TOM WALLIS

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A Tale of the South Seas

Author: Louis Becke

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'SO CLOSE THAT MANY OF HER PEOPLE COULD BE RECOGNIZED.' See p. 268.

TOM WALLIS
A TALE OF THE SOUTH SEAS

BY LOUIS BECKE

Author of 'Wild Life in Southern Seas'
'By Reef and Palm' 'Admiral Philip' etc.

WITH ELEVEN ILLUSTRATIONS BY
LANCELOT SPEED

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TOM WALLIS

CHAPTER I
FATHER AND SONS

Northward from an Australian city, and hidden from seaward view by high wooded bluffs and green belts of dense wind-swept scrub, there lies one of the oldest and quaintest little seaport towns on the whole eastern sea-board, from the heat-smitten rocks of Cape York, in the far north of torrid Queensland, to where, three thousand miles to the south, the sweeping billows from the icy Antarctic leap high in air, and thunder against the grim and rugged walls of stark Cape Howe.

The house in which the Wallis family lived stood at the foot of one of these bluffs, within a stone's throw of the beach, and overlooking the bar; and at night time, when the swift outward rush of the river's current met the curling rollers from the open sea, the wild clamour and throbbing hum seemed to shake the walls

of the old-fashioned building to its foundations. But to the two Wallis boys–who were born in that house–the noise of the beating surf, the hoarse shrieking notes of the myriad sea-birds, and the sough of the trade wind through the timbered slopes, were voices that they knew and understood, and were in a manner part and parcel of their own adventurous natures.

Let me try and attempt to draw, however rudely, an outline of a picture of their home, and of the sight that every morning the two lads saw from their bedroom window, before they clattered downstairs into the low-ceiled old-time dining-room, to each eat a breakfast that would have done credit to a hungry bullock-driver.

First, then, the wide, blue Pacific–would that I could see it now!–sparkling and shimmering in the yellow sunshine, unbroken in its expanse except for the great dome of Kooringa Rock, a mile from the shore, from which, when the wind blew east, came the unceasing croak and whistle of ten thousand gulls and divers, who made it their rendezvous and sleeping-place.

To the north, on the other side of the roaring, restless bar (the house was on the southern horn of the entrance to the harbour), there ran a long sweeping half-mooned beach, ten miles from point to point of headland, and backed at high-water mark by a thick fringe of low, scrubby timber, the haunt of the black wallaby, and the refuge from pursuit of mobs of wild cattle. Not a dozen people in the little township had ever been through this scrub on foot; but Tom and Jack Wallis knew and loved every foot of it, from the sandspit on the northern bank of the river to the purple loom of the furthest cape. Further back still from this narrow belt of littoral, the main coastal range rose, grey and blue in the distance, monotonous in its outlines, and its silence broken only by the axes of a few wandering parties of timber-getters, who worked on the banks of the many streams rising in the mountain gullies, whose waters joined those of the great tidal river on its way to the ocean.

Southward from the bar, the coast presented another aspect; high cliffs of black, iron-stone rock stood up steep-to from the sea, not in a continuous straight line, but in broken irregular masses, forming hundreds of small deep bays with lofty sides, and beaches of large rounded pebbles or snow-white sand. This part of the shore was so wild and desolate, that except themselves, a human being would seldom be seen about it from one year's end to the other, and the boys only went there during the crayfish season, or during an easterly gale, when from the grassy summit of one of the highest cliffs they loved to watch the maddened boil of surf far below, and catch the exhausted gulls and boobies, that sought refuge ashore from the violence of the wind amid the close-set, stunted herbage growing just beyond the reach of the flying spray. Iron-bound and grim-looking, it did not extend more than six or seven miles; and then came another long stretch

of sandy beach for thrice that distance, banked up by lofty sand-dunes covered with a network of creepers, and a saline herb known as 'pig-face.'

Behind the sand-hills were a series of brackish lagoons, whose waters were covered with flocks of black swans, pelicans, and half a dozen varieties of wild duck and other waterfowl, which were seldom disturbed by any of the few settlers round about, who were too lazy to wade through water after a duck, although some of them would ride all night to steal a calf or a bullock. These lagoons had, here and there, narrow passages to the sea through the sand mounds, and where this was the case the waters were literally alive with fish–bream and whiting, and kingfish and trevally, and–but there, the memory of those happy, happy years of boyhood amid such rough and wild surroundings is strong with Tom Wallis still. For the lads, as their father sometimes said, were born in a civilized family by mistake–Nature having intended them to have black skins and woolly hair, and to hunt paddymelons and wallabies with boomerang and waddy, like the survivors of the tribe of blacks who still led a lingering existence along the shores and around the tidal lakes and inlets of that part of the country.

Of the town itself near which they lived little need be said, except that it was very quaint, and, for a new country like Australia, old-fashioned. Once, in the early days of the colony, it promised to become a thriving and prosperous place. Many retired military and civilian officers had been given very large grants of land in the vicinity of the port, upon which they had settled, and at one time many hundreds of convicts had been employed by them. Besides these, there was a large number of prisoners who toiled on the roads, or in the saw-pits, or up on the rivers felling timber, under the supervision of Government overseers. These wretched men were generally marched to their work every morning, returning to their barrack prison at night time. There had been at first a company of soldiers stationed at the port, but when it was discovered that the place was ill-chosen for a settlement–in consequence of the shifting nature of the bar–they were withdrawn to Sydney with all the prisoners, except those who were assigned to the settlers as servants or workmen. Then most of the principal settlers themselves followed, and left their houses untenanted, and their cleared lands to be overgrown, and become swallowed up by the ever-encroaching scrub, which in those humid coastal regions is more an Indian jungle than bush, as Australians understand the word 'bush.' With the soldiers went, of course, the leading civil officials, and the little seaport became semi-deserted, grass grew in the long, wide streets, and the great red-bricked barracks and Government storehouses were left to silence and decay.

Nearly twenty years after the breaking up of the settlement as a penal establishment, Lester Wallis and his young wife had settled in the place. He had formerly been in the service of the East India Company, where he had accu-

mulated a small fortune. During a visit to Sydney, he had met and married the daughter of one of the Crown officials, an ex-naval officer, and, loth to return to the trying climate of India, decided to remain in Australia, and enter into pastoral pursuits. For a few thousand pounds he bought a small cattle-station at Port Kooringa, and, in a measure, became the mainstay of the place, for, in addition to cattle-raising, he revived the dying timber industry, and otherwise roused the remaining inhabitants of the little port out of their lethargic indifference. But fifteen years after he came to the place, and when his two boys were fourteen and thirteen years of age respectively, his wife died, after a few hours' illness. The blow was a heavy one, and for the time crushed him. He withdrew himself almost entirely from such society as the place afforded, dismissed most of his servants, and lived for more than a year in seclusion, in the lonely house facing the sea. His affection for his children, however, came to his aid, and did much to assuage his grief.

'Jack, my lad,' he said to the elder boy, one day, as they were riding along the northern beach, 'we must stick to each other always. You and Tom are all I have in the world to love. Had your mother lived, I should have liked to have returned to England and ended my days there. But she is gone, and now I have no desire to leave Australia. We shall stay here, Jack; and you and Tom shall help me till you are both old enough to choose your future.'

Jack, a sturdy, square-built youngster, with honest grey eyes, nodded his head.

'I shall never want to leave you and Kooringa, father. I promised mother that before she died. But Tom says he hopes you will let him go to sea when he is old enough.'

Mr. Wallis smiled, and then sighed somewhat sadly. 'Time enough to think of that, Jack. But I would rather he thought of something else. 'Tis a poor life and a hard one. But why do you not want to be a sailor?'

Jack shook his head. 'I should like to be an explorer–that is, I mean if you would let me. I should like to cross Australia; perhaps I might find Dr. Leichhardt'–and his eyes glistened; 'or else I should like to ride round it from Port Kooringa right up to Cape York, and along the Gulf of Carpentaria and the coast of Arnhem's Land and West Australia, and then along the Great Bight back to Kooringa. It would make me famous, father. Mother said it would be more than ten thousand miles.'

Mr. Wallis laughed. 'More than that, Jack. But who knows what may happen? Perhaps I may buy some cattle country in Queensland some day; then you shall have a chance of doing some exploring. But not for some years yet, my boy,' he added, placing his hand on his son's shoulder; 'I do not want to go away from Kooringa yet; and I want to come back here, so that when my time comes I

may be laid beside *her*.'

'Yes, dad,' said the lad simply; 'I too want to be buried near poor mother when I die. Isn't it awful to think of dying at some place a long way from Kooringa, away from her? That's what I told Tom the other day. I said that if he goes to sea he might be drowned, or bitten in halves by a shark, like the two convicts who tried to cross the bar on a log when they ran away. Father, don't let Tom be a sailor. We might never see him again. Wouldn't it be awful if he never came back to us? And mother loved him so, didn't she? Don't you remember when she was dying how she made Tom lie down beside her on her bed, and cried, "Oh, my Benjamin, my Benjamin, my beloved"?'

'Yes, my lad,' answered the father, turning his face towards the sea, which shone and sparkled in the bright morning sunlight. Then the two rode on in silence, the man thinking of his dead wife, and the boy dreaming of that long, long ride of ten thousand miles, and of the strange sights he might yet see.

From the broad front verandah of the quiet house, young Tom had watched his father and brother ride off towards the town, on their way to the river crossing which was some miles distant from the bar. Once over the river, they would have to return seaward along its northern bank, till they emerged upon the ocean beach. They would not return till nightfall, or perhaps till the following day, as Mr. Wallis wished to look for some missing cattle in the scrubs around the base of rugged Cape Kooringa, and 'Wellington,' one of the aboriginal stockmen, had already preceded them with a pack-horse carrying their blankets and provisions, leaving Tom practically in charge, although old Foster, a somewhat rough and crusty ex-man-of-war's man, who had been Mrs. Wallis's attendant since her childhood, was nominally so. He with two or three women servants and the gardener were all that were employed in, and lived in the house itself, the rest of the hands having their quarters at the stockyards, which were nearly half a mile away.

Tom watched his brother and father till they disappeared in the misty haze which at that early hour still hung about the beach and the low foreshore, although the sun had now, as Foster said, a good hoist, and the calm sea lay clear and blue beneath. Then something like a sigh escaped him, as his unwilling eye lighted upon his lesson-books, which were lying upon the table of a little enclosure at one end of the verandah, which did duty as a schoolroom for his brother and himself.

'Well, it can't be helped,' he muttered; 'I promised dad to try and pull up a bit–and there's the tide going out fast. How can a fellow dig into school books when he knows it's going to be a dead low tide, and the crayfish will be sticking their feelers up everywhere out of the kelp? Dad said three hours this morning. Now, what does it matter whether it is this morning, or this afternoon, or this

evening? And of course *he* didn't think it would be such a lovely morning–and he likes crayfish. I wonder if he will be angry when I tell him?' Then, stepping inside, he called out–

'Foster, where are you?' There was a rattle of knives in the pantry, and then the old man shuffled along the passage, and came into the dining-room.

'What now, Master Tom?' he grumbled; 'not at your lessons yet? 'Tis nine o'clock—-'

'Yes, I know, Foster. But, Foster, just look at the tip of Flat Rock showing up already. It's going to be a dead low tide, and—-'

'Don't you dare now! Ah, I know what you're going to say. No, I won't have it. Leastways I won't argy over it. And don't you disobey orders–not if all the crayfish in Australy was a runnin' up out o' the water, and climbin' trees.' Then, screwing his features up into an affectation of great wrath, he shuffled away again.

Tom's face fell, and again a heavy sigh escaped him, as he looked at the shimmering sea, and saw that beyond the bar it was as smooth as a mountain lake. Then he quietly opened the Venetian shutters of the dining-room, and let the bright sunlight stream in.

'It's no use,' he said to himself, 'I can't work this morning. I'll try and think a bit whether I shall go or not.'

Over the mantel in the dining-room was a marine picture. It was but rudely painted in water-colours–perhaps by some seaman's rough hand,–and the lapse of five and twenty years had dimmed it sadly; but to Tom's mind it was the finest painting in the world, and redolent of wild adventure and romance. It showed as a background the shore of a tropical island, the hills clothed with jungle, and the yellow beach lined with palm trees, while in the foreground the blue rollers of the ocean churned into froth against a long curve of coral reef, on which lay a man-of-war, with the surf leaping high over her decks, and with main and mizzen-masts gone. On the left of the picture was a beautiful white-painted brig, with old-fashioned rolling topsails and with her mainyard aback; and between her and the wreck were a number of boats crowded with men in uniform, escaping from the ship.

Often when the house was silent had Tom, even when a boy of ten, stolen into the room, and, sitting cross-legged on the rug, gazed longingly at the painting which, to his boyish imagination, seemed to live, ay, and speak to him in a wild symphony of crashing surf and swaying palm trees, mingling with the cries of the sailors and the shrill piping of the boatswain's whistles. Then, too, his eyes would linger over the inscription that, in two lines, ran along the whole length of the foot of the picture, and he would read it over and over again to himself gloatingly, and let his mind revel in visions of what he would yet see when he

grew old enough to sail on foreign seas, as his father and his uncle Fred Hemsley had done. This is what the inscription said:–

'The Wreck of the Dutch warship Samarang on the coast of Timor Laut; and the Rescue of her Crew by the English brig Huntress, of Sydney, commanded by Mr. William Ford, and owned by Frederick Hemsley, Esquire, of Amboyna; on the morning of May 4, 1836.'

* * * * *

Half an hour later old Foster clattered suddenly along the verandah, peered into the schoolroom, and then into the dining-room, where Tom sat in a chair–still gazing at the picture.

'Rouse ye, rouse ye, Master Tom. Your eyes are better than mine. Here, look'–and he placed Mr. Wallis's telescope in the boy's hand–'look over there beyond Kooringa Rock. 'Tis a drifting boat, I believe. Kate tells me that it was in sight an hour ago, before your father and Master Jack went away, and yet the foolish creature never told me.'

Tom took the glass–an old-fashioned telescope, half a fathom long, and steadied it against a verandah post.

'Have you got her?' asked old Foster.

'Yes, yes,' answered the boy, quickly, his hand shaking with excitement; 'I can see her, Foster. There are people in her ... yes, yes, and they are pulling. I can see the oars dipping quite plainly. What boat can it be?'

'Shipwrecked people, o' course. What would any other boat be doin' out there, a comin' in from the eastward? Can you see which way she is heading?'

'Straight in for the bar, Foster.'

'And nothing but a steamer could stem the current now, with the tide runnin' out at six knots; an' more than that, they'll capsize as soon as they get abreast o' Flat Rock, and be aten up by the sharks. Master Tom, we must man our boat somehow, and go out to them. Then we can pilot them in to the bit o' beach under Pilot's Hill, if the current is too strong for us to get back here. But how we're going to launch the boat, let alone man her, is the trouble; there's not a man about the place but myself, and it will take the best part of an hour to send Kate or any other o' the women to the town and back.'

'Never mind that, Foster,' cried the boy; 'look down there on the rocks–there are Combo, and Fly, and some other black fellows spearing fish! They will help us to launch the boat, and come with us too.'

'Then run, lad; run as hard as ye can, and bring them up to the boatshed,

an' I'll follow as soon as I get what I want.'

Seizing his cap, Tom darted away down the hill, across the beach, and then splashed through the shallow pools of water on the reef towards the party of aboriginals; whilst old Foster, calling out to Kate and the other women to get food ready against his return, in case it might be wanted for starving people, hurriedly seized some empty bottles and filled them with water; then, thrusting them into Jack's fishing-basket, which hung on the wall of the back verandah, he followed Tom down to the boatshed, where in a few minutes he was joined by the lad himself, and four stalwart, naked black fellows and their gins, all equally as excited as the old sailor.

The boat was a long, heavy whaleboat, but she was soon run out of the dark shed under the hill, and then into the water.

[image]

THE BOAT WAS SOON RUN OUT OF THE DARK SHED.

'Jump in, everybody,' said old Foster, seizing the steer oar, and swinging the boat's head round to the open sea.

CHAPTER II

CAPTAIN RAMON CASALLE AND HIS MEN

Under the five oars–Tom tugging manfully at the bow, though still panting with his previous exertions–the boat soon cleared the entrance to the little rocky cove, which, during the old convict days, had been made into a fairly safe boat harbour–the only one, except an unfrequented beach under Pilot's Hill, for many miles along the coast. Five minutes after the oars had touched the water she was fairly racing seaward, for she was in the full run of the ebbing tide as it swept through the sandbanks and reefs which lined the narrow bar. Then, as the water deepened, and the current lost its strength, Foster shielded his eyes with his hands from the blazing sun, and looking ahead, tried to discern the approaching boat.

'I can't see her anywhere!' he exclaimed presently; 'easy there, pulling. Perhaps she's in a line with Kooringa Rock, and we won't see her for another

half-hour yet. Jump up, Combo, and take a look ahead.'

Combo, a huge, black-bearded fellow, with a broad much-scarred chest, showed his white teeth, drew his oar across, and sprung upon the after thwart. For two or three seconds he scanned the sea ahead, then he pointed a little to the northward of Kooringa Rock.

'I see um,' he said with a laugh; 'he long way yet–other side Kooringa–two fella mile yet, I think it;' then he added that the people in the boat had ceased pulling, and that she seemed to be drifting broadside to the southward with the current.

Old Foster nodded. 'That'll do, Combo, my boy. You've eyes like a needle. I can't see for the sun blaze right ahead. Give it to her, lads;' then he kept away a point or two to the southward, so as to pass close under Kooringa Rock, against the grim, weed-covered sides of which only the faintest swell rose and fell, to sway the hanging masses of green and yellow kelp to and fro. At any other time Tom's eyes would have revelled in the sight, and at the swarms of fish of all colours and shapes which swam to and fro in the clear water around the rock, or darted in and out amongst the moving kelp; but now his thoughts were centred solely on the boat's present mission–they were going to rescue what would most likely prove to be shipwrecked people–perhaps foreigners who could not speak English! Oh, how beautiful it was! And every nerve and fibre in his body thrilled with pleasure, as, with the perspiration streaming down his face, he watched his oar, and listened for the next word of command from the old sailor.

For a brief minute or two, as the boat passed along the base of the towering dome above, the fierce sun was lost, and Tom gave a sigh of relief, for although he had thrown off all but his shirt and trousers, his exertions were beginning to tell upon him, and he looked with something like envy at the smooth, naked backs of Combo and his sooty companions, who took no heed of the sun, but whose dark eyes gazed longingly at the white masses of breeding gulls and boobies which covered the grassy ledges near the summit of the rock. Then out again into the dazzling glare once more, and Foster gave a cry–'Avast pulling! There she is, close to, but pulling away from us!'

Tom jumped up and looked, and saw the strange boat. She was not more than half a mile away, and he could see the people in her quite plainly; she was again heading towards the entrance to the bar.

'Give way, lads,' said Foster; 'they're only pulling three oars to our five, and we'll soon be within hailing of 'em. They can't make any headway against the ebb, when they get in a bit further, and are bound to see us afore many minutes.'

The crew–black and white–needed no encouragement, and without a word bent to their oars again, and pulled steadily on for less than a quarter of an hour; then Foster stood up and hailed with all the strength of his lungs; but still the

three oars of the strange boat were dipped steadily though slowly, and she still went on.

'They're not looking this way,' muttered the old man to Combo and his listening companions; then Combo himself, drawing in a deep breath, stood up and sent out a long, loud *Coo-ee-ee!*

As the strange weird cry travelled over the waters, Foster and his companions watched intently, and then gave a loud hurrah! as they saw the rowers cease, and figures stand up in the other boat; then presently there came back a faint answering cry, and they saw an oar was up-ended, as a sign that they were seen. It stood thus for a few seconds, then was lowered, and the strange boat slewed round, and began pulling towards them.

'Steady, now steady,' said Foster, warningly, to his crew, who began pulling with redoubled energy. 'Go easy; we'll be alongside in no time now. Master Tom, in with your oar, and come aft here. Take out a couple of those bottles of water, and keep 'em handy, but put the others out o' sight until I tell you. There's a power o' men in that boat, I can see, and I know what happens to a man perishin' o' thirst, when he gets his lips to water, and has no one to stand by him and take a turn in his swallow.'

Tom stumbled aft pantingly, and did as he was bid, and then, looking up, he saw the other boat was not a hundred yards away, and appeared crowded with men. Then followed a wild clamour of voices and cries, as the two boats touched gunwales, and a strange, rugged figure, who stood in the stern, cried out to Foster–

'Thank God, you are a white man! Have you any water?–ours was finished last night.'

'Enough to give you all a small drink,' replied Foster, quickly, as he handed the bottles over to him one by one, 'but we shall be ashore in another hour. Now, sir, tell some of your men to get into my boat as soon as they've had a drink.'

Although the castaways were the wildest-looking beings ever seen out of a picture-book, they still preserved discipline, and one of them at once began sharing out the water to the others, whilst the man who was steering, with his hands shaking with excitement, poured out a little into a tin mug, handed the rest back to Foster with an imploring look, and then sank on his knees in the bottom of the boat beside a small, crouched-up figure clothed in a dirty calico shirt. As Tom bent over to look, he saw that it was a child–a little girl about five or six years of age. She put her hand out to the mug, and with her eyes still closed drank it eagerly.

'No more, sir, just now!' cried Foster warningly to the man, who, with a great sob of joy, and the tears streaming from his haggard and sun-blackened face, had extended his hand for the bottle, 'no more just now for the little one.

Pass her into my boat, and get in yourself; but first take some of this,' and he poured out a full drink.

The officer took it, drank half, and then returned it. 'Is that all that is left? Are you sure that we are safe? For God's sake keep what is left for my child!'

'Ay, ay, sir. Have no fear. In another hour we shall be ashore. But hand me the little one, sir–pass me a tow-line here, some o' you chaps; an' you, Combo, an' Fly, an' the other chap, put on all your beef, and pull with all your might.... Tom, you sit down there with the captain, an' hold the babby.... Never fear, sir, he'll hold her safe, God bless her, dear little mite! ... Cheer up, sir; food an' rest is all she wants, an' all you an' these other poor chaps want.... Pull, Combo, my hearty; pull, Fly; send her along as she never went before.'

Tom, unheeding the excitement of those around him, as a tow-line was passed from the other boat and made fast, and Combo and his two black companions, aided by one of the castaway sailors, bent to their oars and tautened it out, was gazing into the face of his charge, who lay quietly breathing in his arms, whilst her father, weak and exhausted as he was, was telling old Foster his story of disaster and death. It was the first time in Tom's life that he had ever held 'a baby'–as he mentally termed the little girl–in his arms, and under any other circumstances his youthful soul would have recoiled from such a position with horror. But presently, as she turned her face to his, and said in a thin, weak voice, 'Give me some water, please,' he began to shake at the knees, and feel frightened and intensely sympathetic at the same time.

'Only a little, Master Tom; only a mouthful at a time;' and old Foster, his face aglow with excitement, handed him the bottle of water and mug, and Tom carefully poured out about a wine-glassful, and put it to the lips of what, to his mind, seemed more like a dying monkey, with a wig of long black hair, than a real human child.

As the boats drew near the little boat harbour under Pilot's Hill, even the exhausted seamen in the one which was being towed gave a faint cheer, shipped their oars, and began to pull. The sea was still glassy smooth, for it was in November, when a calm would sometimes last for three days and more, only to be succeeded by a black north-easterly gale.

Standing on the shore awaiting the boats were nearly every one of Mr. Wallis's people, who were presently joined by some few of the townspeople, who had heard of something being afoot at the Beach House, as the Wallis's place was called.

'Jump out, Master Tom,' cried Foster, as the leading boat touched the soft, yielding sand, 'and give the baby to Kate. She'll know what to do.'

Tom, his chest swelling with a mighty dignity, surrendered his charge to its father for the moment, leaped out of the boat, and then held out his arms again

for it, as if he had been used to carrying babies all his life; and Kate Gorman, a big-boned red-headed Irishwoman, splashed into the water with eyes aflame, and whipped the child away from him, and then, followed by the other women, and cuddling the now wondering child to her ample bosom, she pushed through the rest of the people, and strode up the grassy hill, leaving Tom bereft of his dignity and importance together.

Food and drink in plenty had been brought by the women, as Foster had ordered, and the famished seamen, after satisfying themselves, lay down upon the sweet-smelling grass above high water, to stretch and rest their cramped and aching limbs, before setting out to walk to Beach House along the edge of the cliffs, for there was no other way. And then there came to Tom the proudest moment of his life, when old Foster, who was sitting on the grass with the dark-faced, haggard man whom he had addressed as 'Sir,' beckoned him to come near, and, rising to his feet, said–

'An' this, captain, is Master Tom Wallis, sir, the master's son. I sarved with his mother's father, an'—-'

The captain stretched out his hand to the boy, and grasped it warmly, as Tom hung his head and shuffled his feet, his face a deep red the while with delight.

'An' now, Master Tom,' resumed old Foster, throwing back his chest and trying to speak with great dignity, 'there's a great responsibility on us until your father comes home. Do you think you can find him at Cape Kooringa, and tell him to come back as quick as possible, inasmuch as there is a party of sufferin' and distressed seamen a-landed at his door, one of which is a infant, and needs medical aid at once?'

Tom's face beamed. 'I can saddle a horse an' be at the cattle camp at Cape Kooringa long before sunrise. Is there any other message, Mr. Foster?'

'Yes; tell your father that there are thirteen men, includin' the captain, and one infant child. Name of captain Raymon' Cashall, name of ship Bandolier. Ran ashore on the south end o' Middleton Reef, on a certain date, slipped off again and foundered in deep water. One boat, with chief mate and seven men, still a-missin'. Can you remember all them offishul details, Tom?'

'Yes, Mr. Foster,' said Tom, who had before this heard the old sailor use similarly impressive language when occasion demanded it.

'Then, as soon as you gets to the house, and before you saddles your horse and goes off in pursooance of your dooty, I rekwests that you will rekwest Kate Gorman to send some person (Mrs. Potter's boy will do) to meet me and the captain and his distressed and sufferin' seamen, with two or more bottles of brandy, and some water, the key of the lazarette being in my room. Please tell your father that these are sufferin' an' distressed seamen, with an infant as mentioned, with no clothes, the ship having gone down sudden soon after strikin', the second

mate an' the captain's wife havin' died through bein' drownded when the ship struck an' washed overboard by a heavy sea, with two men, a Bengalee steward, another man name unknown, and a native nurse girl.'

With this rapidly delivered and puzzling message beating kink-bobs in his already excited brain, Tom started off, hot-foot. The 'lazarette' he knew to mean the cellar–Foster was fond of using the term. Kate Gorman had lived with them ever since Jack's birth.

Kate, red-fisted, red-haired, and honest-hearted, met the boy at the door, her rough freckled face beaming with smiles, though her red-hot tongue had a minute before been going unusually fast, as she rated and bullied the under-servants for being slow in bringing 'hot wather and flannels for the blessed child.'

'The brandy shall Misther Foster have widin twinty minutes by the grace av God, for I'll bust open the dure av his lazzyrett widout trapasin' about for his ould keys. But not a step shall ye move yoursilf till ye've aten and dhrunk somethin' afore ye go ridin' along to Kooringa, an' the black of the night a comin' on fast.'

And then the big Irishwoman, bustling and bristling with importance, yet speaking in a low voice on account of the 'swate blessed choild'–who lay slumbering on a bed that in Kate's eyes was for ever sacred–hurried first to the kitchen, and then to the stables, and, before he knew it, Tom's horse was ready saddled, and a huge dinner steaming and smoking placed before him.

'I can't eat, Kate,' he said; 'it is no use my trying. I want to get to Kooringa Cape to-night. I promised Foster.'

Kate bent down and clasped him in her arms.

'An' God go wid ye, Tom, me darlin'. Shure there's no danger, tho' 'tis a lonely ride along the beach. An', Tom, darlin', me swate, ask your father to hurry, hurry, hurry. For tho' I've niver borne a child meself, 'tis plain to me it is that the little one that lies a slapin' in your own mother's bed, will niver, niver wake in this world, unless some strathegy is done. An' there's no docther widin fifty mile av Port Kooringa; but the masther is full av docthorin' strathegy. So away ye go, Tom, an' all the blessin's av God go wid ye.'

So Tom, with a thrill of exultation and pride, led his horse down the hill to the shore, and springing into the saddle, set off at a steady trot along the long curving beach, towards the grey loom of Kooringa Cape, fifty miles away.

CHAPTER III

HOW TOM LIT A FIRE ON MISTY HEAD, AND WHAT CAME OF IT

Restraining his desire to put his horse into a gallop, Tom went steadily along for the first eight or ten miles, riding as near as possible to the water's edge, where the sand was hard, though by this time the tide was rising, and he knew that in another hour he would have to leave the beach entirely and pick up a cattle-track, which ran through the thick scrub, a few hundred yards back from high-water mark. Although the sun was still very hot, a south-easterly breeze had sprung up, and its cooling breath fanned the boy's heated face, and gave an added zest to the happiness of his spirits, for he was happy enough in all conscience. Here was he, he thought, only thirteen years of age, and the participator in the rescue of a shipwrecked crew, the full tale of whose disaster had yet to be told. Where, he wondered, did the Bandolier sail from, and whither was she bound, when she ran ashore at Middleton Reef? Oh, how heavenly it would be to-morrow, when he, and his father, and Jack were back at home, listening to the story of the wreck! And what strange-looking, tattooed sailors were those with the reddish-brown skins, and the straight jet-black hair like Red Indians? South Sea Islanders, of course! but of what Islands? And how long would they stay at Port Kooringa? Oh, how beautiful it would be if they could not get away for a long time, so that he might make friends with them all! Perhaps some of the brown men with the tattooed arms and legs would teach him to talk their language, and tell him about their island homes, where the palm trees grew thickly on the beaches, and the canoes floated upon the deep blue waters of the reef-encircled lagoons! Perhaps Captain Casalle might take a liking to him, and–he bent over his saddle and flushed with pleasure at the mere thought–and take him away when he got another ship. Oh, he did so hope that his father and the captain would become friends; then it would be so much easier (the 'it' being his father's consent to his becoming a sailor).

And so with such thoughts as these chasing quickly through his imagination, he was at last recalled to the present by the sound of splashing about his horse's feet, as the spent rollers sent every now and then thin, clear sheets of water swashing gently up the sand.

'Come, Peter, old chap,' he said, patting his willing horse on the neck, 'we must get up out of this on to the track, it's getting too soft;' and jumping off, he led the animal straight up over the loose, yielding sand which lay between the water's edge and the fringe of the scrub. Taking a drink from his canvas water-bag as he reached the end of the sand, he mounted again, and was soon riding along the track, which ran through a forest of native apple, whose thick umbrageous canopies of dark green shut out the sunlight so effectually, that the sudden tran-

sition made it appear as if he had moved from light to semi-darkness. From the leafy crowns of the trees, and stretching across or hanging in giant loops upon the ground, or swinging high above, was a network of great snaky vines, black, brown, and mottled, and so full of water that, as Tom well knew, he had but to cut off a four-foot length to obtain a full quart of the clear though astringent liquid. Now and then, as his horse's shoeless feet disturbed the loose carpet of fallen leaves, a frightened wallaby would bound away with heavy thumping leaps into the still gloomier shadows on the left, or down towards the ocean, whose softened and lulling murmur sounded as if the shore on which its waves curled and broke were miles and miles away, instead of scarce more than a stone's throw; though now and then, when the sea breeze rustled the dome of green above, it sang its never-ending song in louder tone. Sometimes there came a whirr of wings, as with harsh screaming notes a flock of green and golden parrakeets, intent upon feeding on the ripe wild apples, would flash by, and their cries perhaps be answered by the long-drawn-out note of a stock-whip bird.

The end of the first belt of scrub at last, and Tom emerged out into the open again–a wide stretch of dried-up swamp, along the seaward margin of which the track led in a waving line of white, hardened clay. Far back on the other side were clumps of tall, melancholy swamp gums, and beyond these the thickly timbered spurs of the coast range, standing out clearly and sharply in the blaze of the sinking sun.

'Come, Peter, my boy, it's getting cooler now, and you shall have a drink when we get to the Rocky Waterholes, behind Misty Head;' and Peter, tough old stock horse, to whom fifty miles, with such a light weight and easy-handed rider as was Tom, was a matter of no hardship, shook his clean-cut head, and giving an answering snort, set off at a steady swift canter, glad to be free of the curse of pestering flies, which in the sunlight hung about his nostrils, and crept into the corners of his big black eyes. An hour later, and just as the sun had sunk, a blazing ball of yellow, behind the purpling range, Tom drew rein at a spot known as the Rocky Waterholes–a series of small deep pools of limpid water at the back of a headland, whose high bold front rose stark from the sea. He had still five and twenty miles to ride before reaching the cattle-camp at Kooringa Cape, where he expected to find his father and Jack–unless, indeed, he met them returning driving the missing cattle, which was hardly likely, without they had met with them near a great fresh-water swamp at the back of Misty Head. Anyway, he thought, he would give Peter a bit of a spell for half an hour. If his father and Jack were already returning, they would be almost sure to stop at the Rocky Waterholes, and wait till the tide fell again–which would be towards dawn–instead of trying to drive the cattle along the track through the scrub in the darkness, and run the risk of some of them breaking away, and being lost.

Leading Peter up to one of the Waterholes, he let him drink his fill, and unbuckling the ends of the bridle, turned the animal adrift to feed upon the sweet grass and juicy 'pig-face' growing lower down. Then a sudden inspiration came to Tom. He would light a fire on the top of Misty Head; it would only take a few minutes, and if his father and Jack happened to be near, they would be sure to come and see who had lit it, and thus he could not possibly miss them.

The landward side of the head was mostly covered with a dense thicket, resembling the English privet, but as it did not reach higher than his waist, Tom forced his way through, and with some difficulty reached the summit–a little cleared space less than half an acre in extent, and free of scrub, but covered with coarse, dry grass about a foot high, swaying and rustling to the wind, which as the sun set had freshened. Lower down, on both sides, were a number of thick, stunted honeysuckles; and feeling his way very cautiously–for a slip meant a fall of two hundred feet or more into the sea below–Tom began to collect some of the dead branches, and then returned with them to the top. Once he had lit a fire, he would have light enough to show him where to find a thicker log or two, for there were many dead honeysuckles about, he knew, as the place was familiar to him. Pulling up some of the dried grass, and placing some twigs on the top, he struck a match and lit the heap. It blazed up crisply, and in a few minutes he could see his surroundings clearly.

'That's all right,' said Tom to himself; 'now for some big logs, and then I'll be off.'

Fifty feet away the gnarled and rugged branches of a dead and fallen honeysuckle stood revealed in the firelight, and he walked toward it. Taking hold of one of the largest branches, he began to drag it towards the fire, when he felt a smart puff of wind, and then heard an ominous crackle behind him, and then followed a sudden blaze of light–the long grass around the fire had caught, and a puff of wind had carried the flames to the scrub! Too late to avert the disaster, Tom dropped the log with a cry of terror, for he knew what a bush-fire at that dry time of the year meant; and, most of all, he dreaded the anger of his father for his carelessness. For a moment or two he stood gazing at the result of his folly; and then a cry of alarm broke from his lips as another eddying gust of wind came, and the flames answered with a roar as they swept through the scrub with a speed and fury that told Tom that in a few minutes they would be leaping and crashing into the timber on the other side of the Rocky Waterholes, and thence into the ranges beyond. And then, too, not only was his own retreat cut off, but the fire on the summit was eating its way to windward, and unless he could find some place of retreat on the sea-face or sides of the head, he stood a very good chance of becoming a victim to his own stupidity. As he looked about, undecided whether to try to get in advance of the flames by forcing his way through

the dense jungle of the north side, down to the water, and then clambering along the rocks to where he had left his horse, or get over the edge of the cliff to a place of safety, there came another bursting roar, and a huge wall of flame sprang up and leapt and crashed through the gums and other lofty trees which grew close to the landward side of the Waterholes–the bush itself had caught. And as Tom gazed in guilty fear at the scene of devastation, he saw his horse break through the stunted herbage above the beach on the north side and gallop down to the water, where he stopped, terrified at the sudden rush of fire, and, no doubt, wondering what had become of his master.

The sight of the horse standing there on the beach in full glare of the flames, which now were lighting up the sea and hiding the land beyond in dense volumes of blood-red smoke, as the wind carried them inland, filled the boy's heart with a new fear–for his father and Jack. Perhaps at that moment they were between Misty Head and the range. If so, then they were in imminent danger, for he knew that, unless they were near the beach, they would be cut off and perish, for now the wind, as if to aid in the work of destruction, was blowing strongly. A prayer that they might be far away at Kooringa Cape rose to his lips, and then, as he saw Peter still standing and looking about in expectancy, he, like a brave lad, pulled himself together. He would climb down the north side of the head, before the fire, which was steadily working downward to the water, cut him off from the mainland altogether, and kept him there until morning. Force his way down through the close scrub he could not, for the rapidly creeping flames, feeding upon the dried leaves and undergrowth, would overtake him before he was halfway down; but there was, he knew, a break in the density of the scrub, caused by a zigzag and narrow cleft in the side of the head, reaching from near the summit to the boulders of blacktrap rock at the foot. A few minutes' search showed him the most suitable spot from where to begin the descent, and guided by the light of the fire–which revealed every leaf and stone as clearly as if it were broad daylight–he soon reached the top of the cleft, which for the first fifty or sixty feet ran eastwards towards the beach, and then made a sudden and downward turn to the sea. The sides, though terribly rugged, afforded him excellent facilities for descent, as, besides the jutting stones which protruded out of the soil, tough vines and short strong shrubs gave him good support.

'Easier than I imagined,' said Tom to himself, thinking of the pride he would have in relating his feat to Jack in the morning; 'now here's the beginning of the straight up-and-down part.' Grasping the thin stem of a small stumpy tree, with prickly leaves, known to the boys as 'bandy-leg,' he peered over. Suddenly he felt that the tree was yielding at the roots; he flung out his left hand for further support, and clutched a vine about as thick as a lead pencil. It broke, and, with a gasp of terror, poor Tom pitched headlong down, bounding from side to side,

and crashing through the stunted herbage, till he struck the bottom, where he lay stunned and helpless, and bleeding from a jagged cut on the back of his head.

[image]

HE STRUCK THE BOTTOM, WHERE HE LAY STUNNED AND BLEEDING.

For some time he lay thus, and then, as returning consciousness came, he groaned in agony; for, besides the wound on his head, the fingers of his left hand were crushed, and he felt as if the arm were half torn from the socket. Wiping the dust and rubble, with which he was nearly blinded, from his face, he drew himself up into a sitting position, and began to feel his left arm from the shoulder down, fearing from the intense pain that one or more bones were broken; but in a few moments he found he could bend it. Groping about carefully–for the spot where he had fallen was in darkness, though he could discern the sea, not far below, still gleaming dully from the light of the fire–he found that the soil and rocks about him were quite dry and warm to the touch; evidently, therefore, he was some distance from the base of the head and above high-water mark. Slowly and painfully he crawled towards the opening, and discovered that he was about twenty feet over the water, just at the point where all vegetation ceased and bare rock began.

Already he was feeling thirst, and had he been able to use his left arm, he would have climbed down to the sea and swum round to the beach, where he felt sure that Peter was still awaiting him, with the water-bag hanging to the saddle dees. He leant his back against a rock, for now a deadly sickness came over him, and he went off into a long faint.

* * * * *

Ten miles away, and camped near a grassy headland known as the Green Bluff, was a party of eleven men, three of whom were watching the red glow of Misty Head; the rest were lying upon the grass, sleeping the sleep of exhausted nature. The three who watched were Mr. Wallis, Jack, and the black stockman, Wellington; those who slept were the first mate and seven of a boat's crew of the Bandolier. Only a few hours previously the latter had made the coast at the mouth of a small fresh-water creek, running into the sea at the Green Bluff, and were dis-

covered there by Jack, who was tailing some cows and calves on the bank, whilst his father and Wellington were looking for the rest of the missing cattle further up the creek. The moment Jack heard the officer's story, he ran to the pack-horse, which was quietly standing under the shade of a mimosa, unshipped the packs (containing cooked beef, damper, and tea and sugar) and lit a fire, whilst one of the sailors filled the big six-quart billy with water from the creek. Then, picking up his father's shot-gun which was carried on the pack-horse, he loaded it with ball, jumped on his horse again, cut off a cow with a year-old calf from the rest of the mob, drove them a little apart from the others, and sent a bullet into the calf's head. Without wasting time to skin the animal, the half-famished seamen set about cutting up and cooking it (having first devoured the piece of cooked beef and damper). Then waving his hand to the officer, and telling him that he would be back with his father in an hour or less, Jack set of at a gallop in search of him. The officer, a tall, hatchet-faced New Englander, nodded his head–his mouth being too full to speak–and then turned his hollow eyes with a look of intense satisfaction and solicitude upon the frizzling and blood-stained masses of veal.

Towards sunset, Mr. Wallis, Jack, and Wellington came cantering down along the bank of the creek, and the genial, kind-hearted squatter, though the advent of the shipwrecked men meant the abandonment of his search for the rest of the cattle, and the loss of much valuable time, sprang from his horse, and shook hands warmly with the officer, as he congratulated him upon his safe arrival.

'You must camp here with us to-night,' he said, 'and perhaps to-morrow as well, or at least until such time as you and your men are sufficiently recovered to walk to Port Kooringa. In the morning, however, I shall send my black boy on in advance, and he will meet us with some more provisions. For the present we can manage–the creek is alive with fish, fresh beef is in plenty'–pointing to the grazing mob of cows and calves,–'and you and your men, above all things, need rest. Now, tell me, do you smoke?'

'Smoke, mister?' and the man's voice shook; 'ef I get a smoke I'll just be in heaven. But I can't do it here, with those poor men a-looking at me. Every one of them is as good a man as me, although I did hev ter belt the life out of them sometimes.'

Mr. Wallis slipped his pipe, tobacco pouch, and a box of matches into the officer's hand. 'Go down to the creek and lie down there and smoke,' he said with a smile; 'I wish I had more tobacco for your men.'

As the mate crept away like a criminal, clutching the precious pipe and tobacco in his gaunt, sun-baked hand, Wellington cried out, and pointed towards Misty Head–

'Hallo! look over there! Big feller fire alonga Misty Head.'

Mr. Wallis turned and watched, and as he saw the lurid flames and huge volumes of smoke rise, and then sweep quickly down the incline of the head, toward the dark line of bush beyond, he could not repress a groan of vexation and anger, for he knew that, with such a strong breeze, the whole coast would be aflame in a few hours, and hundreds of miles of country on Kooringa Run be swept in its devastating course, and cause him to lose some thousands of pounds. Then in addition to this, and of more importance to his generous mind–for money itself held no sway on a nature such as his–was the fact that he and the shipwrecked seamen would have to make their way to Port Kooringa along the beach as the tide served, for they could not for some days traverse the burnt-out country at the back of the many headlands and capes, as the ground would be a furnace covered with ashes.

Towards midnight, Wellington, who was on watch, roused his master, and reported that the fire was rapidly travelling towards the Green Bluff, and would be upon them in an hour. This was serious, for there was no beach to which they could retreat on either side of the bluff for many miles, and the country on the opposite side of the little creek was, though free from scrub, clothed in long grass, which a single flying spark would set ablaze.

Awakening the officer, he explained the situation to him, and suggested a way of escaping from the danger which menaced them by taking to the boat, putting to sea, and making direct for Port Kooringa at once.

Tired as were the mate and his men, they at once acquiesced. The cattle and horses were driven across the creek, and left to take care of themselves, the boat's water-breaker filled, and the saddles and other gear were placed in the boat, only just in time, for already the heat of the flames was getting oppressive. There was but little surf at the mouth of the creek, and the instant the boat had passed through it, the ragged sail was set, and she slipped through the water.

'Don't go too close to Misty Head,' said Mr. Wallis to the officer; 'there is always a strong tide-rip there.'

The officer altered the boat's course.

Poor Tom, just as the daylight broke, saw her sail pass about a mile off. He stood up and shouted till he was hoarse; and then, when he realized that she was too far off for him to be heard, or even seen in such a position, sat down and wept, forgetting his bodily pain in his anguish of spirit.

But, as the sun rose, his thirst became overpowering, and rising to his feet with a prayer for strength upon his lips, he began to make his way along the foot of the rocks. His arm was less painful now, but three of his fingers were black, swollen, and useless, and the wound in his head every now and then made him faint. When half-way to the beach, he saw that the water was sufficiently

shallow for him to wade ashore on the clear, sandy bottom, instead of toiling over the rocks, so getting down at a spot where it was not over his knees, he first immersed his whole body and then bathed his head and face. The stinging, smarting sensation caused him fresh pain, but he set his teeth and bore it manfully, knowing that the salt water would do the cut on his head more good than harm, even though it made it bleed afresh.

With renewed courage–for the cool water had revived him wonderfully–he waded along cheerfully, his thoughts now turning to his father and Jack, for whom he was not at all alarmed, knowing that both of them were too good bushmen to be caught by a bush fire, no matter how suddenly it had come upon them. If they were camped at Kooringa Cape, there was no danger for them at all, as a few miles this side of it there was a wide tidal river, and if they had been anywhere near the Rocky Waterholes when the fire started they would have sought safety on one of the small islands in the Big Swamp. Anyway he would be home to-morrow, or the next day, if he had to keep to the beach–and no doubt would meet some one coming to look for him; for unless Peter had met his father's party, the animal was bound to make for home, and be seen by some person. Then that boat! Of course it must have been the missing boat from the Bandolier–no other boat would be coming down the coast, surely! Oh, if he were only home to know! But a drink first before he decided what to do.

Stepping out of the water on to the hard dry sand, Tom ascended the bank, and then a cry of dismay escaped from him–the Rocky Waterholes were surrounded by a belt of blazing logs, and it was impossible for him to approach within a hundred yards, and the holes themselves were not to be seen!

Tom returned to the beach to consider. He *must* get a drink, and there was none to be had on the way back home, except from the thick vines in the scrub through which he had ridden the previous morning. But was there any scrub left? As far as he could see to the southward, the coast was still burning, and even if the scrub where the vines grew had escaped, he could not cut one, for he had lost his knife when he fell. Well, he must try and get along the beach and round the cliffs, further on, to the creek at the Green Bluff. There was always deep running water there; and now he began to think of nothing else–he must get a drink, or he could never attempt to walk all the way to Port Kooringa. Oh, if he could but get to the creek quickly! he thought, as, taking off his boots and socks, which were filled with coarse gritty sand, he tied them together with the laces, and set out along the hard beach. If it were only five miles of such easy walking as the first two, he would soon reach there; but the remaining three were the trouble–three miles of rocky shore, under a blazing sun, and with his head making him feel strange and faint.

Never once halting, the lad kept steadily on, trying hard not to lose courage,

for every minute he felt his strength failing him, and a strange buzzing noise was in his ears, and the yellow sand seemed to dance and twist about and sink away from his feet. Oh for a drink, a drink! A long drink would set him right again, he kept repeating to himself; there was nothing really much the matter with him except his head.

At last he came to the end of the beach, put on his boots, and began to climb over the first point of rocks. This took him much longer than he anticipated, and he slipped and fell heavily once or twice. Then came a succession of small deep bays, the shores of which were covered with smooth loose pebbles, giving way to every step, and terribly exhausting to walk over. Then again another point–a flat reef of rocks running out some distance into the sea, dangerous, slippery, and covered with a greasy green weed, and awash at high water. Tom had never before walked along this part of the coast, and at any other time its wild loneliness would have pleased his Nature-loving imagination–now it appalled and terrified the poor boy, who, though he did not know it, was rapidly becoming physically exhausted from the injury to his head, which was more serious than he imagined.

Once over the wide stretch of smooth rocks, he took heart again; Green Bluff, now black and smoking, seemed quite near. Another little bay, and then another, and panting and half frantic with excitement and thirst, Tom stumbled blindly over the loose stones and gravel, which were heaped up in ridges on the narrow foreshore. Surely, he asked himself, there could not be many more of these dreadful stony winding bays, backed up by steep walls of rock. Once more a high point obstructed him; and now an insensate rage took possession of him. With blazing eyes, and parched and cracking lips, he sprang at the great boulders, slipping and falling again and again, to rise with bleeding hands and face, a dazed determination in his whirling brain to get to the water at the Green Bluff in spite of everything. Trembling in every limb, he succeeded in getting round–and then stopped, his face white with horror: on the opposite side of the bay a long stretch of cliff rose sheer up from the deep blue water at its base. And then a sudden blackness shut out the world, and he sank down upon the shingle in despair.

CHAPTER IV

CAPTAIN SAM HAWKINS AND THE LADY ALICIA

Thirty miles to the eastward of Breaksea Spit, which lies off Sandy Cape, on the coast of Queensland, a little tubby and exceedingly disreputable-looking brig of about two hundred tons burden was floundering and splashing along before a fresh southerly breeze, and a short and jumpy head swell. By the noise she made when her bluff old bows plunged into a sea and brought her up shaking, and groaning, and rolling as she rose to it and tumbled recklessly down the other side, one would have thought that the Lady Alicia was a two thousand ton ship, close hauled under a press of canvas, and thrashing her way through the water at thirteen or fourteen knots. Sometimes, when she was a bit slow in rising, a thumping smack on her square old-fashioned stern would admonish her to get up and be doing, and with a protesting creak and grind from every timber in her sea-worn old frame, blending into what sounded like a heart-broken sigh, she would make another effort, and drop down into the trough again with a mighty splash of foam shooting out from her on every side, and a rattling of blocks, and flapping and slapping of her ancient, threadbare, and wondrously-patched canvas.

Aft, on the short, stumpy poop, a short stumpy man with a fiery-red face, keen blue eyes, and snow-white hair, was standing beside the helmsman, smoking, and watching the antics of the venerable craft–of which he was master and owner–with unconcealed pride. His age was about the same as the brig, a little over fifty years; and this was not the only point in which they resembled each other, for their appearance and characteristics bore a marked similarity in many respects.

In the first place, the Lady Alicia was a noisy, blustering old wave-puncher, especially when smashing her cumbrous way through a head sea, as she was doing at present. But despite her age and old-fashioned build, her hull was still as sound as a bell; and Captain Samuel Hawkins was a noisy, blustering old shell-back, especially when he met with any opposition; and despite his age and old-fashioned and fussy manner, his heart was not only as sound as a bell, but full to overflowing with every good and humane feeling, for all his forty years of life at sea.

Secondly, the Lady Alicia had antiquated single 'rolling' topsails (which were the skipper's especial pride, although they invariably jammed at critical moments during a heavy squall, and refused to lower, with all hands and the cook straining frantically with distended eyeballs at the down-hauls), and Captain Hawkins wore antiquated nether garments with a seamless bunt, and which fastened with large horn buttons at his port and starboard hips, and this part of his attire was the object of as much secret contempt with his crew as were the hated rolling topsails, though the old man was a firm believer in both.

Thirdly, the Lady Alicia carried stun sails (which was another source of pride to her master, and objects of bitter hatred to the mate, as useless and trou-

blesome fallals); and Captain Hawkins wore a stove-pipe hat when on shore in Sydney, the which was much resented by many of his nautical cronies and acquaintances, who thought that he put on too many airs for the skipper of the Lazy Alice, as they derisively called the old brig. But no one of them would have dared to have said anything either about the brig's stunsails or sailing qualities, or her master's shore-going top-hat in his hearing; for the old man was mighty handy with his fists, and a disrespectful allusion to his own rig, or to that of his ship, would entail a quick challenge, and an almost certain black eye to the offender.

And, fourthly, the brig had been built for the Honourable East India Company, and in the Honourable East India Company's service old Samuel, then 'young Sam,' had served his apprenticeship to the sea; and, in fact, as he stood there on his own poop-deck, the most unnautical observer could not but think that he had been born for the Lady Alicia, and that the Lady Alicia had, so to speak, been built to match the personal appearance of her present commander, despite her previous thirty years of buffeting about, from the Persian Gulf to Macassar, under other skippers.

Presently, turning to the helmsman, a huge, brawny-limbed Maori half-caste, who had to stoop to handle the spokes of the quivering and jumping wheel, the master took his pipe from his mouth, knocked the ashes out upon the rail, and said–

'Well, William Henry, we're doing all right, hey?'

The Maori, deeply intent upon his steering, as his keen dark eye watched the lumping seas ahead, nodded, but said nothing, for he was a man of few words–except upon certain occasions, which shall be alluded to hereafter. Seated on the main hatch, the second mate and some of the crew were employed in sewing sails; for although the brig was jumping about so freely, and every now and then sending sheets of foam and spray flying away from her bows, the decks were as dry as a bone. Further for'ard the black cook was seated on an upturned mess-tub outside his galley door, peeling potatoes into a bucket by his side, and at intervals thrusting his great splay foot into the nose of Julia, the ship's pig, which, not satisfied with the peelings he threw her, kept trying to make a rush past through the narrow gangway, and get at the contents of the bucket.

Just before seven bells, the mate, who did such navigating work as was required, put his head up out of the companion, sextant in hand, and then laying the instrument down on the skylight, turned to the skipper.

'He says he feels bully this morning, and wants to come on deck.'

The little squat skipper nodded, hurried below, and in a few minutes reappeared with a bundle of rugs and rather dirty pillows, which he at once proceeded to arrange between the up-ended flaps of the skylight, then he hailed the black gentleman potato-peeler.

'Steward' (the term cook was never used by the worthy old captain), 'come aft here and lend a hand.'

'Ay, ay, sah,' replied the negro, in his rich, 'fruity' voice, 'I'se comin', sah;' and with a final and staggering kick with the ball of his foot on Julia's fat side, he put the bucket inside the galley, slid the door to, and followed the captain below, whilst the mate, a young, dark-faced, and grave-looking man, swiftly passed his sun-tanned hand over the couch made by the skipper, to see that there were no inequalities or discomforting lumps in the thick layer of rugs.

And then, curly wool and sooty black face first, and white head and red face beneath, up comes Tom Wallis, borne between them into life and sunshine again; but not the same Tom as he was ten days before–only an apology for him–with a shaven head, and an old, wan, and shrunken face, with black circles under the eyes, a bandaged foot, and left hand in a sling.

'Gently, there now, steward, gently does it. Hallo! youngster, you're laughing, are you? Right glad am I to see it, my lad. Steady now, steward, lower him away easy.... There! how's that, son?'

'Thank you, sir,' said Tom, as the two men laid him down upon the rugs. 'Oh, how lovely it is to see the sky again! Where are we now, sir?'

[image]

'THANK YOU, SIR,' SAID TOM, AS THE TWO MEN LAID HIM DOWN.

'Thirty mile or thereabout nor'-east o' Sandy Cape. How's the foot?'

'Much better, sir, thank you; but I think I might have the things off my hand now. I can move all my fingers quite easily.'

Hawkins turned to the mate. 'What do you think, Mr. Collier?'

The grave-faced young mate nodded, sat down beside the lad on the edge of the skylight, and taking Tom's hand out of the sling, began to unwind the bandages from his fingers, which he examined critically, and, pressing them carefully, asked the lad if he felt much pain.

'No, sir,' said Tom, lying manfully, as he looked into the officer's eyes–so calm, patient, and quiet, like those of his own father–'not much.'

'Then we'll have these off,' said Collier, as with a kindly smile he unfastened the bandages; 'but you won't be able to use that foot for another week or two.'

'I don't know how I managed to cut it,' said Tom, as he lay back with a sigh of relief, and watched the brig's royalmasts make a sweeping arc through the air as she rolled from side to side. 'I put on my boots when I came to the rocks

beyond Misty Head.'

Captain Hawkins laughed. 'You was *non compos mentis* of the first class and stark naked in a state of noodity, and when we saw you spread-eagled as it were on the beach, and put ashore to see whether you were dead or alive we couldn't see a stitch of clothing anywhere, could we, William Henry?'

The Maori helmsman nodded his head affirmatively, and then, as eight bells were struck, and he was relieved at the wheel, he came and stood beside the master and mate, and a pleased expression came into his somewhat set and heavy features when Tom put out his hand to him.

'It was you who saw me first, and saved my life, wasn't it?' he said; and then with boyish awkwardness–'I am very much obliged to you, Mr. William Henry.'

The big half-caste took Tom's hand in his own for a moment, and shuffling his bare feet, muttered in an apologetic tone that 'it didn't matter much,' as he 'couldn't help a-seeing' him lying on the beach. Then he stood for'ard.

'Do you know who *he* is, young fellow?' said the skipper, impressively, to Tom, as soon as the big man was out of hearing.

Tom shook his head.

'That's Bill Chester, William Henry Chester is his full name he's the feller that won the heavy-weight championship in Sydney two years ago didn't you never hear of him?'

Tom again shook his head.

'Well you know him now and it'll be something for you to look back on when you comes to my age to say you've shook hands with a man like *him*. Why he's a man as could be ridin' in his own carriage and a hobnobbin' with dukes and duchesses in London if he'd a mind to; but no he ain't one of that sort a more modester man *I* never saw in my life. Why he stood his trial for killin' a water policeman once and only got twelve months for it the evidence showin' he only acted in self-defence being set upon by six of them Sydney water police every one of 'em being a bad lot and dangerous characters as I know; and the judge saying that he only stiffened the other man under serious provocation and a lenient sentence would meet the requirements of the case; seventeen pound ten me and some other men give the widow who said that she wished it had happened long before and saved her misery he being a man who when he wasn't ill-usin' sailor men was a-bootin' and beltin' his wife eleven years married to him although he was in the Government service I'll tell you the whole yarn some day and.... Now then where are you steerin' to? I don't want you a cockin' your ears to hear what I'm sayin'. Mind your steerin' you swab an' no eaves-droppin' or you'll get a lift under your donkey's lug.'

The man who had relieved 'William Henry'–a little, placid-faced old crea-

ture, who had sailed with Hawkins ever since that irascible person had bought the Lady Alicia when she was lying in Port Phillip, deserted by her crew, twenty years before, said, 'Ay, ay, sir,' and glued his eyes to the compass–although he had no more intention of listening to the skipper's remarks than he had of leading a mutiny and turning the brig into a pirate. He had been threatened with fearful physical damage so often during his score of years' service with the boisterous old captain, that had it been actually administered he would have died in a fit of astonishment, for 'old Sam' had never been known to strike one of his hands in his life, although he was by no means averse, as mentioned above, to displaying his pugilistic qualifications on shore, if any one had the temerity to make derogatory remarks about his wonderful old brig.

Swelling with importance, the old man, after glaring at the man at the wheel for a moment or two, turned to the mate–

'Mr. Collier this young person being an infant in the eyes of the law and this ship being on Government service and to-day being his convalescency as it were I shall require you to verify any or whatsoever statements as shall appear to be written in the log of this ship. I know my duty sir and I hereby notify you that I rely on you to assist and expiate me in every manner;' and the fussy little man waddled down the companion way with a kindly nod at Tom.

Tom began to laugh. 'He talks something like old Foster, Mr. Collier–the old man I was telling you about.'

The mate smiled. 'He's a good old fellow, my lad, good, and honest, and true; and now that he is out of hearing, I may tell you that, ever since you were brought on board he has studied your comfort, and has never ceased talking about you. Three days ago, when you were able to talk, and tell us how you came to be where we found you, he was so distressed that he told me that he was more than half inclined to turn the brig round and head for Sydney, so that you might be enabled from there to return to your father.'

Tom's eyes filled at once. 'My poor father! He will never expect to see me again;' and then, as his thoughts turned to home and all that was dear to him, he placed his hands over his face, and his tears flowed freely.

The officer laid his hand on his shoulder. 'Try and think of the joy that will be his when he sees you again, Tom. And, above all, my dear boy, try and think of the mercy of Him who has spared you. Try and think of Him and His goodness and—-'

He rose to his feet, and strode to and fro on the poop, his dark, handsome features aglow with excitement. Then he stopped, and called out sharply to a couple of hands to loose the fore and main royals, for the wind was now lessening and the sea going down.

Ten minutes later he was again at Tom's side, his face as calm and quiet

as when the lad had first seen it bending over him three days before, when he awoke to consciousness.

'I promised you I would tell you the whole yarn of your rescue. There is not much to tell. We were hugging the land closely that day, so as to get out of the southerly current, which at this time of the year is very strong. We saw the fire the previous night, when we were about thirty miles off the land, and abreast of Port Kooringa. Then the wind set in from the north-east with heavy rain-squalls, so the skipper, who knows every inch of the coast, and could work his way along it blindfolded, decided to keep in under the land, and escape from the current; for the Lady Alicia'–and here his eyes lit up–'is not renowned for beating to windward, though you must never mention such a heresy to Captain Hawkins. He would never forgive you. About four o'clock in the afternoon we went about, and fetched in two miles to the northward of Misty Head; and Maori Bill, the man who was here just now, and whom the skipper calls "William Henry," cried out, just as we were in stays again, that he could see a man lying on the beach. The captain brought his glasses to bear on you, and although you appeared to be dead, he sent a boat ashore. There was a bit of a surf running on the beach, but Harry took the boat in safely, and then jumped out, and ran up to where you were lying. He picked you up, and carried you down to the boat–you were as naked as when you first came into the world, Tom,–and then brought you, just hovering between life and death, aboard. Your left foot was badly cut, left hand swollen and helpless, and, worse than all, you had a terrible cut on the back of your head. And here you are now, Tom, safe, and although not sound, you will be so in a few days.'

Tom tried to smile, but the old house at Port Kooringa, and the sad face of his heart-broken father, came before his eyes, and again his tears flowed, as he thought of the anguish of those he loved.

'Oh, Mr. Collier, that day was the happiest day of my life! When I was riding along the beach, I felt as if I was moving in the air, and the sound of the surf and the cry of the sea-birds ... and the wavy, round bubbles that rose and floated before me in the sunshine over the sand ... and I was so glad to think that I could tell father and Jack about Foster and I going out in the boat to the shipwrecked sailors, and bringing them ashore. And I'm so sorry for being so foolish as to light a fire on Misty Head, when the country was so dry. Poor father, I wish I could tell him so now! Of course he will think I am dead;' and, in spite of himself, his eyes filled again, as he thought of his father's misery and worn and haggard face.

'Don't fret, my boy. It cannot be helped. And any day we may speak a ship bound to Sydney or Melbourne, in which case you will soon be back home; anyhow, the Lady Alicia should be in Sydney Harbour in four months from now.'

Then the mate gave Tom some particulars about the nature of the voyage. The brig was really, as the captain had said, on Government service, having been chartered by the New South Wales authorities to convey a boat to Wreck Reef–a dangerous shoal about two hundred miles north-east of Sandy Cape, and the scene of many disastrous wrecks. The boat, with an ample supply of provisions and water, charts and nautical instruments, and indeed every necessary for the relief of distressed seamen, was to be placed under a shed on an islet on the reef, where it would be safe and easily visible. During the past four or five years, so the mate said, several fine ships had run ashore, and the last disaster had resulted in terrible privations to an entire ship's company, who for many months had been compelled to remain there, owing to all the boats having been destroyed when the vessel crashed upon one of the vast network of reefs which extend east and west for a distance of twenty miles.

From Wreck Reef the brig was to proceed to Noumea, in New Caledonia, where she had to discharge about a hundred tons of coal destined for the use of an English gunboat, engaged in surveying work among the islands of the New Hebrides group.

'So you see, Tom,' added Mr. Collier, 'there's every probability of your seeing something of the South Sea Islands–if New Caledonia may be called one. We were there last year on the same errand, carrying coal for the naval people–in fact, old Sam always gets a charter of this sort; he is well known to them all, and although he is not much of a navigator, a better sailor man never trod a deck; and, in spite of the brig being a slow sailer, she is, like her master, always to be depended upon. I have been with him now for more than three years, and during that time we have had several Government charters, of which the old man is very proud of speaking. He has many little vanities, which you must take care not to offend: one is that the brig is a remarkably fast sailer; another is his harmless habit of exaggerating her performances to any stranger whom he may meet; another is that those four old useless six-pound carronades which lumber up the main deck are likely to be of immense service to the colony of New South Wales, should the Russians ever make a descent on Sydney Harbour. They were in the brig when he bought her–she once carried ten such popguns–when she was employed in the China Seas, and I believe had occasion to use them more than once. However, if you want to please him, just ask him one day to let the crew go to quarters for gun-practice. The magazine is in the lazarette–you'll see the hatch just under the cabin table,–and every two weeks he has what he calls an inspection: there's enough round shot down there to load a ten-ton cutter. There really was a Russian scare in Sydney some years ago–long before I joined the brig, before you were born, in fact; and old Sam went mad with delight when the Governor hired the Lady Alicia, to cruise up and down the coast to watch for

the hostile fleet. However, he'll tell you all about it some day. But about the most amusing of his eccentricities is this–whenever we are entering port he likes to do so in style, and nearly drives the crew and myself crazy by rigging stunsail gear, and crowding the old ship with unnecessary and useless canvas; but he really believes that his friends are eaten up with jealousy at the fine appearance he imagines she presents. But there, I must leave you now.'

Presently the skipper's head appeared again.

'My boy me and Mr. Collier and the second officer as is customary shortly after noon take refreshment; will you take a glass of Madery which I can recommend being a consistent invidel myself for many years with liver.'

'Thank you, sir,' said Tom, as the kind old fellow brought him a glass of very good Madeira indeed, and watched him drink it. Then the skipper bustled below again, to take his mid-day tot of brandy-and-water with his officers.

CHAPTER V
THE CAPTAIN OF THE BANDOLIER

Nearly two long months had passed since Tom had lit that fateful fire on Misty Head, and Mr. Wallis, his hair somewhat greyer, and his face more deeply lined, was sitting with the captain of the Bandolier upon the grassy side of the bluff overlooking the bar. Both were smoking, and watching the figures of Jack and the little girl, who were on the beach below, Jack fishing, and the child wandering to and fro, busied in picking up seaweed and shells, and running up every few minutes to show them to the lad. Away to the northward, the headlands showed grey and soft through the misty sea haze which floated about the shore, and as Mr. Wallis let his gaze rest upon them, he leant his face upon his hand, and sighed heavily.

'Wallis,' said the seaman presently, and speaking in a low voice, as he resumed the desultory conversation they had begun when they first sat down on the bluff to wait until Jack and little Nita returned to them, 'I want you to believe me when I say that there is not an hour of my life in which I do not feel that but for me this heavy blow would never have fallen on you.'

'Do not say that, Casalle. It was to be, and you do wrong to reproach yourself for the calamity with which it has pleased the Almighty to afflict me, and for which you are in no way responsible. And your sympathy has done much to help

me. Heavy as is the sorrow which has come upon us both, we should yet reflect that we have no right to cry out in bitterness of spirit: for even though your wife was taken from you in that night of horror with awful suddenness, your little one was spared to comfort you; my boy was taken from me, but his brother is left. And as time goes on we shall begin to understand, Casalle, and even the dreadful manner of their deaths will in God's own time cease to be such an ever-present and heart-breaking reflection as it is to us now.'

The master of the Bandolier made no answer. He had not that hope which to some men is a source of such sublime strength, when all the sweetness and joy and sunshine of life is snatched suddenly away, and the whole world becomes dark to the aching heart. But although he made no response to his companion's fervid speech, he felt its truth, and envied him the possession of such a deep-seated fount of calm, unquestioning faith.

During the two months that had elapsed since he and his men had landed at Port Kooringa, a warm feeling of friendship had grown up between him and his host; and now that the time was drawing near for them to part–for he was to leave the quiet hospitable house under the bluff on the following day–he had tried to express his gratitude for the unceasing kindness and generosity which he, his child, and his officers and men had received at the hands of the owner of Kooringa Run.

Presently Wallis rose. 'Come, let us go down to Jack and Nita. They have forgotten our existence, I believe; Jack is too busy pulling in whiting and sea-bream to even turn his head to see where we are, and Nita won't leave him, you may be sure.'

Casalle laughed softly. 'Yes, they get on well together, don't they? I wonder how long it will be before I see her again,' he added wistfully.

'Not very long, I hope,' said the squatter, cheerfully, 'not long–for all our sakes. And, although I know what a wrench it will be for you to leave her, I am sure you are doing wisely in giving her to us until she is old enough to manage your house in Samoa, when you give up the sea altogether, and settle down a prosperous planter. And I do not think that you will be long absent from her at a time. I shall certainly expect to see you again in less than two years.'

The captain shook his head. 'I lost all I had in the world in the Bandolier, except her insurance. That will enable me to buy a small schooner to begin trading again; but I shall have to get long terms from the Sydney merchants for my trade goods. And I don't see how I am likely to see Kooringa again in two years–I'll have to make Samoa my headquarters for the next five, I fear.'

'My dear fellow,' said the squatter, 'you shall do no such thing–I mean that I am determined not to lose sight of you for five years. Make Samoa your headquarters if you will, but I might as well tell you now what I want you to do for

me. I want you to let me be your banker. I am not a very wealthy man, but I can well spare four or five thousand pounds. And I have written to Sydney to have that sum placed to your credit in the Bank of Australasia. Look upon it, if you have luck in your trading ventures, as a loan; if, unfortunately, you should meet with further misfortune, consider it as a gift, given freely and with sincere pleasure by one friend to another. With this sum you can get at least one of the vessels you need, and have enough capital left to buy all the trade goods you require, and pay for them, instead of handicapping yourself by giving bills to the Sydney merchants. There is nothing more harassing and deterrent to a man's energies, than to know that his credit and reputation are in the hands of people thousands of miles away. Therefore, my dear Casalle, don't give a bill to any one. If you find that five thousand pounds will not pull you through, my agent in Sydney will come to your assistance.... There, there, don't say another word. 'Twould be "a moighty poor wurruld, indade," as Kate Gormon says, if we can't help one another. And then I don't want you to touch the Bandolier's insurance money. A thousand pounds is not much; leave it to accumulate for little Nita. Then again, as to your crew's wages, which you were intending to pay out of the insurance–that is all settled too.'

The seaman's eyes filled. 'Wallis, what can I say? How can I tell you what I feel? I never had a friend in my life till I met you. My father, who was a native of Funchal, was killed in a boat accident when I was a boy of ten. He was a rough Portuguese whaler, and after his death my mother was left in poverty, and died when I was away at sea, on my first voyage. My one brother, who was seven years older than me, also went to sea. I have never seen him since, but heard that long after he had passed as second mate, he returned to our native island, only to find that our mother was dead, and that I had gone. Until I met my wife, who was a native of the New England States, I led the wildest, the most dissolute—-'

The master of Kooringa held up his hand. 'Never mind that, old man. There are not many–men such as you and I, wanderers on the face of the earth–who can show a clean sheet. Like you, I was sent out into the world when a mere boy; but I was less fortunate than you, for instead of a life of honourable hardship, I was led to look forward to–by my parents' influence–to one of ease. You, perhaps, were driven to dissipation when on shore, by the rough life of a whaleship's fo'c'sle. I led a dissipated and worthless existence, because I was cursed with ample funds, and but few of my many associates in India, during all the time I was in the Company's service, had any other thought but of leading a short life and a merry one, or else making as much money as possible and returning to England to live upon it. And like you, a good woman came to my rescue. Now, my dear fellow, let us say no more on this subject. Come, let us see what Jack has caught.'

Too overcome to find words to express his gratitude for such unlooked-for

generosity from a man who, two months before, had been an utter stranger, the captain could only wring his companion's hand in silence.

In another day or two he would have to say good-bye to little Nita and the master of Kooringa; for the antiquated paddle-wheel coasting steamer William the Fourth, which called at Port Kooringa every three months, was then in harbour loading with hides and timber for Sydney, and he had taken passage by her. Brooker, the chief mate, and the whole of the crew, had preceded him some weeks by a sailing vessel, and were awaiting him in Sydney, for no one of them but wanted to sail with him again–and indeed the feeling that existed between captain and crew was something more like comradeship than aught else.

But here I am again, drifting away to leeward, and never a word about the Bandolier herself, and how she came to such mishap, and what happened between the time of that unlucky fire and now–when the two men and Nita and Jack are walking slowly home to spend their last night together in the old house which faced the restless bar.

* * * * *

When the missing boat had sailed past Misty Head at dawn on the day following the fire, Mr. Wallis had told the officer that they should reach the boat-harbour just below his house in another three or four hours; but misfortune overtook them. Twice was the boat, despite the officer's careful handling of her, filled with lumping seas and swamped, and in this dangerous situation furious rain-squalls burst upon them, and lasted almost without cessation for two hours. So darkness had set in ere they landed at the little boat-harbour, drenched and exhausted, and the first intimation Captain Casalle had of the safety of the missing men was by being awakened out of a deep slumber by his American mate, who was standing at his bedside wringing his hands. He was soon followed by Mr. Wallis, who congratulated the master of the Bandolier most warmly upon his escape, and then added a few words of sympathy for the loss of his wife–the mate already having given him some particulars of the disaster to the ship and the manner of the poor lady's death.

The moment he had entered the house, old Foster had told him of Tom's departure the previous day, and expressed some alarm when he found that his father had not seen him, and Mr. Wallis himself could not repress a feeling of anxiety. This he tried to put away, by thinking that the lad would be sure to turn up early on. the following morning. Many things, he knew, might have happened to delay Tom's return–primarily the fire, which might have caused him to make

a wide detour, or else ride on hard to Kooringa Cape to avoid it; or perhaps–and this he thought very probable–the boy had had to take to the beach and wait till the fire burnt out before going on to the Cape. Nothing, however, could be done until morning, and in the morning they would be sure to see Tom safely back, none the worse for his adventure. He was a brave lad, and the bush and its ways were a second nature to him.

Late that night, as the father and son were talking over the exciting incidents of the previous day, the captain of the Bandolier tapped at the dining-room door and then entered, followed by his mate. In a moment Mr. Wallis was on his feet and making his visitors comfortable, whilst big red-haired Kate brought in liquor, cigars, and pipes. Then until long past midnight the three talked, and solemn-faced Jack listened with devouring interest to the full tale of the wreck of the Bandolier.

She was a barque of nearly four hundred tons, and Casalle's own vessel. He, from the time he was a lad of fifteen till he was nearly forty years of age, had sailed in American whaleships. From 'green hand' he had risen step by step from boat-steerer to junior officer, then to first mate, and finally to master; and then, having saved enough money to embark on a venture of his own, and believing that a fortune awaited him in the South Seas as a trader, he had bought the Bandolier, and sailed her out to Samoa. Here he purchased land from the natives for a trading station, and refitted the barque for her future voyages among the island groups. His wife, a young American girl, whom he had married in New London, Connecticut, six years before, had accompanied him with their little daughter; and whilst he was away in the Bandolier cruising through the New Hebrides and Solomon Islands, she remained in charge of the trading station. From the very first he had been fortunate, and at the end of two years he decided to take a cargo of coco-nut oil and other island produce to Sydney, sell it there, instead of disposing of it in Samoa, and invest the proceeds in a fresh supply of goods, which would practically give him a monopoly of the island trade from Samoa to the far-away Marshall Islands. But, as he expected to remain in Sydney for some months whilst the Bandolier underwent extensive repairs, he determined that his wife and child should accompany him. Then, as he thought it very likely he would be able to pick up for a low price in Sydney a small schooner of about a hundred tons, which he intended to use as a tender to the barque, he shipped ten extra native sailors–Tahitians, Savage Islanders, and Rotumahans–just the sort of men he wanted for the work in which the new vessel would be engaged.

'We made a splendid run from Samoa till we were, as I thought, fifty or sixty miles north of Lord Howe's Island,' Casalle went on to say. 'Then the weather became squally and generally dirty, and at four o'clock on the afternoon of the following day I decided to heave-to for the night, not wishing to attempt to run by

the island in the dark, my chronometer being unreliable. Just before sunset a big, full-rigged American timber ship, with her decks piled high with lumber, came racing up astern. Just as she was abreast of the Bandolier, the squall before which she and my own vessel had been running died away, and as we were within easy hailing distance I spoke her, and asked the captain for his approximate position. Much to my satisfaction, it agreed with mine within a mile or two, so I kept on, expecting to pass Lord Howe's Island about midnight. The American ship, which was keeping the same course, soon drew away from us when the next squall came, for the Bandolier was under short canvas.

'About ten o'clock we were running before what appeared to be a steady breeze, although the sky was dull and starless. My wife and I were having a cup of coffee in the cabin, and little Nita was fast asleep, when, without a word of warning, the ship struck heavily. The moment I got on deck I saw that there was no hope of saving the ship, for her bows were jammed into a cleft of a reef, and she was tearing her bottom to pieces aft, for every sea lifted her, and she soon began to pound violently upon the rocks. The native crew worked well–we carried but two white seamen exclusive of my first and second mates–and we got two of the boats away safely, under the chief mate and boatswain, each one with a fair amount of provisions and water. Most unfortunately, my poor wife refused to leave the ship in either of these boats, declaring she would not leave till I did, in the third and last boat; she, however, permitted Mr. Brooker here–my chief mate–to take the little girl with him. Then the child's nurse–a young Samoan native girl–satisfied that her charge was in safety, begged to remain with her mistress. Poor Solepa, her affection cost her her life. Five minutes after we struck, the ship began to fill very rapidly, and I to fear that, before we could get clear of her in the third boat, she would swing round, slip off into deep water, and founder, for, although she was still bumping aft with every sea, she had worked free for'ard.

'Despite the darkness, however, we managed to get the boat ready for lowering, the second mate and two native sailors jumping into her, so as to cast her clear of the falls, and bring her astern the moment she touched the water. This they succeeded in doing, and at that moment, and whilst the steward, a sailor, and myself, were standing by ready to lower my wife and the native girl into the boat, the ship gave a sudden heavy roll to starboard and crashed over on her bilge. Then a black wall of sea towered high over the buried rail, and fell upon us. What happened immediately after will never be known, for I was knocked almost senseless by the sea, which tore my wife from my arms, and then swept us all over the side together.

'When I came to, many hours later, I was lying in the mate's boat, and learnt from him that not only had my wife and those who stood with me on deck

[image]

THE SHIP GAVE A SUDDEN ROLL AND CRASHED OVER HER BILGE.

perished, but my young second mate and his two hands as well; for the same sea which carried us overboard, doubtless capsized the boat, then hanging on under the counter on the port side, and drowned them all. When morning broke we were about five miles off the southern end of Middleton Reef. A wild hope that some of them might yet be alive impelled me to head back for the reef itself, although I knew it was generally covered at high water. With the two boats we pulled right round it–nothing, nothing, Wallis, but the leap and roar of the thundering surf upon the coral barrier. As for the old Bandolier, she had slipped off into deep water and disappeared.

'My own escape from death was marvellous. The waiting boats had, in the darkness, been actually carried over the reef through the surf into smooth water beyond; then they pulled out through a narrow passage on the lee side, and returned to the scene of the wreck to look for the third boat. Suddenly the mate's boat fouled the wreckage of the deckhouse, mixed up with some of the for'ard spars and canvas, and in getting clear of it I was discovered lying dead, as was thought, on the side of the house. Whether I was washed there, or managed to swim there, I cannot tell. One of the South Sea Islanders jumped overboard, got me clear, and swam with me to the boat. Then when daylight came ... as I have said ... we went back to the reef.'

He ceased, for he could speak no longer, and Brooker, the rough American mate, with a soft, kindly light in his usually stern eyes, took up the tale.

'And then, yew see, Mr. Wallis, we had nothing to do but to keep away for Australia. So I went into the small boat, and for about ten days we kept together; then one night it came on to blow mighty hard from the south'ard, and when daylight came the captain's boat was not in sight, and I hed nothin' else to do but keep right on. And now here we are all together again, and thet little Nita sleepin' as sound and happy as if there was no sich things as misery and death in the world.' Then he added savagely, 'I should just like to come across that galoot of a skipper who was the cause of it all. Why, mister, instead of our being where we thought we were, we were just running dead in for Middleton Reef. I guess he had a narrow shave himself, but, anyway, I hope to see the feller piled up somewhere before I quit sea-goin'.'

Then the two men rose and retired to their rooms, leaving the squatter and

his son to pace to and fro on the verandah and watch for daylight and Tom.

And then when daylight came, and the sea mist lifted from the long, long line of curving beach, and Foster, glass in hand, joined his master to scan the yellow sand, and they saw naught to break its outlines but the whitening bones of a great fin-back whale, cast ashore a year before, the master of Kooringa Run turned to the old sailor with trouble in his eyes.

'Foster, I fear something has gone wrong with the lad. Even if he had lost his horse, he should have turned up by now. He is too smart a boy to have let the fire head him off into the ranges. And yet where else can he be? Anyway, there is no time to lose. Jack, you and Wellington must saddle up at once, cross the river high up, and work down from the range till you come to the edge of the burnt country, then follow that right along to Kooringa Cape. I'll take Combo and Fly, and go along the beach between the bar and Misty Head. Most likely I'll meet him footing it home. But hurry, lad, hurry.'

Before noon that day Jack and Wellington were searching the country at the foot of the ranges, and Mr. Wallis and his party were examining the beaches beyond Misty Cape.

But never a trace of Tom could be found, though his horse came home next day. The heavy rain-squalls had obliterated any tracks made on the beach itself: and so when, after a week's steady search, in which all the surrounding settlers joined Tom's shirt and trousers were found lying buried in the sand, by the action of the sea, the heart-broken father bent his head in silence, and rode slowly home.

And that night, as he and Jack sat with hands clasped together, looking out upon the wide expanse of the starlit ocean, and thinking of the face they would never see, and the voice they would never hear again, they heard poor Kate Gorman, who had just laid her little charge to sleep, step out into the darkened garden, and, crouching on the ground, wail out the sorrow her faithful heart could no longer suppress.

Oh, Tom, Tom! the babby that was your mother's own darlin' an' mine, an' mine, an' mine!'

Old Foster came softly over to her. 'Hush, Kate, hush! The master will hear you; don't make it harder for him than it is.'

CHAPTER VI

TOM MEETS SOME STRANGERS ON WRECK REEF

When the Lady Alicia, after bruising and pounding her noisy way over the sea for ten days, made Wreck Reef, and dropped anchor under the lee of the one little islet enclosed within the wide sweep of many lines of leaping surf, the ship's company were astonished to find the place occupied–a boat was drawn high up on the beach, and five ragged fellows were standing on the sand awaiting the landing of the people from the brig. As soon as Captain Hawkins set foot ashore, one of them, who appeared to be the leader, held out his hand, and in good English said he was glad to see him. He and his comrades, he said, were the only survivors of an Italian barque, the Generale Cialdini, which had run ashore on the coast of New Guinea, and after great hardships they had reached Wreck Reef some days before, and were now resting, on their way to the mainland of Australia.

Old Sam eyed him critically for a moment or two, then said quietly–

'You want water and provisions, I suppose?'

The man nodded an eager assent; and indeed he and those with him presented a wretched appearance, for their faces and bodies showed traces of severe hardship.

'Very well,' said Hawkins, 'I'll give you both if you'll come alongside. My boat's crew will lend you a hand to get your boat into the water again.' Then he drew the man aside a little, and added, 'And look here mister don't you spin me any more cuffers about that Italian barque and New Guinea. I know where you come from right well and as my ship is on Government service I ought to collar the lot of you and hand you over to the Sydney police but I don't want to be bothered with you and there's an end of it and what is more, I'll do what I can to help you'–here he grinned humorously–'I'll even give you a passage back to New Caledonia if you like. I am bound to Noumea.'

The stranger started back, his leathern-hued visage paled, and such a despairing look came into his wild eyes, that old Sam was sorry for his jest.

'There don't get scared I mean you no harm; but at the same time, for reasons of my own I don't want your company here. Have you any idea of what part of the coast of Australia you're going to?'

A sigh of relief broke from the man, then he answered in perfect English–

'I will not try to deceive you. We escaped from Noumea thirty-eight days ago, and reached this place a week since. I do not know what part of the coast to steer for. A year ago a party of ten prisoners escaped, and reached some place in Queensland safely; none of them were ever brought back to Noumea. And we are prepared for death–better to die of thirst on the ocean than live in such agony and despair.'

The old man nodded, then mused. 'Look here food and water I would give you in any case but I'll tell you why I am so disposed to assist you. When I was coming up the coast I picked up a boy lying on the beach he was not able to tell

me who he was or where he came from for two weeks and then it was too late for me to land him at any settlement. Now we want to send a letter to his father. Will you promise me to do your best to try and get that letter forwarded? I'm not playing any game on you you can see the boy and read the letter if you like when you come off to the ship.'

'I swear to you that I will act honestly,' answered the convict, who was trembling with excitement, 'I shall do my best. And now I, too, will be open. When I and my comrades saw your vessel early this morning, we planned to attempt to capture her if she anchored here, and had not too many men on board. We thought she might be only a small schooner, with not more than five or six men.'

'Thank you kindly mister. You've got the mug of a born pirate I must say. However I bear you no ill-will and I'll trust you with that letter. If you don't send it on you'll never have a day's luck in your life and be the two ends and bight of a lyin' swab into the bargain. Have you got a compass? No! Why didn't you steal one when you pirated the boat? Might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb, sonny. Now there's your boat ready; follow me off to the ship but don't come aboard and I'll see that everything you want is passed down to you letter included and I'll give you a boat compass as well. All you've got to do is to steer due west till you sight the Great Barrier Reef which you ought to do to-morrow night; then run the reef down southerly till you come to the first opening–you will find plenty of boat passages–then once you are inside steer west again for Cape Manifold which you'll see thirty or forty miles away. Then follow the coast southerly again till you come to the settlement in Keppel Bay. If you don't like landing there you can go on to Port Curtis–there's a lot o' people there but I don't think they will trouble to ask you many questions. A new gold field has been discovered a little distance back from there. Like as not you'll find half a dozen vessels lying there without crews so if you don't care to go on to the gold fields you'll find you'll have no trouble in getting a ship to take you away. But mind don't forget about the letter.'

The convict's eyes glistened with pleasure, and his face worked. 'I repeat that I will be true to the trust you are placing in me–I swear that this letter shall reach the person for whom it is intended. I am an escaped convict, and a few hours ago I was ready to turn pirate rather than be taken back to New Caledonia. Why I am what I am, I cannot now tell you, but I am not a criminal, that I swear to you–only a despairing and desperate man on the verge of madness, through unmerited suffering and wrong.'

He spoke these last words with such a passion and emphasis, that old Sam was impressed.

'Well there's many a wrong done. But you ain't a Frenchman are you?'

'No, I am an American, and a seaman. But five years in a chain gang have made me look as I look now.... Now, sir, I am ready to follow you. But before you go, will you let me take your hand? It will be something for me to remember. Come, sir, do not refuse me.'

The old seaman held out his hand. 'There you are mister; if that will do you any good there it is.'

'It will, it *has*, sir. I shall never see you again, but I shall never forget you. And some day it may be that you may hear the name of Henry Casalle spoken–Henry Casalle, sentenced to transportation for life for mutiny, and for the murder of the captain of the ship Amiral Jurien de la Graviere; and as God is my witness, sir, I am an innocent and unjustly condemned man.'

Hawkins looked at him keenly. 'If you are lyin' to me, you ought to be struck dead in your tracks; but I don't believe you are. Now I'll get aboard, and get the boy to write that letter.'

In ten minutes the energetic little man was on board the brig again, and giving Mr. Collier orders to get some provisions and water ready. Then he beckoned to Tom to come below.

'Tom my son you've got a longish head for a person of your age being an infant in the eyes of the law. Now cock your ears and listen. Those fellers who are comin' off in that boat are escaped convicts from New Caledonia and I am giving them assistance to get to the mainland. The leader of 'em seems to be honest enough–or else he's a flamin' out-an'-out liar–and he's promised to see that your father gets a letter if you give him one. Now don't start askin' questions I believe the feller means to act all square and shipshape an' there's every chance of your father getting the letter in another month or two. I'm doing a disrespectful thing to the Government just on your account by aidin' and abettin'–no more an' no less under any circumstances. But I'll chance it anyway. So just you write.'

So Tom, beaming with joy at the opportunity, set to work, with the skipper standing over him and dictating:–

'Brig Lady Alicia: Wreck Reef,
'Lat. 22° 10' 25" S., Long. 155° 30' E.

'MY DEAR FATHER,

'I was rescued by Captain Samuel Hawkins, of the brig Lady Alicia, bound to the above and New Caledonia, and wish to state I have received every comfort, she being on Government service and he desiring to present his respects to you in every possible manner whatsoever, and to inform you that for reasons not herein specified this letter may not reach you owing to extraneous and futile

circumstances. The master of the said brig will use all and every promiscuous endeavour to forward me (the said Thomas Wallis) to Australia by Her Majesty's ship Virago from Noumea, should she as aforesaid be returning to Sydney previous to the aforesaid brig Lady Alicia, also to inform you that clothing and all such supernumaries shall be duly attended to on arrival at Noumea, where Captain Samuel Hawkins is duly respected.

'**Your affectionate Son**, 'THOMAS WALLIS.'

'That'll do, Tom, that'll do. Put it in an envelope and address it to your father, but don't close it, and be ready with it in ten minutes. Steward get a gallon of rum and five pounds of tobacco for these shipwrecked and distressed foreign seamen who are coming alongside and bring it on deck to me and ask Mr. Collier for that boat compass in his cabin.'

Poor Tom, too dazed and muddled to know what he was doing, was just about to place his letter in the envelope, when the mate came below for the compass. He showed what he had written to Collier, who could not help laughing.

'Write another, Tom, as quick as you can, and enclose it. Otherwise I'm afraid your poor father will think you have gone mad. Hurry up, Tom. Tell your father that you are well, and that you are writing very hurriedly, as a boat is waiting. And say that there is a chance of your being able to get back to Australia by the Virago some time within six months. Perhaps it will be as well to say nothing about these Frenchmen–your letter might be opened, and might lead to the poor wretches being captured by the Queensland police.'

Tom set to work with renewed vigour, and contrived to convey to his father as nearly as possible all that had befallen him since that direful day on Misty Head. Then he went up on deck with the letter.

The boat with the five 'shipwrecked and distressed foreign seamen' was lying alongside, and old Sam was bustling up and down the poop, puffing and grumbling about being delayed on Government service 'by a lot of blessed foreigners.'

A large bag of biscuits, some tinned meats, and other provisions were being passed down into the boat, and Tom stared with astonishment when two of the sun-baked creatures thrust their hands into a sugar bag containing raw potatoes, and began to eat them with the greatest zest imaginable. Their leader stood quietly aft, holding the steer oar, looking straight before him, and giving mono-syllabic orders to his crew regarding the stowage of the water and provisions. Once only he looked up and caught sight of Tom, who was standing

just above him, letter in hand; he pulled off his battered and blackened straw hat and bade him good day in low tones, then turned again to watch his comrades. Brief as was the glance which Tom had of the man's features, they seemed somehow to be familiar to him–to remind him of just such another type of face he had seen somewhere–the jet-black hair and eyebrows, and the deep-set and somewhat stern-looking eyes beneath. Where had he seen such a face before? Then he remembered–the captain of the Bandolier! Yes, the resemblance was most striking, although the man before him was not so tall, and his beard and moustache were short and stubbly. Tom was too interested, however, in the men generally to let his mind dwell on the peculiarity of the resemblance, and soon forgot all about it.

As soon as the convicts had stowed the boat properly, the leader looked up at the master of the brig, and said in French, 'I am quite ready, sir.'

'Well, here's the letter–it's not closed, you see.'

'I do not wish to read it, sir,' said the convict, 'therefore I beg you to close it.'

'Oh, all right, just as you please. There, there it is. Now, is there anything else I can do for you? No? Well, good-bye. Let go that line there.'

The boat's painter was cast off, the steersman flung her clear of the ship, the big lug sail was hoisted, and then, following the leader's example, the rest of the wild-looking creatures stood up, waved their hats and caps in farewell, and called out adieu. In ten minutes the boat was slipping out of the lagoon into the long sweep of the ocean swell, and then she was hauled up a point or two, and headed off westward.

'Well, that's satisfactory,' said old Sam to the mate. 'It's a good job we didn't get here a week sooner, and provide these coveys with a brand new boat and gear worth three hundred pounds. Now let's get to work, Mr. Collier and get her over the side. Tom my bantam d'ye want to have a run ashore? There's any amount of crayfish out on the reef, and the water is full of whopping blue gropers. Ask William Henry to give you his fish-spear and you can prod it into one for our dinner.'

Highly delighted, Tom fled along the deck, secured the spear from the Maori–who had taken a great liking to the boy–and was at once put ashore, where, his mind now free from anxiety to a certain extent, he revelled in the joys of chasing and spearing some splendid fish, for, as the captain had said, the shoal water inside the reef was literally swarming, not only with brilliant, blue-scaled gropers, but half a dozen other kinds of fish. In less than an hour he had secured enough to last the ship's company for a couple of days, and then burying them in the sand, to protect them from the sun till the boat returned, he started off to investigate some wreckage at the further end of the island. The history of

these time-worn timbers had been told him by old Sam–they were the remains of the Porpoise and Cato, two Government vessels, lost there August 3, 1815, and on one of which the gallant and ill-fated Matthew Flinders was a passenger on his way to England, a third vessel, the transport Bridgewater, sailing away, and leaving them to their fate.

In less than a week the shed was built, the boat safely housed, and a flagstaff erected, and then the little islet was left to its loneliness again, and the never-ceasing roar of the surf upon the network of reefs and shoals which surrounded it, and once more the old brig's bluff bows were dipping into the blue, as he braced up sharp for her long beat against the trade wind to New Caledonia.

Thirteen days later she entered Noumea Harbour through the Dumbea Pass, and there awaiting her was her Majesty's paddle-wheel steamer Virago, Commander Bingham. As soon as possible the brig hauled alongside the war-ship, and the blue-jackets were at work on the coal, whilst old Sam, swelling with importance, and using the longest words he possibly could, was relating the story of Tom's rescue to the captain and first lieutenant; and presently Tom himself was sent for, and, dressed in a best suit of the mate's clothes, three sizes too large for him, he soon made his appearance. The captain and his officers treated him with much kindness, made him stay to lunch, and got him to tell his story over again. Offers of clothing were made to him on all sides, and a smile went all round when old Sam, who was sweltering in a heavy frock-coat, and wearing a brilliant green tie with a huge nugget of gold as a scarf-pin, begged them 'on no account whatsoever to trouble,' as he was going ashore with the young gentleman to buy him all that was needed, 'in order that he may be in a manner of speaking assimilated with the proper conditions of irrefutable society without regard to expense on my part, I being sure that his father will do the square thing with me.'

After lunch the commander told the master of the brig that the Virago was not returning to Australia for another four or five months, when another ship would be sent to relieve her in her surveying work among the islands. 'I am sorry, Mr. Hawkins, that this is so. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to take your young friend to Sydney, but, as you see, you will be there long before we are. I trust that the letter he sent by those gentry you met at Wreck Reef will be delivered safely. Oh, and by the way, you need not, of necessity, when reporting that incident to the authorities here–er–er mention that you–er imagined these men were escaped prisoners.'

Old Sam shut one eye. 'I've my log to show 'em. "Five men only survivors of Italian barque Generale Cialdini wrecked on coast of Noo Guinea, etsettery."'

The officer smiled. 'I see, I see, Mr. Hawkins. But you have behaved very humanely–and wisely as well, in not letting them on board to mix with your

crew; it might have led to some unpleasantness here with the authorities.'

Early on the following morning the Cyclope, an ancient-looking corvette, arrived from Sydney with mails from France for the Governor and garrison, and the commander of the Virago went ashore to lunch with the captain at the Governor's house. When he returned, he sent for old Sam, and said–

'Mr. Hawkins, I have something to tell you that will, I think, interest you. The Governor had for three months been expecting the arrival of a large vessel–a transport–with stores for the garrison and convicts. She was despatched from Saigon, in Cochin China, nearly six months ago, and now news has reached Sydney by an island trading vessel that a large French ship was reported by some natives to have been lost on the coast of New Britain, and all hands either drowned or murdered by the inhabitants of a large village there. The Governor fears that this is the missing transport, and is most anxious to ascertain the truth. He has, however, no vessel available for such a long voyage–the Cyclope cannot be spared, and there are but two very small schooners, neither of which is fit for such a task, especially as the crew of the transport may all be alive, and would have to be brought here. Now, he is most anxious to charter your brig to proceed to New Britain and search the coast. I told him I would send you to see him, so you had better go ashore at once. I should think you will find such a charter highly remunerative, and your knowledge of that part of the South Seas will be invaluable to you.'

Old Sam, scenting a fat charter, was profuse in his thanks, and hurried off on shore, taking Mr. Collier with him as interpreter. Meanwhile the work of coaling the Virago went on vigorously, and by six in the evening the brig had hauled off from her side, and all hands were employed in cleaning and washing down.

The little man was soon back, bustling with excitement, having practically come to terms with the Governor, and the brig was to begin taking in stores as quickly as possible. As the Virago was to leave soon after daylight, Tom went on board to say good-bye to the commander and his officers, and, much to his delight, the former presented him with a handsome double-barrelled gun, with ample ammunition; told him to write again to his father, and leave the matter with the Governor, in case the Cyclope might return to Sydney; said that old Sam was a thorough old gentleman, who would make a man and a sailor of him, and shaking the lad's hand warmly, bade him good-bye.

For many hours that night Tom sat listening to the mate and captain discussing their future proceedings; then, unable to sleep, he went for'ard and woke up the Maori half-caste, and with him began fishing till dawn. Then, as the first rays of sunrise lit up the hills, the smoke began to pour from the Virago's yellow funnel, the boatswain's whistles piped shrill and clear in the morning air, the

great paddle-wheels made a turn or two, and churned under the sponsons, the boats were hoisted in, and the tramp, tramp of the blue-jackets' bare feet sounded on the decks as the capstan was manned and the heavy cable came in, and then the old-fashioned war-vessel pointed her nose for Havannah Pass, and steamed slowly away for the New Hebrides.

For the next few days every one on board the Lady Alicia was kept busy preparing her for sea. The Governor was sending an officer from the Cyclope to nominally command, but who was really to rely upon old Sam's judgment and advice in everything, until the survivors–if there were any–of the transport were found. If any seamen could have been spared from the Cyclope, some would have been sent, but old Sam energetically assured the Governor that they would not be needed. He, however, did not demur to taking on board thirty rifles and a plentiful supply of ammunition.

Everything was ready at last, and then came the last day of the ship's stay in Noumea. The skipper had gone ashore to receive his final instructions, and Mr. Collier and the second mate were pacing the deck together, looking out for his boat, and whistling for a breeze to spring up, for a dead calm had prevailed since early dawn, and the day had become swelteringly hot, so hot that even the marine infantry sentries guarding the convicts working on the foreshore of the harbour were handling their rifles very gingerly, for the steel barrels were as hot to the touch as a burning coal, and the bare, treeless hills at the back of the newly-formed town seemed to quiver and tremble, and appeal for rain to slake their parched and sun-baked sides. Out in the harbour lay, covered with awnings fore and aft, the Cyclope, a hulking, wall-sided old French corvette, which had been stationed at Noumea ever since Tardy de Montravel founded the settlement, ten years before. Nearer inshore was a tiny French schooner, and between her and the warship was the Lady Alicia. For'ard, on the latter's deck, were Master Thomas Wallis and the black cook, the latter being engaged in instructing Tom how to polish a shark's backbone, and make it into a walking-stick fit for a gentleman of quality.

Nearly five months had passed since Tom had first appeared on board the brig, and his always brown face was now browner still; and as he rubbed away at the shark bone his honest, grey eyes seemed full of content; and, indeed, he was happy enough. For now he was to have, he felt sure, further adventures.

'De ole man's a mighty long time ashore,' said the coloured gentleman presently; 'I guess he ain't comin' aboard till he's shown these yere Frenchers the proper way to wear a stove-pipe hat an' long tail-coat. He's been an' gone an' took Maori Bill with him–"my servant," he calls him now; an' he's filled Bill's pockets with 'bout six pound o' tobacco cut up inter small chunks, an' Bill hez ter drop 'em along the road, so ez them poor convicts workin' on the chain gang

can pick 'em up when dey sentries isn't lookin'.'

'It's very kind of him, Joe,' said Tom.

The negro nodded. 'Oh yes; he's right 'nuff dat way, is de ole man. It's on'y when he gits usin' dem big high-class college words dat he makes himself contemptuous. Why, sometimes I hez to hold on tight to somethin', for fear he'll see me laughin', and start out on me. Hullo, dere he is comin' down to the jetty with the French officer, and dere's the blessed breeze comin' too.'

Ten minutes later, Captain Hawkins, perspiring profusely in his shore-going garments, and accompanied by a pleasant-faced young naval officer dressed in white duck, stepped on deck, and in the most dignified and awe-inspiring manner asked Mr. Collier if he was 'prepared to heave up.'

'All ready, sir.'

'Thank you Mr. Collier. Then please get the hands to loose sails and man the windlass without delay. Mr. Collier this is Lieutenant de Cann of the Cyclope Mr. de Cann, Mr. Thomas Wallis will you step below, sir, and see if your cabin appurtenances and gear generally are concomitant with all and any natural expectations. One moment, Mr. Collier, before you start heavin' up, Mr. de Cann is doing me the honour to drink a bottle of Tennant with me, and I will thank you to join us. Tom my bantam lay aft here and wet your whistle.'

Five minutes later he was in his sea togs stamping about on deck, and bawling and roaring out the most dreadful threats of violence to his crew, as a 'pack of fat lazy good-for-nothing swabs only fit to scrub paint work or clean out a stable instead of eatin' good vittels.'

A boat was coming alongside from the warship with some of De Caen's fellow officers to wish their shipmate good-bye, and old Sam was determined to show them how he could do things.

The French officer looked inquiringly at Tom as he heard the din overhead, and Tom laughed.

'That is only his way, Mr. de Caen, and I really think the men don't mind it a bit. Mr. Collier says they like it, and that if the captain didn't bully them when he's getting the ship under way or shortening sail, they would be afraid he was becoming ill. Look, here's the steward come for a bottle of Hollands to "grease the windlass," and you'll find that as soon as we are clear of the port that Captain Hawkins will call all the men aft, make them a funny little speech about good conduct, and give them more Hollands.'

'Ah, I see, I see. I did hear from Captain Byng that your captain was very droll sometimes.'

'Boat from the Cyclope alongside, sir,' said Tarbucket, a native sailor, unceremoniously putting his head down through the skylight, and receiving at the same time a tremendous thwack on his back from old Sam's open hand for his

want of manners.

The Frenchmen jumped on deck, bade De Caen a hurried good-bye, and then descended into their boat again, as the old Lady Alicia, dipping her ensign to the Cyclope, began to slip through the water before the freshening breeze.

CHAPTER VII
NORTHWARD TO THE SOLOMONS

Once clear of the dangerous expanse of reefs which surround the entrance to Noumea Harbour, the captain hauled up to the N.N.W. and ran along under the land, the brig going in gallant style, for the water was smooth and the wind fresh and steady. Before reaching Noumea, old Sam had bent his best suit of sails, and painted the ship inside and out, so that she now cut quite a respectable appearance below as well as aloft; and now, as he stood at the break of the poop, smoking a huge cigar, his fat little body swelled with pride. De Caen had expressed his admiration at the manner in which he had worked the brig out through the Dunbea Pass; also he had complimented him upon the serviceable condition and smart appearance of the four carronades and their gear generally.

This had gone to the skipper's heart, and he was struggling with two emotions–one of which was to joke with his crew, as was usual with him when in a good temper; and the other was to treat them with dignified hauteur in the presence of the French officer. He decided upon a middle course by unbending to Tom–he could not possibly remain silent for a whole quarter of an hour. So, calling the lad to him, he pointed out the various headlands and bays on the line of coast, with every one of which he was familiar. The day was clear and bright, with a cloudless sky of blue, and Tom could not but be enchanted by the panorama of tropical beauty which was unfolded before him as the vessel quickly opened out bay after bay and beach after beach, with a background of the loveliest green imaginable rising beyond; and here and there the curious conical-shaped and thatched roofs of a native village could just be discerned embowered in a forest of coco-nut palms.

'And a murdering lot of ruffians they are, too, Tom, these New Caledonia Kanakas; no better now than they were fifteen years ago, before the Frenchmen took the place. Why I can tell you if anybody can all about 'em. I was in the sandal-wood trade with Captain Paddon, of Annatam–old Jimmy Paddon who is

living in Sydney now worth millions. Do you see that narrow bay in there? Well, that's Uaran; it's a big village full of the most poisonous niggers as ever polished teeth on a man's thighbone. I was partner with Paddon. We had a little fore-and-aft schooner called the Kirribilli which he sailed about the coast while I kept to this brig meeting him now and again at Noumea, Levuka in Fiji, or Tongatubu in the Friendly Islands or any other port agreed upon.

'Well, one day as Jimmy Paddon was sailing along the coast, just about where we are now four miles off Uaran he sprung his mainmast and ran in there to anchor and fish it. He knew the place pretty well and was friendly with the two head chiefs who sometimes visited his trading station at Noumea; so when one of 'em came aboard with a lot of his people they were allowed to have the run of the decks and he came down into the cabin, smoked a pipe with Jimmy, and then went ashore, saying he would send off some food for the crew as a present. Towards four or five o'clock a whaleship was sighted about four miles off the land; and as it was falling calm, Jimmy decided to pull out to her and try to buy a bolt or two of canvas. He took four hands with him leaving the mate and six others on board. He got the canvas and started back for the schooner just after dark, one of the whaleship's boats coming with him with her second mate and five hands, to buy some pigs from the natives. She was lying nice and quiet but was showing no light anywhere and there wasn't a sign of any one on deck. In a moment he thought something was wrong, so they stopped pulling and hailed–no answer. "Pull up, lads," he said, and they ran alongside, and as the poor chap who was pulling bow oar stood up and caught hold of the rail, a tomahawk came down like a flash and cut off his hand, and in a moment the schooner's decks were alive with natives, who began firing at the boat, killing another man before it could be pushed off again; and then the blacks, seeing the whaler's boat coming, began to jump overboard and swim ashore.

'They, of course, meant to wait till Jimmy and his boat's crew were all on deck, and then club them, but one of 'em was in too much of a hurry and begun work too soon, and that spoilt their plan. As soon as the other boat came up they lit a boat lantern, and Jimmy and the rest went on board; and there were the decks just smothered in blood, but no trace of the mate and the rest of the men. But it was easy to know where they had been taken to, for the cannibals' drums were beating, and every now and then the saucy niggers would send a bullet flying out, and then give a yell together. The schooner was gutted of most everything of any value–arms, ammunition, trade goods, and even the sails and standing rigging were cut to pieces. Jimmy wasn't long in hoisting lights for assistance, slipping his cable, and towing out towards the ship, which helped him to get the schooner to Noumea. And that there job cost us nigh on four hundred pounds, let alone the loss of the poor mate and the other men who went into the niggers'

gullets.'

Tom was deeply interested in the skipper's story–only one of hundreds of such tragedies as were then of common occurrence throughout the savage Western Pacific, and even at the present day are still enacted among the murderous and cannibalistic natives of the Solomon Group and the German Islands of the Bismarck Archipelago.

For three days the brig ran steadily along the coast of New Caledonia, till D'Entrecasteaux Reefs being cleared, the captain and De Caen held a consultation. The latter was in favour of laying a direct course for New Britain. The former thought that the brig should work through the Solomon Islands, where they would be sure to meet with trading vessels, from which they might obtain valuable information; furthermore, he contended that if any of the survivors of the Marengo (the missing transport) had escaped in boats, they would be almost sure to steer for Noumea by way of the Solomons, where not only was there a likelihood of meeting with trading vessels, but where they could obtain fresh supplies of water and food from numberless islands, many of which being uninhabited, they could land at and refresh without danger. Then again, both he and Mr. Collier pointed out to De Caen that the boats, by working through the smooth waters lying between the two chains of islands which form the vast archipelago of the Solomon Group, would, when they reached San Christoval, the last island of the cluster, have but five hundred miles to traverse to reach the nearest land–the Huon Islands, off the coast of New Caledonia itself–instead of a long and trying voyage of sixteen hundred miles across the open sea, without even sighting a single island, did they endeavour to make a direct course from New Britain to Noumea.

De Caen followed old Sam's reasoning very closely, and could not but be convinced of the soundness of his arguments. The general chart of the Western Pacific was spread out upon the cabin table, and he looked at it thoughtfully.

'It is possible, Captain Hawkins, that the officer in command of the boats–if, alas! there is an officer alive–may have steered for the coast of New Guinea, rounded the Louisiade Archipelago, and kept away for the Australian coast.'

'That's true enough, Mr. de Cann, but if they have done that it's no use our looking for them now and our orders are to search northward–through the Solomons if we like, if not, then along the coast of Noo Britain for the relicks if any are available. At the same time I am under your orders if you like to tell me to steer west for Whitsunday Pass on the Great Barrier Reef and then work up along the coast to the Louisiades.'

'Certainly not, captain! I merely advanced a supposition. I have the most absolute faith in your very excellent judgment and superior knowledge. Let us steer north for San Christoval, and trust that good fortune may attend our search.'

Old Sam's red face beamed with a childish pleasure, and he gurgled something out about 'the intense relevancy of the satisfaction it gave him to be in such complete and personal discord with Mr. de Cann,' and that he 'sincerely trusted they would always remain as such.' Then he strutted away, and bawled out an order to the second mate to tell the cook to kill the pig, as the creature 'discommoded and dirtied the decks with continuous incessity and was always rubbing itself against one of the carronades and suffusing the ship with its intolerability.' (As a matter of fact, he had no ill-feeling against poor Julia, but thought it rather undignified to have the creature poking about the main deck with a naval officer on board.)

These were happy days for Tom. Between himself and the quiet, self-contained young mate there already existed a feeling of friendship, which grew stronger day by day. The advent of De Caen, an educated and travelled man, whose usually refined and dignified manner but concealed a disposition that in reality was brimming over with an almost boyish love of merriment and an ardent spirit of adventure, was another source of pleasure to him; and both of the grown men seemed to vie with each other, as the days went on, in instructing a mind so open and ingenuous, and so quick to receive impressions for good; for whilst Collier gave him lessons in navigation and practical seamanship, De Caen talked to him of the world beyond the Southern Seas, of the history of his own country, and was delighted to find that Tom knew a good deal of his (De Caen's) pet hero, the adventurous Dupleix, and of his struggle with Clive for the supremacy of India in the early days of 'John Company.'

And then in the evenings Collier would tell him tales of his own adventures in the South Seas, tales that made Tom's heart beat quicker as he listened, for the quiet, grave-eyed young officer had faced death and danger very often, from one side of the Pacific to the other.

'The South Sea Islands are a bit different, though, Tom, to what they were fifty, ay, twenty years ago,' he said, with a smile; 'but even Captain Hawkins, who pretends to grumble at the changes that have occurred, admits that us sailor-men have much to be thankful for. The missionaries–English missionaries, I mean–have done a lot for us, quite apart from what they have done for the natives. And yet most trading captains have not a good word for the missionary.'

'Why is that, Mr. Collier?'

'For many reasons, Tom. One is because the advent of the missionary means less profit to the trader, less prestige to him as the one white man on one particular island. The trader wants to sell his grog and his firearms, and he ruins and destroys the natives; the missionary comes to elevate and redeem them. Tom, my boy, you should read what English missionaries have done in the South Seas! It is a better tale than that of the victories won by British troops upon

the blood-stained field of battle; for the victories of the missionary have brought peace and happiness instead of tears and sorrow to the vanquished. Look here, Tom.'

He took down a book from the shelf over his bunk.

'Here, look at this. It is the narrative of the first voyage of John Williams to the South Seas–John Williams, who gave up his life for Christ under the clubs of the savage people of Erromanga. Here you will read the story of those first missionaries. Some of them, perhaps, were better fitted for the task than others; but all were eager to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. And they taught it well. Some of them, like Williams, gave their lives for those whom they had come to help; others lived and worked and died, and no one hears of them, Tom. But though they have no earthly monument to record their good work, God knows it all, Tom; God knows it all.'

One morning at breakfast De Caen was telling Collier some stories about the characters of the convicts in New Caledonia, and of their continual attempts to escape to Australia in small and ill-equipped boats. Once, he said, a party of nine desperate creatures hurriedly made a raft by tying together some timber intended for the flooring of the Governor's house, and with a few bottles of water and a bag of flour to sustain them during a voyage of more than a thousand miles, set out to reach Australia. They actually succeeded in clearing the reefs surrounding Noumea, when the raft came to pieces, and the poor wretches were devoured by sharks, in the presence of the crew of a vessel entering Dumbea Pass.

'Quite recently,' continued the French officer, 'five men, three of whom were seamen, managed, through the negligence of their guards, to escape in a good boat. Their leader, an American by birth, had been sentenced to penal servitude for life, for the murder of the captain of a French ship, of which he was chief officer. He always protested his innocence, and at his trial in Bordeaux said that the steward was the guilty man. Our Governor, who is very just and humane, once told my captain that he believed his assertions; and indeed the poor fellow was innocent; for the Cyclope brought an intimation from France to that effect, and instructions to set him at liberty. This was told to me by the Governor the day after the Cyclope arrived from Sydney.'

Old Sam nearly choked himself with a large mouthful of bread, and then said–

'What might his name be Mr. de Cann?'

'Casalle–Henri Casalle.'

'Casalle!' Tom echoed; 'why, that was the name of the captain of the Bandolier; and the man we saw at Wreck—-'

The captain gave him a furious kick beneath the table, upset his own cup of

coffee, and jumping up from his seat, uttered a yell at the helmsman at the same time.

'Now then, mutton head, where *are* you steering to? Excuse me Mr. de Cann, but that fellow who is steering is the continual cause of my flamatory objections. I could tell you some queer things about him. He is a native of Rotumah–ever been there, sir?–fine island with remarkable lucidity of climate one of Natur's handmaidens as it were only waiting to be tickled with a hoe to laugh with the utmost profligacy. Tom, as you have finished will you be so good as to go on deck and tell the second mate to hoist out a barrel of pork I want to see the head taken off being American pork I'm dubious about it if there's anything in the world that disturbs my naval and automical principles it's stinking pork.'

De Caen waited until he had finished, then added–

'The Governor was much distressed to think that this unfortunate man may never learn of his pardon, for if he and his companions succeed in reaching Australia, they will most likely never be heard of again. Once they get to any of the gold-fields in New South Wales or Victoria, it will be impossible to trace them.'

Collier nodded assent, and then in his quiet manner remarked that, as one of the five was an innocent man, he hoped they had all reached Australia in safety. Then, seeing that old Sam was looking very uncomfortable, he said nothing further, and the subject was dropped.

Under clear, cloudless skies, and with the brave south-east trade wind blowing steadily all day, and dropping to a faint air at night, the Lady Alicia made steady progress to the northward till within a hundred miles of San Christoval. Then it fell calm, and for two days the brig lay sweltering upon a sea of glass, under a fierce, relentless sun, and rolling heavily to a long sweeping swell from the eastward. On the morning of the third day, the wind came away from the westward, and blew in sharp, short squalls, attended by thick, driving rain, which, rising black and lowering on the sea-rim, changed to a dull grey and then to snowy white, as it came rushing and roaring down upon the ship.

Just before noon the sun came out for a brief space, and Maori Bill, who happened to be aloft, called out that a sail was in sight right ahead, and standing down towards the brig. Mr. Collier at once went aloft, and there, not three miles away, was a large white-painted vessel carrying single-topsails, like the Lady Alicia, and running with squared yards before the wind.

For the moment Mr. Collier could not make out whether she was a barque or a brig, as she was coming 'dead on,' but presently she lifted to a high sea and yawed a bit, and he saw that she was a brig of about 500 tons. In an instant he hailed the captain.

'Please come aloft, sir, at once.'

Old Sam waddled along the deck, and then clambered up to the fore-yard beside his mate.

[image]

SAM CLAMBERED UP TO THE FORE-YARD BESIDE HIS MATE.

'What is she, Mr. Collier?' he began, and then he gave a gasp of rage, mingled with alarm, as his eye lit upon the stranger.

'May I be shot if it isn't Bully Hayes's brig! I've never seen the Leonie but that's her sure enough for I've heard all about the look of her.'

'Yes, that is the Leonie, sir. I knew her when she was in the China trade, before Captain Hayes stole her. There is no other vessel like her in the South Seas. He means to speak us, at any rate–if he intends no further mischief–and he can sail rings round us, so it is no use our trying to get away from him. What will you do, sir?'

'Fight him,' said the little man energetically, 'fight him like I would any other pirate–for he is a pirate and nothing else.' Then he bawled to the second mate to stand by to wear ship, and in another five seconds was on deck, followed by Collier.

The helm was put hard up, the yards squared, and the old brig put nearly before the wind, which was her best sailing point, and which would give those on board another hour to prepare. Old Sam, though really bursting with excitement, gave his orders quietly and calmly, and then turned to Lieutenant de Caen, who was thoroughly at a loss to understand why the brig's course had been so suddenly altered by the appearance of another ship.

'Mr. de Cann least said is soonest done as it were so with your permission I will call the hands aft and if you do not care to participate in my remarks you are free to do so. All hands aft.'

The crew, headed by Maori Bill, trooped along the main deck and stood in a group in front of the poop, from which the skipper spoke.

'My lads, I'm not running away from that ship, which is commanded by Captain Bully Hayes, an out-an-out pirate. I mean to fight him that's all I have to say and I hope you will not disgrace me and this ship which is on foreign service. Bos'un, cast off the housings and clear the guns for action. Mr. Collier you and the steward pass up the small arms. Mr. Todd you and two hands pass up ammunition for the carronades and if I see any man funking his mother won't know him again. Mr. de Cann you may depend upon me to collorate any suggestions you may make you being as it were my superior in such a case as is now pro-

truded. Stations men and don't disgrace me and Mr. de Cann. Tom you can bring up that flash gun of yours and stand by me here; every little helps and it is a poor heart that never rejoices so cheer up my lad. I will never let you come to harm through a refuted pirate. Mr. de Cann, this ship is to all intents and purposes a French ship as it were and I am willing to obey your orders I am confident that we can smash this fellow but you must let me have my own way and propagation of ideas which is to lie low and let him come close to and then let drive at him with the carronades unless he begins pounding at us beforehand with his two big guns which I believe he carries being stolen property like the ship herself. Why, he is the man who sunk a Portuguese gunboat in the East Indies five years ago. Certainly he only fired one shot at her but it did the trick and she sunk and when the American commodore at Hongkong tried to arrest him he sent him a letter and said it was an accident and that if it wasn't an accident it was a joke.'

The French officer, who could scarcely follow old Sam's rapid utterances, but quite understood that the strange vessel meant mischief, was quickly enlightened by Mr. Collier in a few words.

'Captain Hayes is the most notorious man in the Pacific, and his crew have the reputation of being a band of unmitigated ruffians. That very vessel you now see he carried off out of Singapore five years ago, and since then he had been cruising among the Islands, trading, pearl-shelling, and engaging in native wars. A Portuguese gunboat tried to capture him off Macao–he sunk her with one shot. He has been chased all over the Pacific by English and American cruisers, but never yet caught. At the same time, I do not believe all that is said about him and his savage nature, but he certainly is a dangerous man.'

During the few minutes which had elapsed since the stranger was sighted, the utmost activity had prevailed on board the Lady Alicia. Nearly two-thirds of the eighteen men she carried were determined, resolute fellows, who had stood by their captain in many a fight with the savage natives of the Solomon and New Hebrides Group; and they were well able to work the four carronades, though rifles were more to their liking. The small arms on board consisted of fifty Enfield rifles and cutlasses, and then, in addition to these, were the thirty rifles brought on board by Mr. de Caen. These were breech-loaders, which had only been adopted by the French Navy a year or two before. They were a Swiss invention, heavy and awkward to handle, but yet very effective. These were brought up by the lieutenant's orders, and he at once proceeded to load them, aided by Tom. Meanwhile, old Sam had his carronades loaded in readiness, and the decks of the little vessel presented the appearance of those of an old time ten-gun brig going into action.

The strange vessel was now rapidly overhauling the Lady Alicia, and Tom, as he stood beside the French officer on the poop, could not repress his admiration

of the beautiful sight she presented as she rose and sank to the swelling seas–with her snowy white canvas glinting and shining against the sun. For some minutes the little group watched her in silence; then Hawkins, noticing how very quickly she was coming up, turned quietly to the mate.

'Hands to the braces. Mr. Collier, let him come up as quick as he likes, I'm ready for him.'

The yards were braced up, and the brig laid to her former course; the stranger at once followed suit, and as she sailed three feet to the one of the Lazy Alice, she was soon within hailing distance. On decks were a number of naked natives, some of whom were standing on the top-gallant fo'c'sle. Aft, on the quarter deck, a big black-bearded man, dressed in pyjamas, was standing beside the helmsman, smoking a cigar.

The strange ship came sweeping on, then suddenly kept away, so as to pass astern of the Lady Alicia.

As she surged past, the big man walked over to the rail, and drawing one hand carelessly through his flowing beard, he nodded to Captain Hawkins, and said with a laugh–

'Good morning, captain. Will you be so good as to back your main-yard and let me come aboard? But you won't hurt me, will you?'

Before old Sam could frame a reply, the strange brig came to the wind swiftly and noiselessly, a whaleboat which hung on the port quarter was lowered, and pulled over towards the Lady Alicia, the big bearded man steering.

'Back the main-yard, Mr. Collier,' said old Sam, quietly. 'Let him come aboard and see how we look.'

CHAPTER VIII

CAPTAIN BULLY HAYES COMES ON BOARD

The boat drew alongside, and the tall bearded man climbed up the rope ladder hung on the side amidships, and then jumped lightly on the deck, where he was met just inside the gangway by Captain Hawkins, who had descended from the poop.

'How do you do, captain?' said the stranger, affably, extending his hand. 'My name is Hayes;' and then, as his bright blue eye took in the surroundings, and he saw the brig's crew standing by the guns, and a group of armed men on

the poop deck, he gave a loud hearty laugh, so genuine and spontaneous that old Sam stared at him in astonishment.

'I asked you not to hurt me, and of course you won't. So you, too, think that poor Bully Hayes is a bloodthirsty pirate! Come, shake hands, my red-faced little fighting-cock. I like you all the better for your pluck. There, that's right;' and seizing the skipper's unwilling hand in his own, he shook it with tremendous vigour; 'but please make your men put away those rifles and cutlasses. I'm such a nervous man, and the sight of any one with a gun in his hand makes me both mad and frightened, so that I can't help knocking him down, just to protect myself.'

'What is it you want on board my ship, Captain Hayes?' said old Sam, pointedly.

'My dear sir, do not look at me in that distant manner,' and he clapped his sun-browned hand on the captain's shoulder, 'it pains me. You've rolling topsails, I see. How do you find them answer? Bonnets trouble you? Mine are perfection. You must come on board and see my ship. Come, now, my dear sir, *don't* look so angry. I'm not at all a bad fellow, I can assure you, nothing so black as I am painted.'

'Well, you mustn't blame me,' said old Sam, more graciously, 'you've got the name anyway; but I must say you don't look like—-'

'Like a cut-throat, Captain—-' He paused.

'Hawkins, if you please.'

'Captain Hawkins, I'm glad to meet you. Now, can you sell me a few bags of rice and some casks of molasses for my native passengers? I've a hundred and twenty blackbirds on board, bound for Samoa, and I'm afraid I'll run short of rice.'

'I can do that,' said Hawkins, delighted to find that his visitor had no evil intentions.

'Thank you very much.' Then, going to the side, he hailed his boat's crew and told them to pass up a bag of dollars; and when old Sam asked him below to have a glass of wine, he again laughed in his boyish and apparently unaffected manner. 'Certainly, captain, with pleasure. You have passengers, I see,' he added, indicating Mr. de Caen and Tom, but politely ignoring the pile of rifles lying on top of the skylight.

'Yes,' said the skipper, 'Mr. de Cann, of the French Navy lieutenant of the Cyclope and Mr. Tom Wallis–Captain Hayes.'

The moment the visitor heard the words 'French Navy,' a swift gleam of light passed over his handsome face; but he bowed courteously to the officer, and together the three men went below and seated themselves at the table, whilst the steward placed refreshments before them. In less than ten minutes, so engaging was Hayes's outspoken yet polite manner, that both Hawkins and De Caen were laughing and talking with him as if they had known him for months.

'Where are you bound to, sir?' asked Captain Hawkins, again filling his visitor's glass; 'you have a lot of natives on board. Where are they from?'

'I am bound to Samoa. The natives are from various islands to the northward. I recruited them for the German planters in Samoa. They are a very savage lot, and'–here he smiled–'although I hate to have armed men about a ship's deck, we have to keep our weather eye lifting, or we might lose the ship some day. Now, tell me,' he added pleasantly, 'where are you bound to, Captain Hawkins?'

'To the Solomons and Noo Britain, captain;' and then, with an air of pride which he tried hard to conceal, 'We're under charter to the Governor of Noo Caledonia to make a search for relicks human or otherwise of a French transport loaded with exigencies for the garrison and convicts at Noumea.'

'Ah,' said Hayes, quickly, 'so you're looking for the Marengo?'

De Caen and Hawkins sprang to their feet. 'Yes. Do you know anything about her?'

'Yes, I do,' he answered curtly, with a harsh inflexion in his hitherto modulated tones. 'I can tell you all about her, and where to find the ship's company–on a certain condition.'

'What is it?' said De Caen, with a contemptuous shrug of his shoulder; 'is it a question of money?'

An angry flash came from Hayes's blue eyes. 'Be careful how you speak, or you'll get no information from me. I don't want money for putting you on the right course to rescue your countrymen–though I have little cause to love them–your admiral at Tahiti sent a rotten old gunboat to the Paumotus to chase and harry me from one island to another, when I was a legitimate trader. I could have captured that gunboat on two separate occasions, had I desired it, and made a bonfire of her for her confounded meddling. And now that I have said so much, I might as well tell you both, that if I had wanted to do this old hooker of a brig any harm, and had acted up to the reputation I have of being a pirate, I could have knocked you to pieces in half an hour, although you do carry four carronades–I've something better than those.' Then he added, with a hard laugh, 'Perhaps you would like me to show you.'

There was a brief silence, then De Caen said smoothly–

'I am sorry for my remark, Captain Hayes. I did not wish to offend you. But surely no seaman would try to take advantage of shipwrecked people?'

'I do not wish to do *them* any harm, but I want to do myself a considerable lot of good; and it rests with you entirely whether I tell you where to find them, or let you go and look for them–and a pretty search you will have, I can assure you.'

De Caen thought a moment. 'Anything that it is in my power to do I will do; but surely you will tell me this first, are the survivors in danger?'

Hayes laughed. 'Ah, that's a clever question, and I should not answer it until you have heard my condition, and have given me your answer. But I shall. They are not in danger, and, furthermore, not a single life was lost when the ship was wrecked. This,' he added slowly, and watching old Sam's and De Caen's faces, 'was told me by Commander Goigoux himself when he boarded my vessel a few weeks ago.'

De Caen's face flushed with pleasure. 'I am pleased indeed. Now, sir, tell me what it is you wish me to do.'

'Steady there, if you please, Mr. de Cann,' interrupted Hawkins, 'before you go making any promises. Now look here Captain Hayes without wishing to cast inflections on your mere verbose statement I would like you to show us some proof that you are not playing us a trick, and that you did see Captain Gee–go. I've heard that you are very fond of a joke, and—-'

'That is all right, my little bantam. I—-'

'Bantam!–you overgrown turkey-cock!' began the old man furiously, when the French officer placed his hand on his arm, and then looked appealingly at Hayes, who was regarding Hawkins with an amused smile.

'For goodness' sake, Captain Hawkins, do not let us quarrel. Captain Hayes, I am sure, would not act so heartlessly.'

'No, indeed I would not. And there, Captain Hawkins, I meant nothing offensive to you. You're a white man to your backbone. I've heard all about you and this fine vessel of yours years ago, from Captain Bannister, who sailed with you as mate when you were in the blackbirding trade–as I am now.'

The fat little man was mollified in an instant. 'Joe Bannister is a good friend of mine but I was never a "blackbirder"–I got my natives honest square and fair–and if you withdraw "bantam" I regret "turkey" both of which are good birds alive or dead;' and he laughed at his own wit as he held out his hand.

Hayes smiled good-naturedly as he grasped it, and then resumed–

'Now the captain, officers, and crew of the transport would be aboard my ship this moment but for three things. In the first place, I had on board two hundred and twenty natives, which are worth nearly two thousand pounds to me delivered in Samoa; and Captain Goigoux would not guarantee me more than fifteen thousand francs for taking him and his men to Noumea; therefore, as a business matter, I could not accept his offer. In the second place, the Governor of New Caledonia might seize me and my ship for some little differences I had with the admiral at Tahiti. To be perfectly plain, I would have brought the shipwrecked people away, but did not want to risk losing both my ship and my liberty for six hundred pounds. But I told Captain Goigoux that I would try to send him assistance; and if you will give me your promise that you will endeavour to get the Governor of New Caledonia to have the orders for my arrest issued by the

Governor of Tahiti cancelled, I will tell you where you can find Captain Goigoux and his ship's company. Have I made myself clear to you? I told him then what I tell you now.'

'I will certainly do all in my power for you with the Governor,' said De Caen; 'for such a service as you propose to render me he will be grateful.'

'I hope so,' said Hayes, quietly. 'I have been hunted from one end of the Pacific to the other for five years. I bought land in the Gambier Group, settled down, and would be a rich man by now if the Governor of Tahiti had not driven me out of the Paumotus, and then outlawed me for acts I was driven to commit through the interference of the greedy priests and the persecution of his deputy-governor. Now, about the Marengo. She went ashore in the straits between New Britain and New Ireland, and broke up very quickly. All the boats but two were smashed in the surf, but the crew all got to shore safely, and a number of stores were saved. From the spot where the ship was lost they made their way to Mioko Harbour, in the Duke of York Island, where you will find them. Half of them are down with fever at one time or another, but otherwise they are safe. They built a cutter from the wreck to carry them to Noumea, but she was accidentally burnt, and when I left they were beginning another; but sickness hinders the work, and the natives have twice attacked them.'

He stopped, and then with a twinkle in his eye, as he looked at old Sam, took a letter from his pyjama jacket and went on.

'And here is a letter addressed to the commander of any French ship of war, the naval officer in charge at Noumea, or the French Consul at Sydney or Melbourne. It was written by Captain Goigoux. No doubt you will open it, Mr. de Caen.'

De Caen took the letter from his hand with an eager exclamation, and at once read it.

'I thank you very much, Captain Hayes. You have made our task easy for us. And the Governor will not forget that Captain Goigoux here writes that you gave him many very necessary articles to aid him in building and fitting out the second vessel he is constructing, and would not accept any payment. For myself I thank you very sincerely.'

'And so do I,' said old Sam; 'and believing in the old axleiom that one good turn deserves another I won't charge you for the rice and molasses no one ever said I don't know how to recipercate in the same way a good or bad action, under any circumstances so put up those dollars captain and your good health.'

They drank together, and then Hayes rose to leave, with the remark that he must not delay, as two of his officers and a dozen of his men were suffering from fever, and that with so many dangerous natives on board he had to exercise great care, only letting fifty on deck at a time, and these were carefully watched.

'I have never been caught napping yet,' he added, 'but I'll be honestly glad when I'm rid of my cargo this time; for they are all recruited from the north end of New Ireland, and are as savage a lot of beggars as ever ate roast man. If they came from various islands they would be safe enough, I could play one lot against the other, if any party of them plotted to take the ship; but all coming from one place, I have had an anxious time, with so many of my men sick.'

'Have you plenty of arms, Captain Hayes?' said the master of the Lady Alicia. 'I can spare you ten or a dozen rifles.'

'Thank you, I have plenty; more than we could use–if we have to use them. My brig, as you may have seen, is flush-decked, which is another disadvantage; but I have a white line painted across the after part, and another just above the fore hatch. Whenever one of them steps over either of these lines, he gets a crack on the head from a belaying pin, to make him remember. So far, we have had no serious trouble. I treat them kindly, and none of my officers or men hit a man unless he is obliged to do so for our common safety.'

Old Sam nodded. 'Ay, ay, once let 'em think you're frightened it's a case of bloodshed and murder. But you'll have to be careful, captain.'

Just as they were leaving the cabin, the mate entered.

'The rice and two casks of molasses are in Captain Hayes's boat, sir; but I don't think it safe to lower the other barrels–she won't stand it in such a lumpy sea. She's too deep as she is.'

The two captains went on deck and looked over the side.

'Drop our own whaleboat into the water, Mr. Collier,' said Hawkins, 'and put the two casks into her. Then take a couple of hands with you and get back as quick as you can.'

Hayes thanked him for his good nature. 'I'm sorry to cause you so much trouble. I would have brought another boat as well, but could not spare the hands. Now, won't you come aboard yourself, and have a look at my cargo?'

Old Sam shook his head, and made his usual remark, about not being able to leave his ship when on Government service.

'Can't I go with Mr. Collier, sir?' put in Tom, quickly; 'I'd give anything to go.'

'Would you, my cockerel? Well, I don't know. What do you think, Captain Hayes?'

Hayes laughed. 'Yes, let him come, captain. He'll see what a "blackbirder" looks like. Come with me in my boat.'

Tom was delighted, and presently slid down the boat falls and waited.

Then Hayes, after giving Hawkins some important particulars about the entrance to Mioko Harbour, bade him and De Caen farewell, with wishes for a speedy voyage, got over the side into his own boat, which shoved off, and

followed that of the mate.

'You'll get wet before you get alongside, Captain Hayes!' cried Hawkins, pointing to a rain-squall which was approaching.

The big captain made some jesting reply, and then Hawkins went below to discuss the important news they had learnt with the French officer, leaving Mr. Todd to attend to the ship.

CHAPTER IX
THE FIGHT ON BOARD THE LEONIE

Mr. Collier's boat, being much lighter than that belonging to the Leonie, and manned by Maori Bill and three stalwart natives, soon left the latter some distance astern. The two brigs had now drifted about a mile and a half apart, and presently Hayes, looking at the coming squall, said–

'We'll have to bring to for a while until—-' The rest of his words were lost in the hum of the wind and the tropical rain, which descended upon the boat with a noise like the simultaneous falling of thousands of great forest trees; and had not Tom seized a bucket used as a baler, and set vigorously to work, the boat would have filled. For ten minutes Hayes kept her head to wind, then the rain ceased as if by magic, and the sun shone out as brightly as ever.

'It's all over, my lad,' said Hayes, as he swung the boat round again, 'and– oh, the natives have broken loose. Pull, boys, pull for your lives!'

As he spoke, there came the sound of rifle shots from the Leonie, followed by the roar of a heavy gun, answered by yells and savage cries; and Tom saw that the brig was lying all aback, and her after part was crowded with struggling figures.

'Pull, boys, pull!' shouted the captain, as a second gun was fired; 'the mate is firing into them with the two after guns. Ah, bravo!' he added, as a third heavy report came from the Lady Alicia; 'the brig is coming to assist us. Bravo, little man, bravo!'

Tom, who at the first alarm had sprung to double-bank the after oar, took a hurried glance astern, and saw that his own ship was indeed running down with squared yards towards the Leonie. Old Sam had evidently fired one of his carronades, to let Hayes know he was coming.

For the next five minutes no word was spoken, as the dark-skinned seamen

panted and bent to their oars, and Hayes, his face now set hard and cruel-looking, kept his eyes on his ship, from which came the continuous crack of small arms.

As the boat swept on, he stooped down, and from the stern locker took out half a dozen broad-bladed tomahawks and six short Snider carbines with belts, and filled cartridge pouches and threw them at his feet. The four native seamen showed their white teeth and grinned savagely.

In another two or three hundred yards they overtook Mr. Collier's boat, which was lying to, waiting for the Lady Alicia.

'I wish I could help you, sir,' shouted the mate quickly, as Hayes passed, 'but we are unarmed. Tom, jump overboard, and I'll pick you up.'

But Tom either could not or would not hear, as he tugged away at his oar, although Mr. Collier continued to shout and gesticulate.

"Stay where you are,' said Hayes; 'you need not come on deck. Now, look out, boys. I'll lay you alongside at the fore-chains. Avast pulling there for a bit, and take these.'

In a few moments each man had buckled on his cartridge pouch, thrust a tomahawk through his belt, loaded his carbine, and placed it in readiness beside him. Then once more they seized their oars, and as they dashed alongside, and the bow oarsman grasped the fore-chains, a chorus of savage yells sounded above, as the body of a white sailor was thrown over the side, to fall into the boat.

'Up you come!' roared Hayes to his boat's crew as, tomahawk in hand, he sprang up the chains and disappeared over the bulwarks, followed by the men, leaving Tom alone in the boat, gazing with horror-struck eyes at the ensanguined form lying across the midship thwart on which it had fallen. The sight was too much for him, though his courage quickly returned.

Seizing the painter, he hurriedly made it fast, then ran aft, picked up the remaining carbine, and with his heart thumping against his ribs clambered up after the others, and jumped down on deck, landing on the top of some dead natives lying between the bulwarks and the for'ard deckhouse.

For a moment or two he was dazed, not only at the sight of the awful carnage the decks presented, but with the din, and smoke, and yells, and curses that filled the air. The fore deck was covered with dead and dying savages, and the main filled with a swaying, surging mass of naked figures, half of whom were pressing towards the after deckhouse, to which the survivors of the crew had been driven, and the others surrounding the giant figure of Hayes and his boat's crew, who were hacking and hewing their way through them with their hatchets; for, after the first few shots, they had been unable to use their carbines again.

Hardly knowing what he was doing, Tom raised his Snider to his shoulder, and sent his first bullet into the packed mass before him. Then quickly jerking out the empty case, he slipped in another cartridge and fired again.

'That's good!' shouted a voice above him; 'jump up here, young feller, quick!'

Loosely coiled on top of the deckhouse was a huge coir hawser, and in the centre of it was the man who had called Tom. He was evidently wounded, for he was in a sitting position. Putting one foot through a port in the deckhouse, Tom clambered up, and took his place beside him.

'Quick! Lie down, and fire into 'em there on the starboard side,' said the wounded man; 'my arm is nearly broken, and I'm no good. Ah! that's it!' he cried, as Tom began firing steadily into a crowd of savages on the starboard side, who were so tightly jammed together that every shot did deadly work. 'Hurrah! the skipper's through into the house, and one man with him. Look out, young feller, they've seen us. I oughtn't to have brought you up here. Jump down again, and over the side, and swim round to the stern. Don't mind me, youngster, I'm done for. Even if I was all right, I can't swim.'

'I'll help you,' panted Tom, putting another cartridge into the breach, 'and the boat is here under the chains.'

In an instant they were on their feet, jumped down, and got over the side into the boat just in time, for half a dozen enemies made a savage rush at them, and one, springing up on the rail, hurled a club at Tom. It struck the barrel of his Snider, and sent it flying out of his hand into the sea.

The sailor, although his right arm was almost useless, and he had received a slashing cut across his ribs, quickly severed the painter with his sheath-knife, and then, pushing the boat off, he put an oar out, and, with Tom's aid, worked the boat round to the stern of the brig.

'The mate and some other sick men are in the cabin; the ports are open, and we can get in, if you heave the painter through, and have it made fast.'

Breathless and excited as he was, Tom, without answering, did as he was told, and as soon as the boat was under the square stern of the brig, he called out–

'Stand by there, and catch this line.'

A man's face appeared at the port, and, as Tom hove the line, he caught it, and then called out–

'All fast.'

Leaving the wounded sailor–who protested that he was quite comfortable–in the boat, Tom, with the aid of the painter, got through the port and into the main cabin, just as Hayes rushed down the companion.

'Where is the steward, Mr. Kelly?' he said to the man who had spoken to Tom, and who was lying on cushions on the transoms.

'Dead, sir;' and Kelly pointed to a prone figure near the cabin table. 'He was one of the first to be cut down when the niggers rushed the after guard. I

did what I could for him, but he did not last long.'

Hayes bent down and looked into the face of the dead man.

'Poor Manuel! poor Manuel!' he muttered, and drawing off the tablecloth he spread it over the body. Then, as he turned to speak to his chief officer again, he caught sight of Tom. 'Ah, my boy, I'm glad you are safe. Mr. Kelly, we have beaten the natives back for the present, but they have possession for'ard and below in the 'tween decks. But there are two boats coming from that brig, and I hope we can avoid further bloodshed.'

The mate, a tall, thin American, who was hardly able to stand through weakness, was about to make some reply, when the boats were reported alongside, and then a second later a hoarse cry rang out–

'Fire! The ship is on fire, sir!'

Hayes leapt up the companion way, followed by Tom, and saw, as he gained the deck, that smoke was issuing from the fore part of the main hatch, which was open. And at the same moment, and as the men from the Lady Alicia, headed by old Sam and Collier, sprang on deck, the natives streamed up from below from both fore and main hatchways, and again attempted to get possession of the deck. So sudden was their onslaught that most of the white men, although they shot five or six of the foremost, were driven back aft to the deckhouse, leaving Mr. Collier, Maori Bill, and Tom cut off and surrounded by a score or so of blood-maddened savages, all armed with clubs and tomahawks. Old Sam, a gigantic American negro belonging to the Leonie, and half a dozen of Hawkins's men, made a dash to their aid, and slashed their way through to them with their cutlasses–for they were unable to use their rifles. Tom and Mr. Collier were down, and not knowing whether they were alive or dead, their rescuers picked them up and then fought their way aft again. Then Hayes, with rage and despair in his heart, as he saw the smoke increase in volume, called out to Hawkins to make a stand with his men on each side of and in front of the deckhouse.

'Keep them at bay for another five minutes. I shall show them no mercy now!'

Utterly undaunted by the steady and deadly fire which had been poured into them by the crew of the Lady Alicia and the crew of the Leonie, the natives made the most determined efforts to overwhelm them by sheer force of weight alone. Then Hayes's voice was heard–

'Stand back there!–this will settle the business.'

He and some of the Leonie's crew had loaded the two guns with heavy charges of nuts and bolts, nails, and whatever other bits of iron which could be found in the deckhouse.

The guns were quickly run forward, until their muzzles were almost touching the naked bodies of the savages, and then fired by Hayes and the big negro.

For a moment or two after the bursting roar of their discharge there was silence; and even Hayes, maddened and desperate as he was, could not help shuddering when he saw the awful sight the main deck presented.

Driving all who were left alive of the now cowed and terrified natives down into the fore peak, Hayes and Hawkins turned their attention to the fire, leaving their own wounded to be attended to by Mr. Todd and Lieutenant de Caen, both of whom now appeared with a fresh party of men from the Lady Alicia to assist.

The fire was fortunately confined to the after part of the 'tween decks, and the hands from the Lady Alicia turned to with such hearty good-will that two hoses were soon at work; and a cheer went up when, after ten minutes' vigorous pumping, the smoke rapidly decreased, and a party were able to descend and completely extinguish it.

Then old Sam and Hayes, blackened with smoke and all but exhausted, went aft to the deckhouse. Todd met them with a grave face.

'Mr. Collier is dying, Captain Hawkins, and wishes to see you; and that poor lad is pretty badly hurt too.'

Sitting in the centre of the house, and supported by De Caen, poor Collier was breathing his last, his dark features fast paling with the coming dissolution of soul from body.

Above, in one of the berths, lay Tom, with closed eyes and bandaged head. In all the remaining bunks–six in all–there was either a sick or a wounded man. Tom had received a heavy blow on his forehead, and another on his ribs from a club; the mate had been cut down with a tomahawk.

As Hayes and the captain of the Lady Alicia entered, and Tom heard old Sam's voice, he opened his eyes, and vainly tried to sit up.

'My poor boy, my poor boy!' said the old seaman, stepping over to him, and taking his hand, 'are you badly hurt?'

'Not much, sir; but I got a tremendous crack on the side, that pains terribly,' said Tom in a faint voice. 'Oh, how is poor Mr. Collier, sir?'

Hawkins shook his head sadly. 'Going fast my lad, going fast!' he said, as he turned away from Tom to kneel beside the young mate, who was feebly asking for him.

Tom saw the skipper's old white head bend close to Collier's face, and the two men speaking to each other.

Then a brief pause, and then Collier called out distinctly–

'Tom!'

'Yes, Collier,' replied Tom.

'Good-bye, Tom, my dear lad. I cannot see your face; good-bye.'

He made a faint motion of farewell with his hand, leant his head against old Sam's shoulder, and Tom covered his face, and sobbed under his breath. When he

looked again, De Caen and the captain were gone, and the still figure of his friend was lying on the deck with his face covered with old Sam's blue-and-white silk handkerchief. Seven of the Leonie's crew of thirty had been killed, and as many more wounded; and as soon as possible the bodies of the former were brought on the quarter deck and made ready for burial, together with that of the first mate of the Lady Alicia.

For some little time, as the two brigs sailed along within a few cable lengths of each other, Hayes and the master of the Lady Alicia paced the quarter deck and talked of the fight. The old man was deeply distressed at the death of Collier, and Hayes, worried as he was with his own troubles, was touched at the spectacle of his grief.

'I am sorry, for your sake, that we ever sighted each other, Captain Hawkins,' he said; 'more than that I cannot say. I do not want to speak of my own losses; but I do want you to believe me–I am sorry, very sorry.'

Old Sam drew his hand across his eyes. 'It cannot be helped,' he answered huskily, 'and I only did for you what was my duty as a man, and what I believe you would have done for me if I stood in the same danger; but I would rather have lost my ship and all I have in the world than that poor young fellow. A better seaman never trod a deck, and a better, cleaner livin' man never drew breath, an' he's gone with a clean sheet too.'

Hayes nodded, and smoked on in silence for another half a dozen turns, then said–

'About that poor boy, Captain Hawkins. His back is badly hurt, and if you take him away with you, the chances are that he will die of fever when you get to New Britain. This is the rainy season, and that some of your ship's company will be laid up with fever is a dead certainty. He will never recover from even a slight attack.'

Old Sam groaned. 'Poor lad! what can I do? Believe me, sir, I'd as lief die myself as see him go. It would just about finish me if I had to write to his father and—-'

'Leave him with me,' said Hayes, quickly. 'I pledge you my honour as a man to take good care of him. With this westerly weather we shall make a quick run to Samoa. If he is not better by the time we get to Apia, there are two good doctors there. And from Samoa he will soon get a chance to return to Australia. I will pay his passage. If you take him with you, you are risking his chances of recovery, strong as is his constitution. Mr. de Caen,' turning to the Frenchman, who had joined them, 'do you not think so?'

De Caen did think so, and so it was decided that Tom should remain on board the Leonie, and old Sam and De Caen went to bid him farewell.

'Tom my hearty,' said the skipper, after he had explained to the lad the

reasons for his decision, 'you have to get well without any prevarication and go home to your father and brother and tell them that old Sam Hawkins isn't a bad old shellback with all his delimits and sincrasses as it were and that he knows his duty and proper evolutions, and you'll have Maori Bill with you to remind you of me and the old Lady A–for Mr. de Cann is a gentleman and is going to do mate's duty in place of poor Mr. Collier and I've given Captain Hayes the loan of Maori Bill and I want you Tom to never disremember that if you never see old Sam Hawkins again, that his last words were always do the straight thing and keep clear of drinkin' and swearin' and dirty conduct and do your duty and give my honoured requests to your father and eat all you can, the more vittels you stow away under the bunt when you have broken bones the more they get settled up as it were and inform their natural functions on the germinus through which the pores circulate. Good-bye my boy, and God bless you and never say die under any exemplifications no matter where or how rigidous.' And the kind-hearted old sailor wrung Tom's hand so warmly that even had not the lad's overwrought feelings at parting with him brought the tears to his eyes, the energy of the farewell would have done so. Then De Caen came and bade him good-bye in his effusive French fashion, much to Tom's discomfiture–for what lad with British blood in his veins likes being kissed by a man?–and promised to write to him from Noumea. Late in the afternoon both brigs hove to. Mr. Collier's body was placed in one of the boats from the Lady Alicia, and Hayes once again bade Hawkins and De Caen good-bye.

Maori Bill, whose own chest, with Tom's effects, had been sent on board the Leonie, shook hands with his captain and Mr. de Caen in silence, and then quietly walking through the men assembled on the main deck, descended to the boat in which the body of the mate was laid, lifted the rug which covered it, and pressed his face to the dead man's hand, and uttered a short *tagi*, or cry of mourning. Then returning to the deck, he stood awaiting the orders of his new captain.

As the two boats pulled quickly away towards the Lady Alicia, Hayes waved his hand to De Caen and Hawkins, and then beckoned to Maori Bill.

'Bill, come here. I want you to do the second mate's duty. He will take Mr. Kelly's place. I know that you are a good man, and will stand no nonsense. Stand by me, and I will stand by you. Call the hands aft.'

The crew trooped aft silently, and Hayes said, curtly–

'Men, this man here is the second mate now, instead of Mr. Harvey, who will take Mr. Kelly's place until Mr. Kelly is able for duty again. Remember that he is an officer now, and "Mr. Chester."'

Then, turning to a coloured man who was now doing duty as steward, 'Serve out some grog.'

Grog was served out liberally to the hands as they stood, and then Hayes brought the brig up a couple of points, so as to increase her speed. The breeze had now freshened, and for an hour or so the two vessels kept the same course.

As the sun began to dip into the western sea-rim, Hayes hove-to and hoisted the American colours half-mast. The Lady Alicia also brought to, and half-masted both British and French colours.

Standing in the waist with bared heads, Hayes and most of the crew waited till the bodies of the seven murdered men were brought from aft, and laid side by side on the deck. Then, as he said in low but distinct tones the words, 'We therefore commit these bodies to the deep, to be turned into corruption,' the canvas-shrouded forms were launched overboard in succession as quickly as possible.

Scarcely had the last body plunged towards its resting-place two thousand fathoms deep, when Hayes called out in a harsh voice–

'Turn to again, Mr. Harvey. East by south is the course. Steward, serve out some more grog to the men. Mr. Harvey, lower the colours, and then run them up again and dip to the Lady Alicia.'

He strode aft again, and Tom, lying and listening in his bunk in the deck-house, heard him suddenly burst out into an awful torrent of blasphemy, cursing his ill-luck: his officers, who 'could let a lot of naked niggers take charge of the ship, and kill seven men who were as good and better men than any one of them,' and the crew themselves for being such a lazy, useless lot of loafers and dead-beats, who deserved to have their throats cut. And, he added savagely, he would show them what he thought of such a lot of crawling, useless 'soldiers,' who were not fit to be left in charge of a canal boat tied up to a horse's tail.

He ceased as suddenly as he began, and then coming to the door of the deckhouse, peered in and spoke to the fever-stricken and wounded men in such suave and kindly tones, that Tom could scarcely believe the evidence of his own senses.

'And how are you, my boy?' he said, coming over to him, and placing his hand on his knees with almost fatherly kindness. 'Do you think you can bear moving? I want to have you down in the cabin, where you will be more comfortable than in this house. You can lie on one of the transom lockers, where you will get plenty of air through the stern ports. The mate will be near you, and you and he will have to make a race to see who gets on his pins first.'

Tom smiled. 'Just as you please, sir; but I don't want to give too much trouble.'

Hayes nodded. 'That's all right. You're to be the leading invalid on board the Leonie, and all hands and the cook are to stand by and wait on you.' Stepping outside, he called out–

'Send a couple of hands here, Mr. Harvey, to carry Mr. Wallis below; and

tell Charlie to come here.'

'Charlie' was the sailor with the injured arm, who, as soon as Tom was lifted out of his bunk, appeared with his arm in a sling, contentedly smoking a pipe.

'How are you, Charlie?' said Hayes.

'Right as rain, sir. I guess you've made a good job of it, sir,' indicating his arm. 'Hallo, young feller, how are you? Here, shake;' and he put out his left hand to Tom; 'my right arm is parcelled up like a half dollar roll of preserved Tahiti bananas. Young feller, I reckon thet you hev the makin's of a general in you. If it hadn't been for him, captain, I wouldn't be here now. He's grit to the backbone.'

Tom was lifted up carefully by two of the crew, and carried below to a comfortable, amply cushioned lounge on the transoms, where he was greeted by the sick mate, whose legs were so enormously swollen from the effects of fever and quinine that he was unable to stand. Otherwise he was perfectly sound, and in full possession of a truly remarkable fund of vituperative expressions, some of which, when he heard Tom let an expression of pain escape him, he hurled at the two men who brought him down. Neither of them, he asserted with many unnecessary oaths, had the strength to lift a sitting hen off her nest, nor the will to pull their mothers out of a fire; also that as soon as he 'got around' again he would haze their worthless lives out of their useless carcases for their clumsiness, and derive unalloyed pleasure from seeing them go over the side feet first with a round shot at their heels.

The men, both of whom were Chilenos, grinned and made no reply. They were used to him, for, ruffian and brute as he was to them occasionally, they yet had a liking for him, born out of their constant association with him in the face of danger and death. And Tom, though the man's language and merciless severity shocked and horrified him, later on learned to respect the many good traits in his character, chief of which were his unswerving devotion and loyalty to Hayes, his iron resolution and dauntless courage, and his restless, untiring energy and watchfulness in all that concerned his duty and care of the ship. Then, too, he had a sense of humour, grim enough, perhaps inborn, perhaps unconsciously acquired from Hayes, who, in his bursts of temper, would kick an offending seaman all round the deck, down the companion-way, and bawl out 'Arnica!' to the steward simultaneously.

Unable to sleep from the pain he suffered, Tom was rather glad than otherwise that the mate, from the same cause, was rather restless, and disposed to be very communicative. The night was brilliantly clear and bright from the light of myriad stars; and from the widely opened stern ports he and Tom, who were lying near each other, watched the bubble and boil of the phosphorescent water in the brig's wake as it went hissing astern. Mr. Kelly, in expectation of one of

his frequent attacks of ague, was heavily wrapped up in blankets and rugs, so that only his face was visible.

'We have the breeze set steady now, I believe,' he said, 'and ought to sight Vanikoro in a couple of days. Were you a passenger on that brig?'

Tom gave him the history of his adventures, to which the American listened with great interest, and in return he gave Tom an account of the origin of the attempt to capture the Leonie by the natives.

When Hayes left to board the Lady Alicia the brig was in charge of the second mate, who had with him the carpenter and boatswain, the latter being stationed for'ard to watch the natives–about forty–who were on deck at the time. The chief mate himself, the third officer, and two boys who were suffering severely from fever, were lying down in the main cabin, and in the after deckhouse were two or three other sick men, and two more were lying on mats under the topgallant fo'c'sle, being attended to by Manuel, the half-caste Portuguese steward. On the topgallant fo'c'sle were two white seamen armed with rifles and cutlasses; another stood guard over the main hatchway, keeping watch upon the remaining hundred and eighty savages in their quarters in the 'tween decks, and two other men armed with cutlasses only were stationed one on each side of the deckhouse aft. Between the deckhouse and the bulwarks were two brass guns (heavily charged with slugs and bullets), but these had their housings on, on account of the rain-squalls, and were not instantly available at the moment they were wanted. The rest of the crew, who were not armed, but whose rifles and cutlasses were handy for use in the for'ard deckhouse, or in their own bunks, were dispersed about the decks, engaged in various work, utterly unsuspicious of any danger.

Suddenly, and in the midst of a heavy, drenching rain-squall, the forty natives on deck sprang upon the crew, killed the two sentries up for'ard and the one at the main hatch, and were instantly joined by many others from below, the poor seaman on guard there being cut down as he was attempting to unhook the ladder and drop it below. A third party, who had cut a hole through the forward bulkhead, made their way on deck through the fore-scuttle, and armed with tomahawks and clubs united with their fellows, and made a determined rush aft, driving before them most of the unarmed seamen. Fortunately, the men who were on sentry in the alley-ways beside the house made good use of their Sniders, and so gave their comrades time to obtain arms from both the deckhouse and main cabin. Then it was that the second mate succeeded in firing the two guns. The discharge from the first cut a lane through the swarming savages on the port side; the second, through being badly pointed in the mad confusion, did but little damage.

'Then,' added the mate,' you fellows came along; an' I guess I felt pleased. I

couldn't get up to take part in the proceedin's myself–had to stay down here and load rifles and pass 'em up on deck. Anyway it's been a mighty bad business all round.... Seven of our men gone, one of yours, and ninety valooable—-'

'Don't,' said Tom shudderingly, covering his face with his hands; 'don't say any more–it was too horrible.'

The American desisted at once, when he saw how even the memory of the dreadful scenes affected the lad's mind.

The morning of the third day broke bright and glorious. Overhead a vault of cloudless blue, beneath, the gently heaving bosom of a sea shimmering and glinting and sparkling in the clear, warm sunshine, with here and there groups of white birds floating lazily upon its surface; five miles astern the high, wooded peaks of Vanikoro Island were fast changing their purple loom to a vivid green, as the wind dispelled the mountain mists of the past night.

With every stitch of her snowy canvas swelling to the sweet, cool breeze, the Leonie was cutting her way through the water at six knots, almost without noise. Aft, pacing the quarter deck on the weather side, Hayes, dressed as usual in linen pyjamas, and smoking his first cigar, was waiting for his coffee, and casting a look, now at the island abeam, and now aloft; then as his eye fell upon the end of the for'ard deckhouse, which faced the main hatch coamings, and he noticed anew its wrecked and shattered condition, caused by the fire of the guns, his features underwent such a sudden and ferocious change, that Maori Bill, whose watch it was on deck, turned his head away, and pretended not to notice. In a moment or two, however, the captain resumed his walk, but there played about his lips such a vicious, savage smile, that those who knew him, and had chanced to see it, would have known that there was mischief afloat.

Presently up came Tom from below, walking somewhat stiffly, and carrying two books in his hand.

'Well, Wallis, my boy, how are you this morning? Ready for your coffee, eh? What's that you have?–ah, *La Pérouse's Voyage autour du Monde.* Who gave you that? Can you read French?'

'Not very well, sir. Mr. de Caen gave me both *La Pérouse's Voyage* and this one, *The Fate of La Pérouse*, which is by Captain Dillon, and I am now reading about his discovery of the relics of the Boussole and Astrolabe, La Pérouse's ships, on Vanikoro in 1828.'

'Ha, I must read that. There's Vanikoro, my boy, over there, and that's where Jean François Galaup, Comte de la Pérouse, perished with every other living soul on board the two ships.'

Then, for the next twenty minutes, as he drank his coffee, he talked; now mentioning some wild adventure in the China seas, now sneering at Englishmen and their 'dull pig-headedness,' and then suddenly flying off at a tangent, and

saying–

'Did you ever read that piece about Deering Woods by Longfellow? I know Deering Woods well, although I come from Cleveland City, on the Great Lakes. The smell of those woods is in my nostrils now, even after fifteen years.'

Presently the boatswain came aft, and said, 'There is a big nigger sulking, sir. He won't eat. Says he's sick.'

Hayes scowled. 'Shamming, I suppose?'

'Of course he is. He is the fellow who killed Manuel.'

'Ah!'–and the savage fury of the captain's voice made the blood in Tom's veins run cold–'that is that big buck who has been at the bottom of the mischief all along. Rout the whole lot of them up on deck; I'll give him some medicine anyway.'

Followed by two or three seamen, the boatswain descended to the 'tween decks, and in a few minutes the black 'cargo' of the Leonie was standing on the main deck. Out of the hundred and thirty who were left, many were wounded, either by bullet or cutlass; a dozen or so women, equally as savage and repulsive-looking as the men, grouped themselves together, and stared sullenly at the captain. Four of the men were handcuffed–these had been especially prominent in the outbreak, among them was the man whom the boatswain had reported as being sick. He was of herculean stature, and the natural ferocity of his aspect was heightened by his hideous red lips and black teeth, the result of chewing betelnut.

'Range them on both sides of the main hatch, Mr. Harvey,' said Hayes, producing a pocket-book, 'and tell every man that as I call his name he must step out and come aft.'

Then he began to call out the names, slowly and quietly. When no response was made, Harvey called out, 'Dead,' and he drew his pencil through the name.

When the last name on the list had been called, and the natives were grouped together aft, Hayes looked at them with a lowering brow. Then he motioned to Harvey.

'Come here, Harvey.'

Harvey stepped over to the captain, and for a few minutes the two conversed in low tones, the crew meanwhile, with loaded rifles, keeping a close watch upon the natives.

Then Harvey (the only man on board who could speak the New Ireland language) at Hayes's behest spoke to the sullen savages.

'The captain says this. He is stronger than you. You tried to kill us all. Now ninety of you have gone into the bellies of the sharks. Now, tell him who among you was the leader?'

There was no answer.

Hayes's face paled with anger. 'Tell them that I will take every one of them, one after another, and flog them until I am told who it was hatched the plot.'

Harvey repeated his words, but without effect.

'Take that fellow first,' said the captain, pointing to the native nearest to him, 'trice him up, and flog him until he speaks.'

Shuddering and sick at heart, Tom saw the man–a strong, well-built savage with a mop of hair twisted into hundreds of greasy curls–seized for punishment, and a sigh of relief escaped his lips when at the third or fourth lash he called out that he would tell.

Dewarrian, he said, was the man who had planned the attack. Dewarrian had killed many white men before, and so they listened to him.

Dewarrian, a big native, was brought before the captain by two seamen; Mr. Harvey stood with them to interpret.

'Dewarrian,' said Hayes, quietly, 'you ought to die. But there are too many blood-stains on this deck. So I will spare your life. Trice him up and give him six dozen. Then let the hands get breakfast.'

'Oh, captain, don't, please don't!' cried Tom. 'Can't you give him some other punishment? Do, I beg of you, let him off any further flogging.'

The passionate tone of entreaty that rang in his voice had its effect; and Hayes considered a moment.

'Very well, Tom, I'll let him off. Put him in irons again, Mr. Harvey, and send him below. I guess he's scared enough as it is.'

At breakfast Tom did not join the captain, who sat alone at the table, apparently not caring for the society of any one. During the rest of the day he scarcely spoke, even to his officers, though Mr. Kelly came and reported himself as fit for duty again. A curt nod was the only recognition he received.

Then followed days of weariness and vexation to all, for the wind failed, and a long calm ensued, and the captain gave way to such mad bursts of rage, that Tom began to sicken of the Leonie and her strange master. One night he spoke to Maori Bill on the matter.

'So am I sick of it,' said the seaman. 'I've sailed in a good many rough ships in my time, Tom; but this brig is the worst of any, and Hayes is more of a devil than a man. Look how he treats his men!–sometimes so nice and soft to them that you'd think butter wouldn't melt in his mouth, and the next minute he knocks a man down senseless. And the curse of God is on this labour trade, for, although Hayes treats these savages pretty well, he only does so because he wants to land them in prime condition in Samoa. It's slavery, Tom, that's what it is, and nothing else. These poor beggars think that they are only going to Samoa to work on the German plantations for three years–they'll be lucky if they see their own country again in seven.'

'How cruel! But can nothing be done for them? Will not the Samoan Government protect them?'

'There's no government there worth speaking of–only the three consuls: German, Yankee, and English, who help the native king to pay the police, that's all.[#] And the big German planting firms can do just as they please in Samoa; they pretty well rule the country.'

[#] This was the actual condition of affairs in Samoa at the time.

'Don't the missionaries interfere?'

'No, sir. How could they? Samoa is a no-man's land, and if an English missionary were to try to get in on to one of the big plantations, just to see how the natives were being treated, he'd get into a lot of trouble. His own Consul would round on him and threaten him with all sorts of penalties, and half a dozen of the British storekeepers in Africa would write a letter to the Governor of New South Wales saying that the missionaries were again inciting the imported natives to rebel against their masters, and bring about bloodshed. It's just this way, Tom: the planters in Samoa say they cannot carry on unless they have coloured labour from the other islands, and the storekeepers say the same, and the two together work dead against the missionaries. They do the same thing in Fiji. The cotton planter, and the sugar planter, and the big storekeeper all work together to keep the labour trade, as *they* call it, going; but *I* call it slavery. The missionaries and a few other white men want to see it swept away, and swept away it ought to be. But we mustn't stand talking here any longer. This is a dangerous ship, and we must be careful. Good night, sir.'

CHAPTER X

TOM AND MAORI BILL GO ON A BOAT VOYAGE

In the tenth day after sighting and dropping Vanikoro, and when the beautiful islands of Fotuna and Alofi, two of the gems of the Pacific, were plainly visible from the deck, Hayes came up from below in unusually good temper.

'Mr. Kelly, I'm going to run into Singavi Harbour on Fotuna to buy yams–a

hundred tons, if I can get them. They will bring a thumping price in Samoa, and we can get them for almost nothing here, and clear over five thousand dollars.'

'Reckon thet will help you pull up some over them dead niggers.'

Hayes smiled pleasantly. 'Yes, it will about bring things even. Keep her head for that high peak on Fotuna. We'll be there early enough to start the natives digging this afternoon. Tom, you'll see some rare old trading now. Come and lend me a hand in the trade-room.'

The trade-room of the Leonie was on the port side of the main cabin; three of the state-rooms had been made into one, and shelves fitted all round. On the upper of these such articles as prints and calicoes were stored; the lower ones being filled with old-fashioned muskets, axes, tomahawks, 16-inch butcher-knives, pistols, and vast numbers of discarded short Enfield rifles with bayonets attached. On the deck were eight or ten huge tierces of negrohead tobacco, cases of gin, and kegs and boxes of powder.

Hayes, with Tom and a couple of the hands, were soon hard at work on a couple of tierces of tobacco, digging out the compact layers of the black, fragrant weed, pulling each stick apart, tying them up in bundles of ten, and passing them on deck, where they were placed in trade boxes. Then followed powder and bullets, caps, knives, bales of Turkey red twill and navy blue calico.

Hayes was in such an excellent humour that the work proceeded very pleasantly, and he talked with almost boyish exuberancy to Tom about the island of Fotuna and the natives. They were, he said, rather a saucy lot, and as he did not want to have his decks filled with three or four hundred of them, and run the risk of a fight occurring between them and his cargo of 'blackbirds,' he would do all the trading on shore, weigh the yams on the beach, and send them off in the boats to the ship.

'They are not a bad lot of people,' he added, 'although they are all good Catholics–that is, every man, woman, and child of them have crucifixes hanging round their necks–and all are born thieves. However, they know their mark, and won't try to rob *me*.'

Soon after dinner the Leonie sailed into a tiny little harbour under the shadow of Mount Schouten, and anchored within a few yards of the beach, and directly in front of the largest village on the island. Taking Tom with him, the captain at once went on shore, and interviewed the leading chief and the one white trader–an old white-headed Englishman, whom Tom learnt afterwards was an escaped convict. A bargain was soon made, as yams were very plentiful, no trading ship had touched at the island for many months, and the natives were eager to sell. The chief showed Hayes some specimens of the yam crop–three enormous vegetables, each of which weighed sixty or seventy pounds. Then a conch-shell was sounded, and the chief and his head men summoned the people

together, and ordered them to begin digging the yams at once.

Promising to bring the trade ashore at daylight, and begin weighing the yams, Hayes, accompanied by the chief and the old trader–who seemed a respectable, quiet-mannered man–returned to the ship, leaving Tom to enjoy a few hours' pigeon-shooting along the sides of the forest-clad mountain.

The birds were uttering their deep crooing notes everywhere around him, as they fed upon the scarlet berries of the lofty *maso'i* trees, and the native lad who came with Tom as guide soon had eight or nine brace of the fat, heavy birds to carry. Returning by the banks of a noisy mountain stream, Tom threw himself down beside a deep crystal pool to rest, whilst the lithe, bronze-skinned native, whose only garment was a girdle of grass, ascended a coco-nut tree for some young drinking nuts. The largest of these he quickly husked with his sharp white teeth, and handed it to Tom to drink. As he drank he heard a footstep near, and looking up he saw standing beside him a man dressed in the habit of a priest. He saluted Tom politely, told him that he was Père Serge, one of the two priests living on the island, made a few inquiries about the Leonie, frowned expressively when he heard the name of Captain Hayes, but then said, cordially enough, that he would be pleased if Tom would visit him.

[image]

LOOKING UP, HE SAW A MAN DRESSED IN THE HABIT OF A PRIEST.

'Thank you,' said Tom, 'I shall be very pleased to come to-morrow, if the captain does not want me on board.'

'But you surely are not a sailor, and an officer; no, you cannot be, you are too young?' inquired the priest in his clear English.

'I am a passenger, sir.'

The père held up his hands. 'A passenger with such a captain, and on such a ship! Ah! my poor sir, you have fallen into bad hands, I fear;' and then noticing the sudden flush on Tom's cheeks, he added hurriedly, 'But never mind Captain Hayes. I shall be glad if you will come to me. And at my mission, two miles from here, there are many more pigeons than there are at Singavi, and the waters of this little river here are full of very nice fish. You shall fish and shoot, and tell me of your travels;' and he smiled as he held out his hand. 'You will not forget to come?'

As soon as Tom returned on board he found the captain, the old trader, and Mr. Kelly all seated together on the quarter deck, drinking, smoking, and

chatting. He was pleased to see that nearly every one of the 'blackbirds' were also on deck, devouring with great gusto baked pork, fish, taro, and yams, which Hayes had bought for them from the Singavi natives. Great piles of young cocoanuts were everywhere lying about the deck, mingled with bunches of bananas, pineapples, and baskets of sun-dried oranges–the latter being left untouched, as the 'blackbirds,' never having seen an orange before, would not eat them. They were all talking, and shouting, and eating at such a rate that Tom was astonished; and his astonishment was increased when he noticed that none of the brig's crew were armed, and that the usual guard were up for'ard, smoking and playing cards.

As he was washing his hands in the cabin, Mr. Harvey, a young, hard-faced, silent man of about thirty, with whom Tom seldom exchanged a word, came below and sat down and began filling his pipe.

'What do you think of the happy-family party on deck, Mr. Wallis? I mean the woolly-haired, black-toothed crowd.'

'Don't they seem jolly, Mr. Harvey? And they have the run of the deck, too.'

Harvey laughed in his quiet way. 'They're all right. Did you notice those two big iron pots with fires lit under them, on shore, just outside the trader's house?'

'Yes, I did. Whaler's try-pots, aren't they? What is boiling in them?'

Harvey nodded. 'Only water. They belonged to the Comboy, a New Bedford whaleship, which went ashore here a good many years ago–before you were born. Well, about an hour ago the skipper called our "blackbirds" together, and solemnly told them that the pots are used by the Fotuna natives to cook strangers in, and that fires had been lighted under them in the hope that Hayes would sell a few of his passengers every day to make a feast. It just scared the life out of them, especially as an old French priest happened to pass along the beach at that time, followed by a lot of converts dressed in white sulus; Hayes pointed him out to them, and said he was the principal "devil doctor" who, with his gang of meat carvers, had come down to the beach to see if there was any meat ready.'

Tom laughed. 'It's funny; but do the "blackbirds" believe it?'

'Rather. And as long as we are at this island we shall have no trouble with our cargo of niggers. They think that they would be killed, cut up, put into those pots, and eaten by the Fotuna natives in a brace of shakes, if Hayes gets mad with them. Oh, it's a mighty smart trick, and saves the hands a lot of trouble.'

'But don't you think, Mr. Harvey, that it is rather a mean sort of trick? The Catholic priests here have done a lot of good to the natives, and redeemed them from their savage customs, have they not? Mr. Collier said that of them.'

Harvey laughed scornfully. 'I'm a "holy Roman," lad–born and bred–but I've sailed the South Seas for twenty years, and I know as much about mission-

aries as any man, and I tell you this–these French priests here have done a lot of good, in many ways; and yet these Fotuna natives are taught to believe that all white men who are not Roman Catholics will be damned.'

'Are you sure, Mr. Harvey?'

'Sure!'–and the stern-faced young officer dashed his clenched hand down upon the cabin table–'sure! My boy, you will learn a lot before you get back to your home again in Australia. Wait till we get to Samoa, and there you will see what the Protestant missionaries have done, and what the French priests have done, and you can size up the work of both alongside, and draw your own conclusions. I am, as I said just now, a Roman Catholic, but I know a lot about the way in which the French priests "Christianize" the natives of these islands, and I despise many of their ways. They have come to the South Seas under the protection of the British flag, in British ships, following in the wake of English missionaries who have done all the hard graft, and then they teach their converts to hate and despise everything that is English and Protestant–from the pennant of an admiral to the jibsheet-block of a British trading schooner.'

'Poor Mr. Collier told me that the French missionaries, although they cause a great deal of trouble, are very good men, Mr. Harvey.'

'Good men! Ay. Guess they're good enough in some ways. They build their own churches and live like the Kanakas themselves, and I allow they don't go in for making dollars. But they poison the native mind against everything that is British or American. Why, three years ago, when I was in Wallis Island, I went ashore to church, and the priest there gave me a bundle of school primers printed in Samoan, and asked me to spread 'em around amongst the natives in the Tokelau Group, on account of the pictures.'

'Pictures?'

'Ay, pictures–pictures that would just grip the fancy of nine out of every ten Kanakas; pictures showing how the cruel and wicked *lotu Peretania* (Protestant faith) was sending people to hell; pictures showing an English missionary chasing a native woman–with thundering lies printed at the foot; pictures showing Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary dressed in store clothes.'[#]

[#] *Note by the author.*–This school primer of which Harvey speaks was actually circulated in the South Seas by the Roman Catholic missionaries. It was printed in Marseilles, but other editions were issued from Sydney in 1866 or 1867.

'Oh, stop, Mr. Harvey, stop! Don't speak like that! Don't laugh so mockingly when you name our Saviour!'

'Mockingly, Tom? No! I'm a rough sailor, and a fit man to be an officer for such a hell afloat as the brig Leonie. I'm as bad as any man can be morally, but I am no mocker of sacred things.'

'I did not mean to hurt or offend you, Mr. Harvey. And I know that you are neither a brute nor a bully.'

The second mate placed his hand on Tom's shoulder.

'I'm glad to hear you say that, Tom, and I wish it was true. But I was brought up in a rough school–in the fo'c'sle of a New Bedford whaler–and I guess I've been getting more and more of a brute and a basher every day of my life. My father was an Irishman and a Roman Catholic, but didn't care a cuss for the priest; my mother was not only an Irishwoman and a holy Roman, but a bigoted one as well, and taught me from the very first to hate and despise the Protestants; and I hated and despised them profusely until I went to sea in the whaler, and found out that a Protestant was just as good a sailor-man as any holy Roman. But I was going to tell you about those pictures.'

He laughed again, and his usually gloomy face was so lit up, that Tom could not help smiling in anticipation.

'These good, gentle priests,' continued Harvey, 'hate Englishmen and Americans like poison; they cause more bloodshed and misery by their lies—- There, that's all. I'm off on deck for a smoke before supper.'

Just after supper was over Maori Bill suggested to Tom that they should ask the captain to let them have one of the whaleboats, and go fishing out in the deep water of the harbour. Tom at once went to Hayes, who was pacing the main deck, talking to the old trader.

'Certainly,' he answered. 'I'd come with you myself, but Ned and I are talking about business. Take a couple of hands with you, and bring back a load of fish. You'll get some hundred-pounder groper, and red rock-cod here. Oh, Bill is going with you, is he? Tell him I want to see him for a minute or two first.'

In a few minutes Tom had his fishing-gear ready; the boat with two hands was brought alongside, and Maori Bill, carrying a basket of young coco-nuts in his hand, came up to the captain.

'Mr. Wallis told me you wanted to speak to me, sir.'

'Yes, Bill, I do. It is only'–and here Hayes spoke in his sauvest tones–'it is only to say that you have done your duty as second mate to my satisfaction. But as Mr. Kelly is now well again, and I have no need for you on board, I am going to leave you here as a trader in place of old Ned, who wants to make a trip to Samoa.'

The big half-caste placed his basket on the deck, and looked at Hayes steadily.

'I don't want a trader's berth, Captain Hayes. I came aboard here to look

after young Mr. Wallis, and do second mate's duty, until Mr. Kelly was better. That was the agreement you made with Captain Hawkins.'

Hayes's face flushed deeply. 'Man! do you know who you are talking to?'

'Yes, sir, to you. And I'm willing to go for'ard and do my duty as a seaman if you ask me, but I'm not going to take a trader's berth ashore to please you or anybody else. My father was a white man–as good as you. I mean no disrespect to you, sir. But I'm not a Chileno or a Dutchman, and won't be hazed by any man on God's earth!'

For a moment or so Hayes regarded the half-caste steadily, then he said quietly–

'You're a bit of a fighting man, aren't you?'

'Yes, sir. But that has nothing to do with my going ashore here.'

'Put up your hands, you half-bred nigger!' and Hayes strode up to Maori Bill with blazing eyes. 'I'll pound the life out of you in two minutes!'

[image]

'PUT UP YOUR HANDS, YOU HALF-BRED NIGGER!'

'No, you won't, captain!' and Kelly, the chief mate, sprang in front of him, and put the muzzle of a Colt's revolver against Maori Bill's chest. 'We can't afford to hev no trouble.'

In an instant the Maori seized the weapon by the barrel, wrenched it from Kelly's hand, and threw it overboard, then lifting the mate up in his arms, he dashed him down upon the deck, where he lay stunned.

The second mate and carpenter both made a rush at the half-caste, but Hayes was before them.

'Keep back, Harvey! keep back, carpenter! Let me deal with him. Now, Mr. Maori Bill, I'll teach you a lesson that will last you for a month of Sundays!' and launching out his left hand with lightning-like rapidity, he seized the Maori by the throat, and in a moment the two men were struggling madly on the deck.

But the half-caste, whose herculean stature and prodigious strength made him a match for Hayes, quickly freed himself from the captain's grip, and then dealt him such a smashing blow over the temple with his right hand, that Hayes staggered, and would have fallen but for Mr. Harvey. The Maori stepped back and waited, his dark face pale with fury, and his teeth set hard.

'That's a bit of a staggerer,' said Hayes, quietly, as he put his handkerchief to his face. 'You're a good man, Mr. Maori Bill; but wait a minute.'

The half-caste folded his arms across his chest. 'I do not want to fight you,

Captain Hayes, although you have called me a half-bred nigger. But the white blood in me is as good as yours, and the mate put a pistol to my chest. Let me alone–this sort of work don't suit me.'

'But it *shall* suit you! I'll pound you first, Bill, then I'll make you useful. You've as good as killed Mr. Kelly, and maybe I'll want you as second mate again. Stand back there, Mr. Harvey.'

'Stand back yourself, sir!' cried the Maori, passionately. 'I am a dangerous man. If I hit you again I will kill you!'

Hayes laughed contemptuously, and in another instant the two were at it again, fighting with such silent ferocity that even the savage natives surrounding them drew back in terror. But Hayes was at a disadvantage, for he could scarcely see; and presently the Maori struck him a terrific blow on the chin, which sent him reeling across the deck, and ended the fight. And then two or three Chilenos and the carpenter sprang upon the half-caste and bore him down, some of them striking him repeatedly in the face. But once again he freed himself, rose to his feet, and sent one of his Chileno assailants down with a broken jaw; then Harvey dealt him a fearful blow on the top of his head with an iron belaying-pin, and stunned him.

'Ah! you coward!' and Tom sprang at the second mate with clenched hands. 'You coward, Mr. Harvey! You have killed him!' and then he knelt down and looked into Bill's face.

Harvey laughed sullenly. 'He had to be settled one way or another.'

Ten minutes later, when the half-caste regained consciousness, he found himself in irons in the for'ard deckhouse, and Tom seated beside him, bathing his head with cold water.

'Bill,' said Tom, taking his hand, 'we must leave this ship.'

The Maori turned his bloodshot eyes on Tom for a moment or two.

'I am quite ready to leave her, sir; but I doubt if I can get away now,' and he held up his manacled hands.

'I won't go without you, Bill. And as for the handcuffs, I can set you free at any moment. I know where I can put my hand on half a dozen keys in the cabin. But first I shall tell the captain I am leaving the ship.'

Bill protested vigorously at this suggestion. Hayes, he said, was so unreliable and changeful, that it would be folly to tempt him to another burst of temper. 'I know more of him than you do,' he added; 'he will never forgive me, and will make my life a hell to me unless I bend to him.'

Tom thought a moment. He did not like the idea of leaving the Leonie in a surreptitious manner, but leave her he would, for Hayes's treatment of Maori Bill he regarded as wrong and cruel.

'Very well, Bill,' he said, 'I shall say nothing; but I don't like sneaking away.'

'He won't let you go over the side if you tell him–you'll only rouse all the devil in him again,–and we'll be all right here, Mr. Wallis, on this island, once we get ashore. I speak Samoan well, and these people understand it. We can live here very comfortably until a whaleship or trading schooner comes along.'

The two conversed for a few minutes longer, and agreed to get ashore that night, either swimming or in a chance canoe. Then Tom rose to go aft again, get some supper, and make such preparations as he could, and then return with a key to unlock the handcuffs.

It was now becoming dark, and just as Tom stepped out on to the deck Hayes met him. His head was bound up, and the moment he spoke Tom knew that he was in a white heat of passion.

'What are you doing here?' he demanded hoarsely.

'I was speaking to Mr. Chester, sir.'

Hayes laughed cynically. 'I'll "mister" him, the yellow-hided soldier! Here, boatswain, bring a light, and tell Jules to come here with his green bag.'

A light was produced, and Hayes, attended by the boatswain and the negro Jules, went inside the house. Tom followed, burning with indignation, and determined to prevent the unfortunate Maori from being flogged.

'Take his irons off,' said the captain, speaking in the same low but savage tone he had used when addressing Tom.

The handcuffs were unlocked, the leg-shackles removed, and the prisoner stood up.

'Now, Bill,' said Hayes, 'I'm not going to round on you for hitting me in fair fight, but you've nearly murdered the mate.'

'You can stow all that, sir. I don't believe you.'

The captain apparently did not heed the interruption.

'And now I've come to talk to you a bit. Will you go ashore here and trade for me?'

'No, I won't. I am willing to go to Samoa and do second mate's duty as I did before, but I am not going to be separated from Mr. Wallis. I have my orders from Captain Hawkins.'

'Very well'–and then he gave vent to his suppressed fury–'if you won't do as I want you, I'll give you a flogging, and chuck you over the side to drown, you mutinous Maori dog! Either that, or turn-to again.'

'For my sake, Captain Hayes, think of what you are doing! Surely you won't flog a man because he beat you, as you say yourself, in fair fight? No *man* would do such a thing.'

The Maori's right hand gripped Tom by the wrist, and he uttered a low warning, 'Sh! Not a word more. I'll fool him.'

Hayes turned furiously upon Tom. 'Away out of this, boy, and do not med-

dle with matters which do not concern you!'

'But this *does* concern me, sir?' began Tom, when Bill interrupted him.

'I'll give in, captain. I'll do whatever you want, but I don't like leaving Mr. Wallis. And I'm willing to turn-to again this minute. Come, captain, I'm a good sailor-man.'

Hayes's mood changed instantly. 'Very well, Bill, we won't quarrel. But we'll have another talk in the morning. Perhaps I'll keep you on board. Jules, clear out. What are you hanging about here for? Go aft and tell the steward to get Mr. Chester some supper. Tom, I'm going ashore. Do you care to come?'

'No, thank you,' said Tom, bluntly, 'I'll stay and get some supper too.'

Hayes smiled good-naturedly. 'Oh, well, just as you please. Bill, did I hurt you at all?'

Bill tried to look pleased. 'Nearly broke one of my ribs, sir.'

Half an hour later Hayes, old Ned the trader, and the carpenter were on their way ashore, and Tom and the half-caste were having supper and talking in low, whispered tones.

'He will not be back before midnight,' whispered Bill, 'I heard him say so. We can easily get away. The whaleboat is astern. Get as many things as you can, and put them on the transom here. The mate is in his own bunk, and there is no one to see you. I'll slip overboard at eight o'clock, and bring the boat up under the port. There is a strong breeze, and the night is very dark. We can manage it. I have five English sovereigns. Have you any money?'

Tom nodded. 'Fifteen. Captain Hawkins lent them to me.'

The Maori's hand gripped his shoulder. 'That will do us. Charlie, the white sailor, is on watch aft. Go up to him and give him ten sovereigns; don't say anything–just put them in his hand and come away; he'll most likely come with us. And I'll give the steward another, to go for'ard and keep out of the way.'

An hour after supper the whaleboat, which was lying astern, seemed to drift right up under the stern ports. She remained stationary for a minute or two, then veered away again, and was lost in the darkness, drifting steadily out to sea before the strong trade wind.

But as the lofty spars of the Leonie became indistinct, and the lights of the native houses on shore grew dimmer and dimmer, Maori Bill sprang to his feet with a laugh, and he and Charlie hoisted the sail.

It's all right, Mr. Wallis. We have a rattling good boat, plenty of food and arms, but only a little water. We'll have to get some at Alofi. I know where we can land at daylight and get all we want. And I and Charlie have given Captain Hayes something to do that will keep him from coming after us.'

'What have you done, Bill?'

The Maori grinned at him through the darkness, as he stood at the long

steer-oar.

'We've made a couple of holes into the brig, one for'ard and one aft, and it'll take some time to find 'em out. She'll have four feet of water into her before the skipper comes aboard again. And Charlie here gave the hands a gallon of rum to keep 'em amused. I'd have set fire to her only for that.'

'But she may founder, and drown some of the people!' cried Tom.

'Don't be alarmed about that, Mr. Wallis. No one will be drowned. Even if she fills before the holes are discovered, she can't sink, for there's only six or eight feet of water between her keel and the bottom–she'll take the ground nice and easy.'

Then he struck a match and lit his pipe, and as he puffed out the first whiffs of smoke he turned and shook his fist at the vanishing land.

'Good-bye to you, Mr. Bully Hayes. I feel a bit better now than I did an hour ago. I'm even with you, anyway. Mr. Wallis, you lie down and sleep. We shall call you when we are running into the fresh-water river at Alofi.'

'And after, Bill?'

'For Fiji, I think, sir. We can run down there in two days easily. Plenty of ships there, sir, an' we'll be in Australia in another month or two.'

Exhausted and excited with the events of the past few hours, Tom lay down in the stern sheets, and the whaleboat leapt and spun along in the darkness towards the scarcely discernible outline of Alofi Island.

CHAPTER XI

JACK AND HIS FATHER HEAR GOOD NEWS

Nearly eight months had come and gone since the captain of the Bandolier had left Port Kooringa, and in the quaint, old-fashioned dining-room of the house under the bluff Jack and his father were sitting–Mr. Wallis smoking his pipe and thinking, and Jack cleaning his gun. It was nearly sunset, and presently Kate Gorman entered.

'Shall yez have the lamps lit, sor?'

'Yes, Kate; and then bring the little one to say good night. I am expecting my letters presently, and will say good night to her now.'

'Shure, sor, but ould Foster tuk her out on the brow of the hill to see the stheamer comin' in, and he's not brought her back yet. He's a terrible conthrary

man, he is, and would sphoil any child.'

Mr. Wallis smiled in his grave way, as he rose and went to the door leading out upon the verandah.

'You are just as bad as he is, Kate. And you, Jack, are worse than either. Between you all Nita *is* being spoilt.'

'And you, father, are *the* very worst of all,' said Jack, laying down his gun, and putting his sun-burnt hand on his father's shoulder. 'Why, old Foster knows it as well as Kate and I do.'

As Kate lit the lamp, father and son stepped out on the broad verandah, and paced to and fro together, as they had done almost every evening since Tom had been taken from their life. Much as they had grown to love the dark-eyed child who had come to them at that dreadful time, their thoughts were now, as they had always been, with the memories of the happier past, when Tom was with them, and his merry, boyish tones were sounding in their ears as he disputed with old Foster or argued with faithful Kate.

Just as Wellington, the black stockman, came cantering up to the gate with the letters and papers, old Foster and little Nita Casalle came up from the beach. The old man had taken her down to the wharf to see the William the Fourth come in, and, instead of her usual joyous prattle when she was with Foster, she entered the house silently, and with the traces of tears on her face.

'What is the matter, Nita?' said Jack, bending down and kissing her.

A suppressed sob escaped from her. 'I saw a man, Jack–I saw a man who looked so like my father that I *had* to cry.'

'Indeed she did, sir,' said Foster to Mr. Wallis. 'He was one of the steerage passengers on board the steamer, and I must say he's mortal like Miss Nita's father.'

Mr. Wallis, who had just looked at his letters, lifted Nita up in his arms.

'Poor little woman! But here's something to dry your tears. Here's another letter from your father. Come inside, Foster; come in, Jack. I have quite a budget of letters here, but we'll read Captain Casalle's first. Nita, you shall stay up an hour later to-night, and hear all about father and the new ship, and the Solomon Islands.'

Returning to the dining-room, Mr. Wallis drew his chair up to the table, and with Nita on one side and Jack on the other, first opened Captain Casalle's letter, without looking at the others. He read the letter aloud, omitting those parts which dealt with business matters. It was written from Levuka, in Fiji, where Casalle had arrived three months previously, after a very prosperous trading voyage among the Solomon Islands. He was delighted with his new vessel, which was a barquentine of 200 tons, called the Malolo. 'She is,' he wrote, 'the fastest vessel of her size in the South Seas, and even Bully Hayes's Leonie, of which I

have often told you, could not catch her. Speaking about Hayes, I have just heard from Captain Harding, the master of a trading schooner, the Lilla, which has just arrived here from Samoa, that the redoubtable Bully nearly lost his ship a few months ago coming from New Britain, when his cargo of blackbirds nearly captured her. There was some terrible fighting, and about a hundred of the natives were killed, as well as some of Hayes's people. During the fighting she also took or was set on fire, and only for another vessel (said to be a Sydney brig) coming to her assistance, the niggers would have massacred every one of the crew. After this Hayes touched at Fotuna Island for provisions, and while there fell foul of one of his officers, a New Zealand half-caste, who seems to have been lent to him by the captain of the Sydney brig, and was about to flog him; but in the night this man, with a white sailor, and a young lad who was a passenger (on the Leonie, I suppose) escaped in one of the boats, after scuttling the brig in two places. Bully had, I believe, a very tough time to keep her afloat. However, he managed to get away all right, and the Lilla met him thrashing through the straits between Upolu and Savaii in gallant style. He sent a boat aboard the Lilla to inquire what ships were in Apia Harbour, and it was from the officer in charge of the boat that my informant gained these particulars. As soon as Harding told him that the British cruiser Cameleon was at anchor in Apia, the officer hurried back mighty quick to the Leonie, which at once wore, and went scurrying away under the lee of Savaii. I am afraid that poor Bully will find his voyage unprofitable, especially if the cruiser should catch him.'

Jack's eyes sparkled. 'What an exciting bit of sea life, father!' Then he added in a softer tone, 'How poor Tom would have loved to have heard all this!'

The letter went on to say that the Malolo would, after refitting, make another cruise to the Solomons, and load there for Sydney. 'So you see, my dear Wallis,' the writer concluded, 'that, everything going well, I shall see you all in about five months from now, and show you my white-winged Malolo.'

Mr. Wallis looked at the date of the letter; it had been written nearly four months previously.

'Why, Nita, little one, 'tis only another month from now! Jack, my lad, we will all go up to Sydney on this very trip of the William the Fourth. Just write a note to the captain, and find out when he is leaving Port Kooringa.'

Just as Jack was setting about his pleasant task, and his father had placed his hand upon the remaining letters, a knock sounded at the front door.

'Some one from the steamer, most likely, father. Perhaps it is the captain himself.'

Foster came to the door. 'Some one to see you, sir, on most partickler business, so he says. I told him you was busy, but he says he must see you at once, sir.'

'Who is he, Foster?'

Foster placed his hand over his mouth, and looked curiously at Nita. 'It's that person, sir, who I was telling you that Miss Nita mistook for Captain Cashall.'

'Show him in.'

The moment the visitor entered the room, both Mr. Wallis and Jack arose with half-uttered exclamations of astonishment. The face of the man before them certainly bore an extraordinary resemblance to Nita's father. He was dressed in a rough but decent manner, and for a moment or two seemed slightly bewildered.

'Sit down, sir,' said Mr. Wallis, kindly.

But, instead of seating himself, the man came forward and held out his hand.

'Mr. Wallis, I have good–good news for you.' His voice shook a little, then he steadied himself. 'Your son Tom is alive. Have you not had a letter from him?'

'For goodness' sake, man, speak! Tell me all. Where is he?' And Tom's father seized the man by the shoulders, and looked wildly into his face.

'I repeat that he is alive. I last saw him on board a brig named the Lady Alicia at Wreck Reef. Here, sir, is a letter from him which will explain all.' And he gave Mr. Wallis the letter which Tom had written from Wreck Reef.

Seizing the envelope with trembling hand, Tom's father tore it open. There were two enclosures–Tom's own note, and honest old Sam's fancifully worded communication; and as he read them through a sob of joy broke from his bosom, as with streaming eyes he put them into Jack's eager hand. Then restraining himself from further emotion by a strong effort, he tried to speak, but could not frame a word, but there was a whole world of inquiry as he pointed mutely to the letters.

'I will tell you all I know, sir. The letter, as you see, was written from Wreck Reef. I and–and some shipwrecked companions were there, when for some reason the Lady Alicia came in and anchored. The captain told me that many weeks previously he had picked up a lad who was lying all but dead on the beach, but was now recovered. I saw him, sir. He looked well, strong, and happy.'

'Thank God, thank God!' at last burst from Mr. Wallis, as, hardly knowing what he was doing, he wrung the seaman's hand again and again; and then Jack, upsetting the astonished and alarmed Nita, made a spring to the door, and tore through the hall in search of the servants, shouting their names at the top of his voice.

'Foster, Foster, come here! Kate, come here! Where are you all? Where's everybody? Tom is alive! Tom is alive! We've had a letter!' Then back he darted into the dining-room to pick up and hug Nita.

In a moment the house was thrown into the wildest confusion, as the women-servants, the stockmen, who were sitting smoking in the kitchen, old

Foster, Wellington, and red-haired Kate, came rushing pell-mell into the dining-room, attended by a dozen or so of barking and yelping kangaroo dogs; the whole lot, dogs and humans, all tumbling over each other in a glorious heap on the carpet, and seriously endangering the house by partially capsizing the lamp.

As soon as he could make himself heard, their master told them the news, and old Foster led off with a cheer; then, by main strength and persuasion combined, he and Kate sent them out again.

'Forgive me, sir,' said Mr. Wallis, as soon as order was restored. 'But you will indeed think me an inhospitable man. Foster—-'

Foster was back in a miraculously short time with a tray holding wines and spirits, and Kate, unasked, hurriedly began to lay the dining-table, copiously damping the cloth with her tears, and shaking with joyful excitement as she banged about and misplaced every article.

The stranger, whose quiet eyes were bent in sympathy on Mr. Wallis's face, rose, and took the glass of brandy-and-water which Jack had poured out for him. Mr. Wallis raised his own, and the two men drank to each other in silence. Then, as they resumed their seats, Jack's father, whose face seemed to have grown ten years younger in as many minutes, said–

'You have brought joy and happiness to me and mine, and yet I have not asked your name.'

A swift shadow passed over the visitor's countenance, but he answered quietly–

'I call myself Charles Brown; that is not my real name, which I have only uttered once in the past five years, and that was when I gave it to the master of the brig which rescued your son. But I will not conceal it from you. My name is Henry Casalle.'

Both father and son started.

'Casalle!'

The man smiled bitterly. 'Ah, you know it. Yes, I am Henry Casalle, who, with four other prisoners, escaped from New Caledonia to Wreck Reef. I suppose the police are looking for me?'

In an instant Mr. Wallis was on his feet, closed the door, and turned the key. The man watched him with the utmost calmness.

[image]

IN AN INSTANT MR. WALLIS WAS ON HIS FEET, CLOSED THE DOOR, AND TURNED THE KEY.

'You ask me,' said Mr. Wallis in a low voice, 'if I know the name of Casalle.' He placed his hand on the visitor's shoulder. 'I do know it. That little girl there is the daughter of a man who has become a dear friend of mine. His name is Ramon Casalle.'

The stranger's swarthy face paled visibly, and his lips twitched.

'I had a brother Ramon. I have never seen him since we were children together. Where is he?'

'At sea; but he will be in Sydney in a month. He told me he had never seen you since you were a boy of eight.'

The ex-convict passed his hand across his brow, as if trying to recall the past; then looking at the little girl, who was regarding him intently with her lustrous dark eyes, he said almost in a whisper–

'Will she come to me? She is my brother's child, and has our mother's face.'

Jack led Nita over to him. Casalle took her little hand in his for a moment, drew her gently to him, and kissed her. Then he leant back in his chair, and covered his face with his hands.

When he had recovered himself a little, and Jack had taken Nita away to Kate, Mr. Wallis, as clearly and briefly as possible, told him the story of the wreck of the Bandolier, and all that had happened since.

Casalle heard him with the deepest interest to the end, and then told him his own story, beginning with the account of his trial and conviction at Bordeaux, and the horrors of his prison life at Noumea. Here he broke down, and Mr. Wallis placed his kindly hand on his knee.

'Tell me no more, Casalle. It pains you to tell, and me to hear it. That you are an innocent man I believe.'

'As God is above us I am! The captain and I did not get on well together, and one day in a moment of passion I forgot myself under his repeated insults, and threatened his life. He was a gross tyrant, his chief mate almost as bad, and the crew were later on goaded into mutiny. I was asleep in my bunk when both captain and mate were stunned and tossed overboard. The ship was then within sight of the coast of Portugal, and the mutineers, headed by the steward, took to the boats and made for the land, leaving me alone on board. A few hours later I was in irons on a Spanish man-of-war. I was sent to Bordeaux, and the very men whom I had often endeavoured to save from brutal ill-usage swore my life away.'

'Forget it all, Casalle, forget it all, or think of it only as some bad dream. You are safe here with me. To-morrow we will decide what is best to be done.'

In calmer tones the ex-convict then related his adventures and wanderings after leaving Wreck Reef. He and his companions had followed old Sam Hawkins's instructions, and had safely reached the Queensland coast, where they separated, three making for the Port Curtis goldfield, and Casalle and another

shipping as seamen on a vessel bound to Port Adelaide, in South Australia. From Adelaide he had steadily worked his way northward again to Sydney, and there made inquiries as to the best way of sending a letter to Port Kooringa. He found that the William the Fourth was leaving in a few days, and decided to bring the letter on to Mr. Wallis himself.

'I swore that you should have the letter safely,' he added, 'and there were no means of sending it to you from Port Curtis.'

'Come, father,' said Jack, 'Kate is waiting to bring in dinner. Then we must go through the papers which have come, and see if there is anything about the Virago, or the Lady Alicia. Perhaps they are both in Sydney Harbour this very moment, dad, and Tom might have only just missed the William the Fourth.'

Such a happy evening had not been spent in the old house for many a long month. Jack, too excited to eat any dinner, set to work on the papers at once, but could find no mention of either Lady Alicia or the Virago, beyond the fact that both were in the list of 'expected arrivals.'

'Never mind, Jack,' said his father cheerfully, 'the latest of those papers is a week old, and Tom is on board one or the other ship. Casalle, my dear fellow, to-night you shall sleep in the room that your brother slept in when he first came to us with little Nita.'

CHAPTER XII

HENRY CASALLE ALSO HEARS GOOD NEWS

No one slept much that night in that happy household, for the news of Tom's escape had spread like wildfire among the townspeople of the quaint old port, and until long past midnight there were many callers, some coming on foot and some on horseback. Most of them were men and women who had known Tom since his infancy, and who had felt a deep and sincere sympathy for his father in the time of his affliction. And all were welcome.

Mr. Wallis, being a shrewd man, was at first rather concerned that the servants had already made it known that their visitor was a brother of Captain Casalle; but it was now too late to remedy the matter. On second thoughts, however, he felt sure that there was no danger to his guest at Port Kooringa, the people of which hardly knew that there was such a place as New Caledonia, and that sometimes convicts escaped from there to Australia. In Sydney, there would

be some danger of Henry Casalle being recognized and recaptured, and sent back to a life of misery. This, however, was a matter to which he would attend; and indeed he had already outlined his plans to his guest.

It was nearly dawn before the last of the visitors had left, and then Mr. Wallis, his son, and Henry Casalle went out upon the verandah facing the sea, and had a quiet talk.

Cheerfully as he had spoken to Jack at dinner about the surety of Tom's return, Mr. Wallis was secretly anxious. As far as he could glean from the letter brought by Casalle, the Lady Alicia was returning to Sydney as soon as she had discharged her cargo at Noumea, but there was a possibility of Tom obtaining an earlier passage to Australia by the Virago. But the Lady Alicia should have been back in Sydney two months ago! What could have happened to her? he thought.

He decided to go to Sydney as quickly as possible, and announced his determination to Jack and Henry Casalle.

'We shall go to Sydney, Mr. Casalle–you, Jack, Nita, and I–and wait for your brother and the Malolo, and Tom and the Lady Alicia. I could not bear to remain here in suspense. The William the Fourth leaves to-night at six. Let us make our preparations at once.'

That evening, as the old Puffing Billy, as she was nicknamed, floundered and gasped and rolled sponsons under against the sweeping seas of the bar, and her long thin funnel sent up clouds of black smoke, Jack, his father, and Casalle waved their hands in farewell to old Foster and Kate, who, with the rest of the servants, were standing on the bluff to watch the steamer pass out. Little Nita was below with her maid–one of the stockmen's daughters.

Early one morning, after a tedious passage of nine days along the coast, Jack came on deck, and saw right ahead the bold outline of the North Head of Sydney, and in another hour the little steamer, which always seemed to be at her last gasp when there was the least sea on, groaned her way through the noble entrance into fair Sydney Harbour. The captain, a rough old sea dog, something after the style of old Sam Hawkins, beckoned to Jack to come up on the bridge, where he was soon joined by his father, both being anxious to see what men-of-war were lying in Farm Cove.

In half an hour they were abreast of the Cove, which lay embosomed in the vivid green of the loveliest gardens in the southern hemisphere, and presently Jack uttered a shout as several men-of-war were seen–one of which was a paddle-wheel barque-rigged steamer.

'That's the Virago, father. I've seen her twice passing Port Kooringa.'

'Ay, ay, that's her, Mr. Wallis,' said the captain. 'She ain't much to look at, neither. If I was to give the old Billy's funnel a coat o' yellow wash, she'd be just as good-looking.'

Hailing a passing schooner, the captain inquired how long the Virago had been in port.

'Three days about.'

'Has the Lady Alicia arrived?'

The master of the schooner shook his head.

'Haven't heard of her, and haven't seen her. She always lies at Cuthbert's slip up here in Darling Harbour. She's expected, I know.'

'Well, we shall soon know if Tom came in the Virago, anyway,' said Mr. Wallis, as the William the Fourth rounded Miller's Point, and headed for her wharf; 'we'll drive to Biffen and Chard's as quick as a hansom can take us.'

As soon as the steamer was made fast, Mr. Wallis told Casalle–who had made some very judicious changes in his personal appearance, changes which made him appear ten or a dozen years younger–to go to Petty's Hotel and await him there; and then he and Tom jumped into a hansom and drove to his agent's office in Pitt Street.

The moment he gave his name to one of the clerks, a big, stout man with a round red face, merged into one vast smile, rushed out of an office marked 'private' and seizing his hand, wrung it with such vigour that Mr. Wallis fairly winced.

'My dear Mr. Wallis,' he said, almost dragging his visitor into his room, 'what a happy meeting! I've glorious, glorious news for you! Your son Tom—-'

'I know, my dear Biffen. Tom is alive. Is he here?'

The big man gasped in astonishment. 'Here! No, of course he's not here; but how did you—-'

'I know that he was picked up by the Lady Alicia, and he sent me a letter *viâ* Queensland, saying that it was possible he might get a passage to Sydney in the Virago from Noumea.'

'Well, the Virago has arrived, and has brought you another letter from him. Here it is; but before you read it let me tell you that the first lieutenant brought it here himself. He told me that your boy was looking splendid. You must go and see him.'

Mr. Wallis nodded. 'Of course I shall, at once. Now let me see what Tom says.'

Mr. Biffen went and left Jack and his father together.

This letter of Tom's was a very much longer one than that from Wreck Reef, and gave a detailed account of his adventures, from the time he lit the fire on Misty Head to his arrival at Noumea. 'I do so hope,' he went on to say, 'that the letter I sent you from Wreck Reef has long since reached you. The person to whom it was given pledged his solemn word of honour to Captain Hawkins that it would reach you safely. There is no harm now in my telling you that he and his

companions were escaped convicts from New Caledonia. I often think of them, and wonder if they reached the mainland without much hardship. I do really love old Captain Hawkins for being so good to those poor wretches, and when you meet him I am sure you will like him too, and so will Jack. Dear old Jack, with his solemn old face! Oh, how I wish I could see into the room at Port Kooringa–that is, if you have received my letter from Wreck Reef, for then I know you would feel happy, and would perhaps be talking about me. Sometimes, after I began to get better, I would think so much of you by day, and dream of you all at night, that I could not stand it, and would sneak out of the cabin, and go up into the fore-top, where I could have a quiet blubber to myself.

'Mr. Collier, the chief mate, is just as kind to me as Captain Hawkins. He is a very religious man, and such a gentleman, and Captain Hawkins says that a better seaman never trod a deck. We often have long talks, for I always stand out the watch with him. The captain himself is the dearest old fellow in the world. Sometimes he swears horribly at the men, and threatens them with the most awful punishments, and they only wink at each other, and don't take the least notice of him, for he has the kindest heart of any man living. He is so proud of his ship, and of the way in which he dresses when he goes ashore–top-hat, frock-coat, gloves, walking-stick, and a watch-chain like a chain cable. This morning he has gone to call on the Governor, and he was half an hour deciding whether he would wear a green satin tie or a scarlet one, with a tiger's claw for a pin. He called Mr. Collier and me into his cabin to decide for him. We said green. It makes such a contrast to his fiery red face and white hair. 'There is a Maori half-caste on board named Chester. He and I are great friends. Captain Hawkins says that he (Chester) could be hobnobbing with dukes and duchesses in London if he had a mind to, as he can knock out any "pug." in the world in four rounds. Mr. Collier is teaching me navigation. I quite forgot to mention that the man who took my letter from Wreck Reef looked just like that shipwrecked captain who came to Port Kooringa that day. I often wonder what became of him and all his men, and whether that poor little girl lived or died. She looked just like a starved monkey. But I shall hear all about it when I come back. I am not very sorry that the Virago is not returning to Sydney before the Lady Alicia, as, although Captain Byng would give me a passage, I would rather stay with Captain Hawkins. Now good-bye for the present.'

The next portion was written very hurriedly:–'My dear father and Jack. Such news! The Governor has chartered the Lady Alicia to go in search of a missing French transport–the Marengo. We are to search the islands to the northward, and leave as quickly as possible. Of course I am very sorry that it will now be perhaps four or five months more before I see you; but you will know that I am all right, and of course I feel very excited at going on such a cruise. Captain

Hawkins, too, is very pleased, and I believe will make a lot of money out of it. He has such a funny way of making long speeches and never stopping for a second, so that you never *can* understand what he means. About an hour ago he called the hands aft and said, "My lads me and this ship has the honour of being employed by the Governor of this Colony to institoot a search for a missing ship whose whereabouts is secluded in mystery you stand by me and do your dooty like men and preserve decority inasmuch as there is a naval officer coming aboard and if I see any man spitting on the deck or smoking at the wheel he will get such a lift under the ear that his own mother won't know him again and if we find this ship I will give every one of you a five-pound note so go for'ard again and study out this revelation."

'And now, my dear father, good-bye! You will not hear from me again until you see me come tearing up over the hill from the town. Give my love to Foster, and Kate, and Mrs. Potter, and Wellington, and all the hands. I hope poor Peter was not burnt up in that awful fire. When I last saw him he was running up and down on the beach, with the reins hanging down, looking for me. And please tell old Foster that the Lady Alicia has single rolling topsails like Uncle Hemsley's brig in the picture over the mantel, and also tell him that I can furl the fore royal by myself; Captain Hawkins says I manage it "with mendicity and ability not to be aversed or commented on by the most improper mind." Oh, I shall have such a lot of things to tell you about him, and the extraordinary words he uses!

'The other day, one of our native sailors met with a rather bad accident–smashed his big toe–and Captain Hawkins made me write a note to the doctor of the Virago, asking him to come on board, as one of his men "was suffering from a fragmentary pediment which was in a state of collusion and might suborn tettans or some corresponding aliment." Good-bye once more, dear dad!'

Intensely disappointed as he was at the prospect of Tom not returning for so many months, Mr. Wallis could not help laughing at his description of old Sam. Presently Mr. Biffen returned, and Mr. Wallis read the letter to him.

'Well, your boy is in good hands, Wallis. Old Hawkins is a sterling old fellow, in spite of his many absurdities, and if the lad has any inclination for a sea life he could not be with a better man. Oh, by the way, you received a letter from Casalle, didn't you? I sent one on to you.'

'Yes; and as he told me he expected to be in Sydney in a month after it reached me, I mean to wait here for him. I have brought his little girl up with me. Possibly the Lady Alicia may soon follow. Anyway, I shall of course wait for her arrival as well.'

'Why not go on board the Virago and see Captain Byng? He can give you a good idea of how long the Lady Alicia is likely to be. I'm sure that both he and the first lieutenant will be delighted to see you; they'll have a lot to tell you about

Tom.'

Thanking Mr. Biffen, and promising to call again later on in the day, Mr. Wallis and Jack rose.

'Casalle tells me in his letter to me that the Malolo is a heeler,' said the merchant (he and his partner had transacted the business of buying her for Captain Casalle), 'and that he expects to repay you about thirteen hundred pounds after selling his cargo.'

Mr. Wallis smiled pleasantly and shook hands with his agent. 'I'm glad he likes his new ship, Biffen. He is a good fellow, I'm sure.' The repayment of thirteen hundred pounds was a matter of no moment to him at such a time, when his thoughts were full of Tom.

Driving up to Petty's Hotel, he and Jack lunched with Henry Casalle and little Nita, and then father and son walked down to the Circular Quay and took a waterman's boat for the Virago.

Captain Byng happened to be on board, and greeted them most warmly, answered all their inquiries about Tom, told them all he knew of the mission on which the Lady Alicia had been sent, and said that he certainly thought she should be in Sydney in a few weeks, whether she had discovered the Marengo or not. Then followed a long talk, in the course of which Mr. Wallis mentioned the fact of his having received a letter from Tom by a somewhat unusual source. 'It was written at Wreck Reef,' he said, 'but only reached me ten days ago.'

The naval officer's face lit up. 'Of course, of course, I know all about it. That amusing old fellow, Hawkins, as well as Tom, gave me an account of the party of gentlemen they met there; and now I've something interesting to tell you. But tell me, do you know where to find the poor fellow who was their leader?'

'He is here in Sydney–with me. I am interested in the man. I believe him to be innocent of the crime.'

The commander jumped up from his chair and went to the cabin door.

'Ask Mr. Perry to come to me at once,' he said to his steward.

Mr. Perry, the second lieutenant, at once made his appearance.

'Perry, this is Mr. Wallis and his son. I want you to tell them what it was the Governor at Noumea said about the party of convicts who escaped a few weeks before the Lady Alicia arrived.'

'He said that the Cyclope had brought a pardon for one of them, an American named Castelle or Casalle, or some name like that, and that he hoped that he at least would reach Australia safely. It seems that something came to light in France which clearly proved his innocence.'

An exclamation of delight broke from Mr. Wallis, who could not now refrain from telling the sympathetic Byng both the story of Henry Casalle, and that of his brother Ramon.

'Well, I'm heartily glad. 'Twill be a happy meeting for them. No doubt the French Consul here has received advices from the Governor on the subject; but at the same time I should strongly advise your friend not to go near him; the chances are that the Consul would apply to the authorities here for extradition papers, and get the poor fellow sent back to Noumea, in order to be told he was innocent. Then the beggars there would most likely give him seven years' detention for running away "while under sentence." That's the French style. He's safe enough now anywhere in the colonies, and I'll use my influence with the Governor at Noumea, when I am there next month, to have the pardon sent on here.'

Mr. Wallis expressed his thanks, and then only remaining a few minutes longer–so eager was he to tell the good news to Casalle–he and Jack shook hands with Captain Byng, and hurried ashore.

Casalle and little Nita were seated on the wide verandah of the hotel, awaiting their return, when father and son dashed up in a cab. Jack's excited face told Casalle that something unusual had occurred.

'Casalle,' said Mr. Wallis, with his grave, kindly smile, as he grasped the ex-convict's hand, 'you were the bearer of happy tidings to me, and now I have good news to tell *you*.'

'Your son Tom—-'

'No, my dear fellow, nothing about my boy–but good news for you. The captain of the Virago has just told me that you have been pardoned. Your innocence has been proved. This he heard from the Governor of New Caledonia only a few weeks after you escaped. Come, let us go inside, and I will tell you all about it. Come, Nita, little one. This is a happy day for us all.'

Regardless of the people who were sitting about, Henry Casalle leapt to his feet, his dark eyes shining with great joy. Then they filled with tears.

'God is good to me, and I thought He had deserted me! The world is bright to me again.'

Then entering a quiet room he knelt down and buried his face in his hands, as Mr. Wallis led Nita away.

CHAPTER XIII

JACK HAS MISGIVINGS

After dinner that evening, as the two men were sitting in the hotel garden smok-

ing, and talking, of course, about the return of the Malolo and the Lady Alicia, Jack, who had been unusually quiet and thoughtful, came up to his father.

'Father, there has been something troubling me all day–ever since we got Tom's letter from Mr. Biffen this morning. Let me have it, please, to read again, and Captain Casalle's as well.'

'What is it, Jack, that is troubling you?'

'Let me read the letters first, dad, then I'll tell you.'

His father gave him both, and Jack, whose always serious face was now more serious than ever, went quietly away into a sitting-room, and placing them side by side, read them through carefully.

He sat considering for a few minutes, then went out again to the garden with the letters in his hand.

'Father, I must tell you and Mr. Casalle what is troubling me. Don't think me foolish.'

'Certainly not, my boy,' said Mr. Wallis, who knew that Jack must have some good reason for speaking as he did.

'Well, come inside, and let us read those letters again. Father, it may be that Tom is not on board Captain Hawkins's ship after all.'

'What!' cried Mr. Wallis in startled tones. 'What on earth makes you think that, Jack?'

Entering the sitting-room and closing the door, the two men seated themselves at the table, and looked expectantly at Jack, who stood, his grey eyes filled with trouble.

'Father, this is what makes me think that some fresh mishap has come to Tom. Now, listen; here is what Tom says in one part of his letter–

'"There is a Maori half-caste on board named Chester. He and I are great friends."

'Now it is just those words which keep running in my head, because of something in Captain Casalle's letter–that part about Bully Hayes and his ship.' Then he read–

'"During the fighting she also took, or was set on, fire, and only for another vessel (said to be a Sydney brig) coming to her assistance, the niggers would have massacred every one of the crew. After this Hayes touched at Fortuna Island for provisions, and while there fell foul of one of his officers, a New Zealand half-caste, who seems to have been lent to him by the Sydney brig, and was about to flog him, but in the night this man, with a white sailor *and a young lad*, who was a passenger (on the Leonie, I suppose), escaped in one of the boats, after scuttling the brig in two places."

'Don't you think it strange, father, that Tom should speak of a "Maori half-caste," and that a "New Zealand half-caste" was lent to Captain Hayes by the

captain of a Sydney brig?'

'It is certainly a coincidence, Jack; but surely it cannot be anything more,' and Mr. Wallis looked at Casalle, as if wishing for confirmation of his views.

The seaman nodded. 'A coincidence, sir, no doubt; but yet—-' he paused a moment, 'some very strange things do occur at times at sea. Did not the captain of the Virago say that the Lady Alicia was going northward to New Britain?'

'Yes.'

'And my brother in his letter says that Hayes was coming from New Britain, bound to Samoa. Can it be that the two ships have met, and, by some means, Tom and the half-caste officer left their own vessel and went on board the Leonie?'

Mr. Wallis thought for a few moments before replying.

'It is very disturbing to think about. Your brother says there was heavy fighting on board Hayes's ship, and that the Sydney brig lent Hayes an officer; but then the young lad is spoken of as being a passenger on board the Leonie–not on board Tom's ship. No; after all, Jack, I do not think we need distress ourselves. But, anyway, let us drive out to Mr. Biffen's house. He may be able to tell us if there are any other brigs in the South Sea trade sailing out of Sydney.'

A short drive brought them to the agent's house, and Mr. Wallis at once mentioned the suspicions which had arisen in Jack's mind, and asked him if there were any other Sydney trading brigs likely to have been cruising about the Solomons.

Mr. Biffen at once answered, 'No, no brigs; of that I'm certain. I know every vessel sailing out of Sydney (and Melbourne as well) which is an island trader. There would be about there at that time the barques Anna and Lightning, and the schooner Meg Merrilies, but no brig. The only other vessel of that rig besides Hawkins's ship which would be seen down there, is the Mexicana, and she has been laid up here for the past six months. It certainly is curious, I must admit, but it is only a coincidence, as you surmise.'

But, in spite of this opinion, both Mr. Wallis and Jack left the agent's house feeling somewhat depressed and anxious.

'We can only wait, Jack, and trust in God. The Lady Alicia may be here in a few weeks now.'

As the time went by, however, even Jack ceased to let the matter trouble him much, and, like all bush-bred boys, entered into the delights of Sydney life with a zest. Unlike Tom, ships and sailors possessed no interest for him beyond that which had lately become engendered in his mind through Tom himself; nevertheless, he and Henry Casalle spent much of their time in sailing about the harbour, watching the great merchant clippers entering the Heads, or being towed to sea; at other times, taking little Nita with them, they would spend the day fishing in one of the countless bays of the Harbour, or on the bright waters of

the Parramatta River or Lane Cove.

Early one warm, drowsy afternoon, as Jack, accompanied by Nita only, was returning homewards from a fishing excursion, and the boat was sailing slowly between Goat Island and the Balmain shore, he saw that signals were flying at the Observatory flagstaff, 'Ship from Fiji Islands.'

Knowing that the Malolo was due, Jack took down the sails, got out his sculls, and sent the boat skimming over the water to town.

'Perhaps it is the Malolo, Nita.'

Nita's black eyes danced with delight, but, having something of her father's grave manner, she did not pester Jack with childish questions. Pulling in to Miller's Point, Jack left the boat with the owner, and in a few minutes he and Nita were hurrying along the squalid streets leading from the Point into the city proper. Almost as soon as he entered the hotel, Mary Potter, Nita's nurse, ran up to him.

'Mr. Wallis and Mr. Casalle have gone down the Harbour, sir, in the Customs launch; the Malolo is come in. And will you and Miss Nita follow in a waterman's boat down to Woolloomooloo Bay, where the ship will anchor? I won't be five minutes dressing, Miss Nita.'

The walk from Petty's Hotel to the Circular Quay only took a few minutes, and as soon as the boat rounded Fort Macquarie Jack saw a large white-painted barquentine, which he knew was the Malolo, just being cast off by a tug, as she anchored between Lady Macquarie's Chair and Garden Island. The moment the boat came alongside, Captain Casalle, who had been talking to his brother and Mr. Wallis aft, ran down the gangway ladder, and caught his child up in his arms.

'How are you, mister?' said a cheerful voice to Jack as soon as he reached the deck; and his old acquaintance, Mr. Brooker, the mate, gave him a hurried handshake as he passed along for'ard; 'here we are back again, safe and sound, with our pockets full of dollars and our hearts as sweet as honey, and right glad I am to see you again.'

Several native sailors, whose faces Jack at once recognised, rushed up to him and shook hands. They were members of the old crew of the lost Bandolier.

Going aft, Jack saw a pretty picture–the two brothers, whom fate had thus brought together so strangely after more than twenty years, and when each only thought of the other as dead, were walking the deck together hand in hand, speaking in low but eager tones, with little Nita clinging tightly to her father's disengaged hand, looking into his face and drinking in every word he uttered.

As soon as possible the captain, his brother, Nita, and Mr. Wallis went ashore, leaving Jack to spend an hour or so on board with the mate, and then follow and join them at dinner.

Whilst the active mate (whose manner of addressing the crew Jack thought

to be extremely personal and vigorous) was getting the decks cleared, and the ship made snug, before sitting down to chat, Jack had time to have a better look at her. Next to the Virago, she was the largest vessel he had ever boarded, and although externally her white-painted hull was reddened and yellowed with rust stains, within board she was spotlessly clean and neat, and her lofty pitch-pine spars were as bright and smart-looking as those of a crack yacht. She carried three boats–a long boat, which was stowed on the main hatch, and two beautifully moulded whale-boats, one on each quarter. She was a flush-decked vessel, and of great beam for her tonnage, with a sheer that would not be perceived until one actually stood on her deck, either for'ard or aft, and looked right along it.

Going below to the cabin, he was met by the steward, a brown-skinned, smiling-faced Samoan, who, putting his arms around Jack's shoulders, rubbed noses with him as he shook his hand.

'Don't you 'member me, Mister Jack? Oh, I never forget you and Kooringa, never.'

'Of course I haven't forgotten you, Salu, but I thought you were a sailor on the Bandolier. Now you are a steward.'

'Yes, sir. You see, sir, my sister Solepa was *fafine tausi teine* (nurse) to Mrs. Casalle's Nita. And now Mrs. Casalle and Solepa are dead and gone to God, and I am Salu, the steward to the captain; and now I am glad, very glad, for I hav' hear that your brother never is dead.'

'No, Salu, he is not dead. He will soon be here in Sydney, I hope.'

The steward smiled delightedly. 'I am glad; every one on boar' this ship is glad. Your fath' is a good man. Now, if you please, let me make you some coffee.'

'No, thank you, Salu,' said Jack, shaking the man's hand, as he looked around the cabin and noticed the number of Snider rifles and cutlasses arranged in racks on both sides. 'What a lot of arms, Salu!'

'Yes, sir. We go to some bad places. Sometimes we *have* to fight, but Capt'en Casalle never want to fight. He always go ashore first when we go to some new place where the natives is wild and we want to trade. He won't let the covering boat come too close, because these wild peoples, when they see the rifle and the cutlass, they get afraid and begin to shoot poison' arrows. He just jump out of boat and walks up on th' beach, with his han's in his trousers' pocket, and smokin' his pipe; an' he says to those wild people, "What's the matter with you? I hav' come to talk an' trade, not to fight. I am not a fighting man. I wan' to buy your copra an' ivory nuts. See, I have no little gun," and then he lifts up his pyjama pocket and show them his bare skin, wis'out no revolver strapped to his waist. Oh, he is a fine man, a good man.'

Mr. Brooker came rattling down the companion way.

'Oh, here you are, Jack. Now, look here, here's the whole lot of the old

Bandolier's crew wants to shake hands with you again. And so do I, Jack,' and he seized Jack's hand in his and wrung it vigorously. 'I reckon I've got some new ideas about British people since I struck Port Kooringa. I was brought up pious enough by a father and mother who believed that the only good people ever produced by Great Britain were the Mayflower folks; and then in the village school I was taught to consider the Britishers of those times as inhuman bein's, who with a mob of Hanoverian or other Dutch-bred soldiers jest delighted to kill American farmers, and their wimmen folk and children, by sticking bayonets into them as a sorter light amusement. Yes, thet is so, Jack. I come from Martha's Vineyard, and us boys were always taught to hate Britishers. We are a mighty poor lot of people down thet way, and the farming folk are the poorest of all–only get a square meal once a week. They'd look sour at a barrel of cider for working after twelve o'clock on Saturday night, and kick a cat for catching a mouse on Sunday morning. But, say, let's get on deck again; these men want to see you mighty bad before you go ashore again. They hev' got something to give you.'

Lighting a huge cheroot, he led the way.

All the crew of the Malolo were gathered together on the main deck, awaiting Jack's appearance. Every man had a present of some kind–a bundle of Solomon Island spears, bows and arrows, baskets of magnificent shells, snowy white coral, clubs, native fish hooks, made from iridescent pearl shell, a whale's tooth, necklaces of porpoise teeth, shell armlets, carved coco-nut shells, and many other curios from the savage islands of Melanesia. Placing them upon the deck at Jack's feet, they drew back, and their spokesman, a sturdy, square-built native of Rotumah Island, made a short speech–

'All these things here me and my shipmates bring you because we want to give you something. All the time we stop at Kooringa, your father and you and old man Mr. Foster very kind to us all, and woman with red hair give us plenty *kai-kai.*[#] That woman is good woman, and me and my shipmates very sorry we can' see her no more. So if you please, sir, good afternoon, and very much oblige'.'

[#] Food.

Simple as were the man's words, their sincerity was very pleasing to Jack, who thanked them individually, shaking hands with them all. Most of them were natives of the South Sea Islands; one came from beautiful and verdant Rotumah; another from lonely Easter Island in the far eastern Pacific; two from Nuié–the 'Savage Island' of Captain Cook; one from Yasawa in Fiji; and the remainder from various island groups in the South Pacific.

Mr. Brooker regarded them with a good-natured smile before telling them to go for'ard again; then he turned to Jack, and said quietly–

'I was taught to despise niggers of any kind or breed, but this sort of thing

jest jumps up and hits me in the face. I never yet saw many white sailors show any gratitude or remembrance for a good turn. Jack Tar is generally Jack Dog, and a darned or'nary yellow dog, with nary a good point about him. Why, every one of these natives aboard is a Christian, and lives clean in mind and body. You should see 'em in the evenings sitting on the main hatch, every man with his Samoan Bible or hymn-book in his hand, and waitin' for Salu the steward to begin the service. It's jest good to hear 'em sing! Where is the crowd of white sailors who'd have the courage, even if they had the inclination, to do as these men do, night after night! And every one of 'em is a right down smart sailor man. Now come below into my cabin, and we can hev' some talk. I want to hear all about your brother Tom, and where in thunder the skipper's brother come from, and all about the folks at Port Kooringa. Come on; the second mate will look after the ship.'

CHAPTER XIV

THE MALOLO SAILS IN SEARCH OF TOM

The following two weeks passed very quickly, Jack and his father and the two brothers being constantly in each other's society. The Malolo, after discharging her cargo, went into dock and came out again a bright shining white, and Mr. Wallis and the captain set about buying trade-goods for her next voyage. The second mate was paid off, and Henry Casalle shipped in his place, much to his satisfaction.

Late one night, after Jack had turned in and his father was about to follow, a hansom drove up to the hotel, and a short stout man, wearing a frock-coat and tall hat, jumped out, and for two or three minutes poured out a torrent of abuse upon the construction of the vehicle and the anatomy of the horse.

'And as for you, my joker,' he said to the cabman, 'you think that I don't know you've brought me by the most circumbendious route you could think of you thundering swab trying the great circle dodge on a poor old sailor.'

'Oh, come now, captain, don't say that. I've driven you a good many times, and hope to do so again.'

'Do you? Well, you won't; what's the figger I have to pay you for betraying me into your crazy old rat-trap?'

'Nothing at all–not to-night, anyway, skipper. You ain't in a good temper.

Shall I wait for you?' replied the cabman, who evidently knew his fare.

'No, but come back for me in an hour. And here's five bob.'

Just as Mr. Wallis was ascending the stairs, he heard the stranger's voice, speaking to the hall porter.

'I want to see Mr. Charles Wallis of Port Kooringa young man; tell him that Captain Samuel Hawkins of the brig Lady—-'

Mr. Wallis ran up to him with outstretched hand.

'I am Tom's father. How are you? Where is Tom?'

'In Samoa or else on his way up to Sydney. But it's a long yarn and—-'

'Come to my room, captain. Porter, call my son, and tell him that Captain Hawkins is here.'

For once in his life old Sam said what he had to say in as few words as possible; and in less than five minutes Mr. Wallis and Jack heard of the meeting of the Lady Alicia with the Leonie, the fight, Mr. Collier's death and Tom's injuries, and how on account of the latter incident Captain Hawkins had acceded to Hayes's request to let Tom remain on board the Leonie with Maori Bill.

'And I'm sure that Bully Hayes would treat him well, sir, and I'm somewhat disappointed at not finding him here with you—-'

'There is a very good reason for that, Captain Hawkins,' said Mr. Wallis, sadly. 'Tom never reached Samoa, and heaven knows what has happened to him and Maori Bill.' And then he told the captain the story that was heard by Captain Casalle in Fiji.

Old Sam was deeply distressed. 'God knows, sir, I acted for the best; and now it is clear I did the worst. Of course, the young lad mentioned must be Tom, and of course the New Zealand half-caste is my William Henry. Now sir what is to be done? I and my brig are at your service. If Tom and Maori Bill and the other man had a good boat they could have easily reached Fiji from Fotuna. And yet they might not have put to sea, after all; they might have gone ashore on some part of Fotuna and hidden until the Leonie had sailed! Fotuna is the place to try first, sir. They may be there now, waiting for a ship. If they did not stay there they would have headed for Fiji.'

Mr. Wallis sighed. 'I fear the very worst, Captain Hawkins. Surely had they reached Fiji we should have heard something by now! Fotuna, I am told, however, is seldom visited by even trading vessels, and it may be that my boy is there now. Now, will you come here to-morrow morning at ten o'clock, and meet my friend Captain Casalle, of whom you have heard from Tom? and we will discuss what is best to be done. He has a vessel ready for sea, and I think I shall charter him to go to Fotuna. If Tom is not there, Captain Hawkins, I shall go to Fiji. I shall never rest until I know what has become of my poor boy. I cannot but think that he and his companions may have perished at sea; though there is

a chance that, by God's mercy, they have reached one of the islands.'

Old Sam pondered, then said, 'I don't want to alarm you, Mr. Wallis, but if Tom and Maori Bill reached Fiji they ought to have been in Sydney by now. But if they didn't leave Fotuna, they might be there for another six months before they could get away in a ship. And, as I said before, I and my ship are at your service; I will lend her and myself and crew to you for six months free of charge to look for Tom, for I love the boy.' He took out a violently coloured silk handkerchief, and mopped his red face and suspiciously watery eyes.

Mr. Wallis pressed the old man's hand. 'Thank you, Hawkins. You have been a good friend to Tom, as his letters show. But come here to-morrow, and we shall decide what we shall do. And always bear in mind one thing, Hawkins–that whether God has or has not spared my boy to meet me again, I shall always be glad to call you my friend.'

The old sailor's eyes filled. 'I'm only a rough old shellback Mr. Wallis but you know what I mean my ship and myself—-'

'I know that you saved my boy's life, I know that you are a good and generous-hearted man, and I thank you very heartily for your offer. But we will talk of all these things to-morrow. Now tell me about your cruise in search of the Marengo. Were you successful?'

'Successful we was, sir. Leastways we found the men right enough, and a miserable lot they were too; not six good sailor-men in the whole crowd. But we had a long long passage back to Noumea, nothing but light winds and calms for weeks together; half of the Frenchmen were bad with fever and some died and me and Mr. de Cann was right glad when the job was finished. And the brig too is badly strained and will have to undergo a lot of repairs.'

Then, bidding Jack and his father good-night, the old captain went away, leaving them a prey to anxiety and torturing surmise about Tom.

Early on the following morning, Mr. Wallis went on board the Malolo for Captain Casalle, and returned with him to the hotel, where at ten o'clock they were joined by Captain Hawkins; and the three men at once went into the subject of the most likely course which would have been taken by Tom and his companions after leaving Fotuna.

'Fiji, of course, would be the nearest land,' said Captain Casalle; 'but, as Captain Hawkins says, they may not have left Fotuna at all, but have waited about till Hayes had sailed. If they had reached any part of Fiji, I should certainly have heard of them whilst I was there. In my opinion, there are at Fotuna still.'

'Then I will charter the Malolo from you, Casalle, and we shall go there—-'

'There is no question of a charter, Mr. Wallis. The Malolo is your ship, not mine. I am at your service, and will be ready to sail in twenty-four hours.'

'And as I told you, sir, last night,' said old Sam, 'me and my ship are yours

for as long as you want us. If harm has come to the boy, it is through me.'

'No, no, Captain Hawkins. Do not say that. You are in no way to blame. And I thank you very sincerely for your offer; but, as you see, the Malolo is ready for sea, while your ship has just come into port after a long and trying voyage, and needs repairs. So it must be the Malolo.'

Before noon that day Mr. Brooker was informed of the decision arrived at, and he and Henry Casalle at once began to make the vessel ready for sea. A cabin was fitted up for Nita and her nurse, and another for Mr. Wallis and Jack, and in something under thirty hours everything was ready. That night the master of Kooringa wrote a long letter to old Foster, giving him full instructions as to what to do in his absence, and concluded by saying–

'We may be away eight months or longer. If we cannot find Tom in six months, I shall give up all hope of ever seeing him again.'

Just before sunset on the following day a tug came alongside the Malolo, and by seven o'clock the beautiful vessel had gained an offing, and was heading eastward on her quest.

CHAPTER XV
ON ALOFI ISLAND

A little before dawn broke, Tom was awakened from a heavy slumber by Maori Bill, and, sitting up, he saw that the boat was within a cable length of densely verdured Alofi, which, unlike its sister island of Fotuna, has no protecting barrier reef along its shore.

'There's a little bit of creek just here, where we can fill our water breakers,' said the Maori, 'but I can't see it just yet. It will be a fine place for us to lie by in until to-night, and then slip out again.'

Taking down the sail, they waited until the light became stronger, and then a little further to the southward they saw a break in the thick foliage which grew to the water's edge.

Charlie, whose arm was not yet strong enough to use an oar in pulling, now came aft and steered, and Tom and Bill went to the oars. It was fortunately high water, and they were enabled to bring the boat not only into the mouth of the creek, but some fifty yards higher up, where she lay completely hidden from view under the thick and drooping foliage of the trees, and in pure fresh water.

Just as the boat was made fast rain began to fall heavily, and Tom and his friends found excellent shelter between the buttresses of an enormous fallen *maso'i* tree, where they ate their breakfast in comfort and watched the descending torrents with complacency.

Maori Bill, as he filled his pipe, seemed well pleased. The place to which he had brought them was well known to him, though many years had passed since he had last seen it. The island of Alofi, he told his companions, had but one small village of half a dozen houses, situated on the northern point, where there were extensive plantations of yams, taro, sugar-cane, and bananas owned by the people of Fotuna. The rest of the island, though of extraordinary fertility, was left to solitude, except when a party of young men would visit it on a pig-hunting or pigeon-snaring expedition.

'Then there's no fear of any natives being about now,' said Tom.

'No; but we must not make a fire. The smoke might be seen by some one. We can lie by here nice and comfortable all day, whether it rains or clears up,' answered the Maori.

As he spoke a grunt sounded near him, and in an instant he lay flat upon the leaves, motioning to Tom and Charlie to do likewise.

'It's a pig,' he whispered, taking his knife out of its sheath.

The grunt was followed by squeaks, and presently a sow, followed by a litter of seven pretty black and yellow striped piglets, came down the side of the leaf-strewn hill, tossing up the leaves with their little snouts in search of *maso'i* berries.

'Let 'em get between us and the boat,' said Bill to Tom. 'I'll tackle the old sow; perhaps you can knock over one or two of the young ones.'

Quite unsuspicious of danger, mother and children rooted their innocent way along till they were well between the water and the fallen tree. Then Bill leapt up and flung himself upon the sow, seized her by a hind leg, and thrice quickly drove his knife into her ribs; the progeny, with squeals of terror, scattered in all directions, some going up the hill-side and others taking to the water like otters. Tom managed to secure one, which promptly bit him savagely on the hand; and Maori Bill jumped into the creek, and caught another, as it was swimming across.

'Don't kill them!' he cried; 'fresh pork for the boat.'

Tearing off some bark from a sapling, Bill lashed the animals' feet securely together and carried them to the boat. They were both very plump, and yelled and squealed and bit vigorously. The sow was at once cut up by Tom, who was no novice at such work, for he had often lent a hand in the killing yard on his father's station, and soon the quarters were hung up to a branch.

After nine o'clock the rain ceased, the sun came out bright and warm, and

the trade wind blew fresh and clear, and brought with it the sweet earthy smell from the rain-soaked forest around and above them. Flock after flock of small but noisy green and gold and scarlet plumaged parrakeets came screaming down from the mountain sides, and settled on the bushes which overhung the creek, and every now and then, with heavy flapping of wings and deep booming note, pigeons, singly and in pairs, lit in the branches of the loftier trees, to feed on the scarlet berries of the *maso'i* and *se'ase'a*.

Satisfied from the absence of any paths along the mountain side that they were not likely to be disturbed by native visitors, and that the boat could not possibly be discerned from the sea, the three adventurers hauled her alongside of a smooth, flat rock on the bank of the creek, and unloaded her. Everything was spread out to dry, and Tom was astonished at the number and variety of articles his companions had managed to smuggle away from the Leonie.

Bill smiled grimly. 'That's the first time I've ever robbed any one–if it is robbery. The steward helped me to get most of the provisions.'

'Robbery!' said Charlie, 'not a bit of it. There's a matter of about three hundred dollars due me by Bully Hayes for wages, which I shall never see.'

'And I was to get a hundred from him with my discharge from Samoa,' said Bill, 'so that's four hundred dollars he'll be to windward.'

'Let us reckon up the value of all this gear, and see how we stand with Bully,' said Charlie, with a grin. 'Mr. Wallis, you do the figgerin', an' me an' Mr. Chester will do the valooin'. Now here goes; but as we hasn't any pens an' paper these will do.'

He went down to the water's edge and returned with his cap full of small smooth pebbles, which he handed to Tom. Then, seizing a flour-sack, which was full of various articles, he turned them out on the rock.

Thirty-four tins of canned dog, called American meat. How much, Mr. Chester?'

'Half a dollar a tin.'

'Half a dollar it is. Got that down, Mr. Wallis?'

'Yes,' said Tom, 'seventeen dollars;' and he counted out seventeen pebbles.

'Six bottles of pickles, two bottles of chutney, and two bottles of green things like plums, one bag of oatmeal, and a tin box of raisins. How much for that lot?'

Bill was not sure. 'Say ten dollars.'

'Fourteen-pound box of "Two Seas" tobacco–Mr. Chester, you has a right noble mind to think of it,–three hanks twine, palm and sail-needles, one box fish-hooks, four pair dungaree pants, six dozen packets Swedish stinker matches, lot o' clay pipes all broken, three clasp-knives, and one tin o' mustard. How much?'

After a little discussion the lot was valued at forty dollars; and then the

contents of the next bag were turned out. They consisted of about fifty pounds of biscuit, some tins of German sausage, a rug belonging to Mr. Kelly, a bag of bullets, a fan-tail hatchet, a bundle of fishing-lines, a burning-glass, a Dutch cheese in a tin, ten boxes of percussion-caps, and one bottle of Edinburgh ale.

'Put them down at twenty dollars, Mr. Wallis.'

The next 'lot' was rolled up in the steward's own blankets, and carefully seized round with spun yarn–three Snider carbines with three hundred or four hundred cartridges, the steward's own razor, glass, and comb, Tom's gun (that given him by the captain of the Virago at Noumea), some more tins of powder, caps, a bag of No. 3 shot, a bottle of one 'Kennedy's Medical Discovery for the Cure of all Diseases,' a bag of salt, a piece of New Zealand bacon, Mr. Harvey's revolver with case and fittings, a roasted fowl, and a sextant-case without the sextant.

'About a hundred and fifty dollars will square that lot,' said Maori Bill, thoughtfully.

In addition to these items, the steward and Bill had casually picked up some unconsidered trifles in the trade-room, such as bottles of brandy, a dozen tins of sardines and salmon, a bundle of tomahawks, some loose tobacco, and a German concertina, which were appraised at twenty dollars by Bill, who seemed anxious to give every article its full value.

'Two hundred and fifty-seven dollars,' said Tom, counting his pebbles.

'Then there's the boat and all her gear complete–sails, oars, and compass,' said Bill, virtuously. 'That's worth another hundred and fifty.'

Charlie grinned and shook his head. 'Don't count that in–the Leonie herself wasn't bought by Hayes; he *found* her. Found her in the Bonin Islands, when her captain and most of the afterguard was ashore drunk at a Portugee dance; and so, as he hadn't a ship himself, and was shocked at seeing such a fine brig being left in charge of a few Manila men sailors, he went aboard with a few of his friends–I was one of 'em–and lifted the anchor and went to sea to look for the owners. But he couldn't find the owners, though I've heard him say that he's just wearing out his life trying to find 'em, and has to go into nigger-catching to pay his expenses. No, you needn't set the boat down. Now, there we are; two hundred and fifty-seven dollars from four hundred.'

'Leaves a hundred and forty-three,' said Tom.

'That Bully Hayes owes us. Well, he owes a lot more to other people, so we'll forgive him our little bill,' said Charlie, as he began laying the various articles out separately on the rock, so as to dry in the sunshine.

Tom looked at the man in silence. He was tall and thin, with red hair, deep-set eyes, a square, determined chin, and a set mouth scarcely veiled by a straggling moustache and ragged beard of the same hue as his hair. His face, on

the whole, Tom thought, was not a taking one; but his voice was pleasant, though a cynical and reckless humour was ever noticeable in his speech. Suddenly he turned and caught Tom's eye, and his cheeks flushed. He stood up stiffly and put his hand in his trouser pocket.

'Look here, Mr. Wallis! Don't you think I run away from Bully Hayes and the Leonie for the sake of these'–he held out the ten sovereigns which Tom had given him the previous night, and then let them fall carelessly upon the rock. 'I came with you and this man here because I was sick of the life I've led with Hayes for the past four years. Mind you, I'm not saying anything against the man; I like him. He did me a good turn when I was lying in gaol in Cape Town, and was as good as booked for ten years for smashing a man's—-'

Bill strode forward and placed his brown hand over the sailor's mouth.

'Shut up, Charlie, shut up, I tell you!' he said in a savage whisper; 'what does this boy want to hear 'bout the doings of men like you an' me? It won't do him no good, I tell you; an' I won't have it. I'm no better than you, Charlie. I've been in goal for killing a man I didn't mean to kill, and I've suffered for it too. Don't let us talk 'bout such things–for the boy's sake.'

The white sailor immediately collapsed. 'Of course I won't. I'm not the man to shove my opinions on nobody, but Bully Hayes is not a bad sort.'

'He's not–with his mauleys. But he's not a better man with them than I am with mine, Charlie. If you don't believe me, wait till we get to Fiji, and I'll thump you and any other three men, one after another, in the yard at Manton's Hotel–for nothing.'

'Thank you, mister; you have a noble mind for trifles, as I said just now. But I take it for granted, and I'm sorry I spoke as I did before the boy. Now what about filling these water-breakers?'

The Maori put both his huge hands on the sailor's shoulders, and with a good-humoured smile forced him down upon the rock in a sitting posture.

'You sit down there and let me do that. You mus' look out that you don't hurt your arm. We may have to pull a lot between here and Fiji. And while I am filling the water-breakers you can fix up some fishing-lines. We can catch some fish here before we leave, and after we have stowed the boat again I'll get a hundred or so of young drinking coco-nuts.'

The remainder of the morning passed away pleasantly enough. Tom and Charlie, baiting their hooks with large fresh-water prawns, which were very plentiful in the creek, threw their lines out in the shallow water at its mouth, and soon caught some purple-scaled fish called by the natives *afulu*, and resembling English barbel in shape and size.

Meanwhile Maori Bill, after placing everything back in the boat, and filling the water-breakers, had walked along a narrow beach to where a grove of coco-

nuts displayed their tempting fruit in great clusters. He ascended two or three trees, threw down a score or so of the young nuts from each, tied them together by tearing out a piece of each husk with his sharp teeth, and returned to the camp just as Tom and Charlie appeared with a string of fish and a huge soft-shell crab, which they had found lying in a weedy pool.

Bill's eyes glistened at the sight of the crab. 'That's a beauty! Let me feel him. He weighs ten pound. What a pity we can't light a fire and cook him! But, never mind, we'll cut him athwart-ships and rub some salt into him when we do the pig. The fish we can dry in the boat. Now what about some dinner?'

With a tin of what Charlie termed 'canned dog,' but what was really excellent American beef, half a dozen biscuits, and some deliciously sweet young coco-nuts, the three made a hearty meal. Then the two men filled their pipes and discussed their coming voyage while roughly salting the pig.

'I couldn't get a chart of Fiji,' said Bill, 'as Bully had locked his door when he went ashore. But it doesn't matter a bit. We have only to steer a course between S. and S.S.W. to hit the north end of Fiji. If we can strike the Nanuku Passage, I'll know my way right down to Levuka. They're a bad lot of natives in the northern part; but even if we have to land there, we'll get along all right without fighting, as I talk Fiji well. I had a Fiji girl for wife once; she came from just that part–from a little island called Thikombia.'

Just as they had finished salting the pork, and were about to stow the boat again, Charlie, looking up at the tree tops, remarked that the wind seemed to have fallen very light 'all of a sudden.'

Bill was on the alert at once. 'I'll have a look outside;' and he walked down to the mouth of the creek, from where he could have a good view of the sky and the sea horizon as well. He came back at a run.

'There's going to be a blow–a big blow from the eastward. Like as not it'll last for five days; three days for certain, anyway. We'll have to snug down here until it's over. Let's get the boat up as far as we can; there'll be a thundering big sea rolling right into the creek before night. Heavy rain is coming too, and we'll have to house in and weather it out.'

His suggestions were carried out as quickly as possible. Everything movable was first taken out of the boat, which was hauled still further up the little creek, and the stores were carried up to the fallen tree, and placed under its buttress, on the dry leaves which covered the ground. Then, leaving Charlie at the camp, Tom and Bill set off in search of fallen coco-nut branches to make a roofing. In an hour they had collected enough, and Bill at once set to work to make thatching, which he did with such speed and cleverness that Tom was lost in admiration at his resourcefulness. By four o'clock in the afternoon they had made the buttress of the fallen *maso'i* into a perfectly rainproof house, open to the

westward, and protected at the back from the coming gale by the mighty trunk of the tree itself.

By this time the atmosphere had become intensely close and oppressive, and every now and then a warm gust of wind would sway the branches overhead. The calls of the forest birds had ceased, but vast numbers of ocean birds came flying in from seaward, filling the air with their hoarse, screaming notes.

'It's coming presently,' said Bill to Tom; 'don't you hear the sea making a booming noise? It always does in these places when it is coming on to blow from the eastward. When the natives of the Tokelau[#] Islands hear the sea make that sound, they know it means heavy weather from the eastward or the northward, and always haul up their canoes and secure their houses from the *matagi afa*,[#] as they call it.'

[#] The Union, Ellice, and Gilbert Islands are now generally termed Tokelau by the inhabitants of the eastern islands of Polynesia. Formerly, however, only the low-lying islands of the Union Group were meant by the term.

[#] Hurricane.

Before Tom could answer there came a droning, humming sound from the sea, and then a wild and deafening clamour, as the first squall of the coming hurricane smote the island, and ripped and tore its way through the forest.

'That's the first lot,' shouted Bill in Tom's ear; 'now we'll get some rain, and after that another squall or two and more rain, and then it'll settle down to business properly, and blow like forty thousand cats yowling at once. I'm glad we put in here.'

It certainly did settle down to business properly, for before another hour had passed the wind was blowing with almost hurricane force, and the sea was a succession of seething, foaming billows, which, dashing furiously against the eastern shore of the island, sent their spume and spray in a continuous misty shower, high up among the swaying and crashing branches of the trees half a mile inland.

Sitting under the shelter of the great tree, Tom and his comrades listened to the howling of the storm with feelings of the utmost serenity, for they were completely protected from its force.

'Let us light a fire,' said Bill, picking up a tomahawk; 'the smoke of fifty fires wouldn't be noticed now, and we can cook the pork and fish.'

The dead tree itself furnished plenty of firewood, and presently Bill and Tom had cut quite a pile; then the former went to the shore with a bag, and

returned with it half filled with large, rough stones.

'I'll show you how we cook in the South Seas, Mr. Wallis,' he said, as he turned out the stones and began to dig out a shallow hole in the soft soil just in front of their shelter. This done, he lit a fire in the centre of the hole, laid a lot of thick pieces of wood across, and then piled the stones on top.

Then as the fire blazed up and began to heat the stones, he and Charlie took the four quarters of pork, cut them up into smaller pieces, wrapped each portion in wide green leaves and placed them aside; the fish were simply disembowelled without being scaled, and then neatly parcelled round with coconut leaf, the crab being treated in the same manner. In the course of an hour the stones, at white heat, fell into the depression, and were spread out evenly by means of a stick, the pork and fish placed on them, and then the whole lot quickly covered up by layers of thick heavy leaves, on top of which again was placed a covering of loose soil.

Whilst waiting for the food to cook, Tom and the others made their way through the forest to the nearest point overlooking the sea. The sky was grey and sullen, and the sea, a mile or so out, presented an appalling aspect; immediately under the lee of the island it was not so bad, though every now and then great billows would come rolling in to the very mouth of the creek, as Bill had foretold. Fotuna Island, although the nearest point, and but eight miles distant, was quite obscured from view, for, in addition to the salty spume which filled the air, there was a sharp, driving rain.

'Bill,' said Tom, 'where should we be now if we had kept on in the boat?'

Bill shook his head. 'We could only have done two things–either let her run before it, and most likely broach to and capsize, or put out a sea-anchor and tried to ride it out that way; but whatever we did we would have been carried away to the westward, and there's no land that way, except the New Hebrides–a matter of more than a thousand miles. I can tell you, sir, that it's lucky for us we left the Leonie without any water. If we had had water in the boat, I should have kept on.'

Returning to the camp before darkness set in, the oven was opened, and the three made another hearty meal by the light of a blazing fire. The two piglets were partially freed by being tethered with a bit of spun yarn to a hind leg. The boat was seen to, and then, spreading out the sail on the ground inside the hut, Tom and his comrades lay down and slept, undisturbed by the clamour of the sea

and the moaning of the wind.

CHAPTER XVI
THE ENDING OF THE BOAT VOYAGE

For the following two days, during which time the gale still blew with unabated force, Tom and his companions found that time did not hang idly on their hands. The Maori had discovered a patch of wild yams growing in the mountain forest, and whilst he dug, and Charlie carried them down to the camp to be baked in preparation for the voyage, Tom was employed in shooting pigeons and *manu-tagi*, a species of ringdove, great numbers of which had been driven over to the lee side of the island by the storm.

On the afternoon of the third day the wind hauled round to the south-east, and towards evening it blew with but moderate force; the sea went down rapidly, the sky cleared, and by dawn the ordinary gentle trade had set in, and a deeply blue ocean lay shining and sparkling in the bright and glorious sunshine.

It was decided at breakfast to make a start that evening just after sunset, when they could not possibly be seen by any one on Fotuna. Charlie bluntly asserted that if Captain Hayes caught sight of their boat, he would give chase in the second whaler, 'and then we'd have a mighty bad time. You, Mr. Wallis, would be all right, but me and Mr. Chester might as well jump overboard and let the blue sharks get us, as be taken back to the Leonie again. He's a passionate man, and doesn't stop at trifles. Me he'd either shoot at sight, or half murder me afterwards, during the voyage.'

Immediately after breakfast, Bill started off to collect a few old coco-nuts to add to their already ample store of provisions, and Tom and Charlie remained at the camp to slaughter and cook the two captive piglets, and catch a few more fish; but hardly had they begun operations by lighting a fire, when Bill came running back.

'The Leonie is all right. She's just coming out of Singavi, and will most likely run past here. Put out that fire, quick, and come and look at her.'

'Oh, I'm so glad that she is all right, Bill!' said Tom. 'It would be a pity if such a beautiful vessel sank altogether.'

'Beautiful to look at, you mean,' said the Maori, grimly.

Walking through the forest to the mouth of the creek, they seated them-

selves on a vine-covered pile of loose boulders, and watched the brig approach. She was running before the wind, and in an hour was so close that many of her people could be recognized. Hayes was leaning on the rail smoking his inevitable cigar, and apparently having a good look at the shore; Mr. Kelly and the other officers were also visible, and a number of the 'blackbirds' were squatted about on the main deck under the care of the usual armed guards. The brig was, of course, much deeper in the water, now that she had more than a hundred tons of yams aboard, but she moved along very quickly. Presently she hauled up a little, so as to round the south point of Alofi, and the unseen watchers heard Hayes's voice for the last time as he called out, 'Steady there, José!' to the man at the wheel. In another five minutes she had disappeared round the headland.

Then Bill turned to his companions, and said, 'Now, Mr. Wallis, and you, Charlie, I would like to say a word. There goes the Leonie, and with her goes any danger to us, if we decide to go back to Fotuna. Now what is it to be–shall we go back? Will you speak first, Mr. Wallis?'

'I vote for Fiji, Bill. I don't want to live on Fotuna for perhaps six months. My father and brother will give me up as dead when the Lady Alicia gets back to Sydney without me.'

Charlie was equally as eager for the boat voyage, pointing out that it could be accomplished without danger; that they had a good boat, and provisions and water enough to last them a month; and that with ordinary fair weather they should reach the Fiji Group in four days at the outside. Bill, who was tacitly understood to be captain, was also in favour of the voyage, and so the matter was decided.

By two o'clock in the afternoon everything was in readiness for a start; but Bill, suspicious that Hayes might imagine they were in hiding somewhere on one of the islands, and only be sailing round the coast to see if he could discover the boat, suggested that they should first make sure of the whereabouts of the Leonie by ascending the highest peak. This they at once set about to accomplish, and after an hour's arduous struggle succeeded in climbing to the summit, and from there obtaining a view of the horizon.

'We're all right,' said Charlie. 'There she is; I can just see her'–and he pointed to a little white speck far away to the eastward; 'she's off, sure enough.'

After resting for a while, and enjoying the glorious view, they descended again, and reached the camp just as darkness fell.

Opening some coco-nuts, Bill poured out a drink each for himself, Charlie and Tom.

'Here's success to our voyage, sir!' he cried, tossing off the liquor, and then sending the shells spinning in the air. 'Now, all hands aboard.'

Tom jumped in, got out his oar, Bill followed, and, with Charlie steering,

the boat was pulled out of the tree-darkened little creek into the bright starlight. A hundred yards from the shore the oars were taken in, the boat-lamp, used as a binnacle, lit, the mainsail and jib hoisted, and with a loud 'Hurrah!' from Tom, the little craft was headed S.S.W. with Bill at the tiller–she was steered with either a rudder or a steer oar, the latter being used when there was a strong breeze only.

The night was warm, the breeze fair, and with plenty of heart in it, and the three comrades were all more or less excited and disposed to talk, and made light of the really venturesome voyage before them. Presently Charlie, to Tom's astonishment, began to sing a catching air in Spanish, learnt when he had served in the Chilian navy years before, and Bill, usually so grim and taciturn, joined in the chorus with his deep, guttural tones.

'Hallo, Bill!' cried the white sailor, dropping the 'Mr. Chester,' 'wherever did you learn this old *yamacueca* jingle?'

'Long, long ago, when I was boat-steerer on the Prudence Hopkins, a New Bedford ship. We had a lot of Chileno hands aboard, and they were always singing it. Now let's quit fooling a bit, and fix up 'bout watches.'

This was soon arranged, and then Bill told Charlie and Tom his plans in detail. He hoped to be able to make the Great Ngele Levu lagoon, remain there for a few days, and then sail across to the island of Rambi, where they were almost sure to find a trading cutter or schooner bound to Levuka; if not, then he would keep on, passing between Taviuni and Vanua Levu, and then head direct for Levuka, where they were certain to meet with a Sydney or New Zealand vessel.

All that night the boat ran before a steady breeze, and at daylight Fotuna and Alofi were fifty miles astern, and there was nothing to break the wide expanse of the ocean around them except a few wandering sea-birds floating upon its bosom. As the sun rose higher, the wind gained in strength without the sea increasing, and the boat slipped through the water in gallant style. A keen look-out was kept astern, for, as Bill said, there was a possibility of their being overtaken by a trading vessel bound from Samoa to Fiji, or a 'blackbirder' heading for the New Hebrides.

Then, as near to eight o'clock as could be judged, the Maori lay down to sleep till midnight, leaving Charlie to steer and Tom to act as 'crew.'

As the night wore on the wind fell somewhat lighter, and both the white sailor and his youthful companion found it hard to resist the feeling of drowsiness which the insidious warmth and beauty of the night was weaving around them.

'Charlie,' said Tom, 'if you will hold the sheet for a minute or two, I'll go for'ard, strip off, and souse some water over myself. I can't keep awake.'

Charlie nodded. 'Right you are, sir; but it's hardly worth while now. I think it must be about eight bells, and time to call the skipper.'

Passing the mainsheet over to him, Tom picked up the bucket used as a bailer, stepped over the mast thwart to the bows, and began to strip, when Charlie sprang to his feet.

'I say, sir, here's a ship close to!' And then his voice rang out loudly–

'*Ship ahoy!*'

The Maori was up in an instant, his seaman's eye took one quick glance at the dark, towering mass of canvas not two hundred yards away, and almost right abeam. Seizing the tiller from Charlie, he called out sharply–

"Bout ship, in with the mainsheet there; she's close-hauled, and we'll catch her up in no time. Give another hail, Charlie. Mr. Wallis, take this lamp, stand up for'ard and sway it; hold it up as high as you can.'

Round went the boat, and then, to their intense delight, at Charlie's second hail, and as Tom swayed his light, an answering cry came from the ship–

'Boat ahoy, there! We see you,' followed by the rattle and squeaking of blocks as the ship's braces were let go, and her main-yard swung back. Then a bright light was shown from the weather mizzen rigging, and a voice hailed–

'Are you able to come alongside? I've lost three of my boats, and the other two are badly damaged.'

'Yes, thank you,' answered Bill, as he and Charlie lowered the mast and sail; 'we'll pull alongside.'

Ten minutes later, Tom and his companions were standing on the deck of the barque Adventurer, of New Bedford, Captain Frank Herrendeen, a typical American whaling skipper, who received them very kindly, his first question being whether they were hungry.

'No, sir,' replied Tom, who, at Bill's suggestion, acted as spokesman; and then, in as few words as possible, he told their story, adding, 'We have suffered no hardships whatever since we left the island, and were making for Fiji. Where are you bound for, captain?'

'Fotuna Island. Won't that suit you?' he inquired, noticing the look of disappointment on their faces.

'The fact is, sir, I have a very strong reason for wishing to get to Fiji or some place where I can find a ship as quickly as possible,' said Tom, who then gave his reasons as briefly as possible, the captain listening with the greatest interest.

'Well, don't decide in a hurry. Come below and let us have some talk. Mr. Burr, don't hoist in these men's boat; put a hand in her to steer, and then veer her astern. She'll tow nicely enough in such weather as this until daylight.'

As soon as they entered the well-lighted cabin, the captain motioned them to seats, and then, as his eye fell on the dark features of the Maori half-caste, he uttered an exclamation of pleasure.

'Why, it's William Chester, as sure as I'm Frank Herrendeen. How are you,

William?' and rising, he shook hands warmly with Bill, saying to Tom, 'Why, this man was boat-steerer with me when I was mate of the Prudence Hopkins, seven years ago.'

The steward brought the three men liquor and cigars, and Tom a cup of hot coffee; and then the skipper of the whaler went into the subject uppermost in his mind at once.

'Now look here. I don't want to induce you three to do anything against your wills; but I'd be mighty glad if you'd give the word, and let me have that boat of yours hoisted on deck. I'm in a tight place, and that's the truth of it, and I'd like you to help me. We had a heavy blow a few days ago, lost five men overboard–my fourth mate was one–and the ship started a butt end, and is leaking; you'll hear the pumps going presently. Two of my boats were swept away one after another, and it was while endeavouring to secure the third that the fourth mate and four of the hands were carried overboard; the ship was thrown on her beam ends at the same time, and the poor fellows were never seen again. So that is why I should like you to give up the idea of going to Fiji–to be right out plain with you, I want to buy that boat. I'll give you two hundred dollars for her, and if you, William, will take a 'fourth mate's berth, I'll be mighty pleased.'

Bill shook his head. 'I can't do it, captain. I've pledged my word to Captain Hawkins to stick to Mr. Wallis here, and I can't go back on it. If you were not cruising, but were bound to a port where me and Mr. Wallis and Charlie here could strike a ship going to Australia, it would be different.'

The master of the whaler jumped to his feet. 'But I'm not cruising exactly, William. I'm going to make Fotuna to heave the barque down and try and get at the leak, and pick up some hands in place of those I've lost; then I'm going to Samoa to land a couple of passengers (I'll tell you all about them presently), and at Samoa you and this young man can get a passage to either Sydney or New Zealand easy enough. You'll reach Australia from Samoa just as quick as you can from Fiji. Come, William, just study it out. I do want that boat of yours real bad. I haven't one I can lower, if we raise a whale. And a boat may mean a lot to me between here and Samoa.'

Bill looked at Tom, and Tom at Bill. The skipper's anxious face appealed to them both.

'I think we can get to Sydney sooner by going on to Fiji, Captain Herrendeen,' said Bill, bluntly; 'there is more chance of a Sydney ship to be met with there than in Samoa. But if Mr. Wallis is willing for us to—-'

As he was speaking, one of the cabin doors on the port side opened, and a woman's soft voice said–

'Can I help in any way, Captain Herrendeen? Solepa tells me that you have picked up a boat with some shipwrecked men. I was fast asleep. Shall I dress and

come out?'

The captain got up out of his seat and went to the door.

'Don't you worry, Mrs. Casalle; the men are all right. Good night.'

With eyes gleaming with excitement, Tom sprang to the captain's side just as the door was shut.

'Casalle, Mrs. Casalle! Did you say *Casalle*, sir,' he said, 'of the Bandolier?'

'Yes, Casalle, that is the lady's name. She and her servant are my passengers. Her husband's ship was the Bandolier, and ran on to Middleton Reef, and nearly all hands were lost—-'

'No, they were not!' Tom shouted. 'Captain Casalle and a lot of his men and his little girl came to Port Kooringa in a boat. *I saw* them; *I saw them*, captain, I tell you! They came to our house. They—-'

Herrendeen raised his hand tremblingly. 'Steady, my boy, steady, for God's sake! She's a poor little weak sort of thing, and this news might kill her right out. Are you certain?'

'I am certain, captain,' replied Tom, with an irrepressible sob of joy; 'I am certain–Captain Casalle! the Bandolier! and all the rest of it! There can be no mistake. He told Foster and I that his wife was drowned with the second mate, two men, and a Samoan girl.'

Captain Herrendeen's voice quavered as he put out his hand to Tom. 'Say, let us tell it to her quietly. William, and you, mister, just go on deck awhile.'

The Maori and Charlie at once went on deck, and left Tom and Captain Herrendeen alone. The captain sat down with his hand to his brow for a minute or so, and then looked at Tom with a strange smile on his face.

'I've been dreaming, my boy; but it's all ended now, and I'm glad, real glad.'

He rose from his seat and tapped gently at the cabin door from which the woman's voice had issued.

'Mrs. Casalle,' he called softly, 'will you dress and come out? I have some real, downright good news for you.'

'Good news, Captain Herrendeen,' said the same musical voice Tom had heard before; 'I think I know what it is–you have found the leak, and we are bearing away for Samoa.'

'Better than that, Mrs. Casalle,' said the captain, turning to Tom, with a smile; 'just you come out, quick.'

There was a murmur of two female voices; then the cabin door opened, and a slenderly-built, pale-faced, dark-haired woman came out, followed by a young native girl.

'What is your good news, Captain Herrendeen?' she said, with a faint smile, as she bowed to Tom, who, boy-like, was too confused to speak for the moment.

'Sit down here, Mrs. Casalle,' and the captain led her to a seat. 'This young man here will tell you something that will do your heart good, something–now just you sit here beside me; and there ... hold on. Now, young fellow—-'

Tom, trying to conceal his nervousness, and yet look dignified at the same time, came forward and took her hand.

'Mrs. Casalle, I am Tom Wallis. Captain Casalle and your little girl are safe. They came to Port Kooringa in one of the boats belonging to the Bandolier.'

She looked at him in a half-dazed sort of way, and then fainted off quietly into Captain Herrendeen's arms.

'She'll be all right presently,' said the captain. 'Here, bear a hand, Solepa. I guess you know what to do better than me.'

'Oh yes, I know, I know,' answered the native girl, quickly; 'she have faint like this plenty of time. You can go, sir. She will soon get better now with me.'

Leaving Mrs. Casalle with her attendant, the captain returned to the main cabin.

'Now, Mr. Wallis, you'll have to sit up and keep me company for an hour or two, until the poor little woman feels better; steward, get a spare bunk ready for Mr. Chester; and let the red-haired man turn in here until breakfast time.'

'You have made up your mind that we're going to Fotuna with you, then, captain?' said Tom, with a smile.

'Of course I have; and of course you have, too? Come, a day or two won't matter much to you, and during that time I'll have talked you round, and get you to come on to Samoa with me. You have just saved the little woman's life, and she'll want to talk to you for about a week, anyway. Come, promise me.'

Neither Tom nor Bill could refuse such a request, and then presently the captain, putting his hand on the former's shoulder, asked him if he was too tired to tell him about the rescue of the captain of the Bandolier.

'Not a bit,' answered Tom; 'and then I want to know how Mrs. Casalle was saved. I heard her husband say that she, the second mate, two seamen, and the nurse were all drowned.'

'Only one hand was drowned. Mrs. Casalle, the second mate, the Samoan girl, and the other sailor managed to cling on to the swamped boat, which they succeeded in clearing of water after a while. They drifted about all night, and about seven o'clock in the morning found themselves quite close to Elizabeth Reef. They had no oars, but by breaking up the bottom boards of the boat they managed to get on shore, lived there on birds' eggs for nearly a week, and there I found them. Then I sailed to and examined Middleton Reef, but found no trace of any other survivors. She and the girl have been with me ever since, waiting to get back to Samoa; the second mate and men are with me, too.'

At sunrise Solepa, the native girl, whose brown face was radiant with

smiles, came on deck.

'If you please, captain, will dis gentleman come now and talk to her? She is better.'

Tom went below, and found Mrs. Casalle waiting for him. She was deathly pale, but tried hard to speak calmly.

'You are sure, quite sure,' she said tremblingly, as she grasped Tom's hand convulsively; 'my husband and my child! You saw them?'

Pitying her intensely, Tom told her the whole story. She did not faint again–only laid her head on Solepa's bosom and wept tears of joy and thankfulness.

Just as Tom rose to leave her, the native girl beckoned him to come back.

'Did you see any Samoa men in that boat, sir?' she asked quietly. 'I did have my brother on board. His name was Salu. I 'fraid he was drown'.'

'There were thirteen men in the boat,' said Tom, 'but I cannot tell you if any of them were Samoans. There were only three or four white men, though; so very likely your brother was there. I hope so,' he added kindly.

Solepa smiled sadly. 'I hope so. But if he is drown' I will not cry no more now, for we shall see the captain and little Nita again.'

CHAPTER XVII
BACK TO FOTUNA

That morning after breakfast, as the Adventurer heeled her weather-beaten sides over the trade wind, and the clanking pumps sent a stream of clear water through the lee scuppers, Tom and Bill on the one part, and Herrendeen on the other part, made a bargain.

Mrs. Casalle had come on deck and was reclining in a cane lounge, with Solepa sitting at her feet fondling her hands and looking into her mistress's face, as she talked volubly to her in Samoan. With her new-found happiness shining in her eyes, and tinting her pale cheeks, Mrs. Casalle seemed to scarcely heed the girl's prattle–she was trying to hear the good-natured argument going on between Tom, the Maori, and the captain. The two hours' talk she had had with Tom had not satisfied her; she wanted to hear his story over and over again; to hear him tell her how he had carried 'the little one' up from the beach and placed her in Kate Gorman's arms; to question him again about her husband and how he looked, and about Port Kooringa, and his own father and brother, and Kate–and

then to lie down and think of God's goodness to her in sparing husband and child to meet her again. Oh, if she could but know where they were now!

She closed her eyes for a moment, and tried to think how many long, long months would pass before she would hear those loved voices and see those dear faces again. The breeze played with her soft hair under the wide Panama hat she wore, and then she heard Herrendeen's tones.

'Now, let us go and tell Mrs. Casalle.'

She sat up with extended hands–one for Herrendeen, the other for Tom–'What is it you are going to tell me, captain? Only one thing in the world can make me happier than I am now.'

'And I reckon you shall have that one thing before long,' said the captain, knowing what she meant, and pressing her hand between both his own. 'Now here is what we have to say. Young Mr. Wallis here, and Bill–this is Mr. William Chester, Mrs. Casalle, one of the best men in the world that ever gripped a whale lance–and we have been talking. They wanted to go in their boat to Fiji, and I said it was just flyin' in the face of Providence.'

'But you will not–surely you will not?' she said to Tom, excitedly; 'think of the dangers of a boat voyage–the risks, the terrible risks. I am a sailor's wife–and I know.'

Tom smiled. 'There is not much risk for us, Mrs. Casalle. We could easily reach Fiji in another day or two. Why, Captain Casalle and thirteen men made a voyage of 400 miles in bad weather to Port Kooringa! But, as I told you, I was anxious to get to Fiji because we thought that from there we could sooner get a ship to Australia. And my poor father and brother—-'

Her eyes filled at once. 'Ah, of course! I did not think of that. See how selfish and thoughtless my own happiness makes me! Forgive me; but oh, do not go away in the boat; do not, do not, I beg of you! You are safer here. In a boat you run such awful risks.'

'Just what *I* said, Mrs. Casalle,' broke in Herrendeen. '*I* say that this young man, who has had enough escapes from death to last an or'nary person all his life, and has a father and brother, has no business to think of scooting around the Pacific in a whaleboat when he has a good solid deck under his feet. And so he isn't going to do it. He's just coming along with us to Samoa.'

'I am so glad; perhaps we may meet my husband and child there.'

'Just what I said. Your husband wasn't likely to stay long at Port Kooringa. He would naturally try to get back to Samoa, where he had his trading station, as soon as he possibly could, if only to settle up his business before going to sea again. Now I shouldn't be a bit surprised if we hear that he has been there, and we'll know where he's gone to. Perhaps he may be there when we arrive.'

The wife's eyes lit up, and again a smile illumined her beautiful face. 'Ah,

Captain Herrendeen, how you talk! If I were strong enough, I would just get up and dance with you and Solepa and Mr. Wallis. I'm a girl again to-day, and don't care what I do. Come here, Tom–I guess I won't say "Mr." any more–now stoop. Why, you're as tall as a man, and I shouldn't do it, but I just shall!' and putting her hands on Tom's cheeks, she kissed him half a dozen times, much to the amusement of Herrendeen and Solepa, the latter clapping her hands and crying, '*Malie, malie! Ua fia fia lau lotu, seula misi!*' [#]

[#] 'Good, good! Your heart *is* glad, dear mistress!'

'Yes, Solepa. My heart is glad. So glad that I think sometimes everything is but a happy dream, and that to-morrow I shall awake to sorrow again,' said Mrs. Casalle, in English, as she raised her face to the captain.

'Well, I reckon when you look at me, Mrs. Casalle, and Tom, and Bill Chester here, and hear those darned old pumps agoing again, and have to eat salt pork and beans again for dinner, you'll conclude it isn't a dream,' said Herrendeen, with a kindly smile; 'and with this wind we can lay up pretty close to Fotuna, and ought to be there by to-morrow night, and then, while we're getting at this blamed leak, you can rest ashore, and try and pick up a bit. Ten days of a beat–if we have to beat–will bring us to Samoa, and then, Mrs. Casalle, if your husband is there, you just shall have a dance with me.'

'Indeed I shall. You, and Tom here, and you, Mr. Chester, and Mr. Burr, and every one on this ship who has been kind to me–and every one *has* been kind to me–shall dance me off my feet.' She spoke merrily, but her voice trembled nevertheless, and ended in something like a sob, as she lay back on the lounge, and looked at them with eyes filled with happy tears.

By this time the boat had been hoisted in, and presently Maori Bill, lifting his cap to Mrs. Casalle, went down to the main deck, and picking up a bunch of young coco-nuts, brought them up on the poop, and placed them at Solepa's feet.

'These are for thee, O maid with the star-like eyes!' he said gravely to her in Samoan, 'but first let me offer one to the white lady.'

Mrs. Casalle started, and smiled as she heard him speak in Samoan, and then took from him and drank part of a nut which he opened and presented to her. Then she asked Tom to come below. 'You can stay here, Solepa,' she said in English to the girl, 'until I call you.'

Maori Bill, although usually slow of speech, was no laggard in love-making. Leaning against the fife-rail, he set to work without delay.

'From what part of Samoa do ye come?' he asked.

'From Leone in Tutuila, where my mistress lives. Why do ye ask?'

'Because thou must be my wife. I love thee. When we get to Samoa I shall ask for thee.'

'I shall say "No,"' said the girl, looking at him from the corner of her eye as she raised a coconut to her lips.

'Why? Am I ill-favoured? I will make thee a good husband. Many will envy thee.'

'*Aue*! Hear the man talk!' and Solepa rolled her eyes up at the sky. 'Tell me, how came ye to speak my tongue so well?'

'Such things are easy to me,' said Bill, affably; 'when we are married I shall teach thee to speak good English. We shall marry in Apia at the mission church; then thou shalt go to Tutuila with thy mistress, and wait till I return from Sydney. I have money saved up there. Then when I return I will buy a cutter, and trade on the coast. Hast many poor relations?'

'Not many.'

'That is good. It is a bad thing for a wife to have people who eat up her husband's substance. But yet I am not a mean man.'

'Why dost thou want me for wife?' said the girl, edging a little nearer to him, and looking up at his stalwart figure.

'Because I am a widower, and I have some money saved, and want to live in mine own house again. My dead wife was a girl of Thikombia in Fiji.'

'Pah!' said Solepa, turning down her lips in contempt. '*Ou te inoino fafine Viti, e matapua'a.*'[#]

[#] 'Fiji women disgust me, they are so ugly.'

'True, very true,' said Bill, diplomatically, 'many of them be ugly; but she was not. She was beautiful; but yet not so beautiful as thee, Solepa.'

He took a silver ring off his little finger, and, stooping down, lifted her left hand.

[image]

HE TOOK A SILVER RING OFF HIS LITTLE FINGER.

'It is large for even the largest of thy fingers,' he said, placing it on; 'but when we get to Apia I shall buy thee one of gold. Art content to promise me?'

Solepa nodded placidly. 'Ay, I am content to wed thee; but not content to leave the white lady. I would be always *tavini tausi tama* (nurse) to her.'

Bill waved his hand magnificently. 'It may be that I shall let thee remain to serve her while I go to sea. But I cannot tell now. Try and please me, and all will

be well.'

Then, filling his pipe, he strolled for'ard, to announce his engagement to Charlie, for whom he had conceived a liking.

During the morning Mrs. Casalle gave Tom an interesting account of her home in Leone Bay, on the Island of Tutuila. She had an ardent admiration of the Samoans generally, and of the girl Solepa she spoke in terms of absolute affection. 'She saved my life over and over again that dreadful night, Tom; for although I can swim unusually well for a white woman, I was dulled and paralyzed with fear. Then, when we reached Elizabeth Reef, she tended and nursed me back to life again, for I really was at the verge of death from exhaustion and grief. I do hope the poor girl's brother Salu was one of the boat's crew which reached Port Kooringa. She has fretted and grieved in silence, and until this morning has hardly mentioned his name, for fear it would add a fresh poignancy to my own constant and unhappy reflections.' She paused awhile, and then resumed, in brighter tones–

'And so, after all your own strange adventures, you are still bent on a sailor's life? Would it not be delightful if you could sail with my husband? He, of course, now that the Bandolier is lost, must get another ship.'

'I should be only too glad,' answered Tom, 'especially if Captain Casalle continues in the South Seas.'

'Well, we shall know before many months–perhaps weeks–are past. Of course you will have to go home first. Then you must come to us in Samoa. Now tell me something about that strange man, Captain Hayes. I have often heard of him from the natives, who always speak well of him. He sometimes visits Apia with a cargo of natives, but our home is sixty miles from there, so neither my husband nor myself have ever seen him.'

'He knew of Captain Casalle by name,' said Tom, who then gave her a description of Hayes himself, his ship's company, and the fight on board. Then he told her all about old Sam and his wonderful brig, at which she was greatly amused.

'I should like to meet the dear old fellow,' she exclaimed.

During the night the wind worked round two or three points, and enabled the barque to lay a direct course for Fotuna, and at daylight Singavi Harbour was plainly in sight, with the yellow-thatched huts peeping out among the bright green of the cocoa-palms.

As soon as the Adventurer was safely moored, the French priest whom Tom had met previously came on board. The old man was both surprised and pleased to see him again, and told him he had done wisely in returning to the island, instead of going on the boat to Fiji. Then Captain Herrendeen introduced him to Mrs. Casalle, briefly telling him her story. The priest was very sympathetic,

and at once urged her and Tom to take up their abode at the mission until the Adventurer was ready for sea again.

'You need rest, oh, very much rest, and change of food, so that you may become strong again. And next to my own house there is a small school-house which you shall use as your own. It shall be made as comfortable as possible. We shall be most pleased. You are the first white lady we have seen at Fotuna for ten–no, twelve–years, and my people will be proud, I do assure you. Now I shall not delay, but return at once to prepare for you;' and hurriedly shaking hands with them, he bustled off ashore again.

By this time the decks were filled with natives of both sexes, all of whom crowded round Mrs. Casalle and Solepa, and gave utterance to expressions of sympathy, when the latter, speaking in Samoan, told them what had befallen her mistress and herself. Presents of fruit were brought to them in such profusion that within an hour or two the after deck was completely covered.

Early in the afternoon the mission boat came alongside, to take Mrs. Casalle, Solepa, and Tom to the mission station at Alō, as the journey over the mountain paths would have been more than the former could have accomplished. The Singavi people, however, who were jealous of Alō securing the *tamaitai papalagi*[#] as a guest, urged her not to go in the boat, but let them carry her through the mountain forest on a litter. At length, after a violent dispute between the two parties, the Singavi natives gave way, on it being pointed out to them by Maori Bill that although the white lady, Tom, and the Samoan girl were going to Alō, the ship would remain at Singavi, and prove a considerable source of profit to them, as their services would be required to help in heaving her down. This ended matters satisfactorily, and bidding the kind-hearted captain and his officers good-bye for the present, Tom and Mrs. Casalle went off in the boat, the brown-skinned crew of which at once struck up a canoe song as they plunged their long, narrow-pointed canoe-paddles into the water.

[#] White lady.

'I'll come and see you in a few days,' called out Herrendeen, as the boat shot out through the opening in the reef.

[image]

THEY STRUCK UP A CANOE SONG AS THEY PADDLED ALONG.

Before starting to heave down the ship, came the tedious task of discharging over three hundred barrels of oil, and rafting them ashore; then the barque was taken in close under a rocky bluff, which offered excellent facilities to carry out the work in water as calm as a mill pond, and as clear as the purest crystal. The started butt-end was found and repaired, the ship righted again, and preparations made for re-shipping the oil by the morning of the fifth day.

That afternoon Herrendeen visited the mission house, where he found Mrs. Casalle and Solepa busy at work with two or three young native women, making dresses out of some more modestly coloured prints than those she had been able to obtain on the Adventurer, which were of the very brightest hue, being intended only for disposal to the colour-loving natives of the Moluccas, and other islands where the captain usually called to buy provisions during his cruise.

'We'll be ready for sea in another week,' he said, looking at his passenger with undisguised admiration. 'Why, Mrs. Casalle, my officers won't know you again, you look—-' He was about to say 'so beautiful,' but stopped himself in time.

'Ten years younger, Captain Herrendeen, I hope you were going to say, but I'll be content if you say five,' she broke in, with a laugh. 'Have you seen Father Serge yet?'

'No, I came to see you first, of course; but here he comes. Where is Tom?'

Mrs. Casalle nodded her pretty head half a dozen times in rapid succession, and threw up her hands in affected indignation.

'Away, of course. He's never here between daylight and dark. If he's not out pig-hunting in the forest, he's away fishing in the middle of the ocean between here and Alofi. He's just deserted me altogether. Is not that so, father?' she said to the old priest, who with another Marist priest as old as himself just then entered the house to greet the captain.

'He is what you call a rambler, a rambler! Oh yes, a great rambler; but he is a good boy, madame, a good boy. Now will you not come with us, so that we may show our friend here all over our mission station?'

Just before supper at the mission house that evening, Tom, brown-faced, dirty, and panting, came staggering up the pebbled path with a turtle on his shoulder.

'We got three,' he said triumphantly, putting the creature down on the verandah,–'and this is only the smallest. Hallo, captain, how are you?'

'Tom Wallis, you ought to have been born a Red Indian or a Samoan,' said Mrs. Casalle, laughingly.

'That's what my father has often said, Mrs. Casalle. And I believe he was

right.'

CHAPTER XVIII
TOGETHER AT LAST

One afternoon, after more than two weeks had passed, the whaling barque still lay quietly at anchor in Singavi Harbour, ready for sea again, and waiting only for a breeze. For, soon after the repairs were finished, the trade-wind had flickered and died away, and a 'furious calm,' as Mr. Burr, the chief mate, called it, had set in, and seemed likely to continue. The captain had started off early the previous morning to walk to the mission house at Alō, and spend a day or two shooting with Tom and Maori Bill, for the natives had assured him that there was not the slightest chance of anything more than the very lightest airs from the eastward for many days to come, and he decided that it was better to be lying at anchor instead of drifting away to the westward. And so, although Mr. Burr and his fellow-officers, to whom an idle day was an abomination and a vexation of spirit, grumbled exceedingly, they had to admit that the 'old man' was right after all. The two damaged boats had been repaired, and were now, as well as the one obtained from Tom and Bill, fit to be lowered again, should whales be seen whilst the ship was at anchor. Look-outs had been stationed on two of the highest points of the island, and a series of smoke-signals arranged, so that if by good luck a whale or whales should be sighted from the mountains, the boats would know where to look for them, if they were not visible from the ship.

The day had been intensely hot, and at five o'clock Mr. Burr and the second mate, as they sat under the awning on the poop deck, were eating oranges and pineapples with a steady determination to do some kind of work.

Presently a canoe came off from the beach and brought off the shore look-outs, who duly came aft and reported.

'See anything, you fellows?' asked the mate, stabbing a pineapple through with his knife and drawing it to him.

'Saw 'bout nine or ten finbacks close in under the south point 'bout an hour ago,' drawled one of the look-outs.

'Finbacks is pizen, and ain't fit to be mentioned to a decent man. Snakes and finbacks air a curse to humanity. But if we hev to lie here and rot much longer, and one of them comes foolin' around, I'm going to put an iron into him,

and let him tow me all around this island for forty days and forty nights. See any blackfish?'

'Nary one. But there's a ship way out to the northward. Saw her early this morning. Reckon she ain't much nearer now. 'Bout fifteen mile off now.'

Mr. Burr displayed a faint interest, and then, being a good-natured, thoughtful man, said to his subordinate–

'Like to take a boat and pull round to the mission house and tell the old man? If that ship is bound to Fiji, she'll most likely pass between here and Alofi, and maybe he or the little woman might want to send a letter. You can stay all night if you like.'

The second mate was only too glad to get away from the ship for a night; and soon after supper he called his boat's crew and started, secretly hoping that on the way back in the morning he might raise a whale.

As the boat rounded the southern point of the island, a gentle, cooling breath of air came from the eastward, and the mate sniffed it approvingly, not because it was laden with the sweet scent of *maso'i*, *tamanu*, and wild orange trees of the mountain forest, but because it felt to his cheeks as if it were the re-awakening to life again of the long-waited-for trade wind.

'Guess the captain won't do much gunning to-morrow,' he remarked in the condescending manner peculiar to whaleship officers, who in rare moments of relaxation unbend themselves sufficiently to make an observation to members of the crew not directly connected with their vocation. 'There's going to be a steady breeze before morning, in spite of what these copper-coloured Kanaka folks say. Give way, there. I'm mighty glad we came now. Maybe we'll get back again to-night.'

The officer's surmise seemed likely to prove correct, for by the time the boat was abreast of the mission station, and just as the evening fires of the natives were being lit, the breeze had certainly strengthened.

Landing directly in front of the white-walled church, the crew hauled the boat up on the soft white sand, and were soon surrounded by the usual crowd of inquisitive natives, while the mate walked on up the hill to the mission house, where he found his captain, Mrs. Casalle, and Tom at supper with the two old fathers.

'Mr. Burr reckoned he had better let you know that there is a ship in sight to the northward; the look-out saw her early this morning, and thinks she's coming this way. If so, she'll be in the straits here by midnight. And there's a steady breeze coming, captain; guess this eternal calm is about broke up.'

This latter news decided Captain Herrendeen to leave Alō as soon as the moon rose, which would be an hour before midnight, as he would thus have time to reach Singavi by daylight, get the ship under way and well out from the lee of

the land as soon as possible; for should it fall calm again he would either have to anchor or tow back again, to avoid the strong westerly current. As for the vessel which the look-outs had sighted, he determined to speak her in the morning, if it could possibly be done.

His hospitable hosts, knowing his anxiety to put to sea again, did not persuade him to wait till morning; but, calling their servants, bade them carry down and fill the mission boat with fruit and vegetables for the use of the ship's company. Then, as there were still some hours before them, supper was proceeded with, and the rest of the evening was spent on the verandah.

At last the time came to say farewell. The moon had risen, and sent a long steady blade of light down the strait, the breeze was blowing fresh and cool and rustling the line of palms in the mission garden, and the two boats with their crews were waiting on the beach.

'Come, my friends,' said the older of the two missionaries to his guests, 'let us go. My brother Garnier and myself are not so old that we cannot walk down with you to the boat.'

As the little procession left the mission it was joined by some hundreds of young women and lads, who pressed forward to say good-bye to Mrs. Casalle and Solepa; many of them were unable to restrain their tears, and Tom could not help remarking upon their warm-hearted impulsiveness to Captain Herrendeen, adding that Hayes had told him that the Fotuna natives were inclined to be saucy and domineering.

'Ah,' said the old priest, who overheard him, 'but Captain Hayes did not understand the changes we have made here of late years. The Fotunans were always a more suspicious and irritable people than the other Polynesians; even now they do not take quickly to strangers like the Samoans or Tahitians, but that is because there is a strain of Papuan blood in them. And it is not more than twenty years ago since my predecessor, Père Channel, was beaten to death by their clubs here at Alō.'

They reached the boats, and then, almost in silence, Tom and Mrs. Casalle bade the good old men farewell.

'Farewell, madame; farewell, Tom!' murmured Père Serge, who was almost afraid to trust his own voice, as he took their hands in his; 'may Heaven protect you both! You have both suffered much, but now happiness is near to you. Think of us sometimes, living out our quiet lives on this lonely little island. And to you farewell, captain, and to you, sir, and to you,' as he held out his hand to Herrendeen, the second mate, and Maori Bill; 'may your voyage be a very happy, a very prosperous one! Perhaps in a year or two you may come to Fotuna again, and tell me that you have killed many whales.'

Another hand-grasp, and Mrs. Casalle and the captain took their seats

in the whaler's boat, Bill–who contrived to get Solepa and Tom with him–took charge of the other, and the word was given to push off.

The priests, surrounded by their flock, stood watching on the beach, and then, as the boats cleared the reef and headed southward, Tom and the captain stood up and waved their hats. For some minutes the two black-garbed figures remained stationary, silhouetted against the white background of moonlit beach; then they turned and disappeared under the shadow of the palms.

When the boats were a few hundred yards beyond the barrier-reef the oars were taken in, the sails hoisted, and soon both were slipping quickly over the water, which, though ruffled by the gentle breeze, was very smooth. The mission boat, however, being both clumsy and heavily laden, dropped behind considerably, and gradually the voices of her native crew, who were singing merrily as they sailed, grew indistinct.

'We mustn't run away from them, Captain Herrendeen,' said Mrs. Casalle, quickly. 'Don't think me nervous, but even being in a boat now terrifies me, and Tom is such an awful boy. If it came on to blow hard, he would just be delighted. Why, as we were leaving I asked him to come with us, but he said he wanted to go with Mr. Chester, as they might pick up a turtle in the moonlight! And that boat is loaded down to the gunwales already. If they swamped'–she shuddered–'and anything happened to him, it would break my heart.'

Captain Herrendeen laughed, but lowered the peak of the mainsail, so as to decrease the speed of the boat.

'Why, he swims like a native, Mrs. Casalle, and would enjoy the thing; but there, we'll wait for them.'

'Thank you, captain. I know I'm silly, but I can't help it. And I was thinking of sharks. Oh! I saw such a dreadful thing once in the Paumotu Group, when a canoe full of people upset, on just such a moonlight night'—-

'Hallo! what's that?' cried the second mate, as a report of a gun came from the other boat.

Herrendeen luffed, and looked astern at the same time.

'Tom's having a shot at nothing, to get rid of his superfluous energy–hallo! there's another,' as a flash and a second report came, followed by a hail.

'Why, they're hailing–the boat's filling, I expect! Down with the sail there, you men! We must pull up to her.'

The sail was quickly lowered, and the boat headed back under the long sweeping strokes of five oars. The mission boat, however, still came on, running steadily before the wind.

'What's the matter with you?' shouted Herrendeen, as he came within speaking distance.

'Nothing,' answered the Maori, 'but look over there, just under the shadow

of the land. There's that ship, close in. We fired to make you bring to.'

A quick glance at the spot indicated showed Captain Herrendeen the vessel. She was rather more than a mile astern of both boats, and gradually overhauling them.

'She's coming down this way, sure enough,' he said to his second mate, 'and will be out through the straits by daylight if she's bound to the westward. Guess I'll hang on here a bit, and wait for her. You can go on, Bill, and tell Mr. Burr to heave short at daylight. I'll be along presently, as soon as I have spoken this ship, and find out where's she going. Mrs. Casalle, will you go in that boat or stay with me?'

'I'll stay with you, captain. Tom, you come too, please. Solepa, you can go on if you like.'

Tom, eager to get on board the strange ship, at once changed into the captain's boat, and Bill, with Solepa pretending to protest that she did not wish to reach the Adventurer before her mistress, at once went on, using both sail and paddles.

As the stranger was still a mile distant, Captain Herrendeen decided to pull up and meet her. By the manner in which she was running down the coast, it was evident that the master of her knew the island pretty well; and indeed as soon as she came abreast of the southern point she hauled her wind, and lay up along the western shore.

'That looks as if he was going into Singavi, Carey,' said Herrendeen to the second mate; 'but still he may not be. At the same time he's altogether too close. Give way, men, we'll soon be up to him. He'll lose most of the breeze, now he's rounded the corner.'

In a quarter of an hour the vessel was so close, and the night so clear, that figures could be discerned moving about her decks, and presently, as the boat came nearer, a man came to the stern rail and hailed in a clear voice:

'Boat ahoy there! Do you want to come aboard?'

'Yes, if you're not going into Singavi.'

'We are going there; but come aboard all the same,' said a second voice.

Mrs. Casalle clutched Tom's arm convulsively, and he felt her figure tremble.

'Oh, Tom, that sounded so like my poor husband's voice! It's all your fault, you've frightened me so—-'

'Ay, ay,' replied Herrendeen. 'I'll come aboard. Don't bring to.'

Pulling up alongside the vessel, which now had barely more than steerage way on her, owing to her being so close under the lee of the high land, Captain Herrendeen caught hold of a rope's end which was lowered to him at the main chains and swung himself aboard.

'Push off, Mr. Carey, and go ahead. You'll be in a good hour or more before this ship. Orders as before for Mr. Burr–heave short at daylight.'

The boat dropped astern, and the crew, bending to their oars, sent her skimming ahead, much to the disappointment of Tom, who, had there been time, would have followed the captain.

The moment Herrendeen was on deck he shook hands with a man who was evidently the captain.

'How do, captain? Say, you're in a bit close; there's an inshore set of current just here. The Comboy went ashore here in a calm; five boats couldn't tow her clear of the reef.'

'Much obliged to you, sir,' said the captain, who at once gave the necessary orders, and the ship was at once kept away from the land. She answered her helm so slowly, however, and her canvas hung so limp, that both Herrendeen and the strange skipper were alarmed as they looked at the land.

'Take a cast of your lead, sir,' said the former quickly; 'you're setting inshore. I can hear the surf. If you can't get bottom at twenty fathoms, you'll have to tow off; there's a sudden drop from twenty fathoms to a hundred, we're just on the edge of it.'

A seaman sprang into the fore chains, took a cast of the lead, and reported no bottom.

'You'll have to tow off, captain,' said Herrendeen; 'it's better to be sure than sorry.'

Two well-manned boats were at once lowered, and in a few minutes the vessel began to move ahead.

'We're all right now, sir, I think,' said the captain to Herrendeen, as he looked over the side, 'thanks to you;' and then, as he saw two figures on the afterdeck evidently waiting to approach him and his visitor, he seized Herrendeen's arm and said hurriedly–

'Have you heard anything about Bully Hayes having been here?'

'Yes, all about it.'

'Anything about a boy named Wallis and a Maori half-caste?'

'*They're here*! The boy was in that boat of mine which was alongside just now; the Maori–Bill Chester you mean–is here too.'

'Thank God! thank God!' said the stranger; 'here are his father and brother;' and then, dragging Herrendeen with him, he called out in quavering tones–

'Tom is here, Wallis! Tom is here!'

For some moments all discipline on board the Malolo was lost, for the crew on deck and the men in the boats caught up the skipper's cry, and cheer after cheer went up, as Mr. Wallis and Jack seized Herrendeen's hands, with eager

tremulous questions on their lips.

Captain Casalle walked quickly away to where Mr. Brooker was standing up forward, watching the ship. He leant on the rail in silence for some minutes.

'Brooker, old shipmate,' he began in a low voice, as he turned to the mate, 'such news as that is heaven to a father's heart, and to me as well, for it was through me that the boy has suffered so. And now I thank God he is found.'

'Just so, captain,' said Brooker, sympathetically; 'I feel most almighty pleased myself: I do.'

Another minute or two passed, and then the murmur of the three voices on the after-deck suddenly ceased, and Mr. Wallis cried out sharply–

'Casalle, Casalle! Where are you?'

The captain ran to meet him. 'What is it, Wallis?' In the dim morning light he saw that the man's usually quiet, grave eyes were glittering under some almost uncontrollable emotion. 'What is it, Wallis? Is Tom ill?'

'Tom is well, Casalle,' said Wallis, trying to speak calmly, 'and as God has spared my son to me, so has He spared your wife to you. She is here at Fotuna, and was alongside in the same boat with Tom!'

* * * * *

Half an hour later, as the Malolo, whose boats were towing astern, came in sight of Singavi Harbour and the Adventurer, Captain Herrendeen stepped up from below, with rather misty eyes, and spoke to Mr. Brooker and Henry Casalle, both of whom were at that moment talking over the exciting events of the past hour. That they should find Tom safe, and actually arrive at the island on the morning of the very day he was leaving it, was a strange and fortunate circumstance; but that their captain's wife should not only be alive and well, but have been rescued by the same ship which had afterwards picked up Tom and Maori Bill, was stranger still.

'How do you do, gentlemen?' said Herrendeen to the two officers, and shaking hands with them both. 'There's no need for me to ask which of you is Mr. Casalle–you and your brother are as alike as the two sheaves in a double block. I guess there's going to be a high old time aboard these two ships to-day.'

When within half a mile of the Adventurer, Captain Casalle, Mr. Wallis, Jack, and little Nita left the Malolo in one of her whaleboats, leaving Captain Herrendeen on board to pilot her in. As they drew near, they saw that Mr. Burr was heaving short and the hands loosing sails.

The boat drew up alongside, and Mr. Wallis–as had been arranged between

him and Captain Casalle–first went up the side and met Mr. Burr at the gangway.

'I am Tom's father,' he said quickly; 'is he below?'

'Just having a cup of coffee,' answered the mate, shaking hands with the visitor. 'Come with me, sir.'

'One moment, please;' and then Mr. Wallis asked the mate if Mrs. Casalle was with him.

'No, she told me she was tired. I guess she's turned in.'

'All the better. Her husband is here with me, and we feared that the shock of seeing him so unexpectedly might be harmful to her. Will you send Tom on deck first?' Then, going to the gangway, he called to Jack and Captain Casalle to come up.

Mr. Burr descended into the cabin. Tom was seated at the table, drinking coffee with Solepa.

'Come on deck, Tom,' said the mate, quickly; 'you stay there, girl.'

Wondering what was the matter, Tom followed him on deck, and in a few moments was clasped in his father's arms, then in Jack's, and then in Captain Casalle's.

Mr. Wallis drew the mate aside and spoke hurriedly with him; then the two went below, and the mate knocked at Mrs. Casalle's cabin door.

'Have you turned in, Mrs. Casalle?'

'No, Mr. Burr. But I feel a little tired, and am lying down. Come in, please.'

The mate opened the door and looked in with a smiling face.

'I hev great news for you, Mrs. Casalle. Tom's father and brother are here; and Mr. Wallis is here outside, and wants to see you mighty particular. He's seen your husband quite recent.'

In an instant she was on her feet, and out into the main cabin with hands outstretched to Tom's father.

'Mrs. Casalle, this is a happy meeting. I have seen my boy, and now I come to tell you that your husband and child are near, very near.'

'Very near! Ah, do not keep me in suspense! Tell me, tell me now! See, I am not excited. There, see!' And she sat down and folded her trembling hands, and looked into his face with swimming eyes. '*Ah, he is here now*! I can see it in your face. He is on board that ship, and the voice I heard was his!'

Wallis, affected almost as much as she was, could no longer delay telling her.

'Yes, it was his voice. Stay here; I will bring him to you.'

He sprang up the companion way. Casalle, with Nita's hand held tightly in his own, was waiting. They went below.

And as Wallis passed by the open skylight to join Tom and Jack, he heard the woman's voice–

'Ramon! Ramon! My husband, my husband! My child, my child!'

CHAPTER XIX
OUTWARD BOUND

Once more the white Malolo lay under Garden Island in fair Sydney Harbour, with but three hands aboard to keep anchor watch, for there were great doings at Mr. Biffen's house, which was lit up below and aloft, and every hand who could be spared had gone ashore.

Two months had come and gone since the Adventurer and Malolo parted company off the verdured hills of Fotuna Island, with cheer after cheer from the crews, as the barque headed north-westward for the whaling grounds, and the schooner stood southward for Sydney.

In the grounds of the merchant's house, which overlooked the Harbour, Mr. Wallis was entertaining not only the crew of the Malolo, but that of the Lady Alicia as well, for in the morning there had been a wedding–Mr. William Henry Chester to Miss Solepa Tuisila. The ceremony had been attended with what Mr. Brooker called 'tremendous fixins,' Mr. Wallis giving the bride away, and Captain Samuel Hawkins acting as best man to 'William Henry.' Among the guests, too, were old Foster and Kate Gorman, who had come up to Sydney in the asthmatic old 'Puffing Billy' to see Tom–only to bid him farewell again, for he was not returning to Port Kooringa with his father and Jack. He had won his father's consent, and was bound to Samoa in the Malolo as supercargo–much to the delight of Maori Bill, who, to old Sam's sorrow, was also leaving in the schooner, to become overseer on Captain Casalle's station at Leone Bay. Charlie also had shipped on the Malolo, declaring that wherever Tom and Bill went he would go too.

Upstairs, as red-haired, true-hearted Kate Gorman was clasping little Nita to her ample bosom for the last time, and with fast-falling tears singing her to sleep, as she had so often done before in the old house at Port Kooringa, when her heart was almost breaking for Tom, the 'babby that was her own darlin',' Tom himself came in.

'What, crying, Kate, old woman!' and he patted her cheeks with his rough brown hands; 'come, don't cut up so. You'll see Nita again in less than a year, for when we return we are coming to Port Kooringa in the Malolo herself. Now put

Nita to bed and come down-stairs; we all want you, father and Jack, and Captain Casalle, and his brother, and Mrs. Casalle, and everybody.'

Kate dried her tears. 'Shure I'll come, av it's only to kape that silly ould man Foster quiet. It's dhrinkin' too much he is I'm shure.'

Old Sam, whose face was redder than ever, was making a speech embracing a variety of subjects, from the good looks and faithful services of the bride to the bridegroom's abilities as a pugilist and a seaman, the remarkable career of the Lady Alicia, and something about a fight he had had when he was a boy at school, all of which were interspersed with sage reflections on the ways of Providence in bringing together husband and wife, and brother and brother, and father and son, and indefinite allusions to an Indian juggler he once saw at Rangoon. Then, turning to Tom, who sat beside him, he clapped him on the shoulder, and brought his speech to a conclusion in these words:

'And I'm sure Tom my boy that you have the makings of a good sailor in you and that Captain Casalle will find it out in the same luminous manner as me and poor Mr. Collier did not forgetting Mr. de Cann who also remarked on your inset proclivities which is only right and proper in a boy of British blood to whom salt water is his natural substance meaning no disrespect to your brother Jack here who tells me he feels more at home with a horse to which I am addicted myself if he is towing a cart or other vesicule and may you have all the good luck in the world ashore or elsewhere and in any position and old Sam Hawkins knows you won't do anything that isn't fair square ship-shape and Bristol fashion. To you also Mrs. Casalle I drink your health with the same sentiments as those here set down and here's success to the Malolo and her captain and officers and crew including the bride. William Henry you've deserted me but you done it for a profound object which I admire secretly for if her skin is dark her heart is true blue. Good luck go with you William and I hope you'll be a good wife to him miss for you won't get another like him no matter how precarious you may be positioned as a widow which I trust may not occur to you under present circumstances.'

Vociferous applause from the Malolos and Lady Alicias, during which Maori Bill, having been informed by Jack that he must respond to the toast of the bride's health, promptly declined, and immediately went on board and turned in, leaving the bride to fulfil her duties of nurse to little Nita.

* * * * *

Again the merry clink of the windlass pawls, as the Malolo's anchor comes un-

derfoot to the rousing chanty of 'Outward Bound.' On the after-deck are gathered Mr. Wallis, Jack, Foster, Kate Gorman, and old Sam, the latter resplendent in his frock coat, shiny bell-topper, and lavender kid gloves. They have all come to say farewell to Tom and the Casalles–a farewell that has in it no touch of sadness, but is full of bright hopes for the future.

The topsails are sheeted home, the tug steams ahead and tautens the tow-line, and the beautiful schooner begins to move.

One parting hand-grasp all round, and the shore party go down the gang-way into the Customs launch. Mrs. Casalle and Solepa come to the side, and Tom, seizing little Nita in his arms, carries her halfway up the mizzen rigging, so that she may see the very last of Jack and his father and Kate; and then, at a signal from Mr. Brooker, the crew, led by Henry Casalle, come rushing aft and give three parting cheers.

And so, with the bright morning sun shining on her snowy canvas, the Malolo heads eastward to the open sea, and Tom Wallis has his heart's desire at last.

THE END

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