

RED HAIR AND BLUE SEA



by **STANLEY R. OSBORN**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY HENRY JAY LEE

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WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE.

Palmyra Tree and her parents, with Palmyra's two suitors, Van Buren Rutger and John Thurston and some other friends, are cruising on the yacht Rainbow.

Palmyra is startled by seeing a hand thrust in through the port of her cabin, makes a secret investigation and discovers a stowaway—a man so mild in appearance that she is disappointed, and tells him so. He commands her to glance at the door. She obeys and sees a huge, fierce, copper-headed man, with a tanned knife held between grinning lips. Now read on.

CHAPTER II

Next morning Mrs. Crawford and her guests were gathered in lee of the deckhouse, huddled in their rugs.

The sun, only at intervals, had been blinking through, bringing a touch of warmth to the surface of the sea, charming the spreading canvas into life. As, presently, Palmyra roused from her preoccupation to join the others in a laugh, the luminary glanced down again and printed on the deck, black and sharp-edged, the fitting shadow of the sails.

Such a shade lay across the girl's face. When the Rainbow rose to a surge, the shadow moved, as a curtain up, and the sunbeam caught in turn and illumined perfect teeth, luminous eyes that danced with fun, and a flame the crown of bright hair, her most noticeable ornament.

But soon she was sadder again. She had been shaken by that fierce visage leaping out at her from the dark.

She should have suspected a second prisoner. One glance at Burke's hand, played though it was, should have sufficed. It was small, pudgy, never the thick straw-paw that had fastened upon the cabin port. His wit about her, she should have recognized Burke's song, not have waited to be told afterwards that he was chanting: "Silent, go stand against the door, knife in twelv, and look terrific."

At this point the shadow of the sail came swooping down again across Palmyra's eyes and she awoke to find that Mrs. Durley, the stewardess, was regarding her with an amused and envious expression. The girl flushed guiltily.

Mrs. Durley stopped forward, hesitated, held out a card tray. "A gentleman to see you, Miss Tree," she announced.

"A gentleman to see Miss Tree?" inquired Mrs. Crawford in amused acceptance of the play. "Why, how unexpected?"

"A pirate or sea horse?" questioned Van.

At this moment she caught sight of the man himself, standing in the alley, beyond the hatch, and the rail.

"Mrs. Crawford," she introduced, "this is Mr. Burke, the well-known pirate. Will be pleased to go on, to demonstrate walking the plank. I'm sure if you could see him south of a ship, you'd feel you'd been greatly entertained."

By daylight the pirate's face had just a charitable aspect. Still singularly unobtrusive as to line and feature, there was now more visibly upon it a maturity of significance that could only have been stamped by dissipation, hardship and danger, or some more violent temperament.

But if Burke's face had gained in significance, his figure had not. Moreover, he now verged on the pathetic, shaking with cold. Palmyra recollected, with a stab of pity, that brown creature down below.

The girl started, impulsively, to rise, then sank back again. She had seen the steward below, a short time past, overhauling blankets, a reserve supply for the men forward. If she could manage to get one or two of these coverings—

Compassion urged the deed. But—she was afraid. Presently, however, a well-authenticated chin settled into place, and two lips grew arbitrary. She arose, excused herself, and marched down the companionway. Yes, the blankets were still there. She snatched two, secured her torch and reached the bulkhead door, unchallenged.

She switched on the torch, forced hers forward. Then after a moment's hesitation: "Here—you! Are you cold? I have two blankets?"

Without warning, premonition, or sound, there appeared within the circle of light the ends of four great massive square fingers.

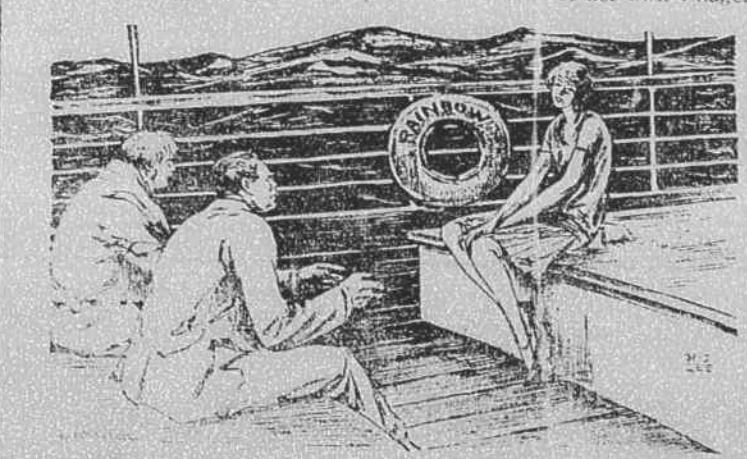
Almost the girl sprang back cried out in pain. A moment the fingers paused. Then they came thrusting toward her from the dark. For a flash it seemed that it must be herself they meant to seize. Then they closed upon the blankets, rested there an instant, withdrew with their prize again into the night whence they had come.

But, brief as the interval, it had been enough. Here at last was the hand that had been sent through the port square, sinewy, brown, adorned even to the great-grandmother mitts.

And only now did she belatedly realize that these mitts were not of silk, but of tattooer's ink.

When the girl came on deck next morning there the savage sat, cross-legged on the fore-hatch, huddled under his blankets in the sun.

As Palmyra and her parents ap-



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peared. Ponape Burke was explaining that the remote intelligence at his feet knew no word of any white man's language.

If the savage recognized her she was unable to note any change in his countenance. Indeed, she saw that this copper mask would seldom, if ever, yield to the civilized eye any useful indication of the mood within.

Ponape Burke, showman, had seized a double handful of the bush of hair on the native's head, and was saying:

"Isn't so much that he's got hair," Burke was saying, "as that his hair ain't black, as you'd expect, but a pretty grey species of tan. Which, besides and gent, is South Sea heavy-norl stuff."

"Is he delightfully sanitary, ladies?" the showman added, "and colors the hair up any shade of blond y'like. But—" he muttered, and glanced audaciously at Miss Tree's own head—"the very foxiest and most envied hue some of 'em succeeds in getting up. Is a red orange near-end."

Van laughed. "Oh, admirable," he cried. "An admirable effect. And never till the moment did I suspect. Why, Palm Tree?"

"Excuse me, miss," Ponape Burke said, "but didn't I hear this gent calling you Plum-tree?"

She assented. "But what, what kind of a joke—" "It isn't a joke," she affirmed. "My family name is Tree, and—" she glanced anxiously at Constance as she given name is Palm."

The stowaway stared, grinned, repeated the name. He turned to his savage, spoke animatedly, nodded his head toward her. The brown man's eyes sought the girl's face once more and she felt sure he had, in some obscure way, been moved. There was certainly a something new upon that strange countenance.

As the savage sat upon the hatch, a corner of blanket touched the teakwood. When he reached down to rescue the fabric his thick right fore arm shot out from cover and so remained. The girl became aware of a line of blue-black markings along the inner side of this arm. She discovered with surprise that these 'tattoos' were letters—her own alphabet. At first she did not catch the word because two of its symbols were upside down.

"Why," she cried impulsively, "what is that he has tattooed on his arm?"

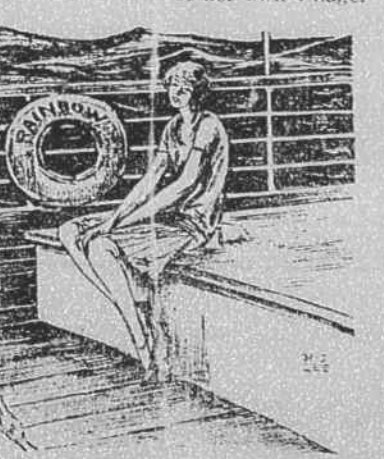
course of Miss Palmyra Tree of Boston. But it was not a pop bottle that the fat horizon-buster flung into the bird's nest fern. It was a bottle which had held olives.

As the olive bottle had fallen, the island mother, her babe upon her hip, found it. She had held the empty bottle up before the eyes of the naked brown boy that he might admire the bright red and green of its lithograph. She had tried to make out the inscription upon it—

ONYX BRAND
The Hubbard Extra Choice
QUEEN
OLIVES

The print was an oddly familiar, but bafflingly unreadable, as a sentence in an you had been to Palmyra. For in the mother's alphabet there were but fourteen letters, eleven of our consonants and a vowel character.

But as her glance fell upon the word "Olive" she smiled. Here was a combination that spelled; every letter as familiar as if it had been the name of her own village.



When the girl came on deck next morning there the savage sat, cross-legged on the fore-hatch, huddled under his blanket in the sun.

"Behold, chiefly son," she had cried to the baby on her hip; "here is a so-island word—'O-l-i-v-e. What to it, think you, is a meaning? And set forth upon a horizon-buster's strong water bottle (to her all bottles meant liquor)." Presently the mother's face had lighted with inspiration. Here, undoubtedly among warriors, was the great word. And here, upon her hip, was the greatest man alive. What better, then, than this for a name?

And so it was the brown baby, to be known forever to all white men as "Olive," and to his South Sea kinsmen, according to their reading of its letters, as "O-l-e-v-y-e."

Burke's glance took in the silent, motionless mass of man on the hatch with quiet ownership. Then he broke again into his oddly unadulterated mirth. "Look at him now," he cried. "Look at him. Mad clear through."

They turned their smiling eyes upon the brown man. "Mad clear through," repeated his master. "Since Miss Tree pointed to his arm, we all been laughing a lot. And he thinks it's at him."

Later in the day Palmyra found her pirates alone. They sat side by side, gripping solidly the khaki fabric that struggled, flapping to the wind behind their backs.

"Speaking of this big brute," Burke began, indicating Olive; "he don't do nothing now but ask questions about you."

The girl did not know whether to like that or not. To begin with, said Burke, it was her courage. She hadn't squawked at the hand in the port nor the face under the spotlight. And she'd come down with blankets when a brown being was in misery with cold.

As regarded the hand: The stowaways, precariously hidden on deck in a boat, had taken the first chance to sneak below. Burke got to cover, but a seaman, unexpectedly starting that way, would have caught Olive. The islander had slipped overside at that point, dangling from a stanchion, only his hands visible. He had put one down to the port, intending to hang trailing from that if the sail or came near. A roll of the yacht thrust his forearm through. Then the seaman had turned away and Olive lifted himself back to deck.

But far more important than Palmyra Tree's courage and kindness was her name. To the white man it had seemed interesting, to the brown astonishing.

"In the low islands," said Burke, "the palm-tree's the most important thing they got. Couldn't live without it a day."

Here, aside from fish, there was often no food except the pandanus—scorned elsewhere—and the coconut. The nuts were eaten at every meal; cooked or raw, green, ripe, germinated. For all the accessories of life the palm could be made, if need be, to furnish the material.

she was named Palm-tree! "But, lady," Burke persisted, "that the things I've mentioned— not even yer name, which counts so much—a— he teased calculatingly—as that hair o' yours, that red hair."

She was again annoyed, but decided to laugh.

Burke was silent for an interval, his oddly undeveloped features rather absurd in their maturity of thought.

"I suppose," he began at last, "y' haven't no idea how a Mary like you fits us islanders, kanaka or white?" "Oh," he added with a shrugging gesture acquired from the natives, "you'd never guess—never." He hesitated in a diffidence strange to his nature. "But think, miss. Here we are, maybe ten, fifteen years never seeing any woman's face except the wife o' some missionary or trader, here too long—sickly, pale, done for. And then, of a sudden, along you comes; a—a vision."

He stammered in his effort to find words that should do justice to his sentiment, but not offend.

"All pink and white, peaches and cream," he went on recklessly; "a living being as beautiful as a painted picture. I ain't meaning no disrespect. But that, Miss Tree, as I reckon you'll understand, just fair knocks us, white and brown alike, dead in a row."

"But do you really believe Palm Tree's pirate has been in gun battles and all that?" Constance Crawford was asking.

Palmyra now spoke. "It's nonsense to take that little man seriously," she affirmed.

There was a general assent. "When he says such things," she added, "it's like hearing a baby swear; awful, and you ought to be shocked, but at the same time comic. I delight in his efforts to make himself out something brigandish."

John Thurston had not joined in the accord. As he stood holding to the main shrouds, the big muscles of arm and shoulder swelling under his coat, he was never quite the yachtman on an idle cruise; always, intangibly, a something of the construction engineer on his way to the Philippines to take charge of government work—the Rainbow to put him aboard a transport at Honolulu, or, possibly if time permitted, at Guam.

"You're all probably right about Burke," he said presently. "But did you ever think how thoroughly we're bound down by the old conventional nonsense in character reading—phenology and all that? A striking develops a big square jaw. Presto—we recognize a determined character, a human bulldog. Really, it's only more bone in his jaw. And if he has a broad high forehead—"

"Solid ivory again," said Van. "Palm's pirate couldn't be farther from our fixed idea of a cutthroat, fierce moustachios, hawk nose, deep-set, menacing, evil eyes. Yet in real life your cold-blooded, murdering brute is quite as likely to be some effeminate youth selling soda water with a lip."

"Never," said Van, "did I have soda water with a lip."

Palmyra had been wondering why everyone on board—everyone except Constance—wanted her to marry Van. She saw that they all did, and she felt that their reasons must be good. Constance, of course, said it was only ancestors. The Tree family worshipped the family tree. "And Van," Constance had said commercially, "has the finest line of ancestors put out by any house in America." It was nothing in Van personally, she had added. "John does things. But Van only is things."

The girl got up restlessly and stood at the rail gazing out over the sunset sea. As John Thurston went on to amplify his thoughts regarding Burke she glanced over her shoulder to scoff.

"I could chase your bad man over the deck with a feather duster."

"I'm only windjamming of course," Thurston laughed. "I don't doubt our stowaway's a little man, sufficiently blunt as to his moral perceptions, but quite harmless, making himself the hero of every gory story he picks up, eager to pose as a deep-sea bad man. But still—"

During this idle chatter the girl had felt, growing with every moment, a fuller perception of herself aboard this yacht. Never until now had she had a complete realization of the intimacy of this cruise with Van and John; of the incredible nearness of these two to her. She had been, all at once, appalled. Thus they would go on through every waking hour, unescapable in their demand upon her love.

She had had a suffocating sense that never, for one instant, could she protect herself from them and their problem. And then, as an inspiration, it had come to her that Ponape Burke should be her refuge. Until she was sure about the two—oh, so sure!—she could always fly to him. She'd demand her pirate's stories, and force Van and John also to sit and listen, no matter how rebellious.

She had a sudden curiosity concerning this Ponape Burke in her new dependence upon him. She was eager to look at him. And she knew he would be perched on the fore-hatch, his brown man as ever at his elbow, silent, motionless, a pagan boss.

She whirled around to gaze, then caught her breath in dismay.

Unexpectedly, startling, the savage, unknown to anyone of them all, had materialized himself here, was sitting almost within their circle. And his eyes were leveled upon her in a profound unblinking stare that seemed to have been going on for hours.

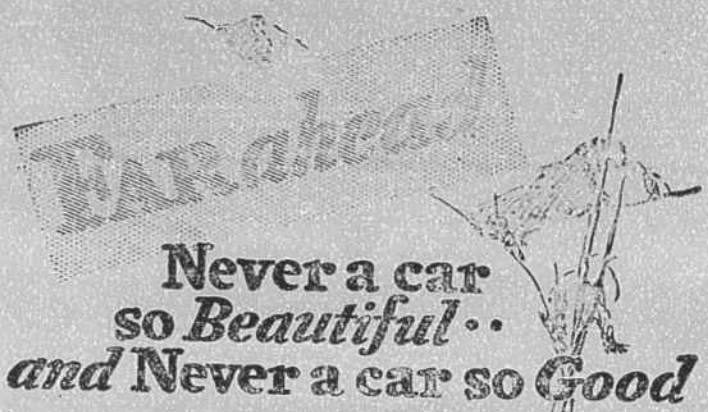
(Continued Next Week)

"Mummy, I can't go to school today."
"Why?"
"I don't feel well."
"Where don't you feel well?"
"In school."

Seed Potatoes

Cooperating with the Department of Agriculture I am making arrangements to buy certified seed potatoes for all farmers in the county who may desire them. There seems to be a shortage of seed to supply the demands of Watauga farmers this year and those desiring seed should place their orders with me at once. I am not going into the business to make money but to assist the farmers and only want to buy a sufficient amount to supply the demand.

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NOTICE TO TAXPAYERS

I will make my second call for 1927 taxes on the following dates at places named. All unpaid 1925 and 1926 taxes must be paid on or before date of call.

Again I call attention to the law requiring that all taxes must be paid by the 1st of May. Those unpaid before that time on May, Those unpaid by that date will turned over to the commissioners, who must order levies to be made on property, thus adding costs. See me at the following places:

- BOONE—First Monday and Tuesdays.
- NORTH FORK, March 8—Thomas' store in the morning and Potter's store in the afternoon.
- MEAT CAMP, March 9—Moretz's store in the morning and Stevens' store in the afternoon.
- BALD MOUNTAIN, March 10—Voting place.
- STONY FORK, March 12—Cook's store in the morning and at Deep Gap in the afternoon.
- ELK, March 13—Trivett's store.
- BLUE RIDGE, March 15—Storie's store.
- BLOWING ROCK, March 16—Holshouser's store.
- WATAUGA, March 17—Collins' store in the morning and Valle Crucis in the afternoon.
- WATAUGA, March 18—Valle Crucis.
- SHAWNEEHAW, March 19—Jones' store.
- LAUREL CREEK, March 20—J. B. Hicks' store in the morning and Ward's store in the afternoon.
- BEAVER DAM, March 21—Sherwood's in the morning and at Hagaman's in the afternoon.
- COVE CREEK, March 22—Mabel in the morning and Sherwood's in the afternoon.

L. M. FARTHING,
Sheriff, Watauga County.

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