

BECKE LOUIS

JOHN FREWEN,
SOUTH SEA
WHALER

Louis Becke

John Frewen, South Sea Whaler

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John Frewen, South Sea Whaler / 1904

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

Captain Ethan Keller, of the *Casilda* of Nantucket, was in a very bad temper, for in four days he had lost two of the five boats the barque carried—one had been hopelessly stove by the dreaded “underclip” given her by a crafty old bull sperm-whale, and the other, which was in charge of the second mate, had not been seen for seventy hours. When last sighted she was fast to the same bull which had destroyed the first mate’s boat; it was then nearly dark, and the whale, which was of an enormous size, although he had three irons in his body and was towing the whole length of line from the stove-in boat as well as that of the second mate, was racing through the water as fresh as when he had first been struck, three hours previously. Then the sun dipped below the sea-rim, and the blue Pacific was shrouded in darkness.

“Why in thunder couldn’t the dunderhead put a bomb into that fish before it came on dark?” growled the skipper to his other officers, as they sat down to a harried sapper in the spacious, old-fashioned cabin of the whaler.

No one answered. Frewen, the missing officer, was as good a whaleman as ever drove an iron or gripped the haft of a steer-oar, and his half-caste boatsteerer Randall Cheyne was the best on the ship. But there was bad blood between young Frewen and his captain, and Cheyne was the cause of it.

“If they cut and lose that whale,” resumed Keller presently, “I’ll haze the life out of them—by thunder, I will, if I break my back in doing it! Why, that is the biggest fish we’ve struck yet. If I had been in that boat, I’d have had that whale in his flurry two hours ago. Why, it appears to me that Frewen got too soared to even try to haul up and give him a bomb, let alone giving him the lance—which was easy enough.”

Just as he spoke, one of the boatsteerers entered the cabin and reported that some of the hands thought that they had heard the second mate’s bomb gun.

“All right,” growled Keller, “tell the cooper to burn a flare.”

“I guess Frewen won’t lose him,” said Lopez, the first mate. “He told me long ago that he never yet had to out, and I don’t think he’ll do it now—unless something has gone wrong. That must have been his gun.”

“Huh!” sneered Keller, as he viciously speared a piece of salt pork with his fork, “we’ll see all about that when daylight comes. You’ll find Mr. Firwen and that yaller-hided Samoa buck back here for breakfast, but no whale.”

None of the men made any reply. They knew that Frewen would be the last man to lose a fish through any fault of his own, and only after carefully “drogueing” his line would he part company with it, and that only if the immense creature emptied the line tubs and “sounded.” Then, to save the lives of those in the boat, he would have to cut.

“Guess we’ll see that whale to-morrow, anyway, whether Mr. Frewen is fast to him or not,” said the third mate to the cooper, as they met on deck; “he’s got a mighty lot of line hanging to him, and, just after the second mate got fast I saw him shaking his flukes and trying to kick out one of the two irons the mate hove into him.”

“Well, that is so; I hope we shall get him. The old man is pretty cranky over it. He hasn’t a nice temper even when he’s in a good humour, and there will be blue fire blazing if Mr. Frewen does lose the fish after all.”

For four hours the barque made short tacks to the eastward, in which direction the boat had been taken by the whale. The night was fine but dark, the sea very smooth, and the flares which were burnt at intervals on board the barque would render her visible many miles away, and a keen look-out was kept for the boat, but nothing could be discovered of it.

Towards midnight the light air from the eastward died away, and was succeeded by a series of rather sharp rain squalls from the south-west, and Keller, fearing to miss the boat by running past her, hove-to till daylight.

The dawn broke brightly, with a dead calm. Forty pairs of eyes eagerly scanned the surface of the ocean, and in a few minutes there came a cheering cry from aloft.

“Dead whale, oh! Close to on the weather beam.”

“Can you see the boat?” cried Lopez.

“No, sir,” was the reply after a few seconds silence. “Can’t see her anywhere.”

“Look on the other side of the whale, you bat!” growled the skipper.

“She’s not there, sir,” was the reply.

“Lower away your boats, Mr. Bock and Mr. Lopez,” said Keller in more gracious tones to the third and first officers; “the second mate can’t be far away, but why in thunder he didn’t hang on to the whale last night I don’t know. Take something to eat with you. You will have to tow that whale alongside—this calm is going to last all day.”

Five minutes later the two boats pushed off, and then, as they sped over the glassy surface of the ocean and the huge carcass of the whale was more clearly revealed, Bock called out to his superior officer that he could see a whift¹ on it.

Lopez nodded, but said nothing.

They pulled up alongside, and the mate’s boatsteerer stepped out on to the body of Leviathan and pulled out the whift pole, which was firmly embedded in the blubber.

“There’s a letter tied round the pole, sir,” he said to his officer, as he got back to the boat again and passed the whift aft.

The “letter” had been carefully wrapped in a strip of oilskin, and then tied around the whift pole by a piece of sail twine. It was a sheet of soiled paper with a few pencilled lines written on it. Lopez read it:—

“For the information of Ethan Keller, Haser: This whale was struck, for the sake of his shipmates’ lays, by Randall Cheyne, the ‘yaller-hided Samoan,’ who has struck more whales than old Haser Keller ever saw. If Haser Keller wants us he will find us at Savage Island, where we shall be ready for him.

(Signed) “R. Cheyne, Boatsteerer, “Casilda.”

“Where is Mr. Frewen, sir?” inquired the boatsteerer anxiously.

“Gone for a picnic,” replied the mate laconically. “Now, look lively, my lads. We’ve got to tow this fish to the ship and ‘cut in’ before the sharks save us the trouble.”

¹ A wooden pole with a small pennon; used by whalers’ boats as a signal to the ship.

CHAPTER II

The quarrel between Keller, a rough, blasphemous-mouthed, and violent-tempered man, and his second officer had arisen over a very simple matter.

Frewen, one of the six sons of a struggling New Hampshire farmer, had received a better education than his brothers, for he was intended for the navy. But at sixteen years of age he realised the condition of the family finances, and shipped on a whaler sailing out of New London. From “foremast hand with hayseed in his hair,” he became boatsteerer; then followed rapid promotion from fourth to second officer’s berth, and at the age of five-and-twenty he was as competent a navigator and as good a seaman and boatheader as ever trod a whaleship’s deck. For like many a country-bred boy he had the sea instinct in his bones, inherited perhaps from his progenitors, who were of a seafaring stock in old Devonshire, in that town made for ever famous by Kingsley in “Westward Ho!”

When Frewen joined the *Casilda*, Keller had taken a great fancy to the young man, whom he soon discovered was a very able officer, and who proved his ability as a good whaler so amply during the first twelve months of the cruise by never losing a whale once he got fast, that Keller, who was as mean as he was brutal to his crew, relaxed his “hazing” propensities considerably. The *Casilda* was always known as a “hard” ship and Keller as a “hazer”; but, on the other hand, she was also a lucky ship, and Lopes, the chief mate, who had sailed in her for many years, was a sterling good man, though a strict disciplinarian, and did much for the men to compensate them for Keller’s outbursts of savage fury when anything went wrong. So Lopez, Frewen, and his fellow-officers “worked” together, and the crew “worked” with them, and the *Casilda* became a fairly happy ship, as well as a lucky one, for Keller, after long years, began to realise that it was bad policy to ill-treat a willing crew who would give him a “full” ship in another six months instead of deserting one by one or in batches at every island touched at in the South Seas.

And Frewen was a mascotte, and his half-caste boat-steerer was another, for whenever a pod of whales were sighted the second mate’s boat was invariably the first to get fast, and on one glorious day off Sunday Island Frewen’s boat killed three sperms—a bull and two cows—and the four other boats each got one or two, so that for over a week, in a calm sea, and under a cloudless sky of blue by day and night, “cutting in” and “trying-out” went on merrily, and the cooper and his mates toiled like Trojans, setting-up fresh barrels; and the smoke and glare of the try-works from the deck of the *Casilda* lit up the placid ocean for many a mile, whilst hordes of blue sharks rived and tore and ripped off the rich blubber from the whales lying alongside waiting to be cut-in, and Keller shot or lanced them by the score as he stood on the cutting-in stage or in one of the boats made fast to the chains on the free side.

Fourteen months out, as the *Casilda* was cruising northward, intending to touch at one of the Navigator’s Islands (Samoa) to refresh, the first trouble occurred. Cheyne, Frewen’s boatsteerer, who was a splendidly built, handsome young fellow of twenty-four years of age, received a rather severe injury to his right foot whilst a heavy baulk of timber was being “fleeted” along the deck. Frewen, who was much attached to him, dressed his foot as well as the rough appliances on board would allow, and then reported him to the captain as unfit for duty.

Keller growled something about all “darned half-breeds” being glad of any excuse to shirk duty.

Frewen took him up sharply: “This man is no shirker, sir. He is as good a man as ever ‘stood up’ to strike a whale. Did you ever see a better one?”

Keller looked at his second officer with fourteen months’ repressed brutality glowering in his savage eyes.

“I’m the captain of this ship. Just you mind that. I reckon I can’t be taught much by any college buster.”

Frewen's hands clenched, but he replied quietly, though he was inwardly raging at Keller's contemptuous manner—

“Just so. You are the captain of this ship, and I know my duty, sir. But I am not the man to be insulted by any one. And I say that my boatsteerer is not fit for duty.”

Keller's retort was of so insulting a character that in another moment the two men—to the intense delight of the crew—were fighting on the after-deck. Lopes and the cooper, as in duty bound, sprang forward and seized their fellow-officer, but the captain, with an oath, bade them stand aside.

“I'll pound you first,” he cried hoarsely to Frewen, “then I'll kick you into the foc'sle.”

The fight lasted for fifteen minutes, and then Lopes and the third mate forced themselves between and separated them. Both men were terribly punished.

“That will do, sir; that will do, Frewen,” said the mate; “do you want to kill each other?”

Keller had some good points about him and a certain amount of humour as well.

“Haow much air yew hurt, Frewen?” he inquired. “I can't exactly see” (both his eyes were fast closing).

“Pretty much like yourself,” replied the officer; then he paused and held out his hand. “Shake hands, sir. I'm sorry we've had this turn.”

“Wa'al, it's mighty poor business, that's a fact,” and Keller took the proffered hand, and then the matter apparently ended.

Early in the morning on the following day whales were raised. There was a stiff breeze and a choppy sea. Three boats, of which Frewen's was one, were lowered. Cheyne, although suffering great pain, insisted on taking his place, and twenty minutes later his officer called out to him to “stand up,” for they were close to the whale—a large cow, which was moving along very slowly, apparently unconscious of the boat's presence.

Then for the first time during the voyage the half-caste missed striking his fish. Unable to sustain himself steadily, owing to his injured foot and the rough sea, he darted his iron a second or two too late. It fell flat on the back of the monstrous creature, which at once sounded in alarm, and next reappeared a mile to windward. For an hour Frewen kept up the chase, and then the ship signalled for all the boats to return, for the wind and sea were increasing, and it was useless for them to attempt to overtake the whales, which were now miles to windward. Neither of the other boats had even come within striking distance of a fish, and consequently Keller was in a vile temper when they returned, and the moment he caught sight of the half-caste boatsteerer he assailed him with a volley of abuse.

The young man listened with sullen resentment dulling his dark face, then as he turned to limp for'ard the captain bade him make haste and get better, and not “try on any soldiering.”

He turned in an instant, his passion completely overmastering him: “I'm no 'soldier,' and as good a man as you, you mean old Gape Cod water-rat. I'll never lift another iron or steer a boat for you as long as I am on this ship.”

Five minutes later he was in irons with a promise of being kept on biscuit and water till he “took back all he had said” in the presence of the ship's company.

“I'll lie here and rot first sir,” he said to Lopez; “my father was an Englishman, and I consider myself as good a boatsteerer and as good a man as any one on board. But I do not mean any disrespect to you, sir.”

Lopez was sorry for the man, but could not say so. “Keep a still tongue between your teeth,” he said roughly, “and I'll talk the old man round by to-morrow.”

“Do as you please, sir. But I won't lift an iron again as long as I am in this ship,” he replied quietly.

He kept his word. On the following morning he was liberated, and in a week's time he had recovered the use of his foot. Then, when the barque was off the Tonga Islands, a large “pod” of whales were sighted. It was a clear, warm day. The sea was as smooth as a lake, and only the faintest air was ruffling the surface of the water. Three miles away were two small, low-lying islands, clad

with coco-palms, their white belting of beach glistening like iridescent pearl-shell under the glowing tropic sun.

As the boats were lowered he said to Frewen, "You know what I have said, sir. I won't lift a harpoon again on this cruise; so don't ask me."

Frewen did not believe him. "Don't be a fool, Randall. We'll show the old man something to-day."

"I will, sir, if it costs me my life."

Five minutes later he was in his old place on the for'ard thwart, pulling stolidly, but looking intently at Frewen, whom he loved with a dog-like affection.

Frewen singled out a large bull whale which was lying quite apart from the rest of the "pod" sunning himself, and sometimes rolling lazily from side to side, oblivious of danger. In another five minutes the boat would have been within striking distance.

"Stand up, Randall," he said.

The half-caste peaked and socketed his oar, and looked at the officer.

"I refuse, sir," he said quietly.

"Then come aft here," cried Frewen quickly, with hot anger in his tones.

"No, sir, I will not. I said I would neither lift iron nor steer a boat again," was the dogged reply.

There was no time to lose. Giving the steer oar to the man pulling the "after-tub oar," the officer sprang forward and picked up the harpoon just in time, Randall jumping aft smartly enough, and taking the tub man's oar. Ten seconds later Frewen had buried his harpoon up to the socket in the whale, and the line was humming as the boat tore through the water. Then, still keeping his place, he let the whole of one tub of line run out, and then hauled up on it and lanced and killed his fish quietly. Cheyne apparently took no notice, though his heart sank within him when Frewen came aft again, and looked at him with mingled anger and reproach.

Some one of the boat's crew talked of what had occurred, though Frewen said nothing; and that night Cheyne was placed in irons by Keller's orders. At the end of a week he was still manacled and almost starving, but he steadfastly refused to do boatsteerer's duty. Then the captain no longer placed any check on himself, and he swore that he would either make the half-caste yield or else kill him. And he did his best to keep his word.

Nearly a month passed, and then, at Frewen's suggestion, all the officers waited on the captain and begged him to release the unfortunate man; otherwise there was every prospect of the crew mutinying.

"Is he willing to turn to again?" he asked.

"Not as boatsteerer," replied Frewen.

"Then he shall stay where he is," was the savage retort.

Five or six days later Frewen went to Cheyne, who was now confined in the 'tween decks, and implored him to give in.

"Very well, sir. To please you I will give in. But I mean to desert the first chance."

"So do I. I am sick of this condition of things. There are three other men besides yourself in irons now."

"Who are they, sir?"

"Willis, Hunt, and Freeman." (The two latter belonged to his own boat, and had been ironed because they had refused to eat some bad beef. Frewen himself had told Keller that it was uneatable, and again angry words passed between them.)

Cheyne was released and resumed his old place in Frewen's boat, and the officer then sounded the rest of his men, and found they were eager to leave the ship. So he made his plans, and he and Cheyne quietly got together a small supply of provisions and a second breaker of water.

They waited till the ship was well among the Friendly Group, and Upolu Island was three hundred miles to the north, and then were given the needed opportunity—when the mate's boat was destroyed by the big bull whale, which was then struck by Cheyne.

“Boys,” shouted Frewen to his crew, as the boat tore through the water, “I'm not going to kill this whale awhile. He'll give us a long run, and is taking us dead to windward, away from the ship. But before it gets dark I'll give him a bomb.”

He successfully carried out his intention. Just as darkness was coming on he hauled up on his line and fired a bomb into the mighty creature; it killed it in a few seconds. Then they lay alongside of the floating carcass, spelled half an hour, had something to eat, and then Cheyne, who had a sense of humour, wrote the scrawl to Keller and tied it round the whift pole.

“Now, lads,” cried Frewen, “up sail! It is a fine dark night, and we should be forty or fifty miles away by daylight.”

And so, whilst the *Casilda* burnt flare after flare throughout the night, the adventurers were slipping through the water merrily enough, oblivious of the cold rain squalls which overtook them at midnight, as they headed for Samoa.

CHAPTER III

When Frewen allowed Cheyne to write the pencilled note to Captain Keller, he did so with a double purpose, for he and Cheyne had carefully thought out and decided upon their plans. In the first place, the dead whale would convince the ship's company that he and his boat's crew had "done the square thing," by killing and leaving for their benefit the best and largest whale that had yet been taken, and that although they were deserting (and consequently losing their entire share of the profits of the cruise so far, which would be divided with their former shipmates) the rich prize they were leaving to the ship would prove of ten times the value of the boat in which they had escaped. In the second place he wished to put Keller on a false scent by naming Savage Island (or Nine, as it is generally known) as their destination; for Keller knew that the island was a favourite resort of runaway sailors, but that a suitable reward offered to the avaricious natives would be sure to effect the capture and return to the ship of any deserters from the *Casilda*.

Cheyne's father was an English master mariner, who, tired of a seafaring life, had settled as a trader in the beautiful island of Manono in Samoa. He there married a daughter of one of the leading chiefs, and himself attained to some considerable influence and property, but lost his life in an encounter with a rebellious clan on the island of Upolu. He left two children: Randall, a lad of sixteen, and Marie, a girl two years younger. The boy went to sea in a whaler, and at the age of twenty-four had an established reputation as one of the smartest boatsteerers in the Pacific. Only once after four years' absence, had he returned to his native country, when he found that his sister, who had just arrived from Australia, where she had been educated, was about to be married to one of the few Europeans in the country—a well-to-do planter and merchant, named Raymond, and that his mother had also married again, and settled in New Zealand.

Satisfied as to his sister's future happiness, he saw her married, and again turned his face to the sea, although Raymond earnestly besought him to stay with and help him in his business. He made his way to Honolulu, and there joined the *Casilda*, then homeward bound, and, as has been related, he and the second officer soon became firm friends.

At the south-east point of the island of Upelu, there is a town named Lepâ, and for this place the boat was now steering. The principal chief of the district was a blood relation of Cheyne's mother, and he (Cheyne) knew that every hospitality would be given to himself and Frewen for as long a time as they chose to remain at Lepâ.

"After we have seen Mana'lio" (the chief) "we shall consider what we shall do," said the boatsteerer to Frewen. "I expect he will not like letting us leave him, but will be satisfied when he knows that you and I want to go to my sister's place. These big Samoan chiefs are very touchy in some things."

On the afternoon of the third day out, the land was sighted, and just as the evening fires were beginning to gleam from the houses embowered in the palm-groves of Lepâ, the boat grounded on the white hard beach, and in a few minutes the village was in a pleasurable uproar, as the white men were almost carried up to the chief's house by the excited natives, who at once recognised the stalwart Cheyne.

Mana'lio made his relative and Frewen most welcome, and treated them as very honoured guests, whilst the rest of the boat's crew were taken possession of by the sub-chiefs and the people of the town generally, carried off to the *fale taupule* or "town hall," and invited to a hurriedly prepared but ample repast.

On the following morning, Frewen called the whole of his boat's crew together, and told them it would be best for them to separate. "Each of you four men say you don't want to go to sea again—not for a long time at any rate. Well, Mana'lio, the chief here, wants a white man to live with him. He will treat him well, and give him a house and land. Will you stay, Hunt?"

“Yes, sir,” was the instant reply.

“Right. And you, Freeman, Chase, and Craik, can stay here in Lepâ, and decide for yourselves which towns you will live in. In less than forty-eight hours half the chiefs on the island will be coming to Mana’lio for a white man. Cheyne here will give you some good advice—if you want the natives to respect you, and to get along and make money and a honest living, follow his advice.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” assented the men.

“Now, here is another matter. Cheyne and I wish to be mates, and we want the boat.”

“Well, I guess *we* have no claim on her, sir,” said Hunt, turning to the others for confirmation of his remark.

“Oh, yes you have—she is as much yours as she is mine. Anyway we all have a good right to her, as we have given the ship a whale worth a dozen new boats; and, besides that, by deserting we have forfeited our ‘lays’ and have put money into Captain Keller’s pocket as well as into those of the crew. Now, I have a little money with me—two hundred dollars. Will you four men take a hundred and divide it, and let Cheyne and me have the boat?”

“Ay, ay, to be sure,” they cried out in unison.

That evening Frewen and Cheyne bade Mana’lio and the seamen goodbye, and accompanied by four stalwart and well-armed natives, stepped into the boat, hoisted her blue jean main-sail and jib, and amidst a chorus of farewells from the friendly people set off on a forty miles trip along the coast, their destination being the town of Samatau, at the extreme north-west of the island.

For here, so Mana’lio had told them, Mrs. Raymond and her husband were living, the latter having purchased a large tract of land there which he was preparing for a cotton plantation.

CHAPTER IV

The boat sailed gently along the outer or barrier reef which fringed the coast of beautiful verdured Upolu, and then, as the sun sank, there shone out myriad stars upon the bosom of a softly heaving sea, and only the never-ceasing murmur of the surf as it beat against the coral barrier, or the cry of some wandering sea-bird, disturbed the warm silence of the tropic night.

Leaving the boat to the care of their native friends at eight o'clock, Frewen and his comrade laid down amidships and were soon fast asleep, for the day had been a tiring one, and they needed more rest to recover from the effects of the three days they had spent on the open sea.

Soon after daylight they were awakened by the steersman, who pointed out a large, lofty-sparred vessel. She was about five miles away, and being head on, Frewen was uncertain as to her rig, till an hour later, when he saw that she was a full-rigged ship.

"Not the *Casilda*" he said to his comrade, and neither of them gave the strange vessel any further thought, especially as the wind had now died away, and, the sail being lowered, the crew bent to the oars under an already hot and blazing sun.

Shortly before noon, the boat rounded a low headland and entered a lovely little bay, embowered in thick groves of coco-palms and breadfruit trees. The new house which Raymond had built was not visible from the bay, but there were some thirty or forty native houses clustered under the shade of the trees, a few yards up from the beach, on which they noticed a ship's longboat was lying.

The moment Frewen's boat was seen, a strange clamour arose, and a number of natives, armed with muskets and long knives, rushed out of their houses, and took cover behind the rocks and trees, evidently with the intention of resisting his landing, and Frewen and Cheyne heard loud cries of "*Lèmonte! Lèmonte!*"

"Back water!" cried Cheyne in his mother tongue to the crew; then he turned to Frewen: "There is something wrong on shore. '*Lèmonte*' is my brother-in-law's name, and they are calling for him." Then he stood up and shouted out—

"Friends, do you not know me? I am Randall. Where is my sister and her husband?"

A loud cry of astonishment burst from the natives, many of whom, throwing down their arms, sprang into the water, and clambering into the boat greeted the young man most affectionately; and then one of them, commanding silence, began talking rapidly to him.

"We must get ashore quickly," said Cheyne to Randall. "My brother-in-law has a number of dead and dying people in his house. There has been a mutiny on board that ship—but come on, he'll tell us all about it."

In another minute the boat was on the beach, and as Frewen and Cheyne jumped ont they were met by a handsome, dark-faced man about forty years of age, who grasped Cheyne's hands warmly.

"I never expected to see you, Randall," he said quietly, "but I thank God that you *have* come, and at such a time, too. Where is your ship?"

"Three hundred miles away. But we will tell you our story another time. How is Marie?"

"Well. She already hears the people shouting your name. Come to the house." Then he turned to Frewen and held out his hand. "My name is Raymond, and you are welcome to Samatau."

"And mine is Frewen. I hope you will accept any assistance I can give."

"Gladly. But I will tell you the whole story presently. I have two men dying in my house, three others wounded, and two dead."

He led the way along a shady, winding path to the house, on the wide verandah of which were seated a number of natives of both sexes, who made way for them to pass with low murmurs of "*Talofa, aliia,*" { * } to the two strangers. Then in another moment Marie Raymond stepped softly out from the sitting-room, and threw her arms round her brother's neck.

* "Greeting, gentlemen."

“Thank God you are here, Randall,” she said, leading the way into another room. “Tom will tell you of what has happened. I will return as soon as I can.”

“How is Captain Marston?” asked Raymond, as she stood for a moment with her hand on the handle of the door.

“Still unconscious. Mrs. Marston is with him.” She paused, and then turned her dark and beautiful tear-dimmed eyes to Frewen: “Tom, perhaps this gentleman might be able to do something. Will he come in and see?”

Raymond drew him aside. “Go in and see the poor fellow. He can’t last long—his skull is fractured.”

Frewen followed Mrs. Raymond into the large room, and saw lying on her own bed the figure of a man whose features were of the pallor of death. His head was bound up, and kneeling by his side, with her eyes bent upon his closed lids, was a woman, or rather a girl of twenty-two or twenty-three years of age. As, at the sound of footsteps, she raised her pale, agonised face, something like a gleam of hope came into it.

“Are you a doctor?” she asked in a trembling whisper.

The seaman shook his head respectfully. “No, madam; I would I were.”

He leant over the bed, and looked at the still, quiet face of the man, whom he could see was in the prime of life, and whose regular, clear-cut features showed both refinement and strength of character.

“He still breathes,” whispered the poor wife.

“Yes, so I see,” said Frewen, as he rose. Then he asked Mrs. Raymond a few questions as to the nature of the wound, and learned that in addition to a fractured skull a pistol bullet had entered at the back of the neck.

“There is no hope, you think. I can see that by your face,” said Mrs. Marston, suppressing a sob.

“I cannot tell, madam. But I do think that his condition is very, very serious.”

She bent her head, and then sank on her knees again beside the bed, but suddenly she rose again, and placed her hand on Frewen’s sleeve.

“I know that my husband must die, no human aid can save him. But will you, sir, go and see poor Mr. Villari. Mr. Raymond has hopes for him at least. And he fought very bravely for my husband.”

Villari was the first mate of the ship, and was lying in another room, together with three wounded seamen. He was a small, wiry Italian, and when Frewen entered with Raymond and Mrs. Raymond, he waved his right hand politely to them, and a smile lit up his swarthy features. He had two bullet wounds, one a clean hole through the right shoulder, the other in the thigh. He had lost a great deal of blood, but none of his high courage, though Raymond at first thought he could not live.

“I am not going to die,” he said. “*Per Bacco*, no.”

Frewen spoke encouragingly to him and then turned his attention to the seamen, all of whom were Englishmen. None of them were severely wounded, and all that could be done for them had been done by Raymond and their own unwounded shipmates, of whom there were four.

“Now I shall tell you the story,” said Raymond to Frewen and Cheyne, as he led the way to the verandah, on which a table with refreshments had been placed. “But, first of all, do you see that ship out there? Well, that is the *Esmeralda*. She is now in the possession of the mutineers, and has on board forty-five thousand dollars. You see that she is becalmed?”

“And likely to continue so for another three or four days, if I am any judge of the weather in this part of the Pacific,” said Frewen, “I agree with you. And now, before I begin to tell you the story of the mutiny, I want to know if you two will help me to recapture her? You are seamen, and—”

Both men sprang to their feet.

“Yes, we will!”

“Ah! I thought you would not refuse. Now wait a moment,” and calling to a young native who was near, he bade him go to the chief of Samatau and ask him to come to the house as quickly as possible.

“Malië, the chief of Samatau, will help us,” he said to Frewen; “he has two hundred of the best fighting men in Samoa, and I shall ask him to pick out fifty. But we want a nautical leader—some one to take charge of the ship after we get possession of her.”

“Now here is the story of the mutiny, told to me by poor Mrs. Marston.”

CHAPTER V

“At daylight this morning, my wife and I were aroused by our servants, who excitedly cried to us to come outside. A boat, they said, was on the beach with a number of white men in it, some of whom were dead.

“I went down to the beach at once, and five minutes later had all the unfortunate wounded and unwounded people assisted to the house, for they were completely exhausted by what they had undergone, and were also suffering from thirst. Two of their number had succumbed to their wounds in the boat a few hours previously, so Villari, the mate, told me. Marston, who had been shot in the neck, was unconscious, and his wife who, as you saw, is little more than a girl, was herself wounded in the arm by a musket ball.

“We did all that we could do, and after Mrs. Marston had had an hour’s rest, she and Villari told me their story.

“The *Esmeralda* is Marston’s own ship, and left Valdivia, in Chile, for Manila about seven weeks ago. She is almost a new ship, only having been built at Aberdeen last year. Marston, who had just married, brought out a general cargo from London to Valdivia and other South American ports, and sold it at a very handsome profit. Whilst on the coast, fever broke out on board, and he lost his second mate and five A.B.’s, and the third mate and two others had to go into hospital. In their places he shipped a new second mate—a man named Juan Almanza—and twelve seamen, ten of whom were either Chilenos or Peruvians, and the remaining two Greeks. The former boatswain he promoted to the third mate’s berth. Almanza proved to be a good officer, and the new men gave him satisfaction, though his agent at Valdivia had urged him not to take the two Greeks, who, he said, were likely to prove troublesome. Unfortunately he did not take the agent’s advice, and said that he had often had Greeks with him on previous voyages, and found them very fair sailormen—much better than Chilenos or Mexicans.

“He had been paid for his cargo mostly in silver dollars, and the money was brought on board in as quiet a manner as possible, and he believed without the new hands knowing anything about it. Poor fellow; he was fatally mistaken! In all it amounted to thirty-five thousand dollars, and in addition to this there was a further sum of two thousand pounds in English gold on board—Marston, I must tell you, is, I imagine, a fairly wealthy man, for his wife told me that he had the *Esmeralda* built at a cost of six thousand pounds.

“He had been informed at Valdivia that a cargo of Chile flour, which could be bought very cheaply at Valparaiso, could be sold at a huge profit in Manila, and he thereupon bought a full cargo—six hundred tons—and sailed, as I have said, about seven weeks ago. All went well on board from the very first, although the English seamen did not much care about their foreign shipmates, who, however, did their duty after a fashion. Almanza, Mrs. Marston says, was in all respects an able and smart officer, and both she and her husband took a great liking to him—the scoundrel!

“The two Greeks—who, by the way, called themselves and shipped under the English names of John Foster and James Ryan—the Levantine breed do that trick very often—were in Almanza’s watch, as were six of the Chilenos; and the mate one night, coming on deck when it was his watch below, was surprised to find Almanza and the two Greeks engaged in an earnest conversation. His suspicions were aroused, and he reported the matter to the captain, who, however, made light of it, and said that Almanza had told him that Foster and Ryan had been shipmates with him on a Sydney barque some years before, and that it was only natural that Almanza would relax discipline a little, and condescend to chat for a few minutes with men who had sailed with him previously.

“Ryan, the older of the two, had proved himself an excellent seaman, and both Marston and Villari felt sure, from the way in which he spoke to the other seamen, that he had at one time been an officer. In addition to Spanish he speaks both English and French remarkably well, and his manners

and personal appearance are extremely good, and no one would take him to be a Greek. He, however, frankly admitted that his name was not Ryan and that he was a native of the island of Naxos in the Ægean Sea.

“At this time, Mr. Frewen, the *Esmeralda* was near these islands—in fact, Upolu was in sight; and Marston, knowing that there were some Europeans settled at the port of Apia, on the north side of the island, decided to put in there for fresh provisions, of which the ship was in need.

“Perhaps his decision made the scoundrelly Almanza imagine that he suspected him, and was only touching at Apia to rid himself of his second officer and his Greek and Chileno accomplices, for Mrs. Marston—who shudders when she mentions Almanza’s name—says that shortly after the ship’s course was altered for Apia, he went for’ard on some excuse, but in reality to talk to the Greeks in the fore-peak. He was absent about a quarter of an hour, and then went about his duties as usual.

“A little before six bells, Captain Marston was on the poop looking at the land through his glasses, Mrs. Marston was in her cabin sewing, Villari, with the boatswain and three A.B.’s (all Englishmen), were with the steward and third mate engaged in the lazarette overhauling and restowing the provisions. Suddenly the captain was felled by a blow on the head dealt him from behind, and the mate and those with him were at the same moment ordered by Almanza to come up out of the lazarette. He told them that he was in possession of the ship, and that they would be shot down if they attempted to resist. Villari and his men came up, and found the second mate and six of the mutineers in the cabin, all armed with pistols and cutlasses. Resistance was useless, and Almanza told Villari not to think of it. He (Villari) was then hustled into his own cabin and locked in, and the English seamen ordered on deck, where they, with the other Englishmen on board, were made to hoist out the longboat. Whilst this was being done Almanza, who had locked Mrs. Marston in her cabin, opened the door, and told her that she need feel no fear, but that she must come on deck to attend to her husband, who had been hurt. She found Marston lying where he fell, and quite unconscious, with a Chileno standing guard over him. As the English members of the crew were hoisting out the longboat, Almanza told the steward—a negro—to get some provisions and some bottles of wine from the cabin. Then the two Greeks—who from the first had seemed bent on murder—interfered, and one of them suddenly raised his pistol and shot the unfortunate steward through the heart. The Chileno seamen applauded the act, and only Almanza’s frenzied protests prevented them from slaughtering the unarmed Englishmen, the Greeks declaring that they (the mutineers) were only putting ropes round their necks by sparing any one of them—including Mrs. Marston.

“For some minutes it seemed as if there was to be a conflict between Almanza and his followers, but the mutineers appeared to yield to his appeals, and assisted in getting the longboat out. The captain was then lowered into the boat, and then Mrs. Marston and all the Englishmen but two followed; when suddenly Villari, who had succeeded in forcing his door, sprang up from the cabin with a pistol in each hand, and singling out Almanza, shot him through the chest, and with the second shot wounded one of the Chilenos in the face. But in another instant he himself fell, for the Greeks and several of the gang fired at him simultaneously, and he was also given a fearful blow on the head with a belaying-pin, partly stunning him, and then thrown overboard to drown. The two men remaining on deck saved their lives by jumping overboard at the same time.

“Most fortunately for the poor mate he fell near the boat, and was rescued by one of the seamen, who sprang overboard after him. But not satisfied with what they had already done, and enraged at the fall of their leader, the mutineers now began firing into the defenceless people in the boat at such a short range that it is marvellous that any one escaped.

“Before they were able to pull out of range, the captain, third mate, and one of the seamen were mortally wounded, and two others and Mrs. Marston also were hit. Then the mutineers, evidently bent on the slaughter of the whole party, began to lower away one of the heavy quarter-boats, but although she was actually put in the water the villains changed their minds for some reason, and the longboat was not pursued.”

“Ah!” said Frewen, “I expect they were afraid to leave the ship in case a breeze sprang up.”

“So Villari says. However, they then began firing round shot at the longboat from the two nine-pounders on the quarter-deck—the *Esmeralda* is armed with six guns—but made such bad practice that after half a dozen shots had been fired they gave up the attempt.

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