

ADVENTURES AT SEA.

STROLLING along the Circular Quay in Sydney, New South Wales, one afternoon, looking at the shipping, and blowing away the weary hours in a cloud of smoke from a much-loved old clay pipe, my attention was attracted by a schooner of one hundred and thirty tons burthen, lying at anchor off in the stream. There was nothing wonderful about her, either for build or rig; she was merely a handsome schooner; but the extreme neatness of everything on board, from rill to truck, was eminently gratifying to the eyes of a seaman. I was sitting on an old spar, landed on the quay from some vessel, with my back against a mooring-post, when a man passed me, and, stopping on the edge of the quay, hailed the schooner:

"Adventure ahoy?" "Ay, ay," was immediately responded; then a man appeared in the waist, looking towards the shore. He waved his hand to the person who had hailed, and disappeared; and in a few minutes a small boat containing two men pulled around the schooner's bow, from the further side, headed for the boat-landing near where I sat.

As the boat approached, the stranger on the wharf stepped down from the sill, on which he had been standing, and moved towards the steps that led down to the platform; and much was I surprised to recognize in the schooner's captain (for such he was), an old friend of mine on the gold-fields of Australia, named Graham.

"Halloo! Graham," said I; "how are you, old fellow? What are you doing here Sydney?"

"Murray, by thunder!" exclaimed Graham; "what, in the name of mischief, are you doing here?" at the same time extending his hand and giving me a warm grip. "Come off aboard the schooner, that one off there, the Adventure; I'm trading with her, have been on two trips, and am going out to-morrow or next day on another. Come off, we'll have a yarn; what have you been doing with yourself, anyway?"

Having nothing else to do, and as Graham was a good fellow, and had been a good mate on the diggings, I accepted his invitation, and was soon introduced to his mate, and went into the schooner's cabin. The latter was not large, of course, but numerous muskets, three very heavy double-barrelled shot-guns, a dozen cutlasses and a half a dozen revolvers, evidently all carefully looked after and highly polished, were disposed in racks or arranged on the walls of the cabin, or around the main-mast, which came down through the fore part of it.

"Halloo! what sort of a hooker have you got here, Graham?" said I, in some surprise; "do you go 'trading' on such capital as that?" pointing to the muskets and cutlasses.

"Why," answered Graham, laughing, "I told you I was trading; and we have to carry all that stuff for safety. But that isn't all our armament, either. We've got a little brass cannon, a four-pounder, that we mount on the to-gal-lant fo'castle of the capstan, unship the capstan and mount the gun; we aren't to be sneezed at, I tell you."

"No, I shouldn't think you were," I said; "but where in the Old Harry do you trade to, that you have to carry all this fighting gear?"

"Where do I trade to? Why, where should I go to trade, except among the islands? I'm going to make a cruise among the King's Mill Group, this time. Shall touch Tanna Island first, and get two or three Tannamen; they are good fellows, and we have 'em for interpreters. I know lots of 'em; had four with us last time. Then, if I can pick up a cargo of sandal-wood or oil, I shall run across to China and sell it, and bring a cargo of tea and silk back to Sydney, on owner's account."

"O ho! I understand; you're going on a sandal-wooding trip. Why didn't you say so at first? I thought you were going to do a little bit of pirating when I looked at your armory," I answered.

Graham laughed, and produced a square bottle and three glasses from a trankon locker; and the mate (Moran) and myself joined him in drinking a glass of "old Holland," after which we adjourned to the deck.

In conversation with Graham and the mate I discovered that "trade" not only meant the exchange of one kind of goods for another, but was also applied to the goods exchanged; and that the "trade" taken out to exchange for sandal-wood and coconut oil consisted principally of gaudy calico, brilliantly-colored glass beads, tobacco, rum and cutlery, the last being the very meanest and cheapest it was possible to procure, made to order, in fact, and the other articles but little better. This wretched "trade" was traded for the wood or oil, and exorbitant prices demanded and obtained.

I had heard of "sandal-wooders" being taken by the islanders on more than one occasion, and knew that the King's

Mills natives were ferocious cannibals; so when Graham, at supper-time, broached the subject of my accompanying him on the trip, I replied:

"Well, Graham, I don't know but what I'll go; I should like to see something of those Pacific Islands; but don't let the natives eat up everybody they can get their hands on?"

"Well, what if they do?" said Graham. "Let 'em eat, we needn't care a curse as long as they don't eat us; and we'll take the best care of that. You see our fixin's here (pointing to the guns and pistols); them's all for arguments to persuade the natives to let us alone. Come, now, I want a second mate; will you go?"

"I'll go, yes; but I won't go as second mate, for I'm not a schooner sailor. Give me yards and square sails, and I know what I'm doing; but these fore-and-aft sails I'm not used to. I'll go as supernumerary, if you like."

"No you won't go as supernumerary or any other ary, not in this packet.—We've got no real work to do till we get among the islands. I'll stand on watch with you myself till you get used to schooner work, and you'll like it."

I agreed to go, and two days later we were bound away for Tanna Island, with a fine breeze and a pleasant sky. Nothing worth noting occurred until we reached the island. Here Graham found his interpreters of the previous trip, and took them on board; and another native, a chief of some kind or other among a tribe on one of the King's Mills Group, also got a passage down to his native island with us. This chief or patriarch, or whatever he was, was well known to Graham, who had purchased sandal-wood of him on his previous trip, and we were all particularly careful not to annoy him on the passage down from Tanna, as he gave us to understand that he had as much sandal-wood as would load the schooner, and we wanted it, of course.

Captain Graham knew the character of the natives, and told us that probably the old chief had not more than a few boat loads, at most, which he magnified much to make himself of consequence among us; and this proved to be the case.

He had four boat loads, each boat carrying about half a ton; and that we bought for two or three knives and about six yards of calico, with a pound of tobacco and a handful beads thrown in.

When we arrived at the island, we put old Daisy (as the sailors called the native) on shore at once, he promising to have the wood down to the beach in the morning; and we then stood off with the schooner till daylight should come.

Pistols and cutlasses had been distributed among the crew, and soon as we sighted land; and Graham and I spent the evening in carefully examining and loading the muskets and shot-guns, the latter being heavily charged with buckshot.

With the first streaks of daylight we stood in for the land, and brought the schooner to the wind about two miles off. The boat, built something after the style of a whale-boat, but shorter and wider, was got ready; the "trade" being stowed away in the bow and under the stern sheets. Each man had a revolver stuck in his belt; two cutlasses and one of the shot guns were laid down in the stern, and the largest of the double-barrels was stood up in the bow. A keg of water and some biscuits and beef completed our outfit, and soon after sunrise we pulled away for the shore, Captain Graham standing at the steering oar, and four of us rowing, I pulling the bow-oar.

We had not pulled more than half way to the island from the schooner when a number of natives appeared on the flat white beach of a little cove, for which Captain Graham headed the boat; and as we neared the shore the natives made signs to us where to land. When within about two hundred yards of the beach, the skipper quietly remarked, half to himself and half to the natives:

"No you don't, not if I know anything about it." And just as quietly he gave the orders to us, "Hold water, your port oars, pull round, starboard," at the same time sweeping the boat with the long steering-oar, till her head lay to seaward.

I was somewhat surprised at this movement, for we could see several pretty good piles of what I was assured was sandal-wood, near the beach.

"What's the matter?" I asked, "ain't you going to land and get the sandal-wood?"

"Land be d-d! no," was the reply; "but we'll get the wood, never fear.—Don't you see how shoal the water is here? Well, we should have to beach the boat, which isn't gospel in this trade, no how, unless you are inclined to be made soup of. These black imps have picked the place out a purpose, most likely; but they'll bring the wood to the place I pick out, see if they don't."

As we pulled out of the cove and

along shore, the natives screamed and made motions for us to return, holding up pieces of the wood, to show that they were ready and willing to trade; but Graham took no notice of them.—We kept on until we found a spot where the water was several fathoms deep close in to the shore, which suited Graham's ideas exactly. The steward, who had pulled the stroke-oar, now took the skipper's place at the steering-oar; the two seamen moved the two after oars, to make as much room forward as possible; and Captain Graham took his station at the bow.

"Now, Murray," said he to me, "fleet aft onto the next thwart, turn round, take that half-grown cannon (the big double-barrelled shot-gun), and stand by to blow the first darkey that shows mischief clean to the devil; keep both barrels cocked and don't take your fingers off the triggers for anybody or anything, but be kind o' careful and don't shoot me. Pull in, boys, keep her steering fair out to sea, steward, and be sure you don't let her swing broad-side on to the beach."

In a few moments the boat's stern touched the rocks, and the skipper continued:

"Lay on your oars, men, and stand by to stern off at once; Murray, keep your weather eye lifting now, and if there be any ugly-lookin' move made by the darkeys, let rip into 'em at once; there's no law here, you know, we've got to take care of ourselves."

"Do you always have to be as cautious as this?" I asked.

"Well, yes; at any rate, I always am just as cautious. There have been trading-vessels taken by the natives among these islands more than once, and I do not mean that they shall have our hooker, not through any fault of mine, anyway."

The natives soon made their appearance at our landing-place, but brought no wood; they were urgent that we should return to the shoal water of the cove, offering to bring the wood out to the boat if we should do so. But our Tannamen gave them to understand plainly that if they wanted to trade they must bring their sandal-wood to where the boat now lay, and nowhere else.

At this they seemed displeased, and threatened not to trade with us at all; but the interpreter was not to be bluff-ed" by them. Holding up a piece of calico printed in the most glaring colors—jet black, scarlet, green, blue and yellow, in stripes six inches wide, looking like a rainbow gone mad—he told them, in their own lingo:

"All right; you keep your wood, and we'll keep this splendid 'tappa.'"

The sight of the gorgeous calico was too much for the natives (no wonder; one look at it was enough to upset almost anybody), and very soon the sandal-wood began to arrive at the boat.

Now the trade commenced. Old Daisy on the shore, and our Tannamen in the boat, kept up an unearthly jabbering, each depreciating the other's wares and praising up his own, after the manner of more civilized nations; and Captain Graham excited the covetousness of the blacks by holding up the marvellous calico, brandishing the huge cast-iron knives, or letting a handful of glass beads, as big as marbles, run from his hand into a tin pan. But a dozen times, while the trade was progressing, he drew my attention to my own particular duty, by saying:

"Mind what you've got hold of, Murray; we're depending an almighty lot on you."

So I did "mind what I had hold of," though I could not detect any arms among the natives except their clubs.

At last we had received as much of the wood as our boat could carry, and Graham invited old Daisy to go off with us to the schooner, promising him a glass of whisky. To any one who has ever been among these islands, it is needless to say that old Daisy accepted the invitation, and soon stowed himself away on the top of the sandal-wood. As all was now ready for our return to the schooner, I laid my gun down to take my oar; but before I could touch the latter, Graham spoke to me in a way to make me pick up the gun again, pretty quick:

"Look out, Murray! d—nation, man, keep your gun and your place till we're clear of the shore; do you want these black devils to knock out all our brains? Stern, the after oar, stern off into deep waters; don't lay her round yet, steward, wait till we're a good ship's length clear."

But the natives showed no inclination to profit by my carelessness, and we were soon all down to the oars, and an hour later were safely on board the schooner, and the valuable wood in her hold.

On the way off Graham told me that the natives knew well the difference between the destructiveness of a pistol-ball and a heavy charge of buckshot; and that, well-armed with revolvers as we were, the big shot-gun probably had more influence in keeping them quiet than all our other arms put together.—He told several yarns, some of them

pretty tough ones, about the natives and their doings, and spoke of old Daisy's wife (or one of his wives), whom he had seen on the Adventure's last trip, as an immensely fat woman.

Directing the interpreter to inquire of old Daisy regarding the welfare of his obese spouse, that worthy coolly replied that she had gone; voluntarily adding by way of explanation, that she had got so fat as to be unfit for work, "so he clubbed her and ate her!" This was a new plan of utilizing a wife to me, and I vowed that old Daisy should not have one of our four glass tumblers to drink his whisky out of, for I'd never drink after him, but Graham and the other men had a good laugh at the circumstance. But I made old Daisy drink his grog out of a tin dipper.

It was too late when we got on board to go for another boat load that day, but next morning we went again, carrying old Daisy with us.

We remained about this island for a week, and then, having secured all the sandal-wood to be obtained there, we left for a new field.

Three months of very successful trading filled our hold two-thirds full of sandal-wood, and we had secured nearly thirty barrels of oil, besides. All the trading was conducted with the same caution as was at first displayed; I constantly holding the big gun, ready for an instant discharge, whenever the trading was going on, though no signs of treachery was ever detected.

Graham was beginning to talk of a run across to China in a week or two, when one morning a circumstance occurred which sent us into Hobartown, in Tasmania, instead of Foo-Choo-Foo, in China.

We were near one of the largest and least known islands of the group, the evening previous to the occurrence which so altered our destination, and Graham remarked at supper that he "expected to get a good lot of wood here for he didn't know of any trader having called at the island since the 'Spec' was lost."

"Wasn't it here somewhere here she was taken?" asked the mate.

"Yes," answered the skipper; "there is nothing certain known of how she was lost; none of her crew ever got back to tell the story. But the natives on this island had lots of her trade among them, and much of her gear and sails; the Victoria—a gunboat—found them when she came down this way looking for the missing missionary barque that was wrecked about that time."

I knew the Spec's skipper well, and he was a good sailor, too, but I always told him he was too careless when he was trading, and I think the natives took the boat first, and then attacked the sloop, or else boarded her in the night with canoes, and killed all hands; they told the man-o'-war they didn't, though; said the sloop drifted on a coral reef in a calm when there was a big sea on, and all got drowned. But they lied, of course they lied!"

"Well," replied Moran, "they won't board us in the night with canoes; if they do, there will be a confounded row, that's all. Keep a good lookout in your watch, Murray, and don't be afraid to rouse all hands if you see anything you don't like. We'll look out for our hides, for we've got too good a voyage aboard to get used up now."

"Light O!" sang out one of the watch on deck, at this moment, and the cabin was soon deserted.

The schooner was slowly head-reaching under short sail, and had got far enough past a point of land to open out the shore beyond, which had been hidden from view as we approached the island in the afternoon. A large fire was burning on or near the beach, but we were too far off to see who was near it or what they were doing. The mate suggested that it might be a signal for us, but Captain Graham thought such was not the case; had it been intended for us, it would have been kindled on the other side of the point, for which we were heading at sunset, the schooner's course being always changed after dark when we were near the islands, to guard against any possible attack from the shore.

"Well," said the skipper, "we shall find out to-morrow if it means anything; just keep your wits about you to-night. Let the schooner crawl off as she's going now till eight bells (midnight), and then war her. Call me at four o'clock and rouse everybody if you've the least cause, or think you have." And with these instructions he went below.—Concluded next week.

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