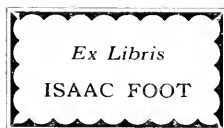


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BY

LOUIS BECKE

AUTHOR OF

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'NEATH AUSTRAL SKIES

I

THE MAN WHO WAS TOO SMALL FOR HIS BOOTS

OFF the low, densely wooded shore of the western end of the great island of New Britain, in the Western Pacific, a brigantine was lying at anchor. Between the vessel and the mainland were several small islets, little more than sandbanks, but covered with coco palms. A reef encircled the group, and the measured beat of the surf upon the coral barrier began to give forth a louder sound as, with the coming night, the trade wind died away, and the lofty hills in the interior of the mainland became enwrapped in mist. Four miles distant to the eastward lay another cluster of islets, and presently the light of many fires showed along the shores, seeming to rise from the sea.

On the after-deck of the brigantine two men were pacing to and fro; for'ard, most of the crew

were having their supper; below in the roomy cabin the lamp was lit and the table laid for supper.

For another ten minutes the two men walked the deck in silence, then some one called out from for'ard—

“The captain’s boat is coming, Mr. Laidley.”

“All right, bo’sun. Stand by to hoist her up. It’s going to be a dirty night.” Then putting his head under the flap of the skylight, Laidley, the mate of the brigantine, told the steward that the captain’s boat was near.

His companion, a young man of about five-and-twenty years of age, had seated himself on the rail, pipe in mouth, and was staring moodily at the fires on the farther group of islets, and listening to the click of the rowlocks of the approaching boat.

The mate was turning to go below, when the young man called him back.

“Laidley,” he said, as he placed his hand on the officer’s arm, “we must put an end to this fool’s game. Will you stand by me, or must I act alone?”

“You mean about the skipper?”

“Yes. I have stood it long enough. My patience is exhausted, and if things go on much longer as they are, I shall either go mad, or knock the little brute’s brains out with a belaying-pin. He

deserves it if only for his heartless treatment of his wretched wife. Will you stand by me or not?"

The mate was a cautious man and paused ere he replied.

"What do you propose to do? I will stand by you to a certain extent, for I am sick of his daily brutality. But I am in a different position to you, and cannot run myself into gaol out of sympathy for the crew and yourself. You are a free man in not being on the articles. To be plain with you, if you mean mutiny, I will have no hand in it, though I know that the crew are ripe for it."

"Will you take command of the ship, if necessity demands it, or the crew force you to do so?"

"I shall have no other choice. But, for God's sake, no bloodshed."

"Rest assured of that. I will take all responsibility. After supper I will give him another chance to abandon this cursed treasure-hunt and prosecute the voyage. If he refuses, then I shall act. No man ever yet bluffed me out of my rights."

The boat, manned by the native seamen, came alongside, and a slenderly built young woman ascended wearily to the deck; after her came her husband, Captain Frank Castell. His garments, from his cap down, were wet through with salt water; slung from his shoulder by a leather strap

was a small canvas bag, which was heavily weighted.

"Hoist up the boat, Mr. Laidley," he said sharply, then he paused for a moment at the companion-way. "Any more of those d—d red-skinned swine shamming sick?"

"Another man down with fever, sir, since you left this morning—that makes seven out of the twelve."

Castell uttered a harsh, barking laugh.

"They've got to be well in the morning, by six bells, and get the anchor up, or I'll know the reason why. I am going to beat up to that other group of islands first thing in the morning."

Beyond the usual "Aye, aye, sir," the mate made no reply, though he was well aware that, with seven men sick out of twelve, it would be impossible to lift the anchor and make sail, unless the wind was very light and the men given plenty of time.

Castell went below, and in a few minutes the steward appeared, carrying his soddened sea-boots and several pairs of socks to put in the galley to dry.

The boots were about three sizes too large for the skipper, having originally belonged to a man who had stood six feet in his stockings, but Castell managed to keep them on his feet by wearing four pairs of thick woollen socks.

The crew hated those boots, for when the little ruffian knocked a man senseless with a belaying-pin, he made use of his boots by kicking the unfortunate wretch when he was down.

Supper was served, and eaten almost in silence. Mrs. Castell was not present, her husband merely mentioning that she was tired, and telling the steward to take her something to eat in her cabin.

Making a hurried meal, the mate rose and went on deck, and the captain and recruiter sat alone, the steward, at a quick sign from the latter, retreating to his pantry.

"I want to have a few words with you before you turn in, Captain Castell. Is it convenient for you to give me a few minutes now?"

Castell swung round in his chair with a flash in his black eyes, for in the tones of the recruiter's voice there was a challenge. He was a rather small, but well-made man of under thirty years of age, and his naturally dark complexion seemed darker still now that he had changed his wet clothes for a well-fitting suit of white American duck. For a moment or two he regarded Meredith in silence, stroking his carefully trimmed beard and moustache.

"Well, what is it?" he said in a tone of careless insolence.

"I want to know when you intend to leave this place and set about the business of recruiting native

labour. We are now over two months out from Samoa, and we have not secured one single recruit." A pause.

Castell lit a cigar. "Well, go on."

"I came with you as recruiter, not as an idler. Recruiting is my business, and I cannot afford, and am not disposed to kick my heels on this ship's deck for £16 a month—even if I am doing nothing—whilst you spend your time on shore grubbing on the reef for Mexican dollars. By this time we should have been beating back to Samoa with a hundred 'recruits' on board; and at the bonus of ten dollars per head that would mean a thousand dollars to me."

Castell leant his elbow on the table, and eyed the speaker evilly.

"Have you finished?" he asked.

"Yes—so far."

"Then before you go any further let me tell you this. This ship is mine. I shall do what I like, go where I like, and if it suit me, I'll stay on this coast for another six months, and you and your recruiting can go to h—l. *I'm* satisfied. Do you understand that?"

Meredith was a hot-tempered man, but he kept himself under control, though his swarthy features paled with anger.

"I don't deny that you are master of your own ship. And if you decide not to continue the cruise,

you can stay here, and go on grubbing for your cursed dollars—but you will do so alone.”

“Ah-h-h!” and Castell showed his white, even teeth in an ugly smile; “so that is your game, is it, Meredith? You threaten me, eh?”

The recruiter looked calmly at the handsome, evil face.

“Since you ask me—yes. I threaten you. And I am not a man to make an idle threat. Now listen to me. Those of the crew who are well are ripe for mutiny. You have hazed and bullied and battered them about for two months, and it is a wonder to me that you have not had a knife into your throat long ago. God knows that you deserve it, you mean, savage little brute! Ah, sit quiet there and keep your hands in sight—if you try to point a pistol at me, I’ll knock your head off. Now,” here he dropped his voice almost to a whisper, so as not to alarm Mrs. Castell, “I have but little more to say. The ship is practically in my hands now—at this very moment—and you would be helpless if I raised my finger. Laidley, who is a fool, might back you up—if he did I would put him in irons, take charge of the ship myself, and sail her back to Samoa. And I want you clearly to understand this—that for a week past your life has not been worth five minutes’ purchase. Think of that, you blind fool! Do you know what has saved you from being knocked on

the head some night in the past and chucked overboard to feed the sharks? Well, I'll tell you."

Unable to speak, Castell sat staring at Meredith, his two clenched hands on the table. Fear had crept into his heart at last.

Meredith leant across the table, and the long pent-up rage and scorn in his whispered words made the man quail.

"This is why, Frank Castell. Because your wife is on board, and she is a good woman, and the men like her as much as they hate you—that is one reason—and because Laidley and the bos'un treat the men with as much humanity as you will allow them to exercise—that is another reason. And the last reason is this—I told the men that when the second mate died it was not from fever, but——"

"But what?"

The words came from him in a panting gasp, and if hatred for a moment overcoming craven terror could have killed, Meredith would have died there and then. And the recruiter watched the man's face, and revelled in his power over him—the power of the knowledge of secret guilt of an enemy who deserves no pity. Yet it was but a random shot. He smiled and leant back in his chair with folded arms before he answered slowly.

"I told them that the second mate, when he went on shore with you that day, and you and he began

your usual search on the reef, I told them, Castell—listen carefully—that he must have had a fit of ague, fallen, and fractured the back of his skull and then rolled off the edge of the reef into deep water and been drowned. But,” and he launched the words out like a bolt, “I could have told them something very different, eh? Men don’t fracture their skulls in that way, Castell. And I happened to be aloft that afternoon. I was watching you—just to pass the time.” (The latter part of this statement was pure fiction, but Castell did not doubt it.)

Castell’s hands, now relaxed and nerveless, were shaking.

“What do you want me to do?” he asked, gulping down a lump in his throat.

“Give up this dollar-hunting right away, and clear out of this fever-stricken hole. Two of the men will be dead in another twenty-four hours. I don’t know, nor care, how much money you have found, but I do know that I want to make some myself—and I am top dog now.”

“See here, Meredith. I’ll take you into my confidence—aye, and more, you shall stand in with me. I’ll give you an eighth share. This is the chance of my life. This morning I discovered that the Dutch barque must have been carried over the reef abreast of us, and brought up on the farther group of islands, where she broke up. This money

I have found must have been in the boats when they were smashed up. Another week is all I want."

Meredith listened in silence, then he spoke.

"I don't want to stand in with you, Captain Castell. But if you will give me your pledge to stay here no longer than one week, I will talk to the crew. But you will go alone, and at your own risk. Those islands are crowded with natives—savage and treacherous cannibals. If you choose to venture on shore you must leave your wife on board. I will let you have four men as a covering party to stand by in the boat—that is all the help you shall have."

"Very well. I am satisfied."

When, three months previously, Meredith had joined the brigantine at Samoa as recruiter, he had done so with misgivings. Castell had a bad name as a "hazing" bully, and no recruiter had ever sailed with him on a second cruise. And yet, when he first came to Samoa from apparently nowhere, though the brigantine's papers (and he) said from Punta Arenas, the white community hailed him as a "good fellow," and were not greatly startled when a month afterwards Nellie Restiaux, the half-caste orphan daughter of a well-to-do trader, fell in love with, and married the dashing American stranger. There were some people who said that

she would repent it—that he was a bad lot, and that it was only her small fortune of ten thousand dollars in hard cash and some little landed property she possessed in Samoa that had attracted him. And these “croakers,” as they were termed by the majority of the community, were not wrong.

In those days only British ships engaged in the Kanaka labour trade came under the jurisdiction of the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, and carried Government agents appointed by the Fiji and Queensland authorities—German, American, and French vessels carried recruiters, but no Government agents, and their owners and masters practically did what they liked, and in too many cases did evilly. Castell's brigantine, the *Doris Price*, was under American colours, and Castell himself was a naturalized American. All the crew, except the boatswain, were Polynesians, and shipped in Samoa for the cruise. Had they known the skipper's reputation they would not have gone near him. Neither would Laidley, Meredith, nor the boatswain. But Hart, the second mate, was a man after Castell's own heart—a brutal, ignorant Prussian. He and Castell soon became very intimate, and before the brigantine had been to sea many days the other officers heard them frequently discussing the wreck of a Dutch barque on the west end of New Britain five years previously. She had on board eight or nine thousand

Mexican dollars. The captain, all the officers, and nearly all of the crew perished, but two Manila men had, a year later, reached Sourabaya and told the tale. Hart had been the mate of a small Dutch schooner sent to seek for the treasure, and from what Laidley and Meredith gathered, the master of the schooner found the spot where the barque had been wrecked, searched for a few days for the money without success, and then he and his boat's crew were attacked by the savage natives, and the terrified skipper abandoned the search and returned to Sourabaya. But Hart had found a few coins strewn among the *débris* of dead coral on the reef, and had kept the matter to himself.

Soon after leaving Samoa Castell began to knock his crew about. One day he gave a man a savage kicking—the next morning his sea-boots were missing. A second pair disappeared also, and for some days he could not pursue his usual kicking, but when the brigantine called at Wallis Island for provisions, he bought a pair from the local trader there, and although they were much too large and made him present a grotesque appearance, the unfortunate native crew soon found out that he was making up for lost time—he began to use them on their bodies within an hour after he came on board.

Immediately after leaving Wallis Island, Castell,

instead of steering a westerly and southerly course for the New Hebrides—which were to have been the brigantine's first "recruiting" grounds, headed N.N.W. for the western end of New Britain. Meredith went to him and asked him what this meant. Castell calmly told him that he had something else in view than looking for "blackbirds" for the next month or so, and that he was going to spend that time at the west end of New Britain. Meredith was helpless, and could say nor do nothing. And Castell sailed the *Doris Price* direct to where the Dutch barque had been cast away, and began his search. It was successful from the very first.

Every morning he, Hart, two native seamen, and Mrs. Castell got into the boat and went on shore. Whilst Castell, his wife and Hart sought for the money, the two seamen were left in the boat, the captain threatening to shoot them dead if they followed him. Why Castell insisted upon taking his wife with him, to suffer physical hardships under a tropical sun, and when she was needing the utmost care and attention that could be given to her by her husband, Meredith and the mate understood quite well—he was afraid of leaving her on board the brigantine, because he feared that she would tell them something of the misery and daily suffering she had endured since she had married such a man as he. And for the same

reason Castell feared to leave her in the boat with the two native sailors. For he knew that they, simple-minded creatures as they were, hated him, and that if his wretched wife appealed to them, they would not refuse to help her on account of the native blood in her veins.

And so matters had gone on till one day Castell came on board and reported that Hart was missing. Laidley and Meredith strongly suspected that Castell had murdered the man, for although Hart was suffering from fever, it was only slightly, and then of late the two men had frequently quarrelled. But when, at the interview in the cabin, Meredith had thrown out his dark hint, his suspicions became a certainty. He had disliked Castell from the first—for it was quite apparent to both him and Laidley that he terrorized his gentle, uncomplaining wife—he had secured her money, and she had become an incubus.

Early on the morning after the scene in the cabin, the crew, at Meredith's private request, obeyed Castell's order, got the ship under way, and in a few hours she let go anchor again on the lee side of the group of islands, and within sight of a native village. The boat was lowered and manned by two sullen men, each of whom was armed with a Snider carbine.

Castell came on deck, with fury in his heart—

the steward had informed him that by an accident his four pairs of socks had fallen on the hot galley range, and been burnt to ashes. He made no answer, but gave the man a look that made him shiver. As he was about to descend to the boat, Meredith spoke to him.

"You are armed, I see, Captain Castell. It is well that you are, for I again warn you that you are risking your life. The two men who are going with you are also armed, but they may want their rifles for their own protection—and they bear you no love."

Castell nodded, but said nothing, and a quarter of an hour later the boat touched the edge of the reef, and he got out and made direct for the shore—sometimes walking on the coral, sometimes wading across the shallow pools that intervened. The two men in the boat pushed off, dropped the killick, and made themselves comfortable.

Scarcely had Castell proceeded a mile towards the beach—searching as he went—when the rattle of native war-drums was heard by those on board the ship, though no natives could be seen. But Castell took no heed, and went steadily on, and a few minutes later two or three score of savages, armed with spears and clubs, broke cover from the dense grove of coco palms on the beach, and rushed towards him.

"The fool!" cried Meredith, "is he mad? Quick,

steward, pass up some rifles. We must not let the man be murdered, Laidley."

But ere a shot could be fired from the ship, Castell looked up and realized his danger, drew his revolver and emptied the six chambers at the advancing natives without effect, and then he turned to run—hampered by his enormous boots—and reloading his pistol as he staggered along. And swiftly on came the black men.

As Meredith and Laidley opened a vain fire—for they were far out of range, and their bullets fell short—the two men in the boat seemed to come to life, and they too began to use their Sniders. But although the savages were in a thick cluster, and not three hundred yards away, not one of them fell—and Meredith knew that they were purposely firing high. They were revelling in the agony of the man who had so long treated them like wild beasts.

A mocking laugh of triumph came from the pursuers, as Castell turned to face them, pistol in hand, and then suddenly sank to his waist in a hole of the reef. Clambering out, minus one boot, he rose and staggered on, only to fall again, and then, as he tried to disencumber himself of the other boot, a spear passed through his back. And then the wild men closed in upon him, and he was hidden from view.

Half-a-minute later they opened out again, and

one of them vauntingly raised his spear on high and held it up to view—Castell's head was on the point. And the last that was seen of him was his battered and mutilated body being borne along the reef to be consigned to the cannibal ovens—a fitting end to a wicked and cruel life.

II

DENISON GETS EVEN WITH SAUNDERSON

TOM DENISON, the South Sea supercargo (who was really a kindly-hearted, good young man), had at last, after some years of pleasant and unpleasant remembrances and associations with his firm, sent in his resignation, and somewhat hurriedly left their employment—all on account of Saunderson.

Saunderson was a member of the firm, and was also travelling inspector of their South Sea Island business, and was always a thorn in the side of their skippers and supercargoes, because he was such a terrible ass, and was always saying or doing things that brought about disaster to every one—and particularly to himself. Every year or so he made a tour of inspection of the various trading stations in the Pacific, to examine the traders' accounts, with the result that he managed to exasperate everybody, white and native, missionaries and beach-combers, and naval officers of all nations, and always got into serious trouble over something

or another, and then returned to Sydney, after a four months' cruise, looking—and feeling—very ill, and blaming Denison for all his misfortunes and calling upon him to resign. Yet, at the bottom of his heart, Saunderson had a sneaking regard for Denison and also for Pakenham, the skipper of the *Palestine*, who had both saved him, on several occasions, from being assaulted, battered and excoriated by furious male natives, who resented the awfully shocking and improper things he said to their women folk in the vernacular. Saunderson intended, of course, to be the pink of politeness and the mirror of propriety, and never knew the nature of the fearful remarks he had made, until Denison had, after rescuing him, explained their enormity, and begged him to discontinue trying to address natives (especially women) in their own language, which he (Saunderson) didn't understand a cent's worth, yet by insisting upon trying to speak it, always brought about serious trouble, and in consequence he (Denison) and Pakenham had to suffer in the estimation of every one in the South Seas, through their being associated with such an unutterable idiot.

But Denison, although he had had furious quarrels with big, fat Alexander Saunderson, his *bête noir*, liked him secretly (even as Saunderson really liked him), for at bottom the Scotsman was a kind-hearted, gentlemanly sort of an ass, and the

two, through the influence of peacemaker Skipper Pakenham, had always shaken hands after a disagreement, and Saunderson had dropped the subject of resignation.

But at last they had such a quarrel that Denison, who often used excited and careless language when he was worried by Saunderson's awful blunders—though naturally he was a quiet, good, even-tempered young man—threatened to choke him as a “confounded nuisance and overgrown block-head.” And as the threat was uttered in front of the British Consulate in Samoa, and in the presence of the British Consul and some European ladies, the firm could not overlook the matter, and regretfully accepted Denison's resignation, but admitted that he had received great provocation. This is what Saunderson had done—

There was a native chief named Sulu, to whom Denison wanted to send a few hundreds of Snider cartridges (which was an illegal act for a British subject, and rendered him liable to a heavy fine), but did not know how to manage it. Then an idea came to him. He had one of the ship's pigs killed and cleaned, filled its interior with cartridges, and then had it carefully sewn up; then he sent it off to Sulu by two of the native crew, who had the animal slung by its feet from a pole.

It was a Sunday morning, and as the seamen went through the street they met people coming out

of the English church, among whom was Saunderson, who was walking with the minister. The moment Saunderson saw the sailormen he bade them stop. He wanted to show off, and let the Rev. Mr. Tiggles see that he was a very important person on board the *Palestine*.

Where were they taking the pig? he demanded. They replied that Mr. Denison was sending it to Sulu as a present.

"Then," said Saunderson loftily, "take it back to the ship again, and tell Mr. Denison that I forbade you to carry a dead pig through the streets on the Sabbath Day."

"Hear, hear!" said Mr. Tiggles approvingly.

But the sailors didn't care a rap about Saunderson, who had no right whatever to interfere with them, and so they took no notice of him and tried to push on. Then Saunderson seized one end of the pole, and again ordered the men back, and a crowd began to gather and enjoy the fun; and then somehow or other in the struggle the pig came to the ground with a thump, and a lot of cartridges rolled out of its internals.

In ten seconds the Apia Municipal police seized the sailormen, and the pig and its contents, and carried them off to jail, and the whole town became excited.

And next morning Tom Denison was haled before the Consuls and fined \$500, and left the Court

looking murder at Saunderson; and soon after he met and rebuked him in the hearing of the Consul.

Then, as I have said, he resigned, and did not see Saunderson again for two years.

Now the loss of that \$500 rankled in Denison's bosom. Saunderson's firm had certainly once cautioned him about selling arms or ammunition in Samoa, and Saunderson himself took a very lofty standpoint when Denison appealed to him to at least pay half the fine. Denison, he said, had no right to endanger the firm's reputation by illegal practices. Besides, he added, it was wrong from a moral point of view to encourage the natives to fight. Mr. Tiggie, indeed, had told the Consuls that it was a pity that they had not power to imprison as well as fine offenders.

"Tiggie is a measly, little, meddlesome ass, whom his brother missionaries (who are gentlemen) don't like—a wretched, snuffling ex-tinker, as I told him, a——"

"He is an excellent man, and a friend of mine——"

"Being a friend of yours is enough to make any right-minded man loathe him," said Denison, who was losing his temper. "Now look here, Saunderson. You were always an ass, but I never thought you were dishonest—and mean as well. Some day you will feel remorse, and repent of your

action in this matter. As you know, my aunt died and left all her money to missions, and it is hard that I should suffer like this for trying to make a little money for myself. Once for all—will you at least pay me half of that scandalous, criminal fine?”

“Certainly not.”

“Very well, Alexander Saunderson. I cannot find words to express my contempt for you. My opinion of you as an alleged Christian has gone down to zero. You ought to be hung.”

* * * * *

Then, one day, after two years had passed, they met in Pitt Street in Sydney. Saunderson was in grand form, tall hat, frock coat and lavender kids, and his fat face was wreathed in smiles as he held out his hand.

“How are you, Denison? So glad to meet you. I heard of you last year. Left the *Vision*, didn't you, and are now a full-blown captain.”

“Yes, I have the *Manaia*. She's in dock now, getting an overhaul. I'm so glad to see you, Saunderson. You do look so well, and have such a *distingué* air.”

Saunderson flushed with pleasure. He little knew that Denison had never forgotten the five hundred dollars, and now thought he saw a way opening unto him.

"Oh, by the way, Saunderson," he said, as they strolled along together, "I must congratulate you. I heard some one in the Exchange mention your name, and say that you are to be married shortly. Being strangers to me," he added mendaciously, "I could not ask the men who is the lady, much as I was interested."

Saunderson expanded his manly bosom, "Yes, I am to be married to Mrs. Julius O'Doherty."

"Mrs. O'Doherty! Why, I know her well—that is, I knew her when Captain O'Doherty was alive, and he was in the Island trade. You are lucky. She is enormously wealthy."

"Her wealth," said Saunderson loftily, "has no attractions for me. It is her goodness, her moral worth——"

"Just so, just so, a most estimable lady. I must do myself the pleasure of calling on her and renewing my acquaintance. I am sure that even if I were a stranger to her I should be welcome from the fact of you and I being old shipmates; and then she would be so interested in the queer adventures we have had, and——"

Saunderson looked very uneasy, as Denison went on—

"By Jove, old man, what times we have had! Oh, shall I ever forget the day when you nearly blew H.M.S. *Badger* out of the water, when you were trying to dynamite fish, and how Commander

Muddle swore at you, and kicked you over the wharf, and——”

“Yes, yes! but please, for Heaven’s sake, don’t say anything about that,” said Saunderson, hurriedly wiping his brow.

“And then—oh, great Cæsar’s ghost! when you tackled the devil-fish——”

Saunderson gave a choking sort of groan, and then asked Denison to come into the Australia Hotel, where he was staying, and have afternoon tea.

* * * * *

An hour later they parted, and Denison told him to be sure and tell Mrs. O’Doherty that he would call very soon. Then, with an inward smile, he went on his way rejoicing, for he felt that he now had the pull on Alexander Saunderson, and would get back the equivalent of that iniquitous fine. For he knew the Widow O’Doherty better than her future husband.

Mrs. O’Doherty was a lady who was close-hauled upon her fiftieth year, and would soon be to windward of it. She was notorious for her great wealth, her meanness, her ostentatious piety, her acidulous tongue, and her resolution to get another husband—Captain Julius O’Doherty having been her second victim, and when that ancient mariner had died, full of years and whisky, and left her his entire fortune, a year later she bought a splendid

mansion in a fashionable suburb, and began to entertain with a view of getting a third. And her choice fell upon Saunderson, who had heard that she was liable to "go off" at any moment with apoplexy, was encouraged to propose thereby, and was now eager to claim his bride before the apoplexy robbed him of her and her fortune. And the widow had graciously yielded to his demand for an early marriage, and named the day—which would be just two weeks after his meeting with Denison.

Saunderson was horribly afraid of Denison visiting his *fiancée*, and would have liked to have warned her against him, as being a man who had been fined for smuggling cartridges, but feared that Denison would hear of it, and in revenge tell her all about his own fearful misadventures, and that then the match would be broken off. All he could do was to hint to her that Denison was "rather fast," whereupon the lady observed that it was all the better that she saw him, as she could give him a lecture which would do him good.

Two days later Denison called on the widow, and charmed her by his polite, diffident manner. He told her much of his interest in missionary work in the South Seas, of his abhorrence of the habitual and unnecessary use of bad language by sailors, of his great liking for Saunderson, whom, he was sure, ought to be—and he felt certain was—

a very happy man. And he begged Mrs. O'Doherty to give him her photograph for his cabin. It would remind him, he said, of his old friend, her late husband, and he would ask Saunderson for his, and have them put in the same frame.

Then he rose to leave. "You must come again next Monday, Mr. Denison," said the lady, "Alexander will be here."

Denison became very grave, and pulled his moustache meditatively.

"I should like to, very much indeed, dear Mrs. O'Doherty. Your late husband liked me, and twice offered me a berth as supercargo. But——" and here he paused.

"But what?"

"I am in a painful position, Mrs. O'Doherty. I do not, for one moment, wish to say one word against my friend Saunderson; and yet I think it will be best for me *not* to accept your kind invitation."

Mrs. O'Doherty pushed him into a chair, took one herself, set her fat, square jaws, and crossed her arms across her half-a-fathom of bosom.

"Thomas Denison, what do you mean?"

Denison looked at her with a mournful air, and for a moment covered his eyes with his hat. Then, after an effort, he spoke.

"Mrs. O'Doherty. Much as I should like to come again and see you, I cannot. I will be per-

fectly frank. Alexander Saunderson—I regret to say it, but for the sake of your future happiness I now solemnly warn you—is an insanely jealous man. And I fear that he, old friends as we are, might do me some mortal injury; shoot me dead, in fact.”

The widow’s face was a study of mingled joy, pride, anger and coquetry. Pride was on top.

“I shall never be the slave of any man, Mr. Denison. You must come. Alexander Saunderson is to be my husband; but my master—never!” and she arose and stood erect.

And then Denison, murmuring something about his being only a blunt sailor, who studied the truth and had a holy reverence for women, pressed her hand and withdrew.

And then Mrs. O’Doherty sent for Saunderson and had him on the carpet, and Saunderson vowed that he loved Denison like a brother, and had not meant to insinuate anything against his character.

“Captain Denison has said nothing against you that he should not have said. He is a most estimable young man. I desire you, Alexander, to go to him, and beg him to come with you here to my house on Monday. The poor young man believes that you are so wickedly jealous of him that you would not hesitate to murder him. Go, or else all is over between us,” and she raised her enormous right arm tragically,

Saunderson's jaw dropped, and he went.

* * * * *

At six o'clock on the following evening, as Denison was having his supper, Saunderson came on board the *Mania*.

"Look here, Denison," he said, "I've been thinking over that matter of the fine that you had to pay, and now I really believe that, in a way, it was my fault, and so here is a cheque for £100——"

Denison laid down his knife and fork, and ordered the steward to leave the cabin.

"Saunderson, you are seeking to bribe me by paying me a sum of money that you ought to have paid me two years ago. I will accept no bribe. You are about to marry—at least you think you are—a lady for whom I have the utmost respect, and who, if I cared to tell her of what you have done, of the awful name you have gained for your disgraceful remarks to native women——"

Saunderson groaned in anguish, and then Denison laughed, but in a very grave manner.

"Saunderson, I'll forgive you, accept the money you owe me, and say no more about my wounded feelings. But if you had not interfered with that pig, I would have made at least five hundred dollars. So you see you made me lose a thousand in all. Now let us shake hands, and I'll be best man at the wedding, and tell your bride that although you are a dangerous man when your

jealousy is aroused, you are a perfect saint otherwise."

* * * * *

Saunderson, although supposed to be a strict abstainer, had to be kept on board the *Manaia* until dark, and then Denison conveyed him in a hansom to his rooms in the Australia Hotel, put him into bed, told him not to worry about anything, and tipped the bedroom valet to attend to him—for Saunderson was weeping—as his friend "had been out in the sun, and had got a touch of it."

"Yes'r. Plenty of iced soda water, sir, to-night, if he wakes, and a cold baby bottle of Perrier in the morning."

"That's it. It will strengthen him. Good-night."

THE DESERTER

EARLY one morning Her Majesty's ship *Thalia* anchored in Safatu Harbour, in the Samoan Group, and William Duke, the local trader, made preparations for the immediate absence of himself and his family. The natives of the village of Sanaapu rendered him every assistance, and within an hour of the arrival of the warship Duke was on his way in his whaleboat to another village, named Vaiee, situated some miles away on the eastern side of Safatu Harbour.

Duke knew that he could depend upon the unswerving loyalty of his native friends, inasmuch as although they were aware of the fact that the commander of the *Thalia* would reward them for handing their white man over to him as a deserter, the perpetrators of such an act of treachery would have to pay for it with their lives. For Māfa, who had been a faithful wife to Duke for five years, was sister to Tui-o-le-Vao, Chief of Safune—a man who could put five hundred of the hardest fighting men in Samoa into the field.

During his seven years' residence in Samoa, Duke, now a man of past forty years of age, had, whenever a man-of-war visited any port at which he was residing, been compelled to absent himself for a short time at some distant village or in the mountains. For although six years had passed since he, then captain of the fore-top of the *Cockatrice*, had settled a grudge with the gunner in Panama by half-killing him and then bolting, he had still a not unnatural aversion to needlessly thrusting himself under the notice of any ship of Her Majesty's Navy. Descriptions of deserters never seem to become mislaid or lost, as many a South Sea trader or beach-comber has found to his cost, when dwelling in fancied security among the brown people of the Polynesian Isles.

So, when, later on in the morning, the commander of the *Thalia* with some of his officers came on shore for a day's pigeon shooting, and casually inquired if there were any white men living in any of the villages of Safatu Harbour, they were informed that one did live at Sanaapu, but that he was then away on a trading cruise along the coast and would not return for a week; also, they added, he would be smitten with a great grief to learn that an English man-of-war had been at Safatu in his absence, for, they asserted, whenever a man-of-war came, Vili (Mr. William Duke) always dressed himself in his best clothes and went on board to

shake the hand of the captain, say—"Talofa," and beg him to honour his house by passing through the doorway.

From the wooded hills about Vaiee, Duke and the villagers had an excellent view of the corvette and of the boats and canoes passing to and fro between the ship and the village of Sanaapu. Vaiee, they knew, would not be visited by any of the ship's company, for access to it by boat was difficult owing to the water inside the reef being so shallow that only at flood tide could the reef be crossed, and by land the distance from Sanaapu was over two leagues. So although two or three natives kept watch on the hills, Duke, his wife, and two little daughters remained in the house of the Chief of Vaiee, quietly awaiting till a cloud of black smoke pouring from the funnel of the old paddle-wheel corvette, told them that she was putting to sea again, and that they might return with safety to their house under the waving palm-trees on the white beach of Sanaapu.

Two days had passed, and the *Thalia* still lay at anchor, for her boilers were in a bad state, although only used when coming into or leaving port, for in those days ships in the Navy used their canvas almost exclusively when on long cruises. But although Māfa began to fret, her husband laughed at her fears and bade her rest content, for he had heard from the Chief of Sanaapu

that the captain of the warship had said that it might be another four days ere the ship would sail away from Samoa to the islands of the west.

"So what need is there for us to fear," he said to his wife as they sat, one evening, in front of the Chief's house, attended by some of their native friends; "even if the captain knew who I am, and sought to find me here in Vaiee, is there not the great cave of Se'uao but a league distant? And who is to find us there—for who is there in Samoa to betray me?"

Māfa bent her dark, long-lashed eyes upon her husband's bronzed and bearded face.

"Hoffman, the German," she said, "hast thou forgotten *him*—that *he* knows, and swore he would have his revenge?"

Duke touched her hand with quiet affection. "Have no fear of him. He is but a boaster. And 'tis five years ago since that day, and he has forgotten."

Māfa shook her head. "With some men hate never dies. And I know in my heart that if he could, he would, kill thee or betray thee to a ship of war. And I know, too, that he hateth me and our children even as he hates thee. And last night a dream came to me and I saw his evil face looking at me with a mocking smile upon his lips—not white with fear as it was when thou struck him to the ground in face of all my brother's people in Safune."

Again Duke sought to reassure his gentle young wife. Hoffman, he observed, lived at Apia on the other side of the island, twenty miles across the mountain range, and it was most unlikely that he or any other person on the north side knew of the presence of the warship in Safatu Harbour. And, he added, Hoffman, though a vindictive man, would not court certain death at the hands of her brother Tui-o-le-Vao, Chief of Safune, by bringing misfortune upon her and her children. Then, bidding her retire with the two little girls to sleep, he turned to his native friends and told them of his wife's fears. They smiled, and one of them, a stalwart young man named Pelu (The Sword), said, to reassure her—

“If the captain of the fighting ship brought all his men to find thy husband, they would seek in vain for the cave of Se'uao. And even if they found it could they enter? Six men can hold it against six hundred. Did not Tasia, Chief of Tuamasanga, with a hundred of his people stay hidden therein in the olden days for three months after they had been beaten in battle? So sleep in content with thy babes, O Māfa.”

Late that night there set in a steady gale from the south, and when dawn came a fierce, raging surf beat upon the reefs from Sanaapu to Vaice, and the *Thalia* rode to it with both anchors down.

Soon after the dawn came a messenger to Duke.

He had travelled across the mountains in the night and through the storm to Sanaapu, and from thence along the coast to Vaiee, and was spent with fatigue.

“Rouse thee, Vili,” he cried as he entered the chief’s house. “I am Lio of Apia and come to warn thee. Hoffman, the German, hath boasted to many people that this day thou shalt be seized and manacled and taken on board the fighting ship, which will take thee to England to die the death of a traitor. And he hath sent a messenger with a letter to the captain of the ship, telling him not to seek for thee at thy house in Sanaapu, but in one of the four villages about. This said he openly yesterday when he had drunken much grog, and staggered about from one house to another saying to white men and Samoans alike: ‘To-morrow I shall follow my messenger and see this dog Vili bound in iron bands and chains on the deck of the fighting ship. And I shall spurn him in the face with my booted foot, and the pride of the upstart Māfa shall be humbled.’ So get thee away into hiding, dear friend.”

Duke listened with an unmoved face, then he thanked the messenger and bade him take food and then rest. Then, turning to his agitated wife and the chief of Vaiee, he said quietly—

“Be not alarmed. No boat can leave the ship whilst the storm holds its strength, so there is no

need for haste. But, after we have eaten, my wife, my children, my two servants, and I shall go into hiding in the cave of Se'uao."

* * * * *

When, seven years before, William Duke had landed in Samoa from a whaleship, he had placed himself under the protection of Tui-o-le-Vao, Chief of Safune, and in a few months he had become such a favourite with the Chief and his people that the former, in accordance with the Samoan custom, exchanged names with him as a proof of the high esteem in which the white man was held.

Duke was a steady, sober, and hard-working man, and his knowledge of boat-building proved of immense advantage to him; for not only was he quickly enabled to earn enough money to begin life as a trader, but his skill as a workman brought him honour and reputation as well. For the Samoans hold in the highest respect a *tufuga*—*i.e.* a man who can work at such trades as that of boat-building, carpentry, and blacksmithing.

Then, too, there was an additional factor towards Duke gaining popularity with the natives. At Safune there were but two white men living beside himself. One was a missionary named Close, the other a trader—Adolph Hoffman. With the former Duke soon became on very friendly terms, but almost from the day that he (Duke) had put

foot on shore at Safune, Hoffman, a tall, powerfully built young man, had displayed the utmost anger and jealousy towards him. He resented most bitterly Duke's intimacy with Tui-o-le-Vao and the respect with which the new-comer was treated by the natives generally. Yet, under the guise of friendship, the treacherous German would often call at Duke's house, where he was always made welcome, until as the months went by the Englishman learned from the natives that Hoffman had put it about that he was a *tagata soli* (deserter) from a man-of-war. Hoffman had based his assertion upon a very simple fact.

One day he came across Duke bathing in a stream and noticed on his broad chest the tattooed device of a cockatrice in blue and vermilion under the words

“HER MAJESTY'S SHIP.”

And Hoffman, who had been in South America, had seen the *Cockatrice* at Valparaiso, and came to the conclusion that Duke was a deserter. So, the venom in his heart made him talk, foolishly imagining that he would damage Duke in the estimation of Tui-o-le-Vao and his people. In a roundabout way Close, the missionary, heard of Hoffman's talk and warned Duke.

“The fellow is a scoundrel, Duke. Beware of him. It does not matter to me whether you are

or are not a deserter. I like you, my wife likes you, and you have the respect and esteem of the natives as an honest, straightforward, and clean-living man. And Hoffman, in your sailor's parlance, is 'the two ends and bight' of a thorough sneaking blackguard and ruffian."

Duke thanked the clergyman in his quiet way but said nothing, although there came into his calm grey eyes a sudden flash of fire.

Now it had so happened that Duke had confided his secret to Tui-o-le-Vao and his sister Māfa, and the Chief, greatly incensed with Hoffman, threatened to expel him from the village and burn his house; though, previous to the arrival of Duke, Hoffman had been one of many suitors for Māfa's hand in marriage, and Tui had somewhat favoured the German's suit, although Māfa herself disliked the man on account of his bullying manner and dissolute habits.

On the strength of what he had been told by the missionary, Duke went to Hoffman, and asked him what he meant by talking about him.

"If I am a deserter, is it any business of yours?" he said, and then, in a sudden fury, he seized the German by the throat, dragged him outside his house, and threw him down upon the footpath in the presence of some hundreds of natives, and the bully's prestige had gone for ever.

Another year passed, and then the gentle Māfa,

who had given her love to the stalwart English sailor, was married to him by Mr. Close. As they left the mission church, Hoffman, mad with jealousy and hatred, burst through the surrounding natives and fired two shots from his pistol at Duke, wounding him in the shoulder. In a few seconds Duke had thrown him down, and then, amidst the jeers and contemptuous laughter of the people, put his foot upon his face—the most deadly insult, to Samoan usage, that could be inflicted upon an enemy.

After that Hoffman went away to Apia, nursing his hatred and waiting for revenge.

* * * * *

Commander Binghampton of the *Thalia* was an easy-going man and hated unpleasant duties such as punishing his men for any dereliction of duty, and to apprehend a deserter was something very distasteful to him. But the Commodore was a martinet, and one of his especial fads was the rooting out of deserters from the Navy in the South Sea Islands. Nothing gave him more satisfaction than the perusal of his "Deserters' List" from 1844 to 1860, and certain crosses against certain names, indicating that he, Commodore Crowley Tamberd, had succeeded in capturing so many absconders from the Navy.

"It's a beastly nuisance, Santley," said Commander Binghampton to Cardew, his first lieu-

tenant; "but we shall have to act upon this letter, especially as the British Consul in Apia vouches for the writer's respectability. Here is what this man Hoffman says: 'I am certain that the man William Duke is a deserter, and that the ship from which he deserted was the *Cockatrice*.' Now, I am afraid that it is all too true and that we shall have to collar the poor fellow, for 'William Duke' is down in Tamberd's confounded List as having deserted from the *Cockatrice*. I hate this policeman's work, but there is no help for it. Send away Mr. Towns in the second cutter and tell him to go to the various villages in the bay and tell the local chiefs that this man 'Vili,' as the natives call him, must be given up to us. I wish I could get out of it, especially as I think that personal spite is at the bottom of the matter. Why does this fellow Hoffman betray the man's secret? As for the Consul, he appears to have played into Hoffman's hands. Here is what he writes: 'I have no doubt but that Mr. Hoffman's statement is correct, and I shall be glad to hear that the man has been apprehended, as I know how very keen Commodore Tamberd is upon arresting deserters. Personally, I know nothing against the man—indeed, the Rev. Mr. Close looks upon him as quite a respectable person.' Bah! the priggishness of the expression disgusts me," and the officer tossed the letter aside contemptuously. "Tell Mr. Towns to be careful

—there is still a heavy sea running, and the wind is increasing.”

* * * * *

On the summit of a high, wooded hill, under which the great cave of Se'uaao was situated, Duke and Pelu were seated, smoking their pipes and watching the *Thaha*. Within the cave Māfa and her servants were arranging the sleeping accommodation by spreading mats upon the gravelled floor, whilst a number of native women were carrying in baskets of cooked food, fruit, and gourds of water. The entrance was concealed by a number of wild mountain banana plants growing so closely together that the cave would have been in darkness were it not for the many narrow and tortuous openings in the great dome-like roof, through which long shafts of sunlight penetrated.

For some minutes the deserter and his native friend smoked in silence, listening to the swaying canopy of tree boughs above them, and the thunder of the surf upon the barrier reef a league and a half distant.

Suddenly Pelu placed his hand on the white man's shoulder, and said in low tones—

“See, Vili; a boat is leaving the ship.”

Duke nodded. “Aye, I see it.” And then he sighed.

“Thou art sad, Vili. Hast thou fear?”

“Nay, friend. No fear have I of that boat and

those who come to seek me, for they can never find me in Se'uao. But my heart is filled with shame and sorrow to think that I should have to hide like a thief from my own countrymen. Would that I had neither wife nor children, so that I might yield myself to the captain of the ship. For as I look upon her my heart is moved within me and a great yearning is upon me to take the hand of but even one of those men now in the boat, and say to him: 'Talofa' (friend), I, too, am an Englishman and have served my Queen in the Navy.' But it cannot be. And yet I have become a broken man and an outcast through no fault of mine own; for the man whom I beat had for two whole years persecuted me. And then in an evil moment my wrath overcame me and my crime was done. And by the laws of my country I should die—for it is death to soldiers or sailors to strike those in authority above them."

"Think no more of what is past, Vili," began Pelu, then he uttered an exclamation of astonishment and pointed to the boat.

"See, the boat hath set her sail and is steering straight for Vaiee, but before her lies the great tide-rip of Tulotu, through which no boat nor canoe can pass even in calm weather. In another league she will be in the swirl of it, and all on board will perish."

Duke sprang to his feet, and in an instant

realized that the boat was indeed sailing to certain destruction.

"We must warn them, Pelu," he cried; "come, follow me," and, rushing down the hill, he set off at a run towards the village. Many natives, as he gained the path, sought to stay him, wondering what had occurred, but he thrust them aside and continued on his course.

Breathless with his exertions, he at last rushed through the village to the beach, crying out as he passed—

"Four strong men to man my whaleboat! Haste, for a boat-load of men from the warship is like to perish in the tide-rip of Tulotu."

His boat was lying hidden among the mangroves, and as he, Pelu, and a dozen more natives reached her, and five of them jumped in and seized the oars and Duke seized the steer-oar and bade them give way, the Chief of Vaiee sprang into the water and seized hold of the gunwale.

"Art thou mad, Vili!" he cried. "Wouldst thou give thyself into the hands of thy enemies? Back to the shore and let me steer the boat. Back to the cave, to thy wife and children!"

"Let go thy hold," shouted the deserter, almost fiercely, and, stooping down, he forced the old chief to release the boat, and then under the steady sweep of five oars, the light craft sped from out the shelter of the mangroves into the wild boil of surf that

was tumbling in upon the beach in long serried lines of white. But this stretch of surf, though dangerous enough, was yet greatly lessened in its force by the barrier reef beyond, which broke the first force of its strength, and outside of which mountainous billows, angry-crested and swaying madly together, threatened every moment to smother the boat and dash her splintered fragments upon the black, protruding pinnacles of reef.

Almost as much excited as their leader, and never for one moment losing courage, the brave natives bent to their oars with cries of encouragement, and a shout of triumph burst from them as, mounting upon a mighty roller, they spun down into the dark trough, clear of the reef, and in a few minutes found the seas becoming less irregular and "lumpy."

Dashing the spray from his eyes, Duke looked ahead, and caught a brief glimpse of the cutter half-a-mile away. She had capsized, and he could see a number of dark figures clinging to her keel.

"*Alo, alo!* (pull, pull), comrades," he cried to his crew. "The boat hath capsized and is being swept towards us."

Fifteen anxious minutes passed, and then as the whaleboat mounted the crest of another great sea, she dropped alongside of the cutter and her drowning and exhausted crew. Seven men were at once seized by the natives and dragged into the boat, putting her dangerously deep in the water.

"How many more are there?" cried Duke to one of the blue-jackets as he sheered away from the submerged cutter.

"Five, with the officer and the coxswain. The coxswain went after the officer, and we saw the whole five a few minutes ago clinging to oars and being swept in-shore. For God's sake, sir, let us try and save them. I think that Mr. Towns must have been hurt, for we never heard him call since we capsized."

"Stand up, Pelu, and look out," cried Duke as he swung the boat's head round. "Ha, there are two of them." These were Lieutenant Towns and the coxswain; the officer was all but unconscious and was being supported on the oar by his companion. They were quickly rescued, and scarcely had they been taken in when the three remaining men were seen, and all picked up in turn.

Then three of Duke's crew, seeing that the boat was in danger of swamping from being so overladen, leapt overboard to lighten her, and set off to swim to the shore, heedless of the danger of sharks.

An hour later when Lieutenant Towns was able to sit up, he found himself with his boat's crew in the house of the Chief of Vaiee. The men told him that the natives were treating them most kindly, but that the white man who had saved them from death had quietly disappeared, and that

the natives only gave evasive answers concerning him. But he had sent word to the *Thalia* of the mishap to her boat, "and, sir," added the coxswain, "the captain is sure to send another boat for us, as the sea is going down fast."

Lieutenant Towns said nothing. He was thinking deeply.

When he returned on board the corvette and made his report, Commander Binghampton also did some thinking.

"I don't think, Towns, that he can possibly be the man, do you?"

"I should say, sir, that he most certainly is *not* the man."

"Quite so, quite so. And as he has vanished so mysteriously, I can't waste any more time in going into the matter any further. And, oh, Mr. Towns, tell the first engineer that he *must* raise enough steam to take us out of this place in two hours. I rather think that we are in a hurry to get to Fiji—eh, Towns?"

"Yes, sir," and the young officer knew the meaning of the kindly light in the eyes of his superior.

And Duke and Māfa, as they watched the corvette steam away from the island, took their children in their arms and kissed them many times.

IV

THE LONELINESS OF IT

I

THE title of this article is the expression used in a letter I recently received from a young Scotsman, who, despite my urgent advice "not to do it," went out to the Pacific Islands to begin life as a trader with the utterly inadequate capital of £250. He had had two years' experience at farming in Manitoba, could not stand the severe winter and the heavy work, and returned home about two years ago very much pulled down, but eager to assail the walls of the City of Fortune once more under milder skies, and more genial conditions of existence. Unfortunately for him he came across a series of articles written by a globe-trotting lady who had been travelling among the Pacific Islands in excursion steamers, and whose language, and really remarkable power of descriptive writing, was only excelled by her extraordinary receptiveness of the absurd tales told to her of the ease with which any energetic person, with one or two hundred

pounds, could acquire a fortune in less than a year in the South Seas by any one of the following pursuits: "digging out gold by the handful" by grubbing for it among the roots of the mangroves growing in the embouchures of the rivers in British New Guinea and the Solomon Islands; hiring a cutter "at a trifling cost," and cruising among the atolls in search of the "innumerable" (*sic*) rich beds of pearl shells which everywhere abounded; starting a trading business, and "making a profit of a thousand per cent" on nearly everything sold to the simple-minded kanakas; buying a large area of land (also for a trifle) from the natives and planting it with coconut trees, sugar-cane or cotton, etc., etc. And all that the energetic person would have to do would be to use his energy in looking on whilst riches rolled in upon him. There was much more egregious and similar nonsense to this effect, and the writer of these present articles was the recipient of some scores of letters from men, who wrote from all parts of the British Isles, asking his advice, and his opinion of the alluring statements contained in the series of articles before-mentioned, and in every case he was obliged to condemn the lady's statements as unfortunate and misleading. From many old trading friends and acquaintances I also received letters, urging me, out of my past and present knowledge of the conditions of life in the Pacific Islands—especially

business conditions, to make known through the English Press the plain fact that, for years past, the average trader in the British-ruled Pacific Islands has barely been able to eke out a living. Those who in former years had been making a fair annual income as independent traders and copra buyers have, as a class, almost ceased to exist, owing to many causes—continuous bad seasons, hurricanes, restrictions upon native labour, and, most disastrous to them of all, the establishment of powerful trading, planting and pearl-shelling companies with a large capital, numerous branches, plenty of steamers and sailing vessels, and importing their trade goods direct to the Pacific Islands from Liverpool, Birmingham, etc.

My correspondent, however, was bent upon "having a try at it," as he informed me in one of his letters. By the time he reached Auckland he had already made a considerable hole in his £250 in buying what he thought was a modest outfit in the way of light clothing, paying his passage out to New Zealand, etc. At Auckland he was strongly advised against proceeding to the Islands to start as a trader, unless he had at least a capital of £2000, and as for his ideas of obtaining employment as a trader, clerk, or supercargo, with one of the large firms, he was told that his chances were *nil*—there were too many experienced men, who were "knocking about the beaches," unable to

obtain work of any kind. Persisting in his intention, however, he at last found himself established as a resident trader on one of the islands of the Union or Tokelau Group, near Samoa, where he was to act as the local agent for one of the minor trading firms in Fiji, at a salary of £4 per month, and five per cent commission on the value of the goods he sold and the copra he bought. He was so unfortunate as to offer to put his remaining little capital into the venture. The results were disastrous, for at the end of eleven months he found himself credited with £44 wages, but in debt to the firm for provisions, house rent, cost of boat, etc., to the extent of £260. And then he was discharged and turned adrift to shift for himself.

In writing me the story of his mishaps and disenchantment of Island life, he feelingly described his disappointment with not only the island itself (Atafu), but with the natives, and I must admit that he was correct in his delineation of the physical characteristics of both island and people.

"It is only a miserable chain of coral reefs with a pool of salt water in the middle, and covered with sand, coconut trees and pandanue, to hide the gross affront it gives to the intelligent mind by being termed an 'island.' The natives were a surly, cantankerous lot of brutes; those few who were not offensive in this respect were crawling,

servile, sponging and hypocritical to a degree. Nine-tenths of them were afflicted with that disgusting skin disease which you have so often mentioned . . . but the horror of which I never realized until then. . . . They have a way of scratching themselves with a flattened piece of stick . . . the native 'padre' used to do it in church . . . they would use my table-knives for the purpose, if I left any lying about. . . . But the worst of it all was the loneliness—the utter loneliness—of the life. No other white man to even nod a 'good-morning' to you. Some days not even a native came to the house, for they had no copra to sell, and when the spongers found that I was not too free-handed with biscuits or tobacco they too left off coming. . . . But the nights were most hideous. I used to read as long as I could, perhaps till midnight, then turn in, and be kept awake till dawn by the confounded thumping and moaning of the surf of the reef, and the eternal swish, swish, of the coconut and pandanus leaves in the trade-wind. There was absolutely nothing to do next morning, but walk up and down, and round and round about through the groves of coconut trees . . . stare out at the horizon and wonder whether one was alive, or only having a—dream."

Now Atafu, in the Tokelaus, is not a cheerful place, but yet my Scots correspondent, had he been differently constituted, mentally and physically,

and not so keen on making a fortune by doing nothing, could have made his time pass very pleasantly, or at least, would never have felt *triste*. For even a lonely, sandy banked atoll in the South Seas is full of attractions and life, and of many good things to delight the mind of even the most timorous student who has the courage and good intent to seek to learn something of the joy and great wonders of Nature. And should the amateur investigator—such as was the present writer in by-gone years—have no native companions with him to instruct him by their explanations of why such and such fish or crustacean changed its colour and mode of life at certain seasons of the year, or be unaccompanied by a score of merry, but obstructive native children, who regard the proceedings as a bit of fun for their own especial delectation, the amateur investigator, aforesaid, can spend many delightful, enthralling hours, day after day, week after week, and month after month, by “doing for himself,” watching, learning and wondering. And in my own case I did watch, learn and wonder; but I was under the heavy handicap of a scanty education, had seen no books on Natural History except those of the Early Victorian type (disembowelled from the works of Cuvier, and made “fit” for the young person of the Early Victorian period). But in years to come I was happy in meeting several naturalists engaged in making collections

in Polynesia and Micronesia, and frequently had the pleasure of accompanying them on some of their excursions, on shore and afloat. Two of these gentlemen were Drs. Finsch and Kubary, men of great scientific attainments, and bright and genial natures. Little as I may have learned from them, it proved a source of pleasure and delight to me when, years later, I found myself living on various islands in turn for long terms, usually the only resident white man. Unlike most of the traders, who found island life very monotonous when business was slack, I scarcely ever experienced a dull day, even when living on some low-lying coral island, without the advantages of forests, mountains and rivers or streams, such as are to be found in Samoa, Fiji, and the great islands of the Solomon and New Hebrides Groups, New Britain and New Ireland, and Admiralty Island.

As showing the other side of the case, so dolefully related by my young Scot's friend of his experience on Atafu Island, let me give some details of my every day life on an island that was no more attractive to the eye than was that place. The name of it is Nanomaga (or Hudson Island), it is the smallest of the seven islands comprising the Ellice Group, and possesses no lagoon (as do most of the others), only a lake or rather pool in the centre of the island. The pool is less than an acre in extent, and rises and falls with the tide, there being

a subterranean passage through the coral strata to the sea—half-a-mile distant at the nearest point.

A little digression here is necessary to explain how I came to be living on Nanomaga, where I remained eleven months.

My employers had established a large trading business in the Pacific Islands, with head-quarters in Liverpool, and main depôts at Apia, Samoa. Owing to bad management and the eccentric conduct of one of their captains, who later on became insane, the firm had suffered heavy losses. Some of the traders absconded, others were lazy, drunken scallawags, who got into serious trouble with the natives, and it was decided to make a clean sweep of these latter, replace them by decent men, and make a fresh start. With this object in view I was despatched from Sydney in a barque of 400 tons laden with trade goods. After visiting various islands we cruised to the north-west, and then the barque started a butt-end, began to leak so badly that even with the aid of a windmill pump, which was made to relieve the labours of the crew, we could barely keep the water under. To add to our troubles the captain, who was a very old man, died suddenly from heart disease. This happened one morning at daylight, when we were in sight of Nanomaga, an island on which I was most anxious to place a trader, had we an available man. I decided to stay there myself and send the barque

to Funafuti Lagoon, where she could be beached, the leak stopped, and then send her to Sydney in charge of the mate. At Funafuti we had a small schooner, doing the inter-island work, and this vessel was to be sent to Nanomaga to pick me up, so that the Caroline Islands could be visited and business carried on.

I landed on the island with trade goods to the value of £2000, and the barque at once sailed for Funafuti. The natives received me most hospitably, and all my goods and personal effects were quickly carried by willing hands to the *fale kaupule*, or town meeting-house, which was given to me for temporary use, until a new house was built for me. This was to be occupied by a trader—when I came across a suitable man. I may mention that the tender schooner never turned up. She had dragged her anchors during a squall, gone ashore on the reef, and bilged herself. The barque, meanwhile, went on to Sydney, and eleven months passed before I was relieved by another of the firm's vessels.

The Nanomaga people had only accepted Christianity three years previously, when they had, after much internal discussion, consented to receive a native teacher and his wife. They were Samoans, and both personally known to me, though many years had passed since I last saw them. The man was a sturdy, well-built young fellow named Ioane

(John) and his wife Eliné, an attractive-looking girl of about eighteen. From the very first, these two treated me with the utmost kindness, and their example was followed by their "flock," who were very fond of them. Ioane was of the muscular Christian type, an ardent sportsman, and having been tatoored in his boyhood in the orthodox Samoan style (of course before he had been converted) the Nanomagans thought him a remarkably fine man.

Before describing the people and their mode of life, let me say something of the physical features of the island itself. The extent of it may be gathered from the fact that I could make the entire circuit in three hours, even though there are stretches of loose coral slabs thrown up by the action of the sea, on which walking was difficult. There is no barrier reef, except at the north end, where a triangular spur, running from south-east and north-west, meets in a sharply defined apex two miles from the shore. On the western, or lee side, the reef narrows into, and is consolidated with the land, the sea-face of it never being more than half-a-mile, and never less than a hundred yards distant from the line of coco palms fringing the beaches. At low water this "flat" reef was dry, except for occasional deep pools in the solid body of rock—pools that harboured not only large fishes of diverse shapes and extraordinary colours, but

hawkbill turtle, giant eels and crayfish. When there was a full tide there would be about six feet of water.

On the eastern or weather side the roof rises steep to from its base at quite a short distance from the shore—about fifty yards. Here the coral formations are wild, irregular and fantastic in their shape and appearance. Huge, jagged boulders encompass small, but deep pools, placid enough at low tide at night, when the lusty south-east trade had gone to sleep, but seething, roaring cauldrons when, during the day, the tide was at half-flood, and the long, rolling ocean billows reared, curved and burst with a thundering clamour against the grim wall of coral that showed its black and jagged teeth defiantly to the onrushing sweeping seas. Here, at the ledge of the reef, if you stood on some projecting spur of a thin layer of coral rock that shot out sharply from the main body, you could look down, at your feet, into forty fathoms of water and almost imagine that through the wavering lights and shadows you could see the bottom. And then, as you looked, if it were a calm and the sea was smooth, and the leaves of the cocos and pandanus palms were not flapping and thrashing and sougling as they do when the lusty trade winds sway their green arms wildly to and fro, you would hear strange, mysterious sounds—gurglings, groanings, and dull and muffled boomings, as the ocean

swell, gently heaving, forced the air upwards through thousands of blow-holes in the crust of the reef. Even in the calmest weather, and when the sea seemed to be—as it was from a sailorman's point of view—at peace, every long, lazy and languorous swell would send up innumerable vapoury jets of spray from the holes and crannies of the reef. Some came up noiselessly in a white feathery spray, curling like an ostrich feather in a lady's hat; some, where the hole in the crust of the reef was larger, shot up in a straight column, subsiding as quickly as it had appeared, others sent out squirts of filmy spray slantingly; these latter the native children called respectively—"porpoise blows," "fin-back whale blows," and "sperm whale blows." The children had great fun with some of these vents in the crust of the reef, and, indeed, grown people (myself included) would participate. Choosing a suitable hole, they would place a piece of planking over it, seat themselves on the board and wait for an incoming roller, and then, amidst loud laughter, they would be raised several feet up on the top of the rush of water; if the board filled over the orifice fairly closely, and was well weighted down, the water would shoot out horizontally in all directions.

On this, the weather side of the island, there are no beaches, but a high bank of loose coral slabs thrown up by the sea, and resembling a roughly-

built terrace, out of which grow coconut and pandanus palms. Here robber crabs abounded—some of them very large—and made their burrows and storehouses under the stones. During daylight they are seldom seen, but are easily captured at night by the aid of torches, and a robber crab hunt is both amusing and exciting. The natives told me that years before a white man, then living on Nanomaga, used to keep robber crabs in captivity, and fatten them by placing them in an empty fifty-pound biscuit tin. I tried the plan myself, and after a time succeeded, but my first attempts were failures owing to my placing two or three in the same tin, the result was that they fought most savagely, tearing off each other's claws and making a horrible noise as they came in contact with the sides of the tin. Although they preferred coconut, or the sweet ripe drupes of the pandanus palm, they were omnivorous feeders—biscuit, tinned meat, fish, or indeed food of any kind. On one occasion a predatory rat met his doom in one of my tins. Jumping down in search of food, he had been unable to get out again, and in the morning my native cook found his corpse, or rather half of it, the rest being torn to pieces by the powerful nippers of *Birgis latro*.

Here and there along the margin of the bank were small open-sided huts, which were frequently used by the natives as sleeping places when mos-

quitoes were troublesome in the village, which was on the lee side of the island, and not exposed to the trade wind. During the rainy season it was impossible to sleep in the village, except under mosquito netting, and on steamy, hot nights we all crossed over to the *fale matagi* (wind houses) to escape the pest and get the benefit of whatever wind there might be.

Behind the bank of coral stones there are a series of deep depressions in the sandy soil, where the natives grow a huge coarse species of taro called *puraka*—the only vegetable the island produces. The labour of making these beds was enormous, every small stone being removed, and the pits filled in with vegetable mould, dead leaves, etc., etc., until a solid stratum of ten feet was attained, then the plants were placed in and carefully tended. Some of these tubers are as thick as a man's body, three or four feet long and weighing up to 100 pounds.

In the centre of the island there are a good many very large trees of the ficus family, which are the breeding place of countless thousands of sooty terns. The natives relish them greatly, as the flesh has only a very slight fishy flavour, and the eggs (about the size of a pigeon's) are quite free of any fishy taste. The natives preserve these birds to a great extent by not touching the eggs or the young birds, but every year they kill and eat thousands

of the parents. So tame are they that the hen bird will allow herself to be lifted off her nest—or rather the leaf on which she lays her one egg—and flutter about the intruding hand until she is permitted to return. It is a curious sight to see these birds, sitting on their solitary eggs, being swayed to and fro by the breeze. The eggs never, or seldom, fall off, being secured to the leaf by a sticky gelatinous substance, but the poor chicks are shaken down in hundreds by a heavy squall, and devoured by the robber crabs. The natives assured me that whenever a heavy rain squall came on at night time, during the incubating season, the robber crabs gathered under the trees to enjoy the feast that lay awaiting them.

Besides the terns, there was a small rookery each of other oceanic birds—a handsome blue-plumaged species of booby, called *kanapu*, and the frigate bird. Occasionally some of these latter were taken when young and kept in semi-captivity by the natives, who prized them greatly as pets, as do the Samoans their tamed wild pigeons. The method was to take two or three unfledged birds and feed them by hand on fish until they were able to fly. Then a perch—the trunk of a pandanus palm stripped of its serrated leaves—was put up somewhere in the village, in an open spot, and each bird secured by a cinnet cord tied to one leg. Here, for a month or two, they were fed continuously by the

native children tossing them up fish. Then they were liberated to go a-hunting by themselves, and they invariably returned at night time to roost, sometimes attended by untamed companions. Every care was taken not to alarm or disturb them, and whenever any of them returned to its perch in the day time a fish or two was always thrown to it. During my stay on Nanomaga there were five frigate birds located in the village, and when they became accustomed to my strange appearance and garments, they allowed me to approach near enough to throw them fish, which they caught in mid-air in a marvellous manner, never letting one fall to the ground.

In addition to these ocean-haunting birds there were white and blue cranes, a few pigeons, and vast flocks of golden plover, and a tiny species of sand-piper with brown back and snow-white chest. The pigeons had once been plentiful, but for some reason they deserted the island about 1870, and settled on the island of Niutao, sixty miles to the windward. During my stay I abstained from shooting more than half-a-dozen, and succeeded in "blarneying" the only two men on the island who possessed guns, not to shoot a pigeon for twelve months—so that there might be an increase of the birds. Being intensely proud of their old Tower muskets, with which they had succeeded in killing a score or two of pigeons (with "shot" of carefully

selected and graded pebbles), they at first demurred, but were won over to rectitude by the gift of a good rip saw, a set of gouges—invaluable to them for canoe making—and a pound of tobacco each. This magnificent present was worth to me something under twenty shillings, but it bore good results, for, when I re-visited Nanomaga four years later, I found that pigeons were plentiful, and that the *kaupule* (town council) had forbidden any one to shoot more than four birds in a week! But this action was, I regret to say, not done out of personal regard for me, nor for the preservation of the birds, but because the astute head men had learned that the captain and passengers of any ship touching at the island were quite willing to pay a couple of dollars for a few hours' pigeon shooting. These birds were exactly similar in plumage, size and appearance to those of Samoa and the Melanesian Islands, and I often wondered how they came to be on these low-lying, sandy atolls, where there were neither fruits, nor even berries, such as the pigeon family live upon in the fruitful and rich mountain forests of Samoa—the nearest high land, and six hundred miles distant. The natives assured me that pigeons had been on the island since its *fanau* (birth), and that they fed and fattened upon the young buds of the coconut tree, as they burst out from the enveloping spathe, and also ate the blossom of the pandanus palm. And that their

statements were correct, I had ample proof, for on many occasions I saw pigeons feeding on both coconut and pandanus flowers. These contain much saccharine matter, and, no doubt, are as nutritious to the birds as the juicy fruits and berries of the mountainous islands of the Pacific, which were their original home. In a very dry season, when there was no water to be had in the *puraka* plantations, the pigeons would come to the village and drink from the scanty supply conserved by the natives in old canoes, and from small cisterns hollowed out at the thick and bulging butts of the coco palms. These tiny reservoirs were made in a very ingenious manner. That side of the butt of the palm, down which the greatest fall of rain-water would run, was dug out, the cavity plastered with a quickly-hardening gum obtained from a tree which grew in the interior of the island, and the coco palm was thus not injured to any degree by its absorbent pores being cut into so deeply. *Experienta docet.* Long years ago, before the white men came to the Pacific, there had been a cycle of drought, and some native genius had hit upon this idea of catching all the rainwater that fell upon the perishing coconut trees, which yielded no fruit and had but a scanty foliage.

Nanomaga is famous among the island groups of that part of the South Pacific for the profusion of a species of the coconut palm, which produces

a very large nut, almost as round as a ball, and with an edible, or rather "chewable," husk. When half-grown, the nut is husked very carefully, strip by strip, and so rich is it in saccharine juice that it literally drips out like water from a soddened sponge. The natives call it *uto ga'au* (husk to chew), and from this tree they obtain their sweet toddy—or rather did so until the missionaries forbade the drinking of toddy on the ground that occasional instances of drunkenness occurred through the toddy being allowed to ferment, when it becomes highly intoxicating. During my time, however, Ioane the pastor, who was a liberal-minded man, never interfered with their toddy drinking, not only drank it himself, but his wife used it for yeast in making bread. (Ioane, I may here mention, was a splendid—and rare—type of the average Polynesian, or Melanesian pastor, who too often, when away from the supervision of his white superiors, becomes a petty tyrant to his flock, interdicts the most innocent forms of amusement or recreation—such as dances, trials of strength, etc., as savouring of heathendom. Ioane not only permitted his recently-converted charges to indulge in their usual games and pastimes, but, stripped to his waistcloth, took part in them himself, and entered into wrestling contests, spear-throwing, etc., with all the zest of a Samoan warrior.)

From the sweet juice of this particular species of the coconut the natives make a sort of nougat, by boiling it down to a paste. It will keep for years, and is very nourishing. In former times a certain quantity was always stored in case of famine or war, each family contributing its quota for the general use. It was enclosed in a plaited cane-work cover, and then seized tightly round with coir cinnet. Old coconuts were also stored in special houses, where they were left for a year or two until the milk had been absorbed into the nut, and the nut itself became detached from the shell. When, by shaking, it was heard to rattle, it was considered "cured," the husk was removed, and the nuts stored in a smaller space. By this process the nut contracted to the size of a cricket ball, and became so hard that, when wanted for use, it had to be cut with a hatchet or broken with a heavy stone. These *tak-a-tak*, as they were called, were only eaten in times of famine, and during my stay on the island, I bought over two tons of them as copra, paying double the price of the ordinary sun-dried copra, for the *tak-a-tak* yields, under machinery, a clear beautiful oil, and is largely used on the Continent as a base for "pure Italian olive oil."

The first thing that would strike a visitor to Nanomaga are the coconut palms, nearly every one of which is encircled by a neat, tight band, composed of layers of the long, dried leaves of the

pandanus palm. This is done to prevent the depredations of rats, which are the curse of the island, for they swarm in incredible numbers and are particularly fond of the young flowers of the coco palm, as they burst out from the enveloping spathe, and were it not for the protecting band the trees would yield no fruit. Whoever the native genius was who discovered this foil to the depredations of the rats, his memory deserves to be honoured. Very often have I watched the attempts of rats to get up a coconut palm. Nimbly running up the tree they would reach the encircling band of smooth, glass-like leaves, which was placed about six feet from the butt of the tree where it "thinned off." Then the depredator found himself hopelessly blocked. He would first make a jump to try and clear the band, fall down to the ground, ascend again, and then go round and round it, scratching angrily at the lowermost portion, and no doubt cursing such a diabolical invention.

Forty or fifty years ago a whaleship captain presented the islanders with a batch of cats—three mothers, with many kittens. They ran wild and increased prodigiously, but had no effect upon the rats.

Every year or two the natives renew these protecting bands, and, by organizing great rat trap-pings, used to diminish the pest.

II

EVERY Nanomagan is a born fisherman, and although their canoes are very small, they do not hesitate to tackle and kill the largest sharks. Sometimes the canoes are capsized, but even then the shark does not escape—he is either disembowelled, or his tail is slit up, which latter operation takes “the kick” out of him very quickly. Hardwood trees of any size being extremely scarce, the natives value their canoes greatly, and one that was made for me cost \$30 in cash and trade goods. The hulls are models of symmetry, and externally are polished as smooth as glass by being rubbed with the rough under-part of the wild fig leaf, or shark skin. Each one is fitted with beautifully constructed whalebacks fore and aft, the for’ard one being about four feet long, and designed to save the canoe from swamping when facing a heavy surf, the after one serving the same purpose when running before it. From each end of the whalebacks the gunwales are raised six inches by thin planking sewn on to the hull with cinnet, and flagged with rushes to make the joining watertight.

Before describing the Nanomagan methods of deep-sea fishing, let me say something of the people

themselves. Although the island is so small there were living on it during my stay no less than seven hundred people. Naturally, their skins were of a light reddish-brown hue, but through constant exposure to the sun, they became much darker. Their hair was straight, and formerly, that of the men was worn long, and tied up in a knot on the top of the head, but the missionaries objected to it as savouring of heathendom. Both the men and women were much inclined to corpulency, but were tall and well-formed, and as a whole they were an extremely healthy race. I did not see a single case of *tinea desquamans* or *T. imbricata*—the curse of the Gilbert and Kingsmill Islands—and only two or three cases of *elephantiasis*. They admit that in former days they were cannibals, and indeed, only as far back as 1863 a missionary who called there saw human limbs hanging up in some of the houses. Their language was a curious mixture of Maori, Samoan, and the Gilbert Island dialect, but I found that if spoken slowly, they understood Samoan. For Polynesians, I considered them an extremely moral community, and their family relations were most affectionate. Although very good natured and laughter-loving, they were prone to sudden and violent bursts of anger, and homicide formerly was prevalent. Theft of food in those days was punished by death, and even now it is looked upon as a serious matter. A

more honest people I never met, and never once did I miss so much as a piece of tobacco—and tobacco they dearly love. After my new house was built I arranged my store—a large room fitted with rough shelves, on which were stacked all sorts of articles, from shot guns, muskets, and loose powder, to sardines and accordeons, tinned meats to prints and muslins; and although I would sometimes be away all day and all night, nothing was ever stolen, despite the fact that my house and store was the general lounge for the whole village, and there was not a locked door or closed window in the entire building. And in November of that year, when the island was visited by a series of tidal waves, and the front of my house burst in, every man, woman and child rushed to my assistance, neglecting their own dwellings, which were being swept away, and carried all my effects to higher ground, where for a week they remained under mats to protect them from rain. Not a single article was stolen, and when I offered them payment to the extent of £20 for their services, the *kaupule* (town council) refused to accept it, because my friend Ioane (the missionary) said it would be a disgraceful thing for them to accept payment for doing what any one with a good *loto* (heart) would do. However, after a protest from me they agreed to accept a cask of salt meat, 100 lbs. of ship biscuit, a bag of sugar, and a

small box of tea, and I had the honour of being the principal guest at the resultant feast.

When I first landed on the island, and whilst my house was being built, I lived with Ioane, who, within a few hours after my arrival, called a public meeting, and said some very pretty things about me generally—especially exaggerating my Samoan reputation as a deep-sea fisherman and wild pig hunter. Then I was formally presented to the two most notable men on the island as gentlemen with whom I should take sweet counsel regarding all future fishing matters. One was a remarkably handsome young man named Muli'ao (The Steersman), and the other, a Herculean monster named Kino (The Bad). Why he was so named I do not know, for he was a good-natured, honest fellow, with a thunderous laugh, and merry, smiling face. Muli'ao was reputed to be *facile princeps* as a bonito fisher and shark catcher, and Kino was the one builder of canoes on the island, and really his name and productions were known all through the seven islands of the Ellice Group. I gave him a commission there and then to begin me a canoe. That canoe remained in my possession for many years, and accompanied me on many voyages between the Pacific Islands, San Francisco and Sydney, and was one of the greatest acquisitions I ever made, for sometimes during a calm, when bonito would be seen, some of the native crew and

I would drop it over the side, get in with our bonito rods and pearl-shell hooks, and have glorious sport.

My stock of fishing tackle at once attracted the attention and won the approval of the natives, and within forty-eight hours of my arrival Muli'ao had taken possession of me body and soul by his descriptions of the huge fish we should take together. And, indeed, Nanomaga is noted for the extraordinarily large fish that abound in the surrounding waters. Although I had then never heard the name "tuna," the fish—or a closely-allied species—was well known to me by the native name of *takuo*, and Muli'ao assured me that we should get them up to such a size that "two strong men could scarce lift one." Then, too, there were the *pala*—a giant fish of the gar family, reaching seven feet in length, and with a girth of thirty inches; the *palu* (a species of *Ruvettus*), which was fished for in from eighty to a hundred and fifty fathoms on dark, calm nights, and greatly prized by the natives of the Equatorial Pacific for its peculiarly oily flesh; and several kinds of blue groper which I had never seen in the Pacific Islands so far, although I had caught them on the east coast of Australia. Muli'ao was a learned man in the matter of deep-sea fishes, and, fortunately being able to speak Samoan very well, he and I got on splendidly, and on the first night of my arrival, we sat up till day-

light, arranging my tackle, and talking and consuming negrohead tobacco.

Four miles from Nanomaga there is a submerged reef, known all over the Equatorial Pacific as a wonderful fishing ground. On the charts it is marked "Grand Cocal Reef, P. D.," and to the natives is known as Tia Kau—"The Reef." It is of circular form, about four miles in circumference, and slopes gradually away from the centre, on which there are four fathoms of water. During heavy weather the sea breaks on it with violence, but in the ordinary trades a vessel can sail across it in safety, and when there was no wind at all, the submerged summit and sloping sides presented a wondrous and beautiful spectacle. Never before had I seen such an extraordinary variety of the shapes and colourings of coral, and such an incredible number of fish, large and small. The Tia Kau always possessed a fascination for me, and I visited it many scores of times, always in company with some of the natives, who flatly refused to let me go there alone in a canoe on account of the great number of sharks. In a boat, they contended, I would be safe enough in fishing, but not so in a canoe, for it often happened that when a large and powerful fish was hooked, and being lifted into the canoe, a shark would make a rush after it, and capsize or swamp the canoe—which meant that the sharks would get a bigger and per-

haps tastier meal than that which would be afforded them by an ordinary fish.

On the second day after my arrival, Muli'ao, Kino, two other men and myself, started off for the Tia Kau in one of the largest canoes. In addition to my usual fishing tackle, I brought with me a whale lance with a blade like that of a razor. This Muli'ao had espied among my gear, and asked me to bring it to *enenene le malië* (tickle the sharks). We certainly did tickle very very many sharks on other occasions with the weapon, and found it most useful, especially when fishing at night time, for sharks—particularly the short, thick blue sharks, have an unpleasant way of hanging about a fishing canoe, waiting to seize any fish being hauled up, and, *inter alia*, by way of diversion, seizing the outrigger in their jaws, and either breaking it or capsizing the canoe. Yet it is but very rarely that a native of the Ellice or Gilbert Islands meets his death, or is injured by a shark. Only once, whilst I was living on Nanomaga, was any one bitten by a shark. This was in the case of a boy, who, whilst swimming to secure a sleeping turtle, was seized on the leg by a very small shark, about four feet in length, and the calf of his leg badly lacerated before the boy could get free of it by seizing its tail and tearing it up lengthways with his teeth.

It was a beautifully calm morning when we set

off. It being low tide we had to carry the canoe down from the beach across the reef, which was bare, and then launch her over the edge into deep water, for there are ten fathoms immediately under the edge of the reef—fifty yards farther out you will not touch bottom under a hundred fathoms. On the slight, cane-work outrigger platform were placed our fishing tackle, four bonito rods, the lance, a coil of stout line, a heavy wooden shark hook, a club for killing large fish or sharks, and two baskets of cooked food—baked fowls and fish, and bread and biscuits, and in the bottom of the canoe were a score of young coconuts, husked and ready for drinking, as well as three or four of these called *uto gau*, the soft husk of which, as before mentioned, is full of sweet juice almost as nutritious as that of sugar cane.

As none of the Nanomaga canoes carry sails, we used our paddles and were soon clear of the island, sweeping over an almost imperceptible swell, only ruffled by a gentle breeze. In half-an-hour my companions ceased paddling, and Kino told me to look down. I did so, and far, far down I thought I could discern the bottom—it was the beginning of Tia Kau. And then, as we paddled slowly on, we seemed to be literally ascending the great dome of the reef, as the water lessened in depth fathom by fathom, and strange lights and

shadows wavered about beneath us. Now there would come a great, ragged chasm in the crust of this mighty structure, showing dark, blue-black depths, which perhaps were a hundred fathoms deep; then would come a dazzlingly white object that, like a cupola of purest marble, seemed to start up from the limpid water to bar our progress, and reach the surface, though in reality its summit was half a hundred feet below—it was simply a coral “mushroom,” a perfect globe upreared upon a thick and stunted column. And all about it swarmed thousands of fish of manifold colours, markings and shapes, some swimming swiftly to and fro, others lazily, in undulating swarms, as if they were being drilled to execute graceful movements under the direction of some unseen marine drill master. Then again would come a patch of marvellously blue-hued coral “trees” encompassing the sides of a deep pool, the bottom of which was composed of smooth white coral pebbles, worn round by constant attrition. And then, next to it, would be another deep crevasse, and, next to that, a sudden blaze of scarlet or golden yellow intermingled—coral growths in strange and fantastic shapes, but yet so wondrously beautiful in their colouring, that all attempt to describe them would be futile. All about these spots moved fish—some swimming lazily to and fro, others darting about with light-

ning-like rapidity. Now and then we would see a shark of considerable size, and small green turtle were very abundant.

At last we reached a space of water about an acre in extent, and four to five fathoms deep. It was literally alive with fish of all sorts—some of them, of the gar species, swimming on the surface. As these are excellent for bait, we quickly killed half-a-dozen by hitting them across the back with the edges of our paddles, as they swam within reach. Then we lowered our small stone anchor, and turned our attention to the food baskets before beginning operations.

III

LOOKING over the side of the canoe we could see numbers of fish of the trevally species, blueish-grey in colour and very handsomely shaped. They were about two pounds to three pounds in weight, and bit very freely—so much so that the moment the bait dropped on the water they rose to it. Like all this species they are game fighters, the instant one takes the hook he makes a downward rush, and when turned runs from right to left. There is one variety which attains an enormous size, weighing up to a hundred pounds, and is caught

at night only, when it comes in close to the reef to feed upon flying-fish. I caught several when out flying-fish catching with the natives, and the largest one nearly pulled me overboard with the violent tug he gave. I was steering, my heavy line towing astern, baited with a live flying-fish. The canoe was moving quickly at the time, and I had just given the line a couple or three slack turns round my right knee, when there came a tremendous jerk that turned me over on my back, amidst a chorus of laughter from the natives. Out flew the rest of the line, and then came a fight of twenty minutes, the light canoe being pulled about like a feather. When my prize was lifted inboard, he was too deep to lie on his side in the bottom of the canoe, so we had to stand him up on his belly. He weighed quite seventy pounds. I at first suggested (after giving him his quietus with the fishing club) that he should be laid upon the outrigger platform, but the natives said it would mean the canoe being capsized by a shark. This variety of trevally is called *la'heu*, and is common to all the Pacific Islands. In Fiji—where it is called *sanka*—it attains gigantic proportions.

After we had caught some dozen of these small trevally the leather-jackets arrived, great yellow fellows, two feet in length, with bright blue markings on the fins and sides of the head. They swarmed beneath the canoe, and we had to stop

fishing, lift killick and paddle swiftly to another spot a good distance away. No more appropriate name could be given to these pests than that bestowed upon them by the Samoans—*isuumu moana*, “sea rat,” for their powerful teeth are very like those of a rat, and they have a vile and pernicious trick of often nipping the line through above the hook, especially if there is a tiny bit of bait, fish skin, or even a scale adhering to it. Despite its ugly appearance, however, the leather-jacket is excellent eating, and the jacket is easily stripped off in the same manner as an eel is skinned. On the coast of New Ireland I came across a species I had never before seen—the jacket was of a brilliant blue, and the ugly protruding teeth an equally brilliant carmine.

We were now on a part of the reef where it was too risky to anchor—thirty or forty fathoms—for the anchor might have dropped into a crevasse and become fast. So whilst one man kept the canoe in position—as there was a slight current—the rest of us fished for red rock cod, of which we soon caught a dozen, ranging from fifty to twenty pounds each. Then a number of small and pestilent sharks, about two feet in length, found us out and we again had to move back into shallow water. Here we fished for a couple of hours, catching quite a dozen kinds of fish, including several very large gars and one large barracouta, which had recently lost most of

its tail. Then, soon after noon, the south-east trade began to blow so strongly that it raised a short choppy sea, and we decided to return home, for we had over two hundredweight of fish—quite enough for our small craft to carry if the sea became more rough. This was my first experience of Tia Kau, but after that I went there very frequently.

A few years before I came to live on Nanomaga, the Tia Kau was the scene of a terrible tragedy. Atupa, the king of the island, wished to pay a visit to the island of Nanomea, thirty-five miles to the north-west. Both islands being very low, the one is not visible from the other, but the natives signal across by means of fires at night. A certain number of fires denote that a party of visitors will be leaving in a certain time. The journey is always begun at dusk, so as to avoid paddling in the heat of the day. Atupa's party consisted of forty all told, men, women and children, and when they started the night was fine and calm. It was still daylight when the canoes were half-way across Tia Kau, and then quite suddenly a furious and heavy rain squall came on. The canoes brought to, head to wind, and waited for it to pass. Unfortunately it was succeeded by another of greater violence, and then came the horror of the thing. A little girl, who was seated on the outrigger grating, in trying to shield herself with a mat from the rain, pressed

too heavily on part of the grating, which broke, and her arm slipped through. Almost instantly it was seized by a shark. Her mother sprang to her help, the canoe broached to and filled, and every one on board was quickly carried off. Maddened with fear the occupants of the other canoes threw their baskets of food, bundles of mats, etc., overboard to lighten their frail crafts, but the sharks tore their paddles out of their hands, and as the canoes broached and swamped the wretched people were seized and devoured. One canoe only, in which were the only two survivors, was carried by the force of the wind and sea away from the terrible reef, and they succeeded in getting back to the island. Said one of them afterwards, "Were I to live as long as he whom the missionary tells us lived to be nine hundred and sixty and nine, I shall hear the groans and cries and shrieks of that *po malaia*—that night of evil luck."

During the time my house was building I "explored" the island from end to end. My constant companions on these occasions were a sturdy boy of twelve and his sister, a pretty child of eight or nine. They first took me to the tiny but curious lake in the centre of the island. It was a charming spot, encompassed by coco palms and a species of ironwood trees. The water was as clear as crystal, and, as before mentioned, rose and fell with the tide. Swimming about were several shoals of

small mullet-shaped fish about ten inches long. The natives told me that they were uneatable on account of the myriad bones, would not take a bait, and had never been seen to eat anything. Furthermore, there were no such similar fish in the sea about the island, and this I believe to be a fact, for they had a special name—*te ika se kai*—"the fish that do not eat." It was considered very unlucky to attempt to catch or disturb them, the story being that two women, who had been sent to "coventry" for misconduct, went to live by the pool, netted some of the fish and cooked and ate them, with the result that none of the ladies were ever seen again—they vanished utterly. In former times the lake was used as a place of punishment for those who were doomed to death. The criminal's body and limbs were wound round and round with coir rope, a heavy stone tied to him and he was thrown in to drown. After a certain time his relatives were allowed to remove the skull, clean it and place it among the family *lares* and *penates*.

Cray-fish of small size abound on the island reefs. Never visible in daylight, they come in over the reef with the flood tide at night and are caught in scoop nets, by the light of torches made of dried coconut leaf. The natives baked them, but I preferred mine boiled, and was never tired of them, eating only the tail part. There was usually a cray-fish excursion three or four nights every week

during the rainy and bad weather season, when they were most plentiful and when but little sea fishing could be done. In this the women and children took part, carrying the torches and baskets, and the blaze of torches, the background of palms, and the dark sea, made quite a pretty picture, and I always enjoyed these outings greatly. It did not take long to fill our baskets, then we would troop back to our houses, cook the cray-fish in ground ovens made ready, and then the young men would usually come to my house, bringing their baskets of food and drinking coconuts, and eat a late supper with me. These were most enjoyable evenings, for the young fellows were good company. My cook (under my eye) used to make a dish from the following: chopped-up boiled cray-fish, with bread or biscuit crumbs, mashed *puraka*, and tinned butter. This was pounded into a paste, salt, pepper and vinegar added, and the whole placed in a coconut shell, from which the water had been run off; then, tightly wrapped up in leaves, it was placed in a quick oven till it was steaming hot, then the shell was cracked in halves and—well, it was delicious. This bit of fancy cookery had been taught me by one of the Marist brothers, living on Wallis Island. He was a perfect genius in this way, and lived very much better on limited means than traders who were well off.

Eliné, the missionary's wife, always made my

bread for me, in return for which I supplied her with tea, sugar and condensed milk and an occasional tin of Danish butter. Although I had plenty of salt meat and pork as well as tinned meats, I seldom used any; the natives, however, were good customers. Curiously enough, with all the choice of fish they have on the island, the people are passionately fond of kegged and tinned meats, tinned salmon and sardines. I frequently paid them for their copra in cash, and the first thing that the money was expended upon were salmon and sardines, then perhaps a huge round of salt junk. The women were continually pestering me to take fowls from them in exchange for sardines—two hens for a sixpenny tin of the fish—or else they would offer five-and-twenty eggs, some of which would be like that of the curate—good in parts. Fowls were very plentiful on the island, and being fed on scraped coconut were, like the pigs, usually very fat. I bought such a number that they became a nuisance about the house, so one day they were taken to the middle of the island and turned loose, to be shot whenever one was wanted.

One day I was told that in former years pumpkins had been grown on the island by a white man who had brought seed from Honolulu, but that the plague of rats gave him great trouble. And then a happy thought came to me. Amongst other

goods I had brought on shore were a number of cases of sheets of corrugated iron six feet by four feet. They were intended for roofing a trading station in the Caroline Islands, but I had opened several of the cases and lent the sheets to the natives for the purpose of sun-drying their copra. Taking forty of these sheets the natives stuck them lengthways, but slanting outwards, in the ground, making a sixty feet square, and then covered the enclosed space with a thick layer of vegetable mould. Among my trade goods were two boxes of vegetable seeds from New Zealand, intended for distribution to our various traders. We planted pumpkins, maize and onions with a very satisfactory result as regards the first and last, but the maize was a failure. The rats were baulked, and in a few months I had the pleasure of eating my own pumpkins and onions. In after years I did the same thing on Providence Atoll in the North Pacific, where I was located with a shark-fishing party, but with much greater success, for there were no rats to contend with and the soil was very good for that of a low-lying coral island.

About four months after my arrival, and whilst Ioane and I were coopering a water-butt of mine, we heard a loud clamour from the village, "*Te vaka motu! te vaka motu!*"—"A ship! A ship!" Throwing down our hoop drivers and hammers we tore down to the beach to the canoes, and saw a

fine, full-rigged ship of about 1500 tons under full sail, bowling along under every stitch of canvas she could carry. She was about two miles distant, and presented a beautiful picture as she sped along the smooth sea with the wind well abeam. A number of us jumped into canoes and pushed off, hoping to intercept her, but she took no notice of our frantic efforts, but kept on her course, and as she was travelling at least ten or eleven knots she soon left us hopelessly behind, and we returned to the shore feeling very dejected and cross as well. But, afterwards, Ioane and I laughed heartily at his wife's sarcastic remark, which, rendered into English, was to the effect that we were truly a beautiful pair to board a ship in our then condition, for Ioane and I, when at work on the water-butt, were stripped to our waists and barefooted, he wearing only a navy blue lava (waist cloth) and I a pair of dungaree pants and a leather belt. Certainly we both had nice Panama hats. But in the excitement of the moment, and imagining at first that the ship was simply a trading vessel, where our lack of sartorial adornment would not be commented upon under the exigencies of the occasion, we lost no time. I afterwards learned that the ship was from Newcastle (N.S.W.) bound to Hongkong by what was then known as the "outer route," and carried a number of passengers.

In my next chapter I shall endeavour to interest

the reader, if he is not already too wearied of the subject, in some of my sea fishing and social experiences with a people in whose welfare, for long years after, my feelings were very keen. For, with them, I never for one day experienced what my young Scots correspondent so feelingly described to me as "the utter loneliness of it," of his existence on Atafu Island in the Tokelau Group. Sometimes, it is true, my anxiety to be relieved by one of our firm's vessels would cause a temporary depression of spirits at night, but in the morning at sunrise, when Pai, my cook, would bring me my coffee and biscuit, and perhaps remark that it promised to be a good day for bonito fishing, or that we ought to kill a pig that morning, etc., I would cast aside all thoughts of business and devote myself to pleasure. For there is a certain pleasure—to some men—even in cutting up a hog and doing it in butcher-like fashion.

And then, after I had finished my coffee and biscuit, my two child friends would come along with my shell of sweet toddy, and say, with smiling, eager faces—

"What is it to be to-day?"

"To-day I be cleaning guns and many packets of chisels which have rusted. And you and all the other children may help."

And off the two would go, to spread the news in the village.

IV

UNLIKE some of the other islands of the Ellice Group, there are no poisonous fish in the Nanomaga waters, except a very small species of wrasse. In the atoll of Nukufetau (De Peyster's Island) many different kinds of fish are poisonous, especially those on the eastern side of the lagoon; yet curiously enough, the very same fish on the western or lee side are quite safe, and still more curious is the fact that the flying-fish (which do not come into the lagoon) are at certain times highly poisonous and remain in that condition for a couple of months, then they are again safe to eat. The natives have a sure way of discovering whether a fish is dangerous or not by examining its mouth—there are certain red and yellow streaks which denote that it is poisonous. Some years ago I was fishing from the shore on the island of Jaluit (Marshall Group) and had caught a dozen or two of bream-like fish about two pounds each, when a native woman came by. She stopped and examined the fish, and declared all but two were kona (poisonous) and threw the others back into the sea. Jaluit, it may be mentioned, is notorious for its highly poisonous fish—even the sharks are at time dangerous to eat.

In connection with the pest of leather-jackets,

alluded to in the previous chapter, the natives have an ingenious method of baffling them on certain occasions. There is a small, round, fat-bodied and coal-black fish which the people prize on account of its oily flesh. It has a very small mouth, is difficult to catch on that account, and is also very shy, so only a tiny hook and thin line are used. It frequents holes in the coral in deep water, and when they are seen the line has to be lowered very slowly so as to get the bait exactly in front of its habitation. But between there and the surface are sure to be swarms of thieving leather-jackets, which, however, never or seldom descend to the bottom. In order, then, to pass the baited hook through the marauders it is enclosed, together with a pebble to sink it, in a leaf of the *Barringtonia*-tree. Down goes the ball of green through the disgusted leather-jackets, who see nothing edible about the thing and let it pass through the danger zone; then a gentle jerk liberates the few turns of the line around the leaf, the pebble falls out and the bait is allowed to sink slowly to its appointed place.

In fishing for the great *Ruvettus* a wooden hook was used similar to that employed for shark-fishing, though not of course anything like it in size. Although I had plenty of seven-inch hooks and used them with success for *Ruvettus*, the natives preferred their own to mine, saying that the *palu*, as

they call the fish, had too soft a mouth for a thin steel hook, which would be likely to tear its way out. A dark, calm night is necessary for *palu* fishing, and from eighty to a hundred and fifty fathoms is the depth. A whole flying-fish is used for bait, and the utmost patience is exercised, for the fish is as scarce as it is highly prized, and, furthermore, is of solitary habit. The largest I have ever seen was nearly six feet in length, weight about 130 pounds, and was caught off Oaitupu Island (Ellice Group). The colour is a uniform dull black, the scales (also black) are wide apart and curl backward like the feathers of a certain kind of French fowl. The flesh is extremely soft, pappy and dull white, and when cut into during the fish's life, appears as if it had been cooked. It is full of oil—indeed, the whole body of the fish, if left out in the sun for a few days, melts. The natives prize the oil for its medicinal qualities, but the flesh is eaten sparingly on account of its highly laxative properties. The oil is a rich, yellow colour, odourless and almost tasteless. The natives sometimes use it as a sauce with fish, pork, etc. (I have seen it stated that a species of the *Ruvettus* has been caught off the coast of Portugal and the Azores by the Prince of Monaco at a depth of 400 fathoms.) The native lines used for *palu* were of three-quarter inch coir, awkward and cumbersome, and I often wondered how they could feel the fish

bite, which it does in a very gentle manner. My line was of white American cotton (twenty-seven cord), and I was usually the first man to pull up a fish. On one occasion four of us got five *palu* in one night, breaking the local record. It is an extremely weak fish, and within a few minutes of coming to the surface it expires, and the bladder is always protruding from the mouth.

One Sunday morning, whilst Ioane was holding service in the newly-constructed church (of which I had the honour of being a reputable member, and had helped to build), I set out for the north end of the island for a walk. I was accompanied by an enormous tom cat, who had attached himself to, and persistently followed me about everywhere. He was a detestable thief, but had his good points, one of which was that he would not let a rat escape him if the rodent came into my house. On very hot days, when I was walking over sandy, lightly timbered ground, the creature would get under the shade of a tree, sit on his haunches, pant like a dog, and almost ask me to let him rest to cool his toes and give him a drink. There were a number of similarly large "loose" cats on the island, and the natives treated them very kindly.

A delightfully cool breeze was rustling the palm from fronds overhead, and the air was filled with the low croakings and pipings of thousands of sooty terns. Taking a narrow winding path that

ran through the centre of the island, an hour's walk brought me to the north end of it, where under a clump of pandanus palms, which afforded good shade from the sun, and whose pinnated leaves were thrashing merrily in the breeze, I stopped. The tide was low, and on the beaches just below me many flocks of golden plover were feeding. I had brought a book with me, and before sitting down to read and smoke, by force of habit began scanning the horizon in search of a sail, when my attention was arrested by something extraordinary at the end of the north horn of the reef—about a mile distant. In a small "bay" of the reef, where the water should have been smooth, there was a tremendous upheaval of surf and flying foam, about what looked like the hull of a vessel bottom up, and in a few seconds I knew what it was—some "killers" (*orca gladiator*) were holding up a large whale, and had cornered him in an angle of the reef. Throwing down my book I ran to the beach, and then along the reef as far as I could, to obtain a nearer view of the struggle. Getting within a hundred yards further progress was arrested by a long, wide arm of deep water, running across the reef; but, still, I was close enough to see that the whale was a fin-back, and seven or eight killers were at work upon him. He was then just about done, and the ocean bull-dogs were evidently trying to slew him round so as to tow him out to sea,

but the "bay" was too narrow, and the mighty creature had wedged his head and the fore part of his body between some jagged coral boulders, from which they could not dislodge him, although they tugged and lugged at him most manfully. Anxious as I was to witness their operations, I was unable to remain any longer on account of the rising tide, and my nervous horror of the pestilent savage little sharks, about three feet in length, which in shallow water come dodging about any swimmer. As it was, it took me half-an-hour to regain the shore, having to wade breast high, across pools through which I had before run, and the old canvas shoes I wore were so torn by the jagged coral that my feet came off very badly.

Reaching the clump of pandanus trees I looked to see how the killers had got on. There was not a sign of either of them or of the fin-back—the rising tide had enabled them to free the Cetacean and tow him out into deep water, to sink and feed upon. And then I found that in my excited rush across the reef I had lost my valued meerschaum pipe, tobacco pouch, silver match-box and pocket-knife. Afterwards Eliné, the missionary's wife, placidly remarked that it would have been better for me had I come to church.

The fish called *palu*, which, as before mentioned, grows to such a great length, is as perfect in shape as a mackerel, and is caught with a running bow-

line by enticing it to come alongside the canoe. Its jaws are armed with one row each of sharply set teeth, like a saw blade, and it is a dangerous customer for inexperienced men to handle, for its strength is tremendous. It will sever the body of a full-grown bonito in halves as cleanly as if done with a carpenter's broad axe. The flesh is coarse and dry, but before I left the island I salted and dried several for the use of the expected ship's company, and every one on board thought it better than salt cod or ling. It is scaleless, blue-black on back and sides, and silvery-white underneath from throat to ventral fin.

But the best fish taken on Nanomaga is one common to most of the equatorial islands. It is called *tau-tau*, much like a salmon in shape, colouring and general appearance, and never exceeds fifteen or sixteen pounds. It is a nocturnal feeder, and is only caught on dark, or at least moonless nights, in deep water, and is a very game fighter. One day, as I was paddling slowly over a very smooth sea during a calm, I happened to look down at the bottom—six fathoms—and there saw an extraordinary spectacle. A few feet from the bottom was a vast number of these fish, all lying motionless and packed closely together, and all facing the same way. Never before had I seen such a thing, though the natives of the Gilbert Islands had told me that *tau-tau* would gather to-

gether in the daytime in great masses "to sleep." For some minutes I gazed fascinated at the picture below me—the swarm of beautiful fish, lying so motionless in the crystal water, the strong sunlight revealing them so perfectly. Hurriedly baiting a line, and removing the sinker, I lowered it down, and saw the bait, half of a flying-fish, actually settle on one's back. Not the slightest notice was taken of it at first, but presently, as I moved it to and fro, and across the backs of others, they quickly made a space and let it pass below them. Then I drew it up a little and must have touched one on the belly, for they at once became alarmed, and the whole of them shot off into deeper water and vanished. They must have numbered many thousands, and the only thing of the kind I had before seen resembling it was a series of schools of "sea salmon" crossing over the bar of an Australian tidal river, or when mullet were ascending it to reach the quiet backwaters.

The Ellice Group of Islands possess no attractions for the average tourist, who during the short stay of an excursion steamer would find nothing to interest him, as he would in the bold and romantic beauties of mountain, forest, river and lake that have given fame to Tahiti, Samoa and Fiji, and where there are hotels, restaurants and billiard-tables—of a kind. But to the man who is fond of sea-fishing, takes some interest in the native

character, customs and mode of life, can accustom himself to his environments, and is not afraid of "the utter loneliness of it," a month or two on one of these islands would be a delightful and long-remembered experience. For me personally there were no dull days, even during the stormy months of the rainy season, when fishing beyond the reef was impracticable except at intervals of a few days, and it was impossible for the natives to cut coconuts and make copra. But we had many other things not only to occupy, but to amuse us, day and night. Kino, the famous canoe maker, and I decided to build a boat out of some Puget Sound redwood timber planking, which I had landed from the barque and which, with the corrugated iron roofing before mentioned, were intended for a new trading station on one of the Caroline Islands. Every one assisted—in fact, too many assisted. Kino and I made a steam box, and the way in which we turned and curved and fitted the planks of soft redwood into position, and clenched them with copper boat nails and rivets into the somewhat crooked ribs of native wood, evoked the greatest applause and admiration from the on-lookers, especially the children, for whom my carpenter's tools had a wonderful fascination. A jack and a rabbet plane were their especial fancies, and the moment I laid either down some urchin would take it and begin planing a piece of plank or a stick.

We made a very good boat—of a kind. She certainly was a mighty weight—three-quarter inch redwood planking and keel, stem and stern posts and ribs of a heavy hardwood called toa; but nevertheless proved very useful in the following year, when I shipped her to the Carolines in my relieving vessel, glorified with a coating of red-lead paint within and dark green without.

I learned many useful things from the kindly-hearted people of Nanomaga. They taught me how to make coir cinnet, how to easily get an octopus from a hole in a coral pool by attaching a number of large shells of the cowrie kind to a line, lowering them down and letting them knock against each other, then the octopus emerges, intertwines his tentacles amongst them and is lifted up. And, *inter alia*, I was shown how to climb the long bole of a coconut palm when, during the rainy season, it was wet and slippery, and the best way of easily making extempore *taka* (sandals of coconut fibre), for use when walking upon the rough and jagged coral. In the matter of deep-sea fishing I learnt vastly from Muli'ao, and when I had to say farewell to him and his people I did so with a feeling of keen regret.

V

JULIUS ADOLPHUS JENKINS'S CHRISTMAS ALLIGATOR

WHEN Mr. Julius Adolphus Jenkins arrived at the thriving little city of Townsville in North Queensland, he was, at first, greatly flattered at the amount of attention he attracted when he walked up Flinders Street to introduce himself to the manager of the Bank of North Australia, to which institution he had been appointed ledger-keeper.

But, when, in addition to being stared at by every passer by, he found that people ran to their shop doors, and either gazed at him in open-mouthed wonder, or laughed outright, he began to feel annoyed and was glad to enter the Bank to escape observation.

The manager of the Bank and his accountant were at that moment discussing the expected arrival of the "new chum" ledger-keeper, who was due that morning by the English mail steamer, and Mr. Jenkins thought it very strange and somewhat rude that they should stare at him as if he were

some new species of animal. However, they were both very polite to him, inquired if he had had a pleasant voyage from London, and asked him what he would like to drink. This made Mr. Jenkins in turn stare at them, and wonder if these two disreputably-clad young men were really the manager and accountant of a BANK, or a couple of daring burglars who had taken possession of the building.

"I—I—thank you—I don't know," he stammered.

"Oh, but please do, Mr. Jenkins," said Alick Macpherson, the manager, genially, "come into the dining-room. Shut the door, Jimmy—if any one comes, let 'em knock," and he led the way into the dining-room, where Mrs. Flaherty, "cook and general," was laying the table for lunch.

Without being told, she went to the deal dresser that did duty as a sideboard and dinner waggon, and brought a bottle of brandy, a bottle of whisky, some bottles of soda, and three large tumblers, and placed them on the table. Apologizing for the want of ice—a rare commodity in Townsville in those days—Mr. Macpherson, on learning that Mr. Jenkins would take "just a very little brandy," passed him the bottle, told him to help himself, and opened a bottle of soda water for him. Then he and the accountant, Jimmy Bathurst—locally known as "Jimmy Badthirst"—helped themselves

to what Mr. Jenkins thought an appalling and disgraceful quantity of whisky.

"Well, Mr. Jenkins," said the manager, as he cocked one leg over the arm of his chair, and began cutting up a pipeful of black plug tobacco, "we are glad to see you. Of course you'll have lunch with us? That's right. Where are your traps? Oh, at the Queen's Hotel—well, it is about the decentest place in town to stay at. Bathurst and I live here—bank rule, you know—and we manage pretty well. Now then, Mrs. Flaherty, kindly hurry up and give us a good lunch, please. Hope you'll like Townsville, Mr. Jenkins. It's a beastly hot hole, but there are a lot of good fellows here, and you'll soon get into our ways."

Mr. Julius Adolphus Jenkins murmured, in a dazed sort of a way, that he hoped so, and then asked when he was to begin his duties.

"Oh, in about a week, if you like. There's no hurry, and I am not going to rush you into work at once. Don't you smoke? Of course your salary begins from to-day, but Jimmy here and the exchange clerk will attend to the ledgers for a week or so more with pleasure. By the way, Jimmy, when is Fletcher coming back?" (Fletcher was the youthful exchange clerk.)

Bathurst grinned. "When he does. You told him he could go fishing for an hour or two this morning. Dare say he'll turn up to-morrow to 'call over.'"

At lunch Macpherson and his subordinate did their best to put their guest at his ease, for they both saw that he was not at all happy—in fact he really was miserable, for he felt that he had come to live among savages. Excusing himself as soon as possible, he went off to his hotel; and, once he was out of hearing, the two young men burst out into irrepressible laughter, in which Mrs. Flaherty, unchecked, daringly joined, swaying, with her hands on her hips, from side to side, whilst tears rolled down her perspiring cheeks.

“Niver did I see such a thing like it in all me loife!” she panted at last. “Sure the whole town will be affer followin’ him up and down the strate.”

“Get away out of this, Mrs. Flaherty,” gasped Bathurst, as, with the tears streaming down his own cheeks, he pushed her out through the door just as a big, bearded man in the uniform of an inspector of mounted police, came in, and looked at the two young men, wondering what was the cause of their mirth.

“Clohesy, my boy, did you see IT?” said Bathurst in a choky sort of whisper, as he sank back in his seat.

“What is it?” asked the officer.

“Our new chum clerk from England, just turned up. Oh, Clohesy, he’s glorious—he’s a wonderful sight—a circus, a panorama isn’t in it with him. You must bring your nigger troopers to look at

him. Such a rig-out for North Queensland you never saw in your life—top hat, frock coat, collar half-a-foot high, monocle, spats on his boots, kid gloves and a beautiful cane.”

“When will he be on show?” inquired the hairy man, as he helped himself to a drink.

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Now “Julius Adolphus,” as he was henceforth to be known, although a terribly conceited young man, and an intense admirer of himself, had a certain amount of common-sense, and when he found that his Piccadilly costume attracted such widespread attention and amusement, he began to feel uncomfortable. It was not pleasant, for instance, when he showed himself in the street, to hear a lot of rough diggers make such remarks as “Oh, strike me, Dick, just look at it!” or for a great hulking bushman to deliberately stand in front of him open-mouthed, and then fall down in a pretended fit. He stood it for a few days, and then Macpherson came to his assistance and gave him advice.

“You see, Mr. Jenkins, your style of dress is so—so very unusual in this part of the world that it—well, it makes people stare. Now, I’m sure you won’t mind my advising you to discard it for something more suitable and less striking.”

“Do you wish me to discard wearing a coat?” inquired Julius Adolphus hotly—adding with dignity that he would draw the line at that.

Had Messrs. Macpherson and Bathurst seen the very descriptive letter which the young man wrote home to his parents, they would have at least been interested, if not flattered at his remarks about the society of Townsville in general, and themselves in particular.

“The people are the roughest and dirtiest imaginable. One half of them are diggers, who are swarming in from the interior on their way to the new gold fields on the Palmer River. They all have horses, use the most frightful language, and when not fighting or intoxicated, are lying asleep in the shade on public-house verandahs. . . . When I first entered the door of the disgraceful building called a Bank, I found therein two rough-looking young men clad in shirts, trousers, and boots (socks I presume they had). Round each man’s waist was a coarse leather belt, on which was also a greasy leather watch pouch; neither had collar nor tie, and each was smoking a pipe! Imagine my disgust when I found that these two disreputable-looking roughs were respectively the Manager and Accountant! Certainly they were civil, and I presume have been gentlemen . . . they address each other as ‘Jimmy’ and ‘Alick,’ and seem to be on terms of the most shocking familiarity with

their customers, and go out and have drinks with them at the low hotel opposite the Bank at all times of the day, or invite them into their own dining-room—and this in banking hours! And they keep a pack of savage kangaroo dogs—which live in the Bank.

“The exchange clerk is an unmitigated young ruffian of eighteen, named Fletcher. He also smokes a pipe in the Bank, and out of it, addresses me as ‘Jenkins,’ and is hail fellow well met with the rough and dirty diggers and bushmen who come into the Bank on business. I wonder what these three beautiful creatures would think of an English Bank and its tone?”

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Six months had passed, and Julius Adolphus had become used to, and not entirely averse to, his surroundings. One reason for this was, that being very musical, his evenings were not dull, and although Townsville was a new town, there was no lack of ladies' society—for nearly all the Government officials, merchants, doctors, and other professional men were married, and some had families, in which were some pretty girls. And as Mr. Jenkins began to lose his provincial English stiffness, and wear white ducks and unbend himself generally, he actually found that he was beginning to like some of the people who were always so hospitable to him, and for a Miss Mary Bran-

don, the pretty daughter of a leading merchant, he had more than a liking. Like himself, she was very musical, and he visited her father's town house on Melton Hill several evenings a week. Mary was at first much inclined to make fun of her admirer, and "chaffed" him a good deal, which only made him the more devoted to her, and as time went on, he gradually lost much of his "new-chummishness," and mixed with young men of his own age, attended an occasional race meeting, and even went so far as to join in a kangaroo hunt. But at the same time he always regarded himself as an infinitely superior person. And he hated Jimmy "Badthirst"—first because that irresponsible young man openly expressed his admiration for Mary Brandon, and secondly because he was noisy in the Bank, smoked incessantly, even when cashing cheques over the counter, and always spoke of banking as "merely a pawnbroking business, without the sign of the three balls over the door." Julius Adolphus had a holy reverence for banking as a dignified and gentlemanly pursuit, and it horrified him to hear loose talk like this.

When the rainy season came in there was a great wild-goose shooting party on some swamps a few hours' ride from the town, and he was induced to take part in it, clad in a wonderful sporting get-up, which caused great hilarity. Everything he wore from head to foot was new, and as every

article, except a huge green-lined solar topee, had been made by local tailors and outfitters who had never made the like before in their lives, but had done their best (which was awful to look at), he presented such a curious spectacle that numbers of the townspeople cheered him, and almost every fourth person he met inquired if he was "going far?" Allusions to the solar topee were numerous as being "just the thing to attract geese and ducks," etc., but Julius Adolphus deigned no reply, and trotted along the street in dignified silence and chin in air.

On his way to join the party he called at Miss Brandon's house. She told him (out of pity) that he looked "so nice, and so different from the others," that he flushed with pleasure, and said he would leave a goose at the house on his way home.

Arriving at the swamp at dusk, the party camped for the night in tents, intending to begin the shoot at dawn from three different sides of the great swamp, and Julius Adolphus was instructed as to the position he was to take up at a certain spot, and not to fire till his turn came, or he would, as young Fletcher observed, "spoil the blooming show." But he was determined to get more geese than any one. So long before dawn, he started alone, got to his appointed post under a clump of *ti*-trees, and waited impatiently; for all around him he could hear hundreds upon hundreds of geese—

some on the banks, some on the water. And at the first break of day he saw on a little islet less than fifty yards away, thirty or forty birds standing at the water's edge. In an instant he fired both barrels, and uttered a shout of triumph as two birds dropped, and gun in hand, he dashed into the shallow water, and promptly sank up to his chin in mud, as some thousands of geese, with a noise of wings like a hurricane, rose in air from all parts of the swamp, and made off to another spot two miles away—amid the curses of the rest of the shooting party.

Julius Adolphus was rescued just in time from perishing miserably. Then his gun was found, and he was brought back to camp, given some coffee, threatened with murder if he left the tent again, and the two geese he had shot thrown at him—with much Queensland language. He waited till the party had gone, then burning with anger at his rude treatment, but proud of his skill, he caught and saddled his horse, and with the pair of geese made his way back to town to his hotel, changed his clothes, and at lunch time carried the geese to his divinity. Her sweet words of praise filled his manly bosom with joy, and before an hour had passed, inspired him to confess his love. And whilst Mary did not actually say “yes,” she did not say “no”; but at the same time frankly told him that he must try and be less English, especially

in his assumption that colonials were an uncultivated lot of beings, and quite inferior in intelligence to the Englishman born. "And, Adolphus," she added, "just show all these young fellows that you are as good a sportsman as any one of them. I know you can be—if you try."

And Julius Adolphus Jenkins went home on air, blessing those two geese.

For some weeks he preserved a distinctly haughty demeanour to Jimmy Bathurst and young Fletcher—especially when the latter made rude allusions to the awful sight he had presented when pulled up out of the mud. He now paid the fair Mary daily visits, and promised her to learn to ride like a colonial, and not mind a little chaff.

"Every new chum gets teased at first, Julius," she said. "Now Mr. Macpherson was such a dandified young Scotsman when we first knew him ten years ago, but look at him now! Any one would think he had been born and bred in the bush, and lived among rough diggers and bushmen all his life. I don't want you to be careless or untidy in your dress, but would like you to be just a *little* more colonial in your ways. And I want you to go shooting and fishing and kangarooing as much as you can—like the other men here. And oh, Julius, do try and shoot an alligator. There were five killed in Ross River last week by different people, and I should like you to shoot one.

Could you not—it is not very dangerous—if you are careful.”

Julius bridled up. “What they can do, I can do,” he said loftily.

Mary’s eyes sparkled. “Oh, Julius! Do try. And if you do, I will marry you whenever you ask me. The fact is, Julius dear, father laughs at you and says you are an awful duffer and teases me terribly about you. And that horrid little beast of a Fletcher boy mimicks you so terribly, and you know what father is—he laughs at every one. But he won’t let me marry a ‘duffer.’ No, not if he were a duke or a bishop.”

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A mile or two from Townsville, near the mouth of the Ross River, there was a small muddy-banked and low mangrove island, in the centre of which was a ramshackle hut raised on four piles. It was used by the local Chinese shrimpers and fishermen, and also by alligator shooters occasionally, as a good and safe spot to get an easy shot at close range at any saurian lying on the river bank a few yards distant.

Here, one afternoon at four o’clock, two days before Christmas Day, Julius Adolphus found himself—determined to kill an alligator before nine on the following morning. (He was due at the Bank at ten.) For the purpose he had borrowed a heavy Terry police rifle, had had its mechanism

explained, provided himself with twenty cartridges, some rope, and also some refreshment in case he had to remain the night. He had reached the islet by a punt belonging to the Chinamen, who lent it to him for the night for half-a-crown, under promise of his not losing it. This he failed to do, for immediately he jumped out of it, the thing shot off stern first, and went whirling down the muddy river and out to sea. This was disconcerting, for there was not a soul about, it was raining, and there were millions of mosquitoes stinging his face and hands. However, he was not alarmed—rather exhilarated, in fact, at spending the night alone, though the loss of the punt and the rope (the latter to secure the alligator after it was shot) was annoying.

The floor of the hut was six feet above the ground, and all around the four rough posts, and also hanging from the floor beams, were folds upon folds of a stout fishing-net put there to dry by the Chinamen. Ascent to the hut was by means of a notched pole, slanting upwards from the ground. The interior was bare of any furniture, but there were plenty of Chinese smells. The hut, although such a ricketty-looking affair, was really strongly built, and every part of it, including the posts, were lashed together with cane, instead of being fastened by nails.

For two hours—till darkness came on, Julius

Adolphus, rifle in hand, scanned the muddy banks opposite, but saw no sign of any alligators, although he was several times inclined to fire at some logs—which he had been told very much resembled alligators when those reptiles were asleep.

He passed a wretched night, it poured with rain continuously—and as it wore on towards morning, he became conscious of an alarming fact: the river was rising fast. Striking a match, he peered down through an opening in the roughly boarded floor, and his heart sank when he saw that the yellow, rushing water was within two feet of the boards. Then he went to the door, or rather entrance hole, of the now trembling shanty, and peered out. He could see nothing, for the blinding rain obscured everything. For a moment or two wild terror possessed him, and seizing his heavy rifle, he fired shot after shot in quick succession through the doorway, in the hope that it would bring succour. No answer came—there was only the hum, the low, droning hum of the rushing flood, as it swept through the mangroves, and the heavy plashing of the rain upon the pine-boarded roof of the humpy.

Then Julius Adolphus Jenkins, the “dude,” the “howling new chum,” and the “rank duffer,” pulled himself together, and became a Man. He lit his pipe (Mary’s doings—for he had abhorred smoking

a pipe), sat down on the quivering floor of the humpy, and waited for daybreak.

Dawn at last, and Julius heaved a sigh of relief, when he saw that the water was lower by several inches, but the ramshackle structure was canted over to an alarming degree, although the posts which upheld it had been planted several feet in the ground.

Suddenly there arose a strange and violent commotion immediately beneath the floor of the hut, which presently began to sway to and fro, then came shakings, followed by a succession of thumps and bumps against the posts, and the hut canted over more than ever, and then began to move, and the occupant realized that he was adrift, and being carried down to the mouth of the river.

Most fortunately the posts did not become detached, and dragging along the bottom, helped to keep the hut in a fairly steady position, although every now and then it would be shaken in a most violent and extraordinary manner, and occasionally turned completely round.

Knocking off some of the roofing, Julius thrust his head through, and shouted with all his strength, as he saw through the blinding rain a group of wood-cutters' huts on the bank. But no one heard him, and on went the humpy, shaking and bumping and swaying to and fro.

As Julius continued to look about him, the rain

suddenly ceased, and his heart leapt with joy when he saw that right ahead was a long, low point of land, and beyond that, and stretching across the river, several mangrove islets close together, and towards these the hut was drifting fast, and he determined that if it did not ground upon one of them, he would swim to the nearest to avoid being taken out to sea.

Ten anxious minutes passed, and then the floating hut crashed into the trees on one of the islands, and stuck fast, but, curiously enough, now began to shake and heave about more than ever.

Satisfied that he was now safe, and that he would soon be seen, Julius clambered out on the roof and looked about him. No habitation was visible, but he could see some horses and cattle about a mile away on the left-hand bank of the river, and as the sudden flood was now subsiding very rapidly, he decided to wait a few hours where he was, instead of trying to swim across, whilst the current was so strong, and perhaps be carried out over the shallow bar, or be seized by an alligator.

In an hour the water had fallen quite two feet, and Julius was eating some sandwiches when he noticed that, although the hut did not shake as it did before, the net, some loose folds of which he could see beneath him, was every now and then agitated in a peculiar manner—and that the folds were being drawn in against—not flowing out with

—the current. Clambering down the other side of the roof, he looked beneath the flooring, which was now many feet above the water, and noticed, swathed round and round in the folds of the net, a huge “something” which certainly moved, and then a chill of horror passed through him as he saw the protruding forearm of an alligator. For a moment or two the sight unnerved him, and he trembled.

Then, hardly knowing what he was doing, he climbed the roof again, got his rifle, and descending to the ground, fired shot after shot into the monster, and a savage delight filled his veins as he saw it writhe and quiver, as each heavy bullet ploughed its way into his carcass. In a few minutes it lay quiet—and dead.

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Half-an-hour later a party of Chinese fishermen appeared in a boat, and the exultant Julius Adolphus struck a bargain with them for £1 10s. to bring the saurian to Townsville. He accompanied them, and a little after noon they landed at the steamer wharf, and the giant reptile—one of the largest ever seen in North Queensland—was housed up by a steam winch amidst a scene of the greatest excitement, and amongst the first to offer their sincere congratulations were Macpherson and Jimmy “Badthirst.”

Followed by a cheering crowd they marched to

the Queen's Hotel, and there Julius Adolphus became the hero of the day, when, leaning his rifle against the bar, he called out—

“Come in, gentlemen, every one of you, and have as many drinks as you like. I am good for five sovereigns.”

A burst of applause greeted this welcome announcement, and the news spread like wildfire. Then the dead alligator was dragged by a pair of horses up to the hotel for exhibition, and Julius Adolphus's cup of happiness was full.

Macpherson took him aside, “Go and change your clothes, Jenkins,” and added with a twinkle in his eye, “and don't bother about the Bank to-day.”

Julius Adolphus, inwardly blessing him, took himself off, and within an hour was with Mary Brandon.

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On the following morning the local *Herald* contained an interesting item of news.

“We are happy to be in a position to state that Mr. Julius Adolphus Jenkins, of the Bank of North Australia, the hero of a thrilling adventure with an alligator (narrated on page 3), will shortly lead to the altar Miss Mary Brandon, daughter of W. S. Brandon, Esq., J.P. of this city.”

VI

MY FRIEND GEORGE, THE DOCKER

EVERY third Sunday afternoon for many months, George would call upon me—a smile upon his sun-tanned face, and his pockets bulging out with large plugs of the best American leaf tobacco, boxes of English wax matches, and four bottles of genuine Dublin stout—all smuggled goods, and always very acceptable to me. I encouraged him for many reasons: one was that I could not smoke the filthy Government-made stuff that French people call tobacco, and for which you pay eighty centimes for two ounces (and English or American tobacco is 15 francs per pound); secondly, he got me the stout for forty centimes the bottle, and my thief of an *elicier* charged me a franc; thirdly, he was a hardworking docker at the *Quai*, had a sick wife, and three children, and deserved sympathy and encouragement, and I approve of smuggling when I directly benefit by it; fourthly, George, who could speak good English, was always willing and eager

to teach me scarifyingly-wicked French expressions to be used upon cabmen, hotel touts and such people. George was an out and out Radical, a follower of M. Combes, and hated the clergy with a holy fervour that occasionally led him into trouble, and an interview with a *de paix*. And then, he had many estimable qualities, he was a good, honest fellow, a patriotic Frenchman, was fairly well-educated, had a fat, hearty laugh that did one good to hear, and only got reasonably elevated on *fête* days, like most of his fellow-workmen.

Georges Durand had not always been a labourer on the Quai at six francs a day as he was now, at the age of fifty-two.

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One hot Sunday afternoon in August, as I was half-dozing in my study chair and looking at the shipping lying in Havre Roads, I heard George's well-known footstep, and presently Rosalie, my servant, came up-stairs, and told me that M'sieur Durand was in the dining-room, also that M'sieur Durand was beautifully dressed, and, here she showed her white teeth in a large smile, he "was very merry."

"Ask him to come up," I said.

George came up, beaming with smiles, and just a little bit "rocky." He was wearing a new tailor-made frock suit, a top hat and gloves, and carried

a cane. I stared, then rising, made him a profound bow. He laughed, slapped me on the shoulder, then as he sat down, became suddenly grave.

“You are alone?” he asked in French.

“Yes, George,” I replied in English, “every one but Rosalie is out.”

“Ah, well, we shall not be disturbed; but let me close the door—that *bonne* Rosalie is a Bretonne, and may hang about and listen, and then tell her priest what she may hear. I trust no woman, and least of all a woman of Brittany—who is priest-ridden before she is born.”

And then he added some strong expressions in the English language concerning priests, abbés and bishops and cardinals individually and collectively—and his grey eyes flashed, as he struck his clenched fist upon the table, nearly upsetting the two small glasses of cognac I had placed there.

“What is the matter, George?” I asked, as I handed him a cigar, “have you been ‘accidentally’ bumping against a cleric again, and been fined forty francs?”

He laughed again. No, he had not. And he had come to tell me news, great news. After four years of waiting, the lawsuit had been decided in his favour, and he and his wife and children would now leave the two squalid rooms in the Rue Lamy, and go away to his own native place—Savenay, near St. Nazaire. Ah, he had wonderful luck this

week. On the very day that the good news came from Paris, he went as usual to the Quai Renaud, and found that there was no work for him that day. And he had had no breakfast, and there were but ten sous in the house to buy food for four people.

“Why did you not come to me, George?”

His brawny hand pressed my knee for a moment or two as he turned his face away. Then he resumed, speaking half in French, half in English (some of his remarks in the latter language were so vivid that I italicise them).

Well, he and his comrade, Michel, walked about the docks looking for work, and presently saw a crowd gathered round a small cargo steamer that was going to Cherbourg, and there was much shouting and excitement, and he heard English voices crying out “*Oh, d—n you for a pack of ——— idiots!*”

It was a motor-car—a grand, superb motor-car, large, luxurious, but heavy—so heavy that it had stuck in the middle of the gangboards, which had sagged into a loop, and were cracking. In a few minutes more the car would have been in the dock. Every one was yelling out advice, and contrary orders, and one of the Englishmen stamped with rage and cried out, “Good Lord, there go eight hundred pounds!” and no one knew what to do. Then he (George) suddenly caught sight of a big,

half-empty coal barge lying a little distance away, and he and Michel jumped into the dock, swam to the barge, cast off her moorings, and managed to get her under the gangway just as it broke, and the car dropped into the barge—almost undamaged.

“Were the Englishmen pleased?” I asked.

George’s eyes twinkled, and leaning back in his chair, he kicked his heels together.

“Monsieur! They give me one note for one hundred francs, and Michel two twenty-franc pieces, and shake hands, and oh, speak very nice to me. They are rich. Father is colonel in army English, India. Son is captain. Three lady—one old, two young.”

“I am glad you have been so lucky, George. I am glad because of your wife. She is a good woman, and has suffered long.”

George bent his head. “Yes, she is a good woman. . . . I will tell you something presently. . . . Monsieur, I go home with my hundred francs. I stop not at any café, but Michel bought half-a-litre of cognac, and we drank it in an *allée* off the street, and ate some biscuits. Then, as I came to the Rue Lamy, I met the postman. He gave me a registered letter. Here, read it. Mon dieu! It is wonderful! Monsieur Combes is a grand man! Only for him I should now be working on the Quai for six francs a day. Read it. My mother willed

all this 37,000 francs to the priests—the robbers, the thieves! because I, her only son, was accused of killing one of the money-grubbers. Ah, Combes is a great man. Only for him I should now be as dirty, ill-clad, and down-hearted as I was two weeks ago. The priests can no longer rob the people. Combes is sweeping away the fat monks and the nuns, and will spare only the Little Sisters of the Poor. *They* are good women. But the bishops, and the rich priests—and the Judas Jesuits—I wish I could see them all strangled.”

“George,” I said with a smile, “the priests seem to have treated you badly. Never mind. Your good star has risen now. So we will have a bottle of Sillery *sec*, and drink to the health of Monsieur Combes and ourselves, and confusion to the enemies of France.”

Opening the Sillery, we repeated toasts amid more laughter, my collie dog “Russ” joining in with vociferous barking. George put his hand in his breast pocket, and brought forth a box of chocolates.

“*Voilà! bon chien, pour toi!*” and he emptied the contents of the box upon the carpet.

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“George,” I asked presently, as we drew our chairs nearer to the open window, “what is this story about your killing a priest? Did you really do so?”

He snapped his jaws together, and laughed harshly. "No, but I beat him badly—savagely, cruelly. And I lay in prison for it for a year and eight months. He was a robber—he made a savage of me. Lend me a pipe, monsieur—I will smoke a pipe too. I have the day free. Berthe" (his wife) "is happy with the children, and receiving congratulations, and I am well out of the way. And Berthe alone knows what I will now tell you. For, before I married her, I told her what I had done. And she has been a good woman to me—as you know."

"She is a good woman, George. And tomorrow, if I may, I will go and see her again. Dr. Guilbert told me that only one lung is affected, and that she will recover, if she had the open-air treatment."

George nodded, as he puffed at his pipe. "She shall have it. We shall go first to one of those places for that in Switzerland, then to my home in Savenay. Now I will tell you."

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"I was mate of a Nantes barque trading to Brazil, when I became engaged to Aurelie Ruze. She was but twenty-one years of age, and the only daughter of a retired cordage maker at Nantes. He was a widower, and had always liked me. He paid for my education up to the time I was sixteen, and his house was always open to me. So

Aurelie and I almost grew up together. That is not the custom in France, but old Ruze did not mind, and only laughed when people told him he was acting foolishly. He said that I was a good lad and would make Aurelie a good husband. And as we had grown up together, so had we grown to love each other. Her father was a rich man, and cared nothing for people's talk. My mother, who was very religious, did not like him, for he used to boast that he had not been inside a church for thirty years. And he disliked the priests and nuns. Why, I never knew. I only know that he thought badly of them all, and used to swear that none of his money would ever go into the coffers of the Church. And fond as he was of his daughter, she often angered him greatly by going to mass and church festivals. All this brought him trouble, and the clericals in Nantes showed their dislike to him in many ways.

“My mother—my father died when I was a child—was what you English people call ‘well-to-do.’ She meant to be a good mother to me, but was hard—hard and stern—and hated my going to the Ruze's house. And so I was not happy at home, and was glad when I went to sea.

“I did well. The shipowners who employed me were pleased, and I rose step by step to be first mate of a fine barque.

““ When you become a captain, you shall marry

Aurelie,' said her father to me. And I knew from Aurelie that the owners had told him they would give me a berth as captain when I returned from my next voyage. So I went away happy.

"It was a year and a half before I returned, and the first thing I did after I got on shore was to go to see old Ruze, and my Aurelie. It was dark when I reached the house. I found it shut up, and *A Louer* notices in the windows. I felt dazed, and I stared stupidly at the deserted house for some minutes. Then I walked down the steps into the street, and entered a café near by. It was kept by an old friend of mine—Pol Vasse. He was at the counter serving customers, and in the little room at the back were his wife and daughter Berthe. They drew me inside, and gave me a warm welcome, but they looked strangely at me.

"What is the matter?' I said quickly. 'Where is M. Ruze? The house is shut up.'

"Old Vasse pressed me into a seat, then he bade his wife attend to the café, and closing the door between, sat down beside me.

"Georges, my friend, old M. Ruze died suddenly two months after you sailed.'

"And Aurelie?' I said, and at my question Berthe Vasse covered her face with her apron, and wept.

"Old Pol placed his hand on my knee, *comme ça*, monsieur, and it trembled, and I felt a great

dread fill my heart. 'Tell, my friend,' I cried. 'Is she ill? Where is she?'

"'She is with the Saints. She drowned herself in the Loire eight months ago. She died broken-hearted. Berthe was with her until a month before she died—and then——'

"'And then——'

"'And then the two Ursuline Sisters, who were constantly in the house, day and night, told her to come no more. One day as she ventured to the door to make inquiries, the Abbé Gervais came to her, and angrily bade her begone. And then we heard about a month later, that Mademoiselle Ruze was slowly getting better, and that by the doctor's orders the Sisters were taking her to some place in the country near Saumur to recover. That was one Saturday, and on the following Monday morning early, she was missing, and her body was found in the Loire the same day. It was discovered that whilst the nurse who occupied the same room with her was asleep, the girl must have got up, put on a long cloak, and quietly opened the front door—it was past midnight—and went to the river.'

"'Little by little, monsieur—but not that night—I got the whole story from Berthe Vasse. When old Ruze died, Aurelie was left alone and helpless—for the Ruzes had not a relation in the world, and no friends. And the greedy priests fastened upon her like a hawk seizes upon a dove. The

nuns came to the house and never left it, and she told Berthe one day that unless I came back to her soon I could never see her again, as she was to go into a convent. And then lawyers came to the house. Bah——”

He stopped speaking, and looked at me steadily for a moment or two. Then he went on quietly—

“Every sou of the old cordage maker’s money went to the Church, and the house and other property to the Abbé Gervais personally. How the matter was effected I cannot tell, but nine out of ten people were satisfied that the law approved of the will as a genuine testament made by Aurelie Ruze of her own free will and consent, and out of a desire to show her gratitude for the kindness she had received during a long illness.

“I did not want a sou of the old man’s fortune. I only wanted my promised wife, and I was hot for revenge.

“The abbé was a rich man, but was not liked by many people on account of his arrogance, and had few friends. For many weeks I waited for an opportunity to meet him alone—and at last it came. Late one night he came out from his study to walk in the garden. I was watching, and sprang over a low wall, and in a few seconds I had him by the throat. He was a big, powerful man, but no match for me.

“Well, I beat him with a stick—as a man would

beat a savage dog—until he was senseless. Then I went to the police-station, told of what I had done, and where they would find Monsieur l'Abbé. I might have escaped had I tried, but I did not care to try.

“I never saw my mother again. She never came near me whilst I was in prison, but when she died five years ago, and left her 37,000 francs to the Church, I appealed to the court. And at last I have got it, with interest as well.

“A year after I came out of prison I married Berthe Vasse. She has been a good wife to me, and I am well content.”

VII

TERESA STUART : A REMINISCENCE OF THE BUSH

FOR four hot and weary days I had tramped along lonely and disused dray-roads and bridle-paths that led from a little mining township in the northern part of New South Wales to the coast—to a somnolent and decaying seaport at the mouth of a tidal river, the slowly moving, muddy waters of which met the white-crested rollers of the Pacific on a wide and shallow bar, in whose ever-changing and restless bed of shifting sand lay, deep down, the hull of many a ship and the bones of the men who had manned them.

* * * * *

After many years' wandering outside Australia, I had gone to that mining township at the written request of an old and dear comrade of mine, whom I had met and with whom I had worked in the old, glorious days of the Palmer River gold diggings, in North Queensland. We had made money together, had lost it together; and then one day we

found ourselves in Cooktown "stony broke," as far as money was concerned, and only our horses, saddles, and unlimited hope for the future between us and absolute want of food. We sold the horses and our outfit to a Chinese restaurant-keeper for £22, indulging in meals at five shillings per meal for two days, and then parted—my mate to join a prospecting party to the Coen River, and I to ship as A.B. on a Sydney-owned schooner then at Cooktown, and which had been chartered by a party of diggers to take them to New Guinea, where the discovery of payable gold had been reported.

Six years had passed since then, and I had just returned to Sydney from a cruise in the South Pacific as "recruiter" in the Kanaka labour traffic, when my sister handed me a letter from my old comrade, telling me that he had struck on what he believed was "a good show," but had no money to work it, and was "shepherding" it, in the hope that I would again join him if I had any money to put into the venture and would tackle mining again. The letter was many months old. But it appealed to me for many reasons. I was sick of the sea and its hardships and worries, and my health was broken down by malarial fever contracted in Melanesia. And the place in which my former mate's "good show" was located was in the district in which I had been born and reared and had run wild in my childhood, and I wanted to

smell the bush again and hear the cheery call of the man at the windlass above the shaft, "Look out below," and to know the peacefulness at night, when the day's hard work was done and honest men gathered together under a shelter of bark and talked happily of what the morrow might bring forth.

The morrow, the morrow—ever it is the morrow to the gold digger. Ever before him he sees the open gate of the City of Fortune, and so often does he lie at the gate—dead.

So, with two hundred pounds (a year's savings) in my pocket, I left the sea behind me, and a few days later found myself at Corella Creek with my old mate. For two months we and two "wages" men we employed worked at the reef, and our first crushing raised our hopes, the second barely paid the cost of raising and crushing, and the third ran us into debt to the millowner, and, to make a long story short, at the end of five months we were again "stony broke." My mate got work at the battery, and I bade him a sorrowful farewell, and set my face towards the sea once more.

On the evening of the fourth day of my tramp I came to a well-remembered spot, familiar to me in the days of my youth, a great reed-fringed swamp, encompassed by lofty grey-boled gums. It lay between two spurs of the coastal range, and in the "sixties" had been known as Lake Stuart, after

the proprietor of a once thriving cattle station, who had built a great house on the grassy rolling downs that stretched between the swamp and the foot of the eastern spur. Financial misfortune fell upon the owner, a Major Stuart, who was a retired East Indian Army officer and a wealthy man. His lavish expenditure and open-handed hospitality were proverbial in all that part of the colony and led to his downfall, and when the crash came he was unable to face the situation, and shot himself. He left a widow and five children—three sons and two daughters.

The youngest of the latter—Teresa—was about fifteen years of age at the time of her father's death, and I well remember seeing her at the funeral—a slight, pale-faced girl, with the black hair and eyebrows of her mother, who was either a Spanish or Portuguese lady. For some years afterwards Mrs. Stuart and her three grown-up sons carried on the cattle station, and at last succeeded in freeing it from the bank, which had foreclosed upon the property when the Major shot himself. But to do this they had to live in the utmost retirement; all the servants, except one or two, were sent away, and the three stalwart sons did the work of ordinary stockmen. With the exception of my own parents, Mrs. Stuart received no visits from any of the friends of the days of her prosperity. She was an intensely proud and reserved woman, and her

sons and daughters shared her spirit. To my brothers and sister, and to me, however, she was always sweet and kind, and the intimacy between the two families—although we lived nearly forty miles from Lake Stuart—was never broken, until there came a great and terrible tragedy.

When I was fourteen years of age, and on my first voyage to sea, Mrs. Stuart, her eldest daughter Frances, and two of her sons had occasion to visit Sydney. Alick, the eldest son, and Teresa remained at home at "The Lake." In those days steamer communication on the coast was very irregular, and one day Alick Stuart rode over to our place at Port M—— and told my parents that he had received a letter from his mother telling him that she, Frances, and Alick's two brothers had taken their passages in a steamer named the *Pluto*, which was bound to Brisbane, but the captain had agreed to land them on the coast at the nearest point to Lake Stuart—a little bay called Red Rocks, where a boat could easily land. It was about five miles from Lake Stuart, and Alick Stuart was to await them there with a trap and a bullock dray to convey them and their luggage home. He, driving a light cart, and a bullock driver with his team left the cattle station and reached Red Rocks in the evening, where they camped. Three days later the bullocks came back to the station, one by one, and Teresa Stuart and a black boy hurried to

Red Rocks, and found her brother and the bullock-driver dead. They had spread their blankets underneath a great tree, which had been struck by lightning, and a mighty branch had fallen upon and killed them instantaneously.

For many weeks the agonized Teresa Stuart awaited the arrival of the *Pluto*; but the *Pluto* never came, and then my father, who was the resident magistrate of the district, had to tell her the dreadful truth. The steamer had left Sydney carrying a heavy cargo, and on her deck was a large Scotch boiler destined for a Queensland sugar-plantation, and its enormous top-heavy weight had, it was surmised, capsized and sunk the *Pluto* during a north-easterly gale that she had encountered a few days after leaving Sydney.

Teresa Stuart went to her mother's relatives in Europe, and the station was broken up and abandoned, and the great house left to decay and go to ruin, for no one in the district was in a position to either buy or rent the place.

That was long, long years ago; and as I threw down my swag and gun, and gazed across the silent waters of "The Lake" at the roof of the old house, which showed above the wild tangle of lantana and other undergrowth, I wondered what had become of the pale-faced, dark-eyed girl whom I had last seen when I was a lad of fourteen years of age. For after the *Pluto* tragedy Teresa Stuart

had never written from Europe to any one in Australia—not even to my mother, for whom she had shown a deep regard from the day that her dead brother had been found at Red Rocks.

* * * * *

Walking through the lines of grey-boled, ghostly gums, I reached, as the sinking sun was purpling the mountain-range, the ruins of the old brick-built lodge; and then I started in surprise. The graves of Alick Stuart and the bullock-driver Cole, which I had expected to find overgrown with the insidious creeping lantana, were enclosed in a neat, white-painted picket-fence, and within the enclosure, which was entered by a gate, was a mass of white and scarlet geraniums and other flowers. At one end a great wisteria vine, in full flower, was trained over an arch of bent saplings, and underneath was a lounge-chair, in the seat of which were some old, worn books and a lady's work-basket containing sewing materials. It had evidently been recently in use, and as I gazed around me, wondering what woman could possibly be living in such a deserted spot, I heard a footstep near me, and an old man appeared, carrying two buckets of water. In an instant I recognized him, though so many, many years had passed since we had last met. He was old Peter Hagan—Major Stuart's soldier-servant.

“Don't you remember me, Peter?”

He put down the buckets and peered at me keenly under his white, bushy eyebrows. Then he put out his hand.

"It's wan of the B—— boys, ye are?"

"Yes; I am the youngest. Are you living here, Peter?"

He nodded. "I am. I'm up at th' ould house. Will ye be for campin' here the night with me?"

"Gladly, Peter. I am dog-tired. I've tramped from Corella Creek Mine. Is your wife here, Peter?"

He jerked his thumb in the direction of the big house. "She's dead an' gone this sivinteen year, an' buried in th' ould orchard. 'Tis on'y me and Miss Tessa that's left now."

"Miss Stuart! Is she living here?"

"She is that. Come along—an' I'll tell ye. 'Tis nigh on five years back since she came. The ould woman an' me was guardin' th' propuppy fur th' Bank at a pound a week. Twelve years afther Kitty died, Miss Tessa came here in a buggy wid her belongin's. Her hair was white as snow, and th' moment I saw her I knew that her mind was gone, though she spoke sinsibly enough, in a way. 'Peter,' says she, 'I've come to th' Lake agin to watch beside Alick, until mother, an' Frances, an' Douglas, an' Kerr come back to me. . . .' An' every day th' poor swate thing comes here an' sits

an' sews, an' talks to herself, an' listens to the callin' av the rollers on the bar."

"Do you think she will remember me, Peter? I should so like to see her again."

The old man shook his head dubiously. "Maybe—maybe. Ye've got a bit av a luk av your mother, and she spakes of her at toimes. Annyway, I'll tell her that ye are here wid me the night, an' I'll ask her to see ye."

* * * * *

When Peter brought me to her she was sitting in the old dining-room that I remembered so well. She was, and yet was not, the same Teresa Stuart whom I had known in the days of my youth, but her face was drawn and thin, and of an unearthly pallor, making a strange contrast to the dark, liquid eyes. Her hair, snow-white, fell about her shoulders in long curls in the fashion of the early "sixties." Only one candle was lit in the room.

She smiled as she gave me her hand, and spoke.

"Will you sit here, please? I remember you quite well. . . . I often think of your mother. Do you mind being in the half-darkness? I do not like Peter to bring all the candles till it is my bedtime." She leant forward and placed her thin hand gently on mine—and looked at me through the fast-gathering darkness. "You are a grown man now."

I pressed her hand in return. "I am glad to

see you again, Miss Stuart," I said, for want of other words, and my eyes filled.

The sound of my voice seemed to electrify her, for, with a quick movement, she rang a tiny bell on the table, and old Hagan appeared.

"All the candles, please, Hagan. I have had a most pleasant surprise."

She spoke so naturally and sanely that I could not for the moment believe that she was mentally afflicted. Quickly old Peter brought the candles, and as he lit them one by one, with a warning look at me, I saw that the dining-room, as far as the walls were concerned, was almost as I had known it in my childhood's days. Her father's portrait in oils, in the uniform of a captain in a Sikh Regiment, was in its old place; so also were those of many other members of the family. But the massive sideboard and all the silver plate were missing, and the floor was bare except for some opossum rugs and strips of faded carpet.

As the light of the candles illumined the room she looked steadily at me for some moments, and then her voice—so soft and sweet, and yet so low—broke into the silence of the night.

"I know you now—so much better—since I heard you speak. You have your mother's voice. . . . You were the boy that Alick liked. . . . I remember when the pilot-boat capsized on the bar at Port M—— and Alick saved you. . . . You

were very freckled, and stammered, did you not? But, how brown you are. Have you come from India?"

"No, Miss Stuart. But I am a sailor, and have become sun-burnt."

"A sailor! Oh, dear! But you are not in naval uniform. Are you on leave? You must stay and have breakfast with me to-morrow before you rejoin your ship. Is your mother still in Australia? . . . I have been away so long, and fear I have lost all my old friends through my own neglect. . . . I like to sit here in these warm summer evenings and listen to the sob of the surf upon the bar. Did you ever read a German story called *Max*? There is a Russian peasant soldier in it, whose wife and children—his wife was called Nada—died in the snow after one of Napoleon's battles in Russia, and he told Max that they used to come and talk to him in the long, silent nights in his lonely hut on the steppe. And I am quite sure that it was true, for since I came here poor father and mother, and Frances, and all my dear brothers come and talk to me. And oh, I am very, very happy."

She passed her hand swiftly down one side of her pale face, and then drew herself up with cold gracefulness.

"But we are very, very poor now. Father has met with some terrible reverses, as you know. . . . And so we do not now receive."

Through the open window I saw Peter Hagan, watching. He made a gesture to me, to come away.

I rose and offered my hand. "Good-night, Miss Stuart; I must not tire you by remaining any longer."

"Good-night. Peter, or some one, will show you to your room. It is very quiet and peaceful here to-night, is it not? If you leave your window open you will hear the sea calling on the bar. Alick loves to hear it."

VIII

CAPTAIN BOLTER'S ESCAPE

BOGGABILLY is an Australian bush town fifty miles from the coast. It has 400 inhabitants, four "hotels," one church (with an itinerant parson), and a tannery, and is one of the hottest, dustiest, and most depressed-looking places on the island continent. Due east of Boggabilly is the pretty and somewhat thriving little seaport of Rocky Bar, which, by reason of there being coach communication with it twice a week, the Boggabillyites called "our port." Rocky Bar, in addition to three hotels, a brick church with an organ and a choir, and a resident clergyman, also possessed a bank, a police magistrate, four mounted police troopers and a court bailiff. It was a charming little town with beautiful scenery, and the well-to-do residents looked up the Boggabillyites as "country bumpkins"—with a leaning towards cattle-stealing.

One of these residents was Mrs. Drake, the widow of a Government official, and at the time of this story she was rejoicing over the presence of

her son, a mate in the merchant service, who had just arrived and was spending a month with her. She had two years' local gossip to tell him, the marryings and buryings, the annual Race balls, and the great fight between Sergeant Finnegan of the Mounted Police and Rody Minogue the horse-breaker, over the latter's attentions to pretty Mrs. Julia Finnegan. Naturally the latter event excited Tom Drake's interest most, for he knew both men very well—and would have liked to have seen it.

“And now, Tom,” said his mother, “I've another piece of news. A nice old man who is a friend of yours called to see me a few months ago—Captain Sam Bolter.”

The young man dropped his pipe in astonishment. “Old Sammy Bolter! Dear old fellow! What on earth brought him here?”

“To talk to me about you, of course. I was delighted to see him. He's a charmingly quaint, outspoken old salt, and laughs like a boy.”

“He's one of the best, mother. As you know, I was two years second mate with him in the *Waratah*. Did he stay long?”

“Half the day—but I haven't told you half my news yet. Do you know that he has given up the sea, and settled down at Boggabilly? In a Sydney paper he saw an advertisement that Duncan's business—the hotel and general store—was for sale, and he bought it. I was astonished when I heard of

it, and knowing how much you like him I sent him a note."

"Mother, I must go and see him. How is he doing?"

"Very well as far as business goes; but"—here she paused—"not at all well in other matters."

"What is it?"

"He is, I hear, going to be married."

Drake laughed. "Well, it's about time, he's over fifty-five."

"Ah, but, Tom, you'll be shocked when I tell you *who* it is he is marrying."

"Some widow, I suppose, with a dozen children."

"That would not concern me if the widow were a good woman; but he is actually engaged to that terrible girl Nina Cody—or Nina Cross, as she now calls herself."

Drake sprang erect. "Good heavens, mother! Does he know who and what she is—does he know anything about her family? Where on earth did he meet her?"

"One question at a time, Tom, and I will answer your last first. I am convinced he knows absolutely nothing about her or her family. Neither does any one else in the whole district but myself know who they are, and I have kept my knowledge *to* myself, as I thought it would be wrong of me to reveal their identity when they are apparently earning an honest living. They came to

Boggabilly five months ago—old Cody and his son Jim (who was liberated two years ago), Mrs. Cody and Nina, who is now five-and-twenty years of age, and as handsome as she is wicked.”

“What are they doing?”

“They have bought a selection ten miles from Boggabilly; and it seems that old Cody—the scoundrel—put up at Captain Bolter’s hotel with his wife and family for a few days before taking over their selection from the former occupier. Then visits began to be interchanged, and two weeks ago both Captain Bolter and Nina Cody told all their acquaintances that they were to be married on the 19th of this month—ten days from now.

“Of course at that time I did not know who ‘the Cross’s’ were, but one day when I was at the Bank getting some money, Magnus Cody and his daughter rode up. I recognized them instantly, though it is so many years since I saw them. And Cody came inside, and paid in to his credit a cheque for £250. The cheque was drawn by your friend.”

Drake whistled. “Ah, the gang have begun to bleed old Sam already, have they?”

Mrs. Drake nodded. “It looks like it. Well, I was dreadfully, *dreadfully* upset. Only that I was afraid of being murdered by either old Cody or his son, I would have told my news to Inspector Develin, who of course would know their record;

but he is not only indiscreet, but brutal, and although he could perhaps have let every one know who they were, it might not stop the marriage. Then I thought of you, and I did something—something that I trust was not foolish or wrong.

“I wrote to your friend, and told him that you were coming home on the 9th, and begged him to come and see you as soon after as possible. Tom, you are a man. Speak to him, if you really care for him as a friend, and save him from marrying into this wicked family. With you here, I am very brave now.”

“Indeed I will, mother. If he married this girl and then discovered her antecedents, and those of her infernal cut-throat relatives, it would break the old man's heart. He is a rough old salt, but a more honourable and upright man never trod deck. Now, he may not be here for a day or two. Does he ride?”

“No, he told me he does not. He came here by coach, and will do so again, I am certain.”

“When is the next coach due?”

“On Sunday—three days from now.”

“Then I'm off to Boggabilly at once, mother. Send Jennie round to the ‘Royal’ to tell Walsh to have a buggy and pair ready for me in an hour, with a man to drive, as I don't know the road, and might get bushed if I took a wrong turn off.”

* * * * *

Captain Bolter was delighted to see his former second mate, and wrung his hand again and again. He was a short, squarely-built man with iron-grey hair and beard, and dark kindly eyes, that seemed always to be twinkling with merriment. And he was indeed a genial-souled old fellow, ever ready to do a friendly act to any one who was in need of it. It was his proud boast that during the forty years he had been at sea as mate and master he had never had occasion to either hit a man or send him to gaol for disobedience.

Supper was just ready when Drake arrived, and after it was over the two men went out on the verandah to smoke and talk, and Drake at once went to work.

"Captain Bolter," he said, "I came to see you on a matter of the most vital importance—so vital that I did not care to wait until Sunday."

The old sailor turned in his chair, and placed his hand on the young man's knee.

"What is it, Tommy?" (Drake had always been "Tommy" to him.)

"I am going to say something to you which may make you very angry. If it does, I can only plead that it is the deep esteem in which I hold you that impels me to say it. And you know me pretty well, don't you?"

"I do, my boy. I know that you are a white man. Now go ahead."

"My mother tells me that you are engaged to be married to Miss Nina Cross."

"Yes. And I suppose you think I am an old fool. I dare say I am. I should have looked out for a middle-aged woman instead of a young one of five-and-twenty. Go on, Tommy."

"Yes, I will. That is what I have come for. But first of all let me ask you if you are very much in love with Miss Cross."

The old man laughed. "No, Tommy, I am not in love with her, and am not such an old donkey as to think that she loves me. But I want a wife. I have not a single relative in the world, and this girl pleased me, and I asked her in a blunt fashion if she would marry me, and she said 'Yes.'"

"Then you wouldn't break your heart if by some chance the match was broken off."

"Not a bit. I am not altogether a fool."

"Well, then, Captain Bolter, you will not marry Nina Cross when I tell you that she is not a fit woman to be your wife. She is one of a bad family, and her name is not Cross, but Cody."

"Go on, Tommy," said the old sailor quietly.

"What I am now about to tell you I will say to her, her father and her mother in your presence. If you find that I have departed from the truth in the slightest degree, or am speaking in malice,

you can kick me all the way down the main street of Boggabilly."

"That's straight. Go on."

"My mother and I know the family well. They come from Gippsland in Victoria. Old Magnus Cody is a bad lot, and his two sons were bushrangers. The elder son was hanged in Melbourne Gaol five years ago for the murder of a police trooper, who tried to arrest him for sticking up the mail; Jim Cody, the second brother, was with Gardiner's gang of bushrangers, and received a sentence of seven years' hard labour for robbery under arms, and was only liberated two years ago. Old Cody was sentenced by my uncle to five years' imprisonment for cattle stealing, and Nina Cody and her sister Kate each served a two years' sentence for the same offence. They were the most notorious family of cattle and horse stealers in Gippsland, and Nina was for six months the companion of a bushranger named Ward, and then betrayed his hiding-place to the police for the reward offered—£500. That was why the family had to clear out of Gippsland; for their lives were not safe. That is all I have to say."

The old man's face had turned very pale, and for some moments he was unable to speak. Then he put out his hand.

"I thank you, Tom Drake. I would put a bullet through my head before I would marry a woman

with a stain on her name. God bless you, my boy, for saving me."

* * * * *

Early next morning Drake drove up to Cody's selection, and had an interesting interview with the family. They were at breakfast when he entered the house, and bade them "good-morning."

"Magnus Cody," he said, in very decided tones, as unasked, he sat down near the door, "my name is Drake, and my uncle is Judge Denton, who sentenced you to five years for cattle duffing. I have the whole record of your family's doings, and have just been relating it to my friend Captain Bolter. Now, I am in somewhat of a hurry, so you must excuse me for coming to the point at once. First of all, though, I must give you, Miss Cody, this letter from Captain Bolter. It will be something for you to sleep upon. Now, Mr. Cody, senior—ah, you needn't look ugly at me, Mr. Cody, junior"—and he opened his coat and showed the butt of his Smith and Wesson's pistol—"if you try on any nonsense with me, you will get a shock, so just keep your seat, and listen to what I have to say to your estimable parents."

Mrs. Cody sprang up, and levelled a torrent of vituperation at him. Drake waited until she had finished.

"As I was saying, Mr. Cody, senior, I have no time to waste. Now, my friend Bolter gave you

one cheque for £100 and a second one for £250, both of which you paid in to the Bank of New South Wales at Rocky Bar. I want you now to give me your cheque in favour of Samuel Bolter for £250—the other £100 your pretty, innocent daughter can keep to soothe her injured pride. So write me that cheque straight away, and no more nonsense. If you don't, I'll be saying something about you to Inspector Develin, and you wouldn't like that, would you?"

Old Cody, trembling with rage and fear, made out the cheque, and Drake put it in his pocket, and after asking Jim Cody if he felt inclined for four rounds before he left—to see which was the better man of the two—got into his buggy, and drove off, well satisfied.

* * * * *

A week later, Captain Sam Bolter came to see him at Rocky Bar.

"Tommy, my boy, I have had a narrer escape. It's been a warnin' to me. I have sold out my business at Boggabilly and have come to the conclusion that the bush is a dangerous place for an old salt. I ain't safe to be trusted by myself on shore. Am I?"

Drake laughed. "No more am I, captain. What are you going to do?"

"Settle down in Sydney—and buy a tidy vessel for the Island trade. And you shall be her skipper.

And it's more than likely I'll make a voyage or two with you before I do settle down. Is it a deal, Tommy Drake?"

"It's a deal, Captain Bolter. I'm your man."

"Then let us go to the 'Royal' and wet the agreement. Lord, what an escape I've had, Tommy!"

IX

SOME SKIPPERS WITH WHOM I HAVE SAILED

IN following such widely-different occupations as that of a shore trader, shark catching, "recruiter" for the Kanaka labour trade, and supercargo, I have sailed with many captains—British, American and foreign. Some were good fellows, some were bad, some were neither, and some were so perfectly colourless in their dispositions and characters that I cannot even remember their names. For some, dead and gone, I shall have ever the most grateful and kindly memories—true comrades and good sailormen. For others—was any one of them now alive, and I was told that he was about to be hanged, I should apply for a press ticket to witness the execution.

Many of these mariners I met when I was free from any duties—as passenger. And a passenger who is also a seafaring man has plenty of time to note and study the idiosyncrasies of the lord who rules the ship.

I shall first speak of one of the "capable" and one of the "incapable" kind together. The latter had been a lieutenant in the Navy, and had to leave the Service for gross faults—intemperance principally. But having some money, and many friends, he managed to obtain the command of a newly-built, splendid brigantine (the *Tuitoga*) belonging to King George of Tonga.

At this time I had taken passage in Sydney for Samoa, via Tonga, in a smart little barque (the *Rimitara*) commanded by a Captain Rosser, who was regarded as the *doyen* of island skippers. He was a "Bluenose," stood over six feet in his stockinged feet, was a man of the most determined courage, unflinching resolution, and was widely known and respected all over the South Pacific.

Both vessels sailed from Sydney at the same hour on the same day, and both were bound for Tonga. We were towed out, almost side by side, and the flashy ex-naval skipper called out to Rosser, offering to bet him £50 to £5 that he would be lying at anchor in Tonga two days before the *Rimitara*. Rosser merely replied that he did not make bets with strangers, and then sarcastically added that he hoped the speaker had some *sailors* on his new command. "You'll want 'em," he said.

Then Rosser turned to me with a grim smile, and observed that the King of Tonga was trying

a risky experiment in putting such a man in command of his new brigantine. "All that flash fellow knows about a sailing ship he learned on a Service training brig, and he's going to make a 'holy mess of things.'"

Lieutenant Raye (so I will call him) did make a "holy mess of things." Five days later at daylight Rosser called me to come and look at "something pretty." The something pretty was the brigantine. She was in a terrible mess. Her fore and main royal and top-gallant masts were gone, and she was on her beam ends, and all her boats gone. Rosser sent assistance, and we stood by her for two days. We got into Nukualofa Harbour ten days ahead, and then, when the *Tuitoga* came into port, she ran on a reef and our skipper and crew floated her off. This "incapable" afterwards shot himself in a fit of D.T.s—a sensible act.

Another "incapable" with whom I sailed as a passenger was a good seaman, but a hopeless navigator. He was a conceited little ape—a Scotsman—and took a rooted dislike to me when I mendaciously told him that I had never heard of "Bobbie Burns" and did not believe any other person had heard of such a poet. I had with me over £2000 worth of trade goods, and during the voyage became alarmed at Captain Macpherson's (so I will call him) rudimentary knowledge of

navigation, although he certainly was a thorough sailorman.

Against the advice of the mate and myself he anchored close in to the reef of Peru Island in the Gilbert Group, during calm but unsettled weather, and ten hours later the vessel was driven on to the reef by a furious squall, became a total wreck, and I lost everything I possessed except some nine hundred dollars in American and Chile money. This enabled me to take a passage for Sydney with the good-natured skipper of the barque *George Noble*.

Captain Evers (a German, but a naturalized British subject) was a good navigator and a splendid seaman, but a most obstinate, pig-headed fellow. Also he had a rooted idea that his officers and crew had a contemptuous dislike for him, on account of his being German born. This led him to vacillate between two courses—sometimes he would be pompously silent and hardly speak, at others stupidly overbearing, like most Teutons in authority.

All ships in leaving Apaian Lagoon do so in the morning, for the passage is on the west, is studded with many coral boulders called, from their shape, "mushrooms," and it would be almost impossible to miss striking one with a bright afternoon sun shining in one's eyes. At noon on the day we were leaving there was a strong breeze blowing,

and I casually observed to Evers that if it were not so we should be too late to get out of the passage—ten miles distant. In an instant he became sulky, and reminded me that he, and not I, was master of the ship, and that he would leave when it suited him. I was snubbed.

We sailed at two o'clock—four hours too late, and soon ran down to the passage. The barque was then under all sail and making eleven knots, but as soon as we entered the narrow passage, through which a six-knot current was rushing, her speed became terrific. The skipper was, with myself, on the fore-yard (he having sulkily given me permission to come up), and every now and then shouting out orders to the steersman, orders that could hardly be heard owing to the roar of the current. He had the blinding glare of the sun full in his eyes, and I am sure he could not see where he was going—I know that *I* could not see anything ahead.

Suddenly he called out, "Starboard a little," and in a few seconds there came a terrific crash, and both he and I were jerked off the foot-rope, toppled over the yard on to the bellying foresail, rolled down, and landed almost in each other's arms, half-dazed but unhurt. Every one on deck was thrown down, and then the barque canted to port, swung round with a fearful grinding and groaning, and with our canvas all in disorder, was whirled out

of the passage into clear water, where we brought to and anchored, and lowering a boat examined the ship for'ard. She had struck on a coral "mushroom," carried away six feet of the stem from below the water-line, and started so many timbers that she was making ten inches of water an hour. It cost £700 to repair her after we reached Sydney, and poor Evers was furious when, on his next visit to Apaian, the local trader thanked him for clearing the passage. "You ran smack agin a big 'mushroom' standin' in the middle an' broke it off short, twenty feet below. Hope you'll try and do the same thing this time and knock down another."

One of the worst skippers with whom I ever sailed, when I was a "recruiter" in the Kanaka labour trade ("blackbirding" as it is generally termed), had once been a chaplain and Naval Instructor in the Navy. He was not only a good navigator and sailor, but was one of the best Continental linguists I have ever come across. Soft and sweet in his speech, he was at the same time a savage despot, and had no more conscience than a rat where his own interests were concerned. He and I frequently came into collision over his treatment of the native crew, for I, being Recruiter, was the responsible man, and he merely the sailing master. I objected to his conduct, pointing out that if he interfered with the crew, except as regarded the actual working of the ship, the result

would be disastrous, and that it was in my power to suspend him and put the chief officer in his place. He laughed in his soft way, and then in the coolest and calmest manner made me a proposition—

“Now look here. I am talking plainly. You are getting £35 a month as Recruiter, and a bonus of £2 for every Kanaka we land in good health and condition in Fiji. That pays *you*. I get only £20 a month. That doesn't suit *me*. Now we have sixty 'blackbirds' on board, worth £100 each in Guatemala, where no questions will be asked. The ship is worth another £6000, and can be sold anywhere on the Central American coast for at least £4000. I'll fake the papers so that there will be no trouble. Are you a business man or a fathead?”

I treated his suggestion as a joke, but he persisted, and then finally, finding I would not accede to his villainous project, he dropped the subject. A week or two later we reached Levuka, in Fiji, where I paid him off at the Consulate. He went away smilingly, and later on I found that with him went twelve £5 notes belonging to me, which he had taken from the bottom of the ship's cash box. This he had opened, regarding the few hundred dollars in silver money as too bulky to take. I never saw him again.

One skipper with whom I sailed as supercargo

was what would now be called a "Christian Scientist." He was a thorough sailor and a good man, but made me stare when one day he begged me not to give chlorodyne to a sailor who was nearly dying of dysentery.

"Prayer is the only thing that will cure him," he said. "I shall now pray for him, direct to the Almighty. In two hours he will be recovered."

He prayed, but I gave the sufferer the chlorodyne, together with some cold arrowroot and water. And in two hours the man was certainly better. He ultimately recovered, but the skipper took all the credit upon himself, and said that a medicine chest was not only a useless thing on board a ship, but an affront to the Almighty.

A remarkable contrast to the last man was the notorious Captain "Bully" Hayes, with whom it was my fortune to sail for two years. Hayes was an extraordinary character, brave and generous to a fault. He was also a merciless tyrant, and sometimes acted more like a savage than a white man. He was strikingly handsome, over six feet in height, and with a pair of bright blue eyes, which could shine with merriment, or blaze with fury. During the two years I was with him we visited many hundreds of islands, trading for coconut-oil, pearl-shells, shark-fins, etc., and in all this time Hayes never committed any act of piracy. I need hardly say that had he attempted such a thing

I should have quickly severed my connection with him. For me personally the man had a great liking, and I was enabled to dissuade him from many acts of violence and cruelty. He was a rigid disciplinarian, and yet would often permit his crew to indulge in the wildest orgies, both afloat and on shore. Flogging was the usual punishment for an offence. On one occasion I came on board and found a young German A.B., who had deserted, triced up, awaiting a flogging. I took Hayes aside, and said, "If you flog that man it will be murder. He has a very weak heart—that I know for a fact." After some consideration Hayes ordered the man to be untied, but put him in irons for a week.

One extraordinary old man, with whom I was a partner on a shark fishing cruise to Palmyra Island, was a very heavy drinker, and when in his cups would always dress in a frock suit and top hat, gloves, etc. Once, after a long bout, he was seized with *delirium tremens*, and I and our native crew had to strait-jacket him. I ran the schooner into an uninhabited atoll, and stayed there for a week, until the old fellow was better. He was very grateful to me, and at the end of the cruise—which was highly profitable—presented me with a valuable gold watch. He always called me his "doctor."

X

DENISON GIVES A SUPPER PARTY

TOM DENISON, supercargo of the brig *Vision*, was very hard up, when, with a fearful black eye, he stepped on shore at Apia, in Samoa, on New Year's Eve, carrying part of his worldly possessions in a much-worn leather bag; the remainder were in his sea-chest, then being borne before him on the naked shoulders of his trusty native servant boy (Jim).

Near the jetty was "Black Tom's" alleged "hotel"—a place as notorious all over the South Seas as "Black Tom" himself. At the doorway Denison met the host—a herculean Galveston nigger, so black that (so some of his enemies said) a piece of black lead drawn across his face would have made a snow-white mark.

"Hallo, Mas'r Denison, what's de matter with yo eye?" inquired the negro, as they shook hands.

"Skipper," was the brief reply, "he came out on top this time; so I've left the *Vision* for good now

—lost my prestige with the crew, you see, now that the skipper knocked me out in the first round this turn up. Now, Tom, give me a bottle of beer and lend me ten dollars. I mean to spend the New Year with you.”

The big nigger gave a rich fruity laugh.

“All right, sah; yo’ can hab de ten dollars, or fifty if yo’ like. Come inside. Fo’ de Lord, dat’s an awful eye, and yo’ nose is a bit twist too.” Then stepping to a door, he smote upon it with his mighty fist.

“Here, Luisa gal, wha’ yo’ doin’ dar, sleepin’ like a hog? Here am Mr. Denison. Bring a bottle ob Foster, and den send away to de butcher and get a bit ob steak for Mr. Denison. He been done trip over a ring-bolt on de deck, and black his eye, and cut his lip.”

Luisa, Black Tom’s handsome daughter by a Samoan mother, opened her door, kissed Denison first on his battered nose, and then on each cheek, and flew to the bar for the beer—for nearly every person in Apia, except the Germans there, liked Denison for his gentle ways.

“Tom,” said the supercargo, as he set down his glass with a sigh of satisfaction, “I’m stony broke just now, but I shall be flush soon after the New Year—if you will help me. Now, look here. Six months ago I promised Mason, the skipper of the *Levuka*, Holt, his supercargo, Harry Todd the

recruiter, and Leseman, the German skipper of the *Samoa* (who is a decent Dutchman), that if we were all in Samoa this Christmas, or at New Year, that I'd stand them a supper, and that you would cook it, and your wife and Luisa would wait. See?"

Black Tom scratched his chin meditatively, shuffled his feet uneasily, and then gazed interestedly at the roof.

"Now, Tom, don't put on that sort of look. I'm going to put money into your pocket—and into mine, if you will do as I wish. If you don't fall in with me I'll go to Charlie the Russian, and get him to fix up the banquet. But *you* are the one man in Samoa who knows just how to cook and lay out a supper in tip-top style."

"Dat's all right 'nuff; but where am de dollars comin' from? I know dat crowd mighty well. Dey all sop up champagne at ten dollars a bottle like as if dey was limekilns, and den start fightin' and smashin' tings. And, in the end, I'se get inter trouble with the Municipal Police and de Consuls. No, sah, I guess I can't give that supper."

"Tom, you *must*, or my good name is ruined. Now, look here, Tom, I'll take you into my confidence. Before New Year's Day I'll be skipper of the *Manaia*, and I'll pay you back every cent I owe you. I've spent a good many hundreds of

dollars in your house, Tom, during the past three years."

"Dat's so, dat's so."

"Well now, look here. "I'll help. I've heaps of native friends, and in a few hours you shall have all the poultry you want, sucking pigs and loads of oranges, bananas, pineapples, and all that sort of stuff. All you have to do is to cook and lay out—and perhaps find some of the liquor. Now, I'm off. Never mind the raw beef just now. Back in a couple of hours, Tom. Oh, I have forgotten something very important," and Denison shut his uninjured eye and placed his hand on the negro's arm, "an aunt of mine has died and left me a pile—that's why I'm giving the supper. D'ye tumble?"

Black Tom grinned. "Guess I do. Shall I put it about?"

"Yes, and so will I. Now I'm off."

Ten minutes later he was talking to the editor of the *Samoan Times*, in that gentleman's office.

"Oh, I say, Colley, an aunt of mine has died and left me all her money, and I am giving a little supper to-night to some old friends. You know them all" (he mentioned their names), "and I thought you would perhaps join us."

"Thanks, I'll come with pleasure. And let me congratulate you. Did the lady leave you much?"

"Every cent."

"May I say anything about it in to-morrow's issue?"

Denison put on a diffident air. "Oh, I don't know. I don't want to swagger about the beach because I've come into money, you know. But perhaps you might just say something about it, and that I have left the *Vision*, and am giving a supper to some friends—no gush, you know. And you might add that I mean to stay in Samoa—I can't go to Australia and lead a life of idleness, it would simply kill me."

Colley said that Denison was the kind of man who was wanted in Samoa. Then he ventured to inquire how his face became so disfigured.

"My own fault, Colley. Was standing on the top-gallant foc'scle the other day when the brig was going about, and got a smack in the eye from the jib-sheet block."

* * * * *

Further down the street he came across a long, thin man with a red beard, a brace of revolvers at his hips, and a green-hide whip in his hand. This was Jack O'Brien, chief of the Apia Municipal Police.

"How are you, John? I was looking for you——"

"What ivir is wrong wid your face, Mr. Dinison?"

"Fell over hatch coamings in the dark—now, as

I was saying, John, I'm glad I've found you. I've come in for a tidy fortune, and I am giving a supper party to-night, and want you to come, or you'll put me out. Black Tom is doing the cooking, and Luisa and some other girls will wait. Just a nice, quiet little party, you know. Will you come?"

"I will that, me boy."

"Right. And, I say, John, look here. The Consuls have a down on that nigger, I know he's no saint, but he's a flaming old cook, isn't he, eh? Now, can't you tell those infernal meddling police of yours to keep away from his place this evening. We don't want the harmony broken up by a lot of tattooed beasts of native policemen. Look here, John—I'll leave ten dollars at Charlie the Russian's saloon, and tell him to give your sergeant a case of gin for your men, eh?"

"That'll do fine, Mr. Dinison. Sure ye always was a thoughtful man f'yer years. I'll send me half-caste sargint for the stuff, and when the night watch musters, I'll give them the liquor, and lock 'em up in the barracks for the night. It's better than that they should be interferin' wid dacent people atin' a bit av supper."

"Right. Good-bye, John. Seven o'clock is the time. Come in at the back gate—front door will be locked—and bring a thirst."

Then off he swung along the hot street to call in at the French Mission to inquire how the good

Marist Brothers were getting on with the building of the new cathedral.

The long man looked at the retreating figure with a kindly eye. "Well, well, well, Tom Dinison, it's a great wee man ye are, wid no har-rum in ye. But 'tis a bit thoughtless av ye to lave me here, bakin' in the sun wid a dhry tongue sthuck to the roof av me mouth."

As Denison ascended the steps of the French Mission, two long-bearded Marist Brothers met him with outstretched hands and smiling faces, for he was a favourite with the French missionaries.

"Ah, c'est toi, mon cher ami, Denison! Tu es le bien venu. Mais qu'est-ce que tu as à ta pauvre figure—elle est tout-à-fait abîmée."

"Ce n'est rien, cher père Sèrge. Dimanche dernier au soir en sortant de l'église anglicane, j'ai trébuché, et je suis tombé sur le perron."

* * * * *

Past through the semi-German suburb of Matafele went Denison, only stopping at "Charlie the Russian's" to pay for the gin, and invite Charlie himself to come to the supper; then on to the native village at Mulinu's Point, where he had many Samoan friends.

They all made him welcome, and prepared a bowl of kava for him to drink. To them he frankly confided his troubles. He wanted, he said, to entertain some dear friends that night, and any

such things as fowls, ducks, pigeons, fish, etc., etc., would be very acceptable.

"Tamu" (Tom), said a chief named Asi, "thou shalt want for nothing." And then he (Asi) gave certain orders to his people.

Denison said to him aside, "Asi, I want you to come to my little *fia fia* (feast) and bring all your dancing girls. And tell your young men that I will order a case of gin for them at Charlie the Russian's presently. And also tell them that the police will be locked up in the barracks. Now, good-bye, I am very busy. *To fa!*" (Good-bye.)

* * * * *

As he was coming back through the town he met the meanest man in Samoa, a wealthy store-keeper and shipowner, named MacBean, who bore down on him with outstretched hand. He had just seen the editor of the *Samoan Times*, who had informed him that young Denison had come in for the entire fortune of his aunt, who was enormously wealthy.

And Denison particularly wanted to see Mr. MacBean, and had intended to call on him.

"Congratulations, my young friend, congratulations," he said oilily, "but whither in such a hurry? Come in and see Mrs. MacBean, and May."

"No, thank you, Mr. MacBean," said Denison, somewhat coldly, "I am busy making a few purchases for a little supper I am giving. And I want

my native friends to enjoy themselves also. I am sending them a few hundredweight of ship biscuits, a bag of sugar, a keg of beef, and—and well, a case or two of spirits and a few cases of beer from Charlie the Russian.”

“You’ll do no such thing, my dear young friend. You must accept them from me. Now, who are they for? I’ll send them anywhere you like.”

“For Asi and his people. But I would rather get them from the Russian and pay for them, thank you.”

“If you do I shall be very much hurt—and so will May.”

“Oh well, as you will, Mr. MacBean. I am very much obliged, and Asi will make your generosity known. Now, good-bye. No, I won’t come in just now. Later on perhaps. Kind regards to Mrs. and Miss MacBean.”

“May, you mean.”

“May, then, if you will so permit me. Tell May that I hope to call and see her to-morrow, if she will overlook my temporary facial disfigurement. The other night as I was lying asleep on deck, the mate, who is a big heavy man, accidentally stepped on my face with his clumsy sea-boots.”

“Dear, dear me! You sailormen have rough experiences.” Then Mr. MacBean added with deeply sympathetic inquisitiveness, “I suppose it is your poor Aunt Lydia who has gone?”

Denison turned aside to hide his emotion. "Please do not speak of her, Mr. MacBean. I feel very lonely now."

"Ah, May will cheer you up. Now, I won't keep you. May your supper party be a merry one."

"Mr. MacBean, six months ago you used very harsh and improper language to me, and forbade me to enter your house again—I felt it very much, and——"

"My dear boy, it was all a mistake. I certainly spoke hastily, and am sorry for it, but——"

"Pardon my interrupting you, sir. That evening when your niece and I were in the garden I was telling her that I intended to ask you to give me the command of the *Manaia*, and that I hoped, by strict attention to my duties, good seamanship, and devotedness to your interests, to some day——"

"My dear, dear boy! Please do forget all about it. I——"

"But without allowing me one word of explanation you ordered me to quit—ordered me to quit in language that cut me to the quick. And every one in Apia—white and native—knows the story."

"My dear boy! Don't brood over my hasty and unfortunate remarks. I withdraw, most unqualifiedly, whatever I said."

Denison put out his hand. "Then I am sorry

for the expressions *I* used to you. Now, Mr. MacBean, will you give me the command of the *Manaia*, or any other one of your vessels?"

"With pleasure. But surely, now that you have inherited your aunt's fortune——"

"Mr. MacBean, I do not intend to lead an idle life."

"Very noble of you! Now, do you *really* want to have the *Manaia*?"

"Yes, I do. I want to show you what I can do with a vessel like that. I want no favours, Mr. MacBean, no favours at all. I have business instincts. Give me the command of the *Manaia* and £40 a month, on a two years' engagement, and you will see the result of the first voyage. I won't touch my aunt's money at present. I mean to show people what I can do."

"You shall have her, my dear friend, you shall have her. I'll write you—or you can write me—a form of agreement and get it witnessed at the Consulate."

"Very well, sir. You please write it, and bring it to the Consulate at three o'clock. I'll be there."

A few minutes later the Mean Man of Samoa was talking to his niece May, a pretty, vivacious girl of nineteen, who wondered what on earth her admirer, Tom Denison, had been telling her uncle, who a few months before had had a stormy inter-

view with that young gentleman, and informed him that he did not approve of his attentions to her, and had forbidden him the house.

And Mr. Thomas Denison went on his way with a twinkle in his sound eye. There was nothing serious between himself and the merry May MacBean, and he knew that she regarded her close-fisted uncle with almost a feeling of hatred.

“By thunder, it’s going to be a bully supper,” he said aloud to himself. “I’ll see if I can’t get a few more fellows to come.”

* * * * *

On his way back to Black Tom’s hotel he was met by several European residents, who all greeted him most effusively, and asked him to dinner, and made sympathetic remarks about his eyes and face, and inquired how it happened, and Denison told a concise, but entirely different tale to every one.

Just as he was going over in the ferry punt across the Vaisigago River, he caught sight of Miss May MacBean riding on the opposite bank, and he shouted out to her to wait. The young lady at once dismounted, and led her horse under a shady orange tree, and awaited him.

“Oh, Tom, what an *awful* sight you are! Whatever in the world——”

“Don’t look at my face, my sweet; have you——”

"Thomas Denison, how *did* you get that fearful black eye?"

Denison paused (hurriedly), then said glibly that, whilst he was shaving, the brig gave a sudden roll and threw him across the cabin.

May laughed, as she gave him a little cut on his arm with her whip. "You shameless, shocking story-teller! I know all about it. You and Captain Randall had a fight yesterday. And I'm not a bit sorry that he's punished you."

"Yes, you are, my priceless May—I can already see the tear of sympathy gathering on that dear eye of yours on the port side. Now, May, have you seen your uncle?"

"I have, and I want to know what is all this rubbish about your coming in for all your aunt's money?"

"It's true, my princess—absolutely true. She actually did leave me all she had to leave when she died—just ten pounds. Two years ago she went into her dotage and gave £50,000 to the Chinese Missions, and so defrauded your loving Tom. Some one had been 'saying things' about me, and she wrote me that I was a brand that she hoped 'would yet be plucked from the burning.'" And this time he laughed somewhat bitterly, and May's eyes filled.

"Tom," she said softly, "I *am* sorry."

"Oh, I don't worry over it, May. Did your

gentle uncle tell you that he has given me the *Mania*, at £40 a month on a two years' agreement?"

May wiped away her tears and smiled. "Yes, indeed. And it made me quite happy. Do you know, Tom, that he has designs upon you, and that I am the pawn?"

"Rather. But I have got *him* now; although, my sweet May, I know I shall never have you. I'm to meet him at the Consul's——"

"I know, I know—with the agreement! He's been so sweet to me ever since he saw you. Tom, there's no one about, and if you like to kiss me, I'll promise I won't scream."

* * * * *

At three o'clock Denison met Mr. MacBean at the Consulate, and the Consul, after a kindly and sympathetic allusion to Denison's face, witnessed the agreement, and congratulated him upon his new command and the fortune he had inherited. And Mr. MacBean, when Denison's back was turned, whispered something to the Consul, who said he always thought so, and that the young man would now steady down.

And then Denison asked Mr. MacBean to come to the supper, and Mr. MacBean beamingly assented, and the ex-supercargo with his black eye—the lucky young man who had inherited his

aunt's colossal fortune—swung along the street to Black Tom's hotel.

* * * * *

There never was such a supper given before in all Samoa—not even in the island's palmiest days. Long before seven o'clock the visitors—white, brown, yellow and cream-coloured—began to arrive, and when supper was served, Black Tom's long dining-room was crowded to its utmost capacity. Asi, the chief, had sent twenty or so pretty dancing girls (who were not shy), and who, bossed by Luisa, assisted as waitresses—one young lady—or two in some cases—to each guest. The noise and laughter travelled across the calm waters of Apia harbour, and the residents in German Town wondered what was happening. Then some one said that Denison the supercargo was giving a supper because he had come into a fortune of 500,000 marks.

* * * * *

To err is human, to forgive divine, and Denison's was a noble nature, for among the invited guests was Captain Randall, who sat on his left. It was remarked by some of those who were present that it was a curious coincidence that that mariner also had, in addition to some facial contusions, a black eye—though nothing so pronounced as that of his host, who the moment Randall entered the room, inquired in loud, but kindly tones, how he

had hurt his eye, and Randall replied that in coming on shore in the whaleboat the previous day, the haft of the steer oar had slipped from his grasp, and struck him in the face.

Shortly after nine o'clock, Mr. Jacob MacBean rose, somewhat unsteadily, to propose a toast, and the moment he uttered the words "Mr. Thomas Denison, our dear host and friend," there was a prolonged outburst of cheering, and several gentlemen, in endeavouring to stand up, fell down, and Randall roared like a bull at Mr. MacBean, and said that he, as master of the *Vision*, and Denison's shipmate for two years, was the proper person to give the toast.

And then Denison begged them both to sit down for a minute whilst he said a few words, and Jack O'Brien, who, as vice-chairman, was at the other end of the table, rose and threatened to "lay out in the flure the first man that interrupted the harmony av the procheedin's."

Denison's speech was very simple—in fact, modest to a degree. He was, he said, painfully embarrassed, and hardly knew how to express his gratitude for the kindly manner in which his friends had honoured him by accepting his invitation to his little supper. He would, first of all, like his guests to give three cheers for his valued friend Mr. Jacob MacBean (loud cheers and sound of some one falling), who had, he was proud to say,

that day given him the command of the smartest vessel in the Pacific, the *Manaia*—a ship (here he turned his sound eye upon Randall, and smiled benignantly)—a ship that could sail rings round the 'dear old *Vision*, fast sailer and ably commanded as she was by his valued friend of two years' standing—Captain Sam Randall—one of Nature's gentlemen, and a man with whom he had never had an angry word, though usually supercargoes had much to contend with in many cases with obtuse captains. Now, he would like to inform his guests, that to Mr. Jacob MacBean, and to their noble native friend, the Chief Asi, they were indebted for the good things upon the table that night. And he (Denison) was happy in the belief that Mr. MacBean and his friend Asi, and all those now gathered about him, had come there, not to congratulate him upon the fact of his having come into money, but out of personal regard to simple "Tom Denison," the man whom they had known for the past five years, and who had tried hard—although he had sometimes gone wrong—to deserve their good opinion. (Here Mr. MacBean became visibly affected, and began to weep.) And he would like to add a few words in praise of their dear mutual friend—John O'Brien, Superintendent of the Municipal Police of Apia (applause)—a gentleman who deserved to have the control of the police force of a great city like London or New

York. Would they charge their glasses (tumultuous cheering) and drink to Mr. O'Brien's good health. He would now tell them a little secret which would still further endear Mr. O'Brien to them, and promote the harmony of the evening—their good friend had locked up his myrmidons in the barracks for the night, and his esteemed new employer (indicating Mr. MacBean, who was swaying in his chair, and smiling glad tears at nothing) had with himself provided the imprisoned men with sufficient liquid refreshment to unfit them for duty (roars of applause) for several days. And now in conclusion, he would beg all and every one to make themselves happy for the rest of the night. (Loud cries of approval.) To-morrow he would assume his new command with all its responsibilities and worries, but he would face them in a cheerful spirit, and with Christian courage. He was only a very young man yet, but he hoped to be a unit in building up Britain Beyond the Seas, and, if his dear friend now present, Captain Leseman, of the *Franziska*, would pardon him saying so, he would assist to rid Samoa and the South Seas of the Germans by hanging them all—except good old Schipper Herman Leseman, whom he would like to see made Governor-General of Oceania, with power to suppress Yankee commercial travellers, missionaries, and other objectionable persons, who were now turning this lovely

garden of Nature—our beautiful Samoa—into an abode of discord. (Frantic applause.)

* * * * *

Let a veil be drawn over the subsequent proceedings. It is sufficient to say that in the morning Denison received this letter, which he read on the deck of his new command.

“TOM,—You ought to be ashamed of yourself. It is true that I told you that I hated Uncle Jacob. But I did not think that you could be so cruel as to send him home on the back of a native. I am sure that he will not be himself again for some weeks. *I don't like you, Tom Denison.—MAY.*”

XI

CLARKSON'S LAST CHANCE

NORMAN HARDY, the artist, told me the story of Clarkson—one of his memories of twelve months' wanderings among the savage Solomon and New Hebrides Islands.

* * * * *

One day, whilst Hardy was talking to the manager of the big trading firm at Vila Harbour in the New Hebrides, a sun-burnt, unkempt and hollow-eyed wreck of a man walked into the office, and, standing in the middle of the room, holding his ragged palm-leaf hat, said in a melancholy, hopeless voice—

“My name is Clarkson. I have just come from Liki Liki in New Ireland, where I was trading for the Germans. They sent me away because I had fever badly. I hear that you want a man for Malekula. I know that the natives are a hot lot, but I'm willing to take it on.”

The manager eyed him coldly. “I have heard of you, Clarkson. You have never done any good for any firm who has given you a berth as trader,

nor for yourself either. You don't get on with the natives, you drink and appear to have been a rank failure all round. And you are in debt to every one who has given you a show."

"I know it. But give me a last chance. I'll do better this time, and won't touch liquor again. You won't get another man to tackle Malekula. And I'm not scared."

The manager laughed somewhat contemptuously. He well knew that Clarkson's many failures had been largely due to his terror of being killed. He thought for a few minutes, then said—

"Well, I will give you your 'last chance.' Go to the storekeeper and get yourself a decent rig out, and tell him I am sending you to Malekula. He will pick out the necessary trade for you. The steamer leaves to-night. Come back here this afternoon and sign your agreement."

The man muttered his thanks and shambled off, and the manager turned to Hardy.

"You would hardly think that ten years ago that poor, broken-down object was a fine, stalwart, clean-looking man. Been decently educated too. What brought him to this murderous part of the South Seas, I can't imagine. He never will be any good as a trader. Can hardly make the natives understand him, and as they know he is in mortal fear of them, they despise and bully him."

"Then what is the use of sending the poor devil

to live among such a pack of howling cut-throats as the Malekula niggers?"

"Oh, they won't hurt him. The man I have there at present—Jessop—is making a trip to Sydney, and I'll send this fellow to act as a mere caretaker of Jessop's station."

* * * * *

That night the little inter-island trading steamer steamed away northward, and Hardy, who was making the cruise through the group, got into conversation with the wastrel, who seemed to have "bucked up" considerably. He had had his beard trimmed, and was slightly disposed to swagger and consider himself a hero in "tackling Malekula," as he expressed it. Also he began to boast about his shooting abilities, and asked Lamont, the supercargo, if he would provide him with a Winchester rifle, instead of a Winchester carbine, and a Smith and Wesson's revolver, instead of a Colt's.

Lamont looked at him out of the corner of his eye.

"What do you want a rifle for?" he asked quietly.

"Oh—well—er. It's the usual thing, of course, for a trader to be well armed."

"No, it isn't!" snapped Lamont, "it is only duffers who go around flashing that sort of hardware. And let me tell you this—if the Malekula

niggers see you with a pistol at your hip it will annoy them, and they'll have your head off your shoulders in a jiffy."

"Hurricane" Williams, the skipper, nodded acquiescence. "That's a fact. They can't stand that sort of tomfoolery."

Clarkson made no further remarks during supper.

Two days later the steamer dropped anchor off Jessop's station at Malekula, and Jessop came on board.

"Got a relief man for me, Mr. Lamont?"

"Yes, there he is, that chap standing for'ard."

"Lord! It's that waster, Clarkson! What the blazes made you bring him here? He'll be scared into blue fits as soon as he steps ashore."

"Oh, he'll do to look after your place until you come back. Got any heads for the manager?"

"Three beauties—two not very old, but beautifully cured. But the third one is a jewel. It is that of a white man. Who he was I don't know, but I rather think he was one of the officers of a Samoa labour vessel that was cut off here about six years ago. The upper jaw has a set of gold-plated artificial teeth. I had no end of trouble to get 'em. Paid about £7 each in trade goods for 'em. I've brought them with me in the boat." He stepped to the rail and called out to his native boat's crew. They passed him up a box.

"Hurricane" Williams, Lamont, Hardy and Clarkson gathered around him on the after-deck as he opened the padlock securing the lid of the box, and then daintily lifted out his gruesome treasures, one by one, and placed them on the top of the skylight, between the up-ended flaps.

"There, Mr. Lamont! Ain't they pictures! Nothing better in any museum in Europe. Old General Robley in London town would weep with joy to even look at 'em. Fact is, Lamont, I was half a mind to send 'em to him direct, and get back a thumping big cheque. *I'm* not such a greeny as you think. I know the General's address in Pall Mall, and here I am, parting with these lovely 'relicks' of humanity for a mere song. What I ought to do is to take 'em to London, get the General's cheque for £500, and then start off on a trip to gay Patee. Holloa! what the blazes is the matter with you, waster?"

Clarkson was holding on to one end of the skylight flap, trembling from head to foot. His sunburnt face had turned a curious greeny-grey, and he pointed with a shaking hand to the head of the white man.

"I—I—I knew him," he said gaspingly, "it is Mortimer's head—Mortimer, the Recruiter of the Samoa labour schooner *Manono*. I sailed two voyages in her six years ago."

Jessop's contemptuous manner changed in an

instant, and, as he pulled his long moustache meditatively, his bronzed face flushed deeply.

"I'm a beast, Lamont! So are you, and so is every one else that can truckle in this blackguardly business. By God! we are beasts! A *white man's* head! No, Lamont, you are not a beast like me. You are a gentleman. I'm not. I'm a mere money-grubbing hog. Get the carpenter to make a box, and we'll bury it decently. As for the niggers' heads, I have no compunction whatever about them."

The carpenter made a box and weighted it with a fire-bar, and half-an-hour later all that was left of poor Mortimer was, with the ship's ensign at half-mast, consigned in silence to the sea—in thirty fathoms of water, too deep for the natives to attempt to raise the treasure again. Had it been taken on shore, Jessop explained, and buried, the savages would "soon root it up again," and secretly convey it to one of their *gamal* houses.

As Lamont was making out Jessop's trading accounts, Clarkson came to his cabin door.

His lips and fingers were twitching nervously, and for some moments he was unable to speak.

"Well, what is it?" inquired Lamont curtly. "You ought to be ready to go on shore with Mr. Jessop and take stock and delivery of the station."

"For God's sake, sir, don't send me on shore here. The sight of poor Mr. Mortimer's head has

upset me! I can't face Malekula, sir. Won't you give me a last chance, and put me on some other island?"

The supercargo swung round in his chair. "Confound you for a nuisance! How many more 'last chances' do you want? I've arranged for you to go on shore here, and now you funk at it!" He stamped his foot angrily.

Clarkson made no answer.

"Very well, then," resumed Lamont, "I can see that it would be folly to put a man like you in Jessop's place. I will give you a show on Aoba. There is a useless old scallywag of a fellow there who wants to be taken away. He has made himself obnoxious to the natives, who have tabu'd him, and won't go near him. I'll land you there with a little trade and some provisions, and you must try to get on with the natives. In the course of a month or so I'll look you up, and see how you are getting on. Mind you, it is a lonely place—no other white man within thirty miles."

"I don't mind that, sir," exclaimed Clarkson eagerly, "I'm ready to go anywhere—except at this place."

A week later the steamer brought to off a deep little bay on Aoba. It was almost encompassed by lofty mountains, and on one of the headlands stood a solitary and tumble-down native house—this was the trading station. Not a single native

was visible anywhere, although there was a large village at the back of the bay, and smoke was arising from the houses.

The steamer sounded her whistle hoarsely, and from the ruined house a ragged old man appeared. For a moment he stared wildly at the steamer, then began to run down the rocky path to meet the boat, almost breaking his neck in his eagerness to get to the beach.

The boat pulled in and brought him off, and when he stepped on deck his filthy appearance made every one recoil from him in disgust. His dirty dungaree pants and jumper were in shreds, and his bare feet were the hue of old pump leather. First of all he begged the supercargo to give him a "good square blow out."

"Dirty old pig," muttered Lamont; "steward, give this man a meal." And then, turning to the old fellow, he told him to hurry up.

"I'm taking you away from here, Joyce. This man here, Clarkson, will take charge. Get what you want to eat, and then Clarkson will go on shore with you with his trade. You must lend him a hand to fix up. The captain is anxious to get away before dark, as it is coming on to blow. Are you still under *tapu*?"

"Yes, sir," whined the old fellow. "Not a soul has come near me for two months, and whenever I try to get into the village to buy food they threaten

to murder me. I've been livin' on tin beef and biscuit all the time. But thank God I'm leavin' this 'ell upon hearth, sir. They 'as treated me cruel 'ard, sir, they 'as hindeed. I uster 'ave a canoe and go fishin' in the bay, but they smashed it before me heyes. The facks is, sir, they is dead set agin white men ever since Captain Dabis come here in the *Royalist*, and burned the village and destroyed all the preserved 'eads they had in their 'ouses."

Clarkson, with the fingers of his hands intertwining nervously, was listening intently.

"Yes, sir. As crooel, crooel a lot o' 'owlin' cannibals has ever wos born. One day, when I was mad to get suthin' to eat in the way o' wegetables, an' p'raps a bit o' fish or fresh pork, I makes a bold dash right inter the willage and asks for it. N'banda, the head man, comes up to me and twirled his club roun' an' roun' my 'ead, an' cursed me right and lef', an' says he 'ad knocked me on the 'ead long ago, and 'ad me a cookin' in the cannibile hovens, if I 'ad any meat on me bones. Then 'e says, says 'e, with a 'orrid grin, that 'e would give me suthin' good to heat if hi was game enuf to heat it. An' he drags me along by me arm to a 'ouse where there was two 'uman arms 'angin' hup to the cross beams. They was cooked, and there was a wooden bowl hunderneath to catch the hoil——"

Lamont dealt the old waster an open-handed smack on the ear, which tumbled him in a heap on the cabin deck.

"Pick yourself up, you garrulous old ass, and be ready to go on shore with *Mr. Clarkson* in half-an-hour."

"*Mr.*" Clarkson, with a deadly terror in his heart, mechanically followed Lamont into the trade-room, and in a dazed manner said "Yes" and "No" to everything that the supercargo said. Had he the courage to do so he would have asked Lamont to let him remain on board the steamer as deck-hand, stoker—anything. But he was afraid of Lamont's contempt—and a sweeping blow from that vigorous right hand. And "Hurry up there, Lamont!" cried red-haired "Hurricane" Williams from the bridge. "Get your man ashore. We have no time to lose. We'll be smothered in a *blank, blanky* gale before two hours, and there is no holding ground in this cursed bay." (Then followed much lurid language.)

* * * * *

As the sun set Clarkson watched the last boat leaving for the steamer. Behind him, the purple clouds of the approaching outburst of Nature were looming down, lurid and fierce, upon the mountain tops from the eastward.

He walked to the edge of the point, and as the boat passed him beneath, and the first moaning

hum of the coming cyclone surged through the mountain forest and swept westward to the open sea, he raised both arms high in air, and called out to Hardy—

“A fitting end to a wasted life, Mr. Hardy! Good-bye!”

The steamer's syren sounded a hoarse farewell, and ten minutes later Clarkson put a pistol to his head and shot himself.

It was his “last chance.”

XII

A COASTAL TRAMP

I

"Hi there, mister! Rouse up, or you'll get a drenching. There's a heavy shower a-comin' on."

Sound asleep, with my head under my blanket, I had heard no one approach, and sitting up, found a horseman, with a packhorse, beside me. He was the bush mailman, carrying the weekly mails between the scanty settlements on the Bellenger and Nambucca Rivers (New South Wales), and seeing me asleep, and heavy rain coming on, had pulled rein to give me a friendly call. I was doing a shooting and fishing tramp along the coast, and had been out for some days.

Thanking my friend—who was quite a stranger to me—I hurriedly rolled up my blanket and macintosh sheet, telling him that I had a tent and fly fixed less than a quarter of a mile back on the edge of a scrub, but that the plague of savage mosquitoes had driven me away to the open to get the sea-breeze.

"Right you are, mister. I'll tote you along there. Put your blanket on the pack, and then jump along o' me. Look slippy."

Hurriedly obeying the good-natured fellow's behest, we started off at a trot, but half-way to the tent, the rain was coming down in torrents, and I got wet through; the mailman had a macintosh coat. Arriving at my camp, we quickly unsaddled the horses and pitched everything inside, leaving the two horses to make the acquaintance of my own old pack-horse, which was feeding just outside the belt of scrub.

Plenty of dead wood being handy, the mailman soon started a fire, whilst I changed into dry clothes, for although it was seven o'clock in the morning and summer time, it was unusually chilly. The mailman already had had his breakfast two hours previously at a selector's house, but informed me that he was quite "open" for a second. And we had a good one—a couple of wonga pigeons grilled, hardboiled eggs, damper, and the usual billy can of tea. The rain kept up for over two hours, then it cleared off as suddenly as it came on, and the mailman saddled up again. He told me that his next stopping-place would be ten miles further on, where a party of three men, for whom he had letters, were sawing timber—a mile or so from the coast, and when he added that they spent a lot of their time in fishing, and would be glad

to see me, I told him I would certainly pay them a visit. Why not come now? he asked. I had only my pack-horse, I replied, and would have to walk, which would delay him. Not a bit, was the cheerful response—we could put the two packs on the one “moke,” and he would ride the other bareback. So it was done, and we started off along the track, which for the first few miles ran parallel with the coast, the sea beach at times being within a stone’s throw. The rain had freshened up the foliage, and a sweet earthy smell came from the soil, as we trotted along in single file. We both had guns, and my companion assured me that at a certain spot on our way (which I knew of old) we would get plenty of wonga pigeons. Although only occupying the humble position of a bush mailman, he was a most intelligent young man, and an excellent bushman. He added to his income by executing commissions for the settlers on his route, taking and bringing parcels to and from the various small townships; then he also broke in horses, split shingles, and did other bush carpenter’s work when not on the road carrying the mail; and later on, I was informed by the sawyers, that “Tom the Mailman” had quite a big reputation for being “mighty smart with his mauleys” when occasion demanded the settling of a dispute by the rules of the P. R., and that no one had “bested” him yet. This was high praise from

colonial timber getters and sawyers, a class of men extremely addicted to settling differences in that manner, but Tom, to all appearances, was the most gentle of creatures, and modesty kept him from ever making the faintest allusion to his exploits.

We reached the sawyer's camp at one o'clock, just as they were having dinner, at which we joined them. They were rough, hearty fellows, and when we gave them some pigeons we had shot, one of them remarked that they would go well in a stew with king parrots, pointing to a string of those handsome birds, which they had shot early that morning, only a few yards from their camp.

My friend the mailman, having gone on his way, one of the sawyers took my pack-horse along the creek to where their own were grazing. I accompanied him, and on the way he cautioned me about snakes—the place, he said, was infested with them, black, brown, and the equally deadly “bandy-bandy,” a small reptile with alternate black and yellow bands.

The camp of these men was quite comfortable. They had a slab living-hut with a bark roof, and a smaller one which they used as a smoke house for smoking fish. Some hundreds of very large schnapper had been caught from the rocks near the camp, and cured. These they sold to, or exchanged, with the settlers inland for beef and vegetables, so that what with beef, fish and game,

they lived very well. Half-a-mile distant a party of aboriginals were camped—half-a-dozen men, with their “gins” and piccaninnies, and quite a score of the usual mangy half-bred dingo dogs. The men assisted the sawyers in getting the logs to the sawpit, etc. Only two or three of them possessed Government blankets, which were issued to all the aboriginals once a year—one for each adult male and female, and one for every two children. This magnificent gift to the sons of the soil, however, did not benefit the poor creatures much; there were always plenty of “mean whites” who would buy the new blankets from them for a bottle of rum, and risking the penalty of a fine of £5, cut out a strip in the centre on which was dyed in red a crown and the letters V.R., and then sew the halves together.

At the invitation of the sawyers, I put up my tent near their hut, and remained with them for a couple of days, during which time we all went fishing and shooting together. They had run out of large hooks, of which I had an ample supply, and gave them a dozen. Our first afternoon’s fishing was a failure, owing to the heavy sea which was running, rendering it dangerous to stand on the smooth, slippery rocks, so drenched through with spray, and without a single fish, we returned to the camp, got our guns, and went into the bush after king parrots. We called at the blacks’ camp

on our way, and found two of the gins cooking an immense carpet snake quite ten feet in length. It was cut into four pieces. They told us that some of the men were away at the head of the tidal water getting fish (mullet), and some had gone to cut out a bees' nest they had found a long way off, and that they would bring us some honey that evening in a bucket, which the sawyers had lent them. Leaving the coloured ladies to attend to their culinary duties, we went along the creek to a clump of wattle trees, which were just coming into their golden bloom of sweet-smelling flowers, on which a few king parrots were feeding, and executing their grotesque gymnastics. We shot five, the rest flying off to some lofty grey gums. Half-an-hour's walk brought us to a swamp about two acres in extent, fringed with reeds and covered with blue water-lilies. A few black duck rose as soon as they caught sight of us, leaving the swamp to a solitary Nankin crane, which was standing on a stump surrounded by reeds, in the centre, apparently meditating, for it took no notice of us. My companions said that its mate's nest was somewhere near the swamp, for they had seen both birds very often during the past two months. This swamp, which I had visited four years previously, was then of much larger extent, and the resort of great numbers of aquatic birds during wet months, and the margin was surrounded by immense gum

trees. These had been felled for timber, with the natural result of diminution of water. The sawyers told me that the place was still visited by a considerable number of ducks and teal during the rains, but that it was impossible to get a shot at them, owing to want of cover, and the presence of spur-winged plover, the latter always giving a kind note of alarm to the ducks, though if one of their own number was shot, the remainder would keep circling about it, falling victims to their affection—or perhaps curiosity in endeavouring to ascertain what was the cause of their late comrade's sudden fall. The vicinity of the swamp was infested with small brown snakes. We saw at least a dozen during the twenty minutes we remained there. When the sawyers first began work they were so much troubled by the intrusion of snakes, that they had to cut down and burn off a clear space around the camp and sawpit. One of their horses and two kangaroo dogs had been bitten and died, and the men themselves had had many narrow escapes.

Continuing our way without getting anything further beyond a few bronze-wing pigeons, we reached the head of the tidal water, where the party of blacks were netting small mullet and black bream. They had taken some hundreds of both, and also a large sting-ray, the liver of which they were then cooking, or rather heating over a small

fire. When they began eating the disgusting-looking mass I had to turn away.

Returning to camp, we had our supper—on a real table—and as the sea had now gone down, and it was flood tide, got our small lines ready to fish for bream from the beach. Just as we were starting, the blacks brought us the bucket of honey. Although there were a good number of dead bees and chips of wood in it, it was fairly clean otherwise, having been handled carefully, and we each—like school-boys—cut out a piece of dripping comb to eat, and then made our way to the beach. The moon was at its full, and was illumining a now smooth and unruffled sea, for the wind had died away at sunset, and only the faintest ripples swished gently to the lip of the small, semi-circular, but quickly shelving beach which the sawyers said was the best place to fish from, on account of the depth of the water a few yards from the shore; furthermore the bottom was free from rocks. We baited with very small mullet, of which the green-backed sea-bream are very fond, and within a few minutes each of us was fast to a fish. They were only small two-pounders, and had been feeding on the bottom, but we could see many larger fish—so clear was the water, and bright the moonlight—swimming to and fro half-way between the surface and bottom, and quite close in. We thereupon discarded our sinkers, and soon one of my

companions hooked a beauty of over four pounds, and from then we had splendid sport, taking over two dozen fine fish in an hour, when for some reason they suddenly ceased biting, although they were still in evidence. As we turned to walk up the beach, we observed a large dingo lying on the sand, not fifty yards away. He got up in a very leisurely manner, and trotted up the bank, turning his head to look at us every now and then. Watson, one of the sawyers, told me that their two kangaroo dogs once ran down a dingo slut with two pups, and killed her, and that on the following morning the blacks caught both the pups and brought them to the camp. Watson took one and kept it for several months, but one day seeing it trying to tear open a canvas ration bag, he took hold of it, when the animal seized his thumb, bit it to the bone, and then bolted to the bush.

All that night the opossums in the gum trees about the camp made a great noise—a sign of coming rain, my companions said, and certainly at dawn it did begin to pour. By nine in the morning the creek was in flood; at noon it was at its usual summer level again. Knowing from previous experience that such a volume of water would carry out great numbers of the creek fish to the bar together with prawns, I took a bucket, and went down to the mouth of the creek, and found ridges of splendid prawns, some still alive, lining

the beach. As they were carried out over the bar, the incoming flood tide waves had washed them back again. Whilst I was filling the bucket, all the aboriginals appeared on the scene, carrying old bags, buckets and baskets, which they filled with small dead fish and prawns, jabbering with glee. After washing the prawns I had picked up, we boiled them in the bucket, throwing in some handfuls of coarse salt, and had some for dinner. As the afternoon turned out fine, the sawyers resumed work, and being left to my own devices, spent the rest of the day in mending my packsaddle, reading a much-thumbed book belonging to one of the sawyers, entitled *Heiress to Ten Millions*, and sleeping, until I was awakened for supper. We had quite a choice of good things—game soup flavoured with bacon, prawns, fish, salt meat, damper and tea. I was much interested at the able manner in which one of my friends, who had a thick, heavy beard, ate “bread and honey.” Cutting off a huge slice of damper he covered it with solid slabs of honeycomb, then bit through the mass as if it were a finnick sandwich, and swallowed it, comb and all together. As we were finishing, a horseman appeared. He was a settler, living ten miles inland, and brought my friends the welcome gift of a small leg of mutton, and a bag of cobs of green maize. He stayed the night, and when I turned in, the four were deep in cards.

On the following day, I bade my hospitable friends good-bye, and resumed my tramp southward, being bound for a deserted cattle station situated five miles from the coast. I was told that an old fellow named Mickey Day, whom I had known in years past, was living there, and that he was as keen a sportsman as he had been in my boyhood's days, and would be delighted to see me. So thither I went.

II

A BUSH BOY

THE coast country in that part of New South Wales extending from the Richmond River to the Macleay River is semi-tropical in much of its flora, and the traveller passes through many stretches of delightfully picturesque woodland, especially where the coast line is high, crowned with dense scrub on the summit, and faced with cliffs, rising sheer-to from the sea. At the back of such high land there are dark, cool valleys studded with groves of the graceful bangalow palm and wild apple-trees. Underneath one's foot the thick carpet of fallen leaves deadens the sound of footsteps, and the pleasant solitude is broken only by the cries of birds overhead in the lofty branches,

or the quick, jumping thud of a scrub wallaby fleeing towards the dense thicket scrub on the cliffs.

Emerging from one of these secluded sun-shaded valleys I came to open country—a series of lightly-timbered downs—and at once felt the refreshing sea-breeze. Here was an old cattle-track leading to the abandoned cattle station whither I was bound, and the moment my old pack-horse saw it he stopped to let me tie up his halter round his neck, and then went on ahead. He certainly was a most intelligent creature. When going through scrub, in which there was no path, he preferred me to lead him, knowing that I should pick the easiest way; but as soon as we struck a bridle or cattle-track, or a road, he would bring to, wait for his halter to be attended to, and then walk on ahead. Then, too, whenever I fired at anything he would stop and wait, turning his head to see what it was that I had shot. His only fault was that he was too fond of going into water—the deeper it was the better he liked it—to rid himself of the flies and sand-flies which so often tormented the tender skin of his stomach. On several occasions he jumped into deep water, wetting through everything in the pack-bags.

At noon I came in sight of the spot where the cattle-station homestead had once stood. There was now nothing left but a mass of fallen timber

beams—or rather their shells, for the white ants had eaten out the interior—and piles of brickwork covered with vines and creepers, and all around were patches of a detestable flowering scrub called lantana, growing on land which, thirty years before, had been an extensive orchard and maize fields. At the rear of the house was a deep, lily-covered water-hole, or rather miniature lake, fringed with ti-trees, and swamp gums of enormous girth. Although quite close I could not see it from where I was, owing to the height of the intervening lantana, and I could hear the faint but melodious gabble of wild ducks. Feeling sure that the old bushman whom I had come to visit would be living near the water, I led the horse between the patches of lantana, and soon saw his bark hut on the opposite side to me of the water. It was surrounded by a rough, but close-set paling fence, within which I could see a good crop of maize, all in tassel. I gave a loud *coo-o-o-e!* and a boy came to the open door, and cried “Hello,” then came to meet me. He was the brownest-skinned white boy I had ever seen. He was hatless, and his rolled-up pants showed legs the hue of old leather. I asked him who he was.

“Solomon Day—Micky Day’s grandson. Come inside and have some grub and a drink o’ tea. Will you hobble your horse or let him loose? He’ll be all right—there’s heaps o’ grass down by

the gums. Me grandfather's gone to Mother Rickett's pub, at the crossin', ter kill a bullock for her, an' won't be back till to-night."

His volubility staggered me, for the average bush youth has to have his words dragged out of him, as a rule. Telling him that I had come to see his grandfather and would stay the night, he nodded, and said, "Right yer are. Do yer wanter have a wash? There's a cask o' water an' a bucket at the back, an' I'll get yer a tile (towel) an' a bit o' soap."

After a wash we had dinner—salt meat, pumpkin and potatoes. My young host was delightful company, and we were soon exchanging confidences and experiences—he telling me all the local "news," and I giving him a description of the various long coastal tramps I had done at intervals, but when I told him that I had practically walked along the entire coast of New South Wales from the Tweed River in the north to Green Cape on the south, he eyed me with distinct suspicion.

"Matter o' a few hundred miles, ain't it?"

"About six hundred. But you see I didn't do it in one tramp. Began when I was a boy, and did a stretch; then when I grew older, and had a few weeks to spare, I would do another long stretch. It is four years since my last one."

"Oh, I see! thought yer meant yer did it right

off the reel. Ain't yer takin' any more beef an' punken?"

Solomon was full of bush lore, and recalled to memory just such another boy whom I had come across years before in the Camden Haven district. Like his old grandfather he was a keen sportsman, and his fund of information on the habits of birds and animals did him credit, and he knew every bit of the country around within a radius of perhaps thirty miles. When I told him that I was a fellow "cornstalk" and was born in that very district, I went up immensely in his opinion. I spoke about the duck I had just seen, and asked if he and his grandfather ever shot any. No, neither he nor the old man had ever fired a shot at them ever since the two of them came there to live, "nigh on three year ago." That was because they found the ducks bred there. During the heavy rains, he added, when the water-hole had risen right up to the butts of the big trees, the place was alive with black duck, wood-duck, teal, etc., and on moonlight nights "they does kick up a row, quackin' and flappin' an' skylarkin'. When we wants ter go duck shootin' we goes to them shaller swamps 'bout five mile back from here. Ever bin there?" No, I had not. "Fishin'?" Yes, he did a bit of fishing sometimes down on the rocks, but he had no line strong enough now for schnapper and only small hooks (I supplied the deficiency). But

perch fishing "way up the river was something grand. Crickets is the best kind o' bait, but grasshoppers or green locuses (locusts) is 'most as good. My word, some o' them perch is whoppers—half as big as a ten-pound schnapper. There's thunderin' big eels, too, in some o' the deep pools. I seed a black fellow spear one that was 'bout five foot long, an' as thick as a big man's calf. Me and the nigger was perch fishin' when we seed the eel coming along on the top o' the water, swimmin' slow as if he was sick; an' he had a big lump o' somethin' in his mouth. The nigger sent a spear through him, an' then jumped in an' pulled him ashore, and we found that the lump in his mouth was a dead black duck which he couldn't swaller, 'cos it was too big, an' the feathers was all tangled up in his teeth. That duck must ha' bin a looney to go divin' anywhere where there is big eels. Most ducks has plenty savee an' won't go divin' in deep water, 'cos they knows they'll get collared if they does." (This was not altogether new to me, for the aborigines in North Queensland had told me that when the rivers are in flood, and the water thick, eels will come into the backwaters and seize ducks.) "Once when I was bogeying (bathing), down there in the water-hole, when the ducks was breedin', I hears a great splashin' and some quackin' and seed all the ducks that was nestin' in the grass and in holler logs was took to the

water, and was swimmin' and tearin' about as if they was all gone crazy. After a while they went back one by one; but the nex' day they did the same thing, 'bout the same time. Grandfather said it was a big carpet snake or a goanner, and told me to go an' look. Whatever it was, he said, I must shoot it, if I couldn't get at it with a stick. So off I goes and searches all round the reeds and logs where the nests was, but couldn't see nothin' for a long time, until at last I spots the biggest goanner I ever seed in my life. He was crawlin' up the bank through the dead reeds and sticks—the water was very low then—and his ugly mug was smothered in blood and yoker (yolk) o' eggs and ducks' down. I was just a-goin' ter give him a charge o' shot when I noticed as he could hardly crawl—he was that full o' eggs and young ducks just a comin' outer their shells. So I waddied him with a stick, and dragged him here, an' he was six foot long, an' me grandfather said he was the biggest he had ever seen anywheres."

After dinner Solomon "showed me around." The garden was closely fenced to secure it from the ravages of the "paddy-melons," and contained maize, pumpkins, sweet potatoes and tomatoes of a brobdingnagian size and fully ripe. Then towards sunset, we took our guns and set out for some small water-holes near the house, where he assured me we should be certain to get some

wongas. On our way we crossed through a patch of country which had been burned off the previous year, and was now covered with Cape gooseberry and raspberry plants, literally laden with ripe fruit. This delayed us for half-an-hour, for the fruit was very tempting, though rather too hot from the sun. The way these fruits appear in the coastal districts in January and February after a bush fire is astonishing. The selectors usually grow great numbers of what are called "pie melons," for cattle food, and these melons and the Cape gooseberries make an excellent jam when flavoured with lemon juice and rind. Some of the melons attain a great size and weight—up to sixty pounds—the interior is quite white or yellow, with jet black or brown seeds. They cannot be eaten raw, as they are hard and tasteless, even when fully ripe. Another cheaply made jam used by the settlers in the coastal regions is obtained from pie melons and wild currants. The plant of the latter is exactly like the English broom in appearance and size, and the quantity of berries one plant will yield is amazing. I have frequently seen over thirty pounds taken from one plant. Even when ripe, however, they cannot be eaten, for although full of juice they are terribly sour. The settlers, in my boyhood's day, made all their jams with "ration" sugar—dark, sticky stuff, almost black, but very sweet.

After shooting a few pigeons we returned home. On the way Solomon showed me a small, deep pool, embowered in a clump of trees, the botanical name of which I do not know, neither have they a vulgar name. From their leaves a sort of green pollen—if I may so call it—falls upon the water and floats thereon, and, even in the very hottest summers, the water is always quite cold, owing to the thickness of the fallen pollen, which always remains alive and green. I have seen similar pools with the same trees in Samoa and the Marquesas Islands; in the former islands they are used as special bathing-places by the privileged few. The Samoans call these pools *tö usi usi*, "green deeps."

Solomon asked me to "feel" the water with my hand. Moving aside some of the thick green coating I put in my hand; the water was almost icy cold, or at least felt so when the perspiration was streaming from every pore in the skin.

When we reached the hut, feeling hot and somewhat tired, Solomon the Wise suggested a "bogey." So we "bogeyed" in the big water-hole, and swam to and fro, and round and round, and Solomon pointed out to me the spots favoured by the ducks for nesting. Then we dressed, and went home and cooked our supper, and at nine o'clock old Micky Day rode up, carrying some fresh meat, and slightly "jolly." Evidently the

widow Ricketts "what kept the pub" had not been inhospitable, as was further evidenced by two bottles of whisky he had brought.

Right heartily the old man welcomed me, and a right good time did I spend with him on the two following days, roaming about the bush and the sea-shore.

XIII

THE MOST HATEFUL PLACE I KNOW

A LITTLE over twenty-two degrees south of the equator, and in longitude $172\frac{1}{4}^{\circ}$ 10' E. there is an island in the South Pacific on which I and a companion in misfortune once spent four dreadful days of loneliness and misery, after we had seen our ship sink beneath the horizon. It is named on the chart Hunter Island, after the ship that discovered it over a hundred years ago. It is a slumbering volcano, scantily wooded, waterless and uninhabited, rising almost sheer from the water's edge to over a thousand feet in height. Several attempts to land on and examine it had been made by the commanders of French and English warships, but without success, owing to the heavy swell which is usually heaving against its steep and forbidding-looking base.

I had twice passed within half-a-mile of the place, and had looked at it with interest from the ship's deck, and noticed smoke issuing from many deep

chasms and crevices on its rocky sides, and although we saw no actual fire we did see many huge patches of sulphur spreading from half way down from the summit, to the overhanging ledges of the cliffs.

On the third occasion we sighted the island we were bound from Fiji to Noumea, in a labour vessel, and were becalmed within a couple of miles of it for an entire day. On the following morning we found that we had made almost a complete circuit of it, and it was then that we noticed a spot whereon a landing could very easily be effected on such a calm day, when there was no wind, and only the gentlest laving of the sea at the base of this giant, silent cone standing sentry in a lonely sea.

We had on board a small light dinghy (my own property) which I frequently used either for fishing, or going on shore in alone, when it was not necessary for me to take one of the ship's whale boats.

The sight of the island, with its streams of pale blue smoke, and jagged pinnacles of black rock sticking out of the yellow patches of sulphur, attracted me greatly, and I told the skipper I would take my dinghy, land on the island, and make a closer inspection of it, especially on the south or verdured side.

"Just as you like," he said, "but I wouldn't put

foot on such a God-forsaken place for a £10 note. But keep the ship in sight after you land. We may get a breeze at any time, though it doesn't look like it."

The dinghy was put over the side. I chose to accompany me a young native seaman named Harry, and we took with us some food, my fishing tackle, a gun and a dozen cartridges, a tomahawk (always kept in the boat), and, most fortunately, a full breaker of water.

The sun was already very hot when we pushed off for our two-miles' pull over the glassy surface of the water, and lightly clad as we were in pyjamas, straw hats and canvas shoes, without socks, the perspiration was literally pouring from us when we reached the spot I had chosen for a landing-place. The first thing we noticed as we drew up alongside a flat rock, was the utter absence of any form of marine life—not a fish, nor even a bit of seaweed was to be seen along the barren sides, which rose up steep-to from a great depth; the second was an unpleasant smell of burning sulphur which loaded the air, and the third was the strange sound of our own voices.

There being no projection of rock to which we could make fast the boat's painter, we hauled her up on top of the flat rock two feet above the water, then carried her along to a still higher spot where she would be perfectly safe, even if the sea should

get up. Then we sat down, had a drink, lit our pipes, and looked about us, before starting on our tramp around the rugged rocks to the south end.

From where we sat not a vestige of vegetation was visible, and five hundred feet above us, from long narrow fissures in the sides, ascended thin, wavering clouds of sulphurous smoke. Not even a wandering sea bird could we see, and the only sign of life beside ourselves was the ship, motionless upon the lake-like surface of the ocean, with her canvas hanging limply from her spars.

Filling my water-bottle from the breaker, and putting some beef and biscuit in our pockets, we started, Harry carrying my gun, for he said that he was sure we should find among the thick scrub on the south end the breeding-place of a large sea-bird called Kanapu, whose flesh is not at all fishy in taste.

After clambering over the rocks, and getting out of the sulphur-smelling zone, we came to a deep narrow bay, several hundred yards in length. The beach was covered with hard black sand, and above this, at high-water mark, was an immense bank of pumice-stone, quite thirty feet in thickness. With infinite difficulty we descended the steep side, crossed the black sand beach, and struggled up the other side, where we again rested, for the sulphur-tainted air had got into our lungs, and breathing was painful.

It took us quite two hours to reach the wooded part of the island, from where, owing to the configuration of the coast, we could not see the ship. That, however, gave us no anxiety—we were completely fagged out, and crawling under some thickly foliated but stunted bushes, we again spelled for half-an-hour. We could see that this part of the island had not suffered so severely from the volcanic outbursts which occasionally shook it to its base, even of late years (since 1860), and, despite the showers of fine ash of pumice and sulphur which must have fallen upon it, that vegetation—revivified by the rainy months, extending from November to March—still kept alive and flourishing as if the Almighty intended that here, at least, some of His winged creatures should gather together to perpetuate their species, and absolve the smitten isle from the horror of utter lifelessness.

Refreshed after our “spell” we rose and made an examination of our surroundings, and a few hundred yards further on, came across some fairly good-sized trees, and found, as Harry had prophesied, a small rookery of kanapu—about two hundred birds. Some were nesting on the soil, and they showed not the slightest fear, but when touched bit most savagely, their eyes blazing with fury, whilst some of the male birds flew at our faces, uttering hoarse croaks of rage. Their valour

appealed to me so strongly that I would not shoot any of them, but Harry had less compunction, for he seized two and wrung their necks.

Following the belt of wood downward to the sea, we found that it terminated about fifty yards from a beach of black sand, composed of volcanic scoria, which shelved so quickly that the water was quite thirty fathoms deep, within a score of yards from the margin of the beach.

“Look at that,” cried my companion, pointing seaward, “the sea is boiling!”

A hundred yards away to the right was an extraordinary sight—a vast volume of white steam was rising in a thick cloud from the ocean. It was some three or four hundred yards in circumference, and as we gazed at it in astonishment, we became sensible of a curious humming sound, now faint and subdued, now rising to a peculiar droning roar, like that made by a hurricane when at seventy miles an hour it blows against the straining wire standing rigging of a ship hove-to. It was the sea boiling.

We went to the water's edge, and put our hands in; it was quite hot, so hot as to be unbearable after a few seconds, and Harry observed that it was good for shaving, but bad for fishing.

As we were going back to the belt of timber to get the two kanapu, and then return to the boat, we noticed a dark line on the horizon, rapidly extending, and at the same time the sky changed

with extraordinary rapidity from a cloudless blue to a sombre grey, and then came a low growl of thunder.

"We'll have to hurry, sir," cried Harry, "it is a *matagi afa*" (a peculiar electrical storm which in that part of the Pacific comes on so suddenly, and rages with such violence that it sends many an unprepared ship to the bottom).

Before we were half-way to the boat the storm was upon us with a roar; and the violence of the wind was such that for some minutes we had to cling to the rocks to save ourselves from being blown into the sea, which was rising with marvellous rapidity, and already surf was breaking against the cliffs. Struggling along yard by yard we rounded a point, and came in sight of the ship. She had not been taken unprepared, for she was hove-to under close-reefed fore and main lower top-sails. Signals to us were flying from her gaff, but what they were we could not make out.

At last, panting, tired, and parched with thirst, we arrived within a few hundred yards of the boat, just as a gust of wind caught her, and rolled her over and over, till she brought up with a bang against a jagged rock—a hopeless wreck. We clambered down to save what we could, and first secured the water breaker, put it out of the wind, and then picked up the beef and biscuit. Then

after taking a long drink—thanking Heaven we had saved the breaker—we filled our pipes, picked out a nook, sat down, and looked at each other. To speak was impossible, for the noise of the wind was now something diabolical, and the huge seas were thundering against the cliffs, and sending showers of spray hundreds of feet up.

For the next five hours the wind continued to blow with such fury that we were unable to stand up. During this time the ship was blown out of sight. As darkness was coming on, the wind moderated a little, but the sea that was now lashing the island was appalling to look at.

Harry touched my arm, and pointed upward silently to the volcanic cone—streaks of red fire were seaming its sides in tortuous lines, and what in the daylight had appeared to be but narrow cracks through which the pale blue smoke ascended, now showed like fiery furnaces seven times heated, and despite the violence of the long, slender tongues of flame, every now and then shot up as straight as a steel bar, died out, sprang up again, and then executed a series of strange and terrifying gymnastics, darting to port, then to starboard, then downward in zigzag lines. It was a frightful spectacle, and as it continued through the night, I and my companion had an oppression and sinking of the heart that is indescribable, for every now and then we heard through the howling of the

wind a strange groaning sound, and felt a tremor of the rocks upon which we lay. And all through the night these nerve-breaking sounds continued.

Towards dawn the wind suddenly died away, and Harry and I decided to make our way back to the wooded part of the island, where we imagined we should be safer. We could see nothing of the ship at sunrise, and I felt sure that we were not likely to, for that day at least, as there is a three-knot current setting westwards from Hunter's Island. The skipper, I knew, would not feel much alarmed about us, knowing that we had water and food enough to last us for a couple of days, and when he saw the wrecked dinghy, would conclude we had gone to the south end of the island, and taken refuge there.

Carrying our precious water breaker, which we slung from my gun, we set off, and in three or four hours reached the kanapu rookery, shot a bird, plucked and cooked it, and made ourselves as comfortable as we could, and carefully examined our stock of tobacco, which we reckoned would, with economy, last us for three days, allowing that we only smoked four pipes a day.

About nine o'clock the gale again sprang up, this time coming away from the S.E., and all that day it blew with savage violence, and the noise of the surf was deafening. At sunset it again dropped

for some hours, and then once more, as night fell, the sides of the mountain burst out into flame, and the roar of the breakers was mingled with the muffled groanings and heavings of the forces of Nature in the heart of the island—forces which a hundred and twenty years before had found a vent, and destroyed every living thing, man and beast, in one dreadful outburst of flame, whose awful reflection was seen one hundred leagues away. For at that time, according to native tradition, Hunter's Island (as it is now called) consisted of a group of three lofty, well-wooded and fertile islands, inhabited by some thousand or so of people, who spoke a language analogous to Fijian. And then came the great catastrophe, which sunk two of the islands, and left one to remain—a place of horror and desolation, set in a lonely sea, appalling to the human eye.

On the afternoon of the fourth day, and when we had but three pints of water left, we saw the ship beating up to the island from the S.E., and a little before sunset she hove-to off the south end, and lowered a boat as soon as the captain saw the smoke of a great fire we had made with dead and green timber. The boat, owing to the surf, could not approach within a couple of cable-lengths of the shore, so Harry and I had to swim out to her. And Harry almost wept when I bade him not to attempt to take my gun with him.

After getting on board the skipper—one of the best-natured men that ever trod on deck—sarcastically asked me how I had enjoyed myself, and I frankly confess that so overwrought were my nerves that I “swounded.”

XIV

AN INCIDENT OF MARRIAGE IN THE SOUTH SEAS

THE dawn was breaking, and low croakings of thousands of dusky terns filled the island air, as they left their rookeries and flew seaward to begin their day's fishing on the blue water beyond the barrier. Rising from his couch of mats Drake, the supercargo, filled and lit his pipe, and stole silently from the trader's house, so as not to disturb the inmates, and took his way along a sandy path that led through the forest of coco palms to the lagoon. The morning air was cool, with a little chill in it, and the grass was heavy with dew; the trade wind had not yet awakened, and the pluméd crowns of the cocos were as motionless as if they were carven from marble, and from the reef on the weather side of the island came the sound of the measured beat of the surf.

A walk of half-an-hour brought him to the inner beach of the atoll—a broad sheet of calm water ten miles long, by four in width, encompassed by a

chain of islands, not one of which was a mile in width. On both sides were villages, from which smoke was already rising as the brown-skinned women lit fires in the open to cook the morning meal, for the Gilbert islanders are early risers.

Drake walked down to the water's edge, and then turned to the north. The tide was low, and the sand hard and firm to the foot; swarms of mullet and gar-fish swam close in, and cranes, blue and snow-white, stalked gravely about on the margin, rising when they saw the man and again settling down a few hundred yards ahead, or with lazily flapping wing, heading across the glassy waters of the lagoon.

A mile on he came to a small village, of a dozen houses, prettily situated in a little bay, and surrounded by a grove of lofty jack-fruit trees. Three canoes had just come in from catching flying-fish, and the crews, surrounded by their women-folk, were grilling some of the fish. Drake gave them the usual greeting of "*Tiakapo*," and was asked to sit down and eat, one of the women bringing him a coarse mat of coconut leaf. In a few minutes two flying-fish were placed before him, with a piece of baked *puraka* (a coarse species of the vegetable known as *taro*) and a couple of young coconuts to drink. The meal finished, the brown men and the white man began to talk and smoke. Was their night's fishing lucky? Drake asked. Yes.

the three canoes had each taken over two hundred fish. Would he eat another? He thanked them, said he had eaten well, but would like a drink of fresh toddy.

"*E rai rai*" ("Good"), and one of the savages made a sign to a boy, who brought him a coconut shell full of delicious toddy, just taken from the coco palm and cold with the night dew.

They were a wild-eyed, fierce-looking lot, these fellows, with their long, straight and jet black hair, cut away in front from just above the eyebrows, their pendulous ear-lobes, which, perforated in infancy, are gradually enlarged by rolls of stiff pandanus leaf, till the orifice is large enough to go over a man's head, and the circle of flesh becomes so stretched that it is no thicker than a quill. Their only covering—men and women alike—was a girdle of dried grasses, called *airiri*, and stained a reddish brown. Like all the people of the Equatorial Islands, they were well-built and muscular, and their manner a sort of semi-defiance, mingled with a rough hospitality, to the stranger.

A week before, a trading vessel on which Drake was a passenger and which was bound to the Caroline Islands, had been lost on this atoll, the native name of which is Peru; on the chart it is called Francis Island. Drake was a "relieving" supercargo, and had taken up his quarters with the white trader at a village near the spot where the

vessel was castaway, and he was beginning to make himself acquainted with the island and its people. There were four white traders living at various villages, and he had met them all but one, a man named Rock. The others had all visited the ship-wrecked people in turn, but Rock had not come near them. None of these traders, owing to business jealousy, were on speaking terms with each other. Drake, however, was on friendly terms with three of them, having frequently done business with them in the past in his capacity of supercargo. Rock was a new comer since his last visit to the island—a year previously.

Presenting each of his hosts with a stick of tobacco—which were at once twisted up in their pendant ear-lobes, he asked them the way to the white man's house. They told him it was on the other side of the lagoon, and offered to take him across in a canoe. As he was being paddled over, he said—

“What manner of white man in this Rokka?”

“A sulky fellow, young and strong. He is a *matan kaibuke* (sailor) and cannot speak our tongue, neither can his wife. He makes friends with no one, and cares not whether we trade with him or not. But yet he is honest and fair in his dealings.”

Landing on the inner beach of the weather-side of the atoll, Drake followed a path through the

endless coco palms for over an hour, passing several villages, and frequently having to walk or wade across the reef connecting one island with another. Then came a long straight stretch of beach trending north, at the end of which was a small, well-wooded island, rather higher than the rest of the chain. Here, he was told, Rokka (Rock) had built his house.

Presently he heard two gun-shots in quick succession quite near him, and looking over at some sand-flats saw a man in European garb; he was shooting golden plover. As he picked up some birds Drake hailed him. He turned, and then came slowly towards him. And when he was within fifty yards, Drake recognized him as a man he knew well and liked, but whom he had not seen for three years—Walter Severn, master of an inter-island trading schooner sailing out of Samoa.

Laying his own gun down on the sand, Drake ran to meet him with outstretched hand.

“Severn,” he cried, “don’t you know me?”

Severn’s deep-set, quiet, grey eyes met his in a searching glance, as he took his hand. “Yes, Drake, I knew it was you the moment I saw you. But how did you know—know that I was living here?”

“I did not know it was you. I was told your name was Rock. I only came for a tramp about the

island, and thought I would look up the one white man here whom I had not yet seen."

Severn nodded. "I am glad to see you, though I should not care about any other white visitor. Come to the house. And my name now is Rock."

At the doorway stood a tall, handsome young woman, dressed in the long, flowing muslin gown favoured by the wives of white men in Polynesia. And in an instant as she smiled at the visitor he, with a badly-concealed start of surprise, recognized her—Mrs. Weiss, the half-caste Samoan wife of an Austrian, a prominent South Sea official in the employ of the big German trading firm; a girl who had been the show pupil of the Marist Mission school in Samoa and whose marriage to the wealthy Weiss had aroused wild jealousy among the unmarried English and American traders. But poor Marie Perreira, as she then was, had no choice—her greedy old ruffian of a Portuguese father simply sold her to the Austrian. Soon after their marriage they left Samoa for Tonga, where Weiss had the management of his firm's business. About eighteen months after this Weiss, when on a visit to Sydney, had died suddenly of apoplexy. No one was sorry, for he was a great, coarse, brutal fellow, and disliked by every one who came in contact with him. What became of his wife Drake could not learn, but supposed she had returned to her people in Samoa.

Now, however, as he entered Severn's house, he thought he understood. Severn had been one of Marie's most favoured admirers, and had married his old love; but why on earth they had come to live on a wretched sandy atoll like Peru puzzled Drake, for Severn was a man of some means.

Whilst Marie and a young native girl set about getting an early lunch, Severn brought out a bottle of whisky and a seltzogene, and the two men talked about old times, but never a word did Severn say about Marie. At last Drake said—

“Severn, I must congratulate you. How long have you been married?”

He looked at his friend steadily for a few seconds in his quiet searching way, then asked a question.

“When were you last in Samoa?”

“Not since I last saw you there.”

“Then you did not hear about Weiss.”

“No, not in Samoa, but in Sydney, where he died.”

“In Sydney! Died in Sydney! Are you sure?”

“Certain. He had an apoplectic seizure in Williams' Bros. office, and died in twenty minutes.”

Severn's hand shook as he placed it on Drake's knee.

“The date! Can you tell me the date?”

“To within a month or so. I was in Sydney in

June of last year, and Williams told me that Weiss had died 'a few weeks ago' and had been buried in Waverley Cemetery."

Severn gave a heavy sigh of relief. "Thank God! then I did not kill him, for if he died about the time you name it was over a year since I struck him down and left him for dead in his house at Vavau in Tonga. Wait till I call Marie and tell her. You have brought us great happiness."

Marie came, and her dark eyes filled with wonder as Severn drew her to him, and with one arm round her waist, as she stood beside him, told his story.

* * * * *

"Marie's father forced her to marry Weiss—he and the nuns terrified her into it. Weiss, you see, was not only rich, but a Catholic—that alone put me out of court.

"I was away on a cruise when the marriage took place, and when I came back, found that Weiss had taken Marie with him to Tonga. I was hit pretty hard, for I knew Marie loved me, and would never have been forced to marry the Austrian had I been in Samoa.

"Three months afterwards I got orders to go to Vavau in ballast, to load copra from Weiss's station. Now, I don't know whether I was glad or sorry. Of course I wanted to see Marie again, but I did not want to bring misery upon her. But one thing I did mean—and that was to take it out

of Weiss if he had not been good to her, and you know what a brute he was. Perhaps I had other thoughts as well sometimes, but I clapped the hatches on my soul, and wouldn't let myself peer down into the hold—there was a devil looking up at me.

“I got into Vavau harbour on a Sunday afternoon, and anchored abreast of the town and close to the *Triton*, whaleship of New Bedford. You know Elkington, the skipper—as good a fellow as ever stepped. He came on board, and we were delighted to meet again. He told me that he was leaving at daylight, bound to the northward through the Tokelau and Gilbert Groups for a cruise, and then hoped to point the *Triton's* nose for the Horn—homeward bound and a full ship.

“Promising to come and have supper with me in the evening, after I had seen Weiss and arranged about my cargo, he went back to his own ship, and I went on shore. Of course it being Sunday, and in Holy Tonga, Weiss's store was closed, and I had to go to his house, just as the bell had stopped ringing for evening service. Not a native was to be seen, they were all at church, and it was just dark as I reached the gate of Weiss's house and opened it. As I walked up the long path I heard the sound of some one running towards me, and in a few seconds more Marie was in my arms—half-crying, half-laughing. She had seen the schooner

come in, and had seen me pull on shore, and had been waiting and watching.

“What she told me in the next few minutes made my blood boil, and the hatches flew off again, and the devil in the hold looked up at me again and grinned. But I steadied myself, and told her I had come to see her husband on business.

“‘He has gone out on the cliffs for a walk, and won’t be back for an hour,’ she said, ‘so come and sit on the verandah until he returns. We shall be in full view there of any passing natives, and I can tell you of all that has happened.’ Then she dried her tears, and we went up to the high verandah and sat down, one on each side of a little table. There was a big lamp, or rather lantern, hanging over the table, and any one from the road could see us. You know what a sneaking Holy-Joe lot the Tonga natives are, and Marie didn’t want them to say that we had been sitting together in the dark, for her two servants were at church, and she was alone in the house.

“But Weiss was only foxing. He had seen the schooner come in, knew I was consigned to him, and, instead of going for his usual Sunday walk, must have planted somewhere—to watch what might happen when I met his wife alone.

“We had not been talking for more than five minutes when Marie sprang to her feet with a scream, and the next instant Weiss, who had crept

upon me from behind in his stockinged feet, gripped my throat in both hands and had me down.

“‘You English swine,’ he growled, ‘I’ll teach you not to come fooling after my wife. I’ll strangle you.’

“But big and heavy as he was, he had no chance with me when I twisted and threw him over on his back, though he held on to my throat like a vice for nearly half-a-minute. As soon as I had freed myself from him I let him lie there for a bit, whilst I got my breath; and then the pig drew a revolver and fired three shots at me, and two out of the three hit me—one in the leg, and one in the shoulder. Then, as he rose to his feet, I grabbed him by his fat throat, and held on until he was black in the face, and when he was as limp as a wet deck swab I lifted him up and threw him over the verandah on to the stones below—a drop of fourteen feet.

“I was bleeding pretty freely, but didn’t feel it, and had all my senses about me, when I took Marie by the hand and led her down to the beach, blowing my boat-call frequently, for I was afraid of being stopped by the native *leo leo* (police) before I could reach the boat.

“Just as my boat touched the beach, and Marie and I tumbled in and the crew gave way, half-a-dozen police came rushing down, and called to me to come back. I guyed ’em and told them they

could come on board and take me—if they were game.

“Instead of going on board my own ship I went to the *Triton*, told Elkington what had happened, and that I must skip, for I had, I was sure, killed Weiss. In five minutes we had fixed up what was to be done; and leaving Marie on board the whaler I boarded my own ship, had a hurried talk with the mate and placed him in charge; then I wrote a letter to the owners, telling them the whole truth, packed up my gear and was back aboard the *Triton* in half-an-hour.

“Elkington had mustered and armed all his crew, ready for the native police boat, which after boarding the schooner, and finding I was not there, came alongside the whaleship. Elkington asked them what they wanted. They said that Weiss was dead, and they had come to arrest me and take me on shore. He threatened to shoot dead the first man of them that put foot on his deck, and the police boat sheered off.

“At daylight the *Triton* got under weigh, although the ship was surrounded by canoes full of natives calling on him to give me up. He took no notice of them beyond pointing his Winchester, and so we got clear of Vavau. Believing Weiss to be dead, I asked Elkington, on the following day, if he was willing to marry Marie and me. He agreed to do so, and we were married that

morning in the presence of the ship's company. Of course both he and I knew that these 'ship' marriages are not recognized by the English law; but they go as legal in the South Seas. And Marie was well content. She knew no better, and I was a law unto her.

"Three months after Elkington landed me here, for he was homeward bound, and I thought that if I stayed here awhile I might get a passage away to China or Japan in a passing whaleship going north. Elkington sold me enough trade goods to keep me going, and I have a few hundred pounds in cash. And that's the end of my yarn, and all Marie and I want now is a parson."

Drake thought a few moments, and then said—

"Give me some more whisky, you inhospitable owl, and have some with me. Then shall I elucidate."

The two men clinked their glasses together, and then Drake, who had known Marie Perreira from her childhood, said—

"Run away, little girl, and get that lunch. I want to talk to Walter."

"Now look here, Walter," he said, dropping his bantering manner and speaking seriously, "there's no need for you to go away further north. Your proper place is your old beat—Samoa and Tonga, where you and Marie have many friends. And you can get another ship in Samoa almost the day

you put foot ashore. Whilst I regret that you did not kill Weiss—for the blackguard had lived too long—you need now not have any fear of going back to Samoa, or anywhere else where the law reigns.”

Severn nodded.

“Now as to the parson. You have a boat?” asked Drake.

“Yes.”

“Well, get her put into the water, and I’ll find you a parson—a real Holy Joe, qualified to perform the marriage ceremony, though he wears a *lava lava* (waist cloth) instead of the orthodox nether garments.”

“Where?” and Severn looked at him incredulously.

“At Nukunau Island—thirty miles to windward—there is a Samoan teacher. He is a right good fellow. Get that boat out, and after we have had something to eat we’ll start. By sundown we’ll be in Nukunau Mission-house. And I’ll give the bride away.”

XV

AN ADVENTURE WITH 'GREY NURSES'

THE men who think that they know everything are very widely dispersed all over the globe. Such a one I knew in Samoa. He was a rich young Englishman who came to the South Seas to buy land for cotton-growing, and so irritated the natives by his gross disregard of their manners and customs that he not only got himself badly mauled about, but involved a number of the white residents in serious trouble as well. He was continually making blunders, some of them of a highly diverting character, and yet nothing could convince him that he had done anything wrong or absurd. He was wrapped, not in a mantle, but in a sheet of chilled-steel self-conceit and arrogance. But at the end of three months, through an act of unparalleled folly, he received such severe injuries that for some time there were but faint hopes of his surviving them. Briefly it was this: he pestered me into lending him my whaleboat and crew

to board a trading vessel hove-to outside the reef in bad weather. Knowing him to be inexperienced I at first flatly refused, then he blustered and cajoled in turn, and finally I told him to take the boat and "go hang." My crew of natives managed to get the boat safely alongside the vessel, though the "man who knew everything" twice let her broach-to through his inability to handle the long steer oar. Then, in coming back, he stormed and bullied them into letting him discard the steer oar and ship the rudder. Then under her lug-sail the boat spun over the seas for the reef, on which a very heavy and dangerous surf was breaking. Result: the boat (worth £50) capsized and was smashed, and so was the "man who knew everything." He was very repentant after this, and ended by becoming a general favourite in Samoa, for at heart he was a good fellow.

But for crass pig-headedness and self-conceit I never met a man whose exploits in idiotcy could rival those of the hero of this tale, and the particular incident which I relate, though I can now recall it with amusement, at the time quite unnerved and filled me with terror—for I was only a boy of twelve years of age.

Between the mouth of the Hastings River (New South Wales) and the little port of Camden Haven there are several conical-shaped hills, or rather miniature mountains, which start sheer upward

from the sea, and are connected with the mainland by narrow necks of dense scrub-covered land. Two of these hills are locally known as Big Nobby and Little Nobby, and in fine weather my brothers and I frequently went there to catch that most beautiful of all Australian sea fish—the schnapper. The sea face of Big Nobby was noted for a great cave which penetrated some hundreds of feet into the interior of the hill. Access to it could be gained by a boat, which, in fine weather, could be taken through two walls of rock which extended some distance seaward, and on exceptionally fine days when the tide was low, and no sea was running, we boys had several times swum into the cave, lit a fire with the drift-wood we found wedged in among the crevices, and imagined ourselves pirates or smugglers. But we never attempted this without leaving one of our number behind on the northern side to look out for sharks, for in the summer months the coast was infested by the most ferocious of all—the dreaded “grey nurse.” And in fishing from the wall of rock either for schnapper or the monstrous brown groper, we took every precaution against slipping, or being dragged over by a powerful fish. For whenever the bright-hued schnapper were plentiful in the narrow passage, the sharks were sure to follow, and one required to be very quick indeed in hauling up a fighting schnapper of ten or fifteen pounds before it was seized either

by a "grey nurse" or its equally active companion in sin, a "blue pointer," and to be dragged over meant death, for the sides of the rock overhung the water, and to climb up even on a calm day was a matter of time and difficulty. Sometimes, without wishing it, we would hook a groper, and then there was nothing to be done but to cut the line, or make it fast and let the fish break it, for it would have been impossible for our united strength to have hauled up a monster of perhaps over 300 lbs. Occasionally, when we got fast to a groper, and had made the line fast, a shark—or several—would come along and relieve us of all trouble by biting the huge fish in halves, or carrying it off bodily—with part of the line as well.

The place was seldom visited by any one but ourselves and a few wandering blacks. The people of the town (Port Macquarie) believed it to be haunted by the ghost of a poor convict, who in 1851 escaped from his guards, secreted himself in the cave, and perished miserably of starvation, for bad weather came on, and he was unable to leave his retreat. I well remember how, years afterwards, his skeleton was one day found, and the mouldy bones brought into the little township for burial.

My brothers and I used to call the spot "the Death Hole," and it now well deserves the name, for since then (in 1886) a terrible tragedy occurred

there on New Year's Day. The annual school-treat was given at a little sandy beach near by, and one of the school-teachers foolishly attempted to swim into the cave in the presence of some scores of his pupils, and his own wife and children. The backwash carried him out, and a fellow-teacher jumped in to his rescue. Both were drowned, and their bodies were never recovered.

Now to my story.

A few hundred yards from the peninsula that connected these two hills with the mainland a landslide had occurred, and revealed the presence of a valuable copper lode. It was on the face of a lofty well-wooded spur, which terminated almost at the water's edge. My father and a gentleman named Rudder decided to work the lode. A party of miners came from Sydney, and operations were begun by driving into the face of the spur, and the drive had been timbered for about 400 feet, when operations were suspended on account of the Christmas holidays—the Cornish miners emphatically insisting on their right to have a "spree."

The manager of the mine was a big Prussian named Zaabe. He was, no doubt, a good manager and knew all about copper and copper-mining, but in other respects he was not a success. The rough Cornish miners detested him for his haughty, domineering manner. But, in a way, they respected him, for he was always ready to fight,

although he had no more idea of how to use his hands than a cow of playing the flute. Consequently he was generally knocked out in the first round, and I really believe that the "cousin Jacks" purposely gave him impudence so as to make him assault one of their number, for the mere pleasure of "layin' un out." He had never before been placed in charge of British miners, and soon found out that the hot-tempered Cornishmen were a very different class of beings to the wretched, ignorant creatures he had formerly bossed in his native Prussia. Another reason why he was disliked by the local people generally, was for his brutal treatment of horses and other animals. He was a heavy man, and never showed any horse he rode any mercy. A poor rider, he would start off at a gallop, and always brought his mount back to the camp in a state of exhaustion, and when I add that he had a most irritating and bullying manner of speaking, even in ordinary conversation, the reader will readily conceive that he was the wrong sort of man to come to Australia and be placed in a position of authority over men who were not used to dictation from even their employers.

The miners (of whom there were fourteen) had made their camp of four tents on the beach, just above high-water mark. My brothers and I were great favourites, for we would sometimes, after a day's fishing, spend the night at the mine, and we

not only gave the miners all the fish they wanted, but used to provide them with game as well, and every Saturday some of them would come with us fishing or shooting. I shall always remember one day when three of the Cornishmen and one of my brothers hooked and almost landed with a bowline a groper of 360 lbs. on the rocks above the Death Hole, when a blue pointer shark leapt at the struggling fish, seized it across the back, and hung on. The weight of the shark added to that of the groper was too much—the three “cousin Jacks” and my brother all tumbled in together off the slippery rocks, and away went the shark with the groper, the bowline, and a hand-made fishing-line and hook worth over £2. None of the Cornishmen could swim, and it was a marvel that they were not all drowned.

Before daylight on the day before Christmas Day my brothers and I were sent by my father (who was the Resident Police Magistrate for the District) to the “Copper Mine” to see if any of the miners were at the camp. Two days previously the whole fourteen had come into town, and proceeded to enjoy themselves at the low public-houses, and by assaulting the mounted police, or any one else who tried to restrain them. Eight of them, with the assistance of the townspeople, had been locked up, two others had been shut up in the priest’s stable to sleep off the effects of the poison they had swal-

lowed, and the other four were missing, and so, fearing that they might have met with a serious accident on the dangerous track to the copper-mine, my father was anxious about them.

On arriving at the mine we found the four men in one of the tents—all in a stupefied condition, and unable to rise. We made them some tea, and hid away several bottles of rum we found in one of the bunks, and were putting the tent in order when Mr. Zaabe appeared. He swore freely at the men in German for some minutes, and then sat down and had some tea and damper with us (it was not yet seven o'clock). He asked us how we were going to spend the day, and we told him that we intended to wait for low tide to catch some crayfish, then fish for schnapper in the Death Hole, and spend the rest of the day shooting wallabies in the scrub, returning home in the evening. He said he should like to join us, and suggested that it would give us more time for shooting if he tried to catch some schnapper whilst we got the crayfish. Now he had never caught a schnapper in his life, but we did not know it, and so we cheerfully lent him one of our best heavy lines—strong enough to hold a porpoise—told him where to fish from, and warned him of the danger of hooking a groper, especially if sharks were about. Lighting his huge meerschaum, off he went, round the north side of Big Nobby, and we set out for the crayfish rocks,

which were quite half-a-mile along the coast to the south.

It was a glorious morning—the blue Pacific was sparkling in the bright sunshine, and a gentle breeze was rustling the leaves of the trees that clothed the mountain spurs from their summits to the water's edge.

The tide was low when we began operations, and in two hours we had all the crayfish we wanted—six big fellows weighing from eight to twelve pounds each. Then we went back to the camp, had another drink of tea, and waited for Zaabe. An hour passed, and then my eldest brother began to feel slightly anxious.

“We had best go and see how he is getting on. He is such a great, clumsy bullock, and is wearing hobnailed boots—just the things he should not wear when fishing off smooth, slippery rocks. Anyway he must have caught quite enough schnapper by now, unless he is a rank duffer.”

The Death Hole could be reached in less than ten minutes from the camp, and we were soon clambering over the rocks on the north side of Big Nobby. Although there the sea was fairly smooth, the cave was making its usual rumbling, as the seas rolled in through the walls of rock. Suddenly we heard a cry—unmistakably the call of a person in distress. In a few seconds we were round the side—Zaabe was not in sight!

But again we heard a cry.

"For God's sake, come here and save me."

Rushing to the edge of the wall we looked over into the Hole, and there on the opposite side, half-way up the rocks, was Zaabe, his feet planted on a small square surface of rock about a foot out of the water, and his body bent almost double. His face, chest and hands were streaming with blood from a terrible wound on the right side of his face—which from the eye down to the jaw was cut through to the bone. But what filled us with horror was the presence of three huge "grey nurse" sharks, which were swimming to and fro in the clear water of the hole, passing every now and then so close to the wretched Zaabe that he could quite easily have touched them with his foot.

Wiping the blood from his mouth, the agonized man huskily begged us to save him, and pointed with a shaking hand to the terrors at his feet.

Shouting to him to keep quiet, we hurriedly consulted as to what was to be done. To drive the sharks away with stones was impossible—there was not a loose stone anywhere near, and every moment Zaabe's piteous appeals for help served to distract us. We knew that if he fell in he would be devoured instantly, for the sharks could not only see him, but were literally tasting the stream of blood that ran down the rocks and tinged the water at their base.

All this we saw in a few seconds—or at most a minute—and then a happy inspiration came to my eldest brother.

“Run to the camp and get the guns,” he cried to my brother Will and me, “and tell the men to bring a rope. For God’s sake make haste,” and then, as we rushed off, we heard him shouting encouragement to poor Zaabe.

Tearing over the rocks, falling and cutting ourselves, but taking no heed of such things, we gained the camp, and panted out our news to the miners, who were now sufficiently sober to be of some help. Fortunately our three guns were loaded, and seizing them, and our shot-belts and powder-flasks, we tore pantingly back to the Death Hole, followed by the four miners, one of them carrying a coil of windlass rope, and the others buckets, which they filled with heavy stones as they staggered after us.

When we returned, Zaabe was in the same position, but had somewhat recovered his nerve, and had managed to partly stay the flow of blood from his cheek by holding one hand against it. The sharks were still there, and the miners were about to begin to pelt them with the stones, when my brother implored them to wait—he feared that stoning would only cause the brutes to sheer off temporarily, and Zaabe would be no better off. Zaabe himself was not forty feet away from us—the sharks

as they passed to and fro beneath us were still nearer—so near in fact that we could have struck them with a sixteen-foot oar.

Our guns were muzzle-loaders, and were charged with heavy shot—No. 1.

Waiting till one of the brutes came within ten feet of us, we all fired together, and one charge at least struck it, for it gave a mighty splash, turned completely over, and then made a bee-line seaward, followed by the other two. A few seconds later there was a tremendous commotion in the water about a hundred yards distant—the wounded shark was being “wolfed” and devoured by its mates.

No time was to be lost, Zaabe could not swim, and none of us had courage enough to go to him with the rope, and every time we cast it he failed to catch it. At last he succeeded, passed the loop over his shoulders and under his arms, and let himself fall. In less than two minutes we had dragged him across, and up over the rocks. He was a heavy man, and it took us all we could do to haul up such a weight with such a slippery and dangerous foothold. Almost as soon as we had him in safety he fainted—and I almost followed suit.

When he had recovered, we all returned to the camp, and I showed the miners where I had planted their bottles of rum. Zaabe was glad of a large dose (and so too were the miners), and he told us

that he had slipped over into the hole in trying to haul up "a fish as pig as a cow" (a groper), that he got tangled up with the line, and was dashed against a rock, cutting his face open, and dislocating his thumb. He managed to climb up to where we found him, and then for the first time noticed the "grey nurses."

XVI

'JACK SHARK'

I HAVE quite frequently been asked by many persons if it is true that in some parts of the North Pacific Ocean sharks of the man-eating kind can be seen in droves of thousands. It is quite true that vast "schools" of sharks may be met with in many of the great equatorial atolls of the North and South Pacific, but these are not, as a rule, "man-eaters," their principal food being fish and turtle. The man-eating blue shark which frequents the deep ocean may, however, be seen together in droves of from 500 to 1,000, especially when a whale has been killed. Yet it is of the rarest occurrence for any one of a whaleship's crew to be either seized or bitten by a blue shark, should a boat be capsized or smashed by a whale, or should a man, when engaged in "cutting in" a whale, happen to slip from the staging or from the back of the cetacean into the water. At such times the sharks are too busily engaged in riving and tearing off huge mouthfuls of the juicy blubber to give their attention to a human being.

Amongst my experiences in the South Seas I was twice in charge of shark-catching expeditions—once at Palmyra and Christmas Islands and once at Arrecifos Atoll in the Western Caroline Archipelago. Our company consisted of forty South Sea Islanders—principally natives of the Hawaiian and Gilbert Islands—our vessel was a schooner of under a hundred tons, commanded by a white man (who was my partner) and officered by two European mates and a boatswain. The industry was a dangerous, but highly profitable one, for the sharks' fins and tails, after being well dried, brought from £60 to £100 per ton at Hongkong, Singapore, or other marts of the Far East. The better class of fins are highly valued as a delicacy by the rich Chinese, and the poorer kinds and the tails are converted into isinglass and also form the basis of painters' varnishes. Our usual take averaged about two hundred sharks daily, their length averaging about eight feet. As soon as one was hooked it was hauled alongside the boat, stunned with one blow from a heavy club, then the fins were quickly "snicked" off with a large knife, the tail also severed, and the carcass let drop into the water, where it was at once devoured by its ever-hungry companions. Wooden hooks (without barbs) were used, and the ease and rapidity with which two natives would hook and dispatch a struggling shark weighing over a quarter of a ton

was marvellous to witness. At the end of each day's fishing the fins and tails were taken on shore, strung on to stout lines of coconut cinnet and suspended between coconut trees to dry.

Arrecifos Lagoon—commonly called Providence Island—is noted by most traders for the immense number of turtle, both of the valuable hawk-bill variety and the common green turtle, which frequent the lagoon waters, and during the laying season we obtained their eggs in thousands. The sharks know as well as possible when to look for the young turtle to emerge from their eggs, and make their way down the beaches into the lagoon, and at night time the placid water would be disturbed by an incredible number of small sharks about three feet in length. These yielded fins of a very high quality, and it was our practice to surround a drove of these rangers of the seas by a thick cordon of green plants and bushes, and then await the ebbing of the tide when we would secure four or five hundred at a time when they were left stranded on the sand. These sharks were of a bright, pearly grey colour, with fins tipped with white, and their flesh was quite edible, being free from the usual rank smell so common to nearly all of the *Squalus* family. They were, however, very savage little brutes, and when alive required most careful handling. Once, when I was living on Strong's Island in the Eastern Caroline Group,

one of my native crew had his hand bitten off by a shark under five and a half feet in length. He was swimming in the harbour when, as he informed me, "the shark very rudely swam across in front of him," and he struck it a blow with his fist; in an instant it turned and snapped at his left hand, which was bitten off as cleanly as if it had been severed by a knife or an axe.

Once during my stay on Strong's Island (where I was shipwrecked in company of the famed, and much maligned, Captain "Bully" Hayes, in 1873) I had a very unpleasant experience with two enormous sharks, called by the Samoans *tarrifa*. This variety of the *Squalas* seldom exceed ten feet in length, but are of enormous girth and their teeth are something to look at and shudder, for they are two inches long and more than that width at the base. They are fond of haunting the mouths of rivers and streams where the water is discoloured, especially during the rainy season, and the natives dread them greatly. On the occasion to which I refer I was fishing on the barrier reef and was accompanied by a boy and girl of twelve and nine years of age. We had filled our baskets with fish and set out to return to the village by crossing the strip of smooth water that lay between the reef and the beach, when our canoe was observed by two monstrous sharks. They at once gave chase, and each in turn tried to upset our frail craft. Pad-

dling as hard as we could we at last reached shallow water, just as one of the brutes seized the outrigger in his huge jaws and bit the stout pole through as easily as a boy can bite a piece out of a slice of bread. Throwing away our baskets of fish we rushed through the shallow water and gained the beach, exhausted and terrified. A party of Samoans and I once killed one of these ferocious creatures in Apia Harbour by shooting it with a whaler's bomb gun. Its length was nine feet, and the depth of its body from just behind the head through to the outside of its fearful throat was four feet four inches.

Of all seafaring men, whalers run the greatest risk from the jaws of Jack Shark, and yet, curiously enough, not many of them go into his maws. Once, when cruising through the Friendly Islands, we saw from the deck of our vessel a boat belonging to the *General Grant*, sperm whaler, "chawed" by a bull whale which had been wounded badly. As the crew clung to fragments of the crushed boat they were surrounded by some scores of blue sharks, which swam to and fro amongst them, but did not attack them—they were evidently waiting for the wounded whale, which had "sounded." As soon as the cetacean reappeared, some ten minutes later, the sharks instantly swam towards him, leaving the boat's crew to be picked up by a "loose" boat which was sent to their rescue. The

whale was shortly afterwards killed by a bomb, and then we saw a truly extraordinary scene, for his huge carcass was surrounded by literally hundreds upon hundreds of sharks, which would scarcely allow it to be towed alongside the *General Grant* to be cut-in.

Yet not always do these adventurous and daring whalers escape; for in 1862 a boat belonging to a Hawaiian brig was stove in by a whale off the Bonin Islands, in the North-West Pacific. Before the "loose" boats could go to the rescue the officer and his men were seized and carried away in the full view of their shipmates.

The average native inhabitant of the South Sea Islands spends nearly one-fifth of his or her existence upon the water, either for pleasure—surf-swimming, etc.—or when engaged in fishing, and yet but few of them lose their lives by sharks, except when a canoe is capsized or swamped at night time. Then, indeed, there is terrible danger, and some awful tragedies have occurred within my own experience. Many years ago, when our trading vessel was lying off the Island of Ailuk, a low-lying, sandy atoll of the Marshall Archipelago, we were boarded by a canoe, the crew of which told us of a fearful event that had occurred the previous evening. Eight young children, boys and girls, were standing on the edge of a reef, catching a fish of nocturnal habit called *malau*, when they were

swept over into deep water by the strong backwash. Before they could regain the reef five of their number were devoured by three sharks, and the remaining three children were only saved by a huge sea hurling them back bodily upon the coral ledge.

The natives of the equatorial Pacific Islands dread the smaller sharks far more than they do the larger kind. These latter are comparatively easy to avoid by such wonderful swimmers as the South Sea Islanders; but a little six-foot shark can turn about with such lightning-like rapidity that he can nip off an arm or a foot ere the swimmer is aware of the creature's presence. A fifteen-foot or twenty-foot shark cannot "go about" very quickly—it takes him time, and the swimmer can dodge. Generally, too, the small sharks have more devilry in them than the big fellows. One bright moonlight night ten years ago our vessel anchored in the passage leading into Apian Lagoon, one of the Gilbert Islands. Being very anxious to see the local trader that night, I left the ship in a boat manned by six Savage Island natives. The tide was ebbing and rushing out through the narrow passage at about five or six knots. So, to avoid being swept out to sea, I stood in to the left, so as to cross over the reef, which was covered by about ten feet of water. Just as we were crossing, a perfect "drove" of small grey sharks rushed us, and

every one of the six oars was seized. Two were torn out of the rowers' hands and carried away instantly, and we only saved the other four with difficulty. In endeavouring to get the steer-oar inboard, myself and a native were knocked down twice. Finding it impossible to proceed, I anchored the boat till a breeze came and we could use our sail. But until the wind came the boat was literally surrounded by two or three hundred of these fierce brutes, not one of which was over eight feet in length. My crew and myself then began firing into them with our rifles. Every bullet struck, and the wounded sharks were at once torn to pieces by their fellows. The sight was a truly horrible one, the water being lashed into a bloody foam, and my hair stood on end like priming wires. Had our boat been attacked in the passage itself she most certainly would have broached-to and capsized in the swift current, and the sharks would have made short work of us.

Still, I would rather swim all day in a South Sea lagoon, where one knows sharks are plentiful and not always dangerous, than essay to swim across one of the many bays of Sydney Harbour, or one of the muddy reaches of backwater of the Parramatta River, where the sneaking ground sharks lie in wait for their prey.

Some of the largest sharks that I have ever seen were on the coast of New South Wales, and were

cruising in quite shallow water near the beaches, playing havoc with the swarms of sea-salmon that visit the coastal rivers during the months of November and January. Sometimes these fish, which range from six pounds to ten pounds in weight, will make their appearance in such incredible numbers that they are barely able to make any progress when crossing a river bar, and scores of thousands of them are devoured by porpoises and sharks. Some of these latter, known as "tiger" sharks, attain eighteen to twenty feet, and are ugly customers to deal with when a person is alone, fishing from a small skiff.

XVII

'LOTS O' TIME'

I

LOTS O' TIME is old—very old indeed from a Colonial point of view—for it was founded just eighty-five years ago in the month of November 1823, when a company of one of the King's regiments, red-tunicked, cross-belted and high shakoed, landed on the shelving beach of a tiny bay situated at the south side of the ever-restless bar; and under a sweltering sun pitched their tents, whilst some hundreds of grey-faced grimy men, clad in toil-stained garments of black and yellow, proceeded under the muskets of the sentries to clear the surrounding scrub. Of them these lines were written by one of their own number—

“From distant climes, o'er wide-spread seas we come,
Though not with much *éclat*, or beat of drum;
True patriots all! For be it understood
We left our country for our country's good;
No private views disgrac'd our generous zeal,
What urged our travels was our country's weal;
And none will doubt but that our emigration
Has proved most useful to the British nation.”

Such was the sombre genesis of the town of Lots o' Time, as it came to be afterwards named in mockery. By and by there came more soldiers and more convicts and some few settlers, and a huge red-bricked gaol was built on a fair, sweet grassy hill which overlooked the sunlit blue of the wide Pacific, and a great square, squat and ugly church reared its hideous form upon a knoll a mile away; and the silence of the forest primeval was broken by the clank of fetters and the sighs and groans of the fated beings who worked at making roads and building culverts under the eyes of the red-coated soldiers, who, with muskets cocked, watched keenly lest one of the yellow and black clad men should make a run and disappear into the gloomy aisles of the surrounding forest. And sometimes that would happen, and perhaps long months after what had once been a man would be found, with the bones gnawed bare by native dogs, and a broken spear or two lying near, to show that the wanderer's days of misery and starvation had come to a sudden and merciful end at the hands of the wild men of the woods.

But, as the years went on, a systematic weeding out of the worst disposed of the prisoners was begun, and the place began to be looked upon with favour by the better class convicts, who were not treated with the same savage brutality and vindictiveness that had characterized the adminis-

tration of the infamous Convict System in other parts of the colony and Van Diemen's Land. They were well fed and well housed in a great barracks which had been built on the southern shore of the port, and though there stood within the lofty-walled quad the truculent triangle, it was seldom used, and the green bag that held the dreaded cat-o'-nine-tails hung, dust-covered, from its peg in the warders' room.

Then came the time when extra well-conducted prisoners were pardoned and became free men, though the black stigma of convictism still enshrouded their daily existence with its never-dying and cruel taint. Some of them bought or were given grants of land about the township, and earned an honest living by raising cattle, or as hired men entering the service of the rich and retired military officers who had settled in the district—some as cattle squatters, and others as sugar planters.

But with all the great natural advantages that were offered to settlers in a vast area of rich country, there were but very few of these people who seemed to be able to do more than earn a bare living. The curse of laziness and procrastination appeared to be inborn, and the stain of transportation no doubt provided another factor to their lack of success in raising themselves to a better condition of existence. Their children grew up ignorant

and "shiftless," and the moral atmosphere was vicious and debasing in the extreme.

It was the proverbial inertia of the majority of the poor settlers in the district, and in the township as well, that led to the latter being termed "Lots o' Time" by the military and civilian officers, who had spent fortunes in endeavouring to open up the country and make it yield some of its many untouched and undeveloped riches.

For me, however, "Lots o' Time" always possessed a strong and lasting interest, for I was a native of the place, and my childhood's days there were very happy. My grandfather had invested a large sum of money in founding cattle stations in that part of the colony, and in persistently searching for copper and tin. He, like many others of the early settlers, lost nearly all his fortune and returned to Sydney in disgust. And then, long years afterwards, my father was appointed Resident Magistrate of the sleepy old township, and there my brothers and I were born in a quaint old house of brick, built by convict hands, and overlooking the blue waters of the sunlit Pacific Ocean.

One of my earliest recollections dates back to the time when I was just turning ten years of age. I was aroused from my slumbers at six o'clock in the morning by one of the servants, who told me that a ship had been lost somewhere near on the coast, and that five boats, crowded with men, were at

that moment pulling in across the bar. I was so excited that, slipping on my shirt and short pants only, I tore out of the house without hat or boots, and in my eagerness to get to the landing-place took a short cut down a soapstone cliff near the old military prison, missed my footing and rolled down upon the beach sixty feet below, where I was found some hours later with a sprained ankle, a fractured arm, and a face covered with cuts and bruises.

Nevertheless, that was one of the happiest days of my life, for in the afternoon my father brought to my bedside two strangers—the captain and chief officer of the wrecked ship—and told me that they were to be his guests for some considerable time; and although I was very literally suffering from a swelled head at the time, it swelled still more with pleasure when the captain told me that I was “an almighty plucky youngster,” and that he would come and see me again in the morning and spin me “a long yarn about the *Adventurer*, and killing whales, and man-eating sharks as long as a whale-boat, and with jaws big enough to swallow a man whole without hurting him,” etc.

My new friend was a Captain Devine, the master of the American sperm whaler *Adventurer*, of Sag Harbour, U.S.A. She had been cruising along the coast of New South Wales, and meeting with a fair amount of luck—having taken five large whales in a few weeks—when, during a calm, she drifted

in too close to the land at Smoky Cape, despite the efforts of her five boats to tow her off, for the inshore current was too strong. She let go her anchors in eighty fathoms of water, just under the steep-to cliffs of the cape (the "Smoaky Cape" of Captain Cook), but in the night a strong "black north-easter" came on; she parted both cables and went ashore, foundering at the base of the cliffs. No lives were lost, for all the five boats were in readiness to leave the moment that Captain Devine saw that there was no hope of saving the ship.

He and his chief officer were my father's guests for over two months, waiting for a passage to Sydney by the steamer that visited "Lots o' Time" every four weeks for her cargo of hides, tallow and maize. That is to say, she was *supposed* to enter the port at monthly intervals; but, being a very erratic craft, she would occasionally be overdue for a few weeks—which mattered but little to the inhabitants of "Lots o' Time." She was a paddle-wheel vessel of 600 tons, had three masts, the fore and main of which carried yards, and had a great spread of canvas, and although under steam she could not achieve more than six knots when under high pressure, she was a picture of beauty when, under full sail, she would lie-to off the roaring bar to await the pilot-boat. Her name was *William the Fourth*, but locally she was known as *Puffing Billy*, owing to her high-pressure engines

and her exhaust steam-pipe, which every few minutes emitted weird, snorting groans, accompanied by puffs of steam.

As soon as I recovered from my injuries I had a delightful time in showing Captain Devine and his chief officer all the places of interest in and about the quaint old town, and when the time came for them to say farewell to us I was unable to control myself, and bursting into tears ran out of the house and hid for the remainder of the day under a ledge of rock that jutted out from one of the headlands three miles distant from my home. I did not want to see the *William the Fourth* pass out across the bar, and so waited until it was nearly dusk before I returned to the house, quite expecting that I should receive a whipping from my father. But in this I was mistaken, for he did not even reproach me.

“Get your supper, my boy, and then go to bed. You may see Captain Devine again some day—especially as you say that you mean to be a sailor,” and he placed his hand affectionately on my shoulder.

I do not suppose that for one moment my father ever thought that there was any possibility of my ever meeting Captain Devine again; neither did he intend that I should go to sea, for he had other views as to my future. Yet I did go to sea, and I did meet Captain Devine.

Thirteen years later, when I was twenty-three years of age, and the supercargo of a South Sea Island trading schooner, I was in Honolulu (Hawaiian Islands) and had occasion to visit the American Consulate in Fort Street on business. There were then lying in Honolulu Harbour over forty American whale-ships which, as was customary in those days, had put into the port to recruit before sailing to the coast of Japan for the "bow-head" whaling season, and every morning most of the skippers of these ships would meet at the American Consulate to gossip; for the Consul was a most genial man, and his office and house were literally an "open house" to all of his countrymen who visited Honolulu. (And *inter alia* he had a charming wife—a Hawaiian princess—who was one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen, and who had equally lovely sisters, one of whom jilted me in the cruelest manner, and put me off my food, but not drink, for a week.)

I had just entered the office of the Consulate, when I heard some one say—

"Well, Captain Devine, and how are you?" and the next moment the door opened and I was face to face again with my old friend. He was delighted to see me, and told me that he had just returned from a long and very successful cruise in the East Indies. During the few days he and I were in Honolulu we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves

in visiting the country houses of some of the American residents and—I regret to say—eating an enormous quantity of fruit. Now I must return to “Lots o’ Time.”

There was one place that always possessed a strong fascination for me, and that was the old cemetery. It was situated on the bank of a wide, reed-margined creek, which was a tributary of the river that debouched at the entrance to the port. The water was very deep and teemed with splendid perch and fresh-water mullet, which none of the townspeople ever tried to catch, for nearly every one of the local folk had a horror of passing through that cemetery, and when they did go there it was only to attend a funeral or to be themselves buried. Why they so dreaded the place I will now explain.

II

THE cemetery was about a quarter of a mile distant from the church of which I have before spoken—a hideous, square edifice of red brick with a squat tower, which accentuated its ugliness, and which, when I grew up and revisited my native town, always filled me with a fervent desire to put a ton of blasting powder under its foundations and blow the whole ghastly excrescence upon Nature sky high. To me that church, even as a child, was

a thing of horror, with its high wooden pews of dark oak, and musty, ill-smelling hassocks, and lofty pulpit from which, in the black convict days, the parson thundered and bawled at the wretched prisoners who formed the majority of his congregation, whilst the military guard in the gallery yawned and slept (with their loaded "Brown Bess" muskets in their hands), supposedly ready to "suppress" any demonstration of weariness or insubordination on the part of the men clad in garments of yellow and black. The clergyman himself, so my mother said, was a man calculated to arouse every feeling of bitterness and hatred in the bosoms of the wretched convicts who had to listen to him, and his vivid portrayal of their iniquities and the undying terrors of the everlasting fires of Hell to which they were, presumably, consigned, without hope of redemption. No doubt many of the wretched creatures would have been sincerely glad to have been laid in the adjoining graveyard, if only to escape the parson and those awful Sundays. Yet the reverend gentleman was a good man in many respects, and only acted according to his spiritual lights.

One portion of the cemetery was mainly taken up with the graves of military officers; and on the heavy, flat tombstones one could read such names as "Vimiera," "Fuentes d'Onor," "Ciudad Rodrigo," "Badajoz," and other famous battles in the

Peninsula, in which the dead men had taken part, as well as the names of many an Indian field that was fought in the days when the "raj" of John Company was at its zenith. One of these inscriptions had a strange fascination for me, and I pictured the departed hero beneath it as a perfect Paladin—a combined Bayard, Richard Cœur de Lion, Cid Campeador, and a man of my acquaintance named Jimmy Gaul, who had lost one leg in the Maori war, and was always willing to show my brothers and myself the stump of the amputated limb if we gave him threepence. The inscription set forth that the gentleman whose dust lay beneath was a certain "Captain —, of the Honourable East Indian Company's Army, who, in the course of a Glorious Military Career, received Twenty-three Wounds, and Killed with his Own Hands Five Enemies who Assailed him when Lying Severely Wounded on the Field of Battle. He was a Thoro' Gentleman, and Deserv'd his Country's Praise."

The humour of the thing never struck my boyish mind; but when, twenty years later, I revisited the old cemetery and found that the tombstone had crumbled almost to the same dust as that of the valorous captain, that after all, the words "Lying Severely" were distinctly applicable in a certain sense.

The people of Lots o' Time firmly believed that

the cemetery was haunted by three ghosts. Two of these had been convicts who, whilst building a wall near the church, had quarrelled, and one killed the other with a spade, then went to the cemetery and hanged himself from a wild honeysuckle tree; the third was that of a young lady who was frequently seen sitting on her husband's grave, reading a book. Hers, indeed, was a tragic story. At a very early age, her husband, who was a lieutenant in the Navy, died and was buried near the bank of the creek. It was her practice to visit his grave nearly every day towards sunset. One warm afternoon she fell asleep, and when she awakened she found an enormous black snake was lying across her knees. The shock was such that she lost her reason and died a few days later.

In the hot summer months it was positively dangerous for any one to walk about the cemetery owing to the number of the deadly black and brown snakes that infested the place, especially where the tombstones were overgrown with scrub and vine. I one day killed seven and saw at least twenty more; like most country-bred colonial boys snakes had no terrors for me, and I never missed killing one if I had time to get a stick, though I liked best to blow their heads off with a charge of small shot.

When I was twelve years of age we had a visitor staying with us for a few days, a German naturalist named Krefft, and he was much interested and

amused with the natural history collection that my brothers and I possessed. It was contained in a loft over the stables; the walls were almost covered with snake skins—the black, brown, diamond and carpet species. Some of the latter were over ten feet in length, and were really valuable—in fact, the local saddler would give us from ten shillings to a sovereign for an extra fine specimen. Then, too, we had numbers of platypus and native bear, opossum, kangaroo and wallaby furs, several sharks' jaws, aboriginal weapons such as spears, wuddies (club) and boomerangs, and a huge sting-ray that we had harpooned in a tidal lagoon, together with a number of dried porcupine fish. Our visitor was especially interested in the snake skins, and asked us if we thought we could put him in the way of procuring a few live snakes. We took him to the cemetery and in a few hours he had caught five black and two brown ones, seizing them in the most daring manner a few inches below the head and putting them into a covered box. He was collecting the dangerous reptiles for the Sydney Museum.

III

NOT far from our house was a reef of rocks which, at very low tides, would become exposed. It was broken up by a number of small but deep pools in which there was splendid fishing—sea bream, schnapper and the handsome black and white rock cod, the best of all Australian fishes. Then, too, these pools were the home of hundreds of great cray-fish, some of which weighed up to fifteen pounds, and which we either caught with hook and line or captured by diving. Long years before, a large vessel had been wrecked on this reef, and at low tides we would always find some relics—principally copper bolts, etc. These we had been collecting for over twelve months, when one day a mean old rascal of a storekeeper, named Wilkins, happened to come along and saw us engaged in cleaning about fifty bolts. He at once offered to buy them, saying he would give us threepence each.

“I don’t think you will, Mr. Wilkins,” remarked my brother Will, “the captain of the *William the Fourth* will buy all we can find, and pay us four times as much as you offer.”

The old fellow snarled out something about our being Godless and avaricious youths (he was a local preacher) and went off, but a few days later

we saw him and his son—a spindle-shanked youth of nineteen—busily engaged in wading over the reef searching for copper bolts. The spindle-shanked one had stripped and was standing up to his waist in water, when we heard him utter a blood-curdling yell of terror, and a moment later the old man also began to bawl and wave his hands about in the most frantic manner. We had been watching them from the beach with no friendly eyes, but at once rushed to their assistance, imagining that the youth had been seized by a shark. Running as hard as we could we reached the pair and saw that the lad had been seized around both legs by a very large octopus, the long tentacles of which were spread up over his back as far as the neck. My brother and I at once jumped into the pool, and seizing the hideous thing by its loose, baggy head, managed to tear it away from its victim, who then immediately fainted. The octopus, after ejecting the usual quantity of sepia from its ink-bag, and blackening the water so as to cover its retreat, at once made off, and we carried the unconscious Wilkins junior to a dry place on the reef and laid him down. The octopus had bitten him most savagely on the calf of one leg, its sharp, parrot-like beak having cut out the flesh as cleanly as it would have been done by a carpenter's gouge. There were three of these deep wounds within a radius of a few inches, and my brother

thought that the young fellow would bleed to death. Fortunately two of the pilot-boat's crew, wondering what had happened, hurried down to us, and they quickly bandaged the leg above and below the knee, and succeeded in staying the flow of blood. Then, as soon as the youth was able to stand, we helped him on shore—the old man doing nothing but moan and groan as if he, and not his lovely son, was the victim. But, as a proof of his gratitude, and whilst we were putting the injured lad into a cart to be driven home, he quaveringly told us that he was willing to pay us sixpence instead of threepence each for all the copper bolts we found in future!

My brother Will had a great sense of humour, and shook his head, as he replied—

“No, thank you, Mr. Wilkins. But I advise you and your son to keep away from the reef. We were watching you from the first, and felt pretty sure that the big octopus would nab one of you. He is an old friend of ours and is as good as a watch-dog—in fact, we feed him.”

Old Wilkins firmly believed this rubbish, and stared at us open-mouthed, no doubt regarding us as inhuman young wretches. However, he did no more searching on our preserve.

About a week after this incident, one of the crew of the pilot-boat and my brother succeeded in harpooning this same octopus. It was one of the

largest ever killed on that part of the coast, and weighed over forty pounds. Young Wilkins received such a shock to his system that he did not recover for many months; and, indeed, it was not to be wondered at, for even when a small octopus entwinds its tentacles on the bare skin of the human body it gives one a powerful shock. In my own case whenever I came in contact with one of these nightmares of the seas, I was certain to be seized with violent nausea. Yet we were constantly capturing them for bait for deep-sea fishing, and I have seen some persons coolly seize one by the head and "bash" it to death on the rocks, without feeling more than a slight electric shock. Always shall I remember a lad named Alf Cummins, the son of the local baker. He had a way of catching "starfish" (Lots o' Time name for octopus) that used to make my flesh creep. Rolling up his shirt-sleeve as far as the shoulder he would thrust his hand and arm into the retreat of an octopus, let the horrid thing fasten its snaky tentacles on his arm and then drag it forth in triumph. So expert was he that he was never once bitten.

We used octopus bait for deep-sea fishing, and had to prepare it in the following manner. Making a fire of dead leaves or grass we would suspend the dead octopus over it for about five or ten minutes, until the mottled outer skin became dry

enough to be peeled off, revealing the marble-white flesh beneath; this we cut up into pieces of various sizes, and then bruised it with a mallet to make it tender. In the tidal rivers we also used this bait for catching "jew-fish"—a species of silvery bass that sometimes weighed up to a hundred pounds. They were a fine, game fish, and always bit well on dark nights, especially if rain happened to be falling. Catching saw-fish was also a favourite sport with my brothers and me, as well as the people of Lots o' Time generally. These saw-fish must not be confused with the deep-sea "sword" fish, which is a handsome as well as an edible creature. The saw-fish is a species of shark, grows to twenty feet in length, and is provided with a broad saw or bill which is set on either side with widely apart spikes or teeth. They are immensely powerful, and when fishing for them we used a stout clothes-line and a shark hook.

IV

I HAVE spoken of the inhabitants of Lots o' Time as being almost too lazy to live; but there were two practices in which they were marvellously diligent—these were fishing from the town wharf during warm drowsy weather, and satisfying their chronic thirst at the bars of the local public-houses,

of which there were four. The favourite beverages were colonial-made beer, known by the distinctly appropriate name of "tanglefoot," and new Queensland rum. Still, although they were such a bibulous community, they were not quarrelsome, and through inherited qualifications were able to carry an abnormal quantity of liquor without calling the latent energies of the police into any semblance of activity. Cattle stealing, which had once been a thriving industry in the district years before, had quite gone out of fashion as an easy way of obtaining a livelihood, owing to the heavy sentence of seven years' hard labour. And then, also, beef was cheap. There were no big meat-freezing establishments in those days anywhere in the colony, and the very best parts of beef only brought twopence to threepence per pound. Mutton was equally as cheap, although the district was not a good one for raising sheep, on account of the prevalence of grass seed—the thin needle-pointed seeds penetrating the animals' bodies in every direction, and causing them to become very poor or else die.

Game—especially wild fowl—was wonderfully plentiful in the district, the rivers abounded with fish as did the sea, the soil was fertile to an extraordinary degree, and would produce any fruit or vegetable common to the temperate zone, and yet the majority of the people in Lots o' Time lived meanly. They were quite satisfied with an eternal

round of fresh or salted beef, with pumpkin as a vegetable, and I do not believe that one family in ten possessed a vegetable garden—it meant work. Yet there were plenty of examples for them to have profited by had they cared to do so. Our own garden and orchard, although only a few acres in extent, yielded nearly all the ordinary European vegetables, and the orchard (apart from a splendid vineyard of Black Isabella grape vines) gave us oranges, lemons, plantains (not bananas), pears, apples, peaches, passion fruit, figs of many kinds, and half-a-dozen varieties of water-melons, sugar-melons and rock melons. And some of our well-to-do neighbours (who owned cattle stations in the district) had once had gardens, orchards and vineyards that filled one with pleasure to behold; but when the price of cattle went down so low that their owners were glad to sell them for £1 a-head to the boiling-down works for the sake of their tallow, these orchards and vineyards were left untended, and were soon overgrown with the ever-encroaching scrub and insidious vines and creepers of the wild bush.

On some—indeed, on most—of the many tidal lagoons, of which a network lay behind the beaches, there were countless thousands of black duck, teal, wood-duck (the maned goose), and black swans and pelicans, and during the wet months any one with an ordinary old-fashioned muzzle-loading

double-barrel could shoot more duck or teal in an hour than he could carry. All of us boys possessed guns, but we preferred trapping the ducks to shooting them. There was a tribe of local aborigines still existent in the district, wandering about from one river to another, or camping on the coast for fishing and hunting. They were a harmless, in-offensive lot of beings, and from them my brothers and I learnt much woodcraft and of the ways of animals and birds. For instance, they showed us how to find the cunningly-hidden nests of the white cockatoos, placed high up in the hollow boles of half-dead gum trees; and from them we learnt to climb a lofty tree with a smooth bole, as only an aboriginal can climb. The majority of the rough settlers treated these wretched remnants of a fast-vanishing race with great cruelty. Too lazy to work hard themselves, they used the poor blacks to do fencing work, timber felling, etc., etc., and usually paid them for their toil with bad rum, black ration sugar and worthless tea, and gave them no shelter at night. There were, of course, exceptions, but they were rare. Both my father and mother felt very keenly for these wandering descendants of Ham, and we generally had twenty or thirty camped somewhere near our house—not too near, however, for a blacks' camp can always be located by the nose if not visible to the eye.

The reader may perhaps wonder how it came to

be that my two brothers and I had so much time in which to wander about the country, long distances from home, and remaining away occasionally for a week at a time. But we had a tutor, a man in whom my father had the most unbounded confidence, and who usually accompanied us, for he was a keen lover of Nature and a born sportsman as well.

On long trips we would sometimes take with us a tent, and one or two pack-horses to carry it and our "swags"—blankets, guns, fishing tackle and provisions. The latter, however, consisted only of flour, tea, sugar, etc.; for we depended upon our guns, fishing tackle and traps for most of our food. It was what highly-refined people would call "a gross existence," for when we were not hunting or fishing we were eating or sleeping. But it was a gloriously happy life nevertheless. We learnt something of the ways and wonders of Nature, and when night came to us after a day's fishing or shooting, and we laid down upon our blankets under the kindly light of myriad stars, set in a dome of deepest blue, we were happy indeed, and slept the sleep of the just, looking forward to the dawn and fresh adventures and experiences.



ETHNOGRAPHICAL



XVIII

THE PALOLO WORM OF SAMOA

NEARLY every chance visitor to the Samoan Islands has heard of the palolo and of the extraordinary excitement that ensues amongst the natives when the worms make their expected annual appearance upon the barrier reefs. Several persons have written on the subject, some few correctly enough from what they have actually seen, others merely from hearsay. One writer described these edible annelida as being "three feet in length, as thick as a lead pencil, and much resembling an European grass snake"; another, equally as well informed, asserted that at a certain hour on a certain day small balls of worms—each ball of a different colour—shot up from the crevices of the reef, and that after rolling and bobbing about for a few minutes became disintegrated, and millions upon millions of needle-like creatures covered the surface of the water like a carpet of many colours. The second description contained most fact, for, although the palolo do not appear in balls and then disintegrate, they certainly do cover the water like a carpet, and can be scooped up in any vessel,

one with a perforated bottom being the best, so as to allow the water to drain through quickly.

For a long time it was supposed that these extraordinary creatures were peculiar to certain islands only in the South Pacific; as a matter of fact, they are widely distributed, but doubtless pre-eminence was given to Samoa as being their favoured home on account of the part they take in native life and customs, the festivities indulged in during the brief three days in which they swarm, and from many ineradicable superstitions concerning them. As an article of food the palolo takes first place in the Samoan dietary. In the olden days savage and bloody combats took place between neighbouring clans through some infringement of the hard-and-fast etiquette observed regarding the respective areas of reef on which the fishing took place.

In Samoa the worm (*Palolo viridis*) usually pululates early in the dawn after the third quartering of the moon in October, and generally the natives can calculate the time to within an hour. On meteorological and other conditions, however, much depends. If in October the last quartering of the moon is late, palolo will rise the day before, the day of, and on the day after, that quarter. If, however, the last quarter is early in October, it may be depended upon with certainty that the worms will not appear till the last quarter of the moon in November.

Some parts of the barrier reefs of the Samoan group are more favoured than others as regards the quantity and quality of the much-prized annelid. The people of the little aristocratic island of Manono assured me that the palolo taken on their reefs and on those of the lee end of the larger island of Upolu surpassed in flavour any taken on the windward reefs of Upolu and Tutuila, and that the fact was admitted throughout Samoa. If this is so, no doubt it is owing to some peculiar qualities of the coral in which they generate. The length, thickness, and coloration are most varied—some are mere threads, others as thick as whip-cord or a good-sized porcupine quill, and when a heap of them is pressed together ready for cooking they present an anything but pleasant appearance. Resident Europeans are, however, quite as fond of them as the natives, and a friend of mine, Colonel Steinberger, U.S.A., who was then military adviser to the rebel party in Samoa, made himself quite ill by indulging too heavily. He declared that the preparation surpassed the best Russian caviare in flavour. Personally, I loathed it, on account of the unpleasant "headachy" smell of living coral which emanated from it. Any one who has walked over living coral at low tide after a hot sun has been beating down upon it will understand the sickening odour.

The middle day of the three is the one on which

these creatures swarm most, when they can be lifted out of the water in heavy masses. A few minutes after sunrise the worms sink, and in ten minutes not one will be visible. It is indeed a marine phenomenon. So great a place has the palolo in the estimation of the Samoans that July, which is the first month of their half year, is called *Palolo mua*, *i. e.* the first month of the half year of the palolo. The word itself is compounded from *pa*, to burst, and *lolo*, oily or fatty, for if a mass of the worms is left in a heap exposed to the sun for even a short time it rises and works like dough, and oil exudes.

After its first baking, which is done in the usual ground oven, small heaps of the worms being wrapped in leaves, it can be kept for nearly a week by rebaking, and gradually loses its disagreeable smell—the which, however, the natives regard as one of its charms. For some days after its first appearances the people give themselves up to unrestricted gluttony, and no work whatever is done, no matter how important.

I have never seen these peculiar seaworms "swarm" as they do at Samoa on any of the reefs of the low-lying atoll islands of the Pacific, although they may be found almost at any time of the year by breaking in halves a piece of thick living coral and carefully drawing the pieces apart, when tiny red and blackish-green worms will be

seen. The natives told me that occasionally small patches of them would appear on the reefs during November. It would seem that they favour the barrier reefs of such lofty islands as Samoa, Fiji, and other high lands further north.

Writing to the Governor of British New Guinea last year, Mr. Moreton, the resident magistrate on Woodlark Island, in the south-east division of the possession, remarks: "In November 1905, I reported that the fish or nereoid seaworm (*Palolo viridis*) of Samoa and Fiji appears on the outside beach of Vakuta Island, the most southern island of the Trobriana Group, and for some fifteen miles up the outside or eastern coast of the next island, Kiriwina (Fergusson Island); they also appear at the Amphlett Islands, some thirty miles further south-west from the end of Vakuta, and also at Sanaroa, Welle Island, some twenty miles from the Amphletts. This worm is called at Vakuta 'Milamala,' and appears at a certain stage of the moon—during the last quarter of the October moon. Their arrival or appearance happens only once a year, and at exactly the same stage of the moon; a few appear the first day, and the next they are in their thousands and can be scooped up with a dish; on the third day they are gone, not to appear again until the next year. They are considered a great luxury by the natives, but young people are not allowed to eat them. Should they do

so, they are not supposed ever to grow or get fat."

In the Western Carolines I once saw a woman bring in a small basketful of similar seaworms, and begin washing them most carefully in fresh water, then placing them on a leaf platter to dry in a shady place, and I learned that they were used to produce a jet black dye, with which the native women dye their loin-belts of woven banana fibre.

XIX

THE 'FISHING LIAR' AND HIS VERIFICATION

FISHING-NETS OF SPIDERS' WEBS

MANY years ago the writer was discussing with an eminent German naturalist—the late Dr. J. S. Kubary, of Ponapé, in the Caroline Islands—the habits and customs of some of the native tribes in the Western Pacific Islands, and the extraordinary ingenuity they displayed in their manufactures. At the time, the doctor and the writer were walking along a narrow mountain-path leading to a native village on the island of Ponapé. It was early dawn, and every now and then our progress was barred by spiders' webs stretching completely across the path from branch to branch, and so strong that we had to break them down with a stout stick. I had never before seen webs of such extraordinary strength and size, and of such wondrously beautiful construction. My friend, however, assured me that they are nothing in comparison to what, he believed, were to be met with

in Eastern New Guinea, in the vicinity of Astrolabe Bay. He had, he told me, seen a published statement or a letter (I forget which) from Baron Maclay, a distinguished Russian naturalist, who lived for many years among the cannibal tribes of Astrolabe Bay, in which he affirmed that certain mountaineer tribes used these spiders' webs for catching fish in the mountain-streams.

Whether the Baron had actually seen the nets or the operation Kubary did not know; but that Baron Maclay would never make such an assertion without ample foundation he was certain. At the same time, Kubary could not conceive *how* the webs were utilized for fishing purposes. His one theory, as he explained to me during our walk, was that the natives, by some cunning contrivance, were enabled to remove one of these gigantic webs *en bloc*—perhaps by cutting away the branches of the trees on which they were spread, and then placing the entire web across some narrow mountain-stream, and driving the fish into it. "Some day," he added, "Maclay's missing journals of his discoveries and researches may be found, and we shall get at the truth."

Baron Maclay, I must mention, died of fever in New Guinea, and his extremely valuable ethnographical collection, journals, etc., were never recovered—at least so far as the writer knows. His wife was an Australian lady, a daughter of the

well-known New South Wales premier, Sir John Robertson, who was one of my earliest friends.

Years after my meeting with Kubary, I one day said to old Sir John that it was a great pity that his son-in-law's scientific notes had been lost; that I for one, and Kubary for another, should like to learn something about those wonderful fishing-nets of spiders' webs. The old gentleman's eyes twinkled as he stroked his long white beard. "My boy, an ordinary Russian is always a good liar, an educated one a better; a scientist or a politician must be as good as a Persian. Maclay, being a Russian, and a very good fellow too, couldn't help exercising his natural talent at the expense of a German rival scientist. He was only taking a rise out of the Dutchman."

Truth is stranger than fiction—how often we hear and say it!—and now after thirty years comes an irresistible and undoubted confirmation of the Baron's story in a book which is now before me. It is entitled, *Two Years among New Guinea Cannibals: a Naturalist's Sojourn among the Aborigines of Unexplored New Guinea*, and is by Mr. A. E. Pratt, Gill Memorialist, Royal Geographical Society. Mr. Pratt, accompanied by his son, had most exciting adventures in New Guinea during 1901-3, and tells them in such a simple, self-effacing manner that those who have been similarly situated cannot withhold their admiration.

The photographs taken by him are most excellent, and I regret that those dealing with the especial subject of this article cannot here be reproduced; for he gives us, on page 262, the picture of a mountaineer native of New Guinea with his spider's web net, and on page 268 a vivid photograph of five of the mountain people engaged in fishing in a pool with these nets.

Now, let me quote Mr. Pratt, and in quoting him I can absolve Baron Maclay from the undeserved imputation accorded to him by Sir John Robertson—

“One of the curiosities of Waley, and indeed one of the greatest curiosities that I noted during my stay in New Guinea, was the spider's web fishing-net. In the forest at this point huge spiders' webs, six feet in diameter, abounded. These are woven in a large mesh, varying from one inch square at the outside of the web to about one-eighth of an inch at the centre. The web was most substantial, and had great resisting power; a fact of which the natives were not slow to avail themselves, for they have pressed into the service of man this spider, which is of about the size of a small hazel-nut, with hairy, dark-brown legs, spreading to about two inches. This diligent creature they have beguiled into weaving their fishing-nets. At the place where the webs are thickest they set up long bamboos bent over into a loop at the end. In a

very short time the spider weaves a web on this most convenient frame, and the Papuan has his fishing-net ready to his hand. He goes down to the stream and uses it with great dexterity to catch fish of about one pound weight, neither the water nor the fish sufficing to break the mesh. The usual practice is to stand on a rock in a backwater where there is an eddy. There they watch for fish, and then dexterously dip it up and throw it on to the bank. Several men would set up bamboos so as to have nets ready all together, and would then arrange little fishing-parties. It seemed to me that the substance of the web resisted water as readily as a duck's back."

Dr. Kubary is dead; but I can well imagine how his eyes would have lighted up, and how he would have clapped me on the shoulder with delight, had he been spared to read this extract from Mr. Pratt's volume. "Ah, mine dear friendt," he would have exclaimed, "did I not tell you that Maclay vas not delling a fairy dale about dose spiders' fishing-nets?"

XX

ON THE WAYS OF SOME TROPICAL BIRDS

MANY years ago I was in charge of the "farthest out" trading station on the island of New Britain. My nearest European neighbour was twenty miles distant, and we saw each other but seldom. Having much spare time on my hands I devoted a good deal of it to fishing and shooting, and learning all I could from the natives of the bird and animal life of the district. Sometimes I would stay a night at some mountain bush village of fairly hospitable cannibals, and would frequently engage one of them as a guide in my shooting excursions. These "bushmen" would not, however, accompany me anywhere out of their own strictly confined territory, neither would the coastal people, among whom I lived, venture with me inland beyond a certain limit.

My neighbour was a German, and a lover of Nature, so we had much in common to talk about when we did meet. Unfortunately, although he had been in New Britain for five years, he had not

succeeded in learning the language, except to a limited extent.

One day, as we were walking along the beach near Cape Luen, we saw some wild pigeons on the edge of the water, drinking, and apparently disporting themselves. My companion told me that he had frequently observed the same thing—not only pigeons, but cockatoos coming to the beach and drinking salt water with a great zest.

But some weeks later I learnt the reason from a native who was returning home with me to my lonely trading station from a populous village named Mutāvat. As we were walking along the beach of black sand, I was again surprised to see numbers of wild pigeons standing at the margin of, and drinking, the sea water. My native guide told me that it was not at all uncommon: "This is the time of the year for them to drink sea water. They are now beginning to come down from the mountains. Every day, for twenty or thirty days, they drink a little salt water and wash themselves."

Why was it so, I asked? All about that part of New Britain were many running streams, and at low tide fresh water could be seen bubbling up from beneath the black sand of the beaches.

"It is for this," he answered, "their bodies are now poor and covered with small, red lice. These lice they get from the crowns of the betel-nut trees, when they settle there to shelter from the hot sun.

Then the pigeons drink the sea water, and the lice fall out and die."

That he was correct I am certain, for I had not only noticed these tiny pests on the bodies of pigeons and cockatoos, but had seen them crawling about the clusters of areca nuts brought to me for sale by the natives. (The firm by whom I was employed had at their head-quarters in Duke of York Island a number of Solomon Island natives, to whom betel-nut was a necessity, and I bought all that I could.)

Another interesting feature in connection with the habits of the wild pigeons of New Britain and other islands of the North-West Pacific, is their fondness for the small Chili-pepper berry. For two or three months of the year the bird's flesh is so pungent as to be quite uneatable—even by a hot-curry-loving old Indian colonel.

* * * * *

The frigate-bird has been well described as the Monarch of the Air, but he descends to very low-down practices at times, and behaves in a very undignified, but thoroughly piratical manner. At Nassau, Palmerston's, Providence, and other atoll islands of the South and North Pacific, I had the time and a keen inclination to watch their habits, especially of some birds which I kept in a state of honourable captivity.

Some turtle came on shore to lay their eggs in

the sand of Palmerston Island. The ever-watchful robber-crabs (the exploiters of the coconut) went down in the night from their cosy retreats under the roots of the ficus and pandanus trees, and, with their terrible claws, dug up Mother Turtle's eggs, and feasted thereon.

Then at daylight my native boat's crew and I saw a curious sight. Seven frigate-birds swooped down from the empyrean upon the gorged "robbers" and the remainder of the uneaten tough-skinned eggs. Several of them disdained to take any of the eggs, but seized *Birgus latro* by his fat, armoured and luscious tail, swept high in air again, and then down came *Birgus* upon the sand, minus his caudal appendage.

* * * * * *

At Ujilong (Providence Lagoon, in the North-Western Pacific) there were in 1870 only eighteen natives left, out of a former population of 500 or 600 in 1850. These eighteen natives were discovered in hiding by the notorious Captain Bully Hayes—the alleged "South Sea Pirate." He treated them most kindly, and told me (who afterwards lived on Providence Island for six months) some interesting facts concerning the remnants of these poor people who had been smitten with small-pox, communicated by some ship that had touched there about 1856 to bury some of her crew.

Hayes told me—and I know it was true from my

own subsequent experience—that vast flocks of golden plover fed upon the sand flats of Providence Lagoon at low tide, and that the few remaining natives caught them in hundreds, in a very simple manner, by spreading out upon the sand a certain very small species of sand crab, which had been allowed to slightly decay. The birds ate these with such avidity that they became stupefied, and were captured by hand with the greatest ease. But the natives, before cooking them, carefully removed every bit of viscera, and washed them thoroughly in brackish water.

XXI

VENOMOUS SEA-SNAKES

SOME years ago Sir James Hector, at a meeting of the Philosophical Society of Wellington, New Zealand, in exhibiting to the members some specimens of *hydridae* (sea-serpents) surprised the members by stating that there were no fewer than seventy known species, which, *without exception*, were fanged, and provided with glands secreting a virulent poison. Sir James is undoubtedly the highest authority on the subject, although other savants have contested his statement that all these *hydridae* are fanged and venomous, and a Dutch medical man, long resident in Dutch New Guinea, informed the writer that out of five or six of different species, which he had captured and examined, he had failed to discover poison sacs or glands, although the fangs were pronounced. But undoubtedly Sir James Hector was correct, and since the time of his lecture the number of the species of these venomous sea-reptiles now known to science has nearly reached one hundred, and it is a well-

accepted fact that a bite from any one is fatal—the most deadly of all being one of the commonest, the yellow-bellied—*Manava sama sama* of the Samoans—(*Hydrus platurus*). In this species the tail is extremely prehensile, and enables it to make its way to a ship's deck by working up a suspended rope or the cable when at anchor. Nearly all the others have a non-prehensile tail.

Before describing the species generally—from personal knowledge derived from a long residence in the North and South Pacific, and on the Australian coast—I may relate two instances in which I witnessed fatal results attending bites from sea-snakes.

In mooring ship in Singavi Harbour, Fotuna (South Pacific), I was sent to take a stern mooring-line to a rock in the middle of the little port. With my boat's crew came several merry Fotuna boys, for amusement. One of them, about nine or ten years of age, sprang out of the boat, and fell on his hands and knees on the rock, arousing a large black and yellow and white-banded snake, which had been sunning itself. The reptile bit him on the thumb, near the wrist, causing the blood to flow from two lines of tiny punctures. Twenty minutes later he was seized with agonizing convulsions and died a few hours afterwards.

The second instance was that of a stalwart young native seaman, belonging to a pearling lugger,

who was diving for clam shells in Torres Straits. A small slender snake (yellow-bellied) suddenly shot up from below within a few inches of his face. He struck at it, and in an instant the reptile coiled itself round his forearm, and bit him on his forefinger. Convulsions quickly followed, and although the finger was amputated an hour later, death ensued from tetanus within forty-eight hours.

Generally, however, death from the bite of a sea-snake follows as quickly as from that of the most deadly land-snake—such as the cobra, green mambre, or Australian death adder, though in the latter instances there can be no doubt that the length of the poison fangs, and their depth of penetration, is the primary cause of the victim so soon succumbing, the virus being so deeply injected that, unless the bitten place is in a situation which favours immediate amputation, no hope can be entertained of recovery.

During a residence in the Caroline Islands a missionary (Mr. Snow) of the Boston Board of Missions, told me of several cases of death from sea-snake bite, related to him by the natives of the Marshall and Caroline Groups. In one instance a woman, whilst walking along the reef at low water, disturbed a snake which was apparently asleep, and sunning itself upon a dry ledge of coral rock. In trying to avoid passing near it she trod upon a sharp shell, which inflicted a severe cut, and she

fell almost upon the snake, which, as it glided away, not only bit her on the hand, but coiling itself around her right forearm, buried its needle-like teeth into her left. From the shore she was seen, and people hurried to her assistance, but although she managed to reach the beach, she died in strong convulsions an hour or two afterwards. This snake was one of the flat-headed species, of a mottled dull black and yellow colour, and was four feet in length.

At Ailuk Lagoon, in the Marshall Islands, Mr. Snow was told of two little native girls, who, in company with many other children, were one night cray-fishing on the reef. A small, slender sea-snake coiled itself around the leg of one child. With a cry of horror she seized it by the tail, and tried to unwind its coils, and was bitten on the back of the thumb; her companion, coming to her rescue, was also bitten on some part of her hand, and in less than two hours both poor children died, after excruciating agonies, followed by coma. Immediately after death there was a peculiar contraction of the muscles. The fingers were tightly clenched, the feet curved, and the jaws set as in tetanus.

Some of these snakes attain a considerable size. In Australian museums specimens of eight feet in length may be seen; and *bêche-de-mer* fishers on the Great Barrier Reef have killed many of ten

feet. These latter were of a kind much akin to a land-snake, and, indeed, is frequently found on the land, especially after storms, when it is washed up on the beaches where for many hours it will lie in a comatose state. It can then be secured without danger. The head is flatted, and the belly has transverse plates similar to a land-snake. It has a great variety of coloration and markings.

The seas about New Caledonia literally swarm with these dangerous creatures, and the Canaques fear them greatly. The natives of the Paumotu Group, where there are at least a dozen species, told me that although the sea-snake may be seen catching fish in the day time, it is a nocturnal feeder, and when the canoes are engaged in flying-fish catching, by torches, they have often seen a sea-snake dart up from beneath a dazed flying-fish, seize it by the throat or belly, and disappear. A snake under three feet in length can, they say, easily swallow a stout flying-fish eight to ten inches in length. That this is true I have no doubt, for during a two years' residence in the Ellice Group I frequently went out with the canoes at night, catching flying-fish. When, at a given signal, the torches of coconut leaf would flash out and illumine the calm surface of the ocean, and the dazed flying-fish were revealed, one was certain to see scores of sea-snakes swimming about in all directions—not on, but under the surface, and generally keeping a

semi-vertical position. On one occasion, when the native in the bow swept up three or four large flying-fish in his scoop net, and dropped them into the canoe, he also brought in a long, thin orange and black-banded snake, which at once succeeded in concealing itself amongst the fishing cordage lying on the bottom. So alarmed were my companions that we at once returned to the beach, turned the canoe over on the sand, and despatched the enemy with a paddle. Our "take" was then thrown away, although, of course, no possible harm could have resulted to any one from eating a fish that had been bitten by a sea-snake. My native friends, however, thought otherwise, and I, of course, would not contest their arguments. But when I asked if I could not keep the flying-fish for bait, they said, "Yes, if you like, but who will eat the fish you catch?"

In conclusion I may mention that that eminent and ill-fated German savant, the late Dr. J. S. Kubary, who has so enriched science by his labours in the Caroline and Marshall Archipelagoes, was one day asked by an English trading skipper what would be "the best thing to get for it," if one were bitten by the olive-backed and yellow-spotted sea-snake, common to the Caroline Islands and Micronesia generally.

"Your revolver," was the laconic reply.

XXII

SUBMARINE DESERTS

PROFESSOR ALEXANDER AGASSIZ has reported that he has discovered an unknown submarine desert, "3000 miles long, by 1200 miles wide, in the Eastern Pacific, between the Galapagos Islands and Easter Island."

That portion of the Pacific, from the Galapagos—through which the equator passes on the one side—to Easter Island, the barren rocks of Sala-y-Gomez, Pitcairn, and Ducie Islands on the other, has long been known as a sea unusually barren of life, either on the surface or below. Sea birds, though they abound on Pitcairn, Oeno and Ducie Islands, and the Galapagos, are rarely seen in the wide area between the equator and the tropic of Capricorn, and from Pitcairn Island to Juan Fernandez. Some times one may see, high in air, above this desolate sea, the wide-spread wings of a frigate bird, sweeping towards land that may be a thousand miles away, but the ocean itself seems devoid of life.

I well remember making a passage in a small

schooner from Easter Island to Manga Reva in the Gambier Group. Midway between Easter Island and Pitcairn Island we met with what our American captain described as a "blazing, furious calm." For six days we lay baking under a torrid sun with the pitch bubbling up in the deck seams, and during that time we did not see a single living thing of any kind—either bird, fish, or any of those floating minor organisms usually met with when a ship is becalmed in tropic seas. When we left Easter Island we had been attended by several pilot fish, which kept with us for four or five days. Then, as the wind died away, they left us—a most unusual thing, for as a rule these beautiful creatures will attend a ship for many days—even weeks. Evidently they knew that there was no food for them in this desert part of the ocean, and so declined to keep us company any further.

I have knowledge of two of these barren ocean patches in the South Pacific. One is off the island of Eua in the Tongan Archipelago, the other at Niué (Savage Island), three hundred miles to the eastward. One day, I, accompanied by a native lad, was pigeon shooting on Eua, and stopped to rest and lunch on the summit of the north-eastern cliffs, which here start sheer up from the sea four hundred feet below. My companion, although he had undergone two years' tuition in the Wesleyan College at Nukualofa (the capital of Tonga) in

view of his being turned into a "minister," was still a highly intelligent and active lad, and had not yet acquired the smug, Chadband-like expression of supreme piety and godliness that invariably impresses itself upon the countenance of young Tongans and Fijians destined to be parsons or policemen. (To be a parson or a policeman is the *raison d'être* of the average Tongan or Fijian youth—just as it is with the Jamaica nigger. To avoid manual toil and to obtain authority, spiritual or physical, over his fellows, is his delight and his Parnassus. If he cannot, as a policeman, club or blackmail the godless person who smokes on Sundays, and hale him to prison, he, as a parson, can, from the pulpit, condemn him to torments eternal.)

Jaojai (George), however, was, unlike most Tongans, an unassuming, good-natured young fellow, an excellent shot, and, like myself, devotedly fond of deep-sea fishing. He had formerly been employed on Messrs. Parker's sheep station on Eua, and had learned to speak very good English. He showed me the written "character" he had received; it was rather amusing: "Jaojai Kubu has been in our employment as a shepherd for three years, and has behaved well. He is neither a thief nor a liar; is—for a Tongan—industrious and moral, and we regret that he is now going to the bad" (*i. e.* becoming a divinity student).

"Jaojai," I said, as we looked down at the smooth blue sea, "the water is very deep here, the cliffs come straight up from the sea. It should be a good place for big fish."

"No indeed. It is no good at all. There is nothing lives there; it is *oge* (literally, "hungry—foodless"). You might fish all day, either close into the cliffs, or for half a league away from them, and catch nothing except a few small rock cod."

"Why is it so?"

"Because there is nothing there for the fish to eat—no growing coral, no seaweed. It is because of the strong current, I think, which sweeps through the straits between this island and Tongatabu, and then curves around this point. The bottom is of hard, flat rock, with here and there great piles of smooth white stones. When there is no wind you can look down for twenty fathoms and see the bottom and the stones, but naught else. There are other places like it in Tonga, between Kao and Tofoa, where fish cannot live. But there it is *oge* because of the volcano, which sometimes causes the sea to boil, and the water is poisoned with sulphur and ashes from the great eruption long since."

A day or so later I took a boat and sailed round opposite to the cliffs, and anchored in fifty fathoms. For an hour I fished without getting a bite, then

went in close under the grim cliffs, and with a water glass examined the bottom at a depth of about twelve fathoms; I could see nothing alive—not even a crab.

Sailing round the weather side of the island I brought to again off the south point, and here in less than an hour, my crew of four and myself caught several hundredweight of fine fish, principally great red rock cod, and a fish like the New Zealand “yellow tail.”

The barren patch at Savage Island lies off a point between the villages of Alofi and Avatela. It is about five miles in circumference, and devoid of life, the bottom covered with huge white boulders, and not a living bit of coral to be seen. There is another—and much more extensive—sea desert near the volcanic island of Ambrym in the New Hebrides; and a fourth between the islands of Manua and Tutuila in the Samoan Group. This latter place is a patch of rock, sixty fathoms below the surface, and of about a mile in circumference. I discovered its existence in 1875, during a calm by sounding, and at once began to fish. In two hours I was satisfied it was also *oge*. Almost anywhere else in the South Pacific thousands of fish would frequent such a comparatively shallow spot, and eagerly take the hook.

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