

A Narrative of the Shipwreck, Captivity and Sufferings of Horace Holden and Benj. H. Nute, Who Were Cast Away in the American Ship Mentor, on the Pelew Islands, in the Year 1832; and For Two Years Afterwards were Subjected to Unheard of Sufferings Among the Barbarous Inhabitants of Lord North's Island. Fourth Edition. Boston: Russell Shattuck, and Co., 1836.

CHAPTER IV.

An extraordinary and unexpected meeting with a person not a native.—Happy result of the meeting.—Acquisition of the Pelew language.—Dissensions between two portions of the natives.—Three of the ship's company separated and carried to a place remote from the rest.—Attempt to construct a boat, in order to leave the island.—The natives agree to release them all for a compensation.—Solemnities observed by the natives on the occasion.—Tools used in making the boat; transportation of timber, &c.—The plan abandoned, and a canoe substituted for the boat.—Another festival.

An interesting incident now occurred. Just at the time when the servant of the prophetess brought out the materials for our repast, we observed, at a little distance, a singular looking being approaching us. His appearance was that of a man of sixty. His hair was long and gray, unlike that of the natives. His legs, arms, and breast were tattooed. His step was quick and firm; his motions indicating that he felt himself a person of not a little importance. His teeth were entirely gone, and his mouth

was black with the use of "kabooá." Judge of our emotions on hearing this strange being address us in broken English! His first exclamation was—"My God, you are Englishmen!" He immediately said, "You are safe now;" but he gave us to understand, that it was next to a miracle that we had escaped being killed on the water.

This person was by birth an Englishman, and had been on the island about twenty-nine years. He told us that he had been a hatter by trade, and that his name was Charles Washington. He had been a private in the British naval service, on board the *Lion* man-of-war. Cruising in those seas, he had, while on duty, been guilty of some trifling offence; and, apprehending that he should be severely punished for it, had left the ship, and taken up his residence upon the island. He seemed to be contented with his situation, and had no desire to return to his native country. He had attained to great celebrity, and was the sixth chief among them. His authority seemed great, and he exercised it with exemplary discretion.

Observing the provisions before us, he told us that they were for our use, and desired us to partake of whatever we preferred. Seeing that we were likely to be somewhat annoyed by the crowd of young persons who had collected around us, he swung his battle-axe over their heads, and giving them to understand that we belonged to *him*, immediately caused them to disperse.

Arrangements were soon made for our accommodation. A part of one of the "pyes" was appropriated to our use, and we were furnished with mats, and other things for our comfort and convenience. Here we remained for about a month, and were regularly supplied by the natives with a sufficiency of provisions of various kinds, such as hogs, goats, fish, yams, cocoa-nuts, bread-fruit, preserved almonds, and occasionally with sweet potatoes.

A change seemed now to have come over us. We were, it is true, amongst a rude and barbarous people, cut off from all intercourse with the rest of the world, and deprived of many things which we had been

accustomed to regard as essential to our happiness'; but even then we found many reasons for being grateful to the Disposer of events. Our actual wants were supplied; and the natives soon evinced a disposition to consider us friends, and treat us as such. To the latest day of our lives we shall remember some of them with heartfelt respect and affection; and, most of all, regret our inability to requite them for the favors which they voluntarily bestowed upon us. Especially should we rejoice to revisit that lonely spot of earth, and carry with us, to those children of nature, the means of civilization, and the blessings of Christian faith and Christian morality. And should the government of enlightened America ever see proper to extend to them some proof of its regard, it would afford us unspeakable pleasure to have it in our power to communicate to them the exalted principles, which might incline this highly favored nation to the performance of so noble a deed.

Finding it important to be able to converse with the natives, we improved every oppor-

tunity to become acquainted with their language. Having but little to occupy our attention, it was not long before we had acquired a tolerable knowledge of it; and we found our situation much more pleasant as we became familiar with it. Our great object was, as the reader will naturally suppose, to contrive some way of escape. Our only means of accomplishing this was by friendly and amicable negotiation, and to make them understand our wishes, and convince them that it would be for their interest to aid us in returning to our native land, were essential to our success.

We had not long been with them before we became acquainted with the fact, that upon the opposite end of the island there was another tribe, and that the two divisions of the inhabitants were not on the most friendly terms with each other. Intelligence had in some way been communicated to those who lived remote from the spot where fortune had thrown us, that we were desirous of leaving the island; and, probably with a view of gaining some advan-

tage, they sent to us a message, informing us of their willingness to assist in constructing a boat sufficiently large to convey us across the water. The persons commissioned to make this proposal, and to persuade us to go to them, were two Englishmen, who, as we afterwards learned, had been on the island for several years, and were left there by English vessels. The particulars of their history we were unable to obtain.

An offer of that kind, coming as it did from their enemies, and being in itself calculated to offend the pride of those into whose hands we had fallen, greatly excited their feelings of animosity; and, in consequence of our having manifested some desire to satisfy our own minds on the subject, we were closely watched. On the whole, however, we had no reason to regret this state of things; for on finding that their neighbors were disposed to assist us, a spirit of emulation was aroused among them, and for a time we had some hopes that the excited energies of this tiny nation would lead to the performance of some exploit, which, in the end, might

place at ~~our~~ disposal the means of deliverance.

Our maintenance had by this time become so great a tax upon their resources, that it was found expedient to cause some of our number to be removed to a settlement about a mile distant. Mr. Nute, Mr. Rollins, and myself were accordingly selected, and under a strong escort taken to the place. This did not please us, as we preferred remaining with our companions; but either expostulation or resistance would have involved us in worse difficulties, and we submitted. In our new situation we were well supplied with provisions, and kindly treated. We were allowed to visit our friends at the other town, and spent our time as agreeably as could be expected under the circumstances.

Previously to this, some steps had been taken towards constructing a sort of boat or vessel to convey us home. Finding the natives disposed to part with us, for a stipulated consideration, and to render us any assistance in their power, we left no means un-

employed to induce them to exert themselves to the utmost ; and, to their credit be it said, it was more owing to their inability than to their want of inclination that we were not entirely successful. An account of their proceedings cannot fail of being interesting.

After much deliberation, and many consultations upon the momentous subject, it was agreed to commence operations. Their prophetess had been duly consulted, and the assistance of their divinity had been implored with great formality. Before they ventured upon the undertaking, it was deemed advisable to hold a festival. An event of so much importance could not be suffered to transpire without being duly solemnized. Tradition furnished no account of any thing equal to this attempt ! Accordingly large quantities of provisions were brought from various parts of the island, and an immense concourse of men, women, and children, attended the feast. On our part we had little confidence in the success of the plan ; but, be that as it might, we were far from being displeased with their efforts to carry it into

execution, and shared with them the festivities of the occasion, with not a little pleasure.

This part of the business having been duly attended to, the time had come for united and vigorous action; and accordingly the whole male population of that region repaired to the woods, to procure timber. In the mean time the females, animated by a spirit of emulation, betook themselves to the task of making mats, to serve as sails to our vessel, when it should be completed. In fine, the whole resources of the country, of every kind, were taxed to the last extremity, to accomplish the work.

Considering the means they had for carrying the plan into execution, it is surprising that they accomplished as much as they did. The best tools we had were a few old inch chisels, which served as substitutes for the broad-axe, in manufacturing trees into planks, and afterwards fitting them to their places. There were a few spikes on the island, but we had neither auger nor gimlet.

When news had been received that the

timber was ready in the woods, orders were given to have it brought together. Seldom had we witnessed a more novel scene than that presented by the natives when they brought from the forests the rudely prepared materials for the boat. They were seen coming in from all quarters with loads of timber on their shoulders, of every size and shape that could be conceived of, and causing the hills and vales to resound with their shouts.

In due time the work of putting together the materials commenced. We succeeded in laying a sort of keel, and at length contrived to erect a kind of frame, which, though it might not be regarded as a first-rate specimen of naval architecture, nevertheless looked somewhat like the beginning of a water-craft. But when we came to the more difficult part of the business, that of putting on the planks, we found that not only our skill, but that of the whole nation, was completely baffled. We were compelled to abandon the undertaking; and despaired of ever being able to succeed in building any thing of the kind.

During all this time the natives were sanguine in the belief that they should succeed, and repeatedly assured us that they could accomplish the work. Their sorrow and mortification, on being obliged to give it up, were great; for they seemed to realize, that now they must have fallen in our estimation, and thought that we should be anxious to avail ourselves of the assistance of their enemies, who, as they well knew, were extremely anxious to get us into their hands. The captain did not attempt to conceal his wish to go to the other part of the island. This greatly increased their dissatisfaction; and their murmurs became frequent and loud. After considerable expostulation, they proposed to make a *canoe* sufficiently large to convey us away; and, having some confidence in the practicability of the plan, we consented to wait and assist them in their endeavors to supply us with this substitute for the more respectable craft we had contemplated building. After duly consulting the old prophetess, the principal chiefs were assembled, and having agreed to take

for the purpose the largest bread-fruit tree on the island, the people were called upon to meet at the spot where it stood, and assist in cutting it down.

Matters of so great importance required deliberation in the operation of planning out the work,—but the accomplishment of an undertaking like that of felling so large a tree, with tools even less adapted to the business than the teeth of a beaver, was one that took several days. At length the herculean task was performed, and the tree fell! But judge of our feelings on finding that the trunk, which we had hoped to render so useful in conveying us to some place from which we could obtain a passage to our native land, had, in falling, become so split as to be good for nothing! It seemed to us that a cruel fate had ordained, that no labor of our hands should prosper. Another tree was selected, and with that we were more successful. We then commenced digging it out, and bringing it to a proper shape. The old chisels were now put in requisition; and, in twenty-eight days from the time we

began, we had succeeded in bringing that part of our labor to a close. Of the other tree we made two wide planks, which we fastened to the upper edges of the canoe, thereby adding very considerably to its capacity. Two months more were consumed in fitting up our canoe with sails, and getting it ready for sea.

Having proceeded thus far, it was deemed proper by the natives to have another festival; and, as our labors, in this instance, had been attended with better success, extraordinary preparations were made for a feast that should do honor to the occasion. An immense quantity of fish had been obtained; the females brought large quantities of bread-fruit, cocoa-nuts, and yams; and the toil of months was forgotten in the universal joy which then prevailed.