

BECKE LOUIS

THE CALL OF
THE SOUTH

Louis Becke
The Call Of The South

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The Call Of The South / 1908:*

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CHAPTER I ~ PAUL, THE DIVER

“Feeling any better to-day, Paul?”

“Guess I’m getting round,” and the big, bronzed-faced man raised his eyes to mine as he lay under the awning on the after deck of his pearling lugger. I sat down beside him and began to talk.

A mile away the white beach of a little, land-locked bay shimmered under the morning sun, and the drooping fronds of the cocos hung listless and silent, waiting for the rising of the south-east trade.

“Paul,” I said, “it is very hot here. Come on shore with me to the native village, where it is cooler, and I will make you a big drink of lime-juice.”

I helped him to rise—for he was weak from a bad attack of New Guinea fever—and two of our native crew assisted him over the side into my whaleboat. A quarter of an hour later we were seated on mats under the shade of a great wild mango tree, drinking lime-juice and listening to the lazy hum of the surf upon the reef, and the soft *croo, croo* of many “crested” pigeons in the branches above.

The place was a little bay in Callie Harbour on Admiralty Island in the South Pacific; and Paul Fremont was one of our European divers. I was in charge of the supply schooner which was tender to our fleet of pearling luggers, and was the one man among us to whom the silent, taciturn Paul would talk—sometimes.

And only sometimes, for usually Paul was too much occupied in his work to say more than “Good-morning, boss,” or “Good night,” when, after he had been disencumbered of his diving gear, he went aft to rest and smoke his pipe. But one day, however, he went down in twenty-six fathoms, stayed too long, and was brought up unconscious. The mate and I saw the signals go up for assistance, hurried on board his lugger, and were just in time to save his life.

Two days later he came on board the tender, shook hands in his silent, undemonstrative way, and held out for my acceptance an old octagon American fifty dollar gold piece.

“Got a gal, boss?” “I admitted that I had.

“Pure white, I mean. One thet you like well enough to marry?”

“I mean to try, Paul.”

“In Samoa?”

“No—Australia.”

“Guess I’d like you to give her this ‘slug’ I got it outter the wreck of a ship that was sunk off Galveston in the ‘sixties,’ in the war.”

It would have hurt him had I declined the gift. So I thanked him, and he nodded silently, filled his pipe and went back to the

Montiara.

Nearly a year passed before we met again, for his lugger and six others went to New Guinea; and our next meeting was at Callie Harbour, where I found him down with malarial fever. Again I became his doctor, and ordered him to lie up.

He nodded.

“Guess I’ll have ter, boss. But I jest hate loafin’ around and seein’ the other divers bringin’ up shell in easy water.” For he was receiving eighty pounds per month wages—diving or no diving—and hated to be idle.

“Paul,” I said, as we lay stretched out under the wild mango tree, “would you mind telling me about that turn-up you had with the niggers at New Ireland, six years ago.”

“Ef you like, boss.” Then he added that he did not care about talking much at any time, as he was a mighty poor hand at the jaw-tackle.

“We were startin’ tryin’ some new ground between New Hanover and the North Cape of New Ireland. There were only two luggers, and we had for our store-ship a thirty-ton cutter. There were two white divers besides me and one Manila man, and our crews were all natives of some sort or another—Tokelaus, Manahikians and Hawaiians. The skipper of the store-ship was a Dutchman—a chicken-hearted swab, who turned green at the sight of a nigger with a bunch of spears, or a club in his hand. He used to turn-in with a brace of pistols in his belt and a Winchester lying on the cabin table. At sea he would lose his

funk, but whenever we dropped anchor and natives came aboard his teeth would begin to chatter, and he would just jump at his own shadder.

“We anchored in six fathoms, and in an hour or two we came across a good patch of black-edge shell, and we began to get the boats and pumps ready to start regular next morning. As I was boss, I had moored the cutter in a well-sheltered nook under a high bluff, and the luggers near to her. So far we had not seen any sign of natives—not even smoke—but knew that there was a big village some miles away, out o’ sight of us, an’ that the niggers were a bad lot, and would have a try at cuttin’ off if they saw a slant.

“Early next morning it set in to rain, with easterly squalls, and before long I saw that there was like to be a week of it, and that we should have to lie by and wait until it settled. About noon we sighted a dozen white lime-painted canoes bearing down on us, and Horn, the Dutchman, began to turn green as usual, and wanted me to heave up and clear out. I set on him and said I wanted the niggers to come alongside, an’ hev a good look at us—they would see that we were a hard nut to crack if they meant mischief.

“They came alongside, six or eight greasy-haired bucks in each canoe—and asked for terbacker and knives in exchange for some pigs and yams. I let twenty or so of ‘em come aboard, bought their provisions, and let ‘em have a good look around. Their chief was a fat, bloated feller, with a body like a barrel, and his face

pitted with small-pox. He told me that he was boss of all the place around us, and had some big plantations about a mile back in the bush, just abreast of us, and that he would let me have all the food I wanted. In five days or so, he said, we should have fine weather for diving, and he and his crowd would help me all they could.

“About a quarter of a mile away was a rocky little island of about five acres in extent. It had a few heavy trees on it, but no scrub, and there were some abandoned fishermen’s huts on the beach. I asked the fat hog if I could use it as a shore station to overhaul our boats and diving gear when necessary, and he agreed to let me use it as long as I liked for three hundred sticks of terbacker and two muskets.

“They went off on shore again to the plantations, and in a little while we saw smoke ascendin’—they were cookin’ food, and repairing their huts. Later on in the day they sent me a canoe load of yams, taro, and other stuff for the men, and asked me to come ashore and look at the village. I went, fur I knew that they would not try on any games so soon.

“There were, in addition to the bucks, a lot of women and children there, makin’ thatch, cookin’, and repairin’ the pig-proof fencin’. I stayed a bit, and then came on board again, an’ we made snug for the night.

“Next morning we landed on the island, repaired two of the huts, and started mendin’ sails, overhauling the boats, and doin’ such work that it was easier to do on shore than on board. Of course we kep’ our arms handy, and old Horn kep’ a good watch

on board—he dassent put foot on shore himself—said he was skeered o’ fever.

“The natives sent us plenty of food, and a good many of ‘em loafed around on the island, and some on board the luggers and cutter, cadgin’ fur terbacker and biscuit. Of course they always carried their clubs and spears with ‘em, as is usual in New Ireland, but they were quiet and civil enough. Every day canoes were passin’ from where we lay to the main village, and returnin’ with other batches of bucks and women all takin’ spells at work; an’ there was any amount o’ drum beating and *duk duk*¹ dancin’, and old Horn shivered in his boots swearin’ they were comin’ to wipe us out. But my native crews and I and the other white divers were used to the nigger customs at such times, and although we kep’ a good watch ashore and afloat, none o’ us were afraid of any trouble comin’.

“On the fifth night, I, another white diver, named Docky Mason, his Samoan wife, and a Manahiki sailor named ‘Star’ were sleeping on shore in one of the huts. In another hut were three or four New Ireland niggers, who had brought us some fish and were going away again in the mornin’.

“About ten o’clock the sky became as black as ink—a heavy blow was comin’ on, and we just had time to stow our loose gear up tidy, when the wind came down from between the mountains with a roar like thunder, and away went the roofs of the huts, and

¹ The duk duk dance of Melanesia is merely a blackmailing ceremony by the men to obtain food from the women and the uninitiated.

with it nearly everything around us that was not too heavy to be carried away. My own boat, which was lying on the beach, was lifted up bodily, sent flyin' into the water, and carried out to sea.

“We tried to make out the cutter's and luggers' lights, but could see nothing and every second the wind was yellin' louder and louder like forty thousand cats gone mad, and the air was filled with sticks, leaves, and sand, and I had a mighty great fear for my little fleet; fur three miles away to the west, there was a long stretch o' reefs, an' I was afraid they had dragged and would get mussed up.

“Thet's jest what did happen—though they cleared the reefs by the skin of their teeth. The moment they began to drag, all three slipped. The luggers stood away under the lee of New Ireland, stickin' in to the land, and tryin' to bring to for shelter, but they were a hundred miles away from me, down the coast, before they could bring-to and anchor, for the blow had settled into a hurricane, and raised such a fearful sea that they had to heave-to for twenty-four hours. It was two weeks before we met again, after they had had to tow and 'sweep' back to my little island, against a dead calm and a strong current, gettin' a whiff of a land breeze at night now an' agin', which let 'em use their canvas. As for the cutter, she ran before it for New Britain, and brought up at Matupi in Blanche Bay, two hundred miles away, where old Horn knew there was a white settlement of Germans—his own kidney. He was a white-livered old swine, but a good sailor-man—as far as any man who says 'Ja' for 'Yes' goes.

“When daylight came my mates and I set to work to straighten up.

“Docky Mason’s native wife—Tia—was a ‘whole waggon with a yaller dog under the team’. She first of all made us some hot coffee, and gave us a rousin’ breakfast; then she made the New Ireland bucks—who were wantin’ to swim to the mainland—turn to and put a new roof of coco-nut thatch over our hut, although it was still blowin’ a ragin’ gale. My! thet gal was a wonder! She hed eyes like stars, an’ red lips an’ shinin’ pearly teeth, an’ a tongue like a whip-lash when she got mad, an’ Docky Mason uster let her talk to him as if he was a nigger—an’ say nuthin’—excep’ givin’ a foolish laugh and then slouchin’ off. And yet she was as gentle as a lamb to any of us fellows when we got fever, or had gone down under more’n twenty fathoms, and was hauled up three parts dead and chokin’.

“Well, boss, we got to straights at last, although it was blowin’ as hard as ever. We had a lot o’ gear on shore in that native house, for I was intendin’ to beach the cutter an’ give her copper a scrubbin’ before we started divin’ regular.

“There was near on a ton o’ twist terbacker in tierces (which we used fur tradin’ with the niggers), a ton o’ biscuit in fifty pound tins, boxes o’ red an’ yaller seed beads, an’ knives an’ axes, an’ a case o’ dynamite, an’ heaps o’ things that was a direct invitation to the niggers, an’ a challenge ter the Almighty to hev our silly throats cut. And those four or five bucks, whilst Tia was hustlin’ them around, was jest takin’ stock as they worked.

“By sunfall the wind an’ sea in the bay had gone down a bit; an’ the bucks said that they would swim on shore (their canoe had been smashed in the night) and bring us some food early in the mornin’. I gave ‘em a bottle o’ Hollands, an’ my kind regards for the old barrelled-belly swine of a chief, some terbacker fur themselves; and then, after they had gone, looked to our Winchesters and pistols, which the bucks hadn’t seen, fur we always kept ‘em outer sight, under our sleepin’ mats.

“Paulo,’ sez Tia to me, speakin’ in Samoan (an’ cussin’ in English), ‘you an’ Docky an’ “Star” are a lot o’ blamed fools! You orter hev shot all those bucks ez soon ez they hed finished. Didn’t you say that, “Star”?’

“Star’ had said ‘Yes’ to her, but being an unobtrusive sorter o’ Kanaka, he hadn’t said nuthin’ to us—thinkin’ we knew better’n him what ter do.

“We kep’ a good watch all that day an’ the nex’ day, and then at sunset two bucks in a canoe came off, bringing us six cooked pigeons from the chief, with a message that he would come an’ see us in a day or two, and bring men to build us better houses to live in until the luggers and the cutter came back.

“We collared the two bucks and tied ‘em up, and then Tia made one of ‘em eat part of a pigeon—she standin’ over him with a Winchester at his ear. He ate it, an’ in ten minutes he was tyin’ himself up in knots, and was a dead nigger in another quarter of an hour. The pigeons were all poisoned.

“We kep’ the other nigger alive an’ told him that if he would

tell us what was a-goin' on we'd let him off, and set him ashore, free.

“‘At dawn to-morrow,’ says he, ‘Baian’ (the fat old chief) thought to find you all dead, because of the poisoned pigeons sent to you. And then he meant to take all the good things you have here, and set up your heads in his *duk duk* house.’

“Before daylight came, Docky Mason an’ ‘Star’ an’ me hed fixed up things all serene ter give Baian and his cannibals a doin’. Fust ev all—to show our prisoner that we meant business, Tia held up his right hand, an’ Docky sent a Winchester bullet through it, an’ told him that he would send one through his skull ef he didn’t do what he was told.

“Then we took two empty one gallon colza oil tins, and filled ‘em with dynamite, tamped it down tight, and then ran short fuses through the corks, and carried ‘em down to the place where our prisoner said Baian and his crowd would land. It was a little bay, lined on each side by pretty high, ragged coral boulders, covered with creepers. We stowed the tins in readiness, and then brought our prisoner down, and told him what to do when the time came. I guess that thet nigger knew thet ef he didn’t play straight he was a dead coon. Tia sat down jest behind him, and every now and then touched his backbone with the muzzle ev her pistol—jest ter show him she was keepin’ awake. At the same time he wasn’t unwillin’, for he hed told us thet he and his dead mate were not Baian’s men—they were slaves he had captured from a town he had raided somewhere near North Cape, and they were liable to

be killed and eaten at any time if Baian's crowd ran short of pig meat or turtle.

"A little bit higher up, Docky Mason, 'Star' an' me, planted ourselves with our Winchesters, an' one of our boats' whaler's bomb guns, which fired four pounds of slugs and deer shot, mixed up—the sorter thing, boss, that you an' me may find mighty handy here in this very place, if we get rushed sudden. We made a charcoal fire, and then frayed out the ends of the dynamite fuses so that they would light quickly.

"When daylight came, we caught sight of nigh on fifty canoes, all crammed with niggers, paddlin' like blazes to where we was cached, but making no noise. Even if they hed we would not hev heard it, fur the wind and the surf beatin' on the reef would hev drowned it.

"On they came and rushed their canoes into the little cove, four abreast, and Tia prodded our buck in the back, and told him to stand up and talk to Baian, who was in one of the leadin' canoes.

"Up he jumps.

"“Oh, Baian, Baian, great Baian,” he called, ‘the two white men are dead in their house, and we have the woman bound hand and foot.’

"“Good,” said Baian with a fat chuckle, as he put one leg over the gunwale of his canoe to step out, and the next moment I put a bullet through him, and then Docky Mason lit the first charge o’ dynamite, and slings it down, right inter the middle of the

crowded canoes, and before it went off he sent the second one after it.

“Boss, I hev seen some dynamite explosions in my time—especially when I hev hed to blow up wrecks—but I hev never seen anything like thet. The two shots killed over thirty niggers, wounded as many more, and stunned a lot, who were drowned. Those who were not hurt swam out of the cove, and neither Docky nor me had the heart to shoot any of ‘em—though we might hev picked off a couple of dozen afore they got outer range.

“Before we could stop him our prisoner jumped down among the dead and wounded, got a long knife, an’ in ten seconds he had Baian’s’ head off, and held it up to us, grinning like a cat, on’y not so nice, ez he hed jet black, betel-nut stained teeth, and red lips like a piece ev raw beef.

“We hed no more trouble with the niggers after thet turn-up, you can bet yer life.

“The buck stayed with us until the luggers came back, and a few days after we landed him at his own village—ez rich ez Jay Gould, for we gave him a musket with powder and ball, a cutlass, half a dozen pounds ev red beads, and two hundred sticks of terbacker. I guess thet thet nigger was able to buy himself all the wives he wanted, and be a ‘big Injun’ fur the end of his days.”

CHAPTER II ~ THE OLD SEA LIFE

One Sunday morning—when I was about to leave the dear old city of Sydney for an unpremeditated and long, long absence in cold northern climes, I went for a farewell stroll around the Circular Quay, and, standing on some high ground on the east side, looked down on the mass of shipping below, flying the flags of all nations, and ranging from a few hundred to ten thousand tons. Mail steamers, deep sea tramps, “freezers,” colliers—all crowded together, and among them but *one* single sailing vessel—a Liverpool barque of 1,000 tons, loading wool. She looked lost, abandoned, out of place, and my heart went out to her as my eyes travelled from her shapely lines and graceful sheer, to her lofty spars, tapering yards, and curving jibboom, the end of the latter almost touching the stern rail of an ugly bloated-looking German tramp steamer of 8,000 tons. On that very spot where I stood I, when a boy, had played at the foot of lofty trees—now covered by hideous ill-smelling wool stores—and had seen lying at the Circular Quay fifty or sixty noble full-rigged ships and barques, many brigs and schooners, and but *one* steamer, a handsome brig-rigged craft, the *Avoca*, the monthly P. and O. boat, which ran from Sydney to Melbourne to connect with a larger ship.

Round the point were certainly a few other steamers, old-fashioned heavily-rigged men-of-war, generally paddle-wheel

craft; and, out of sight, in Darling Harbour, a mile away, were others—coasters—none of them reaching five hundred tons, and all either barque- or brig-rigged, as was then the fashion.

And they all, sailers as well as the few steamers, were manned by *sailor-men*, not by gangs of foreign paint-scrubbers, who generally form a steamer's crew of the present day—men who could no more handle a bit of canvas than a cow could play the Wedding March—in fact there are thousands of men nowadays earning wages on British ships as A.B.'s who have never touched canvas except in the shape of tarpaulin hatch covers, and whom it would be highly dangerous to put at the wheel of a sailing ship—they would make a wreck of her in any kind of a breeze in a few minutes.

In my boyhood days, nearly all the ships that came into Sydney Harbour flying British colours were manned by men of British blood. Foreigners, as a rule, were not liked by shipmasters, and their British shipmates in the fo'c'stle resented their presence. One reason of this was that they would always "ship" at a lower rate of wage than Englishmen, and were clannish. I have known of captains of favourite clipper passenger ships, trading between London and the colonies, declining to ship a foreigner, even an English-speaking Dane or Scandinavian, who make good sailormen, and are quiet, sober, and hardworking. Nowadays it is difficult to find any English deep-sea ship or steamer, in which half of the hands for'ard are not foreigners of some sort. And now practically the whole coasting mercantile marine of the

Australian colonies is manned by Germans, Swedes, Danes, and Norwegians.

When I was a young man I sailed in ships in the South Sea trade which had carried the same crew, voyage after voyage, for years, and there was a distinct feeling of comradeship existing between officers and crew that does not now exist. I well remember one gallant ship, the *All Serene* (a happy name), which was for ten years in the Sydney-China trade. She was about the first colonial vessel to adopt double-top-gallant yards, and many wise-heads prophesied all sorts of dire mishaps from the innovation. On this ship (she was full rigged) was a crew of nineteen men, and the majority of them had sailed in her for eight years, although her captain was a bit of a "driver". But they got good wages, good food, and had a good ship under their feet—a ship with a crack record as a fast sailer.

In contrast to the *All Serene*, was a handsome barque I once sailed in as a passenger from Sydney to New Caledonia, where she was to load nickel ore for Liverpool. Her captain and three mates were Britishers, and smart sailor-men enough, the steward was a Chileno, the bos'un a Swede; carpenter a Mecklenburger joiner (who, when told to repair the fore-scuttle, which had been damaged by a heavy sea, did not know where it was situated), the sailmaker a German, and of the twelve A.B.'s and O.S.'s only one—a man of sixty-five years of age, was a Britisher; the rest were of all nationalities. Three of them were Scandinavians and were good sailor-men, the others were almost useless, and only fit to

scrub paint-work, and hardly one could be trusted at the wheel. The cook was a Martinique nigger, and was not only a good cook, but a thorough seaman, and he had the utmost contempt for what he called “dem mongrels for’ard,” especially those who were Dagoes. The captain and officers certainly had reason to knock the crew about, for during an electrical storm one night the ship was visited by St. Elmo’s fire, and the Dagoes to a man refused duty, and would not go aloft, being terrified out of their wits at the dazzling globes of fire running along the yards, hissing and dancing, and illuminating the ocean for miles. They bolted below, rigged up an altar and cross with some stump ends of candles, and began to pray. Exasperated beyond endurance, the captain, officers, two Norwegians, the nigger cook and I, after having shortened canvas, “went” for them, knocked the religious paraphernalia to smithereens, and drove them on deck.

The nigger cook was really a devout Roman Catholic, but his seaman’s soul revolted at their cowardice, and he so far lost his temper as to seize a Portuguese by his black curly hair, throw him down, tear open his shirt, and seize a leaden effigy of St. Jago do Compostella, which he wore round his neck, and thrust it into his mouth. In after years I saw Captain “Bully” Hayes do the same thing, also with a Portuguese sailor; but Hayes made the man actually swallow the little image—after he had rolled it into a rough ball—saying that if St James was so efficient to externally protect the wearer from dangers of the sea, that he could do it still better in the stomach, where he (the saint) would

feel much warmer.

The barque, a month or so after I left her in Noumea, sailed from T'chio in New Caledonia, and was never heard of again. She was overmasted, and I have no doubt but that she capsized, and every one on board perished. Had she been manned by English sailors, she would have reached her destination in safety, for the captain and officers knew her faults and that she was a tricky ship to sail with an unreliable crew.

In many ships in which I have sailed, in my younger days, no officer considered it *infra dig.* for him, when not on watch, to go for'ard and listen to some of the hands spinning yarns, especially when the subject of their discourse turned upon matters of seamanship, the eccentricities either of a ship herself or of her builders, etc. This unbending from official dignity on the part of an officer was rarely abused by the men—especially by the better-class sailor-man. He knew that “Mr. Smith” the chief officer who was then listening to his yarns and perhaps afterwards spinning one himself, would in a few hours become a different man when it was his watch on deck, and probably ask Tom Jones, A.B., what the blazes he meant by crawling aft to relieve the wheel like an old woman with palsy. And Jones, A.B., would grin with respectful diffidence, hurry his steps and bear no malice towards his superior.

Such incidents never occur now. There is no feeling of comradeship between officer and “Jack”. Each distrusts the other.

I have not had much experience of steamers in the South Sea trade, except as a passenger—most of my voyages having been made in sailing craft, but on one occasion my firm had to charter a steamer for six months, owing to the ship of which I was supercargo undergoing extensive repairs.

The steamer, in addition to a general cargo, also carried 500 tons of coal for the use of a British warship, engaged in “patrolling” the Solomon Islands, and I was told to “hurry along”. The ship’s company were all strangers to me, and I saw at once I should not have a pleasant time as supercargo. The crew were mostly alleged Englishmen, with a sprinkling of foreigners, and the latter were a useless, lazy lot of scamps. The engine-room staff were worse, and the captain and mate seemed too terrified of them to bring them to their bearings. They (the crew) were a bad type of “wharf rats,” and showed such insolence to the captain and mate that I urged both to put some of them in irons for a few days. The second mate was the only officer who showed any spirit, and he and I naturally stood together, agreeing to assist each other if matters became serious, for the skipper and mate were a thoroughly white-livered pair.

Just off San Cristoval, the firemen came to me, and asked me to sell them a case of Hollands gin. I refused, and said one bottle was enough at a time. They threatened to break into the trade-room, and help themselves. I said that they would do so at their own peril—the first man that stepped through the doorway would get hurt. They retired, cursing me as a “mean hound”.

The skipper said nothing. He, I am glad to say, was not an Englishman, though he claimed to be. He was a Dane.

Arriving at a village on the coast of San Cristoval, where I had to land stores for a trader, we found a rather heavy surf on, and the crew refused to man a boat and take me on shore, on the plea that it was too dangerous; a native boat's crew would have smiled at the idea of danger, and so also would any white sailor-man who was used to surf work.

Two days later, through their incapacity, they capsized a boat by letting her broach-to in crossing a reef, and a hundred pounds' worth of trade goods were lost.

When we met the cruiser for whom the coals were destined, the second mate and I told the commander in the presence of our own skipper that we considered the latter unfit to have command of the steamer.

"Then put the mate in charge, if you consider your captain is incapable," said the naval officer.

"The mate is no better," I said, "he is as incapable as the captain."

"Then the second mate is the man."

"I cannot navigate, sir," said the second mate.

The naval commander drew me aside, and we took "sweet counsel" together. Then he called our ruffianly scallywags of a crew on to the main deck, eyed them up and down, and ignoring our captain, asked me how many pairs of handcuffs were on board.

“Two only,” I replied.

“Then I’ll send you half a dozen more. Clap ‘em on to some of these fellows for a week, until they come to their senses.”

In half an hour the second mate and I had the satisfaction of seeing four firemen and four A.B.’s in irons, which they wore for a week, living on biscuit and water.

A few weeks later I engaged, on my own responsibility, ten good native seamen, and for the rest of the voyage matters went fairly well, for the captain plucked up courage, and became valorous when I told him that my natives would make short work of their white shipmates, if the latter again became mutinous.

Against this experience I have had many pleasant ones. In one dear old brig, in which I sailed as supercargo for two years, we carried a double crew—white men and natives of Rotumah Island, and a happier ship never spread her canvas to the winds of the Pacific. This was purely because the officers were good men, the hands—white and native—good seamen, cheerful and obedient—not the lazy, dirty, paint-scrubbers one too often meets with nowadays, especially on cheaply run big four-masted sailing ships, flying the red ensign of Old England.

CHAPTER III ~ THE BLIND MAN OF ADMIRALTY ISLAND

We had had a stroke—or rather a series of strokes—of very bad luck. Our vessel, the *Metaris*, had been for two months cruising among the islands of what is now known as the Bismarck Archipelago, in the Northwestern Pacific. We had twice been on shore, once on the coast of New Ireland, and once on an unknown and uncharted reef between that island and St. Matthias Island. Then, on calling at one of our trading stations at New Hanover where we intended to beach the vessel for repairs, we found that the trader had been killed, and of the station house nothing remained but the charred centre-post—it had been reduced to ashes. The place was situated on a little palm-clad islet not three hundred acres in extent, and situated a mile or two from the mainland, and abreast of a village containing about four hundred natives, under whose protection our trader and his three Solomon Island labourers were living, as the little island belonged to them, and we had placed the trader there on account of its suitability, and also because the man particularly wished to be quite apart from the village, fearing that his Solomon Islanders would get themselves into trouble with the people.

From the excited natives, who boarded us even before we had dropped anchor, we learned that about a month after we had left

poor Chantrey on his little island a large party of marauding St. Matthias Island savages, in ten canoes, had suddenly appeared and swooped down upon the unfortunate white man and his labourers and slaughtered all four of them; then after loading their canoes with all the plunder they could carry, they set fire to the house and Chantrey's boat, and made off again within a few hours.

This was a serious blow to us; for not only had we to deplore the cruel death of one of our best and most trusted traders, but Chantrey had a large stock of trade goods, a valuable boat, and had bought over five hundred pounds' worth of coconut oil and pearl-shell from the New Hanover natives,—all this had been consumed. However, it was of no use for us to grieve, we had work to do that was of pressing necessity, for the *Metaris* was leaking badly and had to be put on the beach as quickly as possible whilst we had fine weather. This, with the assistance of the natives, we at once set about and in the course of a few days had effected all the necessary repairs, and then steered westward for Admiralty Island, calling at various islands on our way, trading with the wild natives for coco-nut oil, copra, ivory nuts, pearl-shell and tortoise-shell, and doing very poorly; for a large American schooner, engaged in the same business, had been ahead of us, and at most of the islands we touched at we secured nothing more than a few hundredweight of black-edged pearl-shell. Then, to add to our troubles, two of our native crew were badly wounded in an attack made on a boat's crew who were

sent on shore to cut firewood on what the skipper and I thought to be a chain of small uninhabited islands. This was a rather serious matter, for not only were the captain and boatswain ill with fever, but three of the crew as well.

For a week we worked along the southern coast of Admiralty Island, calling at a number of villages and obtaining a considerable quantity of very good pearl-shell from the natives. But it was a harassing time, for having seven sick men on board we never dared to come to an anchor for fear of the savage and treacherous natives attempting to capture the ship. As it was, we had to keep a sharp look-out to prevent more than two canoes coming alongside at once, and then only when there was a fair breeze, so that we could shake them off if their occupants showed any inclination for mischief. We several times heard some of these gentry commenting on the ship being so short-handed, and this made us unusually careful, for although those of us who were well never moved about unarmed we could not have beaten back a sudden rush.

At last, however, both Manson and the boatswain, and one of the native sailors became so ill that the former decided to make a break in the cruise and let all hands—sick and well—have a week's spell at a place he knew of, situated at the west end of the great island; and so one day we sailed the *Metaris* into a quiet little bay, encompassed by lofty well-wooded hills, and at the head of which was a fine stream of fresh water.

“We shall soon pull ourselves together in this place,” said

Manson to Loring (the mate) and me. "I know this little bay well, though 'tis six years since I was last here. There are no native villages within ten miles at least, and we shall be quite safe, so we need only keep an anchor watch at night. Man the boat, there. I must get on shore right away. I am feeling better already for being here. Which of you fellows will come with me for a bit of a look round?"

I, being the supercargo, was, for the time, an idle man, but made an excuse of "wanting to overhaul" my trade-room—always a good standing excuse with most supercargoes—as I wanted Loring to have a few hours on shore; for although he was free of fever he was pretty well run down with overwork. So, after some pressure, he consented, and a few minutes later he and Manson were pulled on shore, and I watched them land on the beach, just in front of a clump of wild mango trees in full bearing, almost surrounded by groves of lofty coco-nut palms. A little farther on was an open, grassy space on which grew some wide-branched white cedar trees.

About an hour afterwards Loring returned on board, and told me that Manson had gone on alone to what he described as "a sweet little lake". It was only a mile away, and he thought of having a leaf house built there for the sick men and himself, and wanted Loring to come and have a look at it, but the mate declined, pleading his wish to get back to the ship and unbend our canvas.

"As you will," said Manson to him. "I shall be all right. I'll

shoot some pigeons and cockatoos by-and-by, and bring them down to the beach. And after you have unbent the canvas, you can take the seine to the mouth of the creek and fill the boat with fish.” Then, gun on shoulder, he walked slowly away into the verdant and silent forest.

After unbending our canvas, we went to dinner; and then leaving Loring in charge of the ship, the boatswain, two hands and myself went on shore with the seine to the mouth of the creek, and in a very short time netted some hundreds of fish much resembling the European shad.

Just as we were about to push off, I heard Manson’s hail close to, and looking round, nearly lost my balance and fell overboard in astonishment—he was accompanied by a woman.

Springing out of the boat, I ran to meet them.

“Mrs. Hollister,” said the captain, “this is my supercargo. As soon as we get on board I will place you in his hands, and he will give you all the clothing you want at present for yourself and your little girl,” and then as, after I had shaken hands with the lady, I stood staring at him for an explanation, he smiled.

“I’ll tell you Mrs. Hollister’s strange story by-and-by, old man. Briefly it is this—she, her husband, and their little girl have been living here for over two years. Their vessel was castaway here. Now, get into the boat, please, Mrs. Hollister.”

The woman, who was weeping silently with excitement, smiled through her tears, stepped into the boat, and in a few minutes we were alongside.

“Make all the haste you can,” Manson said to me, “as Mrs. Hollister is returning on shore as soon as you can give her some clothing and boots or shoes. Then they are all coming on board to supper at eight o’clock.”

The lady came with me to my trade-room, and we soon went to work together, I forbearing to ask her any questions whatever, though I was as full of curiosity as a woman. Like that of all trading vessels whose “run” embraced the islands of Polynesia as well as Melanesia and Micronesia, the trade-room of the *Metaris* was a general store. The shelves and cases were filled with all sorts of articles—tinned provisions, wines and spirits, firearms and ammunition, hardware and drapers’ soft goods, “yellow-back” novels, ready-made clothing for men, women and children, musical instruments and grindstones—in fact just such a stock as one would find in a well-stocked general store in an Australian country town.

In half an hour Mrs. Hollister had found all that she wanted, and packing the articles in a “trade” chest, I had it passed on deck and lowered into the boat. Then the lady, now smiling radiantly, shook hands with every one, including the steward, and descended to the boat which quickly cast off and made for the shore in charge of the boatswain.

Then I felt that I deserved a drink, and went below again where Manson and Loring were awaiting me. They had anticipated my wishes, for the steward had just placed the necessary liquids on the cabin table.

“Now, boys,” said the skipper, as he opened some soda water, “after we have had a first drink I’ll spin my yarn—and a sad enough one it is, too. By-the-way, steward, did you put that bottle of brandy and some soda water in the boat?”

“Yes, sir.”

“That’s all right. Just fancy, you fellows—that poor chap on shore has not had a glass of grog for more than two years. That is, I suppose so. Anyway I am sending him some. And, I say, steward; I want you to spread yourself this evening and give us *the* very best supper you ever gave us. There are three white persons coming at eight o’clock. And I daresay they will sleep on board, so get ready three spare bunks.”

Manson was usually a slow, drawling speaker—except when he had occasion to admonish the crew; then he was quite brilliant in the rapidity of his remarks—but now he was clearly a little excited and seemed to have shaken the fever out of his bones, for he not only drank his brandy and soda as if he enjoyed it, but asked the steward to bring him his pipe. This latter request was a sure sign that he was getting better. Then he began his story.

Although six years had passed since he had visited this part of the great island, Manson knew his way inland to the lake. The forest was open, and consisted of teak and cedar with but little undergrowth. Suddenly, as he was passing under the spreading branches of a great cedar, he saw something that made him stare with astonishment—a little white girl, driving before her a flock of goats! She was dressed in a loose gown of blue print, and wore

an old-fashioned white linen sun-bonnet, and her bare legs and feet were tanned a deep brown. Only for a moment did he see her face as she faced towards him to hurry up a playful kid that had broken away from the flock, and then her back was again turned, and she went on, quite unaware of his presence.

“Little girl,” he called.

Something like a cry of terror escaped her lips as she turned to him.

“Oh, sir,” she cried in trembling tones, “you frightened me.”

“I am so sorry, my dear. Who are you? Where do you live?”

“Just by the lake, sir, with my father and mother.”

“May I come with you and see them?”

“Oh, yes, sir. We have never seen any one since we came here more than two years ago. When did you come, sir?”

“Only this morning. My vessel is anchored in the little cove.”

“Oh, I am so glad, so glad! My father and mother too will be so glad to meet you. But he cannot see you—I mean see you with his eyes—for he is blind. When our ship was wrecked here the lightning struck him, and took away his eyesight.”

Deeply interested as he was, Manson forbore to question the child any further, and walked beside her in silence till they came in view of the lake.

“Look, sir, there is our house. Mother and Fiji Sam, the sailor, built it, and I helped. Isn’t it nice? See, there are my father and mother waiting for me.”

On the margin of a lovely little lake, less than a mile

in circumference, was a comfortably built house, semi-native, semi-European in construction, and surrounded by a garden of gorgeous-hued coleus, crotons, and other indigenous plants, and even the palings which enclosed it were of growing saplings, so evenly trimmed as to resemble an ivy-grown wall.

Seated in front of the open door were a man and woman. The latter rose and came to meet Manson, who raised his hat as the lady held out her hand, and he told her who he was.

“Come inside,” she said, in a soft, pleasant voice. “This is my husband, Captain Hollister. Our vessel was lost on this island twenty-eight months ago, and you are the first white man we have seen since then.”

The blind man made his visitor welcome, but without effusion, and begged him to be seated. What especially struck Manson was the calm, quiet manner of all three. They received him as if they were used to seeing strangers, and betrayed no unusual agitation. Yet they were deeply thankful for his coming. The house consisted of three rooms, and had been made extremely comfortable by articles of cabin furniture. The table was laid for breakfast, and as Manson sat down, the little girl hurriedly milked a goat, and brought in a small gourd of milk. In a few minutes Hollister’s slight reserve had worn off, and he related his strange story.

His vessel (of which he was owner) was a topsail schooner of 130 tons, and had sailed from Singapore in a trading cruise among the Pacific Islands. For the first four months all went well.

Many islands had been visited with satisfactory results, and then came disaster, swift and terrible. Hollister told of it in few and simple words.

“We were in sight of this island and in the middle watch were becalmed. The night was close and sultry, and we had made all ready for a blow of some sort. For two hours we waited, and then in an instant the whole heavens were alight with chain and fork lightning. My Malay crew bolted below, and as they reached the fore-scuttle, two of them were struck dead, and flames burst out on the fore-part of the ship. I sprang forward, and was half-way along the deck, when I, too, was struck down. For an hour I was unconscious, and when I revived knew that my sight was gone for ever.

“My mate was a good seaman, but old and wanting in nerve. Still, with the aid of some of the terrified crew, and amidst a torrential downpour of rain which almost immediately began to fall, he did what he could to save the ship. In half an hour the rain ceased, and then the wind came with hurricane force from the southward; the crew again bolted, and refused to come on deck, and the poor mate in trying to heave-to was washed away from the wheel, together with the Malay serang—the only man who stuck to him. There were now left on board alive four Malays, one Fijian A.B. named Sam, my wife and child and myself. And I, of course, was helpless.

“‘Fiji Sam’ was a plucky fellow. Aided by my wife, he succeeded in putting the schooner before the wind and letting

her drive to the N.N.W., feeling sure that she would be giving the land a wide berth. Unfortunately he did not count upon a four-knot current setting to the eastward, and just as daylight was breaking we tore clean over the reef at high water into a little bay two miles from here. The water was so deep, and the place so sheltered, that the schooner drifted in among the branches of the trees lining the beach, and lay there as quiet as if she were moored to a wharf.

“Two days later the Malays seized the dinghy, taking with them provisions and arms, and deserted me. What became of them I do not know.

“Fiji Sam found this lake, and here we built this house, after removing all that we could from the ship, for she was leaking, and settled down upon her keel. She is there still, but of no use.

“When we ran ashore we had in the hold some goats and pigs, which I had bought at Anchorites’ Island. The goats kept with us, but the pigs went wild, and took to the bush. In endeavouring to shoot one, poor Fiji Sam lost his life—his rifle caught in a vine and went off, the bullet passing through his body.

“Not once since the wreck have we seen a single native, though on clear days we often see smoke about fifteen miles along the coast. Anyway, none have come near us—for which I am very glad.”

Manson remarked that that was fortunate as they were “a bad lot”.

“So we have been living here quietly for over two years. Twice

only have we seen a sail, but only on the horizon. And I, having neither boat nor canoe, and being blind, was helpless.”

“That is the poor fellow’s story,” concluded Manson. “Of course I will give them a passage to Levuka, and we must otherwise do our best for them. Although Hollister has lost every penny he had in the world, his wife tells me that she owns some property in Singapore, where she also has a brother who is in business there. By Jove, boys, I wish you had been with me when I said ‘Thank God, I have found you, Captain Hollister,’ and the poor fellow sighed and turned his face away as he held out his hand to me, and his wife drew him to her bosom.”

CHAPTER IV ~ NISÂN ISLAND; A TALE OF THE OLD TRADING DAYS

When I was first learning the ropes as a “recruiter” in the Kanaka labour trade, recruiting natives to work on the plantations of Samoa and Fiji, we called at a group of islands called Nisân by the natives, and marked on the chart as the Sir Charles Hardy Islands. I thought it likely that I might obtain a few “recruits,” and the captain wanted fresh provisions.

The group lies between the south end of New Ireland and the north end of the great Bougainville Island in the Solomon Archipelago, and consists of six low, well-wooded and fertile islands, enclosed within a barrier reef, forming a noble atoll, almost circular in shape. All the islands are thickly populated at the present day by natives, who are peaceable enough, and engage in *bêche-de-mer* and pearl-shell fishing. Less than forty years back they were notorious cannibals, and very warlike, and never hesitated to attempt to cut off any whaleship or trading vessel that was not well manned and well armed.

As I had visited the group on three previous occasions in a trading vessel and was well known to the people, I was pretty sure of getting some “recruits” for Samoa, for our vessel had a good reputation. So, lowering our boats, the second mate and I went

on shore, and were pleasantly received. But, alas for my hopes! I could not get a single native to recruit. They were, they said, now doing so well at curing *bêche-de-mer* for a Sydney trading vessel that none of the young men cared to leave the island to work on a plantation for three years; in addition to this, never before had food been so plentiful—pigs and poultry abounded, and turtle were netted by hundreds at a time. In proof of their assertion as to the abundance of provisions, I bought from them, for trade goods worth about ten dollars, a boat-load of turtle, pigs, ducks, fowls, eggs and fish. These I sent off to the ship by the second mate, and told him to return for another load of bread-fruit, taro, and other vegetables and fruit. I also sent a note to the captain by my own boat, telling him to come on shore and bring our guns and plenty of cartridges, as the islands were alive with countless thousands of fine, heavy pigeons, which were paying the group their annual visit from the mountainous forests of Bougainville Island and New Ireland. They literally swarmed on a small uninhabited island, covered with bread-fruit and other trees, and used by the natives as a sort of pleasure resort.

The two boats returned together, and leaving the second mate to buy more pigs and turtle—for we had eighty-five “recruits” on board to feed, as well as the ship’s company of twenty-eight persons—the skipper and I started off in my boat for the little island, accompanied by several young Nisân “bucks” carrying old smooth-bore muskets, for they, too, wanted to join in the sport I had given them some tins of powder, shot, and a few hundred

military caps. We landed on a beautiful white beach, and telling our boat's crew to return to the village and help the second mate, the skipper and I, with the Nisân natives, walked up the bank, and in a few minutes the guns were at work. Never before had I seen such thousands of pigeons in so small an area. It could hardly be called sport, for the birds were so thick on the trees that when a native fired at haphazard into the branches the heavy charge of shot would bring them down by the dozen—the remainder would simply fly off to the next tree. Owing to the dense foliage the skipper and I seldom got a shot at them on the wing, and had to slaughter like the natives, consoling ourselves with the fact that every bird would be eaten. Most of them were so fat that it was impossible to pluck them without the skin coming away, and from the boat-load we took on board the skip's cook obtained a ten-gallon keg full of fat.

About noon we ceased, to have something to eat and drink, and chose for our camp a fairly open spot, higher than the rest of the island, and growing on which were some magnificent trees, bearing a fruit called *vi*. It is in reality a wild mango, but instead of containing the smooth oval-shaped seed of the mango family, it has a round, root-like and spiky core. The fruit, however, is of a delicious flavour, and when fully ripe melts in one's mouth. Whilst our native friends were grilling some birds, and getting us some young coco-nuts to drink, the captain and I, taking some short and heavy pieces of wood, began throwing them at the ripe fruit overhead. Suddenly my companion tripped over something

and fell.

“Hallo, what is this?” he exclaimed, as he rose and looked at the cause of his mishap.

It was the end of a bar of pig-iron ballast, protruding some inches out of the soft soil. We worked it to and fro, and then pulled it out. Wondering how it came there, we left it and resumed our stick-throwing, when we discovered three more on the other side of the tree; they were lying amid the ruins of an old wall, built of coral-stone slabs. We questioned the natives as to how these “pigs” came to be there. They replied that, long before their time, a small vessel had come into the lagoon and anchored, and that the crew had thrown the bars of iron overboard. After the schooner had sailed away, the natives had dived for and recovered the iron, and had tried to soften the bars by fire in the hope of being able to turn it into axes, etc.

We accepted the story as true, and thought no more about it, though we wondered why such useful, compact and heavy ballast should be thrown away, and when my boat returned to take us to the ship, we took the iron “pigs” with us.

Arriving at Samoa, we soon rid ourselves of our eighty-five “blackbirds,” who had all behaved very well on the voyage, and were sorry to leave the ship; and that evening I paid a visit to an old friend of mine—an American who kept a large store in Apia, the principal port and town of Samoa. I was telling him all about our cruise, when an old white man, locally known as “Bandy Tom,” came up from the yard, and sat down on the verandah

steps near us. Old Tom was a character, and well known all over Polynesia as an inveterate old loafer and beachcomber. He was a deserter from the navy, and for over forty years had wandered about the South Pacific, sometimes working honestly for a living, sometimes dishonestly, but usually loafing upon some native community, until they tired of him and made him seek fresh pastures. In his old age he had come to Samoa, and my friend, taking pity on the penniless old wreck, gave him employment as night watchman, and let him hang about the premises and do odd jobs in the day-time. With all his faults he was an amusing ancient, and was known for his “tall” yarns about his experiences with cannibals in Fiji.

Bidding me “good-evening,” Bandy Tom puffed away at his pipe, and listened to what I was saying. When I had finished describing our visit to Nisân, and the finding of the ballast, he interrupted.

“I can tell you where them ‘pigs’ come from, and all about ‘em—leastways a good deal; for I knows more about the matter than any one else.”

Parker laughed. “Bandy, you know, or pretend to know, about everything that has happened in the South Seas since the time of Captain Cook.”

“Ah, you can laugh as much as you like, boss,” said the old fellow serenely, “but I know what I’m talkin’ about I ain’t the old gas-bag you think I am. I lived on Nisân for a year an’ ten months, nigh on thirty years ago, gettin’ *bêche-de-mer* for Captain Bobby

Towns of Sydney.” Then turning to me he added: “I ain’t got too bad a memory, for all my age. I can tell you the names of all the six islands, and how they lies, an’ a good deal about the people an’ the queer way they has of catchin’ turtle in rope nets; an’ I can tell you the names of the head men that was there in my time—which was about ‘fifty or ‘fifty-one. Just you try me an’ see.”

I did try him, and he very soon satisfied me that he had lived on the Sir Charles Hardy Islands, and knew the place well. Then he told his story, which I condense as much as possible.

FIRST PART

Bandy was landed at Nisân by Captain Robert Towns of the barque *Adventurer* of Sydney, to collect *bêche-de-mer*. He was well received by the savage inhabitants and provided with a house, and well treated generally, for Captain Towns, knowing the natives to be cannibals and treacherous, had demanded a pledge from them that Bandy should not be harmed, and threatened that if on his return in the following year he found the white man was missing, he would land his crew, and destroy them to the last man. Then the barque sailed. A day or so afterwards Bandy was visited by a native, who was very different in appearance from the Nisân people. He spoke to the white man in good English, and informed him that he was a native of the island of Rotumah, but had been living on Nisân for more than twenty years, had married, had a family, and was well thought of by the people. The two became great friends, and Taula, as the Rotumah man was named, took Bandy into his confidence, and told him of a tragedy that had occurred on Nisân about five or six years after he (Taula) had landed on the islands. He was one of the crew of a whaleship which, on a dark night, nearly ran ashore on Nisân, and in the hurry and confusion of the vessels going about he slipped over the side, swam on shore through the surf, and reached the land safely.

One day, said Taula, the natives were thrown into a state of

wild excitement by the appearance of a brigantine, which boldly dropped anchor abreast of the principal village. She was the first vessel that had ever stopped at the islands, and the savage natives instantly planned to capture her and massacre the crew. But they resolved to first put the white men off their guard. Taula, however, did not know this at the time. With a number of the Nisân people he went on board, taking an ample supply of provisions. The brigantine had a large crew and was heavily armed, carrying ten guns, and the natives were allowed to board in numbers. The captain had with him his wife, whom Taula described as being quite a young girl. He questioned the natives about pearl-shell and *bêche-de-mer* and a few hours later, by personal inspection, satisfied himself that the atoll abounded with both. He made a treaty with the apparently friendly people, and at once landed a party to build houses, etc.

I must now, for reasons that will appear later on, hurry over Taula's story as told by him to Bandy.

Eight or ten days after the arrival of the brigantine, the shore party of fourteen white men were treacherously attacked, and thirteen ruthlessly slaughtered. One who escaped was kept as a slave, and the brigantine, to avoid capture, hurriedly put to sea.

Six months or so passed, and the vessel again appeared and anchored, this time on a mission of vengeance. The natives, nevertheless, were not alarmed, and again determined to get possession of the ship, although this time her decks were crowded with men. They attacked her in canoes, were repulsed,

returned to the shore and then, with incredible audacity, sent the white sailor whom they had captured on board the vessel to make peace. But not for a moment had they relinquished the determination to capture the vessel, which they decided to effect by treachery, if force could not be used. What followed was related in detail by Taula to Bandy.

Parker and I were deeply interested in Bandy's story, and at its conclusion I asked him if his informant knew the name of the ship and her nationality.

“Not her name, sir; but she was an American. Taula knew the American flag, for the ship he ran away from was a Sag harbour whaler. The pig-iron bars which you found were brought ashore to make a bed for the *bêche-de-mer* curing pots. He showed 'em to me one day.”

Both Parker and I were convinced of the truth of Bandy's story, and came to the conclusion that the unknown brigantine was probably a colonial trader, which had afterwards been lost with all hands. For we were both fairly well up in the past history of the South Seas—at least we thought so—and had never heard of this affair at the Sir Charles Hardy Group. But we were entirely mistaken in our assumptions.

In the month of April in the year 1906, after a lapse of more than five and twenty years, the mystery that enshrouded the tragedy of Nisân was revealed to me by my coming across, in a French town, a small, time-stained and faded volume of 230 pages, and published by J. and J. Harper of New York in

1833, and entitled *Narrative of a Voyage to the Ethiopie and South Atlantic Ocean, Indian Ocean, Chinese Sea, North and South Pacific Ocean in the years 1829, 1830, 1831*, by Abby Jane Morrell, who accompanied her husband, Captain Benjamin Morrell, Junior, of the schooner *Antarctic*.

Now to her story,

SECOND PART

Opening the faded little volume, the reader sees a wood-engraving of the authoress, a remarkably handsome young woman of about twenty years of age, dressed in the quaint fashion of those days. As a matter of fact she was only four and twenty when her book was published. In a brief preface she tells us that her object in writing a book was not for the purpose of exciting interest in her own experiences of a remarkable voyage, but in the hope that it would arouse philanthropic endeavour to ameliorate the condition of American seamen. Throughout the volume there is a vein of deep, yet unobtrusive piety, and the reader is struck with her self-effacement, her courage, her reverent admiration for her young sailor husband, and her pride in his gallant ship and sturdy crew of native-born American seamen. In the *Antarctic* the young couple sailed many seas, and visited many lands, and everywhere they seem to have been the recipients of unbounded hospitality and attention, especially from their own country people, and English merchants, and naval and military men. It is very evident—even if only judging from her picture—that she was a very charming young lady of the utmost vivacity; and in addition to this, she was an accomplished linguist, and otherwise highly educated. Her beauty, indeed, caused her many tears, owing to the “wicked and persistent attentions” of the American consul at Manila. This gentleman

appears to have set himself to work to make Mrs. Morrell a widow, until at last—her husband being away at sea—she had to be guarded from his persistent advances by some of the English and American families resident in Manila. She tells the story in the most naive and delightful manner, and the reader's heart warms to the little woman. But I must not diverge from the subject.

"I am," she says, "the daughter of Captain John Wood, of New York, who died at New Orleans on the 14th of November, 1811. He was then master of the ship *Indian Hunter*.... He died when I was so young that if I pleased myself with thinking that I remember him, I could not have been a judge of his virtues; but it has been a source of happiness to me that he is spoken of by his contemporaries as a man of good sense and great integrity."

When fifteen years of age Miss Wood met her cousin, Captain Morrell, a young man who had gained a reputation for seamanship, and as a navigator. They were mutually attracted to each other, and in a few months were married. Then he sailed away on a two years' voyage, returned, and again set out, this time to the little known South Seas. Absent a year—during which time a son was born to him—he was so pleased with the financial results of the voyage that he determined on a second; and his wife insisted on accompanying him, though he pleaded with her to remain, and told her of the dangers and terrors of a long voyage in unknown seas, the islands of which were peopled by ferocious and treacherous cannibals. But she was not to be

deterred from sharing her husband's perils, and with an aching heart took farewell of her infant son, whom she left in care of her mother, and on 2nd September, 1829, the *Antarctic* sailed from New York. The cruise was to last two years, and the object of it was to seek for new sealing grounds in the Southern Ocean, and then go northward to the Pacific Islands and barter with the natives for sandal-wood, *bêche-de-mer* pearls, and pearl-shell.

The crew of the brigantine were picked men, and all of them gave Morrell a written pledge to abstain from drinking spirits of any kind during the entire voyage. Morrell, though a strict disciplinarian, seems to have had their respect and even affection throughout, and that he was a man of iron resolution and dauntless courage the book gives ample testimony.

After some months' sealing at the Auckland Islands, and visiting New Zealand, where the Morrells were entertained by the missionary, John Williams, the brigantine made a highly successful cruise among the islands of the South Pacific, and then Morrell went to Manila to dispose of his valuable cargo. This he did to great advantage, and once more his restless, daring spirit impelled him to make another voyage among the islands. This time, however, he left his wife in Manila, where she soon found many friends, who protected her from the annoying attentions of the consul, and nursed her through a severe illness.

“On the seventy-fifth day after the sailing of the *Antarctic*?” she writes, “as I was looking with a glass from my window, as I had done for many days previously, I saw my husband's well-

known signal at the mast head of an approaching vessel.... I was no sooner on board than I found myself in my husband's arms; but the scene was too much for my enfeebled frame, and I was for some time insensible. On coming to myself, I looked around and saw my brother, pale and emaciated. My forebodings were dreadful when I perceived that the number of the crew was sadly diminished from what it was when I was last on board. I dared not trust myself to make any inquiries, and all seemed desirous to avoid explanations. I could not rest in this state of mind, and ventured to ask what had become of the men. My husband, with his usual frankness, sat down and detailed to me the whole affair, which was as follows:—

A TALE OF THE OLD TRADING DAYS

“It seems that six weeks after leaving Manila” (here I omit some unimportant details) “he came to six islands that were surrounded by a coral reef.” (The Sir Charles Hardy Group.) “Here was a-plenty of *bêche-de-mer* and he made up his mind to get a cargo of this, and what shell he could procure.... On May 21st he sent a boat's crew on shore to clear away the brush and prepare a place to cure the *bêche-de-mer*. The natives now came off to the vessel, and seemed quiet, although it was evident that they had never seen a white man before, and the islands bore no trace of ever having been visited by civilised men. The people were a large, savage-looking race, but Mr. Morrell was lulled to

security by their civil and harmless (*sic*) appearance, and their fondness of visiting the vessel to exchange their fruits for trinkets and other commodities attractive to the savages in these climes. They were shown in perfect friendship all parts of the vessel, and appeared pleased with the attentions paid them.... A boat was sent on shore with the forge and all the blacksmith's tools, but the savages soon stole the greater part of them.

“This was an unpropitious circumstance, but Mr. Morrell thought that he could easily recover them; and to accomplish this, he took six of his men, well armed, and marched directly to the village where the king lived. This was a lovely place, formed in a grove of trees. Here he met two hundred warriors, all painted for battle, armed with bows and arrows ready for an onset, waving their war plumes, and eager to engage. On turning round he saw nearly as many more in his rear—it was a critical moment—the slightest fear was sure death. Mr. Morrell addressed his comrades, and, in a word, told them that if they did not act in concert, and in the most dauntless manner, death would be inevitable. He then threw down his musket, drew his cutlass, and holding a pistol in his right hand, he pushed for the king, knowing in what reverence savages in general hold the person of their monarch. In an instant the pistol was at the king's breast, and the cutlass waved over his head. The savages had arrowed their bows, and were ready at the slightest signal to have shot a cloud of missiles at the handful of white men; but in an instant, when they saw the danger of their king, they dropped their bows

to the ground. At this fortunate moment, the captain marched around the circle, and compelled those who had come with war-clubs to throw those down also; all which he ordered his men to secure and collect into a heap. The king was then conducted with several of his chiefs on board the *Antarctic*, and kept until the next day. They were treated with every attention, but strictly guarded all night. On the following morning he gave them a good breakfast, loaded them with presents—for which they seemed grateful, and laboured hard to convince their conqueror that they were friendly to him and his crew—sent them on shore, together with some of his men, to go on with the works which had been commenced; but feeling that a double caution was necessary, he sent a reinforcement to his men on shore, well armed.... All were cautioned to be on their guard; but everything was unavailing; for not long after this, a general attack was made on the men from the woods, in so sudden a manner that they were overthrown at once. Two of the crew who were in the small boat, made their escape out of reach of the arrows, and had the good fortune to pick up three others who had thrown themselves into the water for safety. On hearing the horrid yells of the savages, the whaleboat was sent with ten men, who, with great exertions, saved two more of the crew. The rest all fell, at one untimely moment, victims to savage barbarity! It was an awful and heart-sickening moment; fourteen of the crew had perished—they were murdered, mangled, and their corpses thrown upon the strand without the possibility of receiving the rites of Christian burial.... Four of the survivors

were wounded—the heat was intolerable—the spirits of the crew were broken down, and a sickness came over their hearts that could not be controlled by the power of medicine—a sickness arising from moral causes, that would not yield to science nor art.

“In this situation Captain Morrell made the best of his way for Manila.... I grew pale over the narrative; it filled my dreams for many nights, and occupied my thoughts for many days, almost exclusively.... I dreaded the thought of the mention of the deed, and yet I wished I had been there. I might have done some good, or, if not, I might have assisted to dress the wounded, among whom was my own dear, heroic brother. He received an arrow in the breast, but his good constitution soon got over the shock; though he was pale even when I saw him, so many days after the event. My husband had now lost everything but his courage, his honour, and his perseverance; but the better part of the community of Manila had become his friends, while the American consul was delighted with our misfortunes. He was alone!”

THIRD PART

Nothing daunted by this catastrophe Captain Morrell petitioned the Captain-General of the Philippines for leave to take out a new crew of seventy additional men—sixty-six Manila men, and four Europeans. Everyone warned him of the danger of this—no other ship had ever dared take more than six Manila men as part of her complement, for they were treacherous, and prone to mutiny. But Morrell contested that he would be able to manage them and the captain-general yielded. Two English merchants, Messrs. Cannell and Gellis, generously lent him all the money he required to fit out, taking only his I.O.U. So:—

“On the 18th July, 1830, the *Antarctic* again sailed for Massacre Islands, as my husband had named the group where he lost his men. When I went on board I found a crew of eighty-five men, fifty-five of them savages as fierce as those whom we were about to encounter, and as dangerous, if not properly managed. One would have thought that I should have shrunk from this assemblage as from those of Massacre Islands, but I entered my cabin with a light step; I did not fear savage men half so much as I did a civilised brute. I was with my husband; he was not afraid, why should I be? This was my reasoning, and I found it safe.

“The schooner appeared as formidable as anything possibly could of her size; she had great guns, ten in number, small arms, boarding-pikes, cutlasses, pistols, and a great quantity of

ammunition. She was a war-horse in every sense of the word, but that of animal life, and that she seemed partially to have, or one would have thought so, to hear the sailors talk of her.... She coursed over the waters with every preparation for fight.

“On the 13th of September the *Antarctic* again reached Massacre Islands. I could only view the place as a Golgotha; and shuddered as we neared it; but I could see that most of the old crew who came hither at the time of the massacre were panting for revenge, although their captain had endeavoured to impress upon them the folly of gratifying such a passion if we could gain our purpose by mildness mixed with firmness.” (I am afraid that here the skipper of the *Antarctic* was not exactly open with the little lady. He certainly meant that his crew should “get even” with their shipmates’ murderers, but doubtless told her that he “had endeavoured,” etc)

“We had no sooner made our appearance in the harbour at Massacre Island, on the 14th, than we were attacked by about three hundred warriors. We opened a brisk fire upon them, and they immediately retreated. This was the first battle I ever saw where men in anger met men in earnest. We were now perfectly safe; our Manila men were as brave as Caesar; they were anxious to be landed instantly, to fight these Indians at once. They felt as much superior, no doubt, to these ignorant savages as the philosopher does to the peasant. This the captain would not permit; he knew his superiority while on board his vessel, and he also knew that this superiority must be, in a manner, lost to him

as soon as he landed.

“The firing had ceased, and the enemy had retired, when a single canoe appeared coming from the shore with one man in it. We could not conjecture what this could mean. The man was as naked as a savage and as highly painted, but he managed his paddle with a different hand from the savages. When he came alongside, he cried out to us in English, and we recognised Leonard Shaw, one of our old crew, whom we had supposed among the dead. The meeting had that joyousness about it that cannot be felt in ordinary life; he was dead and buried, and now was alive again! We received him as one might imagine; surprise, joy, wonder, took possession of us all, and we made him recount his adventures, which were wonderful enough.

“Shaw was wounded when the others were slain; he fled to the woods, and succeeded at that time in escaping from death. Hunger at length induced him to leave the woods and attempt to give himself to the savages, but coming in sight of the horrid spectacle of the bodies of his friends and companions roasting for a cannibal feast, he rushed forth again into the woods with the intent rather to starve than to trust to such wretches for protection. For four days and nights he remained in his hiding place, when he was forced to go in pursuit of something to keep himself from starving. After some exertion he obtained three coco-nuts, which were so young that they did not afford much sustenance, but were sufficient to keep him alive fifteen days, during which time he suffered from the continually falling

showers, which left him dripping wet. In the shade of his hiding place he had no chance to dry himself, and on the fifteenth day he ventured to stretch himself in the sun; but he did not long remain undisturbed; an Indian saw him, and gave the alarm, and he was at once surrounded by a host of savages. The poor, suffering wretch implored them to be merciful, but he implored in vain; one of them struck him on the back of the head with a war-club, and laid him senseless on the ground, and for a while left him as dead. When he recovered, and had gathered his scattered senses, he observed a chief who was not among those by whom he had been attacked, and made signs to him that he would be his slave if he would save him. The savage intimated to him to follow, which he did, and had his wound most cruelly dressed by the savage, who poured hot water into it, and filled it with sand.

“As soon as the next day, while yet in agony with his wound, he was called up and set to work in making knives, and other implements from the iron hoops, and other plunder from the forge when the massacre took place. This was indeed hard, for the poor fellow was no mechanic, though a first-rate Jack-tar... however, necessity made him a blacksmith, and he got along pretty well.

“The savages were not yet satisfied, and they made him march five or six miles to visit a distinguished chief. This was done in a state of nudity, without anything like sandals or mocassins to protect his feet from the flint stones and sharp shells, and under the burning rays of an intolerable sun. Blood marked

his footsteps. The king met him and compelled him to debase himself by the most abject ceremonies of slavery. He was now overcome, and with a dogged indifference was ready to die. He could not, he would not walk back; his feet were lacerated, swollen, and almost in a state of putrefaction. The savages saw this, and took him back by water, but only to experience new torments. The young ones imitated their elders, and these graceless little rascals pulled out his beard and whiskers, and eyebrows and eyelashes. In order to save himself some part of the pain of this wretched process of their amusement, he was permitted to perform a part of this work with his own hands. He was indeed a pitiable object, but one cannot die when one wishes, and be guiltless. This was not all he suffered; he was almost starved to death, for they gave him only the offal of the fish they caught, and this but sparingly; he sustained himself by catching rats, and these offensive creatures were his principal food for a longtime. He understood that the natives did not suffer the rats to be killed, and therefore he had to do it secretly in the night time.

“Thus passed the days of the poor prisoner; the wound on his head was not yet healed, and notwithstanding all his efforts he failed to get the sand out of his first wound until a short time before his deliverance, when it was made known to him that he was to be immolated for a feast to the king of the group! All things had now become matters of indifference to him, and he heard the horrid story with great composure. All the preparations

for the sacrifice were got up in his presence, near the very spot where the accursed feast of skulls had been held. All was in readiness, and the people waited a long time for the king; but he did not come, and the ceremony was put off.

“Shaw has often expressed himself on this subject, and said that he could not but feel some regret that his woes were not to be finished, as there was no hope for him, and to linger always in this state of agitation was worse than death; but mortals are short-sighted, for he was destined to be saved through the instrumentality of his friends.

“His soul was again agitated by hope and fear in the extremes when the *Antarctic* made her appearance a second time on the coast. He feared that her arrival would be the signal for his destruction; but if this should not happen, might he not be saved? The whole population of the island he was on, and those of the others of the group, manned their war canoes for a formidable attack; and the fate of the prisoner was suspended for a season. The attack was commenced by the warriors in the canoes, without doubt confident of success; but the well-directed fire from the *Antarctic* soon repulsed them, and they sought the shore in paroxysms of rage, which was changed to fear when they found that the big guns of the schooner threw their shot directly into the village, and were rapidly demolishing their dwellings. It was in this state of fear and humility that Shaw was sent off to the vessel to stop the carnage and destruction; they were glad to have peace on any terms. They now gave up their boldness, and

as it was the wish of all but the Manila men to spare the effusion of human blood, it was done as soon as safety would permit of it.

“The story of Shaw’s sufferings raised the indignation of every one of the Americans and English we had on board, and they were violently desirous to be led on to attack the whole of the Massacre Islands, and extirpate the race at once. They felt at this moment as if it would be an easy thing to kill the whole of the inhabitants; but Captain Morrell was not to be governed by any impulse of passion—he had other duties to perform; yet he did not reprimand the men for this feeling; thinking it might be of service to him hereafter.

“After taking every precaution to ensure safety, by getting up his boarding-nettings many feet above the deck, and everything prepared for defence or attack, the frame of the house, brought for the purpose, was got up on a small uninhabited island—which had previously been purchased of the king in exchange for useful articles such as axes, shaves, and other mechanical tools, precisely such as the Indians wished for. The captain landed with a large force, and began to fell the trees to make a castle for defence. Finding two large trees, nearly six feet through, he prepared the limbs about forty feet from the ground, and raised a platform extending from one to the other, with an arrow-proof bulwark around it. Upon this platform were stationed a garrison of twenty men, with four brass swivels. The platform was covered with a watertight roof, and the men slept there at night upon their arms, to keep the natives from approaching to injure the trees or

the fort by fire—the only way they could assail the garrison. It looked indeed like a castle—formidable in every respect; and the ascent to it was by a ladder, which was drawn up at night into this war-like habitation. The next step was to clear the woods from around the castle, in order to prevent a lurking enemy from coming within arrow-shot of the fort. Next, the house was raised, and made quite a fine appearance, being one hundred and fifty feet long, forty feet broad, and very high. The castle protected the house and the workmen in it, and both house and castle were so near the sea-board that the *Antarctic* while riding at anchor, protected both. The castle was well stocked with provisions in case of a siege.

“The next day, after all was in order for business, a large number of canoes made their appearance near Massacre Island. Shaw said that this fleet belonged to another island (of the group) and he had never known them to stop there before. My husband, having some suspicions, did not suffer the crew to go on shore next morning at the usual time; and about eight o’clock one of the chiefs came off, as usual, to offer us fruits, but no boat was sent to meet him. He waited some time for us, and then directed his course to our island, which my husband had named Wallace Island, in memory of the officer who had bravely fallen in fight on the day of the massacre. This was surprising as not a single native had set foot on that island since our works were begun; but we were not kept long in suspense, for we saw about a hundred war-canoes start from the back side of Massacre Island,

and make towards Wallace Island. We knew that war was their object, and the *Antarctic* was prepared for battle. The chief who had come to sell us fruit, came in front of the castle—the first man. He gave the war-whoop, and about two hundred warriors, who had concealed themselves in the woods during the darkness of the night, rushed forward. The castle was attacked on both sides, and the Indians discharged their arrows at the building in the air, till they were stuck, like porcupines' quills, in every part of the roof. The garrison was firm, and waked in silence until the assailants were within a short distance, when they opened a tremendous fire with their swivels, loaded with canister shot; the men were ready with their muskets also, and the *Antarctic* opened her fire of large guns, all with a direct and deadly aim at the leaders of the savage band. The execution was very great, and in a short time the enemy beat a precipitate retreat, taking with them their wounded, and as many of their dead as they could. The ground was strewn with implements of war, which the savages had thrown away in their flight, or which had belonged to the slain. The enemy did not expect such a reception, and they were prodigiously frightened; the sound of the cannon alarmed every woman and child in the group, as it echoed through the forest, or died upon the wave; they had never heard such a roar before, for in our first fight there was no necessity for such energy. The Indians took to the water, leaving only a few in their canoes to get them off, while the garrison hoisted the American flag, and were greeted by cheers from those on board the schooner, who

were in high spirits at their victory, which was achieved without the loss of a man on our part, and only two wounded. The music struck up ‘Yankee Doodle,’ ‘Rule Britannia,’ etc., and the crew could hardly restrain their joy to think that they had beaten their enemy so easily.

“The boats were all manned, and most of the crew went on shore to mark the devastation which had been made. I saw all this without any sensation of fear, so easy is it for a woman to catch the spirit of those near her. If I had a few months before this time read of such a battle I should have trembled at the detail of the incidents; but seeing all the animation and courage which were displayed, and noticing at the same time how coolly all was done, every particle of fear left me, and I stood quite as collected as any heroine of former days. Still I could not but deplore the sacrifice of the poor, misguided, ignorant creatures, who wore the human form, and had souls to save. Must the ignorant always be taught civilisation through blood?—situated as we were, no other course could be taken.

“On the morning of the 19th, to our great surprise, the chief who had previously come out to bring us fruit, and had done so on the morning of our great battle, came again in his canoe, and called for Shaw, on the edge of the reef, with his usual air of kindness and friendship, offering fruit, and intimating a desire for trade, as though nothing had happened. The offer seemed fair, but all believed him to be treacherous. The small boat was sent to meet him, but Shaw, who we feared was now an object

of vengeance, was not sent in her. She was armed for fear of the worst, and the coxswain had orders to kill the chief if he should discover any treachery in him. As our boat came alongside the canoe, the crew saw a bearded arrow attached to a bow, ready for the purpose of revenge. Just as the savage was about to bend his bow, the coxswain levelled his piece, and shot the traitor through the body; his wound was mortal, but he did not expire immediately. At this instant a fleet of canoes made their appearance to protect their chief. The small boat lost one of her oars in the fight, and we were obliged to man two large boats and send them to the place of contest. The large boats were armed with swivels and muskets, and a furious engagement ensued. The natives were driven from the water, but succeeded in taking off their wounded chief, who expired as he reached the shore.

“After the death of Hennean, the name of the chief we had slain, the inhabitants of Massacre Island fled to some other place, and left all things as they were before our attack upon them, and our men roamed over it at will. The skulls of several of our slaughtered men were found at Hennean’s door, trophies of his bloody prowess. These were now buried with the honours of war; the colours of the *Antarctic* were lowered half-mast, minute guns were fired, and dirges were played by our band, in honour of those who had fallen untimely on Massacre Island. This was all that feeling or affection could bestow. Those so inhumanly murdered had at last the rites of burial performed for them; millions have perished without such honours...it is the last sad

office that can be paid.

“We now commenced collecting and curing *bêche-de-mer* and should have succeeded to our wishes, if we had not been continually harassed by the natives as soon as we began our efforts. We continued to work in this way until the 28th of October, when we found that the natives were still hostile, and on that day one of our men was attacked on Massacre Island, but escaped death through great presence of mind, and shot the man, who was the brother of the chief Hennean. Our man’s name was Thomas Holmes, a cool, deliberate Englishman. Such an instance of self-possession, in such great danger as that in which he was placed, would have given immortality to a greater man. We felt ourselves much harassed and vexed by the persevering savages, and finding it impossible to make them understand our motives and intentions, we came to the conclusion to leave the place forthwith. This was painful, after such struggles and sacrifices and misfortunes; but there was no other course to pursue. Accordingly, on the 3rd of November, 1830, we set fire to our house and castle, and departed by the light of them, taking the *bêche-de-mer* we had collected and cured.”

So ends Mrs. Morrell’s story of the tragedy of “Massacre Island”. She has much else to relate of the subsequent cruise of the *Antarctic* in the South Pacific and the East Indies, and finally the happy conclusion of an adventurous voyage, when the vessel returned safely to New York.

If the reader has been sufficiently interested in her story to

desire to know where in the South Pacific her "Massacre Island" is situated, he will find it in any modern map or atlas, almost midway between New Ireland and Bougainville Island, the largest of the Solomon group, and in lat. $4^{\circ} 50'$ S., long. $154^{\circ} 20'$ E. In conclusion, I may mention that further relics of the visit of the *Antarctic* came to light about fifteen years ago, when some of the natives brought three or four round shot to the local trader then living on Nisân. They had found them buried under some coral stone *débris* when searching for robber crabs.

CHAPTER V ~ MUTINIES

Mutinies, even at the present day, are common enough. The facts concerning many of them never come to light, it is so often to the advantage of the after-guard of a ship to hush matters up. I know of one instance in which the crew of a ship loading guano phosphates at Howland Island imprisoned the captain, three mates and the steward in the cabin for some days; then hauled them on deck, triced up the whole five and gave them a hundred lashes each, in revenge for the diabolical cruelties that had been inflicted upon them day by day for long months. Then they liberated their tormentors, took to the boats and dispersed themselves on board other guano ships loading at Howland Island, leaving their former captain and officers to shift for themselves. This was one of the mutinies that never came to light, or at least the mutineers escaped punishment.

I have witnessed three mutinies—in the last of which I took part, although I was not a member of the ship's crew.

My first experience occurred when I was a boy, and has been alluded to by the late Lord Pembroke in his "Introduction" to the first book I had published—a collection of tales entitled *By Reef and Palm*. It was a poor sort of an affair, but filled my boyish heart with a glorious delight—in fact it was an enjoyable mutiny in some respects, for what might have been a tragedy was turned into a comedy.

With a brother two years older I was sent to San Francisco by our parents to begin life in a commercial house, and subsequently (of course) make our fortunes.

Our passages were taken at Newcastle (New South Wales) on the barque *Lizzie and Rosa*, commanded by a little red-headed Irishman, to whose care we were committed. His wife (who sailed with him) was a most lovable woman, generous to a fault. *He* was about the meanest specimen of an Irishman that ever was born, was a savage little bully, boasted of being a Fenian, and his insignificant appearance on his quarter deck, as he strutted up and down, irresistibly suggested a monkey on a stick, and my brother and myself took a quick dislike to him, as also did the other passengers, of whom there were thirty—cabin and steerage. His wife (who was the daughter of a distinguished Irish prelate) was actually afraid of the little man, who snarled and snapped at her as if she were a disobedient child. (Both of them are long since dead, so I can write freely of their characteristics.)

The barque had formerly been a French corvette—the *Felix Bernaboo*. She was old, ill-found and leaky, and from the day we left Newcastle the pumps were kept going, and a week later the crew came aft and demanded that the ship should return to port.

The little man succeeded in quieting them for the time by giving them better food, and we continued on our course, meeting with such a series of adverse gales that it was forty-one days before we sighted the island of Rurutu in the South Pacific. By this time the crew and steerage passengers were in

a very angry frame of mind; the former were overworked and exhausted, and the latter were furious at the miserly allowance of food doled out to them by the equally miserly captain.

At Rurutu the natives brought off two boat-loads of fresh provisions, but the captain bought only one small pig for the cabin passengers. The steerage passengers bought up everything else, and in a few minutes the crew came aft and asked the captain to buy them some decent food in place of the decayed pork and weevily biscuit upon which they had been existing. He refused, and ordered them for'ard, and then the mate, a hot-tempered Yorkshireman named Oliver, lost his temper, and told the captain that the men were starving. Angry words followed, and the mate knocked the little man down.

Picking himself up, he went below, and reappeared with a brace of old-fashioned Colt's revolvers, one of which—after declaring he would “die like an Irishman”—he pointed at the mate, and calling upon him to surrender and be put in irons, he fired towards his head. Fortunately the bullet missed. The sympathetic crew made a rush aft, seized the skipper, and after knocking him about rather severely, held him under the force pump, and nearly drowned him. Only for the respect that the crew had for his wife, I really believe they would have killed him, for they were wrought up to a pitch of fury by his tyranny and meanness. The boatswain carried him below, locked him up in one of the state-rooms, and there he was kept in confinement till the barque reached Honolulu, twenty days later, the mate acting

as skipper. At Honolulu, the mate and all the crew were tried for mutiny, but the court acquitted them all, mainly through the testimony of the passengers.

That was my first experience of a mutiny. My brother and I enjoyed it immensely, especially the attempted shooting of the good old mate, and the subsequent spectacle of the evil-tempered, vindictive little skipper being held under the force pump.

My third experience of a mutiny I take next (as it arose from a similar cause to the first). I was a passenger on a brig bound from Samoa to the Gilbert Islands (Equatorial Pacific). The master was a German, brutal and overbearing to a degree, and the two mates were no better. One was an American "tough," the other a lazy, foul-mouthed Swede. All three men were heavy drinkers, and we were hardly out of Apia before the Swede (second mate) broke a sailor's jaw with an iron belaying pin. The crew were nearly all natives—steady men, and fairly good seamen. Five of them were Gilbert Islanders, and three natives of Niué (Savage Island), and it was one of these latter whose jaw was broken. They were an entirely new crew and had shipped in ignorance of the character of the captain. I had often heard of him as a brutal fellow, and the brig (the *Alfreda* of Hamburg) had long had an evil name. She was a labour-ship ("black-birder") and I had taken passage in her only because I was anxious to get to the Marshall Islands as quickly as possible.

There were but five Europeans on board—captain, two mates,

bos'un and myself. The bos'un was, although hard on the crew, not brutal, and he never struck them.

We had not been out three days when the captain, in a fit of rage, knocked a Gilbert Islander down for dropping a wet paintbrush on the deck. Then he kicked him about the head until the poor fellow was insensible.

From that time out not a day passed but one or more of the crew were struck or kicked. The second mate's conduct filled me with fury and loathing, for, in addition to his cruelty, his language was nothing but a string of curses and blasphemy. Within a week I saw that the Gilbert Islanders were getting into a dangerous frame of mind.

These natives are noted all over the Pacific for their courage, and seeing that mischief was brewing, I spoke to the bos'un about it. He agreed with me, but said it was no use speaking to the skipper.

To me the captain and officers were civil enough, that is, in a gruff sort of way, so I decided to speak to the former. I must mention that I spoke the Gilbert and Savage Island dialects, and so heard the natives talk. However, I said nothing of that to the German. I merely said to him that he was running a great risk in knocking the men about, and added that their countrymen might try to cut off the brig out of revenge. He snorted with contempt, and both he and the mates continued to "haze" the now sulky and brooding natives.

One calm Sunday night we were in sight of Funafuti lagoon,

and also of a schooner which I knew to be the *Hazeldine* of San Francisco. She, like us, was becalmed.

In the middle watch I went on deck and found the skipper and second mate drunk. The mate, who was below, was about half-drunk. All three men had been drinking heavily for some days, and the second mate was hardly able to keep his feet. The captain was asleep on the skylight, lying on his back, snoring like a pig, and I saw the butt of his revolver showing in the inner pocket of his coat.

Presently rain began to fall, and the second mate called one of the hands and told him to bring him his oil-skin coat. The man brought it, and then the brutal Swede, accusing him of having been slow, struck him a fearful blow in the face and knocked him off the poop. Then the brute followed him and began kicking him with drunken fury, then fell on the top of him and lay there.

I went for'ard and found all the natives on deck, very excited and armed with knives. Addressing them, I begged them to keep quiet and listen to me.

“The captain and mates are all drunk,” I said, “and now is your chance to leave the ship. Funafuti is only a league away. Get your clothes together as quickly as possible, then lower away the port quarter-boat. I, too, am leaving this ship, and I want you to put me on board the *Hazeldine*. Then you can go on shore. Now, put up your knives and don't hurt those three men, beasts as they are.”

As I was speaking, Max the bos'un came for'ard and listened. (I thought he was asleep.) He did not interfere, merely giving me

an expressive look. Then he said to me:—

“Ask them to lock me up in the deck-house”.

Very quietly this was done, and then, whilst I got together my personal belongings in the cabin, the boat was lowered. The Yankee mate was sound asleep in his bunk, but one of the Nui men took the key of his door and locked it from the outside. Presently I heard a sound of breaking wood, and going on deck, found that the Gilbert Islanders had stove-in the starboard quarter-boat and the long-boat (the latter was on deck). Then I saw that the second mate was lashed (bound hand and foot) to the pump-rail, and the captain was lashed to one of the five-rail stanchions. His face was streaming with blood, and I thought he was dead, but found that he had only been struck with a belaying pin, which had broken his nose.

“He drew a lot of blood from us,” said one of the natives to me, “and so I have drawn some from him.”

I hurried to the deck-house and told the bos'un what had occurred. He was a level-headed young man, and taking up a carpenter's broad axe, smashed the door of the deck-house. Then he looked at me and smiled.

“You see, I'm gaining my liberty—captain and officers tied up, and no one to look after the ship.”

I understood perfectly, and shaking hands with him and wishing him a better ship, I went over the side into the boat, and left the brig floating quietly on the placid surface of the ocean.

The eight native sailors made no noise, although they were all

wildly excited and jubilant, but as we shoved off, they called out “Good-bye, bos’un”.

An hour afterwards I was on board the *Hazeldine* and telling my story to her skipper, who was an old friend. Then I bade good-bye to the natives, who started off for Funafuti with many expressions of goodwill to their fellow-mutineer.

At daylight a breeze came away from the eastward, and at breakfast time the *Hazeldine* was out of sight of the *Alfreda*.

I learnt a few months later that the skipper had succeeded in bringing her into Funafuti Lagoon, where he managed to obtain another crew.

CHAPTER VI ~ “MÂNI”

Mâni was a half-caste—father a Martinique nigger, mother a Samoan—twenty-two years of age, and lived at Moatâ, a little village two miles from Apia in Samoa.

Mâni’s husband was a Frenchman named François Renault, who, when he was sober, worked as a boat-builder and carpenter, for the German “factory” at Mataféle. And when he was away from home I would hear Mâni laughing, and see her playing with her two dark-skinned little girls, and talking to them in a curious mixture of Samoan-French. They were merry mites with big rolling eyes, and unmistakably “kinky” hair—like their mother.

It was a fortnight after the great gale of 15th March, 1889, when the six German and American warships were wrecked, that Mâni came to my house with a basket of fresh-water fish she had netted far up in a deep mountain pool. She looked very happy. “Frank,” she said, had not beaten her for two whole weeks, and had promised not to beat her any more. And he was working very steadily now.

“That is good to hear, Mâni.”

She smiled as she nodded her frizzy head, tossed her *tiputa* (open blouse) over one shoulder, and sat down on the verandah steps to clean the fish.

“Yes, he will beat me no more—at least not whilst the shipwrecked sailors remain in Samoa. When they go I shall run

away with the children—to some town in Savai'i where he cannot find me.”

“It happened in this way,” she went on confidentially: “a week ago two American sailors came to the house and asked for water, for they were thirsty and the sun was hot I told them that the Moatâ water was brackish, and I husked and gave them two young coco-nuts each. And then Frank, who had been drinking, ran out of the house and cursed and struck me. Then one of the sailors felled him to the earth, and the other dragged him up by his collar, and both kicked him so much that he wept.

“Doth he often beat thee?” said one of the sailors to me. And I said ‘Yes’.

“Then they beat him again, saying it was for my sake. And then one of them shook him and said: ‘O thou dog, to so misuse thine own wife! Now listen. In three days’ time we two of the *Trenton* will have a day’s liberty, and we shall come here and see if thou hast again beaten thy wife. And if thou hast but so much as *mata pio’d* her we shall each kick thee one hundred times.”

(*Mata pio*, I must explain, is Samoan for looking “cross-eyed” or unpleasantly at a person.)

“And Frank was very much afraid, and promised he would no longer harm me, and held out his hand to them weepingly, but they would not take it, and swore at him. And then they each gave my babies a quarter of a dollar, and I, because my heart was glad, gave them each a ring of tortoiseshell.”

“Did they come back, Mâni?”

Mâni, at heart, was a flirt. She raised her big black eyes with their long curling lashes to me, and then closed them for a moment demurely.

“Yes,” she replied, “they came back. And when I told them that my husband was now kind to me, and was at work, they laughed, and left for him a long piece of strong tobacco tied round with tarred rope. And they said, ‘Tell him we will come again by-and-by, and see how he behaveth to thee.’”

“Mâni,” said in English, as she finished the last of the fish, “why do you speak Samoan to me when you know English so well? Where did you learn it? Your husband always speaks French to you.”

Mâni told me her story. In her short life of two-and-twenty years she had had some strange experiences.

“My father was Jean Galoup. He was a negro of St. Pierre, in Martinique, and came to Samoa in a French barque, which was wrecked on Tutuila. He was one of the sailors. When the captain and the other sailors made ready to go away in the boats he refused to go, and being a strong, powerful man they dared not force him. So he remained on Tutuila and married my mother, and became a Samoan, and made much money by selling food to the whaleships. Then, when I was twelve years old, my mother died, and my father took me to his own country—to Martinique. It took us two years to get there, for we went through many countries—to Sydney first, then to China, and to India, and then to Marseilles in France. But always in English ships. That is how

I have learned to speak English.

“We lived for three years in Martinique, and then one day, as my father was clearing some land at the foot of Mont Pelée, he was bitten by *fer-de-lance* and died, and I was left alone.

“There was a young carpenter at St. Pierre, named François Renault, who had one day met me in the market-place, and after that often came to see my father and me. He said he loved me, and so when my father was dead, we went to the priest and we were married.

“My husband had heard much of Samoa from my father, and said to me: ‘Let us go there and live’.

“So we came here, and then Frank fell into evil ways, for he was cross with me because he saw that the pure-blooded Samoan girls were prettier than me, and had long straight hair and lighter skins. And because he could not put me away he began to treat me cruelly. And I love him no more. But yet will I stay by him if he doeth right.”

The fates were kind to Mâni a few months later. Her husband went to sea and never returned, and Mâni, after waiting a year, was duly married by the consul to a respectable old trader on Savai’i, who wanted a wife with a “character”—the which is not always obtainable with a bride in the South Seas.

CHAPTER VII ~ AT NIGHT

The day's work was finished. Outside a cluster of rudely built palm-thatched huts, just above the curving white beach, and under the lengthening shadows of the silent cocos, two white men (my partner and myself) and a party of brown-skinned Polynesians were seated together smoking, and waiting for their evening meal. Now and then one would speak, and another would answer in low, lazy tones. From an open shed under a great jack-fruit tree a little distance away there came the murmur of women's voices and, now and then, a laugh. They were the wives of the brown men, and were cooking supper for their husbands and the two white men. Half a cable length from the beach a schooner lay at anchor upon the still lagoon, whose waters gleamed red under the rays of the sinking sun. Covered with awnings fore and after she showed no sign of life, and rested-as motionless as were the pendent branches of the lofty cocos on the shore.

Presently a figure appeared on deck and went for'ard, and then a bright light shone from the fore-stay.

My partner turned and called to the women, speaking in Hawaiian, and bade two of them take their own and the ship-keeper's supper on board, and stay for the night Then he spoke to the men in English.

“Who keeps watch to-night with the other man?”

“Me, sir,” and a native rose to his feet.

“Then off you go with your wife and Terese, and don’t set the ship on fire when you and your wife, and Harry and his begin squabbling as usual over your game of *tahia*.”²

The man laughed; the women, pretending to be shocked, each placed one hand over her eyes, and with suppressed giggles went down to the beach with the man, carrying a basket of steaming food. Launching a light canoe they pushed off, and as the man paddled the women sang in the soft Hawaiian tongue.

“Happy beggars,” said my comrade to me, as he stood up and stretched his lengthy, stalwart figure, “work all day, and sit up gambling and singing hymns—when they are not intriguing with each other’s husbands and wives.”

The place was Providence Atoll in the North Pacific, a group of seventeen uninhabited islands lying midway between the Marshall and Caroline Archipelagoes—that is to say, that they had been uninhabited for some years, until we came there with our gang of natives to catch sharks and make coco-nut oil. There was no one to deny us, for the man who claimed the islands, Captain “Bully” Hayes, had given us the right of possession for two years, we to pay him a certain percentage of our profits on the oil we made, and the sharks’ fins and tails we cured. The story of Providence Atoll (the “Arrecifos” of the early Spanish navigators, and the “Ujilang” of the native of Micronesia) cannot

² “Tahia” is a gambling game played with small round stones; it resembles our “knuckle-bones”.

here be told—suffice it to say that less than fifty years before over a thousand people dwelt on the seventeen islands in some twelve or fourteen villages. Then came some dread disease which swept them away, and when Hayes sailed into the great lagoon in 1860—his was the first ship that ever entered it—he found less than a score of survivors. These he treated kindly; but for some reason soon removed them to Ponapé in the Carolines, and then years passed without the island being visited by any one except Hayes, who used it as a rendezvous, and brought other natives there to make oil for him. Then, in a year or so, these, too, he took away, for he was a restless man, and had many irons in the fire. Yet there was a fortune there, as its present German owners know, for the great chain of islands is covered with coco-nut trees which yield many thousands of pounds' worth of copra annually.

My partner and I had been working the islands for some months, and had done fairly well. Our native crew devoted themselves alternately to shark catching and oil making. The lagoon swarmed with sharks, the fins and tails of which when dried were worth from sixty to eighty pounds sterling per ton. (Nowadays the entire skins of sharks are bought by some of the traders on several of the Pacific Islands on behalf of a firm in Germany, who have a secret method of tanning and softening them, and rendering them fit for many purposes for which leather is used—travelling bags, coverings for trunks, etc.)

The women helped to make the oil, caught fish, robber-crabs and turtle for the whole party, and we were a happy family

indeed. We usually lived on shore, some distance from the spot where we dried the shark-fins, for the odour was appalling, especially after rain, and during a calm night. We dried them by hanging them on long lines of coir cinnet between the coco-palms of a little island half a mile from our camp.

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