

Complete Story.

The Lovers of Lolita.

By CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY.

Then Mania's face was evil to look at, his lips were drawn back, and his teeth showed like those of an angry dog, for the blood which flowed from Selem's wound was creeping around his naked feet. Yet once more he cried out to Lau Aua to beware ere it was too late; but the young chief called him a thief, and bade him bring the boat to the wind.

"This for thee, then," cried Mania, and once more he raised his rifle and fired, while Lau Aua spun round and fell over into the sea, for the bullet had struck him in the throat and his life was gone.

That was the last of the fight, for when Lau Aua fell the rest of Tama-vili's men threw down their paddles and let us sail on without further pursuit.

Then whilst I steered Mania tied strips of tappa around Selem's leg so as to stay the bleeding.

"We are safe," cried the girl bravely through her tears, for the pain was very great. "See, lady, the wind is not strong enough for the big double canoe to pursue us."

But yet in his rage, when my father saw that we were escaping, he lowered the mat sail and fired two shots at us with the cannon, the great heavy balls soaring over our heads and plunging into the sea with a splash not fifty fathoms away. Then he troubled us no more.

For four days we sailed steadily onwards, and Selem's wound began to heal. Then one evening we saw the land Uea, just showing above the sea rim, and thought to place our feet on the shore in the morning. But now came sorrow, for in the night it began to blow strongly from the north-east, and heavy rain squalls drove us past the land. In the morning there was but the open sea, and the waves were white and angry, and all that day and the next Mania kept the boat to the wind, hoping that it would change and let us back to Uea. But we hoped vainly. Then there came such a furious storm that we could do naught but drive before it, and go on and on into the great unknown western ocean, whither so many have gone and have been no more known of men. For many, many days we sailed on, and then, although we had much rain and se suffered no thirst, our food began to fail, and had not Mania one day caught a sleeping turtle we should have perished. Some time about the fourteenth day we saw the jagged peaks of an island against the sky, and steered for it. It was the land called Rotumah—a fine, fair country, with mountains and valleys, and running streams. We sailed the boat into a bay on which stood a village of many houses, and the people made us welcome, and besought us to stay there, for their island was, they said, a better place than Uea. And this we should have done and been content, but in the night, as I slept in the house of the unmarried women a girl whispered in my ear:

"Get thee away, Felipa, the head chief of Fao, hath been told of thy beauty, and hath sent word here that the man Mania must be killed to-night, and thou and Selem be sent to him."

So we stole away to the boat, pushed off, and stood out to the sea once more. The people had told us to go round to the north end of the island, where there was a chief named Loli, who would protect us, and give us a home.

But again evil fortune befell us, for the chief of Fao sent a messenger overland to Loli, claiming us as mea tafia i moano—"gifts sent to him by the sea"—and asking him to hold us for him. And so Loli, who would have welcomed us, was afraid, and begged us not to land and so bring about bloodshed.

"Great is my sorrow, O wanderers," he cried to us, "but ye must not land. Steer to the west, where there is a great land—many, many islands which bend north and south (the New Hebrides group)."

"Is it far?" asked Mania.

"Four days for a ship, longer for a boat," replied Loli, shamefacedly. "The gods go with thee, farewell."

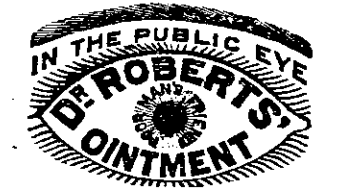
Once again we sailed towards the setting sun, steering by the stars at night time, and for seven days all went well. Then after that there came calms, and the hot sun beat upon us and ate its way into our hearts, and we saw no sign of land, while only now and then did a sea bird come near us. Then came the time when all our food was gone, and we waited for death. Mania had

eaten no food for many days when it came to this—for he said he was feeling quite strong, and divided his share between us. Once as he and I slept Selem put a little piece of old cocoonut—the last that was left—into my hand, and slipped over the side to die, but Mania heard her, and although he was very weak, he roused and caught her as she sank.

One night Mania shot a small shark which was following the boat. It was but three spans long, yet it kept us alive. Mania gave us all the flesh, and kept only the head and skin for himself; after that all the world became dark to me, and we lay together in the boat to die.

The captain of the whaleship was very kind to us, and said he would land us all here at Nuflolle, where there was a white man who would be kind to us.

That is all; and now my husband Mania and I, and Falsoa and his wife Selem are well content to live here always. For even now after many months have passed do Selem and I cry out in our slumbers, and when we awaken our hair lies wet upon our foreheads; but all those bad dreams are passing away from us for ever.



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Having finished the business of the afternoon sooner than I had anticipated, and having dressed for dinner at the office, I found myself at the hotel where we were stopping while the decorators were in our house, in upper Fifth avenue, a half hour earlier than the time appointed by my wife for dinner. She had arranged to come directly to the grand foyer of the hotel from a reception or afternoon tea, or some other feminine function, and I was to meet her near the entrance of the Fifth avenue dining-room.

The passing show was well worth inspection. Indeed, before my wife and I had become quite so used to it, when we were newcomers in New York, we had often gone down there in the evening for the sole purpose of observing the dress parade. It was as good as a theatre—and if you took dinner there not nearly so cheap. The women were all beautifully gowned in the smartest of frocks, and the attendant men were sufficiently submissive to follow unobtrusively en train; sometimes, the awkward ones, on train! The men never attracted much attention anyway. They were as unconsidered as bridegrooms at weddings. They were monotonously alike in their evening clothes, and the attempt to distinguish them from the occasional waiters who strayed out into the corridor was too severe a mental strain for idleness. On this evening, however, much to my surprise, my interest was excited by a mere man, who sat across the corridor from me.

He was a little man, with white hair, a white moustache and imperial, but with an erect figure and keen blue eyes, which belied the other evidences of age. He looked a little foreign and very lonesome. Nobody spoke to him or noticed him, of course, although he surveyed the passing throng with what seemed to me to be a glance of expectancy, hope deferred, and appeal. Finally his gaze rested on me. He studied me unobtrusively for a few moments. I was not born in New York, and he seemed to divine that fact, for, after some hesitation, he arose, crossed the hall and nodded toward a vacant chair by my side with a mutely interrogative glance, remarking in a pleasant, if uncultured voice:—

"Stranger, may I set down here?"
"Certainly," I replied.
"You ain't a New Yorker, are you?"
"I am not a native of New York," I said.

For that matter I have learned by inquiries that nobody in particular is ever born in New York, although everybody who is anybody comes here in time if he can.

"I thought not. You look kind o' sociable, an' as I got tired of playin' a lone hand over there I thought I might venture. My name is Tillotson, Elijah D. Tillotson."

I mentioned my own, and so the acquaintance began.

"You were lonesome, were you?" I asked.

"Lonesome! God A'mighty, I ain't never seen nuthin' like it! I've been alone in a small boat on the sea; I've been the only human bein', as fer as I knew, fer hundreds of miles on the prairie; I've stood on mountain tops with no companion, as fer as I could see, but that kind o' lonesomeness ain't nuthin' to what I felt right here in this crowd. A man on the train told me to come here. It was the best and biggest hotel in the town. He said it was a place where a Western man could be at rest and feel at home. There was so many on 'em here. He said the masses could be exclusive here, too; an', though I ain't seen one Western man that I could pick out unless" (he looked at me)—

"I plead guilty," I remarked, "I was born west of the Mississippi."

"I thought so! Put it there," he said gleefully, his eyes sparkling as he extended his hand and shook mine vigorously, to the surprise of the passers-by. "You are from Mexico, you said!"

"Yes, but American born."
"Oh, of course I knew that."
"Yes, we Americans don't like to be taken fer peones, you can be sure o' that."

"I have some interests in Mexico," I remarked. "What was your business while there?"
"Railroadin'—contractin', that is."

"What do you think of the country?"
"Finest on earth! There's more money to be made there than any place I know, an' easier. I've made my little pile an' am up here to enjoy it, but I doubt not I'll go back again soon. It sort o' fascinates you. If I can do anythin' to help you in your business down there I'd be glad to do it."

"Thank you," I answered, smiling at the frank proposition, "perhaps I shall avail myself of your offer some day. The Mexican women, I understand, are beautiful!"

"They sure are!" returned the other, "but they can't hold a candle to our girls. The prettiest one I ever seen was Dolores Santivanez, little Lolita—she was a darlin' sure! She very nearly done me up, though."

"How was that?" I asked, scenting a story at once, and realising that my friend only wanted encouragement to talk on.

"Well, sir, twenty years ago I was a good sight younger than I am now. I was fresh from the States when I went down there. My hair wasn't white an' I wasn't a bad-lookin' young fellow, nuther. Bein' a blonde in them days, I was somethin' of a contrast to the Mexican lot, an' I used to have some pretty lively times with the girls. That is as lively a time as a man can have when he has to make love through a grate bar. You can imagine it is rather coolin' to a passion till you get used to it."

"Well, as to Lolita—I think it was a little more serious in her case than other times. She was the first one, too. Stranger, she was so all-fired pretty an' she sort o' played into my hand as it was, that I got myself rather tangled up with her. It was down in Oaxaca. We was building the Oaxaca Railroad, an' had the right of way from Teotitlan del Camino south. I had one hundred and twelve kilometres to construct with three camps of about two hundred men each on the line. Of course, as superintendent, I had to divide my time between the three camps an' keep them all to work. Each camp was composed of four or five gangs of peones—common labourers, that is. Over each one was a gang boss, mostly not much above the level of the men. Over each camp and gang bosses there'd be a Mexican assistant superintendent. He had a good job, a bully one, fer he got big pay an' reported only to me."

"The brightest gang boss in the camp near Teotitlan, was Chon Villalobos, which his name was Encorrafacion Villalobos. We called him 'Chon' for short. Chon was a cut above the ordinary boss, an' he had ambitions. If his industries had been proportioned to said ambitions he'd have been a great man, but he was a lary cuss, a shirker, an' generally worthless. I found that out afterward. When I first came an' took charge, the former chief havin' been knocked out by the Yellow Jack, he was a-rasin' Cain, an' it looked like as if he was makin' things hum."

"Well, I told you my name was Elijah D. The 'D' stands for Draco. He was some sort of a foreign gent—a lawyer. I take it—an' Elijah was a scriptural cuss. I never took much stock in lawyers, an' me an' the Scriptures, I regrets to say, ain't got no more'n a bow-in' acquaintance. Therefore, both them names seemed awful inappropriate to me, an' they're all-fired ugly in the bargain, so I never told nobody what my real name was. Secin' my initials they got to callin' me Ed, an' I'm known down there to this day as 'Ed,' an' even sign my cheques that way down there, which it's rather confusin' when I git up here."

"One mornin' I was busy in the tent foolin' over my accounts, when I was