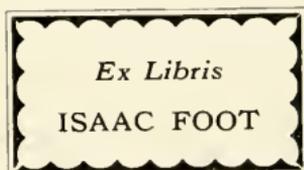




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# Yorke the Adventurer,

*And Other Stories*

By

Louis Becke

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## CONTENTS



	PAGE
YORKE THE ADVENTURER . . . .	I
THE COLONIAL MORTUARY BARD . . . .	74
“REO,” THE FISHERMAN . . . .	79
THE BLACK BREAM OF AUSTRALIA . . . .	87
“MARTIN OF NITENDI” . . . .	101
THE RIVER OF DREAMS . . . .	112
“OLD MARY” . . . .	133
“FIVE-HEAD” CREEK . . . .	168
FISH DRUGGING IN THE PACIFIC . . . .	189
JOHN CORWELL, SAILOR AND MINER . . . .	203
POISONOUS FISH OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS . . . .	230



# *Yorke the Adventurer*

## CHAPTER I

IN that delightful and exciting book, written by Captain Joshua Slocum, and entitled, "Sailing Alone Round the World," there is a part wherein the adventurous American seaman relates how he protected himself from night attacks by the savages by a simple, but efficient precaution. It was his custom, when he anchored for the night off the snow-clad and inhospitable shores of Tierra del Fuego, to profusely sprinkle his cutter's deck with sharp tacks, and then calmly turn in and sleep the sleep of the just; for even the horny soles of the Fuegian foot is susceptible to the business end of a tack; and, as I read Slocum's story, I smiled, and thought of dear old Yorke and the *Francesca*.

\* \* \* \* \*

I first met Yorke early in the "seventies." Our vessel had run in under the lee of the South Cape of New Britain to wood and water, and effect some repairs, for in working northward through the Solomon Group, on a special mission to a certain island

off the coast of New Guinea, we had met with heavy weather, and had lost our foretopmast. In those days there was not a single white man living on the whole of the south coast of New Britain, from St. George's Channel on the east, to Dampier's Straits on the west—a stretch of more than three hundred miles, and little was known of the natives beyond the fact of their being treacherous cannibals. In Blanche Bay only, on the northern shore, was there a settlement of a few adventurous English traders—the employees of a rich German company—and these were only acquainted with the natives in their own vicinity. Even the masters of trading vessels avoided the south coast of the great island, not only on account of the dangerous character of its inhabitants, but also because there was not, they thought, anything to tempt them to risk their and their crews' lives—for the shore nearly everywhere presented a line of dense unbroken forest, with but scanty groves of coco-palms at long intervals, and even had there been many such groves, no communication could be had with the people. In the wild days of the "seventies" the practice of cutting up and drying the coconut into what is known as "copra" had scarcely made any headway in those parts of New Britain, New Ireland, and the Solomon and New Hebrides Groups which were visited by trading vessels—the nuts were turned into oil by a crude and wasteful process known as "rotting."

The captain of our little vessel was one of the oldest and most experienced trading skippers in the Western Pacific, grim, resolute, and daring, but yet

cautious of his men's lives, it not of his own ; so when he decided to anchor under the lee of the South Cape, he chose a part of the coast which seemed to be but scantily inhabited. The dense forest which came down to the water's edge concealed from view any village that might have been near us ; but the presence of smoke arising from various spots denoted that there were some natives living in the vicinity, though we could not see any canoes.

We brought to about half a mile from the shore. Two boats were at once lowered, manned, and armed, and under the captain's guidance, set out to search for water, which we knew we should have but little difficulty in finding, even on the south coast of New Britain, which is not nearly so well watered as the northern shore of the island. In the captain's boat were six men besides himself ; I was in charge of the covering boat, manned by six native seamen and carrying three water-casks—all we could stow.

Pulling in together, close to the shore, the captain then went ahead, my boat following at the regulation distance of fifty yards, only four hands rowing in each, leaving four men to keep a look-out for natives.

Presently the skipper turned to me, and pointed shoreward.

“That's the place for us, Drake—between those two spurs—just round this point. There's bound to be water there.”

The place which he indicated was about two miles distant to the eastward, and the crews gave way with good will, for the prospect of having a drink of pure

water after the brackish and ill-smelling stuff we had been drinking for a fortnight, was very pleasing. Although but a little past nine o'clock in the morning the day was intensely hot, and windless as well, and the perspiration was streaming down the naked chests and backs of our sturdy native sailors. The only sounds that broke the silence were the cries of birds—cockatoos and large green and scarlet parrots, which screamed angrily at us as the boats passed close in to the dense, steamy jungle of the littoral.

Just as the captain's boat rounded the point, we heard a cry of astonishment from his crew, a cry that was echoed by ourselves half a minute later ; for there in the centre of a small landlocked bay, was a cutter lying at anchor ! She appeared to be of about thirty or forty tons, had an awning spread aft, and presented a very weather-worn appearance ; her rudder was gone, and the upper part of her stern badly damaged. There was no one visible on deck, but presently, in answer to the captain's hail, the face of an old, white-haired man, appeared above the companion.

“Come on board,” he called out in clear, vigorous tones, and we saw him take up a broom, which was lying on the skylight, and begin to sweep the after-deck vigorously with one hand, the other being in a sling.

“Guess he's a lunatic,” said Captain Guest, turning to me with a laugh. But we had no time to indulge in surmises, for in a few minutes we were drawing up alongside ; the stranger was standing at the stern, broom in hand, watching us.

“Step on board here, over the stern, please,” he said, and then he added quickly, “but are you all wearing boots?”

“No,” answered the captain, now quite sure the old man was wrong in his head, “some of my men have no boots.”

“Then they had better not come aboard,” he said with a quiet, amused smile, as he saw our puzzled faces.

The moment Captain Guest and myself stepped over the rail and shook hands with the stranger, we saw the reason for the broom—the entire deck, except the small space aft which had just been swept, was covered with broken glass!

“Glad to see you, gentlemen. My name is Yorke, and this cutter is the *Francesca*.”

“And my name is Guest. I am master of the brigantine *Fray Bentos*, of Sydney, lying just round the point, and this is Mr. Drake, my supercargo.”

“Sit down here on the skylight, gentlemen, out of the way of the glass—my cabin is very small.”

“Guess it would have to be a pretty big one if you had another two men like yourself to share it,” said Guest with a laugh, as he surveyed our new friend’s proportions. And indeed he was right, for Yorke was over six feet in height, rather stout, and with a chest like a working bullock. His face and neck were deeply bronzed to a dark tan, and presented a striking and startling yet pleasing contrast to his snowy-white hair, moustache, and eyebrows; his clear, steely blue eyes were in consonance with the broad, square jaw,

and the man's character revealed itself in his features—strong, courageous, dominant, and self-reliant.

The moment Captain Guest mentioned that our men were thirsty and would like a drink of water, Yorke became the soul of hospitality, and told them to come on board and help themselves, while for Guest and myself he produced a couple of bottles of excellent Tennant, and took a glass of it himself.

“Now, do you know, gentlemen,” he said as he sat down on the cutter's rail, facing us, “this morning I had a dream? I thought I heard some one call out, ‘All ready there, for'ard?’ and I heard the rattle of a cable through the hawse-pipes. Then I woke and looked at the clock—it was just half-past seven.”

“And at half-past seven we let go anchor, a good four miles from here. Surely you could not have heard us at such a distance.”

“No, that's a fact. So, when I did hear you hail just now I knew my dream was verified. As a rule, dreams aren't worth a bag of shakings.”

“Where are your crew, captain?” I asked.

“Ah, now I've a yarn to tell you. I'm the only man on board—my mate and every man of my crew were massacred about six weeks ago off the north end of New Ireland, and I only escaped by the skin of my teeth. And now you can guess the meaning of all this glass on the deck. There's plenty of niggers all around us here, and that broken glass is a splendid protection for me at night time. Since I lost my men they have made two attempts to cut me off at night time, once at a place just the other side of Cape St.

George and once near here. But," and he laughed softly, "they didn't stay on deck more than five seconds, I can assure you. I'll tell you the whole yarn presently. But say, captain—can you help me to a new rudder? I lost mine a week ago, and having a bad hand have not been able to do anything towards making one myself."

"Certainly I will. I'll send my carpenter to you as soon as we get back to the ship; or, better still, we'll tow you down to the *Fray Bentos*. But we are in want of water and firewood, and I should like to take some of both back with me."

He thanked Guest warmly, and added that, although the cutter had no rudder, she would steer very well with a sweep; and then he informed us there was good running water within a couple of cables' length of the cutter, also plenty of wood, and offered to take us to the place. We need not, he said, apprehend any attack by the natives, as our party was too large, and the spot where we could fill the casks was in fairly open country, and by stationing a sentry or two on each side of the creek, we could both wood and water with safety.

"There is a village about six miles along the coast from here, and no doubt it was the people from there who boarded me the other night, for I saw a lot of canoes on a little beach there. I think it must be the largest village for many miles hereabout. Now, do you see all those columns of smoke? Some, you will notice, are very thin and bluish, while others are almost black; the thin ones are only from native

ovens, the others are signals to the various smaller villages to the eastward—by this time every nigger within fifty miles of us knows that your ship is at anchor. I hope you left plenty of men on board?”

“Plenty, and ours is a well-armed crew.”

Just as he was stepping into the captain’s boat, I asked him what was the matter with his hand. He replied carelessly that he had “managed to get a bit of a knock,” and would be glad if I would look at it when we returned to the cutter, as it was rather painful at times.

The boats were soon under way for the shore, and in a quarter of an hour we entered a narrow but deep creek, not wide enough to permit us using our oars; but this was of no consequence, for each boat carried half a dozen canoe paddles. Within a hundred yards up from the entrance we found the water to be quite fresh, and while some of the men started to fill the casks, the rest, except the sentries, made for a clump of about a dozen coconut-trees growing close beside a magnificent grove of areca-palms. Every nut that was young enough to drink was quickly thrown down, and carried to the boats. Then we set to work to collect firewood, and two or three dry, solid logs were dragged down into the creek, lashed together, and then, with them and the filled water casks in tow, we returned merrily to the *Francesca*, hoisted up our water casks, swept up all the glass, shovelled it into a hogshead standing on the deck, hoisted her mainsail, and hove up her anchor, glad of having accomplished our task so easily and so quickly. A light air

had sprung up, and the vessel, aided by the boats, made good progress towards our brigantine, despite the logs towing astern.

Our new friend asked me if I would mind coming below with him, as it was past three o'clock, and quite time we had something to eat and drink.

The cabin certainly was small, but was spotlessly clean, and exceedingly well furnished. It contained three bunks, two of which were hidden from view by neat cretonne curtains.

"That was my poor young mate's bunk," he said sadly, "and the other was the boatswain's. Now, will you please pass these up on deck?"

From a locker he took out a dozen or more of ale, two bottles of spirits, and a number of tins of beef, sardines, etc., together with an ample supply of biscuit. These I passed up to Guest, who, at Yorke's request, ordered the boats alongside, so that the crews could get some dinner, and a stiff glass of grog all round. Then we ourselves ate a most hearty meal, rendered the more enjoyable by the deliciously cool beer—a liquor which, until that day, we had not tasted for quite four or five months. As soon as we had finished, I asked him to let me examine his hand.

"Can you do a bit of cutting?" he asked, as I began to remove the bandages.

"Rather," answered Guest for me, "Drake loves to dig out a bullet, especially—doesn't he, Napoleon?"

Napoleon was one of our native crew—a short, nuggety little Tongan, who, in an attack made on our boats nearly a year before, had received a bullet in

the calf of the leg. I had succeeded in extracting it without unduly mutilating the patient, for I had once acted as amateur assistant to a medical missionary in Samoa, and had seen a good many bullets extracted during a very lively six months' native war.

When I saw the condition of Yorke's hand, I was startled. It was enormously swollen from the tips of the fingers to the wrist, and badly lacerated and bruised all over the back, and presented a very dangerous appearance. The pain he had endured, and was enduring at the moment, must have been something atrocious, and I felt a sudden respect and admiration for a man who could attend to *our* wants before thinking of himself.

"Good heavens!" said Guest sympathisingly, "how did it happen?"

He told us that ten days previously the cutter had struck on a reef in the night. She bumped heavily three or four times, but would have worked across the reef without serious damage, as there was a good breeze, had not a sea taken her on the bows, thrown her aback, and driven her stern first against the one exposed portion of the reef, tearing away her rudder, and smashing all the upper part of her stern. Yorke, who was half-stunned by the boom swinging over, and striking him on the head as he was rising to his feet after being hurled along the deck, felt that he had received an injury to his hand, which was bleeding profusely. But just then he gave no thought to it, for the next two or three seas fortunately carried

the cutter over the reef into deep water and safety. When he came to examine his hand, he found it had been crushed, probably by a piece of the heavy hardwood rail, and several splinters were protruding from the back and wrist. These he had succeeded in extracting, but the pain continued to increase day by day, and the palm of the hand began to swell and gather.

“Perhaps there’s a bit of timber in there yet,” he remarked to us.

I thought so also, and so did Guest, and after torturing the poor fellow a few minutes, I located the exact spot—just below the ball of the thumb.

“Captain Yorke,” I said, “I can cut it out, I am sure. But, frankly, the thumb is a dangerous thing for an amateur surgeon to meddle with, and——”

“I know,” he interrupted quietly, “but I’d rather run the risk of lockjaw than the certainty of blood poisoning, and I know that that is what it will turn to. Last night I made up my mind to cut into the damned thing this morning if that last poultice I put on had no effect. Now go ahead. There’s a bottle of carbolic acid below, which will be useful, and my pocket-knife has a razor-edge.”

In less than five minutes I set to work, and in a few more, to my intense satisfaction—for I felt nervous—the thing was done, and I had extracted a piece of wood half an inch long, and as thick as a small quill. Then Guest and I carefully washed the wound over and over again in a solution of carbolic acid, and in half an hour the hand was bound up *pro tem*. Poor Yorke bore the pain without the twitching of an

eyelid, and I felt a sincere thankfulness when, two hours later, we saw the change that relief from intense physical suffering had effected in his features.

When we reached the brigantine, I was able to bandage the injured hand in a more shipshape and proper manner, as we had an ample supply of lint and other requirements; and within ten days he could use his hand freely, though it took a much longer time for a thorough recovery. That he was deeply grateful to us he showed us in many quiet ways; and before he had been with us a week, both the captain and myself, and, indeed, every one else on board the *Fray Bentos* had grown to like the man immensely, though at times he would become unaccountably moody and silent, and keep to himself, only speaking in answer to a direct question. But, even then, he never attempted to directly avoid us, and was always civil, even to any of our native crew who might speak to him.

“Guess he thinks a lot about those poor men of his,” said Guest to me one day.

That first evening we had a very pleasant supper. Yorke was with us, and during the meal he gave us a detailed account of his voyage, and of the massacre of his little vessel's company.

## CHAPTER II

HE had, he told us, bought the *Francesca* at Sourabaya about three years before, and after making several trading voyages between Manila and the Ladrone Islands—voyages which did not pay as well as he had anticipated—he fell in with the master of a Hobart Town whaler, who strongly advised him to go farther eastwards and southwards, particularly about the Admiralty Group and their vicinity, where a few colonial vessels were doing very well, trading for coconut oil, beche-de-mer, sandalwood, tortoiseshell and pearl-shell. Yorke took his advice and made a very successful voyage to the Admiralties, taking a cargo of pearl-shell to Singapore. This he sold very profitably, and was soon at sea again. On reaching the Admiralty Group, however, he was prevented from trading by the hostility of the natives, though on his previous visit they had been very friendly ; and so, fearing that they might cut off the vessel, he decided to leave. He had with him a native of Yap, one of the Caroline Islands—a man who had wandered about the North and South Pacific from his boyhood. His name was Rul, and he was not only a good seaman and an expert diver, but spoke fluently nearly a score of Melanesian and Micronesian dialects.

On the evening of the day that the cutter left Callie Harbour, on Admiralty Island, Yorke called his six men together, and told them that he was very undecided what to do. (I found out afterwards that he had a way of taking his crew into his confidence—"It pleases them," he said, "and has proved very useful on a number of occasions when their goodwill meant much to me").

After telling them that he did not like to risk their lives by trying to return to Callie Harbour, he asked if they were willing to sail with him to the south-western coast of New Guinea, where, he had heard, there was a great deal of pearl-shell to be bought from the natives. At the same time he pointed out to them that it would be a risky undertaking; he had no chart of that part of the Western Pacific, and, if they lost the ship, they would stand but little chance of escaping from the cannibal natives.

"Then," he went on, "this fellow Rul said that although he and the other natives on board were quite willing to go anywhere with me, *he* knew of a place only two days' sail away to the eastward where there was not only plenty of black-edge pearl-shell, but hawkbill turtle-shell as well. He had, he said, been cast away there in a whaleship, and remained on the island three months, could speak a little of the language, and gave me the names of several villages and harbours, but did not know the name of the island as a whole.

"I brought up my chart, and in a few seconds I discovered the names he had mentioned. The island

was New Hanover, and, with the northerly breeze then blowing, I knew we should be there in twenty-four hours. So I made up my mind to try the place; for Rul was a thoroughly trustworthy fellow, and I knew I could depend on him.

“My mate was a young American named Ted Merriman, a native of New London, Connecticut, a fine sailorman, and a good navigator. My boatswain, too, was one of the right sort; and, as for the rest, although they were all natives, they were good seamen, and I had never had a sulky look from any one of them since they first shipped with me.

“We anchored just off a village which Rul knew, and in a few minutes the people came off to us in crowds and filled the deck. Many of them recognised Rul, and they all showed great friendliness and eagerness to trade; and I, like a cocksure fool, was thrown off my guard.”

He ceased speaking, sighed, then lit his pipe and smoked in silence for awhile, and it was evident to us all that, although he was not an emotional man, he was strongly affected by the memory of the tragedy, and reproached himself keenly.

“Everything went well for the two following days,” he resumed; “the natives had over ten tons of good black-edge shell, all of which I bought from them, paying for it principally in tobacco. It was worth to me in Singapore about £65 a ton, and only cost me about £3 a ton, so you may imagine that I felt very well satisfied. Then, besides the pearl-shell I bought nearly five hundredweight of splendid hawk-

bill turtle-shell, giving but two or three sticks of tobacco for an entire carapace of thirteen plates weighing between two and three pounds, and, as you know, hawkbill shell is worth eight dollars a pound in Hongkong, and much more in London or Hamburg."

"Captain Yorke," said Guest, with a laugh, "you should not have told us this. Drake here is a very good fellow, but in business matters—as a super-cargo—he'd cut the throat of his best friend."

"Don't believe that, Captain Yorke," I said, "but at the same time I wish you had not told us of this place. You certainly have the prior right of discovery, and ought to have the benefit, so I promise you I will not repeat to our owners anything you now tell us."

Yorke's face changed, and his bright blue eyes looked into ours with such a kindly expression that the fascination he already possessed over me deepened quickly.

"You and Captain Guest are welcome to my knowledge, but I trust you will use it for your own benefit, and not consider your owners. Tell me now, gentlemen, would they consider *you*? Would they give you a handsome bonus for putting, say, five, or six thousand pounds into their pockets?"

"I daresay they would give us each a cheque for fifty pounds," said Guest meditatively.

"Then keep the thing dark," said the big man energetically, "keep it dark. Why should you, Captain Guest, and you, Mr. Drake, enrich your

owners by imparting to them this information? I tell you, gentlemen, that all shipowners are alike, at least I never ran across any that showed much consideration for any one else's welfare. Nine out of every ten will work the soul out of their ship-masters and officers, who, when they grow too old to go to sea, are chucked out into the gutter to die of poverty, unless they have laid by a nest-egg for their old age."

"That is true enough," assented Guest, "and our esteemed employers are no better than the general run. So we will look on what you have just told us as private; by and by we will all talk over the matter, and see if we cannot go into the thing together."

Yorke nodded. "I'm with you. I've always played a lone hand hitherto, but I think that I can pull very well with men like you."

Then he resumed his story.

"On the morning of the third day I went ashore with my gun to have a few hours' shooting on a large swamp, situated about three miles inland from the village. One of the natives had told Rul that there were great numbers of wild duck and plover there, and offered to guide me to the place; so, telling Merriman that I would be back in time for dinner, I started with the guide. The gun I had with me was a double-barrelled pin-fire Lefauchaux breech-loader, and just before I left the cutter, I put in a couple of cartridges, intending to have a shot at some cranes which I saw walking about on the beach. Most fortunately for me, they flew away before I could get near enough. Besides the gun, I brought with me a Sharp's rifle, as the

guide said that we should most likely see a wild pig or two about the swamp. The rifle I gave to him to carry, but the ten cartridges for it I put in my coat pocket, together with about twenty cartridges for the gun.

“On landing at the village, I was met by the head man, who wanted to know if I would buy a couple of pigs from him. I told him to take them on board to the mate, who would pay him ; then, the guide leading, we struck out into the forest. After going about a mile or so, the nigger was joined by half a dozen young bucks, all armed with spears and clubs. I asked the guide, who spoke a little English, what they wanted ; he replied that they wished to see me shoot.

“‘Very well,’ I said, ‘go ahead then, all of you.’

“The bucks grinned, but instead of going ahead stepped back to let me pass, and fell in, in single file at the rear, the guide still leading. Now, I didn’t like that at all, and I turned round to tell them to go in front of me ; I was just in time to save myself from getting a spear through my back—as it was, it whizzed through the side of my coat, and in another second the nigger who threw it had a charge of shot through his brains. Then, slewing round, I was just able to drop the guide, who was running off with the rifle. I hit him in the back, and saw him fall, then took cover behind a big tree to load again ; but every other nigger had vanished, and then I heard a sound that filled me with dread for those on board the cutter—the loud, hoarse bellowing of conch shells.

“I ran over to the guide, who was lying where he had fallen. I don’t think he was mortally wounded,

for he was quite thirty yards off when I fired. However, I made certain of him by cracking his skull with a long-handled club he carried. Then I loaded the Sharp's rifle, slung it over my shoulder by its sling; and started back for the village at a run, holding my shot gun ready cocked.

“When I reached the village, I could not see a soul—every house was deserted, but from the sea front I could hear diabolical yells and cries. I had to run another hundred yards or more before I came in sight of the cutter, and the moment I did so, I saw that it was all over with poor Merriman and the others—the vessel was simply swarming with niggers, and surrounded by canoes, into which they were already throwing the plunder!

“I rested a minute or so to get my breath and steady my hand, and then opened fire. The cutter was not two hundred yards away from where I stood, and the very first shot plumped right into the black, surging crowd on deck, and one nigger gave his last jump. I fired three more shots into them before they had time to get into their canoes, or spring overboard to swim ashore. Most of the canoes made off to the south, around a point, but three or four of them came right in towards me, heading for the village. I don't think any of them saw me, for I was lying down among the roots and *débris* of a fallen tree, just above high water mark. They came in, paddling like mad, but not uttering a sound. I waited till the first canoe was within ten yards of me, and then fired both barrels of my gun in quick succession right into them,

nearly blowing the chest out of the old chief, who was seated amidships, and wounding all the others. Then I got to work with my rifle again on the other canoes; and, although the moment they saw me, the niggers jumped overboard and dived, I got one for every shot of the last six cartridges—whenever one got into shallow water and stood up to run, down he went.

“Then, taking both shot gun and rifle by the barrels, I smashed them on a rock, tore off my clothes and boots, and started to swim off to the vessel, looking behind me every now and then to see if the niggers were following. But they had had enough of me, and their empty canoes were drifting about the bay.

“I got alongside, clambered up over the waist, and saw a sight I shall never forget—every one of my poor shipmates had been ruthlessly slaughtered, and their mutilated bodies, stripped of every bit of clothing, were lying about the deck. A very brief examination showed me that every one of them was dead—in fact their heads had been beaten to pulp, and each body was pierced through and through with spear wounds and hacked and chopped about with tomahawks; while the deck was just a puddle of blood, mixed with sticks of tobacco, pieces of print, knives, and all sorts of trade goods.

“The first thing I did was to try and hoist the mainsail so as to get under way, but the black devils had cut away a lot of the running gear, and the halliards had been severed and lay on the deck, ready to be taken on shore with the other loot littered about,

though the sail itself had not been damaged. The jib and staysail, also, I could not hoist: they were lying in a heap on the windlass with a dead nigger on top, and, further aft, were another two of the gentry, one dead and one with a smashed thigh bone. I slung the wounded man overboard to the sharks, and then began to consider what was best to do. The niggers, I felt certain, would not tackle the cutter again, when they knew I was safe on board, but I determined to make certain.

“You noticed those two brass three-pounders I carry? Well, the first thing I did was to load them with heavy charges of round bullets, and some nuts and bolts. Then I got up a dozen or so of rifles, and plenty of ammunition, and laid them in readiness on the skylight; for, although the niggers had turned my cabin upside down when looting the ship, there were any amount of small arms and various stores in the little hatch under the cabin table; besides these, I had some more in my own berth in a locker.

“Just as I was taking a long drink at the scuttle butt, I saw some of the niggers creeping back to the village through the trees, and watching what I was doing. I soon let them know.

“The cutter had swung round, and was broadside on to the houses, so taking the gun on the port side over to the starboard, I secured it well, and then trained it with the other on the biggest house in the village—a sort of meeting-house or temple, or some such darned thing. I can tell you, gentlemen, I felt as if I could laugh when I saw quite a score of the black swine go into this house,

one after another. I had friction tubes in both guns, and waited for another five minutes ; then I fired them one after another. Whether many or any niggers were killed, I do not know ; but there was a fearful howling, which did me good to hear, and the front of the house went into splinters under the heavy charges of the guns, and in five seconds the village was deserted again.

“ Before I did anything more for my own safety, I got some sailcloth and rugs, and covered the bodies of my shipmates—the dreadful appearance they presented just unnerved me, and I felt like sitting down and crying. But I had to hustle. I wanted to get under way as quickly as possible before darkness came on, and it was now noon.

“ First of all I rove the mainsail halliards, and then bent on the jib, stopping only now and then to fire a rifle at the village, just to let the natives know I was keeping my eyes skinned. Then I hoisted the mainsail and hove up my anchor without any trouble, for the wind was very light, and got a good cant off shore as soon as I ran up the jib.

“ As soon as I was well away from the land, I stood north-about so as so clear Cape Queen Charlotte, the westerly point of New Hanover, and ran on for three or four hours, the vessel steering herself while I sewed up poor Merriman’s and the boatswain’s bodies as well as I could under the circumstances. I should have done the same for the natives had I had the time, especially for Rul, but I had not. About dusk I brought to, just off the Cape, and dropped

them over the side one after another—only just realising, ten minutes previously, that I was still stark naked!

\* \* \* \* \*

“After rounding the north point of New Hanover, I stood away down the coast of New Ireland till I made Gerrit Denys Island, where I anchored for a couple of days, the natives being very friendly, and giving me all the fresh provisions I wanted for a little tobacco and some hoop-iron. There was an old white beachcomber named Billy living with them; he seemed to do pretty well as he liked, and had a deal of influence with them, not allowing any one of them to hang about the vessel after sunset, and each night he slept on board with me. I gave him a case of Hollands for lending me a hand to set up my rigging, which so pleased him that he turned to and got drunk in ten minutes.

“After leaving Gerrit Denys I had a hard struggle to make Cape St. George, on the south end of New Ireland. For eight or ten days I had rainy weather, with heavy squalls from the eastward, and did not feel very well into the bargain, for I had a touch of fever and ague.”

I asked him how he managed at night-time as regarded sleep.

He laughed quietly, and assured us that he never lost a night's rest during the whole of the time he was at sea. He would simply “scandalise” his mainsail without reefing it, haul the staysail sheet to windward, and let the cutter head reach till daylight. The *Francesca*, he said—and I afterwards found out

that he was not over-rating her qualities—was a marvellous little vessel for taking care of herself.

“Well, I jogged along till one Sunday morning, when I made the land between Cape Bougainville and Cape St. George. It had been raining in torrents for two days, and I was feeling a bit done up ; so, picking out a quiet little bay with thick forest growing right down to the water’s edge, and not a sign of a native or native house, I ran in and let go in fifteen fathoms, but within a stone throw of the shore. And I’ll be hanged, gentlemen, if I did not see, ten minutes afterwards, the smoke of half a dozen signal fires rising over the trees from as many different places, and all within three miles of the cutter. However, I was too weak to heave up again, even had I felt inclined. I wanted to cosset myself up, and get a good sweating between thick blankets to drive some of the fever out of me ; and, niggers or no niggers, I meant to do so that day. Then I thought of a dodge—I mean the broken-glass trick.

“In the hold were half a dozen barrels of empty gin, beer, and whisky bottles. We had put them aside to give to the Admiralty Island people—especially the women and children—who attached some value to them as water holders. I brought up sixty or seventy dozen, and smashed them up in a clean hogshead. Then I turned the whole lot out in a heap on the main hatch, got a shovel, and covered the entire deck fore and aft, first getting all loose ropes, &c., out of the way, as I did not want to get any glass in my own hands when I next handled the

running gear. After that I went below, lit a spirit lamp, and made myself a big bowl of hot soup—real hot soup—a small tin of soup and bouilli, and a half bottle of Worcester sauce with a spoonful of cayenne pepper and a stiff glass of brandy thrown in.

“It touched me up, I can tell you, but I knew it would do me good as I lay down in my bunk, rolled myself in a heavy blanket, and piled over me every other rug and blanket I could find. In half an hour I was sweating profusely, for not only was the soup remedy working, but the little cabin, having every opening closed, was stiflingly hot. However, I stuck it out for a good two hours, till I felt I could stand it no longer ; so I got up, unfastened my cabin door to get some air, and began rubbing myself down with a coarse towel. Heavens ! it felt delightful ; for although my bones still ached, and I was very shaky on my legs, my head was better, and my spirits began to rise. I put on my pyjamas, went on deck, and had a look round. It was nearly dark, the rain had cleared off, a young moon was just lifting over the trees, and the little bay was as quiet as the grave—except for the cries of a colony of flying foxes, which lived in a big *vi* tree just a cable’s length away from the cutter.

“I knew that the New Britain and New Ireland natives don’t like going out after dark, and that if these people meant mischief to me, they would wait till just before daylight, when they would expect to find every one on board asleep ; so, feeling much better and stronger, I turned in at eight o’clock, and slept till past midnight. I made some coffee, drank it, and

laid down again, dozing off every now and then till just before dawn. Then I heard a sudden rush on deck, followed by the most diabolical howls and yells as twenty or thirty niggers jumped overboard with bleeding feet, many of them leaving their clubs lying on the deck. I put my head out of the cabin, and gave them half a dozen revolver shots, but I'm afraid I didn't hit any of the beggars.

"I got away on the same morning, and made a fine run right across St. George's Channel, and along the New Britain coast till I made Cape Roebuck. Once the cutter did a steady nine knots for thirty hours. After running on that reef, I did not drop anchor again till I brought up off a rocky beach a few miles from here ; and there the niggers made another try to get me, but the broken glass again proved effectual."

"It's a mighty smart dodge, Captain Yorke," said Guest, as we rose and shook hands with him, for he was going to sleep on board his own vessel.

### CHAPTER III

WE lay under the lee of the South Cape or New Britain for nearly a fortnight, during which time we effected all the necessary repairs to our own vessel, and fitted Yorke's cutter with a new rudder. So far he had not told us anything further of his intentions as regarded either the further prosecution of his trading voyage, or its abandonment. At breakfast one morning, Guest told him that he (Yorke) could have a

couple of our native hands to help him work the cutter to Manila, or any other port in the China Seas, if he so desired.

He stroked his big, square jaw meditatively.

“That is very kind of you, Captain Guest,” he said; “but to tell you the exact truth, I don’t know my own mind at this moment. I’ve a hazy sort of an idea that I’d like to keep the *Fray Bentos* company for a bit longer. I can outsail you in light winds—and I really don’t care what I do now. And if you can spare me a couple of hands, I could jog along in company with you indefinitely. But, please understand me—I don’t want to thrust myself and the *Francesca* into your company if *you* don’t want *me*. As a matter of fact, I don’t care a straw where I go—but I certainly would like to keep in company with you, if you don’t object. Perhaps you would not mind telling me where you are bound?”

Guest looked at me interrogatively.

“Well, Captain Yorke,” I said, “one confidence begets another; your confidence in us is worth a heap of money to Guest and myself, and, to be perfectly frank and straightforward with you, the captain and myself intended to lay a proposition before you whereby we three might possibly go into this New Hanover venture on our own hook. But Guest and myself are bound to our present employers for another seven months.”

Yorke nodded. “That will be all right. I’m ready to go in with you, either at the end of seven months or at any other time which may suit you. You can

count on me. I'm not a rich man, nor yet am I a poor man; in fact, there's a thousand pounds' worth of stuff under the *Francesca's* hatches now."

"Well then, Captain Yorke," I said, "as Guest here leaves me to do all the talking, I'll tell you *why* we are so far up to the northward, out of our usual beat. We heard in Samoa that a big ship, named the *Sarawak*, had run ashore and been abandoned at Rook Island, in Dampier Straits, between the west end of New Britain and the east coast of New Guinea, and both Guest and myself know her to be one of the largest ships out of Liverpool; she left Sydney for Hongkong about six months ago with a general cargo. And 'there be pickings,' for she is almost a new vessel, and her gear and fittings alone, independent of her cargo, ought to be worth a thousand pounds. All we could learn at Samoa was that she had run up on a ledge of reef on Rook Island, and that the skipper, with three boats' crews, had started off for Thursday Island, in Torres Straits. Now, it is quite likely that, if she has not broken up, there may be a lot of money hanging to it."

"For your owners!" said Yorke, with his slow, amused smile.

"Just so, Captain Yorke. 'For our owners,' as you say. But even our owners, who are rather 'sharp' people, are not a bad lot—they'll give Guest and myself a bonus of some sort if we do them good over this wrecked ship."

"And if you don't 'do them good'?" he asked, with the same half-humorous, half-sarcastic smile.

“If we don’t, the senior partner in our highly-esteemed, sailor-sweating firm, will tell Guest and myself that we ‘made a most reprehensible mistake,’ and have put the firm to a considerable loss by doing too much on our own responsibility.”

He nodded as I went on—“We heard of this wreck from the officers of a French cruiser which called at Samoa while we were there. They sighted her lying high and dry on the reef, sent a boat ashore, and found her abandoned. She was bilged, but not badly, as far as they could see. On the cabin table was nailed a letter, written by the captain, saying that being unable to float the ship again, and fearing that he and his unarmed crew would be attacked by the savages, he was starting off in his boats for Thursday Island, the nearest port. Now, that is a big undertaking, and the chances are that the poor fellows never reached there. However, Guest and I thought so much of the matter that we hustled through our business in Samoa, and sailed the next day direct for Rook Island, instead of doing our usual cruise to the eastward. But we met with fearful weather coming up through the Solomon Group, lost our foretopmast, and strained badly. And here we are now, tied up by the nose off the South Cape of New Britain instead of being at Rook Island at work on that wreck.”

Yorke thought a moment. “Well, gentlemen, let me come in with you—just for the fun of the thing. I don’t want to get any money out of it, I assure you, and I’ll lend you a hand with the wrecking work.”

“Agreed,” said Guest, extending his hand, “but only on this condition—whatever our owners give Drake and myself, we three divide equally.”

“As you please, as you please,” he said. “Now come aboard my little hooker, and have a look at what is in the hold.”

We went on board the *Francesca* with him, and made an examination of her small but valuable cargo, and Guest and I agreed that he had underestimated its worth by quite four hundred or five hundred pounds—in fact, the whole cargo would sell in Sydney or San Francisco for about sixteen hundred pounds.

We sailed together that afternoon, the cutter getting under weigh first. We had given Yorke three of our men—Napoleon the Tongan, and two other natives—and before ten minutes had passed, Guest and every one else on board the *Fray Bentos* could see that the *Francesca* could sail rings round our old brigantine, even in a stiff breeze, for the cutter drew as much water as we did, and had a big spread of canvas. By nightfall we were running before a lusty south-east breeze, the cutter keeping about half a mile to windward of us, and taking in her gaff topsail, when it became dark, otherwise she would have run ahead of, and lost us before morning. At daylight, when I went on deck, she was within a cable’s length, Yorke was steering—smoking as usual—and no one else was visible on deck.

I hailed him: “Good morning, Captain; where are your men?”

“Taking it out in ‘bunk, oh,’” he answered with a

laugh. "I came on deck about two hours ago, and told them to turn in until four bells."

"You'll ruin them for the *Fray Bentos*, sir," cried our mate with grumbling good-humour. "Why don't you start one of 'em at the galley fire for your coffee!"

"Because I'm coming aboard you for it," was the reply. He hauled in the main-sheet, lashed the tiller, went quietly forward without awakening his native seamen, and put the staysail to windward. Then he came amidships again to the main hatch, picked up the little dingy which was lying there, and, despite his bad hand, slid her over the cutter's rail into the water as if she were a toy, got in, and sculled over to the brigantine, leaving the cutter to take care of herself!

Charley King, the mate of the *Fray Bentos*, turned to me in astonishment. He was himself one of the finest built and most powerful men I had ever met, not thirty years of age, and had achieved a great reputation as a long-distance swimmer and good all-round athlete.

"Why, Mr. Drake, that dingy must weigh three hundred pounds, if she weighs an ounce, for she's heavy oak built! And yet with one gammy hand he can put her over the side as if she was made of brown paper."

Yorke sculled alongside, made fast to the main chains, clambered over the bulwarks, and stepped aboard in his usual quiet way, as if nothing out of the common had occurred, and asked the mate what he

thought of the *Francesca* as a sailer. King looked at him admiringly for a moment.

“She’s a daisy, Captain Yorke. . . . but you oughtn’t to have put your boat over the side by yourself, sir, with that bad hand of yours.”

The big man laughed so genuinely, and with such an infectious ring in his voice, that even our Kanaka steward, who was bringing us our coffee, laughed too. The dingy, he said, was very light, and there was no need for him to call one of the men to help him. As we drank our coffee he chatted very freely with us, and drew our attention to the lovely effect caused by the rising sun upon a cluster of three or four small thickly-wooded islets, which lay between the two vessels and the mainland of New Britain, whereupon King, who had no romance in his composition, remarked that for his part he could not see much difference between one sunrise or sunset and another. “One means a lot of wind, and another none at all; one means decent weather and another means rotten weather, or middlin’ weather.”

“Ah, Mr. King, you look at everything from a sailor’s point of view,” he said good-naturedly. “Now, there’s nothing gives me more pleasure than to watch a sunset and sunrise anywhere in the tropics—particularly if there’s land in the foreground or background—I never miss a sunrise in the South Seas if I can help it.”

Presently we began to talk of the voyage, and I asked him a question—which only at that moment occurred to me—concerning himself before we met.

“I wonder, Captain Yorke, when your crew were cut off, that it did not occur to you to run down the west coast of New Ireland, between it and New Britain, to Blanche Bay, where there is a German station, and where you could have obtained assistance. It would have been much easier for you instead of that long buffeting about on the east coast.”

He made no answer at first, and I saw that his face had changed colour. Then he answered slowly :

“Just so. I knew all about the Germans at Blanche Bay, but I did not want to go there—for very good reasons. Will you come aboard and have some breakfast with me? I’ll send you back again any time you like ; the sea is so smooth, as far as that goes, that I could run the cutter alongside, and let you step off on to your own deck.”

Just as we were pushing off from the brigantine, Guest came on deck, glass in hand, to have a look at the cluster of islands, at the same time calling out to Yorke and myself to wait a little. After scanning the islands from the deck, he went aloft for a better view, then descended and came aft again to the rail.

“Good morning, Captain Yorke. I’ve just been taking a look at those islands over there, and an idea has just come to me. But, first of all, are they marked on your chart? They are on mine, but not even named—just dots.”

“Neither are they on my big sheet chart—and I have no other of this part of the Western Pacific.”

“Well then, here’s my idea. I see from aloft that there is a good-sized blue water lagoon there, and as

likely as not there may be pearl-shell in it. Anyway, it's worth seeing into, and so if Drake and yourself like to take our boat and half a dozen men, you might have a look in there. I can't see any houses, but at the same time, be careful. You can run in with the cutter pretty close, and then go ashore in the boat. You are bound to find a passage into the lagoon somewhere or other. I'll send Tim Rotumah and George" (two of our native crew who were good divers) "with you in the boat; they'll soon let you know if there is any shell in the lagoon. If there is, light a fire, and make a smoke, and I'll anchor the brigantine and come after you."

I was delighted with this, and at once returned on board, while Yorke went off to the cutter to give his crew their instructions. In ten or fifteen minutes the whaleboat was over the side awaiting me, manned by six of our native crew, all of whom were armed with Snider carbines and revolvers. Pushing off from the *Fray Bentos*, we went alongside the *Francesca* to pick up Yorke, who was waiting for the boat. As the wind had now fallen very light, he suggested to me to make a start at once, leaving the cutter in charge of Napoleon, with orders to anchor if it fell calm, and he was on easy soundings.

The morning was deliciously bright, clear, and, for those latitudes at that season of the year, very cool. As the boat skimmed over the placid surface of the ocean, "schools" of bright silvery gar-fish and countless thousands of small flying squid sprang into the air and fell with a simultaneous splash into the water on

each side and ahead of us. Then "George," a merry-faced, broad-chested native of Anaa, in the Paumotu Islands, after an inquiring glance at me, broke out into a bastard Samoan-Tokelauan canoe song, with a swinging chorus, altering and improvising as he sang, showing his white teeth, as every now and then he smiled at Yorke and myself when making some humorous play upon the words of the original song, praising the former for his skill and bravery, and his killing of the man-eating savages of New Hanover, his great strength and stature, and his kindly heart—"a heart which groweth from his loins upwards to his throat."

Long, long years have passed since that day, but I shall always remember how Yorke turned to me with a smile when at something George had sung, the rest of our crew burst into approving laughter.

"What is he saying about me?—of course I can recognise that 'Ioka' means 'Yorke,'" he said.

"It's extremely personal, but highly complimentary to you. Now, wait a bit, till they come to the chorus, and I'll try and translate it. There, he's starting:"

*"Miti Ioka, malie toa, toa malohi*

*Kapeni Ioka, arii vaka!*

*Pule Ioka, fāna tonu!*

*Mate puaka uri, kai tino.*

*Maumau lava, nofo noa?*

*Maumau lava, nofo noa?*

*Hālo! Tama, Hālo Foe!!!*

“*E aue ! le tigā ina*  
*Ma kalāga, ma kalāga*  
*O fafine lalolagi*  
*E kau iloa, e nofa noa*  
*Kapeni Ioka*  
*Hālo ! Tama, Hālo Foe ! ! !”*

“which goes,” I said, “as far as I can understand, something like this—‘Mr. Yorke, warrior brave and fighter strong, Captain Yorke, the sailor captain, leader Yorke who fired so truly, slew the black, man-eating pigs of savages ! Oh, the pity he is single, oh, the pity he is single ! *Pull, men, pull !*’ The next verse says that did the world of women know that such a fine man as yourself was a bachelor, they would consume themselves with grief.”

“I wonder why they should take it for granted that I am a single man,” he laughed, as he began to fill his pipe ; then he added quietly—“I may be a widower for all I know. I was married in Copenhagen thirty years ago, and have never seen my wife since, and trust I never may.” Then in a moment he changed the subject, and I took good care not to mention the matter again.

An hour after leaving the brigantine, we found a passage—narrow but safe—leading into the lagoon, which was a mile or mile and a half in width, and but for the one opening in the reef, completely land locked by four small islands, all low and densely wooded with banyan and other trees, and connected with each other at low tide. Here and there, at intervals, were

groves of coco-palms, and a few *vi* trees—the wild mango of the Western Pacific, growing close down to the beach, which on the inner side of the lagoon was of bright yellow sand, and presented a very pleasing appearance.

#### CHAPTER IV

A VERY brief trial of the lagoon, at various depths, soon convinced us that it contained no pearl-shell, both George and the Rotumah man coming up empty-handed after each dive, and pronouncing the bottom to be *ogé*, *i.e.*, poverty-stricken as regarded shell. But we made one rather pleasing discovery, which was that the lagoon contained a vast number of green turtle. We could see the creatures, some of them being of great size, swimming about beneath the boat in all directions. It at once occurred to me that I should let Guest know, for we were getting short of provisions on board the *Fray Bentos*, and had been using native food—pork, yams, and taro, to eke out our scanty store. Here, now, was an opportunity of getting a supply of fresh meat which would last us for a couple of months or more; as we could easily stow eighty or a hundred turtle on board, and kill one or two every day as required. We always carried with us a heavy turtle-net, made of coir fibre, which I had bought two years before in the Tokelau Group. But, first of all, I consulted with our native crew as to whether we could dispense with the net by remaining on the island all night and watching for the turtle to come ashore.

They all assured me that we should get none, or at best but few, as it was not the laying season.

“Very well,” I said, “go off to the ship, and tell the captain that there is no pearl-shell here, but plenty of turtle. Ask him if he will let you have the turtle-net, so that we can set it across the mouth of the passage as soon as it becomes dark; and tell him we shall come off again by midnight if he does not care about our staying till the morning; but that as we are pretty sure to get a lot of turtle, he had better send the longboat as well.”

Yorke, at first, intended to go off again to the *Francesca*, but I told him I was so sure that Guest would come to an anchor when he heard about the turtle, that he (Guest) would be sure to tell Napoleon and the other men on board the cutter to do the same. “In fact,” I added, “a supply of turtle will be a God-send to us, and the skipper will not mind, I am sure, if we stay here for a couple of days, under the circumstances.”

We pulled ashore to a little sandy beach, and Yorke and myself, taking our rifles, ammunition, and a few biscuits each, got out, the native crew at once starting off again for the ship, pulling as hard as they could, for they were eager to return with the turtle-net and enjoy themselves as only South Sea Islanders and other of Nature’s children do when fishing.

About an hour after the boat had gone, we set to work to get some coconuts to drink, both for ourselves and the boat’s crew when they returned. Yorke ascended a very tall palm—about sixty feet in

height—like a native, and began throwing down the young nuts. I took a shorter tree near by, and was leisurely twisting off the heavy nuts, when he, who had a good view of the sea, called out to me that it had fallen calm.

“And what I don’t like, Drake, is this,” he added —“there’s a dull, greasy look on the water over to the eastward there, and I’d like to be on board the *Francesca* instead of being here. I don’t like it, I can tell you, and I’m sorry we did not go off in the boat.”

I, in my fatuous, youthful conceit, laughed at his forebodings.

“It’s only a New Britain squall—a lot of wind for ten minutes, then a power of rain for another twenty, and then it’ll be over.”

Yorke, however, was too old and experienced a seaman to disregard the signs of coming danger. He quickly descended from his tree, and I followed suit.

“There’s something more than a squall coming, my lad. Let us cut through the bush across to the weather side of the island, and try and stop the boat. We can do it if we are quick.”

The island was less than a mile in width, even at its broadest portion, which was where we had landed ; so, after a hurried drink, we picked up our rifles and started off to try to intercept the boat as she was pulling down the outer and eastern shore. But before we had made two hundred yards, we came to a dead stop, our progress being barred by a dense thicket

of thorny and stunted undergrowth. We turned aside and skirted the thicket for a quarter of a mile, then tried again, with the same result—it was absolutely impossible to force our way through the obstacle.

By this time the air had become stiflingly hot and oppressive, and the rapidly darkening sky presaged the coming storm. From every pore in our bodies the perspiration was streaming profusely, and our hands and faces were scratched and bleeding.

“We must go back,” said Yorke, “we cannot possibly get to the other side of the island through this damnable scrub. The only thing we can do is to run along the inner beach of the island till we come to its end, wade across the reef, and try to stop the boat before she has gone too far. This is no common squall, I’m afraid—it’s going to be a hurricane. Come on.”

We started off at a run, along the hard sand, but before we had done the first quarter of a mile, I felt that I could go no further, for I was pumped out, could scarcely breathe, and felt a strange, unnatural faintness overcoming me—a not uncommon sensation experienced by many people just before a hurricane or an earthquake.

“You must go on alone,” I said, pantingly, to Yorke; “leave me here. I’ll be all right, even if I have to stop here a month of Sundays. I can’t starve in such a place as this.”

Pitching his own and my rifle up on the bank above high water mark, he seized me and lifted me

up on his back, telling me to hold on, as he meant to make a big try for the boat. It was no use my protesting—he set off again at a steady run, my weight apparently impeding his progress no more than if he had been carrying a doll instead of ten stone.

At last we gained the end of the island, where there was a break in the verdure, and from which we had a brief view of the sea before it was blotted out by the black wall of the coming hurricane.

“We’re done as far as getting on board is concerned,” he said, as I slid down his back on to the sand; “but, thank God, the boat is safe. In another ten minutes she would have been too late to have reached either the cutter or brigantine, and have been smothered. Look, Captain Guest is all ready, and so is the cutter!”

I got up on my feet, just in time to see the boat go alongside the brigantine, which was under a close reefed lower topsail and a bit of her mainsail only—for Guest knew what was coming, and had prepared to meet it; the cutter, too, was reefed down, and had taken her dingy on deck. At that moment, however, both vessels were becalmed; but scarcely had the whale boat been hoisted up to the starboard davits of the *Fray Bentos*, and secured, when the hurricane struck both vessels. I thought at first that our poor old brigantine was going to turn turtle, for she was all but thrown on her beam ends; but righting herself gallantly, she plunged away into the growing darkness, followed by the cutter, and in five minutes both were hidden from view, and Yorke and myself had to

throw ourselves flat on our faces to avoid being blown down the beach into the lagoon.

I had once, years before when a boy in Fiji, seen a bad hurricane, and was rather proud of my experience, but I never saw, and never wish to see again, such a truly terrifying and appalling sight as my companion and I now witnessed—for within an hour all Nature seemed to have gone stark, raving mad, and I never expected to see the next morning's sun. I do not think it was the fearful force of the wind which so terrified me into a state of helplessness as the diabolical clamour—the clashing and tearing and rending asunder of the trees, accompanied by a prolonged howling mingled with a deep droning hum like one sometimes hears when a volcano is in eruption—and, in a minor key, the dulled roaring of the surf as the mighty seas swept over the outer reef, and broke over the weather shore with such tremendous force that the island seemed to tremble to its very foundations.

Unable to make himself heard in the pandemonium roaring around us, Yorke turned to me, and gripping me by one hand, and shielding his eyes with the other from the hurtling showers of sand and pebbles which threatened to cut our faces to pieces, he managed to drag me along the beach to a low ledge of coral rocks, under the shelter of which we were protected from the fury of the wind, and, in a measure, safe from flying branches, though all along the beach coco-palms were being torn up by the roots, or their lofty crowns cut off as if they were no stronger than a dahlia or some such weakly plant.

As we crouched on the sand under the ledge of rock, a terrific but welcome downpour of rain fell, and we were able to satisfy our thirst by pressing our mouths to crevices in the rock overhead. But we were not long allowed to remain undisturbed in our shelter, for, although the tide was on the ebb, the enormous influx of water, driven over the reef by the violence of the wind, so swelled the lagoon that we had to abandon our refuge and crawl on our hands and knees up over the bank, and thence into the thorny scrub, where we were at least safe from falling trees, there being none near us.

“I must try and get our rifles before it is too late,” shouted Yorke in my ear. “I know the place, but if I don’t get there pretty quick, I shall never be able to recognise it. Stay where you are until I get back, then we’ll try and find a better camping place before night comes on—if this little tin-pot island isn’t blown out of the water over on to New Guinea in the meantime.”

By this time I was beginning to get some courage, and to feel ashamed of myself; so, as soon as Yorke had crept out of the scrub, I braced myself up, and taking out my sheath knife, began to cut away the thorny branches, and pull up by the roots some of the scrub around me, so as to make more room. The soil consisted of decomposed shell and vegetable matter, very soft and porous, underneath which were loose coral slabs, and I soon had a space cleared large enough for us both to lie down upon. Then I started to enclose it on three sides by a low wall of the

flat coral stones, across which I laid a thick and nearly rain-proof covering of branches and leaves, and when Yorke returned an hour later, I was almost finished, and had begun to make a fire of dead roots and branches.

“That’s grand,” he said, as he laid down the rifles. “I was wondering if your matches were dry. Mine are spoilt, as I had them loose in my pocket. How is your tobacco?”

“Quite dry, too. Here you are, fill your pipe.”

The man’s thoughtfulness showed at once. “No, thank you—not just yet. I’ll improve this newly-erected mansion of ours by getting coconut branches up from the beach. We might as well make our roof as watertight as we can before dark. Then I want something to eat, and there are plenty of coconuts lying about everywhere.”

“We won’t starve,” I said; “there are any amount of robber crabs in this scrub, and to-night we can get as many as we want, if we can make a bright fire.”

By dark we had succeeded in carrying up thirty or forty coconut branches, and covering our sleeping place over in a more satisfactory manner, though we were every now and then chilled to the bone by the stinging rain. Our rifles, matches, tobacco, and a few biscuits, we placed in a dry spot, and then built up a small but hot fire of roots under the shelter, and, after eating a meal of coconut and biscuit, we filled our pipes, piled on more roots, and sat by the fire drying our clothes, and listening to the wild uproar of wind and sea, congratulating ourselves upon being in a spot

where we were at least safe from the wind, for our camp was at least eight or ten feet below the general level of the island, both on its windward and leeward sides.

All that night the wind blew with terrific violence, and the noise of the surf thrashing upon the coral barriers of the island was something indescribable. At about midnight, just after a lull succeeded by a heavy fall of rain, the wind hauled round two or three points to the southward, and, if possible, blew with still greater violence. The crashing of trees mingling with the demoniacal shriek of the hurricane, was enough to disturb the mind of the bravest; but my companion lay quietly beside the fire, smoking his pipe and talking to me as he would had we been seated at the supper table on board the *Fray Bentos*. Yet that he was deeply anxious about our ship-mates I well knew, when, bidding me good-night, he laid his great frame upon the sand and went to sleep.

## CHAPTER V

By dawn on the following morning, the hurricane had lost its strength and settled down into a hard gale from the north-east. When we crawled out from our shelter, a fearful scene of desolation met our eyes; not more than a hundred coco-palms were left standing on the weather side of the island, and enormous boulders of coral rock, torn off the reef by the violence of the sea, were piled up in wild confusion

along the shore, while, at the north end, the surf had made a clean breach over the land, with devastating effect. On the inner beach of the lagoon, the destructive results of the wind and sea had not been so great, although vast numbers of fish were lying dead on the sand, or among the soaked and flattened undergrowth above high water mark. We at once collected a few, lit a fire, roasted them over the coals, and made a good breakfast, finishing up with some young drinking coconuts, hundreds of which were lying about us.

We knew that, until the weather moderated, there was little likelihood of our seeing the brigantine and cutter—if we ever saw either again. The ocean for many hundreds of miles around us was full of dangers, for it was unsurveyed, and risky even to a ship in good weather. Many of the islands, shoals and reefs marked on the charts had no existence, but still more were placed in wrong positions, and we both felt that it would be something marvellous if the two vessels escaped disaster. All we could do was to hope for the best, and wait patiently.

As the rain had ceased, and the sun was shining brightly, although the gale was still blowing fiercely, we decided to cross to one of the other islands and make an examination of our surroundings. First of all, however, we examined our stock of ammunition, and found we had thirty-five cartridges between us; the rest of our effects consisted of about a quarter of a pound of plug tobacco, a sheath knife and a pocket knife, a small box of vestas, and the clothes we had on.

With some difficulty we managed to wade through the shallow passage dividing the island on which we had slept from the next, and found the latter to be much better wooded, wider, and three or four feet higher; and I had just observed to Yorke that it would suit us better to live on than the other, when I came to a dead stop—right in front of us was a banyan tree, from a low branch of which was suspended a huge cane-work fishing basket!

In a moment we hid ourselves, and remained quiet for a few minutes, scanning the surrounding bush carefully to see if there were any further signs of human occupancy, or the humans themselves. From the appearance of the basket, however, I judged that it had not been used for many weeks at least, and had been hung up to prevent its becoming rotten from lying on the moist, steamy soil.

After satisfying ourselves that there were no natives—in our immediate vicinity at least—we set out again, proceeding very cautiously, and a short distance further on struck a clearly-defined native path; this we followed, and presently came in sight of half a dozen small thatched huts, under the shelter of two very large trees, from the branches of which were hanging fish baskets similar to that we had just seen. Most of the huts, though damaged by the storm, were substantially built, and evidently had not long been vacated, for in a sort of cleared plot in front were a number of gaily-coloured crotons, which showed signs of having been recently tended—the grass had been pulled up around their roots, &c. In one of the

huts we found some smaller fish traps, a number of fish spears, and two large wooden bowls.

“It’s a fishing village, belonging to the niggers on the mainland, I think,” I said to Yorke. “It is quite a common thing for them, both in New Ireland and New Britain, to have plantations or fishing stations on many of these small islands off the coast, and they come over three or four times a year to plant or fish. Let us go on further.”

My surmise was correct, for, quite near the huts, was a large taro plantation, on which great labour and care had been expended. A brief examination of some of the tubers showed us that they were full grown. This was not a pleasant discovery, for we knew that the owners might be expected to put in an appearance at any moment after the gale ceased, in order to dig them up.

“Well, let us get on, and see what else we can discover,” said Yorke, shouldering his rifle. “The beggars can’t get across from the mainland in such weather as this, so we need not be under any immediate alarm.”

By two in the afternoon we had thoroughly examined the whole of the four islands, but found no more houses, though on all of them we came across the inevitable fish-traps, and also a good-sized bamboo fishing raft, lying far up on the beach. This we at once carried off, and were about to hide in a thicket—little thinking it would prove such a dangerous acquisition—when Yorke suggested a better course. It would be a mistake, he said, to leave the raft so far

from our sleeping place, instead of taking it away, when not only should we have it near us in case of a sudden attack by the natives, but we could utilise it for fishing, and that by removing it to the southernmost islet, which was farthest away from the fishing village on the largest island, we could easily conceal it from view.

The natives, he argued, would be bound to search for it on the islet where they had left the thing, and would conclude that it had been washed away in the hurricane, and therefore were hardly likely to come down to the southern islet, the inner beach of which could be seen from nearly every point on the lagoon.

“So,” he went on, “you see that if the black gentry do think that their raft might have been carried down to the inner beach of the south islet, they will only need to use their eyes to show them it isn’t there. But it will be snug enough on the outer side of the island, where they won’t dream of looking for it, and where we can use it whenever we like—for we’ll shift our camp down there to-day. . . . God knows how long we may have to live here if anything has happened to the *Fray Bentos* and the *Francesca*, and so we must run no needless risks.”

“Right,” I assented, “and see, the wind is falling steadily, and there’s not much of a swell inside the lagoon now. Why not let us try and take the raft away with us at once, instead of coming for her in the morning?”

We cut down a couple of young saplings for poles, carried the raft to the water, and launched it. It was big enough to support five or six people, but floated

like a feather, and, to our delight, we found that we could pole it along in shallow water with the greatest of ease. By four o'clock we reached the island, and carried our craft up from the inner beach into a clump of trees. This spot, we thought, would make a good camp, as from it we commanded not only a good view of the lagoon, but of the sea to the south and west, and we felt certain that if Guest turned up all right, he would look for us at this end of the atoll—even if he made it from the northward, and had to run the coast down.

By supper time we had fixed ourselves up comfortably for the night. The rain now only fell at long intervals, the wind had fallen to a strong, steady breeze, and we made up a fire, and cooked some more fish, of which there were still numbers to be had on the beach merely for the trouble of picking them up. Then we ate our supper, smoked a pipeful of our precious tobacco between us, and discussed our plans for the morrow, Yorke listening to my suggestions as if they were put forward by a man of his own age and experience, instead of by one who was as yet but a young seaman, and a poor navigator.

"I am quite sure," he said in his slow, quiet way, as he passed me the pipe, "that you and I will get along here all right for weeks, months—years even, if it has pleased the Almighty to take our shipmates, and we have to live here till we are taken off by some ship, or can build a boat. Your knowledge of ways and means of getting food, and living in such a place as this, is of more value than my seamanship and knowledge of navigation. Come, let us get out to the beach and take a look at the weather."

He placed his hand on my shoulder in such a kindly manner, as his bright blue eyes looked into mine, that, with the impulsiveness of youth, together with my intense admiration for the character of the man himself, I could not help saying :

“ Captain Yorke ! Please don’t think I was boasting of what I could do in the way of getting food for us—and all that. You see, I have been in the South Seas ever since I was a kid—and by nature I’m half a Kanaka. I’ve lived among natives so long, and—— ”

He held up his hand, smiling the while : “ I’m glad to have such a good comrade as you, Drake. You have the makings of a good sailorman in you, but you’re too quick and excitable, and want an old wooden-headed, stolid buffer like me to steady you. Now let us start.”

We walked across the narrow strip of land to the weather side, and sat down upon a creeper-covered boulder of coral rock. Before us the ocean still heaved tumultuously, and the long, white-crested breakers thundered heavily on the short, fringing reef ; but overhead was a wondrous sky of myriad stars, set in a vault of cloudless blue.

“ The gale is blowing itself out,” said my companion. “ We shall see a fine day in the morning. And, Drake, we shall see the brigantine back in three days.”

“ I hope so,” I said, laughingly, “ but I’m afraid we won’t. Both the brigantine and cutter must have had to heave to, or else run, and if they have run, they may be two hundred miles away from here by now. And

I think that Guest *would* run to the westward for open water, instead of heaving-to among such an infernal lot of reefs and shoals."

"Whatever he may have done, he, and my cutter, too, are safe, and we shall see them back in three days," he reiterated, with such quiet emphasis, and with such a strangely confident, contented look in his eyes, that I also felt convinced the vessels would, as he said, turn up safely.

We sat silent for some minutes, watching the sea, and noting how quickly the wind was falling, when presently my comrade turned to me.

"You asked me why I did not try to make the German head station in Blanche Bay, after my crew were killed," he said. "Well, I'll tell you. I am frightened of no man living, but I happened to hear the name of the manager there—a Captain Sternberg, an ex-captain of the German navy. He and I served together in the same ship—and I am a deserter from the German service."

I was astonished. "You!" I exclaimed; "surely you are not a German?"

"Indeed, I am," he replied, "and if I fell into the hands of the German naval authorities, or any German Consul, or other official anywhere, I should have but a short time in this world."

"Why, what could they do?"

"Send me home to be tried—and shot."

"Surely they cannot shoot a man for desertion in the German navy."

"There is something beyond desertion in my case—

I killed an officer. Sternberg knows the whole story, and though as a man and a gentleman he would feel for me, he would have no hesitation in arresting me and sending me home in irons, if he could get me. And he could not fail to recognise me, although eight and twenty years have passed since he last saw me."

"But he is not an Imperial officer now," I remarked.

"Yes, he is. He is Vice-Consul for Germany in the Western Pacific, and, as such, would have authority to apprehend me, and apprehend me he certainly would, though, as I have said, he knows my story, and when we served together, was always a kind and good friend to me, despite the fact that he was an officer and I was not; for I came from as good a family as his own—and that goes a long way in both the German army and navy."

I made some sympathetic remark, and then Yorke resumed:

"What I am telling you now—and I'll tell you the whole story—is no secret, for thousands of people have read of the Brandt extradition case in the United States. Twenty years ago I was arrested in San Francisco at the instance of the German Consul there, but managed to escape after being in custody for six weeks.

"My real name is Brandt. My father was a German, my mother a Danish lady—a native of Klampenborg, a small sea-coast town not far from Copenhagen. My father was an officer in the army, and was well-known as an Asiatic traveller and lin-

guist, and I was the only child. At fifteen years of age, much to my delight, I went into the navy, served one commission in the Baltic, and two on the west coast of South America. Then when I was about twenty-one years of age, I was given, through my father's influence, a minor position on the staff of a scientific expedition sent out by the German Geographical Society to Arabia. I came home at the end of a year, and was given three months' leave, at the end of which I was to join a new ship.

“Being pretty liberally supplied with money by my father—who was a man of means—I determined to spend my leave in London, and there I met the woman who was to prove the ruin of my future. She was the daughter of the woman in whose house I lodged in Chelsea, and was a very handsome, fascinating girl about nineteen. I fell madly in love with her, and she professed to return my feelings, and I, poor young fool, believed in her. Her mother, who was a cunning old harridan, and greedy and avaricious to a degree, gave us every opportunity of being together. As I spent my money most lavishly on the girl, and they both knew my father was well-off, and I was the only son, they had merely to spread their net for me to fall into it.

“Well, I married the girl, both she and her mother promising to keep the matter secret from my parents until after I returned from my next voyage and got a commission. I knew well that I should get into very serious trouble with my superiors if the fact of my marriage became known, but was so infatuated with

the girl that I allowed no considerations to influence me.

“A month before my leave expired, I sent my wife over to Bremerhaven, where I had some friends on whose secrecy I could rely. My ship—a small gunboat—was being fitted out at that port, and my wife seemed delighted that she would see me pretty frequently before I sailed. I was cautious enough not to travel with her from London, for that would have meant almost certain detection, and, as an additional precaution, she went to my friends in Bremerhaven under her maiden name. I was to follow her in a week, by the next steamer.

“That evening, as I was being driven home to my wife’s mother’s house in Chelsea, the horse bolted. I was thrown out of the cab, and half-an-hour later, I was in a hospital with a broken arm and severe internal injuries. It was six weeks before I was able to leave England to join my ship; but my father had written to the navy office, telling of my accident, and my leave had been extended. During all this time my wife wrote to me weekly, telling me she was very miserable at my not allowing her to return to England to nurse me, but would obey me; for I had written to her and told her not to return, as I did not think it advisable—the doctors and nurses at the hospital knew I was in the German navy, and I was then becoming somewhat fearful of the news of my marriage getting to the knowledge of the naval authorities.

“When I reached Bremerhaven, I had still three days of my extended leave to expire, so had no need

to report myself; but at once went to my friends' house, where I met my wife, who was overjoyed to see me again. My friends, too, welcomed me warmly, though I somehow fancied there seemed to be some underlying restraint upon them. They were quite a young couple: the husband was a clerk in the custom-house, and he and I had been friends from boyhood.

“In the morning I went to look at my new ship, and was greatly pleased to find that my old officer, Lieutenant Sternberg, had been appointed to her. He saw me at once, came along the deck, and spoke very kindly to me. Whilst he was talking to me, an officer from the port guardship came on board. He was a very handsome man, about thirty, with a deep scar across his forehead, and I noticed that he looked at me very keenly—almost rudely—and I fancied I saw something like a sneer on his face as he turned away to speak to Sternberg.

“My young friend, the custom house clerk, whose name was Muller, returned every day from his office at six o'clock, when we had supper, and on this occasion I began to tell him of my new ship, and then said casually :

“By the way, who is that conceited-looking fellow from the guardship—a man with an ugly scar across his forehead?’

“No one answered, and then to my surprise I saw that Muller was looking inquiringly at my wife, whose face suddenly became scarlet, while Mrs. Muller bent her face over her plate. Then Muller looked at me and said quietly :

“That was Captain Decker. I believe that he has the honour of the friendship of Frau Brandt.’

“There was something so stern in his tones that I could not understand ; but another look at my wife’s face filled me with the blackest misgivings. She had turned a deathly pale, and, faltering something inaudible, rose from the table and went to her room. Then I asked Muller what it meant.

“‘Ask your wife,’ he said sadly ; ‘you are my dear friend, and she is my guest—but her conduct has not been satisfactory.’

“I now insisted upon him telling me more, and soon learnt the whole miserable story. My wife had been in the habit of meeting Captain Decker clandestinely ever since she had been in Bremerhaven, although she had denied it when Mrs. Muller had indignantly threatened to write and tell me if she did not at once cease the intimacy. This she had sworn to do, but, Muller said, she had, he feared, violated her promise frequently, though he could not absolutely prove it.

“I went direct to my wife. Instead of a shrinking, trembling woman, I found a defiant devil—a shameless creature who coolly admitted her guilt, told me that she had never cared for me, and that she had only married me to escape from the monotony of her London life with her mother—if she was her mother, she added with a mocking laugh.

“Thank God, I didn’t hurt her ! The revelation was a heavy one, but I braced myself up, and the rage and contempt that filled me were mingled with some

sort of pity. I did not even reproach her. I had in my pockets about thirty pounds in English gold. I put down twenty on the table.

“‘There are twenty pounds,’ I said—‘take it and go. I will send you another two hundred pounds as soon as I can communicate with my father—on one condition.’

“‘What is it?’ she said sullenly.

“‘That you’ll never try to see me, or harass me again. If you do, by God! I’ll kill you.’

“I promise you that much,” she replied. In half an hour she had left the house, and I never saw or heard of her again.

“That evening I made special preparations. First of all I wrote to my poor father, and told him everything, and bade Muller and his wife goodbye, telling them I was going on board my ship. They, pitying me deeply, bade me farewell with tears.

“But I had no such intention. I wanted to settle scores with the man who had wronged me. At a marine store dealer’s that night I bought two common cutlasses, and waited for my chance. I had learnt that Decker went to the service club on certain evenings, and stayed very late.

“My time came the following night. I saw my man come out of the club, and followed him closely till he entered a quiet street. Then I called him by name. He turned and faced me and asked me angrily what I wanted.

“‘I am Theodor Brandt,’ I said, and handed him one of the two cutlasses I was carrying under my overcoat.

“The man was no coward, and fought well, but in less than a minute I ran him clean through the body. He fell in the muddy street, and by the time I had dragged him away into the shadow of a high wooden fence enclosing a timber yard, was dead. Half an hour later I was on board a fishing-smack, bound for Wangeroog, one of the Frisian Islands, off the coast. At that place I remained in safety for a month, then got away to Amsterdam, and from there to Java. Then for the next eight-and-twenty years, down to this very moment, I have been a wanderer on the face of the earth. Six years after I escaped I joined an American man-of-war—the *Iroquois*—at Canton, and when we were paid off in the States I took out my naturalisation papers. This served me well, when, two years afterwards, I was recognised at San Francisco by some German bluejackets as ‘Brandt, the murderer of Captain Decker,’ and arrested. Fortunately, I had money, and while the German Consul was trying hard to get me handed over to the German naval authorities on the Pacific Coast, my lawyers managed to get me out on bail. I got away down to the Hawaiian Islands in a lumber ship, and—well, since then I’ve been knocking around anywhere and everywhere. . . . Come, let us turn in.”

## CHAPTER VI

AT dawn the wind had died away to a light breeze, and the sun rose to shine upon an ocean of unspiced blue. To the eastward, the slopes of New Britain were hidden from our view by a thick mist, only the tops of some high mountain peaks far inland showing above, and there seemed to be every appearance of the fine weather lasting. This gave us much satisfaction, and after a bathe in a rocky pool on the reef, we ate our breakfast of fish and coconut with good spirits, then filling our pipes, went down to the inner beach to bask in the glorious sunshine.

“If this sort of weather keeps up,” I remarked to Yorke, “I’m afraid your prediction about our seeing Guest and the cutter in another two days won’t be verified—it’ll fall calm before noon to-day, and may keep so for a week. I’ve known a calm to last for a solid ten days on the north side of New Britain.”

“Perhaps so,” he replied; “but then the current about here sets strongly to the eastward, and somehow I feel certain that, wind or no wind, we’ll see the ships.”

“Well, if we do, you ought to give up sailing, Captain Yorke, and go into business as a prophet. I for one would always come to you for a tip. But, joking apart, let us imagine that Guest or the cutter did not run far to the eastward, but hove-to, and as soon as the hurricane had blown itself out, headed

back for us; in such a case, both vessels may be within half a day's sail of us at this very moment."

"That is quite possible—it is also possible they may be within twenty miles of us, becalmed. It would not surprise me if Guest actually drifts in sight of these islands, and comes to look for us in his boat."

"Now that brings me to the kernel of my imagination. I think it very likely he may have no boat to send, and——"

He gave me a mighty thump on the back.

"Good boy! I know what you're thinking of—the raft?"

"Exactly, Captain. So don't you think it would be as well for us to turn to at once, and make a couple of good paddles? though in an emergency the butt ends of dry coconut branches do very well for paddles."

Then I went on to say that it was quite likely that Guest had lost both his boats, and the cutter her dingy, before there was time to have them properly secured; and that the brigantine had lost the whaler, which had brought us ashore, I was sure of, for she had, as I have mentioned, been nearly thrown over on her beam ends when struck by the first blast, and the boat must certainly either have been hopelessly stove when she was forced below, or torn away from the davits by the weight of water in her when the ship righted herself.

We set to at once with a good will—Yorke overhauling the cane fastenings with which the great bamboos were lashed together, whilst I went along the beach in search of some young *futu* trees, the wood or

which is soft when green, but dries hard, and could be easily worked, even by such a tool as a sheath knife.

A quarter of a mile from our camp I found just what I wanted—three or four young *futu* saplings lying on the ground, torn up by the roots. Taking two of the best, I stripped off the branches, and returned to my companion, who was still at work on the raft, relashing its timbers wherever needed.

In a couple of hours I had made quite a decent pair of paddles, each about four feet in length, and with four inches of blade in the widest part. Then Yorke, having finished with the raft, went with me along the beach, and collected some old coconuts for food, and some young ones to drink, for, as my comrade observed, one never knew what might happen, and it would be as well to have some provisions all ready to hand in case of emergency. There were still thousands of dead fish to be seen everywhere lying on the sand, or cast up among the *débris* above high-water mark, but these were now turning putrid, and of no use.

We had noticed a huge banyan tree not far distant from our sleeping place, which was the roosting and breeding place of a vast number of whale birds, so Yorke proposed that we should go there and see if we could kill some by hurling sticks at them. We had often seen this done by the natives of the western Caroline Islands, for the birds are very stupid, and allow themselves, when not on the wing, to be approached quite closely. We cut ourselves each a

half-dozen of short, heavy throwing-sticks of green wood, and set out for the rookery, and within an hour had killed thirty or forty of the poor birds, some of which we at once picked, cleaned, and roasted. We had no lack of salt, for every rock and shrub above high-water mark on the weather side of the island was covered with a thin incrustation of it, caused by the rapid evaporation of the spray under a torrid sun. The remainder of the birds we cooked later in the day, intending them as a stand-by.

In the afternoon we again bathed, this time in the lagoon, and Yorke, who was one of the strongest and swiftest swimmers, for an European, that I had ever seen, succeeded in capturing a turtle which was lying asleep on the surface of the water, and brought it ashore ; but it proved to be so old and poor that we let it go again in disgust.

Towards the close of the day we again crossed the islet to have a better look at the New Britain shore, the heavy mist which had hung over it most of the day having now vanished. That the native owners of the plantations would put in an appearance before many days had passed I was certain, for they would be anxious to see what damage had been done by the hurricane, and no doubt dig up some of the taro, which, as I have said, was fully grown.

The moment we emerged from the scrub out upon the eastern shore, we obtained a splendid view of the opposite coast of the great island, though the actual shore was not visible on account of the extreme lowness of the belt of littoral, which was many miles

in width ; but by climbing a tree we could just discern the long, dark line of palms, and here and there a narrow strip of white, denoting either surf or a sandy beach.

“Why,” I said to Yorke, “that land cannot be more than five miles distant to its nearest point, and if there are niggers living there we should see their fires to-night, and——”

The next moment I uttered a loud hurrah ! and nearly fell off the tree in my excitement, for away on the northern horizon was a sail, shining snowy-white in the rays of the sinking sun !

Yorke echoed my cheer. “A day sooner than I prophesied, Drake ! Wish we had a glass, so that we could make out which it is. I am rather inclined to think it is the *Fray Bentos*, it looks too big for the cutter. Anyway, whichever it is, she’s becalmed ; but even if there is not a breath of wind during the night, she’ll be closer in in the morning, as the current is bound to set her along this way.”

We descended from the tree jubilantly, and I suggested that we should make a big blaze on the eastern shore, so as to let the ship know we saw her, but the more cautious Yorke said it would be rather risky. Natives, he said, might be quite near at that moment, a party of canoes could have easily crossed over during the day, and we should be none the wiser unless we happened to see the reflections of their fires, after they had arrived, on the lagoon waters. So, after waiting another ten minutes, when the sun set, we returned to camp.

“Let us kill the fatted calf and divide it between us,” said my companion, taking our plug of tobacco and cutting it in halves; “I’m going to smoke all night, or at any rate until I fall asleep. Did you see how the sun set? Well, that thick, yellow haze means a calm to-morrow, to a dead certainty, and I shouldn’t be a bit surprised if we see Guest pulling into the lagoon at daylight, that is, if he has a boat left.”

I do not think either of us slept for more than a quarter of an hour that night. That Yorke could have done so, I do not doubt, but I would persist in talking, getting up, walking about, and smoking, and he, good-naturedly, kept awake on my account. The night was wondrously calm and beautiful, so calm and quiet that there was not the slightest surf on the outer reef, and the only sound that broke the silence would be the croak of some night-fishing bird, as it rose, prey in bill, from the slumbering lagoon.

As soon as ever we could see our way through to the other side of the island, we were afoot, unheeding the drenching we got from the dew-soaked trees whenever we touched a branch. Within five minutes after we had emerged out into the open the sun rose, and a cheer broke from us when we saw both the cutter and the brigantine lying becalmed about four miles away, between the islet and the mainland of New Britain, and almost abreast of where we stood.

“They have both lost all the boats, I am almost sure,” said Yorke, “or we should see one coming

ashore ; unless, indeed, a boat is already pulling down the lagoon on the other side. Let us wait an hour. That will decide us what to do ; if we see no boat between now and then, we can be assured that Guest has none to send, and that he is waiting for a breeze, so that he can run in close to the reef, and try to get within hail of us. I daresay that he has a raft of some sort already made, and is trying to get closer to the land to send it ashore for us. So we'll give him a pleasant surprise."

We waited impatiently till the hour had passed, but could see no sign of a boat putting off from, or on the way from the brigantine, and were then certain that she had none to send, as if it had left the vessel, even at daylight, it would have entered the lagoon and been with us by that time.

Whilst we were waiting we had piled together on the shore a great heap of dried coconut branches, on top of which we threw masses of a thick, green, saline creeper. This heap we lit as a signal, and a pillar of dense smoke rose high in the windless atmosphere. It was answered by Guest in a few minutes—not by a gun, as we expected, but by a similar signal of smoke, caused by a mass of cotton waste being soaked in coal tar and ignited.

"He's answering us," exclaimed Yorke. "Now, let's get the raft launched and make a start."

We tore back through the scrub to our camp, I panting with excitement, Yorke as cool as ever. Carrying the raft down to the water we quickly put on board the bundles of young coconuts, not

deeming it worth while to bother with the old ones and the cooked birds, as we quite expected to be alongside the *Fray Bentos* within three hours at least, the sea being as calm as a mill-pond, and the raft very light.

“Go easy, my lad, go easy,” said Yorke with a smile, as he saw the state of flurry I was in. “We’ve got two or three hours paddling to do, so don’t knock yourself up needlessly. Now, what about our rifles?”

I had actually forgotten them, but at once ran back for them (the cartridges we always kept in our pockets), and picking one up in each hand, tore down the bank again, caught my left foot in a vine, and pitched upon my nose on the top of the broken coral and pebbles covering the beach with such violence that had it not been for the muzzle of the rifle I was carrying in my right hand plunging into the loose stones, and bringing me up sharply, I might have broken my jaw against a big boulder, which just caught me on the chin.

Pretending I was not hurt, though my chin was skinned, and my shoulder was strained, I picked myself up, handed the rifles to Yorke, and said I was ready.

“Take a drink first,” he said in his authoritative, yet sympathetic way, as he opened a young coconut. “Then fill your pipe and rest awhile. We’re in no hurry for ten minutes. Poor chap, you did do a flyer. Talk about the Gadarene swine! Why you could give them points in running down steep places!”

I certainly had given myself a tremendous shaking, for I felt quite dizzy, but after a few draws at my pipe, said I was fit to paddle the raft to Cape Horn.

We pushed off, then poled along shore till we came to the passage, which was as smooth as glass. Here, on account of the deep water, we had to take to our paddles, and were soon out in the open sea, heading for the vessels. The sun was intensely hot, but we took no heed of it, and congratulated ourselves upon having such a calm sea, instead of having to paddle against a swell, which would have greatly impeded our progress.

For the first mile or so we went along in great style—then, to our consternation, we suddenly ran right into a heavy tide rip, and away we went at the rate of three or four knots an hour to the south-east, and towards the New Britain shore. The belt or tide-rip seemed to be about a mile in width, and although we paddled furiously in the endeavour to get out of the whirling, seething stream, it was in vain—the raft spun round and round with such rapidity that we lost control over, and had to let her go; for not only were we unable to make any headway, but the manner in which we were spinning round would not allow us to keep our feet, and began to make us sea-sick. After half an hour or more of this, we at last saw a chance of getting out of the rip into a side eddy; and, putting forth all our strength, we just succeeded in doing so, only to be menaced by a fresh and more alarming danger.

Yorke, dashing the pouring perspiration from his

brow with his hand, had just stood up to get a look at the brigantine and cutter, when he uttered an oath.

“By God, we’re in for it now! Look, here’s four canoes, filled with niggers, heading dead on for us. The beggars see us, too!”

I stood up beside him, and saw, about a quarter of a mile away, four canoes, each of which was carrying six or eight natives, coming towards us at a furious rate. They were, like all New Britain canoes, very low down in the water, which, together with our own troubles when we were in the tide rip, had prevented our seeing them long before.

“Lucky we have not wasted any of our cartridges” said Yorke grimly; “we’ll give them all the fight they want. But let them get closer, while we head back for the ships. We *must* get out of this current—we can lick the niggers easy enough; but if we get into that tide-rip again, we’ll be carried out of sight of the brigantine by midday.”

Plunging our paddles into the water, we sent our bamboo craft along till we were in absolute safety as far as the tide-rip was concerned. Then Yorke laid down his paddle.

“We’re all right now, Drake; and now we’ll give these man-chawing beggars a bit of a surprise. They mean to knock us on the head in another ten minutes, and take our carcasses ashore for to-night’s dinner. You are the younger man, and can shoot better than I, so I’ll be polite and give you first show. Sight for five hundred yards for a trial shot, at the leading canoe. But wait a minute—don’t stand up.”

He quickly piled up the young coconuts in a firm heap, and then stood over me, his own rifle in hand, whilst I knelt on the bamboos and placed my rifle on the top of the heap of coconuts.

I am now, at this time of life, ashamed of the savage instinct that in those days filled me with a certain joy in destroying human life, unthinkingly, and without compunction. But I had been brought up in a rough school, among men who thought it not only justifiable, but correct and proper to shoot a man—black, or white, or brown, or yellow—who had done them any wrong. It had been my lot, in the Solomon Islands, to witness one of the most hideous and appalling massacres of a ship's crew that was ever perpetrated by natives—a massacre that had filled my youthful mind with the most intense and unreasoning hatred of all "niggers," as we called the natives of Melanesia. The memory of that awful scene had burned itself upon my brain, for the captain and mate of the vessel were dear friends of mine, and they and their men had been cruelly slaughtered, not for any wrong they had done—for they were good, straight men—but simply because their blind confidence in the savage natives invited their destruction.

\* \* \* \* \*

I steadied my rifle upon the top of the heap of coconuts, and waited a second or two till every man in the first canoe was in line. Then I pulled the trigger, and was thrown back bleeding and uncon-

scious, for the rifle burst just in front of the breech-block, which blew out and struck me on the top of my head, nearly fracturing my skull.

When I came to again Yorke's face was bending over me.

"We're all right, Drake. The brigantine is within a mile of us, coming up with a light air, and we'll be aboard in half an hour. How do you feel, my son?"

"Rocketty. Did the rifle burst?"

"Burst? It burst like a cannon, all but killed you, and a splinter hurt me in the eye. Drake, my boy, the next time you do the Gadarene swine trick with a cheap German Snider in your hand, see that the barrel is clear before you fire it. When you fell that time, your rifle barrel must have been pretty badly choked with sand and coral pebbles. . . Now lie still, and don't worry like an old maid who has lost her cat. You can do nothing, and will only be a damned nuisance if you *do* try to do anything. The brigantine will be here presently, and you'll get your head attended to, and have 'pretty-pretty' plasters stuck on your nose and other parts of your facial beauties."

"Where are the niggers?" I asked.

"Gone, gone, my dear boy. Vanished, but not vanished in time enough for five or six of them. I have used every one of our cartridges on the four canoes, and have had the supreme satisfaction of knowing that I have not used them in vain. Now stop talking, and let me attend to the ship—the

bamboo ship. . . There, put your head on my coat ; and don't talk."

\* \* \* \* \*

When the *Fray Bentos* sailed up alongside the raft I was lifted on board, and placed in my berth, and long days passed ere I saw Yorke again.

When I did see him the brigantine was lying at anchor at Rook Island, and Guest was in my cabin telling me the story of the hurricane—of how he had lost the two boats within an hour—one being carried away when the brigantine was all but thrown over on her beam ends, and the other—the longboat—swept away with everything else on deck—guns, deck-houses, bulwarks and all.

"How we escaped smashing into some reef or another I don't know," said Guest ; "but the strangest thing about it all is that Yorke's cutter, manned by native seamen, managed to stick so close to the *Fray Bentos* ; for when I, running before the hurricane, with my decks swept with tremendous seas, suddenly ran into smooth water, brought to in fifteen fathoms, and dropped anchor, there was the *Francesca*, cheek by jowl, alongside of me."

"Kanaka sailors' eyesight," I said. "Napoleon never lost sight of the brigantine for a moment ! And, talking about eyesight, how is Yorke's eye ?"

"Bad, bad, my boy. It is destroyed entirely, and he is now on board here, in my cabin. He has been asking for you. Do you feel strong enough to get up and see him ? "

I rose at once, and went into Guest's cabin. Yorke was lying in the skipper's bunk, and as I entered he extended both hands to me, and smiled cheerfully, though his left eye was covered with a bandage, and his brave, square-set face was white and drawn.

"How are you, Drake, my boy? We had a narrow squeak, didn't we, from the niggers? And here is Captain Guest worrying and tormenting himself that he could not fire a gun to scare them off."

I held his big, right hand between my own, and pressed it gently, for there was something in his one remaining eye that told me the end of all was near.

"Goodbye, dear lad . . . Goodbye, Captain Guest. *I* know what is the matter with me—erysipelas—and erysipelas to a big, fat man like me means death . . . and if you would put a bullet through my head now you would do me a good turn . . . But here, Guest, and you, Drake . . . your hands. I'll be dead by to-morrow morning, and want to say goodbye, and wish good luck to you both, before I begin babbling silly twaddle about things that are of no account now . . . of no account now . . . not worth speaking about now. But the South Seas are a rotten sort of a place, anyway."

## *The Colonial Mortuary Bard*

A WRITER in the *Sydney Evening News* last year gave that journal some amusing extracts from the visitors' book at Longwood, St. Helena. If the extracts are authentic copies of the original entries, they deserve to be placed on the same high plane as the following, which appeared in a Melbourne newspaper some years ago :—

“ Our Emily was so fair  
That the angels envied her,  
And whispered in her ear,  
' We will take you away on Tuesday night ! ' ”

I once considered this to be the noblest bit of mortuary verse ever written ; but since reading the article in the Sydney paper I have changed my opinion, and now think it poor. Bonaparte, however, was a great subject, and even the most unintelligent mortuary verse-maker could not fail to achieve distinction when the Longwood visitors' book was given up unto him. Frenchmen, especially, figure largely. Here, for instance :—

## "MALEDICTION.

O grand homme ! O grand Napoleon !  
 Mais la France et toi sont venge—  
 Hudson Lowe est mort !"

The last line is so truly heroic—French heroic. It instantly recalled to me a tale told by an English journalist who, on a cycling tour in France just after the Fashoda crisis, left his "bike" under the care of the proprietor of an hotel in Normandy. In the morning he found the tyres slashed to pieces, and on the saddle a gummed envelope, on which was bravely written, "FASHODA." This was unintentional mortuary poetry. The gallant Frenchman who did the daring deed when the owner of the "bike" was asleep did not realise that the word itself was a splendid mortuary epic for French aspirations generally.

Then comes something vigorous from one "Jack Lee-Cork," who writes :—

"The tomb of Napoleon we visit to-day,  
 And trod on the spot where the tyrant lay ;  
 That his equal again may never appear,  
 'Twill be sincerely prayed for many a year."

The masters and officers of some of the whale-ships touching at St. Helena seem to have made pilgrimages to Longwood. Mr. William Miller, master of the barque *Hope*, of New Bedford, writes that he "visited the remains of the greatest warrior of the day, interred for twenty years." Then he breaks out into these noble lines :—

"Here lies the warrior, bravest of the brave,  
 Visited by Miller, God the Queen may save."

As a Britisher I shake your hand, William. When you wrote that, forty years ago, American whaling or any other kind of skippers did not particularly care about our nation; but you, William, were a white man. How easily you might have said something nasty about us and made "brave" rhyme with "grave"! But you were a real poet, and above hurting our feelings.

Captain Miller was evidently accompanied by some of his crew, one of whom contributes this gem of prose:—

"Louis F. Waldron, on bord the barke hope of nubedford, its boat steer, has this day been to see boney's tomb; we are out 24 munts, with 13 hundred barils of sperm oil."

All greasy luck attend you, honest Louis, boatsteerer, in the shades beyond. You wielded harpoon and lance better than the pen, and couldn't write poetry. Your informing statement about the "ile" at once recalled to memory an inscription upon the wooden head-board of the grave of another boat-steerer which in 1873 was to be seen at Ponapé, in the Caroline Islands:—

"Sacred to Memory of Jno.  
Hollis of sagharbour  
boatsterer of ship Europa of new  
Bedford who by will of  
almity god died of four ribs stove in by a  
SPERM WHALE  
off pleasant island north pacific  
4.17.69."

Sailors love the full-blooded, exhaustive mortuary poem as well as any one, and generally like to describe in detail the particular complaint or accident from which a shipmate died. Miners, too, like it. Many years ago, in a small mining camp on the Kirk River, in North Queensland, I saw the following inscription painted on the head-board of the grave of a miner who had fallen down a shaft :—

## I.

“Remember, men, when you pass by,  
 What you are now, so once was I.  
 Straight down the Ripper No. 3 shaft I fell ;  
 The Lord preserve my soul from hell.”

On the Palmer River diggings (also in North Queensland) one William Baker testified to his principles of temperance in the following, written on the back of his “miner’s right,” which was nailed to a strip of deal from a packing-case :—

“Bill Baker is my name,  
 A man of no fain,  
 But I was 1 of the First  
 In this great Land of thirst  
 To warn a good mate  
 Of the sad, dreadful fate,  
 That will come to him from drink.  
 WM. BAKER of S. Shields, England.”

But let me give some more quotations from the Longwood visitors’ book. Three midshipmen of the *Melville*, irreverent young dogs, write :—

“ We three have endeavoured, by sundry potations of Mrs. T——’s brandy, to arrive at a proper pitch of enthusiasm always felt, or assumed to be, by pilgrims to this tomb. It has, however, been a complete failure, which I fear our horses will rue when we arrive at the end of our pilgrimage.—Three Mids. of the *Melville*.”

That is another gross insult to France—an insult which, fortunately for England, has escaped the notice of the French press. And now two more extracts from the delicious article in the Sydney paper :—

“ William Collins, master of the *Hawk*, of Glasgow, from Icaboe, bound to Cork for orders. In hope never to have anything to do with the dung trade! And God send us all a good passage home to old England. Amen! At Longwood.”

I sympathise with *you*, good William! You describe the guano-carrying industry by a somewhat rude expression; but as a seafaring man who has had the misfortune to be engaged in the transportation of the distressful but highly useful product, I shake your hand even as I shake the greasy hand of Mr. William Miller, the New Bedford blubber-hunter. My benison on you both.

The last excerpt in the book is—

“ One murder makes a villain, millions a hero ;”

and underneath a brave Frenchman writes—

“ You lie—you God-dam Englishmans.”

## “'Reo,” the Fisherman

'REO was a short, squat Malayan, with a face like a skate, barring his eyes, which were long, narrow slits, apparently expressing nothing but supreme indifference to the world in general. But they would light up sometimes with a merry twinkle when the old rogue would narrate some of his past villainies.

He came to Samoa in the old, old days—long before Treaties, and Imperial Commissioners, and other gilded vanities were dreamt of by us poor, hard-working traders. He seemed to have dropped from the sky when one afternoon, as Tom Denison, the supercargo, and some of his friends sat on Charley the Russian's verandah, drinking lager, he marched up to them, sat down on the steps, and said, “Good evening.”

“Hallo,” said Schlüter, the skipper of the *Anna Godeffroy*. “Who are you? Where do you come from?”

'Reo waved a short, stumpy and black clay pipe to and fro, and replied vaguely—

“Oh, from somewhere.”

Some one laughed, surmising correctly enough that

he had run away from a ship ; then they remembered that no vessel had even touched at Apia for a month. (Later on he told Denison that he had jumped overboard from a Baker's Island guano-man, as she was running down the coast, and swum ashore, landing at a point twenty miles distant from Apia. The natives in the various villages had given him food, so when he reached the town he was not hungry.)

"What do you want, anyway?" asked Schlüter.

"Some tobacco, please. And a dollar or two. I can pay you back."

"When?" said Hamilton the pilot incredulously.

The pipe described a semicircle. "Oh, to-morrow night—before, perhaps."

They gave him some tobacco and matches, and four Bolivian "iron" half-dollars. He got up and went across to Volkner's combined store and grog shanty, over the way.

"He's gone to buy a bottle of square-face," said Hamilton.

"He deserves it," said Denison gloomily. "A man of his age who could jump overboard and swim ashore to this rotten country should be presented with a case of gin—and a knife to cut his throat with after he has finished it."

In about ten minutes the old fellow came out of Volkner's store, carrying two or three stout fishing-lines, several packets of hooks, and half a dozen ship biscuits. He grinned as he passed the group on the verandah, and then squatting down on the sward near by began to uncoil the lines and bend on the hooks.

Denison was interested, went over to him, and watched the swift, skilful manner in which the thin brown fingers worked.

“Where are you going to fish?” he inquired.

The broad, flat face lit up. “Outside in the dam deep water—sixty, eighty fa’am.”

Denison left him and went aboard the ancient, cockroach-infested craft of which he was the heart-broken supercargo. Half an hour later 'Reo paddled past the schooner in a wretched old canoe, whose outrigger was so insecurely fastened that it threatened to come adrift every instant. The old man grinned as he recognised Denison; then, pipe in mouth, he went boldly out through the passage between the lines of roaring surf into the tumbling blue beyond.

At ten o'clock, just as the supercargo and the skipper were taking their last nip before turning in, the ancient slipped quietly alongside in his canoe, and clambered on deck. In his right hand he carried a big salmon-like fish, weighing about 20 lbs. Laying it down on the deck, he pointed to it.

“Plenty more in canoe like that. You want some more?”

Denison went to the side and looked over. The canoe was loaded down to the gunwale with the weight of fish—fish that the lazy, loafing Apian natives caught but rarely. The old man passed up two or three more, took a glass of grog, and paddled ashore.

Next morning he repaid the borrowed money and showed Denison fifteen dollars—the result of his first

night's work in Samoa. The saloon-keepers and other white people said he was a treasure. Fish in Apia were dear, and hard to get.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the following Sunday a marriage procession entered the Rarotongan chapel in Matafêle, and Tetarreo (otherwise 'Reo) was united to one of the prettiest and not *very* disreputable native girls in the town, whose parents recognised that 'Reo was likely to prove an eminently lucrative and squeezable son-in-law. Denison was best man, and gave the bride a five-dollar American gold piece (having previously made a private arrangement with the bridegroom that he was to receive value for it in fish).

'Reo's wife's relatives built the newly-married couple a house on Matautu Point, and 'Reo spent thirty-five dollars in giving the bride's local connections a feast. Then the news spread, and cousins and second cousins and various breeds of aunts and half-uncles travelled up to Matautu Point to partake of his hospitality. He did his best, but in a day or so remarked sadly that he could not catch fish fast enough in a poor canoe. If he had a boat he could make fifty dollars a week, he said; and with fifty dollars a week he could entertain his wife's honoured friends continuously and in a befitting manner. The relatives consulted, and, thinking they had "a good thing," subscribed, and bought a boat (on credit) from the German firm, giving a mortgage on a piece of land as security. Then they presented 'Reo with the boat, with many compli-

mentary speeches, and sat down to chuckle at the way they would “make the old fool work,” and the “old fool” went straight away to the American Consul and declared himself to be a citizen of the United States and demanded his country’s protection, as he feared his wife’s relatives wanted to jew him out of the boat they had given him.

The Consul wrote out something terrifying on a big sheet of paper, and tacked it on to the boat, and warned the surprised relatives that an American man-of-war would protect ’Reo with her guns, and then ’Reo went inside his house and beat his wife with a canoe paddle, and chased her violently out of the place, and threatened her male relatives with a large knife and fearful language.

Then he took the boat round the other side of the island and sold it for two hundred dollars to a trader, and came back to Apia to Denison and asked for a passage to Tutuila, and the German firm entered into and took possession of the mortgaged land, whilst the infuriated relatives tore up and down the beach demanding ’Reo’s blood in a loud voice. ’Reo, with his two hundred dollars in his trousers’ pocket, sat on the schooner’s rail and looked at them stolidly and without ill-feeling.

\* \* \* \* \*

Denison landed the ancient at Leone Bay on Tutuila, for he had taken kindly to the old scoundrel, who had many virtues, and could give points to any one, white or brown, in the noble art of deep-sea

fishing. This latter qualification endeared him greatly to young Tom, who, when he was not employed in keeping the captain sober, or bringing him round after an attack of "D.T.'s," spent all his spare time in fishing, either at sea or in port.

'Reo settled at Leone, and made a good deal of money buying copra from the natives. The natives got to like him—he was such a conscientious old fellow. When he hung the baskets of copra on the iron hook of the steelyard, which was marked to weigh up to 150 lbs., he would call their attention to the marks as he moved the heavy "pea" along the yard. Then, one day, some interfering Tongan visitor examined the pea and declared that it had been taken from a steelyard designed to weigh up to 400 lbs. 'Reo was so hurt at the insinuation that he immediately took the whole apparatus out beyond the reef in his boat and indignantly sunk it in fifty fathoms of water. Then he returned to his house, and he and his wife (he had married again) bade a sorrowful farewell to his friends, and said his heart was broken by the slanders of a vile Tongan pig from a mission school. He would, he said, go back to Apia, where he was respected by all who knew him. Then he began to pack up. Some of the natives sided with the Tongan, some with 'Reo, and in a few minutes a free fight took place on the village green, and 'Reo stood in his doorway and watched it from his narrow, pig-like eyes; then, being of a magnanimous nature, he walked over and asked three stout youths, who had beaten the Tongan into a state of unconscious-

ness, and were jumping on his body, not to hurt him too much.

About midnight ’Reo’s house was seen to be in flames, and the owner, uttering wild, weird screams of “*Fia ola! Fia ola!*” (“Mercy! Mercy!”) fled down the beach to his boat, followed by his wife, a large, fat woman, named appropriately enough Taumafa (Abundance). They dashed into the water, clambered into the boat, and began pulling seaward for their lives. The villagers, thinking they had both gone mad, gazed at them in astonishment, and then went back and helped themselves to the few goods saved from the burning house.

As soon as ’Reo and the good wife were out of sight of the village they put about, ran the boat into a little bay further down the coast, planted a bag containing seven hundred dollars, with the best of the trade goods (salved *before* the fire was discovered), and then set sail for Apia to “get justice from the Consul.”

The Consul said it was a shocking outrage, the captain of U.S.S. *Adirondack* concurred, and so the cruiser, with the injured, stolid-faced ’Reo on board, steamed off to Leone Bay and gave the astounded natives twelve hours to make up their minds as to which they would do—pay ’Reo one thousand dollars in cash or have their town burnt. They paid six hundred, all they could raise, and then, in a dazed sort of way, sat down to meditate as they saw the *Adirondack* steam off again.

’Reo gave his wife a small share of the plunder

and sent her home to her parents. When Tom Denison next saw him he was keeping a boarding house at Levuka, in Fiji. He told Denison he was welcome to free board and lodging for a year. 'Reo had his good points, as I have said.

## *The Black Bream of Australia*

NEXT to the lordly and brilliant-hued schnapper, the big black bream of the deep harbour waters of the east coast of Australia is the finest fish of the bream species that have ever been caught. Thirty years ago, in the hundreds of bays which indent the shores of Sydney harbour, and along the Parramatta and Lane Cove Rivers, they were very plentiful and of great size ; now, one over 3 lbs. is seldom caught, for the greedy and dirty Italian and Greek fishermen who infest the harbour with their fine-meshed nets have practically exterminated them. In other harbours of New South Wales, however—notably Jervis and Twofold Bays—these handsome fish are still plentiful, and there I have caught them winter and summer, during the day under a hot and blazing sun, and on dark, calm nights.

In shape the black bream is exactly as his brighter-hued brother, but his scales are of a dark colour, like partially tarnished silver ; he is broader and heavier about the head and shoulders, and he swims in a more

leisurely, though equally cautious, manner, always bringing-to the instant anything unusual attracts his attention. Then, with gently undulating tail and steady eye, he regards the object before him, or watches a shadow above with the keenest scrutiny. If it is a small, dead fish, or other food which is sinking, say ten yards in front, he will gradually come up closer and closer, till he satisfies himself that there is no line attached—then he makes a lightning-like dart, and vanishes in an instant with the morsel between his strong, thick jaws. If, however, he sees the most tempting bait—a young yellow-tail, a piece of white and red octopus tentacle, or a small, silvery mullet—and detects even a fine silk line attached to the cleverly hidden hook, he makes a stern-board for a foot or two, still eyeing the descending bait ; then, with languid contempt, he slowly turns away, and swims off elsewhere.

In my boyhood's days black-bream fishing was a never-ending source of delight to my brothers and myself. We lived at Mosman's Bay, one of the deepest and most picturesque of the many beautiful inlets of Sydney Harbour. The place is now a populous marine suburb with terraces of shoddy, jerry-built atrocities crowding closely around many beautiful houses with spacious grounds surrounded by handsome trees. Threepenny steamers, packed with people, run every half-hour from Sydney, and the once beautiful dell at the head of the bay, into which a crystal stream of water ran, is as squalid and detestable as a Twickenham lane in summer, when the

path is strewn with bits of greasy newspaper which have held fried fish.

But in the days of which I speak, Mosman's Bay was truly a lovely spot, dear to the soul of the true fisherman. Our house—a great quadrangular, one-storied stone building, with a courtyard in the centre—was the only one within a radius of three miles. It had been built by convict hands for a wealthy man, and had cost, with its grounds and magnificent carriage drives, vineyards, and gardens, many thousand pounds. Then the owner died, bankrupt, and for years it remained untenanted, the recrudescing bush slowly enveloping its once highly cultivated lands, and the deadly black snake, iguana, and 'possum harbouring among the deserted outbuildings. But to us boys (when our father rented the place, and the family settled down in it for a two years' sojourn) the lonely house was a palace of beautiful imagination—and solid, delightful fact, when we began to explore the surrounding bush, the deep, clear, undisturbed waters of the bay, and a shallow lagoon, dry at low water, at its head.

Across this lagoon, at the end near the deep water, a causeway of stone had been built fifty-five years before (in 1820) as a means of communication by road with Sydney. In the centre an opening had been left, about twenty feet wide, and across this a wooden bridge had been erected. It had decayed and vanished long, long years before we first saw the place; but the trunk of a great ironbark tree now served equally as well, and here, seated upon it as the tide

began to flow in and inundate the quarter-mile of dry sand beyond, we would watch the swarms of fish passing in with the sweeping current.

First with the tide would come perhaps a school of small blue and silver gar-fish, their scarlet-tipped upper mandibles showing clear of the water ; then a thick, compact battalion of short, dumpy grey mullet, eager to get up to the head of the lagoon to the fresh water which all of their kind love ; then communities of half a dozen of grey and black-striped "blackfish" would dart through to feed upon the green weed which grew on the inner side of the stone causeway. Then a hideous, evil-eyed "stingaree," with slowly-waving outspread flappers, and long, whip-like tail, follows, intent upon the cockles and soft-shell clams which he can so easily discover in the sand when he throws it upwards and outwards by the fan-like action of his thin, leathery sides. Again more mullet—big fellows these—with yellow, prehensile mouths, which protrude and withdraw as they swim, and are fitted with a straining apparatus of bristles, like those on the mandibles of a musk duck. They feed only on minute organisms, and will not look at a bait, except it be the tiny worm which lives in the long celluroid tubes of the coral growing upon *congewoi*. And then you must have a line as fine as horsehair, and a hook small enough—but strong enough to hold a three-pound fish—to tempt them.

As the tide rose higher, and the incoming water bubbled and hissed as it poured through the narrow entrance underneath the tree-bole on which we sat,

red bream, silvery bream, and countless myriads of the small, staring-eyed and delicate fish, locally known as "hardy-heads," would rush in, to return to the deeper waters of the bay as the tide began to fall.

Sometimes—and perhaps "Red Spinner" of the *Field* may have seen the same thing in his piscatorial wanderings in the Antipodes—huge gar-fish of three or four feet in length, with needle-toothed, narrow jaws, and with bright, silvery, sinuous bodies, as thick as a man's arm, would swim languidly in, seeking for the young mullet and gar-fish which had preceded them into the shallow waters beyond. These could be caught by the hand by suddenly gripping them just abaft of the head. A Moruya River black boy, named "Cass" (*i.e.*, Casanova), who had been brought up with white people almost from infancy, was a past-master in this sort of work. Lying lengthwise upon the tree which bridged the opening, he would watch the giant gars passing in, swimming on the surface. Then his right arm would dart down, and in an instant a quivering, twisting, and gleaming "Long Tom" (as we called them) would be held aloft for a moment and then thrown into a flour-sack held open in readiness to receive it.

Surely this was "sport" in the full sense of the word; for although "Long Tom" is as greedy as a pike, and can be very easily caught by a floating bait when he is hungry, it is not every one who can whip him out of the water in this manner.

There were at least four varieties of mullet which frequented the bay, and in the summer we frequently caught numbers of all four in the lagoon by running

a net across the narrow opening, and when the tide ran out we could discern their shining bodies hiding under the black-leaved sea-grass which grew in some depressions and was covered, even at low tide, by a few inches of water. Two of the four I have described; and now single specimens of the third dart in—slenderly-bodied, handsome fish about a foot long. They are one of the few varieties of mullet which will take a hook, and rare sport they give, as the moment they feel the line they leap to and fro on the surface, in a series of jumps and somersaults, and very often succeed in escaping, as their jaws are very soft and thin.

By the time it is slack water there is a depth of six feet covering the sandy bottom of the lagoon, the rush and bubble under the tree-bole has ceased, and every stone, weed, and shell is revealed. Now is the time to look on the deep-water side of the causeway for the big black bream.

There they are—thirty, fifty—perhaps a hundred of them, swimming gently to and fro outside the entrance, longing, yet afraid to enter. As you stand up, and your shadow falls upon their line of vision, they “go about” and turn head on to watch, sometimes remaining in the same position, with gently moving fins and tails, for five minutes; sometimes sinking down to the blue depths beyond, their outlines looming grey and indistinct as they descend, to reappear again in a few minutes, almost on the surface, waiting for the dead mullet or gar-fish which you may perhaps throw to them.

The old ex-Tasmanian convict who was employed to attend to the boat in which we boys went across to Sydney three days a week, weather permitting, to attend school, had told us that we "couldn't hook e'er a one o' thim black bream; the devils is that cunning, masters, that you can't do it. So don't thry it. 'Tis on'y a-waistin' time."

But we knew better; we were born in the colony—in a seaport town on the northern coast—and the aborigines of the Hastings River tribe had taught us many valuable secrets, one of which was how to catch black bream in the broad light of day as the tide flowed over a long stretch of sand, bare at low water, at the mouth of a certain "blind" creek a few miles above the noisy, surf-swept bar. But here, in Mosman's Bay, in Sydney, we had not the cunningly devised gear of our black friends—the principal article of which was the large uni-valve *aliothis* shell—to help us, so we set to work and devised a plan of our own, which answered splendidly, and gave us glorious sport.

When the tide was out and the sands were dry, carrying a basket containing half a dozen strong lines with short-shanked, thick hooks, and two or three dozen young gar-fish, mullet, or tentacles of the octopus, we would set to work. Baiting each hook so carefully that no part of it was left uncovered, we dug a hole in the sand, in which it was then partly buried; then we scooped out with our hands a narrow trench about six inches deep and thirty or forty yards in length, into which the line was laid, covered up roughly, and the end taken to the shore. After we

had accomplished laying our lines, radiating right and left, in this manner we covered each tempting bait with an ordinary crockery flower-pot, weighted on the top with a stone to keep it in its place, and then a thin tripping-line was passed through the round hole, and secured to a wooden cross-piece underneath. These tripping-lines were then brought ashore, and our preparations were complete.

“But why,” one may ask, “all this elaborate detail, this burying of lines, and, most absurd of all, the covering up of the baited hook with a flower-pot?”

Simply this. As the tide flows in over the sand there come with it, first of all, myriads of small garfish, mullet, and lively red bream, who, if the bait were left exposed, would at once gather round and begin to nibble and tug at it. Then perhaps a swiftly swimming “Long Tom,” hungry and defiant, may dart upon it with his terrible toothed jaws, or the great goggle-eyed, floundering sting-ray, as he flaps along his way, might suck it into his toothless but bony and greedy mouth; and then hundreds and hundreds of small silvery bream would bite, tug, and drag out, and finally reveal the line attached, and then the scheme has come to naught, for once the cute and lordly black bream sees a line he is off, with a contemptuous eye and a lazy, proud sweep of tail.

When the tide was near the full flood we would take the ends of our fishing- and tripping-lines in our hands and seat ourselves upon the high sandstone boulders which fringed the sides of the bay, and from

whence we could command a clear view of the water below. Then, slowly and carefully, we tripped the flower-pots covering the baits, and hauled them in over the smooth sandy bottom, and, with the baited lines gripped tight in the four fingers of our right hands, we watched and waited.

Generally, in such calm, transparent water, we could, to our added delight, see the big bream come swimming along, moving haughtily through the crowds of small fry—yellow-tail, ground mullet, and trumpeters. Presently, as one of them caught sight of a small shining silvery mullet (or a luscious-looking octopus tentacle) lying on the sand, the languid grace of his course would cease, the broad, many-masted dorsal fin become erect, and he would come to a dead stop, his bright, eager eye bent on the prize before him. Was it a delusion and a snare? No! How could it be? No treacherous line was there—only the beautiful shimmering scales of a delicious silvery-sided young mullet, lying dead, with a thin coating of current-drifted sand upon it. He darts forward, and in another instant the hook is struck deep into the tough grizzle of his white throat; the line is as taut as a steel wire, and he is straining every ounce of his fighting six or eight pounds' weight to head seawards into deep water.

Slowly and steadily with him, else his many brothers will take alarm, and the rest of the carefully laid baits will be left to become the prey of small "flatheads," or greedy, blue-legged spidery crabs. Once his head is turned, providing he is well hooked,

he is safe, and although it may take you ten minutes ere you haul him into such shallow water that he cannot swim upright, and he falls over upon his broad, noble side, and slides out upon the sand, it is a ten minutes of joy unalloyed to the youthful fisherman who takes no heed of two other lines as taut as his own, and only prays softly to himself that his may be the biggest fish of the three.

Generally, we managed to get a fish upon every one of the ten or twelve lines we set in this manner, and as we always used short, stout-shanked hooks of the best make, we rarely lost one. On one occasion, however, a ten-foot sawfish seized one of our baits, and then another and another, and in five minutes the brute had entangled himself amongst the rest of the lines so thoroughly that our old convict boatman, who was watching us from his hut, yelled out, as he saw the creature's serrated snout raised high out of the water as it lashed its long, sinuous tail to and fro, to "play him" till he "druv an iron into it." He thought it was a whale of some sort, and, jumping into a dinghy, he pulled out towards it, just in time to see our stout lines part one after another, and the "sawfish" sail off none the worse for a few miserable hooks in his jaws and a hundred fathoms of stout fishing lines encircling his body.

This old Bill Duggan—he had "done" twenty-one years in that abode of horror, Port Arthur in Tasmania, for a variegated assortment of crimes—always took a deep interest in our black-bream fishing, and freely gave us a shilling for each one we gave him.

He told us that by taking them to Sydney he could sell them for two shillings each, and that he would send the money to a lone, widowed sister who lived in Bridgnorth, England. Our mother deeply sympathised with the aged William (our father said he was a lying old ruffian), and always let him take the boat and pull over to Sydney to sell the fish. He generally came back drunk after twenty-four hours' absence, and said the sun had affected him. But Nemesis came at last.

One day some of the officers of H.M.S. *Challenger*, with some Sydney friends, came to spend a Saturday and Sunday with us. It rained hard on the Saturday night, and the stream which fell into the head of the bay became a roaring torrent, sending a broad line of yellow, muddy foam through the narrow opening of the causeway, which I have before mentioned, into the harbour.

Sadly disappointed that we could not give our guests the sport which we had promised them, we sat upon the causeway and gazed blankly upon the yellowed waters of the bay with bitterness in our hearts. Suddenly "Cass," the Moruya River black boy, who was standing beside us, turned to us with a smile illumining his sooty face.

"What for you coola (angry)? Now the time to catch big pfeller brack bream. Water plenty pfeller muddy. Brack bream baal (is not) afraid of line now."

I, being the youngest, was sent off, with furious brotherly threats and yells, to our guests, to

tell them to come down at once with their fishing tackle. I tore up the path and reached the house. The first-lieutenant, commodore's secretary, and two ladies at once rose to the occasion, seized their beautiful rods (at which my brothers and myself were undecided whether to laugh in contempt or to profoundly admire) and followed me down to the causeway.

Before we reached there Billy Duggan and my brothers had already landed half a dozen splendid fish, one of which, of over ten pounds, was held up to us for inspection as a curiosity, inasmuch as a deep semicircular piece had been bitten out of its back (just above the tail) by a shark or some other predatory fish. The wound had healed over perfectly, although its inner edge was within a quarter of an inch of the backbone.

With a brief glance at the fish already taken, the two officers and the ladies had their rods ready, and made a cast into the surging, yellow waters, with disastrous results, for in less than three minutes every one of them had hooked a fish—and lost it.

“Ye're no fishing for finnickin' graylin', or such like pretty-pretties av of the ould counthry,” said the old convict patronisingly, as his toothless mouth expanded into a grin. “These blue-nosed devils would break the heart and soul av the best greenheart as was iver grown. Lay down thim sthicks an' take wan of these,” and he pointed to some thick lines, ready coiled and baited with pieces of raw beef. “Just häve thim out into the wather, and hould on

like grim death—that's all. Sure the boys here have taught me a mighty lot I niver larned before."

Our visitors "häved" out the already baited lines, and caught a dozen or more of splendid fish, varying from 6 lbs. to 10 lbs. in weight, and then, as a drenching downpour of rain blotted out everything around us, we went home, leaving our take with Billy, with the exception of two or three of the largest, which we brought home with us for supper. He whispered to my brothers and myself that he would give us "ten bob" for the lot; and as the old villain's money was extremely useful to us, and our parents knew nothing about our dealings with the ancient reprobate, we cheerfully agreed to the "ten bob" suggestion.

But, as I have said, Nemesis was near to William Duggan, Esq., over this matter of the black bream, for on the following Tuesday Lieut. H—— happened across the leading fishmonger's shop in Hunter Street, where there were displayed several splendid black bream. One of these, he noticed, had a large piece bitten out of the back, and he at once recognised it. He stepped inside and asked the black-moustached Grecian gentleman who attended to the counter the price of the fish, and where they were caught.

"Nine shillings each, sir. They are a very scarce fish, and we get them only from one man, an old fellow who makes his living by catching them in Mosman's Bay. We give him five shillings each for every fish over 6 lbs., and seven-and-sixpence for every one over 10 lbs. No one else but this old fellow

can catch black bream of this size. He knows the trick."

H——, thinking he was doing us boys a good turn, wrote a line to our father, telling him in a humorous manner all about this particular wretched back-bitten black bream which he had recognised, and the price he had been asked for it. Then my father, having no sense of humour, gave us, one and all, a sound thrashing for taking money from old Duggan, who thereafter sold our black bream to a hawker man who travelled around in a spring cart, and gave him three shillings each, out of which we got two, and spent at a ship chandler's in buying fresh tackle.

For 'twas not the "filthy lucre" we wanted, only the sport.

## “*Martin of Nitendi*”

HALF-WAY up the side of the mountain which overlooked the waters of the little land-locked harbour there was a space clear of timber. Huge, jagged rocks, whose surfaces were covered with creepers and grey moss, protruded from the soil, and on the highest of these a man was lying at full length, looking at the gunboat anchored half a mile away. He was clothed in a girdle of *ti* leaves only; his feet were bare, cut, and bleeding; round his waist was strapped a leather belt with an empty cartridge pouch; his brawny right hand grasped a Snider rifle; his head-covering was a roughly made cap of coconut-nut leaf, with a projecting peak, designed to shield his blood-shot, savage eyes from the sun. Yet he had been a White Man.

For nearly an hour he had been watching, ever since the dawn had broken. Far below him, thin, wavering curls of pale blue smoke were arising from the site of the native village, fired by the bluejackets on the previous evening. The ruins of his own house he could discern by the low stone wall surrounding it; as for the native huts which, the day before, had

clustered so thickly around his own dwelling, there was now no trace save heaps of grey ashes.

A boat put off from the ship, and as the yellow-bladed oars flashed in the sunlight the man drew his rifle close up to his side and his eyes gleamed with a deadly hatred.

“Officers’ shootin’ party,” he muttered, as he watched the boat ground on the beach and three men, carrying guns, step out and walk up the beach—“officer’s shootin’ party. Christ A’mighty! I’d like to pot every one o’ the swine. An’ I could do it, too, I could do it. But wot’s the use o’ bein’ a blarsted fool for nothin’?”

The boat’s crew got out and walked about the smouldering remains of the village, seeking for curios which had escaped the fire, pausing awhile to look at a large mound of sand, under which lay seven of the natives killed by the landing-party on the preceding day. Then, satisfied that there was nothing to be had, the coxswain grumblingly ordered the men back to the boat, which pushed off and returned to the ship.

The wild, naked creature lying upon the boulder saw the boat pull off with a sigh of satisfaction. There was, under the ashes of his house, and buried still further under the soil, a 50-lb. beef barrel filled with Chilian and Mexican dollars. And he had feared that the bluejackets might rake about the ashes and find it.

He rose and stepped down the jagged boulder to where, at the base, the thick carpet of dead leaves,

fallen from the giant trees which encompassed it, silenced even the tread of his naked feet. Seated against the bole of a many-buttressed *vi*-tree was a native woman, whose right arm, shattered by a bullet and bound up in the spathe of a coconut-palm, was suspended from her neck by a strip of soft bark. She looked at him inquiringly.

“A boat has come ashore,” he said in the native tongue, “but none of the white men are seeking for my money.”

“Thy money!” The woman’s eyes blazed with a deadly fury. “What is thy money to me? Is thy money more to us than the blood of our child? O, thou coward heart!”

Grasping his Snider by the tip of the barrel the man looked at his wife with sullen, dulled ferocity.

“I am no coward, Nuta. Thou dost not understand. I wish to save the money, but I wish for revenge as well. Yet what can I do? I am but one man, and have but one cartridge left.”

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This naked, sun-tanned being was one of the most desperate and blood-stained beachcombers that had ever cursed the fair isles of the South Pacific, and in those days there were many, notably on Pleasant Island and in the Gilbert Group. Put ashore at Nitendi from a Hobart Town whaler for mutinous conduct, he had disassociated himself for ever from civilisation. Perhaps the convict strain in his blood had something to do with his vicious nature, for both his father and mother had “left their country for their country’s

good," and his early training had been given him under the shadow of the gallows and within the swishing sound of the "cat" as it lacerated the backs of the wretched beings doomed to suffer under the awful convict system.

From the simple, loafing beachcomber stage of life to that of a leader of the natives in their tribal wars was a simple but natural transition, and Jim Martin, son of a convict father and mother whose forbears were of the scum of Liverpool, and knew the precincts of a prison better than the open air, followed the path ordained for him by Fate.

The man's reckless courage won him undoubted respect from his associates; the head chief of the village alone possessed a greater influence. A house was built for him, and a wife and land given him; and within a year of his arrival on the island he signalised himself by a desperate attempt to cut-off a barque bound from Hobart to China as she lay becalmed off the island. The attempt failed, and many of his followers lost their lives. A few months later, however, he was more successful with a Fijian trading cutter, which, anchoring off the village, was carried during the night, plundered of her cargo of trade goods (much of which was firearms), and then burnt. This established his reputation.

Five years passed. But few vessels touched at the island now, for it had a bad name, and those which did call were well armed and able to beat off an attack. Then one day, two years before the opening of this story, a trading schooner called off the village, and

Martin, now more a savage native than a white man, was tempted by her defenceless condition, and by the money which the captain carried for trading purposes, to capture her, with the aid of the wild, savage people among whom he had cast his lot. Of what use the money would be to him he knew not. He was an outcast from civilisation, he was quickly forgetting his mother tongue ; but his criminal instincts, and his desire to be a “big man” with the savages among whom he had lived for so long, led him to perpetrate this one particular crime. In the dead of night he led a party of natives on board the schooner, and massacred every one of her crew, save one Fijian, who, jumping overboard, swam to the shore, and was spared. A few months later this man escaped to a passing whaler, and the story of the massacre of the captain and crew of the *Fedora* was made known to the commodore of the Australian station, who despatched a gunboat “to apprehend the murderers and bring them to Sydney for trial.” Failing the apprehension of the murderers, the commander was instructed “to burn the village, and inflict such other punitive methods upon the people generally” as he deemed fit.

So Commander Lempriere, of H.M. gunboat *Terrier*, went to work with a will. He meant to catch the murderers of the crew of the *Fedora*, if they possibly could be caught, and set to work in a manner that would have shocked the commodore. Instead of steaming into the bay on which the village was situated—and so giving the natives ample time to

clear out into the mountains—he brought—to at dusk, when the ship was twenty miles from the land, and sent away the landing party in three boats. The Fijian—he who had escaped from the massacre of the *Fedora*—was the guide.

“You know what to do, Chester,” said Commander Lempriere to his first lieutenant as the boatswain’s whistles piped the landing party away; “land on the north point, about two miles from the village, and surround it, and then wait till daylight. You can do it easily enough with thirty men, as it lies at the foot of the mountain, and there is no escape for the beggars unless they break through you and get into the bush. Be guided by the Fiji boy; and, as the Yankees say, ‘no one wants a brass band with him when he’s going duck-hunting,’ so try and surround the village as quietly as possible. I’ll see that none of them get away in their canoes. I’ll work up abreast of the harbour by daylight.”

Guided by the boy, Lieutenant Chester and the landing party succeeded in getting ashore without being seen, and then made a long detour along the side of the mountain, so as to approach the village from behind. Then they waited till daylight, and all would have gone well had not his second in command, just as the order was given to advance, accidentally discharged his revolver. In an instant the village was alarmed, and some hundreds of natives, many of them armed with rifles, and led by Martin, sprang from their huts and made a short but determined resistance. Then, followed by their women and children, they

broke through the bluejackets and escaped into the dense mountain jungle, where they were safe from pursuit. But the fire of the seamen had been deadly, for seven bodies were found ; among them was a boy of about ten, whom the Fijian recognised as the renegade's son—a stray bullet had pierced his body as he sat crouching in terror in his father's house, and another had wounded his mother as she fled up the mountain-side, for in the excitement and in the dim morning light it was impossible for the attacking party to tell women from men.

Then by the commander's orders the village and fleet of canoes was fired, and a dozen or so of rockets went screaming and spitting among the thick mountain jungle, doing no damage to the natives, but terrifying them more than a heavy shell fire.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Let us away from here, Nuta,” said Martin, “'tis not safe. In the hut by the side of the big pool we can rest till the ship has gone and our people return. And I shall bind thy arm up anew.”

The woman obeyed him silently, and in a few minutes they were skirting the side of the mountain by a narrow leaf-strewn path, taking the opposite direction to that followed by the two officers and bluejackets. Half an hour's walk brought them to the river bank, which was clothed with tall spear-grass. Still following the path, they presently emerged out into the open before a deep, spacious pool, at the further end of which was a dilapidated and deserted hut. Here the woman, faint with the pain of her

wound, sank down, and Martin brought her water to drink, and then proceeded to re-examine and properly set her broken arm.

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The two officers—the second lieutenant and a ruddy-faced, fair-haired midshipman named Walters—had hardly proceeded a hundred yards along the beach, when the boy stopped.

“Oh, Mr. Grayling, let us turn back and go the other way. There’s a big river runs into the next bay, with a sort of a lake about a mile up; I saw it in the plan of the island, this morning. We might get a duck or two there, sir.”

“Any way you like,” replied the officer, turning about, “and walking along the beach will be better than climbing up the mountain in the beastly heat for the sake of a few tough pigeons.”

Followed by the three bluejackets, who were armed with rifles, they set off along the hard white sand. In a few minutes they had rounded the headland on the north side and were out of sight of the ship. For quite a mile they tramped over the sand, till they came to the mouth of the river, which flowed swiftly and noisily over a shallow bar. A short search revealed a narrow path leading up along the bank, first through low thicket scrub, and then through high spear-grass. Further back, amid the dense forest, they could hear the deep notes of the wild pigeons, but as young Walters was intent on getting a duck they took no heed, but pressed steadily on.

“By jove! what a jolly fine sheet of water!”

whispered the midshipman as they emerged out from the long grass and saw the deep, placid pool lying before them ; then he added disappointedly, “but not a sign of a duck.”

“Never mind,” said Grayling consolingly, as he sat down on the bank and wiped his heated face, “we’ll get plenty of pigeons, anyway. But first of all I’m going to have something to eat and drink. Open that bag, Williams, and you, Morris and Jones, keep your ears cocked and your eyes skinned. It’s lovely and quiet here, but I wouldn’t like to get a poisoned arrow into my back whilst drinking bottled beer.”

“I’m going to have a swim before I eat anything,” said Walters, with a laugh. “Won’t you, sir ?” he asked, as he began undressing.

“Looks very tempting,” replied the officer, “but I’m too hot. Take my advice and wait a bit till you’re cooler.”

The youngster only laughed, and, having stripped, took a header from the bank, and then swam out into the centre of the pool where it was deepest.

“Oh, do come in, sir,” he cried ; “it’s just splendid. There’s a bit of a current here and the water is delightfully cool.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Martin was aroused from his sleep by the sound of voices. He seized his rifle, bent over his wife, and whispered to her to awake ; then crawling on his hands and knees from the hut he reached the bank and looked out, just as young Walters dived into the water.

Hardened murderer as he was, he felt a thrill of horror, for he knew that the pool was a noted haunt of alligators, and to attempt to swim across it meant certain death.

His wife touched his arm, and crouching beside him, her black eyes filled with a deadly hatred, she showed her white teeth and gave a low, hissing laugh.

“Before one can count ten he will be in the jaws,” she said, with savage joy.

“Nuta,” whispered Martin hoarsely, “’tis but a boy,” and the veins stood out on his bronzed forehead as his hand closed tighter around his rifle.

“What wouldst thou do, fool?” said the woman fiercely as she seized the weapon by the barrel; “think of thy son who died but yesterday . . . ah ! ah ! look ! look !”

Tearing the rifle from her grasp he followed the direction of her eyes ; a swiftly-moving black snout showed less than thirty yards from the unconscious bather, who was now swimming leisurely to the bank.

“He must not die,” he muttered ; “’tis but a boy !” Then turning to the woman he spoke aloud. “Quick ! run to the forest ; I shall follow.”

Again she sought to stay his hand ; he dashed her aside, raised the rifle to his shoulder and took a quick but steady aim ; a second later the loud report rang out, and the monster, struck on his bony head by the heavy bullet, sank in alarm ; and then, ere Martin turned to run, two other shots disturbed the silence and he pitched forward on his face into the long grass.

\* \* \* \* \*

“We just saw the beggar in time, sir,” cried Jones. “I happened to look across and caught sight of him just as he fired at Mr. Walters. Me and Morris fired together.”

Grayling had sprung to his feet. “Are you hit, Walters?” he shouted.

“No,” replied the boy as he clambered up the bank; “what the deuce is the matter?”

“A nigger took a pot-shot at you! Get under cover as quick as you can. Never mind your clothes!”

Ten minutes passed. No sound broke the deathly stillness of the place; and then, cautiously creeping through the grass, the officer and Morris crawled round to where the latter had seen the man fall. They came upon him suddenly. He was lying partly on his face, with his eyes looking into theirs. Morris sprang up and covered him with his rifle.

“I’m done for,” Martin said quietly; “my back is broken. Did the crocodile get the boy?”

“Crocodile!” said Grayling in astonishment. “Did you fire at a crocodile? Who are you? Are you a white man?”

“Never mind who I am,” he gasped; “let me lie here. Look,” and he pointed to a bullet-hole in his stomach; “it’s gone clean through me and smashed my backbone. Let me stay as I am.”

He never spoke again, and died whilst a litter was being made to carry him down to the beach.

## *The River of Dreams*

### I

THERE is a river I know which begins its life in a dark, sunless canyon high up amid the thick forest-clad spurs of the range which traverses the island from east to west. Here, lying deep and silent, is a pool, almost encompassed by huge boulders of smooth, black rock, piled confusedly together, yet preserving a certain continuity of outline where their bases touch the water's edge. Standing far up on the mountain-side you can, from one certain spot alone, discern it two hundred feet below, and a thick mass of tangled vine and creepers stretching across its western side, through which the water flows on its journey to the sea.

A narrow native path, used only by hunters of the wild pigs haunting the depths of the gloomy mountain forest, led me to it one close, steaming afternoon. I had been pigeon shooting along the crests of the ridges, and having shot as many birds as I could carry, I decided to make a short cut down to the level ground, where I was sure of finding water, resting

awhile and then making my way home along the beach to the village.

I had descended scarcely more than fifty yards when I struck the path—a thin, red line of sticky, clay soil, criss-crossed by countless roots of the great forest trees. A brief examination showed me that it had been trodden by the feet of natives quite recently ; their footprints led downward. I followed, and presently came to a cleared space on the mountain-side, a spot which had evidently been used by a party of hunters who had stayed there to cook some food, for the ashes of a fire lay in the ground-oven they had made. Laying down my gun, I went to the edge and peered cautiously over, and there far below I could see the pool, revealed by a shaft of sunlight which pierced down through the leafy canopy.

Feeling sure that the track would lead me to the water, where I should have the satisfaction of a long drink, I set out again, and after narrowly escaping pitching down headlong, I at last reached the bottom, and, with a sigh of relief, threw down my gun and birds, and in another moment was drinking eagerly of the ice-cold, crystal water in one of the many minor pools which lay everywhere amid the boulders.

After a few minutes' rest I collected some dead wood and lit a fire, being hungry as well as thirsty ; then leaving it to burn down, I climbed one of the highest boulders to get a good view, and sighed with admiration at the scene—there lay before me a deep, almost circular sheet of water, about thirty yards across. Directly beneath me I could see the rocky

bottom ; fifty feet further out towards the centre it was of unfathomable blueness. On the opposite side a tree of enormous girth had fallen, long years before, yet it was still growing, for some of its mighty roots were embedded in the rich red soil of the mountain-side.

As I looked, a fish, and then another, splashed just beside the fallen tree. Slipping down from the boulder, I made my way round, just in time to see scores of beautiful silvery fish, exactly like English grayling in shape, dart away from under the tree out into the deep water. In other streams of the island I had caught many of these fish, but had never seen any so high up inland ; and, elated at the prospect of much future sport, I went on with my explorations.

I was about to climb over the tree, when I discovered that I could pass underneath, for here and there it was supported on boulders standing out two or three feet above the water. On the other side a tiny stream trickled over a flat ledge of rock, to fall into a second but much smaller pool ten or fifteen feet below ; beyond that lay a long, narrow but shallow stretch of crystal water, running between highly verdured banks, and further away in the distance I could hear the murmur of a waterfall.

Turning over a stone with my foot, a crayfish darted off and tried to hide. There were scores, hundreds of them, everywhere—fine, fat, luscious fellows, and in ten minutes I had a dozen of the largest in my bag, to roast on the now glowing fire beside a juicy pigeon. Salt I had none, but I did

possess a ship biscuit and a piece of cold baked taro, and with pigeon and crayfish, what more could a hungry man desire?

The intense solitude of the place, too, was enchanting. Now and then the booming note of a pigeon, or the soft *coo-coo* of a ringdove, would break the silence; overhead there was a sky of spotless blue; an hour before I had sweltered under a brazen sun; here, under the mountain shade, though there was not a breath of wind to stir a leaf, it was surprisingly cool.

To lean against the soft white moss clothing the buttresses of a giant maruhia-tree and smoke a pipe, was delightful after a tramp of six or eight miles through a mountain forest; and to know that the return journey would be through easy country along the banks of a new river was better still.

I set off with a feeling of joyful expectancy, taking a last glance at the beautiful little lake—I meant to return with some native friends to fish it on the morrow—ere I struck into the forest once more to pick up the path.

Every now and then I caught glimpses of the river, now gradually widening as it was joined by other streamlets on either side. Some of these I had to wade through, others I crossed on stones or fallen trees.

Half-way to the beach I came to a broad stretch of shallow water covered with purple water-lilies; three small ducks, with alarmed quacking, shot upward from where they had been resting or feeding under the bank, and vanished over the tree-tops; and a sudden commotion in the water showed me that there were

many fish. Its beautiful clearness tempted me to strip off and swim about the floating garden resting on its bosom, and I was just about to undress when I heard a shot quite near. The moment after, I fired in return, and gave a loud hail ; then the high reedy cane grass on the other side parted, and a man and a woman came out, stared at me, and then laughed in welcome. They were one Nalik and his wife, people living in my own village. The man carried a long single-barrelled German shot-gun, the woman a basket of pigeons. Stepping down the bank, they waded across and joined me.

“How came ye here ? ” they asked, as we sat down together to smoke.

I told them, and then learnt that the river ran into the sea through the mangroves at a spot many miles from the village. Then I asked about the big pool. Nalik nodded.

“Ay, 'tis deep, very deep, and hath many fish in it. But it is a place of *jelon* (haunted) and we always pass to one side. But here where we now sit is a fine place for fish. And there are many wild pigs in the forest.”

“Let us come here to-morrow. Let us start ere the sun is up, and stay here and fish and shoot till the day be gone.”

“Why not ? ” said Sivi his wife, puffing her cigarette, “and sleep here when night comes, for under the banks are many thousand *unkar* (crayfish), and I and some other women shall catch them by torchlight.”

And that was how I began to learn this island river and its ways, so that now it has become the river of my dreams.

## II

But with the dawn there came disappointment keen and bitter, for in the night the north-east trade had died away, and now wild, swooping rain squalls pelted and drenched the island from the westward, following each other in quick succession, and whipping the smooth water inside the reef into a blurred and churning sheet of foam, and then roaring away up through the mountain passes and canyons.

With my gear all ready beside me, I sat on the matted floor of the hut in which I lived, smoking my pipe and listening to the fury of the squalls as the force of the wind bent and swayed the thatched roof, and made the cinnet-tied rafters and girders creak and work to and fro under the strain. Suddenly the wicker-work door on the lee side was opened, and Nalik jumped in, dripping with rain, but smiling good-naturedly as usual.

“*Wōā!*” he said, taking his long, straight black hair in his hands and squeezing out the water, “’tis no day for us.”

I ventured an opinion that it might clear off soon. He shook his head as he held out his brown hand for a stiff tot of Hollands, tossed it off, and then sat down to open a small bundle he carried, and which contained a dry jumper and pair of dungaree pants.

Then quickly divesting himself of the soddened girdle of grass around his loins, he put on the European garments, filled his pipe, and began to talk.

“The wind will soon cease, for these squalls from the westward last not long at this time of the year ; but when the wind ceases, then comes rain for two days sometimes—not heavy rain such as this, but soft rain as fine as hair, and all the forest is wetted, and the mountain paths are dangerous even to our bare feet, and the pigeons give no note, and the sun is dead. So we cannot go to the river to-day. To-morrow perhaps it may be fine ; therefore let us sit and be content.”

So we sat and were content, remaining indoors in my own house, or visiting those of our neighbours, eating, drinking, smoking, and talking. I was the only white man on the island, and during my three months' residence had got to know every man, woman, child, and dog in the village. And my acquaintance with the dogs was very extensive, inasmuch as every one of the thirty-four families owned at least ten dogs, all of which had taken kindly to me from the very first. They were the veriest mongrels that ever were seen in canine form, but in spite of that were full of pluck when pig hunting. (I once saw seven or eight of them tackle a lean, savage old wild boar in a dried-up taro swamp ; two of them were ripped up, the rest hung on to him by his ears and neck, and were dragged along as if they were as light as feathers, until a native drove a heavy ironwood spear clean through the creature's loins.)

During the evening my native friends, in response to my inquiries about the river, told me that it certainly took its rise from the deep pool I have before described, and that had I made a more careful examination I should have seen several tiny rivulets, hidden by the dense undergrowth, flowing into it from both sides of the gorge. During severe rains an immense volume of muddy water would rush down; yet, strangely enough, the two kinds of fish which inhabited it were just as plentiful as ever as soon as the water cleared.

About four o'clock in the morning, when I was sound in slumber, a voice called to me to awaken. It was Nalik.

“Come out and look.”

I lifted (not opened) my Venetian-sashed door of pandanus leaf, and stepped out.

What a glorious change! The rain had ceased, and the shore and sea lay bright and clear under a myriad-starred sky of deepest blue; the white line of surf tumbling on the barrier reef a mile away seemed almost within stone-throw. A gentle breeze swayed the fronds of the coco-palms above us, and already the countless thousands of sea birds, whose “rookery” was on two small islets within the reef and near the village, were awake, and filling the air with their clamour as they, like us, prepared to start off for their day's fishing.

Our party consisted of—

(1) Nalik, his wife and five dogs.

(2) Three young women, each with several dogs.

(3) Old Sru, chief of the district, with numerous dogs.

(4) Two boys and three girls, who carried baskets of food, crayfish nets, boar-spears, &c. Large number of dogs, male and female.

(5) The white man, to whom, as soon as he appeared, the whole of the dogs immediately attached themselves.

(6) Small boy of ten, named Toka, the terror of the village for his illimitable impudence and unsurpassed devilry. But as he was a particular friend of the white man (and could not be prevented) he was allowed to come. He had three dogs.

Before we started old Sru, Nalik, and myself had some Hollands, two bottles of which were also placed in the care of Nalik's wife. The "devil," as Toka was called, mimicked us as we drank, smacked his lips and rubbed one hand up and down his stomach. One of the big girls cuffed him for being saucy. He retaliated by darting between her legs and throwing her down upon the sand.

Presently we started, the women and children going ahead, with the exception of the "devil," who stuck close to me, and carried my Snider in one hand and my double-barrel muzzle-loader in the other.

For the first two or three miles our way lay along the hard, white beach, whose sands were covered everywhere by millions of tiny, blue-backed, red-legged soldier crabs, moving to and fro in companies, regiments, and divisions, hastening to burrow before the daylight revealed their presence to their dreaded

enemies—the golden-winged sand plovers and the greedy sooty terns, who yet knew how to find them by the myriad small nodules of sand they left to betray their hiding-place.

Oh, the sweet, sweet smell of the forest as it is borne down from the mountains and carried seaward, to gladden, it may be, the heart of some hard-worked, broken-spirited sailor, who, in a passing ship, sees from aloft this fair, fair island with its smiling green of leaf, and soft, heaving valleys, above the long lines of curving beach, showing white and bright in the morning sun! And, as you walk, the surf upon the reef for ever calls and calls; sometimes loudly with a deep, resonant boom, but mostly with a soft, faint murmur like the low-breathed sigh of a woman when she lies her cheek upon her lover's breast and looks upward to his face with eyes aglow and lips trembling for his kiss.

Far, far above a faint note. 'Tis but a snow-white tropic bird, suspended in mid-air on motionless wing, his long scarlet pendrices almost invisible at such a height. Presently, as he discerns you, he lets his aerial, slender form sink and sink, without apparent motion, till he is within fifty feet, and then he turns his graceful head from side to side, and inquiringly surveys you with his full, soft black eye. For a moment or two he flutters his white wings gently and noiselessly, and you can imagine you hear his timid heart-beats; then, satisfied with his scrutiny, his fairy, graceful form floats upward into space again, and is lost to view.

Leaving the beach and the sound of the droning surf behind us we turned to the starboard hand, and struck through the narrow strip of littoral towards the mountains. For the first mile or so our way was through a grove of pandanus-palms, nearly every one of which was in full fruit; on the branches were sitting hundreds of small sooty terns, who watched our progress beneath with the calm indifference borne of the utter confidence of immunity of danger from any human being.

Once through the sandy stretch on which the pandanus loves to grow, we came to the outlier of the mountain lands—low, gently undulating ridges, covered on both sides of the narrow track with dense thickets of pineapples, every plant bearing a fruit half-matured, which, when ripened, was never touched by the hand of man, for the whole island was, in places, covered with thickets such as this, and the wild pig only revelled among them.

“They grow thickly,” I said to Nalik.

“Ay, *tahina*,<sup>1</sup> they grow thickly and wild,” he replied, with some inflection of sadness in his voice; “long, long ago, before my father’s father lived, there was a great town here. That was long before we of this land had ever seen a white man. And now we who are left are but as dead leaves.”

“How came it so to be?”

He shook his head. “I cannot tell. I only know that once we of this land numbered many, many thousands, and now we are but hundreds. Here,

<sup>1</sup> Friend.

where we now walk, was once a great town of houses with stone foundations; if ye cut away the *fara* (pineapples) thou wilt see the lower stones lying in the ground."

We pressed onward and upward into the deeper forest, then turned downwards along a narrow path, carpeted thick with fallen leaves, damp and soft to the foot, for the sun's rays never pierced through the dense foliage overhead. And then we came out upon a fair, green sward with nine stately coco-palms clustered, their branches drooping over the river of my dreams, which lay before us with open, waiting bosom.

### III

Under the shade of the nine cocos we made our camp, and old Sru and the women and children at once set to work to build a "house" to protect us in case it rained during the nights. Very quickly was the house built. The "devil" was sent up the cocos to lop off branches, which, as they fell, were woven into thatch by the deft, eager hands of the women, who were supervised by Sivi, Nalik's handsome wife, amid much chatter and laughter, each one trying to outvie the other in speed, and all anxious to follow Nalik and myself to the river.

The place was well chosen. For nearly a hundred yards there was a clear stretch of water flowing between low, grassy banks on which were growing

a few scattered pandanus-palms—the screw pine. Half a mile distant, a jagged, irregular mountain-peak raised high its emerald-hued head in the clear sunshine, and from every lofty tree on both sides of the stream there came the continuous call of the gentle wood-doves and the great grey pigeons.

With Nalik and myself there came old Sru and the imp Toka, who at once set to work and found us some small crayfish for bait. Our rods were slender bamboos, about twelve feet long, with lines of the same length made of twisted banana fibre as fine as silk, and equally as strong. My hook was an ordinary flatted Kirby, about half the size of an English whiting hook ; Nalik preferred one of his own manufacture, made from a strip of tortoise-shell, barbless and highly polished.

Taking our stand at a place where the softly-flowing current eddied and curled around some black boulders of rock whose surfaces were but a few inches above the clear, crystal stream, we quickly baited our hooks and cast together, the old chief and the boy throwing in some crushed-up crayfish shells at the same time. Before five seconds had passed my brown-skinned comrade laughed as his thin line tautened out suddenly, and in another instant he swung out a quivering streak of shining blue and silver, and deftly caught it with his left hand ; almost at the same moment my rod was strained hard by a larger fish, which darted in towards the bank.

“First to thee, Nalik ; but biggest to the *rebelli*,”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> White man.

cried old Sru, as with some difficulty—for my rod was too slight for such a fish—I landed a lovely four-pounder on the grass.

Nalik laughed again, and before I had cleared my hook from the jaw of my prize he had taken another and then a third, catching each one in his left hand with incredible swiftness and throwing them to the boy. The women and girls on the opposite bank laughed and chaffed me, and urged me to hasten, or Nalik would catch five ere I landed another. But the *rebelli* took no heed of their merriment, for he was quite content to let a few minutes go whilst he examined the glistening beauty which lay quivering and gasping on the sward. It was nearly eighteen inches in length, its back from the tip of the upper jaw to the tail a brilliant dark blue flecked with tiny specks of red, the sides a burnished silver, changing, as the belly was reached, to a glistening white. The pectoral and lower fins were a pale blue, flecked with somewhat larger spots of brighter red than those on the back, and the tail showed the same colouring. In shape it was much like a grayling, particularly about the head; and altogether a more beautiful fresh-water fish I have never seen.

We fished for an hour or more, and caught three or four dozen of this particular fish as well as eight or nine dark-scaled, stodgy bream, which haunted the centre of the pool where the water was deep. Then as the sun grew fiercer they ceased to bite, and we ceased to tempt them; so we lay down and rested and smoked, whilst the women and children made a

ground-oven and prepared some of the fish for cooking. Putting aside the largest—which was reserved for the old chief and myself—Nalik's kindly, gentle-voiced wife, watched the children roll each fish up in a wrapper of green coconut leaf and lay them carefully upon the glowing bed of stones in the oven, together with some scores of long, slender green bananas, to serve as a vegetable in place of taro or yams, which would take a much longer time to cook. On the top of all was placed the largest fish, and then the entire oven was rapidly covered up with wild banana leaves in the shape of a mound.

The moment Nalik and I had laid down our rods, and whilst the oven was being prepared, Toka and the two other boys sprang into the water at one end of the pool and began to disturb the bottom with their feet. The young girls and women, each carrying a small finely-meshed scoop-net, joined them, and in a few minutes they had filled a basket with crayfish, some of which were ten inches in length, and weighed over a pound, their tails especially being very large and fleshy.

“Shall we boil or bake them?” asked Nalik as the basketful was brought up to me for examination.

“Boil them,” I replied, for I had brought with me several pounds of coarse salt taken from our wrecked ship's harness cask and carefully dried in the sun, and a boiled crayfish or crab is better than one baked—and spoiled.

A tall, graceful girl, named Seia, came forward with a large wooden bowl, nearly eighteen inches in diameter

at the top, and two feet in depth—no light weight even to lift, for at its rim it was over an inch thick. Placing it on the ground in front of Sru and myself, she motioned to the other girls to bring water. They brought her about two gallons in buckets made of the looped-up leaves of the taro plant, and poured it into the vessel ; then Nalik and old Sru, with rough tongs formed of the midrib of a coconut branch, whipped up eight or ten large red-hot stones from a fire near by, and dropped them into the vessel, the water in which at once began to boil and send up a volume of steam as Seia tipped the entire basketful of crustacean delicacies into the bowl, together with some handfuls of salt. Then a closely-woven mat was placed over the top and tied round it so as to keep in the heat—that is the way they boil food in the South Seas with a wooden pot !

From time to time during the next quarter of an hour more red-hot stones were dropped into the bowl until old Sru pronounced the contents to be *tunua*, *i.e.*, well and truly cooked, and then whilst the now bright red crayfish were laid out to cool upon platters of green woven coconut leaf, the first oven of fish and bananas was opened.

What a delightful meal it was ! The fat, luscious fish, cooked in their own juices, each one deftly ridden of its compact coating of silvery scales by the quick hands of the women, and then turned out hot and smoking upon a platter of leaf, with half a dozen green, baked bananas for bread ! Such fish, and so cooked, surely fall to the lot of few. Your City

professional diner who loves to instruct us in the daily papers about "how to dine" cannot know anything about the real enjoyment of eating. He is *blasé*, he regulates his stomach to his costume and to the season, and he eats as fashion dictates he should eat, and fills his long-suffering stomach with nickety, tin-pot, poisonous "delicacies" which he believes are excellent because they are expensive and are prepared by a *chef* whose income is ten times as much as his own.

So we ate our fish and bananas, and then followed on with the crayfish, the women and children shelling them for us as fast as we could eat, the largest and fattest being placed before the old chief and the white man. And then for dessert we had a basket of red-ripe wild mangoes, with a great smooth-leaved pineapple as big as a big man's head, and showing red and green and yellow, and smelling fresh and sweet with the rain of the previous night. Near by where we sat was a pile of freshly-husked young coconuts, which a smiling-faced young girl opened for us as we wanted a drink, carefully pouring out upon the ground all the liquid that remained after Sru and myself had drunk, and then putting the empty shells, with their delicate lining of alabaster flesh, into the fire to be consumed, for no one not of chiefly rank must partake even of that which is cast aside by a chief or his guests.

Our first meal of the day finished, we—that is, Nalik, Sru, and myself—lay down under the shade of the newly-built thatched roof and smoked our pipes in content, whilst the women and children, attended by the dogs, bathed in the deepest part of the pool,

shouting, laughing, and splashing and diving till they were tired. The dogs, mongrel as they were, enjoyed the fun as much as their masters, biting and worrying each other playfully as they swam round and round, and then crawling out upon the bank, they ran to and fro upon the grassy sward till they too were glad to rest under the shade of the clump of coco-palms.

In the afternoon—leaving the rest of our party to amuse themselves by catching crayfish and to make traps for wild pigs—Sru, Nalik, Toka, and myself set out towards *the* pool at the head of the river, where, I was assured, we were sure to get a pig or two by nightfall. The dogs evidently were equally as certain of this as Nalik and Sru, for the moment they saw the two men pick up their heavy hunting-spears they sprang to their feet and began howling and yelping in concert till they were beaten into silence by the women. I brought with me a short Snider carbine—the best and handiest weapon to stop a wild pig at a short range—and a double-barrelled muzzle-loading shot-gun. The latter I gave to the “devil” to carry, and promised him that he should fire at least five shots from it at pigeons or mountain fowl before we returned to the village.

Following a narrow footpath which led along the right bank of the stream, we struck directly into the heart of the mountain forest, and in a few minutes the voices, shouts, and laughter of our companions sounded as if they were miles and miles away. Now and then as we got deeper into the dark, cool shade caused by the leafed dome above, we heard the shrill cry of the

long-legged mountain cock—a cry which I can only describe as an attempt at the ordinary barnyard rooster's "cock-a-doodle-do" combined with the scream of a cat when its tail is trodden upon by a heavy-booted foot. Here in these silent, darkened aisles of the forest it sounded weird and uncanny in the extreme, and aroused an intense desire to knock the creature over; but I forebore to fire, although we once had a view of a fine bird, attended by a hen and chicks, scurrying across the leaf-strewn ground not fifty feet away. Everywhere around us the great grey pigeons were sounding their booming notes from the branches overhead, but of these too we took no heed, for a shot would have alarmed every wild pig within a mile of us.

An hour's march brought us to the crest of a spur covered with a species of white cedar, whose branches were literally swarming with doves and pigeons, feeding upon small, sweet-scented berries about the size of English haws. Here we rested awhile, the dogs behaving splendidly by lying down quietly and scarcely moving as they watched me taking off my boots and putting on a pair of cinnet (coir fibre) sandals. Just beneath us was a deep canyon, at the bottom of which, so Nalik said, was a tiny rivulet which ran through banks covered with wild yams and *ti* plants.

"There be nothing so sweet to the mouth of the mountain pig as the thick roots of the *ti*," said Nalik to me in a low voice. "They come here to root them up at this time of the year, before the wild yams

are well grown, and the *ti* both fattens and sweetens. Let us start."

At a sign from Sru, Nalik and the boy Toka, followed by the dogs, went off towards the head of the canyon, so as to drive down to the old man and myself any pigs which might be feeding above, whilst we slipped quietly down the side of the spur to the bank of the rivulet. Sru carried my gun (which I had loaded with ball) as well as his spear. I had my Snider.

We had not long to wait, for presently we heard the dogs give cry, and the silence of the forest was broken by the demoniac yells of Nalik and the "devil," who had started a party of two boars and half a dozen sows with their half-grown progeny, which were lying down around the buttressed sides of a great tika-tree. They (the pigs) came down the side of the rivulet with a tremendous rush, right on top of us in fact. I fired at the leader—a great yellow, razor-backed boar with enormous tusks—missed him, but hit a young sow who was running on his port side. Sru, with truer aim, fired both barrels of his gun in quick succession, and the second boar dropped with a bullet through both shoulders, and a dear little black and yellow striped four-months'-old porker went under to the other barrel with a broken spine. Then in another three or four minutes we were kicking and "belting" about half of the dogs, who, maddened by the smell of blood from the wounded animals, sprang upon them and tried to tear them to pieces; the rest of the pack (Heaven save the term!) had followed the

flying swine down the canyon ; they turned up at the camp some three or four hours later with bloodied jaws and gorged to distension.

The boar which Sru had shot was lean enough in all conscience, but the young sow and the four-months'-old porker were as round-bodied as barrels, and as fat as only pigs can be fat. After disembowelling them, we hoisted the carcasses up under the branch of a tree out of the reach of the dogs, and sent Toka back to the camp to tell the women to come and carry them away.

Then, as we had still another hour or two of daylight, and I longed to see the deep, deep pool at the head of the river, even if it were but for a few moments, the old chief Nalik and I started off.

It lay before us with many, many bars of golden sunlight striking down through the trees and trying to penetrate its calm, placid bosom with their warm, loving rays. Far below the sound of the waterfall sung to the dying day, and, as we listened, there came to us the dulled, distant murmur of the combing breakers upon the reef five miles away.

“’Tis a fair, good place this, is it not ? ” whispered Nalik, as he sat beside me—“a fair, good place, though it be haunted by the spirits.”

“Aye, a fair, sweet place indeed,” I answered, “and this pool and the river below shall for ever be in my dreams when I am far away from here.”

## “Old Mary”

### I

EARLY one morning, just as the trade wind began to lift the white mountain mist which enveloped the dark valleys and mountain slopes of the island, Denison, the supercargo of the trading schooner *Palestine*, put off from her side and was pulled ashore to the house of the one white trader. The man's name was Randle, and as he heard the supercargo's footstep he came to the door and bade him good morning.

“How are you, Randle?” said the young man, shaking hands with the quiet-voiced, white-haired old trader, and following him inside. “I'm going for a day's shooting while I have the chance. Can you come?” .

Randle shook his head. “Would like to, but can't spare the time to-day; but Harry and the girls will be delighted to go with you. Wait a minute, and have a cup of coffee first. They'll be here presently.”

Denison put down his gun and took a seat in the cool, comfortable-looking sitting-room, and in a few minutes Hester and Kate Randle and their brother

came in. The two girls were both over twenty years of age. Hester, the elder, was remarkably handsome, and much resembled her father in voice and manner. Kate was of much smaller build, full of vivacity, and her big, merry brown eyes matched the dimples on her soft, sun-tanned cheeks. Harry, who was Randle's youngest child, was a heavily-built, somewhat sullen-faced youth of eighteen, and the native blood in his veins showed much more strongly than it did with his sisters. They were all pleased to see the supercargo, and at once set about making preparations, Harry getting their guns ready and the two girls packing a basket with cold food.

"You'll get any amount of pigeons about two miles from here," said the old trader, "and very likely a pig or two. The girls know the way, and if two of you take the right branch of the river and two the left you'll have some fine sport."

"Father," said the elder girl, in her pretty, halting English, as she picked up her gun, "don' you think Mr. Denison would like to see ol' Mary? We hav' been tell him so much about her. Don' you think we might stop there and let Mr. Denison have some talk with her?"

"Ay, ay, my girl. Yes; go and see the poor old thing. I'm sure she'll be delighted. You'll like her, Mr. Denison. She's as fine an old woman as ever breathed. But don't take that basket of food with you, Kate. She'd feel awfully insulted if you did not eat in her house."

The girls obeyed, much to their brother's satisfac-

tion, inasmuch as the basket was rather heavy, and also awkward to carry through the mountain forest. In a few minutes the four started, and Hester, as she stepped out beside Denison, said that she was glad he was visiting old Mary. “You see,” she said, “she hav’ not good eyesight now, and so she cannot now come an’ see us as she do plenty times before.”

“I’m glad I shall see her,” said the young man; “she must be a good old soul.”

“Oh, yes,” broke in Kate, “she *is* good and brave, an’ we all love her. Every one *mus’* love her. She hav’ known us since we were born, and when our mother died in Samoa ten years ago old Mary was jus’ like a second mother to us. An’ my father tried so hard to get her to come and live with us; but no, she would not, not even fo’ us. So she went back to her house in the mountain, because she says she wants to die there. Ah, you will like her . . . and she will tell you how she saved the ship when her husband was killed, and about many, many things.”

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

Two hours later Denison and his friends emerged out upon cultivated ground at the foot of the mountain, on which stood three or four native houses, all neatly enclosed by low stone walls formed of coral slabs. In front of the village a crystal stream poured swiftly and noisily over its rocky bed on its way seaward, and on each thickly wooded bank the stately boles of some scores of graceful coco-palms rose high above the surrounding foliage. Except for the hum of the brawling stream and the cries of birds, the silence was unbroken,

and only two or three small children, who were playing under the shade of a breadfruit-tree, were visible. But these, as they heard the sound of the visitors' voices, came towards them shouting out to their elders within the huts that "four white people with guns" had come. In a moment some grown people of both sexes came out and shook hands with the party.

"This is Mary's house," said Hester to Denison, pointing out the largest; "let us go there at once. Ah, see, there she is at the door waiting for us."

"Come, come inside," cried the old woman in a firm yet pleasant voice, and Denison, looking to the right, saw that "Mary," in spite of her years and blindness, was still robust and active-looking. She was dressed in a blue print gown and blouse, and her grey hair was neatly dressed in the island fashion. In her smooth, brown right hand she grasped the handle of a polished walking-stick, her left arm she held across her bosom—the hand was missing from the wrist.

"How do you do, sir?" she said in clear English, as, giving her stick to Kate Randle, she held out her hand to the supercargo. "I am so glad that you have come to see me. You are Mr. Denison, I know. Is Captain Pakenham quite well? Come, Kitty, see to your friend. There, that cane lounge is the most comfortable. Harry, please shoot a couple of chickens at once, and then tell my people to get some taro, and make an oven."

"Oh, that is just like you, Mary," said Kate, laughing, "before we have spoken three words to you you begin cooking things for us."

The old woman turned her sunburnt face towards the girl and shook her stick warningly, and said in the native tongue—

"Leave me to rule in mine own house, saucy," and then Denison had an effort to restrain his gravity as Mary, unaware that he had a very fair knowledge of the dialect in which she spoke, asked the two girls if either of them had thought of him as a husband. Kate put her hand over Mary's mouth and whispered to her to cease. She drew the girl to her and hugged her.

Whilst the meal was being prepared Denison was studying the house and its contents. Exteriorly the place bore no difference to the usual native house, but within it was plainly but yet comfortably furnished in European fashion, and the tables, chairs, and sideboard had evidently been a portion of a ship's cabin fittings. From the sitting-room—the floor of which was covered by white China matting—he could see a bedroom opposite, a bed with snowy white mosquito curtains, and two mahogany chairs draped with old-fashioned antimacassars. The sight of these simple furnishings first made him smile, then sigh—he had not seen such things since he had left his own home nearly six years before. Hung upon the walls of the sitting-room were half a dozen old and faded engravings, and on a side-table were a sextant and chronometer case, each containing instruments so clumsy and obsolete that a modern seaman would have looked upon them as veritable curiosities.

From the surroundings within the room Denison's

eyes wandered to the placid beauty of the scene without, where the plumes of the coco-palms overhanging the swift waters of the tiny stream scarce stirred to the light air that blew softly up the valley from the sea, and when they did move narrow shafts of light from the now high-mounted sun would glint and shine through upon the pale green foliage of the scrub beneath. Then once again his attention was directed to their hostess, who was now talking quietly to the two Randle girls, her calm, peaceful features seeming to him to derive an added but yet consistent dignity from the harmonies of Nature around her.

What was the story of her infancy? he wondered. That she did not know it herself he had been told by old Randle, who yet knew more of her history and the tragedy of her later life than any one else. Both young Denison, the supercargo of five-and-twenty, and Randle, the grizzled wanderer and veteran of sixty-five, had known many tragedies during their career in the Pacific; but the story of this half-blind, crippled old woman, when he learnt it in full, appealed strongly to the younger man, and was never forgotten in his after life.

\* \* \* \* \*

They had had a merry midday meal, during which Mary Eury—for that was her name—promised Denison that she would tell him all about herself after he and the Randles came back from shooting, “but,” she added, with her soft, tremulous laugh, “only on one condition, Mr. Denison—only on one condition. You must bring Captain Pakenham to

see me before the *Palestine* sails. I am an old woman now, and would like to see him. I knew him many years ago when he was a lad of nineteen. Ah, it is so long ago! That was in Samoa. Has he never spoken of me?”

“Often, Mrs. Eury——”

“Don’t call me Mrs. Eury, Mr. Denison. Call me ‘Mary,’ as do these dear friends of mine. ‘Mary’—‘old’ Mary if you like. Every one who knew me and my dear husband in those far, far back days used to call me ‘Mary’ and my husband ‘Bob Eury’ instead of ‘Mrs. Eury’ and ‘Captain Eury.’ And now, so many, many years have gone . . . and now I am ‘Old Mary’ . . . and I think I like it better than Mrs. Eury. And so Captain Pakenham has not forgotten me?”

Denison hastened to explain. “Indeed he has not. He remembers you very well, and would have come with me, but he is putting the schooner on the beach to-day to clean her. And I am sure he will be delighted to come and see you to-morrow.”

“Of course he must. Surely every English and American in the South Seas should come and see me; for my husband was ever a good friend to every sailor that ever sailed in the island trade—from Fiji to the Bonins. There now, I won’t chatter any more, or else you will be too frightened to come back to such a garrulous old creature. Ah, if God had but spared to me my eyesight I should come with you into the mountains. I love the solitude, and the sweet call of the pigeons, and the sound of the waterfall at the

side of Taomaunga. And I know every inch of the country, and blind as I am, I could yet find my way along the mountain-side. Kate, and you, Harry, do not keep Mr. Denison out too late."

By sunset the shooting party had returned, and after a bathe in the cool waters of the mountain stream Denison returned to the house. Kate Randle and her sister, assisted by some native women, were plucking pigeons for the evening meal. Harry was lying down on the broad of his back on the grassy sward with closed eyes, smoking, and their hostess was sitting on a wide cane bench outside the house. She heard the young man's footstep, and beckoned him to seat himself beside her. And then she told him her story.

## II

"I don't know where I was born—for, as I daresay Randle has told you, I was only five years of age when I was picked up at sea in a boat, the only other occupant of which was a Swedish seaman. The vessel which rescued us was one of the transports used for conveying convicts to New South Wales, and was named the *Britannia*, but when she sighted the boat she was on a voyage to Tahiti in the Society Islands. I imagine this was sometime about 1805, so I must now be about seventy years of age.

"The Swedish sailor told the captain of the *Britannia* that he and I were the only survivors of a

party of six—among whom were my father and mother—belonging to a small London barque named the *Winifred*. She was employed in the trade between China and Valparaiso, and my father was owner as well as captain. On the voyage from Canton, and when within fifty miles of Tahiti, and in sight of land, she took fire, and the Chinese crew, when they saw that there was no hope of the ship being saved, seized the longboat, which had been prepared, and was well provisioned, and made off, although the cowardly creatures knew that the second boat was barely seaworthy. My father—whose name the Swede did not know—implored them to return, and at least take my mother and myself and an officer to navigate their boat to land. But they refused to listen to his pleadings, and rowed off. The second boat was hurriedly provisioned by my father and his officers, and they, with my mother and myself and the Swede—all the Europeans on board—left the burning ship at sundown. A course was steered for the eastern shore of Tahiti, which, although the wind was right ahead, we hoped to reach on the evening or the following day. But within a few hours after leaving the barque the trade wind died away, and fierce, heavy squalls burst from the westward upon the boat, which was only kept afloat by constant bailing. About dawn the sea had become so dangerous, and the wind had so increased in violence, that an attempt was made to put out a sea-anchor. Whilst this was being done a heavy sea struck the boat and capsized her. The night was pitchy dark, and when the Swede—who was a good

swimmer—came to the surface he could neither see nor hear any of the others, though he shouted loudly. But at the same moment, as his foot touched the line to which the sea anchor was bent, he heard the mate's voice calling for assistance.

“‘I have the child,’ he cried. ‘Be quick, for I’m done.’

“In another minute the brave fellow had taken me from him; then the poor mate sank, never to rise again. Whether I was alive or dead my rescuer could not tell, but being a man of great physical strength, he not only kept me above water with one hand, but succeeded in reaching first the sea-anchor—four oars lashed together—and then the boat, which had been righted by another sea.

“How this brave man kept me alive in such a terrible situation I do not know. By sunrise the wind had died away, the sea had gone down, and he was able to free the boat of water. In the stern-sheet locker he found one single tin of preserved potatoes, which had been jammed into a corner when the boat capsized—all the rest of the provisions, with the water-breakers as well, were lost. On this tin of potatoes we lived—so he told the master of the *Britannia*—for five days, constantly in sight of the land around which we were drifting, sometimes coming to within a distance of thirty miles of it. All this time, by God's providence, we had frequent heavy rain squalls, and the potato tin, which was about eighteen inches square, and was perfectly water-tight, proved our salvation, for the potatoes were so very salt that we would have

perished of thirst had we been unable to save water. Ohlsen cut down one of his high sea-boots, and into this he would put two handfuls of the dried potatoes, and then fill it up with water. It made a good sustaining food after it had been softened by the water and kneaded into a pulp.

“An hour before dawn, on the sixth day, Ohlsen, who was lying on the bottom boards of the boat, was awakened by hearing me crying for my mother. The poor fellow, who had stripped off his woollen shirt to protect my little body from the cold, at once sat up and tried to comfort me. The sea was as smooth as glass, and only a light air was blowing. Drawing me to his bare chest—for I was chilled with the keen morning air—he was about to lie down again, when he heard the creaking of blocks and then a voice say, ‘Ay, ay, sir!’ and there, quite near us, was a large ship! In a moment he sprang to his feet, and hailed with all his strength; he was at once answered, the ship was brought to the wind, a boat lowered, and in less than a quarter of an hour we were on board the *Britannia*.

“On that dear old ship I remained for five years or more, for the captain had his wife on board, and although she had two young children of her own, she cared for and loved me as if I had been her own daughter. Most of this time was spent among the Pacific Islands, and then there came to me another tragedy, of one of which I have a most vivid remembrance, for I was quite eleven years old at the time.

“The *Britannia*, like many South Seamen of those times, was a letter of marque, and carried nine guns,

for although we were, I think, at peace with Spain, we were at war with France, and there were plenty of French privateers cruising on the South American coast, with whom our ships were frequently engaged. But none had ever been seen so far eastward as the Galapagos Islands, and so we one day sailed without fear into a small bay on the north-west side of Charles Island to wood and water.

“On the following morning the captain, whose name was Rossiter, ordered my old friend Ohlsen, who was now gunner on the *Britannia*, to take four hands and endeavour to capture some of the huge land tortoises which abound on the islands of the group. I was allowed to go with them. Little did I think I should never again see his kindly face when I took my seat in the boat and was rowed ashore. Besides Ohlsen and myself, there were two English seamen, a negro named King and a Tahitian native. The youngest of the English sailors was named Robert Eury ; he was about twenty-two years of age, and a great favourite of the captain who knew his family in Dorset, England.

“We hauled the boat up on a small sandy beach, and then started off into the country, and by noon we had caught three large tortoises which we found feeding on cactus plants. Then, as we were resting and eating, we suddenly heard the report of a heavy gun, and then another and another. We clambered up the side of a rugged hill, from the summit of which we could see the harbour, a mile distant, and there was the *Britannia* lying at anchor, and being attacked

by two vessels! As we watched the fight we saw one of the strange ships, which were both under sail, fire a broadside at our vessel, and the second, putting about, did the same. These two broadsides, we afterwards heard, were terribly disastrous, for the captain and three men were killed, and nine wounded. The crew, however, under the mate, still continued to work her guns with the utmost bravery and refused to surrender. Then a lucky shot from one of her 9-pounders disabled the rudder of the largest Frenchmen, which, fearing to anchor so near to such a determined enemy, at once lowered her boats and began to tow out, followed by her consort. At the entrance to the bay, however, the smaller of the two again brought-to and began firing at our poor ship with a 24-pounder, or other long-range gun, and every shot struck. It was then that the mate and his crew, enraged at the death of the captain, and finding that the ship was likely to be pounded to pieces, determined to get under weigh and come to close quarters with the enemy, for the *Britannia* was a wonderfully fast ship, and carried a crew of fifty-seven men. But first of all he sent ashore Mrs. Rossiter, her two children, a coloured steward, and all the money and other valuables in case he should be worsted. His name was Skinner, and he was a man of the most undaunted resolution, and had at one time commanded a London privateer called the *Lucy*, which had made so many captures that Skinner was quite a famous man. But his intemperate habits caused him to lose his command, and he had had to

ship on the *Britannia* as chief mate. He was, however, a great favourite with the men, who now urged him to lead them on and avenge the loss of the captain; so the moment the boat returned from landing Mrs. Rossiter he slipped his cable, and stood out to meet the enemy.

“We, from the hill, watched all this with the greatest interest and excitement, and then Ohlsen turned to the others and said, ‘Let us get back to the boat at once. The captain has got under weigh to chase those fellows, and we should be with him.’

“So we descended to the beach, where we met the poor lady and her children, and heard that her husband was dead. She begged Ohlsen not to leave her, but he said his duty lay with his shipmates; then she besought him to at least leave Robert Eury with her, as she was terrified at the idea of having to spend the night on such a wild island with no one but the coloured steward to protect her and her children. At this time—although we could not see them—we knew the ships were heavily engaged, for the roar of the cannon was continuous. So, much to his anger, young Eury was bidden to remain with the captain’s wife, her son aged twelve, her daughter Ann, who was three years younger, the coloured steward, and myself. Then, bidding us goodbye, Ohlsen and his three men went off in the boat, and were soon out of sight.

“Young as he was, Robert Eury had good sense and judgment. He was angry at Mr. Skinner venturing out to attack such well-armed vessels with our poor 9-pounders, and although he had been

most anxious to join his shipmates, he was, he afterwards told me, pretty sure that the *Britannia* would have to strike or be sunk. The first thing he did, however, was to make all of our party comfortable. At the head of the bay there was an empty house, which had been built by the crews of the whaleships frequenting the Galapagos as a sort of rest-house for the men sent to catch tortoises. To this place he took us, and set the steward to work to get us something to eat, for Mr. Skinner had sent provisions and wine ashore. Then he took the ship's money, which amounted to about thirteen hundred pounds, and buried it a little distance away from the house. I helped him, and when the bags were safely covered up he turned to me with a smile lighting up his brown face.

"'There, Molly. That's done, and if Mr. Skinner has to strike, and the Frenchmen come here, they'll get nothing but ourselves.'

"By this time it was well on towards the afternoon, and we only heard a cannon shot now and then. Then the sound of the firing ceased altogether. We got back to the house and waited—we knew not for what. Poor Mrs. Rossiter, who was a very big, stout woman, had sobbed herself into a state of exhaustion, but she tried to brace herself up when she saw us, and when Robert Eury told her that he had buried the money, she thanked him.

"'Try and save it for my children, Robert. I fear I shall not be long with them. And if I am taken away suddenly I want you to bear witness that it was

my husband's wish, and is mine now, that Mary here is to share alike with my son Fred and my daughter Ann. Would to God I had means here to write.'

"Robert tried to comfort her with the assurance that all would be well, when as he spoke we saw a sight at which I, girl of twelve as I was, was struck with terror—the two French ships appeared round the headland with the *Britannia* following with French colours at her peak. The three came in together very slowly, and then dropped anchor within a cable's length of the beach. The captain's wife looked at them wildly for a moment, and then fell forward on her face. She died that night.

"The two French captains treated us very kindly, and they told Robert, who spoke French well, that Mr. Skinner had made a most determined attempt to board the larger of the two vessels, but was killed by a musket-shot, and that only after thirty of the *Britannia's* crew had been killed and wounded, and the ship herself was but little more than a wreck, did Ohlsen, who was himself terribly wounded by a splinter in the side, haul down his flag. Then the elder of the two Frenchmen asked Robert which was the child named 'Marie.'

"'This is the child, sir,' said Eury, pointing to me.

"'Then let her come with me and see the gunner of our prize,' said he; 'he is dying, and has asked to see her.'

"I was taken on board the *Britannia*, over her bloodstained decks, and into the main cabin, where poor Ohlsen was lying breathing his last. His face

lit up when he saw me, and he drew me to his bosom just as he had done years before in the open boat off Tahiti. I stayed with him till the last, then one of the French privateer officers led me away.

“In the morning Mrs. Rossiter was buried; the French captains allowing some of the surviving members of the crew of the *Britannia* to carry her body to her grave. There was a young Spanish woman—the wife of the older captain—on board the larger of the privateers, and she took care of us three children. I cannot remember her name, but I do remember that she was a very beautiful woman and very kind to us, and told us through an interpreter that we should be well cared for, and some day go home to England; and when she learned my own particular story she took me in her arms, kissed, and made much of me.

“About noon the crew of the *Britannia* were ranged on deck, and the elder of the two French captains called on Robert Eury to step out.

“‘This man here,’ he said in English, indicating the coloured steward, ‘tells me that you have buried some money belonging to the prize. Where is it?’

“‘I cannot tell you,’ replied Robert; ‘the captain’s wife told me it belonged to her children and to the little girl Mary.’

“The Frenchman laughed. ‘It belongs to us now; it is prize money, my good boy.’

“Eury looked at him steadily, but made no answer.

“‘Come,’ said the captain impatiently, ‘where is it?’

“‘I cannot tell you.’

“The younger of the captains laughed savagely, and stepped up to him, pistol in hand.

“‘I give you ten seconds to tell.’

“‘Five will do, monsieur,’ replied Robert, in French, ‘and then you will be losing five seconds of your time. I shall not tell you. But I should like to say goodbye to my dead captain’s children.’

“The young Frenchmen’s face purpled with fury. ‘Very well then, you fool!’ and he raised his pistol to murder the young man, when the older captain seized his arm.

“‘Shame, Pellatier, shame! Would you kill such a brave man in cold blood? Let us be satisfied with getting such a good ship. Surely you would not shoot him for the sake of a few hundred dollars?’

“‘There may be thousands. How can we tell?’ replied Pellatier.

“Robert laughed, and then raised his hand in salute to the elder captain.

“‘Captain Pellatier is right, sir. Madame Melville told me that there were thirteen hundred pounds in the bags which I have buried. And on certain conditions I will tell you where to find it.’

“‘Name them.’

“‘The money is fair prize money. That I admit. But you will never see it, unless you agree to my conditions, and pledge me your word of honour to observe them honourably. I am not afraid to die, gentlemen.’

“‘You are a bold fellow, and ought to have been a Frenchman—but be quick, name the conditions.’

“Half of the money to be given to these orphan children, whose pitiable condition should appeal to you. And promise me on your honour as men that you will land them at Valparaiso, or some other civilised place, from where they may reach England. If you will not make this promise, you can shoot me now.’

“‘And what of yourself?’ said Pellatier, who was a little dark man with very ugly monkey-like features; ‘you would be the guardian of this money, no doubt, my clever fellow.’

“The insulting manner in which he spoke exasperated Eury beyond endurance, and he made as if he would strike the man; but he stopped suddenly, and looking contemptuously at the Frenchman uttered the one word—

“‘*Babouin!*’

“It nearly cost him his life, for Pellatier, stung to fury by the loud laughter of his fellow-captain, again levelled his pistol at the young man, and again the older captain seized his arm.

“‘By Heaven, you shall not harm him!’ he cried, amid a murmur of applause from the crew. Then addressing Eury he said. ‘I give you my promise. The children and yourself are under my protection, and when we reach Valparaiso I will put you all on shore.’ Then he ordered one of his officers to escort Robert ashore and get the money.

“Eury thanked him quietly, and then he turned to Pellatier, and said he was sorry he used an offensive word to him; but Pellatier received his apology with

a scowl, and turned away. In half an hour Eury returned with the officer, carrying the money. It was counted and divided, and it was easy to see that Dupuis, the elder captain, was very pleased when the young man asked him to take charge of the half of the money belonging to the Rossiter children and myself.

“The three ships sailed in company for South America a week later. I remained on board the *Britannia* together with Robert Eury and six others of her original crew, the Rossiter children being taken by the Spanish lady on board the larger of the privateers, the second lieutenant of which, with about twenty men, were drafted to the prize. After keeping in close company for four or five days we lost sight of the privateers, much to the annoyance of our captain, who was a very indifferent navigator, as he soon showed by altering his course to E. by S. so as to pick up the coast of South America as soon as possible. This was a most fortunate thing for us, for at daylight on the following morning two sail were seen, not five miles distant, and to our intense delight proved to be English letters of marque—the barque *Centurion* of Bristol and the barque *Gratitude* of London. They at once closed in upon and engaged us, and although the Frenchmen made a good fight, they had to strike after a quarter of an hour’s engagement, for the *Centurion* was a very heavily armed ship.

“Her captain was a very old man named Richard Glass. He came on board the *Britannia* and spoke

very good-humouredly to the French lieutenant, for on neither side had any one been killed, and he saw that the *Britannia* was a fine ship. He told the Frenchmen to take the longboat, and as much provisions and water as they liked, and make for the coast, which was less than seventy miles distant. This was soon done, and our former captors parted from us very good friends, every one of them coming up and shaking hands with Robert Eury and calling him *bon camarade*.

“Captain Glass put his own chief officer in charge of the *Britannia* (with Robert as his mate) and ordered him to proceed to Port Jackson and await the arrival there of the *Centurion* and her consort. We arrived at our destination safely, and as soon as my story was known many kind people wanted to adopt me ; but the agent of the *Britannia* took me to his own home, where I lived for many happy years as a member of his family. Robert Eury was then appointed mate of a vessel in the China trade, but I saw him every year. Then when I was seventeen years of age he asked me to marry him, and I did so gladly, for he was always present in my thoughts when he was away, and I knew he loved me.

### III

“My husband invested his savings in a small schooner, which he named the *Taunton*, and within a month of our marriage we were at sea, bound on a

trading voyage to Tahiti and the Paumotus. This first venture proved very successful, so did the two following voyages; and then, as he determined to found a business of his own in the South Seas, he bought a large piece of land on this island from the natives, with whom he was on very friendly terms. His reasons for choosing this particular island were, firstly, because of its excellent situation—midway between Port Jackson and the Spanish settlements on the South American coast, which were good markets; secondly, because great numbers of the American whaling ships would make it a place of call to refresh if there was a reputable white man living on the island; and thirdly, because he intended to go into sperm whaling himself, for it was an immensely profitable business, and he could, if he wished, sell the oil to the American ships instead of taking it to Port Jackson. The natives here in those days were a very wild set, but they really had a great friendship and respect for my husband; and when they learnt that he intended to settle among them permanently they were delighted beyond measure. They at once set to work and built us a house, and the chief and my husband exchanged names in the usual manner.

“My first child was born on the island whilst my husband was away on a voyage to Port Jackson, and, indeed, of my four children three were born here. When Robert returned in the *Taunton* he brought with him a cargo of European stores and comforts for our new home, and in a few months we were fairly settled down. From the first American whaleships

that visited us he bought two fine whaleboats and all the necessary gear, and then later on engaged one of the best whalers in the South Seas to superintend the business. In the first season we killed no less than six sperm whales, and could have taken more, but were short of barrels. The whaling station was at the end of the south point of the harbour, and when a whale was towed in to be cut in and tried out the place presented a scene of great activity and bustle, for we had quite two hundred natives to help. Alas, there is scarcely a trace of it left now! The great iron try-pots, built up in furnaces of coral lime, were overgrown by the green jungle thirty years ago, and it would be difficult even to find them now.

"The natives, as I have said, were very wild, savage, and warlike; but as time went on their friendship for my husband and myself and children deepened, and so when Robert made a voyage to Port Jackson or to any of the surrounding islands I never felt in the least alarmed. I must tell you that we—my husband and myself—were actually the first white people that had landed to live on the island since the time of the *Bounty* mutiny, when Fletcher Christian and his fellow mutineers tried to settle here. They brought the *Bounty* in, and anchored her just where your own schooner is now lying—opposite Randle's house. But the natives attacked Christian and his men so fiercely, and so repeatedly, though with terrible loss to themselves, that at last Christian and Edward Young abandoned the attempt to found a settlement, and the *Bounty* went back to Tahiti, and

finally to Afitā, as the people here call Pitcairn Islands.

“Four years passed by. My husband was making money fast, not only as a trader among the Paumotus and the Society Islands, where he had two small vessels constantly employed, but from his whale fishery. Then came a time of sorrow and misfortune. A South Seaman, named the *Stirling Castle*, touched here for provisions, and introduced small-pox, and every one of my poor children contracted the disease and died; many hundreds of the natives perished as well. My husband at this time was away in one of his vessels at Fakarava Lagoon in the Paumotu Group, and I spent a very lonely and unhappy seven months before he returned. Almost every morning, accompanied by one or two of my native women servants, I would ascend that rugged peak about two miles from here, from where we had a complete view of the horizon all round the island, and watch for a sail. Twice my heart gladdened, only to be disappointed again, for the ships on both occasions were Nantucket whalers. And then, as the months went by, I began to imagine that something dreadful had happened to my husband and his ship among the wild people of the Paumotus, for when he sailed he did not expect to be away more than three months.

“At last, however, when I was quite worn out and ill with anxiety, he returned. I was asleep when he arrived, for it was late at night, and his vessel had not entered the harbour, though he had come ashore in a boat. He awakened me very gently, and then, before

I could speak to him and tell him of our loss, he said—

“Don't tell me, Molly. I have heard it all just now. But, there, I'm home again, dear; and I shall never stay away so long again, now that our children have been taken and you and I are alone.”

“After another year had passed, and when I was well and strong again, the whaleship *Chalice*, of Sag Harbour, Captain Freeman, touched here, and the master came on shore. He was an old acquaintance of my husband's, and told us that he had come ashore purposely to warn us of a piratical vessel which had made her appearance in these seas a few months before, and had seized two or three English and American ships, and murdered every living soul of their crews. She hailed from Coquimbo, and her captain was said to be a Frenchman, whilst her crew was composed of the worst ruffians to be found on the coast of South America—men whose presence on shore would not be tolerated even by the authorities at any of the Spanish settlements from Panama to Valdivia. Sailing under French colours, and professing to be a privateer, she had actually attacked a French merchant brig within fifty miles of Coquimbo Roads, the captain and the crew of which were slaughtered and the vessel plundered and then burnt. Since then she had been seen by several vessels in the Paumotu archipelago, where her crew had been guilty of the most fearful crimes, perpetrated on the natives.

“My husband thanked Freeman for his information; but said that if the pirate vessel came into Tubuai

Lagoon she would never get out again, except under British colours. This was no idle boast, for not only were my husband's two vessels—which were then both at anchor in the lagoon—well armed, but they were manned by English or English-blooded half-caste seamen, who would have only been too delighted to fight a Frenchman, or a Spaniard, or a Dutchman.

“Ah, 'tis so long ago, but what brave, rough fellows they were! Some of them, we well knew, had been transported as convicts, and were, when opportunity offered, drunken and dissolute, but to my husband and myself they were good and loyal men. Two of them had seen Trafalgar day in the *Royal Sovereign* under Collingwood when that ship had closed with the *Santa Anna* and made her strike. Their names—as given to us—were James Watts and Thomas Godwin. After the fleet returned to England they got into mischief, and were transported for being concerned in a smuggling transaction at Deal, in Kent, in which a preventive officer was either killed or seriously wounded—I forget which. Their exemplary conduct, however, had gained them a remission of their sentences, and the Governor of New South Wales, who was most anxious to open up the South Sea Island trade, had recommended them to my husband as good men, Godwin having been brought up to the boat-building trade at Lowestoft in England, and Watts as a gunsmith.

“About ten days after the visit of the *Chalice* my husband left in one of his vessels for Vavitaö—only a day's sail from here. He wanted me to go with him,

but I was too much interested in a large box of English seeds, and some young fruit trees which the Governor of New South Wales had sent to us, and so I said I would stay and watch our garden, in which I took a great pride. He laughed and said that I must not forget to look out for ‘Freeman’s pirate’ as well as for my garden. He never for one moment imagined that the French vessel would turn up at Tubuai.

“He took with him Thomas Godwin and William Myson, leaving Watts, who was master of the other vessel, with me, to attend to the whaling.

“A week after he had sailed I set out to walk to the north end of the island, where my children were buried. I had with me an active native boy named Tati—who was carrying some plants and seeds which I intended planting on and about the children’s graves—and two young women. We started early in the morning, for I intended staying at the north end till late in the afternoon, whilst the two girls went cray-fishing on the reef.

“About noon I had finished my labours, and then, as it was a beautifully bright day, I climbed a hill near by, called ‘The White Man’s Lookout,’ which commanded a clear view of the sea all round the island. It had been given this name by the natives, who said that Fletcher Christian and his fellow-mutineer, Edward Young, had often ascended the hill and gazed out upon the ocean, for they were fearful that at any moment a King’s ship might appear in pursuit of their comrades and themselves.

“I was again feeling somewhat anxious on account of

my husband. He should have returned a week before, for there had been no bad weather, and I knew that his business at Vavitao should have kept him there only a day at the most. But the moment I gained the summit of the hill my heart leapt with joy, for there were two vessels in sight, one of which I at once recognised as my husband's. They were about a mile distant, and were running before the wind for the harbour. The strange vessel, which was a brigantine, was following close astern of our own schooner—evidently, I thought, my husband is showing her the way into the lagoon.

“Just as I was preparing to descend the hill my little companion, the native boy, Tati, drew my attention to four canoes which, in company with a boat from Captain Watts' schooner, were approaching the vessels.

“‘Ah,’ I thought, ‘Watts has seen the vessels from the whaling station, and is going out to meet them.’

“But presently something occurred which filled me with terror. When the boat and canoes were quite close to the vessels, they both luffed, and fired broadsides into them; the boat and two canoes were evidently destroyed, and the two remaining canoes at once turned round and headed for the shore, the brigantine firing at them with guns which I knew to be long twenty-fours by the sharp sound they made. In a moment I knew what had happened—my husband's ship had been captured by the French privateer of which Captain Freeman had told us, and the

Frenchmen were now coming to seize our other selves lying anchored in the lagoon.

“Tati looked at me inquiringly.

“‘Run,’ I said, ‘run and tell Uasi (for so the natives called Captain Watts) that the master and his ship have been captured by an enemy, who will be upon him very quickly, for the boat and two of the canoes he has sent out have been destroyed, and every one in them killed. Tell him I am coming.’

“The boy darted away in a moment, and I followed him as quickly as I could; but Tati reached the harbour and was on board Watts’ schooner quite half an hour before me, and when I went on board I found the vessel was prepared to defend the entrance to the harbour. Captain Watts had swung her broadside on to the entrance, boarding nettings were already triced up from stem to stern, and on the schooner’s decks were fifty determined natives, in addition to the usual crew of twenty men, all armed with muskets and cutlasses. The four 6-pounders which she carried, two on each side, were now all on the port side, loaded with grape-shot, and in fact every preparation had been made to fight the ship to the last. Watts met me as soon as I stepped on board, and told me that before my messenger Tati had arrived to warn him he had heard the sound of the firing at sea, and at once surmised that something was wrong.

“‘Soon after you left the house, Mrs. Eury, some natives sighted the two vessels to the north-east and I sent the boatswain and four men off in one of the whale-boats, little thinking that I was sending them to their

death. Four canoes went with the boat. Just now two of the canoes came back with half of their number dead or wounded, and the survivors told me that as soon as they were within musket-shot both the ships opened fire on them, sunk the boat and two of the canoes with grape-shot, and then began a heavy musketry fire. I fear, madam, that Captain Eury and his ship——'

"'Your fears are mine, Watts,' I said, 'but whether my husband is alive or dead, let us at least try and save this vessel.'

"'Ay, ay, madam. And if we have to give up the ship, we can beat them off on shore. There are a hundred or more natives lying hidden at the back of the oil shed, and if the Frenchmen capture this vessel they will cover our retreat ashore. They are all armed with muskets.'

"We waited anxiously for the two ships to appear; but the wind had gradually died away until it fell a dead calm. Then a native runner hailed us from the shore, and said that both vessels had anchored off the reef, and were manning their boats.

"'All the better for us,' said Watts grimly; 'we'll smash them up quick enough if they try boarding. If they had sailed in, the Frenchman's long guns would have sunk us easily, and our wretched guns could not have done him much harm.' Then he went round the decks, and saw that the crew and their native allies were all at their proper stations.

"Presently he saw the boats—five of them—come round the point. Two of them we recognised as

belonging to my husband's vessel, though they were, of course, manned by Frenchmen. They rowed leisurely in through the entrance till they were within musket-shot, and then the foremost one ceased rowing, and hoisted a white flag.

“‘They want us to surrender without a fight,’ said Watts, ‘or are meditating some treachery,’ and taking a musket from one of the crew he levelled it and fired in defiance. The bullet struck the water within a foot of the boat. The white flag, however, was held up higher by the officer in the stern. Watts seized a second musket, and this time his bullet went plump into the crowded boat, and either killed or wounded some one, for there was a momentary confusion. Then the white flag was lowered, and with loud cheers the five boats made a dash towards us. Telling the gunners to reserve their fire of grape until he gave the word, Watts and the natives now began a heavy musketry fire on the advancing boats, and although they suffered heavily the Frenchmen came on most gallantly. Then when the first two boats, which were pulling abreast, were within fifty yards’ distance, Watts and a white seaman sprang to two of the guns and themselves trained them, just as I heard a native near me cry out that in the bows of each boat he could see a man—my husband and his chief mate, who were both bound. Before I could utter a warning cry to Watts, both of the guns belched out their volleys of grape, and with awful effect. The boats were literally torn to pieces, and their mangled occupants sank under the smooth waters of the lagoon ; only

two or three seemed to have escaped unwounded, and as they clung to pieces of wreckage our savage allies, with yells of fury, picked them off with their muskets ; for the same native who had seen my husband bound in the boat had seen him sink.

“‘No quarter to any one of them !’ roared Watts when he heard this ; ‘ the cowards lashed Captain Eury and poor Mr. Myson to the bows of the boats, and our own fire has killed them.’

“ He sprang to the third gun, the white seaman to the fourth, and waited for the other three boats, which, undaunted by the dreadful slaughter, were dashing on bravely. Again the guns were fired, and again a united yell of delight broke from our crew when one of the boats was swept from stern to stern with the deadly grape and filled and sank. The two others, however, escaped, and in another moment were alongside, and the officer in command, followed by his men, sprang at the boarding nettings, and began hacking and slashing at them with their cutlasses, only to be thrust back, dead or dying, by our valiant crew, and the now blood-maddened natives. Nine or ten of them did succeed in gaining a foothold on the deck, by clambering up the bobstay on to the bowsprit, and led by a mere boy of sixteen, made a determined charge ; a native armed with a club sprang at the youth and dashed out his brains, though at the same moment a Frenchman thrust him through the body with his cutlass. But the boarding party were simply overwhelmed by numbers, and in less than five minutes every one of those who had reached the deck were

slaughtered with but a loss of three men on our side. Those still remaining in the boats alongside then tried to draw off, but Watts, who was now more like a mad animal than a human being, calling to some of the crew to help him, himself cut down the boarding netting, and lifting one of the 6-pounders, hurled it bodily into one of the boats, smashing a large hole through it. Then a score of naked natives leapt into the remaining one, and cut and stabbed the crew till not a living soul remained. Some indeed had tried to swim to the shore a few minutes earlier, but these poor wretches were met by canoes, and their brains beaten out with clubs. The memory of that awful day of carnage will be with me if I live to be a hundred.

"As soon as possible Watts and the carpenter restored some order among our native allies, who, according to their custom, were beheading and otherwise mutilating the bodies of the enemy. We found that we had lost four killed and had about thirteen wounded. Of those killed two were white men.

"Then taking with me half a dozen natives, I went off in one of our own boats to the spot where our grape-shot had sunk the boat in which the native had said he had seen my husband. The water was only about four fathoms deep, and we could clearly see numbers of bodies lying on the white sandy bottom. One by one they were raised to the surface and examined, and the fifth one raised was that of my poor husband. His arms were bound behind his back, and his chest and face were shattered by grape-shot.

"A wild fury took possession of me, but I could

not speak. I could only point to the ship. We went back on board, and my husband's body was laid on deck for the crew to see.

"I hardly know what I did or said, but I do remember that Watts swore to me that I should be revenged, and in a few minutes I was seated beside him in one of our own boats with a pistol in my hand, and we, in company with thirty or forty canoes, were on our way to the ships anchored outside.

"What followed I cannot remember, but Watts told me that I was the first to spring up the side of the French brigantine, and that the captain, as I fired my pistol at him, struck off my hand with his sword, and was then himself cut down by the carpenter. There were but nine men on board, and these were soon disposed of by our men, who gave no quarter. My husband's vessel was in charge of but three of the enemy, and from them, when they surrendered, we heard that every one of her crew, except the mate Myson and my husband, had been cruelly slaughtered at Vavitao a few days previously. Watts tried to save the lives of these three men, but in vain; the natives killed them, in spite of all his efforts. They died bravely enough, poor wretches.

"Watts and the carpenter succeeded in saving my life, and the stump of my arm healed up very quickly, for I was always a strong and vigorous woman. When they came to search the cabin of the French brigantine they found that her captain—the man who had cut off my hand—was Louis Pellatier, the very

same man who, years before, had attempted to shoot my poor husband at the Galapagos Islands.

“I sailed with Watts to Port Jackson a few months later in the French brigantine, which was sold as a prize, and remained there for nearly two years. Then the loneliness of my life began to affect my health, and so I returned here to live and die. And here on this island have I lived for nearly fifty years in peace and happiness, for since Randle and his family came here I have been very happy, and now I only await the last call of all—that call which will summon me to stand before the throne, side by side with my dear husband.”

## “*Five-Head*” Creek

### I

I HAD ridden all day through an endless vista of ghostly grey gums and ironbarks, when I came in sight of the long wavering line of vivid green foliage which showed me that I had reached my destination—a roughly-built slab hut with a roof of corrugated iron. This place was to be my home for six months, and stood on the bank of Five-Head Creek, twenty-five miles from the rising city of Townsville in North Queensland.

Riding up to the building, I got off my wearied, sweating horse, and, removing the saddle and my blanket and other impediments, led him to the creek to drink, and then hobbled and turned him loose to feed on the soft lush grass and reeds growing along the margin of the water. Then I entered the empty house, made a brief examination of it, and wondered how my mate would like living in such an apparently comfortless abode.

I must mention that I had come from Townsville to take charge of Five-Head Creek cattle run,

which had suffered so severely from a terrible drought that it had been temporarily abandoned. We were to look after and repair the fencing, many miles' length of which had been destroyed by fire or succumbed to white ants, to search for and collect the remnant of the cattle that had not perished in the drought, and see after the place generally. My mate was to follow me out in a few days with a dray-load of stores.

I lit a fire, boiled a billy of tea, and ate some cold beef and damper. Then, as the sun dipped below a range of low hills to the westward, I filled my pipe, and, walking down to the bank of the creek, surveyed my environs.

"What a God-forsaken-looking country!" I thought as I gazed around me; and, indeed, the prospect was anything but inviting. On both sides of the creek the soil showed evidences of the severity of the past drought. Great gaping fissures—"sun cracks" we called them—traversed and zig-zagged the hot, parching ground, on which not a blade of grass was to be seen. Here and there, amid the grey-barked ghostly gums, were oases of green—thickets of stunted sandalwood whose evergreen leaves defied alike the torrid summer heat and the black frosts of winter months; but underneath them lay the shrivelled carcasses and whitening bones of hundreds of cattle which had perished of starvation—too weak even to totter down to die, bogged in the banks of the creek. As I sat and smoked a strong feeling of depression took possession of me; I already began to hate the

place, and regretted I could not withdraw from my engagement.

Yet in less than a week I began to like it, and when I left it I did so with some regret, for I had made friends with sweet Mother Nature, whose loving-kindness is with us always in wild places, though we may not know it at first, and take no heed of her many calls and silent beckonings to us to come and love, and rest and dream, and be content upon her tender, mighty bosom.

My horse, cropping eagerly at the soft grass and salty pigweed, suddenly raised his head and pricked up his ears. He had heard something and was listening, and looking across to the opposite bank I saw a sight that lifted me out of my sudden fit of depression and then filled me with delight.

Two stately emus were walking along in single file, the male bird leading, holding his head erect, and marching like the drum-major of a regiment of Guards. On the margin of the bank they halted and looked at the horse, which now stood facing them; a minute's scrutiny satisfied both parties that there was nothing to fear from each other, and then the great birds walked down the bank to a broad dry patch of bright yellow sand, which stretched half-way across the bed of the creek. Here the male began to scratch, sending up a shower of coarse sand, and quickly swallowing such large pebbles as were revealed, whilst the female squatted beside him and watched his labours with an air of indifference. Her digestive apparatus was, I suppose, in good order, and

she did not need three or four pounds' weight of stones in her gizzard, but she did require a sand bath, for presently she too began to scrape and sway from side to side as she worked a deep hole beneath her body, just as a common hen scrapes and sways and ruffles her feathers in the dry dust of the farmyard. In less than five minutes the huge bird was encompassed in a cloud of flying sand, and working her long neck, great thick legs, and outspread toes exactly as an ordinary fowl. Then, having thoroughly covered herself with sand from beak to tail, she rose, shook herself violently, and stalked away up the bank again, where her companion soon followed her, and I lost sight of the pair as they strode through the thick green of the she-oak trees.

As darkness fell I built up a larger fire and spread my blanket beside it to sleep under the open sky instead of in the deserted house, for the night was soft, warm, and windless. Overhead was a firmament of cloudless blue, with here and there a shining star beginning to show ; but away to the south-west a dark line of cloud was rising and spreading, and I felt cheered at the sight, for it was a sign of rain. As I watched it steadily increasing the first voices of the night began to call—a 'possum squealed from the branches of a blue gum in the creek, and was answered by another somewhere near ; and then the long, long mournful wail of a curlew cried out from the sun-baked plain beyond. Oh, the unutterable sense of loneliness that at times the long-drawn, penetrating cry of the curlew, resounding through the silence of

the night amid the solitude of vast Australian plains, causes the solitary bushman or traveller to feel ! I well remember on one occasion camping on the banks of the Lower Burdekin River, and having my broken slumbers—for I was ill with fever—disturbed by a brace of curlews, which were uttering their depressing cries within a few hundred yards of me, and how I at last became so wrought up and almost frenzied by the persistency of their doleful notes, that I followed them up with a Winchester rifle, mile after mile, wasting my cartridges and exhausting mind and body in the vain attempt to shoot them in the dark. There is to my knowledge nothing so mournful as the call of the curlew, unless it be the moaning cry of a penguin out upon the ocean, when a sea-fog encompasses the ship that lies becalmed. There is something so intensely human about it—as if some lost soul were wailing for mercy and forgiveness.

But on this night the cry of the curlew was pleasing to my ear, for as I lay and watched the rising bank of cloud, I heard others calling from the opposite bank of the creek, and then a parrot screamed shrilly—and I knew that rain was certain. I jumped up, carried my blanket, saddle, and gun into the house, and then went out to collect firewood. My horse, as he heard my footsteps, bounded up, hobbled as he was, from the bed of the creek, and neighed to me in the darkness. He too smelt the coming rain, and was speaking to me out of his gladness of heart. I called back to him, and then set to work and soon collected a number of dry logs, which I carried in to the hut

and threw down on the hard earthen floor made of pulverised ant heaps, just as the welcome thunder muttered away off in the distance.

I brought a burning brand from the fire, threw it inside, and then called to my horse. Taking off his hobbles, I slipped the bridle over his head, and brought him in under shelter of the verandah, where he stood quietly, with a full stomach and contented mind, watching the coming storm.

Half an hour later the iron roof of the house was singing a sweet, delightful tune to the heavy down-pouring rain, which, till long past midnight, fell in generous volume, the dry, thirsty soil drinking it in with gladness as it closed up the gaping fissures, and gave hope and vigour and promise of life to the parched and perishing vegetation of the wide plains around.

With supreme satisfaction I sat at the open door, and smoked and watched, with my fire blazing merrily away ; then, before it was too late, I stripped off, and went out and let the rain wash off the dust and dirt of a day's journey under a fierce, baking sun. How cool, delightful, and invigorating it felt !

I dried myself with a spare shirt, and then lay down on my blanket beside the fire to listen contentedly to the clamour of the rain upon the roof. About two in the morning the downpour ceased, the sky cleared, and a fair half-moon of silvery brightness shone out above the tops of the white gum forest. Fifty yards or so away, in front of the door, a shallow pool had formed in a depression of the hard, sun-baked

soil, and as the soft light of the moon fell upon it there came a whirr of wings as a flock of night-roving, spur-winged plover lit upon its margin. I could have shot half a dozen of them from where I sat, but felt that I could not lift gun to shoulder and slaughter when there was no need, and their shrill cries, as they ran to and fro, afforded me an infinite pleasure.

I took off my horse's bridle, put his hobbles on again, rubbed my cheek against his warm, moist nose, and left him. An hour before daylight he stepped quietly inside and stood near the fire—the mosquitoes were annoying him, and he had come in to get the benefit of what little smoke was arising from the burning logs.

At dawn, as I lay half-awake, I heard a sound that made me jump to my gun—the soft quacking of wild duck in the creek. Stealing cautiously down through the fringe of she-oaks, I came to a fine broad pool, in the centre of which was a small sandbank, whereon stood a black duck with a brood of seven half-fledged ducklings around her, dabbling merrily amongst the weed and *débris* of the margin. Of course, no one who *thinks*, unless impelled by sheer hunger, would shoot either an incubating or “just familial” duck, and I laid down my gun with an exclamation of disappointment. But I was soon to be rewarded, for a minute or two later five beautiful black and white Burdekin ducks flashed down through the vista of she-oaks, and settled on the water less than thirty yards away from me. They lit so closely together that my first barrel killed two, and my second dropped one of

the others as they rose. I waded in and brought them ashore.<sup>†</sup>

I wonder how many people know how to cook and eat wild duck as they should be cooked and eaten—when they are plentiful, and when the man who shoots them is, in his way, a gourmet, and is yet living away from civilisation and restaurants? This is *the* way. Pluck the feathers off the breast and body, then cut the breast part out, sprinkle it with salt, impale it upon a stick—if you have a stick or branch of any kind—and hold it over a fire of glowing wood coals. If you have no skewer, then lay the red, luscious-looking flesh upon the coals themselves, and listen to it singing and fizzing, as if it were impatiently crying out to you to take it up and eat it!

When I returned, the sunrays were piercing through the gum-trees and dissipating a thin mist which hung about the green, winding fringe of she-oaks bordering the creek. From the ground, which now felt soft, warm, and springy to my naked foot, there came that sweet earthy smell that arises when the land has lain for long, long months under a sky of brass, and all green things have struggled hard to live. As I drew near the hut I saw that the flock of spur-winged plover were still standing or running about the margin of the newly-formed pool. They took not the slightest notice of my approach, and I was careful not to alarm them, knowing that as long as the water remained

<sup>†</sup> The name "Burdekin" has been given to these ducks because they are so common on the river of that name. Their wings are pure white and black.

they would continue to haunt the vicinity of the pool, and, besides that, I already had three plump ducks, which would last me at least till the following morning.

After breakfast I set out to make a detailed examination of the creek for a distance of three or four miles towards its source. I was glad to find some very extensive water-holes at intervals of a few hundred yards, then would come a stretch of sand from bank to bank, for owing to the want of rain the water had fallen very low, though it was still flowing by percolation through the sand. Yet, in time of flood, the whole of the flat country was submerged, and some of the large gum-trees growing on the banks held in their forks, thirty-five feet from the ground, great piles of dead wood and tangled *débris* that had been deposited there in a great flood of two years before.

I was not long in making a very pleasing discovery—all the pools contained fish, some of which were of good size, for the water was so clear that I could see them swimming about, and I remembered now with satisfaction that among the stores coming on in the dray was a bundle of fishing-tackle which I had bought in Townsville. Bird life all along the creek was plentiful ; but this was to be expected, as the long drought had naturally driven game of all sort towards the water. I saw two or three small kangaroos, and everywhere along the margin were bandicoot holes, where the little pig-like creatures had been digging for roots.

Two miles from the hut I came across a well-

constructed native fish-weir, and near by found the site of a camp ; evidently a party of blacks had been enjoying themselves quite recently, fishing and cattle killing, for under some scrub I found the head and foreleg of a young steer.

As I walked my horse slowly over the sand under the fringing oaks, I made the unpleasant discovery that snakes were very plentiful—not only the harmless carpet snake, but the deadly brown and black-necked tiger variety ; though against this were a corresponding number of iguanas, both of the tree-climbing and water-haunting species. The latter, to which I shall again allude, is a particularly shuddersome reptile. I had never before seen these repulsive creatures, and, indeed, had never heard of them.

I returned to the hut at noon, and to my surprise found a party of thirty or more blacks camped under some Leichhardt trees. They seemed a fairly healthy lot of savages, and were not alarmed when they saw I was carrying a gun. I rode quietly up to them, and shook hands with two or three of the bucks, who spoke a little English. They were, they told me, from the Ravenswood district, which they had left some weeks ago, and were now travelling towards the Burdekin, hunting as they went.

Some of them came to the hut with me, and I saw at once that they had not taken anything of mine, though among other articles I had left on a wooden seat outside were several plugs of tobacco. I gave them a plug to divide, and then asked the most voluble of them how many cattle they had speared.

“Baal blackfellow spear him cattle,” he answered.<sup>1</sup>

“What about that young fellow bullock you been eat longa creek ? ” I inquired.

They assured me that they had not speared the animal, which they had found lying at the bottom of a deep gully with a broken leg. Then knowing it could not live, they had killed and eaten it. I was pleased to hear this, and have no doubt the poor creatures told the truth. They remained with myself and mate for a month, and proved of great assistance to us in fencing and other work, and I learnt much valuable bush-craft from these wandering savages, especially of their methods of hunting and fishing. I shall now give the reader an account of some of the happy days my mate and myself spent in this lonely spot.

## II

A few days later my mate arrived with the dray, which we at once unloaded, and then turned the horses out to feed and have a spell before working them again. Every night since I had arrived a thunder-storm had occurred, much to my delight, and already the once cracked and baking flats were beginning to put on a carpet of grass ; and indeed, in three weeks it was eighteen inches high, and made a glorious sight, the few remaining cattle eating it so hungrily that when night fell the creatures were scarcely able to move, so distended were their stomachs.

<sup>1</sup> Lit., “ We blacks did not spear any cattle.”

Having started our aboriginal friends to cut down ironbark saplings to repair the fencing, we first of all paid a visit to our nearest neighbour, a settler named Dick Bullen, who lived ten miles away. He received us most hospitably, like all good bushmen, and offered to assist us in looking for lost cattle. He was a splendid type of the native-born Australian bushman, over six feet two in height, and simple and unaffected in his manner. I shall remember this man for one thing. He had two of the finest teams of working bullocks I have ever seen, and handled them in a way that commanded our admiration. Never once did he use his whip for any other purpose than to crack it occasionally, and it did one good to hear his cheery call to the fourteen labouring beasts as they toiled up the steep side of a creek or gully with a heavy load of timber, straining every nerve in their great bodies, while the sweat poured off their coats in streams. He was like one of his own bullocks, patient, cheerful, and strong, and an exclamation of anger seldom passed his lips—an oath never. He took a great pride in the appearance of his teams, and especially of the fact that no one of them showed the marks of a whip.

We spent a pleasant hour with this man, and returned home by a different route, in the hope of getting a "plain" turkey—an altogether different bird from the "scrub" turkey. Hansen (my mate) was an excellent shot, especially with a rifle, and indeed when shooting turkeys preferred to use a 44 Winchester rifle. We managed to get one bird—a cock—but so old and poor that we gave it to the black contingent

to eat. Nothing in the shape of food came amiss to these people, and their appetites were astounding. One day Hansen and I were following down a creek which junctioned with the Reid River, when we saw smoke ascending from a dry gully. Riding up we came across a very old and shrivelled gin and a boy and girl of about eight years of age. They were busily engaged in eating emu eggs, and out of thirteen had already devoured eleven, together with four or five hundred of fresh-water cockles! Such a meal would have satisfied half a dozen hungry white men. Their over-loaded stomachs presented a disgusting appearance, and they were scarcely able to articulate.

A week after our arrival the blacks told us that there were indications that the rainy season would come on earlier than usual, and that game, except duck and spur-winged plover, would be very scarce; also that if the creek came down in flood, it would carry away most of the fish. This was bad news for such ardent sportsmen as Hansen and myself, for we were looking forward to plenty of fishing and shooting, not alone for its pleasures, but also because we were charged heavily for anything but the ordinary salt beef, tea, sugar and flour. Sardines and tinned salmon were luxuries we could not afford, but fresh fish and game were better, and, even when salted, were preferable to a continuous diet of beef.

We had among our stores a 250 lb. bag of coarse salt—we had to kill our own meat and salt it down—and I proposed that we should at once set to work whilst the weather was fine and spend a week shooting and

fishing. Such game as plain turkeys (the bustard), scrub turkeys, cockatoos, ducks, &c., we could put in brine, whilst the fish could be drysalted and then put in the sun to dry. Hansen quite approved the idea, and we at once set to work. I was to be fisherman, and he the gunner ; for, curiously enough, my mate was the most helpless creatures with a fishing-line or rod that I ever saw. In five minutes he would either have his line hopelessly tangled, his rod broken, or his hook caught in his hand ; and yet he never lost his temper.

Taking with me two sturdy black boys as porters, and also bringing my gun and ammunition in case of meeting duck, I set out on foot, Hansen riding off, accompanied by a blackfellow, to a chain of shallow lagoons five miles away.

Within a quarter of a mile from the house was a fine deep water-hole formed by the creek being here confined between high banks. At one end, however, an exposed bar of small, coarse round pebbles ran almost across, and here I decided to begin, instead of from the bank, for not only were snakes difficult to see in the undergrowth, but plants of the dreaded stinging-tree were also growing around and between the magnificent gums and the Leichhardts. These latter trees, named after the ill-fated Dr. Leichhardt, are, I think, the most strikingly handsome of all large trees in the north of Queensland. They love to grow near or even in the water, and their broad, beautiful leaves give a welcome shade.

But before I descended to the bank I had to remain

for some minutes to gaze on the beauty of the scene. The water at one end of the pool was of the deepest blue, towards the pebbly bar it gradually shallowed, and for the next eight or ten feet from the margin was as clear as crystal. Close in under the banks the broad leaves of blue flowering water-lilies covered the surface with a carpet of many shades of green and pink ; hovering above the lily leaves were hundreds of small white butterflies, with here and there a black and yellow-banded dragon-fly—"horse-stingers" the Australian youth call them. Not a sound broke the silence, except now and then the rippling splash of a fish rising to the surface, or the peculiar *click, click* made by a crayfish burrowing under a stone.

I leant over the bank and looked down, and then gave a start of pleasure, for right beneath me were three fish floating motionless on the surface—fish that, until then, I never knew lived in fresh water. They were in shape, colour, and appearance exactly like the toothed gar so common on the sea coast—a long slender body with back of dark blue, sides of silvery white, and fins and tail of blue tipped with yellow. I was so excited that I was about to shoot them, but remembered that at so short a distance I should have only blown them to pieces, especially as they were directly beneath me. I motioned to the blackboys to come and look ; they did so, and I learnt that these fish, when the creek was low, were sometimes plentiful, and would take almost any floating bait, especially if it were alive.

Eager to begin, I told the boys to collect some

crayfish for bait, but they said that it would take too long, and small fish were better, and running to some small lily-covered pools about two feet in diameter, and very shallow, they jumped in and stirred up the sand and muddy sediment at the bottom. In a few minutes some scores of very pretty red and silvery-hued minnows were thrown out on the sand. I quickly baited my line, and threw it, with the sinker attached, into the centre of the pool; before it could sink the bait was taken by a fine bream of 2 lbs., which I landed safely, and tossed to the boys. It was the first fresh-water bream I had caught in Queensland, and I felt elated.

Finding that the pool was clear of snags, I bent on three extra hooks, baiting each one with the whole of a tiny fish. Again the baits were seized before they reached the bottom; I hauled in two more bream, and as they came struggling and splashing into the shallow water I saw they were being followed by literally hundreds of the same species, and also by fish much like an English grayling—the pool seemed to be alive! The presence of such large numbers in so circumscribed a space could, however, be easily accounted for by the absence of rain for so many months, the drying up of many minor pools and stretches, and the diminution of the water generally throughout the creek and its tributaries driving the fish to congregate in the deeper and larger pools.

By noon I had caught as many fish as the boys could carry. None, it is true, were very large,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. being the heaviest; but I was pleased to learn

that there were places farther down the creek where the blacks frequently caught some very large cat-fish ; when the water was muddy from heavy rain. These cat-fish, or, as some people call them, "jew-fish," are the heaviest and best of all the Queensland river fish I have ever tasted, except those which, for want of their true name, I called grayling, and Hansen asserted were trout.

Sending the black boys off with the fish, I cut a rod from a she-oak and quickly rigged a line ; for a float I used a small piece of dead wood, and baited with the largest minnow I could find. Then, clambering up the bank, I found a suitable open place to stand at the butt of a Leichhardt, from where I had a good view. I could not, however, see any of the gars, one at least of which I was so anxious to get, but made a cast into the centre—and almost instantly one darted out from under the lily leaves and hooked himself beautifully, but in swinging him out my line fouled a thorny bush, and for a minute I was in despair ; there was the shining beauty suspended over the water, and almost making a circle of his body in his struggle to escape. At last, however, I cleared my line, and swung my prize high up on the bank. Determined to get a better rod, and return after dinner, I picked up gun and fish and followed the boys.

By sunset I had a catch of fish that fairly astonished Hansen when he returned at dusk with but half a dozen black duck, two or three teal, and two turkeys. All that evening we were employed in cleaning and salting the fish and birds, except some for immediate use.

We had many such days. Fish were to be had all throughout the course of the creek, and had we possessed a net like those the blacks sometimes used, we could have taken a hogsheadful in half an hour.

Then, as the rainy season began, I ceased fishing and took to the gun, for now three or four kinds of duck made their appearance, and one moonlight night an immense number alighted in the creek just below the hut, and kept up an incessant gabble and quacking till sunrise.

In less than ten days we had enough salted game and dried and smoked fish to last us three months, even had we eaten nothing else. Our black friends—with the exception of one lad who desired to remain—left us one morning at sunrise, and we saw them no more. I am afraid they were deeply hurt by our poisoning half a dozen of their mangy dogs, which were, with the rest of the pack, a continual source of annoyance to us by their expert thieving.

One dull, rainy day, as we sat indoors mending our clothes, and yarning and smoking, we heard the scream of parrots, and, going to the door, saw some twenty or thirty of them, large, fine, green and scarlet plumaged birds, hanging on to and crawling in and out among the branches of some low trees growing between the stockyard and the creek. These trees were a species of wattle, and were just opening out their yellow, sweet-smelling, downy flowers, which the beautiful birds were devouring eagerly. We did not disturb them, and they did not appear to be alarmed when we walked up to within a

few yards of the trees, merely screaming defiance, and flying up to the higher branches, or to other trees near by. These birds the local settlers called "king-parrots"; they were larger than those of the same species in New South Wales, and later in the season we shot a few of them for soup. This particular flock visited us for many days in succession, forming a pretty picture as they hung on the branches, chattering loudly the while, and flashing their gaily-coloured plumage in the bright sunshine. Like the spur-winged plover, they were very inquisitive birds; if one of their number was shot, and fell wounded, the rest of the flock would fly round and round the poor creature, watching its movements and listening to its cries, not out of pity, but of sheer curiosity, and each could be shot in succession, or sometimes knocked down with a stick. I was told by a stockman on Fanning Downs station that on several occasions when he had wounded birds of this variety of the parrot tribe, their companions descended upon them with fury, tore out their feathers, and bit and lacerated them savagely.

Now and again a few wandering emus would cross the grey gum plains around us, and then, as they caught sight of our figures, shamble quickly off again. In former years they had been plentiful in the district, and provided good food for the aborigines when the latter organised their big hunting parties. But as the country was taken up as cattle runs, hundreds of the great birds were wantonly shot by white men for the mere pleasure of killing, and all the months

we lived in the district we did not see more than twenty.

I have before spoken of the number of snakes that were everywhere to be seen in the vicinity of the water, particularly about pools with a reedy margin. Scarcely a week passed without our killing three or four, and we were always careful in bathing to do so in very shallow water, where there was a clear sandy bottom. There were three kinds of water-snakes, one of which was of a dull blue colour, and these the blacks said were "bad fellow," *i.e.*, venomous. They seldom grew over two feet and a half in length, and on a bright day one might see several of these reptiles swimming across from one bank to the other. Of the common brown snake—the kind we most dreaded—and the black-necked tiger snake, we killed numbers with our guns and with sticks, and one day, when crossing some red ironstone ridges on the Ravenswood road, we despatched two death-adders which were lying asleep on the bare, hot road. They were of a dull reddish brown, the same hue as the ground in the ironstone country, just as they are a yellowish brown in a sandstone region.

One great pest to us when fishing were the number of mud turtles, greedy little creatures which persistently swallowed our hooks, which could only be recovered by placing one's foot on their backs, drawing out their long snaky necks to the utmost tension, and cutting off their heads; the other pests were the hideous flabby water iguanas (I do not know their proper name), which, although they never inter-

ferred with our lines, sickened us even to look at them. They were always to be seen lying on a log or snag in the water. As you approached they either crawled down like an octopus, or dropped, in a boneless, inert mass, without a splash. Their slimy, scaleless skins were a muddy yellow, and in general they resembled an eel with legs. Even the blacks looked on them with disgust, though they are particularly fond of the ordinary iguana.

The time passed somewhat wearily to us when heavy rains and flooded country kept us indoors for days together. Then one night after the weather had begun to get cooler and clearer, we heard, far, far overhead, the *honk, honk* of the wild geese, flying southwards to distant lagoons, and Hansen reminded me that in another week our term of service came to an end.

“What made you think of it?” I asked.

“The cry of the wild geese going South.”

For we, too, longed for the South again.

## *Fish Drugging in the Pacific*

IN an American magazine of a few months ago mention was made of the "discovery" of a method of capturing fish by impregnating the waters of slowly running rivers or small lakes with a chemical which would produce stupefaction, and cause the fish to rise helpless to the surface. The American discoverer no doubt thought he really had "discovered," though I am sure many thousands of people in the civilised world have heard of, and some few hundreds very often seen, fish captured in a somewhat similar manner, the which is, I believe, practised not only in India, Africa and South America, but in the islands of the North and South Pacific, and I have no doubt but that it was known thousands of years ago—perhaps even "when the world was young."

Nearly all the Malayo-Polynesian people inhabiting the high, mountainous islands of the South Pacific and North Pacific Oceans can, and do, catch fish in the "novel" manner before mentioned, *i.e.*, by producing stupefaction, though no chemicals are used, while even the Australian aborigines—almost as low a type of savage as the Fuegians—use a still simpler

method, which I will at once briefly describe as I saw it practised by a mob of myall (wild) blacks camped on the Kirk River, a tributary of the great Burdekin River in North Queensland.

At a spot where the stream was about a hundred feet wide, and the water very shallow—not over six inches in depth—a rude but efficient dam was expeditiously constructed by thrusting branches of she-oak and *ti*-tree into the sandy bottom, and then making it partially waterproof by quickly filling the interstices with earthen sods, *ti*-tree bark, reeds, leaves, and the other *débris* found on the banks. In the centre a small opening was left, so as to relieve the pressure when the water began to rise. Some few hundred yards further up were a chain of water-holes, some of which were deep, and in all of which, as I knew by experience, were plenty of fish—bream, perch, and a species of grayling. As soon as the dam was complete, the whole mob, except some “gins” and children, who were stationed to watch the opening before mentioned, sprang into the water, carrying with them great quantities of a greasy greyish blue kind of clay, which rapidly dissolved and charged the clear water with its impurities. Then, too, at the same time thirty or forty of their number (over a hundred) began loosening and tearing away portions of the overhanging bank, and toppling them over into the stream; this they accomplished very dexterously by means of heavy, pointed sticks. The work was carried out with an astounding clamour, those natives in the water diving to the bottom and breaking up the

fallen earth still further till each pool became of the colour and something of the consistency of green pea-soup. Hundreds of fish soon rose gasping to the surface, and these were at once seized and thrown out upon the banks, where a number of young picaninnies darted upon them to save them being devoured by a swarm of mongrel dogs, which lent an added interest to the proceedings by their incessant yelping and snapping. As the slowly running current carried the suffocating and helpless fish down-stream the hideous noise increased, for the shallow stretch in front of the dam was soon covered with them—bream, and the so-called “grayling,” perch, eels, and some very large cat-fish. The latter, which I have mentioned on a previous page, is one of the most peculiar-looking but undoubtedly the best flavoured of all the Queensland fresh-water fishes; it is scaleless, tail-less, blue-grey in colour, and has a long dorsal spike, like the salt-water “leather-jacket.” (A scratch from this spike is always dangerous, as it produces intense pain, and often causes blood-poisoning.) Altogether over a thousand fish must have been taken, and I gazed at the destruction with a feeling of anger, for these pools had afforded my mining mates and myself excellent sport, and a very welcome change of diet from the eternal beef and damper. But, a few days later, after our black friends had wandered off to other pastures, I was delighted to find that there were still plenty of fish in the pools.

\* \* \* \* \*

Early in the “seventies” I was shipwrecked with

the once notorious Captain "Bully" Hayes, on Kusaie (Strong's Island), the eastern outlier of the Caroline Islands on the North Pacific, and lived there for twelve happy months, and here I saw for the first time the method of fish stupefaction employed by the interesting and kindly-natured people of this beautiful spot.

I had previously seen, in Eastern Polynesia, the natives drugging fish by using the pounded nuts of the *futu* tree (*Barringtonia speciosa*), and one day as I was walking with a native friend along the beach near the village in which I lived, I picked up a *futu* nut lying on the sand, and remarked that in the islands to the far south the people used it to drug fish.

Kusis laughed. "*Futu* is good, but we of Kusaie do not use it—we have *oap*, which is stronger and better. Come, I will show you some *oap* growing, and to-morrow you shall see how good it is."

Turning off to our right, we passed through a grove of screw-pines, and then came to the foot of the high mountain range traversing the island, where vine and creeper and dense jungle undergrowth struggled for light and sunshine under the dark shade of giant trees, whose thick leafy branches, a hundred feet above, were rustling to the wind. Here, growing in the rich, red soil, was a cluster of *oap*—a thin-stemmed, dark-green-leaved plant about three feet in height. Kusis pulled one by the roots, and twisted it round and round his left hand; a thick, white and sticky juice exuded from the bark.

“It ‘sickens’ the fish very quickly,” he said, “quicker than the *futu* nut. If much of it be bruised and thrown into the water, it kills the largest fish very soon, and even turtles will ‘sicken.’ It is very strong.”

I asked him how the people of Kusaie first became acquainted with the properties of the plant. He shook his head.

“I do not know. God made it to grow here in Kusaie in the days that were dark” (heathenism) “and when we were a young people. A wise man from Germany was here ten years ago, and he told us that the people of Ponapé, far to the west, use the *oap*, even as we use it, but that in Ponapé the plant grows larger and is more juicy than it is here.”<sup>1</sup>

Early on the following morning, when the tide was falling, and the jagged pinnacles of coral rock began to show on the barrier reef opposite the village, the entire population—about sixty all told—were awaiting Kuis and myself outside his house. The men carried small, unbarbed fish-spears, the women and children baskets and bundles of *oap*.

From the village to the reef was a distance of two miles, which we soon covered by smart paddling in a dozen or more canoes; for had we delayed we should, through the falling tide, have been obliged to leave our stranded crafts on the sand, half-way, and walk the remainder.

<sup>1</sup> The “wise man from Germany,” I ascertained a year or two afterwards, was the well-known J. S. Kubary, a gentleman who, although engaged in trading pursuits, yet enriched science by his writings on his discoveries in Micronesia.

I need not here attempt to describe the wondrous beauties of a South Sea coral reef at low tide—they have been fully and ably written about by many distinguished travellers—but the barrier reef of Strong's Island is so different in its formation from those of most other islands in the Pacific, that I must, as relative illustration to this account of the fishing by *oap*, mention its peculiarity.

Instead of the small clefts, chasms, and pools which so frequently occur on the barrier reefs of the mountainous islands of Polynesia and Melanesia, and which at low tide are untenanted except by the smallest varieties of rock-fish, here were a series of deep, almost circular, miniature lakes, set in a solid wall of coral rock with an overlapping edge, which made the depth appear greater than it was, especially when one stood on the edge and looked down to the bottom, four to six fathoms below.

In all of these deep pools were great numbers of fish of many varieties, size, and colour; some swimming to and fro or resting upon the sandy bottom, others moving upwards and then downwards in the clear water with lazy sweep of tail and fin. One variety of the leather-jacket tribe was very plentiful, and their great size was excelled only by their remarkable ugliness; their ground colour was a sombre black, traversed by three broad bands of dull yellow. Some of the largest of these fish weighed quite up to 20 lbs., and were valued by the natives for their delicacy of flavour. They would always take a hook, but the Strong's Islanders seldom

attempted to capture them in this manner, for their enormous, hard, sharp, and human-like teeth played havoc with an ordinary fish-hook, which, if smaller than a salmon-hook, they would snap in pieces, and as their mouths are very small (in fact the leather-jacket's mouth is ridiculous when compared to its bulk), larger and stronger hooks could not be used.

Another and smaller variety were of a brilliant light blue, with vivid scarlet-tipped fins and tail, a perfectly defined circle of the same colour round the eyes, and protruding teeth of a dull red. These we especially detested for their villainous habit of calmly swimming up to a pendant line, and nipping it in twain, apparently out of sheer humour. Well have the Samoans named the leather-jacket *Isu'umu Moana*—the sea-rat.

In one or two of the deeper pools were red, bream-shaped fish that I had in vain tried to catch with a hook, using every possible kind of bait; but the natives assured me that I was only wasting my time, as they fed only upon a long thread-like worm, which lived in the coral, and that a spear or the *oap* was the only way of capturing them. So far I had never actually handled one, but on this occasion we secured some dozens. Here and there we caught sight of a young hawk-bill turtle darting out of sight under the ledge of the overhanging walls of coral, putting to flight thousands of small fish of a score of shapes and colours.

We waited until the tide had fallen still lower and until the whole surface of the great sweeping curve

of reef stood out, bare and steaming, under the bright tropic sun. Westward lay the ocean, blue and smooth as a mill pond, with only a gentle, heaving swell laving the outer wall of the coral barrier. Here and there upon its surface communities of snowy white terns hovered and fluttered, feeding upon small fish, or examining floating weed for tiny red and black crabs no bigger than a pea. Eastward and across the now shallowed water of the lagoon was our village of Leassé, the russet-hued, saddle-backed houses of thatch peeping out from the coco-palms and breadfruit-trees; beyond, the broken, rugged outline of the towering mountain range, garmented from base to summit with God's mantle of living green; overhead a sky of wondrous, unspotted blue.

We were all sitting on the rocks, on the margin of the best and largest pool, smoking and chatting, when at a sign from Kúsis, who was the head man (or local chief) of the village, the women took their bundles of *oap*, and laying the plants upon smooth portions of the reef began to pound them with round, heavy stones, brought from the village for the purpose. As each bundle was crushed and the sticky white juice exuded, it was rolled into a ball, used like a sponge to wipe up and absorb all the liquid that had escaped, and then handed to the men and boys, who leapt into the pool, and dived to the bottom, thrusting the balls of *oap* underneath every lower ledge and crevice, and then rising quickly to the surface and clambering out again. In less than five minutes the once crystal water had

changed to a pale milky white, thousands upon thousands of tiny fish, about half an inch in length, and of many hues, began to rise to the surface; then others of a larger size, which the women at once scooped up with small nets; then presently, with much splashing and floundering, two or three of the handsome red fish I have described, with a great leather-jacket, came up, and, lying on their sides, flapped helplessly on the surface. Other kinds, of the mullet species, came with them, trying to swim upright, but always falling over on their sides, and yet endeavouring to lift their heads above the water, as if gasping for air. Then more big leather-jackets, some of which shot up from below as if they had been fired from a mortar, and, running head-on to the rocky wall of the pool, allowed themselves to be lifted out without a struggle. It was most exciting and intensely interesting to witness.

Presently up came a half-grown hawkbill turtle, his poor head erect and swaying from side to side; a boy leapt in and, seizing it by its flippers, pushed it up to some women, who quickly carried the creature to a small pool near by, where it was placed to recover from the effects of the *oap*, and then be taken ashore to the village turtle-dock to grow and fatten for killing. (The "turtle-dock," I must explain, was a walled-in enclosure—partly natural, partly artificial—situated in a shallow part of the lagoon, wherein the Leassé people confined those turtle that they could not at once eat; sometimes as many as thirty were thus imprisoned and fed daily.)

Out of this one pool—which I think was not more than fifteen yards across—we obtained many hundred-weights of fish and three turtle. All fish which were too small to be eaten were thrown into other pools to recover from the effects of the *oap*. The very smallest, however, did not recover, and were left to float on the surface and become the prey of large fish when the incoming tide again covered the reef.

I must here relate an incident that now occurred, and which will serve to illustrate the resourcefulness and surgical knowledge of a race of people who, had they met them, Darwin, Huxley and Frank Buckland would have delighted in and made known to the world. I shall describe it as briefly and as clearly as possible.

I had brought with me a knife—a heavy, broad-backed, keen-edged weapon, which the Chinese carpenter of our wrecked ship had fashioned out for me from a flat twelve-inch file of Sheffield steel, and Kuis had, later on, made me a wooden sheath for it. In my excitement at seeing a large fish rise to the surface I used it as a spear, and then, the fish secured, had thrown the knife carelessly down. It fell edge upwards in a cleft of the coral rock, and Kinié, the pretty twelve-year-old daughter of Kuis, treading upon it, cut her left foot to the bone. Her father and myself sprang to her aid, and whilst I was tying the one handkerchief I possessed tightly round her leg below the knee so as to stay the terrible flow of blood, he rapidly skinned a large leather jacket by the simple process of cutting through the skin around the head and shoulders and then dragging it off the body, by

holding the upper edge between his teeth and then with both hands pulling it downwards to the tail. In less than five minutes the sheet of tough fish-skin was deftly and tightly wrapped round the child's foot, the handkerchief taken off and replaced by a coir fibre fishing-line, wound round and round below and above the knee. The agony this caused the poor child made her faint, but her father knew what he was about when he ordered two of the women to carry her ashore, take off the covering of fish-skin, cover the foot with wood-ashes, and bind it up again. This was done, and when we returned to the village an hour or two later I found the girl seated in her father's house with her injured foot bandaged in a way that would have reflected credit on a M.R.C.S.

After exploiting the large pool we turned our attention to some of those which were wider, but comparatively shallow; and in these, the bottoms of which were sandy, we obtained some hundreds of mullet and gar-fish, which were quickly overpowered by the *oap* juice. In all I think that we carried back to the village quite five hundredweight of fish, some of which were very large: the weight of three of the large banded leather-jackets I estimated at fifty pounds.

In after years, in other islands of the Pacific, when I saw the fearful and needless havoc created by traders and natives using vile dynamite cartridges and so destroying thousands of young fish by one explosion, I tried hard to get them to use either the *futu* nut or the *oap* plant, both of which under many names are known to the various peoples of Eastern Polynesia.

But the use of dynamite has an attractive element of danger ; it is more sudden and destructive in its effect ; it makes a noise and churns up and agitates the water ; its violent concussion breaks and smashes the submarine coral forest into which it is thrown ; and its terrific shock kills and mutilates hundreds of fish, which, through their bladders bursting, sink and are not recovered.

Only a few years ago an old and valued American friend of mine—an ex-ship captain settled in the Gilbert Islands in the North Pacific—became annoyed at what he deemed to be the excessive prices the natives charged for fish. The “excessive price,” I may mention, meant that he was asked a half-dollar for a basket of fish weighing, say, fifty or sixty pounds. A half-a-dollar is equal to an English florin ; but no coin was handed over—four sticks of tobacco costing the trader about ten cents. was the equivalent. So my friend decided to show the natives that he could do without them as far as his fish supply went. He bought a box of dynamite, with fuse and caps, from a German trading schooner, and at once set to work, blowing off his right hand within twenty-four hours, through using too short a fuse.

That wretched box of dynamite proved a curse to the island. The natives, despite my friend’s accident, bought every cartridge from him, singly or in lots, and they then began to enjoy themselves. Every hour of the day for many weeks afterwards the sullen thud of the explosive could be heard from all parts of the lagoon, followed by applauding shouts. Vast

numbers of fish were blown to pieces, for no native would ever think of dividing a cartridge into half a dozen portions and using only one at a time; the entire 6-oz. cartridge was used, and sometimes so short were the fuses, that explosions would take place on the surface, to the delight of the children, who said, "it was as good to hear as the cannons of a man-of-war." In the short space of eight weeks there were five serious accidents, two of which ended fatally. I was thankful when the last charge had been exploded, and although the natives begged me to import a fresh supply, I always declined—not on their account only, but because of the wanton destruction of fish involved.

One day I decided to try and ascertain if *oap* would affect fish by being swallowed. I prepared twenty or thirty small balls of the plant, wrapped each one up carefully in thin strips of fish flesh, so as to thoroughly conceal the contents, and took them out to the "turtle dock." The dock, although it was a safe enclosure for turtle, yet had many small passages through the coral rock which permitted the ingress and exit of moderately-sized fish, particularly a variety of black and red-spotted rock-cod.

Throwing in the balls, one by one, I watched. Three of them were at once swallowed by a lively young hawk-bill turtle, and the remainder were soon seized by some yellow eels and rock-cod, before the larger and slower-moving turtle (of which there were about twenty in the dock) discerned them. I waited about on the reef in the vicinity for quite three hours or more, returning to the pool at intervals and examining

the condition of its occupants. But, at the end of that time, the *oap* had apparently taken no effect, and, as night was near, I returned to the village.

On the following morning, I again went to the "dock," lowered my line, and caught six rock-cod. In the stomachs of two I found the undigested fibres of the *oap* which, through expansion, they had been unable to dislodge ; but that it had not had any effect on them I was sure, for these two fish were as strong and vigorous when hooked as were the four others in whose stomachs there was no sign of *oap*.

The young hawkbill turtle, however, was floating on the surface, and seemed very sick.

Here is a point for ichthyologists. Are the digestive arrangements of a turtle more delicate than those of a fish ?

## *John Corwell, Sailor and Miner*

### I

“AM I to have no privacy at all?” demanded the Governor irritably as the orderly again tapped at the open door and announced another visitor. “Who is he and what does he want?”

“Mr. John Corwell, your Excellency, master of the cutter *Ceres*, from the South Seas.”

The Governor's brows relaxed somewhat. “Let him come in in ten minutes, Cleary, but tell him at the same time that I am very tired—too tired to listen unless he has something of importance to say.”

The day had indeed been a most tiring one to the worthy Governor of the colony of New South Wales, just then struggling weakly in its infancy, and only emerging from the horrors of actual starvation, caused by the utter neglect of the Home authorities to send out further supplies of provisions. Prisoners of both sexes came in plenty, but brought nothing to eat with them; the military officers who should have helped him in his arduous labours were secretly plotting against him, and their

spare time—and they had plenty—was devoted to writing letters home to highly-placed personages imploring them to induce the Government to break up the settlement and not “waste the health and lives of even these abandoned convicts in trying to found a colony in the most awful and hideous desert the eye of man had ever seen, a place which can never be useful to man and is accursed by God.” But the Governor took no heed. Mutiny and discontent he had fought in his silent, determined way as he fought grim famine, sparing himself nothing, toiling from dawn till dark, listening to complaints, remedying abuses, punishing with swift severity those who deserved it, and yet always preserving the same cold, unbending dignity of manner which covered a highly-sensitive and deeply sympathetic nature.

But on this particular day, fatigue, the intense heat, which had prevailed, a violent quarrel between the intriguing major commanding the marines, and many other lesser worries, had been almost more than he could bear, so it may well be imagined that he was more inclined for rest than talk.

Ten, twenty minutes, and then the thin, spare figure raised itself wearily from the rude sofa. He must see his visitor. He had promised to do so, and the sooner it was over the better. He called to the orderly.

“Tell Mr.—Corwell you said?—to come in.”

A heavy step sounded on the bare floor, and one of the finest specimens of manhood Governor Arthur Phillip had ever seen in all his long naval career stood before him and saluted. There was something so

pleasant and yet so manly in the handsome, clean-shaven and deeply-bronzed face, that the Governor was at once attracted to him.

“Be seated, Mr. Corwell,” he said in his low, yet clear tones. “I am very tired, so you must not keep me long.”

“Certainly not, your Excellency. But I thought, sir, that you would prefer to hear the report of my voyage personally. I have discovered a magnificent harbour north of the Solomon Islands, and——”

“Ha! And so you came to me. Very sensible, very sensible of you. I am obliged to you, sir. Tell me all about it.”

“Certainly, your Excellency; but I regret I have intruded on you this evening. Perhaps, sir, you will permit me to call again to-morrow?”

“No, no, not at all,” was the energetic reply. I am always ready to hear anything of this nature.

“I knew that, sir, for the masters of the *Breckenbridge* and another transport told me that you were most anxious to learn of any discoveries in the Pacific Islands.”

“Very true, sir. I am looking forward to hear from them and from the masters of other transports which I am inducing to follow the whale fishery on their return voyage to England *via* Batavia. But so far I have heard nothing from any one of them.”

Encouraged and pleased at the Governor’s manner, the master of the *Ceres* at once produced a roughly executed plan and a detailed written description of the harbour, which, he asserted with confidence, was one or

the finest in that part of the Pacific. A broad, deep stream of water ran from the lofty range of mountains which traversed the island north and south and fell into a spacious bay, on the shores of which was a large and populous native village, whose inhabitants had treated Corwell and the few men of his ship's company with considerable kindness, furnishing them not only with wood and water, but an ample supply of fresh provisions as well.

During the two weeks that the *Ceres* lay at anchor, Corwell and two or three of his hands unhesitatingly trusted themselves among the natives, who escorted them inland and around the coast. Everywhere was evidence of the extraordinary fertility of the island, which, in the vicinity of the seashore, was highly cultivated, each family's plantation being enclosed by stone fences, while their houses were strongly built and neatly constructed. The broad belt of the slopes of the mountains were covered with magnificent timber, which Corwell believed to be teak, equal in quality to any he had seen in the East Indies, and which he said could be easily brought down to the seashore for shipment owing to there being several other large streams beside the one on whose banks the principal village was built.

The Governor was much interested, and complimented the young seaman on the manner in which he had written out his description of the place and his observations on the character and customs of the inhabitants.

“Such information as you have given me, Mr.

Corwell, is always valuable, and I give you my best thanks. I wish I could do more; and had I the means, men, and money to spare I should send a vessel there and to other islands in the vicinity to make further examination, for I believe that from those islands to the northward we can obtain invaluable food supplies in the future. The winds are more favourable for making a quick voyage there and back than they are to those groups to the eastward; but," and here he sighed, "our condition is such that I fear it will be many years ere His Majesty will consent to such an undertaking. But much may be done at private cost—perhaps in the near future."

The young man remained silent for a moment or two; then with some hesitation he said, as he took a small paper packet from his coat pocket and handed it to the Governor, "Will your Excellency look at this and tell me what it is. I—I imagine it is pure gold, sir."

"Gold, gold!" and something like a frown contracted the Governor's pale brows; "ever since the settlement was formed I've been pestered with tales of gold, and a pretty expense it has run me into sending parties out to search for it. Why, only six months ago a rascally prisoner gulled one of my officers into letting him lead an expedition into the bush—the fellow had filed down a brass bolt—" he looked up and caught sight of the dark flush which had suddenly suffused his visitor's face—"but I do not for a moment imagine you are playing upon my credulity, Mr. Corwell."

He untied the string and opened the packet, and in an instant an exclamation of astonishment and pleasure escaped as he saw that the folds of paper held quite three ounces of bright and flaky water-worn gold.

“This certainly *is* gold, sir. May I ask where you obtained it?”

“I made the voyage to Sydney Cove to tell your Excellency of two discoveries—one was of the fine harbour, the other was of this gold, which my wife (who is a native of Ternate) and myself ourselves washed out of the bed of a small stream; the natives helped us, but attached not the slightest value to our discovery. In fact, sir, they assured us as well as they could that much more was to be had in every river on the island.”

“Your wife was it, then, or yourself, who first recognised what it was?”

“She did, sir. She has seen much of it in the hands of the Bugis and Arab traders in her native country.”

The Governor moved his slender forefinger to and fro amid the shining, heavy particles, then he pondered deeply for some minutes.

“Tell me frankly, Mr. Corwell—why did you make a long voyage to this settlement to tell *me* of your discovery?”

“In the hope, sir, that you would advise and perhaps assist me. My crew are Malays and Chinese and would have murdered me if they knew what I knew. Will your Excellency tell me the proper course to pursue so that I may be protected in my discovery? I am a poor man, though my ship is my

own, but she is old and leaky and must undergo heavy repairs before she leaves Sydney Cove again ; my present crew I wish to replace by half a dozen respectable Englishmen, and——”

The Governor shook his head. “I will do all I can to help you, but I cannot provide you with men. The island which you have visited may have been discovered and taken possession of by France, two of whose exploring ships were in these seas a few years ago, and even if that is not the case I could not take possession of them for His Majesty, as I have no commissioned officer to spare to undertake such a duty. Yet, if such an officer were available, Mr. Corwell, I would be strongly tempted to send him with you, hoist the British flag, and then urge the Home Government to confirm my action and secure to you the right, subject to the King’s royalties, to work these gold deposits. But I am powerless—much as I wish to aid you.”

A look of disappointment clouded the young captain’s handsome features.

“Would your Excellency permit me to endeavour to find three or four seamen myself? There is a transport ready to sail for England, and I may be able to get some men from her.”

“I doubt it. Unless you revealed the object of your voyage—which would be exceedingly foolish of you—you could not induce them to make a voyage in such a small vessel as yours to islands inhabited mostly by ferocious savages. But this much I can and will do for you. I will direct Captain Hunter of the *Sirius*,

the only King's ship I have here, to set his carpenters to work on your vessel as soon as ever you careen her; I will supply you at my own private cost with arms and ammunition and a new suit of sails. Provisions I cannot give you—God knows we want them badly enough ourselves, although we are not now in such a bad plight as we were ten months ago. Yet for all that I may be able to get you a cask or two of beef.”

“That is most generous of you, sir. I will not, however, take the beef, your Excellency. But for the sails and the repairs to my poor little vessel I thank you, sir, most heartily and sincerely. And I pledge you my word of honour, as well as giving you my written bond, that I will redeem my obligations to you.”

“And if you fail I shall be content, for I well know that it will be no fault of yours. But stay, Mr. Corwell; I must have one condition.”

“Name it, sir.”

“You too must pledge me your honour that you will not reveal the secret of your discovery of gold to any one in the settlement. This I do not demand—I ask it as a favour.”

Then the Governor took him, guardedly enough, into his confidence. With a thousand convicts, most of them utter ruffians, guarded by a scanty force of marines, the news of gold having been found would, he was sure, have a disastrous effect, and lead to open revolt. The few small merchant ships which were in port were partly manned by convict seamen, and there was every likelihood of them being seized by gangs of desperate criminals, fired with the idea of

reaching the golden island. Already a party of convicts had escaped with the mad idea of walking to China, which they believed was only separated from Australia by a large river which existed a few hundred miles to the northward of the settlement. Some of them died of thirst, others were slaughtered by the blacks, and the wounded and exhausted survivors were glad to make their way back again to their gaolers.

Corwell listened intently, and gave his promise readily. Then he rose to go, and the Governor held out his hand.

“Good evening, Mr. Corwell. I must see you again before you sail.”

## II

One evening, three weeks later—so vigorously had the carpenter’s mates from the old frigate *Sirius* got through their work—the *Ceres* was ready for sea. She was to sail on the following morning, and Corwell, having just returned from the shore, where he had been to say goodbye to the kind-hearted Governor, was pacing the deck with his wife, his smiling face and eager tones showing that he was well pleased.

He had reason to be pleased, for unusual luck had attended him. Not only had his ship been thoroughly and efficiently repaired, but he had replaced six of his untrustworthy Malays by four good, sturdy British seamen, one of whom he had appointed mate. These men had arrived at Sydney Cove in a transport a few days after his interview with the Governor; the trans-

port had been condemned, and Corwell, much to his delight, found that out of her crew of thirty, four were willing to come with him on what he cautiously described as a "voyage of venture to the South Seas." All of them had served in the navy, and the captain of the transport and his officers gave them excellent characters for sobriety and seamanship. Out of the sixty or seventy pounds which still remained to him he had given them a substantial advance, and the cheerful manner in which they turned to and helped the carpenters from the frigate convinced him that he had secured decent, reliable men, to whom he thought he could reveal the real object of his voyage later on.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two years before Corwell had been mate of a "country" ship employed in trading between Calcutta and the Moluccas. The Ternate agent of the owners of the ship was an Englishman named Leighton, a widower with one daughter, whose mother had died when the girl was fifteen. With this man the young officer struck up a friendship, and before six months had passed he was the acknowledged suitor of Mary Leighton, with whom he had fallen in love at first sight, and who quickly responded to his affection. She was then twenty-two years of age, tall and fair, with dark hazel eyes, like her English mother, and possessed of such indomitable spirit and courage that her father often laughingly declared it was she, and not he, who really managed the business which he controlled.

And she really did much to help him ; she knew

his weak, vacillating, and speculative nature would long since have left them penniless had he not yielded to her advice and protests on many occasions. Generous and extravagantly hospitable, he spent his money lavishly, and had squandered two or three fortunes in wild business ventures in the Indian Seas instead of saving one. Latterly, however, he had been more careful, and when Corwell had made his acquaintance he had two vessels—a barque and a brig—both of which were very profitably engaged in the Manila-China trade, and he was now sanguine of mending his broken fortunes.

Isolated as were father and daughter from the advantages of constant intercourse with European society, the duty of educating the girl was a task of love to her remaining parent, who, before he entered “John Company’s” service, had travelled much in Europe. Yet, devoted as he was to her, and looking forward with some dread to the coming loneliness of life which would be his when she married, he cheerfully gave his consent to her union with John Corwell, for whom he had conceived a strong liking, and who, he knew, would make her a good husband.

They were married at Batavia, to which port they were accompanied by Mr. Leighton, who, during the voyage, had pressed Corwell to leave his then employment and join him in a venture which had occupied his mind for the past year. This was to despatch either the barque or brig, laden with trade goods, to the Society Islands in the South Pacific, to barter for coconut oil and pearl shell.

Leighton was certain that there was a fortune awaiting the man who entered upon the venture, and his arguments so convinced the young man that he consented.

On arrival at Batavia they found there the officers and crew of a shipwrecked English vessel, and one of the former eagerly took Corwell's place as chief mate, his captain offering no objection. A few weeks after Mr. Leighton hired the *Ceres* to take himself, his daughter, and her husband back to Ternate, eager to begin the work of fitting out one of his vessels for the voyage that was to bring them fortune. He, it was arranged, was to remain at Ternate, Mary was to sail with her husband to the South Seas.

But a terrible shock awaited them. As the *Ceres* sailed up to her anchorage before Mr. Leighton's house, his Chinese clerk came on board with the news that the barque had foundered in a typhoon, and the brig had been plundered and burnt by pirates within a few miles of Canton. The unfortunate man gave one last appealing look at his daughter and then fell on the deck at her feet. He never spoke again, and died in a few hours. When his affairs came to be settled up, it was found that, after paying his debts, there was less than four hundred pounds left—a sum little more than that which Corwell had managed to save out of his own wages.

“Never mind, Jack,” said Mary. “’Tis little enough, but yet ’tis enough. And, Jack, let us go away from here. I should not care now to meet any of the people father knew in his prosperity.”

Corwell kissed his wife, and then they at once discussed the future. Half an hour later he had bought the *Ceres* from her captain (who was also the owner), paid him his money and taken possession. Before the week was out he had bought all the trade goods he could afford to pay for, shipped a crew of Malays and Chinese, and, with Mary by his side, watched Ternate sink astern as the *Ceres* began her long voyage to the South Seas.

After a three weeks' voyage along the northern and eastern shores of New Guinea the *Ceres* came to an anchor in the harbour which Corwell had described to the Governor. The rest of his story, up to the time of his arrival in Sydney Cove, the reader knows.

\* \* \* \* \*

Steadily northward under cloudless skies the high-pooped, bluff-bowed little vessel had sailed, favoured by leading winds nearly all the way, for four-and-twenty days, when, on the morning of the twenty-fifth, Corwell, who had been up aloft scanning the blue loom of a lofty island which lay right ahead, descended to the deck with a smiling face.

“That is not only the island itself, Mary, but with this breeze we have a clear run for the big village in the bay ; I can see the spur on the southern side quite clearly.”

“I’m so glad, Jack, dear. And how you have worried and fumed for the past three days !”

“I feared we had got too far to the westward, my girl,” he said. Then telling the mate to keep away a couple of points, he went below to pore over the plan

of the harbour, a copy of which had been taken by the Governor. As he studied it his wife's fingers passed lovingly through and through his curly locks. He looked up, put his arm around her waist, and swung her to a seat on his knees.

"I think, Mary, I can tell the men now."

"I'm sure you can! The sooner you take them into your confidence the better."

Corwell nodded. During the voyage he had watched the mate and three white seamen keenly, and was thoroughly satisfied with them. The remainder of the crew—three Manila men and two Penang Malays—did their duty well enough, but both he and his wife knew from long experience that such people were not to be trusted when their avarice was aroused. He resolved, therefore, to rely entirely upon his white crew and the natives of the island to help him in obtaining the gold. Yet, as he could not possibly keep the operations a secret from the five men he distrusted, he decided, as a safeguard against their possible and dangerous ill-will, to promise them double wages from the day he found that gold was to be obtained in payable quantities. As for the mate and three other white men, they should have one-fifth of all the gold won between them, he keeping the remaining four-fifths for himself and wife.

He put his head up the companion-way and called to the man whom he had appointed mate.

"Come below, Mallett, and bring Totten, Harris, and Sam with you."

Wondering what was the matter the four men

came into the cabin. As soon as they were standing together at the head of the little table, the captain's wife went quietly on deck to see that none of the coloured crew came aft to listen.

"Now, men," said Corwell, "I have something important to tell you. I believe I can trust you."

Then in as few words as possible he told them the object of the voyage and his intentions towards them. At first they seemed somewhat incredulous, but when they were shown some of the gold their doubts vanished, and they one and all swore to be honest and true to him and to obey him faithfully whether afloat or ashore, in fair or evil fortune.

From his scanty store of liquor the captain took a bottle of rum, and they drank to their future success; then Corwell shook each man's hand and sent him on deck.

Just before dusk the *Ceres* ran in and dropped her clumsy, wooden-stocked anchor in the crystal-clear water, a few cables' length away from the village. As the natives recognised her a chorus of welcoming shouts and cries pealed from the shore from five hundred dusky-hued throats.

### III

A blazing, tropic sun shone in mid-heaven upon the motionless waters of the deep, land-locked bay in which the *Ceres* lay, with top-mast struck and awnings spread fore and aft. A quarter of a mile

away was the beach, girdled with its thick belt of coco-palms whose fronds hung limp and hot in the windless air as if gasping for breath. Here and there, among the long line of white, lime-washed canoes, drawn up on the sand, snowy white and blue cranes stalked to and fro seeking for the small thin-shelled soldier crabs burrowing under the loose *débris* of leaves and fallen palm-branches to escape the heat.

A few yards back from the level of high-water mark clustered the houses of the native village, built on both sides of the bright, fast-flowing stream which here, as it debouched into the sea, was wide and shallow, showing a bottom composed of rounded black stones alternating with rocky bars. Along the grassless banks, worn smooth by the constant tread of naked feet, grew tall many-hued crotons, planted and carefully tended by their native owners, and shielded from the rays of the sun by the ever-present coco-palms. From either side of the bank, looking westward towards the forest, there was a clear stretch of water half a mile in length, then the river was hidden from view, for in its course from the mountains through the heavily-jungled littoral it took many bends and twists, sometimes running swiftly over rocky, gravelly beds, sometimes flowing noiselessly through deep, muddy-bottomed pools and dank, steamy swamps, the haunt of the silent, dreaded alligator.

At the head of the straight stretch of water of which I have spoken there was on the left-hand bank of the river an open grassy sward, surrounded by

clumps of areca and coco-palms, and in the centre stood a large house, built by native hands, but showing by various external signs that it was tenanted by people other than the wild inhabitants of the island. Just in front of the house, and surrounded by a number of canoes, the boat belonging to the *Ceres* was moored to the bank, and under a long open-sided, palm-thatched shed, were a number of brown-skinned naked savages, some lying sleeping, others squatting on their hams, energetically chewing betel nut.

As they talked and chewed and spat out the scarlet juice through their hideous red lips and coaly black teeth, a canoe, paddled by two natives and steered by Mallet, the mate of the *Ceres*, came up the river. The instant it was seen a chorus of yells arose from the natives in the long hut, and Mary Corwell came to the open doorway of the house and looked out.

“Wake up, wake up, Jack!” she cried, turning her face inwards over her graceful shoulder, “here is Mallet.”

Her voice awoke her husband, who in an instant sprang from his couch and joined her, just as Mallet—a short, square-built man of fifty—stepped out of the canoe and walked briskly towards them, wiping his broad, honest face with a blue cotton handkerchief.

“Come inside, Mallet. ’Tis a bit cooler in here. I’m sorry I sent you down to the ship on such a day as this.”

Mallet laughed good-naturedly. “I didn’t mind it, sir, though ’tis a powerful hot day, and the natives are

all lying asleep in their huts ; they can't understand why us works as we do in the sun. Lord, sir ! How I should like to see old Kingsdown and Walmer Castle to-day, all a-white with snow. I was born at Deal."

Mary Corwell brought the old seaman a young coconut to drink, and her husband added a little rum ; Mallet tossed it off and then sat down.

"Well, sir, the ship is all right, and those chaps aboard seem content enough. But I'm afeared that the worms are a-getting into her although she is moored right abreast of the river. So I took it on me to tell Totten and Harris to stay aboard whilst I came back to ask you if it wouldn't be best for us to bring her right in to the fresh water, and moor her here, right abreast o' the house. That'll kill any worms as has got into her timbers. And we can tow her in the day after to-morrow, when there will be a big tide."

"You did quite right, Mallet. Very likely the worms have got into her timbers in spite of her being abreast of the river's mouth. I should have thought of this before."

"Ah, Jack," said his wife, with a smile, "we have thought too much of our gold-getting and too little of the poor old *Ceres*."

"Well, I shall think more of her now, Mary. And as the rains will be on us in a few days—so the natives say—and we can do no more work for three months, I think it will be as well for us to sail the *Ceres* over to that chain of lagoon islands about thirty

miles from here. I fear to remain here during the wet season, on account of the fever."

After further discussion it was decided that Jack and Mallet, with some natives, should make an early start in the morning for their mining camp, six miles away, at the foot of the range, and do a long, last day's work, returning to the house on the following day. Meanwhile a message was to be sent to Harris and Totten to bring the vessel into the creek as soon as the tide served, which would be in forty-eight hours. Then, whilst she lay for a week in the fresh water, so as to kill the suspected *teredo navalis* worms, which Mallet feared had attacked her, she was to be made ready for the short voyage of thirty miles over to a cluster of islands enclosing a spacious lagoon, where Corwell intended to beach her till the rainy season was over, when he would return to work a very promising stream in another locality. Already he and his men, aided by the natives, had, in the four months that had passed since they arrived, won nearly five hundred ounces of gold, crude as were their appliances.

"Jack," said his wife, "I think that, as you will be away all day and night, to-morrow I shall go on board and see what *I* can do. I'll make the men turn to and give the cabin a thorough overhauling. Marawa, the chief's wife, has given me a lot of sleeping-mats, and I shall throw those old horrible flock mattresses overboard, and we shall have nice clean mats instead to lie on."

\* \* \* \* \*

At daylight Mallet aroused the natives who were to accompany him and the captain, and then told off two of them to make the boat ready for Mrs. Corwell. Then he returned to the house and called out—

“The boat is ready, sir.”

“So am I, Mallet,” replied Mary, tying on her old-fashioned sun-hood. Then she turned to her husband. “Jack, darling, this will be the very first time in our married life that I have ever slept away from you, and it shall be the last, too. But I *do* want to surprise you when you see our cabin again.”

She put her lips up to him and kissed him half a dozen times. “There, that’s a good-night and good morning three times over. Now I’m ready.”

Corwell and Mallet walked down to the boat with her and saw her get in. She kissed her hand to them and in a few minutes was out of sight.

#### IV

A light, cool breeze, which had set in at daylight, was blowing when Mary Corwell boarded the *Ceres*. Totten and Harris met her at the gangway, caps in hand. Poor Sam, their former shipmate, had died of fever a month before. They were delighted to hear that she intended to remain on board, and Harris at once told Miguel, the scoundrelly-faced Manila cook, to get breakfast ready.

“And you must have your breakfast with me,”

said Mary, "and after that you must obey *my* orders. I am to be captain to-day."

\* \* \* \* \*

As she and the two seamen sat aft under the awning, at their breakfast, Selak, the leading Malay, and his fellows squatted on the fore-hatch and talked in whispers.

"I tell thee," said Selak, "that I have seen it. On the evening of the day when the man Sam died and was buried, I was sitting outside the house. It was dark, and the Tuan Korwal thought I had returned to the ship. I crept near and listened. They were speaking of what should be done with the dead man's share of the gold. Then I looked through the cave side of the house, and—dost remember that white basin of thine, Miguel?"

The Manila man nodded.

"The white woman, at a sign from her husband, went into the inner room and brought it out and placed it on the table. It was full to the brim with gold! and there was more in a bag!"

His listeners drew nearer to him, their dark eyes gleaming with avarice.

"Then the Tuan said, 'None of Sam's gold will I or my wife touch. Let it be divided among you three. It is but fair.'

"They talked again, and then Mallet said to the Tuan, 'Captain, it shall be as you wish. But let it all go together till the time comes for thee to give us our share.'

"I watched the white woman take the basin and

the bag, put them into a box, and place the box in a hole in the ground in her sleeping-room. Then I came away, for my heart was on fire with the wrong that hath been done to us."

He rose to his feet and peered round the corner of the galley. Mary and the two seamen were eating very leisurely.

"Three of them are here now and will sleep aboard to-night. God hath given them into our hands!"

"And what of the other two?—they are strong men," asked a wizen, monkey-faced Malay, nicknamed Nakoda (the captain).

"Bah! What is a giant if he sleeps and a kriss is swept across his throat, or a spear is thrust into his back from behind? They, too, shall die as quickly as these who sit near us. Now listen. But sit thou out on the deck, Miguel, so that thou canst warn us if either of those accursed dogs approach."

The cook obeyed him silently.

"*This* it is to be. To-night these three here shall die in their sleep, silently and without a sound. Then we, all but thou, Nakoda, shall take the boat and go to the house. Both the Tuan and Mallet sleep heavily, and"—he drew his hand swiftly across his tawny throat.

"And then?" queried Nakoda.

"And then the gold—the gold, or our share of which we have been robbed—is ours, and the ship is ours, and I, Selak, will guide ye all to Dobbo in the Aru Islands, where we shall be safe, and become great men."

“But,” muttered another man, “what if these black sons of Shaitan here of the Island turn upon us after we have slain the white men?”

Selak laughed scornfully. “The sound of a gun terrifies them. They are cowards, and will not seek to interfere with us.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Night had fallen. The two white seamen, tired out with their day’s work, had spread their mats on the poop, and were sound in slumber. Below in the cabin, the captain’s wife lay reading by the light of a lamp; and Selak, standing in the waist, could see its faint reflection shining through the cabin door, which opened on to the main deck. Sitting on the fore-deck, with their hands clutching their knives, his companions watched him.

At last the light was lowered, and Mary closed her eyes and slept.

The Malay waited patiently. One by one the remaining native fires on the shore went out; and, presently, a chill gust of air swept down from the mountains, and looking shoreward he saw that the sky to the eastward was quickly darkening and hiding the stars—a heavy downpour of rain was near.

He drew his kriss from its tortoiseshell sheath and felt the edge, made a gesture to the crouching tigers for’ard, and then stepped lightly along the deck to the open cabin door; the other four crept after him, then stopped and waited—for less than a minute.

A faint, choking cry came from the cabin, and then Selak came out, his kriss streaming with blood.

“It is done,” he whispered, and pointing to the poop he sprang up.

“Hi, there! what’s the matter?” cried Totten, who had heard the faint cry; and then, too late, he drew his pistol from his belt and fired—as Selak’s kriss plunged into his chest. Poor Harris was slaughtered ere he had opened his eyes.

Spurning Totten’s body with his naked foot, Selak cursed it. “Accursed Christian dog! Would I could bring thee to life so that I might kill thee again!” Then, as he heard the rushing hum of the coming rain squall, and saw that the shore was hidden from view, as if a solid wall of white stone had suddenly arisen between it and the ship, he grinned.

“Bah! what does it matter? Had it been a cannon instead of a pistol it could scarce have been heard on the shore in such a din.”

Ordering the bodies of the two seamen to be thrown overboard, Selak, the most courageous, entered the cabin, took a couple of muskets from the rack, and some powder and ball from the mate’s berth, and returning to his followers, bade them bring the boat alongside.

“Throw the woman after them,” he cried to Nakoda, as the boat pushed off into the darkness, just as the hissing rain began. “We shall return ere it is dawn.”

Nakoda would have sprung over the side after the boat, but he feared the sharks even more than Selak’s kriss; so running for’ard, he crept into his bunk and lay there, too terrified to move.

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Mallet and Corwell, with the natives, worked hard till near sunset, and then ceased.

“There’s nearly five ounces in that lot, Mallet,” said the captain, pointing to two buckets of wash-dirt. “Let us have a bathe, and then get something to eat before it is too dark.”

“The natives say we ought to get back to the house, sir, instead of sleeping here to-night. They say a heavy storm is coming on, and we’ll be washed out of the camp.”

“Very well, Mallet. I don’t want to stay here, I can assure you. Tell them to hurry up, then. Get the shovels and other gear, and let us start as quickly as possible. It will take us a good three hours to get back to the house.”

By sunset they started, walking in single file along the narrow, dangerous mountain-path, a false step on which meant a fall of hundreds of feet.

Half-way down, the storm overtook them, but guided by the surefooted natives they pressed steadily on, gained the level ground, and at last reached the house about ten o’clock.

“Now that we have come so far we might as well go on board and give my wife a surprise,” said Corwell to Mallet. “Look, the rain is taking off.”

“Not for long, sir. But if we start at once we may get aboard afore it starts again.”

Two willing natives, wet and shivering as they were, quickly baled out a canoe, and in a few minutes they were off, paddling down towards the sea. But scarce had they gone a few hundred yards when

another sudden downpour of rain blotted out everything around them. But the natives paddled steadily on amid the deafening roar; the river was wide, and there was no danger of striking anything harder than the hanging branch of a tree or the soft banks.

"I thought I heard voices just now," shouted Mallet.

"Natives been out fishing," replied Corwell.

As the canoe shot out through the mouth of the river into the open bay the rain ceased as suddenly as it began, and the *Ceres* loomed up right ahead.

"Don't hail them, Mallet. Let us go aboard quietly."

They clambered up the side, the two natives following, and, wet and dripping, entered the cabin.

Corwell stepped to the swinging lamp, which burnt dimly, and pricked up the wick. His wife seemed to be sound asleep on the cushioned transom locker.

"Mary," he cried, "wake up, dearest. We—  
. . . Oh my God, Mallet!"

He sprang to her side, and kneeling beside the still figure, placed his hand on the blood-stained bosom.

"Dead! Dead! Murdered!" He rose to his feet, and stared wildly at Mallet, swayed to and fro, and then fell heavily forward.

As the two natives stood at the cabin door, gazing in wondering horror at the scene, they heard a splash. Nakoda had jumped overboard and was swimming ashore.

\* \* \* \* \*

Long before dawn the native war-drums began to

beat, and when Selak and his fellow-murderers reached the mouth of the river they ran into a fleet of canoes which waited for them. They fought like the tigers they were, but were soon overcome and made prisoners, tied hand and foot, and carried ashore to the "House of the Young Men." The gold was taken care of by the chief, who brought it on board to Corwell.

"When do these men die?" he asked.

"To-day," replied Corwell huskily; "to-day, after I have buried my wife."

On a little island just within the barrier reef, she was laid to rest, with the never-ending cry of the surf for her requiem.

At sunset, Corwell and Mallet left the ship and landed at the village, and as their feet touched the sand the war-drums broke out with deafening clamour. They each carried a cutlass, and walked quickly through the thronging natives to the "House of the Young Men."

"Bring them out," said Corwell hoarsely to the chief.

One by one Selak and his fellow-prisoners were brought out and placed on their feet, the bonds that held them were cut, and their hands seized and held widely apart. And then Corwell and Mallet thrust their cutlasses through the cruel hearts.

\* \* \* \* \*

## *Poisonous Fish of the Pacific Islands*

MANY years ago I was sent with a wrecking party of native seamen to take possession of a Swedish barque which had gone ashore on the reef of one of the Marshall Islands, in the North Pacific. My employers, who had bought the vessel for £100, were in hopes that she might possibly be floated, patched up, and brought to Sydney. However, on arriving at the island I found that she was hopelessly bilged, so we at once set to work to strip her of everything of value, especially her copper, which was new. It was during these operations that I made acquaintance with both poisonous and stinging fish. There were not more than sixty or seventy natives living on the island, and some of these, as soon as we anchored in the lagoon, asked me to caution my own natives—who came from various other Pacific islands—not to eat any fish they might catch in the lagoon until each one had been examined by a local man. I followed their injunction, and for two or three weeks all went well; then came trouble.

I had brought down with me from Sydney a white carpenter—one of the most obstinate, cross-grained old fellows that ever trod a deck, but an excellent workman if humoured a little. At his own request he lived on board the wrecked barque, instead of taking up his quarters on shore in the native village with the rest of the wrecking party. One evening as I was returning from the shore to the schooner—I always slept on board—I saw the old man fishing from the waist of the wreck, for it was high tide, and there was ten feet of water around the ship. I saw him excitedly haul in a good-sized fish, and, hailing him, inquired how many he had caught, and if he were sure they were not poisonous? He replied that he had caught five, and that “there was nothin’ the matter with them.” Knowing what a self-willed, ignorant man he was, I thought I should have a look at the fish and satisfy myself; so I ran the boat alongside and clambered on board, followed by two of my native crew. The moment we opened the fishes’ mouths and looked down their throats we saw the infallible sign which denoted their highly poisonous condition—a colouring of bright orange with thin reddish-brown streaks. The old fellow grumbled excessively when I told him to throw them overboard, and then somewhat annoyed me by saying that all the talk about them being unsafe was bunkum. He had, he said, caught and eaten just the same kind of fish at Vavau, in the Tonga Islands, time and time again. It was no use arguing with such a creature, so, after again warning him not to eat any fish of any kind

unless the natives "passed" them as non-poisonous, I left him and went on board my own vessel.

We had supper rather later than usual that evening, and, as the mate and myself were smoking on deck about nine o'clock, we heard four shots in rapid succession fired from the wreck. Knowing that something was wrong, I called a couple of hands, and in a few minutes was pulled on board, where I found the old carpenter lying writhing in agony, his features presenting a truly shocking and terrifying appearance. His revolver lay on the deck near him—he had fired it to bring assistance. I need not here describe the peculiarly drastic remedies adopted by the natives to save the man's life. They at first thought the case was a hopeless one, but by daylight the patient was out of danger. He was never able to turn to again as long as we were on the island, and suffered from the effects of the fish for quite two or three years. He had, he afterwards told me, made up his mind to eat some of the fish that evening to show me that he was right and I was wrong.

A few weeks after this incident myself and a native lad named Viri, who was one of our crew and always my companion in fishing or shooting excursions, went across the lagoon to some low sandy islets, where we were pretty sure of getting a turtle or two. Viri's father and mother were Samoans, but he had been born on Nassau Island, a lonely spot in the South Pacific, where he had lived till he was thirteen years of age. He was now fifteen, and a smarter, more cheerful, more intelligent native boy I had never met.

His knowledge of bird and fish life was a never-ending source of pleasure and instruction to me, and the late Earl of Pembroke and Sir William Flower would have delighted in him.

It was dead low tide when we reached the islets, so taking our spears with us we set out along the reef to look for turtle in the many deep and winding pools which broke up the surface of the reef. After searching for some time together without success, Viri left me and went off towards the sea, I keeping to the inner side of the lagoon. Presently in a shallow pool about ten feet in circumference I espied a small but exceedingly beautiful fish. It was about four inches in length, and two and a half inches in depth, and as it kept perfectly still I had time to admire its brilliant hues—blue and yellow-banded sides with fins and tail tipped with vivid crimson spots. Around the eyes were a number of dark yellowish or orange-coloured rings, and the eyes themselves were large, bright, and staring. It displayed no alarm at my presence, but presently swam slowly to the side of the pool and disappeared under the coral ledge. I determined to catch and examine the creature, and in a few minutes I discovered it resting in such a position that I could grasp it with my hand. I did so, and seizing it firmly by the back and belly, whipped it up out of the water, but not before I felt several sharp pricks from its fins. Holding it so as to study it closely, I suddenly dropped it in disgust, as strange violent pains shot through my hand. In another two minutes they had so increased in their intensity that I became

alarmed and shouted to Viri to come back. Certainly not more than five or ten minutes elapsed before he was with me ; to me it seemed ages, for by this time the pain was excruciating. A look at the fish told him nothing ; he had never seen one like it before. How I managed to get back to the schooner and live through the next five or six hours of agony I cannot tell. Twice I fainted, and at times became delirious. The natives could do nothing for me, but said that the pain would moderate before morning, especially if the fish was dead. Had its fins struck into my foot instead of my hand I should have died, they asserted ; and then they told the mate and myself that one day a mischievous boy who had speared one of these abominable fish threw it at a young woman who was standing some distance away. It struck her on the foot, the spines penetrating a vein, and the poor girl died in terrible agony on the following day. By midnight the pain I was enduring began to moderate, though my hand and arm were swollen to double the proper size, and a splitting headache kept me awake till daylight. The shock to the system affected me for quite a week afterward.

During many subsequent visits to the Marshall Group our crews were always cautioned by the people of the various islands about eating fish or shell-fish without submitting them to local examination. In the Radack chain of this widely spread out archipelago we found that the lagoons were comparatively free from poisonous fish, while the Ralick lagoons were infested with them, quite 30 per cent. being highly

dangerous at all times of the year, and nearly 50 per cent. at other seasons. Jaluit Lagoon was, and is now, notorious for its poisonous fish. It is a curious fact that fish of a species which you may eat with perfect safety, say, in the middle of the month, will be pronounced by the expert natives to be dangerous a couple of weeks later, and that in a "school" of pink rock bream numbering many hundreds some may have their poison highly developed, others in but a minor degree, whilst many may be absolutely free from the taint. In the year 1889 the crew of a large German ship anchored in one of the Marshall Islands caught some very large and handsome fish of the bream kind, and the resident natives pronounced them "good." Three or four days later some more were taken, and the cook did not trouble to ask native opinion. The result was that eight or nine men were taken seriously ill, and for some time the lives of several were despaired of. Two of them had not recovered the use of their hands and feet at the end of ten weeks, and their faces, especially the eyes and mouth, seemed to be permanently, though slightly distorted. All the men agreed in one particular, that at midday they suffered most—agonising cramps, accompanied by shooting pains in the head and continuous vomiting to the point of exhaustion, these symptoms being very pronounced during the first week or eight days after the fish had been eaten.

That kind-hearted and unfortunate officer, Commodore J. G. Goodenough, took an interest in the poisonous and stinging fish of the Pacific Islands,

and one day showed me, preserved in spirits of wine, a specimen of the dreaded *no'u* fish of the Hervey Group—one of the most repulsive-looking creatures it is possible to imagine out of a child's fairy book. The deadly poison which this fish ejects is contained in a series of sacs at the base of the spines, and the commodore intended to submit it to an analyst. By a strange coincidence this gallant seaman a few months afterwards died from the effects of a poisoned arrow shot into his side by the natives of Nukapu, one of the Santa Cruz group of islands.

This *no'u*, however, which is the *nofu* of the Samoans, and is widely known throughout Polynesia, and Melanesia under different names, does not disguise its deadly character under a beautiful exterior like the stinging fish of Micronesia, which I have described above. The *nofu*, which is also met with on the coasts of Australia, is a devil undisguised, and belongs to the angler family. Like the octopus or the death-adder (*Acanthopis antarctica*) of Australia, he can assimilate his colour to his environment. His hideous wrinkled head, with his staring goggle eyes, are often covered with fine wavy seaweed, which in full-grown specimens sometimes extends right down the back to the tail. From the top of the upper jaw, along the back and sides, are scores of needle-pointed spines, every one of which is a machine for the ejection of the venom contained at the root. As the creature lies hidden in a niche of coral awaiting its prey—it is a voracious feeder—it cannot be distinguished except by the most careful scrutiny; then you may see that

under the softly waving and suspended piece of seaweed (as you imagine it to be) there are fins and a tail. And, as the *nofu* has a huge mouth, which is carefully concealed by a fringe of apparently harmless seaweed or other marine growth, he snaps up every unfortunate small fish which comes near him. In the Pacific Islands the *nofu* (*i.e.*, "the waiting one") is generally a dark brown, inclining to black, with splashes or blotches of orange, or marbled red and grey. In Australian waters—I have caught them in the Parramatta river, Port Jackson—they are invariably either a dark brown or a horrid, dulled yellow.

Despite its poison-injecting apparatus this fish is eaten by the natives of the Society, Hervey, and Paumotu groups of islands, in the South Pacific, where its flesh is considered a delicacy. It is prepared for cookery by being skinned, in which operation the venomous sacks are removed. In 1882, when I was living on the island of Peru in the Gilbert Group (the Francis Island of the Admiralty charts), a Chinese trader there constantly caught them in the lagoon and ate them in preference to any other fish. Here in Peru the *nofu* would bury itself in the soft sand and watch for its prey, and could always be taken with a hook. And yet in Eastern Polynesia and in the Equatorial Islands of the Pacific many deaths have occurred through the sting of this fish, children invariably succumbing to tetanus within twenty-four hours of being stung.

A little more about poisonous fish, *i.e.*, fish which at one time of the year are good and palatable food

and at others deadly. In the lagoon island of Nukufetau (the "De Peyster Island" of the charts), where the writer lived for twelve months, the fish both within the lagoon and outside the barrier reef became highly poisonous at certain times of the year. Flying-fish (which were never caught inside the lagoon) would be safe to eat if taken on the lee side of the island, dangerous, or at least doubtful, if taken on the weather side; *manini*, a small striped fish much relished by the natives, would be safe to eat if caught on the reef on the western side of the island, slightly poisonous if taken four miles away on the inside shore of the eastern islets encompassing the lagoon. Sharks captured outside the reef, if eaten, would produce symptoms of poisoning—vomiting, excessive purging, and tetanus in a modified form; if caught inside the reef and eaten no ill effects would follow. Crayfish on one side of the lagoon were safe; three miles away they were highly impregnated with this mysterious poison, the origin of which has not yet been well defined by scientists.

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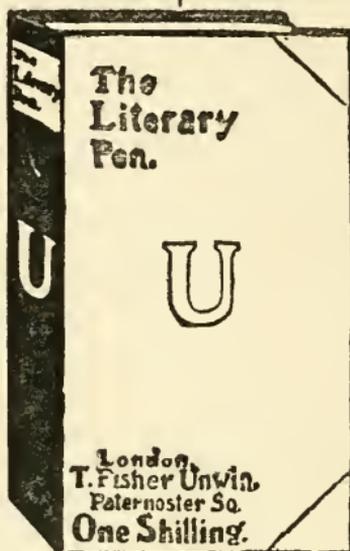
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