

ROBERT MICHAEL BALLANTYNE

THE MADMAN AND THE
PIRATE

Robert Michael Ballantyne
The Madman and the Pirate

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=36094621

The Madman and the Pirate:

Содержание

Chapter One	4
Chapter Two	18
Chapter Three	30
Chapter Four	43
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	51

R. M. Ballantyne

The Madman and the Pirate

Chapter One

A beautiful island lying like a gem on the breast of the great Pacific—a coral reef surrounding, and a calm lagoon within, on the glass-like surface of which rests a most piratical-looking schooner.

Such is the scene to which we invite our reader's attention for a little while.

At the time of which we write it was an eminently peaceful scene. So still was the atmosphere, so unruffled the water, that the island and the piratical-looking schooner seemed to float in the centre of a duplex world, where every cloudlet in the blue above had its exact counterpart in the blue below. No sounds were heard save the dull roar of the breaker that fell, at long regular intervals, on the seaward side of the reef, and no motion was visible except the back-fin of a shark as it cut a line occasionally on the sea, or the stately sweep of an albatross, as it passed above the schooner's masts and cast a look of solemn inquiry upon her deck.

But that schooner was not a pirate. She was an honest trader—at least so it was said—though what she traded in we have

no more notion than the albatross which gazed at her with such inquisitive sagacity. Her decks were not particularly clean, her sails by no means snow-white. She had, indeed, four goodly-sized carronades, but these were not an extraordinary part of a peaceful trader's armament in those regions, where man was, and still is, unusually savage. The familiar Union Jack hung at her peak, and some of her men were sedate-looking Englishmen, though others were Lascars and Malays, of the cut-throat type, of whom any wickedness might be expected when occasion served.

The crew seemed to have been overcome by the same somnolent influence that had subdued Nature, for they all lay about the deck sleeping or dozing in various sprawling attitudes, with the exception of the captain and the mate.

The former was a huge, rugged man of forbidding aspect, and obviously savage temper. The latter—well, it is not easy to say what were his chief characteristics, so firmly did he control the features of a fine countenance in which the tiger-like blue eyes alone seemed untamable. He was not much above the middle height; but his compact frame was wiry and full of youthful force.

“Lower away the dinghy,” said the captain, gruffly, to the mate, “and let one of these lazy lubbers get into her with a box of figs. Get into her yourself? I may want you.”

The mate replied with a stern “Ay, ay, sir,” and rose from the gun-carriage on which he had been seated, while the captain went below.

In a few minutes the latter reappeared, and soon the little boat

with its three occupants was skimming over the lagoon towards the land.

On that land a strange and interesting work was going on at the time. It was no less than the erection of a church by men who had never before placed one stone upon another—at least with a view to house-building.

The tribe to which these builders belonged had at first received their missionary with yells of execration, had torn the garments from his back, had kicked him into the sea and would infallibly have drowned him if the boat from which he landed had not returned in haste and rescued him. Fortunately, that missionary was well accustomed to a state of nudity, being himself a South Sea islander. He was also used to a pretty rough life, besides being young and strong. He therefore soon recovered from the treatment he had received, and, not many weeks afterwards, determined to make another attempt to land on the island of Ratinga—as our coral-gem on the ocean's breast was named.

For Waroonga's heart had been opened by the Holy Spirit to receive Jesus Christ, and the consequent flame of love to the souls of his countrymen burned too brightly to be quenched by a first failure. The desire to possess the little box of clothes and trifles with which he had landed on Ratinga had been the cause, he thought, of the savages attacking him; so he resolved to divest himself totally of this world's goods and go to his brethren with nothing but the Word of God in his hand. He did so. The

mission-boat once again conveyed him from headquarters to the scene of his former discomfiture, and, when close to the beach, where the natives awaited the landing of the party with warlike demonstrations, he slipped out of his clothes into the water and swam ashore—the Bible, in the native tongue, being tied carefully on the top of his head to keep it dry.

Surprise at this mode of proceeding caused the natives to receive him with less violence than before. Their curiosity led them to listen to what he had to say. Then a chief named Tomeo took him by the shoulders, placed his nose against that of Waroonga and rubbed it. This being equivalent to a friendly shake of the hand, the missionary signalled to his friends in the boat to go away, which they accordingly did, and left their courageous brother to his fate.

It is not our purpose to recount the whole history of this good man's enterprise. Let it suffice to say that the natives of Ratinga turned round, childlike—and they were little more than grown up children—swallowed all he had to say and did all he bid them do—or nearly all, for of course there were a few self-willed characters among them who objected at first to the wholesale changes that Waroonga introduced in their manners and customs. In the course of a few months they formally embraced Christianity, burned their idols, and solemnly promised that if any more unfortunate ships or boats chanced to be wrecked on their shores they would refrain from eating the mariners. Thus much accomplished, Waroonga, in the joy

of his heart, launched a canoe, and with some of his converts went off to headquarters to fetch his wife. He fetched her, and she fetched a fat little brown female baby along with her. Missionaries to the Southern seas, as is well known, endeavour to impress on converts the propriety, not to say decency, of a moderate amount of clothing. Mrs Waroonga—who had been named Betsy—was therefore presented to the astonished natives of Ratinga in a short calico gown of sunflower pattern with a flounce at the bottom, a bright yellow neckerchief, and a coal-scuttle bonnet, which quivered somewhat in consequence of being too large and of slender build. Decency and propriety not being recognised, apparently, among infants, the brown baby—who had been named Zariffa at baptism—landed in what may be styled Adamite costume.

Then Waroonga built himself a bamboo house, and set up a school. Soon after that he induced a half Italian, half Spanish sailor, named Antonio Zeppa, who had been bred in England, to settle with his wife and son on the island, and take charge of the school.

For this post Zeppa and his wife were well qualified, both having received an education beyond that usually given to persons in their rank of life. Besides this, Antonio Zeppa had a gigantic frame, a genial disposition, and a spirit of humility, or rather childlike simplicity, which went far to ingratiate him with the savages.

After several years' residence in this field of labour, Waroonga

conceived the grand idea of building a house of God. It was to be built of coral-rock, cemented together with coral-lime!

Now, it was while the good people of Ratinga were in the first fervour of this new enterprise, that the dinghy with its three occupants approached their shore.

At that particular point of time the walls of the new church had begun to rise above the foundations, for the chief, Tomeo, had entered into the matter with intense enthusiasm, and as Tomeo was supreme chief, every one else felt bound to follow his example and work hard; but, to do them justice, they required no stimulant; the whole community entered into it with inexpressible glee.

Zeppa taught them everything, because no one else knew anything, except of course Waroonga, who, however, was not much in advance of his native congregation save in spiritual matters. Zeppa showed them how to burn lime out of the coral-rock, and they gazed with open-eyed—and open-mouthed wonder at the process. Then the great chief Tomeo gave the word to burn lime, and Buttchee, the chief second in command, backed him up by kicking the native nearest to his foot and echoing the order, “Go, burn lime!” The entire population began to burn lime forthwith, and would have gone on burning lime enough to have built a South Sea pyramid equal to Cheops, if they had not been checked and their blazing energies turned into stone-hewing and dressing, and other channels.

Thus the work went on merrily, and so engrossed were they

with it that they did not at first observe the arrival of the visitors. Of course they were aware of the schooner's presence, and had been off to her the previous day, before she had furled her sails, to offer fruits and vegetables; but it was some time before they discovered that three strangers had landed and were gazing at them while they toiled.

Zeppa had a black servant, a negro, whom he had induced to follow him. This man took a prominent oversight of the works. He was by nature a cook, but church-building occupied his leisure moments, and he prided himself upon being not only cleverer, but considerably blacker, than the islanders.

"Now you keep out ob de road, leetil Za." This was addressed to Zariffa, who, by that time, could not only toddle but trowel, besides being able to swim like a duck. "Take care, missy Za, dat clumsy feller wid the big stone—let him fall, and—oh!"

The negro gave vent to a yell, for the accident he feared actually occurred. The clumsy native let a huge piece of coral-rock fall from his shoulder, which just missed crushing the brown little girl. It dropped on a mass of soft lime, which flew up in all directions, making Zariffa piebald at once, and, what was more serious, sending a lump straight into Tomeo's face. This was too much for the great man. He seized the culprit by the neck, and thrust his brown visage down upon the lime, from which he arose white, leaving a beautiful cast of his features behind him.

Tomeo was pacified at once. He burst into a loud laugh, while the guilty man slunk humbly away, not, however, without

receiving a salute from Buttchee's active foot in passing.

At this moment Zeppa came up, holding his son Orlando, a well-grown lad of fourteen, by the hand. He at once observed the captain of the schooner, and, going forward, shook hands with him and the mate. He had made their acquaintance the day before, when the vessel anchored in the lagoon.

"I have come to say good-bye, Mr Zeppa. We have finished taking in fresh water sooner than I had expected, and will be ready to sail with the evening breeze."

"Indeed? I regret this for various reasons" replied Zeppa, in a soft musical voice, that one scarcely expected to issue from such a capacious chest. There was about the man an air of gentle urbanity and tenderness which might have induced a stranger to suppose him effeminate, had not his manly looks and commanding stature rendered the idea absurd. "In the first place," he continued, "my wife and I had hoped to show you some hospitality. You know we seldom have visitors to this out-of-the-way island. Then we wanted your advice with regard to the building of our church, which, you see, is progressing rapidly; and last, but not least, I wished to ask a favour, which it will be impossible to grant if you sail to-night."

"Perhaps not impossible," said Captain Daniel, whose gruff nature was irresistibly mellowed by the sweet spirit of the giant who addressed him. "What d'ye want me to do?"

"I meant to ask a passage in your vessel for my son and myself to the island of Otava. It is not far off, and you said yesterday

that you intend to pass close to it. You see, I am something of a trader, as well as a missionary-schoolmaster; but if you sail to-night I have not time to get ready."

"If that's all your difficulty," returned the captain, "I'll delay till to-morrow night. A day won't make much difference—will it, Mr Rosco?" he said, turning to the mate.

"You know best" replied the mate somewhat sharply, "I don't command the schooner."

The captain looked at the officer with an angry frown, and then, turning quickly to Zeppa, said—

"Well, if that time will do, it is settled. You and your son may go with me. And, see here, I've brought a box of figs for your wife, since you won't take anything for the help you gave me this morning."

"You shall present it yourself," said Zeppa, with a pleased smile.

"Hi! Ebony," hailing the negro, "tell Marie to come here. She is in the palm-grove."

Ebony found his mistress and delivered his message.

Madame Zeppa was a pretty little fair woman, of French extraction. She had been a lady's-maid, and, having been born and brought up chiefly in England, spoke English fluently, though with a slightly foreign accent derived from her mother.

"Missis," said the negro, in a low voice, and with a mysterious look, as he followed her out of the palm-grove, "massa him wants to go wid schooner. Don' let him go."

“Why not, Ebony?”

“Kase I no likes him.”

“You don’t like the schooner?”

“No, de cappin ob de skooner. Hims bad man for certin. Please don’ let massa go.”

“You know I never give master his orders,” returned madame, with a light laugh.

“Better if you did, now an’ den,” muttered the negro, in a tone, however, which rendered the advice not very distinct.

The fair little woman received the box of figs graciously; the captain and mate were invited to the abode of Zeppa, where they met the native missionary, and soon after returned to their vessel to make preparations for departure.

“Marie,” said Zeppa that night as they, with their boy, sat down to rest after the labours of the day, “I expect to be away about three weeks. With anything of a wind the schooner will land us on Otava in two or three days. Business won’t detain me long, and a large canoe, well manned, will bring Orlando and me back to you in a week or so. It is the first time I shall have left you for so long since our wedding. You won’t be anxious, little woman?”

“I would not be anxious if I were sure you went with good people,” returned Marie, with a slightly troubled look; “but are you sure of the captain?”

“I am sure of nobody except you, Marie,” returned her husband, with a smile that contained a dash of amusement in it.

“And me, father,” said Orlando, assuming an injured look.

“Well, Orley, I can’t say that I am quite sure of you, you rascal,” returned his father playfully. “That spice of mischief in your composition shakes me at times. However, we will leave that question to another time. Meanwhile, what makes you doubt the captain, Marie?”

“Ebony seems to doubt him; and I have great faith in Ebony’s judgment.”

“So have I; but he is not infallible. We should never get on in life if we gave way to groundless fears, dear wife. Besides, have we not the promise, ‘Lo, I am with you alway?’”

On the following afternoon a fresh breeze sprang up and the piratical-looking schooner, bowing gracefully before it, sailed across the now ruffled lagoon and stood out to sea, while Marie with the missionary and his wife, and a crowd of natives, stood at the end of the coral wharf, waving farewell to Zeppa and his son as long as their figures could be distinguished. After that, they continued to gaze at the diminishing vessel until it melted like a little speck at the meeting-place of sea and sky.

That night an event which had been long pending was precipitated.

Captain Daniel had given way to his fierce temper so often during the voyage, and had behaved with such cruel tyranny to his crew, that they had resolved to stand it no longer. His harsh conduct to the mate, in particular, who was a favourite with the men, had fostered the spirit of indignation, and the

mate himself, being a man of no fixed principles, although good-natured enough when not roused, had at last determined to side with the men. He was a man of fierce passions, and had been roused by his superior's tyranny and insolence to almost uncontrollable fury; but he had not at that time been guilty of absolute insubordination.

When the vessel's course had been laid that night—which chanced to be a Friday, as some of the crew afterwards remembered—and the cabin lamp had been lighted, the captain sent for the mate, who saw by his looks that a storm was brewing.

"What did you mean, sir," began the captain at once, "by that insolent reply you made to me on shore yesterday?"

The young man might have answered temperately if they had been alone, but Zeppa was lying on a locker reading, and his son was also present, and Rosco knew that the captain meant to put him to shame before them. His spirit fired.

"Scoundrel!" he cried, "the measure of your iniquity is filled. You shall no longer command this schooner—"

Thus far he got when the captain, livid with rage, sprang up to rush at him. Zeppa also leaped up to aid in putting down what he clearly perceived was premeditated mutiny, but the mate sprang out of the cabin, and, shutting the door with a bang, locked it. At the same instant the man at the wheel—knowing what had occurred—closed and fastened the cabin sky-light. The captain threw himself several times with all his weight against the door, but it opened inwards and could not be forced.

There were two square windows in the stern of the schooner, one of which was open. Orlando perceived this, sprang up, clambered through it, gained the deck unperceived, and, running down the companion stair, past all the men, rushed against the cabin door, and burst it open.

Zeppa was endeavouring at the moment to wrench off the lock and was nearly thrown back. Recovering, he struck fiercely out at those who thronged the dark passage.

“Oh! father,” groaned Orlando, as he fell before the blow.

With a terrible cry of consternation Zeppa stooped to pick up his child. He was felled with a handspike as he did so; the crew then rushed into the cabin and the captain was overpowered and bound.

“Overboard wi’ them all!” shouted one of the men.

There were some among these villains who, having once given the reins to their rage, were capable of anything. These, ready to act on the diabolical suggestion, attempted to drag Zeppa and the captain up the companion ladder, but their great size and weight rendered the effort difficult. Besides, Zeppa’s consciousness was returning, and he struggled powerfully. It was otherwise with poor Orlando. One of the ruffians easily raised the lad’s light frame and bore him to the deck. Next moment a sharp cry and splash were heard. Zeppa understood it, for he had seen his son carried away. With a wild shout he burst from those who held him, and would certainly have gained the deck and leaped overboard had not a mutineer from behind felled him a second

time.

When Rosco heard what had been done he ran furiously on deck, but one glance at the dark sea, as the schooner rushed swiftly over it sufficed to show him that the poor boy's case was hopeless.

But Orley's case was not as hopeless as it seemed. The plunge revived him. Accustomed to swim for hours at a time in these warm waters, he found no difficulty in supporting himself. Of course his progress was aimless, for he could not see any distance around him, but a friend had been raised up for him in that desperate hour. At the moment he had been tossed overboard, a sailor, with a touch of pity left in his breast had seized a life-buoy and thrown it after him. Orlando, after swimming about for a few minutes, struck against this buoy by chance—if we may venture to use that word in the circumstances.

Seizing the life-preserver with an earnest "thank God" in his heart if not on his lips, he clung to it and looked anxiously around.

The sight was sufficiently appalling. Thick darkness still brooded on the deep, and nothing was visible save, now and then, the crest of a breaking wave as it passed close to him, or, rolling under him, deluged his face with spray.

Chapter Two

When Antonio Zeppa recovered consciousness, he found himself lying on a mattress in the schooner's hold, bound, bleeding, and with a dull and dreadful sense of pain at his breast, which at first he could not account for. Ere long the sudden splash of a wave on the vessel's side recalled his mind to his bereavement; and a cry—loud, long, and terrible—arose from the vessel's hold, which caused even the stoutest and most reckless heart on board to quail.

Richard Rosco—now a pirate captain—heard it as he sat alone in his cabin, his elbows resting on the table, and his white face buried in his hands. He did not repent—he could not repent; at least so he said to himself while the fires kindled by a first great crime consumed him.

Men do not reach the profoundest depths of wickedness at one bound. The descent is always graduated—for there are successive rounds to the ladder of sin—but it is sometimes awfully sudden. When young Rosco left England he had committed only deeds which men are apt lightly to name the “follies” of youth. These follies, however, had proved to be terrible leaks through which streams of corruption had flowed in upon his soul. Still, he had no thought of becoming a reckless or heartless man, and would have laughed to scorn any one who should have hinted that he would ever become an outlaw and a pirate. But oppression bore

heavily on his hasty, ill-disciplined temper, and now the lowest round of the ladder had been reached.

Even in this extremity he did not utterly give way. He would not become an out-and-out pirate. He would merely go forth as a plunderer to revenge himself on the world which had used him so ill. He would rob—but he would not kill; except of course in self-defence, or when men refused to give up what he demanded. He would temper retributive justice with mercy, and would not suffer injury to women or children. In short, he would become a semi-honourable, high-minded sort of pirate, pursuing wealth without bloodshed! True, in the sad case of poor Orlando, he had not managed to steer clear of murder; but then that deed was done without his orders or knowledge. If his comrades in crime had agreed, he would have preferred some sort of smuggling career; but they would not listen to that, so he had at last consented to hoist the black flag.

While the wretched youth was endeavouring to delude himself and gather crumbs of comfort from such thoughts as these, the awful cry from the ship's hold again rang out, and as his thoughts reverted to the bereaved father, and the fair, light-hearted little mother on Ratinga Island, the deadly pallor that overspread his countenance was intensified.

Rising hastily—with what intent he himself hardly knew—he proceeded to the hold. It was broad day at the time, and sufficient light penetrated the place to reveal the figure of Antonio Zeppa crouching on his mattress, with his chin upon his knees, his

handsome face disfigured with the blood that had dried upon it, and a wild, fierce light gleaming in his eyes.

He did not speak or move when Rosco entered and sat down on the head of a cask near him.

“Zeppa,” he said, with intense earnestness, “as God shall be my judge, I did not mean to—to—throw—to do this to your boy. It was done without my knowledge.”

“Hah!” burst from the stricken father; but nothing more, while he continued to gaze in the pirate captain’s face.

“Indeed it is true,” continued Rosco hurriedly. “I had no intention of letting murder be done. I would not even slay the captain who has used me so ill. I would give my life if I could alter it now—but I cannot.”

“Hah!” gasped Zeppa again, still keeping his eyes fixed on Rosco’s face.

“Don’t look at me that way,” pleaded the pirate, “as if I had done the deed. You know I didn’t. I swear I didn’t! If I had been there, I would have saved Orlando at the cost of—”

He was interrupted at this point by the repetition of the cry which had before reached him in the cabin; but how much more awful did that despairing cry sound near at hand, as it issued full, deep-toned, and strong, from the chest of the Herculean man! There was a difference in it also this time—it terminated in a wild, fiendish fit of laughter, which caused Rosco to shrink back appalled; for now he knew that he confronted a maniac!

For some minutes the madman and the pirate sat gazing at

each other in silent horror. Then the latter rose hastily and turned to leave the hold. As he did so, the madman sprang towards him, but he was checked by the chains which bound him, and fell heavily on the deck.

Returning to the cabin, Rosco went to a locker and took out a case bottle, from which he poured half a tumbler of brandy and drank it. Then he summoned the man who had been appointed his second in command.

“Redford,” he said, assuming, by a mighty effort of self-restraint a calm tone and manner, “you told me once of a solitary island lying a long way to the south of the Fiji group. D’you think you could lay our course for it?”

“I’m sure I could, sir; but it is very much out of the way of commerce, and—”

“There is much sandal-wood on it, is there not?” asked Rosco, interrupting him.

“Ay, sir, plenty of that, an’ plenty of fierce natives too, who will give us a warm reception. I would—”

“So much the better,” returned the captain, with a cynical smile, again interrupting; “we may be able to obtain a load of valuable wood for nothing, and get rid of our cowards at the same time. Go, lay our course for—what’s the island’s name?”

“I don’t know its right name, sir; but we call it Sugar-loaf Island from the shape of one end of it.”

“That will do. And hark ye, friend, when I give orders or ask questions in future, don’t venture to offer advice or raise

objections. Let the crew understand that we must be able to pass for lawful traders, and that a load of sandal-wood will answer our purpose well enough. It will be your wisdom, also, to bear in mind that discipline is as useful on board a Free Rover as on board a man-of-war, and that there is only one way to maintain it.”

The pirate captain pointed to a brace of pistols that lay on the table beside him, and said, “Go.”

Redford went, without uttering another word. His was one of those coarse natures which are ever ready to presume and take advantage when there is laxity in discipline, but which are not difficult to subdue by a superior will. He forthwith spread the report that the new captain was a “stiff un,” a fact which nearly all the men were rather glad than otherwise to hear.

For some days after leaving Ratinga a stiff breeze enabled the schooner—which had been re-named by its crew the “Free Rover”—to proceed southward rapidly. Then a profound calm succeeded, and for a couple of days the vessel lay almost motionless on the sea.

During all this time the poor maniac in her hold lay upon his blood-stained couch, for no one dared—at least no one cared—to approach him. At meal times the cook pushed a plate of food within his reach. He usually took no notice of this until, hunger constrained him to devour a little, almost savagely. No word would he speak, but moaned continually without intermission, save when, in a burst of uncontrollable anguish, he gave vent to

the terrible cry which so weighed on the spirits of the men, that they suggested to each other the propriety of throwing the father overboard after the son. Redford's report of his interview with the captain, however, prevented the suggestion being acted on.

It is possible that the two tremendous blows which Zeppa had received during the mutiny may have had something to do with his madness; but there can be no doubt that the intense mutual affection which had subsisted between him and his only child, and the sudden and awful manner of that child's end, were of themselves sufficient to account for it.

For Orlando had been all that a father could wish; loving, gentle, tender, yet lion-like and courageous in action, with a powerful frame like that of his father, and a modest, cheerful spirit like that of his mother. No wonder that both parents doted on him as their noblest terrestrial gift from God.

"And now," thought the crushed man, as he crouched on his mattress in the hold, "he is gone,—snatched away before my eyes, suddenly and *for ever!*"

It was when this thought recurred, again and again, that the cry of agony burst from him, but it was invariably succeeded by the thought, "No, not *for ever*. Orlando is with the Lord. We shall see him again, Marie and I, when we reach the better land."

And then Zeppa would laugh lightly, but the laugh would merge again into the bitter cry, as the thought would recur persistently—"gone—gone—for ever!"

Oh! it was pitiful to see the strong man thus reduced, and

reason dethroned; and terrible were the pangs endured by the pirate chief as he heard and saw; but he had now schooled himself to accept what he called his “fate,” and was able to maintain a calm, indifferent demeanour before his men. Of course he never for a moment, during all that time, thought of crying to God for mercy, for as long as a man continues to ascribe his sins and their consequences to “fate,” he is a rampant and wilful, besides being an unphilosophical, rebel against his Maker.

At last, one afternoon, the peak of Sugar-loaf Island was descried on the horizon, close to where the sun was descending amid a world of golden clouds.

“Which side is the best for landing on!” asked the captain of his mate.

“The southern end, sir, which is steep and uninhabited,” said Redford.

In half an hour they were under the shelter of the cliffs close to a creek, at the inner end of which there was a morsel of flat beach. Beyond this lay a richly wooded piece of land, which seemed to be connected with a gorge among the hills.

“Lower the boat” said Rosco. “Have three men ready, and, when I call, send them to the hold.”

He descended as he spoke, and approached Zeppa, who looked at him with unmistakable ferocity.

“You are going on shore,” he said to the poor madman, who seemed neither to comprehend nor to care for what he said.

“Once again,” continued Rosco, after a pause, “I tell you that

I had no hand in the death of your son. My men, if they had their way, would soon treat you as they treated him. They want to get rid of you, so, to save your life, I must send you on shore. It is an island—inhabited. I hope the natives will prove friendly to you. I hope you will get well—in time. Do you understand what I say?"

Zeppa neither spoke nor moved, but continued to glare at the man whom he evidently regarded as his deadliest foe.

A touch of pity seemed to influence the pirate captain, for he added in a softer tone, "I would have taken you with me, if it had been possible, and landed you on Ratinga. Perhaps that may yet be done. At any rate I will return to this island—we shall meet again."

At last the madman spoke, in a harsh, grating tone,—“If we meet again, you shall die!”

“I will do my best to avoid that fate,” returned Rosco, with a touch of sarcasm. “Ho! lads! come down.”

Three powerful seamen, who had stood at the hatchway awaiting the summons, descended, and at once laid hold of Zeppa. To their surprise, he made no resistance. To every one but the captain he behaved liked a lamb. Having been placed in the bottom of the boat alongside, with his hands still bound, they shoved off, and Rosco, taking the tiller, steered for the little creek.

The instant the keel touched the land two of the men jumped out and hauled the boat ashore. The others assisted Zeppa to land. They led him to a grassy bank, and bade him sit down. He

obeyed meekly, and sat there gazing at the ground as if unable to comprehend what was being done. Rosco remained in the boat while a small box of biscuit was conveyed to the spot and left at the side of Zeppa.

Then, removing his bonds, the men re-embarked and returned to the schooner, which soon left that part of the island far astern. While it receded, the pirate captain kept his glass fixed on the wretched man whom he had thus forsaken. He saw that Zeppa never once turned his head seaward, but, after gazing in a state of abstraction at the ground for some time, rose and sauntered slowly inland. He did not appear to observe the small supply of provision left for his use. With his chin sunk upon his breast and his hands clasped behind him, he appeared to wander aimlessly forward until his tall figure was lost to view among the palm-groves that fringed the bottom of the mountain.

Leaving him there, we shall turn now to poor Orlando, who had been tossed so unceremoniously into the sea. Probably the reader is aware that the water of the southern seas is, in many parts, so much warmer than that of our northern climes, that people may remain in it for hours without being chilled. Hence natives of the coral islands are almost amphibious, and our young hero, having spent much of his life among these islands, could swim for the greater part of a day without becoming exhausted.

When, therefore, he caught hold of the life-preserver, as stated in the last chapter, he clung to it with some degree of confidence; but by degrees the depressing influence of continued darkness

began to tell upon him, and he became less and less hopeful of deliverance. He bethought him of the great distance they had sailed from Ratinga before the mutiny broke out, and the utter impossibility of his being able to swim back. Then he thought of sharks, and a nervous tendency to draw up his legs and yell out affected him. But the thought of his father, and of the probable fate that awaited him, at length overbore all other considerations, and threw the poor boy into such a state of despair, that he clung to the life-preserver for a long time in a state of semi-stupor.

At last the day dawned faintly in the east and the glorious sun arose, and Orley's heart was cheered. From earliest infancy he had been taught to pray, so you may be sure he did not fail at this crisis in his young life. But no answer was returned to his prayer until a great part of the weary day had passed, and he had begun to look forward with dread to the approaching night.

As evening advanced, exhaustion began to creep over him, and more than once he felt himself slipping from his support under the influence of sleep. The struggle to retain consciousness now became terrible. He fought the battle in many ways. Sometimes he tried to shake himself up by shouting. Then he again had recourse to prayer, in a loud voice. Once he even attempted to sing, but his heart failed him, and at last he could do nothing but grasp the life-buoy and cling with all the tenacity of despair. And, oh! what thoughts of his mother came over him then! It seemed as if every loving act and look of hers was recalled to his mind. How he longed to clasp her once more in his arms and

kiss her before he died!

While these thoughts were gradually taking the form of a hazy dream, he was rudely aroused by something grasping his hair.

Sharks, of course, leaped to his mind, and he struggled round with a wild gurgling shriek, for the grasp partially sank him. Then he felt himself violently dragged upwards, and his eyes encountered the dark face and glittering eye-balls of a savage.

Then was Orley's cry of fear turned into a shout of joy, for in that dark countenance he recognised the face of a friend. A canoe full of Ratinga natives had nearly run him down. They had been absent on an expedition, and were alike ignorant of the visit of the Free Rover and the departure of Antonio Zeppa.

Their astonishment at finding Orlando in such a plight was only equalled by their curiosity to know how he had come there; but they were compelled to exercise patience, for the poor boy, overcome by mingled joy and exhaustion, fell back in a swoon almost as soon as he was hauled out of the water.

Need we describe the state into which poor Madame Zeppa was thrown when Orlando returned to her?—the strange mingling of grief and terrible anxiety about her husband's fate, with grateful joy at the restoration of her son? We think not!

Ebony, the faithful and sable servitor of the family, got hold of Orlando as soon as his poor mother would let him go, and hurried him off to a certain nook in the neighbouring palm-grove where he was wont to retire at times for meditation.

"You's quite sure yous fadder was not shootted?" he began, in

gasping anxiety, when he had forced the boy down on a grassy bank.

“I think not,” replied Orley, with a faint smile at the negro’s eagerness. “But you must remember that I was almost unconscious from the blow I received, and scarce knew what was done.”

“But you no hear no shootin’?” persisted Ebony.

“No; and if any shots had been fired, I feel certain I should have heard and remembered them.”

“Good! den der’s a chance yous fadder’s alive, for if de no hab shooted him at first, de no hab de heart to shoot him arterwards. No, he’d smile away der wiktiness; de *couldn’t* do it.”

Orlando was unable to derive much comfort from this sanguine view of the influence of his father’s smile—bright and sweet though he knew it to be—yet with the energy of youth he grasped at any straw of hope held out to him. All the more that Ebony’s views were emphatically backed up by the chiefs Tomeo and Buttchee, both of whom asserted that Zeppa had never failed in anything he had ever undertaken, and that it was impossible he should fail now. Thus encouraged, Orlando returned home to comfort his mother.

Chapter Three

But Orley's mother refused to be comforted. What she had heard or read of pirates induced her to believe that mercy must necessarily be entirely banished from their hearts; and her husband, she knew full well, would sooner die than join them. Therefore, she argued in her despair, Antonio must have perished.

"But mother," said Orley, in a soothing tone, "you must remember that Rosco and his men are not regular pirates. I only heard them shout 'Hoist the black flag!' when they seized me; but that does not prove that they did hoist it, or that Rosco agreed to do so. They were only mutineers, you see, and not hardened villains."

"Hardened enough when they threw you overboard, my son," returned poor little Madame Zeppa, with a sob.

"True; but that was in the hurry of the rising, and without orders from Rosco, as far as I know. Besides, mother, have you not often told me that God will never forsake His own children? Surely, then, He will not forsake father."

"No, oh, no! the good Lord will never forsake him. He will certainly deliver his soul from sin and death; but God sometimes sees fit to allow the bodies of His children to suffer and die. It may be so now."

"Yes, mother, but also it may *not* be so now. Let us take a

hopeful view, and do what we can to find out—to find—to—”

Poor Orlando broke down here, laid his head on his little mother's shoulder, and wept for his mind had suddenly run itself blank. What was there to find out? what could they do? Nothing, absolutely nothing, except pray; and they did that fervently.

Then Orley went out to consult again with his friends. Alas! there was no other outlet for their grief, save prayer and consultation, for action was, in the circumstances, impossible.

“Bin t'ink, t'inkin' horroble hard all last night. Couldn' sleep a wink,” said Ebony one day, some weeks after the return of Orlando, when, according to custom, he and the native missionary and his wife, with the chiefs Tomeo and Buttchee, assembled for a consultation in the palm-grove.

“What have you been thinking about?” asked Orley.

“Yous fadder, ob course.”

“Of course,” repeated the boy, “but what have you been thinking about him—anything new?”

“Not zackly noo,” returned the negro, with a very earnest look, “but ole t'oughts turned in a noo d'rection. Sit down, Tomeo, an' I will tell you—an' try to forgit yous hat if poss'ble. It's 'xtroarnar good lookin', a'most as much good lookin' as youself, so you got no occashin to be always t'inkin' about it.”

We may remark here that both Tomeo and Buttchee understood a little of Ebony's English, though they could not speak a word. The reader will understand, therefore, that when we put words in their mouths we only give a free translation of

their language. In like manner Ebony understood a little of the Ratinga tongue, but could not speak much of it, and Waroonga, who himself spoke uncommonly bad, though fluent, English, interpreted when necessary.

“Well, you mus’ know,” said Ebony, “dat jus before I goes to bed las’ night I heat a little too much supper—”

“You doos that every night” interrupted Buttchee, with a grin.

Ebony ignored the interruption, and continued—

“So, you see, I dream berry bad—mos’ drefful dreams! Yes. Well, what I dream was dis. I see Massa Zeppa forced by de pierits to walk de plank—”

“What’s that?” asked Tomeo.

Waroonga looked at Ebony for an explanation, and then translated—

“When pirates want to kill people they sometimes tie up their eyes, and bind their hands, and make them walk along a plank stickin’ over the ship’s side, till they fall off the end of it into the sea, where they are left to drown.”

Tomeo looked at Buttchee with a grin and nodded, as though he thought the mode of execution rather a good one; then, recollecting suddenly that any mode of slaying innocent men was inconsistent with his character as a convert to Christianity, he cast a glance of awful solemnity at Waroonga, and tried to look penitent.

“Well, hims walk de plank like a man,” continued Ebony, “hims dood eberyting like a man. An’ w’en hims topple into de

sea hims give sitch a most awful wriggle dat his bonds bu'sted. But hims berry sly, was Massa Zeppa—amazin' sly. I t'ought him lie on's back zif him be dead. Jest move a leetle to look like drownin', an' w'en he long way astern, he slew round, off wid de hanky fro hims eyes an' larf to hisseff like one o'clock. Den he swum'd to a island an' git ashore, and climb up de rocks, an' sit down—an'—an'—dat's all."

"What! be that all?" asked Waroonga.

"Dat's all," repeated the negro. "I no dream no more arter dat, 'cause I was woked by a fly what hab hoed up my nose, an' kep' bumblin' in it like steam inside ob a kittle."

"Well, Ebony," asked Orlando, "what conclusions do you draw from that dream?"

"I di'nt draw no kungklooshins from it 'cos I dunno what de are. Nebber hab notin' to do wid what I don' understan'. But what I was t'ink was dis: in de days ob old, some time after Adam an' Eve was born, a sartin king, called Fair-ho, or some sitch name (Waroonga there knows all about him) had a dream, that siven swine came up—"

"Kine, Ebony—not swine," interrupted the missionary, with a good-humoured smile, "which is all the same as cows."

"Well, den, siven fat cows come up out ob a ribber, an' hoed slap at siven thin cows—mis'erable skinny critters that—"

"All wrong, Ebony," again interrupted Waroonga. "It's just the other way. The skinny ones went at the fat ones."

"Well, ob course you must be right," returned the negro,

humbly, "though I'd have 'spected it was t'other way. But I s'pose the skinny ones was so hungry that the fat ones hadn't a chance wid 'em. However, it don't matter. What I was goin' to say was that a good man, called Joseph, went to Fair-ho an' 'splained all his dream to him. Now, if Joseph could do dat, why shouldn't Waroonga 'splain my dream to me?"

"Because I's not Joseph, Ebony, an you're not Pharoah," returned Waroonga promptly.

Tomeo and Buttchee turned looks of inquiry on Ebony as if to say, "What d'ye say to that, you nigger?" But the nigger said nothing for some moments. He seemed not to have viewed the matter in that light.

"Well, I don'no," he said at last with a deep sigh, "I t'ought I'd get hold ob suthin' when I kitch hold ob dat dream. But, I do b'lieve myself, dat part of it means dat Zeppa hims git on an island, anyhow."

"If my dear father got upon *anything*, it must have been an island," said Orlando sadly.

"That's troo," remarked Mrs Waroonga. "Keep your mouth shut, my da'lin'."

She referred to her brown baby, which she placed with some violence on her knee. It is well to remark here that little Zariffa had been supplied with a coal-scuttle bonnet proportioned to her size, made by her mother out of native straw, and that she did not wear anything else in the way of costume.

After Ebony's dream had been thoroughly discussed in all its

bearings, and viewed in every possible point of relation to their great sorrow, the council adjourned, as usual, to various duties about the flourishing little village, and Orlando went to lay the result before his mother, who, although she could not believe these deliberations would end in anything practical, found it impossible, nevertheless, to resist the influence of so much faith and strong hopefulness, so that she was somewhat comforted, as it were, in spite of herself. Time flew by, and upwards of three years elapsed without anything happening at Ratinga Island to throw a single ray of light on the fate of the lost man.

During that period, however, much that was interesting and encouraging occurred to comfort the heart of the native missionary and the sorrowing Marie Zeppa. In the first place they received several visits from the mission-vessel, with small supplies of such luxuries as sugar, tea, and coffee for the body, and, for the spirit, a few bundles of tracts and books printed in the native tongue, among which, you may be sure, were many copies of the Book of books, the blessed Bible. Carpenters' and smiths' tools were also brought to them, so that they not only carried on their house-building and other operations with greater ease than heretofore, but even essayed the building of small boats with considerable success.

On the occasion of these visits, supplies of clothing were also left for the use of those converts who could be persuaded to put them on. But in these matters of taste Waroonga was not so successful as he had been in spiritual things. After his

first disastrous landing, he had found no difficulty in persuading the natives to burn their false gods, and put away their too numerous wives—reserving only one to each man;—but when it was suggested that the usual bit of cloth round the loins was not quite sufficient for Christians, and that additional clothing was desirable, they betrayed decided symptoms of a tendency to rebel.

Savages in all parts of the world are usually much influenced for good or evil by the example of their chiefs. Those of Ratinga were no exception to the general rule, and the chiefs Tomeo and Buttchee did not encourage the putting on of clothes. In the matter of head-dress they had indeed given in; but when one day, Waroonga presented Tomeo with a pair of what are called slop-made trousers, and advised him to put them on, slapping his own at the same time, and asserting (we trust truthfully) that they were comfortable, Tomeo looked at them with an air of contempt and Buttchee, who was irreverent, laughed.

After much persuasion, however, and being good-natured, he consented to try. He got one leg in easily enough, but when he attempted to put in the other, not being accustomed to the feat, he staggered and had to let the leg down. Raising it a second time, he made a successful plunge, got the foot in, lost his balance, made a frantic effort to disengage his foot, and fell to the ground.

“Sit down, my friend, and try it again,” said Waroonga, encouragingly.

Our missionary was of a gentle, loving disposition. His

successes were in every case the result of suasion. He never sought to coerce men. Tomeo with childlike simplicity rebuked his own awkwardness, and humbly seated his huge body on a bank for another effort. In this position he got his legs easily into the trousers and drew them on, but when he stood up to complete the operation, it was found that they were very much too small for him, besides which he had put them on with the back to the front!

“Ah! my friend, they do not fit,” said Waroonga, thinking it unnecessary to refer to the error. “I will find a larger pair for you in the store. But try this coat. It is the kind worn by the white man when he goes to see his friends. It will be much easier to put on, I think.” So saying, Waroonga produced a blue surtout with bright brass buttons.

“No,” said Tomeo, drawing himself up with dignity, and putting the garment aside, “I do not require it. Has not a coat of skin been given to me? I want no other.”

And truly, the dark brown skin which fitted so perfectly to his muscular frame—tattooed as it was with many elegant devices—seemed to warrant his rejection of the ill-made surtout. But in Ratinga, as elsewhere, tastes differ. Buttchee’s fancy was caught by the brass buttons, and he volunteered to put on the coat, although he had looked with scorn on the trousers.

Like his brother chief, however, he experienced considerable difficulty, especially in distinguishing the difference between the left arm-hole and the breast pocket, despite the able assistance of

Waroonga. At last he got the coat partially on, and with a mighty heave, forced it upon his broad shoulders. Then he stood with arms awkwardly curved and extended, uncertain what to do next. He was by no means properly into the garment, and his look of solemn inquiry said as much to the missionary.

“Try another heave, my friend,” said Waroonga, in a tone of encouragement.

Buttchee tried, with the result of a mysterious and incomprehensible noise at his back.

“What is that?” he said quickly, with looks of alarm, as he endeavoured to glance over his shoulder.

“I fear,” replied Waroonga with some hesitation, “that the coat has burst!”

There could be no doubt whatever about that, for a long strip of the chief’s back was visible, as if a gusset of brown leather had been introduced into the blue coat, from the waist to the collar.

For a considerable time after this, both chiefs declined further experiments in the clothing way, but ultimately Tomeo was induced to wear a striped flannel jersey, and Buttchee, of his own accord, adopted a scarlet flannel petticoat that had been given to his wife. Thus was the ice of conservatism broken in the island of Ratinga, and liberal views prevailed thenceforward in the matter of costume—whether to the advancement of taste and decency remains to this day an open question, as all liberal and conservative questions will probably remain till the crack of doom.

One day, to the inexpressible surprise and joy of the islanders, a large vessel was seen to pass through the narrow opening in the coral reef, and cast anchor in the lagoon. The excitement on Ratinga was great, for vessels rarely had occasion to visit the island, although some of them, probably South Sea whalers, were seen to pass it on the horizon two or three times a year.

Immediately four canoes full of natives put off to visit the stranger; but on reaching her they were sternly told to keep off, and the order was silently enforced by the protruding muzzle of a carronade, and the forbidding aspect of several armed men who looked over the side. "We are men of peace," said Waroonga, who was in the foremost canoe, "and come as Christian friends."

"We are men of war," growled one of the men, "an' don't want no friends, Christian or otherwise."

"We came to offer you hospitality," returned the missionary in a remonstrative tone.

"An' we came to take all the hospitality we want of you without waitin' for the offer," retorted the sailor, "so you'd better go back to where you came from, an' keep yourselves quiet, if ye don't want to be blowed out o' the water."

This was sufficient. With disappointed looks the natives turned their canoes shoreward and slowly paddled home.

"Depend upon it, this is another pirate," said Orlando, when Waroonga reported to him the result of his visit.

"What would you advise us to do?" asked Waroonga.

Lest the reader should be surprised at this question, we must

remind him that Orlando had, in the course of these three years, grown up almost to manhood. The southern blood in his veins, and the nature of the climate in which he had been born and brought up, may have had something to do with his early development; but, whatever the cause, he had, at the early age of eighteen, become as tall and nearly as powerful as his father had been, and so like to him in aspect and manner, that the natives began to regard him with much of that respect and love which they had formerly entertained towards Antonio. Of course Orlando had not the sprinkling of grey in his short black curly hair which had characterised the elder Zeppa; but he possessed enough of the black beard and moustache, in a soft rudimental form, to render the resemblance to what his sire had been very remarkable. His poor little mother left the management of all her out-of-door affairs with perfect confidence to her son. Tomeo and Buttchee also had begun to regard him as his father's successor.

"I would advise you to do nothing," said Orley, in reply to Waroonga's question, "beyond having all the fighting men of the village prepared for action, and being ready at a moment's notice to receive the strangers as friends if they choose to come as such."

"Well, then, Orley, I will be ready for them, as you tell to me, if they comes in peace; if not, you must go and carry out your own advice, for you is manager of all secular affairs here."

In the afternoon a large boat, full of men armed to the teeth, put off from the side of the strange vessel, which was barque-

rigged, and rowed to the beach near the mouth of a small stream. Evidently the object of the visit was to procure fresh water. Having posted his men in ambush, with orders to act in strict accordance with his signals, Orlando sauntered down alone and unarmed to the place where the sailors were filling their water-casks.

“Is your captain here?” he asked quietly.

The men, who were seemingly a band of thorough ruffians, looked at him in surprise, but went on filling their casks.

“I am the captain,” said one, stepping up to the youth with an insolent air.

“Indeed!” said Orlando, with a look of surprise.

“Yes, indeed, and let me tell you that we have no time to trouble ourselves wi’ you or yours; but since you’ve put yourself in our power, we make you stay here till we’ve done watering.”

“I have no intention of leaving you,” replied Orley, seating himself on a rock, with a pleasant smile.

“What d’ee say to kidnap the young buck?” suggested one of the men; “he might be useful.”

“Perhaps he might be troublesome,” remarked Orlando; “but I would advise you to finish your work here in peace, for I have a band of three hundred men up in the bush there—not ordinary savages, let me tell you, but men with the fear of God in their hearts, and the courage of lions in their breasts—who would think it an easy matter to sweep you all off the face of the earth. They are ready to act at my signal—or at my fall—so it will be

your wisdom to behave yourselves.”

The quiet, almost gentle manner in which this was said, had a powerful effect on the men. Without more words they completed the filling of the casks, and then, re-embarking, pushed off. It was obvious that they acted in haste. When they had gone about a couple of boat-lengths from the beach, one of the men rose up with a musket, and Orlando distinctly heard him say—

“Shall I send a bullet into him?”

“If you do, the captain will skin you alive,” was the reply from one of the other men.

The alternative did not seem agreeable to the first speaker, for he laid down his musket, and resumed his oar.

Soon after the boat reached her, the sails of the stranger were spread, and she glided slowly out of the lagoon.

Chapter Four

Let us waft ourselves away, now, over the sea, in pursuit of the strange barque which had treated the good people of Ratinga so cavalierly.

Richard Rosco sits in the cabin of the vessel, for it is he who commands her. He had taken her as a prize, and, finding her a good vessel in all respects, had adopted her in preference to the old piratical-looking schooner. A seaman stands before him.

“It is impossible, I tell you,” says Rosco, while a troubled expression crosses his features, which have not improved since we saw him upwards of three years ago. “The distance between the two islands is so great that it is not probable he traversed it in a canoe, especially when we consider that he did not know the island’s name or position, and was raving mad when I put him ashore.”

“That may be so, captain,” says the sailor: “nevertheless I seed him with my own eyes, an no mistake. Didn’t you say he was a man that nobody could mistake, tall, broad, powerful, handsome, black curly hair, short beard and moustache, with sharp eyes and a pleasant smile?”

“The same, in every particular—and just bordering on middle age,” answers the perplexed pirate.

“Well, as to age, I can’t say much about that,” returns the seaman; “he seemed to me more like a young man than a middle-

aged one, but he had coolness and cheek enough for a hundred and fifty, or any age you like.”

“Strange,” muttered Rosco to himself, paying no regard to the last observation; “I wish that I or Mr Redford had gone with you, or some one who had seen him the last time we were here; but I didn’t want to be recognised;” then checking himself—“Well, you may go, and send Mr Redford to me.”

“I cannot account for Zeppa turning up in this way,” he said, when the mate entered.

“No more can I, sir.”

“Do all the men agree in saying that he seems to be quite sane.”

“All. Indeed most of them seemed surprised when I asked the question. You see, what with death by sword, shot, and sickness, there’s not a man in the ship who ever saw him, except yourself and me. The last of the old hands, you know, went with Captain Daniel when you sent him and the unwilling men away in the old schooner. I have no doubt, myself, from what they say, that Zeppa has got well again, and managed to return home as sound and sane as you or I.”

“If you and I were sane, we should not be here,” thought the pirate captain; but he did not give expression to the thought, save by a contemptuous curl of his lip.

“Well, Redford,” he said, after a few seconds’ pause, “my chief reason for going to Sugar-loaf Island is removed, nevertheless we shall still go there for a fresh load of sandal-wood and other things that will fetch a good price.”

"I fear, sir," returned the mate after some hesitation, "that the crew will be apt to mutiny, if you insist on going there. They are tired of this mixture of *trade* with free-roving, and are anxious to sail in seas where we shall be more likely to fall in with something worth picking up."

"Stop, Redford, I want to hear no more. The crew shall go where I please as long as I command them; and you may add that I will guarantee their being pleased with my present plan. There, don't refer to this subject again. Where did you say the British cruiser was last seen?"

"Bearing nor'-east, sir, hull down—on our starboard quarter. I called you at once, but she had changed her course to nor'-west and we lost sight of her."

"That will just suit us," said Rosco, going into his private cabin and shutting the door.

Well might the pirate captain be perplexed at that time, for he was surrounded by difficulties, not the least of which was that his men were thoroughly dissatisfied with him, and he with them. He did not find his crew sufficiently ready to go in for lucrative kidnapping of natives when the chance offered, and they did not find their captain sufficiently ferocious and bloodthirsty when prizes came in their way. Nevertheless, through the influence of utter recklessness, contemptuous disregard of death, and an indomitable will, backed by wonderful capacity and aptitude in the use of fist, sword, and pistol, he had up to this time held them in complete subjection.

In his heart Rosco had resolved to quit his comrades at the first favourable opportunity, and, with this intent had been making for one of the most out-of-the-way islands in the Pacific—there to go and live among the natives, and never more to see the faces of civilised men—against whom he had sinned so grievously. His intentions were hastened by the fact that a British man-of-war on the Vancouver station, hearing of his exploits, had resolved to search for him. And this cruiser did in fact come across his track and gave chase; but being a poor sailer, was left behind just before the pirate had reached Ratinga, where, as we have seen, she put in for water.

The discovery there made, as he supposed, that Antonio Zeppa had recovered his reason and returned home, not only amazed and puzzled Rosco, but disconcerted part of his plan, which was to find Zeppa, whose image had never ceased to trouble his conscience, and, if possible, convey him to the neighbourhood of some port whence he could easily return to Ratinga. It now struck him that, since Zeppa was no longer on Sugar-loaf Island, that spot would be as favourable a one as could be found for his purpose, being far removed from the usual tracks of commerce. He would go there, take to the mountains as Zeppa had done before him, leave his dissatisfied comrades to follow their own devices, and, crossing over to the other side of the island, ingratiate himself as well as he could with the natives, grow beard and moustache, which he had hitherto shaved, and pass himself off as a shipwrecked sailor, should any vessel or

cruiser touch there.

“And shipwrecked I am, body, soul, and spirit,” he muttered, bitterly, as he sat in his cabin, brooding over the past and future.

Leaving him there, and thus, we will return to Ratinga, the peaceful inhabitants of which were destined at this time to be tickled with several little shocks of more or less agreeable surprise.

One of these shocks was the sudden disappearance of Zariffa, the native missionary’s brown baby. It was an insignificant event in itself, and is only mentioned because of its having led indirectly to events of greater importance.

Zariffa had, by that time, passed out of the condition of brown-babyhood. She had, to her own intense delight, been promoted to the condition of a decently-clad little savage. In addition to the scuttle bonnet which was not quite so tremulous as that of her mother, she now sported a blue flannel petticoat. This was deemed sufficient for her, the climate being warm.

Zariffa was still, however, too young to take care of herself. Great, therefore, was Betsy Waroonga’s alarm when she missed her one day from her little bed where she should have been sleeping.

“Ebony!” cried Betsy, turning sharply round and glaring, “Zariffa’s gone.”

“*Quite* dead,” exclaimed the negro, aghast.

“Not at all dead,” said Betsy; “but gone—gone hout of hers bed.”

“Dat no great misfortin’, missis,” returned Ebony, with a sigh of relief.

“It’s little you knows, stoopid feller,” returned the native missionary’s wife, while her coal-scuttle shook with imparted emotion; “Zariffa never dis’beyed me in hers life. She’s lost. We must seek—seek quick!”

The sympathetic negro became again anxious, and looked hastily under the chairs and tables for the lost one, while her mother opened and searched a corner cupboard that could not have held a child half her size. Then the pair became more and more distracted as each excited the other, and ran to the various outhouses shouting, “Zariffa!” anxiously, entreatingly, despairing.

They gathered natives as they ran, hither and thither, searching every nook and corner, and burst at last in an excited crowd into the presence of Waroonga himself, who was in the act of detailing the history of Joseph to a select class of scholars, varying from seven to seventeen years of age.

“Oh! massa, Zariffa’s lost!” cried Ebony.

Waroonga glanced quickly at his wife. The excessive agitation of her bonnet told its own tale. The missionary threw Joseph overboard directly, proclaimed a holiday, and rushed out of the school-house.

“No use to go home, massa,” cried Ebony; “we’s sarch eberywhere dar; no find her.”

“Has you been to the piggery?” demanded the anxious father,

who was well aware of his child's fondness for "little squeakers."

"Oh, yes; bin dar. I rousted out de ole sow for make sure Zariffa no hides behind her."

At this juncture Orlando came up with a sack of cocoa-nuts on his back. Hearing what had occurred he took the matter in hand with his wonted energy.

"We must organise a regular search," he said, throwing down the sack, "and go to work at once, for the day is far advanced, and we can do little or nothing after dark."

So saying he collected all the able men of the village, divided them into bands, gave them minute, though hurried, directions where they were to go, and what signals they were to give in the event of the child being found; and then, heading one of the bands, he joined eagerly in the search. But, before going, he advised Betsy Waroonga to keep his mother company, as women could not be of much use in such work.

"No," said Mrs Waroonga, with decision; "we will go home an' pray."

"Right, that will be better," said Orlando. "You go back with her, Ebony, and fetch my gun. I left it in Waroonga's house when I went in for a sack to hold the cocoa-nuts. It is behind the door. You'll find me searching in the palm-grove. Now, boys, away; we've no time to lose."

Returning to her house with her sable attendant, poor Betsy rushed into her private apartment threw herself on her knees and half across her lowly bed in an agony of alarm.

She was startled and horrified by a sharp, though smothered cry, while some living creature heaved under the bed-clothes. Instantly she swept them off, and lo! there lay Zariffa safe and well, though somewhat confused by her rude awaking and her mother's weight.

"You's keep up heart, missis," said the sympathetic Ebony, looking hastily into the room in passing; "we's sartin sure to find —"

He stopped. Blazing amazement sat on his countenance for about six moments—a pause similar to that of an injured infant just preparing for a yell—then he exploded into a fit of laughter so uncontrollable that it seemed as if a hurricane had been suddenly let loose in the room, insomuch that Betsy's remonstrances were quite unheard.

"Oh! missis," he exclaimed at last, wiping his eyes, "T's a-goin' to bust."

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.