

KORONG.

A Tale of the Sandwich-Islands.

By GRANT ALLEN.



CHAPTER VII.—Continued.

Felix took the measure of his man at once. He opened his knife, and held it up threateningly. "See here, fellow," he said, in a low, slow tone, but with great decision, "if you dare to speak or look like that at that lady—god or no god I'll drive this knife straight up to the hilt in your heart, though your people kill me for it afterward ten thousand times over. I am not afraid of you. These savages may be afraid, and may think you are a god, but if you are, then I am a god ten thousand times stronger than you. One more word one more look like that, I say—and I plunge this knife remorselessly into you."

Tu-Kila-Kila drew back, and smiled benignly. Stewart rufian as he was, and absolute master of his own people's lives, he was yet afraid in a way of the strange new-comer. Vague stories of the men with white faces—the "sailing gods"—had reached him from time to time, and though only twice within his memory had European boats landed on his island, he yet knew enough of the race to know that they were at least very powerful deities, more powerful with their weapons than even he was. Besides, a man who could draw down fire from heaven with a piece of wood and a little metal box might surely wither him to ashes, if he would, as he stood before him. The very fact that Felix bearded him thus openly to his face astonished and somewhat terrified the superstitious savage. Nevertheless, since he was afraid of him, then certainly a man who was not afraid must be the possessor of some most efficacious and magical medicine. His one fear now was lest his followers should hear and discover his discomfiture. He peered about him cautiously, with that careful gleam shining bright in his eyes, then he said with a leer, in a very low voice: "We two need not quarrel. We are both of us gods. Neither of us is the stronger. We are equal, that is all. Let us live like brothers, not like enemies on the island."

"I don't want to be your brother," Felix answered, unable to conceal his loathing any more. "I hate and detest you."

"What does he say?" Muriel asked, in an agony of fear at the savage's black looks. "Is he going to kill us?"

"No," Felix answered boldly. "I think he's afraid of us. He's going to do nothing. You need fear him."

"Can she not speak?" the savage asked, pointing his finger somewhat rudely toward Muriel. "Has she no voice but this, the chatter of birds? Does she not know the human language?"

"She can speak," Felix answered, placing himself like a shield between Muriel and the astonished savage. "He can speak the language of the people of our distant country—a beautiful language, which is as far superior to the speech of the brown men of Polynesia as the sun in the heavens is superior to the light of a candle. But she cannot speak, and the wretched tongue of you Boupari cannibals. I thank Heaven she can't, for it saves her from understanding the hateful things your people would say of her. Now go! I have seen already enough of you. I am not afraid. Remember, I am as powerful a god as you. I need not fear. You cannot hurt me."

A baleful light gleamed in the cannibal's eye. But he thought it best to temporize. Powerful as he was on his island, there was one thing yet more powerful by far than himself, and that was the custom and superstition handed down from his ancestors. These strangers were Korong; he dare not touch them, except in the way and manner appointed by custom. If he did, god as he was, his people themselves would turn and rend him. He was a god, but he was bound on every side by the strictest taboos. He dare not himself offer violence to Felix.

So he turned with a smile and bided his time. He knew it would come. He could afford to laugh. Then, going to the door, he said, with his grand affable manner to his chiefs around, "I have spoken with the gods, my ministers within. They have kissed my hands. My rain has fallen. All is well in the land. Arise, let us go away hence to my temple."

The savages put themselves in marching order at once. "It is the voice of a god," they said, reverently. "Let us take back Tu-Kila-Kila to his temple home. Let us escort the lord of the divine umbels. Wherever he is, those trees and plants put forth green leaves and flourish. At his bidding flowers bloom and springs of water rise up in fountains. His presence diffuses heavenly blessings."

"I think," Felix said, turning to poor, terrified Muriel, "I've sent the wretch away with a bee in his bonnet."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CUSTOMS OF BOUPARI.

Human nature cannot always keep on the full stretch of excitement. It was wonderful to both Felix and Muriel how soon they settled down into a quiet routine of life on the island of Boupari. A week passed away, two weeks, three weeks—and the chances of relief seemed to grow slenderer and slenderer. All they could do now was to wait for the stray accident of a passing ship, and then try, if possible, to signal it, or to put out in a canoe, if the natives would allow them.

Meanwhile their lives for the moment seemed fairly safe. Though for the first few days they lived in constant alarm, this feeling, after a time, gave way to one of comparative security. A strange institution of Taboo protected them more efficiently in their wretched huts than the whole police force of London could have done in a Boigravian mansion. There thieves break through and steal, in spite of bolts and bars and metropolitan constables; but at Boupari no native, however daring or however wicked, would ever venture to transgress the

narrow line of white coral sand which protected the castaways like an impregnable wall from all outside interference. Within this impalpable ring-fence they were absolutely safe from all rude intrusion, save that of the two Shadows, who waited upon them, day and night, with unflinching willingness. In other respects, considering the circumstances, their life was an easy one. The natives brought them freely of their simple store—yam, taro, bread-fruit, and coconuts, with plenty of fish, crabs, and lobsters, as well as eggs by the basketful and even sometimes chickens. They required no way beyond a nod and a smile, and went away happy as those stender recognitions. Felix discovered, in fact, that he had got into a region where the arid general axioms of political economy do not apply; where Adam Smith is untried and Malthus neglected, where the supply and demand read out themselves continuously by simpler and more generous principles than the familiar European one of "the bidding of the market."

The people, too, though utter savages, were not in their own way altogether displeasing. It was far more curious and superstitious, rather than horrible. Personally, they seemed for the most part simple-minded and good-natured creatures. At first, indeed, Muriel was afraid to venture for a step beyond the precincts of their own huts, and it was long before she could make up her mind to go alone thro' the jungle paths with Mall, unaccompanied by Felix. But by degrees she learned that she could walk by herself, of course, with the two shadows, and even by her side, over the whole island, and meet everywhere with nothing from men, women, and children out of the utmost respect and gracious courtesy. The young ladies, as she passed, would stand aside from the path, with downcast eyes, and let her go by with all the politeness of chivalrous English gentlemen. The old men would raise their eyes, but cross their hands on their breasts, and stand motionless for a few minutes till she got out of sight. The women, however, bringing their dirty brown bills for the fair English lady to admire or to pat on the head, and when Muriel now and again stooped down to caress some of the little naked child, looting in the dust outside the hut, with true tropical laziness, the mothers would run up at the sight with delight and joy, and throw themselves down in ecstasies of gratitude for the notice she had taken of their favored little ones. "The gods of heaven," they would say, with every sign of pleasure, "have looked graciously upon our Unaloo."

At first Felix and Muriel were mainly struck with the politeness and deference which the natives displayed toward them. But after a time Felix at least began to observe, behind it all, that a certain amount of affection, and even of something like commiseration, as well, seemed to be mingled with the respect and reverence, showers upon them by their hosts. The woman, especially, were often evidently touched by Muriel's innocence and beauty. As she walked past their huts with her light, girlish tread, they would come forth shyly, bowing many times as they approached, and offer her a long spray of flowering hibiscus, or a pretty garland of crimson tines, saying at the same time, many times over, in their own tongue, "Receive it, Korong receive it, Queen of the Clouds. You are good! You are kind. You are a daughter of the sun. We are glad you have come to us."

A young girl soon makes herself at home anywhere, and Muriel, protected alike by her native innocence, and by the invisible cloak of Polynesian taboo, quickly learned to understand and to sympathize with these poor dusky mothers. One morning, some weeks after their arrival, she passed down the main street of the village, accompanied by Felix and their two attendants, and reached the marae—the open forum or place of public assembly—which stood in its midst; a circular platform, surrounded by broad-fruit trees, under whose broad, cool shade the people were sitting in little groups, and talking together. They were dressed in the regular old-time festive costume of Polynesia, for Boupari, being a small and remote island, to insignificant to be visited by European ships, retained still all its aboriginal festiveness and customs. The sight was, indeed, a curious and picturesque one. The girls, large-limbed, soft-skinned, and with delicately rounded figures, sat on the ground, laughing and talking with their knees crossed under them; their wrists were encircled with girlish of dark-red dracena leaves, their swelling bosoms half concealed, half accentuated by hanging necklets of flowers. Their beautiful brown arms and shoulders were bare throughout; their long black hair was gracefully twined and knotted with bright scarlet flowers. The men, strong and stalwart, sat behind on short stools or lounged on the buttressed roots of the bread-fruit trees, clad like the women in narrow waistcoats of the long red dracena leaves, with necklets of sharks' teeth, pendant chain of peary shells, a warrior's cap on their well-shaped heads, and an armet of native beans, arranged below the shoulder, around their powerful arms. Altogether it was a striking and beautiful picture. Muriel, now almost released from her early sense of fear, stood still to look at it.

The men and girls were laughing and chatting merrily together. Most of them were engaged in holding up before them fine mats, and a row of mulberry cloth, spread along on the ground, led to a hut near one side of the marae. Toward this the eyes of the spectators were turned. "What is it, Mall?" Muriel whispered, once to expect that something special was going on in the way of local festivities. And Mall answered at once, with many nods and smiles: "All right, Missy Queenie! Him a wedding, a marriage."

The words had hardly escaped her lips when a very pretty young girl, half smothered in flowers, and decked out in beads and fancy shells, emerged slowly from the hut, and took her way with stately tread along the path carpeted with native cloth. She was girt round the waist with rich-colored mats, which formed a long train, like a court dress, trailing on the ground five or six feet behind her.

"That's the bride, I suppose," Muriel whispered, now really interested for what woman on earth, wherever she may be, can resist the seductive delights of a wedding? "Yes, her a bride," Mall answered; "and ladies what follow, them her bridesmaids."

At the word six other girls, similarly dressed, the girl without the train, and demure as nuns, emerged from the hut in slow order, two and two, behind her. Muriel and Felix moved forward with natural curiosity toward the scene. The natives, now ranged in a row along the path, with mats turned inward, made way for them gladly. All seemed pleased that Heaven should thus auspiciously honor the occasion, and the bride herself, as well as the bridegroom, who, decked in shells and beads, advanced from the opposite side along the path to meet her, looked up with grateful smiles at the two Europeans. Muriel, in return, smiled her most gracious and girlish recognition. As the bride drew near, she couldn't refrain from bending forward a little to look at the girl's really graceful costume. As she did so, the skirt of her own European dress brushed for a second against the bride's train, trailed carelessly many yards on the ground behind her.

Almost before they could know what had happened a wild commotion arose, as if by magic, in the crowd around them. Loud cries of "Taboo! Taboo!" raised with unceasing screams here, on every side from the assembled natives. In the twinkling of an eye they were surrounded by an angry, threatening throng, who didn't dare to urag near, but, standing a yard or two off, drew stone knives freely and shook their fists, scowling in the strangers' faces. The change was appalling in its electric suddenness. Muriel drew back, horrified, in an agony of alarm. "Oh, what have I done?" she cried, pitifully, clinging to Felix for support. "Why on earth are they angry with us?"

"I don't know," Felix answered, taken aback himself. "I can't say exactly in what you've transgressed. But you must, unconsciously, in some way have offended their prejudices. I hope it's not much. At any rate they're clearly afraid to touch us."

"Miss Queenie break taboo," Mall explained at once, with Polynesian frankness. "That make people angry, so him want to kill you. Missy Queenie touch bride with end of her dress. Korong may smile on bride—that very good luck—but Korong taboo; no must touch him."

The crowd gathered round them, still very threatening in attitude, yet clearly afraid to approach within arm's length of the strangers. Muriel was much frightened at their noise and at their frantic gestures. "Come away," she cried, catching Felix by the arm once more. "Oh, what are they going to do to us? Will they kill us for this? I'm so horribly afraid! Oh, why did I ever do it!"

The poor little bride meanwhile, left alone on the carpet, and unnoticed by everybody, sank suddenly down on the mats where she stood, buried her face in her hands, and began to sob as if her heart would break. Evidently something very untoward of some sort had happened to the dusky lady on her wedding morning.

The final touch was too much for poor Muriel's overwrought nerves. She, too, gave way in a tempest of sobs, and subsiding on one of the native stools hard by, burst into tears herself with half-hysterical violence.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

An Automatic Proposer.
The tendency to reduce everything to mechanism is rapidly invading the precincts of morality and we may in time be taught to be upright by machinery if we shall not in the year of our Lord 184 do so from inspiration. But here comes an ugly rumor that has just enough of a touch of possibility mingled with its humor to make it interesting.

A thoroughly modern Philistine announces the invention of an "automatic proposer," in these words: "In these practical days, when time is literally and metaphorically money, we must not waste it with sighing, doubting, longing and the many other dilatory circumstances of love. Courtship must be compressed to reduce it to legitimate, up-to-date limits. I submit, then, that it should be obligatory for all under the age of 40, and unmarried, to wear my 'Patent Automatic Proposer.'"

"This is a small mahogany case which contains an electric apparatus and bells connected by wires with the heart and wrists. Edwin and Angelina adore each other but they dare not declare the passion which consumes them. Edwin and Angelina meet; their pulses quicken; this acts at once upon the instruments and starts the bells of both. They then learn that each loves the other and the tinkling of the 'automatic proposer' is the happy precursor to louder peals from the wedding bells." Nothing could be more delightful.

Let Her Have the Bird.

Mrs. Lillie Leveroux Blake says that the eagle on our American dollars is a feminine bird, though Mr. Ingalls has been telling around that it represents the sterner sex. As woman is getting the ballot she may as well have the bird, too. The dominion of man is fast passing away, and he will need no more symbols of any sort unless they are something of a do-e-like, submissive aspect.—St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

The quickness of a man's powers of comprehension depends very much upon whether you are trying to insinuate something good about his neighbor, or something bad.

Talk accomplishes so little that it is a growing wonder to every man that his neighbor does so much of it.

THE HILLS OF THE LORD.

God ploughed one day with an earthquake
And drew his furrows deep!
The huddling plains upturned,
The hills were all a leap.

But that is the mountain's secret;
Eye hidden in their breast,
God's power is everling,
Are the dream-words of their rest.

He hath made them the haunt of beauty
The home-closet of his grace,
He spreads his meetings on them;
His sunsets light their face.

His thunders tread in music
Of footfalls echoing long,
And carry music greeting
Around the slum, through.

His words bring messages to them;
Who sit and read from the main,
They sing it down to the valleys
In the love-song of the rain.

Green tribes from far come trooping,
And over the uplands look,
He weaves the notes together
In notes for his risen rock.

There are nurseries for young rivers,
Seats for his flying cloud,
Homesites for new-born races,
Masterful, low and proud.

The people of varied climes
Come up to him to pray,
God feeds them again within them,
As he passes by all day.

And lo! I have caught their secret—
The beauty deeper than all,
This faith—that life's hard moments,
When the setting shadows fall.

Are but God ploughing the mountains,
And the mountain, yet shall be
The source of His grace and fresh air,
And His peace everlasting to me.

—TRANSCRIBED.

THE FIDDLER.

The fiddler—I could not tell you his real name, but prefer to keep to that by which he was most familiarly known—was first violin in a small theater. He was tall, pale and shakily looking, with jet-black straggling hair that hung down over his forehead, defied in speech, and of a loving and gentle disposition, he was liked by all he came in contact with.

Fate had dealt harshly with him. He had come of a good family and had learned music under the best masters. But on the death of his father, who had speculated unwisely, he found himself almost destitute.

He went to London, expecting that his talent would be at once recognized, and that he should very soon make a fortune. But he was sadly disappointed, for there he found more musicians than could be employed.

Finally, a few months of weary waiting, and when he was on the verge of trying some other way of making a living, he got an engagement in one of the small theaters.

True it was a wretched remuneration, but it was a commencement, and he never entirely lost hope of something better turning up.

At the end of six months his application at one of the larger and better class theaters was successful. It was on a change of places, but instead of thirty he received sixty shillings a week.

Very soon after that he married, and in the following year his daughter Helen was born.

Five years afterwards a great misfortune came to him. His poor wife died, and he was left a widower with his little girl.

His fortunes, as a rule, do not come singly, and so it proved in this case. The fiddler, like most of his class, was at the mercy of circumstances, and through no fault of his own he lost his engagement.

Then, and only then, did he thoroughly regret that he was a musician. For almost twelve months he did nothing. No matter how hard he tried, he could not get an engagement. He was not the only unfortunate—he was only one among many.

When the little money he had saved was almost exhausted, he had taken on again at the theater where he first commenced.

The fiddler lived with his daughter in a room above a public house in a poor and noisy neighborhood. The frequenters of the palace below were not, as a rule, noisy, and the sound from the great thoroughfare reached the place only as a kind of murmur. Helen was a sweet little creature, the image of her mother in feature and expression, but her complexion resembled her father's. She was not very strong and was often troubled with a wearisome cough.

In the evenings, before he went to the theater, the fiddler smoked his long German pipe, which Helen always filled. Then she would sit down at his feet and watch him in silence. She loved to see the blue smoke curl up in clouds round about him.

long while, but she had disguised it from her father as long as ever possible; but her efforts had become more and more feeble as she grew worse.

"Dear me!" said the doctor, when he had seen Helen: "very sad, very! Lungs have been diseased for a long time."

He prescribed for her, and came again and again, but at each visit he gave out less hope of her recovery.

"Almost into the winter," he said, "and the poor child, dear me! she'll never see spring. Lungs most gone!"

There came one day with the doctor a nurse who, although used to pitiful and pain cases, could not keep back her tears at the sight of the poor faded girl. From that day the kind nurse would not leave Helen. She decided to remain and nurse the little invalid, and many a strengthening beverage and dainty dish did she give the child in secret which the father could not possibly have bought.

Many have won the name of hero by one gallant deed, but these nurses in our large towns who live a life of self-denial—giving the best years of their life up to the care and attention of the poor sick—deserve the name of hero.

The poor fiddler was almost heart-broken. Every penny each week was spent in medicines and better food for the invalid, but nothing but change of scene and a warm climate could benefit her. He had not the means to send her even out of London.

The child clung round him in affection mingled with fear, but he was often afraid to look upon her.

"Father, dear father, are you angry with your little Helen?" she asked one day as he sat moodily with his face buried in his hands.

He sprang to his feet and clasped her in his arms and asked her to forgive him if he had seemed unkind.

After that he was always cheerful when in her presence, for he saw that it made her unhappy to see him sad.

Sometimes the fading girl would ask to be carried to the window to see the sun—the winter sun, like a huge ball of blood—sink down behind the housetops.

Occasionally some of the neighbors, who had known her, came to see her, but she was so changed that very few could recognize her.

And, little by little, the hideous disease advanced, sapping up slowly but surely its helpless victim's strength. At times it made her face appear bloodless, like the face of a corpse. At others, oh, cruel mockery! it painted the cheeks like the blush of a rose—it added fire to her eyes and lustre to her skin, thus raising false hopes in the breast of the poor father, who saw her change from day to day.

One morning the fiddler was informed that some one was waiting to see him at the foot of the stairs. He immediately hurried down and found an old gentleman pacing up and down, and mumbling all the while to himself.

"You play the fiddle at the Theater?" he abruptly asked the fiddler, when he appeared.

"Yes, sir. Will you come in, then?"

"I intend to give a party to-night and had engaged T— to give us a tune on the fiddle. Unfortunately, he is indisposed and will not be able to appear. Will you come?"

as the first, which was his own com position.

The host detained the fiddler after the guests had departed.

"I shall have you playing solos at the great concert," he said to the fiddler, in his peculiar, abrupt manner.

The fiddler's heart beat fast. "You can never rise in that wretched theater. You should be playing to those who can understand you. What do you gain from the theater?"

"Thirty-five shillings a week."

"It is nothing. Nothing."

"I am glad to get even that."

"You shall have 235 an evening very soon!"

"I have tried to get an introduction to persons in power connected with the concert, but have always failed."

"I shall not fail!" said the old gentleman, in confident tones. "The next concert takes place in two months' time. I will get you an engagement. There is a peculiar power in your music—a strange, deep power which produces tears. You saw them to-night. The men wept while you played your first piece!"

When the fiddler reached his mean and shabby home the gray specter of light morning was beginning to steal into the room.

He met the nurse on the stairs. She turned her back toward him and hid her face in her hands.

He felt as if his heart had turned into ice as he mounted the stairs in silence.

Helen lay on the bed dead.

"Poor little withered power!"

The fiddler stood at a long time holding the little wretched hand in his. All at once his hand went to his breast pocket and his fingers closed over an envelope, which the old gentleman had given him. Mechanically he tore it open: two notes fell on the floor at his feet. With a smothered cry of agony he fell upon his knees and sobbed a loud. What was money to him now? Would it restore the little waster to life?

At last he rose to his feet. His face was set in rigid lines and his hands twitched nervously. Taking down the fiddle from the wall he flung it upon the floor and ground it to splinters under his heels.

He did not play at the great concert two months later, as announced. No did he ever play again.—New York Mercury.

Started the Duetists.

The other day a young man wanted a pair of evening gloves late at night, and had to go over to Sixth avenue to get them, says the New York Press. There was nothing of his size in stock but a pair of white gloves, while pearl and emerald blue. However, he was a dandy and an artist, had to wear gloves, so he bought the gloves, and in due course of time led the ottoman wearing them. The chappies were astounded. Nobody could question this man's irreproachable taste, and in fact he was something of a leader of fashion. After such a breathless deputation waited upon him to know whether or not white gloves had come back again.

"I'm wearing them, myself, you see, dear boy," he said, jokingly, but with a slight superior smile. "I haven't really heard whether the price has found it out yet or not."

Now our true dilette is not susceptible to the sense of irony. Besides, the deputation was austered at the innovation. The result was that they inhaled those speeches up and in half an hour everybody in the room was saying that the prince of Wales had taken to wearing white gloves in the evening, and that Tom Blank was the first man in New York to wear of it. So white gloves and not pearl are now the proper things to wear in New York City on dress occasions, and when our man of fashion strolled into the Metropolitan Opera House the other night he looked around the circle he smiled grimly. Half the men in the boxes looked as if they were carrying snowballs.

The Conductor Was Game.

"I witnessed a funny incident out at Belleville, on the Cairo Short line, last week," said Manuel G. Rialdo, a cigar salesman at the Lincoln last night. "A railroad man had got aboard the train and tried to work the conductor for a ride. The conductor refused and told him to get off at the first stop. When the station was reached, he did not get off but gave the conductor 30 cents, all the money he had, to ride on to the next station. When that station was reached, the conductor took pains to see that he got off. After the conductor had given the signal to go ahead, and the engineer had started the train, the railroad man called the conductor a hard name.

"The conductor was up in a moment and notwithstanding the fact that the train was under headway, he ran a terrier man, who ran. The conductor ran a terrier man, for getting all about the train. He caught him and proceeded to thrash him in the most approved fashion. A number of passengers had rushed to the rear platform to see the fun. The brakeman, seeing the crowd, hurried back, and saw the conductor a half mile back, unsmiling his insult. He stopped the train and had the engineer back up. The conductor got aboard, calmly washed his hands and resumed his duties refusing to discuss the matter or saying what he would have done had he been absent not been noted when it was"—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

A WIFE HAS MORE occasion to fear a fashionable club than a highway man's bludgeon.

NO PARTY WAS ever big enough to hold either all the good or bad men.