

Kingston William Henry Giles

**Kidnapping in the Pacific:
or, The Adventures of
Boas Ringdon**



William Kingston

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Kingston William Henry Giles Kidnapping in the Pacific; Or, The Adventures of Boas Ringdon / A long four-part Yarn

Chapter One

“You want a yarn. You shall have one,” said a young friend of mine, a midshipman, who had just returned from a four years’ cruise in the Pacific. “I am not a good hand at describing what I have seen, but I can narrate better the adventures of others which they have told me: – ”

We had visited a good many islands in the Pacific, engaged in settling the disputes of the natives or trying to settle them, punishing evil doers, supporting the consuls and missionaries, surveying occasionally hitherto unknown harbours, and endeavouring to make the British flag respected among the dark-skinned inhabitants of those regions.

I with another midshipman and a boat’s crew had landed on a beautiful island of the Western Pacific to bring off a cargo of cocoa-nuts and breadfruit with which the natives had promised to supply us. Two of our men had straggled off against orders into the interior. While waiting for them we saw the signal made for our return. Unwilling to leave them behind, we ourselves unwisely started off to look for them. The natives gave us to understand that they were a little way ahead, so we pushed on hoping to come up with them and bring them with us.

A considerable time longer than we expected was thus occupied, and when having at length overtaken them we got back to the beach, we found that a strong breeze had set in, and that so heavy a surf was breaking on the shore that it would be extremely dangerous passing through it. Still the signal was flying and the order must be obeyed.

We shoved off, but had not pulled many strokes before a succession of tremendous rollers came roaring in, turning the boat right over and sending her back almost stove to pieces on the beach. Had it not been for the natives who swam to our rescue, we should probably have lost our lives.

Wet through, and half-drowned, we were dragged on shore. It would have been madness to have again made an effort to get off. All we could do, therefore, was to haul our sorely battered boat out of the reach of the surf and to collect the portion of our cargo washed up on the sands.

Although it was tolerably hot we felt that we should be more comfortable than we were if we could shift our wet clothes. The garments worn by the natives could assist us but little, seeing that most of them wore only somewhat narrow waist clothes. They made us understand, however, that not far off we should find the house of a white man, who would perhaps afford us accommodation. Why he had not yet hitherto made his appearance we could not tell, but we determined to visit him and claim his hospitality. Led by the natives, we proceeded some distance along the beach when we came in sight of a hut, larger and more substantially built than the other habitations around. Just inside a porch at the entrance of the hut, an old white man, dressed in shirt and trousers, with a broad-brimmed straw hat on his head, was seated in a roughly made easy-chair with his feet resting on the trellis-work before him. A large wooden pipe was in his mouth, from which he was smoking lustily. He seemed scarcely to notice our approach, and when we addressed him he enquired in a gruff voice where we came from and what we wanted. We told him what had happened, and asked him if he could give us shelter, and lend us some garments while our clothes were drying.

“As to that, young gentlemen, you shall have a shirt and a pair of duck trousers apiece, and such food as there may happen to be in my store-house,” he answered, seeing by our uniforms who we were. “Your men shall be looked after also.”

We were soon seated round his cooking stove inside the house, rigged out in the garments he had provided while our own clothes were hung up to dry. A native girl attended us, obeying with alacrity the old man's commands. We supposed her to be his daughter, and spoke of her as such.

"No, you are wrong in that, I have no child," he observed. "She is my wife. That," pointing to a thick stick which rested on a stool near him, "served as my marriage lines, it makes her as sharp and attentive as I can wish, and keeps her in good order."

I had suspected from the appearance of the old fellow that he was a ruffian; I had now no doubt that he was a thorough one; and I felt sure that had he dared he would not have scrupled to hand us over to the natives should they by chance demand our lives. A man-of-war in the offing, though she might be driven away for a few days, afforded us perfect security with such a character.

At first he was not disposed to be communicative; he kept beating about the bush to ascertain apparently whether we knew anything about him, and had come to call him to account for any misdeeds of which he might have been conscious. When he discovered that we were not even aware that a white man resided on the island, he opened out more freely. I was curious to know something about him, and, concealing the opinion I had formed of his character, tried to induce him to talk of himself; that he was an old sailor I could see at a glance.

"You were long at sea, I suppose," I observed.

"First and last pretty nigh sixty years," he answered.

"I was a small boy when I first ran off from home, and I never lived on shore many weeks together from that time up to within a few years ago. I have served on board every sort of craft afloat, and have seen a good many curious sights, as you may suppose."

I resolved not to interrupt him, unless he should get a hitch in his yarn with which a question might help him through, so I let him run on, and, once having begun, he seemed nothing loth to allow his tongue full play. Probably he had not had auditors who could understand him for many a long day.

"The first craft I shipped aboard was bound for the coast of Africa. In those days not a few vessels belonging to Liverpool were engaged in one way or another in the slave trade, either in supplying the slavers with goods, and stores, and provisions, or in actually running cargoes of blacks, which though the most profitable was a dangerous business to engage in.

"I understood that we were to bring back gold dust and ivory, but instead of that we began to load with negroes, and soon had pretty nigh three hundred stowed away below hatches. We had hoisted the Spanish flag, and had a Spanish captain, and fresh papers, for it was, I fancy, a hanging matter for an Englishman to command a slaver, though a few years back it had been all lawful and shipshape, but things change, you see, and what seems right one day is wrong the other. We had to keep a bright look out for English cruisers, who were on the coast to put a stop to the business.

"I heard some curious yarns of the way the slaves are taken. Some powerful tribes make it a regular business, and attack their weaker neighbours for no other purpose than to capture them, and then to sell them to the slave dealers. They generally steal on a village at night, surround and set fire to it, and seize all the inhabitants who rush from their huts to escape the flames. Parties go out to pick up others wandering in the woods, or travelling from one place to another. The inhabitants of the West Coast of Africa must have an uncomfortable life of it, I suspect. With our living cargo on board we made sail for South America.

"Before we were many leagues from the shore, an English man-of-war hove in sight. Should we be taken we should not only lose the vessel and our expected profits, but it would go hard with the English part of the crew. All knew that, and were ready to do anything to escape. We made all sail, but for a wonder the British man-of-war was a fast craft, and soon began to overhaul us. Our skipper, and most of the officers and crew, swore fearfully at the stranger, and some declared that sooner than be taken they would blow our vessel, with all the niggers on board, as well as the English cruiser, into the air.

“I observed the captain and officers talking together, and there was a fierce determination in their looks which showed they meant what they said. I had no fancy to be blown into the air, and was considering what I could do to save myself.

“As the cruiser drew near I saw some of our men go below, and presently up they came with a black fellow. They led him aft and lowered him overboard.

”Don’t be frightened, all you have to do is to swim to yonder ship, and she will pick you up,” said the mate.

“I don’t fancy the negro understood him, still blacks are as fond of life as other people, and I saw him striking out boldly for the ship. He was seen. The ship hove-to, a boat was lowered, and he was picked up. Our people laughed at the success of the plan, for we had increased our distance from the enemy.

“Evening was coming on. The great thing was to keep ahead of her till darkness would allow us to alter our course without being perceived.

“In a short time, as soon as we saw that the boat was hoisted up, another negro was hove overboard. He was a strong swimmer, and struck out boldly. He, too, was seen on board the man-of-war, and by another cruiser of the deep also, a huge shark. The monster made towards him, he swam bravely on for his life, but it was of no avail. Before long he disappeared, and I fancied I could hear the shriek he uttered, even at the distance he already was from us.

“We should have sacrificed half our cargo rather than be taken as long as there appeared any probability of the man-of-war heaving-to to pick up the unfortunate wretches, but the breeze falling light, we had an advantage over the heavier vessel, and darkness coming on, we at length lost sight of her. We immediately altered our course, knowing that she would do her best to fall in with us in the morning. We escaped her, however, although we lost fifty or sixty blacks on the passage; that was a matter of no consequence, considering that we landed the greater portion and made a large profit by the venture. Our success was so satisfactory that it was not long before we were again back on the coast, and as our craft was a remarkably fast one we managed again to escape the British cruisers.

“We made altogether eight or ten trips, now and then we narrowly escaped capture, but we were too clever for our enemy, and they were not up to our various dodges.

“I had by this time become well accustomed to the work, and, though at first it had gone somewhat against me to see the blacks dying by scores during the middle passage, yet now I saw them hove overboard with as little compunction as if they had been so many sheep.

“We had a precious rough crew, about as villainous a set of cut-throats as well could be collected together. It does not do for tender-hearted fellows to sail aboard a slaver.

“I had meantime grown into a big stout lad, and could hold my own against any of them.

“How it was I don’t know, but I should not have liked at that time to have done the things that some of them did. We had a black cook aboard, whether or not sitting before a hot fire had softened his heart, I cannot tell, but he was not as bad as the rest; he had consequently a hard life of it amongst them. One day he was detected by the mate carrying a mess below to some of the sick blacks, they were people of his own tribe, and I suspect relations. The mate swore that he intended to raise a mutiny among them, it may be to let them loose to murder us all. Poor Sambo declared that he had no thoughts of doing anything of the sort, but that the people were ill, and that he hoped what he gave them would do them good and save their lives. He was a sensible fellow, and must have known that from where we were, about mid-channel, they could never have found their way back again to the coast of Africa, and that if they had murdered the crew they themselves must also have perished. The captain and mate would not hear his excuses, and began belabouring him with thick cudgels till they had nearly knocked the breath out of his body. I felt very indignant, for black though he was I had a liking for the man, and determined to speak out.

”I tell you what, Ringdon, if you don’t betray your jaw-tackles you will be treated in the same way!” exclaimed the captain, turning on me.

”Sambo had no bad intentions, I will answer for that,’ I cried out. ‘If any of us were sick and dying we should expect one of our countrymen, if he had the means, to help us, and I don’t see that Sambo intended to do more than that.’ Sambo gave me a glance, as much as to say if I have the chance I’ll render you a service some day; and, bobbing his head, as the mate made another blow at him, escaped forward. The two then turned on me, and I thought were going to try their cudgels on my head. I stood up boldly and faced them.

”Now,’ I asked, ‘what have you got to say to me?’

”Look out for squalls, Master Boas, that’s all,’ growled the mate.

”You will some day wish that you had kept your opinions to yourself,’ said the captain, but neither he nor the mate ventured to strike me. I turned round and walked forward, leaving the two talking together. I was sure by the glances they cast at me that they meant mischief, so I determined to be on my guard.

“Several days passed away, and things went on much as usual. Sambo got many a kick and cuff from the captain and mate when he could not help coming near them, but he kept out of their way as much as he could within the caboose, and cooked our meals without uttering a complaint.

“I had heard say that the pitcher which often goes to the well gets broken at last, and I could not help fancying, notwithstanding our long run of success, that such would be the fate of the slaver.

“Perhaps the owners thought the same, for we had received orders to proceed round the Cape to the East Coast of Africa, where the Portuguese slave dealers had agreed to supply us with a cargo – that coast at the time being less watched by the English cruisers.

“We were some way off the Cape, on our passage eastward, when, while it was blowing hard and a pretty heavy sea was running, I fell from aloft. I had been a good swimmer from my boyhood, and when I came to the surface I struck out for my life, expecting to see the schooner heave to and lower a boat to pick me up. Instead of her doing so, what was my horror and dismay to observe that she was standing away from me. I caught sight of the captain and mate on the poop, and by the looks they cast at me I felt sure that they intended to leave me to my fate. I shouted loudly to them, asking if they were going to allow a fellow-creature to perish. Again and again I cried out, doing my utmost to keep my head above the foaming seas.

“A number of huge albatrosses had been following the vessel, sweeping round and round her, now soaring upwards, now plunging down into the waters to pick up anything which had fallen overboard. You may fancy my dismay when I found that instead of chasing the vessel as before, they were gathering round my head. Every moment I expected to see them darting down towards me, and I knew that a blow from one of their sharp beaks would have easily pierced my skull and struck me lifeless in a moment. Nearer and nearer they drew. I could distinguish their keen eyes watching me, and had I remained quiet for a moment I felt convinced that they would have dashed at me. I continued, therefore, striking out with my feet and beating the water with my hands, which I lifted up as often as they came near to keep them at bay. Still I knew full well that the struggle must soon cease, for I could not possibly much longer exert myself as I was then doing. I had had very little enjoyment in life, but yet I had no wish to go out of it; my hopes of escape, however, were small indeed; the only chance I could see was that the crew, indignant that one of their number should be left to perish, would insist on the captain heaving-to, and would lower a boat to come to my rescue.

“Further and further the vessel sailed away from me. I was beginning at last to think that I should be left to perish, when a hail reached my ears, and I saw about midway between myself and the vessel, a black head rising above the foaming seas. I shouted in return, and redoubled my efforts to keep the albatrosses at a distance, while I struck out to meet my friend, whom I recognised as Sambo the black cook. I found that he was towing after him a spar, which, though it had impeded his progress, would support us both. I was soon up to him.

”Neber fear, Boas, my son!’ he cried out as he assisted me on the spar, ‘we better here dan in slave ship.’ I could not see that exactly, though I thanked him for risking his life to save mine. ‘Risk

not so great as you tink,' he answered, 'I make out big ship, she steering dis way when I was aloft, and she soon come and pick us up.'

"I hoped that he was right, but still it was very likely that we should not be seen; if so he would lose his life as I should mine. I told him I was very sorry that he should do that.

"'Neber fear, Boas,' he answered. 'Nothing bery sweet in life for me. You saved my head from de blows of the captain and mate, I save your life or die wid you.'

"We could not talk much however. On his way he had picked up a couple of pieces of wood, and armed with these we were able to drive the albatrosses off. They are cowardly birds, and when they found that we were living men and not pieces of offal, they left us alone and flew after the schooner.

"The time went slowly by, but at last I could distinguish the sail of a ship rising above the horizon. She was standing towards us; of that I felt certain, so did Sambo. This enabled us to keep up our spirits. We watched her narrowly, her topsails, then her courses appeared, at length her hull itself came in sight, and we made out that she was a frigate, probably English. I was inclined to curse my fate, for one of the things I dreaded most was having to serve on board a man-of-war. Once or twice I felt almost inclined to let go, but Sambo laughed at my fears.

"'Can't be worse off dan on board slaver, and you better live, and den when we have a chance we may run from de ship.'

"His arguments prevailed, and once when it seemed to me she was altering her course, I began to fear that after all we might not be seen. However, as it was, she stood directly for us, and passed within a half a cable's length of where we floated on the spar. We shouted together, she immediately hove-to, and a boat being lowered we were picked up and taken on board. She was an English frigate bound out to the East Indies. We had not thought of agreeing to any story, and therefore when we were questioned as to the character of the craft ahead of us, we had nothing to do but to tell the truth. I could not help hoping that the schooner would be overtaken, when we should be amply revenged, but before we could get up with her night came on. The next morning she was nowhere to be seen.

"I had heard enough about men-of-war to make me expect pretty rough treatment. Things, I must own, were not so bad as I thought. I had no choice but to enter as one of her crew. Sambo did the same, and was rated as cook's mate. He seemed much happier than before, and told me it was the luckiest thing that ever happened to him in his life. When we got out to Bombay, the first place we touched at, I asked him about running from the ship. 'Don't be a fool, Boas,' he answered; 'you stay where you are; you only fall from de frying-pan into de fire if you attempt to run.'

"I still, however, thought that I would try it some day, but so sharp a look-out was kept whenever we were in port, that I gave it up as hopeless.

"Four years passed away. We had a few brushes with the Chinese and some boat service in looking after pirates, and at length the frigate was ordered home. I had had a taste of the lash more than once for getting drunk, and had been put in irons for insubordination, and had no mind to join another man-of-war if I could help it.

"As soon as the frigate was paid off, after I had had a spree on shore, I determined to make my way to Liverpool and ship on board another trader. I tried to persuade Sambo to accompany me. 'No, no, Boas, I know when I well off; I serve my time, den bear up for Greenwich, get pension and live like a gentlemen to the end of my days. You knock about de world, get kicked and cuffed and die like a dog.'

"I felt very angry and parted from him, though I could not help thinking that perhaps he was right.

"Well, after that I served on board several merchantmen, now sailing to the West Indies, now to the East, once in a fruit vessel to the Azores, and two or three times up the Mediterranean. I was wrecked more than once, and another time the ship I was on board was burnt, and I and three or four others of the crew escaped in one of the boats. I could not help thinking sometimes of what Sambo

had said to me, but it was too late now, and as I had not saved a farthing and had no pension to fall back on, I was obliged to continue at sea.

“I had found my way once more back to Liverpool, when the crimps, who had got hold of me, shipped me on board a vessel while I was drunk, and I was hoisted up the side not knowing where I was nor where I was going to till next day, when the pilot having left us, we were standing down the Irish Channel. I then found that I was on board a large armed brig, the ‘Seagull,’ bound out round Cape Horn to trade along the coast of Chili and Peru.

“I had sailed with a good many hard-fisted skippers and rough shipmates, but the captain and mates and crew of the ‘Seagull’ beat them all. The mates had ropes’ ends in their hands from morning to night, and to have marling-spikes hove at our heads was nothing uncommon. I had been at sea, however, too long not to know how to hold my own. My fists were always ready, and I kept my sheath-knife pretty sharp as a sign to the others that I would have no tricks played with me. But the boys among us did have a cruel life of it; one of them jumped overboard and drowned himself, and so would another, but the captain had him triced up and gave him two dozen, and swore he should have three the next time he made the attempt.

“We had a long passage. I have a notion that the skipper was no great navigator. I have seen tall large-whiskered fellows like him who could talk big on shore prove but sorry seamen after all.

“After trying for a couple of weeks to get round Cape Horn we were driven back, and being short of water, the captain, by the advice of the second mate, who had been there before, determined to run through the Straits of Magellan. We had been two days without a drop of water on board when we managed to get into a harbour in Terra del Fuego. We lost no time in going on shore in search of water to pour down our thirsty throats. Scarcely had we landed than we caught sight of a party of the strangest-looking black fellows I ever set eyes on. Talk of savages, they were indeed savages by their looks and manners – hideous looking little chaps with long black hair and scarcely a stitch of clothing on their bodies. We had muskets in our hands, the use of which they, I suppose, knew, for they behaved in a friendly manner, and when we made them understand that we wanted water, they took us to a pool into which a stream fell coming down from the mountain, where we could fill our casks and roll them back to the boats. As soon as we caught sight of it we rushed forward, and dipping down our heads drank till we were nigh ready to burst. I thought that I had never tasted such water before. Had the savages been inclined they might have taken the opportunity of knocking us on the head, but they didn’t. After we had loaded the boat, some of us walked on with them to their village, which was not far off. I cannot say much for their style of building. Their huts were just a number of sticks run into the ground, and tied at the top in the shape of a sugar-loaf – branches were interwoven between the sticks, and the whole was covered with dry grass. A few bundles of grass scattered about on the ground was their only furniture. These people, as far as you could see the colour of their skin through the dirt, were of a dark, coppery brown. The women were as dark and ill-looking as the men, but they were strong little creatures, and, as well as we could judge, did all the work.

“The men had bows and arrows and spears and slings. They had among them a number of little fox-like looking dogs, savage, surly brutes, which barked and yelped as we came near them. They were almost as ugly as their masters, but ugly as they were, they were clever creatures, for we saw them assist to catch fish in a curious fashion. A number of the little brutes swam out to a distance, and then, forming a circle, turned towards the shore, splashing the water and yelping as they came on. They were driving before them a whole shoal of fish towards the net which the Fuegeans had spread at the mouth of, a creek. As soon as the fish got into shallow water, where they were kept by the dogs, the savages rushed in with their spears, and stuck them through, or shot them with their arrows. In this way, by the help of the dogs, a number were caught. The dogs also are used to catch birds. This they do while the birds are sleeping, and so noiselessly do they spring upon them, that they can carry off one after the other without disturbing the rest, when they bring them to their masters. Useful as they are, the dogs get hardly treated, being constantly cuffed and beaten, and never getting even a

mouthful of food thrown to them. They know, however, how to forage for themselves, and will take to the water and catch fish or pounce down upon birds whenever they are hungry.

“Savage as these people are, they can build canoes for themselves, sometimes of birch bark, and sometimes they hollow out the trunks of trees by fire. They make them in different parts, which they sew together with thongs of raw hide, so that when they wish to shift their quarters, they can carry their canoes overland.

“They have got some stones in their country which give out sparks, and they use a dry fungus as tinder, so that they can quickly make a fire.

“As to cooking, their only notion is to make a fire, heat some stones, and put their food in among them.

“They are about the dirtiest people I ever fell in with; and all the time we were among them we never saw any of them washing themselves.

“In summer, when they can get fish and seals, which they catch with their spears, they have plenty of food. In winter, they are often on short commons. We heard it said that when it has been blowing too hard for them to go on the water, and they can catch neither fish nor seals, they are given to eat their old women, who they say can be of no further use, instead of killing their dogs, which they know will be of service to them when the summer again comes round.

“While we were on their coast, a whale was stranded near the mouth of the harbour. The news spread, and canoes were seen coming from all directions. In a short time the canoes gathered round the body of the monster, and the little coppery-coloured chaps were soon hard at work cutting off the blubber with their shell knives. The water was shallow between where the whale lay and the shore, and when one of the little fellows had cut off a large piece of blubber, he made a hole in the middle, through which he put his head, and thus brought his cargo to land, generally munching a piece of the raw fat on his way.

“The most curious things we saw were masses of stuff growing on the beech trees, of a red colour, something like mushrooms. Though this stuff has no taste, the people were very fond of it, and, for my part, I preferred it to raw whale-blubber.

“Having replenished our stock of water and wood, we made our way westward, sailing only during the day, and keeping the lead going. We were glad, however, to get clear of those high rocky shores, and the snow-storms which frequently came down on us. We kept away from the land for some time, and made it again not far from the town of Callao on the coast of Peru.

“The captain’s manner didn’t improve during the passage. Half his time he was drunk, and he was never on deck but that he was cursing and swearing at the crew, rope-ending every one who came within his reach. I could not help wishing that I had followed Sambo’s advice and stuck to the navy; though there was flogging enough at times when men would get drunk, still there was something like justice. A man had only to be sober and keep a quiet tongue in his head, and he need have no fear of the cat. On board the ‘Seagull,’ a man had reason to think himself fortunate if he escaped without a cracked skull. It was easy to tell what the fate of the brig would be, and I resolved to run from her on the first opportunity.

“Though we made the land in the forenoon, we were still at a considerable distance from it when the sun went down. We, therefore, after standing on for some time, hove-to, hoping to enter the harbour of Callao the next day. When morning broke we could see the snow-capped tops of the Cordilleras rising up in the far distance, but still the lower land appeared a long way off.

“We had to wait till the sea breeze set in, and it was nearly nightfall before we came to an anchor off Callao.

“It is the chief port of Peru, a short distance from Lima, the capital. As the captain expected to get rid of a good part of his cargo, I knew that the brig would remain some time. I, however, didn’t wish to lose a moment in getting free of her. As soon as the anchor was dropped, I watched my opportunity for a run. I intended, if possible, to escape in a shore boat, when there would be less

chance of being traced. That night, however, only the Custom House and health boats came off to us. I had to wait, therefore, the whole of the next day. I could not help fancying that the first mate suspected my intention, and was watching me. I showed myself, therefore, more active and attentive to the work I had to do than usual.

“A number of boats during the day came off to us with fresh provisions, especially all sorts of fruits. To throw the mate off his guard, while I saw that he was looking towards me, I bought some fruit; at the same time I tried to make the Chilian understand that if he would come again in the evening I would buy more of him. I then began eating some of the fruit and carried the rest below. After this the mate seemed to take no more pains to keep an eye on me.

“My friend returned just before sunset. I told him to hand me up some of the fruit, and paid him for it, letting him understand that if he would wait a little, and I liked what he had brought, I would take some more. It rapidly grew dark, and I returned on deck with a melon under my arm, which I pretended was rotten, and intended to have changed. Seeing the boat still alongside, holding the melon I slipped down into her, and was followed by the owner, who had been trying to sell more fruit on deck. Sitting by him, I began to talk in my fashion, and when no one was looking slipped a dollar into his hand and pointed to the shore. He at once nodded to show that he understood me. We waited, and I pretended to be bargaining about the melon while it grew darker and darker, and then when no one was looking over the side, lay down among the fruit baskets, pulling some of them over me. My friend continued to remain alongside, and I daresay if anyone had enquired for me, he would have handed me back, but as good luck would have it, I was not missed, and at last, he and his men shoved off and began to paddle towards the shore. Even then I did not feel safe, for I feared that the mate might miss me and send a boat to overhaul all the shore boats which had visited the brig, and I knew if I fell into the captain’s hands, he would clap me into irons and keep me there till we were at sea again.

“After we got some distance, the Peruvian crew began to pull faster. At length we reached the shore. The master, when we landed, shook my hand, to show that he intended to be my friend, and led me away to his house, which was at some distance from the shore. I made him understand that I did not wish to go back to the ship. He replied that it would be safer for me at once to go into the interior, where the captain would not think of looking for me. I saw the sense of this, and after I had had some supper we set out. I gave my friend another dollar, which pleased him mightily, and I told him by signs that I was ready to work in his garden, or anything of that sort on shore, not that I at any time had a fancy for digging.

“We travelled for some hours on muleback, till we reached a farm on the side of a mountain. I found that it belonged to my friend’s brother. After matters had been explained to him he received me very kindly, and I was soon at home in his house. I helped him about the place as I had promised, and had a tolerably easy life of it; for though I worked twice as hard as anyone else, that was not much, seeing that the Spaniards are not addicted to over-tire themselves. My host had a daughter, though I cannot say much for her beauty, for she had a dark skin, and was short and fat, but she took a fancy to me, and so thinking I could not do better, I offered to splice her. Her father, who was glad to get me to assist him, and wished to keep me, consented.

“Accordingly, we were married in the church they went to. The priest asked me if I was a Catholic, and I said I was ready to be anything he liked, on which he replied he would soon make me one. There was a grand festival, and a number of priests and people collected, and they took me in among them and made the sign of the cross upon me, and so I was turned into a Catholic. I suppose that I was a very good one, for I used to attend church with my wife and go to confession to the priest, though as I told him all my sins in English, not a word of which he understood, he could not have been much the wiser; but that, I suppose, didn’t matter, as he absolved me notwithstanding. I was thus looked upon with great respect by our neighbours, and got on very well with my wife.”

Chapter Two

“I had been a good many months in the place when my father-in-law, thinking I was securely moored, began to give me more and more work, which I didn’t like. However, I lived on pretty contentedly, but still I had a wish for a sniff of the sea air, and to feel myself once more on the moving ocean; not, to be sure, that I had not felt the ground move under me, for we had had two or three earthquakes, when not a few houses had been thrown down, and the ground tumbled and tossed, and here and there opened, as if ready to swallow us up.

“I took French leave of my wife, for I was afraid she would stop me; but when I reached Callao I sent word to her by her uncle that I hoped to be back soon, after I had collected no end of dollars to buy her a new dress, and keep the pot boiling.

“I hadn’t made up my mind what to do when I saw a whaler in the harbour. I thought if she was likely to remain in the Pacific for some time, and she wanted hands, I would make a trip in her, on condition that I was to be landed at Callao before she returned home.

“She was an American, only out a few months, and having lost several hands, the captain was very glad to get me. I hadn’t been long on board before I began to wish myself back with my wife. It was much harder work than I expected, especially when we got into the southern ocean among the icebergs. Those spermaceti whales, too, are savage monsters, and will often turn on a boat and try to capsize her.

“I was pretty well nigh losing my life on one of those occasions as several of my shipmates did theirs. We had chased a big bottle-nose right up to an iceberg, and had stuck two harpoons into his back when he sounded. He was making for the berg, we thought, and if he got under it we should have to cut the lines, and lose him and the harpoons. Presently the lines slackened, we hauled in upon them, when suddenly up he came not half a cable’s length from us, blowing away with all his might. We dashed on, when round he turned, and with open mouth came towards us.

”‘Back all,’ was the cry, but before we could get out of his way he struck the bow of the boat with his nose, sending it up in the air, and jerking several of us overboard. The next moment with his huge jaws he made a grab at the boat. Seizing a stretcher I sprang as far as I could out of his way, and struck out for my life. The shrieks of my shipmates and the cracking of the ribs and timbers of the boat sounded in my ears, but I had enough to do to take care of myself, even to turn my head for a moment. I swam on as fast as I could. Fortunately for me, the accident had been seen from the ship, and another boat was coming to our assistance. It’s a wonder the savage whale didn’t attack her, but probably he had had enough of it, while the harpoons in his back must have troubled him not a little. I was soon picked up, and two others were found floating, but the rest of the boat’s crew had either sunk or been crunched to death between the whale’s jaws. He had been watched from the ship, which made sail in the direction he had taken. In the evening a spout was seen in the distance, the boat shoved off, and before nightfall we had the very whale which had attacked us in the morning, fast alongside with tackles hooked on, and the blanket pieces, as we called the blubber, being hoisted on board.

“That trying-out is curious work to those who have never seen it. Along the decks were the huge tripods, with fires blazing under them, and the crew standing round begrimed with smoke and oil, putting in the blubber, while others, as soon as the oil was extracted, were filling the casks and stowing them below. All night long the work went on, and there was no stopping till the huge monster had been stripped of his warm coat, and we had bailed the oil out of its big head, which had meantime been made fast to the stern.

”‘Dollars are pleasant things to pick up, but I must find some pleasanter way for gathering them than this,’ I said to myself. However, for more than two years I hadn’t a chance of returning to Callao. When at last the whaler put in there and landed me, I found that an earthquake had occurred, and the ground opened and swallowed up my father-in-law, and my wife with all her family. My wife’s

uncle, however, had escaped, and he received me very kindly, and more so that, as I had made a good voyage in the whaler, my pockets were full of dollars. They, however, went at last.

“One day I was thinking what I should do next, when he told me that several vessels were fitting out in the harbour, to make a cruise among the islands of the Pacific, just to pick up some labourers for the mines. ‘It’s pretty hard work up in the mountains there, and most of our native Peruvians who used to work in them have died out,’ he observed. ‘There’s a merchant in our city who is going to make a grand speculation, and as Englishmen have shares in most of the mines, of course he is assisted with English capital, which our country could not supply. Now if you like to ship on board one of these vessels, you will find the pay good, the voyage short, and but little risk.’

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