

RED HAIR AND BLUE SEA



by **STANLEY R. OSBORN**
ILLUSTRATIONS BY HENRY JAY LEE
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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 forehatch, his brown man as ever at his elbow, silent, motionless, a pagan joss.

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

Unexpectedly, startlingly, the savage, unbeknown to any one 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.

CHAPTER III.

Enemies—and Friends

Some sixteen days later in Mrs. Crawford's cabin a conference was under way.

"But, my dear, my dear," Palmyra's mother was protesting, "how can you say everything's going right, when Palm spends most of her time listening to that, that miserable stowaway; that—human toad. Her father is beside himself with anxiety."

The man made a deprecatory sound. "Events," said the hostess impressively, "have only too well shown that I, that we, intervened just in time. Your daughter was on the verge of falling in love with John Thurston."

The father uttered a protest. "I don't see we've gained anything."

"But where are your eyes?" demanded the hostess. "As I said in California, Van, with his refined personality, fits the yacht's cabin like 'The Young King Charles' into a gilded frame. Thurston, on the contrary, is a great, robust being. He looks well enough ashore, but here, in these little compartments, on this narrow deck, his hands and feet are in the way."

She paused to smile at them reassuringly.

"Surely, with John at his worst, Van at his best—need we fear?"

Meanwhile Constance Crawford was forward at the Rainbow's bow, sailing through the tropic night upon enchanted waters.

When John Thurston presently joined Constance, she looked up with a frown. "I was just thinking," she explained, "that Palm Tree doesn't at all realize what Burke may be getting into his mind. I believe the little fraud's quite puffed up over the idea he's made something of a conquest."

Thurston answered rather absently. "Anyhow," he said, "Burke's over the side at Honolulu and gone forever."

She assented.

John was silent for some time. Then: "I'd like to go, too," he burst out. "I, I've been trying to tell you I've taken your advice: asked her or become my wife."

"Yes," she answered without moving, "I know."

"She told you?" he exclaimed.

"No. You did."

He was chagrined. "Suppose I do look like that," he said.

"On the contrary. You've been splendid." She glanced up friendly. "But I still think it was the right thing to do. A week or two hence—absolutely no hope. Oh, why didn't you speak in California? She originally liked you best. I'm sure of it. Does still, if she only knew. Or," Constance added ruefully, "would if they'd let her alone."

He laughed with some bitterness. "Oh, I know what you mean. He fell into a sudden petulance."

When Thurston spoke again it was apparently in an effort to get into a more cheerful vein.

"Seemingly," he said, "I have another well-wisher abroad."

With a pocket flashlight he made visible for her a small object of woven fibre: a bark cord wound round a packet perhaps two inches square. "When I came on deck this morning," he explained, "Olive incarnated herself before me. Looked about furtively, jerked my coat-tails up, fastened this round my waist. Then he gave me a friendly grin and vanished."

"But," she puzzled, "what is it?"

"Inside there's a bit of fine mat,

seven hairs and a tooth,"—a good luck charm.

"But, but why . . ."

"How should I know?"

She was thoughtful. "At any rate," she said finally, "he seems to be wishing you good luck."

She examined the amulet again with an absent attention. Then, the smile fading from her lips: "John, promise me you will not leave the Rainbow at Honolulu."

The yacht was pushing on at her stir at her prow as to achieve the best pace, setting up such a lively small, private rainbow for which she had been named.

Burke and Palmyra were on deck—Burke was quizzically regarding the pensive Palmyra.

As though, defining her very thoughts, he spoke.

"Excuse me, Miss," he said.

"Those others—" a slightly contemptuous gesture. "They're tame. That's what—tame. But you? Why, you're different. Y'sure wasn't intended for their little ol' birdcage kind of life. Nature meant y'for something lively-like, something up and doing."

The girl laughed. "Nature," she said, "meant me for a pirate. It's in my blood," she affirmed. "First, a Norseman ravaging the coasts of England. Then, a British admiral ravaging everything else. And lastly, old Captain Ebenezer, with John Paul Jones, descending once more upon the coasts of England."

Burke grinned in admiration.

The girl turned to go; then paused, laughing back at him over her shoulder. "You, Ponape Burke," she said; "you and I—I'm afraid we were born too late."

At the rate the Rainbow was sailing, it was evident the yacht must soon make a landfall. Indeed, already eyes were peering through powerful glasses seeking for the first shadowy silhouette of the peaks of Oahu.

As the Rainbow raised the panorama of dead craters that stands, rather barren, above the verdant town of Honolulu, none upon her decks was so expectant as Palmyra Tree. For from the chaff of Ponape Burke's narration she had winnowed the clean grain of beauty and romance that is the life of this island world of the palm tree. Her imagination was a-glow.

Through the gateway of Honolulu she was to sail on into this world where Happiness is queen.

She was to sail across the trackless sea as those brown mariners of old.

As the girl, thus deep in reverie, stood watching the distant peaks, she became aware of a presence at her side. Turning, she started upon encountering the brown man Olive.

He gave tongue to a few syllables, paused perplexed, then fell back upon pantomime. The hour of departure had come. Soon Burke and he would go over the side and, for ever, into oblivion.

Palmyra smiled. She tried to overcome her aversion, to respond to his attempted farewell. As he had done, she moved to speak, found herself helpless, returned the smile.

The brown man, thus countenanced, laid the square finger upon her own breast. Having thus identified the girl as the being of the drama, he raised his hand, with extended arm, straight over his head. She thought he invoked the One above. But she gave this up when she saw that he wagged, fluttered the fingers.

When she shook her head, regretfully, he abandoned the up-raised hand as futile. He brought out a ring. Palmyra Tree had never seen such a ring: tortoise shell inlaid with silver. There were letters on it; seemingly one word, thrice repeated and separated by disc—the word "N-I."

Olive pointed to the letters, then to the girl and once more held aloft the hand with the moving fingers. But again she shook her head.

The brown man stood, baffled. Then, grinning anew, he hurried away forward.

The savage, presently returning, thrust into the girl's hand a lithograph, an advertisement of Egyptian cigarettes.

He pointed to the silver letters of the ring and pronounced the word

"Ni," then to her with a second "Ni," and to the picture with a third. He dropped the ring into her fingers.

At last the girl who was named Palmtree understood. For there in the advertisement was a palmtree. The upraised hand had symbolized the palm—herself. Olive but sought to give her a ring with her name upon it.

When the hour of leavetaking came, however, he seemed to have re-entered the silence, and the farewells devolved upon Ponape Burke.

As this little stowaway reached her in his round he achieved a simple eloquence of feeling. "You've been kind t'me, miss," he said. "I ain't a-going t'forget it. Nor you."

She shook hands with an unassuming friendliness. "I'm sure," she said, "we shall see you again."

Sharply he glanced at her, as if eager to know whether she really had such a hope. Then he shrugged, island-wise. "It's a large ocean lady. With you and me it's just lights passing in the dark; a hail, and then—nothing."

A minute later Palmyra's pirates were swinging over the side into their boat.

Burke raised his hat jauntily. But it was rather at the savage the girl looked. Over the white man's shoulder he seemed to be watching her to the end with that strangely expressionless but intent stare.

Palmyra faced abruptly away and snatched the ring from her finger. "Yes," she whispered, "I'm certainly glad to have seen the last of him."

Two weeks ashore and the good ship Rainbow was at sea again. she was now for the heart of Oceania, the Equatorial isles of Micronesia. As the yacht was to put John Thurston aboard a Philippine transport at Guam, only a little southing, said the hostess, would take them in among the Gilberts, the Marshalls, the Carolines, that Milky Way of atolls along the Line, of which Ponape Burke had talked so alluringly.

What Mrs. Crawford did not explain was that the real duty, as she saw it, lay in depriving Thurston's long legs of a chance, in this less cramped setting of Honolulu, to snap back to perspective.

By rejecting both her lovers—Van shortly after John—Palmyra had gained a reprieve from that question as to whether she were in love with one man or just dandy good pals with two.

The peaks of Oahu sank back into the moana, the deep, deep ocean, whence they had risen. One day, two days, four, six upon a temperamental sea; a whole week of heavy skies and rain and storm seemed to have carried the girl no further.

A second week came and went; a week of summer sea and lustrous trades and flying yacht. But still no answer.

The third week came and neared its end. Intermittent now the breeze, for they touched the equatorial zone of light and variable airs. A whole day through, perhaps, the Rainbow would scarcely move.

(Continued next week.)

ROBERTSON-McCORD

Miss Kate Eleanor McCord and Clyde J. Robertson were married the afternoon of April 7 at 3:30 o'clock, at the home of Rev. W. M. Smith, of 1009 South Allen street in Charlotte.

The vows were taken before an improvised altar of trailing ivy. The bride's sister, Miss Julia McCord, and a few intimate friends were present.

The bride wore a gown of dark blue with accessories to match, and a corsage bouquet of pink roses and lilies of the valley.

Mrs. Robertson is the fourth daughter of Mr. and Mrs. D. P. McCord, of Huntsville, and is a pretty and attractive young woman.

Mr. Robertson is the son of Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Robertson, of Forest City, and he is connected with a construction company of Charlotte.

Mr. and Mrs. Robertson will be at home in Gastonia after a trip to Western North Carolina.

OAK GROVE NEWS

Ellenboro, R-2, April 9.—We are glad to say that our Sunday school is progressing rapidly since Spring has opened up. We had one hundred and fifty present Sunshine. We hope more of the folks will come and help us to have a still better and larger Sunday school. We had several visitors and welcome them back again.

Mr. and Mrs. David Hawkins and little daughter, Marjorie, spent Sunday with Mr. M. E. Hawkins and family.

Mr. Bruna Beam and family, of family, of Caroleen, and Miss Docia Beam were visitors at Mr. Clyde Wrights Sunday.

Miss Ollieera Randall entertained a number of her friends with a party Saturday night. Those enjoying the party were Misses Lucile Webb, Mary, Eugenia and Pearl Randall, Belle Wilkie, Leigh, Mae, Pauline and Maud Harrill, Attie Bailey, Ethel Lowry, Gladys and Ethleen Randall, Messrs Earl and Cletus Randall, Norris and Huston Biggerstaff, Carmel and Hubert Cooper, Clarence and Odell Tate, Thurman and Bert Lowery, James Webb, Oral Biggerstaff and Grady Randall. Some interesting games were played. All reported a nice time.

Mr. Cletus Walker and family, of Lattimore, spent Sunday at Mrs. R. L. Magness.

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Harrill and Mr. and Mrs. Howard Harrill were dinner guests at Mr. T. B. Harrill's Sunday.

Miss Clara Randall is sick at this writing. We hope she will soon be well.

Among those spending Easter at home were Miss Mae Harrill, Charlotte; Misses Lenith and Catherine Randall, Brevard; Miss Jolley Fallston.

Mr. Thomas Rome and family were visitors at Mr. M. E. Hawkins one night last week.

Mr. C. N. Tate and family, of Mr. W. P. Tates.

Mr. Ellis Bedford, of S. C., spent Sunday with his father, Mr. J. S. Bedford who is very ill.

Mr. Cliff Magness, Miss Mattie and little Ruby Magness and Mrs. R. L. Magness were visitors in Shelby Friday.

Mrs. J. M. Randall and Miss Ollieera Randall spent Sunday night at Mr. L. D. Wilkie's.

Messrs. J. C. and Grady Randall and Misses Eugenia and Pearl Randall spent Sunday with relatives near Lattimore.

Mr. and Mrs. D. K. Randall and children, Louise and Mary Helen, of Forest City, were visitors at Mr. J. T. Webb's Sunday.

Mr. L. D. Wilkie spent several days last week in Polk county visiting his son, Mr. W. P. Wilkie and family.

Mr. J. M. Biggerstaff and family were visitors at Mr. S. C. Crawley's near Lattimore Sunday.

Miss Mary Randall entertained a number of the young folks with an egg hunt Sunday afternoon. All had an enjoyable time.

Master J. D. and Jennings Hardin, of Cliffside, spent Saturday night with their cousin, Master Dwight Biggerstaff.

Mr. C. M. Harrill and family, of Henrietta, spent Sunday at the home of his father, Mr. C. B. Harrill.

Those visiting Mr. L. D. Wilkie's Sunday afternoon were, Mrs. J. M. Brooks, Mrs. Lester Goforth and little son, Joseph, Mrs. Kistie Brooks and little son, Gene, Mrs. Eulas Brooks and little daughter, Hattie Lou and Mrs. Oliver Brooks and little son, Claudus.

Mr. Tate Cooper and family, of

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Morganton, and Mr. and Mrs. John Cooper, of near Salem, were visitors at Mr. W. P. Tate's last Sunday.

Mr. Lawrence, Wall and family spent the week-end at Avondale with relatives.

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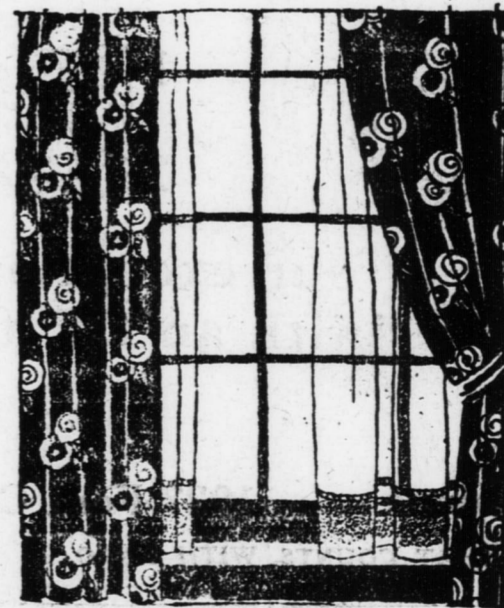
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