

# Christmas On Crusoe's Isle

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ROBINSON CRUSOE.

ONE Christmas morning not many years ago I found myself up a tree in Crusoe's island. I was hunting meat for my Christmas dinner shortly after daybreak that morning, and as the most abundant supply was promised by the peccaries, or wild hogs, that ranged the island, I had left camp and started out after them. It was great fun for awhile, for I fell in with a herd of about a dozen and had secured two of the "varmints" when the survivors, seeming to think that "turn about is fair play," began hunting me. Then the situation assumed a different aspect entirely, for the peccary when aroused is one of the most bloodthirsty of creatures and as revengeful as an Indian. Fortunately for me, a great gum tree stood conveniently near, and by means of the lianas that swung from its branches I was soon safe from harm and looking calmly down upon the little black beasts as they raged around the trunk. But a peccary, as is well known, can entertain only one idea at a time, and the idea that possessed the shallow brains of my friends below was how to effect my destruction. After rooting around awhile they all sat down in an attitude of expectation and patiently waited for me to descend. And they would sit there, I felt sure, knowing peccary nature as I did, until they starved me to death rather than allow me to escape.

I had only a few rounds of ammunition suited to their needs, but I killed three more before it was exhausted and peppered the hides of several others so that if they ever had entertained the idea of leaving they abandoned it entirely. I had not a morsel of food about me. The limbs I sat astride of were not so soft as they might have been if they had been made to order, and I was getting uncomfortable when I noticed a commotion in the herd. The leader of the band, a grisly old tusker with recurved fangs like Turkish scimiters, suddenly stood up and sniffed the air; then he uttered a "whoof" of rage and despair, struck a 2:10 gait and disappeared in the jungle, followed by all the survivors. I was saved by a black man and a dog.

It may or may not be true that the peccary has as intense a dislike for the black man as he has for a dog, but anyway the combination proved effective in this instance. The man who appeared at this juncture was the

while me done cut up an' skin dese hawgs—one, two, three, fo', five. Golly, massa, we done gut 'nuff meat fo' de Christmas dinnah, ain' we? Not to menshun dis yere bag wiv two dozen fine fat crapauds in um, sah."

Pappy Ned set to work dressing (or, to be exact, undressing) the peccaries, being careful not to taint the flesh with the contents of the peculiar musk gland which the species carries on its back, and while he is thus engaged seems a good opportunity for me to make my explanation as to the exact location of Crusoe's island.

It is not, as ninety-nine persons in a hundred think, the island of Juan Fernandez, on the southwest coast of South America, but it is a good many miles nearer the coast of our own United States, in the southeastern part of the Caribbean sea. I will not waste any time, either the reader's or my own, in argument, but respectfully refer the earnest inquirer to old Crusoe himself. Robinson Crusoe, Esq., mariner, of Bristol, England, whose adventures were first written out and published by Daniel De Foe in 1719, was somewhere in latitude 11 degrees north of the equator when he was wrecked—that is, of course, assuming there ever



A PECCARY.

was an entity called "Crusoe" in the flesh. But, whether he ever existed or not, that is where De Foe placed his hero when he had him wrecked on the coast of his island. To quote the words of Crusoe himself, just before it happened, "The master made an observation as well as he could and found that he was in about 11 degrees of north latitude, so that we were gotten beyond the coast of Guiana and beyond the river Amazonas, toward the Orinoco, commonly called the Great river."

Now, that would be evidence sufficient for any sailor, but let Crusoe further explain, as he does well along in his narrative, when he first circumnavigates his island kingdom: "The land which I perceived to the west and southwest was the great island of Trinidad, on the north point of the mouth of the river Orinoco."

Trinidad, as everybody knows, is off the north coast of South America and

with me back to our hut. Hanging three of the pigs up in a palm tree to await his return Pappy Ned shouldered the other two and the sack of crapauds and toted the load to camp, which was distant but a mile or so, and I followed after with my gun. As Tobago is a tropical island the meat would not keep a great while, and we really had much more than we could eat, but Pappy Ned said he knew of some black people over on the other side of the forest who would devour what there was left provided he could get word to them in time.

There never was a more beautiful situation for a hut than the site of mine on a hilltop above the forest line, with views of tropical woods and shining shore, and, as the weather that Christmas day was simply perfect, I ordered my man to make our "spread" in the open, beneath the cocoa palms, sheltered from the blazing sun by the golden rooftrees only. So he set the table out of doors and lost no time in getting at the cooking, which was done over an open fire. Pappy Ned was as adept at preparing exquisite dishes from next to nothing as any Parisian chef that ever lived. We had a garden filled with such plants as the manioc, tania, sweet potato, arrowroot, yam, etc., not to mention corn and mountain rice. From a wild grove of coffee trees I obtained the fragrant berry for my morning beverage; also cacao, or chocolate, from another copse on the border of the forest, while the cocoa palms above and around my hut held a delicious cool drink in their urripe nuts. Pappy Ned dried and grated the cassava tubers, making "farine," from which he cooked great cakes more than a foot across. The juice of the cassava is poisonous in its crude state, but it is converted into a palatable substance by heat and forms the basis of the noted "cassareep," or pepper pot. We always had a pepper pot on hand as a standby, into which we threw the odd pieces of meat left over after ordinary repasts, and a goodly amount of the peccary flesh was thus disposed of, the cassareep acting as a preservative as well as a condiment. But pepper pot was a poor man's makeshift, Pappy Ned always declared, and the day before he had walked the beach for sea turtle eggs, several score of which he had brought back to camp, together with a fine fish he had caught on the shore.

After working three or four hours



FREDERICK A. OBER.

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THE SURVIVORS BEGAN HUNTING ME.

only other in that forest save myself, my sable servant, Pappy Ned. He had been out all night hunting crapauds, or forest frogs, and was on his way back to our camp with a backload of batrachians, the legs of which were to be served up in a style which only Pappy Ned knew to perfection.

"Gorarnighty, massa!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "Was dat yo' gun goin' off pam! pam! lak yo' shootin' a reg'munt ob sogers? Ki, but it's lucky ole Pappy Ned come 'long, hey? Dem hawgs done know Pappy Ned an' jes' cl'ar out when dey hear um a-comin' along wiv dis yer dawg. Dey don' lak niggers, an' dey don' lak dawgs nuther, an' dey'se death on de buckra man."

"Well, pappy, the buckra man, as you call me, has brought death to the peccaries this time, and they've good reason for not liking me, I fancy. But you came along just in the nick of time, old friend, and I owe you another reward for saving my life a second time." He had nursed me through a fever a few months before.

"Oh, me massa, dat ain' nuffin'. Me only too glad to sarve me good massa, fo' shuah. Yo' jes set down an' rest,

is one of the finest British possessions in the West Indies. The only other island which fully answers the description given by Crusoe in relation of location to Trinidad is that of Tobago, from which Sir Walter Raleigh probably derived the name of the "weed" we call tobacco.

I long held the theory that this was Crusoe's island, and in order to prove it went down there on a hunting and exploring expedition, afterward writing a book about my adventures which gives all the evidence, even if it does not sufficiently establish the facts. At any rate, I "played Crusoe" for months in Tobago, the island of the ancient mariner's adventures, built a hut of palm leaves in the forest and for a time lived as good old Robinson lived, with the exception that I did not have any goats; neither did I tempt an attack of rheumatism by residing in a cave. I even had my poll parrot, my hammock under the palms and my "Man Friday," only the latter was not a Carib, like Crusoe's factotum, but a black man, honest and faithful old Pappy Ned, who soon finished skinning those peccaries and was ready to go

over the open fire Pappy Ned came to announce, "Dinnah done ready, sah," at the same time handing me a "cashew cocktail" made from the juice of an aromatic fruit brewed with rum and stirred to effervescence with a "swizzle stick."

The grand repast of the day opened with gumbo soup, followed by fish, frogs' legs and turtles' eggs, while in the center of the table was peccary roast, flanked by a nicely browned guinea bird and a native wild turkey, with a vast assortment of vegetables from my garden. There were no drinks artificially cooled, ice being an unobtainable luxury in Crusoe's island, but there were tropical fruits in abundance—pines, guavas, mangoes, oranges and custard apples—all of which had been plucked within a stone's throw of my hut.

One thing only was lacking—a goodly company—to enjoy that Christmas feast in Crusoe's island. But we were content, for, as Pappy Ned observed, "De good Gorarnighty done gib us all we want, mo' dan we need and a heap sight mo' dan we deserve."

FREDERICK A. OBER.

DON'T TRUST TO LUCK.

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