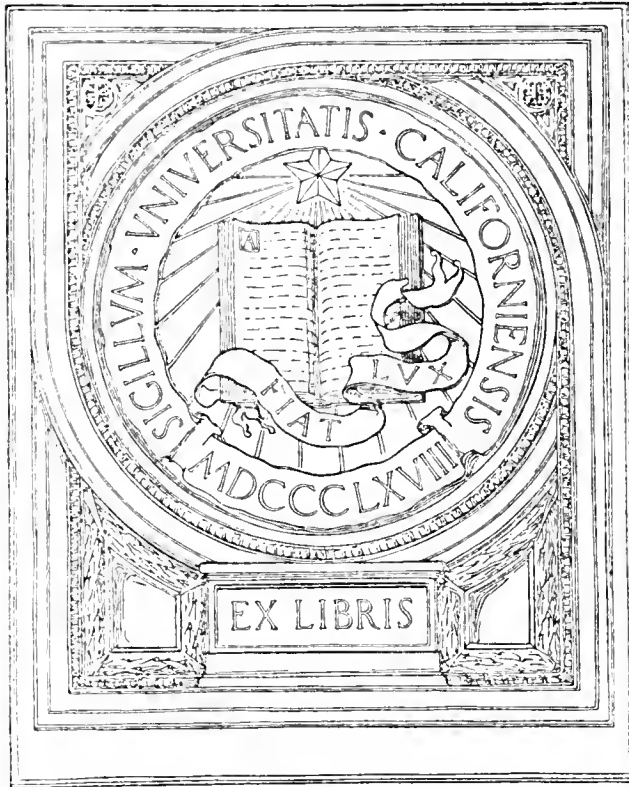


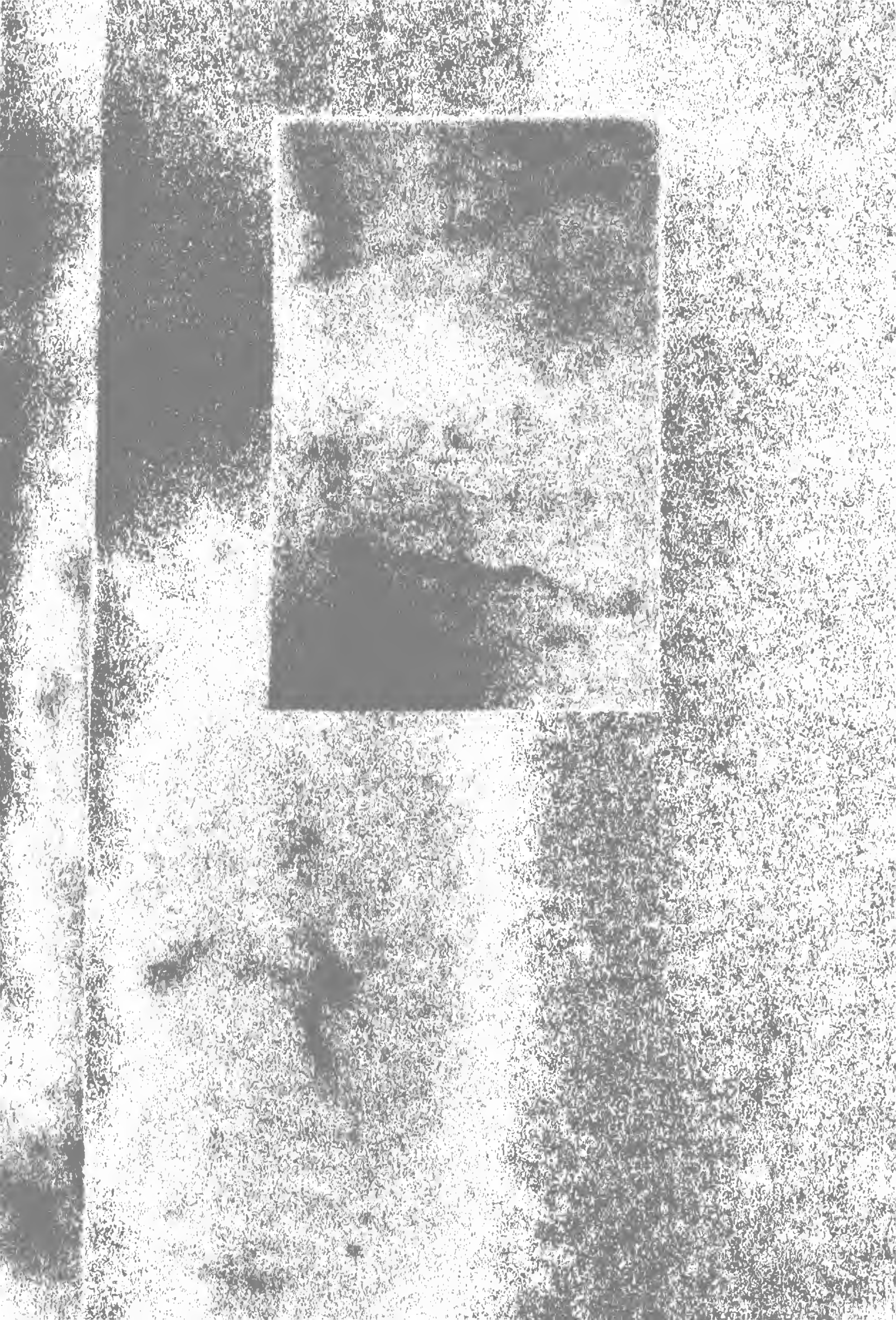
G
530
H6I5

G530.H6I5



EX LIBRIS

BANCROFT LIBRARY



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

Wide World magazine

Oct. 1900

V:30

37656

The Lone Cruise of the "Hornet" Men.

BY LEIGH H. IRVINE, OF SAN FRANCISCO.

The personal narrative of Frederick Clough, of San Francisco, the sole sailor survivor. The clipper ship "Hornet" rounded Cape Horn and left Valparaiso, but caught fire in mid-ocean soon afterwards. The castaways drifted for forty-three days in an open boat. How they managed to keep alive is what the survivor tells us in the following pages.



MR. FREDERICK CLOUGH AS HE APPEARED ABOUT THE TIME OF THE WRECK.
From a Photo. by Charles Marston.

Though nearly a generation has passed since the sleeping crew and passengers of the ill-fated *Hornet* saw their ship dissolve in smoke thousands of miles from land, Clough has a vivid recollection of all that occurred, and he tells the story so faithfully to the known facts, and so feelingly, that the listener has a realistic picture of the castaways during their fearful voyage in an open boat. The telling of his experiences is still so painful to the old sailor that he often sheds tears in the recital.

The survivors of the *Hornet* reached the port of Laupohoe, Hawaii, on the 15th of June, 1866, at the end of a perilous voyage that ran eight hours beyond forty-three days. Their condition was then such that Mark Twain, who saw them a few days after they were picked up by natives, described them as mere skinny skeletons, and said that "their clothes hung limp about them, and fitted them no better than a flag fits the flag-staff in a calm." The appearance thus described marked the change wrought by the hardships of the sea; and it was the moment of the disaster that fifteen well-fed young men scaled their rations down to a fragment of biscuit and a gill of water a day—this diet being



T would be hard to find a more thrilling story of the sea than that of the burning of the clipper ship *Hornet*, which occurred in mid-Pacific on May 3rd, 1866. For the first time since the escape of the fifteen men who drifted for forty-three days in an open boat, and arrived in Honolulu—the feeble survivors of a marvellous voyage through the calms and terrors of the tropics—the story of that terrible affair is now told by one of the ship's crew.

The narrator, who has so long refused to break the silence, is Frederick Clough, of San Francisco, the sole sailor survivor (and the only survivor but one) of one of the most wonderful ocean voyages known. His promise of silence was made to his aged mother many years ago. On account of an annoying newspaper story that the castaways had intended to devour one another, the mother of the sailor induced her son to promise that he would not tell the story for publication so long as she lived. A few months ago death released the son from that pledge, and he has prepared his memoirs for THE WIDE WORLD.



MR. CLOUGH AS HE APPEARS TO-DAY IN SAN FRANCISCO.
From a Photo.

5530

H4T5

agreed upon when the flame of their ship died away and a solemn blackness of smoke filled the sky above the place where the *Hornet* was consumed.

For weeks they were drenched by the down-pour of tropical showers; then the blazing sun of the Equator burnt them. Their narrow quarters were a torture, and for many days hope deceived them at every point of the compass. They had mistaken morning banks of cloud for land for so long, that when at last land did appear they mistook it for the morning bank, and waved it off, as men weary of hoping who would be deceived no more.

Interest in such a story cannot fade. The survival of these men after so long a battle with starvation, with every imaginable hardship, the fear of death and madness, is one of the greatest wonders in the story of human endurance. And in all that solitary waste of waters, with distress and hunger unrelieved for a single moment, no man's hand was ever raised against a companion in violence; and those in charge of the crumbs that were divided each day ate not a morsel beyond their own proportion, though hunger gnawed them, and though they passed weeks of torture "scanning the empty sea-line and counting the steps of death's invisible approach."

Strange to say, the survivors of the *Hornet* all regained their health and strength, and most of them lived for many years, some becoming extremely religious, by the way, after their terrible experience. Captain James A. Mitchell, who engineered the launching, and had charge of the sailing of the boat that lived, would be nearly ninety now if he were still living, but he died nearly twelve years ago. The crew and passengers always gave him credit for preserving their lives and directing the little boat with almost superhuman foresight. It is certain that his wonderful ability to seize the important elements of a problem and do the right thing at the right time enabled the drifting men to survive, and contributed to the sailing of the ship's long-boat in the only way that could have led to land. The captain modestly declined to accept the

praise, however, and always maintained that he did only as any other navigator would have done under the same circumstances. He seldom discussed his own conduct during the disaster. The following characteristic extract from a letter to Clough, dated December 3, 1873, is the only writing of his known to exist in which reference is made to the *Hornet* affair. Its modesty is characteristic of the man's career:—

"My Dear Friend and Shipmate,—I believe there are but three of us left; at least I know of no more. I saw Henry Ferguson last summer. He had almost finished his study for the ministry. He inquired after you. Cox is dead. We certainly had a wonderful and providential escape, and nothing but God's grace sustained us—not a particle of credit is due to me. I only did what any other man must have done under the circumstances. It was the long, constant watchfulness that broke me down more than all the rest."

Now that you have the atmosphere and background of the narrative, as well as something of the personality of the chief hero of the *Hornet*, it will be well to let Clough tell the story largely in his own

way—a man past fifty-four, remember, telling what he felt and suffered, feared and saw, as a lad of twenty. But no man could ever forget the details of such an experience.

"If you want to imagine what all this was like," began the survivor, as he sat smoking and recalling old memories, "you must put yourself where I was, then a lad of twenty, bound for California around the Horn. We left New York just 103 days before May 3rd, 1866; and the *Hornet* was a clipper ship of the first class, and a fast sailer, too. The voyage for the first part was a real picnic, the quarters were roomy, and the captain was a gentleman and a Christian—a thin, medium-sized man who never drank. Captain Mitchell was strict, yet gentle, in his orders, and a man of rare caution, with a well-balanced Scotch head. It was under such circumstances that many young men of the crew and cabin started for the Golden West with leaping pulses and great hopes. Of course, we were all in a hurry to reach the land of gold, and when the captain told us that he had never



CAPTAIN JAMES A. MITCHELL, THE MASTER OF
From a] THE ILL-FATED "HORNET." [Photo.

made so fast and pleasant a passage we were all delighted.

"But, curiously enough, there was something that seemed to tell the old man that the good luck was a bad omen. He remarked to First Officer Hardy that the voyage was made under such strange circumstances that he was afraid something would happen to mar it, and it was not long before his fears were more than realized. We came around the Horn with a fair wind, and ran away off Valparaiso, and then came the fire."

Clough's story should be interrupted here to say that the ship's position on the morning of May 3rd was 112deg. 10min. west longitude, latitude 2deg. above the Equator. The temperature of the air was hot and humid; no sea, no wind, but a blistering calm under the blazing sun. There was a cry of "Fire," followed by the greatest imaginable confusion in getting off men and stores. And all this in the roaring and tossing area of the deadly Doldrums.

"Six bells chimed 'Fire!'" remarked Clough to me, "and the men on watch cried to those of us who were still asleep. Almost before we could spring from our bunks the flames had leapt through the hatchways. The mainmast was going; the rigging was all burnt away. I was one of the first men up, and barely had time to catch a glimpse of the roaring furnace in the booby-hatch. This we battened down, and at once cut a hole in the deck and poured in water in a desperate attempt to save the ship. But it was child's play; and we soon abandoned it to engage in the more desperate battle for our own lives. The rush was all over in fifteen minutes, and even the masts fell in less than an hour. The ship had a general cargo, much of it highly inflammable. There were, for example, hundreds of barrels of kerosene; about a thousand cases of tallow candles, and many large bales of rope scattered amongst these. So you see that the fire had every chance imaginable, and the ship none at all."

The rapidity of the burning will be better understood if its origin is here stated. The ship's mate had gone into the hold for a bucket of black varnish. This he proceeded to draw, holding an open light in his left hand and the bucket in his right. He had almost filled

the vessel when the light ignited the volatile fluid, and the flames spread at once to the cask, burning the mate's hands so badly that he dropped the light and fled for his life.

The narrator continues: "We hustled sixteen men into the two quarter-boats, and fifteen of us, including the captain, two passengers, the third mate and crew, got into the ship's long-boat, which was provisioned for but ten days, counting less than a fifth of an ordinary meal for an entire day's food. In getting off the boat we stove a hole in her as big as a man's head, and while we were doing this the flames burst through the main hatch



"I WAS ONE OF THE FIRST MEN UP, AND BARELY HAD TIME TO CATCH A GLIMPSE OF THE ROARING FURNACE."

and raged in the topsails. The carpenter patched the hole with a blanket, but we had to bale her every hour we were at sea."

The captain took stock as soon as the excitement had calmed, and it was found that each boat had a fair equipment of sea instruments — each a quadrant, a copy of Bodwich's Navigator, and a compass. In addition to this the boats of the captain and chief mate had each a chronometer. For the thirty-one men who occupied the three boats there was on hand the following food supply, much of it being immediately spoiled by the rains: four hams; about thirty pounds of salt pork; half a box of raisins; twelve two-pound cans of oysters; one hundred

pounds of bread; a few clams, and assorted meats; a keg that contained four pounds of butter; twelve gallons of water in a forty-gallon "scuttle butt"; three bottles of brandy; some pipes; a few matches, and one hundred pounds of tobacco. There were no medicines.

With this scant equipment and a few living things that were caught from the sea or hooked in the air the castaways of the *Hornet* began their heroic voyage of more than five thousand miles. Clough's account of the first day and night is quite dramatic:—

"The ship was twenty-two hours in burning, but we hovered nigh her so long as an ember was left, hoping to be discovered and picked up by some passing vessel attracted by the glare. We were so excited as we huddled together in that leaky boat that not a morsel of food passed any man's lips that anxious day; nor did we do much talking, until the captain broke the silence by kneeling in prayer at nightfall. It was then that the terror of our position first fully dawned upon me, as I sat steering by the wind that blew in my face. There was no light but that of the burning ship, but this flare was so intense that the sea was aflame for many miles. The clouds, too, were fiery red from the reflection, and men's faces glowed in the fierce light. I tell you, it was a solemn picture, especially when the rain poured down in torrents and the sea became a bit wild."

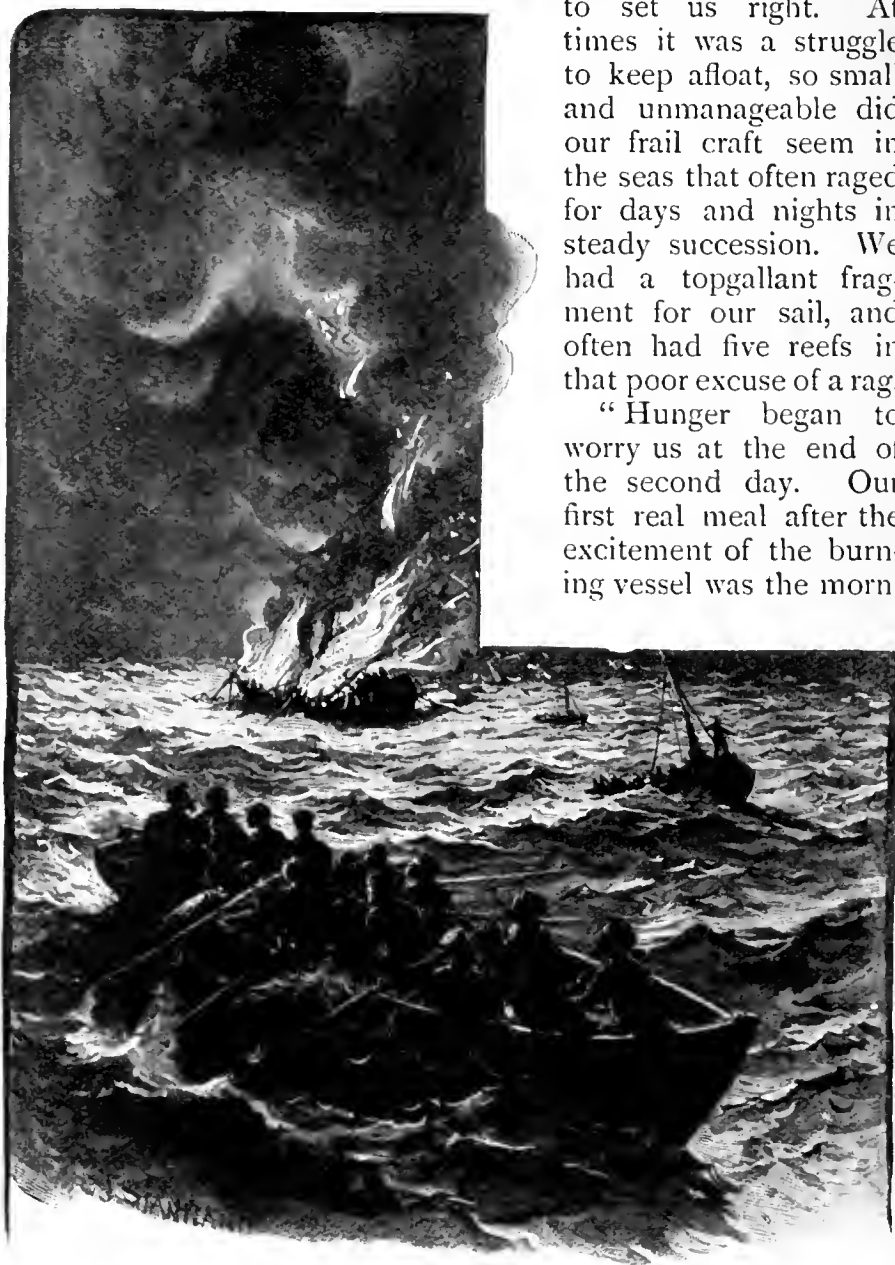
The survivor recalls with keen sympathy the suffering that came upon the company during nineteen days of almost constant rain, chill winds, and dreary nights of broken sleep immediately following the fire.

"The only relief we had from this damp and chill," he says, "came in occasional bursts of burning sun under the Equator, and then the heat was so blistering that we almost welcomed the rains again. The nights were uniformly black, save for occasional gleams of the moon through rifts in the clouds. These glimpses, however, were often a cause of terror, for they showed white caps and walls of sea that were frightful to behold. Later on, though, we were resigned to our fate, and rather courted death

in some more violent form than the horrors of starvation—possibly of madness and murder.

"Our matches soon gave out, or became worthless in the rain, so our steering had to be done by taking the direction of the wind at nightfall (knowing the general direction of the Trades). Of course we used our compass, and we also looked to the sun, the stars, and the general rules found in Bodwich to set us right. At times it was a struggle to keep afloat, so small and unmanageable did our frail craft seem in the seas that often raged for days and nights in steady succession. We had a topgallant fragment for our sail, and often had five reefs in that poor excuse of a rag.

"Hunger began to worry us at the end of the second day. Our first real meal after the excitement of the burning vessel was the morn-



"THE FLARE OF THE BURNING SHIP WAS SO INTENSE THAT THE SEA WAS AFLAME FOR MILES."

ing after the fire. It was then that we broke bread (hard tack) in the rain. Everything was soaking wet, and the spray of the sea was drenching us still more; but the food tasted sweet to men thus adrift. Little did we then think that even that humble meal was destined to be reduced to a few sour black crumbs in less than two weeks from that time. By the end of the fourth or fifth day we were glad to

get even the salt-sodden crumbs and a gill of water in twenty-four hours. Before the end of two weeks we had appetites that did not split hairs at anything; and but for the captain's severe orders some of us would have had a square meal at any cost. Even water began to grow so scarce that it seemed there was no chance to survive; but there was relief in the showers. It was a godsend to catch an extra drink in any old bit of a sail—a refreshing substitute for food."

Clough's account shows how wonderful is the way men's constitutions become accustomed to hardships when stern occasions compel them to meet certain conditions. "We slept in all sorts of positions," he said, "lying in water, wet through for weeks, numb and cramped, weak and chilled by wind and spray, yet often dreaming of Christmas dinners and of most beautiful things. I remember looking at a rosy sunset one evening after a storm. It was at a time when hunger had pulled me down until I was fearfully weak and delirious, but when I fell asleep I dreamt of turkeys on feast tables, and in happy dreams I seemed to be enjoying a meal fit for a king."

Finally, these mere shadows of men grew so ravenous that they began to devour the canvas that had covered the ham. They also chewed the bones of that same ham, sucked every atom of sustenance from the staves of the butter-keg, and even ate their boots and the pulp of bits of wood, which they moistened with sea-water. It was about that

time that an event occurred which gave the party renewed life: they came upon a sleeping turtle, caught him, divided him into fifteen equal parts, and were kings for a day. Mr. Clough continues:—

"Even by this time we were so weak from lack of food and long suffering that I believe we should have died had it not been for the sheer will-power that kept us living. I re-

member we caught a sea-gull with a boat-hook some ten or twelve days before we reached Hawaii, and the work of dividing it into fifteen equal parts, even down to the feathers, took less time than the telling. We had almost reached the last chance then, and by this I mean the casting of lots for the sacrifice of one of us, so that the others might live to tell the story. To this agreement of a gamble for life or death all of us consented without the least hesitation. You see, the captain had induced us to refrain from this dreadful resort so long as a single chance seemed to remain. The last five days we made nearly a thousand miles, with nothing to eat except some pieces of canvas and a swallow of water a day. We had become so weak and hopeless that when I sighted land I could hardly induce even the captain to look. We had been deceived so often that the only answer I got was, 'Don't deceive us any more; we have been fooled too often!' It was not until we were within sound of the breakers that anyone would heed my signal."

There are so many fascinating little things about this remarkable voyage that only one can here be named without encroaching on the main features of the story. A remarkable minor incident of the voyage was the survival of a cock, which crowed regularly at daylight each morning until the end of the eighteenth day, when he expired, after crowing more vigorously than ever. Though hunger had long before that moment made the faces of the sailors wan



"A COCK CROWED REGULARLY AT DAYLIGHT EACH MORNING UNTIL THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH DAY."

and lean, they spared the body of the dead bird as they had spared his life; and when he sang for the last time and died, he was cast into the sea by those who had been cheered so long by his clarion notes, and who were thereafter to miss his cheerful morning alarm.

For several days the crew of the long-boat towed the two quarter-boats, divided food with their occupants, and did all in human power to succour them; but after several rough nights it was evident that the task of towing was too great, and that the three boats must part like bits of flotsam and jetsam tossed by the huge rollers. The parting took place at sunset one lovely evening that gave promise of a perfect day. Captain Mitchell saw that each party was provided with an equal supply of food and water; and then, with the reflection of the tropical sun upon the deep, and with the Trades gently blowing, old friends said good-bye for ever. The last that Clough or any human eye ever saw of those boats and their occupants they were drifting toward the crimson west, and into that lonely sunset they vanished for ever. Whether the unfortunate wretches ate one another, died like heroes together, or met watery graves, no one will ever know.

Clough's account of the sufferings, hopes, and fears of the company is supplemented by a few strikingly eloquent extracts from the diary of Samuel and Henry Ferguson, the former dead, and the latter now an aged college professor; he was then a young man bent on trying his fortune in California. As Mark Twain has aptly said, these entries cannot be improved upon for living interest. Their simple words are golden, especially the description of the feelings of the men when land was finally sighted; and the very pauses and incompleting phrases have in them an eloquence that words cannot portray. First a few extracts from Samuel Ferguson's log are submitted:—

“May 24th.—Headed about north-west all day. In the afternoon heavy sea, with promise of a bad night. No birds nor fish . . . We are all plainly getting weaker; there is no blinding ourselves to this sorrowful truth.”

“May 25th.—Last night was a very hard one till about 4 a.m., the sea breaking over our weather side and making everything wet and uncomfortable; nor was the day any better. I think hardly anyone managed to keep entirely dry. Sun not fully out all day. . . . My cramped position makes lying one way any length of time impossible, and one is sore almost all over. Passed at some distance a spar, but not near enough to see what it was. Saw some whales blow. Weather misty, with some very fine rain, which is penetrating.”

“June 1st.—Last night and to-day sea very high and cobbling, breaking over and making us all wet and cold. Weather squally, and there is no doubt that only careful management—with God's protecting care—preserved us through both the night and the day. It is most marvellous how almost every morsel that passes our lips is blessed to us.”

“Sunday, June 3rd.—Latitude 17deg. 54min. Heavy sea all night, and from 4 a.m. very wet, the sea breaking over us in frequent sluices, and soaking everything—aft particularly. All day the sea has been very high, and it is a wonder we are not swamped.”

The log of the younger Ferguson will now be drawn upon to show something of the fears that harassed the party as their food vanished and their fate seemed one of starvation. By June 10th it seemed that there was little hope of survival for many more days, yet day after day passed with everybody alive and hopeful of land. On June 15th that hope was realized. The entries follow:—

“June 11th.—Ate the rind and meat of our ham-bone, and have the bone and greasy cloth from around the ham-bone left to eat to-morrow. God send us birds or fish, and let us not perish of hunger, or be brought to the dreadful alternative—! As I feel now, I do not think anything could persuade me; but you cannot tell what you will do when you are reduced by hunger and your mind wandering.”

“June 12th.—Stiff breeze, and we are fairly flying toward the islands. Good hopes; but hunger is awful. Ate ham-bone to-day.”

“June 13th.—The ham-rags are not gone yet, and the boot-legs, we find, are very palatable after we get the salt out of them. A little smoke, I think, does some little good, but I don't know.”

“June 14th.—Hunger does not pain us much, but we are dreadful weak. Our water is getting frightfully low. God grant that we may see land soon. Nothing to eat—but feel better than I did yesterday. Toward evening saw a magnificent double rainbow—the first we had seen. Captain said, ‘Cheer up, boys! it's a prophecy! It's the bow of promise.’”

And so the rainbow proved, for by the next night those storm-beaten shadows of men had reached the rainbow islands of the Hawaiian group, the land of eternal June. Here is the last entry, an eloquent touch that was written by a man so weak that he could not stand alone—so far gone, in fact, that it required days of careful nursing to bring him back to health and strength again:—

“June 15th.—God be for ever praised for His infinite mercy to us! Land in sight! Rapidly

neared it, and soon were sure of it. Two noble Kanakas swam out and took the boat ashore. We were joyfully received by two white men and a crowd of natives, with women and children. They treated us splendidly, aided us, carried us up the bank, and brought us water, poi, bananas, and green coconuts. The white men took care of us, and prevented those who would have eaten too much from doing so. Everybody overjoyed to see us, and all sympathy expressed in faces, deeds, and words. We were then helped up to the house, and help we

They gave the captain a little room, and the same to Sam and me, and gave the sitting-room to the men. We enjoyed the night, but did not sleep—dreaded that we might wake up and find ourselves in the boat again."

Thus ends the story of the log, and in the light of Clough's explanations of the endurance of the party it is almost beyond comprehension how fifteen men ever lived so long on nothing. Of course, hope played a great part so long as there seemed anything to hope for; and, even after the sufferers had been deceived for many



"TWO NOBLE KANAKAS SWAM OUT AND TOOK THE BOAT ASHORE."

needed. Mr. Jones and his steward, Charley, are the only whites here. Treated us splendidly. Gave us first about a teaspoonful of spirits in water, and then to each a cup of hot tea and a little bread. Takes every care of us. Gave us later another cup of tea—and bread the same—and then let us go to rest. It is the happiest day of my life. God, in His mercy, has heard our prayer, and we are saved! Everybody is so kind. Words cannot tell——"

"June 16th.—Mr. Jones gave us a delightful bed, and we surely had a good night's rest—but not sleep; we were too happy to sleep.

weary weeks, dreams of feasts and prosperity, with pictures of home and plenty and freedom and the joys of life, came to cheer them during their last days at sea. A strange fact was that all were afterwards in better health than they had been for many years. From this some have concluded that a severe fast at times proves a restorative. However this may be, it is probable that a few more days would have seen the quiet end of all. The rescue of the *Hornet* company after the trials of more than six weeks must ever remain one of the most marvellous authentic stories of the sea.

The Wedding Fêtes of Grez-Doiceau.

BY J. E. WHITBY.

An interesting village ceremonial in Belgium, at which the whole commune came forward to do honour to certain selected married couples of great age and unblemished character. There were church ceremonies, a banquet, the presentation of gifts, a carnival procession, and finally a display of illuminations and fireworks. With photographs specially taken for "The Wide World" by M. de Leemans.



AN invitation to a diamond wedding is not a thing of everyday occurrence; and when that is combined with the celebration of four golden weddings at the same time the matter becomes one which he who is in search of interesting matter for WIDE WORLD readers cannot afford to overlook.

An intimation from the municipal authorities of Grez-Doiceau-lez-Wavre that my presence would be welcome at the festivities to celebrate the wedding anniversaries of these very-much-married five couples induced me to throw to the winds my other engagements for the same day and to take the train for Wavre. From there one of the light railways that traverse Belgium in every direction like the threads of a spider's web conveyed me to the village in question.

At the station I found two very smart-looking officials waiting to receive me, both clad in that curious morning-evening costume which, though it may have the advantage of enabling the wearer to be equal to any emergency, strikes an English eye with bewilderment. A tail coat and silk hat at nine in the morning made an odd combination, but, joined to a white waistcoat, which served as a background for a red and white ribbon and the coat of arms of the little town, gave each wearer a look both important and fine. Thus escorted, I made the tour of the place—a graceful, quaint, and picturesque little spot, with a small stream murmuring its secrets confidentially all through the village. Everything was looking its very gayest, with trees planted for the occasion before everydoor, linked with miles of

paper chains, and hung with innumerable lanterns. It was impressed on me that all this was the result of individual effort, and it certainly showed a unanimity of good feeling which many a larger town might envy, together with a popularity which spoke volumes for the persons in whose honour the *fête* was given. These were spoken of as the "jubilaires," a word for which there is no exact equivalent in the English language; but it is so short and so expressive, that perhaps I may be excused for using it in this descriptive paper, even by those who object to the very tip of the French tongue appearing in an English article.

At half-past eleven five carriages and pairs were sent by the municipality (which, it must be understood, bore the entire cost of the festival) to fetch the "jubilaires" to the Town Hall, where they were received by the Mayor (the Comte de Monceau) and the Corporation. Here, when assembled, they drank what is known as the "vin d'honneur," which took the form of a glass of port and a biscuit. Here also they sat for their photographs. The diamond bride and bridegroom are placed, naturally, in the centre of the picture. He holds a stick, and she has added a white



AN INTERESTING MATRIMONIAL GROUP—ONE DIAMOND AND FOUR GOLDEN WEDDING COUPLES, PHOTOGRAPHED IN THE TOWN HALL. [M. de Leemans.]





