

FORTY YEARS BETWEEN

By LLOYD OSBOURNE
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(Continued from yesterday's edition)

and with a year of receiving nag rank and the command of a fleet. His career had been more than distinguished, and he had won his way to the front as much by his fine personal qualities as by his invariable good judgment and high professional attainments. He had earned the character of a man who could be trusted in situations involving tact, temper and diplomatic skill, and no captain in the navy was more confidently ordered to those scenes of international tension, which in spite of statesmen so often arise in some distant place to menace the peace of the world.

He had never married, and when called on the subject was wont to say, with a laugh, that the sea was his only mistress. No one had ever ventured to question him much further, though his friends were often piqued, especially the women, as to an implied romance in the captain's earlier life. It was known he supported two old maid sisters, the Misses Hadow, the impoverished daughters of his first commander, but in view of his considerable private fortune this drain on his resources seemed scarcely the reason of his renunciation.

He was in command of the inflexible battleship, one of the Australian squadron, when she developed some defects in her hydraulic turning gear and was ordered home to England by Admiral Lord George Howard for overhaul. The captain's heart beat a little faster as he realized his course would take him south of the Societies. He spread out the chart on his cabin table and sighed as he laid his finger on Borabora. He shut his eyes and saw the basaltic cliffs, the white and foaming reefs, the green, still forests of that forgotten island. He was a boy once more, with flowers in his hair, wandering beneath the palms with Teha

How often had he thought of her during all these years, the years that had left him gray and old, the years that had carried him unscathed through so many dangers in every quarter of the world. For him she was still in her adorable girlhood, untouched by time, a radiant princess in her radiant isle, waiting by the shore for his return. It shocked him to remember she was not far short of sixty—a fat old woman, perhaps, married to some strapping chief and more than likely with grown children of her own. How incredible it seemed!

Dawn was breaking as he slowed down to leeward of the island and watched the shadows melt away. It was Sunday, a day of heavenly calm, fresh yet windless, with a sea so smooth that the barrier reefs for once were silent, and one could hear from across the hushed and shining water the coo of pigeons in the forest. Under bare steerage way, with the leadman droning in the forechains, the ship hugged the shore and steamed at a snail's pace round the island.

With every mile the bays and wooded promontories grew increasingly familiar as Sir John was borne toward Lihua, the scene of his boyish folly. He looked ashore in wonder, surprised at the vividness and exactness of his recollection.

It was like a home coming to see all these familiar scenes spreading out before him. He looked at his hands, his thin, veined, wrinkled hands, and it came over him, with a sort of surprise, that he was an old man.

"That was forty years ago," he said to himself. "Forty years ago!"

As Lihua opened out and he perceived with an inexpressible pang the thatched houses set deep in the shade of palms and breadfruit trees he felt himself in the throes of a strange and painful indecision. He paced up and down the bridge, he lit a cigar and threw it away again, he twice approached Commander Stillwell as though to give an order, and then, still in doubt, turned shamefacedly on his heel.

"By the deep, nine!" came the hoarse murmur of the leadman.

It lay with him to stop the ship or not—a word and she would come shivering to a standstill; a word and the boatswain would pipe away his gig and the crew would be running to their places. His heart ached with the desire to land, but something—he knew not what—withheld the order on his lips.

Did he not owe it to her to keep the promise of forty years, a promise given in the flush of youth and hope and sealed with scalding tears?

His resolution was taken. He ordered Commander Stillwell to stop the ship and lower a boat.

"I am going to treat myself to a run ashore," he said by way of explanation.

The vessel slowly stopped. The covers were whipped off the gig. She was hoisted out and lowered, the crew dropping down the ladder into their places at the peep-peep-peep of the whistle.

He was landed at a little cove where in bygone days he had often whiled away an hour waiting in charge of Hadow's boat. It gave him a singular sensation to feel the keel grate against the shingle and to say to himself that this was Lihua! He drew a deep breath as he looked about and noticed

how unchanged it all was.

It came over him with a start that the village was empty. Then he remembered it was Sunday, and they were all at church. Thank God, there was none to watch him! No prying, curious eyes to disturb his thoughts. But they would soon be out again, and it behooved him to make the best use of his solitude while he might. He struck inland, his heart beating with a curious expectancy. At every sound he held his breath, and he would turn quickly and look back with a haunting sense that Teha was near him; that perhaps she was gazing at him through the trees. He approached his old home through overgrown plantations. It awoke him to part the branches and to feel himself drawing near at every step to the only house he had ever called his own. As he heard the splashing waterfall he stopped, not daring for the moment to go on. When at last he did so and mounted the little hill he found no house at all. Nothing but ferns and weeds, man high. He moved about here and there, up to the armpits in verdure, in consternation at discovering it gone.

His foot struck against a boulder. He had forgotten that there were rocks on the hill. He moved along and his foot struck again. He pressed the weeds back and looked down.

He saw a tomb of crumbling cement, green with age and buried out of sight under the tangle.

It had never occurred to him before that Teha might be dead.

He held back the undergrowth again and peered into the depths. Yes, it was the grave of a chief or a woman of rank. He laid both hands on the thick stem of a shrub and tore it out of the ground. He seized another and dragged it out with the same ferocity. It was intolerable that she should suffocate under all this warm, wet jungle that intruded itself, like a horrible cannibal, where there was none to drive it back. He would give her air and sunshine, she that had loved them both. He would uncover the poor stones that marked her last resting place. He would lay bare the earth that wrapped her dead beauty.

He worked with desperation until his hands were bleeding, until his eyes were stung and blinded with steaming sweat. Dizzy with the heat, parched with thirst and sick with the steam that rose from the damp ground, he was forced again and again to desist and rest. He cut his waistcoat into strips and bound them round his bloody hands. He broke the blades of his penknife on recalcitrant roots that defied the strength of his arms. He labored with fury to complete the task he had set before him. Here he stood within four walls of vegetation, the sky above him, the cracked and rotted tomb below, satisfied at last by the accomplishment of his duty.

He called her aloud by name. He bent down and kissed her mossy bed. He whispered with a strange conviction that she could hear him, that he had kept his promise to return.

Then, rising to his feet, he turned toward the sea and retraced his steps. The people were still in church, and the village was deserted as before. He walked swiftly lest they might come flocking out before he could reach his boat to torture him with recognition, with the questions they would ask, with



He had kept his promise to return.

their story of Teha's death. Then he laughed at his own fears, remembering his white hair and the intervening generation. Time had passed over Borabora too. The world, he remembered, was older by forty years. Older and sadder and emptier.

He swung himself up the ladder, mounted the bridge and put the vessel on her course. The telegraph rang, the engineers repeated back the signal, and the great battleship, vibrating with her mighty engines, resumed once more her ponderous way.

Kant's Windlasses.
Kant, the German metaphysician, was a singular being. The English writer Thomas De Quincey made close

observation of Kant's personal peculiarities and frequently dwelt upon one of them with intense amusement. Kant, among other studies in the art of taking care of himself, avoided ordinary garters. He permitted no ligature to be placed on any part of his body, fearing to hinder in the slightest degree the circulation of the blood. He found it necessary at the same time to keep up his stockings. Accordingly he had loops attached to them, and outside each hip he wore a contrivance which may be called a box windlass. These affairs somewhat resembled an angler's reel, with a spring which secured the line at any given point. Behold Kant then expounding his philosophy to a select circle of disciples. Like the famous counsel who could not state his arguments without twisting a bit of twine, Kant worked the windlasses as he talked. The idea of this grotesque fancy so tickled De Quincey that he often lingered on the odd sight. It must have been to observe the master "paying out the cable" or hauling in the "slack" by aid of this curious machinery!

The Wilderness Manna.

In Exodus xvi, 14-36, and other passages in the Old Testament it is to be found an account of the manna fed to the Israelites during their pilgrimage in the wilderness. According to the article on this subject in Smith's Bible Dictionary, which is a summary of several passages, the manna came every morning except the Sabbath in the form of a small round seed resembling the hoar frost. It had to be gathered early, before the sun became so hot as to melt it. It had to be gathered every day except the Sabbath. The attempt to lay aside or accumulate for a succeeding day except on the day immediately preceding the Sabbath failed by the substance becoming wormy and offensive. It was prepared for food by grinding and baking. Its taste was like fresh oil and like wafers made with honey, equally agreeable to all palates. Indeed the manna became to each person the food he was accustomed to take. The whole nation subsisted upon it for forty years, and it suddenly ceased when they first got the new corn in the land of Canaan.

The Independent Shaver.

Two barbers were disengaged when the customer came in. Both got their chairs ready, but the newcomer dodged them.

"I need a shave all right," he said to the proprietor, "but I want to shave myself. Can you accommodate me here?"

"Certainly," said the proprietor, "but I'll charge you the same as if one of my men shaved you."

"That's all right," said the man. "I'm not kicking about the price. All I want is a chance to do my own barbering."

A tonsorial outfit was speedily produced, and the self sufficient individual set to work.

"Isn't that a new wrinkle?" asked another man who had been an interested observer of the proceedings.

"Not at all," returned the proprietor. "Every once in awhile we run up against a fellow who prefers to shave himself, but hasn't the apparatus at hand. We keep a lot of extra razors in stock for the accommodation of just such independent customers."—New York Press.

The English of India.

Applying for a post in the police of the central provinces of India, a native wrote: "I have a good long equiline nose, piercing eyelashes on a semiglobular face and a good physique. My family has a history that takes my imagination back to three pedigrees, when my grandfather was a millionaire. With the vicissitude and times matter change and my father was driven to the necessity to accept a schoolmastership. Ultimately he enjoyed his well earned pension by the time he gave up his ghost. In case my aspirations turn out a reality I shall as a matter of course be bound to prey God for your long life and prosperity."

Conger Eels.

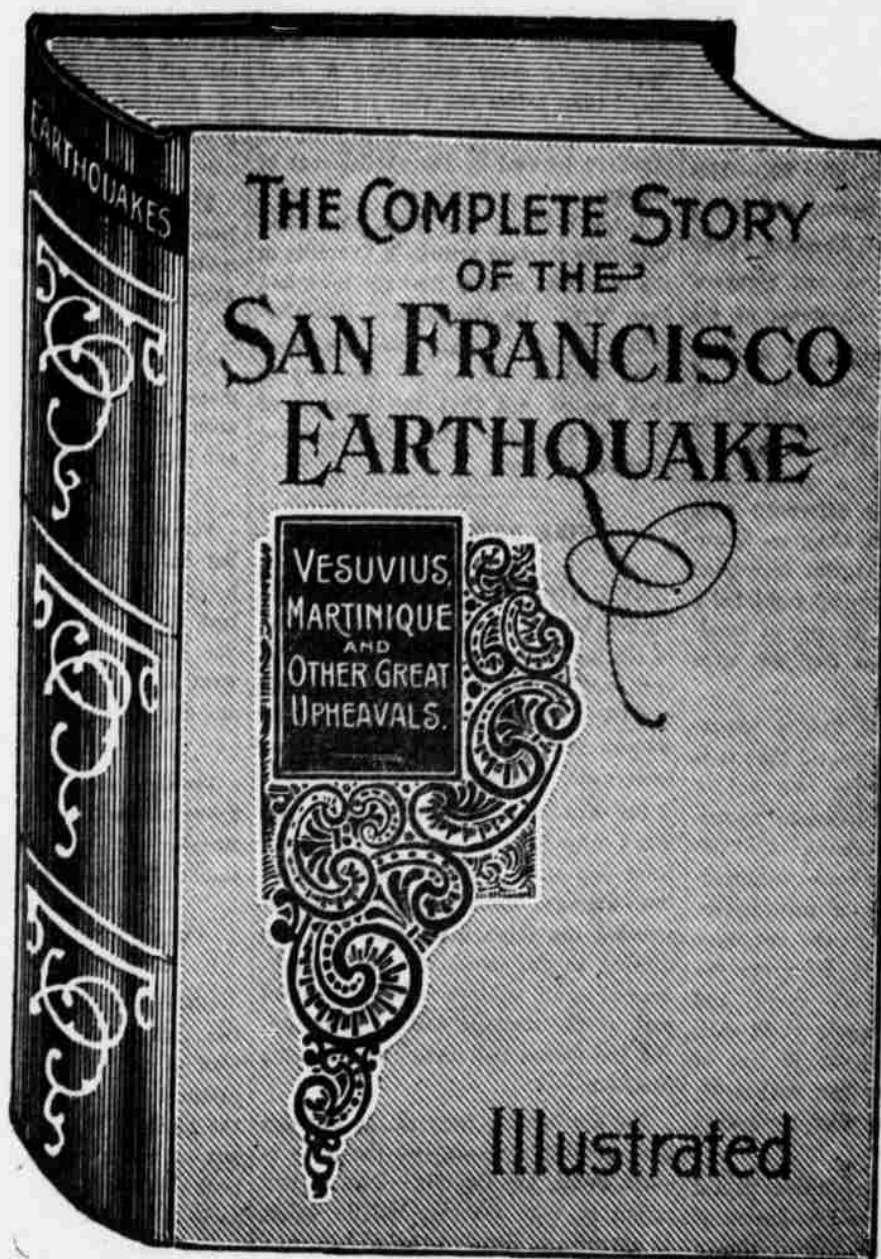
Conger eels hunt for the octopus and, when found, proceed to browse on its limbs. The octopus tries to hug the slippery, slimy conger tight, but in vain, and, finding its limbs growing less, discharges its ink in the face of the foe and under cover of the turbid water beats a hasty retreat. It is to escape the too pressing attention of its foes that the octopus possesses the power of changing its color to correspond with that of its surroundings.

An English Superstition.

According to an ancient bit of Sussex folklore, when a bride returns home from church her single friends at once rob her of all the pins in her dress under the impression that every maiden who is lucky enough to possess one will be married during the course of a year.—London Express.

Sometimes vegetable growth is very rapid. The common mushroom attains its full size in less than twenty-four hours.

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