

RED HAIR AND BLUE SEA



by **STANLEY R. OSBORN**
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CHAPTER II

Next morning Mrs. Crawford and her guests were gathered in lee of the deckhouse, bundled 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 lifting shadows 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, dimples, eyes that danced with fun; set a-flame the crown of bright hair, her most noticeable endowment.

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

She should have suspected a second presence. One glance at Burke's hand, gloved though it was, should have sufficed. It was small, pudgy, never the thick sinewy paw that had fastened upon the cabin port. Her wits about her, she should have mistrusted Burke's song; not have waited to be told afterwards that he was chanting: "Silent, go, stand against the door, knife in teeth, 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. Durlay, the stewardess, was regarding her with an amused and curious expression. The girl flushed guiltily.

Mrs. Durlay stepped 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."

"Airplane or sea horse?" questioned Van.

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

"Mrs. Crawford," she introduced, "this is Mr. Burke, the well-known pirate. Will be pleased, yo' ho ho, to demonstrate walking the plank. I'm sure if you could see him scuttle a ship, you'd feel we'd been greatly distinguished."

By daylight the pirate's face had lost its cherubic aspect. Still singularly undeveloped as to line and featured, 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 temperamental urge than, at first view, could have been suspected.

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 herself forward. Then, after a moment's hesitation: "Here—you! Are you cold? I have two blankets."

She stood, waiting, listening. She could feel the darkness move with unseen menace. But the dead silence of that prisoned space gave no sound of life.

She might have swept the ray into all the corners, but she hesitated to repeat the vision of the night before. Rather, she held the blankets up invitingly and, in silence, turned the jet of light upon them. For almost a minute she waited thus. Then, suddenly, without warning preliminary of sound, there appeared within the outer circle of light the ends of four great massive square fingers.

Almost, the girl sprang back, cried out in panic.

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 appeared, 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 and 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:

"Tisn'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 gay species o' tan. Which, la-adies and gents, is South Sea beauty-parlor stuff."

"Tis dee-lightfully sanitary, 'la-adies," the showman added, "and colors the hair up any shade o' blond y'like. But—" he tittered and

glanced audaciously at Miss Tree's own head—"the very foxiest and most envied hue some of 'em succeeded in getting up is a real orange near-red."

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 a-calling you 'Palm-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 amusedly at Constance—"my 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 sure way, been moved. There was and she felt sure he had, in some obtrusively a something new upon that strange countenance.

As the savage sat upon the hatch, a corner of blanket touched the teak-wood. 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 tattooings 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?"

Here the pirate took up the story of his brown companion's name.

If it had been a pop bottle that the fat horizon-burster (white man) flung into the bird's nest fern beside the spring, this lion of a man would not now be here. Far away on some somnolent speck of coral he would be drowsing through the years; ignorant as to white men's ways, safe forever from the questionable leadership of Ponape Burke; never to touch and cross the life course of Miss Palmyra Tree of Boston. But it was not a pop bottle that the fat horizon-burster flung in the bird's nest fern. It was a bottle which had held olives.

There, as the olive bottle had fallen, the island mother, her babe upon her lip, found it. She had held the empty bottle up before the eyes of the naked brown baby 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
OLIVE

The print was an oddly familiar, yet bafflingly unreadable, as a sentence in Russian would have been to Palmyra. For in the mother's alphabet there were but fourteen letters: eleven of our consonants unmeaning character.

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

"Behold, chiefly son," she had cried to the baby on her lip; "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-burster'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 hips, 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-lee-vay."

Burke's glance took in the silent motionless mass of man on the hatch with prideful 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 brownman.

"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."

(Continued Next Week.)

OFFICERS HAVE RACE

Deputies G. Curtis Hardin and J. A. Hampton with the help of officer Geo. F. Green, of Spindale, had an exciting race Tuesday afternoon, March 20, in Golden Valley Township, from the Cowan place through the Thompson place. The officers were in a Dodge car while the man they were chasing, Clarence Jolly was in a Ford. After a five mile race the officers overtook Jolly and captured him and ten gallons and a pint of whiskey. Jolly gave the officers a lively race. He was lodged in jail at Rutherfordton and was tried Friday in Recorder's court.

Jolly has been caught before, officers state near the same place by Depupies Hardin and Hampton.

LEASES FILLING STATION

Mr. W. L. Horn has leased the Main Street Filling Station on South Main street, of Rutherfordton, which has been conducted by Mr. W. D. Walker. They sell Good Gulf gasoline and a good line of tires and tubes.

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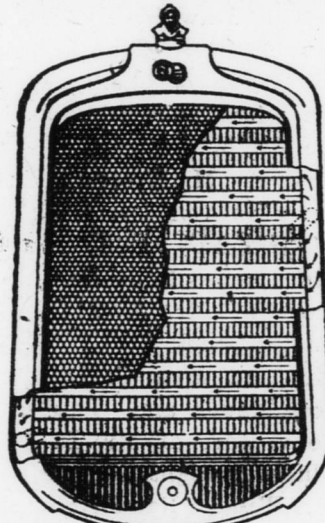
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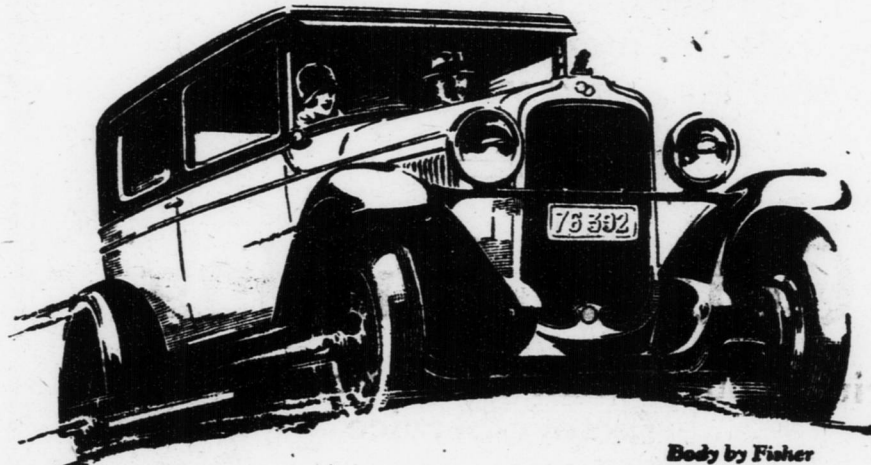


Water from the engine enters the inlet tank at one side, flows horizontally through the core and is pumped from the outlet tank back into the water jacket. It cannot come in contact with the water in the top tank until after it has been cooled, and, as a result, it is practically impossible to lose any appreciable amount of water or alcohol due to high operating temperature.

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