

RED HAIR and BLUE SEA

by Stanley R. Osborn
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WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE

Palmyra Tree, aboard the yacht Rainbow, discovers a stowaway. She is disappointed in his mild appearance and tells him so. Obeying his command to glance at the door, she sees a huge, fierce, copper-hued man with a ten-inch knife between his lips. Stowaway, Burke and the brown man, Olive, go up on deck and tell stories of adventure which are not believed. Palmyra decides she loves Van. The night the engagement is announced the Rainbow hits a reef. John Thurston rescues both Van and Palmyra—but Palmyra thinks Van saved her. A sail is sighted after three days on an island. It is Ponape. Burke, Olive and Palmyra are rescued. Olive has to put her ashore on an island, as a Japanese man-of-war is sighted and it would be dangerous to have her aboard. Olive swims to the island and joins Palmyra. She is in fear of the brown man. Olive and Palmyra swim to another island, from which Palmyra secretly sends a note for aid. Burke's ship approaches the island. Palmyra and Olive sail in a canoe, evading both Ponape's ship and the Japanese gunboat Okayama, which has her friends on it. Olive risks his life to get water for Palmyra. Ponape Burke makes desperate pursuit of Olive and Palmyra, even opening fire on them. Olive proves a friend. He brings Palmyra back among her people on an island. But there she soon falls into the hands of Burke's accomplices, and Thurston and Van are seeking her. Now read on:—

CHAPTER XII

Thurston thrust Van aside impatiently. "The Puelliko, you say?" he demanded of the man Martin.

Across the road a horse stood saddled. Thurston ran to it, jerked the reins free, jumped into the saddle at this moment, came running up.

"Rouse the bench," cried Thurston. "You, Van—the gunboat. Martin—the police. Tree you to the mission. I'm for the Puelliko."

He whirled his horse.

"Wait, wait, Thurston," implored the father. "Here, take my revolver."

"Rouse the beach and fowls," came the answer above the ring of hoofs.

For a moment the three stood petrified, staring after him. Then they ran in different directions, to carry out his orders.

Scarcely had they gone than two native men burst from the narrow footway and crossed to the thatch. A few seconds later, with the old women, they had rushed Palmyra over the road and into the lane between the high blind wall and the salt-water marsh where there were no eyes to see save those of the crabs that ran back and forth across the slime.

Van Buren Rutger ran down the wharf, jumped into Thurston's boat and was pulled to the Okayama.

Commander Sakamoto turned to Van. "But my dear Mister," he said, "something is wrong. How can O-lee-vay have taken the young lady when O-lee-vay is locked up here safe aboard? But he—satisfy me he is only afraid for young lady. He means good. So I let him go, unless you—"

Van was aghast. "Absolutely not!" he cried.

Sakamoto shrugged. "As you say," he conceded.

He gave an order and shortly the brown man appeared on deck.

Olive must have divined on whose demand he was here, for his animosity flamed up. The white man sprang forward. "What have you done with her?" he demanded. Then, turning to the interpreter: "What has he done with her?"

He shot forth a question, received his answer, burst into a rood of enmity.

"He say," repeated the interpreter, "he say turn him loose. He savvy too much. Go look see. Find girl damn too much quick."

The Japanese turned questioning to Van.

"No!" cried the white man passionately. "No!"

The officer shrugged again.

If Palmyra had been there, she would have marvelled that Van could remain blind to the sincerity of Olive's purpose.

As for the islander, he must have adjudged the situation hopeless. With a final look of dumb pleading, he whirled, ducked past his unready guards and the clutching fingers of the others, and sprang over the starboard rail, foot first into the sea.

As Olive struck the brine Sakamoto leaped for the gangway and into his cutter, which happened to be alongside.

"Jab him with an oar," ordered the commander. "But it is not so easy to jab with a long oar."

Olive made a judicious feint, dived back under the vicious thrust of the port oars, and splashed ashore. The sailors floundered close in wake.

Inland, the main road from the beach was crowding in against the river. Soon the fugitive must cross one or the other in the open. He would be seen. He would be caught.

But Olive did not cross the road. He did not cross the river. Nor was he caught. Merely—he disappeared.

He had lain all the while in the river, down among the crowding water plants, only his nose up for air. Normally the water, clear as dew, would have revealed him. But rain in the mountains, tropically copious, had raised the stream out of its banks, stained it earthy brown, dotted its surface with moving leaf and branch.

Meanwhile, John Thurston, putting his horse to a run, had soon neared the Puelliko Rocks.

A shoulder of basalt blocked the view ahead. He clambered up, had almost reached the top, then, startling-

ly, the whistle of a bullet. Thurston ducked behind a rock. "Meaning me?" he questioned. He raised his head cautiously. Bang! A leaf cluster came fluttering, like a wounded bird, to his feet.

Across the road, opposite, a great aloe tree dominated the bush behind it. From among its many trunks a wisp of white smoke had floated out. John, in his effort to locate the enemy, risked standing up. A third bullet flattened itself against the rock.

"Seems they are here, after all," he conceded.

Regaining his horse he had galloped back to the road, with this turning movement in view, when he encountered the girl's rather and seven other men. These were an advance guard. Sailors from the gunboat were following in to scour the bush.

"The lava caves," the father cried, excitedly. "High in the mountains, Thurston, inland of here. Unexplored, inaccessible; a terrible hiding place. My God, John, we've got to head them off from the caves."

Thurston told of the shooting. Thurston found what he sought—footprint.

Native men almost never wore shoes; then only shoes of cloth and rubber. But here, in the damp mould, someone had ascended toward the aloe tree, descended—wearing leathes.

Thurston examined the prints at length. Then "If I'm any sort of an Indian at all," he commented, "this was—Ponape Burke."

For a distance Thurston was able to ride. Then lava, clean washed, a stream, and three paths intersecting at the water.

The bed of this stream, cast solid in one piece from nature's furnace, would have provided a test for the north woods skill of any man. And in addition, Ponape Burke—if it were he—had taken pains to leave no mark.

Later, he found footprints again—shod and bare. Ahead large trees told of dry land.

Thurston advanced stealthily, rifle ready. The elevation took on an unusual form. He recognized it, to his surprise, as an artificial island; one of those ruined fortresses or tombs built by prehistoric conquerors on such islands as Kusale and Ponape.

Could the girl be imprisoned here? Opposite, there rose a twenty-foot wall of basaltic columnar blocks.

But it was not at this wall that John Thurston looked.

Lying under it, in what had been either the canal by which these long stones were floated in, or a dock for the praus or junks of the conquerors, was the schooner Lupe-a-Noa.

Palmyra's captors hurried her into the footway they did not long continue in the dangerous direction of the Puelliko. Shortly they turned into a path that branched out among the mangroves. This path would bring them circuitously back to the sea at a point just outside the harbor entrance.

As the two men urged her along she knew she must soon confront Ponape Burke. Yet it was with a gasp that, at a turning, she saw the leafy wall move and the man's face come leering out.

"Well, Palmie," he tittered. "I come back t'get my kiss."

Her guards now for the first time releasing her hands, the girl snatched forth her pistol and levelled it at him.

He was dressed, absurdly, in the gala attire of the Rainbow, even to the cane. She had not ordered "Hands up!" but he had obeyed that formula, stood thus grinning at her. Now, however, so suddenly she could not pull the trigger, he brought the flexible stick down with whiplike cut across the back of her hand. The fingers, paralyzed, dropped the weapon.

An ugly light flashed into his eyes. "I ain't a-taking no chances this time," he explained.

As they moved forward again Ponape Burke became informative. Had been lying low here waiting an opportunity. This village was a good sort; not like the rest of the island—so damn pious a kanaka wasn't supposed even to smoke. And from the point, a man could watch the Okayama at anchor or get away, quickly and unseen, to the hidden Lupe-a-Noa.

The one obstacle had been Olive. But they had discovered Van's antipathy; planned to get the islander out of the way through him. Graciously Van had acted of his own accord.

For this work the man Martin had been useful, being new to the beach, unknown.

At the sea front the native men lifted Palmyra and Ponape Burke and waded with them through the thigh-deep water to the islet.

At the end of the islet furthest from shore, Ponape Burke ordered his prisoner into the last thatch. She hesitated, gave the natives one disparing glance. She hated them for their curiosity, their complaisance.

She stooped, entered the house, sat upon a mat on the pebble floor, her back against one of the posts in the circle that upheld the eaves. Burke hurried away. The brown men were crowding into the opposite side of the hut. They dropped to stare, cross-legged, knee to knee, silent or whispering, those behind craning to look. Martin came to take up the watch.

(Continued next week.)

The Ontario Legislature

Work of the Ontario Department of Forestry in distributing free of charge trees to residents of the province for planting and windbreak purposes is receiving editorial support from many of the Ontario papers. According to the department 14,000 trees are available for free distribution this year. Last year nearly 5,000 persons accepted trees from the government.

Each resident of the province can get 4,000 trees each year by paying the express from the nearest forestry station which are situated in Norfolk, Simcoe, Durham, Prince Edward and Grenville counties. If the trees are called for there is no expense attached. According to statistics of the department some 431,793 trees were planted in York County last year. Free allotment of trees numbers 4,000 but additional quantities are supplied at \$4 per thousand.

During 1928, or for the first time in history, Ontario's mineral production exceeded \$100,000,000 in value according to a report of the Ontario Department of Mines. Jump of \$11,000,000 in the production of nickel and copper went a long way to establish the record-breaking production figure. Total production for the year was \$100,238,933 or an increase of eleven per cent above production of 1927.

Due to a heavier demand for building material structural materials showing a rise of more than \$500,000 having a total value of \$14,688,210. Non-metallic minerals with a total of \$7,679,133 were only \$30,000 higher than in 1927.

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And his patch of nut-brown hue. "Why don't you patch with color to match?" They said, "Why not with blue?" "Don't be coy, my blue-clad boy, Speak up," and they laughed with glee. Then he hung his head, as he bashfully said: "That ain't no patch, that's me."

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