



## A Veritable Female Crusoe

The recent explorations on the island of San Clemente, which is due west from Del Mar, this county, but sixty miles, have aroused interest in the history of the other islands of the coast. The Santa Barbara Islands in the early part of the present century were inhabited by Indians of comparative white complexion, who spoke a peculiar language. They are supposed to be descendants of the Aztec race of historic fame. There is no record of how these people came to be upon the islands or when they first settled there, but it is probable that the islands were inhabited by them before the founding of the California missions by the Franciscan friars.

Otter, seal, foxes and Sebes were to be found in abundance on the islands and in the adjacent waters, and upon these the natives subsisted, using the flesh for food, the skins for clothing and tents, and the bones for making hunting implements. According to tradition, Indians from the Alaska Islands frequently made trips to the Santa Barbara Islands for the purpose of hunting. During one of these visits the Alaskans fell upon the natives, killing all the males, and, after hunting for some time, they left for the North, abandoning the women to their fate.

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The mission fathers, learning of the fate of the women, determined to have them removed to the mainland, and for this purpose engaged a schooner. Upon arriving at the Island of St. Nicholas the men proceeded to remove the women and such few personal effects as they had to the boat. When this had been accomplished and all were ready for embarking one of the women made a sign that she had forgotten her child and started back after it.

While she was gone a strong wind sprang up, which soon increased to a gale and compelled the little schooner to put to sea for safety. As the wind kept up for several days the captain ran into San Pedro, intending to return for the women who had been left. At San Pedro the Indians were disembarked and taken to the missions at Los Angeles and San Gabriel, where they were cared for. From San Pedro the schooner sailed to Santa Barbara, and from there to Monterey, where she had been ordered.

There was a poor woman left upon a bleak island out in the broad expanse of the great Pacific, with no companions save the wild wolf and the Indian dog, with which the island was infested.

The news of the woman having been left behind spread rapidly, but no further effort was made to rescue her. The natural supposition was that she had perished, and in the course of a few years the subject had passed from the minds of the people.

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In 1851, just fifteen years later, a hunter named Nidever and a couple of companions visited the island of San Nicholas and were astonished to find indications which led them to believe the woman was still alive. Footprints which had been made in the previous rainy season were to be seen in the now dry and hard soil, and from the size and general appearance the hunters concluded they had been made by a woman. Some small, circular enclosures made of brush were also discovered and in them some dried seal's blubber.

Further than this the huts gave no indication of having been inhabited for some time. A strong wind arising, the party put to sea without making any further discoveries. The next winter, 1852, Nidever again visited the island, and, upon arriving, immediately landed and searched for fresh signs of the woman. The huts discovered on the first trip were unchanged, but the seal blubber seemed to have been replenished by a fresh lot. Some wild dogs were found in the vicinity, and the hunters thought it likely the woman had fallen a prey to these beasts, as they were quite ferocious.

In 1853 the same party planned another expedition for the purpose of hunting and making one more attempt to settle the question as to whether the woman was still alive. They searched about the island for some time, and were about despairing of

live. They searched about the island for some time, and were about despairing of success, when one who had become separated from the rest discovered an object some distance away, and upon approaching, it he found it to be the long-looked for woman. He at once signalled the others, and directed them to approach her from different directions, in order to prevent her escape, should she be so disposed.

The men succeeded in getting quite close to her before they were discovered. Instead of showing signs of alarm, as they had expected, the woman appeared quite pleased to see them, and received them with a smile which indicated that she was not in the least afraid. The hunters assisted her to remove such articles of clothing and food to the boat as she was not disposed to leave behind.

In the course of a few days she had become at home in the boat and helped in whatever way she could in the work aboard. After a month's hunting the party sailed for Santa Barbara, where the woman was regarded with wonder and curiosity. The people treated her with the greatest kindness and consideration. She was taken to the families of her rescuers, where she remained until her death, which occurred in a few years from overeating fruit, of which she was very fond.—*San Francisco Chronicle*.

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