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JAMES MONTGOMERY PLACE

George walked boldly up to her, carrying a circlet of flowers. "Julia," he said, "I have brought you a lei. Will you wear it?"

By
Frank
Condon

Here's one George will never tell his wife. It's an idyl of dear old Honolulu—with George doing most of the idling



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No More Widows!

GEORGE was having a miserable time. He said so repeatedly and blamed me for having dragged him into it. The mosquitoes were giving him thunder. He had picked a lovely red hibiscus flower, which immediately produced a swell rash on all his fingers and both thumbs. He couldn't sleep nights, and besides all that, Julia was driving him slowly insane.

On the third day, or rather, the third night, he strolled over to where I was lounging comfortably in a wicker chair, listening to a man from Australia while he described potatoes.

"Henry," said George, mentally brushing the Australian potato expert aside, "why didn't you tell me?"

"Tell you what?" I asked.

"Why didn't you tell me a person can't sleep here in Honolulu?"

That is where we were at the moment.

"I didn't know it," I replied. "This is the first I've heard about it. And anyhow, what difference does it make to an owl? You don't sleep nights whether you are in Honolulu or Chicago."

George deposited himself in an adjoining wicker chair and gave himself over to dismal growlings and lamentations. He had hollows under his eyes and a generally worn appearance. Once a youngish, plump fellow with rosy cheeks, he now suddenly seemed old, and his hands trembled, especially when he lifted a drink of okolehao, which is the native beverage poison and will blow the gold out of your back teeth. Staring at George, I felt sorry for him. We had only recently arrived in Honolulu, the Gem of the Ocean, the Pearl of the Pacific, the Pathway of the Gods. Instead of brightening, George seemed to be sinking lower and lower.

"You better brace up, George," I said. "This

won't do at all. You're commencing to look bad."

"Why wouldn't I look bad?" he demanded. "I'll bet I never leave these islands alive."

"Well, I'm with you," I said comfortingly. "If somebody has to go back with the remains, I'm around, and I'll do my duty."

The real reason why George gazed at life with a frustrated scowl was none other than this same Julia, whom he had encountered on the steamer from America. She was a vivacious widow and he fell in love with her the first day out. It was one of those swift shipboard affairs, with a full moon silvering the sea, deck chairs side by side, ukuleles playing sentimental ballads and George asking Julia how she would like to marry him and forever more ride down the moon-kissed ocean of life.

She said: "Yes, George darling."

I BELIEVE now that young, vivacious widows always reply in the affirmative, which gives them opportunity to think things over. George was in ecstasies. He walked about the ship in a warm glow, giving away money to the stewards and looking happy. He remained full of sentimental prune juice until the ship docked at Honolulu, and from that moment, his joy diminished. Julia, so it appeared, was a mere trifler with male affections. She was a blonde. Her hair was the color of ashes. George also was the color of ashes, after the first day in Honolulu, for Julia was cool with him, and danced perpetually with a bicycle manufacturer from Cleveland, Ohio.

"George," I advised, "the best thing will be for you to forget Julia. She is just a young widow, and you cannot trust a young widow any farther than you can throw a musk-ox."

"I shall never forget Julia," he said mournfully.

Presently, he began worrying me about his sleepless state and I investigated. It seems that people cannot sleep in Honolulu when the wind blows from the north, for a north wind, according to Hawaiian folklore, is kahuna. Kahuna means ill luck. When the wind is kahuna, the spirit of slumber departs and strangers spend the dark hours chasing mosquitoes with a pump gun. It dawned upon me suddenly. The couples we beheld sitting on the beach late at night, holding hands, were merely victims of the universal sleeplessness. George and I had been stepping over them in our wanderings and there, also, we saw our first Beach Boys.

"GEORGE," I said, hoping to take his mind off Julia, "what do you think of these Beach Boys?"

"I don't know what to think," he answered. I had inquired of other gentlemen at our hotel and they, like George, didn't know what to think. They were nonplussed. None of the males knew what to think about Beach Boys, but it was different with the females.

We had been studying the Beach Boys in an effort to discover why wealthy American ladies preferred their company. Down on the coral strand, we beheld handsome women in elegant bathing costumes, and many of them sat by the hour in the sun, conversing with beach boys and utterly neglecting graduates of Eastern universities and tired young business men from the States, who had come out to acquire a coat of tan. Why was this so? I asked George. George said he did not know.

The Honolulu beach boy is a large, muscular fellow, about two shades darker than a football. He plays the ukulele with skill and gusto, sings sentimental ballads, rides a surf-board with no effort, is a veritable fish in the water, but is not beautiful, at least what I call beautiful. Generally the beach boy has no front teeth, which seems to increase his popularity with ladies. George and I stared at the American business men, who were strolling the beach in their brand-new bathing uniforms. They had no ladies to talk to them and wore an air of neglect.

"The way to find out," I said to George, "is to walk up to one of these rich ladies and ask her in a polite voice."

"True enough," said George, who will ask anybody anything.

He selected a striking brunette, who happened by merest chance to be the daughter of a belted earl, home-bound to London from Australia. She was extremely British and scornful with everyone, except beach boys. It was her custom to stare directly through any males she encountered, until her eye presently fell upon a beach boy, whereat she sprang into life. I would be arrested if I ventured to stroll up to a strange lady and ask questions, but George can do it.

"PARDON me, miss," he said, halting the daughter of the belted earl, "but as an investigator of curious facts, I am eager to know why you prefer beach boys to us other boys? Why is it so?"

The lady was not insulted or indignant. She summoned no beach policeman. She even smiled slightly, as an adult will when a feeble-minded child comes along with a query. She stared intently at George, and in so doing she absorbed the details of his costume, which was conventional without being distinctive. George was adorned with a wrinkled shirt and a pair of swimming pants which would have fitted hundreds of people, but did not fit George. He is a sterling character, but is not much to look at unless he is in a telephone booth wearing a fur overcoat. The English lady scanned him briefly.

"I like beach boys," she replied in an even voice, "because of their gorgeous manhood."

That was all the lady said. She turned away with a cold gesture. George bowed and walked on down the beach of Waikiki, and we knew then why ladies preferred beach boys to male American tourists or British taxpayers.

The faithless Julia continued to dance and flirt with strangers and George went on moping and admitting his life was ruined. He bought a ukulele, and accompanied himself while he sang sad songs, or at least he said he was accompanying himself. Every day, George's melodies grew more melancholy and I am here to say that the Hawaiians own and produce the saddest, weepiest songs on earth. The way George sang them did not make them less sad, for George is no thrush.

"They do seem really fond of music," he said, meaning the Honolulu people. "Nowhere will you find harmony taking such an important part in civic life."

THIS was quite true. We happened to be in a gasoline filling station at the moment, where a brown-skinned person was shooting gasoline into our tank, or rather Oscar's tank. A phonograph was in full eruption. It was playing I'm Counting the Drops As They Fall, which is a sad song, but had no reference to the gasoline.

"Universal music," I stated, "is a good thing in a modern republic. If we had more music at home, we would have less bootlegging."

The music played universally in Hawaii is either The Song of the Islands, or Aloha, and after you have heard these two pieces twelve thousand seven hundred and ten times each, you get to know them. You feel as if you had always known them. George went pale over The Song of the Islands, which is a truly haunting melody and will make emotional persons weep. Aloha is likewise sad. George told me that without doubt, Aloha is the saddest song ever written by man. It got so he would begin to wipe his eyes while the band was merely tuning up to play Aloha.

AND aloha is, of course, the leading word in Hawaii. It is a protean word, the like of which exists in no other language and means, as you probably are aware, "Farewell" or "Good-by." It likewise means "Hello," "Good morning," "Good evening," "How are you today?" "What car do you drive?" "Is that stuff pure?" "Have you seen my wife?" "I love you," and "What time is it?" The education of youth is no great problem in a land where they have words like aloha. A native starts to school at nine, graduates at ten, turns on his phonograph at eleven and is selling Chinese pearls to American tourists before lunch.

"We will have to rent a motor car," George observed.

Upon asking a motor cop where one might rent an automobile, we were directed to Oscar. Oscar had no other name—just plain, simple Oscar. He was a cosmopolitan character, one-third Arab, one-third Jap, one-third Chinese and one-third Hawaiian; and one side of his head had either caved in of its own accord, or somebody had caved it in for him. He was the sole proprietor of the most careless filling station and rental agency in the United States, and supplied broken-down motor cars to tourists for fifty dollars per week per car per tourist. By renting a car from Oscar, we would be able to save thousands of dollars in taxicab fares. We would do our own driving.

"We will certainly save a lot of money

this way," George said cheerfully, handing Oscar fifty dollars, American money, which is good in Honolulu, because that is the only kind of money they have in Honolulu. Some tourists believe Hawaii is a foreign country, but we made no such silly mistake. The moment we landed on Pier One, an officer in a blue suit rubbed his hand over George and removed a small flask of snake remedy, which George had brought along in case of attack by Honolulu snakes. We were fined five dollars and knew at once that we were still in America.

OSCAR took the fifty dollars and disappeared, and when I say disappeared, I do not mean that he simply went around the corner. He went away and was gone for days, and others informed us that he always disappeared when anybody handed him fifty dollars. We drove blithely down the street for exactly one block, to the corner of Nuuanu Road and School Street, where our front wheel fell off. Stepping out of the hired automobile to see why a front wheel should fall off so soon, we encountered a Honolulu motorcycle policeman, who, after a brief conversation, handed me a ticket, which requested my presence in court for not having a license to drive about the streets in a gasoline vehicle. We then hired our first taxicab, left Oscar's wreck upon the highway and proceeded at full speed.

"I don't see where we will save such a heap of money dealing with Oscar," I said to George, who scowled at me.

Later on we returned to the rental agency and discovered Oscar's absence. They said he had gone fishing. Three young Chinese boys had charge of the business and were loath to go any farther with the renting of automobiles. It was their feeling that we should stick to the maimed car and not demand any fresh automobiles, and it was our morning custom to drive up in a taxicab, dismount, argue with the Chinese in their own tongue, and, while I talked, George went from car to car trying to start an engine, any engine at all.

THE instant I heard an engine start, I gave over arguing in Chinese, joined George in whatever car he happened to find and we drove rapidly out of the filling station before the boys could have us arrested. Each morning found us with a new car, not really a new car, but a fresh car, and each day we broke down in some remote nook of Honolulu, abandoned our machine and hired taxicabs.

"Wasn't a bad idea of yours," I said bitterly to George, after we had used up five of Oscar's cripples. "Hiring a motor car by the week."

"It was not my idea at all," he replied. "In fact, I warned you against it at the start."

Bad as they were, however, it was



Illustrated by
James
Montgomery
Flagg



"Pardon me, miss," he said, halting the daughter of the belted earl, "but I am eager to know why you prefer beach boys"

JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

one of Oscar's touring cars that brought about our acquaintance with the little native lady, the rosy-cheeked Hawaiian lassie who sold ginger ale and frosted cakes at a roadside stand. We had cracked up as usual miles from home, and were hunting a telephone, and the girl aided us. She spoke excellent English and was friendly to George and he immediately asked if she knew any lively folk tales, or stories of the natives. She happened to know several, but it was the story of the kahuna lei that fascinated George.

IT WAS a simple tale of Hawaii, and to me it had an unfinished sound, yet George liked it. A young lad and his sweetheart had come to the parting of the ways amid the usual tears. His love had died and he began to treat his sweetheart coldly. He told her he no longer loved her and was about to keep company with another young lady in a different part of town. She wept copiously, of course, and pleaded for a final meeting beneath the tropic moon and the lad consented. They met for the last time, and the girl brought with her a lei—a kahuna lei. She placed it about the boy's neck, and almost instantly he changed. He became affectionate. He told her that he loved her and would always love her. They were married within the week and lived happily for more than nine years.

"And then what?" I inquired when

the girl ceased, but she said she knew nothing further.

During the recital of this bit of island lore, I could see George brightening up. His eyes commenced to sparkle.

"This is frightfully interesting," he stated. "Where could a person get one of these kahuna leis?"

Now kahuna means good luck and it likewise means bad luck, and it is always a problem to determine whether, when you fool with kahuna, you have picked up good fortune or the opposite. The girl said she believed George would have no trouble in finding a first-class kahuna lei, warranted to bring results, at a cost of about five dollars. He handed her a bill.

"You want to kill somebody?" she inquired.

"Nobody but Oscar," he stated, "and I can do that myself. What I desire is a magic lei, like this young girl used—one that will cause a certain party to look upon me with approval."

We returned to town in a native taxi-

cab, and paused to examine one of those Japanese Hanging Gardens, which are plentiful in Honolulu and environs, although none of them are really hanging. I have never been in a city which boasted so many Japanese Hanging Gardens, and they are usually hidden away in obscure nooks, so that a stranger could hunt for days and days and never find them.

IN ORDER to reach a Japanese Garden, you invariably drive down a one-way alley, paved with cobbles and bordered with little fish-ponds. When you meet an oncoming automobile, you simply get out of your car, give it to the other man with a courteous gesture and walk the remaining distance to the Jap Garden, where you will be served a sukiaka dinner.

Americans visiting Hawaii are always intensely interested in eating a sukiaka dinner, and even when George was at his lowest ebb, he was still able to consume Jap edibles, which consist

largely of raw fish and clams that seem to be trying to live down the record of an ill-spent life. The principal novelty about a regular sukiaka dinner is that you sit upon the floor, with your shoes off, and being thus solidly on the floor, the lizards can run over you with greater freedom. They are quite harmless and of a battleship gray, and after three or four small lizards have crawled across your shrinking person, you reach the point where you can bear it without shrieking.

The spiders are different, in Japanese Hanging Gardens. You must be careful about the spiders, because the trouble with sukiaka spiders is that you cannot tell immediately whether they are spiders or tarantulas. The Jap girl will warn you to move away from them. The larger ones are about as large as a hot-cake, and George was successful in killing one, starting with a lady's shoe and winding up with a chair.

Leaving aside the lizards and spiders, a very nice time (Continued on page 49)



He sees a bar one hundred feet long; in front of it fifty or sixty men, all drinking gin

Meet and Drink

By Owen P. White

On bended elbow thousands of parched pilgrims from all over this arid land annually unite with the natives of the Crescent City in making gurgling obeisance to the great idol, Good Liquor. Sheboyganites and others of the faithful will enjoy this visit to the ancient shrines recently explored by Crusoe White and his man Thirsty

NEW ORLEANS is a nice city which, behind a moss-hung and weather-beaten exterior, many beautiful wrought-iron balconies and row after row of provocative wooden shutters, conceals a sense of humor that is simply marvelous.

It has always been that way. Long before Mr. Andy Volstead came along and legislated the large and merry ha-ha into the booze business, New Orleans had a keen, chuckling appreciation of what is funny about the drinking habits of the American people.

Its own drinking habits, though, are not funny. They are simply the natural, unrestricted drinking habits of the Latin races: the French, the Spaniards and the Italians. And therefore they are not embittered by any flavor of alcoholic inhibitions, moral considerations or hypocritical clap-trap.

On the contrary New Orleans has always openly enjoyed its liquor, still enjoys it and does so after the manner introduced into the city by the first governor. He, so it is said, became the first American millionaire through his introduction of a prohibition amendment into the drinking customs of his subjects.

Early-American Comedy

That prohibition amendment was simply this: Being a wise gentleman, the governor prohibited his people from drinking in any taverns, inns, grogshops or bar-rooms *except* those wherein GOOD liquor could be had, and as the governor and his wife had previously acquired a controlling interest in all the places where GOOD liquor was sold, it is just as easy to account for his rapid rise to fortune as for the fat bank accounts of many modern prohibition officers.

This governor's end was also like unto that of many of the moderns. He died in prison, and thereafter his wife, running true to form as a rich American lady, took a shipload of money with her to Europe and bought herself another husband.

Thus, thanks to the constructive efforts of its first governor, did New Orleans (unlike Ireland which stoutly maintains that nothing alcoholic can be bad) come to look upon GOOD liquor as a real blessing for which it should be truly thankful. It was thankful, and as an evidence thereof, as the years rolled on, the good citizens erected within the walls of their town many shrines to which they could repair, at any hour of the day or night, and partake of the blessings there to be received.

These shrines, enduring as they did on through the generations, became famous throughout the land. To them came many dry-throated pilgrims and, as no man ever departed with his thirst unslaked, or his desire for something bizarre, extraordinary and expensive in

the way of liquid entertainment unsatisfied, New Orleans eventually found itself a veritable Mecca toward which all men turned when they felt that it was time to go somewhere and have one hell of a time.

And it was at this stage in the history of its drinking industry that the Crescent City began to see the funny side of the drinking habits of the rest of the American people—and to profit by it.

To illustrate with a pre-prohibition example: A stranger, a teetotaler he is, or maybe just a moderate drinker, from Sheboygan, Wisconsin, arrives and registers at the old St. Charles Hotel. He is conducted to his room, tips the bell-hop a nickel, reappears downstairs a few minutes later, looks around, locates the bar-room and dives straight for it. Timidly he orders a first drink of whisky, with more assurance he calls for a second shot, and then, after a third injection, it's all off.

What does he care now for what they think in Sheboygan? What he wants to know next, in a loud, raucous voice, is: "How do I get to the Absinthe House?" He gets there all right, takes a couple of "dripped ones"—dripped for him on a marble slab that has done duty since before the Revolutionary War—and right away the thirst that is still his begins to clamor for the alleviating moisture of a few Sazerac cocktails.

He goes to the Sazerac place, hoists several of the most potent and delicious intoxicators ever devised and, dimly remembering that there is one other notorious filling-station he has to visit if he is to qualify as a real rounder, he mounts a cab and instructs the driver to unload him at that "saloon where they make them famous gin fizzes."

A Grand Sight

The cab driver knows his stuff. He stops in front of the celebrated shrine of Mr. Ramos, and when the gent from Sheboygan steps within he sees a sight that he won't quit talking about for twenty years.

Before him he sees a bar one hundred feet long; in front of that bar he sees fifty or sixty men all drinking gin

fizzes from tall glasses; behind the bar twenty bartenders are industriously mixing more fizzes; and behind the bartenders twenty boys are deftly stirring the decoctions.

He steps into line, orders one for himself, curiously watches its manufacture, almost loses his patience because it is so long in the making, and then, ah, then, as he slowly absorbs it a happy, a beatific, smile spreads itself over his countenance. Why, it isn't even a strong drink! On the contrary, it's so soothing that under its benign influence he can already feel himself getting sober again.

To complete the cure he orders another. It is served to him, mixed with a warning from the bartender that "these things carry a delayed wallop," but what difference does that make to a man from Sheboygan? He takes another, and an hour or so after that, after he has managed, and he doesn't know how, to get himself delivered at the St. Charles again and has been duly deposited in his own room by the bell-boy, he again tips the kid. This time he gives him a dollar.

Now, in order to get a fair picture of a year's pilgrimage to the shrines of New Orleans, prior to prohibition, multiply this gentleman from Sheboygan by about 250,000; imagine that each one remains in the city for four days—because even yet it is extremely difficult to get out of the town in less time than that. Vary his daily route, as he will vary it, so as to include all the shrines on Royal Street and a good many celebrated ones elsewhere.

There also you have the explanation of why New Orleans wears a perpetual smile. It wore one before Andrew Volstead was born and, in spite of his having been, it still wears it. It can't be helped. With its genial old sense of humor it can't help but be amused at the antics of the pilgrims, nor, being both very hospitable and very thrifty, can it refuse to aid and abet them in their search for a good time.

Of course New Orleans knows that

the stranger who enters its gates, hurriedly laps up a composite jag within twelve hours of his arrival, and then nurses it along at great expense and with much trouble for the next four days, is not in the habit of acting that way at home.

There are two reasons why New Orleans knows that this is true. Reason number one is that no human constitution could long stand up under the strain endured by the pilgrims when they rest and recreate for a few days in the Crescent City. Reason number two is that the constitution of the home town wouldn't stand for it, either.

The Laugh Grows Louder

New Orleans, however, wastes none of its really valuable time in worrying about anybody's constitution: not even Uncle Sam's. To be sure, when the old man tacked the patch onto the seat of his constitution in the shape of the Eighteenth Amendment and got so "techy" about it, New Orleans had to do something. But nothing disastrous. Merely as a gesture intended to placate Andy, the town went through the motions of closing up its shrines, and ever since then it has had to laugh harder than ever before at the pilgrims.

Because they still come; they are still



Illustrated by Herb Roth

New Orleans, behind its wooden