

**BECKE LOUIS**

TESSA

Louis Becke

**Tessa**

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# Содержание

CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	11
CHAPTER III	15
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	18

# Louis Becke

## Tessa / 1901

### CHAPTER I

A small, squat and dirty-looking trading steamer, with the name *Motutapu* painted in yellow letters on her bows and stern, lay at anchor off the native village of Utiroa on Drummond's Island in the Equatorial Pacific. She was about 800 tons burden, and her stained and rusty sides made her appear as if she had been out of port for two years instead of scarcely four months.

At this present moment four of her five boats were alongside, each one piled high over the gunwales with bags of copra, which the steam winch was hoisting in as quickly as possible, for night was drawing on and Captain Louis Hendry, who was then ashore, had given orders to the mate, a burly Yorkshireman named Oliver, to be ready to heave up at six o'clock.

The day had been intensely hot and windless, the sea lay sweltering, leaden-hued and misty, and the smoke from the native houses in Utiroa village hung low down amid the groves of coco-palms which encompassed it on three sides.

On the after-deck of the steamer, under the awning, a man was lying on a bed of mats, with a water-bottle and a plate of bananas beside him. Seated cross-legged beside him was a native boy, about fifteen years of age, who kept fanning his master's face, and driving away the pestering flies. It was easy to see that the man was suffering from fever. His deeply-bronzed cheeks had yellowed and were thin and hollow, and his eyes dull and apathetic. He looked like a man of fifty, though he was in reality not more than thirty-two. Every now and then he drank, then lay back again with a groan of pain. Piled up on the skylight was a heap of rugs and blankets, for use when the violent chilling attack of ague would follow on the burning, bone-racking heat of fever.

Presently the mate, accompanied by the chief engineer, came aft. Both men were very hot and very dirty, and their faces were streaming with perspiration. They sat down on deck-chairs beside the sick man, called to the steward for a bottle of beer, and asked him how he felt.

Carr made a sudden effort and sat up.

"D— bad, Oliver! I have about six hundred and forty-nine pains all over me, and no two of them in the same place. I've swilled enough water to float a battleship; and, look here! you must give me some beer: a bottle—two bottles—a gallon—a cask! Beer I will have if I perish like a beast in the field. I can't drink water like that—it's as hot as —"

Morrison, the Scotch engineer, smiled. "Don't swear, Carr. Ye shall have just one long drink of beer. 'Twill do ye no great harm on such a roasting day as this."

The steward brought two bottles of lager beer, and Carr eagerly extended his thin, brown hand for the creamy, tempting liquid poured out for him by the mate. He drank it off and then laid down again.

"When are we getting out of this beastly hole, Oliver?" he asked.

"To night, I expect—that is, if the skipper comes aboard fairly sober. He doesn't often get too much grog aboard, but this island is one of the places where he is bound to get loaded up. The two traders ashore are countrymen of his, I believe, though they call themselves Britishers."

Carr nodded. "Dutchmen of some kind, eh?"

"Yes, like himself. He's a Dane, though if you told him so he'd get nasty over it."

"He's a nasty brute, anyway," said Carr wearily. "I don't like that shifty eye of his. And I think he's a bit of a sneak."

“You needn’t *think* it; you can be sure of it. I’ll prove it to you in a minute,” said the mate. “Both he and that fat beast of a supercargo are a pair of sneaks, and they hate you like poison. What have you done to offend them?”

“Nothing that I know of. But I have always suspected that neither of them are too fond of me. Hendry I consider a low-lived scoundrel. I met his wife and daughters in Sydney a year ago—went to his house with him. They think he’s a perfect saint, and at the time I thought so too, considering he’s been in the island trade for ten years. But I know what he is pretty well by now. He’s not fit to be married to a decent white woman and have children.”

The mate assented. “You’re right, Carr. He’s a double-faced swab, and a thundering hypocrite as well. There’s only one good point about him—he’s a rattling good sailor man. As for Sam Chard, he’s simply a drunken bully. I shall be glad to be quit of this hooker. I’m not a paragon of virtue, but this ship is a bit too rocky for me. Now I will show you what I meant just now when I said I’ll prove that both Hendry and Chard are sneaks, and have their knives into you.”

He disappeared below for a few seconds, and then returned carrying a letter-book.

“Now, Carr, my boy,” he said, seating himself beside the sick trader again, “just cock your ears and listen. This is our esteemed supercargo’s letter-book. I had to go into his cabin yesterday to look for the list of ship’s stores, and I saw this letter-book lying on his table, opened at this particular page. I caught your name, and took the liberty of reading the letter. It is addressed to the owners in Sydney, and is dated May 5, 1889.”

“That was two days after you and the skipper and Chard had the row about those flash Samoan girls coming aboard at Vavau,” put in Morrison, “and he and Chard started to knock the hands about.”

“I remember,” said Carr, as a grim smile flitted across his yellow face; “go on, Oliver.”

The mate began:—

“SS. *Motutapu*. Niafu Harbour,

“Vavau, Tonga Islands,

“May 5, 1889.

“Dear Sirs,—As the barque *Metaris* leaves to-day for Sydney, I take the opportunity of writing you to report progress of cruise of the *Motutapu* up to date.”

Then followed an account of the various trading operations in which the steamer had been engaged from the time she left Sydney up to her arrival at the Friendly Islands. Then—

“In pursuance of your instructions, we called at Kabaira Bay, New Britain, to remove Mr. Harvey Carr from there to a more healthy location. We found Mr. Carr’s station in a satisfactory state, and his accounts were correct. But both Captain Hendry and myself are of the opinion that Mr. Carr was on altogether too friendly terms with the manager of the German firm at Blanche Bay, and we believe that your firm’s interest has greatly suffered thereby. He certainly was ill, but we do not think his illness has been caused by fever, of which we could see no traces, but by his availing himself of the too lavish hospitality of the manager of the German firm. He had also, I learnt, become very thick with the Wesleyan missionaries at Port Hunter, and seems to have been continually visiting them under the pretext of getting medical attendance from the Rev. Dr. Bowen, who, as you are well aware, is a determined opponent of your firm in New Britain, and has made several adverse reports upon our manner of trading with the natives to the commander of H.M. ships.”

“What do you think of that?” inquired the engineer wrathfully, striking his clenched hand upon his knee; “and the fellow is a Scotsman, too.”

Carr laughed. “Don’t get angry, Morrison. He’s one of the wrong sort of Scotsmen. Give me some beer. I’m a drunken beast, aren’t I? Go on, Oliver.”

“In fact Mr. Carr seems to have thoroughly ingratiated himself with the missionaries as well as with the Germans, and I think it is my duty to mention this to you at the earliest opportunity. I proposed to him that he should take charge of one of your stations in the New Hebrides, but he declined to remain in Melanesia, alleging that he is suffering from fever, and insisting on being given a station in the Caroline Islands. I pointed out to him that it would be to the firm’s advantage for him to remain in the vicinity of New Britain, whereupon he was grossly insulting, and said that the firm could go to hell, that he studied his own health as much as anything. Furthermore, he made the direct statement that he was not anxious to continue in the service of a firm that resorted to shady and illegal practices, such as sly grog-selling, and other blackguardly things. These words he uttered to myself and Captain Hendry. On Sunday last, the 3rd inst., myself and the captain had occasion to exercise our authority over our native crew, who were making a noise on deck. Mr. Carr—who was violently excited from the effects of liquor—at once interfered and took the part of the crew, who not only threatened both myself and Captain Hendry with personal violence, but committed an assault on us. I consider that the firm will be wise to terminate their connection with Mr. Carr. His presence on board is a continual source of trouble, and I shall be glad to have authority from you to dismiss him. Captain Hendry bears me out in these statements, and herewith attaches his signature to mine.

“I am, dear Sir,

“Yours very obediently,

“Samuel Chard, supercargo.

“Louis Hendry, master. “Messrs. Hillingdon & McFreeland,

“Sydney.”

“What do you think of that, Carr?” “It doesn’t astonish me, Oliver, for Chard, with all his seeming *bonhomie*, is as big a black-guard as Hendry. And there is a certain amount of truth in his letter—I did say that the firm of Hillingdon and McFreeland were guilty of shady and illegal practices, and that the High Commissioner in Fiji would bring them up with a round turn some day. But, as you know, all the rest is false—downright lies.”

The mate slapped him on the shoulder. “Lies! Of course they are! Now just listen to what I have written in my own private log.”

He stepped along to the deck-house, entered his cabin, and came back with the private log aforesaid.

“Here, listen to this:—

“Vavau, Tonga Islands, May 3, 1889.—This evening Captain Hendry and Mr. Chard, the supercargo, came on board at six o’clock, accompanied by several white men and a number of loose Samoan women. They were all more or less under the influence of drink. As is usual, our native crew were seated on the fore-hatch, holding their evening service, when Mr. Chard went for’ard, and with considerable foul language desired them to stop their damned psalm-singing. He then offered them two bottles of Hollands gin. The native seamen refused to accept the liquor, whereupon Mr. Chard struck one of them and knocked him down. Then Captain Hendry, who was much the worse for drink, came for’ard, and calling on me to follow and assist him, attacked the crew, who were very excited (but offered no violence), with an iron belayingpin. He stunned three of them before the second mate, the chief engineer, and myself could restrain him, and he threatened to shoot what he called “the ringleaders of a mutiny.” He had a revolver belted round his

waist. The native crew then came aft and made a complaint to Mr. Harvey Carr, the trader, who was lying ill with fever in his berth. He came on deck, and speaking in Samoan to the crew and to the women who had been brought on board by Captain Hendry and the supercargo, urged the women to go on shore, as it was Sunday. This they at once did, and getting into a canoe, paddled away. Thereupon Captain Hendry, Mr. Sam Chard, and the white traders became very insulting to Mr. Carr, who, although he was so ill, kept his temper, until Mr. Chard called him a “missionary crawler.” This expression made Mr. Carr lose control of himself, and he used very strong language to Captain Hendry and the supercargo upon the gross impropriety of their conduct. He certainly used expressions that he should not have employed, but under the circumstances, and bearing in mind the fact that the native crew were ready for mutiny, and that mutiny was only averted by Mr. Carr’s influence over the native crew, I and my fellow officers, whose names are attached, desire to record the facts of the case. “Then Captain Hendry and Mr. Sam Chard used very foul language to Mr. Carr, who again lost his temper and called the former a damned stock-fish eating Dutchman, who had no right to sail under British colours as an Englishman, and ought to be kicked off the deck of a British ship. He (Mr. Carr) then, being greatly excited, added that Captain Hendry, being a married man with a large family, was little better than a brute beast in his mode of life, else he would not have brought half a dozen native harlots on board—women whose very presence insulted even his native crew. Mr. Chard then advanced towards Mr. Carr in a threatening manner, whereupon the whole native crew, headed by a white stoker named Cleaver, rushed the after-deck, seized Captain Hendry and Mr. Chard, and threw them below into the saloon. “Mr. Carr then addressed the crew in their own several languages, and explained to them the danger of laying hands upon the captain or an officer of the ship; also he explained to them his own position as a passenger. They listened to him quietly, and promised to follow his directions. At six o’clock Captain Hendry and Mr. Sam Chard came on deck, and in my presence and in that of the second officer and Felix Latour, the steward, apologised to Mr. Carr. Mr. Carr, who was very exhausted with fever, shook hands with them both, and the matter has ended. I have briefly entered these occurrences in the ship’s log, which Captain Hendry refuses to sign. But this statement of mine is signed as follows:—

“James Oliver, Chief Officer.

“Jos. Atkins, Second Officer.

“Felix Latour, Steward.

“Tom Cleaver, Fireman.”

The trader held out his hand, “Thank you, Oliver. But I’m afraid that the firm of Hillingdon and McFreeland will be glad to get rid of a man like me. I’m not the sort of trader they want. I took service with them under the impression that they were straight people. They are not—they are simply unmitigated sweeps. Hillingdon, with his solemn, stone-jug-like face, I *know* to be a most infernal rogue. He fakes the firm’s accounts to the detriment of the London people who are paying the piper, and who are really the firm. As for Sam Chard and this measly, sneaking, Danish skipper, they are merely minor thieves. But I didn’t do so badly with them, did I, Oliver?”

The mate laughed loudly. “No, indeed. You settled them that time. But you must be careful. Hendry especially is a dangerous man. I believe that he wouldn’t stick at murder if it could be done without any fear of detection. And he hates you like poison. Chard, too, is a scoundrel, but wouldn’t do anything worse than he has done, which is bad enough, for the fat blackguard always keeps up the appearance of a jolly, good-natured fellow. But be careful of Hendry. Don’t lean on the rail on a

dark night when he's on deck. He'd give you a hoist overboard in a second if you gave him a chance and no one was about."

"I'll watch him, Oliver. And when I get better, I'll take it out of him. But I'm not going to let him and Chard drive me out of the ship. I am under a two years' engagement to this rascally firm, and have only three more months to put in. I'll settle in the Carolines, and start trading there on my own account. I'm sick of this filthy old tub."

"So is Morrison, and so am I," said the mate, as he rose to go for'ard again. "Hallo, here is the skipper coming at last."

A quarter of an hour later the captain's boat, came alongside, and Hendry and his supercargo came aft under the awning, and with much solicitude asked Carr how he was feeling. He replied civilly to their inquiries, but excused himself when Chard asked him to have a small bottle of lager. They were accompanied by two respectable-looking white men, who were resident traders on Drummond's Island.

"I have some news for you, Mr. Carr," said the supercargo genially; "there's an old friend of yours here, a trader named Remington."

Carr raised himself with an expression of pleasure lighting up in his worn, thin face. "Old Jack Remington! Where is he? I *shall* be glad to see him again."

"He'll be aboard here in another hour. He has a station at the north end of the island. The moment we mentioned your name he said he would come and see you. His daughter is going on to the Carolines with us, and he has just now gone off to his station to bring her on board, as the captain wants to get away at daylight in the morning." Then with a pleasant nod he moved his chair some little distance away, and began talking business with the two traders.

Carr, lying on his side with half-closed eyes, apparently was trying to sleep, in reality he was studying the supercargo's face. It was a handsome, "taking" sort of face, rather full and a bit coarse perhaps, deeply browned by tropic suns, and lit up by a pair of jet black eyes, which, when the possessor was in a good temper and laughed, seemed to dance in unison. Yet they were eyes that in a moment could narrow and show an ugly gleam, that boded ill for the object of their owner's resentment. His curly hair and beard were jet black also, save here and there where they were streaked with grey, and his figure, stout, but close and well-knit together, showed him to be a man of great strength and activity.

From the face of the supercargo Carr let his glance light upon the figure of Captain Louis Hendry, who was standing at the break of the poop talking to the chief mate. He was a small, slightly-built man of about fifty years of age, with regular features, and wore a flowing grey beard trimmed to a point. His eyes were those of the true Scandinavian, a bright steely blue, though at the present moment the whites were bloodshot and angry-looking. As he talked he kept stroking his beard, and directing sullen glances at the crew, who were still working hard at hoisting in the bags of copra. It was not a pleasant face to look at—a sullen ill-humour seemed to glower forth from under the bushy grey eyebrows, and vie with a nervous, sneaking apprehensiveness, as if he every moment feared to be struck from behind. That he was a bit of a dandy was very evident, for although his navy serge coat and cap were soiled and dirty, they were both heavily trimmed with gold lace—a most unusual adornment for the master of an island trading steamer. Like his supercargo, he carried a revolver at his side, and at this Carr looked with a contemptuous smile, for neither of the two traders, who actually lived on the island, thought it necessary to carry arms, though the natives of Taputeauea, as Drummond's Island was called, had a bad reputation.

An hour after sunset, and whilst supper was proceeding in the saloon, a smart whaleboat, manned by a crew of half-naked natives of Pleasant Island, came alongside, and an old white-haired man of past sixty stepped on deck. He was accompanied by a fair-skinned, dark-haired girl of about twenty. The boatswain conducted them aft to where Carr, now shaking with a violent attack of ague, was lying.

“My dear boy,” cried the old man, kneeling beside the trader, and looking into his face with intense sympathy. “I am so glad to meet you again, though sorry to see you so ill.”

Carr, with chattering teeth, held out an icy-cold hand.

“How are you, Remington? And you, Tessa? I’ll be all right in another ten minutes, and then we can talk.”

Tessa Remington slipped down on the deck into a sitting posture beside him, and placed her soft, warm hand on his forehead.

“Don’t talk any more just now, Mr. Carr. There, let me tuck you in properly,” and she wrapped the rugs more closely around him. “I know exactly what to do, don’t I, father?”

## CHAPTER II

From his boyhood Harvey Carr had been a wanderer among the islands of the Southern Seas. Before he was sixteen his father, who was owner and master of a Hobart Town whaleship, had perished at sea in one of the ship's boats after the loss of his vessel upon an uncharted reef in the South Pacific. And though another sixteen years had almost passed since that dreadful time of agony and hunger, and thirst and madness, when men looked at each other with a horrid meaning in their wolfish eyes, the boy had never forgotten his dying father's words, spoken to the lad when the grey shadow of the end had deepened upon the old seaman's rugged face—

"I'm done for, Harvey. Try to keep up the men's courage. Rain will fall before morning. I know it is coming, though I shall never feel it. Stick to your two little sisters, boy; you must be their mainstay when I am gone. Lead a clean life, Harvey. You can do it if you think of your dead mother and of me.... And tell the men to stick steady to an east-southeast course. They'll feel fresh and strong when the rain comes. Drop me over the side the moment I'm gone, lad, won't you? Don't let any one of them touch me. Goodbye, my son."

Those awful days of horror had helped to strengthen Harvey Carr's natural resolution and steadfastness of purpose in life. When the famished and hideous-looking survivors of the crew of the *City of Hope* were picked up two days later the orphaned sailor lad made a vow to devote himself to his sisters and "live clean." And he had kept his vow, though for many years he had lived as trader, mate, or supercargo, among people and in places where loose living was customary with white men, and where any departure from the general practice was looked upon with either contemptuous pity or open scorn. Yet no one, not even the roughest and most dissolute beachcomber in the two Pacifics, would have dared to "chaff" Harvey Carr upon his eccentricity, for he had an unpleasant manner when aroused which meant danger to the man who was so wanting in judgment. Yet some men *had* "chaffed" him, and found out to their cost that they had picked upon the wrong sort of man; for if he was slow with his tongue he was quick with his hands, and knew how to use them in a manner which had given intense pleasure to numerous gentry who, in South Sea ports, delight to witness a "mill" in default of being able to take part in it themselves.

And so the years had slipped by with Harvey Carr, wandering from one island to another either as trader or seaman. Of such money as he made he sent the greater portion to his sisters in the Colonies, retaining only enough for himself to enable him to live decently. He was not an ascetic, he drank fairly with his rough companions, gambled occasionally in a moderate manner with them, swore when the exigences of seafaring life demanded it, but no one had ever heard his name coupled with that of a woman, white or brown, though he was essentially a favourite with the latter; for at the end of fifteen years' experience in the South Seas, from Easter Island to the far Bonins, he was one of the few white men who thoroughly understood the character and disposition of the various peoples among whom he had lived. Had he been a man of education his knowledge of native languages, thought and mode of life generally, might have brought him some money, fame, and distinction in the world beyond, but he took no thought of such things; for to him the world beyond was an unknown quantity, only associated in his mind with his sisters, who had sometimes talked to him of their hopes and aspirations. They would, when he had made plenty of money, go to England, to France, to Italy. They would, with him, see the quaint old church on the sands of Devon where their mother, and her mother too, had been christened so long, long ago. And Harvey had only shaken his head and smiled. They, he said, might go, but he had no care for such things; and he would work hard and make money for them until they married and wanted him no longer.

And then after a brief stay in the quiet little Australian country town where his sisters lived, he would again sail out to seek the ever-fleeting City of Fortune that has always tempted men like him into the South Seas, never to return to the world of civilisation, but with an intense, eager desire to

leave it again as quickly as possible. To him the daily round of conventional existence, the visitings, the theatres, the church-goings, the talkings with well-dressed and highly cultured men and women, whose thoughts and life seemed to him to be deadly dull and uninteresting when contrasted with his own exciting life in the South Seas, palled upon and bored him to the verge of desperation. From his boyhood—from the time of his father's death he had moved among rough men—men who held their lives cheaply, but whose adventurous natures were akin to his own; men “who never had ‘listed,’” but who traded and sailed, and fought and died from bullet, or club, or deadly fever in the murderous Solomons or New Hebrides; men whose pioneering instinct and unrecorded daring has done so much for their country's flag and their country's prestige, but whose very names are forgotten by the time the quick-growing creeper and vine of the hot tropic jungle has hidden their graves from even the keen eye of the savage aboriginal. Go through a file of Australian newspapers from the year 1806 to the year 1900 and you will see how unknown Englishmen have died, and are dying, in those wild islands, and how as they die, by club, or spear, or bullet, or fever, how easily the young hot blood of other men of English race impels them to step into the vacant places. And it is well that it is so the wild wide world over, else would Britain be, not the mistress of the seas, but only a sharer of its sovereignty with France and Germany.

About five years previous to his entering the service of Hillingdon and McFreeland, Carr had been mate of a trading vessel whose cruising-grounds were that vast chain of islands known as the Caroline Group, in the North-West Pacific, and there he had made the acquaintance of old John Remington and his family, an acquaintance that in the course of two or three years had deepened into a sincere friendship. The old trader was a man of means, and owned, in addition to his numerous trading stations throughout the North Pacific, a very smart schooner, of which eventually Carr took command, and sailed her for him for a couple of years. Then Remington, who, old as he was, was of an eager, adventurous disposition, decided to seek new fields for his enterprise among the low-lying equatorial islands to the south, and Carr and he parted, the former resuming his wanderings among the wild and murderous peoples of New Britain and the Solomon Archipelago. Since then they had never met, though the young man had heard that Remington, accompanied by one or more of his children, had opened up a trading business in the Gilbert Islands.

Exhausted with the violence of the fit of ague, Carr had dropped off into a broken slumber, from which he did not awaken till eight bells were struck, and the steward came to ask him to try and eat a little. Chard, Hendry and the two traders were below in the saloon, drinking, smoking, and talking business; Remington and his daughter, who had declined to join them at supper, were still on deck waiting for Carr to awaken; Malua, Carr's native servant, still sat beside his master, from whom he was never long absent, and from the main deck came the murmur of voices from the native crew, who were lying on their mats enjoying the cool breath of the evening land breeze.

The moment the young trader opened his eyes Tessa's father came over to him and they began to talk.

“I was delighted beyond words to learn you were on board, Harvey,” said the old man. “I didn't care about the idea of letting Tess go away under the care of strangers; but now I shall know that she will be well looked after, and that she will be in Ponapé in less than a month.”

Carr heard him in silence, then he said frankly, “And I shall be delighted too; but, at the same time, I wish she were leaving you by any other ship than this. Cannot you keep her with you until one of the German ships come along? Is it necessary she must go home by this steamer?”

“Time is everything, Harvey. Her mother is ill, and wrote to me a few months ago, begging me, if I could not return myself, to at least try and send Tess home. The two other girls are married, as you know, and my two boys are both away—one is second mate on the *Jacinta*, of New Bedford, and the other is in California. And I can't leave Drummond's Island for another four months or so. I have made a good business here and throughout the group, and to leave it now to the care of any one else would mean a heavy loss to me. Then, you see, this steamer will land Tess at home in less

than a month. If she waits for one of the German ships to call she may have to wait three or four months. And her mother wants her badly.”

Again Carr was silent. He knew that Mrs. Remington had always been more or less of an invalid for many years. She was a Portuguese of Macao, and though her three daughters and two sons were strong and robust, she had always struck him as being of a delicate physique—the very antithesis of her husband, whose fame as an athlete was known from one end of the Pacific to the other. Presently Carr sat up.

“Do you mind going away, Tessa, for a few minutes?” he said. “I want to talk to your father on some business matters.”

A vivid flush spread over Tessa’s pale cheeks. “Oh, I’m so sorry, Harvey.”

She rose and walked aft to where the mate was standing, and began to talk to him, her heart beating double quick time the while, for she had never forgotten Harvey Carr, though he had never spoken a word of love to her in the olden days when she was a girl of sixteen, and he was the master of her father’s schooner.

And now, and now, she thought, they would be together for nearly a month. And what were the “business matters,” she wondered, about which he wanted to speak to her father. Perhaps he was coming to them again! How hollow-cheeked, yellow, and dreadful he looked, except for his eyes, which were always kind and soft! She was nineteen, and was no longer the child she was three years ago, when, with her gun on her shoulder, she used to accompany Harvey Carr and her brothers out pigeon-shooting in the dark, silent mountain forest of Ponapé. And then, too, she knew she was beautiful; not so beautiful, perhaps, as her two sisters, Carmela and Librada, whom she had heard Harvey say were the handsomest girls he had ever seen. But yet—and again a pleasant flush tinged her pale cheeks—he had always liked to talk to her most, although she was only a girl of sixteen, just returned from school in California.

She sighed softly to herself, and then looking up suddenly saw the kindly-faced mate regarding her with a smile in his honest grey eyes, for she was answering his questions at random, and he guessed that her thoughts were with the sick trader.

As soon as she was out of hearing Carr spoke hurriedly, for he every moment expected to see either Chard or the captain appear on deck.

“Jack,” he said, speaking in the familiar manner borne out of their past comradeship, “you know that I would do anything for you, don’t you? But while I shall take good care of Tessa, I would rather she was going back home to Ponapé by any other ship than the *Motutapu*.”

“What is wrong with the ship, Harvey?”

“Nothing. But the captain and supercargo are a pair of unmitigated scoundrels. I have seen a good deal of them since I came on board at New Britain, and I hate the idea of Tessa even having to sit at the same table with them. If I were free of this cursed fever, I wouldn’t mind a bit, for I could protect her. But I’m no better than a helpless cripple most of the time, and one or the other, or both, of these fellows are bound to insult her, especially if they begin drinking.”

Old Remington put his hand on Carr’s shoulder. “You’re a good boy, Harvey, and I know what you say of Chard at least, is true. But have no fear for Tessa. She can take good care of herself at any time, and I have no fear for her. Just let me call her for a moment.”

“Tessa,” he called, “come here.” Then speaking in Portuguese, he added, “Show Harvey what you have in the bosom of your dress.”

The girl smiled a little wonderingly, and then putting her hand in the bosom of her yellow silk blouse, drew out a small Smith and Wesson revolver.

“Don’t worry about Tessa, Harvey,” added her father; “she has not travelled around the Pacific with me for nothing, and if either that rat-faced Danish skipper or the fat supercargo meddles with her, she will do what I would do. So have no fear. And she is as anxious as I am myself to get home to her mother.”

Harvey was satisfied. “Perhaps I am doing these two fellows an injustice, Jack. When a man has fever he always takes a black view of everything. And then I should remember that Malua here, and the mate, and nearly all the crew, will see that Tessa is not interfered with. I am sorry, however, that I shall not be with Tessa all the way to Ponapé—I am going ashore at the Mortlocks. There is a good opening there—”

“Don’t be in too much of a hurry, Harvey. Now, listen to me. Go on to Ponapé. Leave this employ, and come in with me again.”

Harvey promised to think it over during the next few days; but the old man could see, to his regret, that the Mortlocks group of islands possessed a strong fascination for his young friend.

Remington remained on board for the night; and then at daylight he bade Tessa and Harvey farewell and went ashore, and half an hour later the steamer had left the island, and was heading north-west for the Carolines.

## CHAPTER III

Five days out from Drummond's Island Carr had so much improved in health that he was able to take his seat at the saloon table for breakfast, much to the annoyance of Chard, who had been making the best of his time in trying to produce a favourable impression upon Tessa Remington. He pretended, however, to be delighted to see the trader mending so rapidly, and was most effusive in his congratulations; and Hendry, of course, followed suit. Harvey responded civilly enough, while Tessa, who had learned from the chief mate of the treacherous part they were playing towards her friend, could not repress a scornful curl of her lip as she listened to Chard's jocular admonition to Harvey, "to hurry up and put on some flesh, if only for the reputation of the cook of the *Motutapu*."

Immediately after breakfast Carr went on deck again, and began to pace to and fro, enjoying the bright tropic sunshine and the cool breath of the trade wind. In a few minutes Tessa, accompanied by her native woman servant, appeared, followed by Chard and Captain Hendry.

"Won't you come on the bridge, Miss Remington?" said Chard, "I'll take a chair up for you."

"No, thank you," she replied, "I would rather sit here under the awning."

The supercargo and Hendry went up on the bridge together, where they could talk freely. The man at the wheel was a thick-set, rather stupid-looking native from Niué (Savage Island), who took no notice of their remarks, or at least appeared not to do so. But Huka was not such a fool as he looked.

"*You'll* stand little chance with her," said Hendry presently, in his usual low but sneering tones as he tugged viciously at his beard.

The supercargo's black eyes contracted, "Wait and see, before you talk. I tell you that I mean to make that girl marry me."

"*Marry* you!"

"Yes, marry me. The old man will leave her pretty well everything he has, and he has a lot. I've been making inquiries, and am quite satisfied."

"How are you going to do it?"

"Don't know just yet. Must think it out. But I never yet knew the woman whom I could not work my own way with—by fair means or foul, as the penny novelists say."

"It strikes me that she likes that damned fellow. Look round presently and see for yourself. She's reading to him."

"Bah! That's nothing. He used to sail one of the old man's schooners, and of course they have a good deal to talk about. I'll settle *him* as far as she is concerned. Wait till I get a chance to talk to her a bit," and taking off his cap the supercargo passed his brawny hand through his curly hair with a smile of satisfaction. "She'll be tired of talking to him before the day is out."

"Where is he going to land? Has he told you?"

"Yes. He wants to be put ashore at the Mortlocks Islands. We have no trader there, and he has lived there before."

"I'd like to see him go over the side in some new canvas, with a couple of fire bars slung to his heels," snarled Hendry viciously.

"So would I," said Chard meditatively.

At four bells the wheel was relieved, and Huka the Niué native trotted off, and immediately sent a message to Carr's servant Malua to come for'ard. The boy did as requested, and remained away for about ten minutes. When he returned he seated himself as usual near his master. Hendry was in his cabin on deck, Chard was below in the trade room, and only Tessa, Harvey, and himself were on the after-deck.

"Master," he said in Fijian, to Harvey, "listen to what Huka, the man of Niué, has told me. The captain and the supercargo have been talking about thee and the lady." Then he repeated all that which Huka had heard.

“The infernal scoundrels!” Harvey could not help exclaiming. “But they won’t get rid of me as easily as they think.”

“What is it, Harvey?” asked Tessa, anxiously bending forward to him.

The trader thought a moment or two before speaking. Then he decided to tell her what he had just heard.

She laughed contemptuously. “*His wife! His wife!*” she repeated scornfully. “If he knew what my father knows of him, and how I hate and despise him, he would not have said that. Does he think that because my mother was a Portuguese, I am no better than some native slave girl whom he could buy from her master?”

Harvey smiled gravely as he looked into her flashing eyes, and saw her clench her hands angrily. Then he said—

“He is a dangerous man though, Tessa. And now listen to me. When I came on board this steamer I intended to land at the Mortlocks Islands. But I think now that I will go on to Ponapé.”

“Do not change your plans, Harvey, on my account. I am not afraid of this man. He dare not insult me, for fear my father would hear of it.”

“I know him too well, Tessa. He and the skipper are, I fear, a pair of cunning, treacherous villains. And so I am going on to Ponapé. And I will stay there until your father returns. I daresay,” he added with a smile, “that he will give me a berth as a trader somewhere.”

A sudden joy illumined the girl’s face. “*I am* so glad, Harvey. And mother, too, will be overjoyed to see you again; father has never ceased to talk about you since you left him. Oh, Harvey, we shall have all the old, old delightful days over again. But,” she added artlessly, “there will be but you and I now to go fishing and shooting together. Carmela and her husband are living in the Ladrões, and Librada and her husband, though they are still on Ponapé, are ten miles away from mother and I. Then Jack is in California, and Ned is away on a whaling cruise.”

A quick emotion stirred his bosom as he looked into her now joyous face. “I don’t think you and I can go out shooting and fishing together, Tessa, as we did in what you call ‘the old, old days.’”

“Can’t we, Harvey?” she asked wonderingly.

He shook his head, and then mused.

“Tessa, I wish you could meet my sisters.”

She clasped her hands together. “Ah, so do I, Harvey. I should love to meet them. Do you think they would like me?”

“I am sure they would.”

They were silent for a while, the girl with her head bent and her long lashes hiding her eyes from him as she sat in the deck-chair, and he thinking of what his sisters would really say if he wrote and told them that he thought he had at last found a woman he would wish to make his wife.

“Tessa.”

“Yes, Harvey.”

She did not look at him, only bent her head still lower.

“*Tessa!*”

“Yes, Harvey.”

Her hands were trembling, and her courage was gone, for there was something in his voice that filled her with delight.

“Tessa,” he said, speaking softly, as he drew nearer to her, and tried to make her look at him; “do you know that you are a very beautiful woman?”

“I am glad you think so, Harvey,” she whispered. “You used to tell father that Carmela and Librada were the most beautiful women you had ever seen.”

“So they were. But you are quite as beautiful. And, Tessa—”

“Yes, Harvey”—this in the faintest whisper.

“Could you care for me at all, Tessa? I do not mean as a friend. I am only a poor trader, but if I thought you could love-me, I—”

She took a quick glance around the deck, and bent towards him. “I have always loved you, Harvey; always, always.” Then she pressed her lips to his, and in another moment was gone.

Harvey, with a sense of elation in his heart, walked for’ard to where Morrison was standing in the waist.

“Why, man, ye look as if ye could take the best man aboard on for four rounds,” said the engineer, with a smile.

“I do feel pretty fit, Morrison,” laughed the trader; “have you anything to drink in your cabin?”

“Some real Loch Dhu, *not* made in Sydney. Man, your eye is as bright as a boy’s.”

Just before eight bells were struck Chard came on deck. He was carefully dressed in shining, well-starched white duck, and his dark, coarsely-handsome face was aglow with satisfaction; he meant to “rub it in” to Carr, and was only awaiting till Tessa Remington and Captain Hendry were present to hear him do it. He knew she would be on deck in a minute or so, and Hendry he could see was sitting at his cabin table with his chart before him. Harvey was strolling about on the main deck, smoking his first pipe for many weeks.

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