

Kidnapping in the Pacific; Or, The Adventures of Boas Ringdon

A long four-part Yarn

William Henry Giles Kingston



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The Adventures of Boas Ringdon: A long four-part Yarn

Author: W.H.G. Kingston

Illustrator: E. Evans

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WHG Kingston

"Kidnapping in the Pacific"

"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 belay 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 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.'

"I thought to myself that I could not do better. I had served too long on board a slaver to think much of the work proposed. There was no difference that I could see between a black skin and a brown skin, and as I had assisted to carry some thousands of black men across to the east coast of America, I did not scruple to undertake to carry as many brown men as could be picked up to the west coast. To be sure, the natives of those bright and sunny islands, unaccustomed to work, might not find it very pleasant to be carried away to labour high up among the rocks and snows of the Andes, but that was no business of mine.

"I accordingly shipped on board one of several vessels fitted out by the enterprising merchant I spoke of. The 'Andorinha' carried thirty hands besides the captain and mate, and we had four guns and plenty of small arms. Our orders were to proceed direct to the nearest islands, and to carry off as many of the inhabitants as we could get on board, but we were to try stratagem first, and by every means in our power induce them to, visit the ship. As soon as we had collected as many as we were likely to entice on board, we were to put them below and shut down the hatches, and sail away with them.

"The plan was simple, and I thought it would succeed. Should they object to make the voyage and attempt to regain their liberty, we had our arms, and were to use them, but we were advised not to kill more people than we could help, as each was likely to fetch fifty or sixty dollars on shore.

"Before sailing, the merchant who had fitted out our vessel came on board with several friends, and the crew being called on deck, he addressed the captain and us, telling us that we were about to engage in an enterprise likely to prove of great value to Peru, but all was to be done

by fair and honourable means. That we were to visit various islands, and to engage the industrious inhabitants to come and labour in our beautiful country for good wages, where they would also have the benefit of being instructed in the Christian faith and become good Catholics, to the great advantage of their souls. We were to treat them kindly and gently, and to give them the best of everything, so that they would not fail, by their gratitude, to show how highly they valued the service we should render them.

“I could not help grinning when I heard this, knowing the way that matters were really to be managed. The speech was made just to hoodwink the authorities, and for the benefit of the merchant’s friends, who, if they were not to profit by the adventure, might have found some fault with the way in which it was really to be carried on.

“The ‘Andorinha’ was a large vessel, and we calculated that we could stow away five or six hundred people on board her.

“Seven other vessels being fitted out, we sailed together in company, our first destination being Easter Island, which lies in latitude 27 degrees South and 109 degrees West, some distance from the coast of Chili.

“Light winds detained us, but at length we made the island, which is high and rocky and about thirty-six miles in circumference. The inhabitants, of the same race as the rest of the Eastern Pacific, and somewhat less savage than most of them, were living in villages, at peace among themselves.

“As soon as our fleet came to an anchor, the boats were lowered and manned, and a strong party of us landed. The inhabitants, not liking our appearance, hid themselves in their houses. We immediately marched to the nearest village, which we surrounded, and entering house after house, dragged off the people, and sent them, with their hands bound behind their backs, to the boats. They did not attempt to resist, for as we had firearms and they had none, it would have been of no use. As soon as the boats were loaded they took them off to the vessel, and then returned for more. We, meantime, kept watching the village, so that no one could escape. Having carried off all the inhabitants, men, women, and children—for even the youngest children were of some use to us—

we proceeded to the next village. These we treated in the same way, leaving a few old men and women who were not worth carrying off.

“Before evening we had shipped nearly every human being we found on the island. None escaped us, for they had no mountains to fly to, and no caves or other places where they could hide themselves. We then collected all the pigs, poultry, and such other provisions as we could find, and sent them on board.

“Before returning to our vessels, we burned down a considerable number of the houses.

“We stowed away all our captives on board two of our larger vessels, which at once returned to land them on the coast of Chili, while we proceeded on our voyage.

“The first land we made was one of the Society Islands, to the north of Tahiti. We could not venture to that island itself, because the French were there, who might have objected to our carrying off the people. For the same reason we avoided the Hervey, and other islands to the south, where we knew a number of English missionaries were stationed, and they might have complained of our proceedings, and taken means to put a stop to them. Here, however, we hoped to make a good haul, and be away before we were discovered.

“The schooner did not bring up, but stood off and on the land under English colours, while a boat was sent on shore to invite the natives on board. I went in her. As soon as we landed, I, with another man, who pretended to be the supercargo, proceeded to the house of the principal chief. It was a large hut, the framework formed of slight poles placed at intervals, bending somewhat inwards, and joined with horizontal poles of the same thickness secured to them, the whole being covered with a neat thatch. We found the chief reclining at his ease on one of several mats which covered the floor, with his wife and other females of the family seated near him. He had thrown aside his robe of native cloth, and was dressed only in his maro or girdle round his waist. We told him that the vessel in the offing was an English trader, and had on board a quantity of goods which were likely to suit him and his people, and we invited him, and as many as he liked to bring with him, to come and inspect them,

hinting that the captain was of a generous disposition, and would be glad, at all events, to make them presents to gain their good will. We were in no hurry, we said, for payment, and would call again for the cocoa-nut oil which he might agree to collect for us. He seemed mightily pleased with the proposal, and promised to come off the next morning. We then went to the house of other chiefs and principal people, telling them the same tale.

“In our rambles we saw a curious spectacle. Having reached another district governed by a different chief, we found him seated on a mat in front of his house, while a number of people were approaching bearing hogs, and fowls, and breadfruit, and other articles of food. Among them were three young women, whose bodies were swathed in a prodigious quantity of native cloth made out of the paper mulberry tree. This cloth and the food were being brought as presents to the chief, who had had, we understood, a child just born to him by one of his wives. How the girls could ever have got the cloth round them was a puzzle to me, but my companion, who had been on these islands and acted as interpreter, explained the matter. He said that the cloth being made ready, the girl lies down on the ground and rolls herself over and over, till the whole of the cloth is wound round her. She is then put on her feet, and taking the end over her shoulder, is able to proceed on her way.

“The food having been presented, one of the damsels was led forward, when she lay down before the chief, and began to unroll herself, while one of his attendants gathered up the cloth; and thus she kept turning round and round till the whole of the cloth was unwound, and she remained in her own somewhat scanty garments. The next girl went through the same process.

“We pretended to be delighted with the cloth, and told the chief that, if he would bring it on board, we would exchange it for all sorts of articles. The news of the rich cargo the vessel contained spread among the people, and large numbers promised to come off to us the following morning.

“Well content with the way we had managed matters, we returned on board.

“The following day we took care to stand in towards the shore in good

time, when a number of canoes full of people were seen coming off to the ship. As they arrived alongside we invited them on board, taking care that they brought no arms with them. We had a few things spread out in the hold, and as the people collected on board, the captain asked them to step down below to see them. When there, the pretended supercargo kept them engaged bargaining for the goods while others were arriving. Having collected all who could be induced to come on board below, the supercargo slipped up by the fore hatchway, saying that he wished to consult the captain about the price of some of the articles. The vessel, meantime, had been edging off the land. Our guns were loaded, and we had all armed ourselves in case the natives might make any resistance. All being ready, we suddenly clapped the hatches down upon our visitors, and had them prisoners. The people in some of the canoes suspecting that their friends were in danger, attempted to climb up the sides to their assistance. We had, therefore, to sink the canoes by throwing cold shot into them. As several other large canoes were approaching which might prove troublesome, we fired our guns at them and knocked them to pieces. This done, we made all sail, and stood away from the island. When the natives below found themselves entrapped, they, as may be supposed, created a considerable uproar, shouting and shrieking, and demanding to be set at liberty. The hatches, however, being fast closed down, they could not force their way out, and as they were without food or water, and the air was pretty close, we knew that they must soon come to their senses, and therefore took no heed of their cries, though it was necessary, of course, to keep watch over them, lest by chance they might make their way out.

“When we had run the land out of sight, the fore hatch was partly lifted, and a few at a time were allowed to come on deck. They looked greatly astonished when gazing round to find that their native land was not to be seen. Our interpreter then told them that, if they behaved themselves, things would go well with them; but if not, they must expect rough treatment. The first which had come up had their hands lashed behind them, and were sent aft; and the rest, as they appeared on deck, were treated in the same manner. Two or three, from the hot air and the struggles they had made, had lost their lives; but that mattered little, considering the number we had secured.

“Having cleaned and fumigated the hold, they were again sent below, and

we stood for another island.

“Of course the people complained of the way they had been treated; some were weeping, others abusing us, while some refused to take the food we offered them. They were told, however, that if they would not eat they should be flogged, for we were not going to allow them to starve themselves to death. In time we got them into pretty good order. As it would not do for them to give way to despair, they were assured that, after working two or three years in the country to which we were taking them, if they were industrious and behaved themselves, and consented to become good Catholics, they would be sent back to their native island much the richer and happier for the trip. I don't know if they believed us; they might possibly have had doubts about the matter. These people had had missionaries among them, and most of them were Christians; but the French had sent the missionaries away, and they had become somewhat slack in their religion. Now, however, in their trouble they began to pray again, and it was curious to hear them singing, and praying, and repeating parts of the Bible which they had learned by heart. Our interpreter said it made him somewhat uncomfortable; but the captain laughed at him, and told him that he must not let such notions trouble him, and that at best they were only heretics, and would now have the chance of becoming real Christians.

“We touched at several other islands in the neighbourhood, from which canoes full of natives came off towards us to learn who we were, and what we wanted. One canoe came alongside with an old chief, who inquired eagerly whether we had a missionary on board, as he was anxiously looking out for one who had promised to come and teach him and his people to be Christians. The captain wanted the supercargo to pass as the expected missionary, but he declined, saying he could not bring his conscience to do it. The captain replied that the missionary was sick below, but that if the chief and his followers would come up the side, they should see him in the cabin.

“The savages looked very much surprised when they came on deck, to find themselves pinioned and handed down below. Two of them before they were secured, attempted to leap overboard. One was caught and the other was shot, their canoe being sunk alongside that she might not drift on shore and tell tales. The people in some of the other canoes

which came off further on were more wary, and we had to use a great deal of persuasion to induce them to trust us. At last, we got one canoe full of natives to come near us. As she approached on the port side, we had two of our boats lowered and manned ready on the starboard side. When, after having in vain tried to get the people on deck, the boats pulled round, and though the savages shoved off, we were too quick for them. There was a fierce struggle, two or three men were knocked overboard, but we captured the rest and quickly had them below hatches, while their canoes, as usual, were sent to the bottom.

“We were not always so successful. Three canoes, one day, were coming off to us, and were nearly up to the schooner, when they took alarm. As the captain did not wish to lose them, he ordered the guns to be fired, which sank two of them, when the boats which were ready pulled away and picked up most of the people, excepting two or three who had been killed by the shot. The third canoe escaped, and we knew after this, there was not much chance of getting any more canoes to come off to us from that island.

“From this place we sailed away for several days, till we sighted a large coral island, with a lagoon in the centre, and numerous cocoa-nut trees growing along the shore. We judged from this that it was inhabited. We stood close in on the lee side, till we could distinguish some low huts scattered about under the trees, and a considerable number of natives scampering along the shore. They were a savage-looking people, without a stitch of clothing, except belts round their waists, and bracelets and shells on their arms and legs, their hair, as they ran, streaming in the wind, while they shook their long thin lances at us. As they had no canoes, we could not get them to come off to the vessel. It was therefore necessary for us to land and try and catch some of them. They looked so fierce and determined that we expected they would give us more trouble than the inhabitants of Easter Island had done. Two boats well armed were, however, sent on shore to make the attempt. We were to proceed by fair means and to offer them trinkets, knives, and glasses, and handkerchiefs. If they would not be induced to trust us, we were to surround their village, and catch as many alive as we could.

“As we pulled in for the shore, a party of the savages, led by an old chief, came leaping, shouting, and shrieking, and brandishing their spears

towards us. The chief was a terrible-looking old fellow, taller than any of the rest, with high cheek bones, his hair and beard of long grey hair plaited and twisted together, hanging from his head and around his mouth like so many rats' tails. His companions imitated his example, and there seemed but little chance of our being able to get hold of any of them by peaceable means. We had our muskets ready to bring them down should they come too near us. We held up the trinkets, and handkerchiefs, and looking-glasses to try to make them understand that we wished to be friendly, but it was of no use; they only shrieked the louder and leapt the higher, and told us to be off, as they did not want us or our goods. However, we remained steady, and they did not venture nearer.

“As our object was to catch them alive, dead savages being of no use to us, we persevered. Having placed several of the articles on the ground, we quietly retired to a distance, and at last we saw two or three of the younger men approach and take the things up. They seemed well pleased with them, and showed them to the rest. On this, we put some more on the ground and again retired, then three of our men putting their muskets on the ground advanced towards the savages, being well covered by the rest of us, and putting out their hands, we presented at the same time several more articles. By these means we began to gain their confidence. We then made them understand that all we wanted was a few cocoa-nuts, and that every man who brought one should be amply paid. In this way after we had waited quietly on the beach, twenty young fellows were persuaded to put themselves within our reach, and to sit down in a circle near the boats. The old chief all the time kept shouting to them, but they did not appear to heed him. While one party with loaded muskets advanced towards the rest of the natives, we suddenly set upon the lads who had brought us the cocoa-nuts, knocked them over, had their arms pinioned, and they were carried to the boats before even their astonished countrymen could attempt to come to the rescue. At last, led by the old chief, the former made a dash at our men who remained, when several were of necessity shot down, the rest taking to flight, and we shoved off well content with having captured twenty stout young fellows, who were likely to prove serviceable labourers at the mines.

“Having at length got a full cargo, we returned to Easter Island, where we landed our captives. There they were to remain under a strong guard till

carried away by smaller vessels and landed on different parts of the coast of Peru. We meantime sailed for the westward.

“During the trip we occasionally fell in with our former consorts, engaged in the same business, and we found that they had succeeded in capturing a number of natives from different islands much in the same way that we had done. Some were enticed on board by stratagem, others taken by force. No one engaged in the business was particular as to what means were employed, provided they could succeed in the enterprise. One vessel had taken a whole cargo off one single island, known as High Island, the crew having landed and surrounded the villages one after another, shooting down all who resisted.

“The wealthy merchant who had fitted out the vessel must have been highly satisfied, as must also the English shareholders who advanced him the money. Possibly they may or may not have been fully aware of the means employed to ensure success.

“Whether these people, accustomed to an easy and luxurious life on their sunny islands, would ultimately prove useful labourers in the dark mines, and be able to carry loads of ore down the steep, rocky sides of the mountains, I am not prepared to say. Our business was to catch them—that of the merchant to sell them; while the overseers of the mines had to see to the rest. If they died from hard work that was their look out.

“At length we arrived off Niue, or Savage Island, to which Captain Cook gave that name because the inhabitants were then and for many years afterwards fierce and barbarous in the extreme. Missionaries, both native and English, I had heard say, had gone among them, and the people had all become Christians and civilised. We could see that a well-made road ran round the island, and at intervals there were white-washed cottages, with gardens full of flowers, and neat churches peeping out among the trees.

“‘These people,’ the captain observed, ‘if we could get hold of them, were likely to prove mild and submissive, and of far more value than the savages we had taken from some of the other islands.’ It was necessary, however, to be cautious, or they might have suspected our intentions.

“We hove-to off the island, and the supercargo going on shore inquired for the English missionary. We found that his residence was on the other side, and we therefore judged that this would be a good place to carry on our operations. The supercargo, pretending that he was a friend of the missionary, invited as many as were inclined to come off to the vessel, saying that he had a present for the missionary and a few trifles for the chiefs, and that he should also be glad to trade with them for any articles they might produce.

“Meantime the other boats were in readiness with arms stowed away out of sight. A large number of canoes at once paddled off to us, some containing ten, others four or five natives each. The people came on board without hesitation, and while the captain kept them amused, showing some cases which he said contained the presents for the missionary and chiefs, bargaining for the few articles they had brought with them, the boats pushed away rapidly for the shore. A large number of people were collected on the beach, but even when they saw the boats coming, not observing any arms in the hands of the men, they were in no way alarmed. Their suspicions did not appear to be aroused, even when our men formed on the shore.

“Keeping our weapons as much as possible concealed, we marched a little way inland, then suddenly wheeling, with a loud shout rushed down upon the natives. They seemed utterly paralysed, and though some few fled, the greater number stared at us as if wondering what we were next going to do. We did not leave them long in doubt, but pressing round them, tripped them over, bound their arms, and in a short time made sixty or more prisoners. They offered little or no resistance, and we soon had all we had caught safely in the boat. As we pulled towards the vessel we saw several canoes making for the shore, but with only two or three people in each, while her guns were playing on a few others which were attempting to escape. We picked up several men who had jumped overboard, and when we got alongside we found that fully a hundred had been secured. Altogether we got a hundred and sixty people from that island alone; some were old men, but most of them were young and active. They were all neatly dressed in shirts and trousers, and looked very intelligent indeed; there was not one among them who could not read in his native tongue, and they all said that they were Christians. Our supercargo told them that so were we, but that we were real ones, while

they, having only learned from the missionaries, were heretics.

“As they might have proved troublesome, we clapped them all down below, and kept the hatches on them.

“Wishing to capture more people from the same island, we immediately made sail, and stood along the coast, hoping to entice others on board before the news of what had occurred had spread. We heard our prisoners talking together, and soon they began knocking at the hatches, and under the deck, and on the sides, shrieking to be let out, and entreating us to put them again on shore. Two of our men were stationed at the hatchway ready to shoot any who might break out. Still the people below continued to make so much noise that the captain and mate became enraged, and, with two other men, went below armed with boats’ stretchers, and began to lay about them right and left, to bring the people to order. At last they were quiet, and we hoped that they had learned a lesson they would not forget. In the evening we heard them, instead of shouting and shrieking to be let out, singing hymns and praying. Looking down into the hold, there we saw them all kneeling together as if in prayer; then an old man among them got up, and while they sat round him he began to speak to them, and the supercargo, who understood their language, said he was preaching; and when he had finished he stretched out his hands, and prayed to God to bless them. After that they were quiet enough, and during the night gave us no further trouble.

“The next morning at daylight we stood in to another part of the coast. We saw several canoes quietly engaged in fishing, and so we guessed that the alarm had not spread thus far. We accordingly stood close in, when several canoes came off to us. The captain, as usual, invited the people on board. Some of them spoke English, which the captain did not understand, and I was not inclined to answer them. As they might have been alarmed had they seen armed men at the hatchway, those who had been stationed there were withdrawn. The new arrivals spoke rather loudly to each other; their voices were heard by their countrymen below, who, making a sudden rush at the fore hatch, forced it off and sprang upon deck.

“The alarm was given immediately; those who had last come, as well as our captives, began to leap overboard. We all rushed upon them,

knocked those we could catch down, and shut close the hatchway. The captain then ordered us to fire on the people in the water swimming for the shore, while the boats were manned and sent in pursuit of the fugitives. Two or three were hit, some sank, and only a few succeeded in gaining one of the canoes; the rest were all retaken. In the canoe which escaped was one young man who was shot just as he got into it: his companions, however, managed to paddle off. Those who had been retaken were well beaten, and forced down below.

“As there was no use remaining longer at Savage Island, we sailed for Samoa.

“We avoided the principal harbours, and kept cruising along the coast, picking up several canoes which came off to us. Occasionally we went on shore to obtain water and vegetables, always being on our guard lest our business might be suspected, and we ourselves entrapped. At one place where we landed for this purpose, we found the natives under an old warrior chief preparing to attack a neighbouring tribe. ‘This is just the opportunity for us,’ observed our supercargo; ‘if we help the old chief, we may bargain that we are to have all the prisoners.’ The supercargo on this began to talk to the chief about the arms and men we possessed, and to hint that we might possibly be persuaded to assist him in conquering his enemies. The old chief at once took the bait, and promised us anything we might ask if we would assist him. The supercargo replied that our captain would be very moderate in his demands, and that we should be content if we might have all the prisoners. We agreed to come on shore with ten men to help him. The captain, however, had arranged to send all the boats, which were to keep in the rear of the enemy, and, as soon as the battle began, the crews were to land, and carry off as many warriors as they could lay hands on.

“Early the next morning we landed with our muskets, and found the army drawn up for battle. The warriors were armed with spears and short clubs, and their hair dressed up in the strangest fashion, and stuck full of feathers. They were almost naked, with the exception of kilts round their waists. We kept in the rear, ready to advance when called upon to act, and the warriors marched forward, singing songs and shouting their war-cries. In a short time they came in front of the enemy, who were seen drawn up in a wood. Both parties halted and began abusing each other,

our friends telling their enemies that they were women, and would soon run away; and warning them that they only came to be killed, if they dared to advance further. After this style of compliment had been exchanged for some time, they rushed towards each other grinning and making faces, when they once more halted, and began throwing their spears. We on this advanced, and fired a volley, which threw them into the greatest confusion. It was evidently totally unexpected, and, before they could recover, our friends rushed in on them, speared some and made others prisoners. We, meantime, were loading, and, having done so, advanced and fired a second volley. The enemy, though brave fellows, began to fly, when our friends dashed in among them, and, with our assistance, a large number were captured. Many of those who escaped were seized by the crews of the boats, and at once dragged off. The victory was complete, and the old chief at once handed over to us all the prisoners he had taken. This was an advantage to them, for they would otherwise have been killed.

“By this means we collected about forty men, whom we carried at once on board.

”“We may as well have some of our friends,’ observed the supercargo, and he accordingly returned on shore to invite the old chief, and as many people as he chose to bring off to visit the ship, and receive some presents which he was told we had prepared for him. The chief looked highly pleased, and much to the satisfaction of the supercargo, accepted his polite invitation.

“Next morning the chief and several people came alongside. The chief said he desired to thank us for the service we had rendered him, and to present us with some cocoa-nut oil and rolls of cloth which would be prepared in a day or two if we would wait for them.

“The captain assured him of his friendship, and begged him to accept some presents in return for those he intended to make, and invited him and several of his principal attendants into the cabin to receive them, while his people were asked by the crew to go down forward. No sooner were our guests below than they were seized and lashed hand and foot before they could give the alarm to those who remained on deck. All hands then rushed on deck, and quickly knocked down the greater

number of those who were collected there; a few uttering loud cries of terror leapt overboard, while those in the canoes, suspecting that something was wrong, shoved off, and began to paddle away towards the shore. Our shot sent after them caused such alarm that several of the canoes returned, others escaped, two or three were knocked to pieces, and some of the people in them drowned.

“We considered this a good haul, but we had some difficulty in keeping order between the new comers and their enemies whom we had before captured; by going among them, however, with our clubs, and showing them that we would stand no nonsense, we brought them into order. Again making sail, we continued our course along the coast, here and there capturing canoes, and occasionally landing and carrying off a few people, though we were not again so successful as in the case I have described.

“In one small canoe we found a Portuguese with two Samoians; the latter we put below hatches, but the captain was afraid of detaining the white man, who declined joining us, and allowed him to make the best of his way to shore.

“We found two of our consorts cruising off this coast, but in a short time the suspicions of the people on shore were aroused, and we therefore left it and proceeded on to visit certain groups of islands lying 8 or 10 degrees south of the equator. From one of these islands we got nearly a hundred people, and another vessel which followed us captured several more, though most of the natives as soon as a sail hove in sight ran off from the coast.

“By various means, from one island or another, we captured fifty or sixty more, till at length with a full cargo we steered eastward to put them on shore, as before, on Easter Island.

“Some disagreeable news met us here. We heard that the French authorities at Tahiti were very indignant at our having carried off the natives of islands under their protection, and that they had sent out several cruisers to intercept us. One of our vessels, the ‘Mercedes,’ had been seized with a hundred and fifty natives on board. The vessel had been condemned and sold, the captain sentenced to five years’ penal

servitude, and the supercargo to ten. Besides her four or five other vessels had been captured and carried into Tahiti, where they were detained. One, having been taken without any natives, was allowed to return to Callao after she had been compelled to dispose of all her rice and other provisions, so as to make it impossible for her to proceed on her voyage. Besides this, the French Governor of Tahiti had sent to the Peruvian Government demanding that every native who had been taken from islands under French protection should be delivered up, and heavy damages paid for any who might be missing. However, as these formed but a very small number of the natives captured, the matter in itself was not of much consequence. The fear was that not only the French but the English might send out cruisers and interfere in all directions with our proceedings. The profit, however, and the demand for labour was so great, that in spite of the difficulties to be encountered, the merchant I spoke of resolved to persevere in the undertaking, although it would be necessary to use even greater precautions than before.

“This first voyage will give you an idea of two or three others which I made shortly afterwards, when we collected our passengers much in the same way as before, though we took care only to visit islands the least frequented by European vessels, so that our proceedings might be kept as secret as possible.

“Ill luck, however, at length set against us. Some of our vessels were wrecked, the natives rose and murdered the crew of one, the French captured several more, and the Peruvian government, compelled to listen to the complaints which were made, interfered, and considerable difficulties were thrown in the way of landing the islanders. The ‘Andorinha,’ after her long career of success, was driven on a coral reef, when the captain and supercargo and most of the crew perished. I was washed on shore, more dead than alive. Fortunately for me, it was near a village of Christian natives, one of whom found me on the beach, and carried me to his hut, and fed and clothed me, and took care of me till I recovered. He knew the character of the vessel, for we had some time before carried off several natives from that very island, but I told him that I was an Englishman, and compelled by the Spaniards to remain on board. He replied that it mattered not who I was or what I had been about, that I was suffering and in distress, and that his religion taught him to feed and clothe the hungry and naked, and to do good to his enemies

—that as long as I chose I might remain, and that if I wished to go I might depart in peace. I was sure he did not believe the account I gave of myself, and I own I did not feel as comfortable as I should have liked. He and his family had prayers and sang hymns morning and evening; and on Sunday, as well as on other days in the week, they attended a large chapel, where a native missionary preached. The other people in the village did the same. All this did not suit me, and I determined to get away as soon as I had the chance. No vessel appearing, however, I told my host that I should like to see other parts of his island, and that I would make a trip through it. He replied that I might do as I wished, but that as some of the natives were heathens or ‘devil’s men,’ as he called them, they might not treat me well. I answered that I would run the risk of that, and as to their being heathens, that was all the same to me. It only, indeed, made me the more eager to be among them, as I thought I should have greater liberty than with my psalm-singing friends. I accordingly walked away with a stick in my hand, for I had no clothes except those on my back. Wherever I went the natives received me kindly, and gave me such food as I wanted.

“After travelling some days, I found myself in a village where there was no church and no school, and the people did not trouble themselves much about clothing. I guessed by this that they were heathens. The chief, a young man, invited me to stop with him, and assist him in his battles. I soon showed him that I was a good hand with a musket, and he remarked that before long the time might come when I could use it. He was just then, however, with some of his friends, going to catch pigeons in the woods. We had first a grand kava feast, the drink they make from certain roots, which they first chew in their mouths. Each of the young men had several trained pigeons, which are taught to fly round and round in the air at the end of a long string, and to come back to their masters when called. Each man had, besides, a small net fixed to the end of a bamboo forty feet in length. On arriving at the wood a large circle was cleared of bush, and a wall of stones built round it. Each sportsman had also a small arbour of boughs erected, in which he could sit hidden just outside the wall. In front of him sat his pigeon on a perch stuck in the ground, while by his side rested his net, ready to be raised in a moment.

“When all was prepared, the decoy birds were let fly as far as the string, forty or fifty feet in length, would allow them, when they circled round and

round, and to and fro, over the open ground. The wild birds, on seeing them, collected from all quarters to learn what they were about. The sportsmen then drew down their birds, when, as soon as the wild birds came near enough, they raised their nets, and seldom failed to capture one of the wild pigeons. In an instant the bird was brought down. Bird after bird was caught in the same manner. Before commencing the game, stakes were put in, and he who caught the greatest number of pigeons won them.

“We remained nearly a month engaged in this sport, spending the morning in bird-catching, and the evening in feasting. I tried my hand at it, but though, after a few days’ practice, I managed to catch several birds, I did not succeed as well as the young chiefs. This was more to my interest, for had I beat them, perhaps they might have become jealous of me.

“Altogether, this sort of life suited me much better than that which I led with the Christian natives. They were a hospitable sort of people, and I had as much liberty as I could wish for.

“Among other curious things I observed while I was among them, was the way they manufactured the cloth with which they make their dresses. They used the bark of the paper mulberry tree. The young tree is first cut down, and the bark stripped off; it is then steeped in water for a couple of days, when the inner bark is separated from the coarse outer bark. This is then beaten until it becomes as thin as silver-paper, and much increased in size. Even then it is scarcely a foot wide; but the edges are overlapped, and stuck together with arrow-root melted in water. It is then again beaten till all the parts are completely joined. Pieces are thus made of many yards in length, such as I saw during my first visit to these islands. They are afterwards dyed of various colours, red, brown, and yellow, and patterns are put on with a sort of stamp.

“Though the heathen natives wore very few clothes generally, they at times dressed up in robes formed of the cloth I have described, which has a very handsome appearance.

“I might tell you a good deal more about these people. I had made up my mind to remain among them; but people, as you know, don’t do always

what they intend. Such was my case in the present instance, as you shall hear. But pass the grog-bottle. I must wet my whistle before I move along.”

I was almost sick with listening to the account of the atrocities witnessed if not perpetrated by the old ruffian, our host, and was inclined to stop him, but his tongue once set going that was more than I could do, and so on he went again.

Chapter Three.

“One day a brig brought up in the harbour near which I happened to be staying, and the crew came on shore. She belonged to Sydney, New South Wales, and as they talked to me about that place I was seized with a fancy to go there. Fearing that the chief would not let me get away, I told him that I was just going on board to pay my countrymen a visit. I kept below during the remainder of the day, and next morning the brig got under weigh, and stood out of the harbour. She was the ‘Tickler,’ engaged in the sandal-wood trade, and had still several places to visit to complete her cargo, which she was obliged to pick up here and there, and often had a hard job to get it. The captain was in no way particular how he managed. I was on board for some months and saw some curious things done.

“The wood mostly grows on the Western Islands, north and south of the line. On one occasion we came off a place where the captain understood it was to be procured from the mountains, some way in the interior. We managed to entice the chief of the district on board by promising him some presents, if he would come and fetch them. As soon as we had got him, the captain told his people that unless they would bring twelve boats’ loads of sandal-wood off he would carry him away as a prisoner. The savages exclaimed that the white men were very cruel and unjust, but the captain did not mind that, as they were only savages, do you see; and as they did not wish to lose their chief, they were obliged to comply. The captain told him that if he didn’t behave himself and hold his tongue, he would double the quantity. The chief, seeing that the captain was in earnest, ordered his people to go and fetch the wood, when the whole neighbourhood had to turn out and cut it. In the course of two or three days it was brought on board.

“Having got the wood we sailed away to another place. These savages are content with curious articles in exchange for their wood. Instead of money the brig had on board a quantity of small white shells, the teeth of sharks and other animals, as also pigs, cats, and goats. So eager are they to possess these animals that they would sometimes give a ton of sandal-wood for a goat or cat. One day a native came on board with a small quantity of sandal-wood when our shells had run short. The mate

offered him some tobacco, which he did not want. He got angry and said he must have a shell, when the mate without more ado pulled out his revolver: it went off, and the native was shot dead. The body was thrown overboard, and the sandal-wood remained with us, though the man's friends wanted payment for it. The captain told the mate he should not have been so careless as to shoot the man, and then thought no more about the matter.

“Our object, however, being to get sandal-wood, the captain cared little as to the means. The lazy islanders in some places, where it grew abundantly, would not take the trouble of cutting it, so the captain devised a plan for obtaining what he wanted. We visited for this purpose an island where the natives were friendly with the white men, and enticed a number on board. When we had got them the captain told them that he would give them their liberty if they would go on shore at a place to which he would take them, and cut as much sandal-wood as he wanted. Back we sailed to the island where the sandal-wood grew. We then took them on shore, and landing with a strong party of armed men, guarded them while they cut the wood, which the inhabitants seemed to object to their doing. They worked well, for they were anxious to go back to their own island. We had to shoot a few of the inhabitants who came too close to us with their spears and clubs, but they were savage black fellows, and terrible cannibals, and so to my mind there was no great harm in shooting them.

“The wood was cut and carried down by our natives to the boats. We had now got pretty well as much as the brig would carry, but the captain told them to go back and cut more. They said they were afraid, lest the black fellows should kill them. The captain answered that that was their look out, and that if they wanted their liberty the wood must be cut. When we had got it into the boats we returned to the brig; the captain then ordered the anchor to be hove up, saying that he could not spare time to go back to the island from which the natives had come, and that he had fulfilled his contract by giving them their liberty and leaving them on shore.

“As we sailed out of the harbour, we saw some of them running down to the beach, and waving their hands to us, with the black fellows at their heels. They were soon overtaken, and one after the other were knocked over by the clubs of the savages, who, to my belief, ate the whole of

them; for the inhabitants of that island were well known, as I have said, to be fearful cannibals.

“Now, perhaps some people may think that the captain of the ‘Tickler’ didn’t behave quite straightforward in the matter; but that’s no business of mine. What he had to do was to get a shipload of sandal-wood as cheaply as he could, and he did his best to save expense. To be sure, others who came after us might have suffered, because the savages were not very likely to trust them. We ourselves were nearly cut off on one occasion, when visiting a large island called New Caledonia. Though we had seen a number of natives gathering on the coast, we pulled in without fear, supposing that their clubs and spears could not reach us, and a volley of small arms would soon put them to flight. As we pulled on we heard them shouting to us, and shrieking loudly. They were a jet-black, fine race of fellows. We could see that some of them had long spears in their hands, but others seemed to be unarmed. Suddenly, however, down there came upon us a thick shower of stones, wounding two or three of our number, which was immediately followed by a whole flight of spears, when more of us were wounded, while several stuck in the boat. The order was given to pull round; and glad enough we were to get out of their reach.

“I afterwards heard that the natives of these islands use a sling, not only for throwing stones, which they can send to a great distance, but for casting their spears, which, as we found, far as they were off, came rattling down upon us in a very unpleasant manner.

“One of our men was killed. When at a safe distance we fired two or three volleys in return, and probably killed some of them; but they quickly got under cover. We then once more pulled in, thinking that they had taken to flight; but they were up again in an instant, and the whole shore appeared lined with warriors. We therefore came to the conclusion, that instead of carrying them off as labourers, they were more likely to kill and eat us, should we land on their island. We pulled away and steered for another place, where we expected to find the natives more peaceably disposed or more easily captured.

“I afterwards heard that several vessels went there, some of which had the crews of their boats murdered on going on shore, while in two or

three cases the vessels themselves were attacked, and every one on board put to death. All I can say is, that whatever people may think of our doings, we were not worse than others. I heard of several things which will prove this. Among others, a sandal-wood trader had called at the island of Maré, when three young men swam off to her, wishing to trade on their own account. They were bargaining with the captain, who offered to give them less than they wanted for their sandal-wood, which they had piled up on shore, ready to embark. They grew angry, and declared that they would keep their sandal-wood. On this, without more ado, he drew out his revolver and shot two of them dead on the deck; the other leaped overboard, and the captain ordered the crew to fire at him. He had got some distance, when a shot struck him, and he sank. The captain then sent a boat on shore, and brought away the sandal-wood. Another captain was on a sandal-wood cruise, when he put in not far from Erromanga, where he found the people at war with another tribe some distance round the coast. As abundance of sandal-wood grew on the hills in the distance, he tried to persuade them to bring him a supply down to the beach. They replied that they could not do so then, as they were engaged in war, when he told them that if they would supply him with the wood, he would go and conquer their enemies for them. The people thought this a fine thing, and agreed to the proposal. So the vessel went round the coast, to where the opposing tribe resided. If he had begun to fire away at once on them, they would have escaped into the woods, and he probably would not have caught a man. He therefore pretended to be very friendly, and managed to entice a number on board. When he had got them, his crew set upon them, and killed some on deck, and shot others who had leaped overboard and were trying to make their escape. One was taken alive, and another desperately wounded. Having thrown the dead bodies overboard, he sailed back with the living prisoner and the other man, who soon died, to his friends. By this time they had the sandal-wood ready, so he made over the living and dead prisoners into their hands, and received the sandal-wood in return. As the people were cannibals, it was easy to guess what they did with their prisoners.

“It cannot be said that we did anything worse than this; but, bless you, I might tell you a hundred other things which either we did or I heard of done by sandal-wood traders in those parts. I was not over particular, so didn't mind, but I wanted the voyage to be over, that I might get to Sydney, and have a spree on shore.

“We got there at last, and our cargo realised a large profit, as the price was known to be up at the time in the China market, for which it was destined.

“I hadn’t been there long, before I found my pockets pretty well cleaned out of cash, and had to think of what I should do next.

“I was sitting one day in a grog shop near the harbour, where I was allowed to run up a score though my last shilling was spent, and I didn’t exactly know how I was to pay for it, when somehow or other I lost my senses. I might have been asleep, or I might have been drunk. When I came to myself, I was in the fore peak of a small vessel, and when I went on deck I found that we were out of sight of land. It was not the first time that such a thing had happened to me, and so I was not going to make a fuss about it. I looked round on my new shipmates, who were about as rough a lot as I ever set eyes on; may be I was not very different from them, but we hadn’t a looking-glass on board that craft, so, do you see, I was not able to judge. I asked the name of the craft, where we were bound for, and the object of the voyage.

“My shipmates laughed.

”“Where were you raised: you don’t look as green as you would wish to make us fancy,’ said one without answering my question.

”“I was raised in a country where they grow bull-dogs, which are more apt to bite than to bark,’ I growled out. ‘When I ask a question I expect a civil answer. I was at sea, and crossed the line a dozen times while most of you were still sucking pap, and so you will understand that though I don’t exactly know how I came to be aboard this craft, you had better not try to pass off your tricks on me.’

“I thought this would have made them bowse on the slack of their jaw-tackles, but they were banded together, and fancied they could say what they liked to me. One young fellow only, Bill Harding was his name, I found stood aloof from them, and cried out that it was a shame to attack an old fellow like me, though I might have got hocused and shipped on board without knowing it. On that one of them, Jos Noakes they called him, goes up to Bill, and begins blackguarding him. He stood as cool as a

cucumber, with a smile on his good-looking face. He was the only one among the lot who was not as ugly as sin.

“Says Bill to Jos, ‘You had better not. I have floored many a man who could beat you with his little finger, and so, Jos, to my mind, you will get the worst of it.’

“I pulled out my pipe and lighted it, for, d’ye see, there’s nothing like a bit of baccy for keeping a man cool, and cool I wanted to be just then. This showed them more than anything else what I was made of.

“There Bill stood waiting to see what Jos would do, while the rest gathered round edging Jos on. Jos doubled his fists, getting nearer and nearer to Bill, and at last made a hit at him. In a moment Bill’s arms were unfolded, and he struck out and caught Jos’s ugly face a blow which sent him reeling backwards, till he lay kicking like a turtle on his back.

”‘Sarve you right, Jos,’ cried out several voices, and now most of the crew seemed to side with Bill.

“Jos had had enough of it, and sneaked below to bathe his jaws in water.

“I shook Bill by the hand and thanked him, and we were friends ever afterwards.

“Bill told me that the craft I had so curiously found myself aboard was the ‘Catfish,’ and that she was on a voyage round the islands to pick up sandal-wood, cocoa-nut oil, or pearls, which he told me were to be found among some of the low-lying coral islands to the eastward.

”‘I shall like well enough to go after pearls,’ I observed; ‘for I know their value and the price people on shore will give for them.’

”‘That made me ship on board the “Catfish,”’ said Bill. ‘I remember my mother used to wear such things in her hair, and that a small string of them was worth some hundred pounds, and I thought that if I could get a few I should be a rich man, and be able to go back to Old England, for I am pretty well sick of this sort of life, though, mate, as you know, when a man is down in the world it’s a hard job to get up again.’

“Then I suppose, Bill, from what you say, you are a gentleman’s son, and you have come out to these parts to make your fortune,’ I remarked.

“Yes, I am well born, and might have been very different from what I am,’ he answered with a sigh. ‘But I came away to sea because I was a wild scamp, and no one could make anything of me at home. However, if I can get hold of a few of those pearls, so as to start fair, I intend to turn over a new leaf, and go back to my friends, provided I can do so with a good coat on my back, and not like the ragged beggar I have been of late. I have got a few articles to trade with, and I shipped on condition that I should do what I liked with them.’

“I’ll help you, my lad, as far as I can,’ said I, for I had taken a fancy to Bill, who might have been all he said of himself. To my notion he was as brave and warm-hearted a fellow as ever stepped.

“I have already described the various ways the sandal-wood traders manage to obtain their cargoes. Our captain was in no degree more particular than most of them, and played a few odd tricks among the natives to get what he wanted. On one occasion we got a chief on board, and the captain told him that he must make his people cut a dozen boat-loads of sandal-wood, or we would carry him away as a prisoner to Sydney. The chief refused, and declared that the wood was not to be got. On this the captain called two or three of his people on board, and then had him triced up and gave him a dozen, and told him that he should have it every morning if the wood was not forthcoming. Still the savage held out, and he was heard to tell his people not to bring any.

“Next morning some of his people came off, when, as they brought no wood, preparations were made to give him another dozen. On seeing this his courage gave way, and he told his people to go back and get the wood. He got his dozen though, for the captain was a man to keep his word on those sort of matters.

“Two or three boat-loads came off that very evening, and in a couple of days all the captain asked for was supplied. The chief was then set at liberty, and told to go about his business.

“The captain observed that he was doing his duty to his owners, and

getting a cargo in the cheapest way he could; he seemed, indeed, to pride himself on his cleverness.

“As sandal-wood was becoming scarce in most of the islands, we took on board, whenever we had the opportunity, as many casks of cocoa-nut oil as we could collect; but pearls were our chief object, and we continued our voyage till we reached the island I mentioned.

“The natives were said to be friendly to white men, and therefore we had no fear of them. They had a few pearls already, which the captain took in exchange for some of the beads, cutlery, looking-glasses, and trinkets we had brought to trade with. He then told the natives that they must go off in their canoes to the reef where the pearl-oysters were to be found, and be quick in bringing him as many as he wanted, threatening them if they were not sharp about it he would carry off their chiefs, cut down their cocoa-nut trees, and leave their wives and children to starve. This made them all alive, though they grumbled a little, and every evening they returned bringing a fair supply of shells. They dared not refuse to work, seeing that they had no muskets; and as their island was perfectly flat, they had no place to fly to and hide themselves, so that by landing a few of our men we could, if we had wished, have burned their huts, cut down their trees, and have carried off as many of them as we wanted.

“One day when they had brought fewer shells than usual, the captain sent a party of us on shore, and having caught two of their chiefs, we brought them on board, and kept them in irons, telling them that we should carry them away unless their people would stir themselves.

“Next day a double quantity was brought on board. The captain seemed mightily pleased.

“‘Now, my boys, this shows what you can do,’ he said, in the lingo the savages spoke. ‘I am going to make a cruise to some other islands not far off, and I shall take your chiefs with me. If, when I come back, you have not got as many pearls as I want,’ and he told them the quantity he should require, ‘up go your chiefs to our yard-arms.’

“I don’t mean that he said this in as many words, but it was what he wished the people to understand.

“The other islands we visited could supply us only with cocoa-nut oil, and though we had a quarrel now and then about it, we generally managed to get what we wanted at the price we chose to give.

“On our return we found the supply of shells the captain had ordered.

“I thought that he would have allowed the chiefs to go on shore, but he was too deep a hand for that. He had found the plan answer so well that he determined to have some more pearls before sailing, so he pretended that the natives had not brought him enough, and told them that they must go off and collect more. They grumbled, declaring that they would do no such thing, and demanded their chiefs back.

“‘You shall have them,’ he answered, ‘but they shall swing at our yard-arms first,’ and he ordered the ropes to be rove to hang them by.

“The chiefs were then brought on deck. They did not look much like chiefs, half-starved and dirty as they were, for they had been kept below during the voyage for fear of their jumping overboard, and making their escape. The natives set up a loud yell when they saw them, and made as if they would attack us, and try to rescue them. On this the captain ordered us to present our muskets, and fire if they approached. Bill was the only person who refused to obey, declaring that it was a shame, and that he would sooner let the natives kill us than shoot one of them. The captain, hearing this, threatened to trice him up with the chiefs, and to my mind he meant what he said. The natives, however, thought better of it, and paddled off to try to get more pearls.

“‘It’s lucky for you, Bill, that the savages played us no tricks; but I’ll not forget you, my lad,’ exclaimed the captain, shaking his fist at him.

“In a couple of days the natives appeared paddling towards us. They kept, however, at a distance, and one canoe only with three men in her came alongside, bringing a few pearls. They said they had got more, but they had resolved to throw them into the sea unless their chiefs were first delivered up to them.

“The captain grinned at this, and replied that they should have one chief, and when the pearls were brought they should have the other. The natives after talking a long time were obliged to comply. The chiefs

embraced; they might have suspected that the one who remained would run a great chance of swinging at the yardarm, notwithstanding the captain's promise. At last he told the younger of the two that he might go, thinking, probably, that he was of less consequence than the other. The poor fellow was lowered into the canoe, and away his countrymen paddled to the shore.

"I thought that the elder man looked well pleased at the escape of his companion, as he squatted down on deck, resting his head on his hands, though he looked up every now and then at the rope hanging from the yardarm, as if he expected to be dangling from it before long.

"The same canoe returned in a couple of hours, bringing a further supply of pearls, while the rest of the natives were seen gathering in the distance.

"Perhaps the captain thought that if he did not deliver up the chief—driven to desperation, they might attack the vessel, and that though many might have been killed, we should not have got off scathless. The natives were indeed in great numbers advancing closer and closer. He therefore told the chief he might go. The old man rose, and with the help of his countrymen got into the canoe, which immediately paddled away towards the rest, advancing rapidly to meet him.

"The breeze was fair out of the harbour. Sails were loosed, the anchor tripped. There was no time to be lost, for some scores of canoes were close up to us.

"'Give the savages a parting volley to teach them that we are not to be insulted with impunity,' cried the captain.

"Several shots were fired at the canoes, and two or three of the savages were hit. I cannot say whether all fired, but Bill did not.

"The brig had gathered way, and we were distancing the canoes, and though the captain ordered another volley to be fired, the shot fell short of them.

"'We have managed that pretty cleverly,' he observed, as he walked the deck, rubbing his hands. 'I never expected to get so many pearls, and we

have not paid dear for them either,' and he chuckled to himself as he turned aft.

"I asked Bill if he had got as many as he had hoped for.

"'No,' he answered. 'The skipper kept too sharp a look-out to allow me to trade honestly as I had intended, and I'd sooner not have got a single one, than obtain them in the vile abominable way he has done. I wish that I was clear of the craft, and hope that I may never set eyes on him again.'

"I told Bill that he was too particular.

"'No, no,' he exclaimed. 'I am a vile wretch as it is, but I am not sunk so low as to stand by and see such things done without exclaiming against them.'

"We had a quick run to the westward, and the captain was congratulating himself on making a prosperous voyage. We had still room, however, for some more sandal-wood, and he took it into his head to visit the place where he had given a couple of dozen to a native chief for refusing to bring off sandal-wood. He was mad, you will allow, to make the attempt. He thought he could catch the chief, and play the trick a second time.

"Bringing up before the place, and telling us to keep our arms ready for use, and to let no native on board, away he went in the boat with six hands well armed. The natives, instead of running off, came down to the beach quite in a friendly manner, and welcomed him on shore. He thought, I suppose, that they did not know the brig again, or that the chief had forgotten his flogging.

"We watched him from the deck, and he and two men advanced up the beach towards the very chief himself, who came down to meet him.

"The captain's idea was, I have no doubt, to seize the chief and bring him off.

"In another instant we saw one of the men running, and a party with clubs and spears, who had remained hidden behind some rocks, rushing towards the captain. Before he could escape, his brains were dashed out, and his companion was struck to the ground. The other man reached the

boat with a spear in his back, and was hauled in just before the savages got up to him. The boat shoved off and pulled away towards us, a shower of spears following her. Another man was hit, for we saw an oar dropped. The remaining three pulled away for their lives. We, meantime, loosed the sails and got under way; and time it was to do so, for we saw a number of canoes, which had been concealed behind rocks along the shore, darting out towards us. As soon as the boat was alongside, we hauled up the men, one of whom was pretty near dead by that time, cut the cable, let the boat go adrift—we had no time to hoist her up—sheeted home the sails, and stood away from the shore.

“We had a narrow escape of it, for though we kept firing at the advancing canoes, they were almost up to us; and it’s my belief the savages would have got on board in spite of all we could have done to resist them, for they seemed resolved to have their revenge. As it was, another man was hit, and our deck was covered with spears and darts.

“We at last got clear of the land, and the mate, who took command, said he would shape a direct course for Sydney, and have nothing more to do with trading. We soon, however, began to suspect that he was but a poor navigator, and Bill said he was sure of it.

“Three or four days afterwards a gale sprung up from the westward. We lost our topmasts, and were driven before it for a week or more.

“Whether or not the mate was a bad navigator, we had no means of proving, for one night he was washed overboard. Bill, who was the only scholar among us, looked at the log; that had not been written up, nor had our course on the chart been pricked off; so there we were, driving before a heavy gale, and not knowing what island might be in our course to bring us up. The brig also had sprung a leak, and we had to turn-to at the pumps. Our provisions and water were running short. We were in a bad case. Even had we sighted an island, we should have been afraid to go ashore, for we had played so many tricks at different places, that, after what had happened, we thought that we might be treated in the same way as the captain had been.

“The gale at length came to an end. Still we had to keep the pumps going. Our last biscuit was eaten; we had not a drop of water in the

casks. Bill, who had been studying the chart, told us that if we would keep up our spirits he hoped in another day or two to make an island to the southward, where we had not before touched. That night, however, there came on a dead calm.

“When the sun rose the next morning the sea was like glass, with not a sign of a breeze.

“When men are starving they will eat anything. We began to stew down our shoes and every bit of leather we could find about the ship. The lockers were searched for biscuit crumbs, or lumps of grease, or anything eatable, till nothing which could keep body and soul together remained.

“The men knew that Bill and I were friends. I heard them talking together and casting looks at him. He was thin enough, poor fellow, by this time; but the rest of us were thinner still, all bones and sinews. Bill and I were on deck together, and I told him to keep by me when I saw the rest of the men coming aft with a glare in their eyes, the meaning of which I well knew. Telling Bill to keep behind me, I drew my knife, and swore I would kill the first man who advanced. Jos Noakes came on in front of the rest. He had not forgotten the knock-over Bill had given him; still I had little hopes of saving my friend, for when men are desperate they will do anything. Jos was close up to me, and though I might have killed him the rest would have set on me; when just then the sails gave a loud flap, and some of the men, looking round, cried out that there was a fresh breeze coming.

“‘My lads,’ cried Bill, who, though the moment before he expected nothing but death, was suddenly himself again, ‘that breeze will take us to the island we were steering for in the course of a few hours. You may eat me if you like, but I don’t think you will find your way there without my help.’

“The men saw the sense of this, and told him he had nothing to fear. While he and I went to the helm, the rest trimmed sails, and we were soon running at a brisk rate through the water.

“Fortunately, some small casks of hams which had got stowed away under the sandal-wood were discovered. This satisfied our hunger, though it increased our thirst. The wind, however, brought rain, and we

were able to collect enough water to keep us alive. We thought all would go well, in spite of the leak, which made it still necessary to keep the pumps at work.

“Bill and I had just come on deck at night for our middle watch, when just as he had been telling me that he hoped next morning to make the land, the vessel’s keel grated on a coral reef which the look-out had not discovered. On she drove, and I hoped might be forced over it, but the grating, tearing sound which came from below told me that the sharp points were ripping off her planks, and the rest of the crew, springing on deck, cried out that the water was rushing in on every side. We clewed up the sails, and got our only boat ready for launching.

“The wind was increasing, and forcing us further and further on the reef. As we could not tell in what direction to pull, we determined to remain till morning, but before the morning arrived the wind increased, and the sea broke over us. The mainmast went by the board, and most of the men cried out that if we did not get the boat in the water we should be lost.

“Bill and I had gone forward. I heard some loud cries. My shipmates had managed to launch the boat, but the next instant she had been swamped alongside, and they were struggling for their lives in the foaming sea. We clung on to the wreck. The sea was making a complete breach over her, and the after part appeared breaking up. Suddenly she swung round, and seemed to me to be slipping off the rock. At that moment a sea took me, striking me on the head, knocking the senses out of me; the next I found myself in the foaming waters, and looking up, the moon bursting forth just then, caught sight of Bill making his way up the fore-rigging. I sung out to him to heave me a rope and haul me on board. The vessel appeared to have been brought up by a lower part of the reef, and to be sticking there. Bill heard my voice, and unreefing the fore brace, hove it to me just as a sea washed me back towards the wreck. I caught hold of it when pretty nigh exhausted, for though I hadn’t had much enjoyment in life, I didn’t wish to leave it, and so clung on with all my strength, while Bill gradually hauled me up to the fore chains. From thence I made my way into the top, where he and I sat, expecting, however, every moment that the mast would go and carry us overboard.

”“Are the rest all lost, think you?’ asked Bill.

”No doubt about it,’ said I. ‘The boat could not have lived a minute in such a sea as there is running. We are better off even here.’

”Terrible,’ said Bill. ‘And you and I are left alone out of the whole lot.’

”We may thank our stars for that,’ said I. ‘And I say, Bill, if we hold out till morning, and it comes on calm, maybe we shall find some of the pearls, and after all it won’t be so bad a job for us.’

”Don’t talk of the pearls,’ he answered, with a groan. ‘I wish that I had never been tempted to try to get them. The captain and the rest have got their deserts, and I would not touch one of them, gained as they were by cruelty and fraud, if they were to be washed up into my hands.’

”I only wish I could catch sight of some of the boxes with the chance of getting them,’ said I. ‘And if you were to do so, Bill, I would not trust to your good resolutions.’

”I don’t want to talk about the matter,’ answered Bill, gloomily. ‘What chance have we of getting away from the wreck? we may be miles off from the shore, for what I know.’

”If the wind goes down, we may build a raft and reach the land, or may be a vessel will pass by and take us off. If not, and it breezes up again, we shall be in a bad case.’

“Bill groaned again.

”I am not prepared to die,’ he exclaimed. ‘I would give anything to get on shore.’

”You haven’t anything to give,’ said I. ‘So you had better make up your mind to brave it out, just as I mean to do. I wish that I could get at some liquor, though; that would keep up our spirits better than anything else.’

“Bill groaned again.

”I don’t want to die like a brute with my senses gone,’ he answered.

”As to that, seamen have to go out of the world somehow, and for my

part I don't think myself worse than the rest,' I answered; 'and with regard to the things done aboard this craft, that was the captain's look out, not mine, nor yours either; so cheer up, Bill, don't be down-hearted. Daylight will soon return, and then, may be, we shall find ourselves better off than we fancy.'

"You see, I kept up my spirits, and tried to keep up Bill's; but he got worse and worse, and began raving away so curiously, that I thought he would throw himself into the sea and get drowned.

"To prevent this I passed a rope round his body when he didn't see what I was about, and lashed him to the top.

"As the night drew on the wind dropped, and at daybreak my eyes were gladdened by the sight of the land about two miles away, while between us and it were numerous small rocks scattered about, by means of which we might make our way, even if we had to swim for it. I remembered, however, the sharks, so I determined to build a raft. Poor Bill could not help me, so I set to work by myself. I was some time putting one together to carry us both, and then, being very hungry, I thought I would try to get hold of the keg of hams and the cask of water which were stowed forward, and also that I might pick up some of the boxes of pearls. I got the hams and water, but could not find the pearls.

"I took some of the food up to Bill, but he would only touch the water.

"At last I managed to lower him on to the raft, and, afraid that the weather might again change, shoved off to make our voyage to the land. It was slow work, for I had only a long pole and a paddle. If Bill had been able to help, we should have got on much faster. At last we came to a small island. I thought to myself I'll leave Bill here with some ham and water for food, and go back and have another search for the pearls. Bill made no objection; I don't think even then he knew where he was. I got back with less difficulty than I expected.

"The tide had now fallen, and the after part of the vessel was clear of water. I cannot tell you how I felt when I caught sight of the boxes where I knew the pearls had been stowed in the captain's cabin. There were a couple of large chests, and in these were several more boxes, with the

captain's money, and some other things of value. I thought to myself, if I turn out everything heavy, these boxes will float and serve to preserve my treasures, even should the raft be capsized. I accordingly, having prepared them as I proposed, put in the boxes of pearls, and having lashed them securely, lowered them on to the raft, loading it with a number of other articles, which I thought would be useful. Shoving off, I made the best of my way towards the rock where I had left poor Bill; it was time I did, for the weather was again, I feared, about to change, and heavy rain was falling. Hoping that he might have revived, I expected to see him looking out for me.

“While making good way through the water, suddenly I found my raft touch ground. The current striking against it drove it further and further on to the reef. To prevent it capsizing, I had to stand up and press my pole against the bottom. There I stood, the rain coming down faster and faster. I shouted to Bill, hoping that he might hear me, and perhaps be able to wade out to my assistance, but no answer came. I might easily have got off by casting the chest and the other articles adrift, but I could not bring myself to do that, not knowing where they and their precious contents might be carried to. At last I thought of mooring the raft, and trying to reach the rock by wading. I had a large axe which would serve as an anchor. I made a rope fast to it, and stuck it securely, as I thought, in a cleft of the coral reef. I then, with the pole in my hand, made my way towards the rock. Reaching it at last, not without difficulty, I looked about for Bill. What was my dismay not to see him! The provisions and water, and the other things I left with him were there, but he was gone. Whether he had fancied I was going to desert him, and had attempted to swim to the mainland, or in his madness had thrown himself into the sea, I could not tell. I climbed to the end of the rock nearest to the shore, shouting at the top of my voice, and still hoping to see him, but not a soul appeared on the beach. I had taken a liking to him, and I felt more unhappy than I had ever felt before, at the thoughts that he was lost. ‘It cannot be helped,’ I said to myself. ‘I’ll go back and tow the chests one by one to the rock, and so get the raft afloat, and in time reach the shore.’ At once I went back to the outer end of the rock, and began to wade towards where I had left the raft. The breeze had got up, and there was some sea on. It struck me that the water was deeper than at first. I hadn’t made many steps when, looking at the raft, I felt convinced that it was moving. I tried to hurry on, but found myself floundering in the water almost up to

my neck, and had to scramble back to the rock to save my life. The raft went faster and faster. I shouted, I shrieked to it to stop; the pearls which would have made my fortune were every instant getting further from my reach. Then a wave took it and turned it right over, another struck it and dashed it against a rock, and away floated the pieces with the chests in the direction the current was making.

“On getting back to the rock I sat down and cried like a child. I felt as if I was done for. At last I got better and began to hope that the chests might be washed on shore, and that I might secure them after all.

“How was I to reach the land? there was the question. I was a bad swimmer, and if I had been a good one the chances were that I should be picked off by a shark. My only remaining hope was that the natives might not be cannibals, and that some of them coming off to fish might see me, and carry me to their island. Still perhaps some days might pass before any one might come out so far. I knew therefore that I must husband my provisions to make them last me as long as possible. Fortunately the rain had filled some hollows in the rock. I drank as much as I wanted of that, and bailed the remainder into the cask I had left with Bill.

“The day passed by and no one appeared, and not only that day but several others went by, and I was still on the rock. I had eaten up all the ham and drunk up nearly every drop of water. I had no means of striking a light, and if I had there was no fuel except my pole, and I could not live long on the raw shell fish which stuck to the rock.

“My last hour I thought was come. I lay down expecting to die, and soon dropped off into a sort of stupor. I was aroused by hearing voices, and looking up I saw a canoe with three brown girls in her, paddling up to the rock. I just lifted my head and made signs that I was very ill; they understood me, and instead of running away managed together to lift me into their canoe. One poured water down my throat, and another fed me with yam. They had been out fishing, and were returning home. They took me to their father’s hut, and fed and nursed me till I recovered. My thoughts were running on the chests with the pearls, but I could hear nothing of them, nor of poor Bill either, nor have I from that day to this.”

Chapter Four.

“I was just well, and thinking what I should do, when a South Sea whaler put into a harbour close by for provisions and water. She wanted hands, and I shipped aboard her. She was not long out from Sydney, to which port she belonged.

“While I served in her I was again nearly lost. We were after a big whale which had already been struck when the creature caught the boat I was in with its flukes, stove in the bows, and turned her right over, while I and the rest of the crew were left struggling in the water. I managed to climb up on the boat’s stern, and hailed another boat which was under sail, but so eager were those in her in pursuit of the monster that they did not see for some time what had occurred. The rest of my mates had sunk before she came up, and I was taken on board so exhausted that I could not have hung on many minutes longer.

“When the cruise was up the whaler returned to Sydney, and I thought that I would stop on shore, and with the money I had saved try what I could do for a living. My cash was gone, however, before I could well look round; my old friends the crimps got most of it.

“Remembering how I had before been shipped on board a craft without knowing it, I determined that such a trick should not be played me again. Perhaps the crimps thought I was too old to be worth much and would not let me run up a score.

“I was standing one day on the quay with my hands in my pockets, when the skipper of the last sandal-wood trader I had sailed in came up to me. He knew me and I knew him, and a bigger villain I never set eyes on; still considering that my last shilling was gone, I could not be particular about my acquaintances.

”“Boas, old ship,’ says he. ‘You know the South Sea Islands as well as most men. I want a few fellows like you for a cruise which is sure to be profitable, and you will come back in a short time with your pockets lined with gold, and be able to live at your ease, if you have a mind to do so, like a gentleman.’

“I asked him to tell me what was the object of the voyage.

”I don’t mind telling you the truth. If you were to ask at the Custom House you would hear we were starting on a voyage after cocoa-nut oil and sea slugs, but there’s poor profit in that compared to what we are really after. We do not call ours a slaving voyage, but our intention is to get as many natives as we can stowed away in our hold, by fair means or foul, and to run them across to Brisbane or some other port in Queensland. The order we receive from our owner is to visit the different islands, and to persuade as many natives as we can to come and work for the settlers. They want labourers, and will pay good wages, and the natives are only to be engaged for three years, and to be carried back again at the end of that time if they happen to be alive, and wish it, to their own islands.’

“I told him that was very like the sort of trade I had been engaged in some years before, when we collected natives and carried them to Peru to work in the mines, and how the French didn’t approve of our taking the people from their islands, and had captured a number of our vessels. ‘But,’ says I, ‘as I suppose that there are no mines in Queensland, the Indians will like Australia better than they did Peru, and won’t die so fast as they did there. But what does the Government say to the matter? Maybe they’ll call it slaving.’

”“Oh we have got a regular licence from the Queensland Government,’ answered the skipper. ‘It’s all shipshape and lawful, provided we treat the natives kindly, and don’t take them unless they wish to go, and make them clearly understand the agreement they enter into.’

”“If that’s the case, Captain Squid, I’m your man,’ says I. ‘I am not over particular; but in my old age I have taken a liking to what is lawful and right.’

”“Very wise too,’ says the skipper, giving me a wink. ‘You will find all our proceedings perfectly lawful, and we run no risk whatever. If the natives get harder worked than they like when they reach Queensland, that’s no business of ours.’

“To make a long story short, I that evening found myself on board the ‘Pickle,’ schooner of about eighty tons. She hadn’t much room for

stowage 'tween decks, but as the passage between Queensland and the islands where she was to get the natives was short, and as I supposed only a few at a time would be taken, I had no scruples on that score. At all events, it could not be anything like the middle passage between Africa and America.

“Next morning we were at sea running to the eastward, after which we stood away northward, towards the islands which extend between the line and New Caledonia. The people are all blacks, a strong, hardy race, and, as Captain Squid remarked to me, more likely to be caught, and when caught better able to work than the brown-skinned natives to the eastward, such as we used to take away to labour in the mines in South America.

“The first place we came to was the Island of Tanna, one of the southernmost of the New Hebrides. We knew that missionaries were there trying to turn the people into Christians—an odd sort of work to my mind for white people to attempt. It would not do, however, to go near where they were. We stood in, therefore, to a part of the island where they were not. Having hove-to, we sent a boat on shore to invite the people to come off with palm oil, telling them that we would pay a high price for it. The second mate, who went in command of the boat with the interpreter, was ordered to be very cautious lest the natives should attempt to cut him off.

“Having delivered his message, he returned to the schooner. To our surprise, in a short time three canoes were seen coming off with a dozen natives in them. They came alongside without fear, and told the interpreter that they were Christians, and friends of the white men. The captain invited them on board, and said that he would not only pay them well for their oil, but would, if they chose, take them to a country where they might soon become rich, and return home again in a short time. They replied that they had no desire to leave their native island, and wanted to receive payment for their oil. The captain said they should have it if they would come down below, where he had got a feast ready for them. An old man of the party advised them to remain on deck till they had received the goods they had bargained for. Some liquor on this was brought up, and they were asked to take a drop. The old man again advised them not to touch it, and took hold of his oil-jar as if he was about

to lower it into his canoe. Notwithstanding what the old man said, two or three of them tasted the grog, and then, first one and then another, went down below. The old man cried out to them, and was about to lower his jar into the canoe, when, at a word from the captain, one of our people seized it, while another caught hold of him. The interpreter at the moment appearing, declared that the oil had been bought, and that he had no business to carry it away. By this time half the natives were below. The old man struggled, he was knocked down, and when his companions came to his assistance they were knocked down also. Before they could get up again their arms were pinioned, while those who were below were treated in the same way. The captain declared that the savages intended to take the vessel, that he did not believe they were Christians, and that in his own defence he was obliged to carry them off.

“You will understand, my lads,’ he said to us, ‘if any questions are asked when we get to Brisbane that’s the answer we must give.’

“The canoes of the savages alongside were sunk, and letting draw the foresail, we stood away along the coast, while the natives were stowed snugly below. The captain seemed highly pleased with this successful commencement of our voyage.

“A short way further on, as we saw some natives on the shore, the boat was sent in to speak to them. I went in her. As we approached the beach, two young men were seen swimming off towing a quantity of cocoa-nuts, which they told the interpreter they wished to barter for any goods we had brought. They were invited to come into the boat, but were timid, and replied that we might have the cocoa-nuts, but must hand out in return what we had to give. A few articles were accordingly held up, and they were invited to come and receive them. Fearing they might escape us, the moment they came alongside they were seized by the hair of their heads, and hauled into the boat. They cried out, saying that they were sons of a chief, and that, if we would set them free, we might have the cocoa-nuts. The mate laughed at them, and told them if they would quietly come with us we would pay them handsomely. As they began to struggle and tried to leap overboard, we had to hold them down. This being seen from the shore, the people became alarmed, and put on so threatening a manner, that we were afraid of going nearer. Having no chance of getting more natives, we returned on board with the two young

men, leaving their friends raging and threatening us in vain.

“The next place we touched at we were more successful, and got nearly a dozen on board, who seemed well pleased at the thought of seeing the world, and willingly agreed to sign the paper placed before them, though I suspect they knew very little about the meaning of it. They were deadly enemies of those we had first taken. The two tribes had been accustomed to fight and eat each other, but, notwithstanding this, we turned the last comers down below to make friends with the others.

“We were standing away from the shore when two or three of the last party happened to hear how the first had been taken, and, becoming alarmed, attempted to leap overboard. Our men who had handspikes in their hands hit at them to stop them doing this. The blows, however, being somewhat heavy, two fell dead on the deck, while a third made his escape to the shore.

“It was a bad job, for we had hoped to obtain more labourers from the same place.

“We got several, however, both men and women, from the Island of Vate. Here the captain had an agent, a clever fellow, who, for a musket and tobacco, was ready to do anything. He persuaded the natives that if they would go on board the schooner, they would be carried to a magnificent country, where, after working for a few moons, they would make their fortunes, and be brought back in safety to their own island.

“The natives are almost as black as ebony, but tall and well-formed, wearing a broad wrapper of matting round their waists, and their hair gathered up into a bunch at the top of the head, and ornamented with feathers; while the women wear a curious tail, which hangs down behind them to the calves of their legs. The men also wear bands of shells round their necks and arms, and rings in their ears.

“They seemed pretty contented when they came on board. The captain, by the agent’s desire, gave each of them a present to send to their friends on shore.

”“Mind you take good care of them, captain,” said old Sneezer, the name we gave the black agent. “Be very kind, and bring them back all right.”

“‘Ay, ay, never fear,’ answered Captain Squid, and he winked at the old fellow. ‘We know how to treat people properly aboard here if they behave themselves.’

“You would have supposed by their looks that they were going on a party of pleasure, but they soon changed their note, poor wretches! before long.

“We got a good many people from the Island of Erromanga, where old Sneezer was very useful. The natives, I had heard say, had murdered some missionary fellows—Williams, and Harris, and others—and of course it was but right, the captain observed, that we should punish them, so we need not be in any way particular as to how we got hold of the savages. Old Sneezer used to go on shore in the boat, and talk to them, and persuade them to come off to us, and in this way we got about thirty or so without much difficulty. He tried to persuade one fellow he found fishing in his canoe off the leese of the island, and as he said he did not want to leave home, Sneezer lugged him into the boat, and then sunk his canoe. He shrieked out, thinking he was going to be killed; but we told him he need not be alarmed, as we were only going to steal him. Another black fellow we found on the shore alone, but he would not come either, because he had got a wife and family at home, so Sneezer, without more ado, clapped his arms round him, and we hauled him into the boat, telling him that we were only just going to another island near at hand, for a short time, and that he would then have his liberty.

“While pulling along the coast of another island in the boat, three men came off to us in a canoe. Sneezer told them, as usual, the good luck in store for them. Two of them believed him, and agreed to come with us; the third jumped overboard. The mate struck out at him with the boat-hook, hooking him in the cheek, and hauled him on board. ‘Now, my lad, come with us,’ says he, ‘whether you like it or no.’ We soon had them on board, and stowed away below.

“We had now a full cargo; indeed, we could not well take in any more. The black with a hole in his cheek, and some others, didn’t quite like the treatment they received, and the first, making his way on deck, insisted on being put on shore again. He was at once knocked back into the hold again; he tried to get up, followed by others, some of whom had their

bows and arrows, which they had been allowed to keep, it being supposed that they could do no harm with them. They began to shoot away, and a general fight took place in the hold, when the captain, thinking the blacks would gain possession of the vessel, ordered us to fire down upon them. The supercargo, who was, I'll allow, a precious villain, afraid that some of them might be killed, and that he should lose part of his cargo, though otherwise not caring for their lives, told us to shoot them in their legs, but not to kill them. It was all dark below, so that we could not see in what direction to fire. Some cotton was therefore fastened to the end of a long stick, and lighted; and when this was held down into the hold, we could take aim. Three savages were shot, and, being hauled upon deck, were thrown overboard: two who were dead floated quietly away, but the third was alive, and we saw him striking out towards the distant shore; but he soon sank, for either a shark got hold of him or his wound prevented him swimming further.

“After this we hove up the anchor, and making sail shaped a course for Brisbane. We had to keep a sharp look out after our passengers, and make them fast whenever they came on deck, for fear they should leap overboard and drown themselves. When in sight of land we had a hard job to keep them quiet, and generally found it more convenient to make them stay below.

“Had the passage been long we should probably have lost a good many of them; but as it was, only three or four died, and we landed the rest in tolerable condition. The captain said that they had all come on board of their own free will; that if they had changed their minds since, that was no fault of his. They were soon engaged by the colonists, who wanted labour at any price. He had no difficulty, in consequence of the favourable report he made, of again getting a licence, and without loss of time we sailed on another cruise.

“We had kept more to the eastward than usual, when it came on to blow very hard, and we had to run before the gale out of our course a considerable distance, the captain being very much vexed at this loss of time. The gale had somewhat moderated, but it was still blowing hard when we caught sight of a sail which, as we neared her, proved to be a large double canoe, with twenty or more hands on board. The captain thought she would prove a good prize, as we might sink her and carry off

the people, and no one be the wiser. She consisted of two large canoes, so to speak, some way apart, but united by a strong deck placed upon them. Through the deck were cut hatches, to enable the people to go below into the canoes, and above the deck was a square house with a platform on the top of it. As we drew near, intending to run her down old Sneezer advised us to let her pass, as she belonged to Fiji, and as he said the people would give us more trouble than they were worth, as they were savage fellows, and would neither work in their own islands nor in Australia, and would very likely murder their masters. We accordingly let them go, and away she flew close hauled on a wind, though the supercargo sighed, as he thought of letting so many fine-looking fellows escape us. The gale ceasing, we hauled up, and stood back for Erromanga.

“Old Sneezer was as useful to us as before. On his first visit to the shore he persuaded a dozen natives to come off, by telling them that he had plenty of pigs on board for a feast they were about to hold. Very fat pigs they were, according to his account, and plenty of tobacco, so that they might smoke from morning till night to their hearts’ content. We took them off in our own boat not to alarm the rest, by having to sink their canoe. When they got on deck they asked for the pigs and tobacco. The only answer they got was finding themselves shoved down below. They shrieked and cried out till the mate went among them with a thick stick and made them quiet.

“We were not quite so successful at the next haul. Sneezer got off six fellows as he had the former ones; but they heard the others cry out before we had them secured, and tried to escape. Three were knocked down in time, but the other three leaped overboard and swam to the shore. The captain sang out for a couple of muskets; one however was not loaded, and the other would not go off, and the men escaped. Knowing that we should get no more labourers there, we had to make sail and run to another place. After this we got several quite quietly, and they were induced to put their marks to the paper shown to them, and to believe all that Sneezer said.

“One day we pulled in to the shore a few miles south of Dillon’s Bay, where the surf ran too heavily to allow us to land, but Sneezer caught sight of four men on the shore, and hailing them, said he was their friend,

and had plenty of tobacco to give them if they would come off for it. They all swam out to us, when in our eagerness we caught hold of two of them somewhat roughly, perhaps, and hauled them into the boat; the others, taking the alarm, swam back and escaped.

“You see in this trade, as in every other, we have our disappointments.

“We had heard of the skipper of a trading schooner, who somehow or other got on very well with the Erromangians by treating them kindly, I suppose, and paying them what he promised. So says Sneezer, ‘I will tell them Captain Tom has got a new vessel, and this is her, and that he wishes to see them.’

“On this Sneezer went on shore, and nearly two dozen natives came off to see their friend Captain Tom. They were then told that he was in his cabin, when they were easily persuaded to step quietly down below. As may be supposed, we didn’t let them come on deck again. What they thought about the matter, or what their friends on shore thought about it, I don’t know; perhaps the next time Captain Tom touched at that port they might not have been inclined to be so friendly with him as before; it’s just possible, indeed, that they might have knocked him on the head without inquiring whether or not he had paid them a visit a short time back, and carried off some of their people.

“The natives we had last got began moaning and groaning, and cursing their folly, because their chief, who was a Christian, had warned them beforehand, and told them that he feared some trick might be played, not liking the looks of the vessel.

“In this way, we managed, as before, to complete our cargo, and to land them all, with the exception of a few who died, at Brisbane.

“We after this made several successful trips, and I should think the colonists must have felt very grateful to us for the free labourers with whom we supplied them.

“There were a dozen vessels or more engaged in the same trade, the supercargoes of which mostly managed matters in the same way we did; if they did not they must have had great difficulty in collecting labourers.

“The ‘Pickle’ had, however, run her course. After we had got most of our cargo on board we were caught in a heavy gale, and had to batten down the hatches to escape going to the bottom. Our passengers must have found it tremendously hot, for the gale lasted several days, and all that time we had to keep the hatches on. When it moderated a little, and we went below to inspect our cargo, we found some had broken their arms and others their legs, tumbling about in the hold, while a dozen more were dead or dying.

“Things were bad enough, but they were to become worse. The gale came on again, and while we thought we were clear of the land the vessel struck on a coral reef. The sea beat over it, and we held on to the rigging, but scarcely was she on the other side, where it was tolerably smooth, than we found the water rushing in through a hole which had been knocked in her bottom. We had just time to get out the boat and jump into her, when down the vessel went, with all those under hatches.

“It is said that a good many of the labourers who leave their native islands never get back again; this accident will account for a hundred or more, and of course the authorities in Queensland were not answerable for it.

“We managed to save our lives, and were picked up by a Sydney vessel.

“Having found the business profitable, I shipped on board another craft engaged to take natives to the Fiji Islands, where labourers were much wanted.

“Having touched at several places, we called at the Kingsmill Islands. Here we got a good many natives in one way or another.

“We were about making sail, when in the evening a black fellow came alongside in his canoe to sell mats and fowls. We persuaded him, as it was late, to sleep on board. As the wind was pretty fresh, he willingly agreed. Next morning he was somewhat surprised to find that the schooner had got under way during the night, and he found himself one of a gang of seventy men and fifteen women, whom we had secured, bound for Fiji. The supercargo, to quiet him, told him that we were only going across to another island close by, and would land him there. The

others we kept pretty peaceable by similar tricks, though they kept asking somewhat anxiously, when they were to be put on shore.

“At last we reached one of the many islands of the Fiji group. I had never been there before; but I had heard that the people were terrible cannibals. So they were till the missionaries persuaded the king and his chiefs, and most of his subjects, to give up the practice. A considerable number of white men have of late years settled on several of the islands, and have bought land to grow coffee and other things. They find a difficulty in getting the natives of Fiji to work for them, so they have to obtain labourers from other islands, and this was the work our schooner was engaged in. Our cargo was quickly distributed among the planters, some taking ten, some twenty, or as many as they could get.

“The natives of Fiji are black and fine big fellows. They wear their hair frizzled out, and big turbans on the top of all; some of them, indeed, wear great wigs over their own hair, for the larger a man’s head is, the more important he thinks himself. This makes them look very tall; indeed, many of the chiefs are very fine men. They also wear ornaments of all sorts, necklaces, and rings, and beads round their legs and arms, and they stick into their ears huge ornaments, while large brooches hang down over their breasts. The common people, however, wear very little clothing at all, and many of the chiefs who have turned Christians, dress something after the English fashion, as they fancy; or at all events, cover their bodies with robes of their native cloth.

“I found a number of English and Frenchmen, and people of all countries settled on the islands, and there are a good lot of grog shops, so that they may be said to have made some progress in imitating civilised people. In some of the wilder parts of the country, however, the natives are still cannibals, and do not scruple to kill and eat any strangers they can catch. Not long ago they were addicted to that unpleasant custom, so that any strangers wrecked on their coasts were sure to be eaten. When they could not get strangers they ate each other; sometimes a dozen, and sometimes even twenty slaves, were killed for one great feast. Altogether from what I heard of the people, I had no fancy to stop and live among them.

“I must say this much for the missionaries, that they have cured them of

their worst habit. At some of the villages I visited, where the missionaries have been long established, the people were as quiet and decent, and well-behaved as any I have been amongst; too much, as I must own, to my taste.

“They are capital swimmers, and seem as much at home in the water as on land. The women swim as well as the men. At one village I stopped at, where, though they had given up eating human flesh, they did not pretend to be Christians, I saw a curious sort of game played by the girls. A stout post was stuck in the water some way from the shore. On the top of it was laid the trunk of a large cocoa-nut tree, the base resting near the shore, and the tip projecting beyond the post over deep water. The fun was for the girls to run up the inclined tree at full speed, and then to leap off from the point and swim back to shore one after the other, as fast as they could go. Twenty or thirty girls could play at the game together, and such shouting, and shrieking, and laughing I never heard.

“However, as the vessel I had come in, the ‘Thisby,’ was returning to Australia, I went in her.

“We got a few natives from the Kingsmill Islands, the New Hebrides, and other places, and carried them to Brisbane.

“Our skipper having landed them in good condition without difficulty, got another licence to bring back a further cargo of fifty natives—for the Government officer didn’t think the vessel had room enough to carry more. Our captain and supercargo, however, had a different notion on the subject.

“We managed to pick them up much as we had done others. Of course it was the same to the natives whether they went to Queensland or Fiji. Instead of fifty, by the clever management of our supercargo and interpreter, we got altogether a hundred. The captain said it would never do to return with so many to Brisbane, and hearing that there was still a great demand for labour at the Fijis, we shaped a course for those islands. The accommodation for our passengers was not altogether such as civilised people would have liked. We had run up a number of shelves round the hold on which they stowed themselves at night. They were all stark naked, and they had no mats to lie on, but we could not of course

expect these savages to be over particular.

“We had a dead beat to windward for the best part of a month, and by that time our cargo, as may be supposed, hadn’t much improved in appearance.

“As ill luck would have it, when we arrived off the port we were bound for, what should we see but a man-of-war at anchor. As we were short of provisions and water, we were compelled to run in and make the best of it. Before long the captain of the man-of-war came on board, and not only rated our skipper and supercargo for the condition the blacks were in, but declaring that our papers were irregular, which it must be confessed they were, landed the blacks and took possession of the craft. I and the rest of the crew lost our wages, and had to go on shore again and look out for ourselves.

“I hadn’t been there long before a fine brig came in with only a dozen natives. The owner was on board, and he and the captain had had a quarrel because the latter had refused to receive any passengers who did not come of their own free will, and sign the agreement with a full understanding of the meaning. The captain, who was, I thought, a fool for his pains, had to give up the command, and two or three of the men who were of his opinion, were landed with him. I having no such scruples was glad enough to join her as second mate. Most of her crew were either Sandwich Islanders or Tahitians. The owner having got another master who was accustomed to the trade, we sailed to the northward to visit a number of islands lying on either side of the line, intending also to cruise about the New Hebrides and Solomon Islands, where we hoped before long to get a full cargo.

“The owner said his vessel would carry three hundred at least, and that number he was determined to obtain.

“I have told you before how the vessels engaged in this trade are accustomed to pick up their cargo. Our owner was a man for dodges of all sorts, and there was not a device he left untried to obtain men. At one place he pretended that the brig was a sandal-wood trader, and offered to give double the price which had ever been given before, provided it could be brought on board the next day. His hope was that a number of natives

would go and cut it, and that each man would come back with the result of his labour. He was not disappointed. The next morning we had a score of canoes alongside. He would only let one man at a time come on deck, and as soon as he appeared he was invited below to receive payment. The first two or three who came received even double what the owner had promised, and were allowed to return to their canoes. This made all the rest eager to come up, and as soon as they had gone below they were gagged and pinioned, and passed into the hold. By this means we got sixty men, even the very last not suspecting the trick that had been played. The first three were also enticed on board, supposing that their companions were receiving even more than they had. We towed the canoes out to sea, where we sank them, and continued our voyage.

“When we approached a place where Christian natives were to be found, we hoisted a missionary flag, and the interpreter going on shore told the people that one of their dear missionaries was on board, when a number eagerly came off to visit him, and were somewhat surprised when they found themselves handed down into the hold.

“This dodge answered so well that we tried it several times, generally with the same success. The owner having heard that a bishop, or a man of that sort, who wears a long gown and preaches, was in the habit of visiting many of the islands, determined to find out where he had most friends, hoping, by a dodge he had thought of, to make a grand haul. He had had a coat and hat made which he said was just like the bishop’s, and another for the interpreter. Rigged in these they went one day on shore, and began preaching to the natives who collected round in great numbers. What they said I don’t know, it must have been something curious, I fancy; but the savages who had never had a visit from the bishop before, though they had heard of him it seemed, were mightily pleased. Some wanted to come off at once, but the owner replied that he should be happy to see as many as chose to visit him next morning, and that he had a number of things he should like to give them.

“Pretty nearly a hundred came alongside the next morning in their canoes; the difficulty, however, was to secure them. At last the interpreter thought of a plan. He told them that the bishop was sick in his cabin and that he could only see three or four at a time; but that there were praying men in another part of the vessel who would be happy afterwards to talk

to them. By this means, a few at a time being got below, the greater number were secured. At last the remainder began to grow suspicious, and one of those below shouting out, they made a rush to the side, and leaped overboard. A few were secured, but several made their escape, when the owner ordered us to fire on them. Several were hit and sank, but the rest reached the shore, thinking, I have no doubt, that it was an odd way for a bishop to treat them, and vowing that the next time they caught sight of him they would make him sorry for what he had done.

“We played a trick like this at several other places, but, as the bishop was known, the interpreter, rigged as a parson, going on shore, told the people that the bishop was ill on board, but would still be very glad to see them if they would come off and pay him a visit.

“By this and all sorts of other means we at last got a full cargo of between two and three hundred people.

“It seemed to me that we had a pretty large cargo already, but falling in with another vessel belonging to our owner, he took out of her sixty or seventy natives, and sent her to collect more, while we continued our voyage.

“Among the natives we had received on board were three young fellows from the island of Anietium, the most northern of the New Hebrides, which I once before had visited to get a cargo of sandal-wood. I remembered making friends with one of the natives, a lad, and having given him several articles, of no great value to myself I must own, though they pleased him mightily. Of the three we had now caught, two were perfect young savages, with their hair frizzled out, and sticking up at the top of their heads in a curious fashion, and big ear-rings in their ears, though with no clothing on, except round their waists. The other was clad in shirt and trousers. I saw him looking at me, and presently he put out his hand, and, taking mine, spoke to me in English, and I found that he was the very lad I had before known. He had been to New Zealand in the meantime, and had become a sort of missionary to his countrymen. I told him I would do my best to help him while on board. He said he didn't mind labouring, but thought it was his duty to remain at his island to try to make the people Christians. The owner only laughed at him, but remarked to me that if he had known he spoke English, he would have let

him alone, as he might be telling tales to the authorities.

“We were somewhat overcrowded, as may be supposed. It was bad enough for the savages, but worse for a man who had seen something of civilised life. I took my friend food, and let him remain on deck during my watch, as he promised me that he would not leap overboard.

“We were delayed by calms, and one day we drifted in close to the island of Poru. How the blacks knew where we were I don’t know, but somehow or other they found out that we were near the shore, and, without a moment’s warning, they managed to lift off the hatches, and up they came swarming on deck, with all sorts of things they had got hold of in their hands. The owner and captain rushed out of the cabin, crying out to the crew to assist them, and drive the savages down below again. I was at the time at the bowsprit end at some work or other, and my missionary friend was in the bows. Just as I looked round on hearing the noise, I saw the owner and captain knocked down, and in a moment their heads were almost cut off, and they were hove overboard. The first mate had come up with his revolver, fighting for his life, and shooting the natives as fast as he could right and left. By chance he had shot one of the crew who had gone to his assistance, and the next instant he himself was knocked down, and treated as the captain and owner had been. I had been making my way into the bows to assist them, when my friend Maka seized me by the arm, and dragged me down the fore hatchway.

“‘Their blood is up now,’ he whispered. ‘Stay quiet till they cool down, and I will save your life.’

“I followed his advice, and he stowed me away under a heap of clothes in the foremost bunk.

“The native part of the crew didn’t join the blacks, but I can’t say that they seemed to me to be doing much to help the owner and white men.

“A strong breeze had sprung up off the land, which I guessed the vessel was fast leaving. I had been hid away some time, when I felt as if I was suffocating; and unable to bear it longer, I threw off the things above me, and found that the fore peak was filled with smoke. I at once knew that the vessel was on fire. I was nearly dropping back, when I felt a hand

seize me, though I could see nothing for the smoke, and I heard Maka's voice, saying, 'Come on deck, I will save your life.' He dragged me up, and I sat down for a moment on the heel of the bowsprit. Smoke was coming up through the hatchways, and flames were already bursting out in the after part of the vessel. The blacks, seized with terror, without stopping to get hold of anything to support themselves, were leaping overboard, and striking out for the far-distant land. I never before saw such a sight, three hundred of them in the water together. It seemed to me that they would have very little chance of ever reaching the shore, but their only thought was to get away from the burning ship.

"Maka had an axe in his hand, he put another into mine, and we set to work to cut away whatever would serve to form a raft. We got hold of several spars and ropes; we had little time to spare, for we expected every moment to have the flames burst out beneath our feet. We at last got our raft overboard. Maka had secured some meal and a small keg of water. We had just time to lash ourselves to the raft, when the flames burst out forward, and the ship was on fire fore and aft.

"By this time we could just distinguish a dark line in the water, which marked where the blacks were making their way towards the land.

"'Poor fellows,' said Maka. 'Very few swim so far.'

"Our case was bad enough, for even with a couple of paddles, which we managed to make while on the raft, out of some spars we had brought for the purpose, we could scarcely hope, with the breeze against us, to reach the shore. Our water and provisions would not hold out long, and no vessel was likely to come near us.

"It was near evening when the fire broke out. The sun went down, but the flames of the burning vessel lighted up the ocean around us, and then the full moon rose, and seemed to cheer us up a little.

"Maka talked to me about my soul, for he didn't seem to think that we should have much chance of escaping with our lives; but I begged that he would not put gloomy thoughts into my mind. He sat and talked on; the truth is, however, I couldn't understand what he was talking about, it was all so new to me.

“Towards morning the vessel burned to the water’s edge, and then the sea rushing in, down she went, and we lay floating, with only the light of the moon to cheer us.

“When the sun rose I found that we had drifted still further from the land, which was no longer in sight.

“It is not pleasant to think of the time I spent on that raft. Several days went by, and we consumed all our meal and water. I thought I should die, and at last was more dead than alive. I lay on my back with my eyes shut, and a piece of wood under my head which Maka had put there to prevent the water washing over me, while he sat up by my side singing hymns, and keeping up his spirits in a way I could not have supposed possible.

“While I thus lay I heard him give a shout, and he helped me to sit up. I saw the land which I didn’t suppose we were near, and a canoe with four natives close to us. I suppose they were Christians, for instead of knocking us on the head, they took Maka and me on board, and welcomed him as a friend, giving us food and treating us very kindly in their village, to which they carried us. We there heard that of all the savages which had been on board the brig, only thirty had reached the shore. It’s a wonder that even they managed to do it, considering the distance. The rest had been drowned, or picked off by the sharks.

“I had had enough of carrying labourers to work for the planters of Queensland or Fiji—kidnapping, I fancy you call it; and so I determined to remain where I was. However, as the customs of the Christian natives didn’t quite suit me, I came away here, where I took a wife and settled, and intend to remain for the rest of my days. I am too old to knock about at sea as I used to do. Maka went back in a missionary vessel to his native island to labour on, as he told me, and try and make the people Christians. I hope he will succeed if he wishes it, for he is an honest fellow, I’ll say that for him.”

The old fellow thus brought his yarn to a close. I am able to corroborate most of his statements, observed my young friend, for we visited many of the places he speaks of, and from the information we received I am

convinced that he in no way overdraws the atrocious practices of many of the sandal-wood traders, or fellows engaged in kidnapping the natives of the Pacific Islands. The villainous doings of the African slave trade is an old story and known to all, but as far as I can judge they do not surpass those of the kidnapers of the Pacific at the present day. In the one case the white men merely received slaves captured by their own countrymen, and conveyed them across to the American coast; but in the Pacific we find white men, in some instances, depopulating whole islands, and capturing indiscriminately by fraud or violence, the natives of others, although nominally to labour as free men, yet in reality to be reduced to a condition little superior to real bondage.

After I had heard old Ringdon's narrative, I felt more anxious than ever to get hold of some of these kidnapping gentlemen. When, three days afterwards, the ship standing in took me and the boat's crew off, and I told the captain what I had heard, he sent to try to induce Ringdon to come on board, and give further information which might help us in capturing some of his former acquaintances, but the old fellow was not to be moved. Indeed, I suspect that should he have the opportunity, he would be very willing, for a sufficient consideration, to act as agent to any kidnapping skipper who might think fit to employ him.

I might mention several naval officers as well as consuls, missionaries, and respectable merchants at Sydney, Brisbane, and elsewhere, who would acknowledge that the main features of the account I have given are perfectly true, however much they might be inclined to doubt the word in ordinary matters of the old seaman who gave them to me.

It should be clearly understood that old Ringdon's narrative refers to times gone by. The Governments of Queensland and the Fiji Islands, now annexed to England have passed enactments for the prevention of the atrocious proceedings he describes. At the same time, as there are numerous lawless white men living on the heathen islands of the Pacific similar in character to Ringdon who would be ready to ill-treat the helpless natives if they should have the opportunity, it is important for the cause of humanity that men-of-war should continually cruise among them to preserve order and to punish delinquents.



The End.



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