

A PERSON OF SOME IMPORTANCE

By LLOYD OSBOURNE

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It was not without hesitation that Matt obeyed. He felt a certain chilling of the confidence that had animated him before. The young officer's tone was masterful in spite of the punctiliousness of his words and carried with it a disquieting authority. The young man led him through various passages and finally brought him to what was evidently the ship's wardroom. Here, seated about the head of the table, were five oldish, grave-looking officers in dress uniform. One, white haired, dignified and somewhat bald, wore the insignia of a rear admiral.

meaning like comic beneath his straggling white brows. Matt had a curious shock of recognition. Where had he seen that benign old face, so hazily familiar, like that of some half forgotten friend of his childhood? The old man's voice was sharp and tremulously impassioned as he advanced slowly into the ward room and addressed the officers. Reproof, indignation and anger were written on every feature. He moved over to Matt and put one arm protectively about him. "Disgraceful," he said in singularly pure English, though with the accent of a foreigner, turning from the cringing officers. "They would have it that I was too ill to be disturbed and have shamed me by their treatment of you. Will you spare me a few minutes' conversation in my cabin? Time is precious, and I feel sure we can come to an agreement more quickly than the gentlemen here anticipate."

Matt assented willingly, though wondering into a meditative beyond, at the far end of the passageway and apparently in the extreme stern of the ship, a small group of servants in livery were gathered, who were similarly stricken to statues at the sight of the pair. Walking unsteadily, more from weakness than the movement of the ship, Matt and his venerable companion supported each other, and at length reached what appeared to be the state cabin. It was the largest Matt had ever seen aboard, taking in the whole beam of the ship, and was furnished with a luxury undreamed of at sea. Beautiful antique furniture, glowing oriental rugs, rich dark hangings of faded crimson, slashed with gold—it was like stepping into a medieval palace or the famed splendours of the Yildiz Kiosk. "You must excuse me if I return to bed," said the old man, whose increasing weariness was becoming painfully apparent. "Sit there and tell me why you are so stubborn in refusing what we ask."

"Put yourself in my place," Matt replied. "Would you betray the best friend you ever had?" "Betray!" exclaimed the old man. "Ah, that has been at the root of all our troubles, of all our intolerable delays and vexations. You think then, our intentions are not for the good of this person to whom you are so loyal? You do not know who I am?" "No." "Well, I suppose the poor fools must be commended for that. Mr. Broughton, my house has trusted you once, and now the head of it will trust you again, knowing that my confidence will be sacred."

At this the old man bent forward and breathed the name of that emperoring whose dominions embraced a dozen countries and comprise the fifth of Europe. Here, for obvious reasons, it must be omitted, though in that great cabin it was uttered aloud and quavered on the lips of the emperoring himself. Matt repeated it with amazement as a hundred pictures of the man before him recurred to his mind—pictures in magazines and newspapers, in geographical books and school histories. He rose respectfully and bowed. "Your majesty?" "Be seated," commanded the benign old man. "Yes, I am that personage, who, whatever his faults, deserves the consideration—the compassion of mankind. Now, is it clearer to you who I am? Is it I?" "No," returned Matt, with an ill suppressed agitation. "No, your majesty."

"I will tell you," said the emperoring, hardly less moved, his trembling hands plucking and clutching at the covert. "The friend you served with such devotion is—my son!" CHAPTER XVII. Lotoalofo. OTOALOFO was in sight, a straggling row of dots to those on the bridge—surf, beaches, palms and shining shadowy lagoons to the watchers in the foretop. Gathered on the bridge, and surrounding the venerable monarch who reclined on a deck chair, was the little party privileged to be with him—Matt, with binoculars to his eyes, standing beside stout old Von Todleben, and overtopping him by a head, Chris, in an officer's cloak, seated on the elongated end of the emperor's chair, a possession of honor to which she had been specially called. Brandeis, now Von Tripitaka, in a borrowed, ill fitting uniform, punctiliously remaining aloof from the frequent consultations. As night closed in an animated discussion took place, with Matt in the center of the group, and for the moment the most important individual there, for it turned on him whether or not the vessel was to hold her position till morning, or venture the entrance of the lagoon by moonlight. Matt's own counsel was for caution, for the man-of-war drew twenty-six feet of water, and while he felt reasonably sure of piloting her safely through the northern channel, there was another, the western channel, deeper, but more tortuous, he shrank from assuming so great a responsibility in the dark. Admiral Von Todleben sided with Matt, as did the captain and the navigating lieutenant. But the emperor, lying in the deck chair, could not be made to appreciate the risk. He reiterated his request to have the ship taken in at once. From a wave he became impatient. "Your majesty is unwise," he said bluntly, waiting till the old man had recovered his sorely shaken composure. "If you will permit me to suggest it, why not take one of the steam pinnaces, and let the ship hold off till dawn?" This simple expedient was hotly resisted by the officers, to whom the personal security of the emperor was of almost sacred importance, but the latter was more than pleased with the idea and welcomed it enthusiastically. While the pinnace was being hoisted out and steam raised in her boiler, the warship's searchlight began to flash as though in answer a spot of light glimmered on the horizon like a red-hot coal. It was a primitive beacon, reared and brightly burning on the beach of the island, to help the ship

keep her position and ride out the night without danger. Such concern for strangers surprised Matt and made him wonder. In his whole previous experience but three vessels had ever entered the lagoon, and John Mori had resented their intrusion and shortened their stay with the utmost bitterness, refusing them water and firewood, banishing any intercourse and disputing, rifle in hand, their right to land. In contrast, this friendly beacon struck Matt as odd, indeed, and at variance with everything he remembered. But he had little time to give to such reflections, for the pinnace was soon ready, and they descended the gangway and took their places in her cockpit—the emperor, Chris and Von Todleben, with himself at the tiller. The end of the pier was clustered with natives who stood waiting without a sound for the boat to approach. It made a bumpy landing at the stone steps, the boat hooks scraping the slimy sides of the pier and bringing it slowly to rest. Matt leaped out first, crying "Talota!" right and left and was mobbed in the throng of half naked humanity that surged about him, calling and repeating his name with unrestrained joy. What noise rubbing! What excitement! What a rush and jostle of Kanaka affection! But what was Peau saying? Peau, grave and dignified in even that press with his chief's carriage and cap and eyes? To be prepared for evil designs! What did he mean? Where was the chief? What was all this about the hand of God? "Where is he?" quavered the emperor. "Why is he not here?" If you have the slightest doubt that Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound will help you, write to Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Co. (confidential) Lynn, Mass., for advice. Your letter will be opened, read and answered by a woman, and held in strict confidence.



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affected the little company profoundly. Nothing was said; the unspoken wish was obeyed. They slowly retraced their steps, the old man walking apart, unassisted. In this funeral manner they reached the pier, where the emperor at last broke the oppressive silence. "And you?" he asked, turning to Matt. "Tell me what I may do for you. Tell me how I can reward you." Matt did not answer, though perplexity and dismay were evident on his face. "You are right," continued the emperor. "It is for me to give, not for you to ask. Would it please you—would it content you—to remain on this island and receive it from me as a gift?" "Oh, your majesty, nothing in the world could make me happier than to see you assemble these savages and let us inform them that you are now the master."

"It is not necessary, your majesty. They will believe me when I tell them." "And I must do more," went on the old man, with pathetic earnestness. "That sum once offered you as a bribe and so honorably refused—it must also be yours. I shall send it to you by a vessel, and if then you find this isolation greater than you can bear my officers will be instructed to take you wherever you wish."

Matt was overwhelmed. "I should be most glad of the vessel," he said after stammering his thanks. "But as for money, what there is here must already be a fortune." "Accept the one from me and the other from my son," returned the emperor. "Goodbye, my friend, and keep us both in your remembrance, as I on my part will ever cherish you in mine."

With another word to Chris, whose hand he bent over and saluting with stately courtesy, he descended into the pinnace and took his place with Von Todleben. The latter looked up and raised his cap. Even as he did so the boat was pushed off, and the water began to boll under her stern. A moment later she was skimming over the lagoon toward the lights of the man-of-war, now twinkling at the entrance of the pass. Matt and Chris, hand in hand, gazed after her spellbound. A deprecatory cough brought them back to earth. "The great honor has been prepared for the reception of your excellencies," said Peau. "And if it be your high chief desire a trifle repeat awaits your condescension."

ACTION SETTLED It is not often that an ex-Mayor is sued for an account of municipality but yesterday in the County Court at Toronto, Jesse Funnell, ex-Mayor, of Toronto, and the Town of Toronto were sued for an account of \$104, by the Toronto Detective Agency. When Mr. Funnell was Mayor in Toronto, complaints were made that houses of ill fame were being conducted in Toronto and girls were misbehaving themselves on the streets. The Mayor decided to ferret out these charges, and put a stop to these practices if they existed so as to protect the good name of the town. Without bringing the matter before the Council he employed the Toronto Detective Agency, who sent two men to Toronto for a week with the result that they reported the charges unfounded. After Mr. Funnell ceased to be Mayor, his successors refused to pay the bill and the suit followed. When the action came on for trial it was settled by the parties. Corley, Wilkie, and Duff for defendant; A. Abbott for Town of Toronto, and W. C. Mikel, K.C. for Funnell.

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The Old Emperor Had Fallen on His Knees in Prayer.