Title: Twice Lost

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"Twice Lost"

Chapter One.

Last day at home—Join the "Heroine" as a midshipman—Bound for the Pacific—Ordered to touch at Cape Coast Castle—On the look-out for a pirate—Chase her up a river—Our boat attacked—Dicky Popo brings us information—Fight with the pirates—A capture—A schooner blows up—Deliver up our prize to the Commodore—Proceed on our voyage.

The last day of my home-life came to an end. Pierce and I went to our room and turned in to our beds, but not to sleep. We had still many things to say to each other, though we had probably said them over and over again before. I promised to write a journal, to show to him when I came back from my first voyage; and he agreed to keep one, from which he might make extracts when he wrote to me, so that I might know everything that took place in our family circle.

Our father, Mr Rayner, was a half-pay lieutenant; but at the end of the war, having no expectation of promotion, he had left the service and joined his elder brother, our Uncle Godfrey (after whom I was named), in a mercantile business at Bristol, near which city we lived. He knew nothing of office work, but hoped by diligence and attention to be of assistance. Our uncle, however, died before he had gained a thorough knowledge of the business; and, besides the sorrow he felt at losing one he loved, much responsibility in consequence devolved upon him. I believe that his affairs were not as prosperous as he could have desired; and he sometimes expressed his regret that he had engaged in an undertaking for which he was not fitted.

I had shown no predilection for a seat in the counting-house; and consequently, when his old shipmate Captain Bracewell, who had just been appointed to the command of the *Heroine* sloop-of-war, offered to take one of his sons as a midshipman, he allowed me, greatly to my delight, to enter the navy.

My sea-chest, already packed, stood at one end of the room, with my dirk and the uniform I was to put on next day lying upon it; in which, as may be supposed, I had already exhibited myself to Pierce and our sister Edith, who was younger than either of us, and naturally thought it, as she told me, very becoming; an opinion I also entertained, as did our mother, and—I flattered myself—the rest of the household.

At last Pierce's voice grew more and more inarticulate, and he dropped off to sleep. I, after some time, was following his example, when the door opened, and our mother glided into the room, afraid of awakening me. I was conscious that she was bending over me: a tear dropped on my cheek, and I felt her loving kiss on my brow. I started up and passed my arm round her neck. She perhaps thought that it was the last time I should be with her alone on earth.

"Godfrey, my dear boy," she said, "fear to offend God, and be faithful and true to him and to all men. He will ever prove your best Friend, here and throughout eternity."

"I will, mother; indeed I will," I answered, as soon as the beatings of my heart and the sobs which burst from my breast allowed me to speak.

"Hush," she said at length; "we must not awaken Pierce. And you too, Godfrey, must go to sleep, to be ready for your journey to-morrow."

She left me, but I could hear her breathing outside the door till she thought I had dropped off to sleep.

Next morning all the family were up to see me off. I won't describe the scene: my dear, sweet little sister Edith, though she looked so proud of me in my uniform, sobbed as if she would break her heart; and I found it a hard matter to restrain my feelings, till the coach came by, and, my chest being stowed away in the boot, my father and I

mounted to the top. I soon recovered my spirits, when my father, entering into conversation with our fellow-passengers, led me to join in it. Most of them were seafaring men; and one of them, with naval buttons on his greatcoat, made himself known to my father as Peter Mudge, once a little midshipman with him, but now an old master's mate on his way to join the *Heroine*.

"You'll keep an eye on this youngster, then, for my sake, Mudge?" said my father; "though I know you would without my asking you."

"That I will, Mr Rayner," answered Mr Mudge; "I'll do all I can for him, though that may be but little."

"You've got one friend on board already, Godfrey," observed my father, "through my interest. I hope you will soon have many more by your own merits."

We reached Plymouth late in the day; and the next morning my father took me on board to introduce me to the captain and officers. Captain Bracewell received me very kindly; and when my father left—as he was soon obliged to do—to return home, Peter Mudge took charge of me, and led me down into the midshipmen's berth, where he introduced me to my new messmates. I was at home in a few minutes, and made up my mind that I should be very jolly. In this opinion I was confirmed by the assurances of another midshipman of about my own age, or rather younger, Tommy Peck by name, who had also come to sea for the first time, and who naturally became my chief chum. He was a merry fellow, delighting in fun and mischief; caring very little about the result of

The men were going round the capstan to the sound of the merry fife.

the latter, provided he could amuse himself for the moment; and without a particle of forethought. He was not altogether destitute of sense, but at the time I speak of he greatly required a friend like Mudge to keep him in the right way.

The sails were loosed, the men were going round the capstan to the sound of the merry fife, when a messenger from the Admiralty arrived in hot haste, directing the captain to carry out despatches to the governor of Cape Coast Castle, instead of proceeding direct to the Pacific, whither we were bound.

The wind being fair and fresh, in a few hours we were out of sight of land. For the first time in my life, as I gazed round from the deck, I saw only the circle of the horizon where sea and sky met. It produced in me a sensation of pleasure not unmixed with awe, though I confess that the feeling very soon wore off.

The next day at noon the midshipmen were ordered to bring up their quadrants; and I received my first practical lesson in navigation. I was anxious to gain a knowledge of my profession, and Peter Mudge did his best to instruct me.

Day after day we sailed on, the fair wind lasting us till we got to the latitude of the Cape de Verde Islands, and I began to fancy that the stories I had heard of gales and hurricanes were fabulous, and that we were to enjoy the same sort of weather during our cruise.

"Wait a bit, my lad, till we're rounding Cape Horn; you'll then chance to pick up a notion of what a heavy sea is like, if you don't happen to learn sooner," said Peter Mudge.

In spite of calms and light winds, however, we at length came off Cape Coast Castle; consisting of an extensive range of buildings surrounded by fortifications, appearing of snowy whiteness against the dark foliage of the wooded height in the background. The captain went on shore to deliver his despatches to the governor. We were expecting the pleasure of a run on shore, when he returned on board, and ordering the anchor to be hove up, we stood to the south-eastward under all sail.

It soon became known that the governor had received intelligence of the appearance of a large craft off the coast, supposed to be a pirate, of which he had directed the captain to go in search. A sharp look-out was accordingly kept for her during the night. She was said to be heavily armed; under Spanish colours; and that her plan of proceeding was to capture any traders she could fall in with, take possession of their cargoes, and exchange them on the coast for slaves, with which she returned to Cuba. "A profitable style of business, whatever might be said of its honesty. I only hope that we may catch her with English property on board," said Mudge; "we shall soon put a stop to her tricks."

The next evening a sail was sighted on the starboard bow, steering the same course as we were; and we immediately

stood for her, hoping that she was the pirate. It was doubtful whether she had seen us; if she had, she had possibly taken us for a merchantman. Darkness was coming on, but we had got her bearings; and unless she was suspicious of us she would stand on as she was doing, and perhaps shorten sail to allow us to come up with her; if so, we had no doubt that we should take her. As it was fully believed that she would not yield without fighting, the ship was cleared for action; the crew went to their quarters, and all stood ready should we sight her, which we might do at any moment.

On glided our ship over the dark waters, her masts towering to the sky like some phantom of the night. A strange feeling came over me as I thought that in a few minutes we might be hotly engaged in firing away at the enemy, round shot and bullets flying about us.

“Sail right ahead, sir!” shouted the second lieutenant from forward. I looked out eagerly, and saw the tall masts and sails of a ship fully as large as, if not larger than, the *Heroine*.

“We must speak her before firing, lest we should be engaging a friend,” I heard the commander observe to Mr Worthy, the first lieutenant. “If yonder craft is a pirate, she takes us for a merchant vessel, as she probably knew that no man-of-war of our size was on the station. Don’t fire a shot till I give the order.”

After this not a word was spoken. In perfect silence we glided onwards, rapidly approaching the dark ship, which we could now distinguish clearly, with her courses brailed up, evidently awaiting us. The captain’s intention was to run up on her starboard quarter, so as to keep her between us and the land. We were almost within hail, and expected in another instant to be engaged, when down came her courses, the yards were braced sharp up, and she stood away on a bowline towards the coast. On this our helm was immediately put down, and we did the same, keeping directly after her and firing our bow-chasers. She was evidently a fast craft, for she rapidly drew ahead of us. The breeze freshened, and having all sail set, we heeled over till the lee guns dipped into the water.

“We shall be whipping the masts out of her, if we don’t take care,” I heard Mudge observe.

The captain seemed to think the same. “Hand royals and topgallant sails,” he sang out; “be smart, my lads.”

The top-men hurried aloft to obey the order, for every one knew there was no time to be lost. The masts bent like willow wands, and I expected every moment to see them go over the side. While attending to shortening sail, the eyes of the officers were withdrawn from the chase; for some of the ropes getting foul during the operation, we were obliged to luff up to clear them, thereby allowing her to get still farther ahead. Still, she could be distinguished standing to the eastward. As soon as the sails were handed we stood on again after her, staggering along under such canvas as we could carry, and every eye on board turned towards her.

“If she runs us out of sight, she’ll put her helm up and stand down the coast,” observed Mudge; “and it will be a hard matter to find her again.”

Our chief hope was that our shot might wing her; but only one gun could be brought to bear, and with the sea there was on, though it was not very heavy, our aim was uncertain. Still, as we had got her jammed in between us and the coast, there was little chance of her ultimately escaping.

We had been running on for some time, the chase still gaining on us, and becoming dimmer and dimmer to view, when a heavy squall struck the ship, and heeled her over so much that the captain gave the order to shorten sail. It cleared off, however, before the sheets were let fly; but when we again looked ahead the chase was nowhere to be seen. We accordingly edged away to the southward, in case she should have gone off before the wind.

Not long after this the morning broke, and the wind went down. As the chase was not to be seen to the southward, the captain and Mr Worthy were still convinced that she had continued her course to the eastward, but that the thick mist hanging over the coast was hiding her from sight. We had again made all sail, and were standing on as before, when the look-out at the mast-head shouted, “Land! land!” and shortly afterwards, as the atmosphere cleared, we could see the wood-covered heights of the African coast rising above the belt of thick mist which still hung over the lower ground, and which would effectually conceal the chase should she have stood in for the shore.

“Should she be there, we shall soon sight her,” observed Mudge. “I only hope that her rascally crew will have the courage to fight for their lives and liberty; though there isn’t much chance of that.”

The lead was kept going, of course, and showed a much greater depth of water than had been expected. On reference to the chart, the captain found that we must be approaching the mouth of a large river. The sun rising, dissipated the mist; and we had got close to the mouth of the river when the wind fell. Being thus unable to enter it, we were compelled to bring up at no great distance from the shore. From where we lay we could see but a very little way up the river, a point of land covered with trees hiding the next reach, so that the chase might be there, though invisible to us. The captain accordingly directed the first lieutenant to pull up in the gig to ascertain if she was there; intending, if so, to carry the ship into the river whenever the sea-breeze should set in. As she was a large, well-armed vessel, with a numerous crew, he was unwilling to risk the loss of his men, at the commencement of a long voyage, by attacking her with the boats.

The gig was soon hidden behind the point; when the watch below, to which I belonged, was allowed to lie down in the shade on deck—for, having been awake all night, we could scarcely keep our eyes open. I was in an instant asleep; and being roused up again after a snooze of two hours, I found that the gig had not returned. The captain was beginning to get anxious, when the look-out from the mast-head, who could see farther over the point than we could on deck, shouted, “The gig in sight, and another boat following her.”

Some minutes passed, when we saw the gig chased round the point, the crew pulling with all their might; and the next instant a much larger boat hove in sight. As she did so, a man standing in the stern-sheets was seen to lift a

musket and fire at the gig: at the same moment an oar dropped from the hands of one of the crew, who sank down on the thwart; the gig, however, still coming on. It was a wanton act. The large boat pulled round, and before we could have brought one of our guns to bear on her she was again hidden behind the point. The captain, on seeing the occurrence, ordered the other boats to be got ready, intending to send them up in chase of the audacious stranger, and they were in the water before the gig was alongside.

Lieutenant Worthy, on coming on deck, informed the captain that he had gone up the river for some distance without seeing the chase, when, just as he had at length caught sight of her topgallant-masts over a wooded point, a large boat had darted out from behind it; while several shots fired from the shore warned him of the danger of proceeding farther. Immediately putting the gig round, he pulled down the river, seeing that it would be madness to attempt attacking the larger boat with his small crew.

The daring way in which the large boat had attempted to capture the gig proved the character of the craft to which she belonged; as also that either her crew must consider themselves strong enough to resist a man-of-war, or possibly might suppose that we should not venture into the river.

In the meantime, the gig with the wounded man had been hoisted up. He still breathed, and was immediately carried below, and placed under the care of the surgeon; who, on examining his wound, expressed but slight hope that he would recover. On hearing this, the crew threatened the pirates with their vengeance, and were eager to go up the river and take them.

We now anxiously waited for the sea-breeze. The cable was hove short, the sails loosed; still, as we looked eastward, not a ripple disturbed the glass-like surface of the ocean.

“We’ve got the fellow in a trap, at all events,” observed Mudge, “and fight he must, whether he likes it or not.”

“I hope he will,” I answered. “I should like to see a good fierce battle; and there will be little glory in taking the pirate, should she give in at once.”

“You’ll sing a different note when you find the shot come flying thickly about your ears, my boy,” answered Mudge; “and as for the glory, there’s not much to be gained by capturing a rascally pirate. For my part, I hope she’ll knock under at once, and give us as little trouble as possible.”

Hour after hour went by, but the breeze did not come; and I heard Lieutenant Worthy remark that it would afford time to the pirates, if they were so minded, to fortify themselves on shore, which would enable them to hold out much better against us, as we should have both the fort and the ship to contend against.

“That must not stop us,” observed the captain; “we must take the ship first, and the fort afterwards.”

At last a few cat’s-paws were seen playing over the water. The dog-vanes blew out, and the breeze, fresh and pure from the ocean, began to blow. The anchor was quickly got up; and the ship, at first standing close-hauled to weather the point, glided on towards the main channel of the river. The bar, on which the water was unusually deep,—a few slight rollers only coming in over it,—was safely passed, when we began to stand up the stream. The shores on either hand were thickly covered with trees, forming impenetrable walls of foliage, and preventing us from seeing the country beyond, with the exception of some high hills which rose in the distance.

The wind being light, and the current running out, we made but slow progress; and before we got far up the river the wind again failed us, and we were compelled to come to an anchor. Had it not been for Mr Worthy’s report, we should have supposed that the ship was not there, and should probably have stood out to sea again, in the hope of falling in with her elsewhere. As evening drew on, the hot land-breeze again blew down the river, which was here of considerable width.

“I shouldn’t be surprised if the pirate were to try to give us the slip after all,” observed Mudge. “We must keep a sharp look-out, so that we may stop her should she make the attempt. I only hope she will, as it will be more to our advantage to bring her to action under way, than to have to attack her at anchor, with springs on her cables, and protected by a fort which, if the fellows have any sense in their heads, they are sure to throw up.”

It was still daylight, and Peter and I were walking the deck, for it was our watch; indeed, the midshipmen’s berth not being the pleasantest place in the world in that climate, we were seldom in it, except at meal-times. I have not talked much about the heat, but the air, if not hotter, was more stifling in that river than we had felt it since we reached the coast. I was looking towards the nearest shore, off which we had brought up at the distance of scarcely a cable-length, when I saw a figure moving amid the trees. I pointed him out to Mudge. Presently, as he reached the bank, we saw that he was a black man, without a particle of clothing on. Putting his hand to his mouth, he hailed, and then waved vehemently, as if to attract our attention. Mudge sent me to tell Mr Worthy; who at once ordered a boat to be lowered, and directed Mudge to pull in to the shore, to ascertain what he wanted. The black, however, turning his head over his shoulder, either saw or heard the approach of some one he wished to avoid, and plunging into the river, began to swim towards the ship. Mudge and I had jumped into the boat, and as we were approaching the shore to pick up the black I saw a dark fin rise just ahead of us. I told Mudge.

“That’s a brute of a shark!” he exclaimed, “and a big fellow too, and the chances are he has poor Blackie for his supper.”

“Not if our voices can drive the monster away,” I answered, horrified at the thought of witnessing the destruction of a fellow-creature. “Shout! shout, all hands!”

Mudge and I raised our voices, joined by the crew, who gave way with redoubled vigour. The black, who just then saw the shark coming, began to splash and kick, and to shout pretty lustily. This was not the only peril to which he was

exposed, for at the same moment several persons appeared among the trees, with muskets in their hands, and began to fire at him. Happily, one of the bullets aimed at him or at us struck the savage shark, just as it was about to make a dash at him; and, either from the wound it had received, or frightened by our shouts, it suddenly turned round, with a whisk of its tail, and darted away from Blackie.

We immediately dashed on, in spite of the bullets. The black was close alongside, when I saw the monster's huge form gliding like lightning beneath the surface; his head rising just as, with a violent jerk, we drew the poor fellow into the boat. The disappointed brute made a grab at one of the oars in revenge, though he got nothing but a broken tooth for his pains.

Without stopping to ask questions, Mudge put the boat round, and pulled away for the ship, fortunately not one of us being hit, while the enemy in the bush quickly vanished. As soon as we were out of the line of fire, one of the ship's guns, loaded with grape, was let fly at the spot from which the shots had come, and greatly contributed to the rapid retreat of Blackie's pursuers, whoever they were—at all events, of those of them who escaped being hit; but whether any were so, we could not tell. As soon as the boat got alongside, the black sprang on board with considerable activity, showing that he was none the worse for his run and subsequent swim. There he stood, naked as he was born; when an old quartermaster, a wag in his way, brought him a pair of duck trousers, evidently considering that he was not fit, as he then stood, to appear on the quarter-deck of a British man-of-war. Blackie put them on with a grin, shook the water out of his woolly pate, and then, with an air of perfect self-possession, walked aft to where the commander and several of the other officers were standing.

"Me Dicky Popo, please, sar," he said, giving a haul at his hair; "me loyal British subject—once serve His Majesty—but de nigger slave-catchers find me ashore, carry me off, and sell me to still bigger rascals. Dey ship me aboard wid oder slaves; and den a bigger rascal still take de whole of us on board de *Sea-Hawk* dere. I seed dat somefing was wrong when dey run up de river, and den I find out dat an English ship chase dem, and come to an anchor inside de bar; den I tink if I run away and get aboard English ship, I know I safe under dat flag."

As he spoke he pointed to the ensign blowing out from the flagstaff astern. Finding that Dicky Popo, as the black called himself, understood English pretty well, the commander questioned him further, and learned many more particulars about the ship we had just chased. She was the *Sea-Hawk*, belonging to Havana, fully as large as the *Heroine*, with as numerous a crew, and carrying two more guns than we did; so that, if well fought, she would prove a formidable antagonist. She had already captured a vessel which had, Dicky Popo said, about a hundred and fifty slaves on board, and was waylaying another, when we somewhat put out her arrangements, and obliged her to run up the very river in which the schooner she had intended to capture was lying. The pirate, not telling the captain of the schooner of his intentions, had persuaded him to assist in defending his vessel in case they should be attacked. For this purpose they had both landed some of their men and guns; and he had also sent on shore the strongest among the slaves, to assist in throwing up fortifications. Dicky Popo, hearing that the corvette had entered the river, took the opportunity, while so engaged, of slipping off, in the hope of getting on board; resolved, should he regain his liberty, to give us information of the preparations made for our reception.

I liked the expression of Dick's countenance, and was certain from the first that he was an honest fellow. He had been kindly treated on board a man-of-war in which he had served—having been rescued from slavery by her; and he was truly grateful to the English, and anxious practically to show his gratitude. I do not believe the person who talks of his grateful heart, when he takes no pains to exhibit it.

The captain was in no way inclined to change his purpose on hearing of the preparations made by the slavers for their defence. "I know that I can trust to our stout fellows, who will bravely do their duty; while our rascally enemies are fighting with halters round their necks," he observed to Mr Worthy.

"No doubt about that, sir," was the answer; "and I hope that it will not take us long to capture the pirate, in spite of the battery on shore, and the assistance the slave-schooner may give her."

Soon after Dicky Popo had made his appearance on deck, night came on. Notwithstanding the preparations the pirates had been making for their defence, the commander expressed his opinion that they might try to slip by us and get out to sea during the darkness, rather than wait our attack in the river. A sharp look-out was therefore kept, the anchor was hove short, and the watch below lay down on deck, so as to be ready to make sail at a moment's notice. A boat was also sent some way ahead to row guard, and bring us early information should either of the vessels be seen coming down. We knew, of course, that the pirates were aware of our exact position, but they could not tell that a boat was also watching for them.

The greater part of the night passed by quietly. The middle watch had nearly come to an end when the boat's oars were heard, and she shortly after dashed up alongside. "The ship is coming down, and will be abreast of us in a few minutes," said the officer in command. "She was shortening sail when we caught sight of her, and she hopes to escape being seen by dropping past us under bare poles."

On hearing this, the captain gave the order to make sail; and slipping our cable with a buoy to it, so that we might easily pick it up, we stood towards the centre of the river. In another minute we caught sight of the tall masts of the pirate, gliding down with the current, not many cable-lengths off. It was impossible for her to return; and should she bring up, we might sail round her and fire at her at our leisure. On discovering us (which she must have done some time before, as we, being under sail, must have been seen before we could make her out), she had begun to set her canvas. That availed her but little, however, as we now had her within range of our guns; which, the captain giving the order, began firing away as rapidly as they could be run in and loaded. She immediately fired in return from her foremost guns, the only ones which for some minutes could be brought to bear on us, as we were, it will be understood, standing across the river directly ahead of her. Her sails being let fall, she soon got abreast of us; when we went about, and passing directly under her stern, so closely that I thought we were going to run her aboard, fired the whole of our broadside into her; we during the operation having received only two or three shots, which did no

material damage. Shrieks and cries arose from her deck, proving the fearful havoc produced by our raking fire; while several halyards and braces having been shot away on board her, and only part of her canvas having been set, we again kept away, speedily got up alongside her, and poured in another well-directed broadside. She returned a feeble fire; many of her crew at the guns having been, we had thus good reason to suppose, killed or disabled by our shot. We, having all our canvas set, were running ahead of her, the captain intending to luff across her bows, and to pour in another raking fire, when we heard a voice from her forecastle shouting, in broken English, “We give in—we haul down flag—don’t fire, don’t fire!”

“Let go your anchor, then, and bring up, or I’ll not trust you,” shouted the captain.

The sound of voices in loud altercation now reached us, some apparently crying out one thing, and some another, in Spanish; while we were steering so as to keep on the weather bow of the pirate.

“Stand by,—brace up the yards,” cried the captain in a loud voice, so that the Spaniards might hear him. “Do you yield, or I fire?” he shouted.

“Yes, yes,” answered a voice.

Immediately the sheets were let fly, and the splash of the anchor and the sound of the cable running out reached our ears above the hubbub still going forward on deck, when the ship slowly swung round to the current. We immediately hauled our wind, and having good way, went about and shot up abreast of our opponent, whom we thus had completely in our power.

As soon as we had furled sails, two boats were lowered; Mr Worthy going in command of one, and Peter Mudge of the other, the crews being well-armed. As I was the midshipman of the lieutenant’s boat, I accompanied him.

No opposition was offered, though no assistance was given, to us, as we got alongside. We quickly, however, scrambled up on deck, which, by the light of several lanterns carried by the men, presented an appearance such as I had never before pictured to myself. The first step I made, my foot slipped and I nearly fell. On the light falling on the spot, I found that I was literally standing in blood. Twenty or more human forms lay stretched out motionless, while others were gathered round the masts or leaning against the guns, endeavouring to bind up their wounds. One group stood aft in sullen silence awaiting our coming, while the remainder of the crew were collected forward. By their dress we saw that most of those aft were officers.

“Where is the captain of this ship?” asked Lieutenant Worthy.

One of them pointed to a body which lay between two of the guns, with part of the chest and one of the arms carried away.

“Poor wretch!” observed the lieutenant. “He will not then have to answer to us for his misdeeds. And are you the officer in command?”

The man to whom he spoke bowed his head, and, advancing, presented his sword.

“Take his weapon,” said the lieutenant, turning to one of the men; “and disarm all the rest. I shall not receive the sword of a pirate, as if he were a naval officer.”

The whole of the party were quickly disarmed, and by the lieutenant’s orders our men then lashed their arms behind them. Peter Mudge with his boat’s crew had, in the meantime, made their way along the slippery deck forward, when he treated the men collected there in the same fashion. Mr Worthy then hailed the corvette, and begged that the surgeons might be sent on board to attend to the wounded; and those who appeared to be officers were lowered into the boat which brought them, to be conveyed to the ship for safe keeping.

While the surgeons were hurriedly binding up the limbs of the wounded men, we were engaged in collecting the dead bodies, that they might be hove overboard. On counting them, we found that five-and-twenty had been killed outright; and one by one, after the surgeon had examined them, they were thrown into the water through the ports.

“Here’s another fellow, sir, who seemed just now as dead as a door-nail; but as I was dragging him along the deck he began to sing out, and to swear by all the saints that he was alive and kicking; and, faith, that same he was, for I had a hard matter to keep hold of his legs. He’s quiet enough now, though; and for the life of me I can’t tell whether he was after speaking the truth or not.”

This address was made by Paddy Doyle, an Irish top-man, to the surgeon who was examining the bodies before they were hove overboard. The surgeon, thus appealed to, went to the man. “He seems to be unhurt, and is still breathing,” he remarked. “By his dress he appears to be an officer. Throw some water in his face; and keep a watch over him, Doyle, when he comes to, as I have no doubt that he soon will. I must look after the other wretches.”

The dead having been disposed of, and the unwounded prisoners placed under a guard, the wounded were carried into the large and handsome cabin—which, however, could not afford accommodation for all of them; the rest were therefore placed, with such spare bedding as could be found, on the upper slave-deck.

By the time these arrangements were made, it was nearly daylight. A prize crew of twenty men was left on board the *Sea-Hawk*, with the assistant-surgeon to look after the wounded, the second lieutenant coming on board to take command of them. I was thankful to be ordered to return to the corvette, for I was heartily sick of the scene I had witnessed.

Just as I was going over the side, I heard Paddy Doyle sing out,—“Arrah! my dead man’s come to life again! Bear a hand, and help me to haul him in;” and looking back, I saw that the Irishman’s prisoner had jumped up, and was

endeavouring to spring through a port—having watched the moment that Paddy's back was turned on him. Paddy had seized one of his legs, and was tugging away with might and main; while the Spaniard, with his other foot on the port-sill, had nearly effected his purpose, notwithstanding the Irishman's desperate efforts to prevent his escape. "Arrah! now he's done it!" exclaimed Doyle, holding up the Spaniard's shoe and a piece of his trousers which had come away in his hand.

The man, who was evidently a good swimmer, and had been trusting to this for escape, was striking out at a rapid rate for the shore.

"Give way after him!" cried Lieutenant Worthy to Mudge, who was in the boat on the opposite side to that from which the pirate had escaped.

The boat shoved off, but had to pull ahead of the ship. It was not till then that Mudge could see the swimmer, who had already made considerable progress towards the shore. I jumped into the rigging to watch him. Should he once land, and get in among the thick trees, he might effect his purpose. Possibly he expected to find friends to assist him.

He was still some way ahead of the boat, when I caught a momentary glimpse of the dark fin of a shark. It disappeared, and the next instant a piercing shriek rent the air; the pirate threw up his arms, and sank beneath the surface! Then the boat pulled round and returned to the ship.

Just as I got on board the corvette, a loud sound of tom-toms and horns was heard from the upper part of the river, and presently a fleet of large canoes appeared paddling rapidly towards us. It seemed scarcely possible that they should venture to attack an English man-of-war; and yet, from the gestures of their crews, and the way they came on, such appeared to be their intention. Possibly they had heard the firing, and, taught to believe the *Sea-Hawk* the most powerful ship afloat, supposed that she had gained the victory. On discovering, however, that she was anchored astern of us, they ceased paddling; then after a short interval regaining courage, they again came on, shrieking and shouting and beating their tom-toms louder than ever, to intimidate us before they attempted to board.

"Fire a shot over their heads," said the commander. "It will show the ignorant savages that we are not to be trifled with."

Scarcely had the gun been discharged, when the canoes were seen paddling away as fast as their black crews could urge them on, each endeavouring as soon as possible to get out of the range of our shot; and in a little time they had disappeared behind the point which had before concealed them from us.

We had still another task to perform—the capture or destruction of the slave-schooner of which Dicky Popo had told us. As the navigation of the river was intricate and dangerous above where we lay, the commander, unwilling to risk the safety of the ship, resolved to send up the boats, notwithstanding the assistance which the canoes might be expected to afford her. Three were accordingly sent away under the command of Mr Worthy, with whom I went; the pinnace having a six-pounder in the bows, and the others being armed with swivels. We soon came in sight of the canoes, with the schooner at anchor some distance beyond them. A shot from our six-pounder quickly sent them paddling away up the stream. Popo, who had been taken in our boat to point out where the battery had been thrown up, directly afterwards exclaimed,—"Dere!—dere it is!"

Scarcely had he spoken, when a shot came whizzing over our heads. At our lieutenant's orders, the boats' heads were immediately turned towards the battery, when, our gun being fired at it, we rapidly pulled on. We quickly reached the bank; and the lieutenant, whose example I imitated, leaped on shore, calling to the small-arm men to follow him. In a few seconds we were scrambling into the battery, the Spaniards and blacks who had just before been in it making their escape helter-skelter into the thick wood behind it. A few of the white men—who, to do them credit, were the last to run—were shot or cut down, but the greater number made their escape,—our lieutenant wisely not allowing us to follow. Five guns found in the battery were spiked, upon which we immediately re-embarked and pulled away towards the schooner.

We had not got many fathoms from the shore, however, when a thick smoke was seen issuing from her hatches, followed by flames which burst out from every part. We pulled on, in the hope of being able to extinguish them; for she appeared to be a remarkably fine vessel, and would have proved a prize worth capture. Before we got up to her, however, the lieutenant ordered the men to back their oars. And not too soon. The boats had still some way on them, when up went the masts and deck of the schooner, numerous fragments falling close around us. The flames raged furiously for a few minutes longer, after which the hull of the lightly-built vessel, shattered by the explosion, sank beneath the surface. What had become of the unfortunate slaves we could not tell; but it was to be hoped, for the sake of humanity, that all had been landed. One thing was very certain,—that we should be unable to capture any of them should we land, as they would all have been driven up into the interior. We therefore pulled back to the ship; and the breeze blowing strongly down the river, she and our prize were got under way, and we stood towards its mouth.

The water on the bar being tolerably smooth, we got out without difficulty, and shortly afterwards sighted a sail beating up towards the land. She was made out to be a frigate, and proved to be that of the commodore on the station, who had also heard of the pirate, and was come to look for her. He complimented our commander on his conduct in the affair, and, greatly to our satisfaction, relieved us of our prisoners, as also of the charge of our prize, directing us to proceed on our voyage to the westward.

Dicky Popo, who had been entered on board, remained with us, and became a great favourite both with officers and men.

It was not till long afterwards that I heard of the fate of the *Sea-Hawk* and the survivors of her piratical crew.

Chapter Two.

Rounding Cape Horn—A gale—Put into a port in Patagonia—Visit a whaler—A romantic history—The lost child—A young lady—A snug harbour—Climb a mountain—A narrow escape—Valparaiso—The coral island—Communicate with the natives—An addition to our crew—Dicky Popo lost overboard—The Sandwich Islands—My shipmates—Survey an island—Recover Popo, and find a white boy—How Popo was saved—Gain information about Harry, the white boy.

Little did I think, scarcely six months before, when seated at a desk in my father's counting-house, that I should ever see Cape Horn; yet there it rose on our starboard beam, dark, solitary, and majestic, high above the ocean, which rolled in vast undulations at its base.

Onward we glided, with the ship's head to the westward and the wind aft, under all sail; now rising to the summit of a glass-like billow, now sinking deep down into the valley to climb up the watery steep on the opposite side. We had touched at Rio, to obtain a supply of wood and water and fresh provisions; but I need not give a description of that magnificent harbour, as nothing very particular occurred there.

"That's a fine sight!" I exclaimed, as I watched the mighty headland, which gradually faded from view over our starboard quarter.

"You'll see a good many other fine sights," observed Peter Mudge, who was somewhat matter-of-fact. "For my part, I have been glad to see the last of it each time I have come round this way, and to get safe into the Pacific; for twice I have been driven back, and have been kept knocking about among the icebergs, with the wind sharp enough to cut our noses off, for six blessed weeks or more. I only hope that is not to be our lot this time."

"I hope not," I answered. "I was expecting to be in smooth water, with a sunny sky overhead, before many days are over."

"So we may, youngster; then we'll hope for the best," said Mudge. "Still, when a fellow has met with as many ups and downs as I have, he learns not to fancy himself safe in harbour till he has got there."

This time, however, Mudge, and we his shipmates, were not doomed to disappointment, and were, ere long, floating on the waters of the Pacific. We ran to the northward with a flowing sheet, keeping much closer in with the coast than, I believe, is usual, till we reached the 46th degree of south latitude. It then fell a dead calm. We had just before caught sight of a sail away to the eastward, beyond which, some forty or fifty miles off, rose the lofty peaks of the Cordilleras, covered with eternal snows; or I should say, perhaps, the southern end of that mighty chain which rises abruptly from the Isthmus of Panama, and extends the whole length of the continent.

For the entire day we lay rolling our masts from side to side, till it almost seemed as if they would be shaken out of the ship. The commander wished to speak the stranger, on the chance of her being lately from England, and able to give us fresher intelligence than we possessed. He had ordered a boat to be got ready to be sent away, when, on looking at the barometer, he found that it was falling, while a bank of clouds was seen to be rising to the north-west.

"Hold fast with the boat," he said; "before she can return, we may have a gale down upon us."

We had not long to wait for it; and in half an hour or so we were dashing through the water under close-reefed topsails, heeling over with the wind from the north-west till the water came rushing in through the lee ports. The master, who had been on the coast before, recommended that, in order not to lose ground, we should run for the Gulf of Penas; where we could find shelter under the lee of an island, or get into one of the snug ports of the mainland. The ship's head was accordingly kept to the eastward. The sail we had seen was also standing in the same direction, probably with the same object in view. We guessed, therefore, that she was also bound to the northward, and wished to avoid being driven back. Mudge expressed his satisfaction that we had not stood away on the other tack.

"If we had, we should have run a chance of being blown back again round the Cape into the Atlantic," he observed. "Not every captain, however, would venture to stand in for the land as we are doing; we must keep our eyes open and the lead going, or we may chance to run the ship on shore. But as yonder vessel probably knows her way, we shall have her as a guide, and may hope to find shelter without difficulty."

We quickly overhauled the stranger, which proved to be a barque; and from her appearance, as we caught sight of her hull, there was no doubt that she was a South Sea whaler, and that, consequently, she was likely to be well acquainted with the coast. As we stood on, we caught sight of an extensive chain of islands, stretching out from the mainland on our larboard bow. Gradually they appeared more and more abeam, while ahead rose up several lofty and rugged peaks. The stranger still kept the lead; and following her, we at length found ourselves in an extensive bay, completely sheltered from the gale blowing without. Being now in perfectly smooth water, and the commander considering it not prudent to run farther in, we furled sails, and brought up some distance ahead of the whaler, which had just before come to an anchor.

The spot where we found ourselves was about the wildest I had ever seen: dark rocks rose out of the sea fringing the shore, and rugged mountains towered up to the sky in all directions; while not a sign of human life was visible. As we swept the coast with our glasses, we discovered, almost abreast of the ship, a deep indentation which looked like the mouth of a gulf or estuary. This we naturally felt anxious to explore, and we hoped to have leave to do so the next day.

Soon after we had furled sails, the commander directed Peter Mudge to take the jolly-boat and board the whaler, with a message to the master requesting any newspapers of a late date which he might possess. "Yes, you may go, Rayner," he said to me. "And, Mr Mudge, take him a leg of mutton my steward will put into the boat, and some

oranges we brought from Rio." We had killed a sheep the previous day.

We were soon on board the whaler. The master, a middle-aged, grave-looking man, in a long-tailed coat and broad-brimmed hat, not much like a sailor in outward appearance, received us very civilly, and was grateful for the present, as his wife, he said, was in delicate health, and to her it would be especially welcome. He invited us into the cabin where she was seated. She was a nice, pleasant-looking woman, though it struck me that her countenance bore a peculiarly melancholy expression. He at once handed us a bundle of English papers, published long after we had left home, and which were very welcome.

"You'll stop and take supper with us, gentlemen. I hope," he said; "it will be on the table immediately. I don't know, however, that I can offer you better fare than you'll get on board your own ship."

Mudge assured him that he did not care about that, and was happy to accept his invitation.

While we remained in the cabin, our men were entertained by the crew.

We had just taken our seats, when the door of a side cabin opened, and a young lady stepped out, looking more like a fairy, or an angel, or some celestial being, than a mortal damsel. So I thought at the time. Mudge and I rose and bowed; she returned our salutation with a smile and a slight bend of her neck. The master did not introduce us, nor did he say anything to let us know who she was. I, of course, thought that she was the captain's daughter; but she did not address Mrs Hudson as mother, and from some remarks she made I doubted whether such was the case. She at once entered into conversation without the slightest bashfulness; and it struck me that she was exerting herself, not so much to entertain us, as to keep up Mrs Hudson's spirits.

The meal did not occupy much time, so that we had but little opportunity of talking. I thought the young lady's voice very sweet and melodious; indeed, she seemed to me the most perfect being I had ever seen. But then, it must be remembered, I was but a midshipman, and my experience was not very extensive; and the best part of a year had passed since we left England.

At last, however, Mudge, pulling out his watch, observed that it was time to be on board again; so getting up, he wished Mrs Hudson and the young lady good-bye in his hearty way, and I was compelled to follow his example. Tears came into Mrs Hudson's eyes as she took me by the hand and murmured, "May Heaven preserve you from the dangers of the sea!" The young lady smiled very sweetly, and I could not help wishing that I might have the opportunity of paying another visit to the *Hopewell*.

The first mate had accompanied me on deck, where I found the master talking to Mudge. I therefore went a little way along the deck to summon our boat's crew, who were with the men forward.

"Mrs Hudson appears to be very melancholy," I observed to my companion.

"She has reason to be so, poor lady," said the mate. "She has never got over the loss of her only child, in these seas, some years ago. It was a sad affair, for he was a fine brave little chap, the pet of all hands. The master's, and my boat, and the second mate's, had gone off in chase of whales, when another fish was seen spouting in an opposite direction. The third mate's boat was lowered, when the little fellow, whose mother was ill below, asked to be taken. The third mate, instead of refusing, thoughtlessly consented to let him go; and before the boatswain or any one else who had sense in his head saw what he was doing, he had carried him down into the boat; no one on deck, indeed, knew he had gone. Away pulled the boat, when the look-out at the mast-head shouted that one of our boats had struck a fish, and the boatswain accordingly made sail towards her. The whale, however, darted away, towing the boats for a league or more farther off, and we then had a hard matter to kill it. It had long been dark before we got alongside, by which time the weather had changed, and the wind was blowing very strong, while a nasty sea had got up.

"I shall never forget the state poor Mrs Hudson was in when she could not discover what had become of her child; while her husband was almost as bad. At last one of the boys, who had before been afraid to speak, acknowledged that he saw little Harry in the arms of the third mate just before the boat shoved off, but that he, being called below at that moment, could not tell what had become of the child. We at once cut adrift the fish we had secured, and made sail in the direction the boat was supposed to have gone, placing lanterns in the rigging and firing guns to show our whereabouts. The weather, however, had been growing worse and worse, and with the heavy sea there was running, the boat herself, we knew, would be in no slight peril.

"All night long we continued cruising over the ground; but not a sign of the boat could we discover. When morning came, we continued our search, with the same want of success. Towards noon the weather again moderated; but though fish were seen spouting, the master would not send the boats after them; and unwilling as we were to lose them, none of us had the heart to press him to do so.

"For the best part of a week we stood backwards and forwards in all directions looking for the boat; till at last the men began to grumble, and I felt it my duty to urge the master to carry out the object of the voyage. Almost broken-hearted, he consented to do so. Slowly his poor wife recovered; and from that day to this they have never found any trace of their lost child. Probably the third mate had got hold of a fish; and he having but little experience, his boat must have been knocked to pieces, or else dragged down by the line becoming foul before it could be cut."

"A very sad history," I remarked; "and I am not surprised at poor Mrs Hudson's melancholy. But who is the young lady?" I asked.

"That is more than I can tell you," he answered. "She came on board the evening before we sailed, but not one of us had ever heard of her till then, and neither the master nor Mrs Hudson thought fit to enlighten us on the subject; while she herself, though ready enough to talk to me at the dinner-table, seldom says anything to any of us on deck."

“How very romantic!” I could not help exclaiming, more interested than ever in the young lady.

Wishing Captain Hudson good-bye, we shoved off, and as we pulled away we saw the young lady standing on the poop watching us. I pulled off my cap, and she waved her handkerchief in return.

The account we gave of her and the master’s wife excited much interest on board.

The next morning, as the gale continued, a party was made up to visit the shore. It consisted of the second lieutenant and master, Peter Mudge, Tommy Peck, and I. We pulled in for the opening we had seen, and which I found to be much farther off than I had supposed—the height of the rocks at the entrance, which rose sheer out of the water, making the land appear quite close to us. At length we entered a narrow passage with high rocks on both sides for some distance, completely bare of trees; indeed, there was not a spot in which the roots could have fixed themselves. Gradually, however, the passage opened out, and we found ourselves in a large basin, the shore of which was covered with the richest vegetation, extending far up the sides of the mountains rising around us. Dark rocks peeped out from amid the trees which grew on the mountain-sides till lost to view, while above them were seen towering peaks covered with glittering snow. The master sounded as we went in, and found the depth of water sufficient for the largest ship. Here she might remain at anchor or moored to the trees, while the fiercest gale was blowing outside, as securely as in an artificial dock.

We pulled round one side of the basin, but could find no opening by which, should we step on shore, we could make our way up the mountain. We did, indeed, land at two or three places, but it was impossible to get beyond a few yards from the water’s edge. Probably, no human being had ever before set foot in that wooded region. Not even the chirp of a bird was heard, nor was any sign of life visible—silence and solitude reigned around. The whole surface of the ground was one mass of rotten timber, covered with various descriptions of moss and ferns. The trunks of trees which had fallen either from age and decay, or from being blown down by the wind, lay about in all directions; another generation having grown up to share the same fate, and to be succeeded by others still proudly rearing their heads green and flourishing.

“Come, it won’t do to be balked!” exclaimed the master. “We’ll make our way somehow or other through the forest;” and the boat was run with her bow against the yielding bank. “You’ll follow me!” As he said this he sprang on shore, or rather on to the trunk of a tree. “All right—come along,” he exclaimed; “do as I do.” The next instant, however, over he went on his nose, and disappeared.

We followed, and found his legs sticking up, while his head and shoulders were three or four feet deep in damp wood and moss. We managed to haul him out, covered from head to foot with wet moss; his blue suit turned into one of green, fitted for the woodland region in which he was so anxious to roam. Undaunted, however, he made his way onwards, now climbing over a somewhat firm trunk; only, however, the next instant to sink up to his middle in the moss and decayed wood. Tommy followed, but was very nearly smothered, and not without difficulty we hauled him out; then the master, finding himself alone, came back grumbling at our cowardice, as he called it.

We now all embarked, and pulled along the shore in the hope of finding a more practicable way up the mountain. As we got to the head of the basin, we discovered a stream flowing into it; up this we pulled for some distance,—the bank on either side being covered with vegetation,—till we reached a rocky ledge on one side, over which the water had apparently at one time flowed. A low waterfall a slight distance ahead showed that further progress was impracticable. We accordingly landed on the ledge, and once more attempted to make our way up the mountain. We had much the same sort of ground to go over as that on which the master had made his first essay; but as the belt of forest which separated us from the steep side of the mountain was much narrower than in the former place, we persevered, and soon found that we were ascending.

Up and up we went, helping ourselves along by the roots and branches of the trees, the more stunted growth of which at length showed the height we had reached. We now emerged from the forest, when the ground above us appeared covered with spongy moss, the walking over which we found comparatively easy, saturated though it was with snow-water, which fell in every direction in tiny cascades over the side of the mountain. Even the grass and moss were at length left behind, and we found ourselves treading on half-melted snow, which, as we ascended, became more crisp and solid—the bright glare, as the sun fell on it, proving very trying to our eyes after the gloom of the forest. Still, on we went for some distance, the ground being almost level; then we ascended, and, passing over the ridge, descended once more into a shallow valley, on the other side of which the mountain rose at a moderate inclination, which, it appeared to us, we could mount without any impediment till we reached the summit. Thence we expected to obtain a magnificent prospect over the sea on one side, and the country towards the interior on the other.

We did get up it somehow or other, panting and exhausted, with our heads aching and our eyes dizzy, to encounter a fierce snow-storm which shut out all objects from view. To remain here longer might prove our destruction; we soon, therefore, began our descent. But the traces of our upward path were obliterated, and after descending a short distance we discovered that we had lost our way. I had gone some little distance ahead of the rest of the party, when I saw before me a gentle slope of snow, by sliding down which I fancied that I should quickly arrive at the bottom; so, calling to my companions, I began slipping gently downwards.

“It’s very pleasant and easy,” I shouted out—“come along;” and on I went.

I had gone some hundred yards, when, the atmosphere clearing, I saw rising before me a perpendicular cliff, which I knew was the opposite side of a deep chasm. Unless I could stop myself, I should be dashed to pieces. I thereupon dug my arms and legs into the snow; but still on I went. I now heard a shout, and looking up I saw Tommy laughing merrily as he descended, totally unaware of the fearful peril he was in. I cried out to him to stop himself if he could; but he did not understand what I said. On I went; not a tree nor a rock appeared to which I could cling. The precipice could not have been fifty yards before me, when, making another desperate effort, I got my feet through the snow

and fixed against a rock in the ground. Still Tommy came on, with the rest of the party some way above him. Just as he shot by me, I seized him by the leg and brought him up. “Why did you do that?” he cried out, even then not knowing how close he was to the edge of the precipice. When he saw it, he joined his shouts with mine; and then pointing to the left, where I observed that the inclination was less steep, we directed the party towards it. Scrambling along on our knees and hands, we joined them; and now, moving with the greatest care, fearing every instant to be sent sliding down to our right, we at length reached a ledge by which we made our way into the valley.

The danger was now past, but we had to undergo immense fatigue before we got back to the boat.

We had intended calling on board the whaler, to pay another visit to Captain Hudson, but the lateness of the hour compelled our return to the ship. I was much disappointed, as I hoped to see the young lady by whose appearance I had been so much struck the previous day; but I consoled myself with the expectation of being able to go on board the next morning.

During the night, however, the gale completely ceased; and when I came on deck I saw the whaler under all sail standing out of the harbour, with the wind off the land. We followed, but did not again get near enough to communicate with her. We stood some distance off the coast, and then continued our course to the northward.

Very frequently, afterwards, did the image of that fair young girl recur to my memory, though she did not appear to have made so much impression on Peter Mudge; but he sometimes spoke of the captain’s wife, and seemed to sympathise with her on the loss of her child, though it had happened so long ago.

The peaks of the Cordilleras again came in sight, at a distance of a hundred and fifty miles, long before the shore at the base of the mighty range was visible—one of them, Aconcagua, rising to an elevation of upwards of 23,000 feet above the ocean. We touched at Valparaiso; which might, we agreed, possibly be a paradise for fleas, but certainly not for human beings of good taste. The climate is fine,—of that I have no doubt,—but the surrounding country is sterile and monotonous, the vegetation just then on the hills consisting of half-withered cacti, though in the valleys and the plains to the left of the town we saw groves of fruit trees and flowering shrubs. I can best describe the place by saying that it is divided by two deep ravines into three hills, sprinkled over with whitewashed houses; the hills are called fore-top, main-top, and mizen-top.

Sailing from thence, during my watch one morning I heard a cry of “Land ahead!” I looked out, but nothing like land could I see.

“We shall get sight of it before long from the deck,” observed Mudge, “if we keep our eyes open.”

The ship, as she glided onward, rose and sank with the swell of the ocean; and presently, as she rose, I caught sight of what appeared to be a fleet of vessels at anchor. The next instant they had disappeared; but as she rose on the next swell I again caught sight of the seeming masts, which I gradually discovered to be tall cocoa-nut palms or pandanus trees. On approaching nearer, the whole white beach was distinctly seen; and above it a narrow belt of land of a light clay colour, surrounding a perfectly smooth lagoon of a beautiful blue tint; while against the outer belt the surf was breaking with terrific force. The highest part of the land appeared to be about ten or twelve feet above the level of the sea; and we calculated that the belt between the sea and the lagoon was about seven hundred feet wide, the soil being composed of coral débris and vegetable matter. Besides the palm-trees, there were a few shrubs not more than fourteen or fifteen feet in height. The whole island was about eight miles long, and from one and a half to two miles wide.

We sounded as we approached, but could obtain no bottom; and it was not till we got quite close that the lead gave us ninety fathoms, and farther on seventy, thus proving that the land was the top of a submerged mountain. Such, indeed, are all the islands of this group. Once upon a time in the world’s history, a mountainous region existed on the spot over which we were sailing, which gradually sank till the ocean flowed over all the highest portions. The coral insects finding it a convenient situation on which to build, the temperature of the water suiting their constitution, commenced operations, and formed an encircling reef round the shore. These creatures can only live at a certain depth beneath the surface; thus, as the land continued to sink, the first builders died, while others continued to work above their habitations. Still the land sank, and the coral insects worked on, building higher and higher till the summit of the mountain was not only covered, but was many fathoms deep below the surface. This, however, did not prevent the persevering creatures from continuing their operations; till at length a time came when the subsidence of the land ceased. The breakers then washed up portions of the coral on to the summit of the reef, which by degrees crumbled away from the action of the atmosphere. Sea-birds made it their home, and deposited the seeds of various plants, while the ocean washed up other seeds still containing germinating powers. Thus vegetation commenced; and the trees and shrubs decaying, more vegetable mould was formed to support the existence of a further succession of trees and shrubs.

I give this information here, though I did not obtain it till long afterwards; indeed, I believe that no one at the time understood how the island was formed. I asked Mudge, who told me that it was placed there by Nature, as other parts of the earth had been formed, to give a pleasing variety to the face of the globe.

“It will afford us anything but a pleasing variety, if we have to sail through a sea studded with such islands as these,” I could not help observing; “for if we don’t keep our eyes open, we shall be running on them.”

“You may well say that, my boy,” he answered. “And as they extend for the best part of two thousand miles across the Pacific, we shall be lucky if our keel escapes acquaintance with some of them, should the commander take it into his head to cruise through their midst.”

The ship having reached the lee side of the island, a boat was lowered, and Mudge and I accompanied the first lieutenant to try and open a communication with the inhabitants,—carrying with us some trifles, such as beads, small looking-glasses, and other trinkets, furnished us at home to barter with the natives or to use as presents in order to

gain their good-will. As we pulled in, a number of them appeared on the beach armed with long spears and clubs, which they brandished with menacing attitudes, as if they would prevent us from landing. We had taken Dicky Popo with us, under the belief that, seeing a person of a darker skin than ours among us, they might be inclined to trust us; not that it was supposed he could understand their language.

As they still continued waving us off, the lieutenant held up a string of beads and some other articles. Then, not wishing to risk the safety of the boat by running her on the coral beach,—on which the surf, beating heavily, might soon have stove in her bows,—we pulled in as close as we could venture, and he threw the articles on shore. The savages eagerly picked them up; but still they did not appear satisfied as to our friendly intentions, and continued waving us off, shouting, at the same time, at the top of their voices. As they did not throw their spears, however, or make any other hostile movements, we remained at a short distance from the beach, hoping that the presents we had given them would produce a more amiable state of mind. Still, though we did all we could to win their confidence, whenever we got a little nearer they again began gesticulating, showing that they had no intention to let us land if they could help it.

Besides the men on the beach, we saw a group of people at some distance, who seemed to be watching our proceedings with great interest, and apparently holding back one of their number who was making efforts to break away from them. In colour and costume, or rather in the want of it, he differed but little from the rest; and we therefore concluded that he was insane, or that from some other cause his companions objected to his coming near us. As the commander had given orders that we should on no account force a landing, our lieutenant, believing that we should be unable to accomplish our object, put the boat round; and we were pulling off, when the man we had seen escaped from those who held him, and, dodging round the others, sprang into the water, and with rapid strokes swam off towards us, in spite of several spears hurled at him. Mr Worthy instantly pulled back to take him in.

“Glad get among you,” he exclaimed, greatly to our surprise, in tolerable English, as he climbed over the side.

“Why, my friend, who are you?” asked Mr Worthy.

“I Kanaka,” he answered; by which we knew that he was a Sandwich Islander.

As we returned to the ship, he explained that he had belonged to a vessel caught in a gale off the island; when, having been washed overboard from the bowsprit, and no attempt being made to pick him up, he had remained afloat all night, and succeeded the next morning, in a way that only a Sandwich Islander could have accomplished, in reaching the island. Happily the inhabitants did not see him till he had recovered his strength. He then went boldly among them; and as he was able to make himself understood, he had, by the way he addressed them, gained their confidence, though he believed that they would otherwise immediately have put him to death. His knowledge being superior to theirs, he was looked upon with much respect; and as he had already taught them many things they did not before know, the people wished to retain him among them.

“Dey stupid savages,” he observed with a look of contempt; though, except that he could speak a little English, we were not inclined to consider him much raised above them in the scale of civilisation.

The lieutenant then inquired the character of the vessel from which he had been washed overboard. The Kanaka, shaking his head and throwing an expression of disgust into his countenance, answered, “No good;” and on further examining him, Mr Worthy came to the conclusion that she was either a pirate, or a craft engaged in carrying off the inhabitants to work in the mines of Peru—the rumour having reached us at Valparaiso that some vessels had been fitted out for that purpose. He had for some time been serving on board a whaler, where he had learned English; and having deserted at a port in Peru, had joined this craft in the hope of getting back to his own island, whither he had understood she was bound.

His name, he told us, was Tamaku. He and Dicky Popo soon became great friends, and both made themselves very useful on board. It was singular that they should have joined us much in the same way. Tamaku was likely to prove of service in acting as interpreter with the natives of Polynesia; for the language of the Sandwich group differs but slightly from the dialects of the other brown-skinned races inhabiting the numerous archipelagoes which dot its surface. The Sandwich Islanders can thus generally make themselves understood wherever they go.

Tamaku being a merry, obliging fellow, became a favourite with the crew, and we hoped that we should be able to retain him on board even after our visit to the Sandwich Islands, to which we were now bound.

We were glad enough to get clear of the Low Archipelago, for it is a serious matter to be caught in a gale amid its countless coral reefs, many of which are not to be seen until the ship is close upon them; and even in fine weather the greatest vigilance is required to avoid them. We had a look-out at each fore-topsail-yardarm, at the fore-topmast-head, and often at the bowsprit end, as the submerged reefs can in calm weather be distinguished only by the darker colour of the water. Even when we were clear of these, we had still to keep a look-out for other islands in our course; as well as for the craft which Tamaku had described to us, or for her consorts, which the commander was very anxious to catch.

As we were soon afterwards running on with a flowing sheet during the night, the stars being obscured by clouds, and the wind pretty strong, “Land! land on the starboard bow!” was shouted from forward. “Land ahead!” was the next startling cry. What dangerous reef might run off it was not known. “Starboard the helm!” shouted the officer of the watch; “brace the yards sharp up!”

“All hands on deck!” was the next cry; for the ship was heeling over so much to the gale that it became necessary to shorten sail without delay. As it was, the risk of carrying away the yards, if not the masts, was very great. While the hands were hauling aft the sheets, a loud clap was heard. The main-tack had given way, and the clew of the sail was flapping furiously in the wind, threatening with death all within its reach.

At the instant it gave way a sharp cry reached my ears. Immediately afterwards a voice from the poop shouted, “Man overboard!” But, alas! whoever he was, no assistance could be rendered him. Destruction awaited the ship should she not weather the land ahead. One of my messmates who was on the poop—Tommy Peck by name—acting upon the impulse of the moment, cut the lanyard of the life-buoy, which fell into the seething ocean; though he either forgot to pull that which would have ignited the port-fire, or the port-fire itself was damaged, as no light was seen as it fell into the water.

Some minutes of anxious suspense followed, during which the ship was ploughing her way through the dark seas which, rolling onward, burst into masses of foam on the rocky shore to leeward.

At length the open ocean could be seen beyond the point which gradually appeared over our starboard quarter; but the commander dared not yet keep the ship away, not knowing how far the reef extending from it might reach. In the meantime the tack had been secured, and two reefs taken in the topsail. Even as it was, however, the ship, slashing through the foaming seas, could scarcely look up to the gale, and I every moment expected to see her go right over. The water was rushing through her ports, and rose half-way up the deck to the combings of the hatchway. With infinite relief, therefore, I heard the order given to port the helm and square the yards; and once more we flew on before the wind, leaving the dark land astern. It seemed as if there had come a sudden lull, so easily did she now speed on her way over the ocean.

All were eager to know who had been lost, and the muster-roll was called. One after another the men answered to their names, till that of Dicky Popo was shouted out. No Dicky answered, and it became certain that he was the unfortunate individual lost. Tamaku expressed his grief with a loud wail. “O Popo! Popo! why you go overboard?” he cried out. “You not swim like Kanaka, or you get to shore. But now I know you at de bottom of de sea.”

It was sad, indeed, to think that the poor lad had gone overboard at a moment when it was utterly impossible to render him any assistance. Under other circumstances he might easily have been saved, as the sea, though rough, was not sufficiently so to prevent a boat being lowered. Now, however, we could not go back to look for him; indeed, as Tamaku said, he must long before this have perished.

We after this sighted the Marquesas, to which the French have laid claim, though they have made no attempt to colonise these beautiful and fertile islands.

The Sandwich Islands were at length reached, and we brought up off Honolulu, in the island of Oahu. We were more struck with the beauty of the scenery than with that of the female portion of the inhabitants; but as the islands have been so often described, I will not attempt to do so; merely remarking that they are eleven in number, some of them about a hundred miles in circumference. Hawaii, formerly known as Owhyhee, is very much the largest, being eighty-eight miles in length by sixty-eight in breadth; and it contains two lofty mountains, each upwards of thirteen thousand feet in height—one called Mauna Kea, and the other Mauna Loa, which latter is for ever sending forth its volcanic fires, while it casts its vast shadow far and wide over the ocean.

After leaving Honolulu, which in those days was a very different place to what it is now, we brought up in the Bay of Kealakeakua, celebrated as the place where Captain Cook lost his life. As we entered the bay we could see in the far distance the towering dome of Mauna Loa. The whole country round bore evidence of the volcanic nature of the soil; broken cliffs rose round the bay, on the north side of which a reef of rocks offers the most convenient landing-place. It was here that Captain Cook was killed, while endeavouring to reach his boat. A few yards from the water stands a cocoa-nut tree, at the foot of which he is said to have breathed his last. The *Imogene* carried away the top of the tree; and her captain had a copper plate fastened on to the stem, the lower part of which has been thickly tarred to preserve it. On the plate is a cross, with an inscription—“Near this spot fell Captain James Cook, the renowned circumnavigator, who discovered these islands, A.D. 1778.”

Tamaku having been allowed to remain on shore during the time we were here, came off again of his own free will, and expressed his readiness to continue on board.

We again sailed to the southward. The commander had been directed to visit the archipelagoes on the western side of the Pacific, but he wished first to make a survey of the island on which we had so nearly run during the gale on our course northward.

I have, by-the-by, said very little about my messmates, except Mr Worthy, Peter Mudge (who acted as my Mentor, as he was likewise that of all the youngsters), and my chum Tommy Peck. There was another mate, who had lately passed,—Alfred Stanford, a very gentlemanly, pleasing young man. We had, besides, a surgeon, a master’s assistant, the captain’s clerk and the purser’s clerk, who made up the complement in our berth. My chief friend among the men was Dick Tillard, an old quartermaster, to whom I could always go to get instruction in seamanship, with the certainty that he would do his best to enlighten me. He had been at sea all his life, and had scarcely ever spent a month on shore at a time. He was a philosopher, in his way; and his philosophy was of the best, for he had implicit confidence in God’s overruling providence. If anything went wrong, his invariable remark was,—“That’s our fault, not His who rules above; trust him, lads, trust him, and he will make all things right at last.”

I have very little to say about our second lieutenant, or the master, or surgeon, or purser,—who, as far as I knew, were respectable men, not above the average in intellect, and got on very well together in the gunroom; so that our ship might have been looked upon as a happy one, as things go, though I confess that we cannot expect to find a paradise on board a man-of-war.

I must not omit to mention our boatswain, a person of no small importance on board ship. So, at all events, thought Mr Fletcher Yallop, as he desired to be called; and if we youngsters ever wanted him to do anything for us, we always thus addressed him—though, of course, the commander and officers called him simply Mr Yallop. If the men addressed him as Mr Yallop, he invariably exclaimed,—“Mr Fletcher Yallop is my name, remember, my lad; and I’ll

beg you always to denominate me by my proper appellation, or a rope's end and your back will scrape acquaintance with each other."

He explained his reasons to me in confidence one day. "You see, Mr Rayner, I expect before I die to come into a fortune, when I shall be, of course, Fletcher Yallop, Esquire. I can't make the men call me so now, because I am but a simple boatswain; but I like the sound; it keeps up my spirits. When I get out of sorts, I repeat to myself: 'Fletcher Yallop, Esquire, be a man; be worthy of your future position in society when you take your place among the nobility of the land, and perhaps write M.P. after your name,'—and in an instant I am myself again, and patiently bear the rubs and frowns to which even warrant-officers are subjected. In truth, though I wish you not to repeat it, Mr Rayner, I may become a baronet; and I always look with trembling interest at the Gazette, to see if a certain person, whose heir I am, has been raised to that dignity."

I ventured to ask the boatswain on what he grounded his hopes of fortune.

"That is a secret, Mr Rayner," he replied, "which I must not divulge, even to you; but you would not doubt my word, I am sure. That must be sufficient for the present; and I must request you not to make the matter a subject of conversation among your messmates. They would not enter into my feelings as you do."

I found, however, that Mr Yallop had been equally confidential to Tommy Peck, though he had not ventured to talk of his hopes either to Mudge or Stanford. Tom and I, on comparing notes, came to the conclusion that the boatswain was under a hallucination; though, as it was a very harmless one, and afforded him intense satisfaction without in any way interfering with his duty, we agreed that it was as well to let him enjoy it. He was, indeed, a first-rate seaman and an excellent boatswain, though he handled the rope's end pretty freely when any of the ship's boys or ordinary seamen neglected their duty. He was a broadly built man, with enormous black whiskers; and no one would have supposed that he possessed a single grain of romance in his composition. He had an eagle eye, and a sun-burned, weather-beaten countenance; but I believe he had as tender a heart as any man in the ship.

Nothing of importance occurred till we sighted the island against which we had so nearly run. Standing in with the lead going, we found good anchorage in a wide bay, protected by a high point of land on one side and a reef on the other. The captain wishing to survey the island, and the weather being fine, he ordered his gig to be manned, and, much to my satisfaction, told me to be ready to accompany him. We took a supply of provisions for the day, as we did not expect to be back till late in the evening.

While the first lieutenant and master were surveying the bay in which the ship lay, and the coast in its immediate neighbourhood, we pulled round to the opposite side of the island. We had as yet seen no natives, but as cocoa-nut trees were visible on shore, we concluded that some parts of it were inhabited. The centre was of considerable height, and was evidently of volcanic origin, the highest point being apparently a volcano, though no smoke or fire was seen proceeding from it.

We had been pulling on for three or four hours, keeping at some distance from the shore, to avoid the reefs which ran off it, as the captain wished to make the whole circuit during the day, when, just as we had doubled the point, we saw right ahead, some way from the shore, a small canoe with a flag flying at her bow. The commander ordered the men to give way, fearing that the natives in the canoe, when they saw us, would attempt to escape, and he specially wished to gain information from them. (Tamaku, I should have said, formed one of the crew, having been taken to act as interpreter.) There appeared to be no one on board the canoe, which was at anchor; but as we drew nearer we saw the head of a person rise up above the gunwale, when, as it seemed, he for the first time caught sight of us. He gazed towards the gig with astonishment, though without uttering any cry of alarm.

"He has an unusually white skin for a native," observed the captain; "indeed, he must be, I am sure, a European."

The boy, for his features showed that he was very young, took something from the bottom of the canoe, as we drew near, and kneeling down in the bow in a suppliant manner, held out his hand towards us. The commander, anxious not to alarm him, ordered the gig to pull round and back in quietly astern, while, standing up, he leaned forward to examine what the boy had got in his hand. Just at that moment another head rose above the gunwale of the canoe from the outside; but that was black as jet; and what should I see but Dicky Popo's astonished countenance, his ivory teeth gleaming whitely as his mouth distended from ear to ear.

"Oh, ky! cappen—and you, Massa Rayner—where you come from?" he exclaimed, as he rested on his elbows before getting into the canoe.

So interested was the captain in the appearance of the white boy,—more even than in the number of beautiful pearls he held in his hand,—that he scarcely recognised Popo.

"Who are you, and where do you come from?" asked the commander.

The lad only shook his head, as if he did not understand his question—still keeping his hand extended, with the pearls in it.

"He no speakee English," said Popo, who had just scrambled into the canoe.

"Why, Dicky Popo," cried the commander, "you here, my boy!"

I could not resist shaking Popo by the hand, so delighted was I to see him.

"Yes, massa cappen; me no drownee," he answered.

"That's very evident," said the commander; "and I shall be glad to know how you escaped. But first I want you to set

the mind of this poor lad at rest, as he seems in a great fright. Tell him we are friends, and will do him no harm, for he does not understand what I say to him."

Popo, more by signs than words, quickly succeeded in tranquillising the lad.

"Who is he?" asked the commander, "for his skin is as white as ours; and I cannot suppose that he is a native."

"He not say who he is," answered Popo; "but by-and-by perhaps talkee more."

"Well, we must wait patiently," said the commander. "Ask him if he has any objection to accompany us; and if he is ready to come we will take you and him into the gig, while we tow the canoe astern." After a few more signs and incomprehensible words had passed between Popo and the white boy, they both stepped into the gig; the latter still holding the pearls in his hand, which, as soon as he was seated, he again offered to the commander, who this time received them, and after examining them put them into his pocket. The canoe was then made fast to the gig astern, and we continued our course round the island.

The commander was engaged in noting its headlands and bays and other features, and could not give his attention to the lad; but I lost no time in trying to learn from Popo how he had escaped,—also drawing from him anything he knew about the white boy. On the first point he quickly enlightened me.

On falling overboard, he had caught sight of the life-buoy which Peck had providentially let go; and being a good swimmer, he had reached it, and climbing up, had made himself fast to it. With a feeling of dismay he saw the ship sailing on, but he did not gave way to despair, as after some time he discovered that the life-buoy was drifting towards the land. Still, he knew that, should it be driven among the breakers, he should in all probability be dashed to pieces on the rocks. However, as he told me, he hoped for the best, and clung on, finding himself getting nearer and nearer the shore.

When morning broke, he found that he was not more than a few cable-lengths from the beach. As the light increased he looked out anxiously, and, much to his satisfaction, saw that he was drifting towards a sandy bay. He cast off the lashings which had hitherto secured him, that he might swim on shore, knowing that the life-buoy would in all probability be rolled over and over.

It now advanced but little; and he was on the point of parting from it and beginning to swim, when he saw several natives come down to the beach, and among them a white lad. The former stood gazing at him, apparently indifferent to the rude breakers; the lad, however, directly afterwards began to launch a small canoe which lay on the beach, and jumping into it and actively working the paddle, made his way through the breakers towards him. Popo being quite sure that he came as a friend, left the life-buoy as soon as he drew near, and with a few strokes reached the bow of the canoe, over which he soon scrambled; when the boy at once paddled back to the beach, carrying him safely through the breakers. The savages, who were as brown as those he had before seen, gathered round him and examined his skin with much curiosity, supposing, he observed, that he had got on a black coat. They then made him and the white boy stand together, grinning at the contrast which their colours presented, and evidently satisfied that they themselves were the just medium.

Popo, who was very hungry, now made signs that he wanted something to eat. His new friend, hastening away, quickly returned from a hut at no great distance with some food, which the brown savages did not prevent his giving him. Popo soon found, however, that although his life was to be spared he was to be treated as a slave, as the white boy appeared to be.

After remaining on the beach a short time, the savages led him to their village, which consisted of a number of low huts. The women had been preparing their morning meal, after which some of the men went out to kill birds, while others occupied themselves in a taro plantation on some level ground to the rear of their village. Popo, meantime, who could scarcely keep his eyes open, was conducted by his white friend to a hut, where the latter spread a mat for him, and made signs that he might lie down. Scarcely had he done so when he fell fast asleep.

The next day, the weather being finer, many of the men went off in their canoes; Popo and the white boy being taken out in that of the chief. Popo found that they were engaged in diving for pearl-oysters. The white lad appeared to be among the best of their divers. He fearlessly plunged overboard with a net and a small axe—the net being attached to the boat by a line; and when his net was hauled up it was invariably full of oysters. The chief made signs to Popo that he must do the same. Though he was a good swimmer, he had never been accustomed to diving; but the white boy showed him how he could accomplish the feat, and after some practice he was able to go down, and succeeded almost as well as his companion.

Since he had been there, three vessels had come and purchased all the pearls which had been collected, when he and the white boy had been carried off some way from the shore, so that they might not communicate with the crews. After each visit paid by the pearl-traders, all the men in the village had become excessively tipsy; and on the first two occasions they, fearing that they might be ill-treated, had run off and hidden themselves, though they did not escape punishment. Popo had begun to learn his companion's language; which he spoke, however, in a way very different from the natives. They were thus able to communicate with each other.

Only the day before our arrival another trader had gone away, and at the present time every man in the village was drunk. As the old chief had on previous occasions beaten them, when he came to himself, for not having some pearls ready for him, they had come off in the canoe by themselves, and were engaged in fishing,—for so it may be called, —when we found them.

Such is an outline of the account Popo gave me.

All the time I was talking to Popo, the lad had his eyes fixed intently on me, as if he was endeavouring to understand

what we were saying.

“And you, Popo,” I asked; “are you glad to escape from the savages?”

“Yes, massa; dat I am,” answered Popo.

“And do you think your companion is the same?” I added, looking towards him.

“Yes, yes,” said the white boy, looking up at me.

“Why, you must be English; you have thoroughly understood what I said,” I exclaimed.

“Me tink so too,” observed Popo.

The commander, who had been listening to what we had been saying, now called Tamaku aft, and desired him to try if he could understand the white boy, who after he had last spoken seemed abashed, and could not be got to utter a word. Tamaku at once began to ask him questions, which he answered with apparent readiness in the same language, differing but slightly in sound.

“Can you make out how he came to be among the natives?” asked the commander, when Tamaku and the boy had ceased speaking.

“He not know much,” answered the Kanaka; “long time wid dem—say dey find him in a boat at sea, and bring him here and make him slavey.”

“Try and find out his name,” said the commander; “whether it is Tom or Dick, or Jack or Harry.”

Scarcely had he uttered the last word when the boy exclaimed, “Harry! Harry! dat my name,” and seemed almost overcome by hearing it uttered.

“Well, Harry, my boy, can’t you talk a little more English? Since you remember your name, tell us something about your father and mother, or any of your other friends,” continued the commander.

“Father—mother,” repeated the boy, with a look of pleasure, as if they were words once familiar to his tongue.

“Well done, my boy,” exclaimed the commander, pleased with the result of his experiment; “you’ll remember more words by-and-by, when you get on board. And we’ll not yet pay your drunken friends a visit to let them wish you good-bye.”

It was difficult to say whether the boy understood him; but, at all events, the commander’s kind tone of voice gave him confidence, and he seemed contented and happy.

As we had only just time to get round the island, the commander did not put on shore anywhere; also, with so small a party, he thought it imprudent to go among the natives, who might prove hostile—especially if they found that he was carrying off their slaves. Popo and the white boy appeared well-pleased at this; and it was evident that the latter had no great affection for those among whom he had lived so long.

Frequently during the remainder of the day we heard the boy saying to himself, “Yes, yes—Harry—father—mother,” as if pleased with the sound of those long-forgotten words. Then I was nearly certain that I heard him muttering to himself a verse of a child’s hymn; but the words were indistinct.

He listened attentively to every word we said, and now and then uttered a word after us.

“I suspect that in the course of a few days he will be able to tell us more about himself than he can do now,” observed the captain; “in the meantime, we must not bother him too much.”

We got on board just before darkness set in. Popo was greeted warmly by the whole of the crew, who were delighted to find that he had escaped and to have him back among them again; while Harry, as the white boy was at once called, was received with much curiosity, every one being eager to know who he was and how he had fallen into the hands of the savages. As may be supposed, he had not been many minutes on board before he was rigged out in a shirt and trousers and jacket, with a handkerchief round his neck, and a broad-brimmed hat on his head. He made no objection to putting on the dress, which really became him; and Dick Tillard, who acted as his valet, observed that it was surely not the first time he had been so rigged out.

Next day, the commander went on shore with a strongly-armed party, taking Tamaku with him, that he might try and obtain further information from the natives. The latter showed no signs of fear, being apparently accustomed to the sight of white men. They inquired what had become of the boys, and demanded to have them back. Tamaku replied that one of them belonged to the ship, and that the other desired to remain on board, so that they could not be given up; but the English commander would make a present to them if they would inform him honestly how they came to have the white boy among them. After this, by Tamaku’s account, they had a long palaver, when the old chief, stepping forward, said that he was ready to declare the truth: that some seven years before, as he and his people were on board a large canoe on their way to this island, they had fallen in with an English boat containing several men and a little boy; but the men had all died; and the little boy had been taken care of, and had lived with them ever since.

Tamaku had his suspicions that the men had been put to death; however, it was not worth while pressing the matter home on the chief, as, of course, he would have denied it.

The commander having finished his survey of the island, and obtained all the information respecting the boy which he could collect, we again made sail and stood to the westward.

Chapter Three.

Harry a member of our mess—He rapidly improves—Anchor off a volcanic island—Our boat-cruise round the island—Chase a whaler—A hurricane—Run before it—Driven on an island—Boat damaged—Find cocoa-nuts—Search for food—The bird island—We form a camp, and go to sleep.

I must not stop to describe our run to the westward, the islands we sighted, the narrow escapes we had of knocking our bows in against coral reefs, or the gales we encountered in the falsely so-called Pacific,—not but that it is pacific enough at times, when long calms prevail; and on two such occasions we lay basking, or rather sweltering, under the rays of a tropical sun, scarcely cooled even during the night. Still we all retained our health, being amply supplied with lime-juice and preserved vegetables, calculated to keep the much-dreaded scurvy at bay.

Harry at once became a favourite on board; for though he had been cowed by his task-masters, his spirit had not been broken. He was grateful for all kindness shown him, and anxious to learn, so that he in a short time was as civilised as any one on board. He also rapidly acquired a knowledge of English,—or, I may say, regained it, for so quickly did he pick up the more simple words, that it was clear he must have known them before. As he did so, recollections of the past seemed to come back to his mind; and when he was able to speak his thoughts, he mentioned numerous circumstances which convinced us of what the commander had from the first suspected.

I took a great liking to him, as he did to me; and taking care not to suggest ideas to him which might have led him into error, I frequently got him to tell me the recollections of his early days. He remembered his mother, whom he described as very beautiful, as he naturally thought her, and very like what Mrs Hudson must have been; and he spoke of his father as being a great chief, who commanded a number of men; and also of being on board a ship, which he said was very much larger than the *Heroine*, and had a great number of men and boats. He spoke, also, of enormous fish being caught, and brought alongside, and cut up and burned; so that, of course, I knew she must have been a whaler. At length he said he recollected being carried into a boat and rowed away from the ship, which he had never seen again; and now I had not a shadow of doubt that he was indeed the long-lost child of Captain and Mrs Hudson. He had no recollection of the murder of the crew, however; but he next remembered finding himself among dark-skinned savages, with whom he had ever afterwards remained. Possibly he might have been in an unconscious state, from want of food, when the boat was seized by the savages, and had so escaped witnessing the murder of her crew.

As soon as I made this out, I told the commander; who took great pains to cross-question Harry, and ultimately arrived at the same conclusion that I had done. He therefore at once told Harry that his surname was Hudson, and that he would spare no pains to restore him to his father and mother, who had long mourned him as lost. Harry seemed much affected by this, and often expressed to me his wish to see his mother again, declaring that he should know her at once; and he thought, also, that he could recognise his father. I reminded him that his mother would look much older than when he had been parted from her, as grief and sickness had paled her cheek; but that I felt sure she would recognise him, and that he must do his best to be like us, so that she might find him a real English boy.

The commander, on thus ascertaining who he was, asked us if we would receive him in the midshipmen’s berth,—charging us at the same time to set him a good example, by avoiding anything that was wrong, and by teaching him only what was right. Without a dissentient voice we all agreed to the commander’s proposal, and Harry Hudson forthwith became a member of our mess. Some of the men, and Dick Tillard especially, were at first rather jealous of this. When I told him what the commander had said, he replied,—“It’s all right, Mr Rayner; and if you follow his advice, it will do you as much good as it will Harry; and we’ll all be ready to serve him as much as before.”

The commander also spoke on the subject to Harry; who, however, did not require his lecture, as he took the greatest possible pains to imitate us, as well as to speak correctly. We began also to teach him to read and write; but I think he must have known his letters before, from the rapid way in which he learned them—he knew them all in a couple of days, and in a week could read short words; indeed, it was evident that he was possessed of great natural intelligence, and an amiable disposition. Yet, had he lived on with the savages, he would have remained as wild and ignorant as they were.

The commander, who was a truly religious man, frequently had him in to talk to him about God, and to tell him how man, being sinful, had separated from God, and had become a rebel to him; how God, notwithstanding, loved him, and yet how, being a God of justice, he must punish sin, and could not therefore forgive him unless he had allowed another—his own sinless Son—to be punished instead of sinful man. Harry thought over what the commander told him; and a day or two afterwards he repeated to me all that had been said, and observed that he was convinced it was just the plan to suit man’s wants, and that he would henceforth try to serve so good and merciful a God, and love that dear Son who had been punished instead of him. Thus Harry became a Christian; and, I believe, a much better Christian than very many on board. Of course, when we found him his mind was imbued with the same dark heathenism as were the minds of the savages among whom he had lived.

A sharp look-out was kept for a sail; and our earnest wish was, that as we got to the westward we should fall in with Captain Hudson’s ship, as he had intended to proceed in that direction. We were not so likely, it was feared, to fall in with any of the abominable Chilian kidnappers; they would probably only attempt to carry off the brown natives from the islands on the eastern side of the Pacific.

We were now, it will be understood, approaching the region inhabited by the black-skinned races. We had stood to the southward, and visited Samoa or Navigator’s Islands, inhabited by an intelligent brown-skinned race, far more

advanced in civilisation than the people we now expected to meet with; but I must not stop to describe them.

We had been some days at sea, still running to the westward, when we sighted a small island ahead. The captain considered that it was the northernmost of a chain of volcanic islands extending from the Friendly group; and, as it was not marked on the chart, he wished to survey it, so we accordingly stood on. As we approached nearer, we saw that it consisted of a range of conical peaks,—many of the hills rising sheer out of the water, while others were bordered by low cliffs or beaches. It had also several deep bays or inlets. Though it was surrounded by a coral reef, two openings were perceived in it, through which it appeared that there would be no difficulty in taking the ship, when we might find secure anchorage in one of the bays within it. A passage nearly the eighth of a mile wide appearing ahead of us, we entered, having look-outs as usual aloft, to warn us in time of any hidden reefs in our course, while the lead was also kept going.

The wind being light, it was evening before we came to an anchor; and darkness soon coming on, displayed to our eyes the magnificent spectacle of a volcano sending forth masses of flame, with hot lava running down the sides of the mountain in broad streams, some making their way towards the bay in which we lay, others being lost to sight in a deep gully, apparently on the other side. Now and then loud rumbling sounds were heard, like the discharge of big guns in rapid succession or the rattling of thunder; and the watch on deck declared they felt the ship shake, as if there had been an earthquake. Once, also, a shower of ashes fell on the ship’s deck, the wind having shifted, and blowing from off the land. The commander, however, did not consider there was any danger, so we remained quietly at anchor.

The next morning, when the commander and master were preparing to set off to commence their survey, Mudge asked me if I should like to make a trip along the coast. Of course I said Yes. As Tom and Harry begged that they might accompany us, Mudge got leave to take the jolly-boat, with Tillard, Tamaku, and Popo to assist in pulling. We provided ourselves with food to last us for the day, put four muskets and a cutlass apiece into the boat; though, as the island did not appear to be inhabited, we did not expect to meet with natives. We might, however, we thought, get a shot at some wild-fowl; and we intended landing somewhere and lighting a fire to cook our provisions.

Fully expecting to have a pleasant day, we pulled away from the ship. Shortly afterwards a breeze sprang up, and we made sail, running swiftly along the shore. Mudge and I had our note-books, in which we noted down the points and inlets, with the computed distances.

We soon got to the extreme end of the island, and had just doubled it when I caught sight of a vessel in the offing. I pointed her out to Mudge. He looked at her through his spy-glass. “She is becalmed,” he observed; “and, Rayner, do you just look at her, and tell me what you think she is; but speak in a low voice, because I don’t want Harry to hear.”

I took the glass, and made out that the vessel was barque-rigged; and though she was hull down, I felt sure that she was a whaler.

“From the appearance of her sails, I shouldn’t be surprised if she was the *Hopewell*,” said Mudge. “I am sure that the commander would wish us to try and communicate with her, and restore that poor lad to his parents; and even if it should fall dark before we can get back, the volcano will serve to guide us.”

Of course I was very willing to do as Mudge proposed. We agreed, however, not to say anything to Harry, lest we should disappoint him.

“We are going to board yonder barque,” said Mudge aloud; “there is an opening through the reef just abreast of us, and we shall have no difficulty in reaching her.”

“Orders are orders,” said Tillard; “I never knew any good come of disobeying them.”

Mudge, however, did not hear him; and I, looking forward to the pleasure of seeing Harry restored to his parents,—and it may be that I just thought of the pretty young lady I had seen on board,—did not repeat what he had said.

As there was a light breeze off the land, we hoisted our sail, that we might benefit by it as long as it lasted. Our only fear was that the barque might get the breeze also, and stand away from us. We kept rowing, therefore, to increase our speed. On we pulled, but in my eagerness it appeared that we were no nearer the barque than at first. I saw by Harry’s countenance that he was as eager as we were, and I could not help thinking that he suspected the object of our trying to board the barque. At last he asked, looking at me intently, “Do you think that my father’s ship?”

“We have some hopes that she is; but, you know, we may be mistaken, Harry,” said Mudge; “so you must not raise your expectations too high. Even if she is, we may not reach her; but, at all events, we’ll do our best to get on board.”

Soon after this, on looking through the glass I observed the barque’s sails fill out, though the wind came from a different quarter to that from which we got it.

“We may still cut her off, though we must steer rather more to the westward than we are doing,” remarked Mudge, altering the boat’s course.

We immediately afterwards got a much stronger breeze; and the boat ran merrily over the waves, which, as we got from under the lee of the land, were somewhat higher than they had before been. Still Mudge, in his eagerness, did not seem to notice this, nor, I confess, did I; having our eyes fixed on the vessel, we did not look astern. We had been standing on for some distance, when an exclamation from Tillard made me look towards the land, over which hung a dense black cloud. Directly afterwards, a loud rushing noise reached our ears, resembling the continuous roar of thunder, mingled with the sound of a downpour of rain. It was the voice of the hurricane. Tillard sprang to the halyards, and, without waiting for Mudge’s orders, lowered the sail half down.

“Keep her before the wind, Mr Mudge; it’s our only chance now!” he exclaimed.

Mudge, seeing that this was the best thing to be done, followed his advice; and the wind striking us the instant afterwards, away we flew directly before it. Had the seas been higher, we might have attempted to keep the boat’s head to wind, and our chance of escape would have been small indeed; as it was, fast as we flew through the seething ocean, we hardly escaped being pooped, the crests of the seas continually breaking over the stern and compelling all hands to keep baling. I looked for the barque, but could nowhere see her; indeed, the masses of spray which filled the atmosphere, mingled with showers of dust and ashes which came from the volcano, completely obscured all objects at a distance; and in a short time we entirely lost sight of the land itself. We all felt that we were in a most perilous position: did the sea get up more, we should in all probability be swamped; or did the gale continue and we live through it, we should be driven far away from the island. There might be others ahead, but they were certain to be surrounded by reefs, on which the boat would probably be dashed to pieces. All we could do was to keep the sail hoisted a few feet up, and to bale out the water as fast as it washed over the gunwale.

Night now came on, adding to the horrors of the scene. On and on we went, Mudge sitting at the helm, and steering the boat in a way which a good seaman only could have done. Tillard offered to relieve him.

“No,” he answered; “I got you into this mess, and it is my business to get you out of it if I can. The hurricane will come to an end at last,—maybe before daybreak,—and then we must do our best to make our way back to the island.”

In spite of our dangerous position, we were all getting very hungry; we had been about to land in order to cook our dinner, when we saw the barque, and after that we were too eager to think of eating. I got some biscuits out of our basket, which I served round to all hands; and I then found a bottle of wine.

“We must economise that,” observed Mudge, when he found what I was about; “half a glass to each person is as much as we ought to take—it may be longer than you suppose before we get back over the ground we have come.”

The food somewhat revived our spirits. Harry sat wonderfully quiet and calm; Tommy Peck’s teeth chattered a little, as if he did not like it; but neither Popo nor Tamaku uttered a word. The storm gave no signs of breaking, and on and on we went, rushing through the darkness. At any moment we might find ourselves, we knew, cast upon a reef, and the boat dashed to pieces; but that risk, fearful as it was, must be run.

I asked Mudge if he could tell what o’clock it was.

“It’s too dark to see the hands of my watch, but I judge that it is some time past midnight,” he answered.

I groaned, for I thought it must be nearly daybreak.

“God has taken care of us thus far, and he will take care of us, if he thinks fit, till morning,” observed Tillard; “we must not give in, however bad things look.”

At last day began to break. The wind blew as hard as ever, and no land was visible—only the tumbling, foam-crested seas, amid which we flew, were around us.

“Patience, lads,” said Mudge; “all we can do is to stand on as we have been going,—and we may be thankful that we have been preserved thus far,—better to have no land, than to find ourselves close to a coral reef with the sea dashing furiously over it.” Which there was no gainsaying.

After a time I again asked if I might serve out some food; to this Mudge consented, charging me to be careful as to quantity.

After taking our scanty meal, most of us lay down to rest again. Tillard having repeatedly begged Mudge to let him take the helm, Mudge at last agreed to his offer, desiring to be called in a couple of hours, or immediately should there be the slightest change; and in a moment, almost, he was asleep.

Tillard ordered Tamaku to keep a look-out ahead, while we four younger ones went to sleep. Before I did so, however, I took a look-out in every direction in the hope of seeing the barque; but no sail was in sight. Though the weather was much clearer than it had been on the previous evening, the gale blew as heavily as at first; and in a couple of hours Mudge started up and insisted on taking the helm again, while Tillard lay down to obtain the rest he so much needed, I taking Tamaku’s place in the bows.

Thus we ran on for the greater part of the day, hoping every hour that the wind would abate. Late in the afternoon I thought I saw land. I told Mudge, who, standing up, observed that there was no doubt about it. It was a small island directly in our course, so that we should have to haul up to avoid it.

“If we do, we shall be swamped,” said Mudge. “We must trust, therefore, to find an opening in the encircling reef, if there is one; but if not, to run into a harbour, or to beach the boat on the sand. Of course, you will understand, we may run on a coral reef and be dashed to pieces, or we may meet with the same fate against a rocky shore. We must trust to Providence, as we have done heretofore, and not expect the worst till it comes upon us.”

“We are ready, I hope, for whatever is to happen, Mr Mudge,” said Tillard; “and we know that you will do the best that is to be done under the circumstances.”

Though it would be satisfactory to run into a snug harbour, yet I could not help wishing that the land was farther off. We approached it with terrible rapidity; in a few minutes, I knew, our fate must be sealed.

Mudge stood up and gazed ahead. “The sea is breaking heavily over the encircling reef,” he said; “but there is a

smooth lagoon between it and the land. If we strike the reef, though our boat may be knocked to pieces we may be washed over into the lagoon, and those who can swim well may reach the shore," he said quite calmly.

He was silent for a minute, and no one else spoke.

"Lads," he exclaimed at length, "I see an opening—it is a narrow one, but we may get through it if we can hit the centre; get your oars ready, and stand by to hoist the sail, should I tell you."

Soon after he spoke I heard the roar of the breakers borne up against the blast, and turning round for a moment I saw that we were rapidly approaching them.

I felt that the boat was being hurled forward.

"Hoist the sail," he cried out; "and you at the oars, give way for your lives!"

We tore on, the foaming surges rising up on either side; the sea washed into the boat, and half filled her, but still we flew on. I know that I held my breath, as I should think did most of the party; but Mudge had a firm grasp of the helm, and I saw that his countenance exhibited no signs of dismay. Another sea struck the boat on the opposite quarter; the next moment, when I thought we were safe, a crash was heard,—the boat quivered from stem to stern,—we had struck the reef. A cry escaped from several of us, for we expected the boat to sink. Another sea came roaring towards us, completely deluging us, and washing away everything not firmly secured; but we held tightly to the sides and thwarts. I felt that the boat was being hurled forward.

"Pull for your lives, lads!" shouted Mudge.

Alas! only two oars remained. Those were plied lustily by Tillard, and Harry, and I; and before we had time for much more thought the boat was driven on the beach which formed the inner shore of the lagoon. How we had got there we could scarcely tell: all we knew was that we had been mercifully preserved. We leaped out of our shattered boat, and endeavoured to haul her up so as to prevent her being carried away by any of the following seas; but none of those which succeeded were of like size to that which had carried us on to the beach. We had great cause to be thankful that we had escaped the fearful danger which had threatened us. Exhausted with the anxiety we had felt, and want of sleep, we all sank down on the sand.

It was now nearly dark, and we felt too tired to go in search of any other spot on which we could rest. After a little time, however, our hunger reminded us that we had had no food for some hours; and as we naturally expected to obtain an abundance on the island, we agreed that we would at all events have a good supper. Tillard and Tamaku accordingly went to the boat to bring up our provisions, which had been stowed away in the locker.

As they were some time absent,—"Well, lads, when are you coming back with our food?" asked Mudge.

"We can't find it, sir," was the unsatisfactory answer. "It must have been washed out of the boat when that sea struck us."

There could be no doubt about the matter. The breaker of water, which had fortunately been secured, was at length found; the contents served to quench our thirst, but we had to go to sleep in our wet clothes, and supperless. Tommy began to grumble at his hard fate, for he was very sharp set; and so were we all.

"I'll tell you what, my lads," said Mudge: "we ought to be thanking God from our hearts that we have been preserved thus far; for in all my life I never came through so bad a sea as that we have just escaped from. Now let us just lift our voices together and praise Him from whom all blessings flow."

We joined heartily in the prayer Mudge offered up, as also in the hymn in which he led us; and then we again lay down on the bank, trusting that we should find food the next morning; and that if there were any inhabitants they might prove friendly.

The rays of the sun just rising out of the ocean awoke me. Harry and Tom were already sitting up; the rest of the party, having their faces turned away from the bright luminary, were still asleep. The country wore a more pleasing aspect than it had done when we landed in the gloom of evening. The shore was fringed by a variety of trees, among

which we recognised the graceful plume-like heads of a grove of cocoa-nut trees, several broad-leaved bananas, and a number of the pandanus or screw-pine (readily known by the beauty of its form and its white glossy leaves), as also the paper mulberry tree, of much lower growth, with large leaves. The gnawings of hunger, however, made us consider more particularly how we could most quickly obtain some cocoa-nuts,—which I saw hanging from the trees,—rather than about anything else. Harry and Tom were thinking of exactly the same thing; so we got up, and being unwilling to awaken our companions, proceeded together along the shore till we reached one of the smaller trees, which Harry said he could climb without difficulty.

“Then the sooner you are up it the better,” cried Tom; “for if I don’t get something solid to eat soon, I must turn into a sheep, and begin to nibble the grass and leaves.”

“Other animals than sheep eat grass and leaves,” I could not help saying; “you might find yourself turned into one of them.”

Tommy looked somewhat angry, which surprised Harry, who did not understand my allusion, never having seen either a sheep or a donkey. “Don’t quarrel,” he said. “I will soon get the cocoa-nuts; and Tom may eat a whole one if he likes.” So saying, he pulled off his shoes and socks, and began climbing the tree in a way neither Tommy nor I could have accomplished.

We watched him eagerly. I ran under the tree, intending to catch them.

“You had better stand away, or they may chance to break your head,” shouted Harry. In a short time he had reached the top of the tree, and broken off two large clusters of the fruit, with which he descended. “They might have broken, and we should have lost the milk,” he observed, as he reached the bottom.

While we were employed in breaking off the outer husks, Harry ran down to the beach and brought back a piece of sharp coral, with which he soon made a hole in one of the cocoa-nuts. “There,” he said, handing it to me, “drink that—that will do you good.”

How delicious the milk tasted! I passed it on to Tommy. In the meantime, Harry had another cocoa-nut ready. We insisted, however, on his taking the first draught from it. A third cocoa-nut supplied us all with as much liquid as we required; we then broke open the shells, but one cocoa-nut afforded us a sufficient breakfast. With the remainder we returned to the spot where we had left our companions; who were very glad, when they awoke, to find their breakfast ready.

The hurricane, I should have said, was over, and the sea glittered brightly in the rays of the sun. We asked Mudge whether he proposed returning at once to the island where we had left the ship.

“There are several reasons against our doing so,” he answered. “We must in the first place repair our battered boat—and that will be no easy job, I suspect; and we have but two oars remaining to pull, should it prove calm; then, we have no food nor water, and the distance which it has taken us a night and a day to accomplish may occupy us three or four days in returning, perhaps longer, should the wind be contrary. Before we can put to sea, therefore, we must repair our boat, and make a couple of oars at all events, if not more, and obtain a sufficient stock of provisions and water. It won’t do to trust to cocoa-nuts; we want fish or fowl, and it will take us more than a day to get them. We must also consider whether it will be prudent to go in search of the ship, as she may have left the harbour to look for us. Judging from the appearance of the country we saw, we are not likely to find any food upon it; so that should we arrive there after she has gone, we should be in a worse predicament than we should be by remaining here.”

The rest of the party agreeing to Mudge’s proposal, we went down to the beach and anxiously examined the boat. Two planks in her starboard bilge had been stove in, as had also a portion of her bow; and it seemed wonderful that she should have floated till she had reached the shore. Harry and I must have placed our feet unconsciously on the shattered planks, and thus partially prevented the water from rushing in. Tom, who was in the bows, had also pressed down the sail with his body, while he was desperately clinging to the foremost thwart. We could account for our preservation in no other way.

Without nails, or tools of any sort except our clasp-knives, we could scarcely hope to render the boat sufficiently sea-worthy for such a voyage as we might have to take before we could get back to the ship. We all looked at each other, wondering whether any one would suggest something.

“Our safest plan will be to remain on the island, in the hope that the ship may, in the course of time, come off the shore to look for us,” said Mudge. “They will know that if we have escaped, we must have been driven in this direction; and I don’t think our commander will desert us till he has made a thorough search in all directions. If the *Heroine*, from any cause, does not appear, we may hope that a whaler or some other craft may pass by and see our signals. We must keep a look-out on both sides of the island; for though we may be happy enough while we remain here, it won’t do to turn altogether into Robinson Crusoes.”

“Pleasanter than having to keep watch, however,” remarked Tom.

“We must think of our friends at home,” I observed. “Should the report reach England that we are lost, they will be mourning for us; and I for one am anxious to let Captain and Mrs Hudson know that we have found their son.”

“Very right, Godfrey,” said Mudge. “I am glad to see you thoughtful about others; and I don’t suppose Tom would wish to make his own family unhappy, as I have no doubt that they care for him more than he fancies.”

“I was not thinking about them just then,” said Tom. “However, if I catch sight of a passing sail, depend upon it I will do my best to let her know that we are here.”

The idea of immediately going off in the boat to try and find the ship was, therefore, of necessity abandoned. We agreed that our first business must be to explore the island, and ascertain what supplies of food we were likely to find. We had little doubt that we should procure other fruit besides cocoa-nuts, while we might also obtain oysters or other molluscs, and perhaps be able to catch fish—though we should first have to manufacture hooks and lines or nets of some sort.

While Mudge and Tom and I had been talking over these matters, Tillard had been again examining the boat. “I have been thinking, Mr Mudge, that if we could manage to get some small nails, we might secure some canvas over the damaged part of the boat, and patch her up fit to go to sea again,” he said.

“That ‘if’ is the most difficult thing to get over,” said Mudge. “Where are the nails to come from?”

“Out of the handles of our clasp-knives,” answered Dick. “I am a bit of a blacksmith; and I have been thinking that if I could manage to make a pair of bellows, I would soon get a forge up, and I should not be long before I had a few dozen of nails.”

“There’s another ‘if’ in the case,” observed Mudge.

“Yes, sir; but it’s one that can be got over, if I can catch a seal or some other animal with a thick skin.”

“Still there is an ‘if,’” said Mudge.

“Well, sir, but perhaps I can do without the skin. I’ll try and make use of a piece of canvas. I’ll render it air-tight with grease or wax, or something of that sort. I don’t promise to succeed, but I’ll try my best.”

“That’s all we can expect of you,” said Mudge.

Tillard’s proposal somewhat raised our hopes. We had, however, in the first place, to look out for water, though the cocoa-nut milk prevented our suffering from thirst; and, what was of equal importance, to search for food. Before setting out, we each of us cut a long pointed stick—the most ready weapon we could manufacture; not for defence, for it would be useless against the arms of the natives, should any exist on the island, but to enable us to kill any animals we might meet with, as also to assist us in getting over any rough ground, or to beat down the brushwood should we meet with forests through which we might have to force our way.

Leaving Tillard to look after the boat and to make preparations for repairing her, we set out. Mudge led the way, Tom and Harry and I followed, Tamaku and Popo brought up the rear. We proceeded along the sea-shore, which was more level than the interior, and presented few impediments to our progress. After going some distance to the south, we reached a region which had apparently, at no remote period, been covered by the sea—probably upheaved by some convulsion of nature. A few cocoa-nut and pandanus trees, however, grew on it, and a scant herbage. We were about to keep along the sea-beach, near which the land rose, covered thickly with trees, when I observed a number of birds hovering over the part of the island I have described. Crossing a level space covered at high tide by the sea, we reached what was evidently at such times an island. Numberless birds had made it their abode. As we approached, they seemed in no way alarmed—those which were sitting on their nests keeping their posts, merely poking out their necks, and uttering such hoarse croaks that we were almost deafened by the sound, and could scarcely hear each other speak.

“Hurrah!” cried Mudge, “we have here food enough to supply all our wants; and, what’s better, such as I hope we may be able to preserve for our voyage.”

A large number of the birds were sitting on their eggs, and so tame were they that we had to push them over to get at the said eggs. Among them were numerous beautiful tropic-birds, sooty terns, and gannets. The eggs of the latter were laid on the ground, without any nest; and so faithful were the hens to their trust, that they allowed themselves to be captured rather than desert them. The most remarkable and beautiful of those we saw, however, were the frigate-birds, whose nests, constructed of a few sticks, were seen in all the surrounding trees. The old birds, as they flew off, inflated their blood-red pouches to the size of a child’s head, looking exactly as if large bladders were attached to their necks, and not at all improving their appearance, handsome as they were in other respects. We at once filled our pockets with eggs; choosing such as looked the freshest. We also knocked down as many birds as we were likely to require for our dinner and supper. This discovery raised our spirits, as we had now as much animal food as we could require.

On our return along the sea-shore, we met with several large crabs. One big fellow had caught a snake, and was walking off with it wriggling in his claws, when down pounced a frigate-bird, and carried off both crab and snake together. Whole armies, too, of soldier-crabs, with their shells on their backs, were moving about in search of prey, or looking out for more commodious homes; it being their wise custom not to leave one home until they have found another. When they neglect this precaution, their soft tails are nearly sure to be nabbed by one of their numerous enemies. The snakes, as far as we could judge, were not venomous; though, as we were not certain of that fact, we agreed that it would be as well to avoid them. The tropic-birds were the tamest,—or I should rather say the least aware of the harm we might do them,—and allowed us to put our hands under them and carry off their eggs without showing the slightest fear.

We had to hurry back, as the tide was rising, and our retreat might be cut off.

On reaching the bay where we were cast ashore, we found that Tillard had made some progress with his forge.

“If I can once get the bellows to work, it will not be long before we shall have as many nails as we want. But we must have patience, sir,” he observed to Mudge; “patience will overcome all difficulties.”

We none of us were disposed to dispute this; so, just then, being rather anxious to cook our eggs and birds, I inquired how we were to get a light to kindle our fire. No one till then had thought of that important point. We each of us searched in our pockets for flint and steel, but none were to be found. The Sandwich Islander was applied to. We had heard that the natives of the South Sea Islands obtained a light by rubbing two pieces of wood together. He could do it, he replied, if he could find the right sort of wood. But the process was not an easy one, and required time; so, as we were too hungry to wait, we dined off raw eggs, with a dessert of cocoa-nut, washed down with the milk.

After we had finished our meal, Tamaku set off to look for the wood he required, while we were employed in collecting leaves and erecting some arbours of boughs, in which we might shelter ourselves during the night, instead of spending it, as we had done the previous one, on the open beach. It was nearly dark when Tamaku returned, saying that he had found the wood he required; but as we were tired and sleepy, we preferred lying down to rest instead of waiting till a fire could be kindled and provisions cooked.

Chapter Four.

On the island—Oysters on trees—Harry's narrow escape from a share—Our first breakfast—Tillard's forge—Expedition across the island—We manufacture nails and hooks—Find a boat—Successful fishing—Our friends return—Launch the boat—Dick and I start to sail round the island—Dick taken ill—My dismay—We are blown off the coast.

Although our beds of leaves were tolerably comfortable, and our clothes were dry, we did not oversleep ourselves, but awoke at daybreak the next morning. Refreshing as was the cocoa-nut milk we had obtained, we all felt very thirsty; so Mudge announced his intention of setting off to look for a spring of water, taking Popo with him to carry the breaker. Tamaku sat down with his knife to cut the wood he had found into the required shape for producing fire; Tillard proceeded with the arrangements for his forge; while Harry and Tom and I agreed to go along the shore to look for shell-fish, and to obtain a further supply of cocoa-nuts.

We had not gone far when we came to a creek, or narrow bay, running inland for some distance. Its shores were thickly lined with trees, their roots being washed by the water, and many of their boughs dipping into it. Near at hand we discovered a cocoa-nut tree bearing several bunches of fruit, and Harry at once volunteered to climb to the summit. While he was thus engaged, I heard Tom shouting out, "Halloa, here are oysters growing on the trees!"

I ran down to the opening by which he had gained the water; and there, sure enough, all the boughs reaching the surface were fringed with good-sized oysters. We gathered those we could reach; and looking down into the clear water below the trees, I saw that the rocks at the bottom were thickly covered with those nutritive shell-fish, in every stage of growth, many of the size of a shilling and even smaller. Here, at all events, was an unfailing supply of food; and, encouraged by the discovery, we hoped that we should obtain a still further variety.

Having filled our pockets and handkerchiefs, we hurried back to the tree, down which Harry was descending with a load of cocoa-nuts. On our showing him the oysters, he observed that they were too small to be of much use, and volunteered at once to dive to the bottom and obtain some larger ones. We accordingly returned to the bay; when, stripping off his clothes, he at once plunged in, and soon brought a number of large oysters to the surface in his handkerchief, which he had taken down with him for the purpose.

"Oh, there are not enough," he said,—"I will soon get some more;" and again he plunged down. We could see him at the bottom, working away with his knife. I could not have remained half the time beneath the surface.

While he was thus engaged, I caught sight of a dark object at the entrance of the bay. Horror seized me, for I knew it to be a shark. I shrieked out to Harry to return. Tom also saw the fearful monster, and, with a presence of mind for which I should not have given him credit, he took up one of the larger oysters and sent it skimming along the surface, in the way boys are accustomed to make "ducks and drakes" with pieces of slate on a calm day by the sea-side. I immediately followed his example, hoping thus to distract the attention of the shark.

At length, though it seemed a long time, Harry came up, and only then hearing our cries, swam rapidly to the shore. We held out our hands to help him, and I breathed more freely when his feet touched the dry ground. A moment longer, and he would have been lost; for the shark, darting forward, almost ran his snout against the bank in his eagerness to seize his prey; then, startled by our cries, and the oysters we continued to heave at him, he suddenly turned round, whisking the water into our faces with his tail.

Harry took the matter very coolly. "It is not the first time I have had a shark dart at me," he observed; "but I have generally had a companion who has attacked the creature with his knife. Had I been prepared, I would have met him in the same way."

"I am very glad you did not make the experiment, Harry," I answered. "However, it is a lesson to us not to venture into the water without keeping a look-out; and I am very thankful that you have escaped."

"So am I," he answered; "but now, as we have got as many oysters as we can carry, in addition to the cocoa-nuts, we may as well join our friends and have breakfast."

"I hope that Tamaku will have managed to light a fire," said Tom; "for though the oysters and cocoa-nuts are nice enough as they are, I don't like raw eggs; and I have an especial fancy for some roast-duck."

As we approached the bay we saw a cloud of smoke ascending from the sand, and we found Tamaku busily employed in blowing up a fire which he had kindled there. We soon rejoined him, and asked why he had chosen this spot.

“Because, you see, if I had lighted it on the grass, we might have had a larger fire than would have been pleasant.”

While we were standing round the fire, Popo came back with a breaker of water, saying that Mr Mudge would soon follow. Wishing to surprise him, we set to work to pluck the ducks, and spit a couple, and roast some eggs. We were thus employed when we saw him coming leisurely towards us; but discovering the fire, he held up his hand with a look of astonishment, and hurried forward.

“Well, lads, you have prepared a feast,” he exclaimed, sitting down on the bank above the sand. “I little expected to have so many good things; and I am thankful to say that I have found a stream of fresh, cold water, issuing from the side of the hill, and falling into a deep basin—in which I could not resist taking a bath; and I would advise you to do the same.”

We were too hungry to wait for the roast-ducks, so we sat down and commenced our breakfast on eggs and oysters, with cocoa-nut milk. By the time we had taken the edge off our appetites, the ducks, under Tamaku’s superintendence, were thoroughly cooked. They were pronounced excellent, and we agreed that no aldermen could have breakfasted better.

“And what are we to do now?” I asked.

“We have no necessity to be anxious about food; we must first of all go across to the other side of the island, which I believe is not far off, and establish a look-out place from whence we can make signals should any vessel pass by,” answered Mudge. “You, Tillard, I suppose, will prefer waiting to finish your forge; and we must trust to you to keep up the fire, so that, should a ship appear off the coast, her attention may be attracted.”

“I’ll undertake to do that, sir,” answered Tillard; “but as I shall want help, I shall be obliged if some one will remain with me. I would rather have one of the young gentlemen; they will understand what I want better than either Popo or Tamaku. Mr Rayner, will you stay by me?”

“I was going to offer to do so,” I answered; “although I should have liked making an exploring expedition across the island.”

I was anxious to be of use; and besides wishing to oblige Dick, I was curious to see how he would proceed. He thanked me very much; and the rest of the party wishing us good-bye, set off with their thick sticks as arms, and a supply of ducks and eggs, wild-fowl, and cocoa-nuts for provisions, leaving us as much as we could require for a couple of days.

As soon as they were gone, Tillard and I set to work on the forge. He had already nearly manufactured a pair of bellows with the aid of the bottom boards of the boat,—fortunately of considerable width,—and some of the spare canvas which had remained in the boat’s bows. It was a very rough-looking machine, but still was likely to answer its purpose. We also found several pieces of iron about the boat which could be removed without impairing its strength; and these we managed to wrench off, with the help of a sharp piece of coral.

At length the fire was kindled in the forge, and on working the bellows a strong flame was produced. All our tools were composed of coral; two long pieces served as tongs, and another as a hammer. Having heated the iron, Dick knocked it out into a long thin bar, and then placing it on the mass of coral which served as an anvil, cut it with successive sharp blows of his knife into small pieces. Each of these had to be re-heated, and taken up and dropped into a small hole with a blow from the hammer, when the head was produced by another sharp blow. In this way he formed a number of small nails with large heads, which, if not very well-shaped, were at least likely to answer the purpose.

We had found a gum issuing from some pine-trees, which did not dissolve in water; and by mixing it with some grease which we happily found in the after-locker, a thick paste was formed with which we payed over the canvas. The boat had been hauled up sufficiently to enable us to get at both leaks during low tide; so we at once set to work, and were thankful to find that the nails answered very well: fortunately, I should have said, I had a small bradawl in my knife, and also a file, with which I sharpened the points of the nails. The whole work was accomplished sooner than I could have expected; and Tillard declared his belief that not a drop of water would come through the damaged part of the boat, whatever it might do elsewhere.

WE LEAPED OUT OF OUR SHATTERED BOAT, AND ENDEAVOURED TO HAUL HER UP.

“I wish we could try her,” I said, when our last nail was expended.

“Wait patiently, Mr Rayner,” answered Dick; “when the tide rises, we’ll get her afloat.”

He was mistaken, however, for with all our efforts we could not succeed in launching her. We had to wait, therefore, for the return of our companions. Getting into the boat, however, we made another thorough search; and while doing so I found jammed into a corner of the after-locker a large fishing-hook, such as is used for catching sharks, bonitos, and other finny monsters of the deep. Besides this, we discovered a ball of twine and some spare pieces of rope.

Dick examined the fishing-hook. “We must keep it as it is,” he observed. “At first I thought that I might form it into smaller hooks; but we have still some iron remaining, and I will try my hand at making such as will catch the moderate-sized fish we are likely to find in the lagoon or outside the reef.”

Returning to the forge, Dick at once set to work, and succeeded in shaping four hooks, though he and I burned our fingers in the operation. On trying them, however, they were found to be too soft for use.

“We must temper them,” I observed; and I ran and filled a cocoa-nut-shell with water.

We again heated the hooks, and plunged them into the water, when we found that they were considerably hardened. I then worked away with the file till I had sharpened the barbs and reduced them to a fair shape. With the twine we manufactured a couple of serviceable lines, to which we attached some small pieces of coral.

Our companions not having returned, we agreed to walk along the shore to the northward of the oyster creek, where Harry had been so nearly caught by the shark. Having made up our fire so that it was not likely to go out before our return, we set forth with our sticks in our hands. We walked on rapidly, anxious to get back to receive our friends,—who would, we thought, at all events return before nightfall. Having doubled the creek, which did not run far inland, we proceeded along the shore, turning our eyes every now and then seaward in case a vessel should appear, though I scarcely expected to see one. Some way on we discovered another opening in the reef, through which we might have passed, had we known of it, with greater ease than by the one through which we had entered.

“We must go out by that opening, if Mr Mudge determines to put to sea,” observed Tillard; “though, without a compass or chart, I doubt whether it will be wise to leave this island, where we have an abundance of food.”

I was inclined to agree with him, as I thought that we had a fair prospect of being taken off by our own ship or by a passing whaler.

We had got nearly abreast of the opening, and were about to turn back, when I caught sight of a dark object on the shore some distance off. I pointed it out to Dick. “What can that be?” I asked.

“It looks to me like a boat,” he answered; “and if so, perhaps we may find that there are other people on the island besides ourselves.”

We hurried eagerly on, and as we drew nearer we saw that we were not mistaken. There lay a small boat, somewhat clumsily though strongly built, but evidently after a European model. From the position in which she lay, almost floating in a miniature lagoon still full of water, we agreed that she must have been thrown up by an unusually high sea, and left there by the receding wave. She was in no way injured; and except that her upper works were likely to leak from having been exposed to the sun for some time, she was still fit for use. Her painter was over her bows; and Dick, having examined the end, was of opinion that she had broken adrift while towing astern of a vessel, probably during a gale of wind. What had become of the craft to which she had belonged, it was impossible to say. Whether she had gone to pieces on the reef, or had managed to haul off, was the question.

Hunting about, we found a broken oar and two pieces of board, which had probably been washed out of her, “I think that we might get her afloat; and it will save us a long walk if we can paddle her back,” observed Dick. I agreed with him; and we accordingly set to work to clear a channel through the sand into the lagoon, using the pieces of board as spades. It did not take us long; and though it was as much as our strength could accomplish, we contrived, by putting

our shoulders under the gunwale, to lift the boat out of her bed, and to launch her on the water of the lagoon. We then got in; and though she leaked, as we expected, we were able with our hats to bale out the water fast enough to keep her afloat.

Paddling on with the broken oar and one of the pieces of board, we reached Refuge Bay, as we called the spot where we had landed. Much to our disappointment, our companions had not returned. Expecting, however, that they might arrive at any moment, we set to work to roast some eggs and the remainder of our wild-fowl, sufficient for all hands. Still our friends did not appear. Though we began to feel somewhat anxious about them, the smell of the roast-duck made us so hungry that we could not resist the temptation of eating our share without waiting for them. Dick then set to work to prepare our fishing gear, and in the course of the evening not only made a netting pin and needle, but manufactured a landing-net, which would serve the double purpose of catching some small fish for bait, and rifting up any larger fish likely to break our tackle should we attempt to haul them out of the water.

Darkness now came on, and at last we had to give up all hope of seeing our friends that night. We agreed that in all probability they had found the distance greater than they had expected; so creeping into our arbours, and repressing the anxiety we could not help feeling, we went to sleep.

On awaking next morning, we found that the weather was still calm and fine; and supposing that our friends would remain on the other side of the island to breakfast, and perhaps still longer, we did not expect them back till late in the day.

“I vote that we go off and try to catch some fish,” I said. “Our friends will be much obliged to us if we can offer them some fish instead of the ducks, which, to say the best of them, are rather tough and strong-tasted.”

Dick agreed to my proposal; and having payed over the seams of the small boat with the mixture we had before used, we found on launching her that she no longer leaked to any extent. Before embarking, Dick, tucking up his trousers, waded into the water with his hand-net, and soon caught an ample supply of small fish for bait. Indeed, had we been pressed for food, we should have been glad to cook and eat them. We then put the jolly-boat’s oars and the boat-hook, which had been preserved, into the small boat, and shoved off, carrying a lump of coral with a long rope to serve as our anchor and cable. We first tried the centre of the lagoon, where before long I got a bite, and hauled up a fish with a large mouth and scales of rich and varied colours.

“I should be sorry to eat that fellow,” observed Dick; “for, in spite of his gay coat, I suspect he is poisonous; but we will keep him in case the bait runs short.”

Dick soon afterwards caught three others of the same description. “We must try fresh ground,” he observed; so hauling up our anchor, we pulled away towards the broad entrance of the lagoon, and again brought up. We soon caught several more fish of good size and sombre colours, which, as far as we could judge, were likely to prove wholesome. They tried our hooks, however; and I was hauling up another big fellow, when he broke away just as Dick was getting the landing-net under him. Another hook disappeared before we could even see the fish which carried it off!

“I must try our shark-hook,” observed Dick, putting on a large bait, and fastening it to the end of a thick rope. “Nothing frightens the fish in these seas; and if we were to lower down a hempen cable with a baited hook, they would bite as freely as they would if we were to use a hair-line.”

The hook had not been overboard a minute when he shouted out, “I’ve got hold of a big one now, anyhow!” and began hauling away.

“He must be a shark, by the way he is pulling,” I observed.

“No, he isn’t,” he answered; “though he is bigger than any fish I ever caught with a hook and line before. Just you lean over to the other side of the boat, Mr Rayner, or maybe he’ll capsize us. I’ll tackle him.”

I did as Dick told me; while he hauled and hauled away, and soon brought to the surface a fish shaped something like a perch, but apparently of sixty or seventy pounds weight. It was indeed, I saw, a species of sea-perch, from the large spines on its back.

In spite of the monster’s struggles, Dick held it fast, and at length hauled it into the boat. “This fellow is a prize,” he exclaimed, and I agreed with him. A blow on the head made it remain tolerably quiet; and on further examination I was convinced that I was right in supposing it to be the fish above-named.

Having now more food than we could consume, we pulled back to the shore; to find that our companions had not yet returned. Having hauled up our boat, we had ample employment in cleaning our fish for cooking. The big fellow could only be dressed by being cut up into slices; but as we wished to show it to our friends, we allowed it to remain entire. We had just finished our own dinner on one of the fish—which being well-shaped and of sombre hue, we believed to be wholesome—when we heard a shout, and saw Harry and Tom running towards us, followed by Tamaku.

I pointed to the big fish, which hung, in the shade, from the bough of a tree.

“That’s grand!” exclaimed Tom. “Still, I don’t know but what the other side of the island beats this; for we have found bread-fruit trees, and plantains, and yams, and all sorts of other roots and fruits. And Mudge has sent us over to tell you to bring the jolly-boat round, if you have made her sea-worthy, as he thinks we should have a better chance of getting on board a vessel on that side than this. There is a capital harbour, in which she can lie at anchor; and a hill near it from whence we can obtain a fine look-out over the ocean for ever so many miles. Tamaku, Harry, and I are to remain here to keep a look-out on this side till you have arrived on the other; and then you can come back and relieve us if you think fit.”

I told him that I was ready to do whatever Mudge wished, but that the difficulty would be to launch the jolly-boat, which Dick and I had in vain attempted to do.

“Five hands may accomplish what two could not,” he answered. “Perhaps, if we can get some rollers under her keel, we may be able to do it; and Tamaku is as strong as an elephant.”

Dick, feeling confidence in the sea-worthiness of the jolly-boat, was ready to take her round, either by himself, or with one of us to help him. I said that I was willing to go, and we settled to start the next morning. Our friends were highly pleased at finding another boat in which they could go off fishing. I reminded them that they must make some oars first, as we should have to take ours; and as they only had their clasp-knives, it would be a pretty tough job.

“Patience, as Dick says, will accomplish wonders; and Tamaku cuts away with his knife in a fashion I never saw any one else do,” answered Tom.

“I cut out the oars,” said Tamaku. Indeed, he was ready to aid in any way proposed, and was well-pleased to find that he should be able to go fishing in the punt.

The rest of the day was spent in making some rollers, and also in preparing some food for our voyage; for although the distance was not great, we might encounter a calm or contrary wind, and be delayed longer than we expected. Unwilling to lose our big fish, too, we now cut it up into slices, which we smoked over the fire. Dick Tillard also advised us to search for some salt, that we might still better preserve our fish; and Tom and Harry undertook to do so after we had set sail.

The next morning, breakfast being over, and the tide at its highest, we got the rollers under the boat, and by our united exertions managed to launch her. Dick, on getting on board, was well satisfied with the way in which he had repaired her damages, and expressed his confidence that she was not only fit to perform the voyage round to the other side of the island, but to make a much longer one if necessary.

Having taken our provisions on board, we hoisted the sail; and the wind being from the southward, we intended to go out at the broad passage, and round by the north end of the island. Our friends accompanied us in the small boat to the entrance of the lagoon, and then with three cheers left us.

As we kept some distance from the coast, to avoid any reefs which might run off it, we could see the land stretching away much farther to the north than we had expected.

“Our trip will be longer than I thought for, Mr Rayner,” said Dick; “but now we have got thus far, and have the wind with us, it will be better to keep on, and maybe when we round the point we shall then get it favourable; though I don’t suppose Mr Mudge was aware how far the island stretches to the northward.”

I thought as Dick did, and agreed with him that it would not now do to try and beat round the southern end, which appeared quite as far off as the northern one. On we sailed; but still the northern cape we wished to double seemed a long way off. The weather, too, which was very fine when we started, now gave signs of changing. I saw that Dick was looking graver than usual: still he was not a man to give up a task he had undertaken; so we continued running on, though clouds had gathered in the sky, and the wind blew much stronger than at first.

“We may as well take a reef down, Mr Rayner,” he observed—“or perhaps two. When we come to haul our wind, we shall have as much sail as the boat will bear.”

We soon had the reefs in, and the sail again hoisted up. The boat now flew rapidly over the fast-rising, foaming seas. On the larboard side the surf was breaking furiously on the coral reef, through which no opening could be seen; while out at sea, on the opposite side, all was dark and lowering. The wind came in fitful gusts; now from the southward, now blowing from the land.

I at length proposed returning.

“That would be a harder matter than standing on,” answered Dick. “Maybe we shall come in sight of a harbour, and if so we will stand in and take shelter; but if not, our only course is to run on till we can double the cape. And then, unless the wind shifts to the westward, we shall be under the lee of the island, and make better weather of it.”

Dick spoke calmly; but as I looked at his countenance I observed a strange expression pass over it.

“Are you in pain, Dick?” I asked.

“To say the truth, I am, sir,” he answered; “though I didn’t like to alarm you by telling you how I feel I should like to have some doctor’s stuff: or maybe a glass of rum would set me to rights; but as that isn’t to be got, I must grin and bear it.”

As I watched Dick, he appeared to grow worse and worse, and every now and then a groan he could not suppress escaped him. Still, he kept his seat at the helm, steering the boat before the wind with his usual care. I remembered the supposed poisonous fish he had spoken of, and wondered whether he had taken any; but I did not like to suggest the thought to him. Presently, to my horror, his hand relaxed its hold of the helm, and he sank down in the bottom of the boat. I seized the tiller in time to prevent the boat broaching-to, and kept her on as we had before been steering. I could do nothing to help him, except place his head against the side of the boat. He breathed heavily, every now and then giving a groan. I was greatly alarmed, not knowing what I should do by myself; while I felt much grieved at the thought of losing him. All I could do was to sit and steer. Nothing I could offer him was likely to do him any good; and I could only hope that his strong constitution would carry him through the attack, whatever it was.

At length I was very nearly up to the cape, and expected to get round it in the course of half an hour or so, when the

wind fell even more suddenly than it had risen, and the boat lay rocking on the water, making no perceptible way. I tried to do all I could to restore Dick. I sprinkled his face with water, and poured some cocoa-nut milk down his throat; but it did not appear to have the slightest effect. He remained perfectly unconscious, only giving signs of life by his heavy breathing and his groans, which grew fainter and fainter.

Hoping that at last a moderate breeze would spring up, I shook the reefs out of the sail, and again hoisted it. Still there was no change. The sun was setting over the island, and I expected to have my difficulties increased by the approaching darkness. The weather also still looked very threatening. Scarcely had the sun disappeared behind a cliff on the left, when the wind again suddenly sprang up, and blew with even greater violence than before. I now wished that I had not shaken the reefs out of the sail, but I could not venture to leave the helm to make any alteration.

On flew the boat as before, the foaming seas rising up on either hand. I could but dimly distinguish the cliff. At length it was lost to sight. As I looked out on the larboard side, I fancied that I saw a line of white breakers, indicating a reef running off from it. How far it might extend I could not tell; perhaps a mile, or a couple of miles. It would be destruction, should I haul up too soon and strike on it; indeed, with the sail I had set, I dared not do that. My only resource was to stand on, hoping that the squall would pass away as quickly as it had sprung up. I knew that I was leaving the land farther and farther astern. In vain in my anxiety I called to poor Dick to help me. Sometimes the horrid thought came over me that he was dead, the splashing of the water and the howling of the wind drowning the sound of his breathing. My anxiety—or, I may confess it, my alarm—made me feel very ill; and I began to fancy that I too had been poisoned, either by the fish or the wild-fowl we had eaten.

I scarcely know how many hours thus passed. At last, as I had expected, the wind suddenly fell to a gentle breeze. I immediately hauled aft the sheet, hoping to be able to beat up to the island again by daybreak; but scarcely had I stood on for a quarter of an hour when it dropped altogether, and the boat lay rocking on the heaving waters. As there was no use in keeping the sail set, I lowered it, and sat down with my arm round the mast, intending to keep awake till the breeze should again get up; while I heartily prayed that it might come from a direction which might enable me to fetch the island. I could hear Dick breathing; but though I called to him he did not answer, and appeared quite as unconscious as at first. I felt very tired, after the excitement I had gone through; still I did my utmost to keep awake. All my efforts, however, were vain, and I dropped off to sleep.

Suddenly I awoke; and standing up, I looked out anxiously for the land. My heart sank: an unbroken sea-horizon was around me. As I was still gazing, a bright glow appeared in the direction towards which the boat's head was turned; and presently the sun, a vast globe of fire, arose out of his ocean-bed, tinging with a ruddy hue the edge of the clouds which still covered the sky. The breeze, however, had sprung up from the eastward, and I knew from the position of the sun in what direction to steer. The numerous birds, also, which hovered round me, proved that the island was not far off.

I again attempted to arouse Dick; but though I did not succeed, his more quiet breathing made me hope that he was recovering. I now hoisted the sail; and hauling aft the sheet, went to the helm, and steered to the southward.

Chapter Five.

Daylight—I make the land—Dick recovers—Captured by a native canoe—Taken on shore—Compelled to work as slaves—our hopes of escape disappointed—Dick again ill—His death—I bury him—Threatening of war—Harry joins me—We witness a single combat—Our champion defeated—Captured by the enemy—Ill-treated—Harry disappears—I escape to the beach—See a boat—The savages pursue me—Rescued by Mudge.

Anxiously I looked out ahead for land—now on one bow, now on the other; for I could not tell how far to the westward I had been driven, or on which side it might appear. It was possible, indeed, that I might have got so far to the west as to pass the island altogether should I continue to steer due south; and yet in the uncertainty I hesitated to take another course.

As I sat in the stern-sheets, I watched Tillard's countenance. He seemed at length to have fallen into a quiet sleep, and I trusted that when he awoke he would feel himself much better. I bored a hole in the end of a cocoa-nut, and also got some fish ready, that I might give him some food as soon as he awoke. But still he slept on; and the fear came over me that it might prove the sleep preceding death. Under other circumstances, I should not probably have thought so; but I was weary and anxious, and my spirits sank to the lowest ebb. As I sat in the boat, gliding over the now tranquil sea, glittering with the rays of the sun, I might have been regarded as a picture of perfect contentment, —very different, indeed, from what was really the case.

Every now and then I stood up to look out for the wished-for land; till at length a light mist which had hung over the water was dissipated by the increasing heat of the sun, and to my joy I caught sight of the lofty headland we had hoped to double the day before, rising out of the blue water much nearer than I had expected to find it. My spirits rose; and I began to hope that, should Dick recover, my troubles and anxieties would be at an end. I could not help shouting out "Land! land!" though I was not aware that I had done so till I heard the sound of my own voice. It had the effect of arousing Dick, however.

"Land, Mr Rayner!" he exclaimed. "I thought we were about to enter the harbour to meet Mr Mudge and the rest."

I tried to explain what had happened, but his senses were too confused to allow him for some time to understand me.

"What! have you been at the helm all night? You must be pretty well knocked up, sir," he said. "Let me take it while you lie down. You need rest."

I observed, from the way he spoke, that his senses were still confused; so I told him that I had already had some

sleep, and that I was able to keep at the helm very well for the present.

I now gave him some cocoa-nut milk and a little fish, which he took very readily; and after eating some of the solid food he appeared much better, and was soon able to sit up and talk rationally.

Calculating by the time we had taken to reach the headland, he judged that we should not get into the harbour at soonest till sunset; and he advised that we should economise our food, in case we should be kept out still longer, as would certainly be the case did it again fall calm.

We at length got up with the island. On the western side it presented a succession of high cliffs, along which we coasted. As the day advanced the breeze freshened, and we ran briskly through the water. We had gone half a mile or so along the coast, when I caught sight of a sail ahead.

“Hurrah!” I cried out. “Perhaps that is a ship. Yonder craft may be able to take us and our companions on board.”

“She is only a native canoe,” observed Dick; “and it is questionable whether she has friends or enemies on board. If the latter, and she catches us, we may have our voyage put a stop to in a way we didn’t bargain for.”

The craft at which we were looking was one of the large double canoes of these seas, with a single triangular sail of white matting, which I, in the first instance, had taken for canvas. On she came towards us, close-hauled, at a rate which would have made it useless to attempt escaping her. The two canoes which formed the lower part of her structure were of great length, and very narrow, supporting a large platform of some height, which served to keep them some distance apart.

We could only distinguish three men on her deck; and had Dick been well, we might easily have resisted them in the event of their exhibiting any hostile intentions. But he felt himself too weak to show fight, and we agreed that our best course was to put a bold face on the matter, and to bid them go on their way, while we continued our course to the southward. As we drew nearer, however, three more men appeared from below, holding bows and spears in their hands. Placing the spears on the deck, each fixed an arrow to his bow; on seeing which—believing that they were going to shoot—I hauled down the sail, and, holding up my hands, tried to make them understand that I surrendered. On this they withdrew their arrows, and the canoe was steered up alongside the boat. I then pointed to Dick, wishing to explain to them that he was ill. They took no notice of my signs, however; and two or three of them leaping into the boat, which they secured by a rope to the canoe, dragged him and me out of it on to their deck. At first I thought that they were going to kill us immediately. Dick was too weak to make any resistance; and I knew that I could do nothing by myself. I endeavoured to exhibit as little fear as possible, however, and taking one of the savages by the hand, shook it and smiled, to show that I wished to be on friendly terms. After they had talked together, they appeared to have determined to spare our lives; then lowering their sail, they hoisted it on the other tack, and stood for the shore, towing our boat astern. Dick was allowed to sit on the deck, while I stood near him, no one molesting us.

“We’re in a bad case, Mr Rayner,” he observed; “but it won’t do to give way to despair, and we must try to put a good face on the matter. If I was well, and able to help you, I shouldn’t so much mind it; but I feel as weak as a baby, and that tries me.”

“I hope you will get stronger soon, Dick, and then we must try to make our escape to our friends,” I answered. “I am afraid that the savages are more likely in the meantime to get hold of them,” he observed. “What puzzles me is, that they didn’t find us out before; but I suspect that, for some reason or other, the southern end of the island is not inhabited.”

I could only account for the circumstance as Dick did; and I hoped that Mudge would discover that there were natives on the island in time to guard against them. Of course, I regretted much that he should have divided our party, as I felt that, united, we might have held out against them, or, at the worst, have escaped in our boats. However, there was no use thinking of what had been done; and we must, I felt, employ our energies in making the best of our situation.

I did my utmost to appear contented, as if I had no fear of our captors. To show this, I walked about the deck and examined the structure of the canoe. The separate lower portions, I found, were composed of two large trees hollowed out, each having a raised gunwale about two inches high, and closed at the ends with a kind of bulk-head of the same height; so that the whole resembled a long square trough, about three feet shorter than the body of the canoe. The two canoes thus fitted were secured to each other, about three feet asunder, by means of cross spars, which projected about a foot over the side. Over these spars was laid the deck, made of small round spars placed close together. On it was a fire-hearth of clay, on which a fire was burning; and I observed a large pot suspended over it, with something boiling within which had a savoury smell. The mast was secured to the deck by knees; the whole being fixed to a cross-beam resting on the lower sides of the canoe. The sail, which was composed of matting, was stretched on a lateen yard, the foot being extended to a boom. The ropes were made of the coarse filaments of the plantain-tree, twisted into cordage of the thickness of a finger; and three or four such cords marled together served for shrouds. This curious craft was steered by a long scull, the handle of which rose four or five feet above the deck. In calm weather, as I afterwards observed, the natives propel these canoes simply by sculling; a man standing astern and working the scull with both hands—a very slow process. They are, indeed, better fitted for sailing than paddling.

Beginning to feel very hungry, I made signs to our captors that I should like to have some food; and I also pointed to Dick, wishing to make them understand that he too required nourishment. One of them on this went to the pot and stirred it with the handle of his spear, as if to ascertain whether the contents were sufficiently boiled. Satisfied on this point, he dived down into one of the canoes and brought up from a locker a hooked stick and some plantain leaves; whereupon all the party, with the exception of the helmsman, gathered round the pot, when the same man drew out some fish and roots, and divided them among his companions, giving Dick and me an equal share. We thanked them

as well as we could by eating the food. Dick, who relished it very much, nodding his head and stroking his stomach, exclaimed “Bono, bono,—very good, master savages.” The fish certainly was very good; and as our captors ate it, we had no doubt that it was wholesome. Dick said he felt much the better for it, and could now look things in the face with less despondency than before.

The canoe all this time was gliding smoothly over the water, though I confess, from her apparently slight structure, I should not have relished being on board her in a heavy sea. As we approached the island, I observed a small bay or inlet for which she was steering, with high cliffs above it, and a valley running up inland to some distance, while on all the level spots near the beach grew cocoa-nut and other trees. The aspect of the country was highly picturesque, and altogether pleasing.

As we drew nearer, I saw a number of dark-skinned natives, almost naked; some in the water, engaged apparently in fishing, others lolling about on the beach watching them. At first they took but little notice of the canoe; but as they caught sight of us, and the jolly-boat towing astern, those not employed in fishing hurried down to the shore of the harbour, up which the canoe ran till she reached a secure spot alongside a rock, on to which her crew could step from the canoe without difficulty.

The captain, or chief man of the canoe, now made a long speech to the natives on shore, describing apparently how he had found us; on which Dick, who was now much recovered, and I shook him by the hand, hoping that what he had said was in our favour. This seemed to please him and his countrymen; and we were now conducted on shore with far more respect than we had at first expected to receive. While some inspected our boat, others, collecting round us, examined our clothes, looking curiously at our light-coloured skins. After more palavering, we were led towards their village, when a few old men and a number of women and children came out to have a look at us, and we had again to endure the same sort of scrutiny as before.

After a little time, we made out that the captain of the canoe which had captured us was the son of the old chief of the village, under whose protection we were placed, or rather whose property we had become. I asked the old man his name, mentioning my own, and then pointing to Dick and pronouncing his. The old man understood me, and replied, “Paowang.” I then asked the son his. He replied, “Whagoo;” on which Dick and I again shook hands with him, thanking them for the information.

“Well, Mr Paowang, I hope you and we shall be friends,” said Dick; “and we shall be further obliged to you if you will show us a house to live in, for we should be glad to get out of the heat of the sud, and to take a quiet snooze; and at supper-time, if you will tell your people to bring us a dish of fish, and any other articles you may think fit, we shall be further indebted to you.”

Although Paowang could not understand Dick’s words, he comprehended his gestures, and pointing to a hut near his own, signified that we might take possession of it. It was a simple structure, consisting of uprights on which matting was stretched for walls, the roof being thatched with plantain leaves. Some coarse mats were also spread on the floor. It enabled us to escape from the pressure of the crowd, which was just what we wanted to do.

The personal appearance of most of the people was not specially prepossessing, though the chief and his son had good-humoured countenances. The women wore petticoats of matting; and the men kilts or cloths round their waists and brought between their legs. They were naturally brown rather than black; but many of them had covered their bodies with a pigment mixed with either earth or charcoal, which made them much darker than they really were. The older men had short bushy beards, and large heads of almost woolly hair. Besides spears and bows, they carried large heavy carved clubs in their hands, of various shapes, some being very formidable-looking weapons. They had also darts with barbed edges, which they threw from a becket or sort of sling fixed to the hand. With these darts we saw them kill both birds and fish at a distance of eight or ten yards. The only tools we saw were composed of stone or shells. Their hatchets were in form like an axe, the pointed end being fixed to a hole in a thick handle. However, I have not time at present to describe the people. What disgusted Dick and me most was to see the poor women compelled to perform all the hard work, and often to receive blows or abuse from their ill-tempered masters.

We were allowed to rest in quiet till the evening, when the chief sent us, by one of his daughters, some more fish and a dish of poi,—a sort of paste made of the bread-fruit or yams. At night, also, we were allowed to sleep without interruption. The next morning, however, the chief signified that we must not expect to eat the bread of idleness, and that we must either work in the taro grounds, or go out hunting and fishing. Dick at once said that we would go out fishing in our own boat; hoping, as he whispered to me, that we might thus have the chance of escaping. I warned him not to show too great eagerness, lest they might suspect that such an idea had entered our minds.

As we could only converse by signs, we had some difficulty in making them understand what was meant. Dick was the most successful. He signified that we could not go out hunting, as we had no arms to hunt with; then he pretended to hoe and dig, shaking his head to signify that that was not to his taste; then he went through the attitudes of letting down the line and hauling up a big fish. The chief nodded his head and pointed to the sea, and allowed us to go down to the harbour. We showed our hooks, which were stowed away in the locker; and seeing some small fish, begged to have them as bait,—quite happy in the thought that we should be allowed to go out alone, and might thus, having thrown our captors off their guard, in the course of a few days easily make our escape, —when three black fellows, with heavy clubs and sharp axes, stepped in after us, showing by their grinning countenances that they suspected our intentions.

Dick looked in no way disconcerted, but putting the oars into their hands, bade them sit down and pull. Of this, however, they had no conception; so he and I had to row the boat out of the harbour, thus letting them see how we managed the oars. After some time two of them proposed trying; but they were not very successful. First one caught a crab, then the other toppled right over on his back and very nearly lost the oar; then the first went over with his legs in the air, bringing his head with a crack against the thwart behind him. Dick and I could not help laughing at the hideous faces he made—at which he grew angry, and seizing his club, threatened to use it on Dick’s head. Dick,

patting him on the back, advised him to cool his temper; then telling him to steer, took the oar to show him how he could use it.

At last, having got some distance from the shore, Dick proposed bringing up and trying our luck. Almost immediately I got a bite, and pulled up a big fish; Dick directly afterwards caught another; and thus we went on, greatly to the delight of the natives. Indeed, our hooks and lines caught more fish in the course of three hours than their nets usually entrapped in a day.

The chief, when we got back, was highly pleased, and bestowed the name of Big-fish-man on Dick.

Several days went by. We were in high favour with Paowang, and the rest of the people treated us with much kindness; still we were slaves, and we felt very anxious about the fate of our companions. Should the savages discover them, and they be tempted to defend themselves, they might not be treated so well as we were; whilst, should they be captured, our chances of escape would be smaller than ever.

A fortnight or more had gone by; and the natives began to treat us more capriciously than at first. Several of them had by this time learned to row, and sometimes Dick was compelled to go out to fish by himself with a couple of natives; sometimes I was sent, while Dick was ordered to work in the taro fields. When I was kept on shore, I had to perform the same sort of labour, in company with the women and girls. I should not have minded it very much, had it not been for the heat of the sun: and from this I found Dick also suffered extremely; indeed, he was looking very ill, and I much feared that he would have a relapse.

My worst apprehensions were too soon fulfilled. One evening, when I and my black crew returned home from fishing, I found Dick lying in our hut scarcely able to speak. He had been out the whole day in the fields, scantily supplied with food, and had received a sun-stroke. He was in a high fever. I ran to the chief and entreated him to give me a supply of cocoa-nut milk, which I hoped, at all events, might alleviate his sufferings. The chief replied that I might help myself to some cocoa-nuts, but offered me no other assistance. In desperation I climbed the nearest tree, on which some were still hanging, and threw them to the ground; two were split and the milk lost, but I brought home three others. I feared, however, as I offered the contents of one of them to my poor companion, that it was too late to afford him any relief. I sat up with him all night, giving him from time to time some of the cooling beverage; but he was evidently getting worse. Once only he spoke to me. “Get off in the boat, Mr Rayner,” he said; “it is your only chance. Trust in God; he will help you in time of need.”

He was silent after this, and, overcome with fatigue, I dropped off to sleep. When I awoke the light was shining in through the door of the hut. I looked at Dick’s countenance; it was calm and pleasant. I took his hand—it dropped by his side. Then I knew that my poor friend was dead; and I burst into tears.

When I recovered myself I got up and told the chief what had happened, begging that some men might be sent to help me to dig his grave, for already the flies were gathering about his face. The chief complied with my request; so we dug a grave on the top of a hill a short distance from the village, and within view of the sea. In the evening we carried him there, and I took my last look of his honest countenance ere the soil was thrown in on his body. I then got some young saplings and planted them round the grave, which I covered up with a pile of earth. On this also I planted some flowering shrubs. Next day I employed myself in carving on a piece of wood his name, and the date, as far as I could calculate it, of his death.

Soon after this I discovered that something unusual was going forward in the village. The chief had evidently important intelligence brought him; for the warriors were arming, and the women were in a state of agitation. What it was all about I could not tell, and the savages did not think fit to enlighten me. They did not, however, neglect their taro fields; and I was sent out as usual to work.

I had started at daybreak, that I might get as much done as possible during the cool hours of the morning, and was labouring away, when, hearing a noise in the bushes near me, I looked up and saw a figure spring out from among them. The next instant I recognised Harry Hudson, who ran towards me.

“Come along,” he exclaimed; “I am pursued, and we may both be captured. I’ll tell you what has happened when we reach a place of safety.”

I set off with him towards the village. Our appearance, with the account we gave, made all the warriors turn out, led by Whagoo, to stop the progress of the enemy; for by Harry’s account the hostile party was approaching, and would, if not stopped, quickly destroy the taro fields and cut down all the trees in their course. The chief expressed his gratitude to Harry for giving him the warning, and promised to defend him should those from whom he had escaped attempt his recapture. To my surprise, Harry was able to make himself clearly understood, though the dialect he spoke evidently differed considerably from that of Paowang and his people.

“But I am eager to learn how you found your way to this place, and knew that I was here,” I observed.

Harry then, having said how anxious he and the rest of them had become at not hearing of Dick and me, told how one day he and Tamaku had set off on an exploring expedition farther to the north than they had yet ventured, in search of cocoa-nuts and other fruit, which was becoming scarce around them; that they had crossed a stream which seemed to separate the southern from the northern end of the island; but as they were going through a forest which extended down to the sea, they were suddenly set upon by a large party of savages; when Tamaku, attempting to defend himself, was struck down, and, he feared, killed. The savages then hurried him along with them to their village, where they treated him with tolerable kindness; but still he dreaded lest, should he by any chance offend them, they might without ceremony kill him, and he intended to make his escape, if possible, in order to warn Mudge and the rest of their danger. Understanding tolerably well what they said, he learned that a white man and a boy—and of course he had no doubt that Dick and I were spoken of—had been captured in a boat by their enemies at the northern end of the island, and that an attack upon Paowang’s tribe had been planned. The chief of the party into

whose hands he had fallen was, he found, called Oamo; he appeared to be a fierce, sanguinary savage, and he felt that his own life, while he remained in the chief's power, was very insecure. So, finding that he could much more easily reach us than get back southward, and that his captors were less likely to look out for him on our side, he resolved to escape; and that very night succeeded in doing so.

On hearing this, Paowang and Whagoo hurried on their preparations; and, led by the latter, the warriors sallied forth in battle array, taking Harry and me with them. As we had no arms, and should have been unwilling to fight even had we possessed any, we were surprised at this; but Whagoo insisted that it was necessary, and we were compelled to comply. We marched on at a rapid rate till we reached a broad stream, which separated, we learned, the territory of Paowang from that of Oamo. On reaching the stream we caught sight of Oamo's forces drawn up on the opposite side. The two armies then set to work to hurl abusive epithets at each other, instead of, as we expected, making use of murderous weapons. This had the effect, however, of exciting their courage and working up their anger. Harry told me, that as far as he could make out, each party was trying to induce the other to cross the stream and fight.

At length Whagoo dared Oamo to come over and engage in single combat. The challenge, after some deliberation, was accepted; and that chief, with about twenty of his followers, wading across the stream, formed on the northern bank, where they stood facing our party at about the distance of fifty yards. The two champions then advanced to meet each other, armed with the formidable carved clubs I have described, one blow from which would, it appeared, quickly decide the contest. As they advanced slowly, they narrowly eyed each other, waiting for a favourable moment to deal the first blow. Whagoo was young and active, but Oamo appeared to possess superior strength. Cautiously he advanced, holding his club with both hands towards the ground; while Whagoo kept his elevated above his shoulders, as if ready to bring it down on his antagonist's head. For a minute or more they stood facing each other, their eyes glaring like balls of fire, when like lightning Oamo bounded towards his antagonist and dealt a blow of force sufficient to bring an ox to the ground; but Whagoo, actively leaping on one side, avoided it, and prepared to strike in return. In an instant Oamo, recovering himself, lifted his club in a position to receive his enemy's attack. They thus stood for another minute or more face to face, each unwilling to risk defeat by giving a fruitless blow.

At length Whagoo, losing patience, gave a sudden bound for the purpose of reaching the right side of Oamo, who, however, quickly faced him and made a blow at his head; which he avoided by dropping on his knee, receiving it on the blunt part of his club. In an instant he was again on his feet, and with another bound attempted to reach Oamo's unguarded shoulder. The latter, however, was too wary to allow him to succeed. Thus they continued springing round each other, Oamo's aim being evidently to exhaust the strength of his antagonist. At last he succeeded in bringing his weapon down on Whagoo's left shoulder, and inflicted a fearful wound; sufficient apparently to disable him completely, for the blood gushed forth in a way which must quickly, it seemed, drain his veins of their contents. He, however, took no notice of it, though it had evidently excited his rage and made him abandon the caution he had hitherto maintained.

I now began seriously to fear for the result. Oamo saw his advantage, and allowed Whagoo still further to exhaust his strength.

"What are we to do, Harry, if our friend gets beaten?" I asked.

"We must try and escape, for otherwise I fear that we shall be handed over to the victorious party," he answered.

"Will they kill us?" I asked.

"Not if Oamo escapes without a wound," he answered; "they will be so delighted with their victory that they will keep us as trophies. I don't like the look of things, however."

Our fears were still further increased when Oamo succeeded in bringing his weapon down on Whagoo's thigh, leaping back quick as lightning to avoid the blow which the other dealt in return. In his eagerness to strike, and much weakened by his wounds, Whagoo overbalanced himself, and before he could again recover his feet or raise his club Oamo brought his weapon with tremendous force down on his unguarded skull, which with a single blow he clove in two, and our champion fell dead to the earth.

Oamo's followers, uttering loud shouts of triumph, immediately rushed forward, and before Harry and I, who stood rooted with horror to the spot, could make our escape, they had surrounded us; Whagoo's party having bounded off like startled deer the instant they perceived the fall of their chief. Satisfied with his victory, Oamo did not attempt to follow them, aware probably that Paowang, with the rest of his tribe, would quickly be down upon them to avenge his son's death.

We were at once dragged off across the stream; after which the whole party, carrying us with them, retreated southward, singing songs of triumph.

Our captors did not halt till they reached their village, when the women came out in crowds to welcome them and to gaze at us. I expected nothing less than torture and death; but even Oamo, savage as he was, did not look at us fiercely, as if intending to do us any harm: possibly he was so well-pleased with his victory that he was inclined to treat us more kindly than he would otherwise have done. We were, however, doomed, we found, to captivity; and I naturally supposed that they would keep so strict a watch over us that we should have no chance of escaping.

"I do not despair, however, of doing that," said Harry, when we were talking over the subject. "They are not aware that I understand what they say, and I shall thus be able to learn what they are about; so we may be able to get off by watching an opportunity. From what I understand, the southern end of the island is tabooed, having belonged to a chief who was looked upon as a priest, or sacred character of some sort. He, before setting out on an expedition with all his people, from which he never returned, threatened to visit with the most fearful curses any who should take possession of his territory during his absence. Oamo and his people had therefore been afraid to occupy it, and thus we were allowed to remain there so long unmolested. I thus hope that if we can once get across the stream which

divides it from this region, we shall be safe."

Harry's remarks greatly raised my spirits, and I was better able to endure the annoyances to which we were subjected than I should have been had there been less hope of escape.

Day after day passed by, and we were treated much as I had before been by Paowang and his people. We were not compelled, however, to go out and fish, for the best of reasons—our captors had no canoes: indeed, Harry learned that Paowang possessed but the one canoe, which had captured us; and as Whagoo was dead, there was no one in the tribe to command it, so that in all probability it was either laid up on shore or kept in the harbour. This seemed at first to be a matter of little consequence to us; but on further consideration we saw that, should we find it necessary to escape in our boat, there would be little risk of our being pursued.

As time went on, our captivity became more and more galling, though it was a satisfaction to us to be allowed to remain together; and during the evenings, when our work was over, I had a constant source of amusement in endeavouring to impart such knowledge as I possessed to Harry. I fortunately remembered portions of the Bible, and numerous pieces of poetry and prose; and by repeating them to him, he also was able to get them by heart. I used to tell him all about England, and how various articles in common use were manufactured. I taught him a good deal of history and geography; and even arithmetic, by making use of pebbles. By this exercise of my memory I benefited greatly, as I was thus induced to recall subjects which I should otherwise in time have forgotten.

Our comparatively pleasant life was, however, at length to come to an end. From some motive which we could not understand—perhaps because they thought we should attempt to escape—the savages at length separated us, and compelled us to sleep in different huts; while we were employed apart during the day. Harry, however, contrived one evening to find me; and I then urged him, if he had an opportunity of escaping by himself, not to run the risk of being caught by coming to look for me. I said that I would either follow, or that perhaps Mudge would manage by some means or other to obtain my liberty, should he not already have left the island. There was some risk of this being the case, we agreed; and if so, Harry said that he would come back to me rather than have to live alone in Taboo Land, as we called it.

Several days passed after this, and though I looked about for Harry, I could nowhere meet with him, so I began to hope that he had escaped. Sometimes the dreadful idea occurred to me that the savages might have killed him; and I was more inclined to think this, owing to the way in which they began to treat me. I was made to work harder than ever; and even the women, who had hitherto looked kindly on me, turned away their faces; and I was often almost starving, being glad of the scraps left by the women after their lords and masters had handed them the remains of their meals. Still, being of a buoyant disposition, I did not give way to despair, and trusted that I might some day effect my escape. I had various plans for doing so. If I could get down to the coast, I thought that I might make my way along the beach, hiding among the rocks in the day time, and moving on in the water just at the margin at night, so that no traces of my footsteps might be left.

As I returned very regularly to my hut at night, my savage masters became less vigilant than before. At last I felt my captivity so irksome that I determined at all risks to put my plan into execution. I came back as usual to the village in the evening, and, pretending to have hurt my foot, as soon as I had eaten the scanty meal given to me I lay down, as if about to go to sleep. I waited anxiously till all noises had ceased in the village, and then quietly stole out of my hut; and, having well noted the way, as soon as I had got to such a distance that my footsteps were not likely to be heard, I ran as fast as I could to the west shore, which was much the nearest. In about an hour I reached it, and at once began to make my way, as I had proposed, along the beach. At all events, Oamo would not be able to ascertain whether I had gone to the north or to the south. Fortunately the water was high, so that I had the soft sand to tread on, my feet being on the margin. As fast as I could move, afraid even for an instant to step on the dry sand lest I might leave a footprint behind me, I went on. Sometimes I had to climb over rocks; but fortunately there were no cliffs in this part of the island rising sheer out of the water, or my progress would have been effectually stopped.

All night long I went on; the light of the moon, which rose soon after I reached the shore, enabling me to make way with less difficulty than I had anticipated. In spite of the temptation to continue my course, when morning dawned I sought shelter among some rocks, amid which I judged that I should be effectually concealed from any pursuers on the shore.

How far I had gone I could not well calculate, but I supposed that I was still a long way from the harbour, where I hoped to find Mudge. As I was well beyond the high-water mark, I had no fear of being overwhelmed by the rising tide; therefore, feeling very tired, I composed myself on my somewhat hard couch to sleep. I awoke with the idea that a pair of huge wings were fanning me; and on looking up I saw a large sea-fowl, as big as an albatross, about to pounce down on my head. I started to my feet, defending my face with my arm, and shouting at the top of my voice to frighten it off. My cries had the desired effect; and as I watched its flight seaward, I saw a small speck on the water. Eagerly I gazed at it; it was a boat, not a canoe, as I had at first feared. It came nearer and nearer, evidently steering along the coast. I feared that I should not be seen among the broken rocks where I had concealed myself, and I could scarcely hope to make my voice heard so far. My only chance was to run along the light-coloured sand, and to wave my hands, trusting that I might attract the attention of my friends in the boat—for that they were my friends I felt certain.

Without further consideration, I rushed from my hiding-place, and began frantically waving my hands, shouting at the same time at the top of my voice. As I for a moment ceased, I heard an echo to my cries; and looking over my shoulder, I saw a party of dark-skinned savages descending the hill towards the beach. From the glimpse I got of them, I saw that they differed in appearance from those among whom I had so long been held captive; I saw, also, that they had neither bows nor spears. With fierce cries they rushed down the hill towards me; while louder and louder I shouted, and waved my hands more vehemently towards the boat. The savages, with pointed daggers in their hands, had reached the foot of the hill; and I was almost abandoning myself to despair, when I saw the boat's head turned towards the shore, and a figure in the bows stand up and wave to me, while a friendly cheer reached my

ears.

In a few minutes more—long before the boat could get up to me—the savages were on the beach. Though I knew that sharks abounded on the coast, I no longer hesitated, but, rushing into the water, waded as far as I could, and then struck out towards the boat. I did not take time to throw off my jacket, but, fully clothed as I was, swam on; one glance, as I looked backward, revealing the savages not a dozen yards behind me. If they chose to swim after me, I should have scarcely a chance of escaping; but that thought did not make me abandon the attempt. I struck out boldly, and my friends in the boat pulled away lustily to meet me.

On turning on my back for one moment to rest, though not to stop, for I still struck out with my feet, I saw the savages on the margin of the water, fiercely threatening me with their daggers, but not daring to swim off in pursuit. My mind was greatly relieved; but there was the risk of cramp, or giving way from fatigue, as also the still greater danger of being snapped up by a huge shark. My friends, however, knew this as well as I did, and continuing to exert themselves as at first, at length came up with me. The time, however, seemed very, very long, and I was almost fainting from my exertions, when I felt a strong hand seize me by the collar of my jacket, and Mudge—for it was he who had got hold of me—pulled me over the gunwale and placed me in the stern-sheets.

I soon recovered, and the first face my eyes fell upon was that of Harry. The pleasure of seeing him soon restored me. He told me that he had effected his escape just as I was attempting to do, though he had been compelled to remain concealed for several days among the rocks. As soon as he reached the harbour he told Mudge, who had given up all expectation of ever seeing me again alive, of my captivity; and arranged with him a plan for rescuing me. Harry’s intention was to land after nightfall, and boldly make his way up to the village; where, knowing my hut, he hoped to be able to find me, and to conduct me back to the boat before daylight. The boat, however, had first to be brought round to the east side; so Mudge, himself, and Tom went across the island together, and brought her round by the south end.

The day after his arrival, while they were employed in putting on board provisions for the expedition, Popo, who had been out shooting with his bow and arrows, came rushing back, saying that he had seen a party of savage natives, who were evidently advancing towards the harbour. They had but just time to jump into the boat, leaving a large portion of the provisions they had prepared behind them, and to shove off, when the savages came rushing down with threatening gestures, shouting and shrieking. From Harry’s account, they were similar in appearance to the men from whom I had escaped, and we agreed that they were probably part of the tribe who had been absent, and had just returned to Taboo Land.

In the meantime, Mudge had put the boat round, and we were pulling away from the shore. One of the plans formed by my friends, they told me, had been, as soon as they had recovered me, to try and cut out our jolly-boat, as the small boat was but ill adapted for the long voyage we might have to take. They were afraid, however, should we linger on the coast, that the savages who had just landed would pursue us in the canoes in which they had arrived; and hence our only safe course was at once to get to a distance, in the hope that we might either fall in with a whaler, or reach some island inhabited by people of a more hospitable disposition. With reluctance, therefore, we abandoned the design of trying to get hold of the jolly-boat. There would, of course, have been danger in the attempt, and we therefore considered it altogether wiser to avoid it.

Unhappily, we had no sail, and only a couple of rough oars, formed by Tamaku; we had a few salted fish and birds, a basket of eggs, and some cocoa-nuts. Our stock of water was contained in a dozen cocoa-nut-shells, prepared as bottles by poor Tamaku. This stock would not last us many days; and should it be exhausted before we could reach another island, or fall in with a ship, we must starve.

Such were our prospects as we rowed away from the island, without chart or compass, or any other means of guiding our course, with the exception of the stars by night and the sun by day.

Chapter Six.

We pull south-west—Want of water and food—Catch some flying-fish—Sufferings from thirst—A breeze—A sail—Taken on board the “Violet”—Visit New Caledonia—Off the Australian coast—A hurricane—Brig wrecked—The pumps manned—Hopes of getting her off—Land in the boats—My father remains on board.

We pulled on all night, taking it by turns; and when the sun rose next morning we were out of sight of land. Mudge had come to the determination of steering to the south, under the belief that the inhabitants of the islands in that direction were less barbarous than those we had left. We thought, also, that we should be more likely to fall in with a whaler or sandal-wood trader belonging to New South Wales, which Mudge understood were in the habit of visiting the islands in those seas. Missionaries also, we knew, were settled on some of the islands to the southward; but, unfortunately, none of us had heard much about them, though we felt sure that, should we reach a place where one was established, we should be treated kindly. But the London and Wesleyan Missionary Societies had not in those days made the progress they have since done,—the blessings of Christianity and civilisation having been by their means carried among a very large number of the brown and black-skinned races of the Pacific. They had for some years been working among the Society Islands, and a few had visited Tonga, Samoa, and Fiji; while some of the native converts had gone forth among the more savage tribes, fearless of the perils they had to encounter.

Mudge proposed that we should at once be placed on an allowance both of food and water, to which we all readily agreed. We rowed on all day; but the boat was heavy, and though the water was calm we did not make more than three knots an hour—and we knew not how many miles we might have to go before we should reach land. During the day we each pulled about an hour at a time; and at night, that we might enjoy longer sleep, those at the oars continued two hours before they were relieved. Providentially, the weather continued fine, and the sea almost as

calm as a mill-pond; thus we were able to make between sixty and seventy miles a day.

I cannot describe the events of each day, as they are much confused in my mind. We did our utmost to keep up our spirits: sometimes we sang, and sometimes we told such stories as we could remember, either of fiction or truth. Had poor Dick Tillard been alive and with us, his fund of yarns would have been invaluable. We frequently spoke of him, and mourned his loss. Mudge had seen a good deal of service, but he had not the happy knack of describing what had happened to him in the graphic, racy way poor Dick had of spinning a yarn. Mudge had been with Lord Cochrane during the war, and had taken part in some of his most gallant adventures. He was with him on board the *Pallas* when her boats had gallantly cut out the *Tapageuse* brig, and afterwards in her action with the *Minerva*, a ship nearly double her size; but his gallant commander having been, by the malignity of his foes, compelled to leave the navy, he himself had very little prospect of ever getting his promotion.

He gave us an account of the capture off Barcelona, by the *Speedy* sloop-of-war, of the *Gamo* frigate, more than twice her size. The *Speedy* was a little craft, of one hundred and fifty-eight tons only, and carried fourteen pop-guns—four-pounders—with a crew of fifty-four men; while the *Gamo* measured six hundred tons, and had thirty-two guns, with a crew of three hundred and nineteen men. After a desperate action, Lord Cochrane laid the little *Speedy* on board his big antagonist. He had ordered his men to blacken their faces; and one party, led by his gallant Lieutenant Parker, boarded at the bow, and soon gained a footing on the enemy's deck. Their begrimed faces and the impetuosity of their onset struck dismay into the hearts of the Spaniards, and they incontinently gave way. Meantime Lord Cochrane headed the aftermost division; and the enemy, thus unexpectedly assailed fore and aft, were driven a confused mass into the waist. Here a desperate hand-to-hand struggle ensued; till one of the *Speedy's* men, having by the captain's direction fought his way to the ensign-staff, hauled down the Spanish colours, when the Spaniards, believing that their officers had struck the flag, cried out for quarter. The difficulty was to secure the prisoners, they having been driven into the main-hold of the *Gamo*. The ladders were removed, and guns were pointed down on them, a man being stationed with a lighted match, ready at any moment to fire among them should they attempt to retake the ship. Meantime sail was made on the prize, and she stood away from the shore just as a number of gunboats were seen coming out of Barcelona, which, had they acted with any degree of spirit, might have captured the *Speedy*, or compelled her to relinquish her prize.

"I wish I had been with him," exclaimed Mudge; "but I was not, for the best of reasons—I was still in the nursery, and had not thought of going to sea."

We all said the same, though none of the rest of us happened to have been born at that time, as it was just the beginning of the century. Poor Mudge—and there were many officers at that time, like him, old enough to be post-captains, who were still master's mates—often sighed as he talked of the events of former days, and I have seen him more than once brushing away a tear as he spoke of his disappointed hopes and blighted prospects.

Day after day we pulled on, each day looking more eagerly than ever for land or for a ship. Our food was rapidly diminishing; and we had barely sufficient water to give us a wine-glassful apiece for two more days. Still, what might not happen in that time? Mudge urged us to keep up our spirits and pull on. Tommy grumbled a little now and then, and expressed a wish that he had never come to sea; but neither Harry nor Popo uttered the slightest complaint. When it was their turn to row, they pulled away with all their might; when they knocked off, they generally lay down in the bottom of the boat and went to sleep. The day was the most trying period, when the sun beat down on our unprotected heads. Even with an ample supply of food and water we should have found it trying; as it was, we suffered doubly. But then came the cool refreshing night and an unbroken sleep of two hours, when we all revived, and felt much better in the morning.

With a feeling which I cannot well describe, we at length emptied our last nut-shell of the salt, strong-tasting liquid it contained.

"I trust we shall make the land before many hours are over, lads," said Mudge, in as cheerful a tone as he could command; "or maybe we shall fall in with some craft or other. I should prefer the latter, provided she happens to be English, with a good supply of water on board."

"But suppose we don't," said Tom, gloomily.

"We mustn't think of that, lad," said Mudge; "we can all easily hold out for another four-and-twenty hours; and we have still some cocoa-nuts, which we must chew to prevent ourselves from feeling thirsty."

We now counted the hours as they went by. As yet our strength was not materially decreased. Though our arms ached, we could still mechanically labour at the oars when we got into our seats; but I very much doubt that we made as much as three knots an hour.

That next night was the most trying we had yet passed in the boat. We had had no breakfast in the morning, not a drop of water to cool our parched tongues, or even to moisten our cracked lips. We might have made the water, by more economy, hold out another day, but there was no use regretting that now. We felt the heat greater than ever. Tom proposed getting overboard; but there was the difficulty of getting in again; so Mudge advised that we should simply dip our clothes in the water and put them on again, that we might thus imbibe some moisture through our skins. He charged us on no account, however thirsty we might feel, to drink the salt water, pointing out the fearful result which might ensue.

Once more the sun went down, and we tried to row, but could now scarcely move the oars. At length, afraid of losing them, Mudge told Harry and me, who were then rowing, or rather trying to row, to haul them in; and we all stretched ourselves in the bottom of the boat and went to sleep.

Morning came again, and one by one we sat up and looked about us, and then gazed into each other's faces without speaking.

“I vote we have breakfast,” said Tom at length, “for I’m sharp set and very thirsty.”

“There’s neither food nor water remaining, boy,” answered Mudge in a hollow tone. “God may, if he thinks fit, send us help before the day is over. We can hold out a few hours longer, I should hope; but if help does not come, we must make up our minds like men to die. It has been the lot of many; why should we complain?”

These remarks were not calculated to raise our spirits. Perhaps Mudge knew that it would be useless to make any attempt to do so. He spoke but the truth, and we all knew that. It was a perfect calm; no vessel could approach us, and we were too weak to row. Mudge and I made the attempt, telling Tom to steer; but after a few strokes I could row no more, and nearly let my oar slip before I could get it inboard.

“We must wait for a breeze,” said Mudge, “which will come some time or other; it is our only hope.”

For some time he was silent. He alone continued seated on a thwart, the rest of us having sunk down with our heads upon them, while we leaned against the side of the boat. As the sun rose, the heat became more and more oppressive.

“Lads, it won’t do to give way to despair,” exclaimed Mudge suddenly, after he had been silent for an hour or more. “Can’t some of you sit up and talk?”

On hearing him say this, I endeavoured to arouse myself. Just then I heard a gentle splash in the water not far off. “What’s that?” I exclaimed.

“A shoal of flying-fish,” cried Mudge. “They are heading this way. Get out your oar, Rayner, and we will try and intercept them.”

By a desperate effort I did as he told me, while he pulled the oar on the opposite side.

“That will do now,” he cried. “Stand by, lads, and try to catch your breakfast as they come this way.”

The appeal was not in vain; even Tom showed that he had still some life in him. The next instant several flying-fish fell into the boat, while with the stretchers we knocked down others which came alongside. They were pursued by a couple of albacores; one of these would have supplied us with ample food for several days, but so rapid were their movements that we got but a single blow at one of them. It dashed by the boat, and was in an instant lost to sight.

The shoal having passed by, we had no hope of catching more, so we immediately set to work eating those we had captured—more in the fashion of ravenous beasts than human beings. They had died directly they were out of the water, or we should scarcely have waited to give them a knock on the head as a quietus before we dug our teeth into them. When people are situated as we were, they do things at which under other circumstances they would be horrified.

But eight fish had been caught; we had consumed five, and thus only three remained to be divided among us for our next meal. However, even the small amount of food we had taken somewhat restored our strength, and I felt that I could hold out another day if water could be obtained; but there was no prospect of rain—the only source from whence it could be derived.

“If a bird would just tumble into the boat, it would give us meat and drink,” observed Mudge. “We must hope for that, since no rain is likely to come.”

In vain, however, did we look around for sea-fowl; by their non-appearance we feared that we must still be far distant from land. Though we felt the gnawings of hunger, we suffered still more from thirst. When I at length dropped off to sleep, I dreamed of sparkling fountains; I saw bottles of champagne, and bitter beer, and all sorts of cooling beverages,—which, however, in some unaccountable way, I could not manage to carry to my lips.

But I will not dwell longer on the sufferings my companions and I endured; the subject is a painful one.

Mudge would not let us take the remainder of the fish that night, observing that it would last till the next morning, when we should want it for breakfast. We all acquiesced in his decision. He was constantly awake during the night, but the rest of us dozed for the greater part of it. At daylight, when I awoke, I saw that he had rigged one of the oars as a mast, to the upper end of which he had fastened a large handkerchief.

“Rouse up, boys!” he said, “and take your breakfast; we shall obtain relief to-day, or I am much mistaken.”

“Why?” I groaned out—for I could scarcely speak.

“Because there is a breeze coming. And look up there at those birds—perhaps one of them will come down and pay us a visit; and if so, we mustn’t stand on ceremony, but knock it inhospitably on the head.”

Mudge got out the fish, and cut each in two.

“You must take a whole one,” I said; “you require more food than we do, and our lives depend on your keeping up your strength.”

“No; I shall reserve it for luncheon,” he answered; “even that little will be better than nothing, and it will be something to look forward to.”

So dry were our mouths, however, we could scarcely masticate the uncooked fish.

We again sank down into our places. I felt that I could not hold out many hours longer; while the rest appeared still more exhausted.

Not a word was uttered by any of us excepting Mudge, who in vain appealed to us to talk. “Say something, boys! say something!” he every now and then cried out; “this silence is bad for us all. I won’t ask you to crack a joke, or tell a funny story; but talk, boys—talk!” A groan was the only answer any of us gave.

A gentle breeze blew from the eastward; I had just consciousness enough to be aware of that—to see honest Mudge sitting near me, and constantly looking about him.

What length of time had passed I know not, when I heard him shout, “A sail, boys! a sail!—we shall be saved!” His voice aroused me, and I saw him standing up, shading his eyes with his hand, while he leaned against the oar which formed the mast. “She’s standing this way; do try, my lads, to hold out for an hour or so longer, and we shall have as much water to drink and food to eat as we want,” he exclaimed. “Here, you shall have your luncheon;” and taking the half fish, he divided it into four equal portions.

“No, no, I don’t want any; I can hold out well enough,” he answered, when I made signs to him to take some. The rest of the party stretched out their hands feebly for the portion he gave them, but could with difficulty carry the food to their lips, or swallow it when they had got it into their mouths. So exhausted were we, indeed, that though we knew that a vessel was approaching, we were unable to sit up and watch her. I too saw her, and as she got nearer Mudge sang out that she was a brig under English colours; yet I could not believe that she was a reality. I several times heard him speaking about her approach. Once he exclaimed, with a deep groan,—“She’s hauled her wind, and is standing away from us!” then again,—“No, no; she sees us!—thank God, we’re saved! we’re saved!” Still, his words had no effect upon me or the rest of the party. Again I heard him hail; and a voice came from the brig in return. I was just conscious that we were alongside, and soon afterwards I felt myself lifted upon the deck; but my senses were confused; I could not understand anything that was going forward, and soon lost all consciousness.

How long I thus lay I could not tell, when, on opening my eyes, I saw a face bending over me; it was that of my mother. I was sure that I was dreaming, and again closed my eyes. The next time I opened them, they fell on the sweet features of my young sister Edith. She stood by the side of the cot in which I lay. I gazed at her for some seconds. There she stood, watching me eagerly; yet I could not persuade myself that it was really her. I knew how very vividly I had often seen persons and objects in my dreams.

I was in a neatly furnished cabin; just before me was a picture of our house at Clifton, and near it were hanging a girl’s straw hat and mantle. Again I turned my eyes towards the figure at my side. “Edith,” I murmured, not expecting to receive a reply.

“Yes, yes, dear Godfrey, I am Edith! Oh, how thankful I am that you are getting better, and know me.”

The reply was very distinct, but so are often replies in dreams. Just then I heard a voice which came down the skylight, giving an order to the crew in an authoritative tone: it was that of my father, I was sure.

“Why, Edith, how has it all happened?” I asked; “is it a reality, or am I still dreaming?”

“It is all real, I assure you,” answered Edith. “I must call mamma. Oh, how thankful she will be! We were afraid sometimes that you would not get better, and poor Pierce has been so unhappy, and so have I; but papa said he knew that you would recover, and we ought to have remembered that he is always right. And now you must get well as fast as you can.”

As she said this, I began to be convinced that I was awake, and that Edith really stood by my side. I did not detain her; and in another minute my mother was bending over me, and folding me in her arms, just as she had done the night before I came to sea. In a short time Pierce made his appearance, but was only allowed to remain a few seconds. Then my father came down, and said a few words expressive of his happiness; and then Edith, who had gone away, returned with a cup of broth, with which my mother fed me just as she had done when I was a baby.

I wanted at once to know how it had all happened, and what had brought my family out into the Pacific.

“It is a long story, and you are not strong enough to listen to it now,” answered my mother; “we will tell you in good time. One thing I may say: we were providentially sent to rescue you and your companions.”

“Are they all right?” I asked. “Have Mudge, and Harry, and Tom, and Popo been saved?”

“Mr Mudge has almost recovered; and the rest are, I trust, out of danger, though at first they appeared even weaker than you were,” answered my mother. “Mr Mudge has told us Harry’s interesting history. Your father knows Captain Hudson, who is an old shipmate, and he will do his best to restore the long-lost boy to his parents. However, we must not talk more at present. Go to sleep again. Our medical book says, that the more a person exhausted as you have been can sleep, the sooner he will get well.”

My mother having arranged a shawl over my shoulders, and bidding Edith sit down out of sight, glided out of the cabin. When I tried to talk, Edith only answered, “Hush!” and in a few minutes I was again asleep.

I do not know how it would have fared with us had we fallen into less careful hands; but my companions and I, in spite of the heat, in a short time recovered.

When I was strong enough to bear conversation, my mother told me how my father, finding his mercantile business in England was not likely to flourish, had resolved to emigrate to Australia, where, as an officer in the navy, he could obtain a grant of land. Following his nautical instincts, he had purchased a brig, on board of which he had shipped all

the family; purposing to make a trading voyage before finally settling down, and hoping thus to realise a considerable sum, and pay the expenses of the vessel. He had hitherto been tolerably successful, though they had run no slight risk twice, if not oftener, of being cut off by the treacherous natives—"Treacherous because, I fear, they have been treated treacherously," observed my mother. "We have been mercifully preserved, and are now on our way to Sydney, where we shall sell the brig and commence our settlers' life. Your father, however, intends first visiting New Caledonia; and perhaps New Guinea, and some other islands."

"Oh, then, I will leave the navy and settle with you!" I exclaimed. "And I am nearly certain that Mudge will also be ready to give up the navy and join us; as also, I am sure, will Harry, and Tom, and Popo."

It was, indeed, most providential that the brig picked us up, for it was more than a fortnight after this that we made New Caledonia, along the northern shore of which we coasted; my father intending to bring up in some convenient harbour, where we could communicate with the natives, and purchase sandal-wood, or other productions of the country. The shore consisted of ranges of hills of some height, mostly covered with wood, with low plains and valleys intervening. We saw several double canoes under sail, such as I have before described.

At last we found a harbour, the appearance of which from the sea tempted my father to enter it. The instant we dropped our anchor, the vessel was surrounded by canoes, which brought off vegetables and all sorts of provisions; but having heard of the way in which many vessels had been cut off by the natives, my father wisely resolved to allow no one to come on board. The crew were kept under arms while he and his mates trafficked with the natives; the articles he had to dispose of being lowered down into the canoes, while the provisions were hoisted up on deck. Had similar precautions been taken by the commanders of other vessels, numerous fearful tragedies might have been prevented.

Some of the canoes I speak of had outriggers; but others, used apparently only for the smooth water of the harbour, consisted merely of four trunks of some light wood, partially hollowed out by fire, and lashed tightly together. Two men sat in them,—one in the bows and the other astern,—who used long pointed paddles like the heads of spears. They usually carried one passenger; in some instances this passenger was a woman, enveloped from head to foot in a cloak of matting.

As the brig had her six guns pointed through her ports, and the crew were seen pacing the deck with cutlasses by their sides and muskets in their hands, the people showed every disposition to behave peaceably, and to traffic on fair terms. Finding that we wanted sandal-wood, they brought off an ample supply, for which my father gave them a price which thoroughly satisfied them. Had all traders behaved as he did, I am convinced that the natives, who have often been stigmatised as treacherous savages, would have gained a very different character.

We again sailed, steering westward, as my father wished to inspect some of the northern portions of the eastern coast of Australia, at that time but little known. His intercourse with savages had led him to believe that, if properly treated, as he had always treated them, they could be easily managed; and he had therefore no fear of settling at a distance from other colonists. Indeed, he wished to be as far as possible from other stations; so that, by keeping the convict servants assigned to him away from the contaminating influence of their old companions, he might have a better opportunity of improving them, while he might at the same time win the confidence of the natives.

I have as yet said nothing about the brig, or those on board. She was called the *Violet*, of nearly two hundred tons burthen. The first and second mates were respectively men selected by my father for their good character, but there was nothing remarkable about them. The boatswain, Ned Burton, took the place in my regard which I had bestowed on poor Dick Tillard, whom, strangely enough, he knew.

"And a right honest fellow he was, Master Godfrey," said Ned; "and if ever I go to that island from which you have escaped, I'll pay a visit to his grave. He and I served His Majesty for many a year; and if the peace hadn't come, we should have been serving him still. When the war was over, and I was paid off, I had made up my mind to remain on shore; and so I should, had not your father, who made his first trip to sea with me, asked me to come out on board the *Violet*. He would have made me second mate; but then, you see, I don't understand navigation, and so I couldn't take the situation. Howsomdever, when he said he would make me a boatswain, I couldn't refuse him; and I'm thinking, when the ship is sold, and if I like the country, of settling down along with him, and sending for my old woman and our two daughters."

I told Ned I thought he would act very wisely; and that in consequence of what Mr Mudge had said to me, and believing that I should have very little chance of promotion, I had made up my mind to quit the service, if Captain Bracewell would allow me.

"Not much difficulty about that, Master Godfrey," answered Ned, laughing. "They don't set a high value on midshipmen, according to my experience; and as he has probably long before this given you and the rest up for lost, he won't be ferreting you out in Australia."

"But I should not like to do anything dishonourable," I said; "and if the captain were to insist on my returning in the ship, I am bound to do so: besides which, I left my chest on board, and there is pay due to me."

"I thought a midshipman's pay was always nothing, and find yourself, Master Godfrey," said Ned. "And as for your chest and its contents, they've been sold by auction on the capstan-head long ago, so that it would be a hard job to get them back again."

I talked the matter over with Pierce, who earnestly advised me not to think of quitting our father, and said he was sure that he would give me the same advice, as he had often said how much he wished I could have been with him.

I must not forget to mention my young sister's pet goat Nanny, which had long afforded her and my mother milk for breakfast and tea. Nanny was the most affectionate of animals; and the moment Edith appeared on deck in the

morning would come bounding up to her, and seemed delighted at being fondled, though she would butt at any one else who touched her. She, however, made friends with Harry, and when Edith was below would come up to him and wait to be caressed; but no sooner did she see her mistress, than she would hasten to her—looking at Harry, as much as to say, “I like you very well, but I like her best.”

We were progressing favourably on our voyage, which would in a short time terminate. I have said little or nothing about the wonders of the ocean, for they have been so often described. I cannot, however, avoid mentioning a beautiful phenomenon which occurred one night as we were approaching the Australian coast. There was a light breeze, which just rippled the water into wavelets, amid which the brig glided onward. The sky was overcast sufficiently to hide the stars. Dark as it was overhead, the whole ocean was flashing with light,—at some places in streaks, at others in vast masses, the spouts of several whales appearing like jets of liquid fire; while numberless huge medusae floated about, appearing as if composed of molten silver.

“I wonder the ship doesn’t catch fire!” exclaimed Tommy, who had just come on deck. “It would be a bad job if it did, for how should we ever put it out again? What can light up the water in this fashion?”

My father overheard him. “We call it the phosphorescence of the sea, because it resembles the glow emitted by phosphorus,” he answered. “Those who have studied the subject say that it is caused by the presence of myriads of minute marine organisms, some soft and gelatinous, and others—such as the Crustacea—of a hard nature; but, in reality, under some conditions of the atmosphere all sorts of marine creatures, like those huge medusae, shine both in the water and out of it.”

This appearance continued many hours. I got up Edith, who had already retired to her cabin, to look at it. She was as delighted as we were, and wanted us to have a bucketful brought on deck. Greatly to our surprise, the water in the bucket shone almost as brilliantly as it did in the ocean.

The next day the wind changed, and the weather became much worse than it had been since we had been taken on board. The wind was continually shifting, now coming from one quarter and now from another. I saw that my father was unusually anxious. He felt that the safety of the vessel, and the lives of all on board, depended on him. It was a long time since he had been at sea, and he had never been off this coast before. I believe that it would have been better for us had we at once stood off the land. It was too late to hope to do so, when the wind, coming round to the eastward, began to blow a perfect hurricane. My father then hoped to find shelter within the coral reefs which ran along the coast at a distance of from five to a dozen miles, on which Captain Cook’s ship, the *Endeavour*, was nearly cast away, in his first voyage.

Soon after daybreak, the hurricane came down with redoubled fury. The brig was hove-to under close-reefed fore-topsails. She behaved well; and we hoped, believing that we were still some thirty miles or more from the coast, that she would not near the reefs till the gale had abated. An anxious look-out, however, was kept all day to leeward. My father did not tell my mother and Edith the danger we were in, but merely begged them to remain in the cabin.

It was about three o’clock in the afternoon, when the first mate, who had been seated in the main-top looking out, came down on deck, and gave my father the alarming intelligence that he saw a line of breakers to leeward, extending north and south as far as the eye could reach.

“Could you discover no opening in them?” asked my father.

“I am not certain at this distance that there is none, though the line of surf appeared to me without a break for its whole length,” was the answer.

“It will take us some time to drift so far, at all events,” observed my father; “and before then the wind may come down.”

The mate looked anxiously to the eastward. “I don’t see any sign of that,” he answered.

“We must trust in Providence, then,” said my father. “However, I will go aloft; and if we can discover an opening, we will endeavour to carry the ship through it.”

I followed my father to the main-top, and stood looking out with him for some minutes. At length it appeared to me that about half a mile to the southward there was a space where the ocean was much less agitated than in other parts. I pointed it out to my father.

“You are right,” he said, after a pause. “It may afford us the means of escape; for should the gale continue during the night, no human power can save us—long before it is over, we should be on the reef.”

Having accordingly taken the bearings of the opening, he descended the rigging.

The operation of keeping away, when a ship has been hove-to, is at all times a dangerous one, and requires the most careful management, as the sea may otherwise strike her, and wash everything from her decks. The crew were ordered to their stations. The first mate, with a couple of trusty hands, went to the wheel.

“Up with the helm!” cried my father, waiting till an enormous sea had passed by us. “Brace round the fore-yard!”

It was done, and the brig’s head fell off to the westward. The main-topsail, closely reefed, was set, and we had then as much canvas as she could stagger under. As it was, several seas swept over her deck, carrying away portions of her bulwarks, and doing other damage; but all hands clung on to the stanchions around the mast, and happily no one was washed overboard. As we flew on, we could see the breakers flying high up on our starboard bow; while ahead appeared the opening which we had before made out. The wind, it should be understood, was on our port, or larboard

quarter, as it was then called. The topsail-yards bent with the pressure put upon them. Should they go, the brig, deprived of her after-sail, would be unable to weather the southern end of the reef.

On and on we flew. A few minutes would decide our fate. Huge seas came rolling up astern, threatening to break aboard us; while, on either hand, the white breakers rose to the height of our tops,—those on the starboard side being so near us that it appeared even now that we should be overwhelmed. We flew through it, however; and I heard an expression of thankfulness escape my father as the white wall of foam appeared over our starboard quarter. For the present we were in comparative safety; but night was coming on, and the shore could not be far off. Once more we hauled up to the northward; then hove-to under the lee of the reef, hoping that the drift during the night would not carry us on shore. Still, our position was not free from danger. The water, even under the lee of the reef, was considerably agitated, although there was but little risk of the seas actually breaking on board as long as we remained afloat. The order was given to range the cable, and get ready for anchoring, should we approach the shore.

No one turned in, for we could not tell at what moment all hands might be required. Towards the end of the first watch, the gale began to moderate, and our hopes of ultimately escaping rose considerably. My father waited till midnight, and then ordered the watch just relieved to turn in, to be ready to take their duty in the morning. It was my morning watch; so I followed his directions, and turned in to my berth, hoping at daylight to see the coast of Australia, which I had pictured in glowing colours.

I was awakened by an ominous grating sound, and then by a blow which made the vessel quiver from stem to stern. She lifted for an instant, and then down she came again with a crash which seemed to be wrenching her timbers asunder. I knew too well what had happened. We were on shore; and in an instant I realised all the horrors of our situation. The cries and shouts which reached me from the deck left no doubt about the matter.

Shipping on my clothes, I hurried into the cabin, where I found my mother and Edith. Entreating them to remain where they were till my father summoned them, I next went on deck to ascertain the worst.

The brig had been carried over a sunken reef, and lay with her masts pointing towards the shore, which could be distinguished through the gloom not more than half a mile away. My father stood by the mainmast perfectly composed, issuing orders as if nothing had occurred. Hands were sent aloft to furl the foretopsail; and he then directed that the boats on the starboard side should be brought over, so as to be launched into the smoother water under our lee—where, on sounding, we found that there was sufficient depth to float them without risk of their striking the coral below. We had driven on to a small inner reef—a portion, probably, of what was once the fringing reef of the continent.

It may seem strange that my father had not gone into the cabin, but his professional duty overcame all

Getting the boats into the water.

other considerations. His first thought was to take measures for preserving the lives of all on board.

As soon as he heard my voice near him, he directed me to go back to the cabin, to assure my mother and Edith that, though the brig might be lost, he felt perfect confidence that we should all be conveyed safely on shore, and desired them to put together such things as they were most likely to require under the circumstances that we might be placed in. Although my mother was alarmed, her fears did not overcome her; and Edith, seeing her comparatively calm, did not give way to terror.

“This is indeed a sad misfortune,” said my mother; “but God’s will be done. We must trust to him to protect us. Tell your father we will do what he desires, and shall be ready to leave the vessel as soon as he summons us.”

I went on deck, and found my father and the mates, aided by Mudge, labouring with the crew in getting two of the boats into the water. Our boat had unfortunately been stove in by the falling of the topmasts when the brig struck.

“It is as well to be on the safe side, and to have the boats ready to shove off in case it should be necessary,” I heard Mudge observe to my father. “But, if I mistake not, it was somewhere about here that Captain Cook, on his first voyage round the world, was nearly lost in the *Endeavour*; though I think he must have been further off-shore. His ship was in a worse condition than ours, I suspect, for she went on shore at high-water; and it was not till after two or three tides had fallen and risen, and a large quantity of her stores had been hove overboard, that she was got off. Even then she would have foundered, had not a fothered sail—the use of which was not so generally known then as

at present—been got under her bottom, by which she was kept afloat till she was carried into Endeavour River. Never perhaps was a ship so nearly lost; and yet, bad as was her condition, she continued her voyage round the world, and arrived safely in England."

"You hear what Mr Mudge says, my men," observed my father to the crew; "it ought to encourage us: but whether we get the ship off or not, I feel very confident that we shall reach the shore without difficulty."

"Never fear for us, sir," cried Ned Burton—"we'll do our duty; and if the brig don't budge, it will not be our fault."

In the meantime, while I was below, the sails were furled, and the carpenter, by my father's orders, had sounded the well. He now reported six feet of water in the hold; which showed that the water must be rushing in with fearful rapidity. The pumps were immediately manned, and all hands set to work to keep it under as much as possible.

While the mates were labouring with the men at the pumps, my father and Mudge and I tried the depth of water round the ship. Although there was sufficient on the lee side to float the boats—we found six feet astern—there were not more than eight feet on the weather or starboard side. We thus knew that she must have beaten over the ledge into a sort of basin, from which it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to extricate her. As the sea, however, did not beat against her with much force, we hoped, should the wind not again increase, that she would hold together till we could get such stores out of her as would be necessary for our support. We were, we knew, a long way from any of the settlements, and, though we might reach them in the boats, a voyage along that rocky and inhospitable coast would be a dangerous one. My father did not perhaps express what he thought to the crew, as he wished to keep up their spirits, and to make every possible effort to get off the brig before he abandoned the attempt as hopeless. Nothing effectual could be done till the return of high-water, however, and daylight would enable us to see our position more clearly than at present.

As soon as "Spell O!" was cried, my father and Mudge and I took our turn at the pumps, and worked away as energetically as any one, though we well knew that all our efforts might be in vain. Again and again the carpenter sounded the well, and each time reported that, notwithstanding our exertions, the water was gaining on us. Still we laboured on, till at length the first streaks of morning appeared in the sky. It was very nearly high-water when we first drove on the reef; the tide had since been falling, and for the present it would be utterly impossible to move the ship. Our fear was that should we leave her she would fill, and the stores and cargo be damaged.

My father now for the first time went below, and I accompanied him. We found my mother and Edith still employed in packing up the articles they considered would most be required on shore.

"This is a sad event, my dear wife," he said; "but we must bear it patiently, and endeavour to do the best we can in the circumstances in which we are placed. I am anxious to land you and Edith without delay; and I propose to send you and the boys under the charge of Mr Mudge or one of the mates, with a tent and as many provisions as the boat will carry, so that should bad weather come on you will be out of danger."

"I will do as you wish," answered my mother; "but I would far rather remain on board till you yourself think it necessary to leave the brig. I don't like the thought of landing on a strange shore without you; and I should be very anxious there while you are still on the wreck and exposed to danger."

"I don't expect to incur any danger by remaining; and should it become necessary to leave the brig in a hurry, we shall be able to do so far more easily when you are already safe on shore," answered my father. "However, as you wish it, you can wait a little longer. In the meantime, the boat can be got ready; and you and those who are to accompany you can have breakfast."

The composed way in which my father spoke considerably reassured my mother. Having given orders to the steward to get breakfast ready, with as much calmness as if we were still running on under easy sail in an open sea, my father went on deck.

Mudge assisting us, we immediately set to work to get up such stores as could be most easily reached, with some sails and several spars for rigging a tent. While we were thus engaged, the mates got a hawser ranged ready to carry the stream-anchor out ahead, to be ready to try and haul the brig off at the top of high-water; the rest of the people still labouring at the pumps.

My father now sent Pierce and Tommy Peck into the cabin, telling them to eat a good breakfast, that they might be able to make themselves useful. Harry, Mudge, and I followed; but we scarcely sat down a minute, tumbling the food into our mouths as fast as we could, and drinking our coffee while standing with the cups in our hands. Mudge was off again almost immediately, to allow my father to come down and take his breakfast. I was struck by the way in which my mother presided at the table, Edith helping her as if nothing unusual had occurred.

Harry and I soon followed Mudge, whom we found engaged in stowing the boat. We were assisting him, when we were again summoned to the pumps; for they could not be allowed to rest for a moment, and the gang who had just been working at them were quite tired out, and required their breakfast.

All this time the sea, though it did not break over the vessel, was striking her side, and every now and then made her give a lurch which I thought would send the masts out of her. The tide having turned, was now again rapidly rising; so the anchor was carried out ahead, and preparations made to heave her off! As the tide rose the seas began to beat with greater force against the side of the vessel, frequently flying over her deck.

"Mudge," said my father, "I must no longer delay sending Mrs Rayner and the young people on shore; I confide her and them to your charge, feeling sure that you will act, according to the best of your judgment, for their good. I trust that you will meet with no natives; but if you do, and they appear to be hostile, you have arms with which to keep them at a distance."

“Depend on me, sir,” said Mudge; who now, with the men chosen to man the boat, hauled her alongside.

My father went below, and returned conducting my mother and sister. They were then carefully lowered into the boat, in which Mudge and the crew were seated; Pierce went next; Harry, Tom, Popo, and I followed.

“Oh, may we have Nanny with us?” cried Edith, not even then forgetting her favourite.

“Where’s Nanny? where’s Nanny?” was cried along the deck; it was feared at first that she had been washed overboard.

“Here she is, all right,” cried the cook, who had looked into the caboose, where it was found that the goat had wisely taken shelter on finding herself neglected by her friends. Her usually sleek hair was somewhat blackened, but that did not matter. She was hauled out of her hiding-place and carried to the side of the vessel. On seeing Edith in the boat she would of her own accord have leaped in after her, but as in doing so she might have pitched upon some of our heads, she was lowered carefully down.

“Thank you, thank you,” cried Edith, as she patted the head of her favourite, who was exhibiting her satisfaction at being with her young mistress.

As we shoved off, my mother looked anxiously at the brig, still evidently not liking to leave my father on board. He had told Mudge to ascertain if there were any natives in the neighbourhood; and should he be certain that there were none, to send the boat back, that she might either assist in getting the brig off, or take more stores and provisions on shore. As we pulled away the position of the brig appeared hopeless indeed, and I believe my father would have thought so had he been with us; but he could not bring himself to abandon her till he had tried every possible means of getting her off. She was heeling over on her side; and as the pumps were kept going, the water flowed out at the scuppers in a continuous stream.

“Is there no hope, Mr Mudge, of getting the vessel off?” asked my mother.

“The commander thinks that there is, or he would not have remained,” he answered evasively, not giving his own opinion; but I saw by his countenance that he did not think there was any hope.

Our attention was now turned towards the shore. As we approached we discovered what appeared to be the mouth of a river some way to the south of where the brig lay, and as Mudge considered we should obtain a better landing-place within it than was offered by the beach, all along which the surf broke with some force, he steered towards it. We found that it was directly opposite the passage through the reef by which we had entered. The ground on the south side rose to a considerable height, with a line of cliffs facing the sea-shore; while on the north the country was much lower, and covered sparsely with trees of a curious growth, such as I had never before seen, and with no underwood anywhere visible; but the mouth of the river on the lower side was lined with mangroves, which extended into the water.

There was some sea on the bar, but not sufficient to make Mudge hesitate about entering. He waited, however, for a good opportunity. “Give way, my lads,” he shouted. Just then a roller came foaming up astern, which made me dread that my mother and Edith would get a wetting, even if the consequences were not more serious; but we kept ahead of it, and in another minute were in smooth water.

We soon discovered a rocky point on the north side, which offered a good landing-place, with green turf and a few trees growing on the upper side; and here we first set foot on the shores of Australia.

Chapter Seven.

Survey our camping-place—Climb to the top of the cliff—Return to the brig—Fruitless attempts to get her off—Stores landed—Visited by a native and his family—Paddy makes Pullingo’s acquaintance—A raft built—A storm—Brig goes to pieces—Disaffection of the crew—I save Mudge from a snake—Cruise in the boats to recover cargo—Case of seeds found—House built—The mates and part of the crew sail for Sydney in the long-boat—Duties on shore—Expedition with Edith in the jolly-boat—Edith taken ill—A gale—Cross the bar—A merciful escape.

The spot on which we had landed was well chosen. There was ample level space on which to erect our tents; indeed, a whole village might have been built on it under such shade as the trees afforded; though that, owing to the way the leaves grew with their edges upwards and downwards, was but slight. It was joined to the mainland by a narrow neck, which could be easily defended, should there be any natives in the neighbourhood inclined to attack us; while a bend of the shore on the upper side of the neck afforded a secure harbour for the boats. The cliffs, which extended along the coast, and apparently ran some way up the river, rose but a short distance from the bank; and as the trees grew widely apart along the shore, no enemy, we supposed, could approach without being discovered.

As soon as we had landed, my mother begged Mudge to ascertain, as far as he could, whether there were any natives in the neighbourhood; and if he was satisfied that there were none, to send the boat back to the brig—which was not visible from where we were, being hidden by the mangroves on the point at the northern side of the entrance to the river.

“The best way to ascertain that will be to climb to the top of the cliffs, as from thence I doubt not but I shall get a good view all over the country,” answered Mudge.

I begged to accompany him; and he giving directions to the men to land the stores and provisions, we set off.

When we reached the foot of the cliffs we found that it would be no easy matter to mount them; indeed, just above the landing-place they were almost perpendicular. By going westward—that is to say, up the stream—we found that they were more broken; and at length we discovered a part where, by means of the shrubs which projected from the crevices, we had hopes of being able to climb up to the top. I don't know what landsmen might have done, but we, not to be deterred by difficulties or the fear of breaking our necks, commenced the ascent.

Up we went, now scrambling over the rocks, now swinging ourselves up by means of the shrubs, till we got to a break in the ground—probably in long ages past a water-course, when the ocean was flowing off the ground; now presenting a surface of undulating downs. The sides sloping gradually, we easily made our way among the bushes growing on them, till we stood on the downs I have just spoken of, on the top of the cliff. By proceeding back to the sea we reached the highest part, just above the landing-place.

Before leaving the vessel, Mudge had thoughtfully slung his telescope over his shoulder, and was thus able to take a wide survey of the country in every direction. We first looked towards the brig, which lay about a mile and a half to the north-east, in the position in which we had left her; the boat was alongside, and as far as we could make out, no effort was being made to get the vessel off.

"I doubt if any power will move her; or, if she were to be hauled off the rocks, whether she will keep afloat long enough to bring her into the harbour," said Mudge, with a sigh. "It can't be helped; and we should be thankful to have reached the shore with our lives, and to have a prospect of making our way in time to the settlements."

"I am afraid that my father will be dreadfully cut up at the loss of the brig and so much of his property, even although we may manage to land the stores and part of the cargo," I observed.

"He would have been more cut up had your mother and sister and you boys lost your lives, or been compelled to make a long voyage in the boats,—which might have been our fate had we not got so close inshore," answered Mudge. "Again I say, let us be thankful for the mercies shown us, and make the best of our position."

Mudge, while he was speaking, was sweeping his glass round from the coast-line to the northward, towards the interior of the country. I meantime was looking down on the party below the cliff, who were all busily employed in carrying the things up from the boat, and placing them close to the spot Mudge had already selected for pitching the tent—in the centre of the little peninsula. Though they were, I concluded, within musket-shot, they were too far off for an arrow to reach them; so that, even should the natives possess such weapons, our encampment could not be assailed from the top of the cliff. This was satisfactory, as it made the position we had chosen a very secure one.

The spot was about a quarter of a mile from the mouth of the river. The opposite shore was, as I have said, much lower than that on which we stood. Close to the sea it was flat and level, with a few sand-hills scattered over it. Farther on, the ground was undulating and thinly covered with trees. On our side, the high ground extended as far as the eye could reach along the bank of the river, as it did also along the shore southward. Altogether, it appeared to me a very fine country, such as we had reason to be thankful we had landed on.

"I can see no huts or cottages, or signs of people, though it seems strange that so fertile a region should be uninhabited. All I can suppose is, that the people live either underground, or in the same sort of wretched hovels I have seen some of the South Sea Islanders dwelling in," said Mudge; "and if so, I might have been unable to distinguish them, even although at no great distance. Do you, Godfrey, take the glass, and tell me what you can make out."

I did as he bade me, examining every hill-side and hollow from north to south of our position, without discovering anything like a hut. To the west and south-west I observed a range of blue mountains, but the country to the southward was either level or undulating, and covered with trees growing widely apart; so that should we decide on making our way overland to the settlements, we should for some distance at all events find no obstruction to our progress.

Having finished our survey, we went along the top of the cliff to the westward, and by proceeding on a little farther we got down by a somewhat easier way than that by which we had climbed up.

In consequence of the report Mudge gave my mother, she begged that he would go back to the brig.

"That I may not do," he answered, "as I promised the captain to remain here to protect you: and though my belief is that there are no natives hereabouts, I cannot be certain; and I should never forgive myself, if they were to come and do you an injury while I had neglected orders and gone away."

"Then let me go off," I said, "with three of the men,—they will be sufficient to pull the boat that short distance; and you, Paddy Doyle, and the boys, will be well able to keep any savages at bay till we come back."

To this Mudge agreed, as my mother seemed to wish it; and everything having been landed from the boat, the men and I jumped into her, and, shoving off, pulled away for the brig.

By the time we arrived alongside, the tide was as high as it was likely to rise. My father was glad to see me back, and to hear the satisfactory report which I gave him. We had no time for conversation, however, as the men had just manned the capstan to make another effort to heave the vessel off. But in vain they laboured; not an inch would she move.

"I am afraid, sir, that our only chance of floating her will be, either to land the cargo, or to heave it overboard," observed the first mate.

"I have arrived at the same conclusion," said my father; "but we will not lose the cargo if it can be helped. We will

land what we can in the boats; and if the weather continues moderate, we will form a raft, and convey as much as it can carry,—by which we shall be enabled, I hope, to save the larger portion."

"Let's have another heave first, sir," cried the men, who thus showed their regard for their commander, and the interest they felt in his welfare, as they all knew that he would be the chief sufferer by the loss of the brig. Again they hove, pressing against the capstan-bars as if nothing could resist them.

"It's all of no use," exclaimed the carpenter, who had been below; "it's my belief that the coral rock has gone through the planking, and that unless we can get the cargo out of her, and every pig of ballast, no power will float her or get her off."

My father, on hearing this, also went below; and on his return he directed the mate, with some of the crew, to load the boats, while he and others set to work to build a raft. As soon as the two boats were loaded, he ordered me to pilot the way in the jolly-boat; saying that he intended to remain on board, with the hands not required in the boats, to complete the raft.

"But won't you leave the mates, father, to do that?" I asked.

"No, Godfrey," he answered, somewhat sternly; "I intend to be the last man to quit the vessel. As soon as the boats are unloaded, they are to return, unless Mr Mudge thinks it necessary to detain the jolly-boat. Tell him what I say; and assure your mother that she need be under no apprehensions on my account."

Of course, all I had to do was to obey my father; but I could not help feeling anxious about him, as I had no doubt my mother would be, notwithstanding the message I was to give her. Jumping into the jolly-boat, then, I told the men to give way, as I wished to reach the shore as soon as possible. The water was tolerably smooth; and though our boats were heavily laden, we crossed the bar without difficulty, it being now high-water, and soon reached the landing-place.

As we approached it, we saw three strange figures standing at the farther end of the neck of land, apparently watching the proceedings of our friends. They were perfectly black, having on the smallest possible amount of clothing, with bushy heads of hair; and one of them had a thick beard, moustache, and whiskers. Two of them had long spears in their hands, but the other, whom as we got nearer we saw to be a woman, was unarmed.

Mudge hailed us. "Take no notice of the natives," he sang out; "they've been there for the last half-hour, and are puzzled to make us out. The best way to manage them is to let them alone; and by-and-by, depend on it, they'll come and try to make friends with us."

I at once gave Mudge my father's message. He replied that there was not the slightest necessity for our remaining, and desired me, as soon as the boats were unloaded, to pull back again to the brig. "Paddy Doyle and I can easily manage our black friends; and it is far more important that the boats should be employed in bringing the stores on shore," he observed. "The only advice I have to give is, that you should cross the bar with the raft while the tide is flowing, and pretty near high-water. It will be better to wait for high tide than to attempt it as yet; and I hope your father will secure the raft alongside, and come on shore in the last trip the boats make this evening."

My mother sent a similar message, entreating my father not to remain.

The crew quickly unloaded the boats, and piled up their cargoes, with the other things before landed, in the centre of the camp.

I observed that Paddy Doyle, instead of working with us, was employed in watching the natives; though he pretended all the time not to be taking any notice of them, but to be amusing himself by playing a number of strange antics calculated to excite their curiosity. This, after a time, he succeeded in doing. The man, having directed his companions to retire to a distance,—for the purpose, as we supposed, of placing them out of danger,—advanced several paces nearer, and stood regarding us with fixed attention. Though he was no beauty according to our notions, he was, as he stood motionless as a statue, with his bundle of five lances, their sharp points polished and serrated, in his left hand, really a fine-looking savage. Stuck in his bushy hair, and fixed in his ear, he wore a heron's feather; and round his waist was a broad belt which served to keep up his very tight kilt, composed of opossum skins. In this belt was stuck a knife or dagger of bone or stone; while at his back was slung a small stone axe. His right hand was, however, kept in readiness at any moment to hurl one of his lances at us. His figure was tall; and his limbs, though covered with dirt, remarkably clean, as far as form was concerned—showing that he was capable of great activity.

Paddy now pretended to have discovered him for the first time, and advancing a few paces, took off his hat and made him a profound bow. Though in all likelihood the savage had never before been so saluted, he seemed to understand that the white stranger wished to become better acquainted with him, and pointing to himself, he uttered the word "Pullingo."

"The top of the morning to ye, Mr Pullingo! I'm after hoping you're pretty well. And how's Mistress Pullingo, and Master Pullingo, and any other pledges of mutual affection you happen to possess?" cried Paddy.

The savage uttered some words in a not unmusical tone, but what they were intended to express it was impossible to say, nor could we be certain that he had mentioned his own name; but, as may be supposed, Paddy at once dubbed him Pullingo, which cognomen he was likely to retain ever afterwards.

"Exactly so," said Paddy, as if he had understood every word that had been uttered. "And my name's Patrick Doyle, at your service; and it's myself and my friends there have come to spend a few weeks in your country, or maybe longer; and we hope by-and-by to have the pleasure of your better acquaintance."

The tone of Paddy's voice, as well as his gestures, seemed to give confidence to the savage, and to assure him that we had no hostile intentions. But after Doyle and he had thus stood looking at each other for some minutes, he began slowly to retreat, always keeping his face towards us, till he had rejoined the woman and boy, when he sat down and held a conversation with them. They then all three rose and made their way up the bank of the river, till they were hidden from sight behind a rock.

I was, however, but a short time on shore, for as soon as the boats were unloaded we pulled away to the brig. By the time we got back to her the raft was nearly completed. As, however, the tide was running out of the river, my father, following Mudge's advice, determined not to send it on shore, but to secure it alongside for the night. The boats were therefore again loaded; and as long as daylight lasted they were kept plying backwards and forwards.

With great unwillingness my father consented to come on shore with the rest of the crew in the last trip. "I should have no fears about remaining," he observed, "as I feel confident that the brig will hold together, even though we may not succeed in getting her off."

We had landed provisions sufficient to last us, with economy, for several months; all our arms and ammunition, most of our own clothing and that of the ship's company, as well as our bedding and a few articles of furniture for my mother's use; our cooking utensils and the cabin dinner and tea service; the carpenter's tool-chest; several spades and pick-axes, and other agricultural implements; and some bales of new canvas, as well as several of the ship's sails and a number of miscellaneous articles. Altogether, we had reason to be satisfied that we had saved so much. Several tents had been put up before dark to accommodate all the party. The most complete was that for the use of my mother and Edith; the others were formed simply by stretching a rope, over which a sail was thrown, between two trees, the edges of the sail being secured by pegs to the ground on either side.

As soon as my father landed he summoned several of the men, and ordered them to cut down all the grass which grew on the isthmus, as well as that surrounding our tents.

"I take a hint from Captain Cook," he observed; "for I remember the narrow escape he and his men had from destruction, when the savages, in a sudden fit of anger, set fire to the grass surrounding his encampment, from which his powder and more valuable articles had only just before been removed. The savages hereabouts may be disposed to be friendly with us; but it will not do to trust them, as we cannot tell from what cause they may take offence."

We had hitherto been too busy to eat anything, with the exception of some biscuit and wine. The fire was now lighted, the tea-kettle put on, and a pot to boil some of the provisions we had brought with us. Nanny afforded some milk for tea, and with the herbage she would now obtain she would, it was hoped, give us an abundant supply.

My father, not trusting to the natives, placed a sentry on the neck of land, as also two others to watch the shore in case they should pay us a visit by water during the night. We all then retired to our tents; and having been up during the previous night and hard at work all day, we very quickly fell asleep.

How long a time had passed I knew not, when I was awakened by a rattling peal of thunder, which sounded directly above my head. Starting up and rushing out of the tent, I found my father and the officers, as well as most of the men, on foot; the rain was coming down in torrents, and the wind was blowing furiously, dashing the water against the bank, and making the tall trees bend before it. My fear at first was that they would be blown down upon us; but when I recollected the shape of their leaves and their scanty foliage, I saw that there was not much danger of that. How thankful I felt that my father had not remained on board the brig, for she, I could not help fearing, would go to pieces, and all her cargo be lost.

My father's first object was to secure the boats, which lay in the bay I have already described, above our encampment. As soon as this was done, he in a calm voice advised those who had not to keep watch to turn in again. "We need not fear for our lives," he observed; "and as for the brig, we can do nothing till daylight. Should the weather then moderate, and she still hold together, we may get off to her; but if not, Heaven's will be done. We should be thankful that our lives have been preserved, and that we have secured so many necessaries."

I was only half awake as it was; so, following my father's advice, I crept back into the tent, and in spite of the storm was quickly asleep. Day had broken for some time when I awoke; the rain had ceased, though the sky was still cloudy. I found the men trying to light a fire with the damp wood and leaves they had collected, but it was a somewhat difficult task. My father, accompanied by Mudge, had gone up to the top of the cliff to look out for the brig, but from the loud roar of the breakers on the bar and along the coast I had but little hope that they would see her. The storm, however, quickly passed away, the sun breaking out from amid the clouds which rolled off to the southward. I awoke my younger companions, who had slept through the whole of it, and were very much astonished to find the ground wet and the sea still roaring in a voice of thunder.

My mother's tent having been securely put up, had withstood the wind, as had the others; indeed, constructed as they were, they could not be blown down or disturbed unless the pegs had been drawn out of the ground.

I found my mother and Edith sitting just inside their tent, waiting for my father's return.

"The utter destruction of the brig will be a sore trial to him," she observed; "and he has no hope that she can have escaped; so we must do our best to keep up his spirits, and to show him that we are contented with our lot. I feel such unbounded gratitude to Heaven for his having been induced to come on shore last night, that the destruction of the vessel appears to me a mere trifle; and I am sure that you and Pierce will do your best to induce the rest to obey his directions."

"That we will, mother; and so, I am sure, will Harry," said Pierce, who was with me; "so will Tommy Peck and Dicky Popo: and if they don't, we'll make them."

The men had succeeded in lighting a fire; and just as breakfast was ready my father and Mudge came in sight. They shook their heads as they drew near.

“Not a vestige of the brig remains,” said my father, with a sigh. “I trust that, if we can get to Sydney, we shall recover our insurance; but I had hoped till the last to save her and the cargo. We have happily secured a good store of provisions and ammunition; and I propose forming a settlement in this neighbourhood, and, having become acquainted with its inhabitants, the nature of the country, and the wild animals which may afford us food, ultimately to send an expedition overland to Sydney. When we have gained experience, we shall have but comparatively little difficulty in travelling to the British settlements in the south.”

My mother was perfectly ready to agree to my father’s proposal; indeed, she saw the wisdom of remaining where we were until we had become acquainted with the country, and she dreaded the long overland journey almost as much as she did a voyage in the boats. All the party, however, I found, were not of this opinion, though they did not at first express themselves openly on the subject. The seamen, as is too often the case when a vessel has been wrecked, now that they had got on shore did not consider themselves any longer under naval discipline; and though they were not actually disrespectful to my father, they took but little pains to carry out his orders. He, having been brought up on board a man-of-war, was not accustomed to the ways of merchant-seamen, and considered that they were as much bound to obey him now as before. The mates, it was evident from their manner, sided with the men, so that Mudge was the only officer on whom my father could depend for support. They two on all occasions consulted together. The first point they had to decide was the position of the proposed settlement, supposing that the men would willingly assist in forming it. When my father spoke to the mates on the subject, however, they at once declared that they had no intention of remaining where they were.

“You see, Captain Rayner, you have your wife and family with you; but with us it is very different,” observed the first mate. “We want to get back to our families and to civilised life, and see no reason why we should remain here when we have got a stout boat in which we can easily make the passage to Sydney. If you’ll give us the boat, we’ve made up our minds to go in her as soon as we’ve stretched our legs on shore a little.”

My father replied that he would consider the matter; on which the mate muttered something which did not reach our ears.

I was shortly afterwards talking over the matter with Mudge. “It can’t be helped, though, I fear,” he observed. “If we can’t persuade them to stay, they must go; for we certainly have no power to compel them to do what they don’t wish, and we must therefore depend upon ourselves. I am very certain that Tommy Peck and Harry will remain faithful; and so, I hope, will the boatswain and Paddy Doyle, who seems much attached to us.”

“I can answer for Ned Burton,” I said; “and, I think, two or three more of the men.”

“Then, whether or not any of the rest stay with us, we shall manage to do very well,” he said in a cheerful tone. “Now, after the experience of last night, I am anxious at once to build a cottage for your mother and Edith, in which they will be more comfortable than in a tent. I told your father, who said he should be much obliged if I would do so; and to show the men that we are independent of them, I proposed that we should set about it at once. The timber about here is too large for the purpose, but I saw some near the mouth of the river which will serve well for uprights and rafters; and if we can get Doyle to accompany us, we will set off at once with our axes and begin to cut it. Tell the other boys; and they can bring the logs here which we cut down, when your father and Burton will set them up. Perhaps we shall shame some of the other men into offering their assistance.”

Harry and Tom were well-pleased to have something to do, and agreed that the two of them could easily carry a log the distance these had to come, unless it was unusually heavy. The men saw us setting off, but continued sitting round the fire smoking their pipes, without inquiring where we were going or what we were about to do.

We soon reached the spot, where, a short distance from the beach below the cliffs, grew a number of small palm-trees with straight, clean stems, exactly suited for our purpose. We soon cut down two; with which the boys trotted off, one at each end, telling us to be ready with a couple more by the time they came back. The heat under the cliff was very great, and had there not been a sea-breeze we could not, I think, have endured it. Mudge threw off his jacket, and tucking up his shirt sleeves, set manfully to work. Doyle did the same; and each had cut down two trees before I had felled one. Doyle then went on towards some trees which he saw farther off, leaving me at work a little distance from Mudge.

I was chopping away, when I heard Mudge give an extraordinary shriek; and looking towards him, what was my horror to see him on the ground encircled in the folds of a huge serpent, whose head was raised high in the air as if about to dart its fangs into him! His axe had fallen to the ground, so that he was unable to defend himself. I sprang towards him with my axe uplifted; and I must have attracted the serpent’s attention, for instead of striking its prisoner it turned its head towards me. Should I miss, I might be bitten as well as my friend. There was not a moment even for thought; with all my might I aimed a blow at the serpent’s head. My axe, providentially, had been lately sharpened, and with one stroke I cut off the creature’s head, which fell, in the act of uttering a hiss, close to my friend’s side. The body still held him fast, and I had to exert some force to unwind it; after which I helped him to get on his feet.

Many a person would have fainted under such circumstances; Mudge merely shook himself to ascertain that no bones were broken; then, having picked up his axe, he said,—“Most heartily I thank you, Godfrey; you have, I verily believe, by your courage and presence of mind, saved my life, for in another instant that creature’s fangs would have been into me. I only hope there are not many more in the neighbourhood, or we shall find it unpleasant.”

When Doyle and the boys came near, they would scarcely credit what had occurred, till they had seen the body of the serpent with its head cut off.

Before again setting to work, we hunted about in all directions to ascertain that there were no more serpents of the same description near at hand. We could find no traces of any other; and I had afterwards reason to believe that the one I had killed was unusually large: indeed, I never saw one of the same size in the country,—although there are numerous snakes, many of them of an exceedingly venomous description, while there are others of large size perfectly harmless.

Satisfied at length that we might continue our work on the spot without molestation, we once more began cutting down the trees, which our companions carried to the encampment as fast as we could fell them. We warned them not to tell my mother and Edith what had occurred, lest they should take alarm, under the belief that the country was infested with snakes. As we improved by experience as woodsmen, we gained upon the carriers, and by the evening had cut down a good many more trees than they were able to convey to the encampment.

When we arrived there we found some of the seamen assisting my father and Burton, who were engaged in shaping and putting up the timbers; but the rest were taking it easy, and enjoying themselves, as they called it. Had my father allowed it, they would have got possession of the rum and wine, and would probably have been quickly drunk; but, knowing the evil consequences which would have ensued, he was very firm on the subject, and had told Edith to keep an eye on the stores, and to call him should any of the seamen come too near the casks and cases, which were piled up together.

The wind was still blowing strongly from the sea, creating a considerable surf on the bar; and this had prevented the boats from going out to search for any part of the cargo which might have been thrown up on the coast. The seamen also saw that they could not commence their projected voyage to Sydney.

Neither Pullingo nor any other natives had been seen; and we therefore concluded that the country was but thinly populated. Still, my father considered it wise to place sentries at night to guard against surprise. Some of the men grumbled at being ordered to keep watch, and my father and Mudge had to be awake all night to see that they did their duty. It was strange that men who had behaved so well during the voyage should have changed so much; but so it was. Probably they were disappointed at not getting to Sydney, where they had expected to enjoy themselves after their own coarse fashion. The better-educated men, we found, were the best-behaved.

By the next morning the wind had gone down, the ocean sparkled brightly in the rays of the sun, and the bar was perfectly smooth. The mates now asked my father to allow them to take their departure in the long-boat, with such of the men as wished to go. They were respectful in their manner, but determined, it was evident, to carry out their purpose. My father pointed out to them the danger they would incur, ignorant as they were of the coast, should such a gale as had just ceased to blow overtake them; and he advised them to raise the gunwale of the boat, so as to make her more sea-worthy. This, however, would take time, they said, and they were anxious to be off at once. He then begged that they would make an excursion along the coast to the northward, to ascertain what had become of the wreck, and whether any of the cargo had been thrown up on the shore. To this the first mate consented, provided my father or Mudge would accompany them.

“Let me go, Captain Rayner,” said Mudge, “while you remain with Mrs Rayner on shore, and superintend the building of the house.”

I begged that I might accompany Mudge, who intended to take the jolly-boat; while the first mate, with six hands, went in the long-boat. We had three of the men; the remainder, who were in better humour since my father had promised to allow them to take the long-boat, agreed to stay behind and help him.

We first pulled for the rock on which the brig had been cast, and soon got close up to it. Nothing was visible. We then saw through the clear water a few timbers rising up from the keel. We had no need to examine the spot more nearly; these told what had been the fate of the unfortunate *Violet*.

“I am very glad that your father did not come,” said Mudge; “it would have been a sore trial to him. And now we’ll look along the shore; though I doubt much whether the cargo will have been carried thus far.”

We pulled in for the shore, and then along outside the surf—which still broke on it for a couple of miles or so to the northward—but for some time could discover only a few shattered fragments of wreck. The long-boat, however, got hold of some planks which were still washing about; and the mate seemed to think that they would be useful in raising the boat, as my father had advised.

We were about to turn back, when I caught sight of a box floating lightly on the water. At first I thought it must be empty; but Mudge observing that it would at all events be worth having, we pulled towards it. It was a case of some size; and when we got it on board I observed the word “Seeds” painted on it.

“They may be of the greatest value, if they are not spoiled by the salt water,” observed Mudge. “Your father evidently brought them out to sow in his garden.”

This encouraged us to pull on still farther; and we picked up three other small cases of different descriptions, and a cask of beer. The mate also got hold of two casks and some cases. After pulling a mile on to the northward, however, and finding nothing, we agreed that it would be useless to go farther. Accordingly, the boats being put about, we returned to the river.

Mudge made his report to my father.

“I knew it too well,” he remarked, with a sigh; “but I had some hopes that part of the cargo might have been washed on shore. However, we must be thankful for the things which we have recovered. The seeds are indeed valuable; and as they are soldered up in a tin case inside the wooden one, there is no fear of their being damaged.”

One of the cases contained preserved fruits, and another dried tongues, which were not much the worse for being wetted. Another was a chest of tea, also in a tin case; and this was a welcome addition to our stores. The beer was not to be despised, and would prove useful provided it was taken in moderation. The cases the mate had picked up also contained provisions. He had, however, got a small cask of rum. My father said that he was welcome to the provisions for his voyage; but warned him of the danger of taking the rum, in case the crew should insist on having more than a proper allowance.

“I have no fear about that,” answered the mate. “I shall be able to keep them in order when once we get away. It is only at present, while they are on shore, that they are a little insubordinate.”

“I hope that you may,” said my father; “but I should warn you to be careful.”

The crew, when they found that my father not only did not wish to detain them, but was ready to assist them in every way in preparing the long-boat for sea, behaved very well. And as we had a supply of tools for the purpose, the carpenter and his mate were not long in adding an upper streak to the long-boat, and in decking her partly over forward: they also fitted her with a couple of masts, two lugs, and a jib. We discovered a fine spring of water issuing out of the rock, not far up the river; but the difficulty was to find casks to carry a sufficient supply for the voyage. My father gave up two breakers, and advised the mate to start the rum and fill up the cask with water.

“No, thank you,” he answered. “We can put in to any river we come to, and are sure to be able to replenish our stock; while the men will be more contented if I can serve them out their allowance of spirits.”

My father and Mudge took great pains to see that the boat was well fitted out, and supplied with everything necessary for the voyage. He also gave the mates his chart, a compass, a spy-glass, and a quadrant, in case they might be driven off the land, and required to ascertain their position. He also wrote a letter to the merchant to whom he had consigned the brig, requesting him, should the journey overland be deemed impracticable, to send a vessel within three months to bring him and his family to Sydney: saying that he would wait her arrival for that time; should she not then appear, he would consider that it was the opinion of those who knew the country that he might without danger undertake the journey by land.

“You may depend on me, sir, that I will deliver the letter,” said the first mate, when he received it; while the second mate promised to come back in the vessel.

The two mates and ten men belonging to the brig embarked in the long-boat, leaving the boatswain and two others, one of whom was the carpenter’s mate.

We parted on friendly terms from our late shipmates, praying that they might have a prosperous voyage. As we watched them standing down the river with a light breeze from the northward, Mudge, from what he said, could not help regretting, I suspect, that he had not been able to accompany them; for it was certainly his duty, as it was mine and Tommy’s, to try and get on board our ship again. But, on the other hand, he could not bring himself to desert my father; and, of course, it was still more my duty to remain with him.

All this time we had been getting on with the house, which was now nearly completed; and Dick Joint, the carpenter’s mate, was making a sash for the window of my mother’s room, and had also undertaken to make various articles of furniture. We had brought on shore the cabin-table, with three folding-chairs; as also two cots, for my mother and Edith.

I have, by-the-by, said nothing about them. They were always busily employed; but Edith suffered much from the heat, which was very considerable under the cliff, satisfactory as the situation was in other respects. My father sometimes spoke of moving on to the downs: but the objections to this were, that we should be at a distance from the water; that we should have a difficulty in carrying up our heavy goods; and that we should be more exposed in the event of our being attacked by hostile natives; while at times the heat was greater on the downs than close to the water.

Edith thought that she should feel better if she could take a row on the river; so, of course, Harry and I, and Pierce and Tommy, offered to take her out whenever she wished to go. The boat being a light one, even two of us could manage it with perfect ease; and we thus daily, and sometimes twice a day, made a trip to the mouth of the river. To shelter her from the sun, we formed an awning over the stern of the boat; and carried a cushion on which she could recline.

Nanny the goat, whenever she saw her mistress embarking, leaped on board; and seemed, indeed, to consider herself part of the crew. Tom declared that he thought she would soon learn to row with her horns; but to this, when he made the attempt to teach her, she decidedly objected, and preferred lying down quietly by the side of Edith.

We had found a supply of fishing-hooks, and having fitted up some lines, were sometimes very successful in catching fish. We were, however, generally busy on shore; and our only idle time was when we were away on such expeditions. Not that it was altogether spent in idleness; for while engaged in fishing, Harry always took his books, that Edith might instruct him; and under her tuition he made more rapid progress than he had done on board the *Heroine*.

One very calm, fine day, Harry, Tommy, and I started with Edith; Pierce, who was somewhat unwell, remaining in the house. Having reached the bar, we found the sea so smooth that we agreed to pull out some distance towards a reef, near which we had before caught some fine fish. Without considering the difficulty of getting it up again, we dropped our anchor in somewhat deep water; a hempen cable being secured to the end of two or three fathoms of iron chain, which was shackled to the stem of the boat. We had caught several fish; and Edith, who was helping to pull them up, seemed to enjoy the fun as much as we did, when she complained of faintness, and lay down on her cushion in the stern of the boat.

“I shall soon be well again,” she said; “so go on, and don’t mind me.”

We all three accordingly let down our lines, and caught several more fish. Harry had just pulled up a peculiarly beautiful one, and was turning round to show it to Edith, when we heard him utter a cry.

“Oh, Godfrey! see, see!—is she dead?” he exclaimed. “Oh, how pale she is!”

I sprang to the after part of the boat, and taking her hand, bent over her. Her hand was warm, and she still breathed: thus I knew she had only fainted; but she looked dreadfully ill.

“We must get back as soon as possible,” I exclaimed. “Harry, do you fan her, while Tom and I get up the anchor.”

I jumped forward again, and Tommy and I began to haul away; but though exerting all our strength, the anchor did not yield. Harry, leaving Edith for a moment, came and helped us; but we tugged and tugged in vain.

“We must cut it somehow or other,” I exclaimed. Then recollecting that we had an axe in the boat, I seized it, and, while Harry went back to attend to Edith, began chopping away at the portion of the chain which went over the gunwale.

“A breeze is springing up, and we shall not be long in getting in,” observed Tommy.

“It will be more than a breeze, I suspect,” I answered, looking seaward, where a dark cloud had risen, gradually extending along the horizon; “we are going to have a thunderstorm. Perhaps that was the cause of Edith’s fainting.”

Already the water was foaming and bubbling round the bows of the boat. In my eagerness I made a deep gash on the gunwale: this taught me to be more cautious in future. Fortunately the axe was a good one, or I should have broken it. I had made some impression on one of the links of the chain; my object was to strike again in the same place.

“Is it nearly through?” asked Harry, looking round.

“No; not far yet,” I answered.

“Then let me try,” he said; “perhaps I can do it.”

I willingly yielded the axe to him, for I was too anxious to have the chain cut through to feel jealous should he show superior skill. He eyed the place which I had been cutting—I having made several jagged notches—and then brought down the axe with apparently less force than I had used. It was exactly in the centre of the cut. Each time he lifted the axe he struck the same place, and in less than a minute the chain was severed. We soon prised out the other half of the link. I then sprang aft to the helm; Tommy got out an oar, and pulled the boat’s head round; while Harry hoisted the sail, bringing the sheet aft to me; and on we flew before the fast-rising wind. Scarcely were we away when it came with redoubled force; and had we remained at anchor many minutes longer, I believe the boat must have filled and gone down.

I felt very thankful that we had cleared the chain; but we had still the bar to cross. Edith, too, remained in the same fainting state. I was in hope that the fresh breeze would revive her; but as we were running before it, she did not feel it much. I looked anxiously towards the bar; some rollers were coming in, but they were not very high, nor did they break much as they reached it. We might, therefore, venture to cross; indeed, we had no choice, for I knew how anxious our father would feel when he saw the wind rising.

As we neared the bar Tommy exclaimed,—“O Godfrey! look at these rollers! Shall we be able to cross it, do you think?”

“We must,” I said; “get the oars out, to prevent her from broaching-to in case we should be becalmed.”

I now held the tiller firmly in my hand, and kept my eye fixed on a point of the cliff which would guide me directly up the centre of the channel. We rose to the top of a roller. “Give way! give way!” I shouted. Tom and Harry pulled with all their might. We sank into the watery valley, and began to ascend the next height. Another roller came hissing on. If it caught us, we should be swamped; but the sail kept full, and the two pulled right lustily.

Just then I glanced down on Edith’s face for an instant: her eyes were open; she was looking round with astonishment.

“Thank Heaven, you are better,” I said. “Keep quiet; we shall be all to rights directly.”

She heard me, and did not move. I held my breath, for we were on the worst part of the bar. Another roller came on, and I thought it would overwhelm us. It lifted the stern of the boat, and we were shot amidst a mass of foaming waves, till we glided down into the smooth water of the river.

We now quickly ran up the river, and rounding to, shot up to the landing-place, where my father and mother stood ready to receive us. As my mother’s eye fell on Edith’s pale face she uttered a cry of alarm.

“She is getting better now, mother,” I said; “and under your care she’ll soon be well again.”

As I spoke, Harry and I were preparing to lift Edith out of the boat. My father came to assist us, and carried her in his arms to the cottage. I was thankful to find that in a short time she was herself again. Possibly her sudden illness may have been the means of saving our lives. Scarcely had we landed when the storm burst with great fury, though it lasted but a short time; after which the sun again came out, and all was bright and beautiful as before.

Chapter Eight.

Expedition to obtain vegetables—Crested cockatoos—We become better acquainted with Pullingo and his family—Tommy takes Mr and Mrs Pullingo's portraits—A sporting expedition—See an emu—Kill two kangaroos—Meet bushrangers—Go out fishing—Hurried return—Bushrangers have visited the village—Find the men bound—Pursue bushrangers—They escape—Edith and Pierce missing—My mother's alarm—Search in the boat along the coast—Discover the body of a bushranger under the cliff—Return without finding the missing ones.

A week had passed away since the boat left us, and we were all feeling ourselves, as it were, at home. As may be supposed, my mother begged that we would not take Edith again beyond the mouth of the river; indeed, she herself had no wish to go. Occasionally we pulled up the stream, for although we knew that there were natives in the neighbourhood, we did not fear that they would molest us, as we had not seen any of their canoes; and by keeping on the opposite side of the river to that on which they might appear, we knew that we could easily avoid them.

When we went to the place where Mudge had been attacked by the snake, we looked around very carefully to ascertain that none of its companions were lurking in the neighbourhood; but we never saw another of the same size—or, indeed, of any description whatever. Paddy Doyle, to account for this, declared that the big fellow must have eaten up all the others before he got killed himself, and that was the reason why he had grown to such a size.

We thus went up and down the river, and over the downs in various directions, without the slightest fear. Occasionally we crossed to the opposite bank in search of game, as also to look for fruit, and some vegetables which might be cooked for dinner. We greatly felt the want of them; indeed, my father was afraid that without green food we might be attacked by scurvy. We had dug a garden and put in seeds, but these, of course, would take some time to come up.

One day Mudge, Harry, and I, accompanied by Paddy Doyle, with our guns, went across to the southern side. Harry had heard my father say how much he wished to have fresh greens of some sort; and as we were walking along we saw several trees of the palm species.

"Stay," said Harry, "while I climb to the top of one of these trees; we shall there find just what the captain wants."

Harry was the best climber among us, having been compelled, when living with the Indians, to swarm up the highest trees to cut cocoa-nuts for them. We all carried long sheath-knives in our belts, which were useful for a variety of purposes. Putting down his gun, Harry was quickly at the top of the tree, and, using his knife, threw down what resembled a large cabbage. Ascending tree after tree, he threw down from each a similar bunch of leaves, till we had as many as we could carry. Going on, we reached some sand-hills, where we found a kind of bean growing on a stalk which crept along the ground. Mudge thought these also would be good to eat; and as they were fit for picking, we filled our satchels with them. We were fortunate also in shooting several pigeons and a number of parrots. Indeed, we all returned fully laden to the boat; and I know that I was very glad to get rid of my burden, which literally made my shoulders ache.

Just before shoving off, I saw, coming towards us through the air, a large flight of birds, their snowy plumage tinged with pink shining in the rays of the setting sun. Before long they pitched in a group of trees on the borders of the river, where they commenced an earnest conversation rather than a concert, all having apparently some interesting matter to communicate to one another. They were crested or pink cockatoos, the most beautiful birds we had yet seen. They did not appear to be at all alarmed at our presence, but remained on the boughs where they had settled, apparently intending to make these their resting-places for the night. We were thus able to examine them without difficulty.

The general colour of the bird was white, with a slight pinkish flush; but the neck, breast, and hind part of the tail were deeply stained with crimson. Its most remarkable feature, however, was its beautiful crest, which it raised like a fan over its head, or depressed at the back of its neck. The feathers of the crest were long, and barred with crimson, gold, yellow, and white, which added greatly to its beauty. The bird was between thirteen and sixteen inches in length. We might have shot any number we liked, but having already a supply of food, we did not like to do so. I wished very much, however, to catch one alive, to carry to Edith; and Harry said he thought he could manage to trap one, though, unless we could get a young bird, it would be difficult to tame.

"You are magnificent fellows," observed Mudge; "but notwithstanding that, we shall be under the necessity of plucking off your fine feathers and cooking you some day, if we are in want of game."

As the evening was drawing on, we did not remain longer to admire the birds, but pushing off with our store of provisions, crossed the river.

"You have indeed brought us a seasonable supply of green food," said my father when we landed. "While nature affords us such wholesome vegetables as those you have found, and while our powder lasts, we need have no fear of starving; and if such can be obtained all the way to the southward, we may set forth on our journey with the hope of being able to find ample food, on the way, to supply our wants."

We had been constantly expecting another visit from our native acquaintance Pullingo; but as he did not make his appearance, we began to fancy that he had been merely travelling from one part of the country to another, and discovering us on his way, had been tempted by curiosity to approach our camp.

Some days had gone by, when one morning, as Paddy Doyle was on the watch, he sang out, "Here comes my old friend with his wife and family.—The top of the morning to ye, Mr Pullingo! and the same to the misthress and the darling little ones; and, to be sure, one of them is a big sthrapping fellow, of whom ye may be proud, Mr Pullingo."

On looking out, we saw the native who had before paid us a visit, accompanied by a youth the very picture of himself, and followed by a woman, or “gin,” as the natives call their wives, with two children, a boy and a girl, trotting by her side. The lad might have been his son, certainly, but not that of the woman, who was apparently much too young to be the mother of so big a fellow.

The woman and children stopped at some distance off, while the man and lad approached cautiously, holding a bundle of lances in their left hand. Paddy made signs to them to come on, and, to give them confidence, put down his musket on the ground. As he did so they laid down their lances and came much nearer. On this Paddy advanced towards them. The savages seemed to understand him, and put out their hands, which he took and shook heartily, apparently much to their astonishment. The Irishman and the elder native then talked away, each in his own language; Paddy every now and then bursting into a fit of laughter at the strange words uttered by the savage.

Knowing that it was important to gain the good-will of the natives, I thought that it would be a good opportunity to make Pullingo a present. So I went into the cottage and asked my father, who had only just risen, for some beads and a looking-glass, and other trinkets, which he had brought to trade with the South Sea Islanders. I got things enough for each of the party, including the two children, and going up to the savage, I presented them to him, and tried to make him understand for whom they were each intended. Though he took them he looked at them with indifference, considering, as it seemed, that they were of no value to him; nor, indeed, were they so in reality.

“Perhaps he would rather have some roast parrot,” observed Doyle, who had just before placed several birds on spits before the fire to cook for breakfast. As we had many more than we absolutely required, we could easily spare them. Doyle and I therefore got each a couple, and carried them on the spits to the savage, whose eyes brightened when he saw them; and he and his son almost snatched them from our hands when we offered them, and, without any gesture of thankfulness, hurried off to where the woman and children were sitting.

“Arrah, Mr Pullingo, do you call that good manners?” exclaimed Paddy. “However, it’s the way of the country, I suppose; though I can’t say it’s a good way. Just give the little ones their share, though, and I’ll not be after finding fault with you.”

As we watched the natives, we observed that they at once tore the birds to pieces, and before they themselves had eaten they gave each of the children a joint.

“Come, I have hopes of you, since you look after the childher,” cried Paddy, when he saw this. “We shall find that Mr Pullingo is a decent sort of fellow when he learns some more of our ways.”

It appeared that Pullingo was as pleased with us as Paddy was with him, for we saw him shortly afterwards employed, with his wife and son, in building a hut, at a spot some way up the river, under the cliff. It was not a very dignified structure: it consisted simply of a number of long thin sticks stuck in a circle in the ground, their tops being bent over and secured together by grass rope; the whole was then covered with sheets of rough bark, fastened on by the same sort of rope. The first hut was intended for Pullingo and his wife; they afterwards put up a smaller one for their big son and the younger children.

These structures, rude as they were, were superior to those we afterwards met with built by the natives, and showed us that Pullingo was more advanced in civilisation than the generality of his countrymen. Whether or not the rest of his tribe were in the neighbourhood, we could not ascertain; at all events, it was satisfactory to have gained his friendship, as he would give a favourable report of us to other natives, and prevent them, we hoped, from molesting us.

I forgot to say that Tommy Peck, though a harum-scarum fellow, possessed considerable artistic talent; superior, at all events, to any of the rest of us. He used to amuse Edith by making drawings and figures in her sketch-book—which had, with her small library, been brought on shore—she herself being only able to draw landscapes.

“Shouldn’t you like, Miss Edith, to have a portrait of Prince Pullingo and his beautiful bride?” he asked. “I don’t think I can do it from memory, but perhaps I can get them to sit for their likeness.”

“By all means,” answered Edith; “though I very much doubt that you will succeed in inducing them to sit quiet while you make your sketch.”

“Trust me for that,” said Tom. “Lend me your book and pencil, and a piece of india-rubber, and I’d try;” and, armed with his apparatus, he walked slowly towards Pullingo’s encampment. Harry and I followed at a distance, so that we might not interrupt him. On arrival, he made them a bow and announced his object, showing them his book, in which were the portraits of several of our party,—Harry and I, and Popo,—by no means flattering likenesses.

I don’t know whether Pullingo understood the meaning of the strokes he saw on the paper; but his wife did so, it seemed, and, turning to him, expressed her wish to have her likeness taken. Tommy at once made them stand up before him, and began sketching away. They stood watching him intently, so that he had plenty of time. He put on rather more clothing than they possessed, as he said, for decency’s sake; it was also, he remarked, a gentle hint to them, by which he hoped they might profit when they came into civilised society.

He finished the portraits then and there, put in all the requisite shades, and showed them to the lady and gentleman. The former was delighted, pointing now at her portrait, now at herself, then at her husband, and then at his portrait. He did not appear quite so well satisfied; fearing, perhaps, that it might be used for some magical purpose. The lady was somewhat disappointed when Tommy shut up his book and she found that she was not to possess it; he therefore tried to make her understand that he would make a copy and give it her; a promise he faithfully fulfilled—though Edith kept the original, which I stuck in my journal.

The tents being found very hot at night, as soon as the first cottage was finished we put up two others for the

accommodation of the rest of the party, and one in which to stow our goods; for though we hoped to get away in a couple of months, it was possible that we might be detained very much longer, and that our stores might run a risk of being damaged by remaining so long exposed to the weather. While we were at work, Pullingo and his son came and watched us with intense interest.

All hands, however, were not employed in housebuilding, as it was necessary that some of the party should go in search of game, in order that we might not exhaust the provisions we had brought on shore. Mudge, Harry, Paddy Doyle, and I were the chief sportsmen; and when Pullingo saw us setting off he followed at a respectful distance. Whether he also intended to hunt or not, we could not tell; his only weapons were a bundle of lances, and a piece of hard wood shaped something like a scimitar—called, we found, a boomerang—which he carried in his belt.

We had never failed to shoot as many birds as we required, but we were anxious to kill some of the curious animals which Captain Cook called kangaroos. They may be said to be the principal creatures of the country. Their heads are something like those of deer, and their coats are of the same colour. They are of all sizes, some being as high as a man. They do not run, like other animals, for their front legs, which they use as arms, are too short for the purpose; but they have very long hind legs, and powerful tails, which enable them to bound over the ground at an immense rate. It is wonderful what a succession of leaps they can take.

We saw some animals like opossums, and flying squirrels, which we took to be bats; and we occasionally caught sight of wild dogs or dingos,—hideous, savage-looking creatures, though they always ran away from us when we moved towards them or shouted.

We could not tell whether Pullingo understood our object; had we been able to exchange ideas with him, he might have greatly assisted us by showing us where game was to be found. He had conceived, I fancy, a great respect for our firearms, and followed us for the sake of seeing their effect.

We had gone farther into the interior than we had ever before been, in the hope of finding some kangaroos, and found ourselves in an open country free of trees, with low hills and rocks beyond. We were about to turn back, believing that, as there was no shelter, we should be unable to approach any game unperceived, when Doyle exclaimed,—“Arrah, see that big bird which has just started up on its legs! Quick, quick! or he’ll be off. His meat would make a hundred parrot-pies, and some to spare besides.”

On turning round as Paddy spoke, I saw, about a hundred yards off, a bird of enormous size—so it appeared to me; a bird certainly, for it had two legs, was shaped like a bird, and was covered with feathers. It could scarcely have been less than seven feet in height; was of a lightish brown colour, with a long neck, a small head, and very long powerful legs; but was destitute of wings, so far as I could see. The creature looked at us with an inquisitive air, as if wondering what sort of curious animals we were; and then advanced a few paces, as if to view us more closely. It might have come nearer, had not Paddy, unable to resist the temptation of trying to kill it, fired. On hearing the report, it turned round and set off, running with the speed of a racehorse across the country, while we stood gazing after it, and, as Paddy observed, looking very foolish.

The creature was an emu; of the same family as the African ostrich, the rhea of America, and the cassowary of the Indian archipelago.

On our way back, soon afterwards, and while passing through a forest, the trees of which grew rather thicker than usual, we saw in an open glade beyond it three of the kangaroos so coveted by us. We crept forward, keeping as much as possible concealed by the trees, lest we should be discovered before we could get within shot of them. Mudge and I went first, Harry and Paddy followed, all having our guns ready to fire. At length Mudge took aim at one of them; I imitated his example. We waited to let Harry and Paddy come up, however, and then all fired at the same moment. One of the creatures fell dead, shot through the head by Mudge; another bounded away at a great rate, apparently uninjured; and a third, after making two or three springs, sank to the ground, unable to move. We rushed forward to seize it, forgetting in our eagerness to reload our pieces. While we were stopping to examine the creature Mudge had killed, Paddy ran towards the wounded animal, which at that moment sprang up and attempted to bound off again.

“Arrah, stop, ye baste,” cried Paddy, attempting to seize it; when at that instant it struck out with its hinder claws, one of which tore a large rent in the Irishman’s trousers, giving him at the same time a severe scratch, which, had he not sprung back, might have been serious. In a moment his knife was in his hand, and before the kangaroo could repeat the blow he had plunged it into its heart.

We had now an over-abundant supply of meat; the difficulty was to carry it. We agreed that we would take the best portions, and give Pullingo as much as he could carry; while we fastened the remainder up to the bough of a tree, out of the reach of the wild dogs.

We were all thus busily engaged, when I fancied I heard the sound of horses’ feet; and what was my astonishment, on looking up, to see two horsemen approaching us! They looked at us with as much astonishment as we looked at them. Their steeds were in tolerably good condition, but they themselves were thin and haggard, their clothes torn almost to tatters. Each of them had a gun slung over his shoulders, a huge pair of holsters with a brace of pistols in them, large saddle-bags and leathern cases strapped on at their cruppers.

“Hallo, strangers, where do you come from?” exclaimed one of the men, with an oath. “I didn’t think there were any whites hereabouts.”

“Nor did we expect to see any one at this distance from Sydney,” said Mudge, eyeing the horsemen with a suspicious glance. “Where do you come from, my friends?”

“As to that, I don’t think it much concerns you,” answered the man; “but, as I take it you are Englishmen, you’ll give

us a share of these kangaroos; for there's one thing I can tell you,—we're pretty sharp set."

"So I should think, from your appearance," observed Mudge; "you must have had a rough and long journey up from Sydney."

"I didn't say we were from Sydney,—though I'll allow we have been there," answered the man; "but it's a good many months since we left it, and we've been leading a pretty rough life since then. However, what we want just now is a slice of that kangaroo; and we'll talk about other matters when we've set it before the fire to roast."

"You're welcome to as much of the meat as you want," answered Mudge, "though we haven't got a fire to roast it at."

"We'll soon have one, master," answered the man. He and his companion then getting off their horses, tethered them, and speedily collecting some dry wood, of which there was an abundance scattered about, piled it up; and one of them producing a tinder-box, quickly lighted the heap—first taking care, however, to cut the dry grass all around. They then helped themselves pretty freely to the flesh, which, cutting into thin slices, they held at the end of sticks before the fire. Before it was half done through, however, they began eagerly gnawing away at it, unable longer to restrain their appetite. The smell made us hungry; so cutting off some thin slices, we roasted them in the same manner, but far more thoroughly than the strangers had done.

Pullingo, who had been watching us, now stole up, and by his gestures begged for a share,—which, of course, we gave him. The strangers eyed him narrowly; and though the desire to get the food had induced him to come up, he evidently regarded them with suspicion. After exchanging a few words with each other, one of them spoke to him in a jargon which he seemed to understand, though we could not. He replied with hesitation. For some time they continued asking him questions, and then talking to each other in a slang which was as incomprehensible to us as was the language they spoke to the native.

"I say, master, there are a few little things we want, and would be obliged to you if you'd supply us with," said one of the men. "In the first place, we should be glad of some tobacco, and maybe you've got some about you; and we want some powder and shot, and a couple of knives; and a suit of clothes wouldn't come amiss."

Mudge had a couple of cigars, and Paddy a small quantity of tobacco, which, without hesitation, they gave to the strangers.

"As for powder, we can spare you but a small quantity," said Mudge; "and for the other things, you must come to our camp to obtain them. I suppose Captain Rayner will be willing to give you what you require for your necessities."

"You'll not play us a scurvy trick, and detain us, if we come?" said one of the men.

"We are not likely to do that," answered Mudge, somewhat surprised at the remark. "You can repay us by giving us a description of the country between Sydney and this."

"Well, we'll come by-and-by, and you'll have the things ready for us," said the man, in a tone which still further surprised us.

Having satisfied our hunger, we divided the kangaroo into portions, each forming such a load as we could carry. Mudge and Paddy took the heaviest, leaving Tommy and me somewhat lighter ones. The strangers, without making any apology, loaded their horses with the larger portion of the other animal Pullingo seemed highly delighted when we gave him the remainder. The strangers declined accompanying us, but said they would follow by-and-by. Just as we were setting off, they again begged that we would spare them a little powder and shot, acknowledging that their own was expended, and that they could neither obtain food nor defend themselves against the natives. They looked so miserable that we could not help feeling compassion for them, and each of us gave them a portion of powder from our flasks and some shot from our belts.

As it was time to return, we set off, leaving them still seated at the fire cooking some of the kangaroo. Pullingo having obtained his share, immediately trotted off with it across the country, without offering to guide us.

We had gone some distance when Mudge observed to me,—"I don't quite like the look of these fellows. I have heard that the worst class of convicts, who are worked in the road-gangs, often make their escape and live a wild life in the bush, taking by force from the settlers whatever they can get hold of. They go by the name of bushrangers; and I can't help thinking that those fellows we have left there are of that description."

"I've little doubt about that same," observed Paddy; "and it's a pity we gave them the powther, though I wouldn't grudge them the mate and the 'baccy."

"They would scarcely make use of the powder to injure us," I observed.

"I wouldn't trust them for that, if they are the gentry I take them for," said Mudge. "However, we must keep a watch, and take care that they don't surprise us."

We were pretty well tired by the time we reached our settlement, as we called it. As may be supposed, the supply of kangaroo which we brought was very welcome, and a portion was served out to the men for supper that evening. As a fire had been seen burning at Pullingo's camp long before our arrival, there could be little doubt that he had reached home much sooner than we did.

The next morning one of the strangers made his appearance at the settlement on foot. He said that he had left his companion on the high ground to look after the horses, and that he had come to claim the articles we had promised. My father had agreed that Mudge was correct in his opinion of the strangers, but that it would be better to supply

them with what they wanted to enable them to support their miserable existence, and to try to obtain from them the information about the country so important for us to gain.

The man looked a little less starved-like than he did the previous day, but his ragged clothes and dirty appearance made us unwilling to ask him into the house. We got a table and chair out for him, however, in the shade; and gave him an ample meal and a glass of ale, which made him open his heart somewhat. He acknowledged that he and his companion were leading a terrible life in the bush, but that he saw no way out of it. He described somewhat minutely the country we should have to pass over: a large portion was open and easily traversed, but other parts were mountainous, rocky, and wild in the extreme, with no water to be found for miles. Whether or not he was giving us a true description, it was difficult to determine,—though, at all events, he must have come through the sort of country he described. Perhaps it might be avoided by keeping further into the interior or closer to the sea-coast.

The man might have been a bushranger, but he did not appear to be at all afraid of us. As soon as he had satisfied his hunger he rose, and turning to Mudge, “Now, master, I’ll thank you to fulfil your promise,” he said. “We want as much powder as you can spare, for it’s bread and meat to us; and I’ll thank you for the knives and the clothes, and some needles and thread. Here, just get a pencil and put down what we want.”

“Suppose we refuse to give it?” said my father, astounded at the man’s impudence.

The stranger’s countenance assumed a ferocious expression. “You would find you had made a bad bargain,” he answered with the greatest effrontery. “When a gentleman makes a promise to me, I expect him to fulfil it. I came here as a friend, and a friend I wish to remain. Not that I want to trouble you with my society; I prefer living by myself. But if you do me a kindness, I can return it; if you venture to treat me ill, I’ll have my revenge—you may depend on that.”

“But suppose we were to seize you, and keep you a prisoner till we could hand you over to the authorities at Sydney?” said my father.

The man laughed long and loud. “You would find that a hard job,” he said; “and I didn’t come here without taking means to secure my safety. So you see, captain, we are quite equal. Now, let me have the things, and I’ll be off.”

My father felt that as Mudge had promised the clothes and other articles, it was right that they should be given to the man. A bundle was therefore made up of all the articles he had asked for; and as soon as he had received it, with very slight thanks, he fixed it on his shoulders, and took his way up the cliff. We were in hopes that we had seen the last of him and his companion, being thoroughly convinced that they were bushrangers, and desperate ruffians.

We observed that as the stranger approached our camp the black and his family made their escape from it, and hid behind a rock watching him till he had disappeared over the top of the cliff.

Pullingo shortly afterwards came to our settlement, which he now frequently did, without hesitation, never being allowed to go away without some article or other which we thought would please him, or food for himself and his family. Nothing we had came amiss to him except beer or spirits, and when one day some was offered him he spat it out with evident disgust. We tried to make him understand that we wished to know his opinion of the strangers. After a considerable time he understood us, and making his countenance assume an expression of hatred and disgust, he shook his head, and then, as it appeared, advised us to shoot them on the first opportunity.

As we were now convinced of his good feelings towards us, he was allowed to roam about our village at pleasure. One day he appeared, bringing a basket containing some of the many magnificent flowers which flourished in the forest, several fruits, and some emu’s eggs. Supposing that he had brought them as a present to my mother or father, we did not interfere with him, but allowed him to take his own way of offering them.

I watched him from a distance, when I saw him enter Mudge’s room, the door of which was open. Wondering what he was about, I at length approached and looked in; when I saw him on his knees, with the contents of his basket spread out on the ground, bending low before Mudge’s gun, which stood leaning against a table in the corner. He was uttering some strange gibberish, and addressing the gun, evidently supposing it to be a being possessed of supernatural powers. He had watched day after day its to him wonderful performances, and had made up his mind to endeavour to propitiate it.

I did not like to interrupt him, or in any way to ridicule him; and I was very glad that neither Paddy Doyle nor Tommy saw him, for I was very sure that they would not have refrained from doing so. I therefore crept away without letting the poor savage know that I had seen him. He at length came out of the hut, and sauntered about the village as usual, spending some time watching the carpenter at work.

When I told Harry, he said he thought that it was very natural, and that when he first came on board the *Heroine* he was inclined to pay the same sort of respect to the compass, the quadrants, the spy-glasses, the big guns and muskets, and various other things, which Popo told him were the white men’s fetishes.

Pullingo had from the first looked upon Paddy Doyle as his chief friend, and they soon managed to understand each other in a wonderful way. Mudge suggested, indeed, that they were nearer akin than the rest of us. We got Paddy to ask him if he could tell what had become of the bushrangers, and Paddy understood him to say that they had gone away to a distance; so, concluding that this was the case, we ceased to think much about them.

Believing ourselves secure from any attack on the part of the natives, we no longer took the precautions we had adopted on our arrival,—with the exception of keeping watch at night, which was more for the purpose of maintaining naval discipline than from any apprehensions we had of an attack. We used to wander about by the side of the river under the cliff without our arms, and sometimes for some distance over the open downs on the top. Even my mother and Edith lost all apprehension, and frequently took walks with only Pierce or Harry. Sometimes I went with them; but

I was generally employed in shooting or fishing. In consequence of this, the younger ones fancied that they might go wherever they liked by themselves.

One day my mother, being unwell, was confined to the house, and Harry came out fishing with Ned Burton and me in the boat. My father, Mudge, and Tommy, accompanied by Paddy Doyle and one of the other men, had gone on a shooting expedition, attended by Pullingo and his son, leaving only Dicky Popo in attendance on my mother, and two men to guard the camp. As we were not far off, a musket-shot would bring us quickly back if we were required.

We pulled down to the mouth of the river. The fish soon began to bite, and we hauled up more than we had ever before caught. I observed that the tide was unusually low, as numerous rocks which I had never before seen were uncovered, and remained so for some time. At last the tide began to rise, and we caught the fish even faster than at first. We were so eagerly engaged that we did not remark how rapidly the time went by. We were well-pleased, because we should not only have fish for all hands, but be able to present our black friends with a welcome supply. We found, I may remark, that they prized us not so much for our knowledge of the arts and sciences, as in proportion to our power of obtaining such food as they valued.

Burton suggested that we might salt some fish, and proposed looking for salt along the shore. I agreed with him that it would be important if we could succeed in doing so, as we might then carry some salted fish on our journey.

As the fish continued to bite, we remained to catch them, and we were still eagerly hauling them in when the sound of a musket fired at the camp reached our ears. We at once hauled in our lines, got up our anchor, and pulled away as hard as we could up the river.

“What can be the matter?” I asked.

“I suppose they wish to remind us that it is supper-time, and so fired the shot to call us back,” answered Burton.

“I hope that no strange blacks have come to the camp, or that those bad men whom we met the other day have not returned,” said Harry.

“It may be; but we’ll soon show them that we’re not going to stand any of their tricks,” observed Burton.

This last suggestion of Harry made me feel very anxious, as I had often heard of the atrocities of which bushrangers had been guilty.

As we neared the camp we could see no one. Just as we pulled up to the landing-place, however, we heard a voice cry out,—“Help! help!—bear a hand, or they’ll be away.” We eagerly leaped on shore, when the spectacle which met our eyes made us very anxious. One of our men lay on the ground, apparently dead; and not far off was the other, bound to the trunk of a tree so that he could move neither hands nor feet. “There! there!” he cried. “Stop them!”

Too anxious about my mother and Edith and Pierce to attend to him, or to understand clearly what he said, I rushed to the door of our cottage. It was closed. I knocked loudly. “Mother! mother!—let me in; we’ve come to your assistance,” I exclaimed. She did not reply; but I heard some one moving, and presently the door opened and Dicky Popo appeared.

“O massa! so glad you come, or dey murder us all,” he exclaimed.

“But my mother—where is she?” I asked.

“She in her room, I tink; but no speakee,” answered Popo.

“Mother! mother!—where are you?” I cried out.

The door of her room was also closed; but rushing against it, with the aid of Dicky I burst it open. My mother lay on the ground. A horrible feeling came over me,—I thought she was shot. On bending down I could discover no wound, and I found that she still breathed, so I trusted that she had only fainted. I sprinkled her face with water, and she shortly after heaved a sigh and opened her eyes. On seeing me she revived, and with Popo’s assistance I lifted her up and placed her in a chair.

“Is it a hideous dream?” she asked; “or have the bushrangers really been here? And where are Edith and Pierce?”

“There is nothing now to be alarmed about, mother,” I answered. “The bushrangers have gone away, and Edith and Pierce are probably hiding somewhere.”

“Oh! go and look for them,” she said, “and bring them here at once. I am afraid that those terrible men have carried them off.”

“Not at all likely, mother,” I said. “I have no doubt, however, that Burton and Harry have already set off to follow the men.”

As she again urged me to go, assuring me that she was quite recovered, I took my gun, and telling Popo to remain and attend on her, hurried out. I found that Burton and Harry had released the man who had been bound to the tree, while the other, who had been only stunned, had recovered; and all four, with guns in their hands, were making their way towards the foot of the cliffs in pursuit of the bushrangers. I followed, shouting for Edith and Pierce; for I could not help thinking it possible that the bushrangers might have carried them off. As the robbers were heavily laden with their spoil, they had got only a part of the way up the cliff when we caught sight of them. With intense thankfulness I saw that they were alone, and that they had not carried off the children.

“Stop, you villains!” cried Burton, when he got near enough to make them hear.

They did not reply, but continued making their way up the cliff. Burton, who was leading, was about to pursue, when one of them turned round and levelled his rifle at his head.

“If you advance another step I’ll fire!” shouted the man.

“Two can play at that game, friend,” exclaimed Burton, lifting his musket and letting fly at the bushranger. We imitated his example; but when the smoke cleared off we found that the men were still making their upward way, springing with wonderful agility from rock to rock.

We had to stop to reload; then, notwithstanding their threats, we again began to climb after them. They had, however, a long start of us, and had already gained the easier part of the ascent; still, laden as they were, one of them might slip and give us a chance of overtaking him, and we continued our ascent. They were now, however, hidden from sight by the trees and rocks above our heads.

Burton still kept ahead of us, and was the first to gain the summit of the cliff. He lifted his musket and fired. Directly afterwards the rest of us joined him, when we saw the two bushrangers galloping away to the southward, at no great distance from the cliffs, where, the ground being level, they could make better play than more to the right, where it was undulating and somewhat soft in the bottom. They were already too far off for our bullets to reach them.

“Missed again!” exclaimed Ned. “I believe the fellows must bear charmed lives; or my musket has taken to shooting crooked.”

As we could not hope to overtake the robbers, I told Burton how anxious I was to return and look for Edith and Pierce,—although I hoped that, frightened by the appearance of the bushrangers, they had hidden themselves.

“I think not, sir,” said Tom Nokes, one of our men. “Soon after you went off in the boat, I saw the young people starting away together along the shore; but thinking their mother had given them leave to go, I didn’t look after them.”

This intelligence was so far satisfactory, that it made me believe they could not have been seen by the bushrangers—who, indeed, could scarcely have been such ruffians as to injure them. I therefore hurried back to my mother; but she, having been asleep all the morning, did not even know that the children had gone away. She expressed her anxiety on hearing what Nokes had said, as at all events they ought by this time to have returned. Not wishing to alarm her more, I expressed my belief that they would soon appear. On leaving her, however, I proposed to Burton and Harry to take the boat and pull along the shore, while Nokes volunteered to go on foot in the same direction.

Having landed our fish, we at once pulled away; but no signs did we see of Edith or Pierce. The sun was setting as we rowed down the river. As the bar was smooth, we crossed it without hesitation, and continued our course along the shore, as close in as the coral reefs would allow us to get. Every now and then I stood up to examine the shore, but nowhere were the children to be seen. The tide had risen, too, and in several places washed the very base of the cliffs. This alarmed me much, for I dreaded lest the tide might have entrapped them as they were making their way back.

“We needn’t fear that, Master Godfrey; for they both have got sense, and will have managed, I hope, to reach some place of safety,” observed Burton.

Again we pulled on, when just under the highest part of the cliff I caught sight of an object in the water which attracted my attention. At first I thought it was a rock, covered with seaweed moved by the surging water. We paddled in as close as we could venture without running the risk of knocking the bottom of the boat against the coral, and then I made out a horse and a human figure lying together half in the water. The man was motionless, and apparently dead; but the horse was still faintly struggling, trying to keep its head above the surface.

“That must be one of the bushrangers,” I exclaimed.

“No doubt about it,” said Burton; “but how he came to fall over the cliff it is hard to say.”

“Can we not reach him and see if he is still alive?” I asked.

“No man could have fallen from that height and kept the breath in his body,” said Ned; “nor, indeed, escape breaking all his bones, unless he had come down on the top of his horse. Depend on it, he’s dead; and so will the poor horse be in another moment—see! its head has already sunk under the water. If we hadn’t to look for the children we might try to get at him; but it would lose much time, and we might chance also to injure the boat.”

“By all means then let us pull on, and continue our search for Edith and Pierce,” I answered; and we again took to our oars.

Evening was now drawing rapidly on. In vain we searched the coast as far as our eyes could reach. As we pulled under the cliffs I shouted my brother and sister’s names, but only the echo of my voice came back faintly to our ears. I became more and more alarmed, and it seemed to me as if their doom was pronounced, when Burton declared that we must pull back, as it was not likely they could have got so far. Harry showed that he was as unhappy as I was, and joined his voice with mine in shouting out their names as we made our way towards the mouth of the river.

There was scarcely sufficient daylight to enable us to distinguish the entrance. We got safely over the bar, however, and as fast as we could move our oars we pulled up to the encampment. My father and his party had just returned. He was, of course, very much alarmed at the disappearance of my brother and sister. Nokes had discovered no traces of them, still he affirmed that he had seen them go in that direction. One thing was certain,—that it would be

useless to attempt continuing our search during the hours of darkness.

That was indeed a miserable night. My father did his utmost to comfort my poor mother, but she could not fail to dread the worst. Our anxiety about them made us scarcely think of the visit of the bushrangers. On examining our stores, however, it was seen that they had carried off a considerable quantity of powder and shot, and numerous other articles which were likely to prove useful to them in their wandering life. They had not forgotten, either, to supply themselves with several bottles of spirits: perhaps the liquor, to which they had been so long unaccustomed, was the cause of the death of the unhappy wretch whose body we had seen beneath the cliff. However, that was only conjecture, and will probably for ever remain so.

I had no inclination to go to bed, but my father insisted on my turning in, saying that he would sit up with my mother; and in spite of my grief and anxiety I at length fell fast asleep.

Chapter Nine.

Paddy suggests obtaining Pullingo's assistance—We set out—Descend the cliff by a rope—Find Edith and Pierce in a cave—The boat arrives—A tremendous storm—The water flows over our settlement—Escape to the cliffs—Take refuge under a rock—Return to the village—It has escaped damage—A whale thrown on shore—It attracts the natives—Their savage dance—They encamp—Unpleasant odour from the whale—Explore the river—Return for our friends—Quit our village—Our first encampment.

My dreams were as miserable as my waking thoughts. I fancied that I saw the bush rangers carrying off Edith and Pierce, who in vain struggled to release themselves; then the wretches hurled the children over the cliff, and shouted as they saw them falling; then the sea rolled up and swept them away, as they held out their hands in vain for assistance.

I awoke before daylight, and as I had no wish to go to sleep again I dressed and went out. The first person I met was Paddy Doyle.

"I'm after thinking, Master Godfrey, that friend Pullingo will be able to help us in finding the dear young childher," he said. "I can soon make him understand that they are lost; and though he hasn't book-learning, he's got notions in his head which would puzzle some of us. The thought came across me in the night, when not a rap more sleep could I get; and I've been waiting till daylight to visit the blacks' camp."

"By all means," I said. "I'll go with you, for I am sure my father will approve of your idea."

As a ruddy glow was already appearing in the eastern sky, precursor of the sun, Paddy and I at once set off. As we drew near he shouted, "Pullingo, Pullingo." Directly afterwards we saw the black crawl out of his hut. "Our friend doesn't take much time to dress in the morning," observed Paddy, "seeing he hasn't a large amount of clothing to put on, and isn't over particular about the use of soap and water."

The black quickly understood that we had some matter of importance to communicate, but it took much longer to make him comprehend what we wanted him for. Paddy, however, succeeded at length; and he set off with us for the village.

On arriving, that there might be no mistake, I took Pullingo into the house and showed him the children's empty beds, and then pointed along the shore in the direction they were supposed to have taken. He thought for some minutes, and then looking about, found a piece of rope: he soon made us understand that it was much too short for what he wanted, and seemed highly pleased when we took him into the store-house, where he at once selected a long coil. He then touched Mudge, Burton, Doyle, and me on the shoulder, and signified that he wished us to accompany him. Before setting out, however, he made signs that he should like something to eat, and seemed highly pleased when we gave him some broiled fish,—which he quickly swallowed, though he had had a quantity of kangaroo flesh on the previous evening.

My father would have accompanied us, but was unwilling to leave my mother. "I entrust the search to you, Mudge," he said; "and I am sure that you will spare no effort to recover the children, should their lives have been mercifully preserved."

Pullingo having inquired by signs whether we were ready, we set out. Instead, however, of taking the way along the shore, he turned up the river towards his own camp, and then ascended the cliff.

"I wonder, after all, whether he really understands that we are in search of Edith and Pierce," I observed to Paddy Doyle.

"No doubt about it, sir," was the answer; "you'll see when we get to the top that he'll go along the cliff. Maybe he knows some way down that we haven't discovered; or there is some place or other into which he thinks the children have tumbled and can't get out again."

On reaching the top of the cliff, however, Pullingo, instead of keeping close to the edge, started off in a direction which would lead us, I saw, to a spot some way along the coast, beyond the point, I calculated, where the bushranger had fallen over. Had I not been so anxious about the fate of my brother and sister, I should have been amused at the air of importance with which the savage strutted on at the head of the party, evidently feeling himself infinitely superior to us. He held a lance in his left hand; a tall feather was stuck in his bushy hair; not an article of clothing had he on, with the exception of the very small kilt which he wore round his waist.

I joined Mudge, and went on ahead with him, close behind our guide, the other men following, and carrying the coil of rope between them.

“I can’t fancy that the children could have got so far round the coast as the point we shall reach if we continue on as we are going,” I observed to him.

“As the tide was low and the sand smooth, they were probably tempted to go on without considering how far they had got,” said Mudge. “I am surprised, however, that your sister Edith should have ventured, and not recollected that the tide would again rise, and that they would not be able to repass many of the places they had previously got over without difficulty. Still, I feel sure that they did go forward, and that the black knows where they are.”

His remarks somewhat cheered me. We went on and on; and it seemed to me that we must be near the part of the cliff over which the bushranger had fallen. We discussed the probable cause of his death.

“At all events, horrible as was his death, it was better than dying of starvation, as is the fate, I fancy, of a large proportion of the convicts who take to the bush,” observed Mudge; “though dreadful must be the fate of his companion, who is now doomed to wander alone through these wilds, without daring to hold any intercourse with white men for fear of being betrayed; and, probably, equally dreading the blacks, who, if he were to be found unprepared, would speedily put him to death.”

We went on for nearly two miles, when we reached a fissure in the cliffs, the ground sloping on either side towards it. The black advanced cautiously; and following him, we found ourselves on the edge of the cliff, which appeared to hang over the water. We descended the slope I have mentioned, till we reached a broad ledge, about a quarter of the way down. Signing to the men to uncoil the rope, the end of which he allowed to fall over till it apparently reached the bottom, he now by gestures inquired which of us was ready to descend.

“We must first secure the upper end, my friend,” observed Mudge; a matter the black did not appear to have considered.

Each of us had fortunately brought a stout staff to serve us as a walking-stick; by forcing these together into the ground, we formed a post of sufficient strength round which to secure the rope, one man in addition holding on to it.

“I wish to be the first to descend,” said I.

“No, no, Mr Godfrey; if there is danger, it is not you should run it, as it would be a sad thing if you were to be lost as well as your brother and sister,” exclaimed Paddy Doyle. “If Mr Mudge will give me leave, I’ll be the first to go; and if I get safe down I’ll shout out, and you can follow.”

“Doyle is right,” said Mudge; “let him go first.”

Without waiting a moment, Paddy threw himself over the cliff, holding on by the rope, and began to descend. It must have been somewhat trying even to his nerves, for the rope swung backwards and forwards, being at a considerable distance from the cliff. How the black came to conceive that we should venture down, it was difficult to say; as he himself certainly could never have climbed up or down such a rope, it must have been a perfectly original idea with him. He had seen the rope in our camp, and formed a just opinion of its strength; and he must have argued that as he could climb a thin and lofty tree without branches, so could we get up and down a stout rope.

On hearing Doyle’s voice I was going to follow, when, to my surprise, Pullingo approached the cliff, and seizing the rope, began to descend as fearlessly as Doyle had done. I waited till he had reached the bottom, and then, not without some feeling of anxiety, followed their example. I found that we had reached a narrow beach, which extended some way up in the hollow formed between the two sides of the cliff. I looked about, half expecting to see Edith and Pierce.

Pullingo observed my disappointment, and beckoned Doyle and me to follow him. He turned back—that is to say, to the northward of the spot where we stood—and made his way along an exceedingly narrow ledge, a few feet only above the water, which beat with a hollow sound beneath our feet. Sometimes I had the greatest difficulty in making my way; and when at length we came to a broader place, Doyle stopped and pulled off his shoes, which he put into his pocket. I followed his example, and was then able to get on somewhat better. The cliff was too smooth to afford any hold to our hands; and a slip would have plunged us headlong into the sea.

At length the black stopped at a somewhat broader place, which allowed us to join him; when, turning round, we looked down into a shallow cavern, in the centre of which we saw Edith and Pierce, kneeling down side by side, and gazing towards the sea. We had approached so noiselessly that they had not heard us. I easily leaped to the level on which they were kneeling, and uttered their names. They both sprang to their feet, and throwing their arms round me, burst into tears.

“We were praying to God for help, but thought it would come from the sea,” exclaimed Edith, as soon as she could find words to speak. “How did you know we were here? And poor mamma, how frightened she must have been at not seeing us! That made us more unhappy than anything else all the night long. We had brought some food, so we were not hungry; and see! there is a spring of water issuing from the cliff, and that gave us what we wanted to drink. But we have been very frightened, and know that we have been exceedingly naughty in coming so far by ourselves. We got as far as this, and were sitting down, very happy, when we began to think it was time to go home; but we had not got far before we found the water close up to the cliff, and we could not pass. It rose higher and higher, so we ran back and got into this cave just before the sea reached the part of the beach by which alone we could gain it. At first we thought that it would perhaps come right up into the cave and drown us. On and on it came, and we got farther and farther back; and oh, how thankful we were when at length we saw it stop and come no higher!”

I did not scold Edith or Pierce; and I felt very thankful that the weather had been so calm, for had there been any wind the surf would have broken into the cave, and certainly have swept them away.

We had now to consider how we were to return. I proposed to Doyle that we should wait till the tide had gone down, and then get along the beach by the way they had come.

“But maybe the tide won’t go down as low as it did yesterday; and if it doesn’t, there are many places you will be unable to get across,” said Doyle.

“Then the best thing we can do is to send round for the boat,” I observed. “If you will climb up to the top of the cliff, I will stay with my brother and sister.”

“To confess the truth, Mr Godfrey, it’s just the thing I don’t think is as aisy as it looks,” said Doyle. “I’ll try to do it, to please you; but I rather think our friend Pullingo, though not brought up to the sea, will do it more aisy.”

“But how is he to make them understand that we have found the children and want the boat?” I asked.

“Haven’t you got a pencil and paper!” exclaimed Edith. “Just write a note to Mr Mudge, and get him to take it up.”

“A bright idea,” I observed; and taking out my pocket-book, I wrote a few words, explaining the plan we proposed.

Pullingo at once understood that he was to carry up the bit of paper, and did not appear to hesitate about ascending the rope. I remained with Edith and Pierce, while Paddy went back with the black. He soon returned to the cave, when he told me that Pullingo had, without hesitation or the slightest appearance of fear, grasped the rope and begun the ascent, showing as much activity as a monkey, or, as he observed, as if he had been born and bred at sea. He watched him till he had climbed safely over the top of the cliff; when a shout from above told him that my note had been received.

We now sat down, watching the tide, which was still flowing.

“What if it should rise higher than it did yesterday?” I observed; “we should be somewhat cramped for space.”

“I don’t think Pullingo would have left us here if he thought that was going to happen,” said Doyle; “he knows all about it. He is a wonderful fellow; how he came to find out that the children were here, is more than I can tell.”

“We saw his son as we came along yesterday, and perhaps he guessed where we had gone,” said Pierce, thus accounting for the black knowing where to find the children.

Still, I did not feel altogether comfortable as I saw the tide rising higher and higher, and I began to consider that, after all, it might have been better to have tried to go up by the rope.

Edith sat quite calmly. “I am very sure that it will not come higher than that,” she said, placing a stone on the ground.

“And why do you think so?” I asked.

“Because God rules the waves. He can stop them just where he wills,” she answered with perfect calmness.

She was right; the water came only a little higher than the stone, and then began to recede.

The children had brought an ample store for their picnic, and had thus enough food to prevent them suffering much from hunger. They wanted Paddy and me to take some, but of course we would not touch it, though I confess that by this time I was somewhat hungry.

At length, greatly to my satisfaction, I caught sight of the boat pulling with four oars rapidly towards us. Feeling her way, she got within twenty yards of where we were. Burton, who was in her, tucking up his trousers waded on shore, and taking up Edith carried her on board; while Paddy got Pierce on his back, and soon placed him by her side. I followed, when the boat shoved off, and we made the best of our way to the river. I was thankful to hear from Mudge, who also had come, that my mother was much better.

Our father received us at the landing-place, and not a word of reproach did he utter to Edith and Pierce—feeling that they had been sufficiently punished for their thoughtlessness; while our poor mother welcomed them back with tears of joy.

“O mamma, mamma! how very sorry I am that we should have alarmed you so,” exclaimed Edith, as she threw her arms round our mother’s neck. “We fancied that we were doing something very heroic in exploring the country, and expected to find another river or beautiful harbour, little dreaming of the danger we were running.”

“We may thank God, my child, that you are preserved,” answered our mother. “From what I hear, had a storm come on you would inevitably have been lost.”

She did not think at the moment how narrow an escape they had had. Scarcely had we landed when the general appearance of the sky to windward changed, clouds dark as ink rose above the horizon; and before an hour had passed, one of those fearful gales known as black hurricanes or black squalls, which occasionally blow on the Australian coast, began to rage.

It was far more furious than the one which burst on us soon after we landed. The sea came rushing into the river and drove back the ebb with a power which rapidly made the water rise; and as we watched it getting higher and higher, we began to fear that the whole of our peninsula would be flooded. Huge boughs were torn off the trees, which bent

before the gale, and every instant we expected some of them to fall.

Night coming quickly on, increased the horrors of the scene. Several times my father went down to the edge of the water to ascertain how high it had risen, leaving Burton to watch, and report to him should it rise above a certain point. In a short time the flood would set in; if so, we might expect the water to rise very rapidly. Of course, no one thought of going to bed; my mother and Edith sat dressed for a journey, and every one was ordered to prepare to start at a moment's notice. We each had our guns and as much ammunition as we could carry, for on that our existence might depend should we be deprived of our stores. We had also a small quantity of provisions, a second pair of shoes apiece, and a few articles of clothing, packed up in readiness for a move.

"I should have despatched a party with provisions and ammunition to a place of safety up the side of the cliff, had I not hoped that before the flood set in the gale would have abated," observed my father; "and I even now think that it might be the most prudent course. I will go down once more and ascertain if the waters are still rising; and if they are, it will be wise to start at once, though I regret that you and Edith should be exposed to the rain and wind."

My father said this as we were collected in the sitting-room of our house.

Mudge just then came in, the rain pouring off his hat. "I have secured the boat with a long warp," he said, "and loaded her with as many of our stores as I thought she could safely carry, so that when the waters subside I trust that these may at all events be preserved. I am afraid, sir, that we must make a start; the water has got to within a foot of the top of the bank, and if a heavy sea were to come rolling up from the mouth of the river it might sweep over the whole settlement."

"We will no longer delay, then," said my father; "tell the men to get ready."

We all of us accordingly, loading ourselves with the packages we had prepared—my mother, indeed, insisting on carrying a pretty heavy bundle—followed my father out of the house. Mudge summoned the men, who were ready to set out. Before proceeding, however, my father ordered them to secure all the doors and windows, so that should the buildings not be carried away by the flood, the articles within them might be preserved, though they would get damaged by the water. My father supported my mother; Mudge took charge of Edith; and I held Pierce by the hand. The rest of the party pushed on close behind—and from the remarks they made they evidently expected the whole peninsula to be overwhelmed in a few minutes.

It was with difficulty we could see our way. "Let me go on ahead, yer honour," sang out Paddy; "I'm a fine pilot in the dark; and it's better that I should tumble into the river than that you and the misthress should come to harm."

Paddy had supplied himself with a long stick, with which he felt the way before him. We managed, by keeping close together under his guidance, to get across the narrow neck of land, and then continued our course along the bank of the river. As it was somewhat higher than the peninsula, we had no great fear of the waters overtaking us till we could reach a place of safety.

We were exposed, however, to another danger, from the masses of earth and rock which, loosened by the wind, came falling down on our left; while branches of various sizes, wrenched off the parent stems, were whirled through the air, and often fell close to us. Even Paddy had great difficulty in finding the part of the cliff which was accessible. Happily, a short distance up there was an overhanging rock. As there was no danger of the waters rising so high, and as it seemed perfectly secure, my father directed us all to take shelter beneath it. We were here, at all events, safe from the branches hurtling through the air, and from the pieces of rock which came bounding down the cliffs. My mother, Edith, and Pierce were placed in the most sheltered part, and the rest crept in on either side or in front of them. Here we all sat the livelong night, anxiously waiting for day, and wishing that the hurricane would cease.

"Such furious gales as this seldom last many hours," observed my father. "I trust that it will prove the clearing storm, after which we may look for fine weather. And we must make up our minds to move in the upper downs should we remain in the neighbourhood; though, unless we hear from Sydney, I believe that we shall act wisely by commencing our journey to the southward. We are a sufficiently large party to resist any attack which the natives may venture to make on us; and as we have an abundance of ammunition, we shall be able to supply ourselves with food on the road."

The subject my father spoke of was of interest to us all.

When we were not talking, I dozed frequently off; and thus the night passed away with me more rapidly than I could have expected. Sometimes, when I awoke, I heard the storm still howling and raging, and the waves roaring on the shore; then there came a lull, and for some time I lost all consciousness.

On starting up I saw that several of the party were on foot. The sky overhead was blue, and the first rays of the rising sun were glancing on the tree-tops sprinkled with moisture, which now no longer waved to and fro in the breeze.

"Let us return to our village: and I trust that we may find that less damage has been committed than we expected," said my father.

We all anxiously followed, looking towards the spot where we had left our houses standing, and wondering whether they would still be there.

"I see their roofs," cried Pierce, who, with Tom, had darted on ahead; "hurrah! hurrah!"

He was right, and in a short time we reached the isthmus. We expected to find the garden, at all events, destroyed and everything uprooted. The water had indeed washed over the greater part of the peninsula, and had filled a trench dug round the garden, but could scarcely have done more than just cover the ground. It had entered the

cottages, which were a little lower down; but it had risen but a few inches, and everything was in its place. Even in the storeroom, the articles alone which were on the lower tier had got wet. The boat was also secure, with her cargo undamaged. We had, indeed, reason to be grateful to Providence, that the waters had been arrested at the moment when they might have destroyed everything in the settlement.

We had to wait some time for breakfast—till the wood we could collect was dry enough to light a fire; and in the interval we employed ourselves in cleaning out the floors of the houses, which were covered with slime. Our narrow escape, however, made my father determine not to wait beyond the expiration of the four months, should a vessel from Sydney not appear to carry us off.

By puffing and blowing Paddy at last succeeded in kindling a fire, when our tea-kettle was boiled and we had breakfast.

Soon afterwards I was looking with a spy-glass towards the coast on the opposite side of the river, from which direction a gentle breeze blowing wafted a far from pleasant odour towards us, when I observed a large dark object lying on the beach. On looking at it with my naked eye, I had till then supposed that it was a rock—though I could not help fancying that no rock had formerly been there. I now discovered that it was a huge dead whale, which, partly decomposed, had been thrown up by the waves during the night. It was likely to prove anything but an agreeable neighbour, however, and would certainly become worse and worse.

I pointed it out to Mudge and the rest. “We must hope that the wind will change before long, or even at the distance it is off it will drive us away from this,” said Mudge.

A number of sea-birds were already hovering over the carcass, showing that they had scented it from afar. Though the smell was unpleasant, still I was anxious to have a nearer view of the monster; so Mudge, Harry, Tommy, and I agreed to go over.

Having taken the things out of the boat, we pulled across the river, which was still somewhat swollen, and had just landed when we caught sight of several natives rushing on with headlong speed towards the whale, having apparently come from the interior. We drew back, and concealed ourselves behind the trees; and they, evidently from having their eyes fixed on the whale, had not seen us. The country towards the west was open, and as I turned my glass in that direction I observed a still greater number running on as fast as their legs could carry them. The sound of their wild shouts and shrieks, as they clapped their hands and kicked up their legs with delight, reached our ears. On they came.

We had no notion that anything like the number of natives we saw existed in the neighbourhood. How, indeed, they came to discover that the creature, to them so great a prize, had been cast on shore, it was difficult to say—unless, like the birds of prey, they had scented it from afar. Over the hills they came, some appearing at the entrance of a valley, others making their way along the shore. Already we saw that some had arrived; and through my glass I recognised our friend Pullingo as the principal figure by the feather at the top of his head, the bundle of lances in one hand, and an axe which we had given him in the other. Some of the natives carried huge drums, which they beat with might and main, forming the bass to their shrill shrieks. All seemed so eager to reach the scene of action, that even had we been much nearer we ran little risk of being discovered.

On they came in troops, till nearly two hundred must have been collected; then joining hands, they formed a large circle round the whale, while Pullingo mounted along the tail to the top of it, where he stood flourishing his axe, and apparently making a speech to the assembled multitude. Its tenor we should not have understood, even had we heard his words distinctly; but it was replied to by the shouts and cries of the people below: then the drums set up a thundering rattle, and the blacks reiterating their shrieks and cries, men, women, and children began to dance round and round, throwing themselves into the wildest and most extravagant postures, all trying to vie one with the other who could leap, and kick, and twist their bodies and arms about in the most grotesque fashion. Whether it was simply to show their joy, or was some religious ceremony, we could not determine.

The dance, if so it could be called, continued for some time, Pullingo still remaining the central figure on the top of the whale, when suddenly he dug his axe into the creature’s back; on which, picking up their stone knives or other instruments, which they had placed on the ground, the savages rushed forward and began hacking away at the body of the whale in a most ferocious fashion.

I was very glad that we were at a distance, for even as seen through a telescope the spectacle was one of the most disgusting I ever witnessed. As they cut out pieces of the flesh, they rammed them into their mouths, tearing them with their teeth like a pack of famishing wolves; some of them literally forcing their way into the carcass, out of which they emerged carrying huge pieces of dripping flesh, covering their bodies with blood. Even the women, some of them young, and, as seen from a distance, far from ill-looking, attacked the whale in the same fashion as the men, and appeared again dripping all over with blood. When I thought of the putrid state of the flesh, it made me almost sick to look at them, and disgusted at seeing human beings so degraded. Under ordinary circumstances they were not pleasant neighbours, but horrible must have been the effluvium arising from them after they had thus gorged themselves.

Not having any wish to get nearer the scene, we returned to the boat; and in a short time afterwards we saw that they had lighted fires in the neighbourhood of the monster, intending apparently to cook the flesh, and to stay there till they had eaten it up.

The presence of so large a number of natives in our vicinity, made my father consider seriously whether it would not be prudent to leave our present position without further delay, nearly four months having elapsed since the departure of the long-boat. He forthwith invited Mudge and Burton to hold a consultation on the subject, at which I also was present; and where Mudge remarked that two days only remained to complete the four months.

“If no vessel appears in that time, I think we may conclude, either that the long-boat has unfortunately been lost, or that Mr Brown has been unable to succeed in obtaining a vessel to come to our relief,” observed Mudge. “While the whale lasts, I don’t think we need fear a visit from those unsavoury gentlemen; but when they have recovered from the effects of their banquet, and begin to feel the pangs of hunger, they are very likely to become troublesome; and though we should be able to hold our own against them, we might find it dangerous to go out hunting singly or in small parties. I therefore advise that at the end of two days we should proceed up the river as far as the boat will carry us, and either pitch our camp there, while we make further preparations for our journey, or push on southward at once. I prefer an inland route to one along the coast, because in the latter case we should have to follow its various sinuosities, and have to cross the rivers at their mouths, where they are probably the broadest; whereas by keeping inland we may steer a direct course, and are more likely to find game and obtain fresh water.”

“I am of Mr Mudge’s opinion,” observed Burton. “By keeping near the coast, if the natives are inclined to attack us we should only have one side to defend. But then, again, if we move quickly on they will see that we are merely travelling through the country, and not wishing to interfere with them, and so are not likely to annoy us. I, however, would advise that we should make all preparations before leaving this, and begin our overland journey directly we leave the boat.”

“I agree with all you have said,” observed my father. “I will get you, Burton, to explain the plan we propose to the other men; and I hope that all will be satisfied that what we suggest is for the best. I should be glad, however, if, before starting, we could manage to communicate with Pullingo, as he would prove invaluable as a guide across the parts of the country with which he is acquainted; and I think, after the way we have treated him, that he may be trusted.”

“Paddy Doyle would be the best person to try and get hold of him,” I observed. “It would be pretty trying to any one of us to go near the whale, but I suspect that the Irishman would not be very particular; and as Pullingo knows that we can always supply him with food, he might be more willing than the rest of his tribe to leave the horrible mass of flesh on which they are gorging themselves.”

“You must speak to Paddy, and see if he is willing to go,” said my father. “In the meantime, we will make packages of the necessaries we are to take with us; and I should advise each person to manufacture for himself a pair of canvas leggings, and a broad-brimmed hat of the same material.”

Before separating they discussed other points, and made out a list of the different articles it would be advisable to take with us.

As soon as I told Doyle, he immediately agreed to visit the blacks’ camp. It was too late to set off that night; but next morning Burton and I, with one of the other men, took him across to the opposite shore. We watched him as he made his way towards the camp, which, in spite of the odour proceeding from the carcass of the whale, was pitched close to it. The only shelter the natives had provided for themselves consisted of some slabs of bark three or four feet in length, either stuck in the ground or leaning against a rail, with their fires in front.

They were still, apparently, all fast asleep, overcome by their debauch of the previous day and night. Doyle, who wisely carried his musket and pistols, went on without hesitation. How he found out Pullingo’s sleeping-place I do not know, as there was nothing to distinguish it from the rest. For some time he was lost to sight behind the carcass of the whale.

We waited and waited, and began at length to wonder that he did not return. Before starting, he had said that he would fire off his pistol should he require assistance, though he had little fear on that score.

“I hope that nothing has happened to poor Paddy,” observed Burton.

“I can’t fancy it, unless he has been overcome by the odour of the whale,” I answered; “it is bad enough even here, and sufficient to breed a fever among the blacks, even if it does not make us sick.”

“No fear of that,” observed Burton; “they are accustomed to it. Hurrah! here comes Doyle, and our friend Pullingo with him, rubbing his stomach, as if he found walking a trouble.”

“I’ve got him,” exclaimed Doyle as he approached; “but we must keep him well supplied with food, or he’ll be off again to have another blow-out of whale’s flesh. Faith, it’s rather high flavoured; but it’s to their taste, I suppose.”

Pullingo hesitated before stepping into the boat, and cast a wistful glance in the direction of the whale.

“Don’t think about that, old fellow,” said Paddy, patting him on the shoulder; “we’ll give you as much good grub as you can want. So come along with us;” and taking his arm, he induced him to step into the boat.

I did not find him a very pleasant neighbour; but I held my nose, and endeavoured not to think about the matter. As soon as we got him on shore, we tried to make him understand what we wanted: that we purposed moving southward, and that we would reward him handsomely if he would act as our guide. We could not clearly make out whether or not he was willing to go; and as we could not start for a couple of days, Mudge offered to go up the river as far as it was navigable in the boat, with Doyle and Harry and me, and one of the other men, and to take him with us. We should thus be better able to judge whether he understood what we wished him to do.

There was no risk, in the meantime, of the natives leaving their feast; and the wind fortunately now blowing from us towards the whale, we were no longer annoyed by the disagreeable odour. One thing was certain,—that the boat could not carry us all, with our provisions and stores, and that we should, at all events, have to make two or three trips. My father, therefore, thought that the sooner we set off the better. We accordingly put on board the boat a supply of provisions, ammunition, and some other articles, which we intended storing near the landing-place at the

head of the river. We also took with us such tools as we should require to build a hut. These arrangements being made, we wished our friends good-bye, and pulled away up the river.

The scenery, as we advanced, became highly picturesque, and in some places the banks on either side were fringed with trees; in others, perpendicular cliffs rose sheer out of the water to a considerable height; while numerous points projected into the stream, some rocky, others covered with the richest vegetation.

We had been curious to know how Pullingo and his family had crossed the river; but we had not got far when we caught sight of a very rough-looking canoe hauled up on the bank. We pulled in to examine it, and found that it consisted of a single large sheet of bark bent up, the ends roughly sewed together, lumps of clay being stuffed in to prevent the water from entering, while the centre part was kept open by several pieces of stick fixed across the upper edge. Such a canoe could not take many minutes to form; and we agreed that it would be well to copy the natives when we had rivers to cross, and to form similar canoes, as they would be more quickly constructed, and could be guided with less difficulty, than a raft. Pullingo made us understand that this was his canoe, but that he would leave it where it was for the use of his wife and family.

As the tide had just begun to flow when we started, we made rapid progress. We saw numerous birds, ducks and geese, which skimmed over the surface, seeking for their prey, or flew off, startled by our approach. We pulled on till the shadows which spread over the stream showed us that night was coming on, and that we must ere long look out for a place to encamp. As, however, the sun’s rays still tinged the topmost boughs of the more lofty trees, we continued our course, anxious to get as high as possible before bringing up.

“Avast pulling,” cried Mudge; “I think I hear the sound of a waterfall.”

We obeyed him. I could distinctly hear the rushing noise of a body of water coming from the upper part of the river. We again gave way, and saw before us a mass of foam produced by the water running over a ledge of rocks some six or eight feet in height, stretching directly across the river. This would effectually bar our further progress; and not to lose more time, we pulled in to the right or southern bank, towards a spot where the tall trees receding afforded an open space on which we might encamp. In other parts along the bank the vegetation was of an unusually dense character for Australia: numberless creepers hung from the branches of the lofty trees, bearing star-like flowers, some white, others of a yellow hue, shining like gold, contrasted with the dark green foliage; while the ground below and more open spaces were carpeted with a rich sward but seldom seen in that country, and produced, probably, by the spray from the waterfall cast over it when the wind blew down the river.

Pullingo, by his gestures, leading us to suppose that he considered it a good place for encamping, we accordingly landed. We found the ground harder than we had expected, as the soil, which was only a few inches deep, rested on a bed of rock, which had prevented the trees from taking root. We quickly set about forming our camp; some of the party collecting sheets of bark, aided by Pullingo, while others picked up broken branches for our fire.

While we were thus employed, a flight of the magnificent cockatoos I have before described settled on some of the branches close to the river. Pullingo, who had brought his boomerang, at once eyed them eagerly. Paddy and I, who were near him, ran for our guns; but he made a sign to us not to shoot, letting us understand that he had a far more effectual way of procuring our supper. We followed him cautiously, so as not to frighten the birds as he stole towards them. As they clustered thickly on the boughs, it was evident they intended to rest there for the night. They sat talking away to each other at a great rate for some minutes; then, having placed their sentinels and wished each other good-night, they put their heads under their wings and prepared for sleep. They little thought of the subtle foe in their neighbourhood.

Having got close under the tree without being perceived, Pullingo drew his boomerang from his belt, and retired a few paces from his shelter; then running forward, to give power to his arm, till his feet touched the margin of the stream, and throwing his right hand, which held the boomerang, over his back, he cast it directly before him with all the force of his arm. These different movements had scarcely occupied three seconds. The sentinels, meanwhile, had given a warning sound, and the birds seemed to be aware that all was not right. When, however, they saw the weapon flying towards the surface of the water, they appeared satisfied that it had nothing to do with them.

But instead of dropping into the stream, as might have been expected, it suddenly took a new direction; and flying up into the air with irresistible force, came turning round and round in the most extraordinary manner, with a whizzing sound, into the very midst of the cockatoos’ roosting-place, continuing its course among them—killing one outright, breaking the wing of another, sending another squalling to the ground, cutting open their heads, and committing all sorts of damage among the feathered inhabitants of the trees. In vain the unfortunate cockatoos, overcome with astonishment, uttered their cries of despair; in vain they endeavoured to escape the awful blows of this apparently enchanted piece of wood; the boomerang continued its eccentric course, not ceasing its gyrations till it had knocked over nearly a dozen birds, and had fallen close to the spot where its owner stood ready to receive it.

It was the first time I had ever seen the boomerang used, and I could not have believed it capable of such performances had I not witnessed them. Before the birds had recovered from their fright, the boomerang was again in their midst, whizzing round and round, as if endued with life, and committing almost as much damage as before. Pullingo was preparing to throw it a third time, when the survivors of the cockatoos, discovering that this was no secure resting-place for them, took to flight, uttering mournful cries for their lost companions—several of whom, having been roughly plucked, were speedily roasting on spits before the fire.

“Much obliged to you for the good supper you’ve procured for us, Mr Pullingo,” observed Paddy; “but it surprises me that you, who can get as many well-tasted birds as you like by throwing that bit of stick, can bring yourself to eat such horrible food as that putrid whale’s flesh. However, we all have our tastes; though I can’t say I admire yours.”

These remarks were made while we were seated round the fire, and Pullingo was gnawing away at the whole body of

a cockatoo, which he had taken for his share. Though he could not understand a word the Irishman said, he seemed to have an idea that he was referring to his gastronomic powers, and he complacently stroked his stomach, to show that he was enjoying his food.

Having finished our meal, we prepared ourselves for sleep, each of us having placed a piece of bark on the ground to serve as a mattress, under shelter of the upright pieces, according to the native fashion. Pullingo was quickly snoring, showing his confidence in us; but Mudge thought it would be wiser to keep watch, in case any strange natives might pay us a visit during the night. We knew that we had no danger to apprehend from savage animals, as even the dingo, the only carnivorous quadruped in the country, will not attack a human being able to offer the slightest resistance. We could not, however, tell what a pack of such brutes might do should they find us asleep.

I kept my watch very faithfully; but I suspect some of the rest of the party followed Pullingo's example, and went to sleep. No serious consequences ensued, but the sun was up before any of us awoke.

We immediately set to work to relight the fire and cook our breakfast. Mudge and Paddy Doyle then tried once more to ascertain whether Pullingo was willing to accompany us to the south; and after such conversation as they could carry on, they were satisfied that he would undertake to act as guide—as far, at all events, as he was acquainted with the country. What had become of his big son, his wife, and small children, we could not make out; but he apparently intended to leave them behind.

"Now, lads," said Mudge, "we will store the goods we have brought up, and then make the best of our way down to the camp; but as it would not be safe, I suspect, to leave them without protection, are any of you willing to remain? If we carry our black friend back within scent of the whale, I am afraid that he will attempt to return to it. Do you think, Doyle, that you could manage to keep him here?"

"I'll try, your honour; and I'm ready enough myself to remain, if anybody will stay with me," answered Paddy.

"I will," said Harry, who observed that the other men did not answer readily.

"So will I," I said, "if you wish it, Mudge."

"No," he answered; "two are sufficient, and you may be wanted to bring up the boat. As we have the tide with us, we may reach the camp and be back here soon after nightfall; and we now know the river sufficiently well to pull up in the dark."

Mudge desired Doyle to place the goods on a bed of bark slabs, and to build a hut over them of the same material, so that, should rain come on, they might be preserved from wet. Pullingo, on seeing that we left our goods behind us, was perfectly ready to remain; and wishing our friends good-bye, we pulled rapidly down the river. As we had a strong current with us we made good way, and in about six hours reached the encampment.

"Has the vessel appeared?" I asked of Tommy Peck, who had come down to meet us, as I sprang on shore.

"Not a sign of one," he answered. "The captain has gone up to the top of the cliff to have a better look-out; and if none appears, I think he will be for moving."

My mother and Edith, on hearing from Popo that the boat had arrived, came out of the house and gave me the same report. They had been busily engaged for the last two days in preparing for our intended journey, as had also the men in the camp.

On my father's return he expressed himself satisfied with what we had done, and accepted Mudge's offer to go back again at once with another cargo of goods; while he himself proposed to remain with Pierce, Tom, and one of the other men; and I was to bring back the boat, which in her last trip was to carry up my father and mother and Edith, and the remainder of the goods and chattels we intended to remove.

We accordingly lost no time in again starting, as we did not wish to lose any of the daylight. For nearly two hours we had to pull on in the dark, and frequently it was so difficult to see our way that we had to advance cautiously. I sat in the bow, endeavouring to pierce the gloom, so as to catch sight of any danger ahead before we were upon it. Very thankful I was when I saw a bright glare cast over the water, and on the boughs and trunks of the surrounding trees, by Paddy Doyle's camp-fire, and he and Harry answered my hail.

We soon made our way to the bank, when we found that they had been expecting us, and had prepared an ample supper of roast parrots and doves, with a pot of tea, and some cakes cooked in the ashes. They had also got ready our sleeping-places; so without loss of time we lay down to rest, intending to start again an hour before dawn, that we might, if possible, return before the close of the day.

I was so anxious to be off in time that I awoke even sooner than was necessary. I found Pullingo sitting up—not keeping watch, but stowing away in his capacious inside the remains of our supper, which I had intended for breakfast. Several birds which had been killed the previous day were hanging up, so I plucked and spitted them. I then aroused those of my companions who were to form the crew. We hurried over our breakfast; and making our way to the boat, began our downward voyage. As before, we had to proceed cautiously till daylight returned; we then made such good play that we reached the camp even before my father expected us.

He had just returned from a last trip to the downs. "No vessel anywhere in sight," he said. "I very much fear that Brown and his party are lost; they must have encountered the gales we felt so severely here. I warned them of the danger they would run, but they would not believe me. Nevertheless, I am heartily sorry to think that they have probably been lost."

I found that during our absence my father had done his utmost to secure the property we were to leave behind from being plundered by the natives. He had barricaded the doors and windows, both of the huts and the store-house, with pieces of timber fixed firmly in the ground and horizontal bars nailed across them, which we had hopes that the natives would not venture to remove.

The remainder of the articles we intended to carry with us were neatly done up in packages. We also took all our arms and ammunition, of which we had not more than would last us, we calculated, till we could hope to reach the settlements; indeed, it was the fear of this running short which made my father determine to commence our journey to the southward without further delay. While that lasted, we might amply supply ourselves with food, and with due precaution set the natives at defiance; but should that be exhausted, they, with their long spears and formidable boomerangs, would be superior to us in weapons of defence, while we should have no means of obtaining provisions. Had not the bushrangers carried off so much of our powder, we might have remained another month or two.

The boat was loaded without delay. Our last act was to collect all the vegetables fit for use in the garden, that we might have a supply of green food—at all events, for the first few days of our journey. Not without regret did we bid farewell to the spot which had afforded us shelter for so many weeks.

“Shove off,” said my father, as he seated himself at the helm, with my mother and Edith by his side, while the faithful Nanny crouched at my sister’s feet; and giving way, we commenced our voyage up the river. We took a look through an opening in the trees in the direction of the whale, round which the natives were still collected in vast numbers; and thankful were we to get away from them, for we had no doubt that as soon as they had eaten up the monster they would become troublesome. We should have been glad had we been able to penetrate farther to the west by water, as a glance at the map we had with us showed that we should still have a considerable amount of westing to make in our course to Sydney.

My mother was cheerful, notwithstanding the arduous journey on foot which she was about to undertake. Edith laughed and talked as usual, not troubling herself about the matter; indeed, she thought that it would be very good fun to walk on all day through a new country with a constant change of scenery, and at the end of it the amusement of forming a camp for the night. She thought, indeed, it would be a succession of picnics, only with more excitement than ordinary picnics afford. We none of us said anything to damp her spirits, though I could not help fearing that she would get tired before long of this style of life. We had, however, every reason to hope that we should enjoy fine weather, as the rainy season was now over; and that would be much in our favour.

We met with no adventure worth recording, and having pulled on all day without cessation, we reached the head of the navigation soon after sunset. Our friends, having a fire blazing up cheerfully and provisions cooking at it, were collected on the bank to welcome us. As soon as the boat was unloaded we dragged her up the bank some way from the water, where we intended, before starting the next morning, to house her carefully over, so that she might be protected from the sun and wet, and be ready for use should we be compelled from any cause to return.

Our camp was formed at some distance from the water, on the side of a bank, where the ground was drier than the spot we first occupied near the river. It was truly a wild woodland scene: the trees of gigantic growth towering up to the starlit sky, their branches thickly interlaced with countless creepers, which hung down in festoons, bearing flowers of various hues, some of enormous size, others so minute as scarcely to be discernible except when massed in clusters. Those only, however, were visible, which, hanging low down, shone in the light of the blazing fire.

Mudge had thoughtfully arranged a bark hut for my mother and Edith, while lean-tos served for the rest of the party. Considering our circumstances, we were very merry as we sat round the fire enjoying a good supper, for, having an abundance of provisions, there was no necessity to stint ourselves; indeed, we possessed more than we could carry, and should have to let some remain *en cache*, as the Canadians call it.

Pullingo had, according to his own idea, become one of us; Mudge having dressed him up in a shirt and trousers, which made him far more presentable among civilised people than he had hitherto been. He had tried to get him into a canvas jacket; but he made signs that it was too hot, and that he should sink with the weight;—though one would not suppose that it could have made much difference. I observed that at night he took off his new clothes, and merely threw his skin-rug over him; probably he would otherwise have been unable to go to sleep.

But I must now hurry on, and merely give the chief incidents of our journey.

Chapter Ten.

Journey commenced—Our night encampment—Witness a corroborree, or skeleton dance—Natives visit us—A magician plays off his tricks—Native superstitions—Journey resumed—Curious trees—Camp alarmed by a “laughing jackass”—halt for the day—Expedition—Discover an old woman trying to arouse the natives to attack us—Pullingo appears to warn us—We retreat—A hurried march—A litter formed for Edith—Again encamp—A fugitive—Surprised by the natives—Prove to be friends of Pullingo—The march resumed.

Having housed in the boat, and hidden such provisions and goods as we could not take with us, we commenced our journey. We each of us carried a pack containing ammunition, a pair of shoes, a change of clothing, flour, biscuit, and preserved meat, salt and other necessaries. My father had, in addition, his money, which he had saved from the wreck, a compass, a sextant, a map, and a book or two. Mudge was similarly loaded. I had my journal; and my mother insisted on carrying her own clothing, as well as some provisions, and her Bible; while Edith was quite unhappy till she was allowed to have a small parcel made up for herself.

Each package was suited to the strength of the person who had to carry it. It is a very different thing to lift a weight which may appear perfectly light for a few minutes, and to have to carry it day after day on one’s shoulders, with the

addition of a musket, a brace of pistols, and a stout stick.

Pullingo went ahead with his spears in his hand and his boomerang stuck in his girdle, fully conscious of his dignity. Paddy Doyle went next to him, or marched at his side for the purpose of keeping him in good humour, while he endeavoured to learn his language and teach him English. Mudge marched next with Tommy Peck; my father and mother followed, and either Harry or I accompanied Edith and Pierce, who led the goat between them; while Burton and Popo, with the other men, brought up the rear. When I was not with Edith, I either walked alongside Burton or went ahead with Mudge.

After we left the neighbourhood of the river we emerged into a more open country; that is to say, the trees grew at a sufficient distance apart to enable us to see a long way between them. We flattered ourselves that we were not likely to meet with any natives for some time, as we fancied that all those in the neighbourhood had collected to feed on the carcass of the whale, and we knew that Pullingo would not lead us through a country inhabited by any tribes hostile to his own.

I should say that the aborigines of Australia are divided into numerous separate tribes or families, living entirely apart from each other, retaining their own hunting-grounds, and so seldom intermixing that in many instances they are unacquainted with each other's language. We were led to suppose that Pullingo's tribe was chiefly located in the region to the south of the river, and that he had come farther north than usual when he fell in with us; we could only thus account for the confidence with which he marched on ahead, as if thoroughly acquainted with the country.

We calculated that we had made fifteen miles, when we encamped for the night on the border of a thick wood to which Pullingo conducted us. On looking at the map, however, it seemed as if, after all our walking, we had made no progress, though the ground over which we had passed had been perfectly easy; and we knew from the account the bushranger had given us that we should have a mountainous and rocky region to cross, when our difficulties would be greatly increased.

"Come, come," said my father, when he heard the remarks some of us were making; "I must not let you look at the map in future. All we have to do is to push bravely onward while we are on the move, and to rest at such spots as will afford us water and an abundance of game."

The next day, having made as good progress as on the first, we had altogether accomplished thirty miles by sunset. We had thus made half a degree, which, as Tommy remarked, sounded at all events like something; and each day we managed to shoot as many parrots or pigeons as we required for food. Occasionally, too, Pullingo brought some down with his boomerang.

We had been travelling on for some days, when one evening we encamped near what was now a rivulet, but it had already fallen considerably, and we could see by the appearance of the banks that it would probably ere long be dry. My mother and Edith, though they had walked on without complaining, were evidently tired, and my father proposed that we should remain there to rest, or only take a short journey the next day. So our camp was formed as usual; and our provisions having been cooked, we sat round the camp-fire to take our supper.

We all shared alike: the food requiring cooking was boiled in our largest pot, the game and vegetables being cut up into small pieces, and biscuit or flour being added to it, with pepper and mustard. This was a favourite dish both for dinner and supper, and very excellent it was. My father and mother and Edith, with Mudge and I and the other boys, took our seats on one side, while the men collected on the other. Pullingo generally squatted down by the side of Paddy, whom he looked upon as his chief friend. They already managed to understand each other pretty well, eking out the few words they knew of each other's language by signs which it would have puzzled the rest of us to comprehend.

This evening, Pullingo, instead of coming to the front, had seated himself some way behind Doyle, who handed him his basin of soup; and we had nearly finished our meal when, on looking up, I found that the black had disappeared. I had fancied, during the pauses in the conversation, that I heard strange sounds coming out of a thick part of the forest behind us, but I took but little notice of them. The idea which passed through my mind was that they were produced by a flock of parrots or cockatoos retiring late to rest.

Presently I saw Pullingo come back and touch Paddy on the shoulder, making a sign to him to follow. Paddy got up, taking his gun, which lay by his side. Being curious to see whatever the black wished to show him, I took up my gun also, and crept on close behind him. The black led us in the direction from whence I had heard the sounds proceed, and which was, I should have said, directly to the south of us, or in the path we were about to pursue next morning.

After going some way, I observed the glare of a fire reflected on the boughs of the trees ahead of us. We got nearer and nearer to it, when the black stopped behind some thick, low bushes. I saw Paddy stretching himself on tiptoe, and looking over them; and imitating him, I beheld a spectacle which sent a thrill of horror through me. Paddy's teeth were chattering and his limbs shaking, yet he still looked on with a fixed gaze, as if he could not force himself away. Directly in front of us, but some distance off, in the dark portion of a forest glade, appeared some twenty or thirty skeleton forms, every limb in rapid motion, twisting and turning and leaping,—the legs and arms being thrown out sometimes alternately, like the toy figures worked by a string for the amusement of babies and small children. Now they went on one side, now on the other; now they cast themselves towards the ground, as if they were about to turn head over heels, in the fashion of boys making a "wheel" alongside carriages; now up they leaped all together, now one following the other; till, after a succession of more extravagant motions than before, they suddenly disappeared. I thought they had gone altogether, when in another instant they again burst into view and recommenced the same performances as before.

For the first few seconds—until I had time for reflection—I could scarcely help fancying that they were skeletons animated by magic power; and poor Paddy, I saw, fully believed that such was the case. All the time, a band of native

musicians, with their drums, were furiously beating away directly in front of us, apparently unconscious of our presence. This convinced me, if I had required other proof, that human beings had to do with the spectacle I saw; and presently my notion was fully confirmed by seeing the seeming skeletons advance close to the fire, when I discovered the substantial black bodies of a party of natives painted over with white lines to resemble the bones of skeletons.

They continued their strange, weird dance, twisting and turning, some with their arms akimbo, others resting on their legs. The groan of relief given by poor Paddy nearly betrayed our presence, of which I concluded Pullingo had not made them aware. What their object was it was difficult to say, or what was Pullingo's in bringing us to see them: possibly, I thought, aware of our presence in the neighbourhood, they wanted to frighten us from proceeding; or perhaps they were only performing a corroborree or native dance for their own amusement.

After we had watched them for some time, I pulled Paddy's arm, and got him, not unwillingly, to retire from the scene.

"Arrah, Misther Godfrey," he said, "sure they're curious crathurs, them black nagurs; and I confess, your honour, when I first saw them, that I felt nigh ready to sink into the ground and turn into a skeleton myself! But why Pullingo brought us to see them, is more than I can make out."

"It puzzles me also," I said. "Perhaps my father or Mr Mudge will be able to form a conjecture on the subject."

These remarks were not made till we were well out of hearing of the natives. Before we had got far, Pullingo joined us, and inquired, Paddy said, what we thought of the performance.

The information we brought to the camp—of the vicinity of so large a party of natives—was anything but satisfactory, and made my father resolve to continue the journey next morning, instead of resting a day, as he had proposed; and my mother declared that she was perfectly able to travel, provided we could make a shorter stage than on the previous days. The account we gave of the curious skeleton dance performed by the blacks made Mudge, Tom, and Harry determine to go and see it. Burton offered to accompany them; but the rest of the men, after listening to the description given by Paddy, seemed to think that there was something weird and supernatural in it, and showed no inclination to join them. As for Pullingo, he made no attempt to explain matters, and I could not help suspecting that he had got up the performance himself for some purpose of his own. We waited some time for the return of Mudge and the rest; but they at length came back, saying that they had not been discovered, and that the skeletons were still dancing away as furiously as ever.

My father determined that a double watch should be kept during the night. To set the example, he took the first, with Burton and one of the men; and I relieved him after a couple of hours. During the whole time I heard the drums beating in the distance, and I had no doubt that the natives were keeping up their corroborree, which I suppose afforded them as much amusement as a ball in England does the young ladies and gentlemen who attend it. Mudge, who followed me, said that he also heard the sounds during the whole of his watch; indeed, the natives must have kept up their festivities, if so they could be called, till the "laughing jackass"—which performs the duty of a cock in Australia, by chattering vociferously just before sunrise—warned them to seek repose.

As we were anxious to avoid the natives, we started at daybreak, and marched nearly four miles before we halted for breakfast, munching only a little biscuit to stay our appetites. Pullingo led the way as usual, making us suppose that he had no connection with those who had been engaged in the corroborree. My father, however, did not entirely trust him: taking out his compass, he examined it frequently, to ascertain that he was conducting us on a direct course. We might, indeed, have dispensed with his guidance, had he not been of so much service in showing us where springs of water were to be found, as also in pointing out the trees on which parrots, pigeons, and other birds perched at night.

After breakfast we rested for a short time, and then again pushed forward, hoping to keep well ahead of our black neighbours of the previous night. As it was impossible for my mother and Edith to make so long a journey as on the previous day, we halted early in the afternoon, in a wooded region very similar to that in which we had encamped on former nights, on the southern side of a stream which we had just before passed. I call it a stream, because water ran through it; but it consisted merely of a numerous succession of holes more or less deep, connected by a tiny rivulet, over which we could step without the slightest difficulty. We could see that in the rainy season the water had risen many feet, when it must have assumed the character of a torrent, difficult and often very dangerous to cross.

We lost no time in building a hut for my mother and Edith, and in arranging shelter for ourselves. Mudge, Doyle, Harry, and I then took our guns and went out to kill some game for supper, hoping to get as many birds as would serve also for our breakfast next day. On looking about for Pullingo, to get him to accompany us, we found that he had disappeared; but in what direction he had gone no one could tell.

"We can do very well without him," observed Mudge; "only we must take care not to lose our way."

My father offered to lend us his compass, charging us to be very careful. Our object had been to shoot cockatoos, parrots, or pigeons, or indeed any other birds likely to prove good for food. We troubled ourselves very little about their names or habits; we were, indeed, sportsmen simply for the pot. We kept our eyes about us, however, in search of a kangaroo or any other animal; and either Mudge or I had our fowling-piece loaded with bullets, in case one should cross our path. We had already shot several beautiful doves and parrots; but even now I could not help feeling what a pity it was to deprive creatures with so lovely a plumage of life.

We were walking on when Harry exclaimed, "Look! look! what is that fearful creature?"

"A small bear, I do believe, by its colour and the way it walks," exclaimed Mudge as he ran on. "I hope soon to be better acquainted with the gentleman."

The animal, which was leisurely pursuing its course, waddling along something like a fat bear, across the bottom of a slight depression in the ground, did not perceive us; and Mudge, whose rifle was loaded with a bullet, soon got sufficiently near to fire. His shot must have penetrated to the animal's heart, for it rolled over and was dead in a moment. On examining the creature, which was three feet long, we found its fur warm, long, and somewhat harsh to the touch, of a grey colour, mottled with black and white. Its muzzle was very broad and thick. It was, indeed, very similar to a bear, but it possessed a pouch like the kangaroo, and its feet were black, and armed with strong claws.

"He is a curious-looking creature," observed Paddy, who quickly came up with us. "One thing is very certain,—whether it's a bear or a pig of these parts, it will give all hands a dacent supply of meat for the next day or two."

Paddy at once set to work to cut up the animal, after which we loaded ourselves with the portions, I should think it must have weighed fully forty pounds. It was, I afterwards found, a wombat, or Australian bear, an animal very common in all parts of the country. It burrows deeply into the earth; but we were fortunate enough to find this one on a journey, otherwise we should not have obtained it so easily.

We returned at once with our booty to the camp, when Paddy lost no time in spitting the wombat, and placing it to roast before the fire. The spit he used was a long thin stick, which he rested on two forked uprights before the fire; one end extending like the tangent of a circle to a sufficient distance, so that a person could keep turning it round and round without having to sit too close to the fire.

Soon after our arrival Pullingo appeared, accompanied by three blacks, one of whom he formally introduced to us as Naggernook. He was apparently, judging by his withered skin and white hair and beard, a very old man; but he had not lost the use of his tongue, for he chattered away with extraordinary volubility, as if wishing to impress some matter of importance upon us—though what it was, of course we could not understand. The sight of the wombat roasting before the fire excited his interest, and he inquired of Pullingo how we had obtained it. Pullingo, pointing to our guns, entered into a long account of the wonders they were capable of performing; indeed, he himself, though he had so often seen them fired, seemed still to regard them with superstitious awe, which it was important for our interests that he should continue to feel.

As my father was anxious to conciliate the blacks, he waited till one of the joints of the wombat was sufficiently roasted, and then presented it to Naggernook; who had no sooner received the present than he began jumping, and hopping, and skipping about in the most extraordinary manner, hugging it with delight. Having thus exhibited his satisfaction, if not his gratitude, he sat himself down on the ground, and began to devour the meat—taking off huge pieces, which he stuffed into his mouth in a fashion more honoured in the breach than in the observance; occasionally throwing a piece, though not without reluctance, to his two younger companions, who sat by his side, submissively eating what was thus bestowed on them, much after the way a couple of dogs would have done while watching their master at dinner.

We had no wish for the society of these unattractive specimens of humanity, but they, it appeared, had made up their minds to remain, for the purpose of obtaining whatever we were disposed to bestow on them,—or perhaps of stealing, if they had the opportunity. However, on that point we may have wronged them.

As soon as the two lads had scraped every particle of meat off the bone Naggernook had thrown them, they collected some sheets of bark and put up a lean-to close to our camp, showing that they had no intention of going away. Pullingo, when he sat before the fire at supper, gave us, in a low voice, as if afraid they would overhear him, a long account of his native acquaintances who had honoured us with a visit; but what it was we could not clearly make out. One thing was certain,—that a considerable number of blacks were encamped in our neighbourhood, though whether we should be troubled by them remained to be seen. Of course we kept watch as usual, Mudge and I undertaking the charge of the second watch. We agreed to walk together round and round the camp; or if one sat down, the other was to move backwards and forwards, and to speak to him at each turn.

We had been walking up and down for nearly an hour, when, feeling very tired, I sat down, while Mudge continued pacing up and down. He had just got to the end of his beat, the light of the fire still enabling me to watch him, when I saw him bending forward with his hand above his eyes, as if to peer into the darkness. As I got up and moved towards him, he stopped. Just then I saw, in an opening of the forest some way off, what appeared to be a human figure, standing on the summit of a mound of earth slightly elevated above the surrounding ground. Human though the figure was, it had a most extraordinary appearance. From the shoulders floated out, moved by the breeze which blew through the opening, the ends of a long scarf, with which its body was enveloped, like the wings of some huge bird of night. A long beard hung from its chin; while its hair, divided into separate long locks, rose in numerous points above its head.

Not a sound issued from this extraordinary-looking being, who stood like a statue—with the exception of its arms, which it continued slowly to wave up and down in a series of mysterious signs, as if it would bar our progress in that direction; indeed, if I may not be accused of impiety by saying so, it reminded me of the angel with the flaming sword, stationed at the entrance of Eden to prohibit the return of our first parents,—though I am very certain that the idea must have been original so far as the Australian necromancer—for such, we concluded, was the character assumed by the being we saw before us—was concerned. He must have been a bold fellow, to endeavour thus to practise on the supposed credulity of the white men, for a shot from one of our rifles might quickly have put an end to his performances; but, of course, we did not for a moment think of firing at him.

"What can be the object of that extraordinary-looking character?" I asked, as I got close up to Mudge.

"A trick of the natives, I conclude, to try and frighten us," he answered. "Perhaps, as they know that they cannot compete with our firearms, they are trying to awe us with an exhibition of their magic powers; and that old fellow there is evidently acting the part of a sorcerer. I should suspect him to be our friend Naggernook, had I not seen him fast asleep in his camping-place when I last passed round that way. Just you go and see whether he is still there,

Godfrey, while I keep an eye on the fantastic-looking personage out there."

Moving cautiously, I made my way towards the spot where our visitors had gone to rest; and there, to the best of my belief, they were all three still fast asleep. I returned to Mudge, who had not moved, he being curious to watch the proceedings of the sorcerer.

"Rouse up Pullingo," he said, "and let us see what account he has to give when he sees yonder scarecrow."

I found our black guide sleeping in his usual place near Paddy Doyle. While I was waking him, Paddy started up.

"There is an extraordinary-looking character playing off some trick or other not far from this, and we want to see what the black thinks about him," I said; "try and make him understand that we are not in the slightest degree frightened, and only want to know what can be his object in placing himself there."

"But suppose it is a real ghost? For the love of Heaven, don't be after offending him," said Paddy in a low whisper; "there are such things in the old country, and none but a haythen man would think of doubting it. So do, Masther Godfrey dear, take care what you are about."

Paddy having thus delivered himself, tried to make Pullingo understand that we had seen something extraordinary near the camp; and not without some hesitation did he accompany Paddy and me to where I had left Mudge standing. The effect produced on him upon seeing the figure was far greater than I had expected: the moment his eyes fell on it he began trembling all over; and shouting out at the top of his voice, "Karakul! karakul!" he bolted off towards the camp.

His cries aroused the other natives, who, starting to their feet, fled away through the forest, uttering the same mysterious word. The noise they made, of course, aroused every one in the camp; and my father and Burton quickly joined us, inquiring what was the matter. We had naturally looked to see what had become of the blacks, and when we turned our eyes again towards the mound the mysterious figure had disappeared.

"We must try and find the fellow, and teach him not to play his tricks before us," exclaimed Mudge, dashing forward. I and most of the party followed. Harry, however, brave as he was on most occasions, seemed almost as much frightened as the blacks, and entreated us to let the ghosts alone.

In vain we hunted round and round the mound; no one could we discover: indeed, in the darkness, a person well acquainted with the locality could easily have escaped, and might still be hiding not far off.

"There's no use in looking further for the fellow," observed Mudge; "but we must let him see that we are not frightened by his tricks."

Returning to the camp, we made up the fire, and then went in search of Pullingo and his friends. After some time we found them, crouching down together in the hollow of a tree some way on the other side of the camp. Either they were very much alarmed, or they pretended to be so: their teeth were chattering, their limbs shaking, as they all clung together, holding each other's hands, and looking out of their hole with staring eyeballs; even their hair appeared to have assumed an upright position, as if it was standing on end. If not really frightened, they certainly acted their parts very cleverly. Calling Paddy, who had now recovered, and seemed rather ashamed of himself, we got him to persuade Pullingo and his friends to come with us to the fire; round which they sat down in their usual fashion, as if nothing had happened. I observed, however, that they looked every now and then in the direction in which the figure had appeared, and occasionally cast suspicious glances behind them. But a couple of roast parrots which we divided among them contributed to restore their spirits.

By dint of cross-questioning Pullingo, we learned from him that the karakul was, as we suspected, a sorcerer—a being with unlimited power over the lives of all who offend him. He produces the death of his victim in a very extraordinary fashion, by means of a small bone extracted from the body of a dead man, which by his magical power he can send into the heart of any one whom he wishes to destroy. He obtains this bone by his enchantments. On the death of a native, he goes to the grave the night after the funeral, and going through certain magical performances, he afterwards lies on the top of it. At the precise moment that a certain star appears in the heavens the dead man comes forth, summoned by these incantations, and introduces within the skin of the karakul, without causing him more pain or inconvenience than does the bite of an ant, a minute bone taken from his own skeleton. The bone thus obtained remains concealed under the enchanter's skin till the moment that he requires to use it. He then, by magical power, orders the mysterious bone to go out of his own body and plant itself in that of the person he intends to destroy: it immediately enters the heart of his unhappy victim, who quickly dies in great agony.

The enchanter, however, pretends not only to kill people, but to cure them. When he cannot do so by his incantations, he tries rubbing and various passes, much in the fashion of a mesmeriser. When these fail, he burns the arms and legs of his patients, bleeds them behind the ear, or hangs them up by an arm to the branch of a tree; if they are wounded, he covers up their wounds with an ointment of mud. If after the application of these remedies the patient does not get better, the karakul declares that it is his own fault, and washes his hands of it.

"We have good reason to stand in awe of these powerful enchanters," observed Pullingo; at all events, that was what we understood him to say, as far as we could comprehend his gestures and words. When I came to know more about the natives, I found that his account was perfectly correct. He told us a good many other curious things relating to the superstitions of his countrymen; but I do not remember all of them. He told us that the natives are firmly convinced no person ever dies from natural causes; and that if not killed by his fellow-creatures, or destroyed by the spells of magicians, he would live on for ever without growing old or exhausting his physical powers.

"Come, we've had enough of this stuff," said Mudge at last. "Tell your friends to turn in again and go to sleep; and you do the same, Master Pullingo, or you will not be fit for your duty to-morrow."

Burton and one of the men relieved Mudge and me; but though they kept a look-out for the karakul, the magician did not think fit to return to his post: possibly the gleam of the fire on their muskets as they walked round the camp may have shown him that the experiment would be dangerous.

We talked over the matter the next morning, and came to the conclusion that, for some reason or other, the natives were anxious to prevent us continuing our journey. Of course, we settled to take no notice; and as soon as breakfast was over we packed up our traps and got ready to start, telling Pullingo to lead the way. He hesitated, and finally declared that he could not venture in the direction where the karakul had appeared.

“You may go any way you like,” observed Mudge; “but we shall go straight forward, and you may join us on the other side.”

Naggernook and his attendants had been watching our proceedings, and when they saw that we were advancing in the direction of the mound they bolted off, crying out, “Karakul! karakul!” We replied with shouts of laughter. Mudge fired a shot ahead to make them understand that that would clear the way of all foes. It was a hint which they were well capable of understanding, and, we hoped, would prevent their countrymen from molesting us. Our great object was to avoid coming into collision with them, for if blood was once shed we could not tell where it might end. It was important to show the natives our power, and that we did not entertain the slightest fear of them.

We marched forward in our usual order, and soon left the “sorcerer’s hillock,” as we called it, far behind. Whether he and his associates were following us we could not tell; though, of course, knowing the country, they might be advancing in the same direction on either side of us, and still keeping carefully out of sight.

I have not spoken much as yet of the appearance of the country, or the trees we met with. Near the river, and as far as we could see along the coast, were groups of magnificent pines known as the Norfolk Island Pine, a hundred feet in height, with perfectly straight stems, fit for masts to the largest ships. The most numerous trees were the eucalypti, or stringy-bark tree, of various species, some of the prodigious height of a hundred and fifty feet; others were of enormous girth, many from thirty to forty feet round; and several, hollowed by age, were large enough to admit the whole of our party. Except for size, they cannot be called handsome, as the colour of the leaf is harsh and unsightly, owing to its margin being presented towards the stem, both surfaces having thus the same relation to light. In the hollows we met with superb ferns growing on stems some twenty feet in height, and about the thickness of a boat-oar. It then throws out a number of leaves in every direction, four or five feet in length, very similar in appearance to the common fern. Another curious tree had a stem sixteen feet long; after which it branched out in long spiral leaves which hung down on all sides, resembling those of the larger kinds of grass. From the centre of the leaves sprang a foot-stalk twenty feet in length, exactly like the sugar-cane, and terminating in a spiral spike resembling an ear of wheat. It yielded a fragrant-scented yellow resin.

Pullingo having lost two of his spears, with which he had attempted to kill a big forester kangaroo, and which made off with them sticking in its back, he climbed to the top of several of these trees and cut down this upper stem. He then hardened them in the fire. On comparing the new spears with his old ones, we found that they were all of the same material. We before had been puzzled to know how he had obtained such straight and slender rods.

Though we believed that Pullingo was attached to us, we were still very doubtful of the temper of his countrymen, and therefore, when on the march we kept close together, to be ready to resist any sudden attack. When we halted at mid-day to rest, we took care not to range to any great distance in search of game unless we had him with us. We seldom went more than a couple of days without killing a kangaroo or a wombat, while we obtained an ample supply of birds,—either cockatoos or parrots and parakeets, several varieties of pigeons, as also of doves, and now and then a bustard, or native turkey, a large bird weighing sixteen or eighteen pounds. Frequently, as we were marching on, we were saluted by a sound so like the crack of a whip, that Tommy and Pierce declared that some black boy near at hand must be amusing himself with one; and it was some time before we discovered that the sound was produced by a small bird either over our heads or perched on a tree near at hand.

We marched on about ten miles, and again encamped close to one of the huge eucalypti I have before mentioned. Near at hand was a forest, or bush, somewhat denser than usual with hilly ground, which confined our view on that side to narrow limits. A stream of water tempted us to stop here rather than push on a few miles farther. My mother and Edith performed the daily journey without feeling any unusual fatigue; but the great heats had not begun, and the air was pure and exhilarating.

Mudge, Paddy, and I were very successful in a shooting expedition on which we started, as soon as we had encamped, with Pullingo; Mudge having killed a good-sized kangaroo, and Paddy and I two dozen gaily-feathered birds, while Pullingo had brought down nearly a dozen more with his boomerang. We had intended going in the direction of the hills, but when he saw us setting off he made signs to us that it would be of no use; and when we still persevered he placed himself in front of us, and by the most violent gestures endeavoured to stop our progress. At length, as we dodged him, he turned back towards the camp and sat himself down on the ground, as if determined not to accompany us. We therefore gave up the attempt, and took the way he pointed out, along the banks of the stream, near which we found most of the birds we killed.

On our return the men set to work to pluck our feathered prizes, while Paddy scientifically cut up the kangaroo; after which there was a grand cooking of flesh and fowl, while some cakes made by my mother were baked under the ashes. As a rule, the farinaceous food we were able to carry was reserved for my mother, Edith, and Pierce. We found scarcely anything in the shape of fruit, but we obtained a sort of wild spinach, and occasionally heads of cabbage-palms, which served us for vegetables, and assisted to keep the whole party in health.

Supper was over, and my mother and Edith had just retired to their hut. Except Mudge and Paddy, who had to keep the first watch, the rest of the party were about to lie down under the lean-tos, when on a sudden there burst forth, close to us, a wild, unearthly, and abrupt yell of mocking laughter, as if uttered by a party of natives who, creeping

on us unawares, had surrounded the camp, and now to their delight found that we were in their power. We started to our feet and seized our arms, expecting the next moment to have a shower of spears hurled into our midst; but when we looked round to see in which direction the enemy would appear, no one was to be seen.

“Where can that have come from?” exclaimed Mudge.

“The fellows must have retreated, whoever they were. Keep steady, my lads,” cried my father; “on no account leave the camp. Their object probably is to entice us away, when they hope to destroy us in detail.”

My mother had come out of her hut with Edith, who stood trembling by her side.

“Don’t be alarmed,” said my father. “The savages, finding that we are prepared, are not likely to attack us.”

“But there is no shelter for them nearer than the neighbouring bush; and that cry came from a spot close at hand,” observed Mudge. “With your leave, Captain Rayner, I will take two men with me and soon rout them out of their lurking-place.”

“Depend upon it, they are far away by this time,” observed my father.

Scarcely had he spoken, when again there came that fearful yell, sounding like what I could conceive to be the horrible laughter of a maniac.

“Why, I do believe it comes from some fellow who has climbed into this very tree,” cried Mudge; “and I’ll take the liberty of shooting him if he doesn’t come down of his own accord.”

I had observed all this time that Pullingo sat very quietly by the fire, watching what we were about, and merely uttering the word “Gogobera;” but whether that was the name of the leader of the savages surrounding us, or of some supposed malign spirit, we could not tell. I now saw, however, that he was quietly laughing, evidently highly diverted by the alarm these strange sounds had produced among us.

“The black knows something about it,” I sang out. “I shouldn’t be surprised if, after all, it was one of those necromancers he was telling us about playing off his tricks. Paddy, do you try and get him to tell us who has been making those hideous noises.”

Pullingo quickly understood Paddy, and getting up, went towards the branch of the tree at which Mudge and several others were looking up. Taking out his boomerang, he stepped a few paces back; then away it flew till it took a course upwards and penetrated amid the boughs, and the next instant down came a large bird, with a black head and a peculiarly strong beak.

“Dat make laughee,” he observed composedly.

We found that our nocturnal visitor was no other than that well-known member of the feathered tribe, the “laughing jackass;” more scientifically denominated the “giant kingfisher.” When I saw the bird, I was very sorry that it had been killed; for, notwithstanding its discordant voice, it is a remarkably sociable and useful creature, as we afterwards discovered. It destroys snakes, which it catches by the tail, and then crushes their head with its powerful beak; it also renders an essential service to the settlers who want to get up early, by shouting out its strange notes to welcome the approach of dawn—from which peculiarity it is also called the “settler’s clock.” We soon discovered that *gogobera* was the name given to it by the natives. They, at all events, have no superstitious feeling regarding it; for Pullingo, plucking the bird, soon had it roasting before the fire; and, to the best of my belief, he had devoured the whole of it before the morning.

“I hope we shall have no other disturbance during the night, and so I advise all hands to turn in,” said my father.

We quickly followed his advice. Probably, had the black not killed the poor gogobera, we should have been aroused betimes in the morning; as it was, the man who was on watch at that time did not think it necessary to call us till the sun was above the horizon.

My father, I found, after consulting with Mudge, determined to remain where we were for the day, as our camp was well situated near water, and there was evidently an abundance of game to be obtained in the neighbourhood. Pullingo, who had over-eaten himself during the night with the gogobera, on hearing this showed no inclination to get up, but rolled himself over and went to sleep again.

Mudge and I had been curious to know what sort of country lay beyond the hills in the direction Pullingo had been so unwilling we should take on the previous day. We determined, therefore, to set off as soon as breakfast was over.

We did so, taking Paddy Doyle and Popo with us to carry our provisions, and armed with our fowling-pieces and pistols. As Pullingo was still fast asleep, we settled not to interrupt him. We set off, therefore, without waiting for the black, and at once made our way to the westward, through the forest. Soon reaching the top of the hill, we descended into the valley, which was still more thickly wooded than the country we had left. On we went, without seeing any birds at which to fire, till, as we happened to be standing without speaking, I fancied I heard the sound of voices coming from a distance. I told Mudge, who, on listening, was convinced that I was right.

“Still, we will go on,” he said. “If the voices are those of natives, we can but retire; and the very fact of our doing so will show them, should they discover us, that we have no ill-feeling or hostile intentions towards them.”

We went on and on through the thick forest, which afforded us ample shelter. The voices we had heard grew louder and louder, and we saw that we were approaching an opening, when just at the edge of it we found a thick belt of bushes, which completely concealed us from any one beyond, though we managed to look through it. The scene

which presented itself induced us to remain instead of retiring. In the centre, on the top of a mound, stood a tall, gaunt old woman, her long white hair streaming behind her back in the wind. In her left hand she held a long stick, which she flourished above her head, while with the other she was making the most vehement gestures. Around the woman, and densely packed together, were collected a number of men of all ages, and a few women—as we supposed, from seeing several sturdy infants rolling about on the grass by their sides. The eager faces of her audience were intently fixed upon her as she poured forth a torrent of words, the meaning of which was beyond our comprehension. So intently were they listening, that we ran but little chance of being discovered, unless she should happen to turn her eyes in the direction of the spot where we lay hidden.

For several minutes she went on, eloquently addressing the assembly and wildly gesticulating, apparently in the endeavour to arouse them to some mode of action which she was advocating. From some of the words which reached our ears, we at length could not help suspecting that she was speaking about us, and advising the warriors of her tribe to put a stop to our progress through the country. The longer she went on the more convinced we became of this, and we could not help dreading that they would suddenly start up to rush towards our camp, and discover us.

Mudge touched me on the shoulder, and made a sign to me to retreat while there was time. I passed it on to Paddy and Popo, who were on the other side. Just at that moment, on looking round, I saw the countenance of a black close behind me. Had our enemies surrounded us? If so, we should have to fight hard for our lives. Great was my satisfaction, when a second glance showed me that the new-comer was no other than Pullingo, who had crept cautiously up to us. He did not speak, but his gestures proved that he wished us to retreat as silently as he had approached. As this was undoubtedly the wisest thing we could do, we moved noiselessly away from the bush, stooping down as he was doing, so that we might escape being seen by the old witch on the top of the mound. Happily at that time her head was turned away from us, while she was addressing those on the further side of the circle.

Pullingo led on without stopping for a moment, or venturing even to look back, probably fearing that he might be discovered, and bring down the vengeance of his countrymen upon himself. At all events, the fact of his having followed us, knowing the danger in which we might place ourselves, was a convincing proof of his fidelity. With unerring sagacity he led the way through the forest, and not till we had passed over the first range of hills did he stop to allow us to take breath.

“Bad!—mighty bad, Paddy!” he said, turning round to his friend, and speaking with the accent he had learned from the Irishman. “If get killed, others say Pullingo did it. Bad!—mighty bad, Paddy!” he continued repeating, his limited stock of words not allowing him to express his opinion of our proceeding in any other way.

“But if we had not gone, we should not have found out that the blacks were thinking of attacking us,” answered Doyle. “They might have been down upon us during the night, and killed every mother’s son among us before we were awake in the morning; so you see, Mr Pullingo, our journey has been of more use than you’re inclined to suppose. And pray how comes it, if you knew they were there, that you didn’t tell us?”

“I tell by-and-by if dey come,” answered Pullingo. “Now, on again;” and once more moving forward, he led the way to the camp. He either took a shorter route, or we got over the ground very much faster than when we were going, as we arrived considerably sooner than I expected.

The account we gave my father made him hesitate about remaining where we were. We had still four hours of daylight, and by pushing on we might put a distance of ten miles or so between ourselves and the blacks. From what we had seen, and the few words we had understood, we gathered that the old hag, for some cause or other, was instigating her tribe to attack us. Pullingo was consulted on the subject; and when he understood that we proposed moving away, he advised that we should do so without delay.

My father had been anxious to allow my mother and Edith time to rest: the strength of my little sister, indeed, was severely tried with the long walk she had taken every day since we had commenced our journey.

“But, sure, we can carry the young lady,” exclaimed Paddy. “I, for one, will willingly lend my shoulder. Sure, she’s as light as a feather!”

“And so will I,” said Mudge. “I only wish we had thought of it before.”

Burton also, and one of the other men, volunteered to carry her. My mother thanked them, and declared that, so far as she herself was concerned, she was ready to proceed any distance which might be thought necessary. We accordingly at once set to work to construct a sort of palanquin. Several of the trees I have described, which have long foot-stalks above their leaves, from which the natives make their spears, were growing near, and from these two long poles were speedily cut. They were tough and light, and sufficiently strong to bear my sister’s weight. Some cross-pieces were secured to them, and the intervals filled up with the long spiral leaves from the same tree. On the top of this network a piece of bark was fastened; thus, in less than five minutes a very suitable litter was constructed.

Having quickly packed up our traps, we placed Edith on it and set out; Paddy declaring, with true Irish politeness, that his own pack felt all the lighter for having the young lady to balance it. Pullingo was evidently astonished at seeing the pains we took with the little girl, as his own wife and daughters would have had to carry any property they possessed, while he trudged ahead, laden only with his spears and boomerang,—not, by the way, that the Australian natives ever are the possessors of many weighty articles, dispensing, as they do when travelling, with houses or clothing or cooking utensils, or indeed any of the requirements of civilised beings. While acting as our guide, however, he seemed anxious to imitate us in all respects, and now marched ahead wearing the trousers and shirt which had been given him; looking upon them, however, more as an honourable distinction than as articles of necessity.

The appearance of the country varied but little from that we had passed over. It was sufficiently level to allow of Edith being carried without difficulty, though in some places undulating, and covered pretty thickly with trees; generally, however, the country was thoroughly park-like, and I could not help expecting to see a herd of deer start up and go bounding away before us. In lieu of them, we occasionally caught sight of three or four kangaroos, and sometimes of solitary individuals,—which, however, made their escape before we could get a shot at them. They are wary animals; and it is difficult to approach them unless where the cover is thick, and the sportsman is on the alert. But even when feeding they keep a watchful eye round on every side, to give notice of their two enemies, the natives or the dingos, as they approach.

“Well, after all, this is a very jolly life,” observed Tommy to me, as he and Harry and I brought up the rear, having been ordered to keep a look-out on every side, as well as behind us, lest any natives should be following our trail. “I only wish those black fellows would take themselves off and not interfere with us.”

“Perhaps they may be saying the same thing of us,” I observed. “We must remember that we are the trespassers; and they, by right of previous occupation, consider the country their own, and are naturally not pleased at seeing us killing the animals on which they subsist.”

“But there must be enough for both of us,” said Tommy, “judging from the number of birds we see overhead. And it is very foolish in them to attempt to interfere with the white men: the weakest must always go to the wall.”

“That may be,” I observed: “but they have to learn that lesson; and in the meantime they fancy that they can drive us out of the country. We have, of course, a perfect right to come here; but we are bound to treat them with humanity, and to take every pains not to injure them or deprive them of their means of subsistence.”

“That, I am sure, is very right,” observed Harry. “It is not their fault that they are ignorant savages; and we must think of what we should have been ourselves if we had not been instructed. I never can forget what I might have become had I been left with those dreadful people from whom you rescued me. I should have known nothing of God or of his love for man, or of his desire that man should be reconciled to him through his own appointed way, and come to live with him in the glorious heaven he has prepared, for ever and ever.”

“Then why is it that thousands and tens of thousands of savages, in all parts of the world, are allowed to live and die without ever hearing of him?” asked Tommy.

“That is one of the many mysteries which man has failed to solve,” I observed. “We cannot understand His plans; with regard to them, all we know is how He deals with us: for that we know through the Bible, where all seems to me perfectly clear.”

“I am sure it is,” observed Harry; “I have been certain of that since your mother and Edith have read the book to me, and have taught me to read it for myself. It seems to me that people are ignorant because they will not read the book, or seek for grace to understand it.”

I was very glad to hear Harry say this, for it showed that my mother’s instruction had not been thrown away on him. Indeed, besides being thoroughly guileless and honest, he possessed as much natural intelligence as anybody I ever met.

We talked about many other things, and Harry was always ready to listen for the sake of gaining information. He delighted especially to hear about England, as well as other countries, and the numberless wonders of which he formerly had no conception.

That day’s march—to us, who had been out all the morning—was a very fatiguing one. We had, too, as I have said, to be constantly on the watch, especially when passing near thickets—so I will call them—of ferns or other closely-growing trees, which might afford concealment to the blacks. We knew that, cunning as they were, they were just as likely to appear ahead or on one side of us as behind. My father had given directions that, should we be attacked. Edith was to be placed on the ground, when we were to gather round her, forming a hollow square, in the same way that infantry are arranged to receive cavalry; but that no one was to fire until he gave the word. He always entertained a hope that the blacks, on seeing us well-prepared, would not venture to attack us.

I was very thankful when at length, just as the sun was setting, Pullingo called a halt by the side of a wood. It was somewhat in a hollow, for the sake of a water-hole which existed at the bottom. Our camp, however, was pitched on a slope where the ground was dry. Around the spot grew some enormous ferns, as large as ordinary trees in the northern parts of the world. We lost no time in making preparations for passing the night: our huts were quickly put up and a fire kindled—the grass surrounding the place being first carefully cut down, so as to prevent any risk of it blazing up and setting the trees in flames. This, in dry weather, is the chief danger to be guarded against when travelling in Australia.

Edith thanked her carriers for having saved her so much fatigue.

“Sure, it’s the pleasantest thing I’ve done for many a day, Miss Edith,” answered Paddy, with a flourish of his straw hat; “and of course I just speak the sentiments of all the rest.”

Mudge, who was not in the habit of paying compliments, smiled; but he told Edith he was very glad to have been able to carry her, and that he should propose making a litter for Mrs Rayner, and letting Harry, and Tom, and Popo, and me act as her bearers for another day.

Scarcely had we sat down to supper when we were saluted with the same discordant, laughing cry which had startled us on the previous evening; but this time, knowing from whence it proceeded, we felt no alarm; though I believe that, had not Pullingo killed the gogobera, we should not have been convinced that a bird could have produced such

sounds.

Of course, we kept a watch; but the night passed away without any event to disturb our rest. Even before the sun was up, our friend the “laughing jackass” woke us with his strange cries. Pullingo would have killed him with his boomerang, had we not begged his life; and soon after the sun was up, I observed him flying away to a place of safety, disturbed by seeing so many people moving about.

As our rest had been cut short at the last place, my father settled to remain here till past noon, and to make only half a day’s journey, so that we might start at dawn the next day and make some progress during the cool hours of the morning. We therefore sat quiet after breakfast, enjoying the rest we all more or less needed.

Though I have not before mentioned it, my father, I should have said, invariably called all the party together for prayers, both morning and evening, and either he or my mother read a portion of the Bible to us.

After this had been done, Mudge and I took our guns, in the hope of shooting some birds for dinner, which we intended to take before starting. We killed as many as we required; and finding it very hot, we agreed to rest under the shade of a huge fern, while we sent the game back by Popo, who had accompanied us, to be got ready for cooking. Mudge leaned back against a tree and lighted his pipe, while I sat close to him, enjoying the comparative coolness which the shade afforded.

We had not been resting many minutes when we heard a rustling sound in the bushes; and supposing that it was caused by a kangaroo, I lifted my gun, ready to fire. At that instant a native burst from the cover; but on seeing us, with a look of astonishment and terror he sprang on one side, and continued his course at headlong speed, passing some thirty yards from us, and being quickly lost to sight. I was thankful that I had not fired, as I was nearly doing, before I discovered that it was a human being, rushing through the forest, and apparently, from some cause or other, flying from his foes. Had he merely been hunting, he would have retreated, as he would have known that the animal of which he was in chase was not likely to have passed us.

“It proves, at all events, that the natives are timid beings, and that we have very little cause to fear them, or that fellow would not have been so frightened at seeing us,” observed Mudge.

Some time passed by, when Mudge looked at his watch. “I should think that the parrots must now be properly done; and we may as well return to the camp,” he observed. “But, really, I feel very little inclination to get up.”

Just as he spoke I saw Pullingo close to us. He had approached so noiselessly, that, had he been an enemy, he might easily have surprised us.

“Not good here; too far from camp,” he said in a low voice.

Scarcely had he said this when I heard a rustling in the direction from whence the native had appeared, and immediately afterwards seven dark forms—some with spears, others with axes or clubs, in their hands—came rushing forth into the sunlight, looking about in every direction, as if in eager search of some one or something. Concealed as we were by the high grass and the trunks of the trees, they did not at first perceive us, and earnestly I hoped that they might pass by without doing so. Pullingo crouched down, eagerly watching them, but without uttering a word. Mudge’s hand moved towards his pistols; and I kept my finger on the trigger of my gun, ready to fire should they appear to have any intention of attacking us. They were more savage-looking fellows than any we had before seen—their countenances distorted with rage, and every action exhibiting the fury which animated them. Eagerly they looked about on every side; but not discovering the object of their search, were about to rush onward, when one of them caught sight of us.

On finding that we were discovered, we both sprang to our feet with our guns ready to fire, determined to sell our lives dearly should they attack us, as we had no doubt they would; while with terrific shrieks they came bounding towards us, some with their spears ready to dart, others flourishing their axes and clubs.

“I’ll pick off the leading fellow, and you fire at the next,” cried Mudge; and I was on the point of obeying him, when Pullingo started up and uttered some words in his own language, the meaning of which we could not understand.

The natives stopped, and Pullingo cried out to us, “Don’t shoot! don’t shoot!” He was but just in time. “Dey not enemy,” he said.

He now advanced and exchanged a few hurried words with the natives, who, I had very little doubt, were in pursuit of the black we had previously seen; but, of course, we did not let them know that he had passed us. Having exchanged a few more words with Pullingo, they continued their course in the direction the fugitive had taken, while we returned with Pullingo to the camp.

On the way he told us that the fugitive had committed a murder or some other crime, and that the avengers were following him to take his life. Alas! for him, poor wretch! there was no city of refuge in the land; and unless he could exhibit more cunning and endurance than his seven pursuers, his fate was sealed, and probably ere the sun had set he would be numbered with the dead.

We were thankful for our escape, for had we killed one of them in our ignorance of their intentions, the others would have set upon us; and we should either have been compelled to shoot the whole of them, or have been pierced through and through with their lances. It was, at all events, fortunate that Pullingo had come up just at the right moment.

Before we reached the camp he resumed his shirt and trousers, which, for some reason or other which he did not explain, he had hidden away in the bush. I could not help fancying that he knew his countrymen might pass by that

way; and having found out where we were, he had come to warn us of our danger.

We narrated the adventure to my father and the rest of the party; and after the description we gave of the blacks, they expressed a hope that we should not fall in with them.

Our game, as we had expected, was ready for taking off the spits; and as soon as we had discussed it, we prepared for our departure.

Chapter Eleven.

Visited by more blacks on our march—Wonder at our thunder-makers—A permanent camp formed—Mudge and I set off to explore the way—Pullingo disposes of his garments—Cross a river—Reach the foot of the range—Pullingo meets his son Quaquagmagu—His determination to leave us—The cavern of the Moon—A native legend—Observe the natives worshipping before the cavern—Deserted by Pullingo—We proceed without him—Enter a rugged region—Skeleton of the bushranger—Camp under a rock—Our water exhausted.

We travelled on for several days, happily escaping any molestation from the natives. A few came near us, to whom Pullingo explained that we were merely passing through the country, and that we wished to be on friendly terms with the black men,—but at the same time that we possessed the power, with our wonderful thunder-makers, of destroying all our enemies. Now and then an individual bolder than his companions would come up to us while we were on the march, or when we were encamped, for the purpose of examining the said thunder-makers, as they called our firearms, more closely; but when they did so they gazed at them with the utmost astonishment and awe in their countenances, and quickly took their departure, evidently thinking it not safe to remain in the neighbourhood of such formidable beings. All this time even Pullingo himself had never ventured to touch a firearm, so that he had no idea how the explosion was produced. The greater number of the blacks we saw, however, scampered off as soon as they caught sight of us.

The country over which we passed was very similar to that I have before described. One evening, as we were passing over a higher hill than usual, we caught sight in the far distance of a blue range of mountains, which it was very clear we must cross to get to the southward. How high it really was we could not decide, but it appeared of considerable elevation, and, we feared, would prove rugged and barren.

When we were encamped that evening, after my mother and Edith had retired to their hut, my father expressed his fears to Mudge and me that they might suffer much inconvenience and hardship, if not danger, in passing over it. “I wish that I had shown more resolution in preventing my poor mates from going away in the long-boat,” he observed; “had I induced them to wait till the stormy season was over, they might have accomplished the voyage in safety, and we should by this time probably have been succoured by a vessel from Sydney, and saved the fatigue of this long journey.”

“You acted for the best, sir,” observed Mudge; “and perhaps the difficulties we have to go through may not be so great as you anticipate. However, I have been thinking over the matter, and if you will allow me and one other person to set out, with Pullingo as a guide, supposing we can induce him to accompany us, we will explore the route, while you remain encamped in some eligible position near water with the rest of the party, where you can obtain abundance of game. Doyle is a capital shot, and sure amply to supply your larder. We, having ascertained the best road to take, will return for you; and perhaps on the other side of the range we may fall in with settlers, from whom we may obtain horses on which Mrs Rayner and your daughter could perform the rest of the journey. Two or three men can often make their way easily in a region through which a larger party would find it difficult if not impossible to proceed.”

“I am indeed most grateful to you for your offer,” said my father; “but whom do you propose taking with you? I confess that, for the sake of my wife and daughter, I am unwilling to weaken our party, in case the natives should visit our camp, and, seeing only a few men, might be tempted to molest us.”

As soon as I had heard Mudge’s proposal, I determined if I could to accompany him. “Let me go,” I exclaimed. “I can endure as much fatigue as any one; and though I can use my rifle to some effect, the blacks, looking upon me only as a boy, would not consider that I added to the strength of the party: and thus you will retain five men besides yourself, while I think I shall be of as much assistance to Mudge as any one else.”

“I shall be very happy to have you, Godfrey,” said Mudge, “if your father approves of your going; indeed, I had thought of proposing that you should accompany me. What do you say, Captain Rayner? I will defend him with my life, should he be exposed to danger—not that I think we shall have to encounter any. And we may depend, I think, on our guns for supplying ourselves with food.”

My father considered the matter, and, greatly to my satisfaction, finally agreed to let me accompany Mudge. He explained the plan to my mother the next morning, observing: “We allowed Godfrey to go to sea, and surely he will have to encounter no greater danger by accompanying so sensible and determined a fellow as Mudge, than he would have had to run constantly while performing the duties of his profession.”

The matter being settled, we lost no time in making our preparations. We had some alterations to make in the contents of our packs, that we might each carry a sufficient store of the articles we were most likely to require. We took an ample supply of powder and shot, a tinder-box apiece, the most portable food we possessed, and bottles to contain water, with a pocket-compass and a spy-glass, and an additional pair of shoes. We had also a kettle to boil water for making our tea, and a tin cup apiece to drink it out of, with a spoon, a plate apiece, and a couple of knives and forks. Our camp equipage, though not elaborate, was as complete as we desired. Our legs were encased in

strong gaiters.

We left our party encamped on the summit of a mound, from which they could obtain a view on every side; while the trees, with the addition of some stockades placed between them, would enable them effectually to defend themselves against any attack of the natives. At the foot of the mound ran a stream with several deep water-holes in its course, which were not likely ever to become dry; while the trees along its margin were frequented by various descriptions of birds. Thus an abundant supply of food could always be obtained.

Between it and the range was a more thickly wooded country than we had hitherto passed through, and of some extent, which prevented us from seeing the character of the ground beyond. Through this we should have to make our way. We should, however, have some distance to go before we could reach the actual base of the hills.

Pullingo, as far as we could ascertain, had no objection to accompanying us; and besides our guns, we each had a brace of pistols, an axe, and a long knife.

At early dawn, after a hearty breakfast, all the party having got up to wish us good-bye, we set out. The clearness of the atmosphere deceived us, and it took us some time before we entered the forest. The rays of the sun, as they gleamed through the trees, showed us the direction we were to take. Mudge went first, and I followed, for there was often not room between the numberless creepers which hung down from the boughs to make our way two abreast.

Pullingo had, I observed, for some days past been giving signs that he was becoming tired of the routine of our life, so different from that which natives are accustomed to lead. He now, instead of going ahead, lagged behind, merely pointing in the direction we were to take, and which we knew perfectly well without his assistance. Directly we entered the forest I saw him making all sorts of extraordinary gestures, and after going on a little way I observed that he had taken off his shirt. A minute afterwards, what was my surprise on turning round to see him holding his trousers in his hand; then, flourishing them for an instant in the air, he pitched them on to the bough of a tree, where they hung fluttering in the breeze, while he bounded forward, as if delighted at finding himself free of the garments which had so long proved irksome to him. I hailed Mudge, and asked him whether he ought not to be told to go back and get his clothes.

“Let him alone,” was the answer; “he is only following the bent of his nature; he is perfectly welcome to run naked if he likes, though I suspect that when we come to cross the tops of the hills he will be sorry that he got rid of them.”

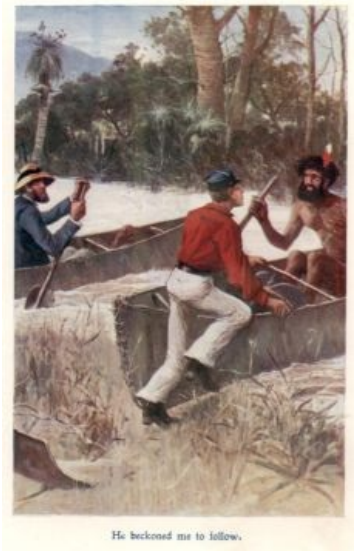
So strange, however, were the black’s antics, that I began to fear he had lost his senses. He shouted and laughed, and tumbled head over heels, and skipped, and jumped about in the most extraordinary manner, as if rejoicing in his regained freedom.

“I suppose he fancies that his clothes will hang there till he comes back, when he intends to appear decently, I hope, at the camp,” I remarked.

“I don’t think he troubles himself about the future,” answered Mudge; “he just now feels as much satisfaction at being without his clothes, as you or I would in getting a warm bath and putting on a clean shirt and trousers.”

We were some time in making our way through the forest, Pullingo not taking any special trouble to pick out the best path. We had expected almost immediately to commence our ascent of the mountain, but on emerging from the forest we saw before us a valley, with a broad stream flowing through it. By the rapidity of the current we judged that it made a direct course to the sea; and it was evidently far too deep to allow us to hope that we could wade across it.

We pointed it out to Pullingo, who had now become a little more quiet, and asked him how he proposed to



He beckoned me to follow.

cross the river. He at once turned back, and going towards a huge old stringy-bark tree which stood out some way from the rest, stripped off two large pieces of bark, which he invited us to assist in carrying down to the water’s edge. He then, looking about, got some long grass of a peculiar nature, with which he quickly manufactured some strong twine; then bending up the ends of the bark, which yielded easily to the pressure he bestowed on it, and using a pointed stick as an awl, he soon sewed them together. Both pieces were treated in the same way. He then got some clay from the bank of the river and stuffed it into the ends; and thus in a wonderfully short time had manufactured two canoes. From some small pieces of bark and a pole, which he cut with my axe, he also speedily formed a couple of paddles.

We had all along intended, it will be remembered, should we meet with rivers, to make some canoes for crossing them; but he, in less than a quarter of the time that we should have employed in making one, had formed two which would answer the purpose—though I should not, I own, have liked to undertake a long trip in one of them. He signed to Mudge to get into one, while he seated himself in the other, beckoning me to follow, which I did without hesitation, though the water reached almost up to the gunwale. We were quickly across; then he drew the canoes carefully up the bank, and placed them side by side, showing how he recollected that we might require them on our return.

We had been much deceived as to the distance; and we found that we had still some way to go before we got actually among the ranges we had to traverse. How wide they might be we could not tell; it might take us a day or two, or several days, to cross them.

The evening found us making our way over a tolerably level country, the hills which we thought so near in the morning being still at some distance. Here and there vast eucalypti of enormous growth were scattered about, towering to the sky; some decayed and hollow, with their limbs scathed by lightning, and their bark hanging down in long strips, like ragged giants, others still covered by sombre foliage.

We were struck by Pullingo's manner; he kept looking about him, not as if the region were strange to him, but as if he were searching for something.

The shadows of the tall trees continued increasing in length; at last Mudge proposed that we should forthwith encamp, and accordingly made Pullingo understand that we intended doing so. He nodded his consent to our proposal, and at once began to collect bark for a lean-to and wood for a fire. Relieving ourselves of our packs, we assisted him, and had soon erected our shelter for the night, close to the trunk of one of the enormous trees I have described. These arrangements being made, we took our guns, and in the course of a few minutes had shot as many birds as we required for our supper and breakfast.

On returning to our camp we saw, to our surprise, Pullingo seated on the ground opposite another black, on whose knees his hands rested, while they gazed into each other's faces. They were talking earnestly together, as if they had matters of the greatest importance to communicate. As we drew near enough to distinguish the features of the stranger black, we recognised our old acquaintance, Pullingo's son, Quaquagmagu. So deeply were they engaged, they did not even perceive our approach; and as we had no wish to disturb them, we retired to a distance to wait till they had finished their conversation. Finding, however, that we might wait till midnight, and as we wished to get our pigeons plucked and roasted, we once more drew near. At length perceiving us, they sprang to their feet; when Pullingo exclaimed, "Son—Quaquagmagu—me, me!"

"Of course we recollect him," said Mudge, shaking him by the hand. I did the same, apparently much to the young man's satisfaction.

"And what brought your son here?" inquired Mudge, as if he knew that it would be useless to put the question to Quaquagmagu.

"All, all," answered Pullingo, shaking his head; and he poured forth a torrent of words which we could not understand.

At length, however, we made out, chiefly by signs, that something was wrong at home—either that his children were ill, or that his wife had run away; at all events, that he wished to return northward. This was to us a serious announcement, as we had greatly depended on his assistance for traversing the country. It had, however, been tolerably evident that he had got tired of acting as our guide; indeed, few of the wild natives can ever be depended upon for associating with the whites for any length of time. Only the younger men, who get gradually habituated to civilised customs, will ever remain faithful to the duties they undertake. Pullingo was no exception to the rule.

"Will it be necessary for us to turn back?" I asked.

"Certainly not," answered Mudge; "we can make our way very well without him, and as it is important for the sake of your mother and sister that we should undertake the journey, I say, by all means let us push on."

"I am perfectly ready to do so," I answered; "indeed, I very much doubt whether Pullingo knows anything about the mountains, and I suspect that from the first he had no intention of conducting us over them. I suppose, however, that he does not intend to leave us at once?"

"Little fear of that while we have the pigeons roasting at the fire," observed Mudge. "Perhaps during the evening we shall be able to learn more about the matter; however, in the meantime we must make him and his son assist us in plucking the birds, for I am getting pretty sharp set."

Pullingo and Quaquagmagu very willingly obeyed our directions, especially as they were to benefit by the task, and we quickly had a dozen pigeons and parrots roasting on as many spits.

"And so, Pullingo, you intend to leave us to make our way over the hills by ourselves! That is not treating us properly," observed Mudge.

The black hung down his head, as if he had understood every word that was said, and then with a sigh pointed northward.

"But why couldn't you have told us this before?" asked Mudge.

Pullingo pointed to his son, to intimate that he had brought him intelligence which made him wish to return.

"And has he come all this way by himself?" asked Mudge, making signs at the same time to explain his meaning.

The black intimated that he had not come alone, but that several of his tribe had accompanied him, for some object or other which we could not make out. We were puzzled also to discover how Quaquagmagu had known where to find his father. It showed us that the blacks had some secret means of communicating with each other of which we were ignorant.

We sat by our camp-fire endeavouring to hold a conversation with Pullingo. His stock of words was but small; though, considering the time he had been with us, it was wonderful that he had gained the meaning of so many. We both eked them out by signs, in making use of which the black was singularly clever. Our aim was to ascertain the object for which Quaquagmagu and his companions had come into that part of the country, but we were for a long time excessively puzzled to understand the meaning of Pullingo's words and gestures. It had something to do with the moon, and also with a large cavern; but whether they had come to worship the moon, or some object in the cavern, we could not clearly make out.

It was not till long afterwards that I understood what he wished to tell us. In the early days of the world, the moon, who was then a very beautiful young woman, lived happily in the midst of the forests through which we had lately passed. It was her custom to take up her abode in a large cave in the side of the mountain we were approaching. Here she would have remained till the present day, had she not, by the envy of some evil spirits, been driven from earth, and condemned to exist only in the night up in the sky. The stars, the blacks believe, are the tears of regret which the moon sheds when weary of her banished condition. When she gains a certain position in the sky, however, she is able to look down upon her former well-beloved abode, on which she is wont to shed a brilliant light; unless her enemies, by means of clouds which they send across the heavens, deprive her of the only pleasure she enjoys in her solitary existence.

Those of her mortal relatives who still regard her with affection, make a point of paying an annual visit to the place she loved so well when on earth; and it appeared that a large party had been made up by Pullingo's tribe with this object in view. The ceremony, if so it could be called, was, we understood, to take place the following night.

Anxious as we were to push forward, we would not have allowed ourselves to be stopped by such an object; but as the cavern existed some way up the mountain, we thought that we should probably not be able to get much beyond the spot. Our curiosity, indeed, had been excited by what Pullingo had told us, and we were glad of an opportunity of witnessing anything like a religious ceremony performed by the blacks; for, from what we had heard of them, we supposed that they were utterly destitute of anything approaching to religion.

At length Mudge told Pullingo that it was time to turn in. We retired to our hut, leaving him and his son to creep under a lean-to they had put up. Though we believed that we could thoroughly trust his honesty, and that our lives also would be safe while he was near us, we agreed that it would be prudent not to let him suppose that we should both be asleep at once. Accordingly, after Mudge lay down I walked about with a gun in my hand, to show that we were on the watch; and when I did go to sleep, I made a pillow of my knapsack, and held a pistol in my hand.

We were awakened in the morning by the loud cry of our friend the "laughing jackass." As Pullingo and Quaquagmagu had eaten up the remainder of the birds we had shot, we immediately started to obtain a fresh supply. This was not difficult to do, and we soon killed enough to feed all hands and to enable us to carry some with us for the next day's journey. Then shouldering our muskets, we set out with our faces to the hill, the two blacks accompanying us.

"Perhaps Pullingo is, after all, sorry for having intended to desert us, and will still continue our guide," I observed.

"Not much chance of that," answered Mudge. "Depend on it, he'll take French leave whenever it suits his convenience."

Still, I was inclined to believe that the native would prove faithful. Neither he nor his son, however, offered to carry our packs; though Pullingo chatted as usual, and seemed in a particularly merry mood.

In the afternoon, after having stopped for dinner,—when we fed our attendants with the produce of our guns,—we were already among the spurs of the mountains, amid which the trees were of even more gigantic growth than lower down. Instead of ascending abruptly, we found ourselves in a valley with a gentle slope, penetrating far into the range.

As the sun was now setting, we agreed to camp under a tall tree by the side of a stream flowing down the valley, which would supply us with water. We had shot some birds on our way, so we at once set to work to collect bark for our hut and wood for our fire. Pullingo and his son assisted us; but we observed that they did not put up a lean-to for themselves. We were busily engaged in preparing our birds for supper, when, after we had spitted them, on looking round we found that our black companions had disappeared.

"I suppose they will come back for their share," observed Mudge.

Even when the birds were roasted they did not return, so we ate our supper and prepared to take our rest. The moon, by this time, had risen high in the sky, and was shedding her beams on the precipitous side of the valley a little way below us. I was on the point of dropping off to sleep, Mudge having agreed to keep watch, when I was aroused by a chorus of strange, unearthly cries.

"Depend upon it, these must proceed from our black friends, who are paying their respects to the cavern of the moon," observed Mudge. "I thought just now I caught sight of some figures moving over the ground. Probably Pullingo and his son are among them. Let us go and see what they are about."

I willingly agreed. Strapping on our packs, which we were too wise to leave behind, we proceeded in the direction from which the sounds came, knowing that the light of the fire would enable us to find our way back to the camp

without difficulty. In a short time we caught sight of a number of dark figures forming a semicircle in front of a cavern, the entrance to which was surrounded by trees and numberless creepers clinging to the rock. The men were dancing in their usual strange fashion, leaping and springing, and twisting their bodies into all sorts of curious attitudes; singing at the same time at the top of their voices. Suddenly, at a signal from their fugleman, they all dropped down on their knees and began to creep towards the cavern, rubbing their noses every now and then on the ground. Thus they continued moving about in front of the cavern, no one apparently daring to approach too near the entrance.

As we were unwilling to be discovered, which we thought would be the case should they on rising face about in our direction, we slowly retreated towards our camp. On looking back, we saw that they were still crawling about on hands and knees; and as the spectacle was rather humiliating than interesting, we did not feel inclined to watch their further proceedings.

After lying down I was very soon asleep. When Mudge called me, he told me that the shouting and singing had been going on ever since, and that neither Pullingo nor his son had returned.

“They’ll come back, however, before morning,” I observed.

I was wrong, for when I awoke they were not visible; nor, as far as our telescope could enable us to distinguish objects, was a black to be seen. We had several birds remaining, and we cooked them; still fully expecting that Pullingo and his son would return for breakfast. We ate our portion, keeping the remainder for them; but after waiting for some time, they did not make their appearance.

“It would be useless to lose more time,” observed Mudge at length. “It is very evident that Pullingo and Quaquagmagu have taken French leave, and gone off with their companions. The chances are that we shall see no more of them. If the old fellow changes his mind, which perhaps he may do when he recollects the pleasant roasts with which we supplied him, he can easily track us along the valley.”

“I can scarcely fancy that he would have gone off without wishing us good-bye,” I observed. “We’ll give him another chance: I’ll fire off my gun, which I suppose he will understand as a signal that we are on the march.”

“Don’t throw away a shot for so uncertain an object,” answered Mudge. “Let us look out for the birds; we may as well carry as much food as we can into the mountains, in case we should find none there.”

I followed Mudge’s advice; and looking about, soon caught sight of a magnificent cockatoo, at which I let fly and brought it to the ground, the echoes of the report reverberating down the valley. “If our black friend is in the neighbourhood he must have heard that shot,” I observed. Returning with my prize, we packed up our traps, stuffing the roast pigeons into our kettle, which Mudge carried, while I hung the unplucked bird outside my pack.

“Forward!” cried Mudge, and we turned our faces up the mountain.

We soon got into a region very different from any we had as yet met with. Wild, rugged, and barren rocks rose around us, and a stunted vegetation alone appeared in the gorges along which we made our way. Still we pushed on, steering by our compass, which told us that we were keeping a pretty direct course to the southward. Fortunate it was that we had brought food with us, for not a bird appeared, nor did we see an animal at which we could get a shot. We, of course, carefully noted the way, not only that we might know it again, but to judge whether it could be easily traversed by animals. As yet we agreed that a sure-footed horse could easily get along, rugged as the way was, and steep in some places. At length we came to the steep side of a mountain, over which we ourselves, laden as we were, might be able to make our way, though it was very certain that no horse could either ascend or descend it with safety. I proposed, notwithstanding, that we should climb it.

“We’ll not do that if it can be avoided,” answered Mudge. “It may take us less time to get over it, but it will be more advantageous to our friends if we can make our way either to the right or left.”

We looked about and soon found a route to the right, which appeared practicable, as far as we could see; but where it would lead us to, we could not tell.

“There’s nothing like trying,” observed Mudge; “and a perpendicular precipice alone should stop us.”

He was right; and after proceeding about a mile to the eastward, we descended again into a valley which led in the direction we wished to take. A cascade which came tumbling down the rock tempted us to stop, although no trees from the bark of which we could form a hut were to be seen. The shrubs, however, which grew in the neighbourhood of the fall afforded us a supply of firewood. As we could find no cave or hollow for a sleeping-place, we cut down a quantity of boughs, and arranged them so as to screen ourselves from the cool breeze which blew along the valley; but, from the dry appearance of the grass, and our own previous sensations, we judged that the place was hot enough during the day, when the sun beat down into it.

We soon had our kettle boiling; and having eaten some of our cold pigeons—which, by the way, were rather high by this time—we drank our tea, and lay down to sleep, with our firearms by our sides. There was not much chance of our being interfered with by natives, and we also concluded that no dingos were likely to find their way into a region destitute of all other animals. There is no country in the world, indeed, in which a traveller can rest so securely at night, provided no natives attack him, as in Australia. Perhaps I might except the risk from snakes; but these are only to be met with in the hotter spots, and even the venomous ones seldom bite unless attacked. Dreary as was the aspect of the region in which we were encamped, compared with the scenery to which we had been accustomed, we slept, however, without fear; and the next morning, having taken a shower-bath in the waterfall, we breakfasted, and set off in good spirits.

“No signs of Master Pullingo,” observed Mudge. “He might have found it difficult to track us over the rocky ground, even had he wished it; but I suspect that he has gone away north with his friends, and that we shall not again set eyes on him.”

We trudged on along the bottom of the gorge, the heat as the sun rose and beat down into it becoming greater and greater till it was almost insupportable. The scenery became still wilder as we advanced, and much more arid; often bare rocks alone were to be seen on either hand, with only the most stunted vegetation, and no signs of water. We travelled on till noon, when we stopped under the shade of a rock to eat our frugal meal. We had, of course, filled our bottles in the morning, and therefore did not suffer from thirst, though we had been compelled to exhaust a large portion of their contents.

Hitherto the route we had fortunately hit upon was practicable for horses, though in many places the riders would have to dismount in order to proceed with safety. The day was well advanced when, as we were making our way through a narrow gorge, we came upon the bones of a large animal; which, upon examination, proved to be those of a horse—picked completely clean, however, by birds or insects.

“This shows that some traveller has been trying to make his way through this defile; and if he came from the southward, it should encourage us to hope that the route is practicable for four-footed beasts,” observed Mudge.

“Yes,” I remarked; “but also, I fear, it makes it probable that there is but little water or herbage, and that the poor animal must have died from hunger and thirst. And look there! see, here are the bit and stirrups, and the ironwork of the saddle. The rider must have found it necessary to desert his steed without attempting to preserve them. Look there! under the cliff are also part of a knapsack and other things.”

We hurried on to the spot at which I pointed. There lay a gun, a brace of pistols, a tinder-box, a clasp-knife, powder-horn, the brass of a shot-belt, and many other articles. The knife attracted my attention—it was exactly like one I had lost; and taking it up, what was my surprise to see my own initials on the small plate in the handle, which I had myself cut.

“That powder-horn is one I have used,” observed Mudge; “I left it in the store, intending to fill it. Let me see,—it was the very day before the bushrangers paid us a visit. I have no doubt that the horse was one ridden by the fellow who escaped, and that he must have been making his way across the mountains when the animal fell down and died.”

“If so, he must have been very hard pressed, or he would not have left his gun and ammunition, on which he depended for subsistence, behind him,” I observed.

“You are right, Godfrey; and I have no doubt he must have been overtaken by sickness, or been starved to death.” Immediately after, Mudge exclaimed,—“See! there is a piece of cloth hanging in that bush above our heads; perhaps it was intended as a signal to any passer-by, or has been blown there by the wind. I’ll take off my knapsack and climb to the top; there appears to be a broad ledge, from which I may get a view down the gorge, and perhaps discover the most practicable path for us to follow.”

Mudge did as he proposed; when, getting his head above the level of the ledge, he turned round and exclaimed,—“It is as I expected. There lies the skeleton of the unhappy wretch, picked as clean as the bones of his horse. He must have climbed up here for the purpose of looking about him, and sunk down and died. Not an article of clothing remains; the ants and birds must have carried that off.”

“Heaven grant that his fate may not be ours!” I could not help mentally exclaiming.

Mudge having looked round the ledge, and taken a glance along the valley, now rejoined me. We had no time to lose, and were glad to get away from the remains of the unhappy man and his steed. The powder-horn was empty; and as we did not wish to add to the weight of our knapsacks, we left that and the other articles, with the exception of my knife, which I put in my pocket. We were very doubtful at times whether any horse could get over the rough ground along which we made our way.

At last, night approaching, we were obliged to encamp in a wild and desolate spot, the least satisfactory we had as yet stopped at. The only shelter we could find was under an overhanging rock; such bushes as we could see not affording us the means of building a hut or putting up any protection against the night wind, which blew keenly across the heights. We managed, however, to cut a sufficient quantity of dry wood to light a fire, at which to boil the tea-kettle and cook our last remaining bird. It was somewhat high, but we ate a portion notwithstanding, reserving some for breakfast next morning. We had now only a few mouthfuls of water at the bottom of our bottles, and, as far as we could judge from the appearance of the country to the southward, which presented a succession of rocky heights, it might be long before we could replenish our store. We had still, however, some preserved meat and flour and a small quantity of biscuit, which we had hitherto carefully husbanded; and we hoped before that was exhausted to get into a region where game and fruits of some sort could be found. We did not, therefore, allow our spirits to be depressed. It was a great thing to be conscious that we were performing an important duty; and I especially felt very thankful that my mother and Edith had not been induced to attempt crossing the mountains on foot before we had explored the way.

The place we had chosen was, at all events, dry enough, and we hoped, by creeping close under the rock, not to suffer much from the cold.

Having said our prayers,—which, I may here observe, we always did both morning and evening,—we recommended ourselves to the care of our heavenly Father, and fearlessly lay down to rest.

Chapter Twelve.

Journey across the mountain-range—We mount higher and higher—I nearly give in—Reach the highest ridge—Descend by a rugged valley—Benighted—Take shelter in a cavern—Visit from dingos—Discover a pitcher-plant—Kill a rock kangaroo—Journey continued for a month—Powder and shot expended—Mudge sings to keep up our spirits—Found by a shepherd's hut-keeper—Night at the hut—Arrive at Captain Hudson's station—Welcomed—His father's joy at hearing that Harry is alive—I become ill—Lily's father—Expedition under him to assist our party—Nursed by Lily—I recover—Arrival of our party—My father settles near Captain Hudson—Mudge and I leave the Navy—We become prosperous settlers—Conclusion.

We had not as yet undergone any intolerable physical sufferings from want of food or water since we landed in Australia; we had always found sufficient water to drink, and an abundance of game. But as we trudged on during the next day, we began to fear that our endurance might be put to a severe trial. Our bottles were empty, our fresh animal food exhausted; and we were afraid to eat the salt pemmican, for fear of still further increasing the thirst from which we were suffering.

Wild, rocky ridges alone appeared before us, rising higher and higher. Still we went on, cheered with the hope that we should soon reach the highest ridge, and that then we might descend to a more fertile region. Sometimes we had to make our way along the summit of precipices; sometimes to descend into rocky valleys; and then, again, to mount up rugged heights. Still, it was our belief that for the whole of the distance a sure-footed steed would be able to make its way. We ourselves might possibly have taken a shorter route; but even though sore pressed we kept our main object steadily in view. We looked about on every side for patches of verdure, a sure sign of the neighbourhood of water; but we could see none to tempt us to swerve from our course.

"I suppose that the bushranger must have been making his way to the northward, and had already passed over this barren region, when he perished," observed Mudge. "Were it of any great extent, he would not have attempted it; and I hope that before long we shall meet with water, and some four-footed beasts or feathered fowl to afford us food."

"But how do you account for his powder-flask being empty?" I asked.

"He probably had gone to the south," answered Mudge; "and having made an unsuccessful raid on some of the out-settlers, had been pursued and hard pressed, and had taken to the mountains, in the hope of making his escape, before he had been able to replenish his stock of ammunition. Perhaps he intended to pay us another visit. However, conjectures on the subject must be fruitless; only, it shows us that if he could get as far as the place where he died, we, in good health and strength, may hope to make our way over the ground, rough as it may be, till we can find water and food."

We thus kept up our spirits with the anticipation of soon getting out of our difficulty. Still, in the aspect of the country there was nothing to encourage us. Except when we were traversing a gorge or narrow valley, the air was pure and exhilarating, and gave strength to our muscles; but they were pretty well tried, I must confess.

I was gratified by the remarks Mudge made to me. "You get on capitally, Godfrey," he said. "I haven't heard a grumble come out of your mouth, and you look cheerfully at the bright side of things. It is the best plan for making your way through the world; of that I am convinced, though I haven't always followed it. But stick you to it, lad. You will, I hope, be actuated by a higher motive; that is, to put your trust in God's love and mercy. Whatever occurs, he has promised to look after those who honestly trust him. I say honestly, for he won't have any half-and-half trust. I don't think we should expect that he will attend to the cries of those who forget him when they think themselves safe and prosperous, and only pray for help when they are in trouble. I have often thought on that subject, and have tried to say my prayers all the more heartily when things have been going smoothly and pleasantly with me."

I agreed with Mudge, and told him that I would try to remember his advice. We talked on this and on many other subjects when the ground would allow of our walking abreast; but sometimes I had to walk behind him, while he pioneered the way, and more frequently we could only think of the road and the means of getting along it. There was, indeed, as may be supposed, very little plain sailing; but then we had time enough to talk when we were encamped.

We had seen a ridge before us which we hoped would prove the highest we should have to cross, and that afterwards we should find ourselves descending gradually into the plains to the southward. Our great aim was to get over it some time before dark, so that we might gain a lower level for camping; and, as we hoped, find water, even though we might not succeed in killing any bird or beast for supper.

We had both become very silent; in truth, I found my tongue clinging to the roof of my mouth, and a dry, painful sensation in the throat. I observed a peculiar hollowness in Mudge's voice, too, and I was conscious that my own also sounded unusual. Still it would not do to give in, and we were not so far gone yet as to think of doing that. On, therefore, we went, though not without suffering. My knees felt weak, and I breathed with difficulty; but I would not tell Mudge this, lest it should discourage him.

At length, however, I could hold out no longer. Suddenly, when twenty yards or so behind Mudge—for I had lately lagged somewhat—I found myself sinking to the ground, not far from the summit of a ridge at which we had been aiming. He went on, not knowing what had happened; I followed him with my eyes, though I could neither cry out nor move. He reached the top, and looked eagerly out to the southward; then he took off his hat and waved it, shouting out, "I see a fine open country ahead."

His voice revived me, and getting on my feet, I tottered forward to join him. He saw my weakness, and came to help me up to the top of the ridge. I felt greatly revived at the knowledge that our chief difficulty had been surmounted. Mudge stopped a little to consider the path it would be most advisable to take down the mountain, and then proposed proceeding. Looking at me, however, he saw that I was not able to exert myself as usual.

“Let me carry your pack, Godfrey,” he said; “it won’t make much difference to me, as most of the way will be down-hill, and it will relieve you. I advise you also to munch a little biscuit and pemmican; you’ll get it down in time, though at first you may find it difficult to swallow.”

I declined; but he insisted that I should try, and taking out some of the food, made me put it into my mouth.

“Perhaps our bottles may contain a little water, and that will help you,” he observed.

I shook my head, for I knew mine was empty. He looked at his, and found half a cupful I believe that he had saved it for such an emergency. It and the fresh air, and the knowledge that we might hope soon to be better off than at present, had a magical effect, and I felt able to continue the journey.

We went on and on, rapidly descending, till we reached the edge of a precipice.

“This won’t do,” observed Mudge; “but we will keep along to the left, where the ground slopes more than it does here, and perhaps we shall reach a practicable valley.”

He was not mistaken; and we soon found ourselves in a valley, which, though stem and wild as those on the other side of the mountain, would lead us, we hoped, into a more fertile region. Night rapidly approached, however, while we were still surrounded by barren rocks, so during the little time daylight remained we looked about to find a sleeping-place.

We were expecting to be compelled to rest without any shelter, when Mudge, who was a little way on up the side of the mountain, cried out,—“Here is a cavern; it will shelter us, at all events, from the cold wind and dew; though I am afraid we must go without a fire—or our tea, seeing that we have no water to boil even if we could make one.”

I followed him, and groping our way we found ourselves in a large arched cavern in the slope of the mountain. It was apparently of no great depth, but would afford us, at all events, ample accommodation; and we accordingly crept in. We ate a little more pemmican and biscuit, though I had the greatest difficulty in swallowing my share. We then, groping about, discovered two soft places, beds of sand, a short distance apart. Mudge chose one, and I lay down on the other.

“Go to sleep quickly, Godfrey,” said Mudge; “it is the best thing you can do; you’ll find yourself stronger in the morning. We’ll start at daylight, and enjoy a capital breakfast—when we find it.”

I did my best to follow his advice, and succeeded better than I could have expected. I must have slept for a considerable time, when I awoke with a start, and saw by the light of the moon, which streamed into the cavern, Mudge sitting up with his pistols in his hands, and staring, as I fancied, wildly before him.

“What’s the matter?” I exclaimed, under the idea that he was still asleep and fancied that he saw something terrible.

“Look there! look there!” he answered. “Can those be wolves, or jackals, or hyenas? or what other prowling creatures of night are they, with staring eyeballs, at the entrance of the cavern? Be prepared, Godfrey; for I verily believe they are about to rush in and attack us.”

I now distinguished in the gloom a dozen or more animals with fiery eyes, as it seemed to me, staring fiercely at us. I say animals, though I could only make out the heads of most of them; but one elevated on a slight mound above the rest showed me what they were.

“I am very sure there are none of the animals you mention in this country,” I answered, more awake than Mudge. “I believe they are only cowardly dingos; and a shout, or, at all events, a shot, would send them to the right-about. Fire, and you’ll see I am not mistaken,” I shouted at the top of my voice.

He discharged his pistol, the report of which echoed loudly through the cavern; and, as I expected, the dingos—for such they were—instantly turned tail and scampered away, uttering cur-like yelps, which left no doubt as to their character.

“I believe I was half asleep,” said Mudge, “or I should have known what these yelping brutes were. They might have proved somewhat annoying had they attacked us unawares; but I don’t think they’ll come back. In case they should, I’ll keep one eye open; but do you go to sleep again, Godfrey—I am sorry you should have been disturbed.”

I did not trouble myself much about the dingos, as I felt pretty sure they would not attack human beings, and I very soon followed Mudge’s advice.

I cannot say, when I awoke in the morning, that I felt as rested as I could have wished. My mouth was as dry as a dust-hole, and the sensations in my throat were very distressing. However, I managed to get on my feet; and the moment there was sufficient daylight to enable us to see our way, we recommenced our descent.

As I walked on,—or I may say, stumbled on,—Mudge still insisting on carrying my knapsack, we eagerly looked about for water; but though we saw shrubs and even trees, not the most tiny streamlet could we discover. I felt sure that I could not put anything into my mouth until I had taken some liquid to moisten my parched throat; and Mudge confessed that he felt much as I did, though his strength was less impaired than mine. We had passed a number of trees, which we examined eagerly in the hope of finding some juicy fruit, but in vain.

“What would I not give for a handful of strawberries or figs!” I could not help exclaiming.

“I shouldn’t object to a dozen ripe pears or apples,” said Mudge; “but none of these trees are likely to afford us what we want.”

We were thus trying to keep up our spirits, for it was a hard matter to do so, when my eye fell on a curiously-shaped tree. Growing on it was what at first I thought was fruit, though of a remarkable form. Making our way towards it, we discovered that what we took to be fruit were in reality leaf-formed cups, some with lids, others open; and our joy can be imagined when, on taking hold of one of them, some clear liquid ran over the rim. I did not stop to consider whether it was real water; but immediately putting the cup to my lips, I drained it to the bottom. How deliciously cool and refreshing it tasted!—no water from the fountain-head of the purest stream could have been more so—though it had a somewhat sweetish taste.

Mudge followed my example; and between us we had drunk the contents of several of these small cups, when he whispered, half to himself, “I wonder whether it is really water, or something poisonous!”

“I am very sure that it is wholesome,” I could not help answering; “it would be ungrateful in us to doubt it. Providence has placed a tree in this dry spot for the purpose of supplying man, and perhaps some of his other creatures, with the chief necessary of life.”

“Or perhaps it may be to nourish the tree,” observed Mudge.

“That may be true; and both objects, as is often God’s intention, are thus answered,” I remarked.

“Then let us sit down under it and be thankful; and now we’ll eat some pemmican and biscuit,” exclaimed my companion, “and get a little strength into our bodies.”

We did so, and felt greatly refreshed; and before we again started we drank some more cupfuls of the liquid. Near at hand we met with several trees of the same description, to which we again applied. Indeed, I felt that I could go on drinking all day without being satisfied.

Thoroughly recovered, we now looked about for birds, that we might have a substantial supper at night. Suddenly we caught sight of a creature which, startled by our approach, bounded out from behind a bush where it was feeding. It was a kangaroo of tolerable size; but, unlike the large kangaroos we had before seen, it went leaping away up the hill with as much ease as they make their way along the plain. The appearance of the animal at this spot showed that we were likely to see others, so, though that one had escaped, we were not without hopes of having some meat for dinner. We kept our eyes about us more vigilantly than ever. We saw also a few birds, but they kept at a distance from us. Of course, had we not been anxious to push on, we might have been able to get at them, and might possibly also have got up with the kangaroo we first saw.

Trees of various descriptions now began to appear, and shrubs of large size; among others were several nettle-trees, twenty feet in height at least. There was no mistaking their leaves. Once before, though I had forgotten to mention it, I had had my hands severely blistered by merely touching them. Their power of injury, indeed, is proportionate to their size.

We kept along the side of the hill, on the probability of starting another kangaroo; resolved to chase it either up or down the slope, should we fail to kill it at the first shot. We accordingly kept our guns ready to fire; looking, as we walked along, for more pitcher-plants, in case we should fail to find water.

We had gone on for some distance, and I was again beginning to feel excessively thirsty, when we saw before us a valley, by following which we hoped that we might reach the foot of the mountain-range. We were making our way into it, when, just before us, another kangaroo started up from the sunny spot where it had been basking, and looked round at us, doubtful, apparently, which direction to take. We thought that it would go up the hill; but instead of doing so, it came bounding towards us. I felt sure that I should hit it, when suddenly it took a leap over a precipice on our right. I immediately fired, and so did Mudge, but not before the animal had taken its spring. In consequence, over the precipice it went, and rolled down the steep slope towards the bottom of the valley. Uncertain at first whether either of us had really hit it, I handed my gun to Mudge, and looked out for a place where I could make my descent. Scrambling down, I was not long in reaching the kangaroo. The poor creature was still living, and tried to raise itself, as if about to fight in its defence; but my knife soon put it out of pain.

Wishing to carry our prize to the spot on which we had been standing when we shot it, as the place was convenient for camping, I dragged it to the foot of the precipice, and fastened round it a long vine which I found growing close at hand; with this, having climbed to the top of the rock, I without difficulty hauled it up—just as Mudge, who had gone round to assist me, came back.

The animal we had so fortunately killed was about four feet long, including the tail; which was, however, very nearly half that length. Its fur was of a purplish hue, warming into a rich rusty red towards the tail. It had strong, powerful claws on its hinder feet, almost concealed by the thick hair around them. We did not, however, stop long to examine it, but, taking out our knives, quickly skinned and cut it up. This done, we lost no time in collecting wood, lighting a fire, and setting a joint to roast; while we toasted some thin slices to satisfy the immediate cravings of our hunger.

As soon as we had done so, Mudge started to look for water, leaving me to attend to the roast, and to watch that no hungry dingo carried off our store of meat. “Depend upon it, that animal can’t have lived without water; and if its home is near here, water is not likely to be far off,” he observed. So, though it still wanted a couple of hours or more to sunset, we were so weary that we agreed it would be wise to stop where we were.

After I had seen that the meat was roasted, I employed myself, while waiting for Mudge’s return, in cutting some poles and collecting bark to form our hut; keeping my eye, however, on the fire. It was fortunate that I did so, for while I was cutting down a small tree, partly hid by a bush, I caught sight of one of our canine visitors of the previous night—or, at all events, an animal of the same species, the abominable dingo—stealing cautiously towards the carcass of the kangaroo. I sprang out, axe in hand, hoping that the intruder would await my coming. He did so for an instant, unwilling to lose the feast he had expected to enjoy; but just before I reached him he turned round and ran

off yelping, disappointed of his prey.

The animal was shaped like a common dog; was of a reddish-brown colour, with a sharp muzzle, and ears short and erect, its tail pendent and bushy, and its eyes small and cunning.

We afterwards had a great deal of trouble with these dingos, which are clever creatures, hunting in packs, and committing fearful depredations on the flocks of the settlers. To preserve our meat, I hung it up on the bough of a small tree, at a height no dingo could reach; feeling very sure that otherwise it would be carried off during the night.

I had begun to be somewhat anxious at Mudge's long absence, when at length I heard his voice, singing as he came along; and presently he climbed up to the plateau with both our bottles and the kettle he had taken with him full of water.

"We may consider the difficult part of our journey over, and be thankful," he said, as he got up to me. "A stream flows down the side of the mountain, and instead of running towards the ocean, it takes, as far as I could see, a due southerly course; so that we may travel along its banks, and be sure not only of water, but of plenty of birds, which are certain to frequent the locality during the morning and evening."

This was good news; and the ample supply of meat we enjoyed restored our strength and raised our spirits. We washed it down with I don't know how many cups of tea; which, though we had no milk, was not the less enjoyable. To prevent any dingos from unpleasantly smelling at us during the night, we fixed a number of sticks into the ground around our sleeping-place, and before turning in made up as large a fire as we could find fuel for. Its warmth, at that altitude, was pleasant, if not absolutely necessary.

We had a capital breakfast the next morning off some more of the rock kangaroo, and then packed up the more delicate portions to carry with us. "Forward!" cried Mudge; and setting our faces down the valley, we continued our course. We had still some hundred feet to descend, and even then we were not on a level plain, as, when looking from the mountain, we had supposed the country below us to be. The river on our left went rushing and foaming onwards, showing that the descent it was about to make was still considerable.

We were not disappointed in our expectations of finding abundance of game as we travelled on by the side of the river, for three days or more; after which it turned towards the eastward on its course to the ocean.

After this we proceeded southward, crossing several rivers and numerous streams. Most of the latter were fordable. We passed over the rivers in canoes, such as I have before described. For a considerable distance we had a lofty range of mountains on our right; and we had to make our way over some of the smaller ranges, but with much less difficulty than over the first we had crossed.

Perseveringly we trudged onwards, over table-lands and wide-extending plains and across valleys. All these rivers, streams, mountains, hills, plains, table-lands, and valleys have long since been named and thoroughly explored; while towns and villages have sprung up on the banks of the rivers, numerous flocks and herds are pastured on the plains and downs, and thousands of industrious settlers people the country. But in those days the black man, the kangaroo, the emu, and the dingo ranged in unrestrained freedom over the land. If names there were, they were such only as were given by the aboriginal inhabitants to the regions they claimed as their own.

We frequently met with natives; but as we were always on our guard, and avoided giving them offence, we were never annoyed by them. We fell in with most of them while we were on the march, so that we proceeded onwards and saw them no more; while the few who on rare occasions visited us at our camp in the evening, were always friendly. When we killed a kangaroo or emu, we gave as much of the meat as we could spare to any of the black men who were near; and we always found that food was the most acceptable gift we could bestow.

We had been nearly a month on our journey from the time we had left my father's camp. That space of time may appear short to those who are reading our adventures; but to us it seemed a long period, especially as we felt deeply anxious to send relief to our friends, whose stock of powder and shot might, we feared, be exhausted before we could return. Mudge observed that my father would probably send back to obtain supplies from the store we had left behind; but I reminded him that the men who went could only carry enough for themselves, and that without beasts of burden it would be impossible to relieve their wants in that way, while it was very certain that the natives could not be induced to act as carriers.

As yet we had met with no signs of civilised life; and as we had brought no quadrant, we were unable to calculate, with anything like accuracy, the number of miles we had performed each day. We could only guess, therefore, how far off we were from the most northern settlements. Our powder and shot, on which our very existence depended, was rapidly diminishing; and should that become exhausted, we should be at the mercy of the natives, and have to trust to them for supplying us with food, as we had great doubts whether we could trap any birds or beasts.

Though we had occasionally picked a few wild fruits, the supply was very uncertain, and we often had to go a considerable distance without finding any. The most nourishing was a fruit larger than a Spanish chestnut, and with a similar taste. It grew on a tree with beautiful green and pinnated foliage, contrasting strikingly with the dark leaves which give so sombre a hue to the Australian forests. We found three to five seeds in pods of considerable size, growing solitary and pendent. Had we been able to obtain a sufficient supply of these nuts, we might, with the aid of the cabbage-palms, and the leaves of a species of sorrel and other plants we met with, have been able to support existence on a vegetable diet.

On examining our stores one evening, as we sat in our camp, we found that we had between us not more than half-a-dozen charges of powder and shot. We had still some pemmican, but our biscuit had long been exhausted; and we had but a few pinches of tea, although we had for some time been enjoying that refreshing beverage in a very diluted state.

“We must not despair,” said Mudge,—“we have been preserved hitherto; and we must trust to Him who has all along taken care of us, to enable us to reach our journey’s end in safety. We must husband our powder and shot; we must live on pemmican and sorrel on alternate days, unless we can make sure of hitting the game we meet with; and I trust that we shall thus run no risk of starving, for a week to come.”

The cheerful way in which Mudge spoke revived my spirits; and the next morning we trudged courageously on, determined not to be daunted by anticipated difficulties. Still, we were sorely tried when we missed two kangaroos which we made sure of hitting. At length, having expended several charges of powder and shot on as many small birds, we found, one evening, that our ammunition had come to an end.

“Cheer up, Godfrey!” exclaimed Mudge, after I had been silent for some time; “I’ll sing you a song, to show you that I am still in good heart, as you ought to be;” and he began trolling forth a sea-ditty which he had often sung on festive occasions on board the *Heroine*.

He had got through three or four verses, when we were somewhat startled by hearing an English hail. Soon after we had replied to it, having sprung to our feet, a voice exclaimed, “Hallo, mates! where have you dropped from?” and we saw emerging from the gloom the figure of a white man, in the rough dress of a shepherd, with a gun in his hand and a brace of pistols in his belt. As I caught sight of him, the thought crossed my mind that he was a bushranger; but we rushed forward, notwithstanding, without asking who or what he was, and grasped him by the hand, when a few words sufficed to tell him what he wanted to know.

“And have we really got near the settlements?” asked Mudge eagerly.

“The nearest, I suppose, you would call a settlement, is not more than about five miles away to the southward,” answered the man; “but mine and my mate’s hut is less than a quarter of a mile off, and you will be welcome there if you like to strike camp and come along with me. Our tea-kettle is boiling, and the damper will be cooked by the time we get there. I am the hut-keeper; and my mate, the shepherd, had just penned the sheep and made all snug for the night, when I caught sight of the glare of your fire. Says I to my mate, ‘It’s some of them natives, and they’ll be trying to steal a sheep, or do some other mischief; at all events, I’ll go and see what they’re about.’ When I heard that jolly song of yours, sir, I soon knew all was right, though I did wonder how you came to be out here.”

Mudge, who was perfectly satisfied that the man was what he represented himself to be, at once accepted his invitation; and emptying our kettle, we quickly slung that and our other traps on our backs, and prepared to accompany the shepherd.

“Stay, mates, we’ll put out the fire first,” he said; “we don’t know where the sparks may be carried to if left alone: they might soon set the whole country in a blaze.”

Having taken this precaution, we walked briskly along with our new friend. We soon reached a low shingle-roofed slab hut, from which a couple of dogs issued, barking furiously on hearing the footsteps of strangers. The hut-keeper’s voice quickly silenced them, when they came fawning up to him, licking even our hands when they discovered that we were whites. Our companion ushered us into his hut, which consisted of one smoke-begrimed room, containing a clay fireplace, two rough bunks in the corner, and a table and couple of stools in the centre. The kettle on the wood fire was bubbling and hissing merrily.

Our guide’s “chum,” as he called him, presently came in from the sheepfold, and gave us a hearty welcome. He was as rough-looking as his companion, but scarcely rougher than Mudge, with his unshaven beard, his moustache, and long hair; and I, though I had not a beard and moustache to boast of, must have looked pretty rough too.

Our hosts gave us the best they had: fresh damper, broiled mutton, and tea. The captain, as they called their master, allowed no spirits, but, they acknowledged, took good care that they were well supplied with necessaries; and if we would stop another day they would give us plum-pudding for dinner. We, of course, said that we were anxious to go on to the station as soon as possible, that we might obtain horses to return to our friends. The captain, they said, would give us every assistance in his power. He had a herd of cattle, as well as sheep, with several horses, though whether he would be able to spare the horses they could not tell; but he would probably try and obtain them for us from the next station, a dozen miles or so farther off.

We were still, we found, a hundred and fifty miles, at least, from Sydney; so that, had not the settlers established stations to the northward, we should have had a long journey to perform before we could obtain assistance. They were more ready to hear the accounts we had to give than to say anything about themselves; indeed, when once or twice Mudge inquired how long they had been in the colony, and why they came out, they made evasive answers, and turned the subject. They were, in reality, convicts; assigned servants, who received no wages, but were allowed thus much of liberty as long as they behaved themselves well.

As soon as supper was over, they advised us to turn in, observing that they should have to be up before daybreak to breakfast, that the shepherd might take his sheep at early dawn to their pasture, at some distance from the hut. They offered us their bunks, but we declined; for two reasons: one was, that they looked excessively black and dirty; and the other, that, being long accustomed to sleep on the bare ground, we would not turn them out of their beds. We accordingly lay down on the floor, with our knapsacks as pillows, with a feeling of security which we had not for long enjoyed; and knowing that one of the faithful dogs was watching at the door, we were soon fast asleep. When I awoke, I saw the hut-keeper kneading a damper, which he put under the ashes of the already kindled fire. I need not say that I would rather not have witnessed the operation.

I did not open my eyes again till he summoned us to breakfast, when we were joined by the shepherd, who had gone out to see that his sheep were safe. Our meal being quickly despatched, he bade us farewell and again sallied forth, to let his sheep out of their pen; when the hut-keeper asked us if we were inclined to stop a while, or go on to the captain’s. We, of course, expressed a wish to set off at once, and begged him to show us the way.

“I can’t go with you, as I have to help my chum to attend to some sick sheep,” he said, “and to look after the hut; but you can’t mistake it if you keep due south, over yonder rise with the three big trees at the top of it, and then make for a stream you will see shining in the distance. There’s a bridge over it, which leads to the station.”

The directions being sufficiently explicit, we set off without fear of losing our way. A walk of rather more than an hour’s duration brought us in sight of the stream, with a plank-bridge thrown over it; on which, as we got nearer, we saw two black men. They were not, however, such as we had been accustomed to meet with, but were decently clothed. Saluting us civilly in English with “Good morning, friends,” they told us that this was the station of which we were in search, and that if we went on a little farther we should find the master, who would be glad to see us.

Passing some huts, we soon saw before us a low, bungalow-looking building, with a broad verandah. Directly afterwards there issued forth a middle-aged gentleman, who advanced towards us. “Glad to see you, my friends, wherever you come from,” he said, putting out his hand. “You look as if you had had a long tramp of it. I take it you are ready for breakfast. Come in at once. We were just upon the point of sitting down when I caught sight of you from the window.”

“Thank you, sir,” answered Mudge. “Your shepherds, at whose hut we slept, gave us some breakfast; but we accept your hospitality, as, for my part, I should be ready for a little more; and so, I dare say, will my friend Rayner,—at all events, midshipmen have the credit of being able to stow away two or three meals in succession without inconvenience, and we have been on short allowance for some days past.”

“What, are you naval officers?” exclaimed the captain, eyeing us attentively. “I thought so from the way you spoke. However, come in. You can tell me all about yourselves afterwards; it doesn’t come up to my notions of hospitality to bother strangers with questions before they have eaten, and drunken, and rested themselves after their journey.”

Saying this, our host led the way into a neat parlour, where two ladies were seated at table; one evidently his wife, the other very young. I looked from her to the elder lady, then, springing forward, I put out my hand and exclaimed, “Mrs Hudson!”

She shook it with a look of surprise; then, turning round, I added, “Captain Hudson, I am sure it is you, sir;” and looking at the young lady, I said, “I don’t know your name, but I remember you very well indeed, and have never forgotten you since I was on board the *Hopewell*, off the coast of Patagonia, two years ago.”

After I had shaken Captain Hudson by the hand, the young lady, who had risen from her chair, came forward to greet me, saying, “I remember the midshipman who paid us a visit, but I should not have recognised you; yes, yes—I remember your eyes and your features now;” and she smiled very sweetly.

“I thought I had seen your face before,” I heard Mudge saying, as Captain Hudson was shaking him warmly by the hand.

Our host and hostess now pressed us to sit down to breakfast, but I could scarcely eat anything for thinking of the information we had to give them. A word whispered in my ear from Mudge—“Don’t say anything yet”—made me cautious, for he was too wise not to think that it would be dangerous to communicate such joyful intelligence too suddenly, and that it was important to break it to the captain first. We had a great deal to tell about our adventures, however.

Captain Hudson then informed us that soon after we fell in with him the ship had come across to Sydney, where, on account of Mrs Hudson’s health, he had given up the command, and determined to settle on shore. Finding an acquaintance who happened to be in Sydney, and who wished to give up this station, he came on here. “For though so far in advance of the other settlers,” continued Captain Hudson, “I was sure that, by the proper management of my assigned servants, and by treating the blacks judiciously, we should be as safe here as near other stations. I have not been mistaken; and we have already succeeded in partly civilising several young natives, who seem perfectly happy and contented, and are ready to perform any light labour to which I put them.”

When we told Captain Hudson that the object of our journey was to carry assistance to our friends, he at once volunteered to do all in his power to obtain horses, provisions, and trusty men to accompany us back. “Though I cannot go myself,” he said, “I have a friend in the neighbourhood who will, I am sure, take great pleasure in accompanying you, and in whom you may thoroughly rely, as few men have travelled more in the wilds than he has, or are so well able to manage the natives.”

I saw the young lady look up at Captain Hudson as he spoke, but what that look betokened I could not then understand. All this time we were, of course, burning to tell him that his son was alive; though, had he known it, he could scarcely have been more anxious to send assistance to our friends than he was already. It occurred to me, indeed, that, to save him and Mrs Hudson the anxiety of waiting for Harry’s arrival, it might be better to say nothing about him. How dreadful it would be should any accident have happened to him in the meantime, or should all our party have perished! Not that we dared contemplate such a contingency for two moments together. It did, however, when I felt at all depressed, flash across my mind; but I put it from me as too horrible to dwell on; besides which, it seemed like ingratitude to God, who had so far protected us.

As soon as breakfast was over, I mentioned my idea to Mudge; but he considered that we ought to tell the captain that we had found a white boy among the savages, apparently of the age of his son—that he had been long with us, and had become perfectly civilised, and, from his amiable qualities, a great favourite. Captain Hudson might thus draw his own conclusions.

The captain soon afterwards joined us, when Mudge cautiously introduced the subject; notwithstanding which he was almost overcome with agitation.

“We ought not to raise your hopes too high, sir,” said Mudge; “but still, neither Captain Bracewell nor any one on board the ship had any doubts on the subject.”

“How can I thank my merciful Father in heaven for his boundless kindness to me!” exclaimed the captain. “I will carefully prepare my dear wife, but in her delicate state of health it will require great caution; and I must beg you, therefore, not to utter a word to any one else.”

This, of course, we promised to do; and we were surprised at the self-command which the captain afterwards exhibited in presence of Mrs Hudson.

We had made inquiries about our ship, but she had not visited Sydney before Captain Hudson had been last there, and he had heard nothing of her. This satisfied Mudge that he was not in duty bound to go there to look for her.

Captain Hudson, notwithstanding the agitation of his mind, observed our tattered condition, and insisted on rigging us both out in new, strong clothes suited for our object. These were put on after a thorough bath in the stream hard by. Mudge also had got shaved by the captain’s black cook, an African who had accompanied him on shore, and who was barber, sheep-shearer, tailor, carpenter, and I don’t know how many other trades besides.

Captain Hudson, in the meantime, had sent off to the friend he spoke of, who soon afterwards arrived on horseback. He was a handsome, middle-aged man, of a peculiarly grave and melancholy countenance, but with a keen eye, and who appeared, by his bearing and manners, to have been an officer. He at once, on hearing our account, agreed to accompany us, and to organise an expedition to carry such provisions as he thought would be necessary, with horses for the conveyance of my mother and sister, as well as my father, and any of the rest of the party who might be unable to walk.

I felt in high spirits, and perfectly ready to set off on the following morning. Towards evening, however, I suddenly became very ill, when Mrs Hudson insisted on my going to bed; and next morning I was utterly unable to rise. But, of course, the expedition could not be delayed on my account.

I was unconscious, so I was afterwards told, for some time; and when I regained my senses I found that the party had long since started. My fear was that while I had been in delirium I might have talked of Harry Hudson, and I was thankful to find that such had not been the case. Mrs Hudson watched over me with as much care as my own mother could have done, and I often saw tears dropping from her eyes—when I knew that she was thinking of her own boy, whom she supposed to have been lost.

As I got better, Lily, for such was the name of the young lady—she was, as I could not help telling her, a sweet white English Lily; not like one of the Australian lilies, with grand blossoms of rich crimson, six inches in diameter, growing on stalks twenty feet high—Lily was my constant companion. Every day that I was in her company I admired her more and more—but I must not talk about that just now. She was, I suspected, the daughter of the leader of the expedition, who, for some reason—not a dishonourable one—was compelled to live a secluded life in Australia. Two more months passed away, when one afternoon a man on horseback appeared, bringing the joyful intelligence that our party were close at hand, and all well. I saw that Mrs Hudson was greatly agitated, and I now knew that the captain had been gradually preparing her for the appearance of their son.

It is beyond my power to describe the meeting; I know a great many of us cried with joy, and I am not ashamed to say that I did so. My dear mother and Edith had borne the journey well, though they had been hard pressed for some weeks, and had become very anxious before the appearance of the expedition sent to succour them.

Captain Hudson received our party with unbounded hospitality, having prepared a residence for those who could not be received into his own house. I was delighted to find that my father had arranged to take a station within a few miles of that of Captain Hudson, who promised to afford him that assistance which, as a new-comer, he of course greatly required.

Mudge, who, as soon as he could communicate with England, made arrangements for quitting the service, got a grant of land, and settled near us. Being only a midshipman, I had simply to discharge myself, without any other formality; as did Tommy Peck. The rest of the crew were so enamoured of the country that they remained with us, and turned stockmen; most of them becoming at length successful settlers.

Harry, of course, married Edith; and Lily became my wife. This event happened a long time ago, and it might not increase the interest of my readers if I were to say that it is long since our wives became grandmothers.

We all flourished, as I am firmly convinced people will do who, seeking guidance from above, act with due judgment and discretion, taking advantage of the experience, as well as warning from the failure, of others. We, of course, had those ups and downs which all settlers in Australia must meet: dingos carried off our sheep, and the rot visited them; the blacks were troublesome, and droughts and blights occurred; bush-fires occasionally took place, and our wool brought lower prices than we had hoped for. But, notwithstanding, in the long run we were blessed with prosperity, and had ample reason to be thankful that we had been preserved from the numerous dangers we had encountered, and that we had been guided to the shores of Australia.

The End.

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