

**ROBERT
MICHAEL
BALLANTYNE**

JARWIN AND CUFFY

Robert Michael Ballantyne

Jarwin and Cuffy

«Public Domain»

Ballantyne R.

Jarwin and Cuffy / R. Ballantyne — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

Chapter One.	5
Chapter Two.	10
Chapter Three.	15
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	17

R. M. Ballantyne

Jarwin and Cuffy

Chapter One.

Adrift on the Ocean

On a certain morning, not very long ago, the sun, according to his ancient and admirable custom, rose at a very early hour, and casting his bright beams far and wide over the Pacific, lighted up the yellow sands and the verdant hills of one of the loveliest of the islands of that mighty sea.

It was early morning, as we have said, and there was plenty of life—animal as well as vegetable—to be seen on land and sea, and in the warm, hazy atmosphere. But there were no indications of man's presence in that beautiful scene. The air was perfectly calm, yet the gentle swell of the ocean terminated in great waves, which came rolling in like walls of glass, and fell on the coral-reef like rushing snow-wreaths with a roar as loud as thunder.

Thousands of sea-birds screamed and circled in the sky. Fish leaped high out of their native element into the air, as if they wished to catch the gulls, while the gulls, seemingly smitten with a similar desire, dived into the water as if they wished to catch the fish. It might have been observed, however, that while the fish never succeeded in catching the gulls, the latter very frequently caught the fish, and, without taking the trouble to kill them, bolted them down alive.

Cocoanut-palms cast the shadows of their long stems and graceful tops upon the beach, while, farther inland, a dense forest of tropical plants—bread-fruit trees, bananas, etcetera—rose up the mountain-sides. Here and there open patches might be seen, that looked like fields and lawns, but there were no cottages or villas. Drove of pigs rambled about the valleys and on the hill-sides, but they were wild pigs. No man tended them. The bread-fruits, the cocoanuts, the bananas, the plantains, the plums, all were beautiful and fit for food, but no man owned them or used them, for, like many other spots in that sea of coral isles and savage men, the island was uninhabited.

In all the wide expanse of ocean that surrounded that island, there was nothing visible save one small, solitary speck on the far-off horizon. It might have been mistaken for a seagull, but it was in reality a raft—a mass of spars and planks rudely bound together with ropes. A boat's mast rose from the centre of it, on which hung a rag of sail, and a small red flag drooped motionless from its summit. There were a few casks on the highest part of the raft, but no living soul was visible. Nevertheless, it was not without tenants. In a hollow between two of the spars, under the shadow of one of the casks, lay the form of a man. The canvas trousers, cotton shirt, blue jacket, and open necktie, bespoke him a sailor, but it seemed as though there were nothing left save the dead body of the unfortunate tar, so pale and thin and ghastly were his features. A terrier dog lay beside him, so shrunken that it looked like a mere scrap of door-matting. Both man and dog were apparently dead, but they were not so in reality, for, after lying about an hour quite motionless, the man slowly opened his eyes.

Ah, reader, it would have touched your heart to have seen those eyes! They were so deep set, as if in dark caverns, and so unnaturally large. They gazed round in a vacant way for a few moments, until they fell on the dog. Then a gleam of fire shot through them, and their owner raised his large, gaunt, wasted frame on one elbow, while he gazed with a look of eagerness, which was perfectly awful, at his dumb companion.

“Not dead *yet!*” he said, drawing a long sigh.

There was a strange, incongruous mixture of satisfaction and discontent in the remark, which was muttered in a faint whisper.

Another gleam shot through the large eyes. It was not a pleasant look. Slowly, and as if with difficulty, the man drew a clasp-knife from his pocket, and opened it. As he did so, his brows lowered and his teeth became clenched. It was quite plain what he meant to do. As he held the open knife over the dog's head, he muttered, "Am I to die for the sake of a *dog!*"

Either the terrier's slumbers had come to an end naturally, at a fortunate moment, or the master's voice had awakened it, for it opened its eyes, raised its head, and looked up in the sailor's face. The hand with the knife drooped a little. The dog rose and licked it. Hunger had done its work on the poor creature, for it could hardly stand, yet it managed to look in its master's face with that grave, simple gaze of self-forgetting love, which appears to be peculiar to the canine race. The savage glare of the seaman's eyes vanished. He dropped the knife.

"Thanks, Cuffy; thanks for stoppin' me. It would have been *murder!* No, no, my doggie, you and I shall die together."

His voice sank into a murmur, partly from weakness and partly from the ideas suggested by his concluding words.

"Die together!" he repeated, "surely it ain't come to that *yet*. Wot, John Jarwin, you're not goin' to give in like that, are you? to haul down your colours on a fine day with a clear sky like this overhead? Come, cheer up, lad; you're young and can hold out a good while yet. Hey, old dog, wot say *you?*"

The dog made a motion that would, in ordinary circumstances, have resulted in the wagging of its tail, but the tail was powerless to respond.

At that moment a gull flew towards the raft; Jarwin watched it eagerly as it approached. "Ah," he muttered, clasping his bony hand as tightly over his heart as his strength would allow and addressing the gull, "if I only had hold of *you*, I'd tear you limb from limb, and drink your blood!"

He watched the bird intently as it flew straight over him. Leaning back, he continued slowly to follow its flight, until his head rested on the block of wood which had served him for a pillow. The support felt agreeable, he forgot the gull, closed his eyes, and sank with a deep sigh into a slumber that strongly resembled death.

Presently he awoke with a start, and, once more raising himself, gazed round upon the sea. No ship was to be seen. How often he had gazed round the watery circle with the same anxious look only to meet with disappointment! The hills of the coral island were visible like a blue cloud on the horizon, but Jarwin's eyes were too dim and worn out to observe them.

"Come," he exclaimed, suddenly, scrambling to his feet, "rouse up, Cuffy; you an' I ain't a-goin' to die without a good fight for life. Come along, my hearty; we'll have another glass of grog—Adam's grog it is, but it has been good grog to you an' me, doggie—an' then we shall have another inspection o' the locker; mayhap there's the half of a crumb left."

The comparatively cheery tone in which the sailor said this seemed to invigorate the dog, for it rose and actually succeeded in wriggling its tail as it staggered after its master—indubitable sign of hope and love not yet subdued!

Jarwin went to a cask which still contained a small quantity of fresh water. Three weeks before the point at which we take up his story, a storm had left him and his dog the sole survivors on the raft of the crew of a barque which had sprung a leak, and gone to the bottom. His provision at the time was a very small quantity of biscuit and a cask of fresh water. Several days before this the last biscuit had been consumed but the water had not yet failed. Hitherto John Jarwin had husbanded his provisions, but now, feeling desperate, he drank deeply of the few remaining drops of that liquid which, at the time, was almost as vital to him as his life-blood. He gave a full draught also to the little dog.

"Share and share alike, doggie," he said, patting its head, as it eagerly lapped up the water; "but there's no wittles, Cuffy, an' ye don't care for baccy, or ye should be heartily welcome to a quid."

So saying, the sailor supplied his own cheek with a small piece of his favourite weed, and stood up on the highest part of the raft to survey the surrounding prospect. He did so without much hope, for "hope deferred" had at last made his heart sick. Suddenly his wandering gaze became fixed and

intense. He shaded his eyes with one hand, and steadied himself against the mast with the other. There could be no doubt of it! “Land ho!” he shouted, with a degree of strength that surprised himself, and even drew from Cuffy the ghost of a bark. On the strength of the discovery Jarwin and his dumb friend immediately treated themselves to another glass of Adam’s grog.

But poor Jarwin had his patience further tried. Hours passed away, and still the island seemed as far off as ever. Night drew on, and it gradually faded from his view. But he had unquestionably seen land; so, with this to comfort him, the starving tar lay down beside his dog to spend another night—as he had already spent many days and nights—a castaway on the wide ocean.

Morning dawned, and the sailor rose with difficulty. He had forgotten, for a moment, the discovery of land on the previous night, but it was brought suddenly to his remembrance by the roar of breakers near at hand. Turning in the direction whence the sound came, he beheld an island quite close to him, with heavy “rollers” breaking furiously on the encircling ring of the coral-reef. The still water between the reef and the shore, which was about a quarter of a mile wide, reflected every tree and crag of the island, as if in a mirror. It was a grand, a glorious sight, and caused Jarwin’s heart to swell with emotions that he had never felt before; but his attention was quickly turned to a danger which was imminent, and which seemed to threaten the total destruction of his raft, and the loss of his life.

A very slight breeze—a mere zephyr—which had carried him during the night towards the island, was now bearing him straight, though slowly, down on the reef, where, if he had once got involved in the breakers, the raft must certainly have been dashed to pieces; and he knew full well, that in his weak condition, he was utterly incapable of contending with such a surf.

Being a man of promptitude, his first act, on making this discovery, was to lower the sail. This was, fortunately, done in time; had he kept it up a few minutes longer, he must inevitably have passed the only opening in the reef that existed on that side of the island. This opening was not more than fifty yards wide. To the right and left of it the breakers on the reef extended, in lines of seething foam. Already the raft was rolling in the commotion caused by these breakers, as it drifted towards the opening.

Jarwin was by no means devoid of courage. Many a time, in days gone by, when his good ship was tossing on the stormy sea, or scudding under bare poles, had he stood on the deck with unshaken confidence and a calm heart, but now he was face to face with the seaman’s most dreaded enemy —“breakers ahead!”—nay, worse, breakers around him everywhere, save at that one narrow passage, which appeared so small, and so involved in the general turmoil, as to afford scarcely an element of hope. For the first time in his life Jarwin’s heart sank within him—at least so he said in after years while talking of the event—but we suspect that John was underrating himself. At all events, he showed no symptoms of fear as he sat there calmly awaiting his fate.

As the raft approached the reef, each successive roller lifted it up and dropped it behind more violently, until at last the top of one of the glittering green walls broke just as it passed under the end of the raft nearest the shore. Jarwin now knew that the next billow would seal his fate.

There was a wide space between each of those mighty waves. He looked out to sea, and beheld the swell rising and taking form, and increasing in speed as it came on. Calmly divesting himself of his coat and boots, he sat down beside his dog, and awaited the event. At that moment he observed, with intense gratitude to the Almighty, that the raft was drifting so straight towards the middle of the channel in the reef, that there seemed every probability of being carried through it; but the hope thus raised was somewhat chilled by the feeling of weakness which pervaded his frame.

“Now, Cuffy,” said he, patting the terrier gently, “rouse up, my doggie; we must make a brave struggle for life. It’s neck or nothing this time. If we touch that reef in passing, Cuff, you an’ I shall be food for the sharks to-night, an’ it’s my opinion that the shark as gits us won’t have much occasion to boast of his supper.”

The sailor ceased speaking abruptly. As he looked back at the approaching roller he felt solemnised and somewhat alarmed, for it appeared so perpendicular and so high from his low position, that it seemed as if it would fall on and overwhelm the raft. There was, indeed, some danger of this. Glancing along its length, Jarwin saw that here and there the edge was lipping over, while in one place, not far off, the thunder of its fall had already begun. Another moment, and it appeared to hang over his head; the raft was violently lifted at the stern, caught up, and whirled onward at railway speed, like a cork in the midst of a boiling cauldron of foam. The roar was deafening. The tumultuous heaving almost overturned it several times. Jarwin held on firmly to the mast with his right arm, and grasped the terrier with his left hand, for the poor creature had not strength to resist such furious motion. It all passed with bewildering speed. It seemed as if, in one instant, the raft was hurled through the narrows, and launched into the calm harbour within. An eddy, at the inner side of the opening, swept it round, and fixed the end of one of the largest spars of which it was composed on the beach.

There were fifty yards or so of sandy coral-reef between the beach outside, that faced the sea, and the beach inside, which faced the land; yet how great the difference! The one beach, buffeted for ever, day and night, by the breakers—in calm by the grand successive rollers that, as it were, symbolised the ocean's latent power—in storm by the mad deluge of billows which displayed that power in all its terrible grandeur. The other beach, a smooth, sloping circlet of fair white sand, laved only by the ripples of the lagoon, or by its tiny wavelets, when a gale chanced to sweep over it from the land.

Jarwin soon gained this latter beach with Cuffy in his arms, and sat down to rest, for his strength had been so much reduced that the mere excitement of passing through the reef had almost exhausted him. Cuffy, however, seemed to derive new life from the touch of earth again, for it ran about in a staggering drunken sort of way; wagged its tail at the root,—without, however, being able to influence the point,—and made numerous futile efforts to bark.

In the midst of its weakly gambols the terrier chanced to discover a dead fish on the sands. Instantly it darted forward and began to devour it with great voracity.

“Halo! Cuffy,” shouted Jarwin, who observed him; “ho! hold on, you rascal! share and share alike, you know. Here, fetch it here!”

Cuffy had learned the first great principle of a good and useful life—whether of man or beast—namely, prompt obedience. That meek but jovial little dog, on receiving this order, restrained its appetite, lifted the fish in its longing jaws, and, carrying it to his master, humbly laid it at his feet. He was rewarded with a hearty pat on the head, and a full half of the coveted fish—for Jarwin appeared to regard the “share-and-share-alike” principle as a point of honour between them.

The fish was not good, neither was it large, and of course it was raw, besides being somewhat decayed; nevertheless, both man and dog ate it, bones and all, with quiet satisfaction. Nay, reader, do not shudder! If you were reduced to similar straits, you would certainly enjoy, with equal gusto, a similar meal, supposing that you had the good fortune to get it. Small though it was, it sufficed to appease the appetite of the two friends, and to give them a feeling of strength which they had not experienced for many a day.

Under the influence of this feeling, Jarwin remarked to Cuffy, that “a man could eat a-most anything when hard put to it,” and that “it was now high time to think about goin' ashore.”

To which Cuffy replied with a bark, which one might imagine should come from a dog in the last stage of whooping-cough, and with a wag of his tail—not merely at the root thereof, but a distinct wag—that extended obviously along its entire length to the extreme point. Jarwin observed the successful effort, laughed feebly, and said, “Brayvo, Cuffy,” with evident delight; for it reminded him of the days when that little shred of a door-mat, in the might of its vigour, was wont to wag its tail so violently as to convulse its whole body, insomuch that it was difficult to decide whether the tail wagged the body, or the body the tail!

But, although Jarwin made light of his sufferings, his gaunt, wasted frame would have been a sad sight to any pitiful spectator, as with weary aspect and unsteady gait he moved about on the sandy ridge in search of more food, or gazed with longing eyes on the richly-wooded island.

For it must be remembered that our castaway had not landed on the island itself, but on that narrow ring of coral-reef which almost encircled it, and from which it was separated by the lagoon, or enclosed portion of the sea, which was, as we have said, about a quarter of a mile wide.

John Jarwin would have thought little of swimming over that narrow belt of smooth water in ordinary circumstances, but now he felt that his strength was not equal to such a feat. Moreover, he knew that there were sharks in these waters, so he dismissed the idea of swimming, and cast about in his mind how he should manage to get across. With Jarwin, action soon followed thought. He resolved to form a small raft out of portions of the large one. Fortunately his clasp-knife had been attached, as seamen frequently have it, to his waist-belt, when he forsook his ship. This was the only implement that he possessed, but it was invaluable. With it he managed to cut the thick ropes that he could not have untied, and, in the course of two hours—for he laboured with extreme difficulty—a few broken planks and spars were lashed together. Embarking on this frail vessel with his dog, he pushed off, and using a piece of plank for an oar, sculled himself over the lagoon.

It was touching, even to himself, to observe the slowness of his progress. All the strength that remained in him was barely sufficient to move the raft. But the lagoon was as still as a mill-pond. Looking down into its clear depths, he could see the rich gardens of coral and sea-weed, among which fish, of varied and brilliant colours, sported many fathoms below. The air, too, was perfectly calm.

Very slowly he left the reef astern; the middle of the lagoon was gained; then, gradually, he neared the island-shore, but oh! it was a long, weary pull, although the space was so short, and, to add to the poor man's misery, the fish which he had eaten caused him intolerable thirst. But he reached the shore at last.

The first thing that greeted his eye as he landed was the sparkle of a clear spring at the foot of some cocoanut-trees. He staggered eagerly towards it, and fell down beside a hollow in the rock, like a large cup or bowl, which had been scooped out by it.

Who shall presume to describe the feelings of that shipwrecked sailor as he and his dog drank from the same cup at that sparkling crystal fountain? Delicious odours of lime and citron trees, and well-nigh forgotten herbage, filled his nostrils, and the twitter of birds thrilled his ears, seeming to bid him welcome to the land, as he sank down on the soft grass, and raised his eyes in thanksgiving to heaven. An irresistible tendency to sleep then seized him.

"If there's a heaven upon earth, I'm in it now," he murmured, as he laid down his head and closed his eyes.

Cuffy, nestling into his breast, placed his chin on his neck, and heaved a deep, contented sigh. This was the last sound the sailor recognised, as he sank into profound repose.

Chapter Two. Island Life

There are few of the minor sweets of life more agreeable than to awake refreshed, and to become gradually impressed with the conviction that you are a perfectly free agent,—that you may rise when you choose, or lie still if you please, or do what you like, without let or hindrance.

So thought our hero, John Jarwin, when he awoke, on the same spot where he had thrown himself down, after several hours of life-giving slumber. He was still weak, but his weakness did not now oppress him. The slight meal, the long draught, and the deep sleep, had restored enough of vigour to his naturally robust frame to enable him, while lying on his back, to enjoy his existence once more. He was, on first awaking, in that happy condition of mind and body in which the former does not care to think and the latter does not wish to move—yet both are pleased to be largely conscious of their own identity.

That he had not moved an inch since he lay down, became somewhat apparent to Jarwin from the fact that Cuffy's chin still rested immovable on his neck, but his mind was too indolent to pursue the thought. He had not the most remote idea as to where he was, but he cared nothing for that. He was in absolute ignorance of the time of day, but he cared, if possible, still less for that. Food, he knew, was necessary to his existence, but the thought gave him no anxiety. In short, John and his dog were in a state of quiescent felicity, and would probably have remained so for some hours to come, had not the setting sun shone forth at that moment with a farewell gleam so intense, that it appeared to set the world of clouds overhead on fire, converting them into hills and dales, and towering domes and walls and battlements of molten glass and gold. Even to the wearied seaman's sleepy vision the splendour of the scene became so fascinating, that he shook off his lethargy, and raised himself on one elbow.

"Why, Cuffy!" he exclaimed, to the yawning dog, "seems to me that the heavens is a-fire! Hope it won't come on dirty weather before you an' I get up somethin' in the shape o' a hut. That minds me, doggie," he added, glancing slowly round him, "that we must look after prokoorin' of our supper. I do believe we've bin an' slep away a whole day! Well, well, it don't much matter, seein' that we hain't got no dooty for to do—no trick at the wheel, no greasin' the masts—wust of all, no splicin' the main brace, and no grub."

This latter remark appeared to reach the understanding of the dog, for it uttered a melancholy howl as it gazed into its master's eyes.

"Ah, Cuffy!" continued the sailor with a sigh, "you've good reason to yowl, for the half of a rotten fish ain't enough for a dog o' your appetite. Come, let's see if we can't find somethin' more to our tastes."

Saying this the man rose, stretched himself, yawned, looked helplessly round for a few seconds, and then, with a cheery "Hallo! Cuff, come along, my hearty," went down to the beach in quest of food.

In this search he was not unsuccessful, for the beach abounded with shell-fish of various kinds; but Jarwin ate sparingly of these, having been impressed, in former years, by some stories which he had heard of shipwrecked sailors having been poisoned by shell-fish. For the same reason he administered a moderate supply to Cuffy, telling him that "it warn't safe wittles, an' that if they was to be pisoned, it was as well to be pisoned in moderation." The dog, however, did not appear to agree with its master on this point, for it went picking up little tit-bits here and there, and selfishly ignoring the "share-and-share-alike" compact, until it became stuffed alarmingly, and could scarcely follow its master back to the fountain.

Arrived there, the two slaked their thirst together, and then Jarwin sat down to enjoy a pipe, and Cuffy lay down to suffer the well-merited reward of gluttony.

We have said that Jarwin sat down to enjoy a pipe, but he did *not* enjoy it that night, for he discovered that the much-loved little implement, which he had cherished tenderly while on the raft, was broken to atoms in his coat-pocket! In his eagerness to drink on first landing, he had thrown himself down on it, and now smoking was an impossibility, at least for that night. He reflected, however, that it would not be difficult to make a wooden pipe, and that cigarettes might perhaps be made by means of leaves, or bark, while his tobacco lasted; so he consoled himself in the meantime with hopeful anticipations, and a quid. Being still weak and weary, he lay down again beside the fountain, and almost immediately fell into a sleep, which was not at all disturbed by the starts and groans and frequent yelps of Cuffy, whose sufferings could scarcely have been more severe if he had supped on turtle-soup and venison, washed down with port and claret.

Thus did those castaways spend the first night on their island.

It must not be supposed, however, that we are going to trace thus minutely every step and sensation in the career of our unfortunate friends. We have too much to tell that is important to devote our “valuable space” to everyday incidents. Nevertheless, as it is important that our readers should understand our hero thoroughly, and the circumstances in which we find him, it is necessary that we should draw attention to some incidents—trifling in themselves, but important in their effects—which occurred to John Jarwin soon after his landing on the island.

The first of these incidents was, that John one day slipped his foot on a tangle-covered rock, and fell into the sea. A small matter this, you will say, to a man who could swim, and in a climate so warm that a dip, with or without clothes, was a positive luxury. Most true; and had the wetting been all, Jarwin would have had nothing to annoy him; for at the time the accident occurred he had been a week on the island, had managed to pull and crack many cocoa-nuts, and had found various excellent wild-fruits, so that his strength, as well as Cuffy’s, had been much restored. In fact, when Jarwin’s head emerged from the brine, after his tumble, he gave vent to a shout of laughter, and continued to indulge in hilarious demonstrations all the time he was wringing the water out of his garments, while the terrier barked wildly round him.

But suddenly, in the very midst of a laugh, he became grave and pale,—so pale, that a more obtuse creature than Cuffy might have deemed him ill. While his mouth and eyes slowly opened wider and wider, his hands slapped his pockets, first his trousers, then his vest, then his coat, after which they fell like pistol-shots on his thighs, and he exclaimed, in a voice of horror—“Gone!”

Ay, there could be no doubt about it; every particle of his tobacco was gone! It had never been much, only three or four plugs; but it was strong, and he had calculated that, what with careful husbanding, and mixing it with other herbs, it would last him for a considerable length of time.

In a state bordering on frenzy, the sailor rushed back to the rock from which he had fallen. The “baccy” was not there. He glanced right and left—no sign of it floating on the sea. In he went, head foremost, like a determined suicide; down, down to the bottom, for he was an expert diver, and rioted among the coral groves, and horrified the fish, until he well-nigh burst, and rose to the surface with a groan and splutter that might have roused envy in a porpoise. Then down he went again, while Cuffy stood on the shore regarding him with mute amazement.

Never did pearl-diver grope for the treasures of the deep with more eager intensity than did John Jarwin search for that lost tobacco. He remained under water until he became purple in the face, and, coming to the surface after each dive, stayed only long enough to recharge his lungs with air. How deeply he regretted at that time the fact that man’s life depended on so frequent and regular a supply of atmospheric air! How enviously he glanced at the fish which, with open eyes and mouths, appeared to regard him with inexpressible astonishment—as well they might! At last Jarwin’s powers of endurance began to give way, and he was compelled to return to the shore, to the great relief of Cuffy, which miserable dog, if it had possessed the smallest amount of reasoning power, must have deemed its master hopelessly insane.

“But why so much ado about a piece of tobacco?” we hear some lady-reader or non-smoker exclaim.

Just because our hero was, and had been since his childhood, an inveterate smoker. Of course we cannot prove our opinion to be correct, but we are inclined to believe that if all the smoke that had issued from Jarwin’s lips, from the period of his commencing down to that terrible day when he lost his last plug, could have been collected in one vast cloud, it would have been sufficient to have kept a factory chimney going for a month or six weeks. The poor man knew his weakness. He had several times tried to get rid of the habit which had enslaved him, and, by failing, had come to know the tyrannical power of his master. He had once been compelled by circumstances to forego his favourite indulgence for three entire days, and retained so vivid a recollection of his sufferings that he made up his mind never more to strive for freedom, but to enjoy his pipe as long as he lived—to swim with the current, in fact, and take it easy. It was of no use that several men, who objected to smoking from principle, and had themselves gone through the struggle and come off victorious, pointed out that if he went on at his present rate, it would cut short his life. Jarwin didn’t believe *that*. He *felt* well and hearty, and said that he “was too tough, by a long way, to be floored by baccy; besides, if his life was to be short, he saw no reason why it should not be a pleasant one.” It was vain for these disagreeable men of principle to urge that when his health began to give way he would not find life very pleasant, and then “baccy” would fail to relieve him. Stuff and nonsense? Did not Jarwin know that hundreds of thousands of *old* men enjoyed their pipes to the very last. He also knew that a great many men had filled early graves owing to the use of tobacco, but he chose to shut his eyes to this fact—moreover, although a great truth, it was a difficult truth to prove.

It was of still less use that those tiresome men of principle demonstrated that the money spent in tobacco would, if accumulated, form a snug little fortune to retire upon in his old age. John only laughed at this. “Wot did he want with a fortin in his old age,” he would say; “he would rather work to the last for his three B’s—his bread and beer and baccy—an’ die in harness. A man couldn’t get on like a man without them three B’s, and he wosn’t goin’ for to deprive hisself of none of ’em, not he; besides, his opponents were bad argifiers,” he was wont to say, with a chuckle, “for if, as they said, baccy would be the means of cuttin’ his life short, why then, he wouldn’t never come to old age to use his fortin, even if he *should* manage to save it off his baccy.”

This last argument always brought Jarwin off with flying colours—no wonder, for it was unanswerable; and thus he came to love his beer and baccy so much that he became thoroughly enslaved to both.

His brief residence on the south-sea island had taught him, by painful experience, that he *was* capable of existing without at least two of his three B’s—bread and beer. He had suffered somewhat from the change of diet; and now that his third B was thus suddenly, unexpectedly, and hopelessly wrenched from him, he sat himself down on the beach beside Cuffy, and gazed out to sea in absolute despair.

We must guard the reader at this point from supposing that John Jarwin had ever been what is called an intemperate man. He was one of those honest, straightforward tars who do their duty like men, and who, although extremely fond of their pipe and their glass of grog, never lower themselves below the level of the brutes by getting drunk. At the same time, we feel constrained to add that Jarwin acted entirely from impulse and kindly feeling. He had little to do with principle, and did not draw towards those who professed to be thus guided. He was wont to say that they “was troublesome fellers, always shovin’ in their oars when they weren’t wanted to, an’ settin’ themselves up for better than everybody else.” Had one of those troublesome fellows presented John Jarwin with a pound of tobacco in his forlorn circumstances, at that time he would probably have slapped him on the shoulder, and called him one of the best fellows under the sun!

“Cuffy, my friend,” exclaimed Jarwin at last, with an explosive sigh, “all the baccy’s gone, so we’ll have to smoke sea-weed for the futur’.” The terrier said “Bow-wow” to this, cocked its ears, and looked earnest, as if waiting for more.

“Come along,” exclaimed the man, overturning his dog as he leaped up, “we’ll go home and have summat to eat.”

Jarwin had erected a rude hut, composed of boughs and turf, near the fountain where he had first landed. It was the home to which he referred. At first he had devoted himself entirely to the erection of this shelter, and to collecting various roots and fruits and shell-fish for food, intending to delay the examination of the island until his strength should be sufficiently restored to enable him to scale the heights without more than ordinary fatigue. He had been so far recruited as to have fixed for his expedition the day following that on which he sustained his irreparable loss.

Entering his hut he proceeded to kindle a fire by means of a small burning-glass, with which, in happier times, he had been wont to light his pipe. Very soon he had several roots, resembling small potatoes, baking in the hot ashes. With these, a handful of plums, a dozen of oyster-like fish, of which there were plenty on the shore, and a draught of clear cold water, he made a hearty repast, Cuffy coming in for a large share of it, as a matter of course. Then he turned all his pockets inside out, and examined them as carefully as if diamonds lurked in the seams. No, not a speck of tobacco was to be found! He smelt them. The odour was undoubtedly strong—very strong. On the strength of it he shut his eyes, and endeavoured to think that he was smoking; but it was a weak substitute for the pipe, and not at all satisfying. Thereafter he sallied forth and wandered about the sea-shore in a miserable condition, and went to bed that night—as he remarked to his dog—in the blues.

Reader, it is not possible to give you an adequate conception of the sensations and sufferings of John Jarwin on that first night of his bereaved condition. He dreamed continuously of tobacco. Now he was pacing the deck of his old ship with a splendid pipe of cut Cavendish between his lips. Anon he was smoking a meerschaum the size of a hogshead, with a stem equal to the length and thickness of the main-topmast of a seventy-four; but somehow the meerschaum wouldn’t draw, whereupon John, in a passion, pronounced it worthy of its name, and hove it overboard, when it was instantly transformed into a shark with a cutty pipe in its mouth. To console himself our hero endeavoured to thrust into his mouth a quid of negro-head, which, however, suddenly grew as big as the cabin-skylight, and became as tough as gutta-percha, so that it was utterly impossible to bite off a piece; and, stranger still, when the poor sailor had by struggling got it in, it dwindled down into a point so small that he could not feel it in his mouth at all. On reaching this, the vanishing-point, Jarwin awoke to a consciousness of the dread reality of his destitute condition. Turning on his other side with a deep groan, he fell asleep again, to dream of tobacco in some new and tantalising form until sunrise, when he awoke unrefreshed. Leaping up, he cast off his clothes, rushed down the beach, and plunged into sea, by way of relieving his feelings.

During the day John Jarwin brooded much over his dreams, for his mind was of a reflective turn, and Cuffy looked often inquiringly into his face. That sympathetic doggie would evidently have besought him to pour his sorrows into his cocked ears if he could have spoken; but—alas! for people who are cast away on desert islands—the gift of speech has been denied to dogs.

Besides being moody, Jarwin was uncommonly taciturn that day. He did not tell Cuffy the result of his cogitations, so that we cannot say anything further about them. All that we are certainly sure of is, that he was profoundly miserable that day—that he postponed his intended expedition to the top of the neighbouring hill—that he walked about the beach slowly, with his chin on his breast and his hands in his pockets—that he made various unsuccessful attempts to smoke dried leaves, and bark, and wild-flowers, mixing with those substances shreds of his trousers’ pockets, in order that they might have at least the flavour of tobacco—that he became more and more restive as the day wore on, became more submissive in the evening, paid a few apologetic attentions to Cuffy at supper-time, and, finally, went to bed in a better frame of mind, though still craving painfully for the weed

which had enslaved him. That night his dreams were still of tobacco! No lover was ever assailed more violently with dreams of his absent mistress than was John Jarwin with longings for his adorable pipe. But there was no hope for him—the beloved one was effectually and permanently gone; so, like a sensible man, he awoke next morning with a stern resolve to submit to his fate with a good grace.

In pursuance of this resolution he began the day with a cold bath, in which Cuffy joined him. Then he breakfasted on chestnuts, plums, citrons, oysters, and shrimps, the former of which abounded in the woods, the latter on the shore. Jarwin caught the shrimps in a net, extemporised out of his pocket-handkerchief. While engaged with his morning meal, he was earnestly watched by several green paroquets with blue heads and crimson breasts; and during pauses in the meal he observed flocks of brightly-coloured doves and wood-pigeons, besides many other kinds of birds, the names of which he did not know, as well as water-hens, plover, and wild ducks.

“Lost your appetite this morning, Cuff?” said Jarwin, offering his companion a citron, which he decidedly refused. “Ah!” he continued, patting the dog’s sides, “I see how it is; you’ve had breakfast already this morning; bin at it when I was a-sleepin’. For shame, Cuffy!—you should have waited for me; an’ you’ve bin an’ over-ate yourself again, you greedy dog!”

This was evidently the case. The guilty creature, forgetful of its past experiences, had again gorged itself with dead fish, which it had found on the beach, and looked miserable.

“Well, never mind, doggie,” said Jarwin, finishing his meal, and rising. “I’ll give you a little exercise to-day for the good of your health. We shan’t go sulking as we did yesterday; so, come along.”

The sailor left his bower as he spoke, and set off at a round pace with his hands in his pockets, and a thick stick under his arm, whistling as he went, while Cuffy followed lovingly at his heels.

Chapter Three.

Communings of Man and Beast

It would appear to be almost an essential element in life that man should indulge in speech. Of course we cannot prove this, seeing that we have never been cast alone on a desert island (although we *have* been next thing to it), and cannot positively conclude what would have been the consequences to our castaway if he had rigidly refrained from speech. All that we can ground an opinion on is the fact that John Jarwin talked as much and as earnestly to his dog as if he knew that that sagacious creature understood every word he uttered. Indeed, he got into such a habit of doing this, that it is very probable he might have come to believe that Cuffy really did understand, though he was not gifted with the power to reply. If it be true that Jarwin came to this state of credulity, certain it is that Cuffy was deeply to blame in the matter, because the way in which that ridiculous hypocrite sat before his master, and looked up in his face with his lustrous, intelligent eyes, and cocked his ears, and wagged his tail, and smiled, might have deceived a much less superstitious man than a British tar.

We have said that Cuffy smiled, advisedly. Some people might object to the word, and say that he only “snickered,” or made faces. That, we hold, is a controvertible question. Cuffy’s facial contortions looked like smiling. They came very often inappropriately, and during parts of Jarwin’s discourse when no smile should have been called forth; but if that be sufficient to prove that Cuffy was not smiling, then, on the same ground, we hold that a large proportion of those ebullitions which convulse the human countenance are not smiles but unmeaning grins. Be this as it may, Cuffy smiled, snickered, or grinned amazingly, during the long discourses that were delivered to him by his master, and indeed looked so wonderfully human in his knowingness, that it only required a speaking tongue and a shaved face to constitute him an unanswerable proof of the truth of the Darwinian theory of the origin of the human species.

“Cuffy,” said Jarwin, panting, as he reached the summit of his island, and sat down on its pinnacle rock, “that’s a splendid view, ain’t it?”

To any one save a cynic or a misanthrope, Cuffy replied with eye and tail, “It is magnificent.”

“But you’re not looking at it,” objected Jarwin, “you’re looking straight up in my face; so how can you tell what it’s like, doggie?”

“I see it all,” replied Cuffy with a grin; “all reflected in the depths of your two loving eyes.”

Of course Jarwin lost this pretty speech in consequence of its being a mute reply, but he appeared to have some intuitive perception of it, for he stooped down and patted the dog’s head affectionately.

After this there was a prolonged silence, during which the sailor gazed wistfully round the horizon. The scene was indeed one of surpassing beauty and grandeur. The island on which he had been cast was one of those small coral gems which deck the breast of the Pacific. It could not have been more than nine or ten miles in circumference, yet within this area there lay a miniature world. The mountain-top on which the seaman sat was probably eight or nine hundred feet above the level of the sea, and commanded a view of the whole island. On one side lay three lesser hills, covered to their summits with indescribably rich verdure, amongst which rose conspicuous the tall stems and graceful foliage of many cocoanut-palms. Fruit-trees of various kinds glistened in the sunshine, and flowering shrubs in abundance lent additional splendour to the scene. On the other side of the mountain a small lake glittered like a jewel among the trees; and there numerous flocks of wild-fowl disported themselves in peaceful security. From the farther extremity of the lake flowed a rivulet, which, from the mountain-top, resembled a silver thread winding its way through miniature valleys, until lost in the light yellow sand of the sea-shore. On this beach there was not even a ripple, because of the deep calm which prevailed but on the ring or coral-reef, which completely encircled the island, those great

“rollers”—which appear never to go down even in calm—fell from time to time with a long, solemn roar, and left an outer ring of milk-white foam. The blue lagoon between the reef and the island varied from a few yards to a quarter of a mile in breadth, and its quiet waters were like a sheet of glass, save where they were ruffled now and then by the diving of a sea-gull or the fin of a shark. Birds of many kinds filled the grove with sweet sounds, and tended largely to dispel that feeling of intense loneliness which had been creeping that day over our seaman’s spirit.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.