

# Rídan the Devil, and Other Stories

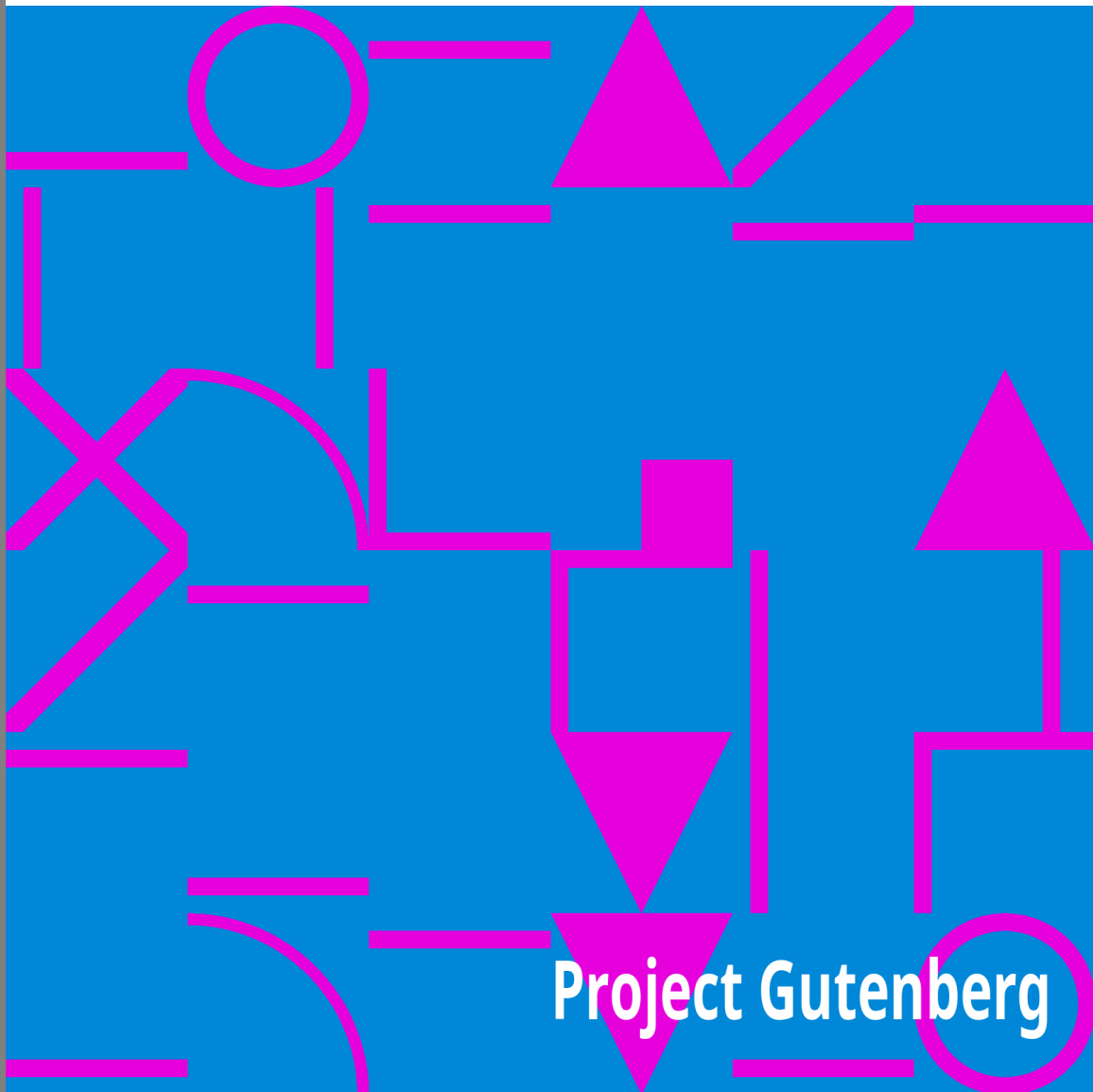
Louis Becke

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Louis Becke



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**RÍDAN THE DEVIL AND OTHER  
STORIES**

**By Louis Becke**

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## RÍDAN THE DEVIL

Rídan lived alone in a little hut on the borders of the big German plantation at Mulifenua, away down at the lee end of Upolu Island, and every one of his brown-skinned fellow-workers either hated or feared him, and smiled when Burton, the American overseer, would knock him down for being a 'sulky brute.' But no one of them cared to let Rídan see him smile. For to them he was a wizard, a devil, who could send death in the night to those he hated. And so when anyone died on the plantation he was blamed, and seemed to like it. Once, when he lay ironed hand and foot in the stifling corrugated iron 'calaboose,' with his blood-shot eyes fixed in sullen rage on Burton's angered face, Tirauro, a Gilbert Island native assistant overseer, struck him on the mouth and called him 'a pig cast up by the ocean.' This was to please the white man. But it did not, for Burton, cruel as he was, called Tirauro a coward and felled him at once. By ill-luck he fell within reach of Rídan, and in another moment the manacled hands had seized his enemy's throat. For five minutes the three men struggled together, the white overseer beating Rídan over the head with the butt of his heavy Colt's pistol, and then when Burton rose to his feet the two brown men were lying motionless together; but Tirauro was dead.

Rídan was sick for a long time after this. A heavy flogging always did make him sick, although he was so big and strong. And so, as he could not work in the fields, he was sent to Apia to do light labour in the cotton-mill there. The next morning he was missing. He had swum to a brig lying at anchor in the harbour and hidden away in the empty forehold. Then he was discovered and taken ashore to the mill again, where the foreman gave him 'a dose of Cameroons medicine'—that is, twenty-five lashes.

'Send him back to the plantation,' said the manager, who was a mere German civilian, and consequently much despised by his foreman, who had served in Africa. 'I'm afraid to keep him here, and I'm not going to punish him if he tries to get away again, poor devil.'

So back he went to Mulifanua. The boat voyage from Apia down the coast inside the reef is not a long one, but the Samoan crew were frightened to have such a man free; so they tied him hand and foot and then lashed him down tightly under the midship thwart with strips of green *fau* bark. Not that they did so with unnecessary cruelty, but ex-Lieutenant Schwartzkoff, the foreman, was looking on, and then, besides that, this big-boned, light-skinned man was a foreigner, and a Samoan hates a foreigner of his own colour if he is poor and friendless. And then he was an *aitu* a devil, and could speak neither Samoan, nor Fijian, nor Tokelau, nor yet any English or German.

Clearly, therefore, he was not a man at all, but a *manu*—a beast, and not to be trusted with free limbs. Did not the foreman say that he was possessed of many devils, and for two years had lived alone on the plantation, working in the field with the gangs of Tokelau and Solomon Island men, but speaking to no one, only muttering in a strange tongue to himself and giving sullen obedience to his taskmasters?

But as they talked and sang, and as the boat sailed along the white line of beach fringed with the swaying palms, Rídan groaned in his agony, and Pulu, the steersman, who was a big strong man and not a coward like his fellows, took pity on the captive.

'Let us give him a drink,' he said; 'he cannot hurt us as he is. Else he may die in the boat and we lose the price of his passage; for the white men at Mulifanua will not pay us for bringing to them a dead man.'

So they cast off the lashings of *fau* bark that bound Rídan to the thwart, and Pulu, lifting him up, gave him a long drink, holding the gourd to his

quivering mouth—for his hands were tied behind him.

'Let him rest with his back against the side of the boat,' said Pulu presently; 'and, see, surely we may loosen the thongs around his wrists a little, for they are cutting into the flesh.'

But the others were afraid, and begged him to let well alone. Then Pulu grew angry and called them cowards, for, as they argued, Rídan fell forward on his face in a swoon.

When 'the devil' came to and opened his wearied, blood-shot eyes, Pulu was bathing his forehead with cold water, and his bruised and swollen hands were free. For a minute or so he gasped and stared at the big Samoan, and a heavy sigh broke from his broad naked chest. Then he put his hands to his face—and sobbed.

Pulu drew back in wondering pity—surely no devil could weep—and then, with a defiant glance at the three other Samoans, he stooped down and unbound Rídan's feet.

'Let him lie,' he said, going aft to the tiller. 'We be four strong men—he is but as a child from weakness. See, his bones are like to cut through his skin. He hath been starved.'

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At dusk they ran the boat along the plantation jetty, and Pulu and another man led Rídan up the path to the manager's house. His hands were free, but a stout rope of cinnet was tied around his naked waist and Pulu held the end.

'Ah, you dumb, sulky devil; you've come back to us again, have you?' said Burton, eyeing him savagely. 'I wish Schwartzkoff had kept you up in Apia, you murderous, yellow-hided scoundrel!'

'What's the use of bully-ragging him?' remarked the plantation engineer, with a sarcastic laugh; 'he doesn't understand a word you say. Club-law and

the sasa {\*} are the only things that appeal to him—and he gets plenty of both on Mulifanua. Hallo, look at that! Why, he's kissing Pulu's toe!

\* *Whip.*

Burton laughed. 'So he is. Look out, Pulu, perhaps he's a *kai tagata*' (cannibal). 'Take care he doesn't bite it off.'

Pulu shook his mop of yellow hair gravely. A great pity filled his big heart, for as he had turned to go back to the boat Rídan had fallen upon his knees and pressed his lips to the feet of the man who had given him a drink.

That night Burton and the Scotch engineer went to Rídan's hut, taking with them food and a new sleeping-mat. He was sitting cross-legged before a tiny fire of coco-nut shells, gazing at the blue, leaping jets of flame, and as the two men entered, slowly turned his face to them.

'Here,' said Burton, less roughly than usual, 'here's some *kai kai* for you.'

He took the food from Burton's hand, set it beside him on the ground, and then, supporting himself on his gaunt right arm and hand, gave the overseer one long look of bitter, undying hatred; then his eyes drooped to the fire again.

'And here, Rídan,' said Craik, the engineer, throwing the sleeping-mat upon the ground, 'that'll keep your auld bones frae cutting into the ground. And here is what will do ye mair good still,' and he placed a wooden pipe and a stick of tobacco in 'the devil's' hand. In a moment Rídan was on his knees with his forehead pressed to the ground in gratitude.

The men looked at him in silence for a few moments as he crouched at Craik's feet, with the light of the fire playing upon his tattooed yellow back and masses of tangled black hair.

'Come awa', Burton, leave the puir deevil to himself. And I'm thinking ye might try him on the other tack awhile. Ye *have not* broken the creature's

spirit yet, and I wouldna try to if I were you—for my own safety. Sit up Rídan, mon, and smoke your pipe.'

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Two years before, Rídan had been brought to Samoa by a German labour-ship, which had picked him up in a canoe at sea, somewhere off the coast of Dutch New Guinea. He was the only survivor of a party of seven, and when lifted on board was in the last stage of exhaustion from thirst and hunger. Where the canoe had sailed from, and whither bound, no one on board the *Iserbrook* could learn, for the stranger spoke a language utterly unknown to anyone of even the *Iserbrook's* polyglot ship's company—men who came from all parts of Polynesia and Micronesia. All that could be learned from him by signs and gestures was that a great storm had overtaken the canoe, many days of hunger and thirst had followed, and then death ended the agonies of all but himself.

In a few weeks, and while the brig was thrashing her way back to Samoa against the south-east trades, Rídan regained his health and strength and became a favourite with all on board, white and brown. He was quite six feet in height, with a bright yellow skin, bronzed by the sun; and his straight features and long black hair were of the true Malayo-Polynesian type. From the back of his neck two broad stripes of bright blue tattooing ran down the whole length of his muscular back, and thence curved outwards and downwards along the back of his thighs and terminated at each heel. No one on the *Iserbrook* had ever seen similar tattooing, and many were the conjectures as to Rídan's native place. One word, however, he constantly repeated, 'Onêata,' and then would point to the north-west. But no one knew of such a place, though many did of an Oneaka, far to the south-east—an island of the Gilbert Group near the Equator.

The weeks passed, and at last Rídan looked with wondering eyes upon the strange houses of the white men in Apia harbour. By-and-by boats came off to the ship, and the three hundred and odd brown-skinned and black-

skinned people from the Solomons and the Admiralties and the countless islands about New Britain and New Ireland were taken ashore to work on the plantations at Vailele and Mulifanua, and Rídan alone was left. He was glad of this, for the white men on board had been kind to him, and he began to hope that he would be taken back to Onêata. But that night he was brought ashore by the captain to a house where many white men were sitting together, smoking and drinking. They all looked curiously at him and addressed him in many island tongues, and Rídan smiled and shook his head and said, 'Me Rídan; me Onêata.'

'Leave him with me, Kühne,' said Burton to the captain of the brig. 'He's the best and biggest man of the lot you've brought this trip. I'll marry him to one of my wife's servants, and he'll live in clover down at Mulifanua.'

So early next morning Rídan was put in a boat with many other new 'boys,' and he smiled with joy, thinking he was going back to the ship—and Onêata. But when the boat sailed round Mulinu's Point, and the spars of the *Iserbrook* were suddenly hidden by the intervening line of palm trees, a cry of terror burst from him, and he sprang overboard. He was soon caught, though he dived and swam like a fish. And then two wild-eyed Gilbert Islanders held him by the arms, and laughed as he wept and kept repeating, 'Onëata, Onëata.'

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From that day began his martyrdom. He worked hard under his overseer, but ran away again and again, only to be brought back and tied up. Sometimes, as he toiled, he would look longingly across the narrow strait of sunlit water at the bright green little island of Manono, six miles away; and twice he stole down to the shore at night, launched a canoe and paddled over towards it. But each time the plantation guard-boat brought him back; and then Burton put him in irons. Once he swam the whole distance, braving the sharks, and, reaching the island, hid in a taro swamp till the next night. He meant to steal food and a canoe—and seek for Onëata. But the

Manono people found him, and, though he fought desperately, they overcame and bound him, and the women cursed him for a Tâfito{\*} devil, a thieving beast, and beat and pelted him as the men carried him back to the plantation, tied up like a wild boar, to get their ten dollars reward for him from the manager. And Burton gave him thirty lashes as a corrective.

*\* The Samoans apply the term 'Tâfito' to all natives of the Gilbert Group and other equatorial islands. The word is an abbreviation of Taputeauea (Drummond's Island), and 'Tâfito' is synonymous for 'savage'-in some senses.*

Then came long, long months of unceasing toil, broken only by attempts to escape, recapture, irons and more lashes. The rest of the native labourers so hated and persecuted him that at last the man's nature changed, and he became desperate and dangerous. No one but Burton dared strike him now, for he would spring at an enemy's throat like a madman, and half strangle him ere he could be dragged away stunned, bruised and bleeding. When his day's slavery was over he would go to his hut, eat his scanty meal of rice, biscuit and yam in sullen silence, and brood and mutter to himself. But from the day of his first flogging no word ever escaped his set lips. All these things he told afterwards to Von Hammer, the supercargo of the *Mindora*, when she came to Mulifanua with a cargo of new 'boys.'{\*}

*\* Polynesian labourers are generally termed 'boys.'*

Von Hammer had been everywhere in the North Pacific, so Burton took him to Rídan's hut, and called to the 'sulky devil' to come out. He came, and sullenly followed the two men into the manager's big sitting-room, and sat down cross-legged on the floor. The bright lamplight shone full on his nude figure and the tangle of black hair that fell about his now sun-darkened back and shoulders. And, as on that other evening long before, when he sat crouching over his fire, his eyes sought Burton's face with a look of implacable hatred.

'See if you can find out where the d—d brute comes from,' said Burton.

Von Hammer looked at Rídan intently for a minute, and then said one or two words to him in a tongue that the overseer had never before heard.

With trembling limbs and a joyful wonder shining in his dark eyes, Rídan crept up to the supercargo, and then, in a voice of whispered sobs, he told his two years' tale of bitter misery.

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'Very well,' said Burton, an hour later, to Von Hammer, 'you can take him. I don't want the brute here. But he is a dangerous devil, mind. Where do you say he comes from?'

'Onêata—Saint David's Island—a little bit of a sandy atoll, as big as Manono over there, and much like it, too. I know the place well—lived there once when I was pearling, ten years ago. I don't think the natives there see a white man more than once in five years. It's a very isolated spot, off the north-east coast of New Guinea. "Bully" Hayes used to call there once. However, let me have him. The *Mindora* may go to Manila next year; if so, I'll land him at Onêata on our way there. Anyway, he's no good to you. And he told me just now that he has been waiting his chance to murder you.'

The *Mindora* returned to Apia to take in stores, and Von Hammer took Rídan with him, clothed in a suit of blue serge, and with silent happiness illumining his face. For his heart was leaping within him at the thought of Onêata, and of those who numbered him with the dead; and when he clambered up the ship's side and saw Pulu, the big Samoan, working on deck with the other native sailors, he flung his arms around him and gave him a mighty hug, and laughed like a pleased child when Von Hammer told him that Pulu would be his shipmate till he saw the green land and white beach of Onêata once more.

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Six months out from Samoa the *Mindora* was hove-to off Choiseul Island, in the Solomon Group, waiting for her boat. Von Hammer and four

hands had gone ashore to land supplies for a trader, and the brig was awaiting his return. There was a heavy sea running on the reef as the boat pushed off from the beach in the fast-gathering darkness; but who minds such things with a native crew? So thought Von Hammer as he grasped the long, swaying steer oar, and swung the whale-boat's head to the white line of surf. 'Give it to her, boys; now's our chance—there's a bit of a lull now, eh, Pulu? Bend to it, Rídan, my lad.'

Out shot the boat, Pulu pulling stroke, Rídan bow-oar, and two sturdy, square-built Savage Islanders amidships. Surge after surge roared and hissed past in the darkness, and never a drop of water wetted their naked backs; and then, with a wild cry from the crew and a shouting laugh from the steersman, she swept over and down the edge of the reef and gained the deep water—a second too late! Ere she could rise from the blackened trough a great curling roller towered high over, and then with a bursting roar fell upon and smothered her. When she rose to the surface Von Hammer was fifty feet away, clinging to the steer-oar. A quick glance showed him that none of the crew were missing—they were all holding on to the swamped boat and 'swimming' her out away from the reef, and shouting loudly for him to come alongside. Pushing the steer-oar before him, he soon reached the boat, and, despite his own unwillingness, his crew insisted on his getting in. Then, each still grasping the gunwale with one hand, they worked the boat out yard by yard, swaying her fore and aft whenever a lull in the seas came, and jerking the water out of her by degrees till the two Savage Islanders were able to clamber in and bale out with the wooden bucket slung under the after-thwart, while the white man kept her head to the sea. But the current was setting them steadily along, parallel with the reef, and every now and then a sea would tumble aboard and nearly fill her again. At last, however, the Savage Islanders got her somewhat free of water, and called to Pulu and Rídan to get in—there were

plenty of spare canoe-paddles secured along the sides in case of an emergency such as this.

'Get in, Pulu, get in,' said Rfdan to the Samoan, in English; 'get in quickly.'

But Pulu refused. He was a bigger and a heavier man than Rfdan, he said, and the boat was not yet able to bear the weight of a fourth man. This was true, and the supercargo, though he knew the awful risk the men ran, and urged them to jump in and paddle, yet knew that the additional weight of two such heavy men as Rfdan and Pulu meant death to all, for every now and then a leaping sea would again fill the boat to the thwarts.

And then suddenly, amid the crashing sound of the thundering rollers on the reef, Rídan raised his voice in an awful shriek.

'*Quick! Pulu, quick!* Some shark hav' come. Get in, get in first,' he said in his broken English. And as he spoke he grasped the gunwale with both hands and raised his head and broad shoulders high out of the water, and a bubbling, groan-like sound issued from his lips.

In an instant the big Samoan swung himself into the boat, and Von Hammer called to Rídan to get in also.

'Nay, oh, white man!' he answered, in a strange choking voice, 'let me stay here and hold to the boat. We are not yet safe from the reef. But paddle, paddle... quickly!'

In another minute or two the boat was out of danger, and then Rídan's voice was heard.

'Lift me in,' he said quietly, 'my strength is spent.'

The two Savage Islanders sprang to his aid, drew him up over the side, and tumbled him into the boat. Then, without a further look, they seized their paddles and plunged them into the water. Rídan lay in a huddled-up heap on the bottom boards.

'Exhausted, poor devil!' said Von Hammer to himself, bending down and peering at the motionless figure through the darkness. Then something warm flowed over his naked foot as the boat rolled, and he looked closer at Rídan, and—

'Oh, my God!' burst from him—both of Rídan's legs were gone—bitten off just above the knees.

Twenty minutes later, as the boat came alongside the *Mindora*, Rídan 'the devil' died in the arms of the man who had once given him a drink.

# **A MEMORY OF 'THE SYSTEM'**

## CHAPTER I

The house in which I lived from my birth till I was twelve years of age stood on the green-grassed slopes of a treeless bluff which overlooked the blue waters of the sunlit Pacific. Except for a cluster of five or six little weatherboard cottages perched on the verge of the headland, half a mile away, and occupied by the crew of the Government pilot boat, there were no other dwellings near, for the 'town,' as it was called, lay out of sight, on the low, flat banks of a tidal river, whose upper waters were the haunt and breeding places of the black swan, the wild duck and the pelican.

My father was the principal civil official in the place, which was called Bar Harbour, one of the smaller penal settlements in Australia, founded for what were called 'the better class' of convicts, many of whom, having received their emancipation papers, had settled in the vicinity, and had become prosperous and, in a measure, respected settlers, though my father, who had a somewhat bitter tongue, said that no ex-convict could ever be respected in the colony until he had lent money to one or other of the many retired military or civil officers who held large Crown grants of land in the district and worked them with convict labour; for, while numbers of the emancipists thrived and became almost wealthy, despite the many cruel and harassing restrictions imposed upon them by the unwritten laws of society (which yet academically held them to be purged of their offences), the grand military gentlemen and their huge estates generally went to ruin—mostly through their own improvidence, though such misfortunes, our minister, the Reverend Mr Sampson, said, in the sermons he preached in our hideous, red-brick church, were caused by an 'inscrutable Providence'—their dwellings and store houses were burnt, their cattle and sheep disappeared, and their 'assigned' labourers took to the bush, and either

perished of starvation or became bushrangers and went to the gallows in due course.

My mother, who was a gentle, tender-hearted woman, and seemed to live and move and have her being only for the purpose of making happy those around her, was, being English-born (she was of a Devonshire family), a constant church-goer, not for the sake of appearances, for her intelligence was too great for her to be bound by such a shallow reason, but because she was a simple, good and pure-minded woman, and sought by her example to make a protest against the scandalous and degraded lives led by many of the soldier officers and officials with whom she and her children were brought in almost daily contact, for my father, being an all too generous man, kept open house. But although she was always sweet-tempered and sometimes merry with the hard-drinking old Peninsular veterans, and the noisy and swaggering subalterns of the ill-famed 102nd Regiment (or New South Wales Corps), she always shuddered and looked pale and ill at ease when she saw among my father's guests the coarse, stern face of the minister, and her dislike of the clergyman was shared by all we children, especially by my elder brother Harry (then sixteen years of age), who called him 'the flogging parson' and the 'Reverend Diabolical Howl.' This latter nickname stuck, and greatly tickled Major Trenton, who repeated it to the other officers, and one day young Mr Moore of the 102nd, who was clever at such things, made a sketch of the cleric as he appeared when preaching, which set them all a-laughing immoderately.

'God alive!' cried old Major Trenton, holding the picture in his left hand, and bringing down his right upon the table with a thump that set all the glasses jingling, 'tis a perfect likeness of him, and yet, Moore, if ye had but given him a judge's wig and robes instead of a cassock, he would be the double of damned old hanging Norbury up there,' pointing to the picture of an Irish judge which hung on the wall. 'Come,' he added, 'Mrs Egerton must see this. I know our hostess loves the gentle parson.'

So three or four of them, still laughing boisterously, left the table to look for my mother, whom they found sitting on the latticed-in verandah, which on hot summer days was used as a drawing-room. She, too, laughed heartily at the sketch, and said 'twas wonderfully drawn, and then my brother Harry asked Mr Moore to give it to him. This the young lieutenant did, though my mother begged him to destroy it, lest Mr Sampson should hear of the matter and take offence. But my brother promised her not to let it go out of his keeping, and there the thing ended—so we thought.

Yet, in some way, my mother's convict and free servants came to hear of the picture—they had already bandied about the parson's nickname—and every one of them, on some cunning excuse, had come to my brother's room and laughed at the drawing; and very often when they saw the clergyman riding past the house, attended by his convict orderly, they would say, with an added curse, 'There goes "Diabolical Howl,"' for they all hated the man, because, being a magistrate as well as a minister, he had sentenced many a prisoner to a dreadful flogging and had watched it being administered.

But perhaps it was not altogether on account of the floggings in which he so believed for which he was so detested—for floggings were common enough for even small breaches of the regulations of the System—but for the spiritual admonition with which he dosed them afterwards, while their backs were still black and bloody from the cat. Once, when an old convict named Callaghan was detected stealing some sugar belonging to one of the pilot boat's crew, my mother went to Dr Parsons, who, with the Reverend Mr Sampson, was to hear the charge against Callaghan on the following morning, and begged him not to have the man flogged; and Tom King, the man from whom the sugar was stolen, went with her and joined his pleadings to hers.

'Now, come, doctor,' said my mother, placing her hand on the old officer's arm and smiling into his face, 'you *must* grant me this favour. The man is far

too old to be flogged. And then he was a soldier himself once—he was a drummer boy, so he once told me, in the 4th Buffs.'

'The most rascally regiment in the service, madam. Every one of them deserved hanging. But,' and here his tone changed from good-humoured banter into sincerity, 'I honour you, Mrs Egerton, for your humanity. The man is over sixty, and I promise you that he shall not be flogged. Why, he is scarce recovered yet from the punishment inflicted on him for stealing Major Innes's goose. But yet he is a terrible old rascal.'

'Never mind that,' said my mother, laughing. 'Major Innes should keep his geese from straying about at night-time. And then, doctor, you must remember that poor Callaghan said that he mistook the bird for a pelican—it being dark when he killed it.'

'Ha, ha,' laughed the doctor, 'and no doubt Mr Patrick Callaghan only discovered his mistake when he was cooking his pelican, and noticed its remarkably short bill.'

My mother left, well pleased, but on the following morning, while we were at our mid-day meal, she was much distressed to hear that old Callaghan had received fifty lashes after all—the good doctor had been thrown from his horse and so much hurt that he was unable to attend the court, and another magistrate—a creature of Mr Sampson's—had taken his place. The news was brought to us by Thomas King, and my mother's pale face flushed with anger as, bidding King to go into the kitchen and get some dinner, she turned to my father (who took but little heed of such a simple thing as the flogging of a convict), and said hotly,—

"Tis shameful that such cruelty can be perpetrated! I shall write to the Governor himself—he is a just and humane man—oh, it is wicked, wicked,' and then she covered her face with her hands and sobbed aloud.

My father was silent. He detested the parson most heartily, but was too cautious a man, in regard to his own interest, to give open expression to his

opinions, so beyond muttering something to my brother Harry about Thomas King having no business to distress her, he was about to rise from the table, when a servant announced that the Reverend Mr Sampson wished to see him.

The mention of the clergyman's name seemed to transform my mother into another woman. Quickly, but gently, putting aside my sister Frances, whose loving arms were clasped around her waist, she rose, and fire flashed in her eyes as she said to the servant,—

'Denham, tell Mr Sampson that I desire to speak with him as soon as he has finished his business with Mr Egerton.'

My father went out to the drawing-room, where the clergyman awaited him, and for the next ten minutes or so my mother walked quickly to and fro in the dining-room, bidding us remain seated, and in a harsh, unnatural tone to one so sweet and gentle, she told the servants who waited to withdraw.

'Mr Sampson is at your service, madam,' said Denham, opening the door.

'Show him in here,' said my mother, sharply, and her always pale face grew paler still.

The clergyman entered, and extended his fat, white hand to her; she drew back and bowed coldly.

'I do not desire to shake hands with you, sir.'

Mr Sampson's red face flushed purple.

'I do not understand you, madam. Is this a jest—or do you forget who I am?'

'I shall try to make you understand me, Mr Sampson, in as few words as possible. I do not jest, and I do not forget who you are. I have a request to make.'

'Indeed! I feel honoured, madam,' and the corners of the clergyman's thick lips turned contemptuously down—'and that is—?'

'That you will cease your visits to this house. It would be painful indeed to me to receive you as a guest from this time forth, for this very day it is my intention to write to the Governor and acquaint him with the shocking act of cruelty committed this morning—'twas a shameful, cruel deed to flog an old man so cruelly.'

Mr Sampson's face was now livid with the rage he could not suppress.

'Beware, madam, of what you say or do. 'Tis a pretty example you set your children to thus insult a clergyman.'

My mother's answer cut like a whip-lash. 'A clergyman such as you, Mr Sampson, can inspire naught in their childish minds but fear and abhorrence,' and then she pulled the bell cord so violently that not only Denham but my father entered as well.

'Show Mr Sampson out,' she said in accents of mingled anger and scorn, and then turning to the window nearest, she seemed to be gazing unconcernedly upon the blue expanse of ocean before her; but her little hands were clasped tightly together, and her whole frame trembled with excitement.

As soon as the clergyman had mounted his horse and ridden off, my father returned to the dining-room.

'You have made a bitter enemy of a man who can do me much harm,' he began; but something in my mother's face made him cease from further reproaches, and he added lightly, that he hoped 'twould soon blow over.

'Charles,' said my mother, who was now herself again, 'it must *not* blow over. The Governor shall know of this man's doings. And never again shall I or my children enter the church when he preaches. To-night, I suppose, he will visit that wretched old man—the victim of his brutality—and

administer “spiritual admonition.” Come, children, let us go to the beach and forget that that dreadful man has been here.'

It was, I think, this practice of 'administering admonition' to convicts after he had had them sentenced to a severe flogging that first gave my mother such an utter abhorrence of the man, together with his habit of confining his sermons to the prisoners to the one subject—their own criminal natures and the terrors of hell-fire everlasting. Then, too, his voice was appalling to hear, for he had a way of suddenly dropping his harsh, metallic tones, and raising his voice to a howl, like to that of a hungry dingo.\*

*\* The native dog of Australia, whose long, accentuated howl is most distressing to hear.*

Often did I, when sitting in our great square pew in that dreadful, horrible church, press close to my mother's side and bury my face in her dress, as he lashed himself into a fury and called down the vengeance of a wrathful God upon the rows of silent, wretched beings clad in yellow, who were seated on long stools in the back of the church, guarded by soldiers, who, with loaded muskets, were stationed in the gallery above. Some of the convicts, it was said, had sworn to murder him if an opportunity served, and this no doubt made him the more merciless and vindictive to any one of them who was so unfortunate as to be charged before him in his capacity of magistrate. By the Regulations he could not sit alone to deal out punishment, and sometimes had difficulty in finding a colleague, especially among the military men, who nearly always protested against his fondness for the cat; but there were always to be found, in the end, magistrates who would do anything to please him, for it was known that he had great influence with the Home Government, and was not chary of using it on behalf of those who truckled to him, if he so inclined; and, indeed, both Major Trenton and Dr Parsons said that he was a man with many good points, and could be, to those who pleased him, a good friend, as well as a bitter enemy to those

who in any way crossed him. But they asserted that he should never have been appointed a magistrate in a colony where the penal laws gave such latitude to his violent temper and arbitrary disposition.

Early one morning in December, and three months after the drawing of the picture by Lieutenant Moore, my two brothers and myself set off on a fishing excursion to a tidal lagoon whose waters debouched into the Pacific, about fifteen miles southward from the little township. Behind us followed a young man named Walter Trenfield, who was one of my father's assigned servants, and an aboriginal named 'King Billy'; these two carried our provisions, cooking utensils and blankets, for we intended to camp out for two or three days.

A half-an-hour's walk over the slopes of the bluff brought us to the fringe of the dense coastal forest, through which our track lay for another two or three miles before we again came to open country. There was, however, a very good road, made by convict labour, through the scrub as far as it went; it ran almost along the very verge of the steep-to coast, and as we tramped over the rich red soil we had the bright blue sea beneath us on our left, and the dark and almost silent bush on our right. I say 'almost,' for although in these moist and sunless seaboard tracts of what we Australian-born people call bush, and English people would call wood or forest, there was no sound of human life, there was yet always to be heard the *thump, thump* of the frightened scrub wallaby, and now and again the harsh, shrieking note of the great white cockatoo, or the quick rush of a long-tailed iguana over the thick bed of leaves, as the timid reptile fled to the nearest tree, up whose rugged bole it crawled for security.

We had come some three or four miles upon our way, when we suddenly emerged from the darkness and stillness of the scrub out into the light of day and the bright sunshine, and heard the low murmur of the surf beating upon the rocks below. Here we sat down to rest awhile and feast our boyish eyes on the beauties of sea and shore and sky around us. A few hundred

yards away from where we sat was a round, verdured cone called 'Little Nobby'; it rose steep-to from the sea to a height of about three hundred feet, and formed a very striking and distinct landmark upon that part of the coast—bold and rugged as it was—for a stretch of three score miles. Presently, as we lay upon the grass, looking out upon the sea, Walter Trenfield and the aboriginal joined us, and whilst they made a fire to boil a billy of tea, my brother Harry, hearing the call of a wonga pigeon, picked up his gun and went into the scrub to shoot it.

## CHAPTER II

I must now relate something of the previous history of this young man Trenfield. He was a native of Bideford, in Devon—my mother's county—and had been a sailor. Some years before, he, with another young man named Thomas May, had been concerned in a mutiny on board a London whale-ship, the *Jason*, and both men were sentenced to fourteen years' penal servitude, it being believed, though not proven, that either Trenfield or May had killed one of the officers with a blow of the fist. They were, with six of their shipmates, tried at the Old Bailey, and although a Quaker gentleman, a Mr Robert Bent, who had visited them in prison, gave a lawyer fifty guineas to defend them, the judge said that although the death of the officer could not be sheeted home to either of them, there was no doubt of their taking part in the mutiny—with which offence they were charged. After spending three months in one of the convict hulks they were sent out to Sydney in the *Breckenbridge* transport. But before they sailed they were several times visited by Mr Bent, who told them that he would always bear them in mind, and should endeavour to have their sentences reduced if he heard good word of their future conduct from his agent in Sydney; this Mr Bent was the owner of several of the Government transports, which, after discharging their cargo of convicts, would sail upon a whaling cruise to the South Seas. More than this, he said that he would give them berths on one of his vessels as soon as they regained their freedom, and that he had written to his agent to that effect.

It so happened that this agent, a Mr Thomas Campbell, was a friend of my father's, who also knew Mr Bent, and so when the *Breckenbridge* arrived at Sydney he succeeded in having Trenfield assigned to him, and

Thomas May to a contractor who was building a bridge for the Government over a river in the vicinity of Bar Harbour.

The two young seamen were very much attached to each other, and their cheerful dispositions, good conduct and unceasing industry led to their being granted many privileges. Both my father and my mother had taken a strong liking to Trenfield; and so, too, had Ruth Kenna, a young free female servant of ours. As for we boys, we simply worshipped both Trenfield and May as heroes who had sailed in the far South Seas and harpooned and killed the mighty sperm whale, and had fought with the wild and naked savages of the Pacific Isles.

Ruth Kenna was the daughter of a small farmer in the district, who had been emancipated by the good Governor. He was a widower, and a rough, taciturn man, but passionately devoted to Ruth, who was his only child. He had been transported for having taken part in the disastrous Irish rebellion of '98,' and his young wife had followed him to share his exile. The terrors and hardships of the long voyage out killed her, for she died almost as soon as she landed, without seeing her husband, and leaving her infant child to the kindly care of the officers of the detachment of the regiment which had come out in the same ship. By them the infant girl had been placed in the charge of a respectable female convict, who, at my mother's expense, had kept her till she was ten years of age. Then she came to us as a servant, and had remained ever since.

Very often my father—though he pretended, as became his official position in a Crown Colony, to have a great dislike to Irish Roman Catholics—would allow we boys to go to Patrick Kenna's farm to shoot native bears and opossums, which were very plentiful thereabout, for the land was very thickly timbered with blue gum, tallow-wood and native apple. The house itself stood on the margin of a small tidal creek, whose shallow waters teemed with fish of all descriptions, and in the winter Kenna would catch great numbers of whiting, bream and sea mullet, which he

salted and dried and sold to the settlers who lived inland. He lived quite alone, except from Saturday morning till Sunday morning, when Ruth stayed with him and straightened up the rough house. Sometimes Ruth would persuade my mother to let my brother Will and myself stay with them for the night, and dearly did we love going; for her father, though a silent, cold-mannered man to most people, was always different to any one of us Egertons, and never even grumbled when we got into mischief, though he pretended to be very angry. Once, indeed, he had good cause to be—as I shall relate.

One Saturday evening, after we had finished our supper, Patrick Kenna found that he had run out of tobacco, and said that if we were not afraid of being left by ourselves for a few hours he would walk into Bar Harbour and buy some before the store closed, returning before midnight. Of course we did not mind, and in a few minutes Ruth's father set out, accompanied by 'King Billy' and one or two other black-fellows who were in hopes of selling some wild honey for a bottle or two of rum. We watched them disappear into the darkness of the forest, and then, as the night was suitable, my brother Will proposed that we should all go down to the creek and fish for black bream.

'The tide is coming in, Ruth,' he said gleefully, 'and we'll have fine sport. I'll go on first and light a fire on the bank.'

Presently, as Ruth and I were getting ready our lines, he dashed into the house again, panting with excitement.

'Never mind the lines. Oh, I have glorious news! The salmon are coming in, in swarms, and the water is alive with them! Ruth, let us get the net and put it right across the creek as soon as it is slack water. 'Twill be glorious.'

Now, we knew that the sea salmon had been seen out at sea a few days before, but it was yet thought to be too soon for their vast droves to enter the rivers and lagoons. But Will was quite right, for when we dragged down

the heavy net we found that the water, which half an hour before, though under the light of myriad stars, had been black and silent, was now a living sheet of phosphorescent light, caused by the passage up the creek of countless thousands of agitated fish, driven in by hundreds of porpoises and savage, grey ocean-haunting sharks, whose murderous forms we could see darting to and fro just outside the shallow bar, charging into and devouring the helpless, compact masses of salmon, whose very numbers prevented them from escaping; for serried legion after legion from the sea swam swiftly in to the narrow passage and pressed upon those which were seeking to force their way up to the shallow, muddy waters five miles beyond—where alone lay safety from the tigers of the sea.

Ruth Kenna, as wild with excitement as my brother and myself, took up one pole of the net and sprang into the water, leaving Will and I to pay out on our side. She was a tall, strong girl, but what with the force of the inward current and the mad press of the terrified salmon, she could barely reach the sand-spit on the other shore, though the passage was not fifty feet across. But she managed to struggle ashore and secure her end of the net by jamming the pole between some logs of driftwood which lay upon the sand. Then, with a loud, merry laugh, she bade me run up to the house and bring her a petticoat and bodice, and leaping into the water she swam across again and helped Will to properly secure his end of the net to the bole of a tea tree.

Old as I am now, the memory of that happy, happy night lives with me yet. By the light of a huge fire of logs we sat and watched the net, which, as the tide ebbed, curved outward to the sea, though the salmon without still tried to force a passage into the creek, and the ravening sharks outside the deep water of the bar rushed through and through their close-packed ranks and gorged themselves till they rolled about, with distended bellies, as if they were water-logged baulks of timber.

As we sat by the fire, waiting for the tide to run out, we heard the dogs barking and knew that Patrick Kenna had returned. Presently we heard him walking down towards us, and at the same moment Ruth uttered an exclamation of terror and pointed to the water.

'Oh, look! look! There are a lot of sharks inside, coming down the creek. Quick! let this end of the net go, or they will be caught in it and tear it to pieces!'

Her father was alive to the danger. Springing before us, he cut the end of the line fastened to the tea-tree; but he was too late, for before the net had tailed out to the current four or five sharks had dashed into it and entangled themselves in its meshes, and in ten minutes the net was utterly ruined, for although the sharks could not use their teeth, the great weight of their gorged bodies and their furious struggles soon tore the bight of it to shreds.

Kenna watched the destruction of the net in silence. As he stood in the light of the fire, his dark, rugged face showed no sign of the anger that must have burned within him at our thoughtless conduct.

'Ye might have waited till I was back, Ruth,' he said quietly; 'there's as good a net as was ever made gone to ruin. And sure 'twas a mad thing for ye to do when th' ravening sharks were so plentiful.'

Of course my father and mother were very angry with us, and sent Kenna five pounds to partly pay for the damage done. He sent it back by Ruth, and said that he would be a poor creature to take it, for the mishap was caused by Ruth's folly, and that we boys were in no way to blame.

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Almost every alternate evening Tom May would come to our house, and go to Walter Trenfield's quarters, which were in a large airy loft over our stable, and the two young men would dress and sew the skins of the wallabies and 'possums which my brothers had shot. My mother never objected to us staying with them till about ten o'clock, and Ruth, too, often came and made coffee for us all. Both May and Trenfield always behaved

well and soberly, and although they had been whale-ship sailors they were always very careful in their language when we were with them. Some time before my mother's angry interview with Mr Sampson she had mentioned, in his hearing, to Major Trenton's wife, that her boys were greatly attached to the two young men, whose stories of their former sea life were very exciting, and so forth, whereupon the clergyman said sourly that both were dangerous villains who should not be trusted, and she would do well to prevent the further intercourse of her children with such rascals.

My mother bowed stiffly to him, and said gently that she thought he was mistaken greatly in their characters; also she was well able to look after her children's morals; but Mrs Trenton, a sharp-tongued old Irishwoman, who hated the parson and loved my mother, spoke out pretty plainly.

'No one but a clergyman would make such a rude speech to a lady, sir. A man who *called* himself a gentleman would be made to account for his lack of manners.'

One Saturday afternoon, as Walter Trenfield and Ruth were driving the cows down to the creek to drink, and Will and I were idling about on the seaward hill, we saw Patrick Kenna ride up to the house, dismount and knock. He only remained indoors a few minutes, and presently we saw him galloping towards Trenfield and Ruth, with whom he stayed talking for even a still shorter time; then, without taking any notice of us—which was most unusual for him—he put spurs to his horse and rode straight for the scrub, towards his home.

'There is something the matter,' said Will. 'See, there is Walter running up to the house again. Come, let us see what it is.'

We ran home, and entering by the garden gate saw that Walter was talking to my mother on the back verandah. She seemed very troubled and almost on the verge of crying, and we soon heard the news, which was bad

enough. Thomas May had been given a hundred lashes and had taken to the bush.

It appeared that May, whom we had not seen for one or two weeks, had been working under an overseer named Cross, at a place about ten miles from the town. (This man Cross was of a notoriously savage disposition, and had himself been a convict in Van Diemen's Land, but had received a pardon for having shot and killed a bushranger there.)

May, with the rest of his gang, was felling timber, when a heavy chip flew from the tallow-wood tree upon which he was working, and struck the overseer in the face. Cross at once flew into a violent passion, and with much foul language accused poor May of having thrown the chip at him. This the young fellow warmly denied, whereupon Cross, taking his pistol out of his belt, struck the sailor on the mouth with the butt. In an instant May returned the blow by knocking the overseer down, and was then seized by two of his fellow-convicts. He was ironed and taken into town, and on the following morning was brought before Mr Sampson and another magistrate. It was no use of his pleading provocation, he received his flogging within a few hours. Towards daylight he crept out of his hut, broke into his master's storeroom, and took a musket, powder and ball, and as much food as he could carry, telling a fellow-prisoner that he would perish in the bush rather than be taken alive.

On the fifth night after his escape, and whilst the constables were scouring the country in search of him, he came to Patrick Kenna's house. The night was very dark and the rain descending in torrents; so, there being no fear of intruders, Kenna barred his door and made the poor fellow comfortable by giving him a change of clothes, a good meal and some tobacco to smoke. Tom inquired very eagerly after Walter, and sent him a long message, and then told Kenna some startling news.

Two days after he had absconded, and when he was quite thirty miles distant from Bar Harbour, he saw smoke arising from a dense scrub.

Creeping along on his hands and knees he saw two men—escaped convicts like himself—engaged in skinning a wallaby. He at once made himself known to them and was welcomed. After a meal from the wallaby, the two men asked him if he would join them in a plan they had of getting away from the country; he was just the man, they said, being a sailor, who could bring the attempt to a successful issue. Then they told him that, many weeks previously, they had found a whale-boat lying capsized on the beach some miles away, and that she was perfectly sound. By great labour they had succeeded in dragging her up into the margin of the scrub on the beach, where they had turned her over and covered her carefully with dead branches. A further search along the beach had resulted in their finding an oar and one of the line tubs,{\*} but that was all.

*\* English whale-ship boats generally used two line tub's—American only one. No doubt this boat was lost from an English whaler, the Britannia, then on the coast.*

Of course poor Tom May was greatly taken with this, and said that he would join them, and that he thought Walter Trenfield would come as well. He went with the men to look at the boat, and found her just as they had said—almost new and quite watertight. He agreed to return to within a safe distance of Bar Harbour, and, through Patrick Kenna, let Trenfield know of the discovery of the boat and get him to help them to fit her out properly. Oars and a mast they could easily make, had they the tools, and a sail could also be obtained through either Ruth or her father, who could get them enough coarse calico for the purpose.

Kenna promised to help, although he told Tom he should try to dissuade Walter from joining in the enterprise. Just before daylight May bid Kenna good-bye, as he was anxious to return to the other two convicts and tell them that they had friends who would help them. Before he left, however, he arranged with Kenna that the latter should bring the required articles one by one—especially two breakers of water—to the foot of Little Nobby's and

hide them in the scrub at the spot agreed upon. Then, when all was ready and a dark night favoured, May and the other two men were to launch the boat and make their way with all speed down the coast to Little Nobby's—nearly twenty miles distant from where the boat was hidden—take on board the water and provisions and put to sea; it being May's intention, whether Trenfield joined him or not, to make to the northward for Timor in the East Indies. Then, with a warm hand-grasp, they parted; and never again was Thomas May seen alive.

On the following morning Kenna contrived to see Walter and tell him that his former shipmate was safe, and what was afoot. Of course Walter was overjoyed to learn that he (Tom) had such a means of escape offering, and at once announced his intention of falling in with the enterprise; but Patrick Kenna spoke very strongly against his doing so, and Ruth, too, came to her father's aid. It was, they said, foolish of him to link himself with these desperate men, every one of whom had a price upon his head, whereas he, Walter, stood in good chance of receiving his pardon at any moment. Why should he sacrifice himself and break Ruth's heart for the sake of his friend?

So, finally, overcome by their arguments, he yielded, saying, however, that he felt he was acting a coward's part, and begged of Kenna to arrange a farewell meeting between Tom and himself. This, wisely enough, Kenna refused to do, but said he would do anything else to make their separation easier. So Trenfield wrote his old comrade a letter of farewell, and, taking a canvas bag, he filled it with all sorts of articles likely to be useful on a long boat voyage. Kenna took the bag, together with material for a sail, away with him at night and placed it in the spot agreed upon with May. He had already given Tom a tomahawk and an adze with which to make some oars and a mast.

On the fourth night after his visit to Kenna's house, Tom May again came through the bush, and went to Little Nobby's, for when Ruth's father went to the hiding-place in the morning with a breaker of water and a large bundle

of dried fish, he found that the bag and the sail-cloth were gone, and on a small piece of white driftwood which lay on the ground these words were written in charcoal:—

*'Sunday, Midnight?'*

By this Kenna knew that the three men meant to come for the provisions and water at the time mentioned. It was then Friday, and he had much to do to get all in readiness; for Little Nobby's was quite six miles distant from his house, and he could only make his journeys to and fro with great secrecy, for the constables were still searching the coastal region for May. But, aided by Billy, the aboriginal, he managed to have everything in readiness early on Sunday night. He afterwards told my mother that besides the two breakers of water, each holding ten gallons, he had provided four gallons of rum, a hundredweight each of salted meat and dried fish, tobacco and pipes, fishing tackle, two muskets, and plenty of powder and bullets. The place selected for the landing of the boat was an excellent one; for on one side of Little Nobby's was a little, narrow bay running in between high cliffs of black trap rock, which broke the force of the ocean swell entirely. Then, too, the place was very lonely and seldom visited, for the main road lay nearly two miles back beyond the cliffs.

Whether my mother actually knew of all that was going on I do not know; but I do know that about this time she seemed paler than ever, and we frequently saw her and Ruth talking earnestly together; and Ruth and Walter, too, were always whispering to each other.

Sunday came, and as my mother, since her quarrel with the Reverend Mr Sampson over the flogging of old Callaghan, did not now go to church, we all, except my father, who was still on friendly terms with the clergyman, remained at home, my mother herself conducting a short service in the dining-room, at which all the servants, free and bond, attended. In the afternoon Major Trenton, Captain Crozier and some other soldier officers

rode up, as was customary with them on Sundays, and Ruth and Denham brought them brandy and water on the front verandah, where they awaited my mother and sisters.

'Harry, you young rascal,' said Major Trenton, presently to my eldest brother, 'what did you do with Mr Moore's picture of the parson, eh?'

'It was stolen from me, sir,' he answered, laughing, 'about three or four months ago.'

'Indeed,' said the major; 'then the thief has principles, and will doubtless send it back to you, for he has made a score of copies of it, and they are all over the district. Why, the rascal, whoever he is, nailed one to the door of the Commissariat Store not long ago, and the first person to see it was Mr Sampson himself. He is mightily wroth about it, I can tell ye, and somehow suspects that the picture came from someone in this house, and told your father that these copies were given about by your man Trenfield. So just ye give a hint to the fellow, and tell him that if the parson gets a chance to tickle his back, faith he'll do it.'

'I am sure, sir, that Walter did not take the picture,' said my brother. 'It was nailed up over my bed and one day I missed it. I thought that my mother had destroyed or taken it away. But she had not, and I cannot account for its disappearance.'

Now this was hardly true, for, from something they had heard from Ruth, both Harry and my sister Frances thought that Thomas May had taken away the caricature, intending to replace it.

'Well, never mind, my lad,' said Major Trenton, laughing, 'tis a monstrous fine joke, anyway, and, faith, I sent one of the copies to the Governor himself. 'Twill amuse him hugely.'

Presently my mother and my two sisters joined the group on the verandah, and as they were all talking and laughing together, Ruth Kenna came to my mother and said that her father had just come with a basket of

fresh fish and would like to see her for a minute. I, being the youngest boy of the family, and over-fond—so my brothers said—of hanging on to mammy's apron-strings, as well as being anxious to see the fish, followed her out on to the back verandah, where black-browed, dark-faced Patrick Kenna awaited her.

"'Tis a fine dark night coming on, ma'am," he said in a low voice. "The wind is north-east and 'twill hould well till daylight. Then 'twill come away from the south-east, sure enough. They should be there long before midnight and out of sight of land before the dawn."

'Yes, yes, Patrick,' said my mother, hurriedly. 'I shall pray to-night to God for those in peril on the sea; and to forgive us for any wrong we may have done in this matter.'

'No harm can iver come to any wan in this house,' said the man, earnestly, raising her hand to his lips, 'for the blessin' av God an' the Holy Virgin is upon it.'

My mother pressed his hand. 'Good-bye, Patrick. I do hope all may go well;' and with this she went away.

Kenna raised his hat and turned to go, when Walter Trenfield came to the foot of the verandah steps and stopped him.

'Let me come with you,' he said, 'and bid Tom good-bye.'

'No,' answered Kenna, roughly, 'neither you nor I nor any wan else must go near Nobby's to-night; matthers are goin' well enough, an' no folly of yours shall bring destruccion upon them. As it is, the constables suspect me, and are now watching my house.'

Then, mounting his horse again, he rode leisurely away over the brow of the hill towards the scrub, through which his road lay.

Both Walter and Ruth knew that unless the night was very clear there was no chance of even the lookout man on the pilot station seeing a small boat passing along to the southward; but nevertheless they went up to the pilot

station about ten o'clock, when they thought that Tom May and his companions would be passing Bar Harbour on their way to Little Nobby's. They stayed on the headland for nearly an hour, talking to Tom King and the look-out man, and then came home, feeling satisfied that if the three men had succeeded in launching the boat safely, they had passed Bar Harbour about eleven o'clock and would reach Nobby's at or before midnight.

Soon after breakfast next morning, Patrick Kenna, under pretence of speaking to my mother about a strayed heifer of ours, came into the kitchen, and told Ruth that all was well; he had been to Little Nobby's at daylight and found that everything was gone and the boat was nowhere to be discerned.

For quite another two or three weeks after this the constables pursued their search after Thomas May, much to the amusement of Ruth and Patrick Kenna, especially as the latter, with 'King Billy' and another aboriginal, were officially employed by my father at ten shillings *per diem* to discover the absconder—Billy, who seemed to be most anxious to get the reward of five pounds, leading the constables all over the country and eating more than three men's rations daily. At last the chase was abandoned, and my father wrote officially to Sydney and said that 'Thomas May, No. 3614, *Breckenbridge*,' was supposed to have either died of starvation in the bush or have been killed by the natives. My mother, of course, thought she knew better.

And so the matter was forgotten by everyone but us who had known and cared for the good-natured, high-spirited and warm-hearted young sailor; and as the months went by, Walter Trenfield and my mother both looked forward to receiving a letter from Tom May, telling them that he and his companions had reached some port in the Dutch East Indies in safety. For not only was the boat well found, but they had plenty of provisions, and Tom May was a thorough seaman; and besides that, my mother had often

told us the story of the convict William Bryant, who had escaped from Sydney Harbour in Governor Phillip's time, and in an open boat, with four other men and his wife and two infant children, succeeded in reaching Timor, after a voyage of three thousand miles.{\*}

*\* Publisher's Note.—The strange but true story of the Bryants is told in a volume entitled A First Fleet Family. (Louis Becke and Walter Jeffery. London: T. Fisher Unwin. 1896.)*

But no letter came until two long years had passed.

Ruth Kenna, at the time of my story, though not yet seventeen years of age, was a tall, powerful girl, and was known as the best horsewoman in all the country around. She was a happy, good-natured sort of a wench, with a heart filled with sunshine and love and truth and honesty; though Mr Sampson once told my father that she was a 'dangerous Papist,' and the child of a convicted rebel, and as such should have no place in a Protestant family. This so angered my mother that she wrote the clergyman a very sharp letter and said she would take it as a favour if he would not interfere with her servants. This was a great thing for her to do; and my father said 'twas most indiscreet. But mother only smiled and said that although she was sorry Ruth was a Papist, she (Ruth) was a good, honest girl, and that her father was a good, honest man, and that if Mr Sampson was wise he would not come near Ruth, who, being a free woman, had said she would throw him down the garden well. At this time Ruth was looking forward to the day of her marriage with Trenfield, who, through my father's influence with the Governor, was expecting to be pardoned.

But now I am forging ahead too fast, and must go back to where we boys and Walter Trenfield were lying on the grassy bluff overlooking Little Nobby's awaiting the return of my brother Harry.



## CHAPTER III

'Walter,' said Harry, throwing down the pigeon which he had shot, and pointing to Little Nobby's, 'this is the lowest tide I have ever seen. Look, the topmost fringe of kelp on the rocks is quite dry, and six feet above the water, and there is no surf. Let's swim across the gut into the cave.'

'As you please, sir,' the young man answered, his sun-tanned face lighting up with pleasure; 'the wind is westerly, and the water very clear; so, if there are any sharks about we can easily see them.'

So presently down we trooped, and, clambering over the jagged pinnacles of rock, soon reached the seaward face of Little Nobby's. The cave of which my brother had spoken was in the very centre of the cone, and the only known way of access to it was by swimming across the narrow gut or channel which cleft in twain the base of the hill. A boat, in calm weather, might have easily rowed up to the mouth of the cave, but only during a very low tide. No one, so far, had attempted this, and 'King Billy,' when he saw my brother and Trenfield strip and jump into the water, seemed much disturbed. The cave, he said, was the home of a 'debbil-debbil,' and 'twas dangerous for any human being to enter it. But Harry and Trenfield had already swum across, clambered up the kelp-covered ledge of the cave and disappeared into the darkness beyond.

For nearly ten minutes, or perhaps a quarter of an hour, Will and I waited impatiently for their return, grumbling at not being allowed to go with them, for the sea was as smooth as a mountain lake, and the water so clear that the smallest pebble could be discerned lying upon the white sandy bottom five fathoms below.

Said Will presently, 'I don't believe there's a shark within a mile; do you?'

'No,' I answered, looking longingly at the crystal water and then at the black mouth of the cavern, which neither Will nor I had ever entered.

'Then come on,' said Will, quickly, and in a few seconds we were out of our clothes, and paying no heed to 'King Billy's' exclamations of terror we dropped quietly into the water and swam across, telling him to stay where he was and keep a look-out for sharks.

A few strokes brought us safely over, and then, as we climbed up and stood on the cold rocky floor of the dark cave, our hearts began to fail us somewhat—the place was so grim, silent and terrifying.

Feeling our way carefully along, however, we advanced for some ten or twelve yards and then stopped, for though we heard the voices, we could see the figures of Harry and Trenfield but dimly.

'Where are you?' cried Will.

'Over here,' answered my brother; 'you can come along if you like. We think that there's a way of getting out by climbing up—we can see the trees on the back of the hill.'

This was a discovery indeed, and Will and I, as we made our way to where they sat, found the darkness decreasing at every step, and when we reached them, we could see about us quite plainly, for thin, dimmed shafts of sunlight penetrated the cavern from above by a narrow cleft, through which we could see not only the dark foliage of the trees, whose branches overhung the place, but a strip of blue sky.

'Listen!' said Will.

Somewhere near a 'butcher' bird was calling to its mate, who quickly answered, and then the pair whistled sweetly and joyously together; and when they ceased a bell-bird sounded his clear, resonant note thrice—then silence.

Presently Walter and Harry set about to attempt an ascent, laughing heartily at the thought of how we should startle poor 'King Billy' by

reappearing out of the bowels of the earth, instead of by the way we had left him.

The top of the cleft was not more than thirty feet from the floor of the cave, and its very narrowness reduced the difficulty of climbing up its rugged sides, which were composed of pieces of rock embedded in earth. In the centre, however, the walls approached so closely to each other about half way down—within a few inches, in fact—that they were blocked up with what appeared to be a mass of decaying branches, fallen leaves and such *débris*.

Walter Trenfield went first, then Will, and Harry and I followed. We found it much easier working our way up than we anticipated, for the jutting points of rock gave us a good foothold, and the roots of trees, living and dead, helped us greatly, for some of these grew across from one side of the cleft to the other, and afforded us ladder-like steps.

Walter had nearly reached the mouth of the chasm, when Will, who was ascending more leisurely and carefully behind him, put his foot upon the thick mass of leaves and rotting wood which blocked up its centre, and, finding it was firm, sat down upon it to rest himself. Presently, to have some amusement at the expense of Harry and myself, who were directly beneath him, he began to shower armfuls of dead leaves upon us—then suddenly he uttered a cry of terror, sprang to his feet, and clambered quickly to the top, where Trenfield seized him just as he was about to fall.

Thinking that he had been frightened, or perhaps bitten by a black snake or a death-adder, Harry and I climbed up after him as quickly as possible, little heeding the cuts and bruises we inflicted upon our naked bodies. As soon as we reached the ledge and flung ourselves, panting and somewhat terrified, on the thick bed of leaves which covered the ground like a carpet, we saw Walter Trenfield bending his tall, naked figure over Will, who was crouched up in a heap and trying, through his sobs of terror, to tell what it was that he had seen.

'There is a dead man down there,' he gasped, 'a dead man! When I took up the last armful of leaves to throw down on Tom and Harry, I saw a dreadful face beneath... it was almost a skull, but there is some flesh on the face... and oh, Walter! *it has red hair like Tom May's.*' Then, overcome by the terror of that which he had seen, he sobbed afresh.

'Come,' sir,' said Trenfield to my eldest brother, 'we must go down and look.'

Leaning over the brink of the narrow cleft, I watched Harry and Trenfield descend, throw down the rotting leaves and timber which had accumulated in the centre; and then I saw a dreadful sight—a shrunken, awful face, with white, gleaming teeth, and two fleshless hands lying together upon an all but skeleton chest. The rest of the body, except one leg, which from the knee downwards was partly raised and showed a bone protruding from a rough raw-hide boot, was mercifully concealed from our sight by the coarse jumper and grey canvas trousers of a convict.

Presently Walter looked up, and cried out in a strange, hoarse voice,—

'Go away, Master Tom, you must not look. Do you and Master Will wait for us on the rocks, but first tell Billy to come here with our clothes.'

Will and I at once obeyed, glad to get away, and hurrying round the base of the hill we returned to 'King Billy,' who, poor simple savage, had given us up for lost, and was crouched up in a-heap on the rocks, making a low whining noise like the cry of a very young puppy. He did truly dance for joy when he heard our voices, and then at once, without asking us what had happened, went off to Walter and Harry, taking their clothes with him.

Will and I dressed ourselves, and then we sat down to wait.

'Tom,' said Will, who had now recovered his composure, 'I am sure it is poor Tom May who is lying there. Do you remember a red silk handkerchief which mother gave him last Christmas Day? Well, there is one exactly like it round *its* neck. I was too frightened to look closer, but Tom

always wore his handkerchief round his neck in a sailor's knot. And then, too,' and here Will's eyes filled with tears and he began to sob, 'it had bright red hair... it had nearly all fallen off, and...'

'Oh, Will,' I cried, 'don't tell me any more! I feel so sick.'

Nearly half an hour passed, and then we saw Harry and Trenfield, holding each other's hand like two children, coming towards us. They sat down near us, and then the young convict placed his big, brown hands over his face, and heavy sobs broke from his broad chest.

'Oh, God! Master Harry!' he cried, 'is there no justice in the world? To die there, in that awful place, like a rat in a trap! oh, it is dreadful, dreadful! And then I thought that he was long ago far away from here—a free man.'

'Do you think those two other men threw him down there, Walter?' asked my eldest brother, almost in a whisper.

'No, sir,' he replied, catching his breath. 'Why should they murder the man who alone was capable of taking the boat upon such a long voyage? This is what I think, sir. Poor Tom, instead of coming down in the boat with the other two, left them on Saturday and walked here so that he might light a fire on the top of Little Nobby's on Sunday night to guide them to the place. He told Ruth's father that he thought he should do this in case the night turned out very dark. And Billy says that a fire was made, and that when poor Tom was descending the hill to meet the boat he fell into the cleft and got jammed between the rocky walls.'

'But would not the two other men make a search for him?'

'God knows, sir! We shall never know. They may have thought that Tom had been captured, and that the fire had been lit by Ruth's father. But I think that Billy is right, and that poor Tom, after lighting the fire, was coming down the hill to meet the boat, when in the darkness he wandered off the track and stepped into the crack at the widest part of its mouth, which is right above where we found him. He must have fallen upon his back and

become so tightly wedged in in that awful place that he could not use his arms to free himself. And then, sir, even if he had not been stunned, his cries could not have been heard by the other two men, who, unless they purposely made a search, would not have had any reason to go within two hundred yards of the spot where he fell.'

Harry shuddered, and then for some time no one of us spoke. 'King Billy' had been sent off to tell my father of the discovery of the body, or rather skeleton, which Walter and Harry had at first attempted to free from the walls of the chasm, but were too overcome to complete the task.

Together we slowly ascended the bluff, and there a surprise awaited us; for, sitting on their horses, on the brow of the hill, were the dreaded minister and his convict orderly. They had no doubt seen our bags and guns lying on the grass, and had ridden to the crest of the bluff to discover our whereabouts.

Mr Sampson eyed us all very sourly, and scarcely deigned to respond to our salutations, as one by one we walked past him and busied ourselves in silence over our impedimenta. No doubt he saw that both Harry and Walter were very pale, and that Will and I had not yet dried our tears.

'Come here, boys,' he said in his harsh, pompous tones. 'What, may I ask, is the cause of this grief which seems to be shared by all alike?' Then, without waiting for an answer, his glance fell upon Walter Trenfield, who, after saluting him, had turned away, and with averted face was strapping some of our belongings together.

I saw the clergyman's coarse red face, with its fat, terraced chins, grow purple with rage as I had seen it once before, and I instinctively drew back.

'Ha!' he said, and urging his horse forward, he bent down and touched the young convict on the shoulder with his whip. 'Ha! look up, fellow. I want a word with you, sirrah.'

Trenfield, who was stooping at the moment, stood erect, and then, facing the parson, again raised his hand to his cap. His face was deadly pale, and his deep-set bright blue eyes seemed to have suddenly shrunken and drawn back, and his whole body was trembling.

'Look at me, fellow,' said Mr Sampson, for the second time.

*'I am looking at you, sir.'*

The words came from between his white lips and set teeth in a low, hoarse whisper, and all the hatred in his heart seemed to go with them. The clergyman eyed him for a few seconds in silence, but the convict met his gaze unfalteringly.

'So 'tis to you, you scoundrel, that your ruffianly fellow-criminals are indebted for so much amusement at my expense! Tell me, you villain, where you got that picture, and who prompted you to display it? Answer me quickly, you unhanged rascal!'

Trenfield's lips moved, but ere he could speak, my eldest brother stepped forward, bravely enough.

'Indeed, sir, Trenfield had nothing to do with the picture. It was given to me, but by some mischance was lost or stolen. I am sure, sir, that Trenfield would not—'

'Trenfield is a villain. How dare you, presumptuous boy, seek to excuse him! A good birching, for which you are not too old, would teach you that reverence and respect for a clergyman which your mother has so forgotten.'

Harry fired up quickly enough at the insulting words.

'How dare you, sir, speak to me in this fashion? My father shall hear of this.'

'Let *me* deal with him, the bloody-minded dog!' said a voice.

It was that of Walter Trenfield, who, springing forward, presented my brother's loaded fowling-piece at the minister's head. 'Listen to me, you

beast in human form, you heartless fiend! I am going to send your poisonous soul to hell.'

He pulled the trigger, but the gun missed fire; then swiftly clubbing the weapon he brought it with terrific force against the clergyman's chest and knocked him off the horse. The orderly at once turned, and fled as his master fell.

The Reverend Mr Sampson lay prone upon the sward, his once red face blanched to a deathly white, and over him, with grounded gun, stood the young convict.

My brother tried to take the weapon from him, but Trenfield tossed him aside with one hand as if he were a straw. Then for a minute he looked at the prostrate man in silence; once he raised the gun by the muzzle, then he threw it aside, and, kneeling beside the clergyman, placed his face close to his.

'You dog, you dog, you damned dog! I could choke you now as you lie, you brute beast. But I will let you live, to go to hell in God's own time, you cruel, flogging wretch! *You* murdered Thomas May—his rotting body is not a hundred yards away. May the stink of it reach the nostrils of Almighty God—and be in yours for ever!'

He rose quickly, took the saddle and bridle off the clergyman's horse, and, striking the animal a sharp blow on the nose, sent it galloping away into the forest; then he returned and again stood over Mr Sampson, his face working with the violence of his passion.

'Are you going to murder me?' the minister asked gaspingly.

'No,' he replied savagely, kicking him again and again in the face, 'but lie there, you bloody-minded swab, till I tell you you can go.'

And then, his passion spent, he turned to us with outstretched hand,—

'God bless you all, young gentlemen! God bless you, Master Harry! and your good mother and Miss Frances and little Miss Olive. I am done for

now. But tell Ruth that if I am taken I'll die a man. And tell her, Master Harry, that—that—'

My brother grasped his trembling hand, as for a moment he stood, gun in hand, and swayed to and fro as if he were like to fall. Then he plunged into the forest.

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One night, three weeks after this, and whilst Mr Sampson was recovering from his injuries, and a force of constables, with a black tracker, were scouring the country for Walter, my mother called we children to her bedroom. She had retired, but Ruth Kenna, with tears in her blue Irish eyes, stood beside the bed.

'Quick, children,' said my mother, in a whisper, 'Ruth is going away. Quick, quick; kiss her goodbye.'

And then whilst we, wondering, put our arms around dear Ruth, my mother slipped out of bed, and taking some money out of a cabinet, put it into the girl's hand, and said,—

'Good-bye, Ruth. You've been an honest girl to us. May God bless and keep you always, my dear child, and do not fail to write.'

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Next morning there was a great to-do, for Patrick Kenna's house was found to be empty, and he and his daughter and Walter Trenfield were never seen again in our part. But away out on the horizon were the sails of a whale-ship which had been cruising about the coast for some days past; and though my mother kept her own counsel for a long year, we children soon knew that all three had escaped in the whaler, for my brother Harry had received a letter from Trenfield. It was handed to him by the aboriginal 'King Billy,' and contained only these words,—'Good-bye, sir. Ruth and I and her father will be on the blue water before daylight.'

When two years or more had passed, my mother received a letter. It was written from Boston in America, and was signed 'Ruth Trenfield.'

'I am glad she and Walter are happy at last,' said my mother, with the tears shining in her soft eyes.

## A NORTH PACIFIC LAGOON ISLAND

Two degrees north of the Equator, and midway between the Hawaiian Islands and fair, green Tahiti, is the largest and most important of the many equatorial isolated lagoon islands which, from 10 deg. N. to 10 deg. S., are dispersed over 40 deg. of longitude. The original native name of this island has long been lost, and by that given to it by Captain Cook one hundred and twenty years ago it is now known to Pacific navigators—Christmas Island. Cook was probably the first European to visit and examine the place, though it had very likely been sighted by the Spaniards long before his time, in the days of the voyages of the yearly galleons between the Philippines and Mexico and Peru.

On the afternoon of December 24, 1777, Cook (in the *Resolution* and *Discovery*) discovered to leeward of the former ship a long, low, sandy island, which proved to be about ninety miles in circumference. It appeared to be an exceedingly barren-looking land, save on the south-west side, where grew a luxuriant grove of coco-palms. Here he brought his ships to an anchor, and partly to recuperate his crews, who were in ill health, and partly to observe an eclipse of the sun, he remained at the island some weeks. He soon discovered that the lagoon in the centre was of noble proportions, and that its waters teemed with an immense variety of fish and countless 'droves' of sharks. To-day it remains the same.

Fifty years passed ere this lonely atoll was visited by another ship, and then American and English whalers, or, as they were called in those days, 'South Seamen,' began to touch at the island, give their crews a few days' spell amid the grateful shade of the palm grove and load their boats to the gunwales with fat green turtle, turtle eggs, robber crabs, and sea-birds' eggs. From that time the place became well known to the three or four hundred of

sperm whalers engaged in the fishery, and, later on, to the shark-catching vessels from the Hawaiian Islands. Then, sixteen years ago, Christmas Island was taken up by a London firm engaged in the South Sea Island trade under a lease from the Colonial Office; this firm at once sent there a number of native labourers from Manhiki, an island in the South Pacific. These, under the charge of a white man, were set to work planting coco-nuts and diving for pearl shell in the lagoon. At the present time, despite one or two severe droughts, the coco-nut plantations are thriving, and the lessees should in another few years reap their reward, and hold one of the richest possessions in the South Seas.

The island is of considerable extent, and though on the windward or eastern side its appearance is uninviting in the extreme, and the fierce oceanic currents that for ever sweep in mighty eddies around its shores render approach to it difficult and sometimes dangerous, it has yet afforded succour to many an exhausted and sea-worn shipwrecked crew who have reached it in boats. And, on the other hand, several fine ships, sailing quietly along at night time, unaware of the great ocean currents that are focussed about the terrible reefs encompassing the island, have crashed upon the jagged coral barrier and been smashed to pieces by the violence of the surf.

Scarcely discernible, from its extreme lowness, at a distance of more than eight miles from the ship's deck, its presence is made known hours before it is sighted by vast clouds of amphibious birds, most of which all day long hover about the sea in its vicinity, and return to their rookeries on the island at sunset. On one occasion, when the vessel in which I was then serving was quite twenty miles from the land, we were unable to hear ourselves speak, when, just before it became dark, the air was filled with the clamour of countless thousands of birds of aquatic habits that flew in and about our schooner's rigging. Some of these were what whalers call 'shoal birds,' 'wide-awakes,' 'molly-hawks,' 'whale birds' and 'mutton birds.' Among them

were some hundreds of frigate birds, the *katafa* of the Ellice Islanders, and a few magnificently plum-aged fishers, called *kanapu* by the natives of Equatorial Polynesia.

Given a good breeze and plenty of daylight, the whale-ships of the olden days could stand round the western horn of the island, a projecting point rendered pleasingly conspicuous by the grove of graceful coco-palms which Cook was so glad to observe so many years before, and then enter a deep bay on the north-west coast, where they obtained good anchorage in from fifteen to twenty fathoms of water of the most wonderful transparency, and within a mile of the vast stretches of white sandy beach that trend away for miles on either hand. And then the sailors, overjoyed at the delightful prospect of running about in the few and widely-apart palm groves, and inhaling the sweet, earthy smell of the thin but fertile soil, covered with its soft, thick bed of fallen leaves, would lower away the boats, and pulling with their united strength through the sweeping eddies of the dangerous passage, effect a landing on a beach of dazzling whites and situated in the inner south-west border of the wide lagoon.

On our first visit to the island, in 1872, we had some glorious fishing; and when we returned on board, under the rays of a moon that shone with strange, uncanny brilliancy, and revealed the coral bottom ten fathoms below, the scene presented from our decks was one of the greatest imaginable beauty, though the loneliness of the place and the absence of human life was somewhat depressing. We remained at the island for three days, and during our stay our crew of South Sea Islanders literally filled our decks with fish, turtle and birds' eggs. Curiously enough, in our scant library on board the little trading vessel I came across portion of a narrative of a voyage in a South Seaman, written by her surgeon, a Mr Bennett, in 1838,\* and our captain and myself were much interested in the accurate description he gave of Christmas Island and its huge rookeries of oceanic birds.

\* *Narrative of a Whaling Voyage round the Globe, from 1833 to 1836.* By F. D. Bennett.

This is what he says: 'Here and there among the low thicket scrubs are vast rookeries of aquatic birds, whose clamour is deafening. They nest and incubate upon the ground, and show not the slightest fear of the approach of human visitors. Among the sooty terns, whose number it was impossible to estimate, were many hundreds of tropic birds and pure snow-white petrels.' (He no doubt imagined the pure snow-white petrels to be a distinct species—they were young tropic birds.) 'These latter, who flew with a gentle, flapping motion, would actually fly up to us and scan our countenances with an almost human expression of interest and curiosity.' (Darwin, in his account of another Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean, also describes these gentle creatures as being of ethereal beauty.) 'Some, indeed, permitted themselves to be caught, and although their delicate, fragile forms quivered with fear when they came in contact with our hands, they would, when released, return to us again and again, as if seeking to solve the mystery of what strange beings were these that had invaded their retreat. In one rookery there were many varieties of these oceanic birds, and a species of booby that seems to be peculiar to Christmas Island. In size and colour they much resemble the ordinary gannet of our cold northern seas. Their plumage is of a wondrously bright snow white, with the exception of the primary and secondary feathers of the wings, and the *retrices* or tail feathers, which are of a glossy black. The skin of the cheeks and chin is devoid of feathers, and of a jet black colour, the beak a delicate yellow blue, the legs bright blue. The solicitude of the female birds of this species for their offspring was most interesting to witness. Their nests were of the rudest description, being merely circular heaps of sand raised in the open plain and exposed to the fury of storms. As we approached the nests the mother birds settled themselves down upon their single egg and screamed loudly, but would permit themselves to be lifted off, yet struggled violently

in our hands to get back again. Although there were thousands of these nests within a radius of an acre, a brooding hen might easily have been passed unnoticed, for her white plumage corresponded so well with the hue of the coral sands that one was apt to kick against the nest were it not for the agonised, barking note of the poor mother. The male birds, however, of this species did not show any marital concern for their partners. They were usually seated near the nests, but at once took to flight upon our approach. Further on, among a thicket of scrubby vegetation, we found a rookery of many thousands of the superb red-tailed tropic bird (*Phaeton phoenicurus*), also engaged in incubation. Their nests were mere circular excavations in the sand, under the shade of the bushes of the thicket. Each nest contained an egg of pure white, dotted with delicate lilac spots, and in size rather larger and rounder than that of the domestic hen. The females, as well as the males, made no attempt to escape from their nests on our approach, whether they had or had not the care of eggs, and consequently several of our crew, with innate Polynesian vanity, soon caught a number, and plucking out the two long scarlet tail feathers placed them in their hat bands.

'A hundred yards away from the rookery of the tropic birds was one of a colony of the snowy tern before mentioned. These gentle, black-eyed creatures do not even pretend to construct a nest, but simply deposit a solitary egg upon the bough of a tree (like the *gogo*, or whale bird). They select for this purpose a tree destitute of foliage, and a branch of horizontal growth. It is strange that, notwithstanding the exposed situation of these eggs, they are very difficult to find; and it was not until long after the solicitude of the parent birds informed us that their spot of incubation was near that we could solve the mystery which attended their nursery. Each egg is the size of a pigeon's, and marked with either blood or chocolate-coloured splashes and spots of irregular shape. Considering the slenderness of the branches on which they are deposited, it is remarkable that the eggs (which appear to be at the mercy of every passing breeze) should yet retain their

extraordinary position during incubation.' (Any Pacific Islander could easily have explained this seeming mystery. The shell, when the egg is laid, is covered with a strong adhesive coating. I have often seen a single egg, laid upon a slender branch, swaying about in a strong trade wind, and yet remain firmly in its position.) 'What may be the habits of the newly-hatched birds we had no opportunity of learning, as none of the latter came within our observation.

'Small reef birds (tern) were present in prodigious numbers, skimming the waters of the coast with an erratic, rapid, but yet graceful flight, like that of the stormy petrel. At night they assembled in vast numbers on an islet in the lagoon, to roost on the trees. They are about the size of an Australian snipe, and their forms are models of elegance and beauty. Their plumage is in true slate colour, the secondary wings are white, and a narrow white zone surrounds each eye; their legs and feet are a pale blue, with white webs.

'Every now and then as we, during our visit, walked along the snow-white beaches, great crowds of golden-winged plover and tiny snipe sprang skyward, and swept in graceful gyrations over the broad expanse of water, till they settled upon some sandy spit or spot of projecting reef; and, indeed, the immense concourse of frigate birds, boobies, terns, petrels and other aquatic denizens of the island filled us with boundless astonishment.

'At night time there crept out from their lairs in the loose coral shingle that lined the scrub at high-water mark, incredible numbers of huge "land lobsters"—the "robber crab" of the Pacific Islands. They all crawled to within a few feet of the placid waters of the lagoon, where they remained motionless, as if awaiting some event—possibly to prey upon the smaller species of *crustaceæ* and turtle eggs.'

Christmas Island, in its structure and elevation, much resembles Palmerston Island, Arrecifos or Providence Island (the secret rendezvous of Captain 'Bully' Hayes), Brown's Range, and other low-lying atolls of the North and South Pacific. The greater part of the interior of the island is,

however, despite the vast number of coco-nuts planted upon it during the past ten years, still sadly deficient in cheerful vegetation.

The waters of the lagoon vary greatly in depth, but generally are shallow and much broken up by sandy spits, reefs and huge coral boulders which protrude at low water, and the surface is much subject to the action of the trade wind, which, when blowing strong, lashes them into a wild surf; and the low shores of the encircling islets, that form a continuous reef-connected chain, are rendered invisible from the opposite side by the smoky haze and spume which ascends in clouds from the breaking surf that rolls and thunders on the outer barrier reefs.

In the interior no fresh water is obtainable, although in the rainy season some of a brackish quality can be had by sinking shallow wells. This water rises and falls in the wells in unison with the tides. Here and there are very extensive swamps of sea-water, evaporated to a strong brine; the margins of these are clothed with a fair growth of the pandanus or screw-pine palm, the fruit of which, when ripe, forms a nutritious and palatable food for the natives of the Equatorial Pacific Islands.

The island where Captain Cook set up his observatory is but a small strip of sandy soil, clothed with a few coco-palms, some screw-palms (pandanus), and a thick-matted carpet of a vine called *At At* by the natives. The only quadrupeds are rats, and some huge land tortoises, similar to those of the Galapagos Islands. They are most hideous-looking creatures, and, being of nocturnal habits, like the great robber crab, are apt to produce a most terrifying impression upon the beholder, if met with in the loneliness of the night. The present human occupants of Christmas Island are, however, well supplied with pigs and poultry; and though this far-away dot of Britain's empire beyond the seas is scarcely known to the world, and visited but twice a year by a trading vessel from Sydney, they are happy and contented in their home in this lonely isle of the mid-Pacific.



## BILGER, OF SYDNEY

A death in the family brought about my fatal acquaintance with Bilger. A few days after the funeral, as my sister and I sat talking on the verandah of our cottage (which overlooked the waters of Sydney Harbour) and listened to the pouring rain upon the shingled roof, we saw a man open the garden gate and come slowly up to the house. He carried an ancient umbrella, the tack lashings of which on one side had given way entirely, showing six bare ribs. As he walked up the path, his large, sodden boots made a nasty, squelching sound, and my sister, who has a large heart, at once said, 'Poor creature; I wonder who he is. I hope it isn't the coal man come for his money.'

He went round to the back door and, after letting himself drain off a bit, knocked gently and with exceeding diffidence.

I asked him his business. He said he wanted to see my wife.

'Not here. Gone away for a month.'

'Dear, dear, how sad! Broken down, no doubt, with a mother's grief. Is there any other lady in the family whom I could see?'

'What the deuce do you want?' I began angrily; then, as he raised his weak, watery eyes to mine, and I saw that his grey hairs were as wet as his boots, I relented. Perhaps he was someone who knew my wife or her people, and wanted to condole with her over the death of her baby. He looked sober enough, so, as he seemed much agitated, I asked him to sit down, and said I would send my sister to him. Then I went back to my pipe and chair. Ten minutes later my sister Kate came to me with her handkerchief to her eyes.

'Do go and see the old fellow. He has *such* a sympathetic nature. I'm sure I should have cried aloud had I stayed any longer. Anyone would think he had known poor little Teddie ever since he was born. I've asked Mary to make him a cup of tea.'

'Who is he?'

'I don't know his name, but he seems so sympathetic. And he says he should be so pleased if he might see you again for a few minutes. He says, too, that you have a good and kind face. I told him that you would be sure to take at least a dozen of those in cream and gold. There's nothing at all vulgar; quite the reverse.'

'What *are* you talking about, Kate? Who is this sodden old lunatic, and what on earth are you crying for?'

My sister nearly sobbed. 'I always thought that what you derisively termed "mortuary bards" were horrid people, but this old man has a beautiful nature. And he's very wet—and hungry too, I'm sure; and Mary looks at him as if he were a dog. Do try and help him. I think we might get one or two dozen cream and gold cards, and two dozen black-edged.

And then he's a journalist, too. He's told me quite a sad little story of his life struggle, and the moment I told him you were on the *Evening News* he quite brightened up, and said he knew your name quite well.'

'Kate,' I said, 'I don't want to see the man. What the deuce does he want? If he is one of those loafing scoundrels of undertakers' and mortuary masons' touts, just send him about his business; give him a glass of whisky and tell Mary to clear him out.'

My sister said that to send an old man out in such weather was not like *me*. Surely I would at least speak a kind word to him.

In sheer desperation I went out to the man. He addressed me in husky tones, and said that he desired to express his deep sympathy with me in my affliction, also that he was 'a member of the Fourth Estate.' Seven years

before he had edited the *Barangoora News*, but his determined opposition to a dishonest Government led to his ruin, and now—

'All right, old man; stow all that. What do you want?'

He looked at me reproachfully, and taking up a small leather bag, said that he represented Messrs ——, 'Monumental Masons and Memorial Card Designers and Printers,' and should feel pleased if I would look at his samples.

He was such a wretched, hungry-looking, down-upon-his-beam-ends old fellow, that I could not refuse to inspect his wares. And then his boots filled me with pity. For such a little man he had the biggest boots I ever saw—baggy, elastic sides, and toes turned up, with the after part of the uppers sticking out some inches beyond the frayed edges of his trousers. As he sat down and drew these garments up, and his bare, skinny legs showed above his wrecked boots, his feet looked like two water-logged cutters under bare poles, with the water running out of the scuppers.

Mary brought the whisky. I poured him out a good, stiff second mate's nip. It did my heart good to see him drink it, and hear the soft ecstatic 'Ah, ah, ah,' which broke from him when he put the glass down; it was a *Te Deum Laudamus*.

Having briefly intimated to him that I had no intention of buying 'a handsome granite monument, with suitable inscription, or twelve lines of verse, for £4, 17s. 6d.,' I took up his packet of *In Memoriam* cards and went through them. The first one was a hand-drawn design in cream and gold—Kate's fancy. It represented in the centre an enormously bloated infant with an idiotic leer, lying upon its back on a blue cloud with scalloped edges, whilst two male angels, each with an extremely vicious expression, were pulling the cloud along by means of tow-lines attached to their wings. Underneath were these words in MS.: 'More angels can be added, if desired, at an extra charge of 6d. each.'

No. 2 represented a disorderly flight of cherubims, savagely attacking a sleeping infant in its cradle, which was supported on either hand by two vulgar-looking female angels blowing bullock horns in an apathetic manner.

No. 3 rather took my fancy—there was so much in it—four large fowls flying across the empyrean; each bird carried a rose as large as a cabbage in its beak, and apparently intended to let them drop upon a group of family mourners beneath. The MS. inscribed said, 'If photographs are supplied of members of the Mourning Family, our artist will reproduce same in group gathered round the deceased. If doves are not approved, cherubims, angels, or floral designs may be used instead, for small extra charge.'

Whilst I was going through these horrors the old man kept up a babbling commentary on their particular and collective beauties; then he wanted me to look at his specimens of verse, much of which, he added, with fatuous vanity, was his own composition.

I did read some of it, and felt a profound pity for the corpse that had to submit to such degradation. Here are four specimens, the first of which was marked, 'Especially suitable for a numerous family, who have lost an aged parent, gold lettering is. 6d. extra,'—

*'Mary and May and Peter and John [or other names]  
Loved and honoured him [or her] who has gone;  
White was his [or her] hair and kind was his [or her] heart,  
Oh why, we all sigh, were we made thus to part?'*

*For an Aunt, (Suitable verses for Uncles at same rates.)*

*'Even our own sweet mother, who is so kind,  
Could not wring our hearts more if she went and left us behind;  
A halo of glory is now on thy head,  
Ah, sad, sad thought that good auntie is dead.'*

*For a Father or Mother,*

*'Oh children, dear, when I was alive,  
To get you bread I hard did strive;*

*I now am where I need no bread,  
And wear a halo round my head.  
Weep not upon my tomb, I pray,  
But do your duty day by day.'*

The last but one was still more beautiful,—

*For a Child who suffered a Long Illness before Decease.*

[I remarked casually that a child could not suffer even a short illness *after* decease. Bilger smiled a watery smile and said 'No.']

*'For many long months did we fondly sit,  
And watch our darling fade bit by bit;  
Till an angel called from out the sky,  
"Come home, dear child, to the Sweet By-and-By.  
Hard was your lot on earth's sad plain,  
But now you shall never suffer again,  
For cherubims and seraphims will welcome you here.  
Fond parents, lament not for the loss of one so dear."'*  
[N.B.—"These are very beautiful lines."]

The gem of the collection, however, was this:—

*Suitable for a child of any age. The beautiful simplicity of the words have brought us an enormous amount of orders from bereaved parents.*

*'Our [Emily] was so fair,  
That the angels envied her,  
And whispered in her ear,  
"We will take you away on [Tuesday] night."'*

[*"Drawing of angels carrying away deceased child, is. 6d. extra."*]

The old imbecile put his damp finger upon this, and asked me what I thought of it. I said it was very simple but touching, and then, being anxious to get rid of him, ordered two dozen of Kate's fancy. He thanked me most fervently, and said he would bring them to me in a few days. I hurriedly remarked he could post them instead, paid him in advance, and told him to help himself to some more whisky. He did so, and I observed, with some regret, that he took nearly half a tumblerful.

'Dear, dear me,' he said, with an apologetic smile, 'I'm afraid I have taken too much; would you kindly pour some back. My hand is somewhat shaky. Old age, sir, if I may indulge in a platitude, is—'

'Oh, never mind putting any back. It's a long walk to the ferry, and a wet day beside.'

'True, true,' he said meditatively, looking at Mary carrying in the dinner, and drinking the whisky in an abstracted manner.

Just then my sister beckoned me out. She said it was very thoughtless of me to pour gallons of whisky down the poor old fellow's throat, upon an empty stomach.

'Perhaps you would like me to ask him to have dinner with us?' I said with dignified sarcasm.

'I think we might at least let Mary give him something to eat.'

Of course I yielded, and my sister bade Mary give our visitor a good dinner. For such a small man he had an appetite that would have done credit to a long-fasting tiger shark tackling a dead whale; and every time I glanced at Mary's face as she waited on my sister and myself I saw that she was verging upon frenzy. At last, however, we heard him shuffling about on the verandah, and thought he was going without saying 'thank you.' We wronged him, for presently he called to Mary and asked her if I would kindly grant him a few words after I had finished dinner.

'Confound him! What the deuce—'

My sister said, 'Don't be cruel to the poor old fellow. *You may be like him yourself some day.*'

I said I didn't doubt it, if my womenfolk encouraged every infernal old dead-beat in the colony to come and loaf upon me. Two large tears at once ran down Kate's nose, and dropped into the custard on her plate. I softened at once and went out.

'Permit me, sir,' he said, in a wobbly kind of voice, as he lurched to and fro in the doorway, and tried to jab the point of his umbrella into a knot-hole in the verandah boards in order to steady himself, 'permit me, sir, to thank you for your kindness and to tender you my private card. Perhaps I may be able to serve you in some humble way'—here the umbrella point stuck in the hole, and he clung to the handle with both hands—'some humble way, sir. Like yourself, I am a literary man, as this will show you.' He fumbled in his breast pocket with his left hand, and would have fallen over on his back but for the umbrella handle, to which he clung with his right. Presently he extracted a dirty card and handed it to me, with a bow, which he effected by doubling himself on his stomach over the friendly gamp, and remained in that position, swaying to and fro, for quite ten seconds. I read the card:—

*MR HORATIO BILGER*  
*Journalist and Littérateur*

*Formerly Editor of the 'Barangoora News'*

*Real Aylesbury Ducks for Sale*  
*Book-keeping Taught in Four Lessons*

*4a Kelliet Street,*  
*Darlinghurst, Sydney*

I said I should bear him in mind, and, after helping him to release his umbrella, saw him down the steps and watched him disappear.

'Thank Heaven!' I said to Kate, 'we have seen the last of him.'

I was bitterly mistaken, for next morning when I entered the office, Bilger was there awaiting me, outside the sub-editor's room. He was wearing a new pair of boots, much larger than the old ones, and smiled pleasantly at me, and said he had brought his son Edward to see me, feeling sure that I would use my influence with the editor and manager to get him put on as a canvasser.

I refused point blank to see 'Edward' then or at any other time, and said that even if there was a vacancy I should not recommend a stranger. He sighed, and said that I should like Edward, once I knew him. He was 'a noble lad, but misfortune had dogged his footsteps—a brave, heroic nature, fighting hard against unmerited adversity.' I went in and shut the door.

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Two days later Kate asked me at supper if I *couldn't do something for old Bilger's son*.

'Has that infernal old nuisance been writing to you about his confounded son?'

'How ill-tempered you are! The "old nuisance," as you call him, has behaved very nicely. He sent his son over here to thank us for our kindness, and to ask me to accept a dozen extra cards from himself. The son is a very respectable-looking man, but rather shabby. He is coming again to-morrow to help Mary to put up the new wire clothes line.'

'Is he? Well, then, Mary can pay him.'

'Don't be so horrid. He doesn't want payment for it. But, of course, I shall pay his fare each way. Mary says he's such a willing young man.'

In the morning I saw Mr Edward Bilger, helping Mary. He was a fat-faced, greasy-looking youth, with an attempted air of hang-dog respectability, and with 'loafer' writ large on his forehead. I stepped over to him and said,—

'Now, look here. I don't want you fooling about the premises. Here's two shillings for you. Clear out, and if you come back again on any pretence whatever I'll give you in charge.'

He accepted the two shillings with thanks, said that he meant no offence, but he thought Mary was not strong enough to put up a wire clothes line.

Mary (who was standing by, looking very sulky) was a cow-like creature of eleven stone, and I laughed. She at once sniffed and marched away. Mr

Bilger, junior, presently followed her into the kitchen. I went after him and ordered him out. Mary was leaning against the dresser, biting her nails and looking at me viciously.

Half an hour later, as I walked to the ferry, I saw Mr Bilger, junior, sitting by the roadside, eating bread and meat (my property). He stood up as I passed, and said politely that it looked like rain. I requested him to make a visit to Sheol, and passed on.

In the afternoon my sister called upon me at the *Evening News* office. She wore that look of resigned martyrdom peculiar to women who have something unpleasant to say.

'Mary has given me notice—of course.'

'Why "of course!"'

Kate rose with an air of outraged dignity. 'Servants don't like to be bullied and sworn at—not white servants, anyway. You can't expect the girl to stay. She's a very good girl, and I'm sure that that young man Bilger was doing no harm. As it is, you have placed me in a most unpleasant position; I had told him that he could let his younger brothers and sisters come and weed the paddock, and—'

'Why not invite the whole Bilger family to come and live on the premises?' I began, when Kate interrupted me by saying that if I was going to be violent she would leave me. Then she sailed out with an injured expression of countenance.

When I returned home to dinner at 7.30, Mary waited upon us in sullen silence. After dinner I called her in, gave her a week's wages in lieu of notice, and told her to get out of the house as a nuisance. Kate went outside and wept.

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From that day the Bilger family proved a curse to me. Old Bilger wrote me a note expressing his sorrow that his son—quite innocently—had given

me offence; also he regretted to hear that my servant had left me. Mrs Bilger, he added, was quite grieved, and would do her best to send some 'likely girls' over. 'If none of them suited, Mrs Bilger would be delighted to come and assist my sister in the mornings. She was an excellent, worthy woman.' And he ventured, with all due respect, to suggest to me that my sister looked very delicate. His poor lad Edward was very sad at heart *over the turn matters had taken*. The younger children, too, were sadly grieved—to be in a garden, even to toil, would be a revelation to them.

That evening I went home in a bad temper. Kate, instead of meeting me as usual at the gate, was cooking dinner, looking hot and resigned, I dined alone, Kate saying coldly that she did not care about eating anything. The only other remark she made that evening was that 'Mary had cried very bitterly when she left.'

I said, 'The useless, fat beast!'

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The Curse of Bilger rested upon me for quite three months. He called twice a week, regularly, and borrowed two shillings 'until next Monday.' Then one day that greasy ruffian, Bilger, junior, came into the *Evening News* office, full of tears and colonial beer, and said that his poor father was dead, and that his mother thought I might perhaps lend her a pound to help bury him.

The sub-editor (who was overjoyed at Bilger's demise) lent me ten shillings, which I gave to Edward, and told him I was sorry to hear the old man was dead. I am afraid my face belied my words.

## THE VISION OF MILLI THE SLAVE

One day a message came over from Tetoro, King of Paré, in Tahiti, to his vassal Mahua, chief of Tetuaroa,\* saying, 'Get thee ready a great feast, for in ten days I send thee my daughter Laea to be wife to thy son Narü.

*\* Tetuaroa is an island about forty miles from Tahiti. It was in those days (1808) part of the hereditary possessions of the chief of Paré.*

For Narü, the son of the chief of Tetuaroa, had long been smitten with the beauty of Laea, and desired to make her his wife. Only once had he seen her; but since then he had sent over many canoes laden with presents, such as hogs and turtle, and great bunches of plantains, and fine tappa cloth for her acceptance.

But Tetoro, her father, was a greedy man, and cried for more; and Mahua, so that his son might gain his heart's desire, became hard and cruel to the people of Tetuaroa.

Day after day he sent his servants to every village on the island demanding from them all such things as would please the eye of Tetoro; so that by-and-by there was but little left in their plantations, and still less in their houses.

And so, with sullen faces and low murmurs of anger, the people yielded up their treasures of mats and tappa cloth, and such other things that the servants of the chief discovered in their dwellings, and watched them carried away to appease the avarice of Tetoro the King.

One night, when they were gathered together in their houses, and the torches of *tui tui* (candle-nut kernels) were lighted, they talked among themselves, not loudly but in whispers, for no one knew but that one of the

chiefs body-men might perhaps be listening outside, and that to them meant swift death from the anger of Mahua.

'Why has this misfortune come upon us?' they said to one another. 'Why should Narü, who is an *aito*{\*} set his heart upon the daughter of Tetoro when there are women of as good blood as her close to his hand? Surely, when she comes here to live, then will there be hard times in the land, and we shall be eaten up with hunger.'

*\* A man distinguished in warfare.*

'Ay,' said a girl named Milli, 'it is hard that we should give our all to a strange woman.'

She spoke very loudly, and without fear, and the rest of the people looked wonderingly at her, for she was but a poor slave, and, as such, should not have raised her voice when men were present. So they angrily bade her be silent. Who was she that dared to speak of such things? If she died of hunger, they said, what did it matter? She was but a girl and a slave, and girls' lives were worth nothing until they bore male children.

And then Milli the Slave sprang up, her eyes blazing with anger, and heaped scorn upon them for cowards.

'See,' she said, and her voice shook with passion; 'see me, Milli the Slave, standing before ye all, and listen to my words, so that your hearts may grow strong, even as strong as mine has grown. Listen while I tell thee of a dream that came to me in the night.

'In my dream this land of ours became as it was fifteen moons ago, and as it may never be again. I saw the groves of plantains, with their loads of fruit, shine red and yellow, like the setting of the sun, and the ground was forced open because of the great size of the yams and taro and arrowroot that grew beneath; and I heard the heavy fall of the ripe coconuts on the grass, and the crooning notes of the pigeons that fed upon the red *mati*

berries were as the low booming of the surf on the reef when it sounds far distant.'

For a little while she ceased, and the people muttered.

'Ay, it was so, fifteen moons ago.'

And then Milli, sinking upon one knee, and spreading out her arms towards them, spoke again, but in a low, soft voice,—

'And I saw the white beach of Teavamoa black with turtle that could scarce crawl seaward because of their fatness; and saw the canoes, filled to the gunwales with white, shining fish, come paddling in from the lagoon; and then came the night. And in the night I heard the sound of the *vivo*{\*} and the beat of the drum, and the songs and laughter and the shouts of the people as they made merry and sang and danced, and ate and drank, till the red sun burst out from the sea, and they lay down to sleep.

*\* Nasal flute.*

'And then, behold there came into my dream, a small black cloud. It gathered together at Paré, and rose from the ground, and was borne across the sea to Tetuaroa.{\*} As it came nearer, darker and darker grew the shadows over this land, till at last it was wrapped up in the blackness of night. And then out of the belly of the cloud there sprang a woman arrayed as a bride, and behind her there followed men with faces strange to me, whose stamping footsteps shook the island to its roots in the deep sea. Then came a mystic voice to me, which said,—

“Follow and see.”

*\* Tetoro's canoe, in which he sent his daughter to Tetuaroa, was painted black by an English sailor who, living under his protection, afterwards married his daughter.*

'So I followed and saw'—she sprang to her feet, and her voice rang sharp and fierce—I saw the strange woman and those with her pass swiftly over

the land like as the shadows of birds fall upon the ground when the sun is high and their flight is low and quick. And as they passed, the plantains and taro and arrowroot were torn up and stripped and left to perish; and there was nought left of the swarms of turtle and fish but their bones; for the black cloud and the swift shadows that ran before it had eaten out the heart of the land, and not even one coco-nut was left.

'And then I heard a great crying and weeping of many voices, and I saw men and women lying down in their houses with their bones sticking out of their skins; and wild pigs, perishing with hunger, sprang in upon them and tore their bellies open with their tusks, and devoured them, and fought with each other among the bones and blood of those they ate.'

A groan of terror burst from the listening people, and the slave girl, with her lips parted and her white teeth set, looked with gleaming, angry eyes slowly round the group.

'Again I heard the cries and the groans and the weeping; and I saw thee, Foani, take thy suckling child from thy withered breast, and give it to thy husband, so that it might be slain to feed thy other children. And then thou, too, Tiria, and thou, Hini, and many other women, did I see slay thy children and their children, and cook and eat them, even as the wild pigs had eaten those men and women that lay dying on their mats. And this, O people! is all of the dream that came to me; for then a great sweat ran down over my body, and a heavy pain came upon my heart, so that I awoke.'

She trembled and sank down again among the women, in the midst of whom she had been sitting, and then growling, angry murmurs ran round the assemblage, and the names of Narü and the king's daughter passed from lip to lip.

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Well as they liked their chief's son—for he was distinguished alike for his bravery and generosity—they yet saw that his marriage with Laea would

mean a continued existence of misery to them all, or at least so long as the young man's passion for his wife lasted.

Past experience had taught them many a bitter lesson, for ever since their island had been conquered, they had been subjected to the payment of the most exacting tribute.

Fertile as was Tetuaroa, the continued demands made upon its people for food by the royal family of Tahiti had frequently reduced them to a condition bordering upon starvation.

But these requests had, of late years, been so much modified, that the island, under the rule of Mahua, had become renowned for its wealth of food and the prosperous condition of its inhabitants.

It was, therefore, with no pleasant feelings that the people viewed the approaching marriage of the son of their chief to the child of the grasping Tetoro, a man who would certainly see no abatement made in the extortions he had succeeded in inducing his vassal Mahua to again inaugurate.

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At midnight, long after the women were asleep, the principal men of the island met together and talked of the dream described by the slave girl. So firmly were they convinced that she had been chosen by the gods as a means of warning them of their impending fate if the marriage took place, that they firmly resolved to frustrate it, even if it cost every one of them his life.

But, so that neither Mahua nor his son should suspect their intentions, they set about to prepare for the great feast ordered by Tetoro; and for the next week or so the whole population was busily engaged in bringing together their various presents of food and goods, and conveying them to the chief's house, where, on the arrival of the fleet of canoes that would bring the king's daughter from Paré, they would be presented to her in person by the priests and minor chiefs.

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On the afternoon of the tenth day, some men whom Mahua had set to watch for Tetoro's fleet saw the great mat sails of five war canoes sweeping across the long line of palms that fringed the southern beach? Then there was great commotion, and many *pu*{\*} were sounded from one end of the island to the other, bidding the people to assemble at the landing-place and welcome the bride of the chiefs son.

\* *The conch shell.*

Now, it so happened that Narü, when the cry arose that the canoes were coming, was sitting alone in a little bush-house near the south point of the island. He had come there with two or three of his young men attendants, so that he might be dressed and adorned to meet Tetoro's daughter. As soon as they had completed their task he had sent them away, for he intended to remain in the bush-house till his father sent for him; for such was the custom of the land.

Very gay and handsome he looked, when presently he stood up and looked out over the lagoon to where the canoes were entering the passage. Round his waist was a girdle of bright yellow strips of plantain leaves, mixed with the scarlet leaves of the *ti* plant; a band of pearl-shell ornaments encircled his forehead, and his long, black hair, perfumed with scented oil, was twisted up in a high spiral knob, and ornamented with scarlet hibiscus flowers. Across one broad shoulder there hung a small, snowy-white poncho or cape, made of fine tappa cloth, and round his wrists and ankles were circlets of pearl shell, enclosed in a netting of black coir cinnet. On each leg there was tattooed, in bright blue, a coco-nut tree, its roots spreading out at the heel and running in wavy lines along the instep to the toes, its elastic stalk shooting upwards till its waving plumes spread gracefully out on the broad, muscular calf.

Yet, although he was so finely arrayed, Narü was troubled in his mind; for not once did those who had dressed him speak of Laea, and this the

young man thought was strange, for he would have been pleased to hear them talk to him of her beauty. In silence had they attended to his needs, and this hurt him, for they were all dear friends. So at last, when they rose to leave him, he had said,—

'Why is it that none of ye speak either to me, or to one another? Am I a corpse that is dressed for the funeral rites?'

Then one of them, named Tanéo, his foster-brother, answered, and bent his head as he spoke,—

'Oh, Narü, son of Mahua, and mine own brother, hast thou not heard of the dream of Milli?'

At the name of Milli, the hot blood leapt into the face of the chief's son; but he answered quickly,—

'Nay, naught have I heard, and how can the dream of a slave girl concern me on such a day as this?'

'Oh, Narü!' replied Tanéo, 'tis more than a dream; for the god Oro hath spoken to her, and shown her things that concern thee and all of thy father's people.' And with that the young men arose and left him without further speech.

Little did Narü know that scarce a stone's throw away from where he stood, Milli, with love in her eyes, was watching him from behind a clump of plantain trees. She, too, was arrayed as if for a dance or a marriage, and behind her were a number of women, who were crouched together and spoke only in whispers.

As they stood, the sounds of the drums and flutes and conches came from the village, and then Narü went forth from the little house, and walked towards it through the palm grove.

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As he stepped proudly along the shaded path he heard his name called in a low voice, and Milli the Slave stood before him with downcast eyes, and

barred his path.

Now, Narü, bold as he was, feared to meet this girl, and so for some moments no words came to him, and Milli, looking quickly up, saw that he had placed his right hand over his eyes. Then she spoke,—

'See, Narü, I do but come to thee to speak some little words; so turn thy face to me once more; for from this day thou shalt never again see Milli the Slave.'

But Narü, still keeping his hand to his eyes, turned aside, and leaning his forehead against the trunk of a palm-tree, kept silence awhile. Then he said, in a low voice,—

'Oh, Milli, be not too hard! This woman Laea hath bewitched me—and then—thou art but a slave.'

'Aye,' answered the girl, softly, 'I am but a slave, and this Laea is very beautiful and the daughter of a great chief. So for that do I come to say farewell, and to ask thee to drink with me this bowl of orange juice. 'Tis all I have to offer, for I am poor and have no wedding gift to give thee; and yet with this mean offering do I for ever give thee the hot love of my heart—ay, and my life also, if thou should'st need it.'

And so, to please the girl whom he had once loved, he received from her hand the drink of orange juice, which she took from a basket she carried, and yet as he drank he looked away, for he feared to see her eyes looking into his.

Only one word did he say as he turned away, and that was 'Farewell,' and Milli answered 'Farewell, Narü;' but when he had gone some distance she followed him and sobbed softly to herself.

And soon, as Narü walked, his body swayed to and fro and his feet struck the roots of the trees that grew out through the soil along the path. Then Milli, running swiftly up, caught him as he fell, and laid his head upon her knees. His eyes were closed and his skin dead to her touch.

Presently the bushes near by parted, and two women came out, and lifting Narü between them, they carried the young man to a shady place and laid him down.

And then Milli wept as she bent her face over that of the man she loved, but the two older women bade her cease.

Once more the girl looked at Narü, and then, stepping out into the path, ran swiftly towards the village.

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The five canoes were now sailing quickly over the smooth lagoon, with the streamers from their mat sails floating in the wind, and on the stages that ran from their sides to the outriggers were grouped parties of singers and dancers, with painted bodies and faces dyed scarlet with the juice of the *mati* berry, who sang and danced, and shouted, and made a brave show for the people who awaited their coming on the shore.

On the great stage of the first canoe, which was painted black, was seated Laea, surrounded by her women attendants, who joined in the wild singing whenever the name of their mistress formed the singers' theme.

Then suddenly, as each steersman let fall from his hand his great steering paddle, which was secured by a rope to the side, the canoes ran up into the wind, the huge mat sails were lowered, the stone anchors dropped overboard, and the music and dancing ceased.

And then a strange thing happened, and Laea, who was of a proud and haughty disposition, as became her lineage, grew pale with anger; for suddenly the great crowd of people which had assembled on the beach seemed to sway to and fro, and then separate and form into two bodies; and she saw that the women and children had gathered apart from the men and stood in a compact mass on the brow of the beach, and the men, in strange, ominous quiet, spear and club in hand, had ranged, without a sound, in battle array before her escort.

There was silence awhile, and then Tanéo, the foster brother of Narü, clothed in his armour of cinnet fibre, and grasping a short stabbing spear in his hand, stepped out of the ranks.

'Get thee back again to Tahiti, O men of Paré,' he said quietly, striking his spear into the sand. 'This marriage is not to our minds.'

Then Laea, as she looked at the amazed and angered faces of her people as they heard Tanéo's insulting words, dashed aside her attendants, and leaping from the canoe into the shallow water, walked to the shore, and stood face to face with him.

'Who art thou, fellow, to stand before the daughter of Tetoro the King, with a spear in thy rude hand, and thy mouth filled with saucy words?'

'I am Tanéo, the foster brother of the man thou seekest to marry. And because that a warning hath come to us against this marriage do I stand here, spear in hand.'

Laea laughed scornfully.

'I seek thy brother in marriage? Thou fool! Would I, the daughter of my father, *seek* any man for husband? Hath not this Narü pestered me so with his presents and his love-offerings that, for very weariness, and to please my father, I turned my face from the Englishman who buildeth ships for him, and said "Aye" to this Narü—who is but a little man{\*}—when he besought me to be wife to him. Ah! the Englishman, who is both a clever and strong man, is more to my liking.'

*\* Meaning in rank.*

'Get thee back, then, to thy Englishman, and leave to me my lover,' cried a woman's voice, and Milli the Slave, thrusting aside the armed men who sought to stay her, sprang out upon the sand, and clenching her hands tightly, gazed fiercely at the king's daughter.

'Thy lover!' and Laea looked contemptuously at the small, slender figure of the slave girl, and then her cheek darkened with rage as she turned to her followers. 'See how this dog of a Narü hath insulted me! Have I come all this way to be fooled for the sake of such a miserable creature as this?' and she pointed scornfully to Milli and then spat on the ground. 'Where is this fellow? Let him come near to me so that I may tell him to his face that I have ever despised him as one beneath me. Where is he, I ask thee, girl?' And she seized the slave girl by her wrist.

The savage fury of her voice, her blazing eyes, and noble, commanding presence, excited alike both her own people and the clustering throng of armed men that stood watching on the beach, for these latter, by some common impulse moved nearer, and at the same time every man in the five canoes sprang out, and, dashing through the water, ranged themselves beside their mistress.

'Back!' cried Tanéo, warningly; 'back, ye men of Paré, back, ere it be too late, and thou, Laea, harm not the girl, for see, O foolish woman! we here are as ten to one, and 'twill be a bloody day for thee and thy people if but a spear be raised.'

And then, facing round, he cried, 'And back, O men of Tetuaroa. Why draw ye so near? Must blood run because of the vain and bitter words of a silly woman?'

Then, with an angry gesture, Laea released her hold of the slave girl's slender wrist, and she, too, held up a warning hand to her warriors.

'True, Tanéo,' she said mockingly; 'thy people are as ten to one of mine, as thou sayest, and for this alone dost thou dare insult me. Oh, thou coward, Tanéo!'

A swift gleam of anger shone in Tanéo's eyes, and his hand grasped his spear tightly. Then he looked steadily at the king's daughter, and answered.

'Nay, no coward am I, Laea. And see, if but a little blood will appease thee, take this spear and slay me. It is better for one to die than many.' Stretching out his hand, he gave her his spear.

She waved it back sneeringly.

'Thy words are brave, Tanéo; but only because that behind them lieth no danger. Only a coward could talk as—'

He sprang back.

'Ho, men of Paré! Listen! So that but one or two men may die, and many live, let this quarrel lie between me and any one of ye that will battle with me here, spear to spear, on this beach. Is it not better so than that Tetoro the King should weep for so many of his people?'

A tall, grey-headed old warrior leapt out from the ranks of those that stood behind Laea.

'Thou and I, Tanéo, shall fight till one of us be slain.'

Suddenly Milli the Slave sprang between them with outstretched arms.

'Peace, peace! Drop thou thy spear, Tanéo, and thou thine, old man. There is no need for blood but mine—for Narü is dead.'

Then, kneeling on the sand she said, 'Draw near to me and listen.'

Quickly the opposing parties formed a circle around her; before her stood the haughty and angry Laea; behind her, and standing side by side, Tanéo and the grey-haired Tahitian warrior.

'I am Milli, the bond-woman of Mahua, the father of Narü. And Narü loved me; but because of thee, O Laea, he turned from me, and my heart became cold. For who would give food to my child when it was born—the child of a slave whose lover was a chief and who had cast her off? And then there came a vision to me in the night, and I saw the things of which I have told ye, O men of Tetuaroa. And I knew that the black cloud of my vision was sent to warn the people of this land against the marriage, and the

hunger and the bitter days of poverty that would come of it. And so, because thou art a great woman, O Laea, and I but a poor slave, did I meet Narü but a little while since and give him to drink; and when he drank of that which I gave him he died, for it was poisoned.'

A low murmur, half anger, half pity, broke from the assembled people.

'Thou fool!' said Laea, pityingly; and then she turned to Tanéo.

'And so thy brother hath died by the hand of a slave? Let us part in peace. Farewell!'

And then, as the men of Paré returned in silence to their canoes, Tanéo and his people closed in upon the kneeling figure of the slave girl, who bent her head as a man stepped before her with a club.

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When the five canoes had sailed away a little distance from the beach, Laea saw the men of Tetuaroa open out their ranks, and, looking in the midst, she saw, lying face downwards on the sand, the body of Milli the Slave.



## DENISON GETS A BERTH ASHORE

After many years as supercargo, 'blackbirder' {\*} and trader in the South Seas, Tom Denison one day found himself in Sydney with less than ten shillings in his pocket, and with a strong fraternal yearning to visit his brother, who was a bank manager in North Queensland and a very good-natured man. So he sent a telegram, 'Tired of the sea. Can you find me a billet ashore?' An answer soon came, 'Yes, if you can manage poultry farm and keep books. If so, will wire passage money and expenses.'

*\* A 'backbirder' is the term applied to any person engaged in the Polynesian labour traffic.*

Denison pondered over the situation. He had seen a lot of poultry in his time—in coops on board the *Indiana* and the *Palestine*; and one Captain 'Bully' Hayes, with whom he had once sailed as supercargo, had told him a lot of things about game fowls, to which birds the genial 'Bully' had a great leaning—but was not sure that he was good at books. In fact, the owners of the *Palestine* had said that his system of book-keeping had driven the senior partner to drink, and they always sent a 'Manual of Book-keeping' on board every time the ship sailed from Sydney. At the same time Denison was touched by the allusion to passage money and expenses, and felt that making entries about the birth of clutches of chickens and ducklings, and the number of eggs sold, would be simple enough—much easier than the heartbreaking work of a supercargo, when such customers as Flash Harry of Apia or Fiji Bill of Apamama would challenge the correctness of their grog bills, and offer to fight him instead of paying. And then, he thought, it would be simply delightful to sit in a room in a quiet farmhouse and hear the gentle moaning of calves and the cheerful cackle of exultant hens, as he wrote items in a book about eggs and things, and drink buttermilk, instead

of toiling in the ill-smelling trade-room on board the *Palestine*, bottling off Queensland rum and opening tierces of negrohead tobacco, while the brig was either standing on her head or rolling her soul out, and Pakenham the skipper was using shocking language to everyone on deck.

So he sent a 'collect' telegram to his brother, and stated that he thoroughly understood all branches of poultry and book-keeping.

On the voyage up to Cooktown he kept to himself, and studied 'Pip and Its Remedy,' 'Warts and the Sulphur Cure,' 'Milligan on Roup in Ducks,' and other valuable works; so that when the steamer reached the port and he met his brother, the latter was deeply impressed with the profound knowledge he displayed of the various kinds of poultry diseases, and said he felt sure that Denison would 'make the thing pay.' The poultry farm, he said, belonged to the bank, which had advanced money to the former proprietor, who had most unjustifiably died in *delirium tremens* at Cooktown Hospital a few months ago, leaving the farm to the care of some aboriginals, and his estate much in debt to the good, kind bank.

On the following evening Denison was driven out to the place by his brother, who took advantage of the occasion to point out to the youth the beauties of a country life, away from the temptations of cities. Also he remarked upon the folly of a young man spending the bloom of his years among the dissolute natives of the South Seas; and then casually inquired if the women down there were pretty. Then the younger Denison began to talk, and the elder brother immediately pulled up the horse from a smart trot into a slow walk, saying there was no need to rush along on such a hot night, and that he liked to hear about the customs of foreign countries. About ten o'clock they reached their destination, and the elder brother, without getting out of the trap and entering the house, hurriedly bade Tom good-bye and drove off as quickly as possible, fearing that if he stayed till the morning, and the youth saw the place by daylight, the latter would become a fratricide.

The occupants of the farm were, the new manager found, three black fellows and two 'gins,' {\*} all of whom were in a state of stark nudity; but they welcomed him with smiles and an overpowering smell of ants, the which latter is peculiar to the Australian nigger. One of the bucks, who when Denison entered was sleeping, with three exceedingly mangy dogs, in the ex-proprietor's bunk—a gorgeous affair made of a badly-smelling new green hide stretched between four posts, at once got up and gave him possession of the couch; and Denison, being very tired, spread his rug over the hide and turned in, determined not to grumble, and make the thing pay, and then buy a place in the Marquesas or Samoa in a few years, and die in comfort. During the night the mosquitoes worried him incessantly, until one of the coloured ladies, who slept on the ground in the next room, hearing his petulant exclamations, brought him a dirty piece of rag, soaked in kerosene, and told him to anoint his hair, face and hands with it. He did so, and then fell asleep comfortably.

*\* 'Gin,' or 'lubra'—the female Australian aboriginal.*

Early in the morning he rose and inspected the place (which I forgot to say was twenty miles from Cooktown, and on the bank of the Endeavour River). He found it to consist of two rusty old corrugated iron buildings, vaguely surrounded by an enormous amount of primaeval desolation and immediately encompassed by several hundred dead cattle (in an advanced state of putrefaction) picturesquely disposed about the outskirts of the premises. But Denison, being by nature a cheerful man, remembered that his brother (who was pious) had alluded to a drought, and said that rain was expected every day, as the newly-appointed Bishop of North Queensland had appointed a day of general humiliation and prayer, and that poultry-rearing was bound to pay.

The stock of poultry was then rounded up by the black-fellows for his inspection—thirty-seven dissolute-looking ducks, ninety-three degraded

and anaemic female fowls, thirteen spirit-broken roosters, and eleven apathetic geese. Denison caught one of the ducks, which immediately endeavoured to swallow his fore-finger, under the impression it was food of some sort.

'Jacky,' he said to the leading coloured gentleman, 'my brother told me that there were five hundred ducks here. Where are they?'

Jacky said that the ducks *would* go on the river and that 'plenty feller big alligator eat 'em up.'

'Then where are the seven hundred and fifty laying hens?'

Jacky scratched his woolly head and grinned. 'Goanner' eat some, snake eat some, some die, some run away in bush, hawk eat some. By ——, this feller duck and fowl altogether dam fool.' »

During the following week Denison found that Jacky had not deviated from the truth—the alligators did eat the ducks, the tiger and carpet-snakes and iguanas did crawl about the place at night-time and seize any luckless fowl not strong enough to fly up to roost in the branch of a tree, the hawks did prefer live poultry to long-deceased bullock, and those hens physically capable of laying eggs laid them on an ironstone ridge about a mile away from the house. He went there one day, found nine eggs, and saw five death adders and a large and placid carpet snake. Then he wrote to his brother, and said that he thought the place would pay when the drought broke up, but he did not feel justified in taking £3, 10s. a week from the bank under the present circumstances, and would like to resign his berth, as he was afraid he was about to get an attack of fever.

A few days later he received an official letter from the bank, signed 'C. Aubrey Denison, Manager,' expressing surprise at his desire to give up the control of a concern that was 'bound to pay,' and for the management of which the bank had rejected twenty-three other applications in his favour, and suggesting that, as the poultry were not thriving, he might skin the

carcasses of such cattle as died in the future, and send the hides to Cooktown —'for every hide the bank will allow you 2s. 6d. nett.' With the official letter was a private communication from the Elder Brother telling him not to be disheartened so quickly—the place was sure to pay as soon as the drought broke up; also that as the river water was bad, and tea made from it was not good for anyone with fever, he was sending up a dozen of whisky by the mailman next week. Again Denison was touched by his brother's thoughtfulness, and decided to remain for another week at least. But at night-time he thought a good deal about the dear old *Palestine* and Harvey Pakenham, her skipper.

While awaiting with considerable anxiety the arrival of the mailman, Denison passed the time in killing tiger-snakes, cremating the dead cattle around the place, bathing in the only pool in the river safe from alligators, and meditating upon the advantages of a berth ashore. But when the mailman arrived (four days late) with only five bottles of whisky, and said in a small, husky voice that the pack-horse had fallen and broken seven bottles, he felt a soured and disappointed man, and knew that he was only fit for the sea. The mailman, to whom he expressed these sentiments, told him to cheer up. It was loneliness, he said, that made him feel like that, and he for *his* part 'didn't like to see no man feelin' lonely in the bloomin' bush.' Therefore he would keep him company for a few days, and let the sanguinary mail go to Hades.

He did keep him company. And then, when the whisky was finished, he bade Denison good-bye, and said that any man who would send 'his own bloomin' brother to perish in such a place was not fit to live himself, and ought to be flamin' well shown up in the bloomin' noospapers.' At daybreak next morning Denison told the coloured ladies and gentlemen to eat the remaining poultry; and, shouldering his swag, tramped it into Cooktown to 'look for a ship.'



## ADDIE RANSOM: A MEMORY OF THE TOKELAUS

A hot, steamy mist rose from the gleaming, oily sea, and the little island lay sweltering and gasping under a sky of brass and a savagely blazing sun. Along the edges of the curving lines of yellow beach the drought-smitten plumes of the fast-withering coco-palms drooped straight, brown and motionless; and Wallis, the trader at Avamua village, as he paced to and fro upon the heated boards of his verandah, cursed the island and the people, and the deadly calm, and the brassy sky, and the firm of Tom de Wolf & Sons (whom he blamed for the weather), and the drought, and the sickness, and the overdue ship, and himself, and everything else; and he wished that Lita would go away for a month—her patience and calmness worried and irritated him. Then he might perhaps try getting drunk on Sundays like Ransom; to-day was Sunday, and another Sunday meant another hell of twelve hours' heat, and misery, and hope deferred.

'Curse that damned bell! There it goes again, though half of the people are dead, and the other half are dying like rotten sheep! Oh, for a ship, or rain, or a howling gale—anything but this!'

He dashed his pipe furiously upon the verandah, and then flung himself into a cane lounge, pressed his hands to his ears, and swore silently at the jarring clamour of the hated church bell.

Lita's brown hand touched him on the shoulder.

'Wassa th' matter, Tom, wis you?'

'Oh, go away, for God's sake, Lita, there's a good girl. Leave me alone. Go to church, and tell Ioane I'll give him a couple of dollars not to ring that damned, infernal bell again to-day. I'm going mad! I'll get drunk, I think,

like Ransom. My God! just think of it, girl! Twelve months without a ship, and this hateful, God-forsaken island turning into a pest-house.'

'Wasa is pesta-house, Tom?'

'Place where they put people in to die—lazzaretto, charnel-house, morgue, living grave! Oh, go away, girl, go to the blarsted church if you want to, and leave me alone.'

Her slender fingers touched his hand timidly.

'I don' wan' go to church, Tom. I don' wan' leave you here to get mad an' lon'ly by yourse'f.'

'Very well, old woman, stay here with me. Perhaps a breeze may come by-and-by and then we can breathe. How many people died yesterday, Lita?'

"Bout nine, Tom—four men, tree woman, an' some child.'

'Poor devils! I wish I had some medicine for them. But I'm hanged if I know what it is—some sort of cholera brought here by that infernal American missionary brig, I believe. Hallo! there's Ioane beginning.'

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The white-walled native church was not a stone's throw away, and through the wide, paneless windows and open doors the deep voice of Ioane, the Samoan native teacher, sounded clearly and solemnly in the still, heated morn. Wallis, with his wide straw hat covering his bronzed face, lay back in the lounge, and, at first, took no heed. Lita, sitting at his feet, rested her chin on one hand and listened intently.

'Turn ye all, men and women of this afflicted land of Nukutavau, to the Word of God, which is written in the Book of Isaiah, in the fortieth chapter and the sixth verse. It was to my mind that we should first sing to the praise of Jehovah; but, alas! we cannot sing to-day; for my cheeks are wetted with many tears, and my belly is bursting with sorrow when I see how few there are of us who are left. But yet can we pray together; and the whisper of

affliction shall as surely reach the ear of God as the loud, glad song of praise. But first hear ye these words:—

“The Voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? And the Voice answered. All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: Surely the people is grass.”

Wallis sat up and listened; for as the preacher ceased he heard the sound of many sobs; and presently a woman, old, gaunt and feeble, staggered out from the church and flung herself face downwards upon the burning sand.

'A mate, a mate tatou,' she moaned, 'e agi mai le manava Ieova.' ('We perish, we perish with the breath of Jehovah.')

She lay there unheeded; for now the preacher, with broken voice, was passionately imploring his congregation to cast themselves upon the mercy of God, and beseech Him to stay the deadly pestilence which had so sorely smitten the land.

'And spare Thou, O God Most High, Most Merciful, and Most Just, these many little children who yet live, for they are but very small, and have not yet sinned before Thee. Three of mine own hast thou touched with Thy hand, and taken to Thee, and my belly and the belly of my wife are empty, and yearn in the night for the voices we shall hear no more. And for those three whom Thou hast taken, spare Thou three of those who yet live. And shield, O God, with Thy care, the *papalagi*{\*} Ranisome and his child, the girl Ati' (Addie), 'for she loveth Thy word; and turn Thou the heart of her father from the drinking of grog, so that he shall be no more as a hog that is *loia*.'{\*\*} 'And shield, too, the *papalagi* Walesi and the woman Lita—she who liveth with him in sin—for their hearts are ever good and their hands ever open to us of Nukutavau; and send, O most merciful and compassionate One, a ship, so that the two white men and the woman Lita,

and the girl Ati, and we, Thy people, may not die of hunger and thirst and sickness, but live to praise Thy holy name.'

*\* Foreigner.*

*\*\* A man or an animal is loaia when he or it has eaten or drunk to such repletion as to lie down and be overrun with ants—an expressive Samoan synonym for excess.*

A burst of weeping, and *Amene! Amene!* came from his hearers, then silence; and Wallis, taking his hat from his face, bent his head.

Presently the scanty congregation came slowly forth. Some, as they passed the white man and Lita, tried to smile a greeting to them, though every brown face was wet with tears. Last of all came Ioane, the Samoan teacher, short, square-built, with deep sunken earnest eyes bent to the ground, his right arm supporting his wife, whose slender frame was shaken with the violence of her grief for those three of her heart whom 'He had taken.' Wallis, followed by Lita, stepped down from his verandah, and held out his hand. The teacher pressed it in silence, and, unable now to speak, walked slowly on. Lita, her dark, oval face still hot with anger, drew back and made no sign, though Eliné, the teacher's wife, murmured as she passed,—'Nay, be not angry, Lita; for death is near to us all.'

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As they returned to the house, Ransom, the old trader from Avatulalo, the next village to that in which Wallis lived, met them at the gate. He was a man of sixty or thereabout—grey, dirty, dishevelled and half drunk.

'I want you and Lita to come back with me,' he said slowly, holding to the palings of the fence, and moving his head from side to side; 'you must come... 'you must come, or'—with sudden frenzy—'by God, I'll put a firestick into your house; I will, by blazes, I will! Curse you, Tom Wallis, and your damned, Sydney-white-duck-suit-respectability, and your damned proud quarter-caste Portugee woman, who you ain't married to, as I was to mine—bad as she was. Put up your hands you—'

Wallis gripped him firmly but kindly by the wrists, and forced him into a seat.

'What's the matter with you, Ransom? Only drunk and fightable as usual? or are you being chased by pink snakes with tiger's heads again, eh? There, sit quiet, old man. Where is Addie?'

For a few moments the old man made no answer; then he rose, and placing his trembling hands on Wallis's chest said brokenly,—

'God help me, Tom! She's a-dyin'... an' I'm near drunk. She was took bad this mornin', an' has been callin' for the teacher an' Lita— an' I'd as lief go to hell as to ask a damned Kanaka mission'ry to come an' talk Gospel an' Heaven to a child o' mine—not in my own house, anyway. It ain't right or proper. But she kep' on a-pesterin' me, an' at last I said I would come an' arst him... an' while I was waitin' outside the church I hears the damned feller a-prayin' and sayin' "*All flesh is grass, and the grass withereth*"—his voice quivered and broke again—'an' onct I heard my old mother say them very words when she was a-dyin', more'n forty year ago, in the old country. An' Addie's dyin' fast, Tom; dyin', an' I can't say a prayer with her; I don't know none. I'm only a drunken old shellback, an' I ought to be struck dead for my bloody sins. She's all I has in the world to love; an' now, an' now—' He turned away and, covering his face with his coarse, sunburnt hands, sobbed like a child.

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Half an hour later Wallis and Lita were in the room with the dying girl. Ransom, shambling behind them, crept in and knelt at the foot of the bed. Two native women, who were squatted on the matted floor went out softly, and Wallis bent over the girl and looked into her pallid, twitching face, over which the dread grey shadow was creeping fast. She put out her hand to the trader and Lita, and a faint smile moved her lips.

'You is good to come, Tom Wallis,' she said, in her childish voice, 'an' so is you, Lita. Wher' is my fath'? I don' see him. I was ask him to bring Ioane

here to pray fo' me. I *can't* pray myself.... I *have* been try.... Wher' is you, fath'?

Ransom crept round to her side, and laid his face upon her open hand.

'Ah, fath', you is come... poor fath'. I say, fath', *don* you drink no more. You been promise me that, fath', so many time. *Don''* you break yo' promise now, will you?'

The grizzled old sinner put his trembling lips to hers. 'Never no more, Addie—may God strike me dead if I lie!'

'Come away, old man,' said Wallis, softly, 'let Lita be with her. Neither you nor I should disturb her just now. See, she wants Lita. But her time is near, and you must keep close to her.'

They drew apart, and Lita knelt beside the bed.

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'An' did he pray for fath', an' me, an' you, an' Tom, an' my mother who runned away? Tell me all 'bout it, Lita. I *did* wan' him to come and tell me some things I wan' to know before I is dead. Tell me what he say.'

'He say dat vers', "De grass with', de flow' fade, but de word of de Lor' God endure fo' ev.'"

'Was do it mean, Lita, dear?'

'I don' 'xactly know, Ati, dear. But Tom say he mean dat by-an'-by, if we is good an' don' lie an' steal, an' don' kill nobody, dat we all go to heav' when we is die.'

'Lita, dear, Ioane say one day dat de Bible say my fath' go to hell because he get drunk all de time.'

'Don' you b'lieve him, Ati; Ioane is only dam Kanaka mission'ry. Wassa the hell do *he* know 'bout such thing? *You* go to heav' sure 'nuff, and you fath' come to you there by-an'-by. He never been steal or lie; he on'y get drunk. Don' you be 'fraid 'bout dat, Ati, dear. An' you will see yo' mother, too. Oh, yes, yo' will see yo' mother; an' yo' fath' will come there too, all

nice, an' clean, an' sober, in new pyjamas all shinin' white; an' he will kiss yo' mother on her mouf, an' say, "I forgive you, Nellie Ransom, jes' as Jesu Christ has forgive me."

The girl sighed heavily, and then lay with closed eyes, breathing softly. Suddenly she turned quickly on her side, and extended her arms, and her voice sounded strangely clear and distinct.

'Where is you, fath'? Quick, quick, come an' hol' me. It is dark.... Hol' me tight... clos' up, clos' up, fath', my fath'... it is so dark—so dark.'

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The natives told Wallis next morning that 'Ranisome' had gone quite mad.

'How know ye he is mad?'

'*Tah!* He hath taken every bottle of grog from two boxes and smashed them on the ground. And then we saw him kneel upon the sand, raise his hands, and weep. He is mad.'

## IN A NATIVE VILLAGE

When I first settled down on this particular island as a trader, I had, in my boundless ignorance of the fierce jealousy that prevailed between the various villages thereon, been foolish enough to engage two or three servants from outlying districts—much against the wishes of the local *kaupule* (town councillors), each of whom brought me two or three candidates (relatives, connections or spongers of their own) and urged that I should engage them and no others. This I refused to do, point blank, and after much angry discussion and argument, I succeeded in having my own way, and was allowed to choose my servants from villages widely apart. In the course of a few weeks some terrific encounters had taken place between my women servants and other of the local females, who regarded them as vile usurpers of their right to rob and plunder the new white man. However, in time matters settled down in a measure; and beyond vituperative language and sanguinary threats against the successful applicants, the rejected candidates, male and female, behaved very nicely. But I was slumbering on a latent volcano of fresh troubles, and the premonitory upheaval came about a month after our head nurse, Hakala, had been fined five dollars for using English Seafaring' language to another woman who had called her a pig. As Hakala could not pay the fine—being already in debt to me for two months' wages paid in advance—I settled it; for she was a widow, and had endeared herself to me by the vigorous manner in which she had pitched a large, fat girl named 'Heké out of the house for stealing some sugar from my store-room. The members of the *kaupule* (the village parliament) were pleased to accept the money, but wrote me a formal letter on the following morning, and remarked that it was wrong of me to encourage brutal conduct in any of my servants—wrong and un-Christian-

like as well. 'But,' the letter went on to say, 'it is honest of you to pay this woman's fine; and Talamaheke' (the sugar-thief) 'has been sentenced to do three days' road-making for stealing the sugar. Yet you must not think evil of Talamaheke, for she is a little *vale* (mad), and has a class in the Sunday-school. Now it is in our minds that, as you are an honest man, you will pay the fines owing on the horse.' I had a vague recollection of my predecessor telling me something indefinite about a horse belonging to the station, but could not remember whether he said that the animal was in the vicinity of the station or was rambling elsewhere on the island, or had died. So I called my Samoan cook, Harry, to learn what he knew about the matter. Harry was the Adonis of the village, and already the under-nurse, E'eu, a sweet little hazel-eyed creature of fifteen, and incorrigibly wicked, had succumbed to his charms, and spent much of her time in the kitchen. At that moment Harry was seated outside the cook-house, dressed in a suit of spotless white duck, playing an accordeon; also he wore round his brown neck a thick wreath of white and scarlet flowers. Harry, I may remark, was a dandy and a notorious profligate, but against these natural faults was the fact that he could make very good bread.

'Harry,' I said, 'do you know anything about this horse?' and I tapped the official letter.

He smiled. 'Oh, yes, sir. I know all 'bout him. He been fined altogether 'bout two hundred and fifty dollar, an' never pay.'

'What do you mean? How can anyone fine a horse?'

Then Harry explained and gave me the horse's history.

The animal had been brought from New Zealand for some occult reason, and had behaved himself very badly ever since he landed. Young banana trees were his especial fancy, cotton plants he devoured wholesale, and it was generally asserted that he was also addicted to kicking chickens. My three predecessors on the station had each repudiated the creature, and each

man when he left the island had said that his successor would pay for all damage done.

'Where is the brute now?' I asked.

Looking cautiously around to see that no one was within earshot, Harry informed me that until a week previously the *nuâ* had been running quietly in the interior of the island for many months, but since my arrival had been brought back by two of the deacons and was now feeding about the immediate vicinity.

'Why did the deacons bring him back, if he destroys banana trees and kill chickens?'

Harry looked very uncomfortable and seemed disinclined to speak, but at last let the cat out of the bag and revealed a diabolical conspiracy—the horse had been brought back for my undoing, or rather for the undoing of the strings of my bag of dollars.

'You see, sir,' said he, confidentially, 'these people on this island very clever—all dam rogue' (his mother was a native of the island), 'an' 'bout a month ago, when you give two dollar to help build new church, the *fakafili* and *kaupule*{\*} (judge and councillors) 'say you is a very good man and that you might pay that horse's fines. An' if you pay that horse's fines then the people will have enough money to send to Sydney to buy glass windows and nice, fine doors for the new church. An' so that is why the deacons have bring that horse back.'

'But what good will bringing the horse here do? That won't make me pay his fines.'

'Oh, you see, sir, since the horse been come back the people take him out every day into some banana plantation and let him eat some trees. Then, by-and-by—to-morrer, perhaps—they will come an' ask you to go and look. Then you will look an' say, "Alright, I will pay five dollar." An' then when you pay that five dollar the *kaupule* and the judge will say, "Now you mus'

pay for all the bad things that that horse do before you come here.” An' s'pose you won' pay, then I b'lieve the judge an' headmen goin' to *tapu*{\*} your store. You see they wan' that money for church very bad, because they very jealous of Halamua church.'

*\* Tapu, in this sense, means boycotting.*

'Jealous of Halamua church! Why?'

'Oh, because Halamua people been buy a foolpit for their church—a very fine foolpit from California; an' now this town here very jealous, and the people say that when you pay that horse's fine they will buy pine windows, pine doors, and pine floor, *and give Halamua church hell?*

The novel (but in some cases exceedingly correct) pronunciation of pulpit pleased me, yet my wrath was aroused at this scandalous revelation of the plans of the villagers to beautify their church at my expense. It was as bad as any church bazaar in Christendom.

As Harry surmised, I received a visit from a deputation the next morning. They wanted me to come and see the destruction done to their plantations by *my* horse.

'But it's not my horse,' I said. 'I decline to hear anything about a horse. There is no horse down in my stock list, nor an elephant.'

A dirty old ruffian with one eye and a tattooed face regarded me gravely for a moment, and then asked me in a wheezy, husky voice if I knew that Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for telling lies.

'Of course,' I replied promptly, 'I saw them struck. My uncle in England had them buried in his garden to improve the soil. And why do you come here and tell me these things about a horse? If there *is* a horse, and it eats your bananas and sugar-cane, why don't you shoot it?'

This suggestion staggered the deputation, half of which scratched its head meditatively. Then a tall, thin man, with an attenuated face like a starved

fowl, said sneeringly in English,—

'What for you want to make gammon you no savee about horse?'

His companions smiled approvingly; not that they understood a word of English, but they evidently regarded the fowl-like creature as a learned person who would give me a dressing down in my own language.

I looked at him with a puzzled expression, and then said to Harry,—

'What does this man say, Harry? I can't talk German. Can you?'

Harry grinned and shook his head; the rest of the deputation looked angrily at the hatchet-faced man, and the member seated next to him told him he ought to be ashamed of himself to pretend to be able to *vogahau faka Beretania* (talk English).

For some minutes no one spoke. Then the youngest member of the deputation, a jolly, fat-faced young deacon, dressed in a suit of white flannel, laughed merrily, and asked me for some tobacco. I gave them a plug each all round, and the deputation withdrew. So having successfully repudiated the horse and all his works, I felt satisfied.

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Pigs were the next trouble—my own pigs and the pigs of the general public. When I landed on the island I had brought with me from Sydney a lady and gentleman pig of exceedingly high lineage. They were now the proud and happy parents of seven beautiful little black-and-white piglets, and at any hour of the day one might see numbers of natives looking over my wall at the graceful little creatures as they chased one another over the grass, charged at nothing, and came to a dead stop with astonishing rapidity and a look of intense amazement. One fatal day I let them out, thinking they would come to no harm, as their parents were with them. As they did not return at dusk I sent E'eu, the under-nurse, to search for them. She came back and told me in a whisper that the father and mother pig were rooting up a sweet-potato patch belonging to the local chief. The piglets she had

failed to discover. Enjoining secrecy, I sent E'eu and Harry to chase the parents home. This was effected after considerable trouble, but the owner of the potato patch claimed two dollars damages. I paid it, feeling his claim was just. Next morning the seven piglets were returned one by one by various native children. Each piglet had, according to their accounts, been in a separate garden, and done considerable damage; and 'because they' (the piglets) 'were the property of a good and just man, the owners of the gardens would not hurt nor even chase them,' etc. Glad to recover the squealing little wanderers at any cost, I gave each lying child a quarter-dollar. Next day I had a piece of ground walled in with lumps of coral and placed the porcine family inside. Then I wrote to the councillors, asking them to notify the people that if any of the village pigs came inside my fence and rooted abyssmal holes in my ground, as had been their habit hitherto, I should demand compensation. His Honour the Chief Justice stated in court that this was only fair and right; the white man had paid for the damage done by *his* pigs, and therefore he was entitled to claim damages if the village pigs caused him trouble. (I had previously squared his Honour with the promise of a male sucker.) One day the seven young pigs escaped from their mother and went out for a run on the village green. They were at once assailed as detestable foreign devils by about two hundred and forty-three gaunt, razorbacked village sows, and were only rescued from a cruel death after every one had lost its tail. Why is it that pigs of different breeds always bite off each other's tails? I claimed fifty cents per tail, and was awarded \$3.50 damages, to be paid by the community generally. The community refused to pay. His Honour then notified by the town crier that I was at liberty to shoot any pig that broke into the station grounds. I put a cartridge into a Snider rifle and told my servants to call me if they heard a grunt in the night.

Three days after this, as I was discussing theology and baked fowl one night with the local teacher in his own house, a boy burst in and said that

there was a strange pig in my garden devouring my crop of French beans. In two minutes I was back in my house, snatched up the Snider, and ran to the garden wall. There was the brute, a great black-and white beast, the biggest native pig I ever saw. His back was turned, but hearing my steps he 'went about' and faced me. 'Twas a bright moonlight night, and the bullet plugged him fair between the eyes. Over he rolled without a kick. Then I heard a shriek or laughter, and saw half a dozen girls scuttling away among the coco-palms. A horrible suspicion nearly made me faint. Jumping over the wall I examined the defunct, and could scarce forbear to shed a tear.

'Twas mine own prized black Australian boar, daubed over with splashes of coral lime whitewash. And the whitewash came from a tub full of it, with which the natives had that morning been whitening the walls of the newly-built village church. The one-eyed old scoundrel of a deacon told me next day it was a judgment on me.

## MAURICE KINANE

Eastward, from the coast of New Guinea, there lies a large island called, on the maps, New Britain, the native name of which is Berara. It is nearly three hundred miles in length and, in parts, almost sixty in width, and excepting the north-eastern portion, now settled by German colonists, is inhabited by a race of dangerous and treacherous cannibals, who are continually at war among themselves, for there are many hundred tribes living on the coast as well as in the interior. Although there have been white people living on the north-east coast for over thirty years—for there were adventurous American and English traders living in this wild island long before the natives ever saw a German—not one of them knew then, or knows now, much of the strange black tribes who dwell in the interior of the centre and western part of the island, save that they were then, as they are in this present year, always at enmity with the coast tribes, and are, like them, more or less addicted to cannibalism.

Sixty miles from the western end of the island is the mountainous land of German New Guinea; and sometimes, when the air is clear and the south-east trade wind blows, the savages on Berara can see across the deep, wide strait the grey loom of the great range that fringes the north-eastern coast of New Guinea for many hundred miles. Once, indeed, when the writer of this true story lived in New Britain, he saw this sight for a whole week, for there, in those beautiful islands, the air is very clear at certain seasons of the year.

From Matupi, where the principal settlement in New Britain is situated, to the deep bay at Kabaira, fifty miles away, the coast is very beautiful. And, indeed, no one who looks at the lovely grassy downs that here and there show through the groves of waving palm trees stretching from the

beach away up to the rising land of the interior could think that such a fair country was the home of a deadly fever; and that in the waters of the bright limpid streams that ran gently down from the forest-clad hills to meet the blue waters of the Pacific there lurked disease and death to him who drank thereof.

At the time of my story (except for the adventurous American whalers from Nantucket and New Bedford, and the sandal-wood cutters from New South Wales, who sometimes touched there) white men were unknown to the people of New Britain. Sometimes when the sperm-whaling fleet was cruising northwards and westward to the Moluccas, a ship would sail along the coast in the daytime, but always anchored at night, for it was dreaded for the many dangerous reefs that surround it. And once the anchor was down a strict watch was kept on board, for the natives were known to be fierce and treacherous.

Between where is now the German settlement and the great native town at Kabaira Bay there is an island called Mano, which stands five miles off from the mainland. Early one morning, when the wild people of the villages among the palm-groves which lined the long winding beach came out of their thatched huts for their morning bathe they gave a great cry, for a large full-rigged ship was standing in close under the lee of Mano, and clewing up her sails before she came to an anchor.

Now the natives who lived on the mainland of New Britain were the hereditary enemies of those who dwelt on Mano Island, and it was hateful for them to see a ship anchor there, for then the Mano Islanders would get axes and muskets and hoop-iron.

So, with Baringa, the chief, at their head, they all ran to the summit of a high, grassy hill (known, by reason of a terrible deed once done there in the olden times, as the Hill of Old Men's Groans), and sat down to watch if the ship would send her boats ashore.

'Look!' said Baringa, fiercely, striking the ground with his heavy jade-headed club, 'look, I see a boat putting out from the side. Who among ye will come with me to the ship, so that I may sell my turtle shell and pearl shell to the captain for muskets and powder and bullets? Are these dogs of Mano to get such things from the ship, and then come over here at night and slay and then cook us in their ovens? Hungry am I for revenge; for 'tis now twelve moons since they stole my son from me, and not one life have I had in return for his.'

But no one answered. Of what use was it, they thought, for Baringa to think of his little son? He was but a boy after all, and had long since gone down the throats of the men of Mano. Besides, the Mano people were very strong and already had many guns.

So for an hour Baringa sat and chafed and watched; and then suddenly he and those with him sprang up, for a sound like thunder came over to them, and a cloud of white smoke curled up from the ship's side; she had fired one of her big guns. Presently Baringa and his people saw that the boat which had gone ashore was pulling back fast, and that some of the crew who were sitting in the stern were firing their muskets at the Mano people, who were pursuing the boat in six canoes. Twice again the ship fired a big gun, and then the boat was safe, for the two twenty-four pounders, loaded with grape-shot, smashed two of them to pieces when they were less than a hundred yards from the ship.

Baringa shouted with savage joy. 'Come,' he cried, 'let us hasten to the beach, and get quickly to the ship in our canoes; for now that the white men have fought with these Mano dogs, the ship will come here to us and anchor; for I, Baringa, am known to many white men.'

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The name of the ship was the *Boadicea*. She was of about seven hundred tons, and was bound to China from Port Jackson, but for four months had remained among the islands of the New Hebrides group, where the crew

had been cutting sandal-wood, which in those days was very plentiful there. Her captain, who was a very skilful navigator, instead of going through Torres Straits, had sailed between New Ireland and New Britain, so that he might learn the truth of some tales he had heard about the richness of those islands in sandal-wood and pearl shell. So he had cruised slowly along till he sighted Mano Island, and here he decided to water the ship; for from the deck was visible a fine stream of water, running from the forest-clad mountains down to the white sands of the quiet beach.

As soon as possible a boat was lowered and manned and armed; for although he could not see a native anywhere on the beach, nor any signs of human occupation elsewhere on the island, the captain was a very cautious man. A little further back from the beach was a very dense grove of coconut trees laden with fruit, and at these the crew of the *Boadicea* looked with longing eyes.

'We must water the ship first, my lads,' said Captain Williams, 'and then we'll spend the rest of the day among the coco-nut trees, and fill our boats with them.'

Just then as the bronze-faced captain was ascending to the poop from his cabin; a small barefooted boy came aft, and, touching his hat, said,—

'Av ye plaze, sor, won't ye let me go in the boat, sor?'

'Why, Maurice, my boy, there's quite enough of us going in her as it is,' said the captain, kindly, for the dirty-faced but bright-eyed Maurice Kinane was a favourite with everyone on board.

'Ah, but shure, sor,' pleaded the boy, 'av yer honour would just let me go, av it was only to pluck a blade av the foine green grass, and lave me face in the swate clane wather I'll be beholden—'

'Well, well, my lad, jump in then,' said Captain Williams, with a smile, and buckling his cutlass belt around his waist he sent the lad down the ladder before him and the boat pushed off.

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Ten months before, this poor Irish lad, who was but thirteen years of age, had lost both his parents through the upsetting of a boat in Sydney Harbour. His father was a sergeant in the 77th Regiment, and had only arrived in the colony a few months previous to the accident, and the boy was left without a relative in the world. But the captain of his father's company and the other officers of the regiment were very kind to him, and the colonel said he would get him enlisted as a drummer.

And so for a time Maurice lived in the barracks under the care of Sergeant MacDougall, a crusty old warrior, who proved a hard master and made the boy's life anything but a happy one. And Maurice, though he was proud of the colonel's kind words and of serving with the regiment, fretted greatly at the harsh manner of the old sergeant.

One morning he was reported as missing. Little did those who looked for him all the next day think that the boy was far out at sea, for he had stowed away on board the *Boadicea*; and although Captain Williams was very angry with him when he was discovered and led aft, the lad's genial temper and bright, honest face soon won him over, as, indeed, it did everyone else on board.

For nearly an hour after the boat had landed at the mouth of the little stream the seamen were busily-engaged in filling the water casks. Not a sign of a native could be seen, and then, regardful of the longing looks that the sailors cast at the grove of coco-nuts, the captain, taking with him Maurice and four hands, set out along the beach for the purpose of gathering a few score of the young nuts to give to his men to drink.

One of the four seamen was a Kanaka named 'Tommy Sandwich.' He was a native of Sandwich or Vaté Island in the New Hebrides. In a very short time this man had ascended a lofty palm-tree, and was throwing down the coco-nuts to the others, who for some minutes were busily engaged tying them together to carry them to the boat.

'That will do, Tommy,' cried the captain, presently. 'Come down now and help the others to carry.' He did not see that Maurice, boy-like and adventurous, had managed to ascend a less lofty tree some little distance away, out of sight of his shipmates, and at that moment was already ensconced in the leafy crown, gazing with rapture at the lovely scene that lay before him.

It took the men but another ten minutes to tie up the coco-nuts into bunches of ten, and then each of them drank copiously of the sweet milk of half a dozen which Tommy had husked for them.

'Come, lads,' said Captain Williams, 'back to the boat now. By-and-by—'

A dreadful chorus of savage yells interrupted him, and he and the men seized their muskets and sprang to their feet. The sounds seemed to come from where the boat was watering; in a few seconds more four musket shots rang out.

'Run, run for your lives,' cried the captain, drawing his pistol. 'The savages are attacking the boat.' And the seamen, throwing down the coco-nuts, rushed out of the palm grove to rescue their shipmates.

They were only just in time, for the banks of the little stream were covered with naked savages, who had sprung out of the thick undergrowth upon the watering party, and ere the boat could be pushed off two of the poor sailors had been savagely slaughtered. Fortunately for the captain and his party, they were nearer to the boat, when they made their appearance, than were the natives, and, plunging into the water, and holding their muskets over their heads, they reached her in safety, and at once opened fire, whilst the rest of the crew bent to the oars.

But the danger was not yet over, for as soon as the boat was out of reach of the showers of spears sent at her from the shore, a number of canoes appeared round a bend of the mountainous coast. They had evidently been sent to cut off the white men's retreat. And then began the race for life to the

ship which had been witnessed by Baringa and his people from the mainland.

Maurice, from his tree, had heard the yells of the savages and the gunshots, and was about to descend and follow the captain and his shipmates, when he heard a rush of bodies through the palm grove, and saw beneath him forty or fifty natives, all armed with clubs and spears. They were a horrible-looking lot, for they were quite naked and the lips of all were stained a deep red from the juice of the betel-nut, and their dull reddish-brown bodies were daubed over with yellow and white stripes. This party had perhaps meant to surprise the captain and his men as they were getting the coco-nuts, for, finding them gone, they at once rushed out of the grove in pursuit. Fortunately for Maurice they were too excited to think of looking about them, else his end would have come very quickly.

For nearly ten minutes the lad remained quiet, listening to the sounds of the fighting, and in fearful doubt as to his best course of action—whether to make a bold dash and try to find his way to the boat, or remain in the tree till a rescue party was sent from the ship. Suddenly the thundering report of one of the ship's guns made him peer seaward through the branches of his retreat; and there, to his delight, he caught a brief view of the boat. Again the report of another gun pealed out, and a wild screaming cry from the natives told him that the shot had done some execution.

'I must get out of this,' he thought, 'and make a bolt along the beach in the other direction, till I get into the hills. I can see better from there, and perhaps make a signal to the ship.' Maurice got quietly down from the tree, and after looking cautiously about him, was about to set off at a run, when he found himself face to face with a young native boy, who, running quickly forward, grasped him by the hands, and began to talk volubly, at the same time trying to drag him towards the beach. The boy, save for a girdle of ti leaves, was naked, and Maurice, anxious and alarmed as he was for his

own safety, could not but notice that the young savage seemed terribly excited.

'Let me go, ye black naygur,' said Maurice, freeing his hands and striking him in the chest.

In an instant the native boy fell upon his knees, and held up his hands, palms outward, in a supplicating gesture.

Puzzled at this, but still dreading treachery, Maurice turned away and again sought to make his way to the hills; but again the boy caught his hands, and with gentle force, and eyes filled with tears, tried to push or lead him to the beach. At last, apparently as if in despair of making the white lad understand him by words, he made signs of deadly combat, and ended by pointing over to where the boat had been attacked. Then, touching Maurice on the chest, and then himself, he pointed to the sea, and lying on the ground worked his arms and legs as if swimming.

'Sure, perhaps he's a friend,' thought Maurice, 'an' wants me to swim off to the ship. But perhaps he's a thraitor and only manes to entice me away to be murdered. Anyway, it's not much of a choice I've got at all. So come on, blackamoor, I'm wid ye.'

Although not understanding a word that Maurice said, the native boy smiled when he saw that the white lad was willing to come with him at last. Then, hand-in-hand, they ran quietly along till they reached the beach; and here the native, motioning Maurice to keep out of view, crept on his hands and knees till he reached a rock, and then slowly raised his head above it and peered cautiously ahead.

Whatever it was he saw evidently satisfied him, for he crawled back to Maurice, and again taking his hand broke into a run, but instead of going in the direction of the river, he led the way along the beach in the opposite direction. Feeling confident now that he had found a friend, Maurice's spirits began to rise, and he went along with the boy unhesitatingly.

At last they rounded a sandy point, covered with a dense growth of coconut trees and pandanus palms; this point formed the southern horn of a small deep bay, in the centre of which stood an island, warded by a snow-white beach, and on the nearest shore Maurice saw a canoe drawn up.

The island beach was quite three hundred yards away, but Maurice was a good swimmer, and although he shuddered at the thought of sharks, he plunged in the water after his dark-skinned companion and soon reached the islet, which was but a tiny spot, containing some two or three score of coco-palms, and three untenanted native huts. It was used by the natives as a fishing station, and the canoe, which was a very small one, had evidently been in use that day. Close by were the marks in the sand where a larger one had been carried down. In one of the huts smoke was arising from a native ground-oven, which showed that the fishermen had not long gone; doubtless they would return when the food was cooked, for the native boy pointed out the oven to Maurice with a look of alarm.

The two boys soon launched the canoe, and each seizing a paddle, at once struck out in the direction of the ship. The native lad sat aft, Maurice for'ard, and clumsy as was the latter with the long and narrow canoe paddle, he yet managed to keep his seat and not capsize the frail little craft.

'Hurroo!' cried foolish Maurice, turning to his companion, 'we're all right now, I'm thinkin'. There's the ship!'

There she was sure enough, and there also were four canoes, paddling along close in-shore, returning from their chase of the captain's boat. They heard Maurice's loud shout of triumph, at once altered their course, and sped swiftly towards the two boys.

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Scarcely had Captain Williams and his exhausted crew gained the ship when the mate reported that a fleet of canoes was coming across from the mainland of New Britain, and orders were at once given to load the ship's eight guns with grape and canister. (In those days of Chinese and Malay

pirates and dangerous natives of the South Seas, all merchants ships, particularly those engaged in the sandal-wood trade, were well armed, and almost man-of-war discipline observed.)

'We'll give them something to remember us by, Hodgson,' said Captain Williams, grimly. 'That poor lad! To think I never noticed he was not in the boat till too late! I expect he's murdered by now; but I shall take a bloody vengeance for the poor boy's death. Serve out some grog to the hands, steward; and some of you fellows stand by with some shot to dump into the canoes if we should miss them with the guns and they get alongside.'

But just as he spoke the mate called out, 'The canoes have stopped paddling, sir, all except one, which is coming right on.'

'All right, I see it. Let them come and have a look at us. As soon as it gets close enough, I'll sink it.'

For some minutes the canoe, which contained seven men, continued to advance with great swiftness; then she ceased paddling, and the steersman stood up and called out something to the ship, just as she was well covered by two of the guns on the port side. In another minute she would have been blown out of the water, when Tommy Sandwich ran aft and said,—

'I think, cap'n, that fellow he no want fight ship; I think he want talk you.'

'Perhaps so, Tommy; so we'll let him come a bit closer.'

Again the native paddles sent the canoe inward till she was well within easy hailing distance of the ship, and the same native again stood up and called out,—

'Hi, cap'n. No you shoot me. Me Baringa. Me like come 'board.'

'All right,' answered Captain Williams, 'come alongside.'

The moment the canoe ranged alongside, Baringa clambered up the side, and advanced fearlessly toward the poop. 'Where cap'n?' he asked, pushing unceremoniously aside those who stood in his way; and mounting the

ladder at the break of the poop he walked up to the master of the *Boadicea* and held out his hand.

In a very short time, by the aid of Tommy Sandwich, whose language was allied to that of the natives of New Britain, Captain Williams learnt how matters stood. His visitor was anxious to help him, and volunteered to join the white man in an attack on the treacherous people of Mano, though he gave but little hope of their finding Maurice alive. They had, he said, stolen his own son twelve months before, and eaten him, and he wanted his revenge. Presently, as a proof of his integrity, he produced from a dirty leather cartridge pouch, that was strapped around his waist, a soiled piece of paper, and handed it to the captain. It read as follows:—

*'The bearer, Baringa, is the chief of Kabaira Coast. He is a thorough old cannibal, but, as far as I know, may be trusted by white men. He supplied my ship with fresh provisions, and seems a friendly old cut-throat.'*

*'Matthew Wallis,  
'Master, ship Algerine of New Bedford.  
'October 2 st, 1839.'*

'Well, that's satisfactory,' said Captain Williams, turning to Tommy. 'Tell him that I am going to land and try and find Maurice, and he can help me with his people. Mr Hodgson, man and arm the boats again.'

In a moment all was bustle and excitement, in the midst of which a loud 'hurrah' came from aloft from a sailor who was on the fore-yard watching the remaining canoes of Baringa's fleet. 'Hurrah! Here's Maurice, sir, coming off in a canoe with a nigger, an' a lot of other niggers in four canoes a-chasin' him.'

Springing to the taffrail, Captain Williams saw the canoe, which had just rounded the point and was now well in view. The two boys were paddling for their lives; behind them were the four canoes filled with yelling savages.

'Into the boats, men, for God's sake!' roared the captain. Had a greater distance separated Maurice from his pursuers the master of the *Boadicea* would have endeavoured to have sunk the four canoes with the ship's guns; but the risk was too great to attempt it as they were. However, the gunner and carpenter were sent into the fore-top to try and pick off some of the natives by firing over Maurice's canoe.

Five minutes later the ship's three boats were pulling swiftly to the rescue, and Baringa, jumping into his own canoe, beckoned to the rest of his flotilla to follow him, and six natives urged the light craft furiously along after the boats.

On, on, came the two poor boys, straining every nerve; but every moment their pursuers gained on them; and on, on dashed the heavy, cumbersome boats. Already the nearest canoe was within fifty feet of Maurice and his black friend, the savage paddlers undaunted by the fire from the muskets of the gunner and carpenter, when Captain Williams saw a native rise up and hurl a club at the two boys. Quick as lightning the captain picked up his musket and fired, and the savage fell forward with a bullet through his chest. But quick as he was he was too late, for the club whizzed through the air and struck the native boy on his right arm.

A savage yell of triumph came from the pursuing canoes as their occupants saw the boy go down and the canoe broach-to, and then the leading canoe dashed up alongside that of Maurice and his companion.

'Pull, men, pull, for God's sake!' cried the captain, frantically, as he saw the Irish lad, paddle in hand, standing up over the body of the fallen boy, and strike wildly at his murderous pursuers.

With heaving bosoms and set teeth the seamen urged the boats along, and they and the four canoes crashed together in deadly conflict. But as they met, a huge savage stood up and, poising a spear, darted it at the prone figure of the native boy; it did not reach him, for Maurice, wounded and

bleeding as he was with a spear wound through his thigh, flung himself in front of the weapon to save his friend. It struck him in the shoulder and came out a full foot at his back.

'You dog,' said Williams, raising his pistol, and the native went down with a crash.

And then ensued a scene of slaughter, as the seamen of the *Boadicea* got to work with their cutlasses. It did not take long to end the fight, and not one of the Mano men escaped, for now Baringa's canoes had come up, and with their heavy jade clubs dashed out the brains of those of their enemies who sought to swim ashore. It was in truth a hideous sight, and even the hardy sailors shuddered when they saw the merciless manner in which wounded and dying men were massacred by their naked allies.

As quickly as possible, the two boys were lifted out of the little canoe and placed in the captain's boat, where their wounds were examined. The native boy's arm was broken, and his back badly hurt, but he was quite conscious. As for Maurice, he was in a bad state, and Captain Williams decided not to pull out the spear till the ship was reached.

Just as he had given orders to pull for the ship, Baringa's canoe returned from the slaughter of the remaining fugitives, and drew up alongside the captain's boat, and the moment the chief saw the native boy lying in the stern sheets of the boat he sprang out of the canoe and embraced him.

'It is my boy, my Lokolol—he whom I thought was dead.'

Little remains to be told. The two boys were carefully attended to as soon as they reached the ship, and to the joy of everyone the spear, when extracted from Maurice's body, was pronounced by Baringa not to be a poisoned one. As for Lokolol, the chief's son, his arm was put in splints, but during the time that was occupied in doing this his hand was clasped around that of the brave young sailor lad who had saved his life, and his big, black eyes never left Maurice's pallid face.

For three days the *Boadicea* remained at anchor opposite the village—she had sailed there the morning after the fight—and the chief showed his gratitude by every possible means. On the morning of the day on which the ship sailed he came on board, attended by thirty canoes, every one of which was laden deep down with pearl shell. It was passed up on deck, and stacked in a heap, and then Baringa asked for the captain and the white boy who had saved his son. Beside him stood Lokolol, his arm in a sling, and tears running down his cheeks, for he knew he would see Maurice no more.

Then Captain Williams came on deck and showed the chief the little cabin boy, lying in a hammock under the poop awning. The burly savage came over to him, and taking Maurice's hand in his, placed it tenderly upon his huge, hairy bosom in token of gratitude. Then he spoke to the captain through Tommy Sandwich.

'Tell this good captain that I, Baringa, am for ever the white man's friend. And tell him, too, that all this pearl shell here is my gift to him and the boy who helped my son to escape from captivity. Half is for the good captain; half is for the brave white boy.'

Then, after remaining on board till the ship was many miles away from the land, the chief and his son bade the wounded boy farewell and went back to the shore.

Maurice soon recovered, and when the *Boadicea* arrived at Hong Kong, and Captain Williams had sold the pearl shell, he said to his cabin boy,—

'Maurice, my lad, I've sold the pearl shell, and what do you think I've been paid for it? Well, just eight thousand dollars—£1600 in English money. You're quite a rich boy now, Maurice. It's not every lad that gets four thousand dollars for saving a nigger's life.'

Maurice's bright blue eyes filled with honest tears. 'Shure, sor, he was a naygur, throe enough. But thin, yere honour, he had a foine bould heart to do what he did for Maurice Kinane.'

And, as I have said, this is a true story, and old Maurice Kinane, who is alive now, himself told it to me.

## THE 'KILLERS' OF TWOFOLD BAY

Enbosomed in the verdure-clad hills of the southern coast of sunny New South Wales lies a fisherman's paradise, named Twofold Bay. Its fame is but local, or known only to outsiders who may have spent a day there when travelling from Sydney to Tasmania in the fine steamers of the Union Company, which occasionally put in there to ship cattle from the little township of Eden, which is situated upon the northern shore of its deep and placid waters. But the chief point of interest about Twofold Bay is that it is the rendezvous of the famous 'killers' (*Orca gladiator*) the deadly foes of the whole race of cetaceans other than themselves, and the most extraordinary and sagacious creatures that inhabit the ocean's depths. From July to November two 'schools' of killers may be seen every day, either cruising to and fro across the entrance of the bay, or engaged in a Titanic combat with a whale—a 'right' whale, a 'humpback,' or the long, swift 'fin-back.' Never have they been known to tackle the great sperm-whale, except when one of those mighty creatures has been wounded by his human enemies. And to witness one of these mighty struggles is worth travelling many a thousand miles to see; it is terrible, awe-inspiring and wonderful. The 'killer' ranges in length from ten feet to twenty-five feet (whalemen have told me that one was seen stranded on the Great Barrier Reef in 1862 which measured thirty feet). Their breathing apparatus and general anatomy is much similar to that of the larger whales. They spout, 'breach.' and 'sound' like other cetaceans, and are of the same migratory habit, as the two 'schools' which haunt Twofold Bay always leave there at a certain time of the year to cruise in other seas, returning to their headquarters when the humpback and fin-back whales make their appearance on the coast of New

South Wales, travelling northwards to the feeding-grounds on the Bampton Shoals, the coast of New Guinea and the Moluccas.

The head of the killer is of enormous strength. The mouth is armed in both jaws with fearful teeth, from one and a half inches to two inches long, and set rather widely apart. In colour they show an extraordinary variation, some being all one hue—brown, black, or dull grey; others are black, with large, irregular patches or streaks of pure white or yellow; others are dark brown with black and yellow patches. One, which I saw ashore on the reef at the island of Nukulaelae in the South Pacific, was nearly black, except for a few irregular blotches of white on the back and belly. This particular killer had died from starvation, for nearly the entire lower jaw had decayed from a cancerous growth.

The whaling station at Twofold Bay is now, alas! the only one in the colony—the last remnant of a once great and thriving industry, which, in the early days of the then struggling colony, was the nursery of bold and adventurous seamen. It is now carried on by a family named Davidson, father and sons—in conjunction with the killers. And for more than twenty years this business partnership has existed between the humans and the cetaceans, and the utmost rectitude and solicitude for each other's interests has always been maintained. *Orca gladiator* seizes the whale for the Davidsons and holds him until the deadly lance is plunged into his 'life,' and the Davidsons let Orca carry the carcass to the bottom, and take his tithe of luscious blubber. This is the literal truth; and grizzled old Davidson, or any one of the stalwart sons who man his two boats, will tell you that but for the killers, who do half of the work, whaling would not pay with oil only worth from £18 to £24 a tun.

Let us imagine a warm, sunny day in August at Twofold Bay. The man who is on the lookout at the old lighthouse, built by Ben Boyd on the southern headland fifty years ago, paces to and fro on the grassy sward, stopping now and then to scan the wide expanse of ocean with his glass, for

the spout of a whale is hard to discern at more than two miles if the weather is not clear. If the creature is in a playful mood and 'breaches,' that is, springs bodily out of the water and sends up a white volume of foam and spray, like the discharge of a submarine mine, you can see it eight miles away.

The two boats are always in readiness at the trying-out works, a mile or so up the harbour; so, too, are the killers; and the look-out man, walking to the verge of the cliff, looks down. There they are, cruising slowly up and down, close in-shore, spouting lazily and showing their wet, gleaming backs as they rise, roll and dive again. There's 'Fatty,' and 'Spot,' and 'Flukey,' and 'Little Jim,' and 'Paddy,' and 'Tom Tug.' Nearly every one of them has a name, and each is well known to his human friends.

Presently the watchman sees, away to the southward, a white, misty puff, then another, and another. In an instant he brings his glass to bear, 'Humpbacks!' Quickly two flags flutter from the flagpole, and a fire is lit; and as the flags and smoke are seen, the waiting boats' crews at the trying-out station are galvanised into life by the cry of 'Rush, ho, lads! Humpbacks in sight, steering north-west!' Rush and tumble into the boats and away!

Round the south head sweeps the first boat, the second following more leisurely, for she is only a 'pick-up' or relief, in case the first is 'fluked' and the crew are tossed high in air, with their boat crushed into matchwood, or meets with some other disaster. And as the leading boat rises to the long ocean swell of the offing, the killers close in round her on either side, just keeping clear of the sweep of the oars, and 'breaching' and leaping and spouting with the anticipative zest of the coming bloody fray.

'Easy, lads, easy!' says the old boat-header; 'they're coming right down on us. Billy was right. They're humpbacks, sure enough!'

The panting oarsmen pull a slower stroke, and then, as they watch the great, savage creatures which swim alongside, they laugh in the mirthless

manner peculiar to most young native-born Australians, for suddenly, with a last sharp spurt of vapour, the killers dive and disappear into the dark blue beneath; for they have heard the whales, and, as is their custom, have gone ahead of the boat, rushing swiftly on below full fifty fathoms deep. Fifteen minutes later they rise to the surface in the midst of the humpbacks, and half a square acre of ocean is turned into a white, swirling cauldron of foam and leaping spray. The bull-dogs of the sea have seized the largest whale of the school, and are holding him for the boat and for the deadly lance of his human foes. The rest of the humpbacks raise high their mighty flukes and 'sound,' a hundred—two hundred—fathoms down, and, speeding seaward, leave the unfortunate bull to his dreadful fate.

(And, in truth, it is a dreadful fate, and the writer of this sketch can never forget how one day, as he and a little girl of six watched, from a grassy headland on the coast of New South Wales, the slaughter of a monstrous whale by a drove of killers, that the child wept and shuddered and hid her face against his shoulder.)

Ranging swiftly alongside of him, from his great head down to the 'small' of his back, the fierce killers seize his body in their savage jaws and tear great strips of skin and blubber from off his writhing sides in huge mouthfuls, and then jerking the masses aside, take another and another bite. In vain he sweeps his flukes with fearful strokes from side to side—the bulldogs of the sea come not within their range; in vain he tries to 'sound'—there is a devil on each side of his jaws, their cruel teeth fixed firmly into his huge lips; perhaps two or three are underneath him tearing and riving at the great tough corrugations of his grey-ribbed belly; whilst others, with a few swift vertical strokes of their flukes, draw back for fifty feet or so, charge him amidships, and strike him fearful blows on the ribs with their bony heads. Round and round, in ever-narrowing circles as his strength fails, the tortured humpback swims, sometimes turning on his back or side, but failing, failing fast.

'He's done for, lads. Pull up; stand up, Jim.'

The boat dashes up, and Jim, the man who is pulling bow oar, picks up his harpoon. A minute later, it flies from his hand and is buried deep into the body of the quivering animal, cutting through the thick blubber as a razor would cut through the skin of a drum.

'Stern all!' and the harpooner tumbles aft and grips the steer oar, and the steersman takes his place in the head of the boat with his keen-edged lance. But 'humpy' is almost spent, and though by a mighty effort he 'ups flukes,' and sounds, he soon rises, for the killers thrust him upwards to the surface again. Then the flashing lance, two, three swift blows into his 'life,' a gushing torrent of hot, dark blood, he rolls over on his side, an agonised trembling quivers through his vast frame, the battle is over and his life is gone.

And now comes the curious and yet absolutely truly described final part that the killers play in this ocean tragedy. They, the moment the whale is dead, close around him, and fastening their teeth into his body, by main strength bear it to the bottom. Here—if they have not already accomplished it—they tear out the tongue and eat about one-third of the blubber. In from thirty-six to forty hours the carcass will again rise to the surface, and as, before he was taken down, the whalers have attached a line and buoy to the body, its whereabouts is easily discerned from the lookout on the headland; the boats again put off and tow it ashore to the trying-out works. The killers, though they have had their fill of blubber, accompany the boats to the head of the bay and keep off the sharks, which would otherwise strip off all the remaining blubber from the carcass before it had reached the shore. But once the boats are in the shallow water the killers stop, and then with a final 'puff! puff!' of farewell to their human friends, turn and head seaward to resume their ceaseless watch and patrol of the ocean.

The killers never hurt a man. Time after time have boats been stove-in or smashed into splinters by a whale, either by an accidental blow from his

head or a sudden lateral sweep of his monstrous flukes, and the crew left struggling in the water or clinging to the oars and pieces of wreckage; and the killers have swum up to, looked at, and *smelt* them—but never have they touched a man with intent to do him harm. And wherever the killers are, the sharks are not, for Jack Shark dreads a killer as the devil is said to dread holy water. Sometimes I have seen 'Jack' make a rush in between the killers, and rip off a piece of hanging blubber, but he will carefully watch his chance to do so.

On some occasions, when a pack of killers set out whale-hunting, they will be joined by a thresher—the fox-shark (*Alopias vulpes*)—and then while the killers bite and tear the unfortunate cetacean, the thresher deals him fearful blows with his scythe-like tail. The master of a whaling vessel told me that off the north end of New Caledonia, there was, from 1868 till 1876, a pack of nine killers which were always attended by two threshers and a sword-fish. Not only he, but many other whaling skippers had seen this particular swordfish, year after year, joining the killers in attacks upon whales. The cruising ground of this pack extended for thirty miles, north and south, and the nine creatures and their associates were well known to hundreds of New Bedford whalers. No doubt many of these combats, witnessed from merchant ships, have led to many sea-serpent stories; for when a thresher stands his twenty feet of slender body straight up on end like a pole, he presents a strange sight, as his long body sways, and curves, and twists in air, as he deals his cutting blows upon his victim. Then, too, the enormous length of the pectoral fins of a humpback whale, which show dazzlingly white as he rolls from side to side in his agony, and frantically beats the water with them in his struggles, or upends one after the other like a mast, might well be mistaken for the uprearing of a serpent's body. But any South Sea whaler will smile when he hears talk of the sea-serpent, though he has not forgotten the awe and fascination with which he was filled, when he first saw a whale in the agonies of combat with *Alopias*

*vulpes* and *Orca gladiator*, and the serpentine evolutions of the former creature.

The whaleman in the Pacific sees very strange and wondrous sights; and never, since Herman Melville wrote his strangely exciting and weird book, 'The Whale,' nearly fifty years ago, has any writer given us such a vivid and true picture of whaling life and incident as Mr Frank T. Bullen in his 'Cruise of the *Cachalot* published this year.

## DENISON'S SECOND BERTH ASHORE

I have already told how Tom Denison, the South Sea Island supercargo, took a berth ashore as overseer of a Queensland duck farm, which was mortgaged to a bank of which his brother was manager, and how he resigned the post in great despondency, and humped his swag to Cooktown.

Over his meeting with his brother let a veil be drawn. Suffice it to say that the banker told him that he had missed the one great chance of his life, and quoted Scripture about the ways of the improvident man to such an extent that Denison forgot himself, and said that the bank and its infernal ducks could go and be damned. Thereupon his sister-in-law (who was a clergyman's daughter, and revered the Bank as she did the Church) swooned, and his brother told him he was a heartless and dissolute young ruffian, who would come to a bad end. Feeling very hurt and indignant, the ex-supercargo stumped out of the bank, and went down to the wharf to look for a ship.

But there was only a dirty little coasting steamer in port, and Denison hated steamers, for once he had had to go a voyage in one as supercargo, and the continuous work involved by being constantly in port every few days, instead of drifting about in a calm, all but broke his heart. So he rented a room at a diggers' boarding-house kept by a Chinaman, knowing that this would be a dagger in the heart of his sister-in-law, who was the leading lady in Cooktown society; also, he walked about the town without a coat, and then took a job on the wharf discharging coals from a collier, and experienced a malevolent satisfaction when he one evening met Mrs Aubrey Denison in the street. He was in company with four other coal-heavers, all as black as himself; his sister-in-law was walking with the wife of the newly-appointed Supreme Court judge. She glanced shudderingly at

the disgraceful sight her relative presented, went home and hysterically suggested to Aubrey Denison, Esq., that his brother Tom was a degraded criminal, and was on the way to well-deserved penal servitude.

After the coal-heaving job was finished, Denison lay back and luxuriated on the £5, 17s. 6d. he had earned for his week's toil. Then one morning he saw an advertisement, in the *North Queensland Trumpet-Call*, for a proof-reader. And being possessed of a certain amount of worldly wisdom, he went down to the bank, saw his brother (who received him with a gloomy brow) and said he should like to write a letter to the editor of the *Trumpet-Call*. He wrote his letter—on bank paper—and then went back to Sum Fat's to await developments. The following morning he received a note from the editor telling him to call at the office. To Susie Sum Fat, his landlord's pretty half-caste daughter, he showed the missive, and asked her to lend him one of her father's best shirts. Susie, who liked Denison for his nice ways, and the tender manner in which he squeezed her hand when passing the bread, promptly brought him her parent's entire stock of linen, and bade him, with a soft smile, to take his pick. Also that night she brought him a blue silk kummerbund streaked with scarlet, and laid it on his pillow, with a written intimation that it was sent 'with fondest love from Susie S. Fat.'

Arrayed in a clean shirt, and the swagger kummerbund, Denison presented himself next morning to the editor of the *Trumpet-Call*. There were seven other applicants for the billet, but Denison's white shirt and new kummerbund were, he felt, a tower of strength to him, and even the editor of the *Trumpet-Call* seemed impressed—clean shirts being an anomaly in Cooktown journalistic circles.

The editor was a tall, stately man, with red eyes and a distinctly alcoholic breath. The other applicants went in first. Each one had a bundle of very dirty testimonials, all of which recalled to Denison Judge Norbury's remarks about the 'tender' letters of a certain breach of promise case. One little man, with bandy legs and a lurching gait, put his unclean hands on the editorial

table, and said that his father was 'select preacher to the University of Oxford.'

The red-eyed man said he was proud to know him. 'Your father, sir, was a learned man and I reverence his name. But I never could forgive myself did I permit a son of such a great teacher to accept such a laborious position as proof-reader on the *Trumpet Call*. Go to Sydney or Melbourne, my dear sir. The editors of all our leading colonial papers were clergymen or are sons of clergymen. I should be doing your future prospects a bitter injustice. A bright career awaits you in this new country.'

He shook the hand of the select preacher's son and sent him out.

Among the other applicants was a man who had tried dugong fishing on the Great Barrier Reef; a broken-down advance agent from a stranded theatrical company; a local auctioneer with defective vision, but who had once written a 'poem' for a ladies' journal; a baker's carter who was secretary to the local debating society; and a man named Joss, who had a terrific black eye and who told Denison, *sotto voce*, that if the editor gave *him* any sauce he would 'go for him' there and then and 'knock his bloomin' eye out,' and the son of the local bellman and bill-poster. The editor took their names and addresses, and said he should write to them all in the morning and announce his decision. Then, after they had gone, he turned to Denison with a pleasant smile and an approving look at Sum Fat's shirt, and asked him if he had had previous experience of proof-reading. Denison, in a diffident manner, said that he had not exactly had much.

'Just so. But you'll try and do your best, Mr Denison? Well, come in this evening at eight o'clock, and see Mr Pinkham, the sub-editor. He'll show you what to do. Salary, £2, 15s. Strict sobriety, I trust?'

The successful one said he never got quite drunk, expressed his thanks and withdrew. Once into the street he walked quickly into Sum Fat's, and

told the Celestial that he had taken a billet at 'thirty bob' a week on a newspaper.

'Wha' paper?' inquired Sum Fat, who was squeezing a nasty-looking adipocerous mass into fish-balls for his boarders.

'The *Trumpet-Call*.'

'That's a lotten lag, if you li.' It close on banklupt this long time.'

Denison assented cheerfully. It *was* a rotten rag, he said, and undoubtedly in a weak position financially; but the thirty bob would pay his board bill.

Then Sum Fat, who knew that the ex-supercargo was lying as regarded the amount of his salary, nodded indifferently and went on pounding his awful hash.

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'Where is Mr Pinkham?' asked Denison at eight p.m., when an exceedingly dirty small boy brought him his first proof.

'He's tanked.\*} An' he says he ain't agoin' to help no blackguard sailor feller to read no proofs. And most all the comps is tanked, too.'

*\* 'Tanked.' A colonialism which indicates that a person has indulged in too much liquid refreshment.*

However, with the intelligent assistance of the boy, Denison managed to pull through that night, with the following result in the intercolonial Telegrams' column:—

*'Melbourne, August 13.—The body of an elderly boat was foundd last night floating down the Yarra, down the Yarra, with its throat cut. It wvs dressed in v grey tweed suit with a flannel shirt, dressed in a grey tweed suit with a flannel shirt. This mourning a girl said the deceased was her father,' etc.*

A few lines further down in the same column was the intelligence that Chief Justice Higinbotham of Victoria had 'sentenced the man Power to imprisonment for the term of his natural next.'

When Denison turned up next evening, the editor asked him in distinctly cold tones if he 'had read the paper.'

Denison said he had not—he was too tired.

Then the editor pointed out twenty-nine hideous mistakes, all underlined in blue pencil and on a par with the two above-mentioned. Denison explained in regard to the word 'next' that he meant 'life,' but there being a turned 'e' in 'life' he somehow deleted the entire word, and just then in his zeal, calling out 'next proof,' he unthinkingly wrote 'next' on the proof instead of 'life.' As for the matter of the boat he had no excuse to offer. The editor was not harsh, but said that a man of Denison's intelligence ought to be employed in building up Britain beyond the seas instead of reading proofs.

For the next two issues he pulled through fairly well. Sum Fat advanced him ten shillings, with which he bought Susie a pair of canvas shoes, and Susie kissed him seven times and said she loved him because he never said horrid things to her like the other men. And when she laid her innocent face upon his shoulder and wept, Denison was somewhat stirred, and decided to get away from Susie as quickly as possible.

On the fourth evening a beery local politician sent in a paragraph, written in an atrocious hand, stating that he (the beery man) had 'received a number of replies to the circulars he had sent out to the supporters of the Government,' etc. In the morning the paragraph appeared:—

*'Mr Ebenezer Thompson, the champion of Separation, for North Queensland, has again received quite a large number of reptiles,' etc.*

Of course Mr Thompson was terribly insulted—everyone in Cooktown knew that he had periodical illnesses, during which he imagined he was chased by large snakes joined to blue dogs with red eyes and crimson tails

—and demanded Denison's instant dismissal. The editor however, pleaded for him on account of his inexperience, and the matter was passed over.

He worried along pretty well till the end of the week, and then fresh trouble arose. Mr Pinkham the sub-editor, who did the foreign cables and the local fire-brigade items, got exceedingly drunk—a weekly occurrence—and, for his own safety, was locked up by the intelligent police. The three reporters, who all hated Pinkham, declined to sub-edit his cables, and consequently the editor was himself driven to take refuge in drink. The business manager, however, took his place, and told Denison that he relied on him to assist with the cables. Denison hinted at increased emoluments, and the manager promptly threatened to sack him and all the rest of the literary staff. He would do the cables himself, he said. He abhorred Denison on account of Susie and the kummerbund.

Just then the Emperor Frederick was dying at San Remo, and cables were coming through *via* Sydney.

At one a.m. the business manager came in to Denison and said that they should try to get along amicably. As both the editor and Mr Pinkham, he said, were in a disgraceful condition, he relied upon the rest of the staff to maintain the credit of the *Trumpet-Call*, etc. Then he showed Denison a cable he had just received, and asked him if he could assist him to make it out. It ran in this wise:

*'London—Emperor Frederick condition very grave. German physicians hamper Morell Mackenzie, but approve suggestion operation tracheotomy esophagus without delay.'*

Denison said (with secret joy) that he was afraid he couldn't help. But he believed that there were two world-famous Italian doctors named Tracchi and Tomy. 'Esophagus' was, he also remarked, no doubt meant for 'sarcophagus'—the Latin name for the gullet. And he suggested to his enemy that it would be well to rush the cable through as quickly as possible. The business manager said he should—he merely felt a little doubt about

the proper spelling of the Italian doctors' names, though he, of course, knew that there was no such word as esophagus. As he went out Denison smiled like a fiend. His anticipations of an ample revenge upon the low, sordid creature who had refused him another sovereign a week were gratified in the morning, for under a large heading he saw this:—

*'THE EMPEROR FREDERICK*

*'Serious Condition*

*'San Remo.— The Emperor Frederick's condition is causing grave anxiety. The German physicians in attendance hinder Morell Mackenzie in every possible way. They, however, agree to his suggestion to send for the two celebrated Italian specialists, Drs Tracchi and Tomy, and with them perform an operation on the Emperor's sarcophagus. Wheat is 1d. firmer. Hides are dull, bank rate unaltered. Tallow is improving.'*

The absolute beauty of the thing, however, to Denison's mind, was that the business manager had sold a copy of his translation of the cablegram to the other local paper—run by the Cooktown Labour Union—which had used it word for word.

Nothing of moment occurred after this till a report of a sermon by Dr Stanton, the first Bishop of North Queensland, appeared. His lordship, alluding to certain conditions of the human mind which rendered one's judgment 'subject to warp and bias,' the intelligent compositor made it 'wasps and bees,' and Denison, being very sleepy when he read the proof, let it go. And Dr Stanton, good and generous man, laughed heartily when Denison, with a contrite and broken heart called on him, and asked for his forgiveness.

But Nemesis was coming along. There was a wealthy and atrociously vulgar magnate in Cooktown, whose wife ran second to Mrs Aubrey Denison in local society, and who had just lost her father. The death announcement appeared as follows:—

*'On June 18, at the Bungalow, Cooktown, Donald Dugald  
M'Whannel, Government Inspector of Artesian Bores for North  
Queensland, aged sixty-five.*

*'Also, at the same time and place, five trusses of  
Victoria hay, some pigs and calves, and twenty-six bags of  
onions and potatoes, all in prime order.'*

Of course this was the last straw, and Denison was asked to resign. But as Mrs Aubrey Denison wrote and said she should like to forgive him for his disgraceful conduct before he went away, he sent the Scotch foreman of the *Trumpet-Call* to explain to her that the catch-line of an auctioneer's advertisement had been 'dropped' on the same galley as the mortuary notice, and overlooked when the forme was locked. And so, after a tender farewell to little Susie Sum Fat, and with her kisses still warm upon his lips, Denison went out into the world again to look for a ship.

## A FISH DRIVE ON A MICRONESIAN ATOLL

We were thrashing our way in a little brigantine, owned by Tom de Wolf, of Liverpool, against the strong north-east trade wind, from the Western Carolines to Milli in the Marshalls, when one day we sighted a low-lying cluster of five small palm-clad islands that lay basking, white and green, in the bright Pacific sun; and an hour before dark the *Lunalilo* dropped her anchor just in front of the native village. In a few minutes the resident white trader came off to us in his boat and made us welcome to his island home.

We had heard that he had quite a considerable quantity of hawkbill turtle shell and some coco-nut oil to sell, and came to ascertain the truth of the report before we were anticipated by some German or American trading vessel.

Less than a mile away from where the brigantine was anchored we saw a noble white beach, trending east and west in many curves, and backed by serried lines of palms and groves of bread-fruit trees, through whose bright verdancy peeped out the thatch-covered and saddle-backed houses of the natives. Apart from the village, and enclosed by a low fence of growing hibiscus palings, stood the trader's house, a long, rambling building with white coral-lime walls and a wide, shady verandah on all four sides. In front of the fence was a tall, white-painted flagstaff, and presently we saw a woman come out of the trader's house and walk up to it. In another minute the Stars and Stripes went slowly up, and then hung limp and motionless in the windless atmosphere.

'There,' said the trader, with a laugh, 'you see, my wife, native as she is, is more polite than I am. But the fact is that I was so excited when I saw your schooner that I never thought about hoisting the old gridiron. Now, look here, gentlemen; before we do anything else, or talk about business, I want

you to promise to come ashore to night. There is to be a big fish drive, and I can assure you that that is a sight worth seeing.'

We made the promise, and half an hour later went ashore and walked up to our friend's house. Here we found the entire population of the island assembled to do us honour, and for quite ten minutes were embraced most effusively by every one, male or female, who could get near us. The men were naked to their waists—the missionaries had not then made any headway in the Caroline Islands—around which they wore either gaily-coloured girdles of bleached and then dyed strips of fine pandanus leaf, or sashes of closely-woven banana fibre. The women, however, somewhat ineffectually concealed the remarkable beauty of their figures by wearing, in addition to their grass waist girdles, a crescent-shaped garment of similar material, which was suspended from their necks, and covered their bosoms. {\*} Their glossy black hair hung in wavy curls down their smooth brown backs. \* Since the advent of the missionaries this costume has been suppressed.

Nearly all the young unmarried girls wore narrow head circlets of white pandanus leaf, profusely adorned and embroidered with red and yellow beads, flat pieces of polished pearl shell, and edged with green and gold and scarlet parrots' feathers. Their address and modest demeanour was engaging in the extreme, and we noticed that they showed the utmost deference and respect to an aged female who sat on a mat in the centre of the room, surrounded by a number of young children. She was, we learnt, the king's mother, and at her request the trader led us over to where she sat, and gave us a formal introduction. She received us in a pleasant but dignified manner, and the moment that she opened her lips to speak the clatter of tongues around us ceased as if by magic, and the most respectful silence prevailed.

As neither the captain nor myself were able to speak the local dialect—which is similar to that of Ponapé—we were somewhat at a loss to answer the questions she put to us, and etiquette forbade the trader to volunteer his

services as an interpreter, till the old dame asked him. Presently, however, she desired him to tell us that she was very pleased to see us; that the fish drive would, she hoped, interest us greatly. Then, at a sign from her, a handsome young man who stood in the doorway came forward and laid down a bundle of mats at our feet; this was the old lady's formal present to the captain and myself. She then rose, and bidding us to come and see her in her son's house before we sailed, she walked over to the end of the room, attended by her retinue of children, and sat down again on a finely-worked mat, which was spread out before her. Then she made another and longer speech on behalf of her son, who, she said, had desired her to say that he was very pleased we had brought the ship to an anchor; that his stomach was filled with friendship for white men; and that the trader would tell us that all that he (the king) said was true; also that if any of her people stole even the most trifling article from our ship they would be severely punished, etc. Furthermore, she trusted that after we had spent one night at the white man's house and seen the fish drive, we would spend the following morning with her, when we should be feasted, and every honour and attention shown us. Then the young man attendant produced another present—from the king. This was a live sucking pig, a pair of fat Muscovy ducks, and a huge green turtle. This latter was carried in by four women, and placed in the centre of the room. We then, through the trader, made return gifts of a bolt of white calico, a lamp and a tin of kerosene. Touching these with her hand the old woman signed to her attendants to take them away, and then, with another polite speech, left the house.

The moment the king's mother retired, many more of the common people swarmed into the house, and all seemed highly delighted to learn that we intended to stay and see the great fish drive.

As every one of our native crew was very anxious to join in the sport, the captain had asked the king's mother to 'tapu' the ship till daylight, and shortly afterwards we were told by a messenger from the king that this had

been done, and that no native would attempt to board the ship till we had returned. Although these people were honest enough, our captain thought it hardly safe enough to leave the ship without a white man on board, for all natives are very careless with the use of fire, and, being great smokers, he felt nervous on that score.

At five o'clock we were taken to the king's house, where we found the whole population assembled. A great feast was spread out, and King Ralok, who advanced to meet us, took us by our hands and sat us down in the midst of a vast collection of baked fish, bread fruit, turtle meat and eggs, and roast fowls, pigeons and pork. Of course we had to eat; but at the earliest opportunity the trader told the king that we were anxious to see the preparations made for the drive before it got too dark. Ralok at once agreed, and after drinking the milk of a young coco-nut to wash down the repast, we made a start for the scene of operations.

This was along the shore of the lagoon. At high water, for nearly two or three miles, the white, sandy bottom would be covered by a depth of about four feet of water; at low water, as it was now, it was dry. Here and there were clumps of coral boulders, generally circular in shape, and these, at high water, would be just flush with the surface. These boulders were some two or three hundred yards apart, and as we came out upon the lagoon beach we saw that they were connected by a vast number of nets lying upon the sand, in readiness to rise, by means of their light wooden floats of puka wood, as soon as the incoming tide swept in from the ocean. Upon the top of each of these connecting boulders were piled bundles or long torches made of dried coco-nut branches, which were to be lighted when the drive began. The total length of the netting was about two miles, but at one end, that facing the deep water of the lagoon, there was a wide, unenclosed space. Here, however, were lying half a dozen canoes, whose outrigger platforms were piled up with strong nets, which were to be stretched across the opening at the proper moment.

After looking at the preparations, we returned to the village, and as we had no time to lose, and the tide was coming in at a great rate over the reef, we began to dress, or rather undress, for the sport. To each of us was given a spear, and a number of young women and children were told off to accompany us with baskets, with half-a-dozen boys as torch-bearers.

As soon as darkness had fallen the whole village was astir. From every house men, women and very young children swarmed, these latter without even the traditional leaf to hide their nakedness, while the grown girls and women, possibly with the view of not shocking us too much, wore short—very short—girdles around their loins.

The grown men and youths now launched a number of canoes, and, crowding into them, paddled out into the lagoon, keeping well away, however, from the line of nets, the floats of which were now appearing upon the surface of the water. In each canoe was a large basket filled with a nasty-looking mass. This was the crushed shells and bodies of *uga*, or small land crabs, and was to be used as 'burley' to attract the fish to the wake of the canoes.

Before going further I must mention that at a particular season of the year—May—many of the Micronesian Islands are visited by vast shoals of fish much resembling an English salmon. These enter the lagoons from the ocean in pursuit of smaller fish. These smaller fish, which are a species of sprat, assemble in incredible quantities, and at night-time are wont to crowd together in prodigious numbers about the coral boulders before mentioned, in the same manner that ocean-living fish will sometimes attach themselves to a ship or other moving substance, as some protection from pursuit by bonito, albacore, and the fish called *tautau*. The latter are of nocturnal habit when seeking food, and during the daytime lie almost motionless near the bottom, where they can often be seen in serried masses. As soon as night falls they rise to the surface and give chase to flying-fish and other surface-swimming ocean fish. In shape they are very similar to a salmon, but do not

possess the same deepness of body and general fulness. Their heads consist of a series of long plates, and their jaws are armed with rows of serrated bone plates. In colour they are a very beautiful iridescent silver along the sides and belly, the back and head being a deep, glossy blue. When full grown their length is slightly over four feet, and weight about twenty-five pounds. They are as voracious as the pike, swim with extraordinary swiftness at night-time, and will take the hook eagerly if baited with a whole flying-fish; their flesh is somewhat delicate in flavour and greatly relished by the natives of Micronesia, who regard it as second only to the universally esteemed flying-fish.

Two or three days before we made the little group of islands, immense droves of these *tautau*, as the natives of Eastern Polynesia call them, had been hovering about the reefs, and the people were now to endeavour to tempt them into the trap set for them with such care and labour.

For about a quarter of an hour not a sound broke the silence of the night. We were in the midst of some three or four hundred natives, who only spoke in whispers for fear of alarming the fish. All round the deeper portion of the chain of nets was a line of canoes, filled with women and girls, who held torches in their hands ready to light up the moment the signal was given. Further in towards the shore, where the water was not too deep to prevent them keeping on their feet, were numbers of girls and children standing close together, their bodies almost touching, and the floats of the nets touching their bosoms; we white men, with the trader, were standing together, with our torch-bearers, upon a flat-topped coral boulder.

Suddenly a whisper ran along the line of watchers—the canoes were coming. One by one we made them out, the paddlers dipping their paddles into the water in silence, as one of their number in each canoe threw out double handfuls of the crushed crab 'burley.' As they approached nearer to us we became aware of a peculiar lapping, splashing noise, as of hundreds of bare feet walking in water a few inches deep.

'That's the fish,' whispered the trader. 'Look at them—they are coming in in thousands.'

And then even our unaccustomed eyes could see that the water behind the canoes was churned into a white froth by the jumping, splashing fish, which were following the canoes in a solid wall, snapping up the food so industriously thrown to them. In a few minutes the canoes had entered the open end of the trap, and were paddling noiselessly past the inner lines of nets, not a hundred yards from where we stood. At last, when the whole inclosure was literally swarming with fish, the outside canoes quickly closed up the gap by stretching the nets across it, and almost at the same moment there was a tremendous splashing and churning up of the water around each knoll and boulder of coral. The *tautau* had left off eating the bait thrown them from the canoes, and were attacking the myriads of small fish that clustered round the boulders. And then, at a signal given by one of the outside canoes, the torches sprang into flame, and by the bright light that flooded the scene the most extraordinary sight was revealed, for from one side to the other the great inclosure was full of magnificent *tautau* about three feet six in length. They were all swimming on the surface; and as soon as the blaze of the torches illumined the water they at once became almost stationary; or, after the manner of flying-fish, when subjected to a strong light, swam slowly about in a dazed, hesitating manner.

The work of capturing some very large turtle, that had come into the fatal circle of nets, was now at once begun, lest in their endeavours to escape the nets might be broken and the fish escape. There were six of these creatures speared before they could do any damage; as well as two or three small sharks, which, having gorged themselves to repletion, were killed as they lazily swam along the circle of nets.

So well had the natives judged of the time it would take to carry out their scheme, that within half an hour of the inclosure of the fish the tide began to fall, and the imprisoned swarms showed signs of anxiety to escape, but as

fresh supplies of torches were brought from the village, and kept continuously alight, their alarm seemed to disappear. Had a heavy shower of rain fallen—so the trader told us—and extinguished the torches, the fish would have rushed at the nets and carried them away by sheer weight.

Meanwhile, as the tide continued to fall, many of the women and girls amused themselves by stunning all the fish that came within reach of them, and loading the canoes with them. Once some fifty or sixty *tautau* came right up to the boulder on which we stood, and were so dazed by the glare of light that poured down on them, that some permitted themselves to be captured by the hand.

Lower and lower fell the water, and as the shore end of the trap became dry, the fish were gradually forced to come closer and closer together as their swimming space diminished. By-and-by, as the receding tide left the chain of coral rocks dry on their summits, women waded out with firewood, and built fires on them; not that there was now any danger of the fish breaking away, but to give a still better light. At last, however, the word was passed along the line that the sea end of the drive had been strengthened by additional nets in case a sudden rush might occur; but, by this time, so rapidly was the water running out, that even at the deepest end there was not perhaps two feet available for the now terrified and struggling swarms of *tautau*. In another twenty minutes there was heard a most extraordinary sound, caused by thousands upon thousands of fish thrashing and jumping about on the sand; while at the sea end of the drive, where the great body of all were massed together, the scene was simply indescribable. What little water was left was beaten into froth and foam by their violent struggles, and the light from the torches showed that a space of about five acres in extent was covered with a shining, silvery mass of splendid *tautau*, intermixed with a small number of gorgeous-hued rock-fish, cray-fish, and some hawk-bill turtle.

The work of picking up the prizes went on for at least two hours. Three or four of the *tautau* placed in a basket was as much as a woman could carry, and, although everyone present worked hard, some thousands of fish were not taken. Many of these, however, were not dead, and, with the incoming tide, swam off again. All the young turtle, however, were secured, the natives taking them up carefully and putting them in walled-in pools where they would remain prisoners.

We tried to ascertain the number of fish taken, but gave it up. Every house and canoe-shed appeared to have the floor covered with them, and for the next day or two there were great fish dinners on the island.

Some thousands of *tautau* were split open and dried upon platforms in the same manner as the natives of Eastern Polynesia dry flying-fish, and the Fraser River Indians their salmon.

We succeeded in buying a fine lot of turtle shell from the trader, as well as some from the king and his mother. The old lady treated us right royally, and, a few hours before we sailed, a canoe-load of fruit and drinking coconuts were sent off to the ship, with her compliments.

## BOBARAN

When our boat touched the beach in front of the trader's house just as the dawn was breaking, I thought Kabaira Bay one of the loveliest places in the Pacific, and said so to the man I had been sent to relieve. He quite concurred in my opinion of the beauties of the scenery, but said that he was very glad to get away. Then, being a cheerful man, though given to unnecessary blasphemy, like most South Sea Island traders, he took me out to the rich garden at the back of the station and showed me the grave of his predecessor, who had died of fever a year before. Further on, but outside the enclosing fence, were some more graves, he said.

'Whose?' I asked.

'Captain Murray's, his mate's, and two of his cutter's crew.'

'Fever?'

'No,' he replied, with some slight surprise at my ignorance; 'the natives killed 'em a couple o' years ago. An', see, just over there by Point Luen, is the Hon. Mr Willington's house. He was a nephew of Lord L———. I goes there sometimes and rips a board out o' the floor when I wants one.' ^

'Mr Wellington gone away?' My friend *was* surprised this time. 'Why, you *must* be a new chum in New Britain. Why, Willington ain't dead six months.' 'Fev—'

'Fever be ——-. No, he got speared when he was lying in his bunk readin' a book one night. *I* told him that the niggers would pay him out for a-playin' crooked with em'; but he was too cock-a-hoopy to listen to a feller like me.'

'Any more white men buried in Kabaira?' I asked after a while, as we walked back to the house to take stock of my host's trade goods.

'No, that's all that's planted here—at least, all I know of, and I've been here, in New Britain, five years. There's been a good many Dutchmen killed on the coast here, and over in New Ireland, but I didn't know any of 'em. An' they're such a silly lot o' duffers, that they reg'lar tempts these New Britain niggers to kill 'em; and then the beggars, not knowing an Englishman from a Dutchman, are ready to murder anyone with a white skin. So you look out, young feller. These niggers here are a rotten bad lot. But I'll interdooce yer to Bobaran. He's the biggest cut-throat of em' all; but he an' me is good pals, and onct you've squared him you're pretty safe. Got plenty fever medicine?' 'Lots.' 'Liquor?' 'Case of gin.'

'That'll keep you clear o' fever as much as anything, as long as the case lasts. Always drink some when it's raining.' (It usually rained nine days out of ten in New Britain). 'Now we'll take stock. I can tell you I'm mighty glad to clear out o' this place—an' so will you be in a couple o' months, if—you're alive.'

Having thus, in cheerful converse, somewhat enlightened me as to the peculiar characteristics of Kabaira Bay and its inhabitants, my friend had breakfast cooked, and whilst we were eating it, sent a messenger for his friend Bobaran to come and make the acquaintance of the new white man. During breakfast the trader gave me much further information, all of which, as a man new to the ropes, I was very glad to obtain. Kabaira, I already knew (I had but just arrived in New Britain from Eastern Polynesia), was the 'furthest out' trading station on the great island, which, at that time, had barely thirty white men living on it; most of these were settled on Gazelle Peninsula, and a few on the Duke of York Island, midway between the northern point of New Britain and mountainous New Ireland. My nearest neighbour lived at Kabakadà, a populous native town ten miles away. My host told me that this man was 'a noisy, drunken little swine,' the which assertion I subsequently found to be absolutely correct. Further on, five miles from Kabakadà, was another trader named Bruno Ran, a hard-

working Swiss; then, after rounding Cape Stephens, was the large German trading station of Matupi in Blanche Bay, where you could buy anything from a needle to a chain cable. On the Duke of York Island was another trading station, and also the Wesleyan Mission, which as yet had made but few converts in New Britain; and over in New Ireland were a few scattered English traders, who sometimes sailed over on a visit to their dangerously-situated fellow-countrymen in the big island.

For dangerous indeed was the daily existence of traders in those then little-known islands. But money was to be made, and men will dare much to make money quickly, even though at the risk of their lives. As for the natives of New Britain, a few words will suffice. They were the most unmitigated savages, cowardly and treacherous, and with the exception of the people of the villages in the vicinity of Blanche Bay, whose women wore a scanty girdle of leaves of the plant *Cordyline terminalis*, they passed their lives in a state of stark nudity. Their dwellings and canoes were of the poorest description, but their plantations and gardens were highly cultivated, and marvels of incessant and intelligent labour. For human life they had no regard; in fact, a pig was worth more than a man, except among those tribes where a man who weighed more than a pig would be more valuable as food. At the present time things have improved on the Gazelle Peninsula, but along the coast-line, which to the westward stretches for over two hundred miles towards New Guinea, matters have not changed. As for their personal appearance, it is simply hideous. Take the biggest anthropoid ape, stain his teeth black and his lips scarlet, stick a wig of matted greasy curls on his head, and put half a dozen slender spears in his right paw, and you have an idea of a New Britain nigger—a 'brand,' according to missionary ethics, who should be plucked from the burning, but whom the Christian of ordinary intelligence would cheerfully watch burning until he was reduced to a cinder.

Just as we had finished breakfast, Bobaran came in and squatted on the flour. Being a man of rank and influence, he was privileged, and allowed to carry his arms with him inside the trader's house. These consisted of five spears, one long-handled ebony-wood club, with a huge jade head, and a horse-pistol, which was fastened to a leather belt around his naked waist. His fuzzy wool was dyed a bright brick red colour and twisted into countless little curls which, hanging over his beetling and excessively dirty black forehead, almost concealed his savage eyes, and harmonised with his thick, betel-stained lips and cavernous, grip-sack mouth. Around his arms were two white circlets of shell, and depending from his bull-like neck a little basket containing betel-nut and lime. He certainly was a most truculent-looking scoundrel. Nevertheless, I shook hands with him cordially, and he agreed, for certain considerations, to look after me, find me in food, warn me of any danger that might impend, and also to murder anyone with whom I might feel annoyed, for a fixed but very small remuneration. In proof whereof of this alliance, and as a token of amity and goodwill, Parker (the trader) presented him with a small tin of ship biscuit, four dynamite cartridges, a dozen boxes of matches and a bottle of a villainous German liquor called 'Corn Schnapps.' Then the atrocity stood up and embraced me, and asked me to show him my firearms. His fierce eyes gleamed with pleasure as he turned them about in his filthy paws, and he was especially pleased with the size of a Sharp's rifle cartridge and bullet which would, he grinned, 'make big fellow hole in man.' Then, with further expressions of goodwill on both sides, we parted.

At dusk Parker bade me good-bye, and urging me to put the utmost confidence in Bobaran and drink plenty of gin whenever it rained—to keep the fever from 'gettin' holt' of my system—he walked down to the beach and stepped into the boat. For a few minutes I stood watching till he was hidden from view by a point of land, and then, feeling somewhat depressed at my future loneliness, I walked back to the house.

Bobaran, the Mesdames Bobaran (three), and the Masters and Misses Bobaran were sitting on the verandah awaiting me. None of them were as much dressed as their father, who had, as I have said, a leather belt around his loins, and all were chewing betel-nut and expectorating the scarlet juice thereof vigorously about the premises. Being aware of the fact that a New Britain woman is never abroad at night, and a man but seldom, I was surprised at such a family gathering, for the village was some distance away. Bobaran, however, explained that as he and two of his sons intended keeping guard for me that night, the rest of the family had come with them—and that they should like some tobacco.

Leaving his wives and children outside to smoke, my protector came into the sitting-room, and as he had acquired a considerable amount of unpolished sailor man's English, I found him very entertaining and also instructive. First he told me that the Kabaira people were perfectly safe; it was a very peaceful village, and the people liked white men, and he hoped I would not carry arms whenever I went out—it made them frightened, and when people were frightened of a man they naturally tried to kill him. Agreed to. Secondly, they were not cannibals—all their neighbours were, however. (I said I was pleased to hear it, no doubt someone had maligned them.) But they were all thieves, and I must take prompt action to prevent myself from being robbed—(here one of his wives crept to the door on all fours and asked her lord and master for a match, but was struck with great violence in the mouth with an empty salmon tin instead, for interrupting). To-morrow I should do as 'Parka' did the day he came to Kabaira. I must go down to the beach with a dynamite cartridge in my hand and seek for a place where there was plenty of fish. And I must have another cartridge ready in my pocket. As soon as the first shot went off hundreds of natives would jump in the water and try to steal all the best fish. Then I was to light the fuse of the second cartridge and throw it in. And it would be sure to hurt

some of the people, and they would not follow me next time I went fishing. But, of course, if I *should* happen to kill anyone, I would pay for it?

'Of course I would,' I said. 'How much?'

'Big feller man, one good musket; boy, one axix' (axe); 'old woman, old feller, musket; young girl, one good musket.'

Then he approached me on a delicate subject, i.e., the taking over of my predecessor's harem of three native women. I explained that I was expecting my wife down soon from Samoa and couldn't do it. He said it was a great pity, as one of 'Parka's' wives could make tea and cook meat. Also, that I need be under no fear of her making any unpleasantness when my wife turned up. Would I like to see the girl? 'Parka' had taught her a lot of things. She did not oil her hair with pigeon fat, and cleaned her teeth every day just like a Samoan girl. Also, she had ten coils of *dewarra* (cowrie shells threaded on the midribs of the coco-nut leaf, and used as the native currency). I said I was very much tempted, but thought I had better not. He looked at me steadily for a few seconds, as he thrust a fresh 'chaw' of betel-nut and lime into his hideous mouth, and said that I was missing a great chance—there were plenty of white men along the coast who would be glad to get anyone of 'Parka's' wives, especially she who could make tea and cook meat.

He seemed pleased that I was disposed to be as liberal-handed as Parker, for whom he seemed to have a high regard; and then proceeded to tell me of some of his own exploits among the inhabitants of Mutavât, a village across the bay, which was at enmity with Kabaira. The infinite gusto with which he related a series of atrocious murders gave me a chill, and he looked like an evil spirit when his great red lips parted in a grin and revealed his black teeth. Presently he asked me if I had shot any people; and when I said I had not, he became regretful, but soon brightened up again and said I would have plenty of chances yet.

There were some bush villages, to which he would take me some day, and if we were careful we could knock over two or three people easily; they were a bad lot these 'man-a-bush' (bush-men).

At ten o'clock I turned in, and Bobaran, after an animated conversation with his family, lay down at my door with a Snider rifle and his horse-pistol by his side.

And for many long, weary months, in the beautiful but fever-ridden Kabaira Bay, he was the only person to whom I could talk; and in time I began to take a liking to him, for I found him, as Parker had told me, 'a thunderin' old cut-throat, but as straight as a die to a white man who acts straight to him.'

## SEA FISHING IN AUSTRALIA

'Hi, mister, turn out, please, if you're a-comin' with us,' a gruff voice called out to me one frosty morning in May, and then a hairy, good-humoured-looking face flattened itself against my window pane as the owner sought to peer into the room.

I jumped out of bed, opened the window, and shivered in my pyjamas as the keen morning air rushed in to the warm room. Slaney, the coxswain of the Port Macquarie pilot boat, {\*} was standing below me on the grassy side walk, muffled up in his great coat, and carrying a shin of beef in his hand.

*\* Port Macquarie is a quaint 'old' seaport on the northern coast of New South Wales.*

'How does it look outside, Slaney?' I asked.

'Smooth as glass. Hurry up, please. I've just come from the butcher's, couldn't get any fish bait last night, so bespoke a shin of beef.'

Five minuses later I had dressed, and was running up the hill to the pilot station with my fishing tackle, together with some sandwiches, some bottles of beer, and a tin pannikin, slung in a corn sack over my shoulder—not a very elegant turn-out, but the correct thing for such rough and tumble work as schnapper fishing. At the top of the hill I stopped to give myself breath a minute. An impatient 'Hallo there, *do* hurry,' ascended to me from beneath, where the smart pilot boat lay rocking on the waters of a little cove, cut out of the solid rock by the labour of convicts seventy years before, her crew of six men standing up to their knees in the water, and holding her steady. Tumbling down the grassy hill at the risk of breaking my neck, I waded out and clambered over the side, and in another minute the crew were bending to their oars and the boat sweeping round a clump of conical rocks that

sheltered the boat harbour from the long roll of the Pacific billows. Oh, what a lovely morning, and how the blue ocean glinted and sparkled in the quick warming sun. Away to the southward the high, thickly-timbered coast was broken up by jutting headlands and little, irregularly shaped bays, with steep, rocky shores; and northward a long sweep of beach trended in a curving line for ten miles, till it ended at the purple sides of Point Plomer, beyond which loomed the misty blue outline of Captain Cook's 'Smoaky' Cape.

The wind was from the westward; so we hoisted our lug sail, and headed seaward to the sun. Behind us the noisy Hastings River bar clamoured and moaned unceasingly; for though the sea was smooth, the tide was on the ebb, and rushing fiercely out over the wide but shallow entrance to the river, and short, angry waves reared, and tumbled, and fought the roaring current. But in another ten minutes the noise of the waters became lost in the distance, and we heard, naught but the gentle *lip-lap, lip-lap*, of the boat's cut-water as she slipped over the swelling seas. Three miles out we took our bearings from a mountain called The Brothers, and Camden Haven Heads, and then dropped our anchor in twenty-two fathoms on a rocky bottom.

There is not much 'finnicking' preparation for schnapper fishing, and in five minutes every line was baited, and over the side, and at the bottom, and before another two or three had passed we knew we had struck the right spot, for nearly every one of us felt the unmistakable tug of a lusty schnapper, and then the determined downward pull, strong and steady, which he makes when once hooked. Slaney, who was using a line as thick as signal-halliards, was the first to haul his fish over the side, and drop him, kicking and thrashing like a young porpoise, into the boat; the rest of us, whose tackle was much thinner, were a long way behind him, and Slaney's line was over the side again before our fish were laid beside the first arrival. What a beautiful fish is a ten-pound schnapper—a brilliant pink back, sides and tail, dotted over with tiny spots of a wonderful, gleaming blue that

sparkle like miniature diamonds; the bream-shaped head a deep reddish-purple, with nose and lips of palish pink; the belly a pure, shining white. No wonder that Phillip, the first Governor of New South Wales, spoke of the schnapper as 'an exceedingly beautiful and palatable fish.'

For about an hour we continued to haul up fish after fish till our arms ached. The smallest weighed about three pounds, the largest about seventeen pounds, and the average weight of the lot was about eight pounds. Then we knocked off for breakfast. That finished, we lit our pipes and settled down to work again. Alas! a swarm of ugly brown and yellow 'leather-jackets' had arrived on the scene, and before our lines could touch bottom the brutes would either take the bait, or bite off the hook snoozings with their keen, rat-like teeth. In a quarter of an hour we had caught but four schnapper and lost a dozen or more hooks; my own line was bitten through at about five fathoms from the surface—a piece of meat skin had wound itself round it and had been discovered by one of these predatory villains. No wonder that the Samoans and natives of the Tokelau Islands term the leather-jacket *isumu moana*—the sea-rat. However, as leather-jackets make excellent schnapper bait, two of us were told off to fish for them with bream-lines and wire-snoozed small hooks, and we soon had the satisfaction of catching a dozen of the thieves. These were quickly skinned and cut up; then we lifted anchor and pulled southward for about half a mile, knowing we should catch but few schnapper where leather-jackets were.

Our new ground proved a lucky one, for we not only caught some seventy schnapper—some of them truly noble fish—but two magnificent black and white rock cod, a fish whose flavour is excelled by no other in Australian waters. No leather-jackets appeared to disturb our pleasure, and not even the usual murderous shark showed his ugly face, and played the usual game of seizing every schnapper as it was hauled up, and biting it in halves. Only the previous week half a dozen had followed us about from

ground to ground, breaking our lines, and taking five out of every ten fish we hooked. Two at last we succeeded in harpooning and killing, and casting their bodies to their friends, who made short work of them and left us alone for the rest of the day.

Schnapper in the winter months, on the Australian coast, retire to the deep water, and can be caught in from thirty to fifty fathoms. They travel in droves like sheep, and prefer to frequent rocky or broken ground. Sometimes, however, they will enter the bar harbours in great numbers and ascend the tidal rivers. Twenty-five years ago they were often taken in nets in the Parramatta River, near Sydney, and were very plentiful in Sydney Harbour itself. Nowadays one is rarely caught anywhere inside the Heads. Steamboat traffic and the foul water resulting from sewerage has driven them to the deep waters of the ocean. One peculiar feature of schnapper fishing on the northern coast of New South Wales is that, be the fish ever so plentiful and hungry, they invariably cease biting immediately, if the wind should change to the east or north-east. Yet on the southern seaboard, from Twofold Bay to Galo Island, they will take the hook during a black north-easter, as freely as they do when the wind is blowing from any other quarter.

From one end to the other of the coast of New South Wales, there is grand rock-fishing to be had by anyone who once is initiated into its mysteries, and is not afraid of getting an occasional drenching from an ocean roller when there is any sea running. Right from the southern boundary of the colony to the Tweed River on the north, are breaks in the long sandy beaches, of rocky coast, which in most places are easily accessible to the fisherman; and the water in these spots being deep close under the verge of the cliffs, the deep-sea fish, such as schnapper, blue and brown groper, the gigantic mottled rock-cod, trevally, king-fish, the great Jew-fish, sea salmon, etc., at certain seasons of the year cruise to and fro about the rocks in extraordinary numbers. But, strange as it may appear,

rock-fishing is almost unknown to the average colonial, except those living near the principal ports. The greatest ignorance, too, prevails as to the edible qualities of the many varieties of excellent rock-fish, except the well-known schnapper. The generality of the coast settlers look upon most coloured fish as 'bad to eat,' if not 'poisonous,' and particularly so in the case of the delicious blue groper or blue-fish, the 'leather jacket,' and the scaleless bonito, which latter occasionally visit the shores of the colony in large 'schools,' and take a bait eagerly.

My boyish experiences of rock-fishing in New South Wales are full of delightful memories. Then, accompanied by one of the few surviving members of the Hastings River (Port Macquarie) blacks, my brothers and myself would set out for a week's camping-out on the wild and lonely coast between Port Macquarie and Camden Haven—a stretch of twenty miles or so. Our equipment consisted of some very heavy lines and hooks for the big fish, some fine tackle for beach fishing—for bream, whiting, flathead, etc.—a couple of spears for cray-fish, an old smooth-bore army musket and ammunition (for shooting ducks on the tidal lagoons), tea, sugar, as much bread as we could carry, and a tomahawk. As for tents, such luxuries were unknown to us boys in those days; if it showed signs of rain at night time we could soon put up a bark shelter, and, with a pair of light blankets under us, sleep in peace.

One of our most favoured spots was at Tacking Point, a curious steep-to bluff, clothed on its sides with a dense thicket scrub, the haunt of hundreds of black wallabies and wonga pigeons, and also a large variety, of brown and black snakes, with an occasional death adder. The summit, however, was beautifully grassed, and clear of timber, except for a clump or two of gnarled and knotted honeysuckle trees; and here, after our day's fishing, we would camp, and, lying beside our fire, look out upon the starlit Pacific two hundred feet below. Although only five miles from the little town, we scarcely saw a human being during our many trips. Sometimes, however,

some of 'Tommy's' sooty relatives would follow us up, in order to gorge themselves on fish and game, which we shared with them cheerfully.

My first groper was an exciting experience. Descending to the rocky shore very early in the morning with 'Tommy,' we clambered over some huge jagged and wildly-jungled-together boulders at the foot of the bluff, and reached the edge of a large, deep pool of blue water in the rocks, with a narrow opening to the sea. The sides were covered with long streaming kelp and many-coloured seaweed, which moved gently up and down to the rise and fall of the ocean swell. Only in one part could we see the white sand at the bottom of the pool, for the depth of water was some six or seven fathoms. Both blue and brown groper are very fond of crabs; in fact, when a big, wary fellow will not look at either a piece of octopus or the flesh of the *aliothis* shell, he cannot resist a crab. We soon secured plenty of crabs of all sizes and colours, and, baiting our lines with two of the largest, dismembered the others, and flung portions of them into the pool. A number of small parrot-fish, sea-bream, and mottled cod at once appeared and devoured the fragments. The size and hardness of the shells of our crabs, however, were too much for them, and although they snapped off a leg or two and 'worried' the baits considerably, our hooks touched bottom safely (we were using sinkers of stone). Suddenly, just as my companion had thrown another handful of 'burley' into the water, three big blue groper rose to the surface almost together, and, swallowing the crushed-up crab, began swimming round and round the edges of the pool eagerly seeking for more. This was my first view of this species of groper at close quarters, and these three presented, a very beautiful sight, the very dark blue of the whole of their closely-scaled, shining bodies, and the very light blue of their fins and tails making a pretty contrast. Two were about 15 lb. to 16 lb. each, the other about 35 lb. to 40 lb., and nearly four feet in length. They swam but slowly, though every now and then they would turn with some swiftness of motion as 'Tommy' continued to throw in pieces of crab. Meanwhile, by my

black companion's whispered instructions, I had cut the sinker off a spare line, and baited the four-inch hook with the two largest crabs left. Unreeving about six fathoms of line, I handed the baited end to 'Tommy,' who deftly threw it just before the nose of the big fellow. In an instant he had seized the hook, and, diving, made for the opening between the rocks. 'Tommy,' yelling to me to look to the other lines, held on like grim death and managed to turn his prize's head in time; the two others sticking close to their brother in misfortune. I had just hauled up one of the other two lines, and was running round the jagged side of the pool holding the other in my left hand (so as to keep clear of 'Tommy's' fish), when I felt a terrific tug that nearly sent me over. 'Look out! Look out!' shouted 'Tommy,' warningly; 'don't let that fella get underneath the seaweed; keep him clear of dat, or you lose him!' For a 16-lb. fish he pulled tremendously (for a boy of my size); but at last I managed to get a steady strain on him, and then his big blue head, with its thick, negro-like lips, soon appeared at the base of a slanting rock, up which I hauled him, kicking and floundering. 'Tommy' meanwhile had already landed his fish, and had cast his line for the last of the trio; but without success; he had made off to the sea.

A few hours later, at low tide, we caught, in the same pool, seven schnapper, averaging about 8 lb. each; a brown groper of 20 lb., a dozen or more of deep sea bream, beautiful silvery-scaled fish, with a pale greenish tinge on the head and back, and bright yellow fins and tail; and several huge cray-fish, which clung to our hooks and did not let go their hold in time.

This pool was only one of many along this picturesque and rocky coast, along which, at the present time, fish are just as plentiful and as easy to catch; but four years ago I, on visiting 'the' pool of my early days, found it filled by a pile of soap-stone rocks, detached by the rains from the sea face of the bluff above it. It was a bitter disappointment to me, for the memory of that pool had remained with me since my boyhood, and I felt as one who, after a long, long separation in foreign climes from some dear friend of his

youth, at last returns home, hoping to meet his comrade once more, and is shown his grass-grown grave.



## AN ADVENTURE IN THE NEW HEBRIDES

More than twenty years ago a fine young Polynesian half-caste, named Alan, and the writer, were running a small trading cutter out of Samoa, among the low-lying atolls of the Ellice and Tokelau groups, in the South Pacific. We had hauled her up on the beach to clean and put a few sheets of copper on her, when, one day, a big, bronze-faced man came to us, and asked us if we were open to a charter to Santo in the New Hebrides. After a few minutes' conversation we struck a bargain, the terms of which were to take him, his native wife, three servants, and twenty tons of trade goods to his trading station on Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides, for six hundred dollars. He was an ex-trading skipper, but had given up the sea, married a Hervey Island half-caste, and, after trading some years in the Caroline and Marshall groups, had made a trip to the New Hebrides, where he had gone into partnership with a Frenchman, who, like himself, was a sailor man, and had settled down on Santo. Hannah—for that was his name—had then returned to the Carolines for his family, and brought them to Samoa, from whence he thought he could get a passage down to the New Hebrides in one of the two German brigs then engaged in the Kanaka labour trade—'black-birding,' as it was called. But one, the *Iserbrook* had been burnt in Sydney Harbour, and the other was away at Valparaiso.

But now arose a difficulty. I was not navigator enough to take the vessel to Santo—a distance of thirteen hundred miles—let alone beat her back to Samoa against the south-east trades. This, however, Captain Hannah soon settled. He agreed to navigate us down, and his partner would come back with me, as his wife, who was a Samoan woman, wanted to pay a visit to her native country, and our vessel would afford her an excellent

opportunity; his own services in bringing the cutter back to Samoa to be 'squared' by free passages for himself and wife.

My partner Alan was quite satisfied. The big man planked down two hundred and fifty dollars on account, and we shook hands all round. Hannah was a quiet, silent sort of fellow, but I knew we should get on all right, for he came down to us next morning with his people, helped us heave the cutter off the beach, and covered our decks with pigs and poultry. That afternoon we got our wood and water aboard, and were ready for sea at daylight.

Alan was a splendid type of a man. Brought up to the sea from his childhood, he had served some years as a boat-steerer on American whale-ships, then with 'Bully' Hayes as boatswain in the notorious *Rona* brig; and a finer seaman never walked a deck. He was very proud of the English blood in his veins, and always talking of the exploits of his father, who had served with the gallant Cochrane in the Chilian navy. At sea he was a man for emergencies—quick, resolute, resourceful and sober. On shore, with money in his pocket, he descended to the level of the lowest beach-comber, and was always in trouble for thumping somebody—generally another half-caste or a policeman. Peace to his bones! He went to a sailor's death long ago; but the writer of this narrative will never forget the dark, handsome face, laughter-filled eyes, and cheery voice of the best shipmate with whom he ever sailed.

We put to sea with a fine breeze, and running between the islands of Upolu and Savai'i, were out of sight of land by dusk. There were but thirteen persons all told on board—our seven passengers, Alan, four native sailors, and myself—but we were in no wise crowded for room, for the hold was used as a sleeping-place by Captain Hannah's wife, her two children and three servants. Mats had been spread over the cargo, and the weather being fine, the hatch was left open from the time we left Samoa nearly till we reached Santo.

The south-east trade wind held steadily, and the little vessel, being clean and in fine trim, ran along at a great rate, till, on the sixth day out, when we had just sighted Pentecost Island, one of the New Hebrides group, it died away, and at sunset we were becalmed. All that night the air was close and muggy, but towards dawn a faint air came from the westward. During the night the strong current had carried us in ten or twelve miles nearer to the shore, and at sunrise we were not more than six miles from the land. Pentecost, from the treachery of its savage inhabitants, had always borne a bad reputation; and so, as the cutter still continued to drift shorewards, Alan, Captain Hannah and myself thought it just as well to be prepared for any canoes that might attempt to cut us off. (As-a matter of fact, however, we need not have been under any alarm in this respect, for although the Pentecost natives were, and are now, a thoroughly bad lot, as the surveying vessels of the Australian Squadron know to their cost, they would never attempt to cut off a vessel unless she were anchored. But no one of we white men knew much of the New Hebrides.) So as we had plenty of arms on board—Winchesters and Sharp's rifles—We got them in readiness; and very fortunate it was that we did so.

We drifted steadily along the densely-wooded shores of Pentecost all that day, the sea as smooth as glass, and the pitch bubbling up in the decks from the intense heat. Towards sunset, Captain Hannah's wife, who was lying on the skylight with her youngest child, called out to us that she could see a boat or canoe on the starboard beam. Hannah and I at once got our glasses, and soon made out a boat, pulling five oars, coming towards us from the island, and not more than a couple of miles away.

As she came nearer, and lifted now and then to the swell, we obtained a better view, and saw there were six people in her—five pulling and one steering. They came along very leisurely.

'Shipwrecked people, I imagine,' said Hannah; and then, turning to Alan and myself, he added, with a laugh, 'Perhaps there's a fine big lump of a

ship ashore about here, and you fellows are bound to get some fine pickings—might get the ship herself afloat.'

In ten minutes or so a bit of a light air came over the water, and filled our sails, so we stood over towards the boat, which was now drawing close. Presently one of our native sailors hailed us from aloft, and said he could see four or five more men in the boat besides those who were pulling; and at the same time she ceased rowing awhile, then the oars dipped again, and she came on.

Suddenly Hannah, who was scanning the strange boat very closely, turned to me quietly and said, 'I don't like the looks of that boat. We had better not let them come alongside. Perhaps they're escapees from New Caledonia. I thought so at first—they've got the regular "Ile Nou stroke." If they try to board we must beat them off, or we may lose the ship.'

Realising the danger, we at once called the native hands aft, gave each man a loaded Sharp's rifle and half a dozen cartridges, and told him to lay it down handy on the deck, and be prepared to use it. Hannah's wife at once began loading our five Winchester rifles. By this time the boat was within a hundred yards of the cutter. Whether those in her saw what we were doing or not I do not know, but they came on very confidently.

Then, getting up on the rail, I hailed, 'Boat ahoy, there! Don't come any nearer, or we'll fire into you. What do you want?'

There was a sudden commotion among the rowers, and then Hannah and Alan, coming to the rail, stood beside me with their Winchesters in their hands. This display had a good effect, for they stopped pulling at once, and the man steering stood up. The moment I got a full view of him and heard him speak, I knew that Hannah was right about the identity of the strangers.

'We are a ship-a-wreck men,' he called out; 'we wanta water and provis!'

'Well, pull abeam or us to windward, but don't come alongside just yet.'

'All right,' was the answer.

The wind was very light, and the boat could have soon overtaken us, but we felt confident that, with the arms we possessed, we could easily beat them off if they tried to board. At the same time we were willing to give them some provisions, and such other assistance as lay in our power.

After talking the matter over with Hannah, I again hailed the boat, and told the steersman that he could come aboard, but that the rest of his crowd must keep to the boat.

Hauling our jib to windward, we let them range alongside, and the steersman jumped on deck. During the few minutes that the boat was waiting, we had a good look at her and her occupants. The former, I could see, was German-built, very long, narrow and heavy, and was lumbered up with a quantity of fresh coco-nuts, yams, taro and other native food. As for the crew, they were as suspicious and as desperate-looking a lot of scarecrows as could be imagined.

Some of them were dressed in the heavy woollen garments usually worn by German merchant seamen, but half a dozen of them were wearing the yellow-grey canvas trousers of the New Caledonian convict. As I looked down at them Alan pointed out to me the muzzles of three or four short rifles showing from beneath the edge of a ragged native mat which was spread over the bottom boards for'ard. They had evidently spent the night on shore, for some of them, who were wearing cloth caps, had made themselves peaked sunshades of plaited green coco-nut leaves, which were tied round their heads, native-fashion. Lying amidships was a good-sized water-breaker; and one of the gang, a little, hooknosed ruffian, with a villainous face and wearing a filthy print shirt with the tails outside his pants, kept tapping it with a piece of wood to show us by the hollow sound that it was empty.

'Pass it up on deck, you monkey-faced swine,' said Alan. 'Why didn't you fill it when you were ashore?'

'We no finda water,' said the leader; 'we looka two, tree day—no finda, and too many ————— nigger on shore shoota us all the time witha-bow-anda-arra.'

'Well, you've got some guns there, I see. Couldn't you keep the niggers off while a couple of you filled the breaker?' I asked. 'And there's plenty of water on Pentecost, I believe.'

He shrugged his shoulders. 'Of what-a good the gun? We no have the cartridge. Perhaps you give some—feefty, twenty, ten, eh?'

Alan, who was a bit of a humorist, answered that we would give him as many cartridges as he wanted, if he gave us all the rifles he had in the boat in exchange.

A scowl—which he tried to twist into a smile—flitted across his face, and he turned his head away.

Giving the crowd in the boat a long line, we veered them astern, and as the breeze was now freshening, the cutter slipping through the water pretty fast, and we felt safe, Hannah, Alan and myself turned our undivided attention to our visitor. He was a tall, squarely-built fellow of about fifty years of age, with a thick stubble of iron-grey beard covering his cheeks and chin, and his forehead and neck were burnt to the colour of dark leather by the rays of a tropic sun. He was dressed in a pea-jacket and dungaree pants, but had no boots.

'Sit down,' I said, 'and tell us what we can do for you. But take a glass of grog first.'

He drank the liquor eagerly, first bowing to Mrs Hannah and then to us all in turn, and at the same time taking a sweeping glance along the deck at our crew, who were grouped for'ard. As he raised his hand to his mouth I saw that the back of it was much tattooed.

'Where did you lose your ship?' I asked.

'Astrolaba Reef,' he answered quickly, 'three hundreda mila to south-ward.'

'What was her name?'

'The *Airdale*,' he replied glibly. 'Belonga to Liverpool—fine biga ship. We bound to Pam in New Caledonia to load chroma ore, and run ashore on dark night. Ship break up very quick'—and then he spun off the rest of his yarn, and a very plausible one it was, too. The ship, he said, was not injured much at first, and on the following morning the captain, with the second mate and four hands, had left in one of the boats for Pam to get assistance. The first mate, bos'un and three hands were drowned. After waiting for ten days on the wreck the rest of the crew took to the long boat, for bad weather came on, and the ship began to pound on the reef.

'But what are you doing here so far to the northward?' asked Hannah, in his slow, drawling tones. 'Why didn't you steer for New Caledonia? You were only two days' sail to there from Astrolabe Reefs. Now you are three hundred miles to the north.'

The man was a marvellous liar. Yes, he said, that was true, but 'Goda help him,' he would 'speaka true.' He and the nine men with him did not want to go to New Caledonia, and did not want to have anything more to do with the captain, who was a very 'harda' man, and so they had stood to the northward, meaning to land on one of the New Hebrides.

'What was the captain's name?'

'Smeeth—Captain Johna Smeeth. Belonga to Liverpool.'

'Are you one of the ship's officers?'

'I am carpenter,' he answered promptly. 'I all the time sail in Englisha ship.'

'Just so; are you a Frenchman?' asked Hannah, casually.

'No; I come from Barcelon.'

'Well,' I said, 'I hope you will get along all right in your boat, wherever you go. I'll give you a 50-lb. tin of biscuits, some tinned meats, and as much water as you can take.'

He thanked me effusively, and said he would remember me in his prayers to the Virgin, etc.

'Have you a compass?' I asked.

He shrugged his shoulders despairingly. No, they had no compass; the 'gooda Goda must be compass' for them.

Mani, Hannah's wife, who was sitting near us, with her youngest child on her lap, apparently taking no heed of our talk, held the infant up and smiled; and, as if speaking to it, said in Samoan,—

'He lies. I saw a boat compass in the stern sheets of the boat.'

'Well, I'm sorry I can't give you a compass,' I said. 'Alan, pass up a tin of biscuit and a case of meat. The breeze is freshening, and we must get along.'

Then our visitor made an earnest appeal. His boat was leaky, his comrades were worn out, yet if we would let them come aboard they would, after a little rest, tow the cutter in a calm, and not trouble us in any way. Then, when we sighted Santo, they would leave us and make for Leper's Island, which was the place they wanted to reach. The natives there were very friendly, and there were some white men there.

'No,' I said, 'our vessel is too small for so many people. If you follow Pentecost along to the north, you will sight Leper's Island as soon as you round the north point. Now, haul your boat alongside. And here are a couple of bottles of brandy for yourself and crew, some matches, and a small box of tobacco.'

The boat hauled alongside, and our visitor, again thanking us, got in. In a few minutes we saw their leader serving them out a nip; then the night blotted them from view.

At daylight we were again becalmed and drifting steadily to the northward. The boat was not in sight, and the only signs of life visible around us were some slender columns of smoke ascending from the native villages along the coast, which was less than three miles away. The heat at ten o'clock was intense, and, to add to our discomfort, a heavy swell set in and caused us to roll incessantly. However, we lowered our mainsail, tried to be philosophical, and waited for a breeze. Towards four in the afternoon a sharp rain squall swept down upon us from the land; it lasted barely ten minutes, and was followed by others at short intervals, and then we knew we were in for a night of it. Whenever one of these squalls came tearing over the water we made good use of the wind by running before it to the east, so as to get away from the land; but at midnight we found we were still a great deal too close; and that the current was very strong, and now setting in-shore very rapidly, we could tell by the sound of the surf. There was nothing for us but to tow off, for the water was too deep to anchor, even within thirty fathoms of the reef. Just as we got the boat over the side there came a tremendous downpour of rain, and we could only make ourselves heard by shouting to each other at the top of our voices. This continued for half an hour, and through it all, the boat, with Alan and three hands, continued to tow. Suddenly the rain ceased—for about five minutes—only to fall again with a deafening uproar. At two o'clock it toned down to a misty drizzle, and we called to Alan to come alongside, as Hannah, two of his natives and myself would give him a spell. The rain had beaten the swell down, but the current was terribly strong, and when the mist lifted a bit we saw we were still too close to the reef. After taking a cast of the lead, and finding no bottom, Hannah and his two natives and myself tumbled into the boat. We had just about tautened the tow-line when Alan's voice rang out.

'Boat ahoy! Come back, quick, for God's sake! Here's the Frenchmen coming!'

We backed alongside and jumped on board, just in time; for almost at the same moment the Frenchmen's boat came up with a rush, and half a dozen men sprang on to our decks and instantly closed with us. The rest would have followed, but the ever-ready Mani began firing into their boat with a Winchester. This kept them off. Had they, too, gained the deck we should probably have lost the ship. The struggle on board was short but sharp. Hannah, who was possessed of enormous strength, had seized the first man who jumped over the rail round his waist, and slung him clean across the deck against the port bulwarks, where he lay stunned; and then went for the next man, whom he knocked backward into the boat with a terrific blow. Meanwhile, Alan, two native sailors and myself, were tied up in a knot with three others on the port side. It was so dark that it was impossible to tell friend from foe at first; and one of our hands, a Savage Islander, named Puniola, was just about to put a knife into me, as he, two of the boarders and myself were struggling together, when by chance he felt the big square buckle of my leather belt and recognised me. He quickly let go of me, seized one of the convicts by the throat, and choked him into insensibility, and we soon quietened one of the other two by the same method. The third man, who was as wiry as an eel and as strong as a horse, fought desperately, knocked two of us down, and was then himself laid out by Hannah, who had come to our assistance. Poor Alan, however, had fared badly; for the leader of the gang had half-stunned him with a weapon of some sort, and we found him lying across the cutter's tiller, bleeding profusely from a cut on the head. His assailant, seeing that the attempt to capture the ship had failed, jumped overboard and swam to his boat, which was drifting near to us in the darkness.

As quickly as possible we got lights and examined the gentry lying about on the deck. One of them was still unconscious, the rest were pretty badly mauled about in the tussle; and Mani suggested that we had better drop them overboard to save further trouble. Her blood was up, and she was full

of fight; but Hannah merely laughed, and told her not to be such a *pun fia ai* (tiger cat).

Showing a light, we hailed the Frenchmen's boat, and told them to come alongside again.

'If you don't look smart we'll drop these five men overboard. So hurry up.'

The gentleman from 'Barcelon'—who was certainly possessed of inimitable cheek—after telling us to go to Hades, added that he had but one oar in the boat, the others had gone adrift. So we had to dump our prisoners into our own boat, and pull out to the other. Then, while Alan and I covered those in the Frenchmen's boat, Hannah and two hands flung our prisoners out of our boat into their own. Their leader took matters very coolly, cursed his returning comrades freely as cowards, and then had the face to ask us for some oars.

Then Hannah, who, we now found, spoke French, boiled over. Jumping into the other boat, he seized the gentleman from Barcelona by the throat with his left hand and rapidly pounded his face into a pulp with his right.

Whilst Hannah was taking his satisfaction out of the big man, we struck some matches and examined the rest of the crowd in the boat. One man, we saw, was badly wounded, Mani having sent two bullets through his right shoulder and one through his thigh; another had his cheek cut open, but whether this was caused by a bullet or not I could not tell. I, being young and green, felt very pitiful and wanted Hannah to bring the badly-wounded man on board; but he, like a sensible man, said he would see me hanged first, and that we ought to shoot the lot of them.

But, anyway, we gave them three oars, and then pushed clear of their boat just as another rain squall came seething along.

At dawn we saw them, about two miles abeam of us, pulling slowly in towards Pentecost.

We heard afterwards that they were sighted by the Sydney steamer *Ripple* Captain Ferguson, off Torres Island, in the Banks Group. Most probably they abandoned the idea of stopping at Leper's Island, where they would not be safe from recapture by the French cruisers, and were then making for the Solomons. But that they ever reached there is doubtful; or, if they did, they were probably eaten by the natives. The boat, we heard, they had captured from a German vessel loading nickel ore at one of north-eastern ports of New Caledonia, and they had then raided a small settlement on the coast and obtained some arms and provisions. Long afterwards I was told that their leader was a sailor who was serving a life sentence for killing his mistress at La Ciotat, in the South of France.

It is quite possible, however, that they may have been picked up by an American whale-ship making northwards to the Moluccas from the New Zealand ground. In those days there were quite thirty ships still remaining of the once great American whaling fleet, which traversed the Pacific from one end to the other.

*Publisher's Note.—The half-caste Alan mentioned in this story is the same 'Alan' who so frequently figures in Mr Becke's tales in By Reef and Palm, and his subsequent books.*

## THE SOUTH SEA BUBBLE OF CHARLES DU BREIL

Less than a year ago news was received of the arrival in Noumea, in New Caledonia, of the remainder of a party of unwashed visionaries, calling themselves the 'United Brotherhood of the South Sea Islands.' A year before they had sailed away from San Francisco in a wretched old crate of a schooner, named the *Percy Edward* (an ex-Tahitian mail packet), to seek for an island or islands whereon they were to found a Socialistic Utopia, where they were to pluck the wild goat by the beard, pay no rent to the native owners of the soil, and, letting their hair grow down their backs, lead an idyllic life and loaf around generally. Such a mad scheme could have been conceived nowhere else but in San Francisco or Paris.

In the latter city such another venture, but founded on more heroic lines of infatuation, was organised eighteen years ago by the late Charles du Breil, Marquis de Rays, and the results ought to have made the American enthusiasts reflect a little before they started. But having got the idea that they might sail on through summer seas till they came to some land fair to look upon, and then annex it right away in the sacred name of Socialism (and thus violate one of the principal articles of their faith), they started—only to be quickly disillusionised. For there were no islands anywhere in the two Pacifics to be had for the taking thereof; neither were there any tracts of land to be had from the natives, except for hard cash or its equivalent. The untutored Kanakas also, with whom they came in contact, refused to become brother Socialists and go shares with the long-haired wanderers in their land or anything else. So from island to island the *Percy Edward* cruised, looking more disreputable every day, until, as the months went by, she began to resemble, in her tattered gear and dejected appearance, her

fatuous passengers. At last, after being chivvied about considerably by the white and native inhabitants of the various islands touched at, the forlorn expedition reached Fiji. Here fifty of the idealists elected to remain and work for their living under a government which represented the base and brutal institution of Monarchy. But the remaining fifty-eight stuck to the *Percy Edward* and her decayed salt junk, and stinking water, and their beautiful ideals; till at last the ship was caught in a hurricane, badly battered about, lost her foremast, and only escaped foundering by resting her keel on the bottom of Noumea Harbour. Then the visionaries began to collect their senses, and denounced the *Percy Edward* and the principles of the 'United Brotherhood' as hollow frauds, and elected to go ashore and get a good square meal.

The affair recalls the story of the ill-starred colony of 'Nouvelle France,' which was given the tacit support of the French Government, the blessing of the Church, and the hard-earned savings of the wretched dupes of French, Italian and Spanish peasantry who believed in it—until it collapsed, and many of them died cursing it and themselves on the fever-stricken shores of New Ireland.

Early in 1879 an enticing prospectus appeared, signed 'Ch. du Breil, Director and Founder of the Free Colony of Port Breton in Oceania.' In this precious document the marvellous fertility, the beautiful scenery, and the healthy climate of the island of New Ireland (Tombara) were described at length, while the native inhabitants came in for much unqualified praise as simple children of nature, who were looking forward with rapture to the advent of the colonists, and to the prospect of becoming citizens of the Free Colony, and being recognised as Frenchmen, and helping the settlers cultivate the vine, etc., and being admitted into the fold of Christianity.

Perhaps Du Breil believed in his impossible scheme—many people said so, when, some years afterwards, he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment and a fine of thirty thousand francs for his share in it. But if

he did not, the French peasantry did, and money came pouring in. Ignorant people sold their little all and gathered together at Marseilles and other ports, where ships waited to convey them to the new paradise; in all, nearly half a million pounds was subscribed. Then away went emissaries to the southern parts of Italy, where the ignorant agricultural labourers bit freely and were caught wholesale. In their case, however, the prospectus varied from that issued in France, which was specially designed to ensnare small capitalists, tradespeople and farmers, as well as the poorer peasants. The various religious fraternities in France, which hoped to benefit financially by their advocacy, boomed the scheme, and sermons were preached on the philanthropy of M. le Marquis, who, like Law and Blount, was nothing if not magnificent. By the time the *Chandernagore*, the first ship, had sailed from Flushing, elaborate plans were issued of the new city, with its parks and public buildings, and noble wharves and boulevards aglow with life and excitement; while the religious wants of the settlers had not been neglected, for cathedrals and churches figured conspicuously. Also, it was indicated by a carefully-prepared descriptive pamphlet, that gold and diamonds and such other things only wanted looking for in the surrounding islands, where they could be obtained in quantities sufficient to satisfy the most avaricious.

The *Chandernagore* carried only eighty colonists, all males, and, flying the Liberian flag, after a long passage she reached the Lachlan Islands, in the South Pacific, where sixteen of them elected to stay, charmed by the beauty of the place and the unconventional manners of the native women. Of these sixteen, five died from fever, and of the remainder two were killed and eaten by natives of other islands, and the rest were rescued by Australian and German trading vessels. The *Chandernagore* proceeded on her voyage, and Port Breton was reached at last. It is on the south end of the great island of New Ireland, and with, perhaps, the exception of the Falkland Islands, or the Crozets, or London in the month of November, the most sodden, dank, squashy and appalling place on the globe. The day after

the ship anchored it began to rain, and, as it showed no signs of clearing up at the end of three weeks, the captain was besought to look out for another site for the city where it was not quite so wet. He took them to a better place, named Liki Liki Bay, near Cape St George, and, after a preliminary orgie on board, the enthusiastic colonists set to work house-building and clearing the primaeval forest for the grape and fig crop. But as there were about two thousand and ninety trees to the hectare, and every tree was joined to its neighbours by vines as thick as a ship's main-mast, the work proceeded but slowly. Considerable time was lost, also, by each man dropping his axe twice in ten seconds to kill the mosquitoes which stung him severely. After a few days of this the founders of New France decided to return to Europe, and, duly arming themselves, went on board and interviewed the captain. The captain, MacLachlan, was a Scotchman by birth, but a naturalised Frenchman. He was also a humorist in a grim sort of way. On the voyage out he and M. de Villacroix, who was the temporary Governor, found that the eighty gentlemen colony founders were a pretty rough lot, who wanted to take charge of the ship. MacLachlan, who was a man of energy, brought them to reason by tricing seven of them up to the rigging by their thumbs, and promised to 'deal severely' with them next time. So when they boarded the *Chandernagore* and informed him that he must take them back to France, he answered by hunting them ashore again, landing six months' provisions, and sailing for Sydney, according to instructions from the Marquis. On arriving at Sydney he chartered a schooner, loaded her with provisions and agricultural machinery, and despatched her to Liki Liki Bay. Rough and cruel as he may appear, MacLachlan was the right sort of man to master insubordination and mutiny. I knew the man well, and know that he knew the ruffianly element he had to deal with in the first lot of colonists, and dealt with it in a proper and summary manner. Had there been half a dozen more such men as

himself and Villacroix to back him up, the tragic ending of the ill-fated expedition would have been averted.

But meantime the second contingent was preparing to leave, and the steamer *Genii* was bought by the Marquis to load another cargo of deluded emigrants at Marseilles and Barcelona. Like Villacroix and MacLachlan, her captain (Rabardy) was a man in whom he reposed implicit trust; and, indeed, Du Breil seems to have been at least fortunate in the choice of his sea-leaders to conduct his deplorable colonists to their Paradise. Under other and less determined men the loss of life would have been terrible. MacLachlan's letters from Sydney had warned him of one source of danger—mutiny—and Du Breil decided to send out with the second contingent a military guard. From the Italian and Spanish 'settlers' there was nothing to fear. Whatever they suffered they suffered in silence, like sheep; and the presence of several priests (going out to preach in the handsome stone cathedrals and churches before mentioned), whom they looked up to with simple reverence, was a surer safeguard for their good conduct than a company of troops. The married men among the French contingent of the second lot were like them in this respect; but, all through the course of the disastrous expedition, it was cursed by the inclusion of a number of unmarried men, whose ruffianism proved too strong to be checked; then there were a number of *nymphes du pavi*, recruited from the streets of Marseilles and Toulon. 'They came on board as unmarried women, but an "arrangement" in each case was made with one of the single men to play M. le Mari,' said one of the leaders, to the writer, when he lay dying of fever in the *Genil's* stifling saloon at Duke of York Island. Who can wonder at the collapse of the 'colony,' when practices such as these were tolerated? But it is typical of the system, or rather want of system, of French colonisation generally. On March 16th the *Genii* left Barcelona with over two hundred and fifty colonists—men, women and children. Some of the Italians were from the north—these were hard-working and intelligent—some from

Calabria—little better than beasts of the field—and the Spaniards came from Valencia and Catalonia. The military guard consisted of a Spanish captain and lieutenant and an Italian lieutenant, while the rank and file were of various nationalities. Before the crazy old *Genii* reached Port Said the guard themselves made matters warm, and, with the first and second engineers and second officer, refused to proceed. Rabardy, the captain, gladly let them go at Port Said and made for the Maldiv Islands, where he engaged thirty Arabs. Later on he put these ashore at Point de Galle. At Singapore the vessel remained six weeks, waiting for instructions, and then reached Liki Liki Bay fifteen days later—to find the place abandoned and the beach covered with the stores left there by the *Chandernagore* party, who had escaped to Australia; this he learned two days later from the white traders at Mioko, the settlement on Duke of York Island, twenty or thirty miles away. Rabardy was at his wit's end. He knew that another steamer was due in a month or two, and determined to wait and consult with the new Governor, who was coming out with a fresh batch of three hundred people. No work at settlement was begun, for Rabardy considered the former site could be bettered. Meanwhile, there arrived a barque of one thousand tons, the *Marquis de Rays*, deeply laden with cotton and sugar machinery, stores, provisions and medicines, and a large amount of trade goods for barter with the natives. These latter, although not cannibals like the people of the neighbouring Island of New Britain, were a very low type of savages, and their mode of life was disgusting in the extreme; whilst their wild and ferocious appearance was in harmony with their stark nudity. Still the *Genil's* people established friendly relations with them, and were supplied with fruit and vegetables, such as yams and taro.

On October 17th the steamer *India* arrived with her emigrants, and the new Governor, M. de Prévost, nothing daunted by the unfortunate previous experiences of the colony and its mismanagement, set to work with Captain Rabardy to get things in order.

A fresh site was chosen for the actual settlement, and the new arrivals, joining heartily with the *Genil's* people, began to clear and build. The Italians and Spaniards toiled, in happy expectation of future prosperity, with their French fellow-settlers, and hope ran high. But already the deadly malaria had begun its work, and ere long more than half of the many hundreds of colonists were suffering from fever, and soon some died. Then suddenly the Governor, who hitherto had cheered them up by his example and energy, announced his intention of going to Sydney in the *Genii* (the *India* had sailed for France) to procure cattle and a fresh stock of provisions. He never returned. Months and months went by, and the colonists waited and waited, while the fever carried off someone every few days; and then their hearts failed them, and they longed for the lands they had left for a chimera. A sad two months passed, and then one day another steamer—the *Nouvelle Bretagne*—came into Liki Liki Bay. She had brought out some three hundred more colonists, Spanish people, who listened, with doleful faces, to the tale of those who had preceded them to the Utopia of Charles du Breil. Rabardy, of the *Genil*, who, a month later, was to die of fever, game to the last, consulted with Captain Henry, of the *Nouvelle Bretagne* and, as they talked on the poop deck of the newly-arrived steamer, a cry came from the people on shore that another ship was in sight. An hour later a black-painted, unobtrusive-looking steamer came slowly into the bay and dropped anchor. She looked like a collier, and flew the red ensign of England; but Henry knew her. She was the *Legaspi*, Spanish gunboat from Manila, and had chased him from the Philippines. As her cable rattled through her hawsepipes, down went the red ensign and up went the Spanish colours, and a boat full of armed men dashed alongside the *Nouvelle Bretagne*, and in another five minutes Captain Henry was a prisoner, handcuffed, and on his way to the warship. What he had done at Manila was a daring deed enough, and is a story in itself, and nothing much to his discredit. His ship had been prevented from putting to sea by the

Spanish authorities, and Henry, who had many sick on board, and was greatly harassed in mind, suddenly slipped his cable and steamed off, although there was a Spanish guard on board. These he landed on the coast of Luzon.

That evening the commander of the *Legaspi* called the Spanish emigrants together and addressed them. 'The colony is a failure; the French, Italian and Spanish Governments have repudiated it. Those of you who like to return with the *Legaspi* to Manila can do so; those who do not may remain here, to die of starvation or be eaten by the savages.'

Next morning the *Legaspi* steamed out of Liki Liki Bay with the *Nouvelle Bretagne* in tow, taking; all the Spanish colonists with her. Then, to the aid of the despairing French and Italian colonists, came one Tom Farrell, an English trader on the Duke of York Island. He gave them provisions, advanced them money, and treated them well, taking care to get possession of the *Genil* and the barque *Marquis de Rays*. The *Genil* he sent to Australia under command of an English captain (Rabardy was dead by then, and his dying words to the writer of this sketch, as he grasped his hand for the last time, were, 'I have tried—and failed. I had not one competent officer with me to help me to maintain my authority or shoot some of the ruffians who have ruined the expedition'). Her unfortunate passengers were generously treated by the New South Wales Government, who settled many of them on the Richmond River, in the northern portion of the colony. Here they founded a prosperous little settlement, and are to this day happy and contented, and thank their stars that they left a spurious Utopia to dwell in a country where the conditions of climate are like those of their own sunny Italy. Perhaps, however, they think sometimes of those of their former comrades who died out there in the savage 'colony' of Charles du Breil. At Liki Liki there died nine; at Duke of York Island, thirteen; at New Britain, twenty-one; and six were eaten by the cannibals of the islands thereabouts. Of a score or so of others who remained in the North-West Pacific there is

no record. Probably they succumbed to fever, or went down under the clubs and spears of the wild people of New Britain, New Guinea and the Admiralty Group. Such was the end of the vision of Charles du Breil and the Colony of New France.

## THE WHITE WIFE AND THE BROWN 'WOMAN'

Masters, the trader at Fana 'alu, was walking up the beach to his house, reading a letter which he had just received from the captain of a passing vessel. It was from his employers in Sydney,—'We are confident that Mrs Masters and yourself will do all you can to render the lady's stay at Fana 'alu agreeable to her. You will find her husband, our new supercargo, a very fine fellow, easy to get on with, and a thoroughly honourable and conscientious business man.'

'Here, Melanie, old woman, where are you?' he called, as he flung himself lazily into a cane lounge on the verandah.

Melanie, who, native-like, was combing her hair in the sitting-room, rose from the mat upon which she was sitting and came to the door.

'What is it, Tom?' she asked, leaning against the wall and drawing the comb slowly through her long, black locks.

'Why, the barque will be here in another week or so, so this letter says, and there's a *tamaitai papalagi* (white lady) on board, and she will very likely stay here with us while her husband, who is the new supercargo, goes away in the ship to the Solomon Islands. He will come for her again in about six weeks.'

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Melanie's dark eyes glistened with pleasure. White women were rare visitors at lonely Fana 'alu. Every year, it was true, when the American missionary barque touched at the island, one, or sometimes two, white ladies would come ashore; but they were missionaries' wives, and never passed inside the door of the trader's house to speak to his wife. That, in the

eyes of the converted natives, would have been scandalous. Melanie might, if she so wished it, have called upon *them* at the native teacher's house, and paid homage afar off by sitting down on the mats in the furthest corner of the house, while fat, greasy Lepeka,\* the wife of the equally fat and greasy teacher Paulo, Christianly whispered in the ears of the holy white ladies that that was the white man's 'woman'—who wasn't married to her 'husband.' And even a white missionary's wife must not offend the spouse of the native teacher. So had any of these ladies wished to talk to Melanie, they would have had to make Lepeka their medium; for in some parts of the South Seas the usual position of vicar and curate is reversed, and the white visiting missionary and his wife deliver themselves into the hands of the brown curate and his wife for the time being. Perhaps it is this that makes most white missionaries so thin—the strain of having to submit to a Kanaka teacher's ideas of conventionality must be pretty hard to bear. And so poor Melanie, who would have liked to have sat near the fair-faced, sweet-voiced white ladies, or, perhaps, fondled their hands, as did the young unmarried girls who always surrounded them, bore her lot with content. For once, when she had brought her simple *alofa* (gift of love) to the missionaries, and laid it timidly down on the mats in the centre of the room, one of the white ladies had smiled at her and said to her husband,—

'Oh, what a pretty girl, and how nicely she is dressed. Ask her to come here and sit by me.'

\* *Rebecca.*

But Melanie was quick to see Lepeka's dark frown, and discreetly retired to her usual corner, at the back of the room, and when she went home to Masters, she did not chatter and laugh as usual when telling him of all she had seen and heard at the teacher's house.

For, in her simple heart, there began to grow an unrest. She would feel better, she thought, when the mission ship had sailed away again, and she

would forget the kind smile of the missionary's wife, and forget, too, the sneering curl of Lepeka's fat lips. Three years before, when Tom Masters had picked her up in a dancing saloon in Apia and had asked her to come away with him to Fana 'alu as his wife, she had thought of a marriage in the church, with its attendant mild excitements, and gluttonies of baked pig and fowls, and *palusami* and other delicacies, and the receiving and giving of many presents. But when Masters—who possessed a fragmentary conscience—told her why he could not marry her, she accepted the position calmly, and said it did not matter.

Perhaps, among the women of Fana 'alu, she stood highest in public estimation, notwithstanding her bar sinister, for she was open-handed and generous, and both the chiefs wife and Lepeka, the teacher's grand lady, were of common blood—whilst she, despite her antecedents in Apia, was of the best in Manono—the birthplace of the noble families of Samoa.

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So, as she stood there in the doorway, first combing and then plaiting her hair *à la Suisse*, she asked in her native tongue,—

'Is she young, Tom? Will she have hair of goldthread like that of the wife thou hadst in Sini{\*} long ago—she who married another man?'

\* *Sydney*.

Masters laughed. How could he tell! She might be young and fair; she might be an *olomatua* (an old woman), dried up and skinny. But that was none of their business. All that he and Melanie had to do was to entertain her well and make much of her.

'True,' said the placid-minded Melanie; 'and even if she be as ugly as an *aitu* (devil), yet will that fat-faced pig Lepeka die with envy to see a white lady a guest in my house. Would that I could send to Manono for my three brothers, so that they might come here and get drunk, and beat Paulo! I hate Paulo, even as I hate Lepeka, for they both speak evil of *me*, yet are for ever

cringing to *thee*, taking eagerly thy gifts of money to the church and the school and the mission fund, and yet whispering of me as the dancing-house whore.'

'Never mind that, old woman,' said Masters, softly, placing his hand upon the girl's head. 'Next year we shall go away from Fana 'alu. We shall go to Ponapé, in the far, far north—away from these islands; no bitter tongues shall pain thy heart there.' Then, picking up his hat, he sauntered down to the beach again and stood watching his whale-boat being hauled up into the boat-shed by her native crew.

*'Like the wife he once had in Sydney, long ago.'*

He lit his pipe, and began to pace to and fro on the sandy path under the cool shade of the coco-palms and bread-fruit trees, thinking of an incident of his past life, which, although six long years had passed, neither his subsequent wanderings in many lands, nor his three latter years' monotonously happy and lazy existence with Melanie at Fana 'alu, had yet quite banished from his memory. And the chance question put to him half an hour before had brought back to him a vision of the slender, blue-eyed and golden-haired woman who was the partner of his first matrimonial venture.

They had in the beginning led a turtle-dovey kind of life in those old days on the shores of Port Jackson. Not long after their marriage the shipping firm in which he was employed failed, and he had to seek for another billet; and, being an energetic, self-reliant man, with no false pride, he shipped as steward on board the *Noord Brabant*, a hogged-backed, heartbroken and worn-out American lumber ship running between Puget Sound and the Australian colonies. His wife had cried a little at first; but he told her that no one but their two selves would know, and it was better for him to be earning five pounds a month than idling about in Sydney.

On board the crazy old barque he found an acquaintance, who soon became a friend. This was the second mate—another Sydney man—who had shipped on the *Noord Brabant* because berths on good ships were scarce and mates and skippers were plentiful. So the two men, while the ship was being patched up for her long voyage across the Pacific, spent their evenings together at Masters's house.

Harry Laurance—that was the second mate's name—was a fine, handsome man, with clear, honest eyes and a merry, infectious laugh, and those evenings at his friend's house were a source of unalloyed happiness to him, for from his boyhood he had known no home except a ship or a squalid boarding-house.

One night, as the three sat together in Masters's little four-roomed cottage, and Nellie Masters had ceased playing upon the rattling fifteen-guinea box of discord called a piano, the three made plans for the future. When they—Masters and Laurance—returned from Puget Sound, they were not to part. Laurance, who had had long experience in the Island trade, had saved a little money—not much (as he told Masters one day when he placed ten sovereigns in the latter's hand, and asked him to accept it as a loan for his wife's sake), but nearly enough to buy a little thirty-ton vessel he knew of which was for sale, and which would be just the craft to run on trading voyages from New Zealand among the islands of the Gambier Group—if they could load her with trade goods. And he knew a man in Puget Sound who, he thought, would lend him a few hundreds, and take a third share in the venture. Then, when he and Masters returned from the impending voyage to Sydney, they, with Mrs Masters, would go over to Auckland, buy the schooner and the trade goods, and then sail for Manga Reva in the Gambier Group, where Masters and his wife were to buy a bit of land and put up a trading station, whilst Laurance ran the little vessel to and fro among the various islands of the group, and brought back pearl shell and copra for sale to the big German firm in Tahiti. And Masters's pretty wife

smiled joyously. She did not like to be parted from Tom for nearly seven months; but seven months was not a lifetime—and then they would be so happy, away from the grinding poverty of their existence in Sydney.

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Dreams! Six weeks afterwards, as the old *Noord Brabant* lay groaning over on her beam ends, thrashing her canvas to ribbons in a fierce night squall off Beveridge Reef, Tom Masters, hurrying on deck to help the hands shorten sail, was knocked overboard by the parting of the spanker-boom guy, and disappeared without a cry, into the seething boil to leeward.

For two hours—after the squall had ceased, and Masters was missed—the boat searched for him under the bright rays of a silvery moon and a clear, cloudless sky. But every now and then rain fell heavily, and though the boat rowed round and round the ship within a radius of two or three miles no answering cry came to the repeated hails of the crew. So then the *Noord Brabant* stood away again on her course, and Harry Laurance lay awake all his watch below, thinking sadly of his friend and of the dreadful shock which awaited the young wife in Sydney.

But Tom Masters did not drown. When he came to the surface of the water he found himself floating among the *debris* of the quarter-boat, which, when the spanker-boom guy parted and the heavy spar swung over to leeward, had swept the after-davit out of its socket and let the boat hang, stern down, by the for'ard fall, until the labouring old barque, raising her stern high out of the water, smashed down upon it as it dragged under her counter and tore out the for'ard ringbolt.

Half-stunned by the force of the blow which he had received on the back of his head from the spanker-boom when it swept him overboard, Masters was yet able to swim to the wreckage of the boat which he saw floating near him, and, clinging to the after part of the keel, he saw the cabin lights of the *Noord Brabant* shining brightly through the square, old-fashioned ports for a minute or two, and heard the cries of her crew as the sails were clewed up

and furled. Then a sharp, hissing rain squall hid her from view in a thick white mist, and, with agony and despair in his heart, he gave up all hope of life, knowing that the only other boat was turned bottom up on the main hatch of the barque, and that the ship was only half-manned by a scratch crew of long-shore loafers.

But it so happened that when the *Noord Brabant*, close-hauled to clear Beveridge Reef, was thrown on her beam ends by the violence of the squall, the whaling schooner *John Bright* was rolling easily along before it under shortened canvas, and the cook of the schooner, as he stood on the foc'scle, smoking his pipe, caught a sight of floating wreckage right ahead, with the indistinct figure of a man clinging to it, and bawled out 'Hard a-port!' just in time, or else the schooner had run right on top of the drifting boat and finished this tale and Tom Masters as well.

But boats are lowered quickly on an American whale-ship—quicker than on any other ship afloat—and in less than ten minutes Tom Masters was picked up and, in face of a blinding rain squall, brought on board the *John Bright*. Then a long illness—almost death.

Three months afterwards, as the schooner was slowly crawling along over the North Pacific towards Honolulu, she spoke a timber ship bound to the Australian colonies from Port Townsend in Puget Sound; and Masters, now recovering from the terrible shock he had received, went on board and asked the captain to let him work his passage. But the Yankee skipper of the lumber ship did not seem to like the idea of having to feed such a hollow-eyed, gaunt-looking being for another six weeks or so, and refused his request. And so Masters, in a dulled, apathetic sort of way went back to the *John Bright*, climbed up her side, and, with despair in his heart, lay down in his bunk and tried to sleep, never knowing that, half an hour before, when he was speaking to the captain of the lumberman, a letter to his wife from Laurance lay in a locker not three feet away from him, telling her of her husband's death at sea and his own heartfelt sorrow and sympathy.

And Laurance was honest and genuine in his sympathy. He had had a warm feeling of friendship for Tom Masters, and his heart was filled with pity for the poor little wife left alone without a friend in the world. He had tried to express himself clearly in his letter, but all that Nellie Masters could understand was that Tom had been drowned at sea, that Laurance would be back in Sydney in a month or two and give her all particulars, and that she was not utterly friendless and alone in the world.

Within a month of Harry Laurance's return she began to think more of him and of his goodness to her, than of her dead husband—and then gratitude became love. She was only a poor little woman, and of a weakly, irresolute nature, unable to think for herself, and unfitted to battle alone with the world and poverty. So one day when Laurance, whose big heart was full of love and pity for her, asked her to be his wife, she gave him a happy smile and said 'Yes.' Before a second month had passed they were quietly married.

Masters, meanwhile, had been pursued by the demon of ill-luck. When the schooner reached Honolulu, he, a mere wreck, physically and mentally, of his former self, had been carried ashore to the hospital, and was making a slow recovery, when the Sydney whaling brig, *Wild Wave* came into port with some of her crew injured by a boat accident. One of the men was placed in a bed next to that occupied by Masters, and one day his captain came to see him and brought him some colonial newspapers which had just arrived.

'Here, mate,' said the sailor, tossing one of the papers over to Masters, 'you're a Sydney man, and there's a Sydney newspaper.'

Masters took up the paper, and the first lines he read were these:—

'Laurance—Masters. On the 10th inst., at the Scots Church, Church Hill, Henry A. Laurance to Helen, widow of the late Thomas Masters.'

Possibly, had he been well enough to have returned to Sydney, he would have gone back and made three persons' lives unhappy. But, although an Englishman, he had not the rigidly conventional idea that the divorce court was part of the machinery of the Wrath of God against women who unknowingly committed bigamy, and ought to be availed of by injured husbands. So, instead of having a relapse, he pulled himself together, left the hospital, and got placidly drunk, and concluded, when he became sober, not to disturb them.

'I suppose neither of them is to blame,' he thought. 'How were either of them to know that I was not drowned?... And then poor little Nell had only ten shillings a week to live upon until I came back.'

Still, he would have been better pleased had Harry Laurance been a stranger to him—no man cares to know his successor in such a matter. By-and-by he worked his passage to Samoa, where, under the assumed name of Tom Patterson, he soon found employment. Then one night he went into Charley the Russian's saloon—and met Melanie.

And now he was settled down at Fana 'alu, was doing well as a trader, and had acquired, in all its intensity, the usual dislike to the idea of ever going back to the world again, common enough to men of his nature in Polynesia. Besides that, Melanie understood him and he understood her. She was as open and honest as the day, worked hard for him in his store, and was sincerely attached to him. So he was well content.

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There was much commotion in the village when the trading barque arrived and lay-to off Fana 'alu. Melanie, in a dress of spotless white muslin, flitted to and fro within the house, smoking cigarettes and cursing her women assistants' laziness and stupidity. Masters, it so happened, was away in his boat at another village along the coast, and pretty Melanie was in a state of nervous trepidation at the thought of having to meet the English lady alone. What should she do? What should she say? Her English was

scant but vigorous, having mostly been acquired from the merchant skippers, who, in her—to put it nicely—maiden days, frequented the dance house of 'Charley the Russian' in Apia, and she was conning over the problem of whether she should address her coming guest in that language or not. Her child, a little girl of two, followed her mother's movements with intense curiosity; and presently a bevy of young native girls swarmed into the room with the news that the boat had come ashore, and that the white lady and her husband had landed and were now walking up to the house. Then Mrs Masters Number Two pulled herself together and, throwing away her cigarette, went to the door and, with a graceful, modest demeanour and a timid, bashful smile, held out her hand to a lovely being with big, bright blue eyes and thick masses of hair of shining gold. Beside this—to Melanie—glorious vision of beauty, stood the husband—a big, black-moustached and bronze-feced man, who stooped as he entered the door of the trader's house, and said good-naturedly to her,—

'Glad to meet you, Mrs Patterson. Will your husband be long before he returns?'

'I don' know, sir,' answered Melanie. 'He hav' gone to Pitofanua. But he will come ver' quick when he know that the ship hav' come.' Then, trembling with pleasurable excitement, she turned to the lady and indicated a low easy-chair, and said in Samoan,—

'Sit thou there, O lady;' and then in English, 'I can't speak Englis' very good sometimes. But my man will soon come.' Then she remembered something. 'Please will you come into dis room here, which is been made all ready for you, an' take off your hat;' and then she darted over to a side table, brought a glass and a bottle of whisky over to the lady's husband; then, with a winning smile, timidly held out her brown hand to her guest, and led her into the bedroom.

The new supercargo helped himself to a nip of whisky and then sat down, his keen business eye taking in the order and cleanliness of the room. In a

few minutes his wife came out.

'Hang these traders, Nell! Why isn't this fellow here to meet me? He had no business to go away from his station when the ship was due. However, he has jolly nice quarters, and so we'll make ourselves comfortable until he turns up. I think you'll like this place, Nell, and won't find it tedious whilst I'm away at the Solomons. Eh, pet?'

The White Lady nodded and smiled. 'Yes, Harry, but I'll miss you terribly to-morrow. Six weeks is a long time, dear.... Oh, Harry, do look—isn't she a lovely child?' And, bending down, she swept up Melanie's little girl in her arms and kissed her softly, and her eyes suddenly filled with tears.

'Yes,' said the supercargo, shortly, as, without looking at the child, he took some papers from his pocket and began to read. His and her hearts' desire had never been granted, and so he hated to look at the child of another man.

'I wish this fellow would come,' he said presently, in an irritable tone, as he rose and walked to and fro.... Don't let that child paw you about like that, Nell.... Hallo, here he is at last.'

Fanning his heated brow with his broad hat of pandanus leaf, the trader stood in the doorway.

'Good morning. I'm sorry I was away when you came—'

A cry, half scream and half sob, came from the supercargo's wife, as, still holding the child in her arms, she swayed to and fro, and Melanie sprang to her side.

'Oh, Harry, it is Tom!' she said.

Then she sank back and lay upon the matted floor, with her head pillowed upon Melanie's bosom; and the child wailed in terror.

'What the hell is the matter?' said the big supercargo, striding forward to the trader and seizing him by the arm. Then he looked into Masters's face.

'By God, Masters, is it *you*? As heaven is my judge, I swear to you that we both thought you were dead!'

The trader's eyes met his in a long, searching glance, then turned to where the unconscious, figure of the white woman lay, supported in the arms of Melanie, who, with affrighted eyes, gazed appealingly to them both.

He reached out his hand to the other man. 'That's all right, Laurance. Let us go outside and talk. See, *your wife* has fainted, but Melanie will see to her.'

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That night, whilst Masters and Laurance, cigars in mouth, were gravely picking out the former's trade goods on board the *Palestine* the White Lady and the Brown 'Woman' talked.

'Is you any better now?' said Melanie, as she caressingly ran her hand down the golden locks of Mrs Laurance.

A smothered sob was her answer, and the yellow head buried itself among the pillows of the couch.

Melanie turned away despairingly, and then lit a cigarette. What a fool was this beautiful white woman—nothing but sob, sob, sob! What could be done to dry her tears?

Presently the Brown 'Woman' slid her hand under the waist of the weeping White Lady, and pressed her cheek to hers.

'Don' you wan' to stay here now?'

'No, no, no! Let me go away. I wish I were dead!'

'What for?' and the philosophical Melanie sent two long streaks of smoke through her nostrils. 'Why are you 'shamed? You have a husban' now, and yo' don' wan' to *faotane*, do you?'

'What is *faotane*?'

Melanie laughed. '*Faotane* is Samoa language; it means stealing a husband.... And yo' won' steal my husband' from me, will you? Yo' hav' got a new husband', and yo' won' take Tom from me, will yo'?'

Mrs Laurance sprang to her feet and placed her hands on the Brown 'Woman's' shoulders.

'Tell me,' she said, 'did he ever talk of me?'

'Yes,' said the truthful Melanie. 'He tell me that yo' have hair like gold, and that your eye was blue like the sky.'

'No more?'

Melanie shook her black locks. 'No more. My man never talk too much. You like to eat some roast pigeon now?'

The White Lady turned her head aside and sobbed. 'And for a soulless being like this!' Then she remembered that Masters was not to blame, and waited, trembling and sobbing, for the two men to return.

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Masters, having finished his business on board the barque, held out his hand to Laurance.

'Good-bye, Harry. Nothing can be done. Tom Masters was drowned off Beveridge Reef years ago, and Harry Laurance married his widow; and Tom Patterson is another man, who has a native wife, and—'

He wrung Laurance's hand, sprang up the companion-way and called to his boat's crew,—

'Haul the boat alongside, boys. I'm going to Pito-fanua again; and you beggars will have to pull like hell.... Good-bye, Harry, old fellow. Send your boat ashore for your wife... and God bless you both!'

## WITH HOOK AND LINE ON AN AUSTRAL RIVER

The English visitor to the Eastern Colonies of Australia, who is in search of sport with either rod or hand line, can always obtain excellent fishing in the summer months, even in such traffic-disturbed harbours as Sydney, Newcastle and other ports; but on the tidal rivers of the eastern and southern seaboard he can catch more fish than he can carry home, during nine months of the year. In the true winter months deep sea fishing is not much favoured, except during the prevalence of westerly winds, when for days at a time the Pacific is as smooth as a lake; but in the rivers, from Mallacoota Inlet, which is a few miles over the Victorian boundary, to the Tweed River on the north, the stranger may fairly revel, not only in the delights of splendid fishing, but in the charms of beautiful scenery. He needs no guide, will be put to but little expense, for the country hotel accommodation is good and cheap; and, should he visit some of the northern rivers, where the towns—or rather small settlements—are few and far between, he will find the settlers the embodiment of British hospitality. Some five years ago the writer formed one of the crew of a little steamer of fifty tons, named the *Jenny Lind*, which was sent out along the coast in the futile endeavour to revive the coast whaling industry. Through stress of weather we had frequently to make a dash for shelter, towing our one whale-boat, to one of the many tidal rivers on the coast between Sydney and Gabo Island. Here we would remain until the weather broke, and our crew would literally cover the deck with an extraordinary variety of fish in the course of a few hours. Then, at low tide, we could always fill a couple of corn sacks with excellent oysters, and get bucketfuls of large prawns by means of a scoop net improvised from a piece of mosquito netting. Game, too, was very

plentiful on the lagoons. The settlers were generally glad to see us, and gave us so freely of milk, butter, pumpkins, etc., that, despite the rough handling we always had at sea from the weather, we grew quite fat. But as the greater part of my fishing experience was gained on the northern rivers of the colony of New South Wales, it is of them I shall write. Eighteen hours' run by steamer from Sydney is the Hastings River, on the southern bank of which, a mile from the bar, is the old-time town of Port Macquarie—a quaint, sleepy little place of six hundred inhabitants, who spend their days in fishing and waiting for better times. There are two or three fairly good hotels, very pretty scenery along the coast and up the river, and a stranger can pass a month without suffering from *ennui*—that is, of course, if he be fond of fishing and shooting; if he is not, he should avoid going there, for it is the dullest coast town in New South Wales. The southern shore, from the steamer wharf to opposite the bar, is lined with a hard beach, on which, at high tide or slack water at low tide, one may sit down in comfort and have great sport with bream, whiting and flathead. As soon as the tide turns, however, and is well on the ebb or flow, further fishing is impossible, for the river rushes out to sea with great velocity, and the incoming tide is almost as swift. On the other side of the harbour is a long, sandy point called the North Shore, about a mile in length. This, at the north end, is met by a somewhat dense scrub, which lines the right bank of the river for a couple of miles, and affords a splendid shade to anyone fishing on the river bank. The outer or ocean beach is but a few minutes' walk from the river, and a magnificent beach it is, trending in one great unbroken curve to Point Plomer, seven miles from the township.

Before ascending the river on a fishing trip one has to be provided with a plentiful supply of cockles, or 'pippies,' as they are called locally. These can only be obtained on the northern ocean beach, and not the least enjoyable part of a day's sport consists in getting them. They are triangular in shape, with smooth shells of every imaginable colour, though a rich purple is

commonest. As the backwash leaves the sands bare, these bivalves may be seen in thick but irregular patches protruding from the sand. Sometimes, if the tide is not low enough, one may get rolled over by the surf if he happen to have his back turned seaward. Generally I was accompanied by two boys, known as 'Condon's Twins.' They were my landlord's sons, and certainly two of the smartest young sportsmen—although only twelve years old—I ever met with. Both were very small for their age, and I was always in doubt as to which was which. They were always delighted to come with me, and did not mind being soused by a roller now and then when filling my 'pippy' bag. Pippies are the best bait one can have for whiting (except prawns) in Australia, for, unlike the English whiting, it will not touch fish bait of any sort, although, when very hungry, it will sometimes take to octopus flesh. Bream, whether black or silvery, flathead, trevally, Jew-fish, and, indeed, all other fish obtained in Australia, are not so dainty, for, although they like 'pippies' and prawns best, they will take raw meat, fish, or octopus bait with readiness. Certain species of sea and river mullet are like them in this respect, and good sport may be had from them with a rod in the hot months, as Dick and Fred, the twins aforesaid, well knew, for often would their irate father wrath-fully ask them why they wasted their time catching 'them worthless mullet.'

But let me give an idea of one of many days' fishing on the Hastings, spent with the 'Twins.' Having filled a sugar-bag with 'pippies' on the ocean beach, we put on our boots and make our way through the belt of scrub to where our boat is lying, tied to the protruding roots of a tree. Each of us is armed with a green stick, and we pick our way pretty carefully, for black snake are plentiful, and to tread on one means death. The density of the foliage overhead is such that but little sunlight can pierce through it, and the ground is soft to our feet with the thick carpet of fallen leaves beneath. No sound but the murmuring of the sea and the hoarse notes of countless gulls breaks the silence, for this side of the river is uninhabited, and its solitude

disturbed only by some settler who has ridden down the coast to look for straying cattle, or by a fishing party from the town. Our boat, which we had hauled up and then tied to the tree, is now afloat, for the tide has risen, and the long stretches of yellow sandbanks which line the channel on the further side are covered now with a foot of water. As we drift up the river, eating our lunch, and letting the boat take care of herself, a huge, misshapen thing comes round a low point, emitting horrid groanings and wheezings. It is a steam stern-wheel punt, loaded with mighty logs of black-butt and tallow wood, from fifty feet to seventy feet in length, cut far up the Hastings and the Maria and Wilson Rivers, and destined for the saw-mill at Port Macquarie.

In another hour we are at our landing-place, a selector's abandoned homestead, built of rough slabs, and standing about fifty yards back from the river and the narrow line of brown, winding beach. The roof had long since fallen in, and the fences and outbuildings lay low, covered with vines and creepers. The intense solitude of the place, the motionless forest of lofty, grey-boled swamp gums that encompassed it on all sides but one, and the wide stretch of river before it were calculated to inspire melancholy in anyone but an ardent fisherman. Scarcely have we hauled our boat up on the sand, and deposited our provisions and water in the roofless house, when we hear a commotion in the river—a swarm of fish called 'tailer' are making havoc among a 'school' of small mullet, many of which fling themselves out upon the sand. Presently all is quiet again, and we get our lines ready.

For whiting and silvery bream, rather fine lines are used; but we each have a heavy line for flathead, for these fish are caught in the tidal rivers on a sandy bottom up to three feet and four feet in length. They are in colour, both on back and belly, much like a sole, of great width across the shoulders, and then taper away to a very fine tail. The head is perfectly flat, very thin, and armed on each side with very sharp bones pointing tailward.

A stab from one of these causes intense inflammation. The fins are small—so small as to appear almost rudimentary—yet the fish swims, or rather darts, along the bottom with amazing rapidity. They love to lie along the banks a few feet from the shore, where, concealed in the sand, they can dart out upon and seize their prey in their enormous 'gripsack'mouths. The approach of a boat, or a person walking along the sand, will cause them to at once speed like lightning into deep water, leaving behind them a wake of sand and mud, which is washed off their backs in their flight. Still, although not a pleasing fish to look at, the flathead is of a delicious and delicate flavour. There are some variations in their shades of colour, from a pale, delicate grey to a very dark brown, according to their habitat, and, although most frequent in very shallow water, they are often caught in great quantities off the coast in from ten to fifteen fathoms of water. Gut or wire snoodings are indispensable when fishing for flathead, else the fish invariably severs the line with his fine needle-pointed teeth, which are set very closely together. Nothing comes amiss to them as food; but they have a great love for small mullet or whiting, or a piece of octopus tentacle.

Baiting our heavy lines with mullet—two hooks with brass-wire snoods to each line—we throw out about thirty yards, then, leaving two or three fathoms loose upon the shore, we each thrust a stick firmly into the sand, and take a turn of the line round it. As the largest flathead invariably darts upon the bait, and then makes a bolt with it, this plan is a good one to follow, unless, of course, they are biting freely; in that case the smaller lines for bream and whiting, etc., are hauled in, for there is more real sport in landing a 10-lb. flathead than there is in catching smaller fish, for he is very game, and fights fiercely for his life.

Having disposed our big lines, we bait the smaller ones with 'pippies,' and not two minutes at the outside elapse after the sinkers have touched bottom when we know we are to have a good time, for each of us has hooked a fish, and three whiting are kicking on the sand before five minutes

have expired. Then for another hour we throw out and haul in again as quickly as possible, landing whiting from 6 oz. to nearly 2 lb. weight. One of the 'Twins' has five hooks on his line, and occasionally lands three fish together, and now and again we get small bream and an occasional 'tailer' of 2 lb. or 3 lb. As the sun mounts higher the breeze dies away, the heat becomes very great, and we have frequent recourse to our water jar—in one case mixing it with whisky. Then the whiting cease to bite as suddenly as they have begun, and move off into deeper water. Just as we are debating as to whether we shall take the boat out into mid-stream, Twin Dick gives a yell, as his stick is suddenly whipped out of the sand, and the loose line lying beside it rushes away into the water. But Dick is an old hand, and lets his fish have his first bolt, and then turns him. 'By jingo! sir, he's a big fellow,' he cries, as he hauls in the line, now as taut as a telegraph wire, and then the other twin comes to his aid, and in a few minutes the outline of the fish is seen, coming in straight ahead, as quick as they can pull him. When he is within ten feet of the beach the boys run up the bank and land him safely, as he turns his body into a circle in his attempts to shake out the hook. Being called upon to estimate his weight, I give it as 11 lb., much to the Twins' sorrow—they think it 15 lb. Half an hour passes, and we catch but half a dozen silvery bream and some small baby whiting, for now the sun is beating down upon our heads, and our naked feet begin to burn and sting; so we adjourn to the old house and rest awhile, leaving our big lines securely tied. But, though the breeze for which we wait comes along by two o'clock, the fish do not, and so, after disinterring our takes from the wet sand, wherein we had buried them as they were caught, to prevent them being spoilt by the sun, we get aboard again and pull across to the opposite bank of the river. Here, in much deeper water, about fifteen feet right under the clayey bank, we can see hundreds of fine bream, and now and then some small Jew-fish. Taking off our sinkers, we have as good and more exciting sport among the bream than we had with the whiting, catching

between four and five dozen by six o'clock. Then, after boiling the billy and eating some fearfully tough corned meat, we get into the boat again, hoist our sail, and land at the little township just after dark. Such was one of many similar days' sport on the Hastings, which, with the Bellinger, the Nambucca, the Macleay and the Clarence Rivers, affords good fishing practically all the year round. Then, besides these tidal rivers, there are at frequent intervals along the coast, tidal lagoons and 'blind' creeks where fish congregate in really incredible quantities. Such places as Lake Illawarra and Lake Macquarie are fishing resorts well known to the tourist; but along the northern coast, where the population is scantier and access by rail or steamer more difficult, there is an absolutely new field open to the sportsman—in fact, these places are seldom visited for either fishing or shooting by people from Sydney. During November and December the bars of these rivers are literally black with incredible numbers of coarse sea-salmon—a fish much like the English sea bass—which, making their way over the bars, swim up the rivers and remain there for about a week. Although these fish, which weigh from 8 lb. to 10 lb., do not take a bait, and are rather too coarse to eat, their roes are very good, especially when smoked. They are captured with the greatest of ease, either by spearing or by the hand, for sometimes they are in such dense masses that they are unable to manoeuvre in small bays, and the urchins of coastal towns hail their yearly advent with delight. They usually make their first appearance about November 20th (I presume they resort to the rivers to spawn), and are always followed by a great number of very large sharks and saw-fish,{\*} which commit dreadful havoc in their serried and helpless ranks. Following the sea-salmon, the rivers are next visited in January by shoals of very large sea-mullet—blue-black backs, silvery bellies and sides, and yellow fins and tails. These, too, will not take a bait, but are caught in nets, and, if a steamer happens to be on the eve of leaving for Sydney, many hundreds of baskets are sent away; but they barely pay the cost of freight and commission, I

believe. There are several varieties of sea-mullet, one or two of which will take the hook freely, and I have often caught them off the rocky coast of New South Wales with a rod when the sea has been smooth. The arrival of the big sea-mullet denotes that the season for Jew-fish is at its height, and if the stranger to Australian waters wants exciting sport, let him try Jew-fishing at night. In deep water off the coast these great fish are occasionally caught during daylight, but a dull, cloudy night is best, when they may be caught from the beach or river bank in shallow water. Very stout lines and heavy hooks are used, for a 90-lb. or 100-lb. Jew-fish is very common. Baiting with a whole mullet or whiting, or one of the arms of an octopus, the most amateurish fisherman cannot fail to hook two or three Jew-fish in a night. (Even in Sydney Harbour I have seen some very large ones caught by people fishing from ferry wharves.) They are very powerful, and also very game, and when they rise to the surface make a terrific splashing. At one place on the Hastings River, called Blackman's Point, a party of four of us took thirteen fish, the heaviest of which was 62 lb. and the lightest 9 lb. Next morning, however, the Blackman's Point ferryman, who always set a line from his punt when he turned in, showed us one of over 90 lb. When they grow to such a size as this they are not eaten locally, as the flesh is very often full of thin, thread-like worms. The young fish, however, are very palatable.

*\* The 'saw-fish' of the Australian tidal rivers is very distinct from the sword-fish of the deep sea.*

The saw-fish, to which I have before alluded as harrying the swarms of sea-salmon, also make havoc with the Jew-fish, and very often are caught on Jew-fish lines. They are terrible customers to get foul of (I do not confound them with the sword-fish) when fishing from a small boat. Their huge broad bill of hard bone, set on both sides with its terrible sharp spikes, their great length and enormous strength, render it impossible to even get them alongside, and there is no help for it but either to cut the line or pull

up anchor and land him on the shore. Even then the task of despatching one of these creatures is no child's play on a dark night, for they lash their long tails about with such fury that a broken leg might be the result of coming too close. In the rivers of Northern Queensland the saw-fish attain an enormous size, and the Chinese fishermen about Cooktown and Townsville often have their nets destroyed by a sawfish enfoldng himself in them. Alligators, by the way, do the same thing there, and are sometimes captured, perfectly helpless, in the folds of the nets, in which they have rolled themselves over and over again, tearing it beyond repair with their feet, but eventually yielding to their fate.

The schnapper, the best of all Australian fish, is too well known to here enter into a detailed description. Most town-bred Australians generally regard it as a purely ocean-loving fish, or at least only frequenting very deep waters in deep harbours, such as Sydney, Jervis Bay and Twofold Bay. This is quite a mistake, for in many of the rivers, twenty or more miles up from the sea, the writer and many other people have not only caught these beautiful fish, but seen fishermen haul in their nets filled with them. But they seldom remain long, preferring the blue depths of ocean to the muddy bottoms of tidal rivers, for they are rock-haunting and surf-loving.

Of late years the northern bar harbours and rivers of New South Wales have been visited by a fish that in my boyhood's days was unknown even to the oldest fisherman—the bonito. Although in shape and size they exactly resemble the ocean bonito of tropic seas, these new arrivals are lighter in colour, with bands of marbled grey along the sides and belly. They bite freely at a running bait—i.e., when a line is towed astern—and are very good when eaten quite fresh, but, like all of the mackerel tribe, rapidly deteriorate soon after they are caught. The majority of the coast settlers will not eat them, being under the idea that, as they are all but scaleless, they are 'poisonous.' This silly impression also prevails with regard to many other scaleless fish on the Australian coast, some of which, such as the trevally,

are among the best and most delicate in flavour. The black and white rock cod is also regarded with aversion by the untutored settlers of the small coast settlements, yet these fish are sold in Sydney, like the schnapper, at prohibitive prices.

In conclusion, let me advise anyone who is contemplating a visit to Australia, and means to devote any of his time to either river or lake fishing, to take his rods with him; all the rest of his tackle he can buy as cheap in the colonies as he can in England. Rods are but little used in salt-water fishing in Australia, and are terribly expensive to buy. Those who do use a rod are usually satisfied with a bamboo—a very good rod it makes, too, although inconvenient to carry when travelling—but the generality of people use hand lines. And the visitor must not be persuaded that he can get really good river fishing without going some distance from Sydney or Melbourne. That there is some excellent sport to be obtained in Port Jackson in summer is true, but it is lacking in a very essential thing—the quietude that is dear to the heart of every true fisherman.

## THE WRECK OF THE LEONORA: A MEMORY OF 'BULLY' HAYES

The brig *Leonora*, owned and commanded by the notorious Captain 'Bully' Hayes, has, perhaps, been more written and talked about than any other vessel, except the *Bounty*, that ever sailed the South Seas, and her career was as eventful as that of her captain. It was my fortune to fill the distinguished position of supercargo to that eminent gentleman for two years, and, as may be imagined by those who have read anything of Hayes's strange life and doings in the Pacific and the China Seas, I found the berth a remarkably curious one. How and why I became supercargo to the famous alleged pirate is another story; but, in justice to 'Bully's' memory, I may here at once say that the man was *not* the remorseless ruffian that his enemies and many writers of tales of the South Seas have painted him; furthermore, he was one of the best sailor-men that ever trod a deck. Had he lived in the times of Drake or Dampier, he would have been a hero, for he was a man born to command and lead. *Inter alia*, he was also clever with his fists, and my soul was possessed of the deepest admiration for him in this respect from the very first day I stepped on board the *Leonora*, in Milli Lagoon, in the Marshall Islands, for it was my privilege to see him knock out three men, one after another, in twice as many minutes. These men were 'toughs' from a New Bedford whaler, and had been put ashore at Milli Lagoon by their captain as dangerous and useless characters. They came on board the *Leonora* and asked 'Bully' to ship them. He refused in such unnecessary language that the leader of the three, in fatuous ignorance of the man to whom he was speaking, threatened to 'put a head on him'; whereupon Hayes at once had the deck cleared, and, taking them in turn, knocked each man out in the first round. Then he gave them a glass of grog all round, a bottle

of arnica to cure the malformations he had caused on their countenances, and sent them ashore.

But this is not the story of the wreck of the *Leonora*.

We had made Strong's Island from Ponapé, in the Western Carolines, to wood and water and land some cattle, and for two weeks we lay at anchor in the beautiful harbour of Lêlé. We found the island in a very disturbed and excited state, for a few weeks previously two American sperm whalers had touched at Lêlé and landed five white men, with a retinue of nearly one hundred savage natives from Pleasant Island, an isolated spot situated in 0.25 S., and these people—white and brown—so terrified the Strong's Islanders that the old King Togusa was in abject fear of them. We (Hayes and myself) soon learnt their story, which was that they had been compelled to fly for their lives from Pleasant Island on account of an engagement between the various clans of that place. The two chiefs under whose protection these men lived had been badly beaten, and the victors gave the five white traders a short notice to clear out or be shot. They at once put to sea in their several whale-boats, but when some three hundred miles away from the island, on their way to Ponapé—the North Pacific Cave of Adullam—they were sighted and picked up by the two whalers, the *St George* and the *Europa*, the captains of which, not caring for their company all the way to Ponapé, landed them at Strong's Island. They were now awaiting a chance to continue their voyage to Ponapé in a passing whaler, and in the meantime their savage followers were harrying the unfortunate Strong's Islanders to death, robbing their plantations, abducting their women and knocking them about generally.

These wild people were the most noisy and intractable lot of natives I had ever seen, wearing only a girdle of leaves around their waists, and all armed with Snider carbines and short stabbing knives made from cutlasses broken in halves. But, although they bullied the weak and effeminate Strong's Islanders, they were yet very obedient to their white masters, to whom they

were all more or less related through the native wives whom the traders had married. The women were very tall and handsome, and every bit as handy with their knives as the men in a quarrel.

Hayes, of course, was well known to both the white men and natives, and at once began his good offices by threatening to open fire on the houses and boats of the former if they did not at once cease to persecute the king and his subjects. This threat he made in the presence and hearing of the king himself, who was deeply grateful, and at once said he would make him a present of two tuns of oil. The five hairy ruffians were considerably startled at first; but Hayes, I regret to say, turning to one of them, named Pedro Diaz, said in Spanish, 'Don't be scared, Peter. I'm not going back on you fellows; but at the same time you'll have to quit knocking these poor devils about. So just go ashore and take away your people's rifles—it means a couple of tuns of oil for me—its just as well in the hold of the *Leonora* as in that of the missionary brig *Morning Star*. The missionaries would only promise King Togusa credit in heaven. I'll give him enough grog to keep him drunk for a month of Sundays on earth; and as he never possibly could get to heaven, I am treating him better than the missionaries, who would simply be obtaining his oil under false pretences.'

On the following day the king sent off his gift of oil; the five white men and he became reconciled, and the abducted Strong's Island women were returned to their parents or husbands as a guarantee of good faith. In the evening the traders came on board and made an arrangement with Hayes to proceed in the brig to Arrecifos (Providence Island), a large atoll to the north-west, of which Hayes had taken possession. Here they were to live as long as they liked, paying Hayes a certain quantity of coco-nut oil as tribute, and resisting, by force of arms, any attempt to take possession of the atoll by the German trading company of Godeffroy, should it be made by any one of the three, armed German brigs belonging to the firm, and then cruising in the North Pacific.

Two days later we bade farewell to the old king and his pretty young wife, Se, and the *Leonora* sailed out of Lêlé. We were first to call at South Harbour, six miles to leeward, where we were to take in yams, pigs and other provisions for the voyage to Providence Island, as we had now over one hundred additional people on board.

We ran out of Lêlé at daylight, and at seven o'clock in the morning dropped our anchor in fourteen fathoms in South Harbour, or Utwé,\* as the natives called it. As quickly as possible the ship's boats, aided by those belonging to the traders, set to work to bring off the yams and pigs, for which, as they were brought on deck by their native owners, I weighed and paid. By dusk we had finished, and I was just dressing to go to supper aboard one of the American whale-ships which were lying near us, when the trade wind, which had been lusty enough all day, suddenly fell—a very dangerous sign at that season of the year. In a few minutes Hayes sent a boat over to the whalers, telling the captains that a blow was coming on from the westward, and advising them to clear out to sea. But the American captains decided not to risk towing out through the narrow passage; and as they were in a much better position than the *Leonora*, they did wisely, for in less than a quarter of an hour a mountainous swell began rolling in, and it soon became evident that even with our own four boats, and the seven belonging to the traders, we could not tow out.

\* *The Port Lottin of Dupurrcy.*

As quickly as possible Hayes had our royal and top-gallant yards sent down, the boats slung in-board from the davits on the deck, the Pleasant Islanders sent below, and every preparation made to ride out the blow, which we were in hopes would not last more than six hours or so. So far not a breath of wind had come, but the brig was rolling so badly that we quite expected to see her go over on her beam ends and stay there. At sunset the air was so close and oppressive that one could scarcely breathe, and the

natives in the hold became half suffocated, and could only be kept down by the white traders and some of our officers threatening to shoot the first man that tried to get on deck. Many of them, however, besought to be allowed to swim ashore and remain till morning, and Hayes told them they could go. Some ten men and six women at once came up; and, although it was now dark, and the sharks consequently much more to be dreaded, sprang overboard, and swam in towards the native village of Utwé.

For another twenty minutes or more we remained anxiously awaiting. The sky was as black as pitch, and there was now a tremendously high sea, and the din and thunder of the surf on the reef a couple of cables' length away was most appalling. I had never heard anything like it before, nor have I since; and the weird sound of the huge seas as they tumbled and roared upon the hollow crust of the reef made my hair stand upon end like priming wires. The tide was low, and perhaps that had something to do with the wild, resounding clamour of the seas upon the long line of reef; but there was a strange humming note underlying it all, which was new to many of our ship's company, and seemed to fill even the rest of the Pleasant Islanders who remained on board with a sense of dread, for they earnestly besought Hayes to let them come on deck, for, they said, 'the belly of the world was about to burst.'

To this, most fortunately for themselves, Hayes consented, and in a few minutes they swarmed up on deck, each man carrying his Snider and cutlass-knife, and the women and children loaded up with their sleeping-mats and other gear. Some of the women crawled under the long boat, which was lying on the port side, and made themselves comfortable; and the men brought their arms to me to stow in the trade room, for fear of their getting wet, and then returned to their white masters, who were grouped together on deck.

Then, quite suddenly, the jumping, tumbling sea began to subside, and through the darkness we heard the skipper of one of the American whalers

hail us.

'What are you, going to do, Captain Hayes? I guess we're in a pretty tight place. I'd try to tow out if I could see the hole in the wall. We're going to get it mighty hot presently. It's coming on fast.'

'That's so,' Hayes replied, with a laugh; 'but we can't stop it. And, say, look here, captain, as you fellows are lying further out than I am, you might each start a cask of oil to run when the seas begin to break. It won't help you much, but it will me.'

The whale-ship captain laughed, and said that he was afraid that his six hundred barrels of oil would start themselves if the sea began to break—meaning that his ship would go ashore.

The previous heavy rolling of the brig had nearly made a wreck of my trade room, for everything had been jerked off the shelves, and cases of liquor, powder, cartridges, concertinas and women's hats, etc., were lying burst open on the floor; so, calling a couple of native sailors to help me, I was just going below, when I heard Captain Hayes's sharp tones calling out to our officers to stand by.

From the north-west there came a peculiar droning, humming sound, mingled with a subdued crashing and roaring of the mountain forest, which lay about a quarter of a mile astern of us—the noise one hears when a mighty bush fire is raging in Australia, and a sudden gust of wind adds to its devastation—and then in another half a minute the brig spun round like a top to the fury of the first blast, and we were enveloped in a blinding shower of leaves, twigs and salty spray. She brought up to her anchors with a jerk that nearly threw everyone off his feet, and then in an incredibly short time the sea again began to rise, and the brig to plunge and take water in over the bows and waist—not heavy seas, but sheets of water nipped off by the force of the wind and falling on the decks in drenching showers.

Just as I was hurrying below, Hayes stopped me.

'Don't bother about the trade room. Get all the arms and ammunition you can ready for the boats. I'm afraid that we won't see this through. The blubber-hunters are all right; but we are not. We have to ride short. I can't give her more than another ten fathoms of cable—there are a lot of coral boulders right aft. If the wind hauls round a couple of points we may clear them, but it isn't going to; and we'll get smothered in the seas in another ten minutes—if the cables don't part before then.'

Seldom was a ship sent to destruction in such a short time as the *Leonora*. I had not been five minutes in the main cabin before a heavy sea came over the bows with a crash, carried away the for'ard deckhouse, which it swept overboard, killed four people, and poured into the cabin. I heard Hayes call out to the mate to give her another ten fathoms of cable, and then, assisted by half a dozen native women and a young Easter Island half-caste girl named Lalia, wife to one of the five white traders, began packing our arms and ammunition into two or three strong trade boxes. In another chest we stowed the ship's chronometers, Hayes's instruments, and all the charts upon which we could lay hands, together with about six thousand silver dollars in bags, the ship's books and some silver plate. The women, who were the officers' and traders' wives, were fearfully terrified; all but Lalia, who was a fine, courageous girl. Taking a cutlass from the rack in the cabin she stood over them; and, cursing freely in French, English, Spanish and whalers' language, threatened to murder every one of them if they did not hurry. We got the first box of arms safely up the companion, and Hayes saw it lowered into one of the traders' whale-boats, which was standing by under the stern. Then, as a tremendous crashing sea came over the waist, all the women but Lalia bolted and left us alone. Lalia laughed.

'That's the long-boat gone, sir; and all those Pleasant Islands women are drown, I hope—the damned savage beasts, I hate them.'

\* *The Leonora carried four guns.*

I learnt afterwards that the crash was caused by the two guns on the starboard side taking a run to port, and carrying away the port ones with them over the side through the bulwarks.\* The long-boat was washed overboard by the same sea, but half a dozen of our Rotumah Island sailors had jumped overboard after her, and, using canoe paddles, saved her from being dashed on the reef. She was soon brought alongside, fully manned, and awaiting Hayes's orders.

The captain now called to me to stand by to take charge of her, when a second fearful sea came over the waist, and fairly buried the ship, and Hung, the Chinese carpenter and myself were only saved from going overboard, by being entangled in the falls of one of the quarter-boats. As for the long-boat, it was swept away out of sight, but succeeded in reaching the shore safely, with the loss of one man.

By this time the seas were breaking over the brig with terrible force, and when they came over the bows they swept her flush decks like a torrent. Presently she gave such a terrible roll to port that we thought she was going over altogether, and the third mate reported that six four-hundred-gallon water tanks, which were stored in the 'tween decks amidships, had gone adrift to the port side. Then Hayes told the carpenter to cut away the masts. A few slashes at the rigging, and a couple of snicks at the spars themselves, sent the sticks over the side quick enough; the brig stood up again and rode easier.

Meanwhile, the boat of one of the traders named Terry—an old ex-man-of-war's man—had come off, manned by half a dozen of his stalwart half-caste sons, and although it was still pitch dark, and the din of the gale sounded like fifty railway locomotives whistling in unison, and the brig was only revealed to the brave fellows by the white light of the foam-whipped sea, they ran the boat under the counter, and stood by while a number of women and children jumped, or were pitched overboard, to them. These were quickly rescued, and then that boat, too, vanished.

Again the wind lulled for about five minutes, and Hayes and old Harry Terry urged the rest of the remaining women to jump overboard and make for the shore, as the brig's decks were now awash, and every third or fourth sea swept along her, fore and aft, with irresistible force. One woman—a stout, powerfully-built native of Ocean Island—whose infant child was lashed to her naked back with bands of coir cincture, rushed up to the captain, and crying, 'Kâpeni, ka maté a maté'—('Captain, if I die, I die')—put her arms round his neck, rubbed noses with him, and leaped over the stern rail into the seething surf. She was found the next morning lying dead on a little beach, having bled to death from the wounds she had received from the jagged coral rocks, but the baby was alive, for with her dying hands the poor creature had placed it under shelter, and covered it over with grass and leaves, where it was found, sleeping soundly, by a native sailor.

There was not now the slightest hope of saving the ship, unless the sea went down; and Hayes, who was as cool as if he were taking his morning coffee, told the rest of the crew, who were now all gathered together aft, to get ashore the best way they could. Three of the white traders were still aboard, awaiting the return of their boats, which, manned by their faithful Pleasant Islanders, we now and again could dimly discern, as they appeared on the summit of the heaving seas, waiting for a chance to pull up astern and rescue their masters.

There were still two chests full of valuables in the main cabin to be got on deck, and Lalia (sweet Lalia), the young woman of whom I have before spoken, although her husband had gone ashore, refused to jump to the boats, and said she would stay and help us to save them.

'Go, ashore, Lalia. Go to your husband,' said Hayes, sternly pushing her to the stern rail; 'he is an old man, and cannot come off again in his boat for you. Perhaps he is drowned.'

The girl laughed and said it was all the better—she would get another and a younger husband; she would stay with the *men* on board and not swim

ashore with the old women. Then she ran below. In a few minutes she reappeared, with a fine powerful Pleasant Island native named Karta, carrying our Chinese steward, who was paralysed with drink and terror. Hayes took the man up in his arms and, seeing one of the boats close to, threw him overboard without further ado. Then Lalia and I again went below for another of the boxes, and, aided by Karta, we had got it half-way up the companion ladder when the brig rose her stern high to a mountain sea, and then came down with a terrific crash on to a coral boulder, ripping her rudder from the stern post, and sending it clean through the deck. Lalia fell backwards into the cabin, and the heavy chest slipped down on the top of her, crushing her left foot cruelly against the companion lining, and jamming her slender body underneath. Karta and myself tried hard to free the poor tortured girl, but without avail, and then some of our Rotumah Island sailors, hearing our cries for help, ran down, and by our united exertions, we got her clear, put her in the steward's bunk—as she had fainted—and lugged the chest on deck.

One of the traders' whale-boats was lying close to, and the chest was, by the merest chance, dropped into her just as the brig came down again on the coral boulder with a thundering crash and smashed a big hole into her timbers under her starboard counter. In a few minutes she began to fill.

'It's all up with her, boys,' cried the philosophical 'Bully.' 'Jump for the boats all of you; but wait for a rising sea, or you'll get smashed up on the coral. Bo'sun, take a look round below, and see that there are no more women there. We must take care of the women, boys.'

Karta, the brave Pleasant Islander, a Manila man named Sarréo, and myself then went below for Lalia. She was sitting up in the steward's bunk, stripped to the waist, and only awaiting help to get on deck. Already the main cabin had three feet of water in it, and just as we lifted the girl out, another sea came in over deck and nearly filled it; and with it came the bruised and battered dead body of a little native boy, who, crouching up

under the shelter of the companion, had been killed by the wheel falling upon and crushing him when the rudder was carried away.

Half-drowned, we managed to struggle on deck, Karta carrying the girl, and the Manila man and I helping each other together. The brig was now quite under water for'ard, but her after part was hanging on the coral boulder under it, though every succeeding sea rolled her from side to side. Hayes snatched the girl from Karta's arms just as the ship lobbed over to starboard on her bilge, then a thumping sea came thundering down, and swept the lot of us over the stern.

The poor Manila man was never seen again—barring a small portion of his anatomy; to wit, his right arm and shoulder, the rest having been assimilated by Jack Shark. Hayes got ashore by himself, and the writer of this narrative, with Karta, the Pleasant Islander, and Lalia, the trader's wife, came ashore on the wreck of a boat that had been carried on top of the after-deck house.

We were all badly knocked about. Karta had a fearful gash in his leg from a piece of coral. This he had bound up, whilst swimming, with a strip of his grass-cloth girdle. Lalia, in addition to her dreadfully crushed foot, had her right arm badly cut; and the writer was so generally excoriated and done-up that he would never have reached the shore, but for the gallant Karta and the brave-hearted Lalia, who both held him up when he wanted to let go and drown quietly.

At dawn the gale had ceased, and whilst we, the survivors of the *Leonora* stood up and stretched our aching limbs we saw, as we glanced seaward, the two 'blubber hunters,' who had ridden out the storm safely, heave-up and sail through the passage. I don't think either of the captains was wanting in humane feeling; but both were, no doubt, very much afraid that as 'Bully' Hayes had lost his ship, he would not be particular about taking another near to hand. And they were quite correct. Hayes and his third mate, some of the white traders, and twenty or so of our crew were quite willing to

seize one of the whalers, and sail to Arrecifos. But the Yankee skippers knew too much of 'Bully,' and left us to ourselves on Strong's Island; and many a tragedy resulted, for the crew and passengers of the *Leonora* with some few exceptions, were not particular as to their doings, and mutiny, treachery, murder, and sudden death, were the outcome of the wreck of the *Leonora*.

## AN OLD COLONIAL MUTINY

The following notice one day appeared among the official records of the earlier days (1800) of the colony of New South Wales:—

*'Whereas the persons undermentioned and described did, in the month of November, by force of arms, violently take away from His Majesty's settlement at Dalrymple a colonial brig or vessel called the Venus, the property of Mr Robert Campbell, a merchant of this territory, and the said vessel then containing stores, the property of His Majesty, and a quantity of necessary stores, the property of the officers of that settlement, and sundry other property, belonging to private individuals.'*

Then follows the description of the crew, from which it will be seen that there was every factor towards some criminal deed on board the *Venus*. First of all the chief mate is mentioned:—

*'Benjamin Burnet Kelly, chief mate; says he is an American. He arrived in this colony as chief mate of the Albion, a South Sea whaler (Captain Bunker); Richard Edwards, second mate; Joseph Redmonds, seaman, a mulatto or mestizo of South America 299 (came out from England in the Venus); Darra, cook, a Malay man, both ears missing; Thomas Ford and William Porter Evans, boys of 14 and 16 (Evans is a native of Rose Hill in this colony); Richard Thompson, a soldier; Thomas Richard Evans, a convict, formerly a gunner's mate on H.M.S. Calcutta (sentenced to fourteen years for desertion and striking an officer); John Lancaster or Lancashire, a convict, a very dangerous person; Charlotte Badger, convict, a very corpulent person (has an infant in arms); Kitty Hegarty, convict, very handsome woman, with white teeth and fresh complexion, much inclined to smile, a great talker.'*

Then comes an official proclamation, signed 'G. Blaxcell, Secretary, Government House, Sydney,' cautioning 'all governors and officers in command at any of His Majesty's ports, and the Honourable East India Company's magistrates or officers in command, at home or abroad, at

whatever port the said brig may be taken into, or met with at sea, against any frauds or deceptions that may be practised by the offending parties,' and asking that they might be seized and brought to condign punishment.

The *Venus*, under the command of Mr S. Rodman Chace, sailed out of Sydney Cove (as Port Jackson was then called) for Twofold Bay at the time before mentioned. Here she remained at anchor for about five weeks, and here it was that the first trouble began.

Captain Chace had been ashore, and about dusk was returning in his boat to the ship, when he heard sounds of great hilarity proceeding from those on board. On coming alongside and gaining the deck, he found that the two convict ladies were entertaining Mr Benjamin Burnet Kelly, the mate, with a dancing exhibition, the musical accompaniment to which was given by Darra, the earless Malayan cook, who was seated on a tub on the main-hatch playing a battered violin. Lying around the deck, in various stages of drunkenness, were the male convicts and some of the crew, and the genial Mr Kelly presided over a bucket of rum, pannikins of which were offered to the ladies at frequent intervals by the two faithful cup-bearers,—Ford and Evans.

Chace at once put an end to the harmony by seizing the bucket of rum and throwing it overboard, and the drunken people about him being incapable of offering much resistance, he put them in irons and tumbled them below. Kelly, who was a big, truculent-looking man, then produced a bowie knife of alarming dimensions and challenged Chace to combat, but was quickly awed by a pistol being placed at his breast by his superior officer. He then promised to return to his duty, provided—here he began to weep, that—the captain did not harm Kitty Hegarty, for whom he professed an ardent attachment.

As the *Venus* carried despatches for the Governor of Van Diemen's Land, Captain Chace was eager to reach his destination, Port Dalrymple, with all speed, and therefore was in a very anxious state of mind after the

disturbance mentioned, particularly as the mate Kelly, and the convicts on board, seemed to have some sort of secret understanding. However, the *Venus* arrived there safely, and Captain Chace duly delivered his despatches to Lieutenant House, the Marine officer in charge. Feeling sure that there was now no further danger to be apprehended, he spent the night with an old shipmate, the captain of the schooner *Governor Hunter*. After breakfast, accompanied by Mr House, he got into his boat and set out for his ship. He had left instructions with the mate to get up anchor at six o'clock and come up the river, and about seven o'clock, as he and Mr House were being pulled towards her in the boat, they saw that she was under weigh, and coming up.

'There's not much use in us going down, as your ship is coming up, Chace,' said Mr House. 'Let us go ashore here in this cove and wait for her.'

The master agreed to this, and the boat turned into a little sandy-beached cove, where they lost sight of the ship, which, with the light breeze then blowing, would not pass abreast of the cove for another hour.

About an hour passed, and then they heard the sound of oars, and the *Venus* boat was seen sweeping round the headland of the cove. The crew seemed thoroughly exhausted, and many of them were cut and bleeding. In a few moments they told their story, which was, that just after the ship got under weigh, Kelly and the convicts sprang upon the second mate, stunned him and pitched him below. Then, before those of the crew who were not in league with the mutineers could offer any resistance, they were set upon by the pilot, Thompson, the soldier, Darra, the earless cook and the two women, all of whom were armed with pistols and swords.

'Into the boat, all of you fellows,' said Kelly, pointing a pistol at the five seamen; 'into the boat; quick! or you are all dead men!'

The boat was towing astern, and the five seamen, seeing that the *Venus* was now in the absolute possession of the mutineers, and that Kelly would not hesitate to shoot them if they disobeyed him, went into the boat quietly.

As soon as the mutineers cast off the boat's painter, Kelly came aft with Kitty Hegarty, and placing his arms around her waist, jocularly called out to the men in the boat to 'look at the pirate's bride, and give his compliments and "Mrs Kelly's" compliments to Captain Chace, Lieutenant House, and the Lieutenant-Governor.' He also charged them to tell Lieutenant House that he was much obliged to him for lending Chace (on a former occasion) the *Narrative of Lieutenant Bligh and the Mutiny of the Bounty*, which had so much interested him (Kelly) and 'Kitty' that they had 'decided to do Fletcher Christian's trick, and take a cruise among the South Seas.' He then, with much accompanying laughter from merry Miss Hegarty, put a wooden bucket on her head, and called out to the people in the boat to look at 'Her Majesty, Queen Kitty Hegarty of the Cannibal Islands.' Immediately after this badinage he ordered Thompson, who was at the helm, to put it hard up; and then wore ship and sailed out seawards.

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News of the mutiny was at once sent to Lieutenant-Governor Paterson. But the mutineers were not heard of for a long time. Then it was learnt that Kelly had sailed the *Venus* to the coast of New Zealand and, by means of selling a number of casks of rum to the Maoris, had acquired a quantity of small arms, and two brass cannons, each throwing a 6-lb. shot. At one of the places they touched at, Thompson, with the aid of Kelly, abducted a handsome young Maori girl. She was a niece of Te Morenga, a chief in the Bay of Islands district. The unfortunate girl, however, so fretted, and lost so much of her attractiveness, that her scoundrelly abductor sold her to a chief named Hukori, of Mercury Bay, or, if he did not sell her, she eventually came into Hukori's possession. On their voyage up the Hauraki Gulf, they raided one or two small Maori *hapus* and carried off another girl, the daughter of the chief Te Haupa, or, as he was better known, Te Totara.

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Early in the following year Captain Bierney, of the London brig *Commerce*, reported to the Governor of New South Wales that the *Venus*

had anchored at Te Puna, in New Zealand, and that Kelly had invited a number of Maoris on board to an orgie. For some time a great state of drunkenness had prevailed on board; for the *Venus*, among other stores, carried a large quantity of wines and spirits, intended for the use of the military at Van Diemen's Land. Her sails and running gear were in a very bad state, and not the slightest discipline was maintained.

In answer to the mutineers' invitation, a number of Maoris came on board, and Kelly, addressing the leading chiefs, told them that he was perfectly well aware of the fact that he and those with him were incapable of offering resistance if his visitors attempted to cut off the ship. But, he said, he had determined to abandon the ship, and therefore he had invited them on board so that they might take what they wanted from her; and if they had no objection, he and his wife wished to live ashore with them for the future. He then broached a cask of rum and invited them to drink it.

The Maoris appeared to have fallen in with his suggestion with alacrity, and the chief gave the leading mutineer and his wife a large *whare* to live in, and also two slaves as servants.

The rest of the tale is incomplete in its details. Of the fate of the *Venus* nothing is known. Probably she was burnt by the Maoris. Kelly, Kitty Hegarty, Charlotte Badger and her child, Thompson, and two others, lived among the natives for some time. Then the woman Kitty Hegarty died suddenly while Kelly was away on a warlike excursion with his Maori friends, and was hastily buried. It was alleged that she was killed by some women, one of whom was anxious to possess Kelly for her husband. Kelly himself was captured by a king's ship in 1808, and sent to England, where he was hanged for piracy. Lancaster was also captured by the master of an American whale-ship, *The Brothers* of Nantucket, and taken to Sydney and hanged. The rest of the mutineers either met with violent deaths at the hands of the Maoris, or succeeded in living their lives out as pakeha-Maoris.

Of the other woman—Charlotte Badger—and her child nothing further was known, save that in 1808 she and the child were offered a passage to Port Jackson by Captain Bunker; but she declined, saying she would rather live with the Maoris than return to New South Wales to be hanged. This was not unnatural.

But, long afterwards, in the year 1826, an American whale-ship, the *Lafayette* of Salem, reported an incident of her cruise that showed some light on the end of Charlotte Badger.

In May 1826, the *Lafayette* was off 'an unknown island in the South Seas. It was covered with trees, was about three miles long, and was inhabited by a small number of natives. The position of this island was in 22 deg. 30 min. south, 176 deg. 19. min. west.' The weather being calm at the time and the natives, by the signs and gestures they made to the ship, evidently friendly, the captain and second mate's boats were lowered, and, with well-armed crews, pulled ashore. Only some forty or fifty natives of a light brown colour were on the island, and these, meeting the white men as they landed, conducted them to their houses with every demonstration of friendliness. Among the number was a native of Oahu (Hawaii), named Hula, who had formed one of the crew of the London privateer *Port-au-prince*, a vessel that had been cut off by the natives of the Haabai Group, in the Friendly Islands, twenty years previously. He spoke English well, and informed Captain Barthing of the *Lafayette* that the island formed one of the Tonga Group (it is now known as Pylstaart Island), and that his was the second ship that had ever visited the place. Another ship, he said, had called at the island about ten years before (this would be about 1816); that he had gone off on board, and had seen a very big, stout woman, with a little girl about eight years of age with her. At first he thought, from her dark skin, that she was a native, but the crew of the ship (which was a Nantucket whaler) told him that she was an Englishwoman, who had escaped from captivity with the Maoris.

No doubt this was the woman Badger, described in the official account of the mutiny of the *Venus* as 'a very corpulent person.'

## A BOATING ADVENTURE IN THE CAROLINES

In the year 1874 we were cruising leisurely through the Western Carolines, in the North Pacific, trading at such islands as we touched at, and making for the Pelew Group, still farther to the westward. But at that season of the year the winds were very light, a strong ocean current set continuously to the eastward, and there was every indication of a solid calm setting in, and lasting, as they do in these latitudes, for a week. Now, part of our cargo consisted of dried sharks' fins, and the smell from these was so strong that every one of the three white men on board was suffering from severe headache. We had a number of native passengers, and, as they lived in the hold, we could not close the hatches; they, however, did not mind the nauseating odour in the least. So, for three or four days, we crawled along, raising the wooded peaks of Ascension Island (Ponapé) one afternoon, and drifting back to the east so much in the night as to lose them at sunrise. Then followed another day of a sky of brass above and a steaming wide expanse of oily sea below, and then, at nightfall, a sweet, cooling breeze from the north-east, and general happiness, accentuated by a native woman playing a dissolute-looking accordion, and singing 'Voici le Sabre,' in Tahitian French. No one cared to sleep that night. Dawn came almost ere we knew it, and again the blue peaks of Ascension loomed up right ahead.

Just as we had finished coffee, and our attention was drawn to a number of boobies and whale-birds resting upon some floating substance half a mile distant, we discovered a couple of sail ahead, and then another, and another, all whalers, and, as they were under easy-cruising canvas—being on the sperm whaling ground—we soon began to overhaul them. One was a small, full-rigged ship, the others were barques. As we slipped along after them I

ran our little vessel close to the floating object I have before mentioned, and saw it was a ship's lower mast, which looked, from the scarcity of marine growth upon it, to have been in the water but a short time. Shortly after, we passed some more wreckage, all of which evidently had belonged to a good lump of the vessel.

About eleven o'clock we were close to one of the barques—a four-boat ship, and also carrying a nine-foot dinghy at her stern. She hoisted the Hawaiian colours in response to ours, and, as the breeze was very light, I hailed her skipper and we began to talk. Our skipper wanted some pump-leather; he wanted some white sugar.

'Come aboard,' he said, 'and have dinner with me. I'll give you a barrel of 'Frisco potatoes to take back.'

We lowered our whale-boat, and, taking two hands, I pulled alongside the barque. Although under the Hawaiian flag, her officers were nearly all Americans, and, as is always the case in the South Seas, we were soon on friendly terms. The four ships were all making for Jakoits Harbour, in Ponapé, to wood and water; and I said we would keep company with them. Our own skipper, I must mention, was just recovering from wild, weird visions of impossible, imaginary animals, superinduced by Hollands gin, and I wanted to put him ashore at Ponapé for a week or so.

After dinner the American captain put a barrel of potatoes into our boat, and I bade him good-bye for the time. The breeze was now freshening, and, as he decided to get into Jakoits before dark, the barque made sail, and was soon a good distance ahead of our vessel.

Between four and five o'clock we saw the foremost whaler—the ship—brace up sharp, and almost immediately the other three followed suit. We soon discovered the cause—whales had been sighted, coming down from windward. The 'pod' or school was nearest to us, and we could see them quite plainly from the deck. Every now and then one of them would 'breach'

and send up a white mass of foam, and by their course I saw that they would pass between us and the barque—the ship nearest to us. In less than five minutes there were more than a dozen boats lowered from the four vessels, all pulling their hardest to reach the whales first. The creatures came along very leisurely, then, when about a mile from the schooner, hove-to for a short time; their keen hearing told them of danger ahead, for three or four of them sounded, and then made off to windward. These were followed by all the boats from the other three vessels, and two from the barque, the remaining two belonging to the latter pulling across our bows, close together and within a hundred yards of us.

The rest of the whales—some cows, with their calves, and a bull—after lying quiet for a short time, also sounded, but soon rose again, quite close to the two boats. That of the chief mate got 'fast' first to one of the cows, and away they flew at twelve or thirteen knots. The second boat was making for the bull, which seemed very uneasy, and was swimming at a great speed round and round the remaining cows and calves, with his head high out of the water as if to guard them from danger, when the monstrous creature again sounded and the boat-header instantly turned his attention to a cow, which lay perfectly motionless on the water, apparently too terrified to move.

Half a dozen strokes sent the boat to within striking distance and the boat-header called to his boat-steerer to 'Stand up.' The boat-steerer, who pulls bow oar before a whale is struck, and goes aft after striking, is also the harpooner, and at the order to stand up, takes in his oar and seizes his harpoon. After he has darted the iron, and the boat is backed astern, he comes aft to steer, and the officer takes his place for'ard, ready to lance the whale at the fitting time. There is no reason or sense in this procedure, it is merely whaling custom.

Just as the boat-steerer stood up, iron in hand, the bull rose right under the boat's stern, lifted her clean out of the water with his head, and then, as

he swept onward, gave her an underclip with his mighty flukes, smashing her in like an egg-shell and sending men, oars, tub and lines, and broken timbers, broadcast into the air. Then, with the lady by his side, he raced away.

Most fortunately, our own boat was still towing astern, for as we were so near the land we had not bothered about hoisting her up again, knowing that we should want her to tow us into Jakoits if the wind fell light when going through the passage.

The mate, two Penrhyn Island natives and myself were but a few moments in hauling her alongside, jumping in, and pulling to the assistance of the whale-boat's crew, some of whom we could see clinging to the wreckage. The officer in charge was a little wiry Western Island Portuguese, and as we came up he called out to us that one of the men was killed and had sunk, and another, whom he was supporting, had his leg broken and was unconscious. We lifted them into the boat as quickly as possible, laid the injured man on his back and started for the schooner. We had scarcely pulled a dozen strokes when, to our profound astonishment, we saw her suddenly keep away from us.

'The captain's come on deck again,' cried one of our native hands to me.

Sure enough, the skipper was on deck, and at the wheel, and took not the slightest heed of our repeated hails, except that he merely turned his head, gave us a brief glance, eased off the main-sheet a bit, and let the schooner spin away towards the land. We learnt next evening that he had suddenly emerged on deck from his bunk, given the helmsman a cuff on the head, and driven him, the steward and the other remaining hand up for'ard. They and the native passengers, who knew something of his performances when in liquor, were too frightened to do anything, and let him have his own way.

We pulled after the schooner as hard as we could for a quarter of an hour, then gave it up and steered for the barque, which was now a couple of miles

away. She had been working to windward after the chief mate's and fourth mate's boats—both of which had quickly killed their respective whales—when the disaster to the second officer's boat was seen, and she was now coming towards us. The fourth boat was miles distant, chasing the main body of the 'pod,' in company with those of the other barques and the ship.

By this time it was all but dark; a short, choppy sea had risen, the wind came in sharp, angry puffs every now and then, and we made scarcely any headway against it. The barque seemed to be almost standing still, though she was really coming along at a ripping pace. Presently she showed a light, and we felt relieved. Just then the man with the broken leg called to his officer, and asked for a smoke, and I was filling my pipe for him when the boat struck something hard with a crash, shipped a sea aft, and at once capsized, several of us being taken underneath her.

The Portuguese, who was a gallant little fellow, had, with one of the Penrhyn Islanders, got the wounded man clear, and presently we all found ourselves clinging to the boat, which was floating bottom-up and badly bilged. Fortunately, none of us were hurt, but our position was a dangerous one, and we kept hailing repeatedly, fearing that the barque would run by us in the darkness, and that the blue sharks would discover us. Then, to our joy, we saw her close to, bearing right down upon us, and now came the added terror that she would run us down, unless those on board could be made to hear our cries and realise our situation.

Again we raised our voices, and shouted till our lungs were exhausted, but no answer came, the only sounds we heard being the thrapping and swash of the waves against our boat. Five minutes—which seemed hours—passed, and then we suddenly lost sight of the barque's headlight, and saw the dull gleam of those aft shining through the cabin ports.

'Thank God!' said the whaler officer, 'he's bringing to.'

Scarcely had he spoken when we heard a hail distinctly.

'Boat ahoy, there, where are you?'

'In the water. We're capsized,' I answered.

No response came; then again they hailed, and again we shouted unitedly, but no reply, and presently we saw a blue light was being burnt on the starboard side—they were looking for us in the wrong quarter. For some minutes our suspense was horrible, for, if the captain thought he had overshot our boat (knowing nothing of the second disaster), he would, we feared, go off on the other tack. Again they hailed, and again we answered, though we were now feeling pretty well done up, and the Portuguese was alternately praying to the saints and consigning his captain to hell.

'Hurrah!' cried Tom, one of my Penrhyn Island boys, 'she's filling away again, and coming down; they've heard us, safe enough.'

It so happened that they had not heard us at all; but the captain, at the earnest request of the ship's cooper, who believed that we had been swamped, and were to leeward, decided to keep away for a short time, and then again bring-to. Not only was he anxious for us, but for the other boats, and the dead whales as well; for he feared that, unless he could get the latter alongside by daylight, and start to cut-in, the sharks would devour the best part of them.

A few more minutes passed, and now we saw the barque looming through the night, and apparently again coming right on top of us. We shouted and screamed till our voices broke into hoarse groans; and then there happened a strange thing. That which had caused our misfortune proved our salvation. We heard a crashing sound, followed by loud cries of alarm, and then saw the ship lying flat aback, canting heavily over to port. Presently she righted, and then made a stern-board, and came so close to us that one of the hands not only heard our cries but saw us in the water.

In an instant the captain called to us to cheer up, and said a boat was coming. 'The ship struck some wreckage, and is making water,' he added.

We were taken aboard in two trips, the poor, broken-legged sailor suffering terribly. He had been kept from drowning by one of the Penrhyn men, who stuck to him like a brick through all the time we were in the water. Neither of these brave islanders had lost heart for a moment, though Harry, the elder of the two, was in consumption and not at all strong.

As soon as we had sufficiently recovered to be able to talk and tell our story, we were pleased to hear from the captain that the ship was not badly injured, and that the pumps—short-handed as he then was—could easily keep the water down; also that all the other boats were safe, and had signalled that they had each 'killed,' and were lying by their whales.

Early in the morning the four ships were within a few miles of each other, and each had one or more whales alongside, cutting-in. The schooner, too, was in sight, lying becalmed under the lee of Ponapé. The captain of the whaler lent me one of his boats, paid me a fair price for the loss of our own, and otherwise treated us handsomely. He was highly pleased at having such 'greasy luck,' i.e., getting three fish, and, besides presenting me with another barrel of potatoes, gave me four bolts of canvas, and each of our natives came away with a small case of tobacco, and five dollars in silver.

We had a long pull to the schooner, and our arrival was hailed with cries of delight. The skipper, we were pleased to learn, was nearly dead, having been severely beaten by the women passengers on board, one of whom, creeping up behind him as he was steering, threw a piece of *tappa* cloth over his head, while the others bore him to the deck and tied him up and hammered him. He told me a few days afterwards that he had not the slightest recollection of leaving us in the boat.

The wreckage upon which the whale-ship struck was, so her captain imagined, the same which had capsized our boat. As far as he could make out in the darkness, it was a long and wide piece of decking, belonging to a large ship. Our boat, very probably, had gone half her length on top of the

edge of it, and was then washed off again after she had bilged; and the strong current had set us clear.



## A CHRISTMAS EVE IN THE FAR SOUTH SEAS

Donald MacBride and myself were the only Britishers living on one of the North Pacific island lagoons when Christmas of 1880 drew near, and we determined to celebrate it in a manner that would fill our German and American trading rivals throughout the group with envy. MacBride was a bony, red-headed Scotchman, with a large heart and a small, jealous, half-caste wife. The latter acquisition ruled him with a rod of iron, much to his financial and moral benefit, but nevertheless agreed with me that we—Donald, she and myself—ought to show the Americans and the 'Dutchmen' how an English Christmas should be celebrated. But as Sera was a half-caste native of the Pelews, and had never been to a civilised country, she also concurred with me that Donald and myself should run the show, which, although I was not a married man, was to take place in my house on account of the greater space available. Donald, she said, wanted to have a 'hakkise'; so we bought a nanny-goat from Ludwig Wolfen, the German trader at Molok, and one evening—the 23rd of December—I helped Sera to drive and drag the unsuspecting creature home to her husband's place to the slaughter. (I may as well say at once that MacBride's nanny-goat haggis was a hideous failure, and my boat's crew, to whom it was handed over, with many strong expressions about MacBride's beastly provincial taste, said that it *smelt* good, like shark's liver, but was not at all so juicy.)

Meanwhile, Wolfen, a fat, good-hearted Teuton, with a face like a full moon in a fog, called upon me, and remarked in a squashy tone of voice, superinduced by too many years of lager beer, and its resultant adipose tissue, that he and Peter Huysmans, his neighbour, would feel very much hurt if we did not invite them to participate in the festivities. I said that

'Blazy-head' (for so we called dear old MacBride) and myself would be delighted; whereupon Wolfen, who had once, when he was a sailor on an English ship, spent a Christmas in a public-house somewhere in the vicinity of the East India Docks, said that the correct thing for us to do would be to have a Christmas cake; also, he suggested we should invite Tom Devine and Charley de Buis, the two American traders who lived across the lagoon, to join the party. Being aware of the fact that, from trade jealousies, there had hitherto been a somewhat notorious bitterness of feeling between my German fellow-trader and the two Americans, I shook his hand warmly, said that I was delighted to see that he could forgive and forget, and that I should that moment send my boat across the lagoon to Devine and Charley de Buis with a written invitation, and ask them to favour us with their company; also, that as Mrs Charley—who was a Samoan half-caste girl—was skilled in baking bread, perhaps she would lend Mesdames MacBride, Wolfen and Huysmans her assistance in making a Christmas cake, the size of which should cause the native population to sit up and respect us as men of more than ordinary intelligence and patriotism.

On the evening of the 24th, three whale-boats, attended by a flotilla of small native canoes, sailed into the little sandy-beached nook upon the shores of which the trading station was situated. The three boats were steered by the Messrs Peter Huysmans, Charles de Buis and Thomas Devine, who were accompanied by their wives, children and numerous female relatives, all of the latter being clad in their holiday attire of new mats, and with their hair excessively anointed with scented coco-nut oil, scarlet hibiscus flowers behind their ears, and necklaces of sweet-smelling pieces of pandanus drupes.

MacBride, Mrs MacBride and I received them the moment they stepped out of the boats, and then Ludwig Wolfen, who was disposed in the background with an accordion, and seated on a gin case, played 'The Star Spangled Banner,' to the accompaniment of several native drums, beaten by

his wife and her sister and brothers. Then my boatman—a stalwart Maori half-caste—advanced from out the thronging crowd of natives which surrounded us, and planted in the sand a British red ensign attached to a tall bamboo pole, and called for three cheers for the Queen of England, and three for the President of the United States. This at once gave offence to Ludwig Wolfen, who asked what was the matter with the Emperor of Germany; whereupon Bill Grey (the Maori) took off his coat and asked him what he meant, and a fierce encounter was only avoided by half a dozen strapping natives seizing Billy and making him sit down on the sand, while the wrathful Ludwig was hustled by Donald MacBride and Mrs Ludwig and threatened with a hammering if he insulted the gathering by his ill-timed and injudicious remarks about a foreign potentate. (Ludwig, I regret to say, had begun his Christmas on the previous evening.)

But we were all too merry, and too filled with right good down comradeship to let such a trifle as this disturb the harmony of our first Christmas foregathering; and presently Bill Grey, his dark, handsome face wreathed in a sunny smile, came up to the sulky and rightly-indignant trader with outstretched hand, and said he was sorry. And Wolfen, good-hearted German that he was, grasped it warmly, and said he was sorry too; and then we all trooped up to the house and sat down, only to rise up again with our glasses clinking together as we drank to our wives and ourselves and the coming Christmas, and to the brown smiling faces of the people around us, who wondered why we grew merry so suddenly; for sometimes, as they knew, we had all quarrelled with one another, and bitter words had passed; for so it ever is, and ever shall be, even in the far South Seas, when questions of 'trade' and 'money' come between good fellowship and old-time *camaraderie*. And then sweet, dark-eyed Sera, MacBride's young wife, took up her guitar and sang us love songs in the old Lusitanian tongue of her father; and Tom Devine, the ex-boat-steerer, and Charley de Buis, the reckless; and Peter Huysmans, the red-faced, white-haired old Dutchman,

all joined hands and danced around the rough table; while Billy Grey and Ludwig Wolfen stood on the top of it and sang, or tried to sing, 'Home Sweet Home'; and the writer of this memory of those old Pacific days sat in a chair in the doorway and wondered where we should all be the next year. For, as we sang and danced, and the twang, twang of Sera's guitar sounded through the silent night without, Tom Devine, the American, held up his hand to MacBride, and silence fell.

'Boys,' he said, 'let us drink to the memory of the far-off faces of those dear ones whom we never may see again!'

He paused a moment, and then caught sight of Sera as she bent over her guitar with downcast eyes; 'And to those who are with us now—our wives and our children, and our friends! Drink, my boys; and the first man who, either to-night or to-morrow, talks about business and dirty, filthy dollars, shall get fired out right away before he knows where he is; for this is Christmas time—and, Sera MacBride, why the devil don't you play something and keep me from making a fool of myself?'

So Sera, with a twist of her lithe body and a merry gleam in her full, big eyes, sang another song; and then long, bony MacBride came over to her and kissed her on her fair, smooth forehead, whispered something that we did not hear, and pointed to Charley de Buis, who stood, glass in hand, at the furthest corner of the big room, his thin, suntanned face as grave and sober as that of an English judge.

'Gentlemen'—(then *sotto voce* to the chairman in the doorway, 'Just fancy us South Sea loafers calling ourselves gentlemen!')—'gentlemen, we are here to spend a good time, and I move that we quit speech-making and start the women on that cake. Tom Devine and myself are, as you know, members of two of the First Families in America, and only came to the South Seas to wear out our old clothes—'

'Shut up,' said Devine; 'we don't want to hear anything about the First American families; this is an English Christmas, with full-blooded South Sea trimmings. Off you go, you women, and start on the cake.'

So Charley de Buis 'shut up,' and then the women, headed by Sera and Mary Devine, trooped off to the cook-house to beat up eggs for the cake, and left us to ourselves. When it drew near midnight they returned, and Peter Huysmans arose, and, twisting his grizzled moustaches, said,—

'Mine boys, will you led me dell you dot now is coming der morn ven Jesus Christ vos born? And vill you blease, Mary Devine, dell dose natives outside to stop those damdt drums vile I speaks? Und come here you, MacBride, mit your red het, und you, Ludwig Wolfen, and you Tom Devine, und you Charley de Buis, you wicked damdt devil, und you, Tom Denison, you saucy Australian boy, mit your curlt moustache and your svell vite tuck suit; und led us join our hands together, and agree to have no more quarrellings und no more angry vorts. For vy should ve quarrel, as our good friendt says, over dirty dollars, ven dere is room enough for us all on dis lagoon to get a decent livings? Und den ve should try und remember dot ve, none of us, is going to live for ever, and ven ve is dead, ve is dead a damdt long time. But now, mine friendts, I vill say no more, vor I am dry; so here's to all our good healths, and let us bromise one another not to haf no more angry vorts.'

And so we all gathered around the big table, and, grasping each other's hands, raised our glasses and drank together without speaking, for there was something—we knew not what—that lay behind Dutch Peter's little speech which made us *think*. Presently, when a big and gaudy German-made cuckoo clock in the room struck twelve, even reckless Charley de Buis forgot his old joke about Tom Denison's 'damned old squawking British duck,' as he called the little painted bird, and we all went outside, and sat smoking our pipes on the wide verandah, and watching the flashing torchlights of the fishing canoes as they paddled slowly to and fro over the

smooth waters of the sleeping lagoon. Then, almost ere we knew it, the quick red sun had turned the long, black line of palms on Karolyne to purple, and then to shining green, and Christmas Day had come.

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To-night, as a chill December wind wails through the leafless elms and chestnuts of this quiet Kentish village, I think of that far-away Christmas eve, and the rough, honest, sun-browned faces of the men who were around me, and pressed my hand when Peter Huysmans spoke of home and Christmas, and Tom Devine of 'the dear faces whom we never might see again.' For only one, with the writer, is left. MacBride and his gentle, sweet-voiced Sera went to their death a year or two later in the savage and murderous Solomons; Wolfen and his wife and children perished at sea when the *Sadie Foster* schooner turned turtle off the Marshalls; and Devine and Charley de Buis, comrades to the last, sailed away to the Moluccas in a ten-ton boat and were never heard of again—their fate is one of the many mysteries of the deep. Peter Huysmans is alive and well, and only a year ago I grasped his now trembling hand in mighty London, and spoke of our meeting on Milli Lagoon.

And then again, in a garish and tinselled City bar, we raised our glasses and drank to the memory of those who had gone before.

THE END

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK RÍDAN THE  
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