowish faces, brown faces, white faces looking like some dilapidated collection of men dumped down there haphazard. The Rajah seemed the only living, movable presence; his limbs shook violently as he stood in the Fate-like presence of the faded, half-wild woman who had come in so dramatically for the final act.

She was swaying her body, making mystical passes with one hand; her voice trembled in an emotional way as she chanted. The only audible sigh from all that watching throng came from Gabrielle's lips. The shells of the Koiari woman's *rami* made a faint tinkle-tinkle as she moved another step forward.

Macka listened. He understood the meaning of that mumbling song and heathenish incantation. He did not appeal for mercy. Strange as it may seem, he looked half sadly on the faded beauty of the Koiari woman who had once lain in his arms, had felt the passion of his caresses long ago. For a moment she stood perfectly still before him, not in hesitation, but with a look in her eyes as though she would recall some old memory before she did that which the gods had decreed.

It was only a moment's respite. Up went her hand, taking the goblet right up against the Rajah's chin quite gently, as though she would bid him drink once again of some old love-token—before he died! She tossed her hand up, very carefully, so that there should be no mistake—she had thrown the contents of the goblet!

The terribly potent vitriol smoked on his face!

A cry of horror went up from Ulysses' lips and from all the watching crew. The natives yelled out in anguish. Even the mangy Papuan tribal dog, sitting close to the idol's wooden feet, lifted its nose to the crescent moon and howled. The sight of the Rajah's eyes had gone! Standing there, blind, his face seared with fire, the fumes from the goblet issuing from the top of his tilted turban and rising in a shivering vapour to the palms above his head, he made a terrible picture! He violently clapped his hands to his face. He began to dance in a wild frenzy. His mind was shattered with pain. He jumped and jumped, stamping on the ground as though he would crush his very soul out with his feet.

Notwithstanding all that the man had done to Hillary the young apprentice felt some sympathy for the afflicted Rajah. It was so unexpected. Ulysses, who had sworn to do so much when he had Macka in his grasp, re-echoed the horror, the murmur that went up from the huddled, onlooking crew. And no wonder, for as they watched a woman's scream of anguish echoed to the mountains. In a moment they all moved back as the Rajah, hearing that scream, put his hand forth in mute appeal. *He* heard the sympathetic wail in that blood-curdling cry. The final act of the terrible drama, enacted before Ulysses and his crew, was strangely in harmony with its wild setting. None expected that final act, the thrilling exit from the stage when Maroshe the Koiari woman forgave and became united to the Rajah! Mango Pango jumped with fright and clutched Bilbao's arm. "Saver me, poor Mango," she wailed. Bilbao dispelled the tense silence by yelling out: "By thunder!"

The hollow-eyed mate stood like a spectre of misery who saw retribution ahead as he lifted his shrunken hands and stared upward at the stars.

The hubbub of the cowardly natives had suddenly ceased as they too watched Macka's exit from his old life. Gabrielle clutched Hillary in fear; indeed, every onlooker drew in a mighty breath as they saw them go—Macka, a blind, groping figure, looking like some demon of the night flying onward, and shouting in his Malayan tongue, one hand waving in the air, Maroshe clinging to his other arm. They were reunited at last, and she was leading him away to watch over him in his eternal darkness.

For quite twenty seconds Ulysses and all the crew stared after them.

By now the cowardly natives, who had sought to give no help to one of their own kind, had begun their infernal hubbub and were clamouring round Ulysses, begging for the several bribes he had promised should they lead him to the place where the Rajah had taken the white girl.

Bilbao, who had lived with the natives from Dampier Strait to Sarawak, Borneo, knew they were a treacherous lot and liable to turn on him and his scanty crew at any moment, so he was anxious to get back to the *Sea Foam.* He wiped the

perspiration from his brow. His voice was almost gentle as he turned to Hillary and Gabrielle and said, with evidently simulated calm: "I say, we'd better clear out of this at once." Then he turned to the crew: "Hurry up, boys; let's get back to the boats." The sallow mate, who had fallen down in a kind of fit, rose to his feet, and stood swaying like a branch in a wind as he brushed the dust from his brass-bound, peaked cap.

In a moment Hillary, Gabrielle, Mango Pango and the crew had started off, hurrying down the track as Ulysses led the way; the natives came clamouring behind them, whirling and humming in guttural appeals like bunches of monstrous two-legged stalk-flies.

It all seemed like a wonderful dream to Hillary as Gabrielle once more walked by his side, her hair blowing against his face. Even dusky Mango Pango had a shadowy look as she clung to Gabrielle's arm, her broad showy yellow sash blowing out behind her as the two girls kept close to the heels of the hurrying crew.

"Don't tremble, dear. I've come, you see. I never thought to see you again," said Hillary, as he realised that he did not move through a shadow world of phantoms and dreams.

"I knew you'd come," said Gabrielle, as she looked him in the eyes.

Hillary half noticed that strange look of her in the hurry and bustle of the flight back to the boats—a bustle and hurry that Gabrielle appreciated. At last they arrived on the beach. In a moment the natives who were waiting paddled their canoes to the shore. A tremendous hubbub had begun just behind them. What was it?

Gabrielle gasped as she heard that loud, terrible voice yelling from far off: "Butih Bunga, my kali bini!"

It was the enraged voice of old *bapa* (Macka's father) hurrying through the jungle. He wanted to know where his son was, and so he called aloud for the beautiful white wife (*putih bini*).

The natives whom Ulysses had bribed had rushed straight away to Macka's people and told them all that had occurred.

"Hurry up, you damned niggers," yelled Ulysses, as he looked behind him. He was busy undoing the knotted tackle that held the ship's boat.

"Now we shan't be long!" he said, as he gave a low whistle. For he had spotted the huddled masses of dusky figures who had just rushed out of the forest of mahogany-trees, as old *bapa* drove them on, keeping warily behind them! Old *bapa* could distinctly be seen waving his arms as he came into sight just round the edge of the belt of mangroves; he was following closely behind the heathen horde who were rushing down to the beach. From the loud shouts, and the courage of the pursuers, it was every evident that old *bapa* was yelling forth

mighty promises of prizes for those who could clutch hold of the Rajah's *putih bini*.

"Jump into the boat, never mind me," whispered Hillary. In a moment Gabrielle was safely sitting just behind Mango Pango in the ship's one boat, as the rest of the crew embarked in the unstable canoes in which they had come ashore.

Hillary and Ulysses still stood on the shore. As the apprentice turned his head he saw a dusky Papuan crouch down by the reefs just up the shore. Swish! A spear was thrown.

"Crack! crack!" Hillary had fired his revolver to make sure. He was taking no risks. Old *bapa's* voice was still shouting lustily, till his words echoed in the mountains: "Putih bini! The Rajah's beautiful bunga bini!" And though the top of the dusky Papuan's head had been blown off, and Ulysses had given a muffled oath and told Hillary to jump into the canoe and not stand there on the beach writing poetry, those dreadful words echoed in the young apprentice's brain—for he knew the meaning of them.

Hillary, recovering his mental equilibrium, turned to embark, and was helped by a shove from the irritated Ulysses into the canoe.

In a moment the paddles were splashing. They were off! The covey of canoes shot out into the silent waters of the forest-locked bay! In a quarter of an hour they had all safely reached the decks of the hospitable *Sea Foam*.

"Clear off, you niggers," said Ulysses, as the clamouring natives received payment for the job in tins of condensed milk, sugar, tea and tobacco plug. But still they clamoured for more! In no time Ulysses had picked up a deck broom and cleared them over the side, back into their canoes. In less than an hour the *Sea Foam* was stealing along the coast to the north-west.

It appeared that Samuel Bilbao had got wind that the North German steamer *Lubeck* was about due from Apia, bound for the ports of German New Guinea along the western coast. The *Sea Foam* was right dead in the trading course. He was anxious to get Hillary and Gabrielle off the *Sea Foam* in case of trouble. Ulysses was no fool: he well knew that the original skipper of the *Sea Foam* would not stagnate in Bougainville, but would make a hue-and-cry and seek Government help to trace the whereabouts of his vessel. Bilbao loved liberty, and the idea of languishing for five or ten years in some island *calaboose* (jail) or in Darlinghurst, New South Wales, a punishment that would not be out of place in the verdict of the kindest judge and jury extant, made him anxious to seek the outer seas. Consequently, before dawn the *Sea Foam* once more dropped anchor, under the cover of dark, some miles to the east of Astrolabe Bay.

"Come along, boy, now's yer chance. Bring the gal forward," said Ulysses, as he put his hand to his brow and scanned the sea horizon.

"What's the matter?" whispered Gabrielle, as she stepped forward, half recovering from the stupor that had made her fall asleep as she had sobbed in Hillary's arms under the awning aft. Hillary, who had hardly spoken a word to her during the three hours they had been on board the *Sea Foam*, said: "We are going to leave the *Sea Foam.* Our friend here has got to fly, to go a voyage that we cannot take." Hillary said no more. He could not very well explain to the girl, especially in her distressed condition, *how* Samuel Bilbao had obtained possession of the *Sea Foam* and that now that Gabrielle had been rescued from the kidnapper, Macka, he must sail her to remote isles where he could strand her, make a bolt, or do anything he liked except go back to Bougainville. Indeed, Ulysses, Hillary and the bilious, haunted mate had planned the whole programme before they had first dropped anchor off Tumba-Tumba. Ulysses knew that Hillary could easily obtain a passage from Astrolabe Bay for the Admiralty Isles, and then again ship for Bougainville. And so it happened that at the first flush of dawn, when all the stars were taking flight, Samuel Bilbao put forth his big hand and gripped Hillary affectionately by the wrist: "Farewell, pal; good luck to ye."

"Good-bye, Bilbao; and may good luck come to you," said Hillary, with deep meaning and sincerity in his voice as he looked into the clear eyes of the Homeric sailorman.

"Awaie! O le Sona Gaberlel," wailed sad Mango Pango, as she threw her arms affectionately round the white girl's neck. She had known Gabrielle as a child in Bougainville. For a moment the two girls wept. It was a strange sight to see Mango Pango's brown arms entwined with Gabrielle's white arms as they bade each other farewell and wept together. They were only girls after all. Then the mate crept out of the shadows of the awning aft; he had worried so much over his share in stealing the *Sea Foam* and in helping to install Ulysses as skipper, and he had so reduced his frame, that he seemed to consist only of clothes and bones, a veritable skeleton of sorrow with a cheese-cutter on its skull. "Farewell, for ever, friends; farewell!" he almost sobbed, as his bones creaked. At hearing that melancholy voice, Samuel Bilbao, in his thunderous, inconsequential style, gave a loud guffaw and brought his fist down with wonderful artistic gentleness on the mate's bowed form. Had Ulysses struck the mate with his usual forcible exuberance he would have surely doubled up as though he were no more than a bit of muslin wrapped round an upright skeleton.

Then Ulysses gently took hold of Gabrielle's hand and said: "I knew yer brave old father years ago!" Then he added: "Good-bye, girl; he's a good boy, he is."

Hillary felt truly sorry to say farewell to that strange man of the seas. Samuel Bilbao still held the girl's hand. His voice had gone as tender as the girl's. And Mango Pango's eyes looked very fierce as Ulysses, stooping forward,

bent one knee with a massive gallantry that belonged to another age:

"Farewell, Miss Gabrielle; farewell!"

Even the huddled crew seemed to come under the spell of Bilbao's personality as the first pallid hint of dawn swept across the seas. A hot wind from the inland forests on the starboard side stirred Ulysses' magnificent moustache as he slowly rose to his feet, and with his hand arched over his clear blue eyes stared seaward. Then he lifted his dilapidated helmet-hat. The soft sea winds fluttered the bronze-hued curls that hung like an insignia of chivalry over his lofty brow. With a magnificent gesture he gently pulled the disheveled golden head towards his big bosom, then softly kissed Gabrielle's upturned face as though he had loved her a thousand years ago, and now, once again, they must part, each going their separate ways.

Gabrielle couldn't help coming under the influence of that extraordinary man: she too felt a definite sorrow over the parting. And as she looked up into the flushed, honest countenance, half in wonder at her own thoughts, and caught one glimpse from those fine eyes, she saw the *real* Ulysses—all that he might have been.

"Captain, it's a-getting loight, dye's a-coming!" came like a rasp from the Cockney seaman. But even that voice could hardly break the romance of the farewell scene.

Then a mist seemed to come over the silent world as Ulysses, standing like a giant on deck amidst his wondering crew, dissolved into the shadows.

"Dip, dip," went the splashing oars as Gabrielle and Hillary looked into each other's eyes. They were in the ship's boat being rowed hurriedly ashore at Aufurao.

Half-an-hour after they both stood on the beach of a strange, desolate land. Sunrise had just begun to throw ineffable hues over the mountain peaks just behind them. Once more they stared seaward and saw the *Sea Foam* fading away on the wine-dark seas, the sails fast disappearing like a grey bird, taking Ulysses, his remorseful mate and crew, and laughing Mango Pango, beyond the horizon, out of sight, far from their aching, watching eyes.

It was a wild god-forsaken spot where Hillary and Gabrielle found themselves stranded. They were miles away from A——, where a scanty population of white men, half-a-dozen in all, owned copra, coffee and sugar plantations. But though it was the wildest spot in the whole of New Guinea, the young apprentice preferred it to any other. Even the great loneliness, that seemed to come out of the wide, endless seas into which the *Sea Foam* had faded, was more welcome than his own thoughts.

"Come on, Gabrielle," he said, as he sighed, and looked seaward. He thought how he was seeing the great world with a vengeance, reaping life's full meed of romance and sorrow. He realised how one by one his old ideals had disappeared, receding into the past like frightened birds. But who can tell what thoughts haunted the young apprentice as the tropic sun blazed over the wild coast of New Guinea and as Gabrielle, exhausted, slept beneath the mountain trees.

As she lay there in the leafy glooms of the dwarf ivory-nut palms, he looked down on her sleeping face till the soft-lashed eyelids seemed to be two tiny graves wherein lay buried all the purest passion of his dreams.

Up in the tall, dark-green-fingered palms a strange yellow iris bird was singing. And it seemed to him that it had come to serenade him in his loneliness and whistle some hope into his heart. Then it flew away, and he, too, lay down and slept till once more the great tropic night crept with stars over that wild, godforsaken forest coast. He heard the call of the red-wings in the jungle and the forest that ran sheer to the rugged mountains that overlooked the shore. It seemed that he and she dwelt alone in all that primitive world of sombre forest lands and interminable gullies.

"Gabrielle, we must get away from here," he said, as she stood beside him trembling. She had just awakened from a dream that had given her Hillary's love and the security of civilisation far from the unreal world of jungle that met her eyes.

"Come on, Gabrielle." The girl took his hand like an obedient child, and then walked with him out on to the reefs where the waves came hurrying in, tossing their white, foamy hands by the caves and coral bars. Neither spoke one word about the arranged trip up the coast to the settlements, and of the *Lubeck*, N.G.L. steamer, and all that Ulysses had so carefully planned, so that they might not be stranded on that dreadful, fever-stricken coast. It seemed that they had read each other's souls and by instinctive communion stood there caring not where their steps might take them so long as they were together.

As they stood there at the edge of the promontory, beneath the bright stars, Hillary half imagined he stood again on the old hulk off Bougainville; the two dead screw-pines ahead of them looked just like the rotting masts of an old wreck.

"Come nearer, dearest," said the young apprentice, just as he had done on the derelict hulk. Then he said: "Gabrielle, don't cry, dearest. I love you with all my heart and soul. I realise now how you must have felt that night on the old hulk off Bougainville, when you wanted me to jump into the sea and die with you."

He pulled her softly towards him, rained impassioned kisses on her mouth and once more looked down into the depths of her eyes. Their lips met again and again. He placed his fingers in the folds of her glorious hair and breathed the

music of his soul into her ears.

Like some herald of a phantom day, a great radiance flushed the horizon—it was the moon rising far out to sea. It was then that Hillary looked into the girl's eyes and said tenderly: "Is this to be the end, dearest?"

"I'll go anywhere with you," said Gabrielle.

A soft drift of wind came across the hot seas, ruffled the glassy deep swell of the ocean, blowing Gabrielle's tresses out as she stood there. Nor did the torn blue blouse, the dilapidated shoes and her jungle-scratched face impair her beauty.

Gabrielle simply pressed her lips to his and repeated: "I'll go wherever you go."

It was not till then that Hillary realised the soundness of Ulysses' advice. A moment before in his dreamy, melancholy mood he had thought of putting out to sea with Gabrielle in an old canoe which he had found among the reefs. It would make so romantic a climax to their adventure: he had thought of the mysterious and wonderful shores on which they might find themselves driven by the sea, without chart or compass. Gabrielle said she would go wherever he went. Well, after all, they would make their way to the small white settlement, and see what turned up then. Hillary would probably be able to find a ship to take him and Gabrielle away. And then—and then.

He turned again to the girl who was still staring out to sea.

"Are you ready?" he said, rousing himself. "For it seems to me the first thing we've got to do is a good long tramp. That'll bring us to the settlement. Don't you want to see people who are more or less civilised once again?"

"Of course I do. But when you said that about going away with you wherever you went, I thought—I thought you meant——" She hesitated.

"Oh! so you thought that," said Hillary. "Well, never mind. Come, we ought to make a move. And as we go you can tell me of everything that's happened." His face darkened. "Gabrielle," he added a moment later, "you know that I always believed in you."

"Yes," she added simply. "And—and, Hillary, thank God you *were* in time to rescue me from that Rajah Macka. Oh, if you had been too late!"

Hillary for a moment turned away, his eyes wet with emotion. He had feared such unutterable things.

"Yes," he said, his voice hardly steady; "thank God, we were in time. What an adventure it has been. But now everything seems to have come right again. And I've got you for always, haven't I?" he added. And the wind, singing in the palms, drifted a tress of Gabrielle's hair against his face as they stood there gazing on the great moonlit ocean before them.

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