

The Bounty Trilogy:

**MUTINY ON THE BOUNTY,
MEN AGAINST THE SEA,
PITCAIRN'S ISLAND**

The three historical novels, solidly based on fact, that make up the *Bounty* Trilogy have been called the greatest sea story of all time. Each is a complete and separate novel and this one—**PITCAIRN'S ISLAND**—concludes the trilogy.

The mutineers sailed the *Bounty* back to Tahiti after setting Captain Bligh and his loyal crewmen adrift. Tahiti was a paradise, but they all knew that some day the British Navy would come looking for them and that, if caught, they would be executed.

So late in December, 1789, the *Bounty* set sail to the east. Aboard were nine of the original mutineers along with twelve Tahitian women and six Tahitian men. They were searching for an uncharted island where they could never be found. This is the story of their discovery of Pitcairn's Island, a paradise that became a living hell of terror and bloodshed and death.

The motion picture *Mutiny on the Bounty* is an Aaron Rosenberg Production. Screenplay by Charles Lederer. Directed by Lewis Milestone.



PUBLISHED BY
POCKET BOOKS, INC.

PRINTED
IN
U.S.A.

PITCAIRN'S ISLAND • Nordhoff
and Hall

THE COMPLETE BOOK

pb

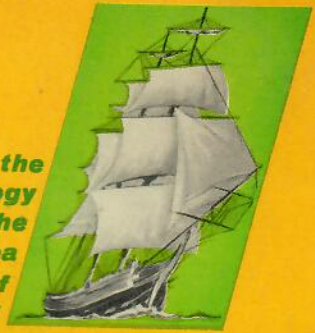
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Part of the
Bounty Trilogy
"One of the
greatest sea
stories of
all time"



PITCAIRN'S ISLAND

**CHARLES NORDHOFF and
JAMES NORMAN HALL**

From **MUTINY ON THE
BOUNTY** Metro-Goldwyn-
Mayer has made one of the
most lavish motion pictures
of all time—**MUTINY ON
THE BOUNTY**. Filmed in the
South Seas in Technicolor®
and Ultra-Panavision 70®,
it stars **MARLON BRANDO,**
TREVOR HOWARD and
RICHARD HARRIS



CHAPTER XI

ONE afternoon Christian was trudging up the path that led to the Goat-House Ridge. Toiling to the summit, he left the path and turned north along the ridge, to make his way around to the seaward slope of the peak. His path was the merest cranny in the rock, scarcely affording foothold, but he trod the ledge with scarcely a downward glance. Deeply rooted in the rock ahead of him, two ironwood trees spread gnarled limbs that had withstood the gales of more than a century; a goat would have been baffled to reach them by any way other than Christian's dizzy track.

Reaching the trees, he lowered himself between the roots to a broad ledge below and entered a cave. It was a snug little place, well screened by drooping casuarina boughs—ten or twelve feet in depth, and lofty enough for a tall man to stand upright. Half a dozen muskets, well cleaned and oiled, stood against the further wall; there was a keg of powder, a supply of bullets, and two large calabashes holding several gallons of water.

The cave was a small fortress, where a single resolute man might have held an army at bay so long as he had powder and lead. It was here that Christian spent an hour when he wished to be alone, lost in sombre reflections as he gazed out over the vast panorama of lonely sea and listened to the booming of the surf many hundreds of feet below. For the situation of the mutineers and the native men and women with them he felt a deep and tragic sense of responsibility, and since the passing of the frigate he had realized that sooner or later their refuge was certain to be discovered. He had resolved not to be taken alive when that day came.

Christian now took up his muskets, one after the other, and concealed them with his powder and ball among the roots of

the further ironwood tree. When nothing but the calabashes of water remained in the cave, he made his way back to the ridge and took the path to the settlement, walking rapidly. He found Maimiti with her baby, Charles, seated on a mat in the shade of a wild hibiscus tree. Nanai, the wife of Tetahiti, was beside her. Thursday October Christian, a sturdy boy of two, had trotted down the path to Young's house, where he spent much of his time with Balhadi and Taurua, childless women who loved the small boy dearly.

"Come with me," said Christian to his wife. "There is something I wish to show you. You'll look after the baby, eh, Nanai?"

"Shall we be gone long?" Maimiti asked.

"Till sunset, perhaps."

She followed her husband up the trail to the ridge and along the breakneck path to the ironwood trees. When he lowered himself to the ledge before the cave and held up his arms for her, she gave an exclamation of surprise.

"*Ah!* No one knows of this place!"

"Nor shall they, save you. I want no visitors here!"

He seated himself on the ledge, with his back to the wall of rock, while Maimiti examined the cave with interest. Presently she sat down beside him and they were silent for a time, under a spell of beauty and loneliness. Sea birds hovered and circled along the face of the cliff below, the upper surfaces of their wings glinting in the sun and their cries faintly heard above the breakers. The wind droned shrilly through the foliage of the ironwood trees, thin, harsh, and prickly. At length Christian spoke.

"Maimiti, I have brought you here that you may know where to find me in case of need. I love this place. Sometimes, in its peace and solitude, I seem to be close to those I love in England."

"Where is England?" she asked.

He pointed in a northeasterly direction, out over the sea. "There! Across two great oceans and a vast island peopled by

savage men. Such an island as your people never dreamed of, so wide that if you were to walk from morning till night each day it would take three moons to cross!"

"*Mea atea roal*" she said wonderingly. "And Tahiti—where is my island?"

"Yonder," replied Christian, pointing to the northwest. "Are you no longer homesick? Are you happy here?"

"Where you are, my home is, and I'm happy. This is a good land."

"Aye, that it is." He glanced down at her affectionately. "The cool weather is wholesome. Your cheeks grow pink, like an English girl's."

"Never have I seen boys stronger and better grown than ours."

"All the children are the same. And since we came here not a man or a woman has been ill. Were not some of the fish poisonous, our island would be like your *Rohutu Noanoa*, a paradise."

"Do you believe that Hu and Tararu died of eating a fish?"

He turned his head quickly. "What do you mean?" he asked. "Surely they died of poisoning; they were known to have eaten a large fish declared to be poisonous in Tahiti."

"The *faaroa* is harmless here; I have eaten many of them."

"What do you mean?" he repeated, in a puzzled voice.

She hesitated, and then said: "It was whispered to us by one who should know. The others suspect nothing. What if Tararu hated Williams more bitterly than we supposed? What if he sharpened an axe expressly to kill him by night, and found Hutia waiting with a loaded musket, outside the door? I think she made it her business to poison Tararu's dinner, and that Hu partook of the food by chance!"

Christian knew that suspicion was foreign to Maimiti's nature, and the seriousness of her words made him look up in astonishment. "But have your people poisons so subtle and deadly?" he asked.

"Aye, many of them, though they are not known to all.

Hutia's father was a sorcerer in Papara, an evil man, often employed by the chiefs to do their enemies to death. The commoners believe that such work is accomplished by incantations; we know that poison is administered before the incantations begin."

Christian remained silent, and she went on, after a pause: "The others suspect nothing, as I said."

He sighed and raised his head as if dismissing unpleasant thoughts from his mind. "It is ended," he said, rising to his feet. "Let us speak no more of this."

Three years had passed since the arrival of the *Bounty* at Pitcairn, and the little settlement presented the appearance of an ordered and permanent community. The dwellings had lost their look of newness and now harmonized with the landscape as if they had sprung from the soil. Each house was surrounded by a neat fence enclosing a small garden of ferns and shrubbery, and provided with an outdoor kitchen, a pigsty at a little distance, and an enclosure for fattening fowls. As in Tahiti, it was the duty of the women to keep the little gardens free of weeds, and to sweep the paths each day.

Winding picturesquely among the trees, well-worn trails led to the Goat-House, to the western slope where Williams lived, to the Auté Valley where the principal gardens of the cloth-plant had been laid out, to the yam and sweet-potato patches and plantain walks, to the rock cisterns Christian had insisted on building in case of drought, to the Rope, and to the saw pit, still used occasionally when someone was in need of plank.

The smithy, under the banyan tree by the house of Mills, looked as if it had been in use for many years. The vise and anvil bore the marks of long service; the bellows had been mended with goatskin, to which patches of hair still clung; there was a great pile of coconut shells close to the forge, and another of charcoal made from the wood of the *mapé*. The

ground underfoot was black with cinders for many yards about.

The life of the mutineers had become easy, too easy for the good of some. Quintal, Martin, and Mills had taken to loafing about their houses, forcing most of their work on Te Moa and Nihau. Happy with the girl who had given him so much trouble in the past, Williams saw little of his friends. Smith and Young worked daily, clearing, planting, or fishing for the mere pleasure of the task.

For more than a year McCoy had kept the secret of the still. Only a Scot could have done it, one gifted with all the caution and canny reserve of his race. Little by little he had exhausted the principal supplies of ti, and for many months now he had been able to obtain no more than enough to operate his still twice or, rarely, three times each week. A small stock of bottles, accumulated one by one, were hidden where he concealed the still when not in use; by stinting himself resolutely, he managed to keep a few quarts of his liquor set aside to age. In this manner, which had required for some time a truly heroic abstinence, McCoy was enabled to enjoy daily a seaman's ration of half a pint of grog.

His temperament was an unusual one, even among alcoholics. When deprived of spirits, he became gloomy, morose, and irritable, but a glass or two of rum was sufficient to make him the most genial of men. Mary had been astonished and delighted at the change in him. He conversed with her for an hour or more each evening, laughing and joking in the manner the Polynesians love. He romped with two-year-old Sarah and took delight in holding on his knees the baby, Dan. With his grog ration assured, there was no better father and husband on the island than McCoy.

He longed to make a plantation of ti, but decided after much thought that the risk was too great. Explanations would be lame at best, and the sharper-witted among his comrades would be certain to suspect the truth. Meanwhile, he realized with a pang that the island produced only a limited

supply of the roots, bound to be exhausted in time. Even now, fourteen months of distilling had so diminished the ti that McCoy's cautious search for the roots, scattered here and there in the bush, occupied most of his waking hours. He took the work with intense seriousness, and though by nature a kindly man, not inconsiderate of others, he now joined heartily with Quintal in forcing Te Moa to perform their daily tasks in the plantations and about the house. If the native was remiss in weeding a yam patch or chopping firewood, McCoy joined his curses to Quintal's blows. The unfortunate Te Moa was rapidly sinking to the condition of a slave.

After Hu's death, Martin had similarly enslaved Nihau, and Mills, seeing that his neighbors were comfortable in the possession of a servant who did nearly all their work, soon fell into the same frame of mind. The natives resented their new status deeply, but so far had not broken out in open revolt.

On a morning in late summer, McCoy set out on one of his cautious prowls through the bush. He took care to avoid the clearings where others might be at work, and carried only a bush knife and a bag of netting for the roots. Making for a tract of virgin bush at the western extremity of the Main Valley, where he had formerly spied several plants which should be mature by now, he was surprised and displeased, toward eight o'clock, to hear the strokes of a woodsman's axe not far ahead. He concealed his bag, which contained three or four smallish roots, and moved forward quietly, knife in hand and a frown on his face.

Tetahiti was a skilled axeman who loved the work. He was felling a tall candlenut tree, and each resounding stroke bit deep into the soft wood. Warned by a slight premonitory crackle of rending fibres and the swaying of branches overhead, he stepped back a pace or two. A louder crackling followed; slowly and majestically at first, and then with a rushing progress through the air, the tree which had weathered

the gales of many years succumbed to the axe. McCoy had just time to spring aside nimbly as it crashed to earth.

"Who is that?" called Tetahiti, in dismay.

"It is I, McCoy."

"Had I known you were there . . ."

McCoy interrupted him. "*Eita e peapea!* It was my fault for approaching unannounced." He was irritated, but not on account of the tree. "What are you doing here?" he asked.

The native smiled. "You have heard the men of Tahiti call me 'Tupuai taro-eater.' We love it as the others love their breadfruit. I never have enough, so I am clearing this place, where the soil is rich and moist."

"Aye," said McCoy sourly, as he caught sight of several splendid ti plants hitherto concealed by the bush, "the soil is good."

Tetahiti pointed to where he had thrown together several roots larger than any McCoy had seen. "Where the ti flourishes as here, taro will do well." Seeing the other stoop to examine the roots with some show of interest, he went on: "These are the best kinds; the *ti-vai-raau*, largest of all, and the *mateni*, sweetest and easiest to crush."

"Are you fond of it?"

"No, its sweetness sickens me. But I thought I would fetch in a root for Christian's children."

"Then give me the rest."

The native assented willingly, and before long McCoy was trudging over the ridge and down toward his still, bent under a burden far heavier than usual. His thoughts were gloomy and perplexed as he prepared a ground oven to bake the roots.

It was late afternoon when he returned to the house. He found Quintal alone, sitting on the doorstep with his chin in his hands. His expression was morose, and he seemed to be thinking, always a slow and painful process with him.

"What's wrong, Matt?" asked McCoy.

"The Indians, damn their blood!"

"What ha' they done?"

"It's Minarii. . . . I'd a mind to put Te Moa to work on my valley—ye know the place, a likely spot for the cloth-plant. I took a stroll up that way and found Minarii clearing the bush. 'Chop down as many trees as ye like,' said I, 'but mind ye, this valley is mine!' He looked at me cheeky as a sergeant of marines. 'Yours?' he says. 'Yours? The land belongs to all!'"

"Did ye put him in his place?"

Quintal shook his head. "There'd been bloodshed if I had."

"Aye, he's a dour loon."

"We was close enough to a fight! It was the thought of Christian stopped me; I want him on my side when the trouble comes."

McCoy nodded slowly. "Ye did right; it's a fashious business, but we'll-ha' peace gin we divide the land."

"How'll we go about it?"

"We've the right to a show of hands. I'll see Jack Williams, and Isaac, and Mills; we'll be five against the other four. Then we'll go to Christian."

Quintal brought his huge hand down resoundingly on his knee. "Ye've a level head! Aye, let every Englishman have his farm, and be damned to the rest!"

"Ilka cock fight his ain battle, eh?" said McCoy, with a complacent grin.

Late the next evening Tetahiti was trudging up the path from the cove. He had been fishing offshore since noon, and carried easily, hanging from the stout pole on his shoulder, nearly two hundredweight of albacore. At the summit of the bluff he set down his burden with a grunt and seated himself on a boulder to rest for a moment. He glanced up at the sound of a step on the path, and saw that Te Moa was approaching at a rapid walk.

"I was hastening down to help you," said the man apologetically.

"Let us stop here while I rest," Tetahiti replied; "then you can carry my fish to the house. There is enough for all."

"I must speak!" said Te Moa after a short silence. "I can endure no more!"

"Are the white men mistreating you again?"

"They take me for a dog! Quintal sits in his house all day, like a great chief. McCoy is always away in the hills; I think he has secret meetings with some of the women. In the beginning I did not dislike these men; I shared their food as they shared in the work, and McCoy smiled when he spoke, but they are changed, and little by little I have become a slave. Have you noticed Quintal's eyes? I fear him—I believe he is going mad."

"Aye, I have seen him on his doorstep, talking to himself."

"What can I do? If I displease him, he beats me, both he and McCoy."

Tetahiti flushed. "They are dogs, beneath a chief's contempt! Let them work for themselves. Cease going to their house."

"I fear Quintal. He will come and fetch me."

"Let him try!" Tetahiti's deep voice was threatening. "I will deal with him. We have been patient, hoping to avoid bad blood. Once he affronts you in public, Christian will put an end to all this."

He rose and helped the other to shoulder the heavy load of fish.

Half an hour later, stopping at Quintal's house to give Sarah a cut of albacore, Te Moa found the women alone. "They are gone to Christian's," Mary explained, "on some business that concerns them all. Best wait till morning to distribute your fish."

The sun had set, and in the twilight, already beginning to lengthen with the approach of spring, the mutineers were seated on the plot of grass before Christian's house. He and Young sat on a bench facing the men. Williams was the last to arrive. The hum of talk ceased as McCoy rose to his feet.

"Mr. Christian," he said, "there's a question come up that's nae to be dismissed lightly. Ye've bairns, sir, as have I,

and John Mills, and Matt Quintal here. We've them to think on, and the days to come. A man works best on his ain land. The time's come, I reckon, to divide up the island, giving each his share."

Christian nodded. "Quite right, McCoy!" he said heartily. "Mr. Young and I were speaking of the same thing only last week. As you say, a man works with more pleasure when the land is his, and the division will leave no grounds for dispute after we are dead. The island can be divided so that each will have a fair share; I have already given the matter some thought. A show of hands is scarcely necessary. Are there any who disagree?"

"Not I, sir!" said Alexander Smith, and there was a chorus: "Nor I! Nor I!"

"Then it only remains to survey the place and see that all are dealt with fairly. Mr. Young and I will undertake the task, and propose boundaries for the approval of all hands. Let us meet again one evening, say a fortnight from now."

"Ye've an easy task, sir," remarked McCoy; "John Mills and I was talking of it an hour back. The island'll divide itself natural into nine shares."

"Nine!" exclaimed Christian. "Thirteen, you mean."

"Surely ye're nae counting the Indians, sir?"

"Would you leave them out?"

"There's nae call to share with 'em."

Christian controlled his temper with an effort. "Is this your idea of justice, McCoy?" he asked quietly. Alexander Smith spoke up.

"Think of Minarii, Will! Think of Tetahiti! How would they feel if we did as ye propose? There's land and to spare for five times our numbers! We'd be fools to stir up bad blood."

"We've oursel's to think on, Alex," replied McCoy stubbornly. "Oursel's and our bairns. The Indians can work our lands and share what they grow."

"That's my notion!" put in Martin approvingly.

"I'm with 'ee, lad!" remarked Quintal, and Mills exclaimed: "Aye! Well spoke!"

"Listen!" ordered Christian quietly. "Think of the consequences of such a step. All of you know something of the Indian tongue. They have a word, *oere*, which is their greatest term of contempt. It means a landless man. Two of our four Indian men were chiefs and great landowners on their own islands. Would you reduce them to the condition of *oere* here? Attempt to make them slaves, or dependents on our bounty? We have land and to spare, as Smith says. To leave the Indians out of the division would be madness! Their sense of justice is as keen as our own. Do you wish to make enemies of them, who will brood over their grievances and hate us more bitterly each day? Make no mistake! I would feel the same were I treated as you propose to treat these men who have been our friends!"

McCoy shook his head. "I can nae see it that way, sir. We've oursel's to think on, and we've the right to call for a show of hands—ye promised that!"

"Mr. Christian is right," said Young. "Such a course would be madness. Bloodshed would come of it—I'm sure of that!"

Brown ventured to remark, "Well spoken, Mr. Young," but he shrank before the black look Martin turned on him.

"We want a show of hands, sir," growled Mills, "and we want it now!"

"You're in the right," Christian said sternly. "See that you don't misuse it! McCoy's proposal is folly of the most dangerous kind! So be it. . . . Shall we divide the island into nine shares, leaving the Indians out?"

McCoy raised his hand, as did Quintal, Mills, Williams, and Martin. They were five against the other four.

"One thing I must insist on," said Christian, after a moment's pause. "The decision is so serious, so charged with fatal consequences, that you must give it further thought. We shall meet again, the first of October. I trust that one or more of you will change his ideas on reflection, for the step you pro-

pose would be the ruin of our settlement. Yes, the ruin! Think it over carefully, and before you go each man is to give me his promise to say nothing of this to the Indians."

Young and Christian remained seated on the bench after the others were gone. Neither man spoke for some time. The evening was warm and bright with stars.

"They hold the Indians in increasing contempt," said Young, "and would make slaves of them, were it not for you."

Christian smiled grimly. "Make a slave of Minarii? Or of Tetahiti? For their own sakes I hope they attempt nothing so mad!"

"They are no better and no worse than the run of English seamen, but a life like ours seems to bring out all that is bad in them. They are better under the stern discipline of the sea."

"They'll get a taste of it if they persist in this folly! McCoy is at the bottom of this! Unless he has changed his mind when we meet to settle the matter in October I shall be forced to take stern measures, for his own good!"

"Aye, we are facing a crisis. I fear it was a mistake to give them the vote. You'll have to play the captain once more, to save them from their own folly!"

Young rose to take his leave. When he was gone, Christian entered the house and climbed the ladder to the upper room. The sliding windows were open and the starlight illuminated the apartment dimly. He crossed the room on tiptoe to the bed-place where Maimiti and her two boys slept under blankets of tapa. Maimiti lay with her beautiful hair rippling loose over the pillow; the younger boy slept as babies sleep, with small fat arms thrown back on either side of his head.

Presently Christian descended the ladder and lit a taper of candlenuts in the lower room. The *Bounty's* silver-clasped Bible lay on the table; he took up the book and began to read while the candlenuts sputtered and cracked. He read at random, here and there, as he turned the pages, for he could not sleep and dreaded to be alone with his thoughts. The Bible,

which had brought comfort to so many men, brought none to Christian that night.

"And the Lord passed by before him," he read, "and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."

The man sighed as he turned the pages, and presently he read: "I will punish you seven times more for your sins. . . . I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you. . . . And upon them that are left alive of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth."

Christian closed the book slowly and set it down on the table at his side. He covered his face with his hands, and sat bowed, elbows on his knees. The last of the candlenuts burned down to a red glow and winked out, leaving the room in darkness, save for the faint starlight that found its way through the window.

Though the bearing of the five trouble-makers grew more arrogant with the assurance that the land would soon be theirs and the Maoris their bondsmen, three weeks passed without an open break. Minarii and Moetua were building a house in the small valley Quintal considered his own; the native had disregarded with contempt Quintal's warning that he was a trespasser and only McCoy's dissuasion had prevented a serious quarrel between the two. "Bide yer time, mon," the Scot admonished him more than once. "Ye've only to do that and we'll put him off all lawfu' and shipshape." Quintal watched the building with an increasing dull anger. "Bide the devil!" he would growl in reply. "Wait till his house is finished. . . . I'll show him who owns the land!" McCoy would

shrug his shoulders impatiently. "It's nae beef nor brose o' mine, but ye told Christian ye'd bide!"

Minarii's house was small, since only he and his wife were to live there, but it was handsomely and strongly built, with a thatch of bright yellow pandanus leaves and a floor of flat stones chinked with sand. It stood in the new clearing, on a slope of Quintal's valley.

Tetahiti had helped the builders with the ornamental lashings of the ridgepole, and on the morning when the house was finished, toward the end of the month, he strolled up to admire the completed work. Minarii was sprinkling sand from the watercourse into the chinks of his stone *paepae*, and straightened his back as he perceived the other approach.

"Come in!" he called.

"It is finished, eh?" remarked Tetahiti, glancing critically about the single lofty room. "You two have worked well. A pretty house! You of Tahiti are more skillful carpenters than the men of my island."

"It is but a bush hut. Nevertheless we shall soon come here to live. It is in my mind to make a large enclosure for the breeding of swine."

Tetahiti nodded. "Aye. Pigs thrive on this island."

"Let us go inland together. I was about to set out when you came. Yesterday, in the Auté Valley, I marked down a sow with eight young pigs of an age to catch."

The other shook his head. "I am going back to the house to sleep. It was dawn when I came in from the night fishing."

The sun was overhead when Tetahiti awoke from his siesta. He lay on a mat in the shade of a *purau* tree near his house, and for a moment, while he collected his thoughts confused by dreams, he stared up wild-eyed at the broad, pale green leaves which made a canopy overhead. Hearing his wife's footsteps, he sat up, yawning.

Nanai was approaching with a basket of food. She smiled at her husband as she set down his dinner beside him on the mat.

"Have you slept well?" she asked. "Nihau prepared your meal. There's a joint of cold pig, and baked plantains, and fish of your own catching with coconut sauce."

She retired to a little distance while he ate, and fetched him a calabash of water to rinse his hands when the meal was done.

"Tetahiti," she said earnestly, "there is something I must tell you while we are alone. You must know, though I cannot believe it true." He nodded to her to go on, and she continued: "Susannah told me, swearing me to secrecy. Martin told her, she said. When I tell you, you will understand why I break my word."

"*Faaité mait!*" ordered Tetahiti, a little impatiently.

"Susannah says that the whites have had a meeting, unknown to us, and have decided to portion out the land, setting stones on the boundaries of each man's share."

"You cannot believe it?" he interrupted. "Why not? It is our ancient custom and would avoid dissension here."

"Aye, but let me finish. She says that the Maori men are to be left out of the division, that you will be *oere* from now on, slaves to work the lands of the whites."

Tetahiti laughed scornfully. "A woman's tale!" he exclaimed. "You know little of Christian if you suppose he would allow such a thing!"

"I told you I did not believe it!" said Nanai.

She left him, a little piqued in spite of herself at his reception of the news. The man lay down once more, hands behind his head. Though incredulous of Susannah's tale, he could not dismiss the thought of it, and little by little, as he reflected on certain things that had seemed without significance hitherto, and on the increasingly overbearing attitude of the whites, the seed of suspicion took root in his mind. He rose slowly and took the path to Martin's house.

He found the woman he sought alone. Mills was at work in the bush, and Martin lay snoring in the shade of the banyan tree. Though dark and by no means pretty, Susannah had

once been a pleasant, light-hearted girl. Three years of Martin had broken her spirit. She went about her household duties mechanically, and rarely smiled. She gave a start at the sound of Tetahiti's voice. He beckoned her to the doorway, and asked in a low voice:—

"The tale you told Nanai . . . is it true?"

"She told you?" asked Susannah nervously.

"Aye. It was no more than her duty. Did you invent this woman's story?"

"I told her only what Martin told me."

He glanced at her keenly, perceived that she was speaking the truth. "Why should he invent such lies?"

"Lies?" said Susannah, shrugging her shoulders. "Who knows? Perhaps it is the truth!"

Martin awakened suddenly, perceived Tetahiti at the door, and sprang to his feet. He came limping across to the house. "What d'ye want here?" he asked, unpleasantly.

Tetahiti turned slowly and looked at the black-browed seaman with stern disdain. "To learn the truth. I think your words to this woman were lies!"

"*Aué! Aué!*" moaned Susannah, wringing her hands.

"What words?" asked Martin, unable to return the other's glance.

"That you white men have portioned out the land among you, unknown to us, and that we are to be left landless! Did you tell her that?"

Martin stood with downcast eyes. "No," he muttered after a moment's pause; "she must have invented the tale."

The native took one stride, seized him by the neck, and shook him angrily. "You lie! Now speak the truth lest I choke it out of you!" He released Martin, who stood half crouched, his knees trembling visibly. "Have you agreed to portion out the land?"

Reluctantly the seaman met the angry native's eyes. "Aye," he replied, sullenly.

"And we are to be left out of the division?"

Martin nodded once more, and Tetahiti went on still more fiercely: "Did Christian consent to this?"

"Aye."

Without further speech Tetahiti turned on his heel and strode off rapidly in the direction of Christian's house. Pale and badly shaken, Martin stood watching him till he was out of earshot, before he entered the house, seized Susannah by the hair, and began to cuff her brutally.

Christian had taken a brief nap after his dinner, and when he awakened, Maimiti was standing in the doorway, a basket of tapa mallets in her hand. Balhadi stood outside. Seeing that he had opened his eyes, Maimiti said: "We are going to Brown's Well to beat the cloth."

He sat up with a sharp twinge, for he had had a headache since dawn and felt irritable and out of sorts. "Let Balhadi go. Don't work to-day. Who knows at what moment the pains may begin!"

"Our child will not be born before night."

"Then work at something here if you must work. It is madness to go inland at a time like this."

Usually the most affectionate and docile of wives, Maimiti was now in one of the perverse humours which accompany her condition. She shook her head stubbornly. "I desire to go, and I am going. Men do not understand these things!"

He said no more as the two women turned away and walked down the path. He was thinking, in a mood of dejected irritation, of the gulf which divided Polynesians and whites. No man respected the good qualities of the natives more, but they seemed willful as children, believing that the wish justified the act, and living so much in the present that they were incapable of worry, of plans for the future, or of ordered thought. He rose and stood in the doorway, with a hand on his aching head.

The short, burly figure of Alexander Smith appeared beneath the trees. He was coming down the path from the Goat-

House, and perceiving Christian at the door, he approached, holding up a rusty axe.

"I found it, sir!" he announced.

"Good! Where?"

"On the ridge. Where Tetahiti was felling that *tapou* tree."

Christian sighed as he took the axe and felt its edge absently. "It's the best I have left. The Indians! When they finish a bit of work, no matter where, they drop their tools and forget where they've left 'em. . . . They're all alike!"

Smith grinned. "Ye're right, sir! D'ye think I can learn my old woman to put things back where they belong? Not if we was to live in the same house for a hundred years!"

"Aye, there are times when they would try a saint."

Presently Smith took leave of Christian, who went into the house once more and lay down on his settee. The violent throbbing of his headache moderated as he closed his eyes; he was drifting into a troubled sleep when the sound of rapid steps aroused him.

Never in his life had Tetahiti entered any man's house—chief's or commoner's—without the customary hail and pause for the invitation from within; to do so was a most flagrant breach of the first law of Polynesian courtesy. But now he entered Christian's garden, strode up the path without a halt, and in through the open door.

Christian opened his eyes. Before he could speak the man was standing over him with a scowl on his face, blurting out in a voice vibrant with anger: "Is it true? True that you whites have held a secret meeting? That you have dared to divide the land among you, leaving us as *oere*, as slaves?"

Taken completely by surprise, Christian said: "Who told you this?"

"No matter!" replied Tetahiti furiously. "Is it true?"

"Yes . . . no . . . let me explain to you . . ."

"I knew it!" the other cut him short.

Christian controlled his temper with an effort. "Sit down, Tetahiti. I will explain."

"Explain! There is nothing to explain. It is shame I feel that I should have regarded you as my friend! A chief? You are no better than Quintal! Aye, no better than Martin, that base-born hog!"

The white man sprang up and faced the other so sternly that he recoiled a pace. Then, composing himself with a violent effort, he went on: "Sit down! You must know . . ."

The native interrupted him fiercely: "Enough!" He spun on his heel and flung himself out through the door. "Wait!" called Christian in a voice anxious and peremptory. There was no reply.

Tetahiti strode down the path to Bounty Bay, glancing neither right nor left, nor returning the salutations of his countrywomen in the houses of the mutineers. He found his wife awaiting him at the door. She had been watching his approach with anxious eyes.

"Where is Minarii?" he asked gruffly.

"Is it true?"

"Where is Minarii?"

"He has not been here; I think he is at his new house in the bush. Is it true?"

He made no reply; Nanai took his arm and gazed up anxiously at his face. He shook her off without a word and turned away as abruptly as he had come.

It was mid-afternoon; a still, warm day in early spring. The trees shadowing the lower parts of Quintal's valley were beautiful with the pale green of new foliage; a clear, slender brooklet, revived by recent rains, trickled down the watercourse. While still at some distance from the house of Minarii, Tetahiti became aware of a faint scent of burning wood; glancing up, he perceived that a column of smoke rose above the tree-tops ahead. As he reached the edge of the clearing, he gave a deep exclamation of astonishment.

Only a pile of smouldering embers marked the spot where the newly completed house had stood. Close by, with arms folded, and head bent as if deep in brooding thought he per-

ceived the gigantic figure of the chief. Minarii turned his head as the other approached.

"What is this?"

"I did not see it done. It is Quintal's work!"

They were silent for a time, both staring at the embers with sombre eyes. At last Tetahiti said: "Let us sit down, Minarii. There is something you must know."

CHAPTER XII

THE house of Quintal and McCoy had long been in darkness. Their sleeping rooms were on the upper floor, divided by a partition of matting. The ground floor was used as a common room and was furnished with two tables, some roughly made chairs and benches, and a cupboard used for food and to contain various household utensils. Some time after midnight, Minarii stole silently out of this dwelling and proceeded in the direction of Christian's house. A light was burning there, for Maimiti was in labour with her third child, and a number of the women were gathered to assist Balhadi, who was the most skillful midwife among them. Minarii advanced with the greatest caution and halted at the edge of the clearing, where he crouched for some time, listening and watching. It was a clear, starlit night, and he could make out the forms of Christian and Young walking back and forth across the grassplot on the north side of the house, and those of various women seated on the bench by the open doorway.

Withdrawing as noiselessly as he had come, he crossed the belt of forest land, skirting some of the nearer gardens of the settlement until he came to a footpath leading over the western ridge. Crossing the ridge and descending the slope for some distance, he struck into another path which entered the ravine which the white men called Temple Valley by reason

of its having been set aside by Christian for the use of the native men in the practices of their religion. This valley, narrow and rocky, was, in fact, little more than a gorge, and near the head wall, in a cleft not a dozen paces across, the natives had erected the stone platform that served as their *marae*. The path leading to it was steep, winding over the roots of great trees and among rocks that had fallen from the heights above; but Minarii was familiar with every foot of the way, and, dark as it was, he proceeded without hesitation. Mounting steadily, he came at length to a huge boulder that all but blocked further passageway. Here he halted.

"Tetahiti?" he called, in a low voice.

"*É, teié*," came the reply, almost at his side.

The darkness was intense; scarcely a gleam of starlight penetrated the foliage of the great trees overarching the ravine. Minarii seated himself with his back to the rock. "The others have come?" he asked.

"We are here," a voice replied.

"Listen well," said Minarii. "In the house of Quintal and McCoy there were, as you know, two muskets. I have taken these, and the powder and ball kept by them. You have done what was agreed, Tetahiti?"

"I have the muskets from Young's house, and Nihau has those of Mills and Martin. We have powder and ball for twenty charges."

"Will not the weapons be missed?" Nihau asked.

"That is a chance that must be taken," said Minarii.

"I have my ironwood club," said Nihau. "I care not whether I carry a musket."

"You speak foolishly," Minarii replied. "We have not to do with men of our own race, here. Our purpose is to kill them, and quickly. I have my club, but I shall carry a musket as well, and you shall do the same."

"It must now be decided whether any are to be spared," said Tetahiti. "I am thinking of Christian."

"Wait," said Minarii. "Let us first consider the others. Five

I can kill with joy in my heart—Quintal, Williams, Martin, Mills, and McCoy."

"We waste words in speaking of these," Tetahiti replied.

"I long to see them dead," Nihau added, fiercely, "and their bodies trampled in the mud!"

"Good. Four remain. We must be of one mind about them. Tetahiti, speak now of Christian."

"You ask a hard thing, Minarii. He is a brave and good man, and our friend."

"Our friend?" There was scorn in Minarii's voice. "Does a friend insult his friends? He is a chief in his own land. He knows you and me to be chiefs in ours. And he has agreed to divide the land among his own men, leaving us with nothing, as though we were slaves! Had he spit in our faces, the shame could not have been greater."

"Your anger is just," Tetahiti replied, "but what he has done was not meant to shame us, this I know."

"And how do you know?"

"This is what he once told me: his men must have a voice here, equal with his own. Those who are strongest in numbers have their will, even against the desire of their chief."

"That is a lie!" Minarii replied. "One of two things must be true: either he is no chief, as we have believed, or he wishes to shame us. The first cannot be so. Would he be ruled, then, by pigs of men such as Quintal and Mills and Martin? Would he bow to them in a thing so important as the division of our lands if he did not wish us ill?"

"I have nothing to reply," said Tetahiti. "My mind is as dark as your own; yet I cannot believe that Christian wishes to shame us."

"Why, then, should he do so?" Minarii asked. "A chief does what he wills. Christian and Young shall both be killed," he continued, quietly. "Let their deaths be at my hands. Even though it were as you have said, do you not see that they must die? The blood of their countrymen would cry out for

ours. Christian and Young are men. They would take their just revenge upon us."

Tetahiti was long in replying. "It is true," he said at length. "There is no other way. But understand this, Minarii: he who kills Christian shall call me friend no longer."

"Let that be as it will," Minarii replied, grimly. "The island is large enough. You can go with your women to one side. I will go with mine to the other."

"Minarii," said Tetahiti, "Brown is your friend. Is he to be spared?"

"He is like my brother, a younger brother. He has nothing but good in his heart. He will see us coming and suspect nothing. Who could strike him down?"

"It can be done," said Te Moa. "Let him be among the last when our blood is hot and the lust for killing upon us all. I could do it then."

"If Christian is not to be spared, Brown shall die," said Tetahiti.

"I see that it must be so," Minarii replied; "but you shall not touch him, Te Moa! Tetahiti shall kill my friend, since I am to kill his. But see that you do it swiftly, you man from Tupuai!"

"My hand shall be as steady as your own. His death shall be as swift as you make that of Christian."

"It remains to be seen whether this land will seem as large as I thought, with the white men dead," said Minarii. "It may be too small to hold us two."

When Tetahiti replied, the anger was gone from his voice. "Enough, Minarii. Let there be no hot words between us. I see that my friend must die. Can you be blind to the need of death for your own? His life, alone, among the slayers of his countrymen would seem to him worse than death. Do you not see this?"

"I see it," Minarii replied, coldly. "Let no more be said of him."

"One remains to be spoken of. What of Smith?"

"A brave and good man who has done none of us harm," said Nihau. "Evil is the need that calls for his death."

"There is no other way," said Minarii. "It must be as Nihau says."

They were silent for some time; then Minarii again spoke. "I say this for you, Nihau, and Te Moa. We four have nine to kill. There must be no blundering, and you must do exactly as we say."

"So it shall be," Nihau replied.

"The plan shall be in your hands, Minarii," said Tetahiti. "It falls to you of right as the older man."

"I am content," Minarii replied, "and I must be obeyed as you would obey a chief in war."

"It is agreed," said Tetahiti.

"This is not war, and it will be a shame to us forever that we must kill men as hogs are killed for the oven; yet it must be done."

"If we used no secrecy in this affair, Minarii, but challenged those five to fight us four?" asked Tetahiti.

"That is spoken like a chief," said Minarii. "It is what I, myself, would most desire, but Christian would never allow them to accept such a challenge; then our purpose would be known and our chance for killing them gone."

"We could wait," said Nihau, "making a pretense of friendship until their minds were again at rest. When they believed we had forgotten we could fall upon them as we plan to do now."

"Speak no more of this," said Minarii, sternly. "Could you wait in patience for such a time? If I have my way they shall all be dead before another sun has set."

"If it is willed," said Tetahiti. "That must first be known."

"It is willed that they shall die; that is certain," said Minarii. "Whether or not it shall be in the coming day we shall soon know."

The strip of sky above them was now suffused with a faint ashy light, sifting like impalpable dust into the gloom of the

ravine. Soon the dim outlines of trees and rocks and the crags above them could be discerned, and the forms of the men, who had long been only voices in the darkness, were revealed to each other. Minarii sat by the boulder where he had first halted. He was a man of commanding presence. Naked, save for the strip of bark cloth about his loins, he seemed equally unconscious of the chill dampness of the night air and of the long fatigue of his motionless position. Tetahiti sat near him, his back to a tree and his legs outstretched. The thick mantle of tapa around his shoulders was wet and limp with the heavy night dews. Nihau and Te Moa were seated on the lowest of the roughly laid stone steps that led to the *marae*. The ravine was extremely narrow at this point, and beyond the stone platform the fern and moss-covered head wall rose toward the ribbon of sky in a series of giant steps of basaltic rock.

Presently Minarii rose. Nihau and Te Moa made way for him as he mounted the stone staircase to the platform of the *marae*. Tetahiti removed his mantle and followed, the other two bringing up the rear. They waited in silence at the summit of the staircase while Minarii retired to a small thatched house at one side of the *marae*. He appeared a moment later in his ceremonial robes, whereupon Tetahiti proceeded to the rocky recess where the casket containing the god was kept. This was brought to the altar stone in the centre of the platform. All four now took their places at the kneeling stones and the ceremony of awakening the god was carried out. A moment of deep silence followed; then Minarii made his prayer:—

"Our God, who listens: hear us!

Judge, Thou, if we have summoned Thee amiss.

Judge, Thou, if our wrongs are great and our cause just.

Known to Thee is the cause before tongue can speak;

Therefore it is told.

If our anger is Thy anger, let it be known!

If the time favours, speak!"

A few moments later the four men filed down from the *marae*, and as soon as they were beyond sacred ground Minarii halted and turned to face his companions.

"Our success is sure," he said, "and now we must not rest until they are all dead."

"What is first to be done?" asked Tetahiti.

"You and I should return to the village," said Minarii. "Our absence may be wondered at, but if we two go down they will suspect nothing."

"I have promised to obey you," said Tetahiti, "but this thing I cannot do. Maimiti's child must now have come. I cannot face her and Christian, knowing what we have to do."

"That was to be expected, and we shall not go down," Minarii replied. "Nihau alone shall go."

"What shall I do there?" Nihau asked.

"Tell the first woman you meet that I am hunting pig, with Williams, and that you three will be fishing until evening from the rocks below the western valley. Go now and return quickly."

The path from the settlement to the western valley crossed the high lands a little below the Goat-House Peak. Here it branched, a second trail leading southward along the ridge to the partially clear lands of the Auté Valley. The ridge was bare at the junction of the two paths, and at this point was a rustic bench used as a resting place on journeys across the island. Not far to the right rose a small heavily wooded spur which commanded a view of the ridge and of the valleys on either side. Here Minarii, Tetahiti, and Te Moa now lay concealed awaiting the return of Nihau.

The sun had not yet risen, but a few ribbed clouds, high in air, glowed with saffron-coloured light. A faint easterly breeze was blowing, fragrant with the breath of sea and land. The summit of the spur was only a few yards in extent. Tetahiti and Te Moa, their muskets beside them, lay at a point directly above the junction of the two paths. Minarii watched the steep

approach from the settlement. That people were astir there was evident from the threadlike columns of wood smoke that rose straight into the air above the forests until caught by the breeze, which spread them out in gossamer-like canopies above the dwelling houses. The houses themselves were hidden from view; not even the clearings, some of them of considerable extent, could be seen from above. Save for the smoke, the island, in whatever direction, presented the appearance of a solitude that had never been disturbed by the presence of man.

Half an hour passed. Minarii crept back to where the others were lying. A moment later Nihau appeared; he crossed the open space by the rustic bench and plunged into the thicket to the right. When he had joined them the four men crouched close, talking in low voices.

"They suspect nothing," said Nihau. "I met Nanai, Moetua, and Susannah on their way to the rock cistern. They will be making tapa to-day."

"You saw Christian?" asked Tetahiti.

"No. He and Young are still at Christian's house. Maimiti's child was born just before the dawn."

"Is the child a boy or a girl?"

"A girl."

"What men have you seen?" asked Minarii.

"Only Smith, carrying water down from the spring to Christian's house."

"Minarii, it is a hard thing to kill Christian on this day when his child is born," said Tetahiti.

"It is a hard thing," Minarii replied, "nevertheless we shall do as we have planned, and now two of us shall go quickly to Williams's house and not return to this place until he is dead."

"Then he shall fall at my hands," said Tetahiti. "Christian may work in his yam garden to-day. He may be the first to come this way and I would not be the one left to meet him here."

"That is as it should be," said Minarii. "Te Moa shall go with you. See that Williams's woman is not allowed to escape. Take her and bind her. Carry her to the lower end of the small valley behind Williams's house. She must be left there until we come to release her."

"It shall be done," said Tetahiti.

He grasped his musket and was about to rise when Minarii laid a hand on his arm. A moment later Hutia appeared on the path leading from Williams's house. She carried a basket with a tapa mallet projecting from it, and was humming softly to herself as she sauntered along the path. Upon reaching the bench she seated herself there for a moment to examine a scratch on her leg. She wet a finger and rubbed the place; then she held her small pretty hands out before her, regarding them approvingly as she turned them this way and that. The valley was all golden now in the light of the just-risen sun. The girl rose and stood for a moment looking down over the forests. Still singing, she went lightly down the path and disappeared among the trees.

"It is plain from this that our god was not awakened unwisely," said Minarii. "He is ordering events to suit our purposes and now none of you can doubt that this is the day appointed for what we must do."

"I see it," said Tetahiti. "Wait here. We shall soon return."

Followed by Te Moa, he made his way through the thick bush below the spur, and was soon lost to view.

"It will be well if Christian comes now," said Nihau.

"Nothing shall be done here," said Minarii. "If any turn into the path for the Auté Valley, we will follow. If they go down into the western valley, we will wait here until Tetahiti returns. Now watch and speak no more."

Christian and Young were seated in a small open pavilion on the seaward side of Christian's house. Christian held his eldest child, now a sturdy lad of three years, on his lap.

"You must make haste, Ned," he was saying, "else I shall have such a start as you will never be able to overcome."

Young smiled. "Taurua and I are both envious of you and Maimiti," he replied. "The poor girl is beginning to fear that we are to have no children."

"Taurua? Nonsense! She'll bear you a dozen before she's through. What a difference children will make, here, in a few years' time! What a change they have brought already!"

"What are we to do in the matter of their education? Have you considered the matter at all?"

"Mine shall have none, in our sense of the word," Christian replied.

"You shan't teach them to read and write?"

"What end would it serve? Consider the difficulty we should have in trying to give children, who will know life only as they see it here, a conception of our world, our religion. Let their mothers' religion be theirs as well. Save for the cult of Oro, the war god, the Indian beliefs are as beautiful as our own, and in many respects less stern and savage. We believe in God, Ned; so do they. It would be a mistake, I think, to mingle the two conceptions."

"You may be right," Young replied, doubtfully; "and yet, when I think of the future . . ."

"When our children are grown, you mean?"

"Yes. What would our parents think, could they see their grandchildren, brought up as heathens, worshiping in the Indian fashion?"

Christian smiled, bleakly. "There's small chance of their ever knowing of these grandchildren."

They were silent for some time. Christian sat stroking the thick black hair of the solemn little lad on his lap. "If the chance were offered, Ned, of looking into the future, would you accept it?"

"I should want time to consider the matter," Young replied.

"I would; whatever it might reveal, I should like to know. What would I not give to see this boy, twenty years hence,

and the second lad, and the little daughter born this morning! God grant that their lives may be happier than mine has been! It is strange to think that they will never know any land but this!"

"We can't be certain of that."

"Not completely certain, but chances are strongly against any other possibility. We must make it a happy place for them. We can and we shall," he added, earnestly. "But get you home, Ned, and sleep. Your eyes look heavy enough after this all-night vigil."

"They are, I admit. And what of yourself? Why not come to my house for a little rest? We shan't be disturbed there."

"No, I feel thoroughly refreshed, now that Maimiti's ordeal is over. This evening I shall call the men together. Whether they will or no, the division of land shall be altered to include the Indians and on equal terms with ourselves."

"It is a wise decision, Christian; one we shall never regret, I am certain of that."

Christian accompanied his friend a little distance along the path. Returning to the house, he tiptoed to the door of Maimiti's chamber and opened it gently. Balhadi sat cross-legged on the floor by the side of the bed. The newly born infant lay asleep in a cradle made of one of Christian's sea chests. He crossed the room softly and stood for a moment looking down at Maimiti. She opened her eyes and smiled wanly up at him. "I knew you had come," she said. "I heard you in my sleep." He knelt down beside the bed, stroking her hair tenderly. She took his other hand in both of hers.

"*Aué*, Christian! Such a time this little fledgling gave me! Her brothers came so easily, but I thought she would never come."

"I know, dear. Are you comfortable now?"

"Yes; how good it is to rest! Does she please you, this little daughter?"

"She will be like you, Maimiti. Balhadi and Taurua both say so. Already I love her."

"There—I am content. Balhadi, let me have her. . . . Oh, the darling! How pretty she is!"

Balhadi laid the sleeping child in the mother's arms, and a moment later Maimiti herself had fallen into a profound slumber.

On the spur overlooking the ridge, Minarii and Nihau were still waiting, so well concealed that no scrutiny from below could have revealed their hiding place; nevertheless, they had a clear view of the ridge and of the bench there which faced eastward, a little to the left of the path. The sun was well above the horizon when the sound of voices was heard from below, and shortly afterwards Mills appeared, followed by Martin. The men were bare to the waist and wore well-patched seamen's trousers chopped off at the knee. Their heads were protected by handkerchiefs knotted at the four corners. Upon reaching the summit of the ridge they halted. Martin walked to the bench and sat down.

"Do as ye like, John," he said, "I'll have a blow."

"Aye," said Mills, "ye'd set the day long if ye could have yer way."

"Where's the call for haste? Come, set ye down, man, and cool off. There'll be time enough to sweat afore the day's done."

Mills joined his companion, and for a time the two men had no further speech.

"Have ye seen Christian this morning?" Martin asked, presently. Mills shook his head. "My woman was over half the night. This bairn's a girl, she says."

"Aye; that makes seven, all told, for the lot of us, and three of 'em Christian's."

"And where's yours?" Mills asked. "What's wrong with ye, Marty, that your woman's not thrown a foal in three years?"

"Ye've no great call to boast, with the one," Martin replied. "The fault's Susannah's—that I'll warrant."

"Aye, lay it to the woman," Mills replied scornfully.

"And why not? I board her times enough. If she was a wench from home, now, she'd be droppin' her young 'un a year, reg'lar as clockwork. She's bloody stubborn, is Susannah."

"Is she takin' to ye better now?"

"She's not whimperin' for Tahiti all the while, the way she was. I've beat that out of her. . . . What's that? A shot, wasn't it?"

"Aye. That'll be Williams. Huntin' pig, I reckon."

"I've a mind to go myself this afternoon; there's a fine lot o' pig runnin' wild in the gullies yonder. What do ye say we invite ourselves to dinner with Jack? I've not seen him this week past."

"I'm willin'; but come along now. We've work and to spare, to get through afore dinner time."

"Damn yer eyes, John! Can't ye set for half an hour? The day's young yet."

"Dawdle if ye like, ye lazy hound! I'm goin'."

"Fetch my axe from the tool-house; I'll be along directly," Martin called after him. Mills went on without replying and was lost to view below the crest of the ridge.

Nihau turned slightly and slipped his musket forward, glancing at Minarii as he did so. The chief, without turning his head, stretched out a hand to stay him. In the stillness of the early morning the crowing of the cocks could be heard and the rhythmical sound of tapa mallets in the valley below. Martin sat leaning forward, his elbows on his knees, his hands clasped loosely, gazing vacantly at the ground between his bare feet. Presently he turned to look down the path along the ridge to his right. Tetahiti and Te Moa were approaching, their bodies half hidden by the fern on either side of the path. After a casual glance, Martin turned away again. At sight of him, Tetahiti stopped short, then came quickly on, changing his musket from his right hand to his left. As they neared,

Martin again turned his head slightly to give them a contemptuous glance.

"So ye're pig-hunters, are ye?" he said, derisively. "And where's the bloody pig? Safe enough, I'll warrant! Which of ye missed fire? I heard but the one shot."

The two natives stood before him without speaking.

Martin rose, lazily. "Give me yer piece," he said, to Te Moa. "I'll learn ye how to put in a charge, and much good may it do ye."

He stepped forward, holding out his hand for the musket. With the quickness of a cat, Tetahiti seized him by the wrist. At the same moment Minarii and Nihau appeared from the bush at the side of the ridge. Passing his musket to Te Moa, Nihau stepped forward and seized Martin by the other arm, and before the white man could again speak he was half pushed, half dragged along the path leading to the Auté Valley. For a few seconds he was too astonished to offer resistance; then he held back, making violent efforts to wrench himself free.

"What's the game?" he cried, hoarsely. "Let me go, ye brown bastards! Let me go, I say! . . . John! John!"

"Loose him," said Minarii.

Tetahiti and Nihau released their holds. Minarii reached forward and grasped him by the back of the neck. Martin howled with pain in the powerful grasp of the chief, who held him at arm's length, with one hand. "Don't 'ee, Minarii!" he cried, in an anguished voice. "Don't 'ee, now!" The chief dropped his hand. "Walk," he said.

About one hundred yards beyond there was a broad slope of partially clear land. They turned off here. They had gone but a little way when Martin again halted and turned toward Minarii. His eyes were dilated with terror. He glanced quickly from one to another of the four men. "What do ye want?" he cried in a trembling voice. "Te Moa! . . . Nihau! . . . For God's sake, can't ye speak?"

Minarii again reached forward to grasp him. Of a sudden

Martin's legs went limp and he fell to his knees. They lifted him up and he fell again. "Carry him," said Tetahiti. Nihau and Te Moa grasped his arms, lifting him, and carried him along with his legs dragging on the ground. At a sign from Minarii they dropped him at a spot where a great pile of brush had been heaped up for burning. Martin fell prone. He turned his head, his eyes glaring wildly. Minarii motioned to Te Moa, who stepped back, unloosing the long bush knife fastened by a thong to his belt. Martin struggled to his knees. "Oh, my God! Don't 'ee, lads! Don't 'ee kill me!" With an awful cry he sprang to his feet, but Nihau was upon him at once, and, throwing out his leg, tripped him and sent him sprawling. "Be quick," said Minarii in a contemptuous voice. As Martin again rose to his knees, Te Moa swung the long, keen blade with all his force, taking off his head at a blow.

The air seemed to be ringing still with the last despairing cry of the murdered man. The head, which appeared to leap from the body, had rolled a little way down the slope. Te Moa ran after it and held it aloft with an exultant shout, letting the blood stream down his arm. Scarcely had he done so when Mills appeared, axe in hand, at the edge of the clearing. At sight of Te Moa, whose back was toward him, he stopped short; then with a bellow of fury he rushed upon him. Te Moa turned and leaped aside just in time to save himself.

The impetus carried the white man past him, and before he could again turn and raise his axe, Minarii, concealed from his view by the brush pile, sprang out, and with a quick blow of his club broke Mills's arm and sent the axe flying from his hand. The boatswain lurched to one side, and Nihau, swinging his club at arm's length, brought it down with crushing force on the man's head.

They dragged the two bodies into the thicket beyond the clearing, where Nihau, with a clean stroke of his knife, severed the head of Mills from the trunk. Te Moa cut a small straight branch from an ironwood tree, shaving it down and rounding it, sharpening it to a needle's point at one end. Lay-

ing Martin's head on the ground, he drove the ironwood splinter through it, from ear to ear. A thong of bark was pulled through with it, and he then fastened the head at his hip, to his belt of sharkskin. Nihau did the like with Mills's head. Minarii and Tetahiti squatted near by, watching.

Minarii rose. "Come," he said. He grasped his club and his musket and made his way noiselessly through the bush toward the ridge. The others followed. They came to a little hollow under the western side of the ridge, well screened by fern and not more than a dozen paces below the junction of the paths. Here Minarii halted, and the others crouched beside him. Minarii turned to Nihau. "Watch there," he said, pointing to the spur above them. "If any come, throw a handful of earth here where we wait."

Nihau took his musket and disappeared in the fern.

"This plan was well made," said Tetahiti.

"There is no honour in killing men so; yet it must be done," said Minarii. They spoke no more after that.

Presently there was a light patter of earth and small pebbles among the fern that sheltered them. Minarii lay on his belly, and drew himself forward a little way. Several minutes passed; then they heard the light tread of bare feet along the path in front of them, and a slight rustling and rasping of the bushes on either side. Minarii pushed himself back to where Tetahiti lay. He waited for a few seconds, then rose to his knees and glanced to left and right over the top of the fern.

"Who passed?" Tetahiti asked.

Minarii avoided his glance. "You have agreed to obey me this day as you would obey a chief in war. Wait here, then—you and Te Moa."

Tetahiti rose to his knees and looked down over the thickly wooded land below them, but there was no one to be seen. Stooping, he seized Minarii's musket and thrust it into his hand. "Your club shall be left here," he said. "Go quickly."

Two hundred yards from their hiding place, on a shaded knoll, a combined tool- and store-house had been erected for

the common use. Minarii crept forward until he could command a view of this house. He saw Christian appear with an axe in his hand and go on down the path. Minarii then examined carefully the charge in his musket. He waited where he was until he heard the clear steady sound of axe strokes in the forest beyond. Taking up his musket, he proceeded in that direction.

Several small clearings had been made on these upland slopes. Minarii halted opposite the second one. Christian was at work a short distance from the path, hewing down a large *purau* tree. He swung his axe steadily, with the deliberate measured strokes of a skilled woodsman. His back was toward Minarii, who approached stealthily, his musket held in one hand, until he was not ten paces distant.

"Christian," he called, quietly.

Christian turned his head. Seeing who it was, he leaned his axe against the tree. "Oh, Minarii." He straightened his back and flexed the muscles of his shoulders, turning toward the native as he did so. Of a sudden the faint smile on his face vanished. "What is it?" he asked.

For a second or two they stood regarding each other, Minarii grasping his musket in both hands. An expression of amazement, of incredulity, came into Christian's eyes, then one of sombre recognition of his danger. He stepped back quickly, reaching behind him as he did so toward his axe. With a swift movement, the chief raised his musket to his shoulder and fired. Christian staggered back against the tree; then sank to his knees, his head down, swaying slightly. Of a sudden he fell forward and lay still.

CHAPTER XIII

ALEXANDER SMITH'S taro garden lay in swampy ground within a five-minute walk of the settlement. He had been at work there for some time, knee-deep in mud, clearing the weeds and water grass from around the young plants. Having reached the end of a row, he waded to firm ground, cleaned his muddy hands on the grass, and sat down to rest. Rising presently to resume his work, he stopped short, hearing his name called. For a moment he saw no one; then Jenny appeared from behind a covert and ran headlong toward him.

"What is it, Jenny?"

"Come quickly!" she said, in an agonized voice. She ran ahead of him into the forest beyond the clearing. Halting there, she was unable to speak for a moment, holding out her hands, which were smeared with blood. Then she burst into a torrent of words. "It is Brown's blood, not mine, that you see! Tetahiti has killed him! Have you heard no shots?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"Tetahiti has killed him, I tell you! They are all together—Tetahiti, Minarii, Nihau, and Te Moa. They have muskets, clubs, and knives. Three are already dead. Where is Christian?"

"He has gone to the Auté Valley."

"Then he too must be dead! Come quickly! Arm yourself!"

"Wait, Jenny! You say . . ."

"Will you come?" she cried, wringing her hands. "Mills's head I have seen! It is hanging at Nihau's belt! They are seeking you now!"

Faintly, from far to the eastward, the sound of a shot was heard.

"There! Will you believe me? It is not pig they are shooting, but men!"

She turned and sped down the slope toward the settlement. Smith ran after her and seized her hand.

"Maimiti must know nothing of this, Jenny! You understand? Now do as I tell you! Young is asleep in his house. Go and warn him. Tell him I will meet him there. I must fetch Christian's musket."

The woman nodded and sped on down the path.

All was silent in Christian's house. The door stood open. Smith entered softly. Balhadi lay asleep on the floor by the door leading to Maimiti's chamber. Smith shook her gently by the shoulder. She sat up quickly, rubbing her eyes. "*Aué!* Oh, it is you, Alex. Shh! We must not disturb Maimiti. She is having a good sleep. She needs it, poor child!"

"Where is Christian's musket, Balhadi?"

"His musket? Let me see. Yes, it is hanging on the wall in the other room."

"Fetch it, with the powder flask and the bullet pouch."

Smith returned to the door and looked out. The little glade lay peaceful and deserted. Balhadi returned with the musket. "What is it, Alex?" she asked, in a low voice. Motioning her to follow him, Smith went around the dwelling to a small outbuilding used as a storehouse.

"Listen, Balhadi, what you feared has happened. The Maoris are killing the white men . . ."

"*Aué!*"

"I have met Jenny. Three are already dead, she says. She has seen Nihau with Mills's head at his belt. Te Moa has Martin's. Brown is dead. Christian may be, but that is not known. Where is Young?"

"At his house, I think. Go quickly, Alex!"

"You must stay with Maimiti. Say nothing to her . . ."

"No, no! Do you think you need to tell me that? Go! Make haste!"

Save for the clearings made for the houses and the path to the cove, the forests of the island had been little disturbed along the seaward slope of the plateau. Smith ran across the

path into the heavily wooded land, making his way with great caution toward Young's house. Jenny, Prudence, and Taurua were standing in the dooryard. Smith revealed himself at the edge of the clearing. Taurua ran toward him at once.

"Ned is not here, Alex," she said, in a trembling voice. "He came home to sleep—that I know. I left Maimiti only a little time ago. Ned was not in the house when I came, and we can't find him."

"You *must* find him!"

"We shall if he is alive, but we are afraid to call out. Two shots have been fired in the direction of Quintal's plantation."

"I heard them. Fetch my musket, and the powder and ball. Run!"

Taurua returned, bringing only a cutlass. Jenny followed her.

"The muskets are gone, both yours and Ned's," she said. "They must have taken them in the night."

"Then you must keep this one for Young," he said, handing her the weapon. "Give me the cutlass."

"What shall you do?"

"I must find Christian, if he is alive. Now go, all three of you, and search for Young. I shall make my way to the Auté Valley. If I find that the others are dead, I shall hide near the Goat-House. Tell Young to come there."

He then reentered the forest and was lost to view.

The three women separated and continued their search. Taurua, having hidden the musket, went along the seaward slope, examining every hollow among the rocks, every clump of bushes. Presently she found Young, stretched out on a grassy slope, asleep. She roused him and clung to him a moment, unable to speak; then she quickly informed him of what had happened. He gazed at her in silence for a moment.

"Ned! Are you awake?" she cried. "Do you understand what I say?"

"Only too well. Christian is dead, I fear. You say Alex left his musket for me? Why did you let him, Taurua?"

"Why? Because he is stronger than you! He can defend himself well with a cutlass."

Young rose. "I must find him at once," he said. "Where is the musket?"

Taurua went ahead. A moment later she beckoned Young to follow. Prudence and Jenny had returned to the house. There was a window at the eastern end of the dwelling overlooking the path in the direction of the cove. Prudence, her child in her arms, kept watch there. Jenny watched from the window at the opposite end of the house. Taurua brought the musket from the bushes where she had hidden it. The powder flask was half filled, and there were only four balls in the bullet pouch. Young had just seated himself to charge the musket when Prudence called softly from the window: "Hide, Ned! . . . Minarii!"

Taurua seized him by the arm and pulled him into the room adjoining. Two large chests stood there, near the bed. Young crouched between them and Taurua threw over him a large piece of tapa. Jenny concealed herself behind the curtains of the bed-place. Prudence remained at the window, crooning softly to her child. Taurua reentered the common room and quickly seated herself on a stool in one corner, resuming a task, interrupted some time before, of grating coconut meat into a bowl. She had herself well in hand. A moment later Minarii appeared in the doorway. He now carried only his musket. He greeted them casually. Taurua looked up, smiling. She did not trust herself to speak at first.

"Where are you going, Minarii?" Prudence asked. "Is it you who has been shooting pig this morning?"

"É," he replied, "Williams and I. We wounded a large boar on the ridge. He ran down into the Main Valley. We have not yet found him. Where is Young, Taurua?"

"Fishing, at the cove. He went early this morning."

Minarii glanced around the room.

"If you pass Brown's house," said Prudence, "will you tell

Jenny that I have the bundle of reeds for her? I'll carry it up this afternoon."

"I'll tell her if I see her." He took up his musket, nodding to the two women as he turned away.

"*A noho, orua.*"

"*Haere oé,*" they replied.

He turned and went back the way he had come. Prudence remained at the window. "We have fooled him, Taurua. He thinks we know nothing."

"Is he keeping to the path?"

"Yes. . . . He is out of sight now."

Taurua rose and went quickly into the other room. A moment later Young, waiting his chance, ran out of the house and disappeared into the forest.

It was getting on toward mid-morning. Young had been gone for some time. The three women sat on the bench by the doorstep, talking in low voices.

"Minarii would have saved Brown?" Taurua was saying.

"He could easily have killed him had he meant to do so,"

Jenny replied. "This happened: We were weeding the yam garden near the house. Minarii found us there. 'There is little time for words,' he said. 'Three of the white men are dead. Tetahiti, Nihau, Te Moa, and I have killed them. They shall all die except Brown. Him I will save if I can. When I shoot my musket over his head he must fall to the ground and lie as dead. He must not move till the others have passed; then let him hide in the woods. It is his only chance.' Then he fired into the air and pushed Brown and sent him sprawling. 'Go into the house!' he said to me. 'Go at once and stay there! The others are close behind.' He went on into the forest. Soon came the other three. I watched from a tiny hole in the thatch. They halted when they saw Brown lying on his face. They walked toward him and stopped again. Brown could not have heard them. He moved, turning his head a little. Tetahiti was not ten paces from him. He raised his musket

and shot him through the head. When I saw what he would do, I ran from the house and sprang on him from behind, but it was too late. Then the three of them bound my hands and feet and carried me into the house. As soon as I could free myself I ran to warn Alex."

"I see how it was," said Taurua. "Minarii must have killed Christian. They must have quarreled over who should die, and . . ."

"The beast! The vile dog!" Jenny exclaimed, her eyes blazing. "Tetahiti shot my man as he lay on the ground! *Aué! Aué!*"

She put her head in her arms, rocking back and forth on the bench; but she made no further outcry. The time for weeping had not come. All three women were too stunned for tears.

"Nanai must have known of this," said Prudence, fiercely.

"Both Nanai and Moetua must have known of what was to happen to-day, and they gave us no warning."

"You are wrong, Prudence," Taurua replied. "Minarii and Tetahiti would never have told their wives of such a plan."

"I shall hate them forever!"

"That can be understood," said Taurua, "but they are not to be blamed. I saw them both early this morning. Had they known, I could have guessed it at once. No, they are as innocent as ourselves."

They talked in low voices, waiting, listening, hearing nothing save the crowing of cocks in the forest and the sighing of the wind through the trees. Prudence's child awoke and began to cry. She reentered the house and took it up, nursing it in her arms as she walked the room. Taurua laid a hand on Jenny's arm. "Listen!" The two women turned their heads at the same moment. At the turn of the path below the house Mary and Sarah appeared, half running, half walking, carrying their children in their arms. Taurua and Jenny ran forward to meet them. Mary was weeping hysterically. "You know, Taurua? They have been here?" she cried.

"Tell us quickly—are your men dead?"

"They must be! Minarii . . ."

"Hush, Mary," said Sarah. "We don't know that they are dead."

"They must be! McCoy has only his bush knife. Quintal has nothing to defend himself with. How can they escape? *Aué*, Prudence! Are you here? Do you know that your man is dead? Ours will be next!"

The moment they had entered the house, Mary sank to the floor and lay there, her head buried in her arms. Taurua took up her child. "What has happened, Sarah?" she asked.

"You heard the shots?"

"Yes."

"They were fired at Quintal. He and McCoy were to make a fence to-day, and Quintal had gone up the valley to carry down some posts he had cut. He left me to sharpen his axe. I was carrying it up to him when Minarii and Te Moa stepped out from behind some bushes. Te Moa was covered with blood and he had Martin's head hanging at his belt. Minarii took the axe from me and told me to go back to the house. Just then I saw my man come out of the bush with a bundle of poles on his shoulder. I shouted to him. Minarii and Te Moa ran toward him. Both fired, but they must have missed, for Quintal ran back into the forest.

"What of McCoy?"

"He was still at the house. I ran down to warn him, and before any of them came to look for him he had time to escape."

"Had the muskets at your house been taken?" Jenny asked.

"Yes. I must have looked at the very hooks where they hung, early this morning, without wondering why they were not there."

"Who came to search the house?"

"Tetahiti and Nihau. McCoy had just gone. I asked Tetahiti if they had killed Quintal. He would say nothing, but as they went out again Nihau stopped at the door. 'You want to

know if your man is dead?' he asked. 'Yes,' I replied. 'I will tell you this,' he said; 'you will be one of my women to-morrow, and Te Moa shall have Mary.' Then he ran on after Tetahiti."

"Which way did they go?"

"Inland, up the valley. What of Ned, Taurua? And Christian and Alex?"

"They are dead! They must be by this time!" Mary cried in a terrified voice. Again she broke out in hysterical weeping. She clutched and held fast to Taurua's legs. Jenny took her roughly by the shoulders. "Hush, Mary!" she said. "What a coward you are! Stop, I say! Have you no spirit?"

"Could there be a more worthless woman?" said Prudence, in her soft voice. "Leave her, Jenny; there is nothing to be done with such a thing as she is."

They tried in vain to quiet her. She became more and more hysterical, clinging to Taurua with all her strength. Sarah was, herself, on the verge of panic, but controlled herself. Of a sudden, Mary raised her head. Her eyes were dilated with terror.

"Come," she said, in a low gasping voice. "We must hide! They will kill us, too! Yes . . . they will kill us all! Shhh! Do you hear anything?"

She sprang to her feet, gazing wildly toward the door; Taurua spoke to her soothingly. "Be silent, Mary. You are in no danger. None of the women will be killed."

"Yes! Yes! You have not seen them! They are like sharks maddened with blood!"

Prudence stepped forward and struck her across the face with her open hand. "Will you be silent?" she said. The sharp blow, better than words could have done, quieted the terrified woman. She sank down again, whimpering in a low voice. Taurua lifted her up. "Come, Mary; lie you down in the other room. We will watch. No one shall harm you." The others waited in silence. Presently Taurua returned. "The poor thing has worn herself out," she said. "She will sleep, I think."

"May she sleep well," said Jenny. She held Mary's two-year-old boy on her lap. "What will this son be like," she added, "if he has his mother's nature?"

Taurua went to the door and stood for a moment looking into the forest beyond the path. "I must return to Maimiti," she said. "Balhadi is alone there. Stay here, you three."

"And wait, doing nothing, while all our men are killed?" Jenny asked. "Not I!"

"What would you do?" Sarah asked.

"One thing at least I can do. My man lies on the ground before our house, a prey to the ants. His body shall be left there no longer. Prudence, will you come with me?"

"No, no, Prudence! Stay!" Sarah begged. "Don't leave me alone with Mary!"

"Sarah, no possible harm can come to you here," Taurua said. "If they had meant to kill us, do you not think that they would have done so before now? Jenny is right. Something may be done to help our men. Listen, Jenny, this you shall do: Find Hutia; she may be at the rock cistern. She will go with you. When you have cared for your man's body, then learn if you can what ones are dead; if you can find Alex and Young, let them know that we think McCoy and Quintal are still living. Or, if you will, stay with Maimiti and I will go in your place. Prudence has her child; she must remain here with Sarah and Mary."

"Stay you with Maimiti," Jenny replied. "I will go."

So it was decided, and the two women set out on the path to Christian's house.

It was late afternoon. Prudence sat alone on the bench before Young's house. Sarah and Mary remained within doors, their children around them, talking in whispers. Mary was quiet now. Three hours had passed and nothing had been heard, nothing seen. Prudence turned her head. "Taurua is returning," she said. The other two women rose and came to the door, waiting anxiously. Taurua was alone.

"Jenny has not come?" she asked.

Prudence shook her head. "We have seen no one since you left," she replied. "Who are at Christian's house?"

"A little time after I went there, Susannah came. She was at the rock cistern with Hutia. They knew nothing until Jenny brought them word. Both have gone with Jenny. We must wait."

Taurua went to the outdoor kitchen, returning with some cold baked yams and plantains, which she placed on the table. "Here is food," she said, "for those who need it. Prudence, you and Mary should eat for the sake of your babies." She prepared some food for the two older children, who seized it greedily, but the women themselves ate nothing.

Now that Taurua had come, Mary and Sarah ventured to the bench by the doorstep, and the four women sat there, talking little, peering into the forest beyond the path, streaked through with shafts of golden light.

"Maimiti has not been told?" Prudence asked.

"She had just wakened when I went back," Taurua replied. "She is so happy with her little daughter. She said to me: 'Now, Taurua, I have nothing more to wish for.' Every little while she would send Balhadi or me to the door to look for Christian. How could we tell her? How? Who could do it?" Her eyes filled with tears. "*Aué, Maimiti 'si é!*" In a moment all the women except Prudence, who sat dry-eyed, forgetting themselves and their own sorrows, were weeping together for the mother of the newly born child. "What will she do, Taurua?" Sarah asked, at length.

"We must not think of it now," Taurua replied, drying her eyes. "And we do not yet know that he is dead. Let us hope while we can."

The sun had disappeared behind the western ridge before Jenny returned. Hutia and Susannah were with her. Their kirtles of tapa were torn and soiled and their arms and legs covered with cuts and bruises. As soon as they had entered the

house, Taurua closed the doors and the wooden shutters to the windows. "Now, Jenny?" she asked.

The women were breathing hard. "Give us some water," Jenny said. "Our throats are dry with dust." They drank greedily. "We have seen Minarii and Nihau, but no one else," Jenny began. "They passed almost within arm's length of where we lay hidden in the fern."

"If we had had muskets we could have killed them both," Hutia added.

"They must have gone again to the Auté Valley, for they were coming down from the ridge. As soon as they had passed we went on. We went first to Hutia's house. Williams's body was lying in the doorway. He had been shot through the head. We carried him inside. Then we went to Christian's new clearing just below the ridge. We found an axe leaning against a tree half cut through. There was blood on the ground close by, but what happened there we do not know. We searched everywhere, but could not find his body.

"You saw Mills's body?" Prudence asked.

Jenny hesitated, glancing quickly at Hutia. "No," she said, "it must have been hidden."

"And you saw none of our men, Jenny? No one at all?" Sarah asked, in a trembling voice.

Jenny shook her head.

"That is not strange," Taurua said, quietly. "They lie concealed."

"They are dead!" Mary cried, burying her face in her hands.

"Hush, Mary! What a foolish woman you are! They may be together now, all of them. It must be so."

"But if they are, Taurua, what can they do without weapons?"

"Ned has a musket. Alex Smith has a cutlass. Quintal is a man as strong of body as Minarii. He will cut him a club in the bush. We have reason to hope, I tell you!"

"Do you think that Minarii will rest until they are all

dead? Never! He well knows that his own life will not be safe until all the white men have been killed."

"It is true," Sarah said, wretchedly. "We shall never know peace now until one party or the other are all dead."

"And who wishes for peace until those four are killed?" Jenny exclaimed. "I saw Tetahiti shoot my man as he lay helpless on the ground. Do you think I shall rest until he himself is dead?"

"Let us speak no more of this," said Taurua. "There has been bloodshed enough . . ."

She broke off. The report of a musket shot was heard close by. Mary ran into the house, her hands pressed to her ears. The other women rose quickly and looked at one another.

"Let us go in," said Taurua, "and make ready the house. Some of our men may have to come here to defend themselves."

"And one of them may be lying dead within sound of our voices," said Jenny. "I must know what has happened. You others prepare the house." Without waiting for a reply, she ran across the path and plunged into the forest.

She quickly crossed the wooded land bordering the path. Beyond this, and not more than one hundred and fifty yards from Young's house, there was half an acre of cleared ground planted to sweet potatoes and yams. The report of the musket shot had come from this direction. Jenny halted within the border of the woodland and looked out across these gardens. She saw no one. She skirted the plantations and was about to proceed farther into the valley, when she came upon a cutlass lying half hidden by a clump of plantains. There was fresh blood on the dead leaves near by and she discovered naked footprints in the moist earth of the plantain walk a little way beyond. She had proceeded but a short distance farther, when she came upon Alexander Smith lying face down, groaning feebly. She knelt beside him, and, putting her arms around him, lifted him to a sitting position with his head resting against her shoulder. He opened his eyes drowsily. "Jenny?"

he said. She examined him swiftly. The ball had entered at his shoulder and had come out at the neck. "Alex, could you walk with me to help?" He nodded. With one arm around her shoulders, he struggled to his feet, but they had gone only a few steps when his body went limp. With both arms around him, she held him for a moment and then let him sink gently down. She ran back to Young's house and returned with Taurua and Hutia. Smith was a solidly built man and it was all the three women could do to lift and carry him, but a quarter of an hour later they had him in Young's bed. He was breathing heavily and had lost much blood.

"It is a clean wound; the ball has passed through," said Taurua. "The great artery has not been touched—that is certain. Otherwise he would be dead."

The women worked quickly and in silence. Susannah carried water while Taurua and Jenny staunched the flow of blood from Smith's wound and bound it well. He was now unconscious and his face ghastly pale. Hutia kept watch by the door and Prudence by the window. The sun had set and the shadows began to deepen in the room.

"They left him for dead—that is clear," said Jenny. "Did Minarii know that he still lives, mad with killing, as he now is, he would come and club him as he lies."

"Yes," said Taurua, "and we must be prepared if they come here. I shall go now for Balhadi. Keep watch, you two. If you see any of them coming, cover Alex at once with the tapa mantle as though he were dead and kneel all of you by the bed, wailing and crying. They will believe and not molest you. When Balhadi comes she can be prepared to gash herself with a *paohino*. Seeing her face streaming with blood, they will be sure to think her man dead."

"The plan could not be better," said Jenny. "Make haste, Taurua; we shall do as you say. Balhadi must lose no time in coming."

Taurua set out for Christian's house. It was a lonely way between the two dwellings, with ancient forest trees over-

arching the path. She had gone about half the distance when she heard her name called, and halted. Nanai came out from behind a screen of bushes and beckoned to her, earnestly. Taurua went to where she stood and regarded her coldly, waiting for her to speak. Nanai was deeply agitated, but controlled herself.

"Hate me if you will, Taurua, for what my man has done this day," she said, "but believe, if you can, what I say: I knew nothing of their plans, and Moetua is as innocent as myself."

"I am willing to believe it," Taurua replied, "But this will not give life to murdered men. Speak quickly if you have more to say, for I have little time to spend here."

"Your man lives . . ."

Taurua grasped her by the arm. "You know this? Where is he?"

"On the Goat-House Peak, hidden in a spot where they will never be able to find him. It was I, Taurua, who told him of the place and led him there."

Taurua gazed at her searchingly. "We have long been friends," she said. "You would not deceive me—that I could never believe."

Nanai's eyes filled with tears. "You are like my own sister, Taurua, and Ned has been as a brother. Ask your heart if I could act basely toward you. But this I ask in my turn. If Ned is spared, he must put thoughts of revenge from his heart. Tetahiti is my husband."

"Though he and those with him were killed, the dead cannot breathe again. I cannot promise that his word will be given, but I shall do what I can to bring this about."

"It is enough, Taurua. Minarii is terrible in anger, but the desire for killing is short-lived. Ned has only to remain hidden. His life will be spared. Tetahiti will wish it—of that I am sure. Moetua and I will stand with you all in this."

"Alex is badly hurt. We have carried him to our house. We know nothing of Christian."

"Listen, Taurua. Moetua is close by. We shall go together in search of him. Perhaps we can help him if he still lives. Whatever has happened, I will bring you word when we know. Do what can be done to soften the hearts of the others toward us two. What our men have done is done. That cannot be forgiven, but let them know that Moetua and I are blameless."

"That I shall do," Taurua replied, "but keep well aloof from them until a later time, and most of all from these three—Jenny, Hutia, and Prudence. Their men have been murdered by your husbands. Their anger toward you can be understood."

"They shall not see us," Nanai replied.

"Now I must hasten to Maimiti," said Taurua. "Go, and good go with you for your kindness to me."

Nanai clung to her for a moment; then she turned and disappeared in the shadows of the forest.

Balhadi had seen Taurua approaching. She came quickly to the door and the two women spoke in whispers. "He will live, Balhadi, this I believe," Taurua was saying. "I would not tell you so if I thought there was no hope. But do as I have said if Minarii or the others come. Cover Alex as you would cover a corpse, and all of you wail over him as for one dead. They will believe and not molest him."

A moment later she was alone in the room. She went to the door of Maimiti's bedroom and halted there, listening; then she returned to a bench near the table, and seated herself, her chin in her hands, staring unseeingly out of the window. Her eyes brimmed with tears, and for a time she wept silently.

Presently she heard Maimiti's voice calling Balhadi. Drying her eyes quickly, she entered the room where the mother was lying.

"Balhadi has gone to her house, Maimiti."

"Oh, is it you, Taurua? Christian has not come?"

"Not yet. Shall I light a taper?"

"There is no need. I love this dim light of evening. Such a

good sleep I have had! Look, Taurua, how she sucks! She is like a little pig. Where can Christian be? He told me he would come early in the afternoon, and here it is past sundown!"

"He will come soon."

"Go up the path to meet him, dear. He must surely be coming now. What a strange father he is! You would think he had a little daughter born to him every day! Go quickly, Taurua. Tell him to hasten."

Taurua nodded and turned hastily away. She stood for a moment outside the door gazing up the path now barely discernible in the dim light of evening. A moment later she seated herself on a bench there and buried her head in her arms.

CHAPTER XIV

IN THE rich little valley between Ship-Landing Point and the easternmost cape of the island, Tetahiti and Nihau lay in the fern where they had slept, conversing in voices inaudible a few yards away. The moon had set long since, but the first faint grey of dawn was in the east. Nihau sat up, shrugged his shoulders, and spat.

He began to count on his fingers. "Nine muskets we have; fourteen were landed from the ship. Five are missing, though Young may have taken that which always stood in Christian's house."

Both men started and seized their weapons at the sound of a footfall close by, but relaxed at a low hail from Minarii. He was followed by Te Moa, who carried a bunch of ripe plantains on his back. He set down the fruit, as well as four drinking nuts fastened together with strips of their own fibrous husk, and Tetahiti reached into the fern behind him for a basket of baked yams.

They ate quickly and in silence. When the meal was over, Tetahiti remained for some time deep in thought. "Minarii," he asked, "will you not consent to spare Young? Quintal and McCoy must be hunted down, but Young . . ."

"He too must die! Speak no more of this! They must all be killed, and quickly!"

"Where can the others be?" said Nihau.

"Wherever they are, they shall not live to see the end of this day."

Minarii rose, taking up his musket as he spoke. "Go with Nihau and search the western slopes," he went on. "Waste no more powder at long range. With Te Moa, I shall comb this end of the island, so that a rat could not escape our eyes. Let us meet a little after nightfall in the thicket close to Quintal's house."

Minarii beckoned to his follower, and led the way up to the head of the valley and across the ridge. It was a stiff climb and both men were panting as they skulked along the ridge to the brink of the curving cliffs called "the Rope." Their feet made no sound on the rocky path, and, though the stars were only beginning to pale, Minarii moved with the alert caution born of years of bush warfare. He halted in a clump of pandanus at the very edge of the cliff.

"I had not thought of this place," he said to Te Moa in a low voice. "Keep watch while I scan the beach below. It will soon be day."

He set down his musket and stretched himself out at full length to peer down the dizzy face of the precipice at the narrow strip of beach many hundreds of feet below. Though the morning was windless, a southerly swell had made up during the night, and great seas came feathering and smoking into the shallow bay, to burst with long-drawn roars that seemed to shake the solid rock. The spray of the breakers hung in the air, oftentimes veiling cove and beach from the eyes of the watcher above. Sea fowl wheeled and soared before their nesting places.

The light grew stronger. Presently the sun's disc broke the horizon to the east. Peering down through a tangle of thorny pandanus, Minarii gave a sudden low exclamation. He beckoned over his shoulder to the other man.

"I see him!" exclaimed Te Moa in a whisper. "There by the big rock! Ah, he is gone!"

"Who is it?"

"I could not tell for the drifting spray."

Minarii reached for his musket, measured the distance with his eye, and shook his head. Some time passed before Te Moa whispered rapidly: "Look! At the eastern end of the sands!"

"McCoy or Young," said Minarii. "Quintal is a span wider in the shoulders."

The fog of salt spray closed in again; when it dispersed, the man or men on the beach had disappeared. Minarii backed away from the verge of the cliff and crouched in the pandanus thicket. "What think you?" he asked. "Your eyes are younger than mine. Are there two, or one?"

"Two, I think. Quintal and McCoy."

"Perhaps. Yet one man might have walked the distance in the shelter of the scrub."

"Whether one or two, they are trapped," said Te Moa. "No man could climb the cliffs nor enter those breakers and live."

"And safe from us," remarked Minarii, musingly. "This sea is a *miti vavau*, sprung from a distant storm. It made up quickly and will calm down as fast. I will keep watch here. Go you to the landing place and lash the outrigger on our canoe. Go softly. When the work is done, hide yourself near the path at the top of the bluff. If the swell goes down, I will hasten across to you. If not, we shall meet as appointed, near Quintal's house."

When Te Moa was gone, Minarii settled himself to watch. He lay as immobile as the basalt crags of the ridge. Twice during the hours of the morning he had glimpses of a figure below, but the swell grew heavier as a south wind made up; the cove was now one smother of foam, half invisible under

the wind-driven spray. The sun reached its zenith and began to decline. In spite of the south wind, it was warm in the shelter of the scrub. Minarii grew drowsy as the afternoon advanced. He was stifling a yawn when his quick ear caught the sound of a footstep not far off. He took up his musket, cocked it noiselessly, and turned his head to peer out through the matted leaves.

Twenty yards to the west, the low scrub parted and Matthew Quintal stepped out into the open, glancing this way and that. He wore a knotted handkerchief on his head, and a pair of trousers cut off roughly at the knee. His eyes were bloodshot and his great arms crisscrossed with scratches beneath the growth of coarse red hair. He came to a halt, crouching to avoid showing himself against the sky line, and began to gaze intently at the ridges and hillsides to the westward, one hand shielding his eyes from the sun.

Firearms—even bows and arrows—were regarded as cowards' weapons by the men of the island race, and Minarii hated Quintal so fiercely that he yearned to kill him with his bare hands. He set down the musket softly beside his club, and stepped out of the thicket, a look of sombre rejoicing in his eyes. Flexing the huge biceps of his left arm, he smote the muscle a resounding blow with his right hand; the native challenge to combat. The blow rang out like a pistol shot. Quintal spun on his heel; then he rushed toward Minarii.

They came together crouching, with their hands low. Minarii feinted and lashed out with his right fist, a mighty blow that drove home smacking on the other's jaw. Only Quintal's great bull neck saved him; he blinked, staggered, and rushed in under the native's guard, seizing him beneath the arms in a hug that might have cracked the ribs of an ox. Minarii grunted as he was lifted off his feet; next moment he drove his thumbs deep into his enemy's throat. With eyes starting from his head, Quintal brought his knee up sharply, and as the other released his grip and staggered back, grunting with pain, the white man sprang on him and brought him to

the ground. They grappled, twisting fiercely as each strove for a throttling hold on the other's neck. Then suddenly, as they had fallen, they were up again, but this time Quintal had his left arm braced on the native's chest, and a grip on Minarii's great sinewy right wrist. A breath too late, the warrior realized his danger. As they turned in a half-circle, his battering fist rained blows on Quintal's head, but the Englishman held on doggedly, exerting all of his enormous strength.

Next moment, with a loud snap, the bone broke. Grunting with pain and anger, Minarii wrenched himself free and got in a blow that caught Quintal unaware. His head flew back; as he stood swaying with vacant eyes, the native's uninjured hand shot up under his chin and closed on his throat. Both men were bleeding from a score of deep scratches, for they were fighting in the thorny pandanus scrub on the very brink of the cliff.

With huge fingers sunk in his enemy's neck, Minarii dragged him toward the precipice. Dazed, throttled, and in great pain, Quintal reached up feebly, felt for a finger, and bent it back with all the strength that remained to him. As the clutching hand at his throat let go, he struggled to his feet. At that moment Minarii aimed a mighty kick at his chin. Had the toughened ball of the warrior's foot found its mark, the fight would have been over; but, as it chanced, the crumbling rock on which he stood gave way. He staggered, waving his left arm in an effort to regain his balance. The white man sprang forward, seized the upraised foot of his enemy, and hurled him backward.

Quintal craned his neck and saw the warrior's body rebound from a crag a hundred feet down, crash through a thicket of dwarf pandanus standing out horizontally from the cliff, and plunge on and down, to fetch up against a stout palm-bole, five hundred feet below.

The Englishman was scarcely able to stand. One eye was swelling fast, he was scratched and bruised from head to foot, and his throat bore the red imprints of the dead man's fin-

gers. He swallowed with difficulty, coughed, spat out a mouthful of blood, and felt his neck tenderly. Then, after a long rest with head in his arms, he set out at a limping shuffle, across the ridge and down into the valley to the west.

Only the bent and torn pandanus leaves and a sprinkle of blood here and there on the rocky ground bore witness to the combat. The sea fowl still soared before their eyries on the Rope, with the afternoon sun glinting on their wings. The sun went down at last behind the western ridge, and the bowl of the Main Valley began to fill with shadows.

In the thick bush, well back from the settlement, Tetahiti and Nihau were making their way cautiously toward the place of rendezvous. All through the day they had searched the western half of the island, without a glimpse of the men they sought. Tetahiti was in the lead. He halted as they came to one of the paths that led inland; then he seized Nihau's arm and pulled him back into the bush. Next moment Moetua came into view. She was unaccompanied.

Tetahiti called to her in a low voice: "Moetua O!"

As she turned, he beckoned her to follow him into the bush. "Where is Minarii?" she asked.

"With Te Moa, searching for the white men."

She was nearly of his own stature, and now she looked him squarely in the eyes, without a smile. "Tetahiti," she said earnestly, "have you not had enough of killing? Will you spare none?"

"All must die. Those are your husband's words. Have you seen Quintal or McCoy?"

"No. As for Young, if I knew where he was concealed I would not tell you!"

Tetahiti shrugged his shoulders. "I am of the same mind, yet Minarii is right; it is the white men or ourselves. None shall be left alive."

"Blood! Blood!" she said in a low voice as she turned away. "Men are wild beasts. To-day I hate them all!"

Te Moa was awaiting them at the rendezvous, an area of

unfelled bush not far from Quintal's house. He told Tetahiti of what they had seen at the Rope, and of the chief's instructions to him.

"Here is food," he said. "You two are weary and I have done nothing all day. Sleep when you have eaten. Minarii will soon be here. I will keep watch and arouse Nihau when I can stay awake no longer."

Prudence and Hutia sat close together on the floor of Mills's house. The smaller girl caressed, from time to time, the head of the sleeping baby on her knees. The door opened softly. Hutia called in a low voice not without a slight quaver: "*Ovai tera?*"

"It is I, Jenny!"

She closed the door and felt her way across the darkened room. "Listen!" she whispered rapidly. "Our chance has come! Have you courage to seize it?"

"Courage for what?" asked Prudence coolly.

"To kill the slayers of our men!"

Prudence rose, set down her child on a bed, and came back to Jenny's side. "Now tell us what is in your mind."

"I have found Tetahiti and Nihau and Te Moa asleep. Te Moa lies with his back to a tree at some little distance from the others. His musket is between his knees. They must have posted him as a sentinel, but sleep has overcome him. We have an axe and two cutlasses. Are your hearts strong? Will your arms not falter?"

"Not mine!" said Hutia grimly.

"I claim Nihau," remarked Prudence, in her soft voice.

"Aye," said Jenny, "and Tetahiti is mine!"

Hutia slapped her knee softly. "*Eita e peapea!* I will bear my part, so that the three die. . . . But Minarii, where is he?"

"He may come soon," said Jenny. "We must make haste. The moon will set before long. Take the cutlasses and let me have the axe."

They rose and took up their weapons. Prudence bent over her sleeping child for a moment before she left the house.

An hour passed and the moon hung low over the western ridge. Quintal was making his way down toward the settlement. He walked with a limp, slowly and cautiously, keeping in the shadows of the bush. Passing the blackened platform of stones where Minarii's house had stood, he began to reconnoitre the thicket which separated him from the cleared land surrounding his own deserted house.

He was about to emerge into the moonlight when he caught his breath suddenly, halted, and whispered: "Christ!" Next moment he stooped to take up the severed head of Te Moa, and turned the face to the moon. McCoy's old cat, fetched from Tahiti, was a great night wanderer in the bush. He rubbed his back against Quintal's leg, turned away, and began to lap at something on the ground. Fiercely and noiselessly, with his bare foot, Quintal kicked him away.

He glanced this way and that, walked to a tree that stood at a few yards' distance, and came to a halt before the bodies of Tetahiti and Nihau. "All dead!" he muttered. "And a good job, too! Who could ha' done this?"

With three muskets under his arm, Quintal now took the path to the settlement.

The candlenuts were alight in the house of Mills, but the windows and doors were barred. Quintal whistled softly outside, and after a moment's pause Jenny called, "Who is it?" in an uncertain voice. He made himself known. Presently the door was unbarred and he entered the house. Prudence was on the floor, suckling her child; Hutia started to her feet nervously at sight of him.

"Where is Minarii?" asked Jenny, closing and fastening the door.

"Dead. I killed him. What Englishmen are dead? I found Jack killed by a musket ball, and the headless bodies of Martin and Mills."

Jenny told him briefly all that she knew, and he asked: "Where is Will McCoy?"

She shook her head. "Who killed the men I found yonder in the bush?" he went on.

The three women exchanged glances, and at last Jenny spoke: "If I tell you, will you keep the secret? *Parau mau?*"

"Aye!"

"They were the murderers of our husbands," said Jenny slowly. "We killed them as they slept."

Quintal blinked bloodshot eyes as his slow mind considered this information. "Damn my eyes!" he exclaimed. "Women's work, eh?"

"Listen," Jenny said. "It was our right and duty to kill these men. But their wives may have other thoughts. They must not know the truth. There has been trouble enough on this unhappy land. Will you tell the others that you killed those three?"

"Aye, if you wish it; why not?"

"You will tell no one, not éven Sarah?"

"No. Where is she?"

"At Young's house."

Prudence covered her breast and laid the sleeping child on Mills's bed. "We are glad to have you here," she remarked. "We feared Minarii, and the spectres of the newly dead!"

Quintal limped across to Mills's bed-place and lay down. Hour followed hour while the three women whispered nervously and lit fresh tapers of candlenuts. At last the stars paled before the light of dawn. When the last of the fowls had fluttered down from the trees, Hutia slipped out of the house. Jenny was moving about in the outdoor kitchen, and Prudence sat astride a rude little three-legged stool by the door, grating coconuts. Presently the basket was full and she stood up.

"*Pél Pél Pél*" she called, ringingly, while the fowls began to run with outstretched wings, increasing their speed as the girl flung out handful after handful of the crinkled snow-

white flakes. She upturned the basket, dusted her hands, and entered the house. Quintal still slept heavily, face turned to the wall. Prudence bent over her child, her lips caressing the cool little forehead. She took a comb of bamboo from the shelf above the bed, seated herself on the doorstep, and began to undo the long and heavy plait of her hair. Shaking her head impatiently, she raised a hand to dash the tears from her eyes.

Mary and Sarah were approaching the house, leading McCoy's children and Quintal's boy. As Prudence glanced up, Sarah asked, "Where is he?"

"He still sleeps."

Without rising, she moved a little to let the older girl pass into the house. Mary stood before her, her eyes red with weeping. McCoy's two children clung to the folds of her kirtle.

"Has Matt seen my man?"

Prudence shrugged her shoulders. She felt only contempt for this soft, unready woman who became hysterical when it was time to act.

Sarah was kneeling at Quintal's side. He turned uneasily and opened his eyes. His two-year-old son was trying to climb on to the bed. The father's eye brightened and he smiled.

"Up, Matty!" He lifted the child to his side. "There's a stout lad! Eh, Sarah, old wench!"

"Where is McCoy?" she asked.

"Dead, like enough. We must search for him."

He rose, stretching his muscles gingerly, limped out through the back door to the water barrel, and dashed a calash of water over his head. His injured leg had stiffened during the night, and he found it next to impossible to walk. Sarah spread a mat for him close to the door and fetched him a breakfast of half a dozen ripe plantains. He ate half-heartedly, for he was only beginning to realize the full extent of the catastrophe. Will McCoy dead, no doubt, and Christian, too. And Jack Williams . . . old John Mills. Murdering bastards, those Indian men. Damn their blood, why couldn't they have kept the peace? Alex Smith would probably die, from

what the women said. Quintal drew a deep breath and raised his head. The woman beside him leaned forward at sight of his gloomy face.

"Ye must help me," he said, "I can scarce walk. There's naught to hurt ye in the bush; take Mary and make a search for Will. The children can stop with me."

"Where shall we search?"

"Try the eastern cape. Let Mary follow the ridge west above Tahutuma. If ye don't find him there, work down the Main Valley. He may be living; hail him, from time to time, on the chance."

Sarah nodded as she rose, but Mary would not go until Jenny agreed to accompany her. Sarah set out to the east, while the other two crossed the Main Valley to the ridge.

The sea had calmed during the night. The sun was about an hour up and the morning cool and cloudless. Sarah glanced fearfully this way and that as she walked. Now and then she stopped and hailed: "Will! Will O! Will McCoy!" but for some time her clear hails died away without a response in the morning calm.

When she had turned inland and was gazing down over the broad wooded bowl of the plateau, she heard a faint rustle in the bushes and a hoarse voice.

"Sarah? Are ye alone?"

"Yes."

"Duck down off the sky line! Where's Matt?"

McCoy was close to her now, and she started as the leaves were pushed aside and his haggard face appeared, ugly with a three days' growth of red stubble. He stared wildly at her, as though doubting her word.

"Where's Matt?" he asked again, in a low voice.

"At the house. Come back with me. They are all dead."

"Who are dead?"

"All of the Maori men."

"And the Englishmen?"

"Come back with me. Quintal will tell you."

"Are ye speaking the truth?"

"Yes!" replied Sarah impatiently.

Some rat or lizard made a slight rustling sound among the dead leaves a few yards off. McCoy gave a violent start and peered about him in terror. The shirt and ragged trousers he wore were wet with salt water. He scrutinized the woman suspiciously.

"Fetch Matt. I'll believe it when he tells me."

Sarah shrugged her shoulders wearily. "There is nothing to fear. Yet I will fetch him if you wait."

"Be off!"

When she was gone, he moved cautiously through the bush to higher ground, where he could overlook the rendezvous without being seen.

While McCoy awaited the coming of his friend, Taurua was walking rapidly along the western side of the plateau, toward Christian's yam plot. From time to time she called softly: "Moetua! Nanai!" At last, in a thicket near the steep path leading to the ridge, she found those she sought.

The two girls sat by a litter of *purau* saplings lashed with bark. Christian lay on this rude couch, ghastly pale and with a stubble of black beard on his chin. His eyes were closed; only his rapid, shallow, and laboured breathing showed that he lived. Moetua and Nanai sat by the stretcher, moistening bits of tapa with cool water from a calabash and laying them on the wounded man's forehead. His fever, perilously high, dried the cloths fast.

Moetua looked up at the newcomer with the slight smile courtesy demands of her race, but the sight of Taurua caused her to rise instantly.

"What is it, Taurua?" she asked, with a tremor in her voice.

Nanai stood up, twisting her hair hastily into a knot and scanning Taurua's face anxiously. "Aye, speak out!" she said. The other girl cast down her eyes and drew a long breath.

"I would that another might have told you," she said slowly.

"I am the bearer of ill tidings. . . ."

"Speak!" commanded Moetua.

"Your husbands . . . both are dead, and Te Moa and Nihau."

Moetua's face turned pale. After a long time she said, "The gods have forgotten. There is a curse on this unhappy land." Nanai stood with bowed head. The taller girl put a hand on her shoulder, and turned to Taurua once more. "Who killed Minarii?"

"Quintal has killed them all."

"Young had no hand in it?"

"No."

Moetua's eyes were full of tears as she looked Taurua straight in the face. "You are sure?"

"Sure! I swear it!"

Taurua turned away and sank down on her knees beside Christian. "The fever consumes him," she said to Moetua. "We must carry him to Young's house."

"Go back to Maimiti. We will fetch him down," said Moetua.

When she was gone, the two girls sat for some time in silence, with bowed heads and stony eyes. At last Moetua rose and made a sign to Nanai to take up one end of the litter. Carrying their burden easily, and still in silence, they took the path to Young's house.

They found Young with Balhadi in the room. Alexander Smith lay in the bed on the seaward side, unconscious and with closed eyes. Though he had lost much blood, his face was flushed with fever. Balhadi sat beside him on a stool. She looked up at the sound of footsteps outside the door.

Without a glance or a word of greeting, the two girls carried the litter into the room, set it down by the bed opposite Smith's, and lifted Christian's unconscious body on to the fresh spread of tapa. Young rose as they entered and was about to speak when he caught sight of Moetua's face. Still

without a word, she turned and beckoned Nanai to follow her out through the door.

Young crossed the room hastily to Christian's side. He listened to the wounded man's breathing, opened his shirt with gentle fingers, removed the dressing of native cloth, and examined the wound. As he rose from his knees his eyes met Balhadi's anxious glance.

"Can he live?" she asked.

"He must!" he replied, in a low voice. "He must and he shall!"

CHAPTER XV

THE American sealing vessel *Topaz* was steering west-by-south with all sail set, before a light air at east. The month was February and the year 1808. Her captain, Mayhew Folger, was one of the first Yankee skippers who were beginning to round the Horn, venture into the Spanish waters off the American coast, and steer west into the vast and little-known South Sea, in search of sealskins, whale oil, or trade.

The *Topaz* was ship-rigged, and, although small, she had the sturdy weather-beaten look of a vessel many months out-bound and well able to find her way home. The coast of Peru was now more than a thousand leagues behind her and she sailed a sea untracked by any ship since 1767, when Captain Carteret's *Swallow* had passed that way.

When Folger had taken the sun's altitude, at noon, he went below to make his calculations and to dine. Turning to go down the companionway, he caught the mate's eye.

"Keep her as she is, Mr. Webber," he said.

The mate was an Englishman of thirty, or thereabout, with a clear, ruddy complexion and an expression firm, reserved, and somewhat serious. He stood with arms folded, not far

from the helmsman, glancing aloft from time to time to see that the sails were drawing well. It was midsummer in the Southern Hemisphere; the sky was cloudless, and the sun, tempered by the east wind, pleasantly warm. The ship rolled lazily to an easy swell from the northeast.

Two bells sounded, and shortly afterward the man in the crow's nest hailed the deck. He had sighted land, distant thirty-five miles or more. A moment later the captain appeared, wiping his lips with the back of his hand and holding an old-fashioned spyglass which he extended to the mate.

"Get aloft, Mr. Webber, and see what you make of it."

Folger strode the deck until the other returned and handed him the telescope.

"A high, rocky island, sir, from the look of it. The bulk of the land is still hull-down. It bears sou'west-by-west."

"Hmml! A likely place for seals, I should think. You can alter the course to steer for it."

When Webber had given the necessary orders, the captain addressed him once more. "A discovery, sure as I'm a Yankee! There's nothing charted hereabouts save Pitcairn's Island, and Carteret laid that down a good hundred and fifty miles to the west."

The *Topaz* approached the land slowly, for the wind was dying to the lightest of light airs. At sundown the land was still far distant; it was not until past midnight that the ship was put about to stand off and on. Shortly after daybreak the land bore south—a small island, high and wooded to the water's edge, with a heavy surf breaking all along shore.

Captain Folger came on deck in the grey of dawn. As he was focusing his leveled telescope, the mate, standing at his side, gave an exclamation of astonishment.

"Smoke, sir! Yonder, above the bluffs!"

The captain peered through his glass for a moment before he replied. "Aye, so it is. The place is inhabited, without a doubt. I can see the smoke of four different fires." He sighed as he lowered his glass. "Well, there go our hopes of seals—"

and half our water casks empty. They'll be Indians, of course, apt to be hostile in this sea."

"Inhabited or not," remarked the mate, "no boat could land on this side. She would be dashed to pieces."

"And all hands drowned," Folger added, once more peering through his glass. "There's not a sign of a beach, and the coast is studded with rocks, offshore. . . . Bless me! Here's some of 'em now! Three, in a canoe!"

Webber's unassisted eye soon made out the tiny craft, appearing and disappearing as it approached over the long swell. The ship was allowed to lose what little headway she had, and within a quarter of an hour the canoe was close by—a long, sharp, narrow craft, with an outrigger on the larboard side. Her crew backed water at a distance of about thirty yards from the *Topaz*, and sat, paddle in hand, as though prepared to flee back to the land as swiftly as they had come. They regarded the ship with looks of wonder and awe, not unmingled with apprehension. In spite of repeated hails to come on board, they neither spoke nor came closer for some time. The mate gazed at these strange visitors with the keenest interest, observing that they were lads, the eldest no more than eighteen or nineteen. If Indians, they were, certainly, lighter in complexion than any he had seen. Their faces were bronzed by a life in the open air, but scarcely darker than those of white seafaring men. The stern paddler, who wore a straw hat of a curious shape, ornamented with feathers, seemed somewhat reassured by his scrutiny.

"You are an English ship?" he called, in a strong, manly voice.

"What in tarnation!" Folger exclaimed under his breath. And then: "No. This is an American vessel."

The three youths looked at one another and spoke together briefly in low voices.

"Who are you?" Folger called.

"We are Englishmen."

"Where were you born?"

"On the island yonder."

"How can you be English?" asked the captain.

"Because our father is an Englishman," came the quiet reply.

"Who is your father?"

"Alex."

"Who is Alex?"

"Don't you know Alex?"

"Know him? God bless me! How should I know him?"

The lad in the canoe regarded the captain earnestly, then turned to his companions again for another low colloquy in an unintelligible dialect. At length he said, "Our father would make you welcome on shore, sir."

"Come aboard first, my lads. You've nothing to fear from us," Folger replied in a kindly voice.

The steersman glanced at his companions, and, after a moment of hesitation, they dashed their paddles into the water and drew alongside. A line was dropped to them and made fast, and the three young islanders swarmed on deck with rare agility. The captain stepped forward to greet them, a smile on his kindly, weather-beaten face.

"I am Captain Folger," he said, extending his hand to the tallest lad, "and this is Mr. Webber, the mate."

"My name is Thursday October, sir. This is my brother, Charles, and this is James."

The spokesman, for all his youthful appearance, was a full six feet in height, and magnificently proportioned, with a handsome, manly countenance and a ready smile. All were barefoot, bare-chested, and bare-legged, and dressed in kilts of some strange cloth which reached to their knees. Their manner was easy and they showed no further signs of timidity, though they stared about them in round-eyed wonder at what they saw.

"What a huge, great ship, sir!" remarked Thursday October in a voice of awe. "We've heard of them from our father but have never seen one before."

The people of the *Topaz* were crowded as far aft as convention allowed, regarding their visitors with glances as interested as those the three lads bestowed on the ship.

"You shall be shown over her, presently," said the captain, "but I want to ask you about your island, first. Is there a landing place on the other side?"

"Only one, and that dangerous. We land and embark in the cove yonder."

Folger glanced toward the land and shook his head. "Our boats could never risk it. You have plenty of fresh water here?"

"Yes, sir."

The captain pointed to the scuttle-butt, outside the galley door. "We've a score of casks like that one. Could they be landed in your bay?"

"That would be easy, sir," Thursday October replied, quickly. "If you would tow them to the edge of the breakers, we could swim them in, one by one."

"And you could fill them, once on shore?"

"Yes, sir; though we would have to fetch the water down in calabashes."

"How long would it take?"

"Brown's Well is the nearest water." The lad thought for a moment, measuring with his eye the cask by the galley. "With all of us at work, I'll warrant we could do it in two or three days."

"And you'd be willing to lend us a hand?"

The lad's face lighted up. "To be sure we would, sir! There's a plenty of us ashore to help."

"Good! Never mind the work, young man. You shall be well rewarded. Now the boatswain will show you over the ship, above decks and below. Keep your eyes open and choose what will be most useful to you. Within reason, it shall be yours for filling my casks."

As the three lads followed the boatswain forward, Captain Folger turned to the mate. "The weather has a settled look,

Mr. Webber; yet I don't feel free to leave the ship. Will you go ashore and see that no time is wasted in filling the casks?" Webber's expression of pleasure was so transparent that Folger went on without waiting for a reply. "I envy you! Who can they be? There's a mystery here; you must solve it."

"I'm to go in the canoe, sir?"

"Yes, and you'd best stay ashore until the work's done. We'll tow the casks in with the longboat. Tell Mr. Alex, or whoever he is, that we'll be off the cove, ready to work, by noon."

When the young islanders had finished their tour of the ship, they proved reluctant to make known their wants.

Being urged, they at length informed the captain that a couple of knives, an axe, and a copper kettle would be more than ample compensation for watering the ship. Folger, who had taken a great fancy to the lads, gave them the kettle at once, and then forced upon them half a dozen each of large clasp knives and axes.

"And what style of man is Mr. Alex?" he asked, as they were handing down their things into the canoe. "Is he tall or short?"

"Like yourself, sir," Thursday October replied. "Short and strong-made."

Folger went below and returned with a new suit of stout blue broadcloth on his arm.

"Take this to Mr. Alex with my compliments."

Thursday October's eyes lit up with pleasure. "God will reward you for your kindness, Captain! We have no such warm clothes as these. Our father is no longer young and often feels the cold in the wintertime."

The three then shook hands warmly with Folger and the boatswain, waved to the others, and sprang down into the canoe, followed by the mate. A moment later they had cast off and were paddling swiftly toward the cove, now about three miles distant.

Webber was seated amidships, and as they drew near to the

land he forgot his curiosity in admiration of the sixteen-year-old lad who sat on the forward thwart. Never, he thought, as he watched the play of muscles on the paddler's back and shoulders, had he seen a nobler-looking boy. His countenance, when he turned his head, had the open, fearless look of a young Englishman, yet there was something at once pleasing and un-English in his swarthy complexion, his black eyes, and the thick black hair falling in curls to his shoulders.

They were close in with the land now, to the east of the little cove, where a huge rock, rising high above the waves, stood sentinel offshore. A bold and lofty promontory, falling away in precipices to the sea, gave the cove some shelter from the southeast winds; the swell, rising as it approached the land, rushed, feathering and thundering, into the caverns at the base of the cliffs, each wave sending sheets of spray to a great height. The cove itself was studded with jagged rocks, black and menacing against their setting of foam. It seemed incredible, at first glance, that even skilled surfmen could effect a landing at such a place. The cove was iron-bound, save at one spot where Webber now saw a tiny stretch of shingly beach, at the foot of a steep, wooded slope. A score or more of people were gathered there, staring at the approaching canoe. To reach the shingle, Webber perceived, the little craft would have to be steered with the greatest nicety, through a maze of rocks that threatened instant destruction. Yet the young paddlers seemed wholly unconcerned and approached with an air of complete confidence.

They halted briefly on the verge of the breaking seas, and then, at a word of command from Thursday October, all three dashed their paddles into the water at once. A great feathering sea lifted the canoe and bore her forward as swiftly as a flying fish on the wing. She turned, flashed between two boulders, and was swept high on to the little beach. Half a dozen sturdy lads rushed into the surf to hold her against the backwash; the paddlers sprang over the side to seize the gunwales,

and with the next comber they carried her high up on the shingly sand.

The little crowd on the beach, Webber observed with some surprise, was made up of boys and girls who might range from ten to eighteen years of age. Not a grown man or woman awaited the canoe. Where were the parents of all these youngsters? Thursday October had said that they had never before seen a ship. It seemed remarkable indeed to the mate of the *Topaz*, if Alex, the father, were truly an Englishman, so long cut off from humankind, that he and the other adults should show so little interest in visitors from the outside world.

The young people seemed shy, almost apprehensive. None stepped forward to greet the stranger; they seemed rather to shrink from him, whispering together in little groups and regarding him with bright eyes which expressed curiosity and wonder. The boys, like the three who had come out to the vessel, all wore kilts of figured cloth; the girls were neatly clad in the same materials, and most of them wore chaplets of sweet-scented flowers. Some of the girls would have attracted attention anywhere, though their beauty was more of the Spanish than of the English kind. When they whispered together, they spoke in some jargon unknown to the visitor.

The three paddlers now returned from a long thatched shed, well above high-water mark, where they had carried their canoe. The youngest, known as James, carried the suit of clothes, and now the boys and girls clustered around him, feeling of the cloth and exclaiming softly in wonder and admiration. Thursday October touched Webber's arm.

"Come this way, sir," he said.

The land rose steeply from the beach to the sloping plateau above, in a wooded bluff perhaps two hundred feet in height. A zigzag path led to the summit, and the lads and lasses were already trooping upward and were soon lost to view. Webber followed his guide, envying the agility of the lad, who strode along freely and without a halt, while he himself panted with his exertions and was obliged from time to time to cling to the

roots of trees, bushes, or tufts of grass. At length they reached the summit, where the mate halted to regain his breath. The young islander then led the way along a well-footed path that followed the seaward bluffs, winding this way and that among great trees whose deep shade felt deliciously cool. After crossing two small valleys, or ravines, they reached a kind of village, consisting of five houses scattered far apart along a stretch of partially cleared land which sloped gently toward the sea.

The houses were of two stories and thatched with leaves of the pandanus. They looked old and weather-beaten, but were strongly timbered, and three of them were planked with oak which Webber recognized as the strakes of a shipwrecked vessel. As they passed the first house he saw a dark, gypsy-looking woman peering out at him, and, at another open window-place, a second, somewhat younger, with a handsome face and thick rippling hair of a copper-red color the Englishman had never seen before. He caught glimpses of several other women at the farther dwellings, but they were no more than glimpses. Faces vanished from view the moment he looked toward them.

Presently they came to an ancient banyan tree on the seaward side of the path. Its huge limbs, from which innumerable aerial roots depended, like hawsers anchoring the tree still more firmly to the earth, seemed to cover half an acre or more. Directly opposite, on the inland side of the path at a distance of about thirty yards, stood a dwelling, delightfully pleasant and neat like all of the others, with a greensward dappled with sunlight and shadow and bordered with flowers and flowering shrubs.

A man of about fifty stood in the doorway. He was short and powerfully built, clad in the same strange cloth the others wore, but neatly cut and sewed into the form of frock and trousers, after the fashion of the old-time British tar. His grey hair fell upon his shoulders, and his features and the glance of his eye expressed strength tempered with benevolence.

"Welcome, sir," he said, stepping forward and extending his hand.

"My name is Webber. I am mate of the ship yonder."

With a word of apology to the visitor, Thursday October now stepped forward and spoke rapidly and briefly to the old man, in the same curious jargon the mate had heard on the beach—a language in which certain words of English were discernible, but whose sense was unintelligible to him. Presently the old man dismissed the lad with a nod and ushered the Englishman into the house.

"Dinah!" he called. "Rachel! Where are ye, lasses?"

Two little girls not yet in their teens appeared at the door, regarding the stranger with bright-eyed timidity.

"Fetch some coconuts for the gentleman," their father went on, "and what fruit ye can find."

The children dashed away without replying, while their father brought forward a chair. "Sit ye down, sir, and rest, and taste of what our island affords. Ye've been long at sea, I take it."

"Three months and more," the mate replied. "Little we thought there was land anywhere hereabout. What is the name of your island?"

"It's Pitcairn's Island, sir. No doubt ye've been misled by the chart. Captain Carteret laid it down a hundred and fifty miles west of its true position."

"But he called it uninhabited."

"Aye, so it was in his day. . . . Ye need water, the lad says. We've plenty here, but it'll be a three-day task at best to get it down to the beach. Can ye bide the time?"

"We've no choice. Scarcely a spit of rain have we had since we left the coast of Peru. Most of our casks are empty."

"And what might your errand be in these parts?"

"We're a sealing ship," Webber replied. "We were bound to the westward when we raised your island. Are there seals hereabout? In that case we'd like well to fish here, if you've no objection."

The islander shook his head. "Ye'd have no luck, Mr. Webber. I've seen a few of the animals on the rocks at rare times. The last was all of ten years back."

The old man fell silent, elbows on the rude table and chin in his hands. Webber had a slightly uncomfortable feeling that he was being studied and appraised. His curiosity concerning the inhabitants of the seagirt rock was so intense that once or twice he drew breath to put the direct question, but he thought better of it each time. His host was, plainly, a man of intelligence, who would realize how strange this little community must appear to a man from the outside world. If he had reasons for keeping silent, they should be respected. If willing to satisfy a stranger's curiosity, he would do so in good time.

"Ye're an Englishman, I take it?" said the islander at last.

"Yes. But the ship is American. She hails from Boston, in New England."

The old man gave him a keen glance. "Say ye so!" he replied. "Then there's still peace between us and the Colonies?"

"Aye, and a brisk trade, too."

The old man sighed and paused for a moment before he spoke. "Close on to twenty years I've been here, Mr. Webber. Ye're the first man to set foot on shore in all that time."

Webber looked up in astonishment. "Twenty years!" he exclaimed. "Then you've heard nothing of what's happened in the world—of the revolution in France; of old Boney, of Trafalgar, and all the rest!"

The children now returned, bringing drinking nuts and a dozen great yellow plantains in a wooden bowl, together with other fruits which were strange to the mate. He partook of them with the relish of a sailor long at sea, and, while he ate, narrated briefly the events of the stormy years at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. The old man displayed little interest in political happenings and battles on land, but the account of England's naval victories brought a flush to his cheek and a sparkle to his eye.

Yet all the while he seemed to labour under a baffling and unnatural reserve, maintaining a silence concerning himself out of keeping with a countenance as frank and open as that of John Bull himself.

The sun was high when Thursday October returned to escort the visitor down to the beach. "I'd take it kindly, sir," said the old man as he rose to his feet, "if ye'd stop with me whilst the watering is done. Or will your captain come ashore?"

"He'll want to stretch his legs before we leave," the mate replied, "But he will remain on board till the work is finished. I shan't put you out if I accept?"

The islander laid a hand on his arm. "Put me out, Mr. Webber? God bless ye, sir, never in the least! Ye'll be welcomed, and hearty, by one and all—that I promise ye!"

The longboat was towing the first of the barrels into the cove when the mate arrived at the beach. All the young people engaged in the task of swimming them in through the surf, shouting and sporting in the breakers, where they seemed as much at home as on land. Webber had never seen such swimmers; they appeared and disappeared in the swirling white water among the rocks, guiding the great, clumsy casks to the landing place, where they were beached without the slightest mishap. Soon all the first lot were ashore and rolled to a piece of level land that had been dug out of the hillside, while the longboat pulled back to the ship, now two miles distant.

Toward the close of the afternoon, Webber went for a ramble about the plateau, with some of the younger children as his guides. They led him first to a rock cistern in the depths of the valley and retired while he refreshed himself with a bath. No man could have asked for merrier companions, once their shyness had worn off. They brought him fruits and flowers, and spoke freely, even eagerly, of the trees and plants of the island, of the wild swine, the goats and fowls; but, for all their childlike faith and trust in him, Webber was aware of the same reserve so noticeable in the man they called father.

They seemed to be partakers in a conspiracy of silence concerning their history; and it was silence the guest respected, however much his curiosity was aroused.

Toward sunset he returned to the house where he had been bidden to sup and spend the night. He found his host seated on a bench outside the door with half a dozen of the smaller children seated on the grass around him. He was giving them an exercise in dictation, and the mate observed that he read from the Bible—a copy so worn and well thumbed that it was falling to pieces. He read slowly, a phrase at a time, while the children, with lips pursed and chubby fingers clasped round their pencils—the blunt spines of a kind of sea-urchin—set down the words as he pronounced them. For slates they used thin slabs of rock ground smooth on both sides.

"Avast!" said the old man as he perceived his guest. "That'll do for to-day, children. Rachel, run and tell Mother we're ready to sup. Come in, Mr. Webber. Ye've an appetite, I hope? I must tell ye, sir, ye've filled my old head so full of republics, and battles, and what not, I've been woolgathering all the afternoon!"

As they were about to seat themselves at the table, a woman of forty or forty-five came in through the back door, bearing a large platter containing baked pig and heaped up with sweet potatoes, yams, and plantains, all smoking hot. She had a pleasant homely face and the mate perceived at once that she was not of white blood.

"This is Balhadi, Mr. Webber, the mother of the little girls yonder." The mate stepped forward to greet her, and as he did so, his host spoke to her in the curious speech the islanders used among themselves. As soon as he had finished, she stepped forward and took the stranger's hand in both of hers, caressing it as a mother might do, her eyes glistening with tears as she peered up at him; then she turned and withdrew.

The two men seated themselves, and when the old man had heaped their plates he bowed his head, and, quietly and reverently, asked God's blessing on the food of which they

were about to partake. Webber was a religious man in the fine sense of the word; cant and snuffing were hateful to him, and he felt his heart touched and uplifted by the simplicity and the deep sincerity of the brief prayer.

Twilight was fading by the time they had finished the meal. While they were still at the table the mate had observed, through the open doorway, small groups of people turning in at the gateway and gathering on the grassplot before the dwelling. His host now led the way outside and for a few moments they remained seated on the bench by the door, looking on in silence at the scene before them. All the inhabitants of the island seemed to have assembled there. They sat in groups on the grass, speaking in soft voices among themselves. They were clothed in fresh garments and the younger women wore newly made wreaths of fern and flowers pressed lightly down over their loose dark hair. The visitor gazed about him with the keenest interest, thinking that he had never seen a group of healthier, happier-looking children. Counting them idly, he found that the young people numbered four-and-twenty, and seated among them were eight or nine women of middle age, the mothers, evidently, of this little flock. It was clear that they were all of Indian blood. But where were the fathers? With the exception of his host and himself, not a man of mature age was present.

Presently the old man rose to his feet, and at a sign from him the older women came forward to greet the visitor. The first to take his hand was a tall and slender woman of forty; the Englishman thought he had never seen a face at once so sad and so maturely beautiful.

"Mr. Webber," said his host, "let me make ye known to Maimiti, Thursday October's mother."

She greeted him in a soft, low voice, making him welcome in a few words of English spoken with a strange accent, very pleasant to hear. Following her came a woman of commanding presence, a head taller than the mate himself, whom his host introduced as Moetua. In her fine carriage, the poise of

her head, most of all in the proud spirit that looked out of the dark eyes, Webber was reminded of some mother of the heroic stage, or of some queen of the Amazons capable of performing deeds worthy to be handed down in the legends of primitive races.

Next came four women with English names—Mary, Susannah, Jenny, and Prudence—although they were evidently of the same race as the others. It was Prudence whose handsome face and copper-red hair he had admired at the window of the house he had passed on the way from the cove. These were followed by three more with strange Indian names which he found it impossible to keep in mind. Some greeted him in silence, merely shaking his hand; others spoke to him in the English tongue, though in a manner which revealed that they were little accustomed to the common use of it; but, whether silent or not, all made him feel, by the sincerity and kindness of their manner, that he was indeed a welcome guest.

Meanwhile, some of the younger people had brought a small table and two chairs from the house which they placed on the greensward, and a moment later Dinah appeared carrying her father's Bible, and Rachel with a kind of taper made of a dozen or more oily nuts threaded like beads on the midrib of a coconut leaflet which was stuck upright in a bowl of sand. The topmost nut was burning brightly, with hissings and sputterings, while a slender column of smoke rose from it, ascending vertically in the still air. The little company now seated themselves on the grass before the table, and the murmuring of voices ceased. The old man turned to his guest.

"This is the hour for our evening worship, sir," he said. "We should be pleased to have ye join with us."

A chair was placed for the visitor at one side of the group, whereupon his host seated himself at the table and opened his silver-clasped Bible, holding the volume close to the flick-

ering light. He turned the pages slowly with his large, rough fingers. Presently, clearing his throat, he began to read.

"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid."

Webber felt himself carried back to his boyhood, twenty years before. His grandfather, a white-bearded yeoman farmer, had read a chapter from the Bible each evening, in just such a quiet, earnest voice, after the same admonitory clearing of the throat; but how different a scene was this to the one he so well remembered in the north-country farmhouse of his childhood! The old man read on, his finger slowly following the lines, while the members of his little congregation listened with an air of the deepest interest and respect. When the lesson was at an end, all knelt and repeated the Lord's Prayer in unison, and as the guest listened to the voices of youths and maidens mingling with the clear, childish accents of the little children, he felt that here indeed was worship in purity of heart, in simple unquestioning trust in God's loving-kindness toward His children. It was as though all felt His presence there among them.

The service over, old and young came forward to bid the stranger good-night before dispersing to their various homes. When the last of them had gone, it seemed to Webber that his host looked at him with even more kindness and with less reserve than hitherto.

"It's plain that ye've a great love of children, Mr. Webber," he said. "Ye've some of your own, I take it?"

"That I have; three of them, the oldest about the age of the lad I had on my knee a moment ago. Whose child is he?"

"My own, though he's living with his foster mother just now. . . . It's over early for bed, sir. Would ye relish a bit of a walk? I've a bench not far off, overlooking the sea. It's a pretty spot and the moon will be up directly."

He led the way along the path toward the cove, but turned off in a moment on another leading through the groves to a rustic seat placed at the very brink of the cliff which fell steeply to the sea.

"Many's the time I come here of an evening, Mr. Webber," he explained, as they seated themselves. "Ye may think me fanciful, but there's times when the breakers seem the very voice of God—comforting at a time like this, wrathful on a night of storm. . . . Look! Yon she comes!"

The moon, a little past the full, was rising above the lonely horizon, flashing along the white crests of the breakers far below and glinting along the motionless fronds of the coconut palms.

The islander turned to his guest, hesitated, and said at last: "No doubt ye've wondered at my not naming myself. Smith's my name—Alexander Smith."

He watched his companion's face closely, as though to divine what effect the mention of the name might produce. As there seemed nothing to say, Webber remained silent.

"And ye must have wondered about other things," the old fellow went on, after a long pause. "Who we are, set down on this bit of land as far from any other."

The mate smiled. "I should have been more or less than human had my curiosity not been aroused."

His companion sat leaning forward, elbows on his knees, his hands clasped loosely, as he gazed out over the moonlit sea.

"Ye're an honest man, that's sure," he said, at length, "and a kind-hearted man. . . . I'd never believe ye could wish harm to me and mine?"

"Harm you? God forbid!" the mate replied, earnestly. "Set your mind at rest there, my friend. I would as soon harm my own little family as this flock of yours."

"What happened, Mr. Webber, was long ago—more than twenty years back. . . ." Of a sudden he turned his head. "Did ye ever hear of a ship called the *Bounty*?"

The words came to Webber like a thunderclap—like a blaze of lightning where deep darkness had reigned a moment before. In common with most seamen of his day, he had heard of the notorious mutiny on board the small armed transport

sent out from England to fetch breadfruit plants from the island of Tahiti to the West Indies. He remembered clearly the principal events in that affair. The fate of the *Bounty* and those who had been aboard her constituted one of the mysteries of the sea.

The mate turned to his companion and said, with emotion in his voice, "Then you're . . ."

"Aye," Smith interrupted quietly, "one of Fletcher Christian's men, Mr. Webber. It was here we came."

A hundred questions crowded into Webber's mind, but his companion was now more eager still.

"What can ye tell me of Captain Bligh?" he asked, anxiously. "Was he ever heard of again?"

"Indeed he was! He got home, at last, with most of his men, after the greatest open-boat voyage in the history of the sea."

Smith brought his hand down resoundingly on his knee. "Thank God for that!" he exclaimed, reverently. "Ye've done me a great service, sir. Now I'll sleep better of a night. And the men we left on Tahiti? What became of them?"

"I've read a book or two on the subject," Webber replied; "and the tale is well known. A ship-of-war was sent out to search for the *Bounty*. Let me see . . . *Pandora*, I think she was called. They found a dozen or fifteen of the *Bounty's* company on Tahiti. The *Pandora* seized them and they were being taken home in irons when the vessel was wrecked off the coast of New Holland. A number of her company and several of the prisoners were lost, and the rest of her people were forced to take to the boats. They reached England nearly a year later, as I remember it, when the prisoners were tried by court-martial. Three or four, I believe, were hung."

Smith had been listening with an air of almost painful eagerness. "Ye don't recollect the names of the lads was hung?" he asked.

Webber shook his head, as he was forced to do when his companion asked after numerous men by name.

"I'm sorry; I can tell you the fate of none of them," he replied. "Of the *Bounty's* company I remember only Captain Bligh, and Christian, the officer said to have led the mutiny."

"It was Mr. Christian's son, Thursday October, that brought ye ashore."

"And where is Christian, and the others who came with you? As I remember it, there were a dozen or more in all."

"Nine," said Smith. "That is, nine of us white men. Besides, there was six Indian men and twelve women that came with us from Tahiti. The women ye met this evening are the mothers of these lads and lasses."

"But where are the fathers?"

"There's none left, save me."

"You mean they've gone elsewhere?"

Smith shook his head. "No. They're dead, sir."

The mate waited for him to proceed. The old fellow sat staring before him. At length he said: "Are ye a patient man, Mr. Webber? Could ye listen to a story 't would take me a couple of evenings to tell?"

"An account, you mean, of what has happened here?"

"Aye."

"I should like nothing better! Why, man, there are scores in England would travel a hundred leagues to hear the tale from your lips! Have no fear! You'll find me a patient listener, I promise you!"

"I've no wish to tell it, God knows," Smith continued, earnestly. "And yet, if so be as I could . . . it would ease my heart more than I could well say. I've little learning—that ye can see for yourself; but I've forgot nothing that's happened here. Ye shall have the truth, Mr. Webber. I'll keep nothing back, but I'll ask ye to bear in mind that the Alex Smith who speaks is not the Smith of the *Bounty* days.

"Well, sir, to begin at the beginning . . ."

As he listened, the mate of the *Topaz* was lost to the present moment. He felt himself carried, in an all but physical

sense, into the past. In place of Alexander Smith—stout, middle-aged, and fatherly—he saw a rough young seaman in the midst of as strange a company as ever sailed an English ship. He was conscious of the heave of the *Bounty's* deck beneath his feet, of the hot suns, the wind and weather of bygone days. He found himself looking on at old unhappy scenes, sharing the emotions and hearing the voices of men long since dead—voices that had broken the silence of this lonely sea and still lonelier island, nearly twenty years before.

CHAPTER XVI

WHERE WAS I, sir? (Smith proceeded, on the following evening). Aye, if ye recollect, Mr. Christian and me was lying wounded in the house. Save for what I learned afterwards, I can tell ye nothing of the time that followed. Ye can fancy the state the women was in. Moetua and Nanai went off into the bush by themselves after they'd fetched Mr. Christian. Jenny and Taurua stopped with Mrs. Christian, who kept asking for her husband and wondering why he didn't come back. Ye'll recollect that she'd been brought to bed of a daughter on the morning the killing began.

Hutia stopped with Balhadi to care for us. Mr. Christian had lost so much blood, he lay quiet as a dead man. I'd a high fever; for three days without a let-up, they told me, I babbled, and cursed and raved. The rest of the women, with McCoy's children and little Matt Quintal and Eliza Mills, gathered in one house. They was that dazed and listless they might have starved, I reckon, if they'd not had the little 'uns to think on. They sat huddled on the floor the day long, with scarce a word exchanged, some of 'em crying softly with heads covered, as Indians do. The days was bad enough; it was the nights they dreaded most. They've strange notions,

not like ours. They reckon that the spirits of the new dead, no matter if dear friends or husbands in life, are fierce, ravening things, hating the living. Of a night, the women in Mills's house would bar every door and window, and huddle with the children by their candlenut torch, quaking at every little sound outside.

Quintal stopped alone at his place, sitting on the doorstep most of the time, with his chin in his hands, and he'd speak to no one. I've no notion what was going on in his mind. It may be he felt the loss of Mills and Jack Williams, or was thinkin' of the fix Mr. Christian was in, and how he'd brought the trouble on by burning Minarii's house.

The killing started at dawn, as ye know. September twenty-second, it was, 1793, a date I'll not forget. The last of the Indians was killed on the night of the twenty-third. Next morning, when Moetua and Nanai was gone, Taurua came across from Mr. Christian's house to speak to my old woman. She told her Mrs. Christian was in such a state it was all they could do to keep her in bed. It was agreed by all she'd have to be told.

Mr. Young said, long afterwards, he'd as soon face the hangman as live through that morning again. They tried to soften the news to Mrs. Christian, but she guessed what they held back.

Up she got, in her kirtle, threw a mantle over her shoulders, took up her newborn babe, and went out the door without a word. When they reached our house, she went straight to the bed-place, motioning Hutia away.

Mr. Christian's eyes was closed and his fever was high. Hutia took the child, and his wife settled herself at the head of the bed-place to keep the cloths on his forehead wrung out cool and fresh. Ye know what a shock the like of that will do to a woman. Mrs. Christian's milk begun to flow strong and good that morning; by nightfall her breasts was dried up. When the baby cried, Balhadi fed it on what the Indians call

ouo, the sweet jelly they scrape out of young coconuts. Aye, and she throve on it; for the next year she'd naught else.

All that night, through the next day and the night following, Mr. Christian and I lay there, tended by the women and Mr. Young. He'd told Mrs. Christian what had happened; after that she scarce spoke a word. It must have been the morning of the third day when the fever left me and I opened my eyes.

Here I was in my own house, weak as a cat and bad wounded. My left shoulder and my neck was all stiff and sore. When I tried to move, it pained me cruel. My head was light from the fever and it was a good bit afore I could set my thoughts in order. It came back slow—how Jenny'd come to my taro patch, how I'd climbed the Goat-House, hoping to meet up with Mr. Young, and hid myself alongside the path in the Main Valley, on the chance of cutting down one of the Indians and getting his musket. Towards sunset I'd crept down to Mr. Young's plantain walk, for I'd had naught to eat all day. Then I recollected Té Moa, and Nihau, with Mills's head at his belt, stepping out sudden as I was reaching up for some ripe fruit, and the shot that knocked me down; how I'd scrambled up and made a run for it; then something to do with Jenny, and no more. Three was killed, she'd told me at the taro patch. That was all I knew.

My bed-place was on the north side of the room, by an open window. It was a calm, sunny morning, with scarce enough breeze to move the tree-tops. Here and there, where the screen of bush was thin, the sea showed blue through the trees. Beautiful, it was, and peaceful; ye'd never have thought men could plot murder in such a place. I set my teeth and turned my head the other way.

I saw someone on the other bed, across the room, but couldn't make out who it was. Mrs. Christian sat on the floor beside him with her back to me, and I could see neither her face nor his. He never moved, and I took a notion he was dead. Taurua and my old woman was feeding a tiny baby

on a mat, and Mr. Young stood near by. I called out to him.

Balhadi sprang up, baby and all; and Mr. Young came across to me. "Hush, Alex!" said he. "Thank God ye're better, now the fever's down!" My old woman tried to smile at me, and nodded with a hand on my head.

"Who's that yonder?" said I.

"Mr. Christian."

"Is he living?"

"Aye."

Mrs. Christian came over and spoke to me kindly.

When she'd gone back to sit by Mr. Christian, I had a glimpse of his face. One look was enough. There's no mistaking a dying man. Mr. Young signed to Balhadi to take the baby away, and sat on a stool close by.

"Ned," I whispered, "tell me what's happened, else ye'll have me in a fever again."

When he had, I lay there thinking on it and wondering what the outcome'd be. It was a black business. Ye won't wonder I felt bitter toward Quintal and McCoy. They'd done more'n anyone else to bring on trouble with the Indians, and come through scot-free. God meant this island to be a little Garden of Eden, and we'd made a hell of it. Mr. Christian had done all a man could. Now he lay dying for his pains. Knowing him as I did, I reckoned he'd be glad to go. We'd had our chance, and we'd failed. Why? It wasn't the Indians' fault; they'd had cause enough for what they'd done. I thought of Tetahiti, who'd been my friend; and of Minarii—both high chiefs on their own islands. Because their skins wasn't white, McCoy and Quintal and Martin and Mills reckoned they wasn't fit to own land. I went back to the beginning, to the day we landed here, trying to make out how we'd got on the wrong course. No, it was no fault of the Indians. All the men asked was to be treated like men; they'd have been our best friends had we met 'em halfway. As for the girls, ye'd travel far to find a better lot. Real helpmates, they was, ready to take their share in all that was going. And none

o' your sour, scolding kind. *We* was to blame, and no one else. In the first place, we should have seen to it, afore ever we left Tahiti, that each man had his girl, with some to spare. That might have kept Williams out o' mischief. *Might*, I say, for ye could never tell with a man like Jack. He and his precious Hutia was the start o' the trouble. But it was bound to come, girls or no girls. There was them amongst us reckoned the Indians was made to be used like dogs. That's the first and last of it, sir, in few words.

I slept most of the morning. I felt a deal better when I woke up again, and grateful just to be alive. Maimiti was still at the foot of Mr. Christian's bed, watching him with a look on her face would have melted a heart of stone. All at once I saw her eyes light up; she came quickly and softly to the head of the bed and knelt down beside him, taking his hand. The fever had left him and he was conscious.

He looked at her in a puzzled way at first. "What's this, Maimiti?" said he. "Where are we?"

"In Ned's house."

She fetched him some water, and I could see by the look in her eyes that hope was springing up in her. He drank a little and said no more for a bit; then he asked, "Is Ned here?"

Mr. Young was at the door. He came in and stood at the foot of the bed. He didn't trust himself to speak.

"What is it, Ned? What has happened?"

"Don't worry or try to talk just now," said Mr. Young.

"Where is Minarii?"

"He is dead."

"And the other Indian men?"

"All dead."

Mr. Christian turned his head slow on the pillow and saw me. "Are ye hurt, Smith?"

"Aye, sir, but not bad," said I.

His voice was stronger when he spoke next.

"Ye must tell me the whole of it, Ned. I want to know."

There was no getting out of it. Mr. Young told him, quick

and short. However he felt, he gave no sign; just lay there, a-starin' up at the ceiling; then his eyes closed, and Mr. Young tiptoed out o' the room.

Mrs. Christian never moved from her place at the foot of the bed, where she could watch his face. She was blind to what I could see. Trust a good woman to hope. It was afternoon when he came round again and drank a little of the water she offered him. Then a long time passed without a word said. It was well on toward eight bells when young Thursday October came to the door. He was three at the time, and ye never saw a handsomer little lad. He'd a finger in his mouth as he stood in the doorway, looking into the room with his round eyes. At last he came in on tiptoe, half afraid, even after he'd made his father out. Mr. Christian turned his head and saw the little fellow. Desolate, his face was; such a look as I hope never to see another man wear.

"Take the child out," said he.

His wife took up the lad and set him down outside the door. She was gone for a minute or two; I think it took her that long to get herself in hand.

The afternoon wore through. Balhadi fed me a bit of sweet coconut water now and again. I could look out the window, as I told ye. A fine breeze had made up; the trees was swayin', and there was whitecaps out at sea. All the womenfolk was gathered outside, waiting. Mr. Christian was conscious this while, but he spoke no more than a word or two. He knew he was dying, most like, and felt glad to go. All he'd touched was ruined, he'd be thinking: the *Bounty's* voyage, the men set adrift with Captain Bligh in the launch, those who'd stopped on Tahiti, and now our little settlement, where he'd hoped for so much. Aye . . . I'll warrant there was never a man waited his end with greyer thoughts than Mr. Christian. My heart bled for him.

The breeze died away after sundown, as it often does here. I don't recollect a stiller, more beautiful evening. It was spring in these parts, as ye'll remember, and the twilight came

on slow. Mrs. Christian gave her husband a sip of water, set down the cup, and stopped where she was, seated on the bed beside him. He put a hand on hers and looked up with a faint smile. Then he turned his head, slow.

"Alex," he said.

"Sir?"

When he spoke again it took me by surprise, and I'm not certain of the words to this day. He said, "There's a chance, now," or "there's still a chance"—one or the other.

He seemed to expect no reply, so I made none, but lay there trying to make out just what he meant. If he'd said, "There's a chance, now," the words was the bitterest ever spoke, for he must have meant that with him dead and out of the way there might be hope for us. I can scarce believe he spoke so, but it may have been.

After a long time I heard his voice again: "Never let the children know!" and those was the last words I heard him say.

I must have dozed off then, and when I opened my eyes it was dark in the room.

It was Mrs. Christian's low, hopeless cry that woke me. I couldn't see her, or Mr. Christian, but I knew the end had come.

CHAPTER XVII

The month that followed was a sorry time, with the silence of death over all. I was afeared, at first, that Mrs. Christian might lose her reason. She wasn't one to weep, and that stony kind of grief ain't natural in a woman. Tears would have helped but none came. It made my heart sore to see her going about the house with that dazed, dead look on her face, like as if the truth hadn't come home to her yet. And there

was nothing ye could do to help. She had to fight it through alone. Sometimes a whole day'd pass without her speaking a word.

Aye, it was a numb, hopeless time for all, and I'll never forget how lonesome it seemed with so many gone. There was one, Martin, I'd have had no wish to see back. We was all of a mind about him: he was better dead; but the others, whites and Indians alike, was sore missed, and most of all, of course, Mr. Christian. We could see better, now, the man he'd been, and the deep need we had for him. There was no one could take his place. We was like sheep without a shepherd.

Mr. Young was the hardest hit of any of the men, I reckon; ye'd scarce believe the change that came over him. He'd sit on the bluffs for hours at a time, lookin' out over the sea, or wander about the settlement like a man walkin' in his sleep. There'd been no one fonder of a joke in the old days, but after Mr. Christian's death I never again heard him laugh. My bein' hurt and needin' a bit of care was a help to him. When Maimiti or Balhadi wasn't settin' by me, he was, and I'd try to get his mind on other things: plans for the future—how we'd divide ourselves up, now, amongst the houses, the new gardens we'd make, and the like. He'd try to show interest, but it was plain he had no heart for anything.

But Mrs. Christian wouldn't give in, and having the children to see to and the other women to comfort was a godsend to her. Little by little she became more like her old self, and she'd hearten the others with her quiet ways. I don't know what some would have done without Maimiti.

One day when she and Mr. Young was by me in the house, she spoke of Moetua and Nanai. Ye'll mind that they was the wives of Minarii and Tetahiti. They'd not been near the settlement since the day they brought Mr. Christian down, but lived by themselves in Jack Williams's old house on the other side of the island. Some believed they must have known their men meant to kill all the whites, and there might have been a war and a massacre amongst the womenfolk if it hadn't

been for Maimiti and Taurua; they knew well enough that Moetua and Nanai had naught to do with it and was as innocent as themselves.

Well, Mrs. Christian asked Mr. Young to go across and coax 'em down, if he could. "Tell 'em to come for my sake, Ned," said she.

All the women liked Mr. Young; they'd do anything he said. Inside of an hour he was back, and they with him. He came in first and they stood at the door. Ye've seen Moetua, sir; ye can picture what she was in her young womanhood. I've seen thousands of Indian women, whilst on the *Bounty*, on islands scattered all over this ocean, but none to match Moetua for strength and beauty. She was like a young oak tree. I can't say better than that she was a fit wife for Minarii. It'd done my heart good just to see them two going about together.

It wasn't fear of Prudence and Hutia or all the women folk together that kept her away from the settlement at this time. She'd have been more than a match for the lot of 'em. But she knew Quintal had killed her husband and she was afeared she might take her revenge on him. She'd not his great brute strength, but, with the fire of hate in her heart, I'll not say she couldn't have mastered him and put him to death.

Nanai had a softer nature. She was of the best Indian blood: ye could tell at a glance the difference there was between her and women the like o' Jenny or Hutia. She was gentle. She needed someone to cling to, and it was a blessing she had Moetua, after Tetahiti was killed. Half crazed as some of the women was, after the killing, I reckon they might have found a way to murder Nanai if she hadn't been with Moetua.

As I've said, they stood at the door, waiting. The minute she saw 'em, Maimiti came across and took 'em by the hands and brought 'em in. "Moetua," said she, "what our men have done is done. It may be that your husband killed mine; now both lie dead. Nanai, Christian and Tetahiti were friends. We

have been like sisters in the past. I have nothing but love in my heart for ye two. Will ye come here and live with me?"

I can tell ye what was said, but not how it was said. Never a woman lived with a more kind, gentle nature than Mrs. Christian. Moctua took her in her arms and held her close. She had a beautiful husky voice, near as deep as a man's. "Aye, that we will!" said she. Then the three of them wept together, with their arms round each other. Glad I was to see that meeting. It was the first time Mrs. Christian had shed tears.

As soon as I was able to walk, she asked me if I'd let her have my house and move over to hers. I knew how it was with her: she'd a terror of setting foot in the house where she and Mr. Christian had lived. So we moved down there—my old woman, and Hutia, and Prudence, who was to live with us. Mr. Young took Mills's house, with Taurua and Jenny. Quintal and McCoy stopped where they always had, with their own two girls and Susannah.

My wound healed slow. I was able to walk by the end of October. But it was close to Christmas before I had any use of my left arm. I was good for little this while and had to stop indoors. It was a quiet time, but desperate lonesome, as I've said. Quintal and McCoy kept clear o' me, and I was glad they did, for my heart was bitter towards both. I knew we'd mostly them to thank for bringin' trouble to a head with the Indians. I wouldn't have cared if I'd never set eyes on either of 'em again.

Ye'd have said, sir, that God had give us that time to mind us of the past and the mistakes we'd made, and to make sure of our ways for the days to come; but some of us was too ignorant to profit by it, and the rest too weak or stubborn. I'm speaking of the men. What followed was no fault o' the women. Them that went our ways did it because we led 'em, or forced 'em to it.

I've spoke of McCoy's still. He had it going long afore the killing started, but he was that close about it not even his

crony, Matt Quintal, knew what he was up to. There's no better way to show ye what a sly clever man Will McCoy could be. On this mite of an island, where there was so few of us, he'd been able to make spirits, enough for his own use, and none of us knew.

It wasn't till later I learned all that went on. McCoy had been shook bad by the days he was in the bush with the Indians after him. A time or two they all but had him; they'd passed within a few feet of where he lay hid, and he'd seen Mills's bloody head, and Martin's, hangin' at their belts. Aye, he'd been near daft with fear, and, when all was over, the women who went in search of him couldn't coax him back to the settlement. He'd not even believe Mary, his own girl, and it wasn't till Quintal came and showed him the Indians' dead bodies that his mind was set at rest. Then off he went again, no one knew where.

Quintal was crazed himself, in a different way. There'd always been something a little queer about Matt; I'd noticed it in the old days on the *Bounty*. It wasn't often, but now and again something he'd say or do would show ye the man wasn't quite right in his head. The trouble got worse, after the killing. He'd set on his doorstep muttering to himself, the women said, and act so queer, most of the time, they was afeared of him. For all that, he began to work about his place again, chopping wood, doing a bit o' weedin' in the gardens, and the like. Then it came over him, of a sudden, that McCoy had quit the house. Slow and dogged, Quintal began to search for him, and found him at last in one of the gullies on the west side of the island. McCoy had made him a hut, close by his still, a dry, cozy little place with a soft bed of fern inside.

"So this is where ye hide out!" said Matt. "What's come over ye, Will, and what's all this gear ye've got?"

McCoy saw he'd have to tell, and he was glad, in a way, that Quintal'd found him. "Set ye down, Matt," said he. He pulled a bottle out of the fern, and a pewter half-pint he had by him.

"Taste that," said he, and he poured him out a big dollop of spirits.

Quintal took a sniff and then poured it down. "It ain't bad, not by a long way," said he; "but what is it? Where'd ye get it from?"

"I made it," said McCoy, "out o' ti roots."

Then he told Quintal how it was done. They got the *Bounty's* big copper kettle. The other McCoy had was too small to make spirits for more than one; with the big one they could brew any amount and set some of it aside to age. A new still was set up, and so new trouble started.

In the beginning they went at their drinking quiet-like. It was noticed, of course, that they'd be off together somewhere, but the womenfolk was glad to have 'em gone, and took no thought of what they might be up to. After a few weeks they'd bring their grog to the house, and they teached their girls and Susannah to drink with 'em. It wasn't long till Prudence and Hutia took to goin' there of an evening, and sometimes even Jenny would go. That's how I first got wind of it.

I'll say this for myself, sir, and it's the one right thing I did in all that time: I tried to hold Hutia and Prudence back, at first. But they'd found that grog could make 'em forget the troubles we'd had. Once they knew that, there was no keepin' 'em away from McCoy's house; but the women I've spoke of was the only ones that ever touched the stuff. The others would have naught to do with it.

One evening before I was able to get about much, Mr. Young came in to see me. He was like a new man, and it was easy to guess where he'd been.

"Alex," said he, "I've brought ye what will do ye a world of good."

"What's that?" said I, knowing well enough what it was.

He'd a bottle under his arm, which he set on the table.

"Will McCoy's sent this along to ye, with his hearty good wishes," said he; "and it's grand stuff, Alex. Ye'd scarce know it from the best London gin."

"Ye've had a good sup, already, Ned," said I. "That's plain to be seen."

"I have so," said he. "Where's the sense of our holding out against a tot o' good grog now and again? It's a sad lonesome life we lead here. God knows a little good cheer won't harm us."

"Ned," said I, "I'll not say I don't wish I had a cag o' the same, but have ye reckoned what this might lead to? Ye've never seen Quintal in his cups. I have. He's the devil himself!"

"He was quiet and pleasant as ye please to-night," said Mr. Young.

"That may be," said I. "There's times when he's harmless enough; but ye never know when he'll be the other way."

"Quintal or no Quintal," said he, speakin' a little thick, "I'm for the grog! I've not felt like this in months, lad. My idea is that a little o' this—seamen's rations, mind ye, like we had in the old days—will harm none of us."

I said naught for a bit. Of a sudden he looked at me in a sober way, and got up from his chair.

"God forgive me, Alex!" said he. "If ye wish to abstain, I'd cut off my right hand before I'd be the one to urge ye!" He grabbed up the bottle and was about to go, and, fool that I was, I begged him to set down again. I'd been away from spirits for so long, I could just as well have kept off it; and I knew how it would be once I started again. No seaman ever loved his rum more than myself. I'd been used to it from the time I was a mere lad, and words can't say how I coveted a share o' that bottle.

Well, sir, the long and the short of it was that I fetched a couple of half-pints and a calabash of water, and between us we finished the whole bottle. And Mr. Young was right: it did me a world of good. I'd been low-spirited enough, but after a few drinks everything was bright and sunny. Balhadi looked on at the two of us, pleased as anything to see us so cheerful again. At this time none of the women-folk knew the harm there was in drink. In years past there'd been a spree or

two in the bush, but these they'd not seen, and for the most part we'd drunk our grog rations from the old *Bounty's* supply quiet and peaceable till all was gone. So the womenfolk, bein' ignorant, made no fuss at all, at first, about the still. Most wouldn't drink because they couldn't abide the taste o' spirits, but they didn't mind us doing it.

As soon as I was able to get about, I took to joinin' the others at McCoy's house. At first there was no harm in any of us. We'd agreed each man was to have his half-pint a day and no more. It was even less at the start, because we hadn't enough to make up a half-pint around, but that was soon mended. We'd never worked harder in the old days than we did now at clearing land for ti-planting. Quintal and me took charge o' that, and Mr. Young and McCoy minded the still. They soon had a cag o' spirits set by to age and started filling another. We hunted the island over for wild ti roots whilst them we'd planted was coming along. The food gardens was left to the womenfolk.

Ye can guess what followed, sir. We was young seamen, save Mr. Young, and the eldest of us scarce five-and-twenty. As soon as there was a good store of spirits set by, no more was said about half a pint a day, though Mr. Young held fast to that at first. The rest of us drank as much as we'd a mind to, and the five girls with us. There was Sarah Quintal, and McCoy's Mary, and the three others I've spoke of—Susannah, Hutia, and Prudence. These last had no men o' their own, and the grog made 'em as wild and hot-blooded as ourselves. Ye'll not need to be told how it was with us. We took no thought o' wives or anything else.

There was trouble a-plenty afore many weeks. Mrs. Christian wasn't long in seein' the truth o' things. She'd come to Mr. Young and me and beg us to leave off for the children's sakes if for naught else. And we'd be shamed to the heart and promise to do better; but, a few days after, back we'd go and all would be as before. It got so as Mrs. Christian and the other decent women would have naught to do with us. She

gathered the children away from McCoy's house, and she fitted bolts and bars to her house, well knowing what a dangerous man Quintal was, at times, when he was drunk. One night, when the rest of us was too far gone to stop him, he near killed Sarah. She and Mary both had more than enough bad treatment. They'd have been only too glad to leave the house, but didn't dare to, for fear o' what their men might do.

So it went with us for another three months; then a thing happened that brought even such brutes as we'd become to our senses.

The four of us men was at McCoy's house, drunk as usual, with Prudence and Hutia and Susannah. Mary and Sarah had got to the place where they was more afraid to stay than to go, and Mrs. Christian had taken 'em in at her house. Quintal had been of a mind to fetch 'em back, but the rest of us had talked him out o' that and got him quieted down. McCoy didn't mind Mary going, for he still had some decency in him and he knew she'd be best awáy with the children.

I came stumbling back to my own house about midnight and Balhadi got me into bed. She'd stayed by me all this while, and Taurua had done the like by Mr. Young, which only goes to show how patient and long-suffering good women can be. But they was near to the end of their patience, as I'm about to tell ye.

It seemed to me I'd scarce closed my eyes when I was shook awake by Balhadi. "Quick, Alex!" said she. "Rouse the others and come! Quintal's just gone by toward Maimiti's house! He means mischief!"

I set out at a run for McCoy's house and roused him and Mr. Young, who was sleeping there. Before we'd come half-way back, we heard Quintal batterin' at the door of Mrs. Christian's house. The sound of it sobered us, I can promise ye!

The moon was about an hour up. Quintal was at the door with a fence post he'd picked up, and all but had it battered

down by the time we got there. McCoy yelled at him, but he gave no heed. We could hear the children crying indoors, and then Mrs. Christian's voice, cool and quiet. "I've a musket here," said she. "I'll shoot him if he sets foot inside. Stand away, ye others!"

McCoy was the only one of us who could ever manage Quintal with words. He ran up now and took hold of his arm. "Matt, are ye mad?" said he. Quintal turned and gave him a shove that threw him clear across the dooryard. "I want Moetua," said he.

I dragged him back, and Will was at his legs and Mr. Young tried to hold one of his arms. The three of us was no match for him, and that's the truth. Then the women took a hand.

Balhadi pitched in with us; then what was left of the door was broke down and out came Moetua. Hating Quintal as she did, she was better than two men. She got her fingers round his throat and would have killed him if it hadn't been for Maimiti. We tied him up and carried him, half dead, back to McCoy's house.

That was the last straw for the women. Even Prudence and Hutia left us, wild young things that they was in those days, and they took Susannah with 'em. They joined the others at Mrs. Christian's house. We'd bound Quintal hand and foot, so he couldn't move, and had to keep him so all the next day, for he was like a wild animal. Nothing we could say would quiet him.

That same morning, Balhadi went down to Mrs. Christian's and was gone till afternoon. There was a scared, sober look on her face when she came back. I noticed it, though I was still muddled and sleepy with the drink I'd had. She'd a mind to tell me something—I could see that—but she held off, and I didn't coax her to come out with it, whatever it was. The fact is, I was ashamed and disgusted with myself, thinking how I'd used Balhadi all these months, and I was short and surly with her to hide how I felt. Around the middle of the

afternoon I told her to fetch me a bite to eat, which she did. When I'd finished I lay down for a nap, and having had no sleep the night before, I didn't wake till daylight the next morning.

Balhadi was nowhere about. It was a day of black squalls, makin' up out of the southeast, with hot calm spells betwixt 'em. I went to the edge of the bluffs, as I always did of a morning, for a look at the sea and sky. While I was there, a squall came down so sudden I'd no time to run to the house, and squatted in the lee of a clump o' plantains, takin' what shelter I could. It was over in ten minutes, and I was looking out to the eastward when I saw something afloat about a mile offshore. For all my bleary eyes, it looked like a capsized boat. I rubbed and looked again and made out what I thought was people in the water alongside, and some up on the keel.

I'd no notion of the truth, but ye'll know the start it gave me to see a capsized boat, with men clinging to it, in this lonely ocean. In all the years we'd been here we'd sighted but the one ship I've told ye of. I scanned the horizon all around, as far as I could see, for the ship this boat belonged to, but there was none in view; then I ran to McCoy's house to get the spyglass.

Him and Mr. Young was there, still asleep. I shook 'em out of it and the three of us hurried down to the lookout point above the cove. Ye know how it is when ye get a glass on something far off—it jumps right up to your eye. What I saw was our cutter, upside down, and all our womenfolk around it, some swimming, some clinging to the boat as best they could, while they held their little ones up on the keel.

Ye'll know the shock it gave us—such a sight as that. Even with it there before our eyes, we was hard put to believe it was real. We ran back to McCoy's house to fetch Quintal. He was snoring fit to shake the place down. We pulled him out of the bed-place tryin' to waken him. "Rouse him out of it," said I to Will. "Kick him awake somehow! Let him know

young Matt's out there like to drown!" Then Mr. Young and me ran to the cove.

We dragged the biggest of the canoes down into the water. By good luck there was no great amount of surf and we was soon beyond it. We made the hafts o' them paddles bend, I promise ye!

Afore we was half a mile out, another black squall bore down on us—solid sheets of water, and wind fit to blow the hair off your head. It passed, quick as it had made up, and there was the cutter, not a cable's length off.

Had the girls been women from home, more than one of the children would ha' been drowned that day; but these knew how to handle themselves in the sea. Prudence and Mary came swimmin' to meet us, and passed up their babes afore they clambered aboard. Next minute we was alongside, and took little Mary from Mrs. Christian. Then the older ones they had on the keel was passed over to us.

McCoy and Quintal was on the way by this time in the other canoe. Quintal was in the stern. He made the water boil and no mistake!

"Is Matt safe?" he yelled when he was still a quarter of a mile off.

"Aye, safe!" I hailed back. "And all hands!"

Mary was in our canoe with their two little ones, half drowned, in her lap, and I'll not forget the look on Will's face when he saw 'em. We was takin' the other women on board, Mrs. Christian the last. The two canoes held the lot of us. We took the cutter in tow and made for the cove.

Some of the women was weeping, but not a word was spoken all the way. Mrs. Christian sat on a thwart with little Mary in her arms. She'd a look of hopelessness and despair that'll haunt me to my last day.

We ran the breakers and got the women safe ashore, and them with the children hurried on to the settlement. The others helped us get the cutter righted and bailed out and back in the shed. We had no words with 'em or they with us.

We was too shocked and sobered by what they'd tried to do to have a harsh word for any of 'em.

Will ye believe it, sir? They'd meant to sail off with the young 'uns in that bit of a cutter! Mrs. Christian understood the compass, and they minded some low islands we'd passed in the *Bounty* on the way from Tahiti. That's where they was bound, if so be as they could find 'em. Unbeknownst to us, Mrs. Christian had got 'em together, provisioned the cutter, and set sail to the north. Had they not made the sheet fast and capsized in a squall, they'd all ha' been lost, as certain as sunrise!

But this'll show ye how desperate they was. They was sickened to the heart's core of men, and they'd come to hate the island where there'd been so much bloodshed and misery. We'd drove 'em to the point where they'd sooner chance death by drowning, or thirst and starvation, than live with us and have their children brought up by such fathers as we'd become.

That evening the four of us got together, but not to drink. It was McCoy himself that spoke first. "Mr. Young," said he, "I'm done with it! I know how much blame falls to my share in all that's passed. I'll be the cause o' no more trouble. We've children and good women here. I'm for a decent life from now on."

"I'm with ye, Will!" said I, standin' up, "and there's my hand on it!"

We was all of a mind, Quintal as hearty and earnest as the rest. There was to be no more distilling, that was agreed on and swore to, and we went to our beds sober and peaceable for the first time in many a day. Aye, we thought we was turning a new leaf that evening. There was to be naught but peace and quiet in the days to come.

CHAPTER XVIII

Now, sir, I'll pass over three years. It was a time I don't like to think about. I said I'd tell ye the truth of what's happened here, and so I will, but ye'd not want to hear the whole thing of it. There's little to be said about those years save that we went from bad to worse. Not all at once. For two or three months after the womenfolk tried to leave the island we kept our word, and not a drop of spirits was touched. We did try, the four of us, to make a new start; then it was the old story over again: our solemn promises was broke, and the end of it was that Maimiti left the settlement with her three children and went over to the Auté Valley to live, and Moetua and Nanai went with her. They built a house with no help from any of us, and not long after, Jenny and Taurua, Mr. Young's wife, joined 'em, and they gathered all the children up there, away from us. I was glad they did. The settlement was no place for children, that's the truth of it.

Balhadi had stayed by me all this while, hoping I'd come to my senses, and Mary had done the like by McCoy, but little heed we gave to either of 'em. Four of the women—Hutia, Susannah, Prudence, and Sarah, Quintal's girl—stayed on with us, for the most part, and we lived together in a way it shames me to think of.

Mr. Young made one with us in this. Ye'll wonder he could have done it. He was a gentleman born. How did it come he could join with men the like of Quintal, McCoy, and myself? My belief is he'd lost all heart and hope, seein' how things went. He was never a man to lead. He must have thought we could never be made to go his way, so he went ours. But it was plain he hated himself for doing it. Never have I seen a sadder face than Mr. Young's at this time. It was a blow to

him when Taurua left to join Maimiti, but he didn't change his ways. He took to drinking harder than ever, like as if he wanted to kill himself. For all that, he was a gentleman in whatever he did. I knew well enough it was only the grog that made him able to abide the rest of us.

So things went till the end of 1797. I mind me well of a spree we had in the fall of that year. We'd started by killing a pig and making a feast. There was the four of us and the women I've spoke of. It happened that Jenny and Moetua had come down to the settlement that day. They found us in a carouse that was the worst, I reckon, we'd ever had up to that time. McCoy recollected that it was four years to the very week from the time when the last of the Indian men was killed. He was so drunk he cared for naught, and he told the women we'd made the feast to mind us o' that. Then Quintal made him brag before Moetua, who'd been Minarii's wife, about how he'd thrown her husband over the cliff at the top of the Rope. I was far gone in drink myself, then, and I've no doubt I did my part to make the women hate us the more.

I've little recollection of what happened after, but I know the women was horror-struck at our brute ways. There was fighting 'twixt Quintal and McCoy and some o' them, but I was too drunk to take part in it. I was awake early next morning and found I'd climbed to the loft, somehow. Mr. Young was asleep on a bed on the other side of the room. I went down the ladder and found Quintal and McCoy sprawled out on the floor, and a precious-looking pair they was! McCoy was scratched and bruised all over his body, and he had every stitch of clothing torn off him. Quintal's face and beard was smeared and caked with blood from a deep gash on his head; one of the women must have given him an awful knock. The benches and tables was upset, and glass from broken bottles was scattered all over the floor.

I went along home for a bit, but there was no one about, or in any of the other houses. I went on to Mr. Christian's old place where Prudence and Susannah lived at this time. Mai-

miti had never set foot there—or in the settlement, for the matter of that—since the day she'd moved to the Auté Valley.

The *Bounty's* chronometer was at Mr. Christian's house. He'd kept it going from the time the ship was seized from Captain Bligh to the day he was killed. Mr. Young minded it after that, till he took to drinking so hard; then I'd looked after it, and if I did nothing else I saw that it was never allowed to run down. I don't know why I did it, for time meant nothing to us and we'd the sun to go by. Likely it was because the clock was a link with home and minded me of the days before we'd brought so much misery on ourselves. Anyway, I never missed a day in winding it, and I took charge of Mr. Christian's calendar. He'd said to me once: "Alex, if anything happens to Mr. Young or me, see that ye keep my calendar going; else ye won't know where ye are."

Ye might have thought the four of us would sober up now, after such a spree as we'd had, but it wasn't the way with us then. We was at it again all that day, and the next, but on the third morning I'd had enough. It was then I began to suspicion something was amiss with the womenfolk. Not one had come near us, and we'd nothing left to eat in the house save a bunch of plantains. Quintal and McCoy and me made out a meal with 'em, and I carried some up to Mr. Young, who was lying down in the loft. He always kept to himself as much as he could. He'd come down now and again, but he said not a word more than was needed to any of us. I told him about the women, but he was in a black mood and begged me to go away and leave him alone.

McCoy and Quintal had lost track of the days; they didn't know how long we'd been drinking steady and they didn't care. The two of them was in a stupor again when I left the house about the middle of the morning.

The settlement was empty, just as it had been the past two days. I went along to the pool below Brown's Well; there was hardly an hour of the day but ye'd find some of the women at the spring, but there was none that morning, so I went

along the trail that goes along the western ridge and into the Auté Valley from that side.

When we first came here, all that high land was covered with forest, but we'd cleared bits of it here and there. It was as pretty a place as ye could wish to see, high and cool, with rich little valleys running down to the north, and paths amongst the trees, and open places where we'd made gardens. We'd left the forest standing round about.

For three months past none of us men had set foot in the Auté Valley. As I've said, we'd hardly drawn sober breath in all that time; the work was left to the womenfolk. Balhadi and Taurua had kept Mr. Young and me supplied with food, and Mary and Sarah had done the like for the other two. Hutia and Prudence and Susannah would come to McCoy's house now and again, but we'd seen little enough of the others. They kept away, and we'd not lay eyes on 'em for weeks together.

I went along the old trail, amongst the woods and fields, till I came to open sunny land that stretched south to the cliffs above the sea. And there I stopped.

All the land here was cleared and laid out in gardens, and the women was at work amongst them, and they'd made pens for fowls and pigs to one side. But what made me stand and stare was a kind of stockade, beyond, and close against the cliffs to the south'ard. It was made of the trunks of trees set close together deep in the ground and all of a dozen feet high. I judged it to be about twenty yards square. I could see it was new built, and it was as strong a little fort as men could have made.

I was so took aback that I stood stock-still for a bit; then I went on, slow, till some of the women spied me, and four of 'em came up to meet me.

Mrs. Christian was in front. Moetua and Prudence and Hutia came with her, and each one carried a musket. They halted and waited for me, and when I was about a dozen

yards off Maimiti said, "Stand where ye are, Alex! What is it ye want?"

I didn't know what to say, I was that surprised, and I was ashamed to meet Maimiti face to face, knowing what she must think of such a drunken useless thing as I'd become. The last time I'd seen her was a day long before, at Brown's Well. She spoke about Mr. Christian, and how well he'd thought o' me. She begged me to take hold of myself, and I'd give my solemn promise I would. Three days after I was back at McCoy's house, and things went on just as they had before.

A man who's lost his self-respect will try, like as not, to brazen it out, if he can, and so I did.

"Where's Balhadi?" said I. "I want her to come home."

Mrs. Christian looked me straight in the eyes; then she said, very quiet: "Go back where ye've come from. Balhadi wants nothing more to do with ye."

"Let her tell me that herself," said I. I knew well enough it was so. For three years Balhadi and me had lived together as happy as heart could wish, and I knew she'd been as fond of me as I was of her. But after the still was started everything fell to pieces. At last she let me go my own way.

Maimiti beckoned to the others, who'd gathered in the gardens below and stood looking toward us. They came to where we stood. Balhadi was amongst them, and when Maimiti asked if she wanted to go back with me she said, "No."

Then Maimiti said, "Now go ye back, Alex, and mind ye this: Ye're to stay on the other side of the island. Ye may do as ye please there; but from this day, if any of ye set foot in the Auté Valley, it will be at your peril. We have all the muskets here, and the powder and ball, and the lead for making more. Ye know that the half of us can shoot as well as any of ye men, so get ye gone to your friends and let them know what I've said."

"Do ye think, Maimiti," said I, "that we'll rest with matters in this state? Our wives had best come back if they know what's good for 'em."

Then Taurua spoke up. "Say ye so, Alex? We've give ye chances enough, and ye're worse than pigs, the lot of ye. Not one of us shall go, and ye'd best let us alone."

They was in dead earnest; I could see that. In my heart, I was proud of their spirit and well knew they had all the right on their side; but the badness in me came to the front, and I said things I was ashamed of even as I said 'em. I began to threaten and bluster and talk big, and I was mean enough to tell Sarah that Quintal would half kill her as soon as he could lay hands on her. She had a deathly fear of Quintal, and with reason. Many's the time he'd beat her in the past.

The old scared look I'd seen so often came into her face; it was like as if she saw Quintal behind me. Mrs. Christian put an arm around her shoulders as a mother might have done. She had a gentle-womanly nature, but no man could better Maimiti in courage. There, before the others, she told me what miserable things the four of us was. She didn't raise her voice, but what she said struck home. "And let Quintal know this," she went on in her quiet way. "We keep watch here day and night. If he or any of ye try to molest us, I promise it shall be for the last time. Now be off, for we've no more to say to ye."

I went back the way I'd come, and the women stood watching until I was out of sight in the forest. When I'd reached the ridge below the Goat-House Mountain I sat down on a bench we had there and looked out over the land, all so peaceful and quiet and sunny. I thought of the times I'd rested in the place with Mr. Christian as we'd go back and forth from the settlement. He'd tell me about his hopes and plans, and ask my advice about this and that. He was always thinking of ways to do us good and make us more happy and contented as time went on. I never heard him speak of the mutiny, but I knew he thought he'd ruined the lives of all of us, and felt bound to do what he could to make up for it. He planned and worked with that in mind, and if we'd backed him up the way we should have, not a drop of blood would ever have been spilt here.

Little comfort I had from my thoughts that morning. I saw no light ahead, and I didn't care what happened. I've no mind to defend myself. I knew right from wrong, but I'd a reckless streak in me that made me take to the bad at this time as though to spite myself.

I went down to the village and searched through the houses. The women had took every musket and pistol, as Mrs. Christian said, and all the powder and ball and lead was gone from the storehouse. They'd carried away their own things as well, but none of ours was touched save the weapons. Mr. Young and me had some fowls penned up near the house. I'd clean forgot 'em and the poor things were half dead. I fed and watered them and went along to join the others.

Quintal and McCoy was still dead drunk; I couldn't have roused 'em if I'd wanted to. Mr. Young wasn't in the house, but I found him on the slope to seaward. I could see from the look he gave me that he'd no wish for company, but I thought I'd best tell him what had happened. When I had, he smiled in a bitter way. "It's what we might have expected," he said. "The wonder is they haven't all left us long since."

"What's to be done now?" said I. I could see how little heart he had for anything.

"What's to be done? Nothing, Alex. I mean to leave 'em alone. The rest of ye can do as ye've mind to," and with that he got up and went off amongst the trees, home. I would have liked well to go with him, but I knew he wanted to be alone, so I stayed where I was.

Before I go on, I'd best tell ye something more about Quintal and McCoy. McCoy was a good neighbor when he was sober. He was quiet and hard-working and fond of his wife and children, but there was an ugly streak in him that showed now and again. It wasn't often ye'd see it, and then it was best to leave him alone. I've known him to beat Mary black and blue, and be so sorry for it, after, there was nothing he wouldn't do to make it up to her. He'd more brains than the rest of us seamen together, but spirits was a thing he

couldn't resist. Once the still was set going, he thought of naught but that. He would drink more than any two of us, and I often wondered how long he could keep it up at that rate.

Quintal was a big man—not tall, but thick through and strong as a bull, and slow-witted as he was strong. He'd sit for hours at a time, saying nothing, and ye'd wonder if he ever had a thought in his head. There was little harm in him, sober, but all the women except Moetua had a mortal fear of him, drunk. Maimiti he'd never laid hands on, but the others whose men had been killed he thought of as his own property to do as he liked with. Moetua was near as strong as Quintal himself. He'd tried to handle her, but she taught him a lesson or two he didn't forget. All the womenfolk hated him except his Sarah. They'd come to think of him as worse than a wild beast, which wasn't far from the truth.

In the afternoon, when McCoy and Quintal woke up, I told 'em what the women had told me.

"It couldn't have happened better," said McCoy. "Let 'em go their way and we'll go ours."

"What!" said Matt. "And have naught to do with 'em for the rest of our lives?"

"Rest ye patient," said McCoy. "D'ye think they'll stop as they are for long? They'll come to heel soon enough if we take 'em at their word. It's Maimiti and Taurua's put 'em up to this, with two or three more to back 'em. Leave 'em alone. We'll have our cronies back soon enough."

Quintal was in one of his ugly spells. "I'll not leave 'em alone," said he. "They'll play none o' their games with me. I'll fetch a pair of 'em down."

"Ye'll do naught o' the kind, Matt," said McCoy. "Don't be a fool. They've all the muskets, and there's a good half-dozen can shoot as well as any of us. They're in no way to be trifled with now, that's plain; but if we set quiet here we'll have 'em back of their own wish."

"Set quiet if ye like," said Quintal. "I'm going." Up he got

and off he went, out of the house and across the valley, without another word.

"What d' ye think, Alex?" said McCoy. "Will they try to harm him?"

For all Maimiti had said, I didn't believe they would. We'd had our way so long, doing as we pleased and giving no heed on using 'em as we'd a mind to.

"They'll not shoot," said I, "unless he tries to climb their stockade, and he'll not do that, for it's all of a dozen feet high."

"We'd best go and see what happens," said McCoy. "I'd like well to have a look at the fort they've made."

So we followed across the valley to the southern ridge. We didn't catch sight of Quintal till we'd reached the upper side of the Auté Valley. He was standing at the edge of a thicket, staring down at the fort. "God bless me!" said McCoy when he saw the place. The three of us stood for a bit, looking out across the valley. Some of the women was at work in the gardens about a hundred yards away, and others farther on. They didn't see us, for we kept hid amongst the trees.

"When could they ha' done all this?" said Quintal. The pair of 'em was surprised as I'd been at sight of the fort; for all I'd told them, they wasn't expecting to see such a strong-made place.

"There's no matter o' that now," said McCoy. "Ye see it, Matt, and if ye're not daft ye'll come back with Alex and me. Ye'll only make things worse if ye try' any hard usage with 'em. Come along down, man, and leave 'em alone."

But there was no talking Quintal over, once he got a notion into his head. He'd a great conceit of his strength, and was too thick-witted to believe the women would dare to hold out against him, even with muskets in their hands.

"Stand ye here and watch," said he. "I want none o' yer help, if that's what ye're afeard of."

Quintal hadn't washed himself for days, and he had a great bushy beard that half covered his chest. He'd no clothes on

save a bit of dirty bark cloth about his middle, and with his club in his hand he looked worse than any naked savage I've ever laid eyes on.

All that piece of land down from the ridge had been cleared; the women had seen to that, so as they could have a view of anyone coming. The minute Quintal showed himself out of the forest there was a conch shell blown by someone on watch on a platform inside the stockade. Those at work in the gardens had spied him at the same time. There was a half dozen outside, and instead of running back to the fort, as we'd expected, they spread out in a line and waited for Quintal to come on. I saw Moetua and Prudence in the centre. Moetua carried a cudgel and Prudence had a musket. Mrs. Christian was off to one side, with Hutia; and Balhadi and Taurua stood on the other side.

Moetua got down on her knees, and Prudence, who was a little thing, but as good a shot as any man, stood behind with the musket resting on Moetua's shoulder. Mrs. Christian knelt down behind a boulder and rested her piece on that. They'd not been twenty seconds in getting ready for Quintal. He was a good sixty yards off when he halted; then he went on, slow and steady, like the thick-skulled simpleton he was. Afore he'd gone three steps farther, Maimiti blazed away at him, and we saw Quintal half swing round and go down. He gave a bellow and leaped up again, and at that, Prudence fired. Quintal waited for no more. He ran back up the slope as fast as he could go, with the women after him, Moetua in the lead. He came crashing into the thickets and on he went down into the Main Valley. McCoy and I didn't wait to see what the women meant to do. We followed Quintal.

He was on a bench by the door, holding his hand over his left shoulder, and with blood streaming down one side of his face. Maimiti's shot had torn through the muscles of his shoulder, but Prudence had meant to kill, and a near thing it was for Quintal. The ball had all but took off one of his ears.

McCoy and I was busy for the next hour getting him bandaged.

We'd no more doubt that the women was in earnest. Quintal had learned the only way he could—by being hurt; he had to lay up for near two months while his wounds was healing. He was in an ugly temper all this while, and it was as much as we could do to get a word out of him. Whether it was drink, or lonesomeness, or both together, I don't know, but McCoy and I could see he was getting more queer in his head every day. He'd talk to himself, even with us in the room, and half the time ye could make naught of what he'd say.

Things went on quiet enough for a while. Quintal and McCoy worked on at making spirits, and before they was through they filled up every bottle we had, with a cag or two beside. I kept clear of 'em as near as I could. I did some gardening again, and with that and fishing I was busy most hours of the day. But when night came I'd set me down to drink with 'em, hating myself all the while for doing it.

McCoy was sure some of the women would come back. "Rest easy, Matt," he'd say to Quintal. "There'll be no need to chase after 'em. We'll have a two-three of 'em down here before the week's out." But two months went by and not one came near us.

We saw little of Mr. Young. As I've said, he went off home the day I told him about the women leaving, and he came no more to McCoy's house. And never again, to his last day, did he touch a drop of spirits. I was worried about his health. The year before, he was took with what looked like asthma trouble, and it was getting worse. He needed someone to look after him, but he was bound to do for himself, and he wouldn't hear to my letting the women know he was sick. He was always friendly when I went along to see him, but I knew he wanted to be alone and that made me slow to bother him. Not a word did he say about my keeping on with Quintal and McCoy, but I was sure how he felt.

By the time Quintal's wounds was healed, him and McCoy

decided they'd had enough of waiting. They'd come to think the right of things was on our side now. I was strong against makin' any move, but they was bound to stir up more trouble.

"What'll ye do?" said I to Will. "Fetch Mary back, willing or not?"

"Mary?" said he. "I'd not have her now if she was to crawl on her knees, beggin' me. There's a-plenty besides her, and one of 'em I'll take!"

Quintal was gettin' more ugly every day, and he was of the same mind. I knew I couldn't keep 'em quiet for long, and I had the notion to go across and warn Mrs. Christian. I should have done it, but, as I've said, I had a stubborn streak in me. I'd been told to keep away from the Auté Valley, and so I did.

One day Quintal was bound to go. There was no use arguing with either of 'em, so I tried another plan. I fetched out a bottle of spirits, hopin' to get 'em so dazed with grog they'd not be able to move.

"There'll be the devil to pay now," said I, "so we may as well have a good spree afore trouble starts." They was agreeable, and didn't go that day, but early next morning, when I was away, they set out across the island. They was still drunk, but able to take care of themselves, and they'd sense enough left to recollect the women could shoot. They'd no mind to go marchin' down amongst 'em the way Quintal had.

I was told what happened, afterward. When they got to the top of the ridge they hid themselves so as they could look across the gardens to the stockade. Some of the women was at work outside and they still carried muskets. They'd waited a good two hours when they saw Nanai and Jenny come out of the fort. They'd baskets on their arms, but no weapons, and they went off to the westward.

There's a steep little valley runs down to the sea below the mountain on the southern side. They waited till they was sure that was where Nanai and Jenny was bound; then they backtracked and came round to the west side of the Auté Valley,

and hid themselves close to the path that goes down this ravine. They'd only to wait to catch the women as they came up.

"I'll take Jenny and you can have Nanai," said McCoy. Jenny was Mrs. Christian's right hand. McCoy believed we had her to thank for coaxin' Prudence and Hutia away from us. He was glad to have this chance to get back at her.

Presently they spied Nanai comin' up amongst the trees, below. It was a stiff climb and she had a carrying pole, with a bunch of plantains at one end and a basket of shellfish on the other. Nanai was about twenty-three at this time. She'd been Tetahiti's wife, if ye remember. There was none had a greater fear of Quintal.

When she reached level ground she set down her load to rest not three steps from where they was hid. Out Quintal jumped and grabbed her. She was so terrified she made no struggle at all, and they had her tied hand and foot in a minute. They stuffed leaves in her mouth with a strip of bark tied across it, to make sure she wouldn't cry out.

Jenny wasn't far behind, and they had her before she knew where she was. She was small, but wiry as a cat, and she fought like one, tooth and nail. It was as much as Quintal could do to hold her while McCoy put a gag over her mouth. He got the palm of his hand bit through doing it. When they had her tied he took her over his shoulder, and Quintal came after, with Nanai.

I'd come back to the house, in the meantime, and found no one there. I guessed what Quintal and McCoy was up to, but I didn't believe they'd be able to get at the women. In case they had, I didn't want to be mixed up in it. So I went along to Mr. Young's house and spent the night there. I said naught to him about the others.

They brought the girls to the house and Nanai was loosed, but Jenny was kept tied at first. Then McCoy began to crow over Jenny, but she had a fiery spirit and gave him as good as he sent. "Lay hands on me, Will McCoy, and I won't rest till

I've killed ye," said she. "Where's Alex and Ned Young?"

"Leave Ned out o' this," said McCoy. "He had naught to do with us. He's been a sick man this long while; yet, betwixt ye, ye've kept Taurua away from him."

Then he told her I was off on a woman hunt of my own and would be along with another of 'em directly.

Nanai was crouched in a corner, with Quintal on a bench in front of her. All at once she made a spring for the door, but Quintal grabbed her by the hair and dragged her back. Ye'll not wish to hear what went on after this. First they tried to force the girls to drink with 'em, and in the end they abused both in a shameful way. In the night, when Quintal and McCoy was asleep, they got away. When I came down from Mr. Young's next morning I could see there'd been a fight in the house. McCoy was nursing his bit hand with a rag tied round it. But not a word was said of what had happened. They was a glum surly pair, and no mistake!

CHAPTER XIX

THE next day Mr. Young came along to see us. He was having one of his bad attacks of asthma and it was all he could do to speak. When we'd set a chair for him he broke in a fit of coughing was pitiful to see. It wasn't till that morning that it came to me what a state Mr. Young was in. He'd wasted down to little more than skin and bone. When his coughing spell was over he told us what he'd come for.

"I've been asked to bring ye a message from the women," said he. "Maimiti says the three of ye must leave the island. They're all agreed on this. Ye can take the cutter and what ye need in the way of supplies, but ye must clear out."

"Clear out!" said I. "Where to?"

"I don't know. Tahiti, I suppose. Where ye like, so long as

it's away from here. They'll give ye three days to make plans."

"And do they think we'll be fools enough to go?" said McCoy.

"Maimiti says ye must," he replied, almost in a whisper. He had to fight for breath every few words he spoke. "Ye'd best do it. I'll go with ye."

"Go with us?" said I. "That ye won't, Ned. D'ye think we'd allow it, sick as ye are?"

He held up his hand. "Wait, Alex. . . . It's no matter what happens to me. I want to go. . . . Get away from here. . . . We could fetch some island to the westward; one o' them we passed on the way from Tahiti. Try it, anyway."

"And if we won't go, what then?" said McCoy.

"Maimiti means what she says. They'll take action."

Quintal laughed. "Let 'em try!" said he.

My heart went out to Mr. Young. He'd no wish to go, I knew that well enough; but he was the only one could use a sextant, and he knew we could never fetch up any place without him. Even with him our chances would be poor enough. But he was thinkin' of the women and children more than us. He wanted them to have a chance to live quiet decent lives.

"What are ye for, Alex?" said Quintal. "Ye'll wish to give in to the bitches, I'll warrant—let 'em drive us out. Damn yer eyes! If it'd not been for yerself and Will, we'd ha' learned 'em who's masters here long afore this."

"Aye, ye made a brave show, Matt, a while back," said I, "runnin' up the hill with the lot of 'em at yer heels. They've had right enough on their side, the womenfolk, and well ye know it! It'll be yerself and Will has drove 'em to this."

"Drove 'em, did we?" said McCoy. "We've not been near 'em till yesterday, and much good it's done us to keep clear. But there'll be some drivin' now, I promise ye!"

Mr. Young shook his head. "Take care!" said he. "They mean what they say."

"Sit ye down, Will," said I. "Let's talk this over quiet, and see what's best to be done."

But neither of 'em would listen to reason and was all for doin' something straight off. Mr. Young could have been no more sick of 'em than I was.

Presently he got up, shaky and weak, and made ready to go. "I've done all I can," said he. "Now look out for yourselves!"

"Never ye mind about us," said Quintal. "We'll do that and more!" I wanted to help Mr. Young along the path, home, but he wouldn't hear to it and went off alone.

McCoy was uneasy about the still, and nothing would do but it must be hid away. Quintal helped him carry it to a place in the valley where they'd never be able to find it. As I've said, we'd spirits enough on hand to last us for months, and that was stowed away as well, in a safe place.

I didn't know just what to do. Ye may think it strange, but I still had a soft spot in my heart for Will and Matt. We'd been shipmates so long, and I'd the wish to stand by 'em, come what might. And wasn't I as much to blame, or near as much, as themselves? For all that, I wanted bad to follow after Mr. Young and talk things over with him. I'd the notion the pair of us should see Mrs. Christian and try to patch things up; join with the women, mebbe, if they'd have us, and leave McCoy and Quintal to go their own way. But, when I thought it over, that seemed to me a dangerous thing for all. It would oppose us men, two and two, and might lead to the killing of one side or the other. What I wanted above all was for us to keep clear of any more bloodshed. And there was another thing. It shames me to say it, but I couldn't abide the thought of bein' without drink. So the end of it was I did naught, but waited to see what would come.

That day McCoy and Quintal got as drunk as I'd ever seen 'em, and stayed so, and lucky it was that Matt was in none of his ugly spells. He drank himself to sleep with scarce a word said. I had my share, but not so much but I was up and about, doin' my chores. But I mind how low-spirited I was, thinkin' of the lonesome unnatural life we had, when there was no

need for it. And all this time I missed the children and craved to see 'em. What fools we was to think more of our grog than we did of them!

The three days went by, but there was no sign of the women. That didn't surprise us, for we'd no idea they'd do anything. After we'd et, at midday, we had our sleep, as usual. It was toward the middle of the afternoon when I woke up; I could see the streaks of sunlight slanting down through the chinks in the windows. The house had four shutters, two on each side. I got up to open 'em. As I was sliding the first one back, a musket was fired from the edge of the forest, and the ball sang past within an inch or two of my head. I ducked down and slammed the window shut. McCoy was asleep on the floor by the table. He raised up his head. "What's that?" said he, and he'd no more than spoke when another ball splintered through the boards of the shutter I'd just closed. That roused Quintal; he sat up and glared at the two of us. I motioned 'em to keep quiet, and crawled to a knothole in one of the planks that gave me a view across the strip of cleared land, which was about twenty yards wide.

At first I saw naught but a bit of the forest; then I made out the barrel of a musket was pushed through the bushes and pointing at the door, another farther along. A minute later I had a glimpse of Hutia behind a tree. We'd been caught, right enough, and was still so muddled with sleep, it took us a quarter of an hour to get our wits together. While I was spying out the valley side of the house, Quintal opened the door a wee crack on the other side. Two shots was fired the minute he did it. One grazed his hipbone, breaking the skin. We knew, then, the place was surrounded, and the women meant to kill us if they could. McCoy called out for Mrs. Christian, but there was no answer save another shot through the wall. For all their warnings, we'd not believed they'd take any such action as this. We'd no mind to give in, now, but all we could do was to keep well hid. Every little while shots would be fired through the windows or doors; we had to lay flat on

the floor. There was fourteen muskets amongst 'em, and half a dozen pistols, and the women who couldn't shoot kept the extra ones loaded for the others. Quintal and I was for making a rush out, but McCoy was against this. "Don't be fools," said he. "That's what they hope we'll do, and it's little chance we'd have to get clear by daylight. We'd best wait till dark, unless they take it into their heads to rush us before." So we stayed as we was, with the doors blocked with the benches and tables and some bags of yams and sweet potatoes. We didn't speak above a whisper all this time.

We'd little fear they would try to come to grips with us in the house. They'd keep well off and trust to the musket; but they was bound to get us into the open afore dark, and so they did. Some of 'em slipped up to the ends of the house with torches of dry palm fronds and set fire to the thatch.

In a couple of minutes the whole place was in a blaze. There was no time for anything except to get out as quick as ever we could, and a chancy thing it was. Quintal was so thick-headed as to clear away the benches we'd piled in front of the door. I heard the women on that side shooting at him as I went out one of the windows on the seaward side. I dodged around the cookhouse as one of them fired at me. She was hid behind a rock, and before any of the others could shoot I was across the bit of open ground and amongst the trees.

As soon as I was well out of view I slowed down to a walk, for I was sure they'd not scatter and try to follow us. I went up the western ridge and on to the Goat-House Peak. It was near dark by that time; the house was still in a full blaze, but it soon burnt itself out. I heard no more shots; all was as quiet as though there was no one but me on the island. I knew the women would do no more prowling round at night; they'd keep together and go back to the fort, so I waited till moon-rise and then went down to Mr. Young's house.

I made certain there was no one about, and slipped inside. Mr. Young was gone. Afterward I learned that some of the

women had come down the day before, with a litter they'd made, and carried him up to their place so's they could look after him. I got a scare and jumped halfway across the room when something brushed against my leg, but it was only one of the *Bounty's* cats was born on the ship on the way out from England. He was a great pet of mine. I went out to the cookshed to scratch up a coconut for him, and whilst I was at it I heard McCoy's voice calling out for Ned.

He was hid under the banyan tree below the house. He'd been shot through the fleshy part of the leg and had lost a good deal of blood. Moetua had chased him, he said, but he'd managed to get clear of her in the forest. Quintal he'd not seen.

It was a painful wound he had. I cleaned the place and bound it up. As soon as that was done he was all for moving on. He was scared bad. "They mean to kill us, Alex; I take that as certain," said he. "Like enough they've done for Quintal."

"That may be," said I, "but they'll not come in the night. We can rest here till daylight, and then hide out till we know what they're up to."

We went off next morning while it was still dark. McCoy was too lame to go far, but I hid him in a thicket where they could never have found him. I kept watch on the settlement and no one came near it. Not a sign of Quintal did we see in all that time, though I searched far and wide for him. We was both sure he was dead.

We kept away from the settlement for ten days; then we moved into Mr. Young's house. We felt none too easy at first, not knowing but the women might be spying on us and making ready for another attack; but after three weeks we felt certain they meant to leave us alone as long as we didn't molest them. McCoy was laid up this while; I spent a good piece of my time getting food and searching for Quintal's body. It was a lonesome life. I can't say we relished it.

It was in March 1797 that the women burned the house.

After that McCoy and I let up on the drinking. We'd have a sup together now and again, but there was no swilling it down the way we'd done before.

One day McCoy was away from sunup, and when he came back he told me he'd seen his girl, Mary. He'd met her in the forest, without the others knowing.

"What did she say of Quintal?" I asked him.

"They thought they'd hit him," said he, "but they couldn't be sure what happened."

"Did ye tell Mary we'd not seen him?"

"Aye. He's dead, Alex, for certain. Who knows but he may have lingered on for days, past helping himself, and us knowing nothing about it?"

"What else did Mary tell ye?" I asked. "How did they know but what we'd been killed as well? And yet none of 'em came near to see."

"They've known. They kept watch of us for a fortnight, Mary says. They reckoned Quintal had been bad hurt and we was nursing him."

"There's a thing I'd like well to know," said I. "Did Mary and Balhadi come down with the rest the day they burned the house?"

"They did not; and I'll tell ye more, Alex. They was against the others coming, and Sarah Quintal with 'em. Bad as we'd used 'em, they had no wish to see us dead."

"And what's the mind of the rest about us now?"

"We'll not be troubled, Mary says, as long as we let 'em alone."

"It's a wonder to me, Will, ye didn't try to coax Mary back," said I.

"So I did, but she'll not come. They've had enough of us, Alex. That's the truth of it."

"Will," said I, "could we break up the cursed still and be sober again? It would be desperate hard at first, but like enough we could do it."

Many's the time I've thought, since, of what might have

happened if he'd said, "So we can, Alex! We'll not rest till it's done!" I was in the mind, and if I'd made an honest try I might have coaxed McCoy. But the truth is I was half afraid he'd agree.

"I couldn't, Alex," said he. "God forgive me, I couldn't! Where'd we be, in such a lonesome shut-off place, without a drop to cheer us up now and again?"

"It's right ye are," said I. "I was daft to think of it," and there was an end o' that.

"How is it with Ned Young?" I asked him.

"He's been desperate sick, Mary says, and he's still in his bed."

"It's little we'll see of Ned from now on," said I. "He'll never come back to us, and it'll be better so for all hands. And now I'll tell ye, Will, what I mean to do. Ye can go as you've a mind to, but I'll keep clear of the women if so be as I can. There's been trouble enough here. I'll be the cause of no more."

"There'll be no need o' that," said he. "I'll be seeing Mary again, and I'll have a word with her whenever ye say. I'll warrant there's a two-three of the women will be willing enough to come down and pass the time o' day with ye."

But I told him I'd go it alone for the present.

The next day we roamed the Main Valley over on a last hunt for Quintal's body. There wasn't a place he might have crawled into that we hadn't searched, but we tried once more. By the middle of the afternoon we was ready to give up. We'd come out on the western ridge, and McCoy thought we ought to hunt through the gullies on that side, but I was sure no man as bad hurt as Quintal must have been would crawl that far to die. There'd be no sense in it.

"But it's what Quintal might do, for all that," said McCoy. "There was no sense in *him*, poor loon! We'd best look, anyway. I'll feel better when it's done."

I was willing, for I hated to think of poor Matt's body lying unburied; but before we went down on that side we climbed

the Goat-House Peak for a look around. And there, close to the top, where the cliffs made a straight drop to the sea, we found an axe handle leaned up against a rock. It was one of them had been in McCoy's house the day it was burned. It gave us a shock to see it, for we knew that Matt himself had carried it there. It was stained with dried blood, on the rock itself. It's a chancy place, the Goat-House Peak; the footing is none too sure for a well man; and the axe handle was resting not three feet from the edge of the seaward cliffs. McCoy crawled to the edge and looked over, but there was nothing to see save the surf beating up against the rocks. We looked no farther. We couldn't guess why Matt had come there, but we knew he had, and there'd be no body to find. He might have lost his balance, but, knowing Matt, we thought he must have been so bad hurt he'd thrown himself off to make an end.

We went down without a word. He was a rough, hard man, was Quintal. Ye'll think, sir, from what I've said of him, that he was naught but a great brute we might be glad to think was dead. A brute he was, in his strength—I've never seen his equal there, save Minarii—and dangerous bad, times, when drunk. But there'd been a side to him I've not brought out the way I should have. There was none but liked the old Matt Quintal that first came to Pitcairn, and it was that one I was thinking about as we went back to the settlement.

It hit McCoy harder than it did me, for they'd been cronies ever since the *Bounty* left England, and they'd lived together here. Quintal thought the world and all of McCoy, and when he was sober would do whatever he said; but these last years, when he was growing so queer, not even McCoy could manage him.

That night it set in to raining and blowing hard from the east, and it kept on for three days. There was nothing we could do but stay in the house. We started drinking again, McCoy on one side of the table and me on the other. Before half the night was over he'd finished two quarts of spirits, but

for all that he'd no mind to leave off. He'd took it into his head he was to blame for all the misery there'd been on the island, and he'd talk of naught but that.

"It's the truth I'm speaking, Alex," he'd say. "I was the first to want the land divided, and talked it up and egged the others on to stand out against Christian. That's what started the killing. There's not a murdered man, Indian or white, but that has me to thank for his death."

And so he went on, the night through, till I was half crazed with hearing the same thing over and over again. Finally I could stand it no more.

"Ye'd best go to bed, Will," I said, and with that I went out of the house. The night couldn't have been wilder or blacker. I lost my way and fell down a dozen times before I reached Mr. Christian's house. All wet and slathered in mud, I rolled into his old bed-place and went to sleep.

It was past midday when I woke up, and raining harder than ever. I went out in it for a bath and to feed my pigs and fowls. When I'd cleaned up the muddy mess I'd made in Mr. Christian's house, I went to the out-kitchen and boiled me some yams and cooked some eggs; had my own breakfast and carried some up to McCoy. He was settin' at the table, wide awake, just as I'd left him. He'd finished what was left in the bottle I'd been at the night before, but he spoke to me as sober as though he'd been drinking nothing stronger than water. There was no more weeping talk. I tried to coax him to eat a bite, but he wouldn't touch what I'd brought him.

"Leave me alone," said he. "Go back to Christian's house, or wherever ye've been. I'm wanting no company."

"I can manage without yours," said I, and left him there. It rubbed me the wrong way to have him speak like that when I'd taken the trouble to cook his breakfast and bring it to him.

The wind shifted to the north and blew a gale; low grey clouds was scudding past not much over the trees. I went down the cove to see if the *Bounty's* old cutter was safe. We had it in a shed above the landing place. Not that we ever

used it much. I don't think it had been out of the shed since the time the womenfolk tried to go off in it. We might as well have broken it up, for any good it was to us, but we'd patch and caulk it, none of us knew why, exactly.

I've never but once seen a heavier surf in the cove than there was that day. It was an awesome sight to watch the great seas piling, throwing spray and solid water halfway up to the lookout point. The shed was gone and the cutter with it, and the wreckage was scattered far out across the cove. We had two Indian canoes, but they was safe. We'd lost canoes before, and when we made the last ones we took care to dig out a place for 'em well above the reach of any sea that might make up.

I went back to Mr. Christian's house, and for two days I kept away from McCoy. Then I got a bit worried about him, and after I'd had my supper I went along to see him whether he wanted me to or not.

The wind had gone down, but it was still cloudy, unsettled weather. McCoy had all the doors and the windows shut. I called out to him, but there was no answer, so I pushed open the door and went in.

It was so dark inside that I could see naught at first. "Will! Where've ye got to?" said I. Then I heard his voice from the corner of the room. "Is it yourself, Alex? Quick man! Shut the door!"

I slammed it to in spite of myself, he spoke in such a terror-struck voice. "What is it, lad?" I said. I didn't know but what the women might have changed their minds about leaving us alone; but when he begged me to make a light I knew it couldn't be that.

We kept a supply of candlenut tapers ready for lighting on a shelf, along with a flint and a box of tinder. The tinder had got damp with the rainy weather and I was a quarter of an hour getting a taper alight. I found McCoy huddled down in a corner with the table upset and pulled up close, to hide behind. The minute I saw him I knew what was wrong. He had

the horrors coming on, for the first time since I'd known him.

"Alex!" said he, "Alex!"—and that was as much as he could get out at first. He was a pitiful sight, shakin' and shiverin', with his knees under his chin and his eyes staring up at me like a wild man's.

"What's all this, Will?" said I, in as easy a voice as I could manage. "What's this game ye're playin' on me?" And whilst I spoke I righted the table and pulled it back into the middle of the room. "Come aboard, lad! D' ye still hate the sight of an old shipmate?"

He kept his eyes on the door, with a look on his face I'll not forget. Then up he sprang, and in three steps he was beside me on the bench, and gripped my arm with both his hands, so tight that the marks of his fingernails was there for days.

"Don't let him touch me!" said he, in a voice it sickened me to hear. Then he slid down on the floor under the table and held me fast by the legs.

"What ails ye?" said I. "What are ye afeared of?"

"Minarii," said he in a whisper. "There by the door!"

"Will, ye daft loon! There's no Minarii here. Don't ye think I could see him if there was? Come, have a look for yourself."

He got up slow to his knees and turned himself till he could look toward the door.

"Are ye satisfied now," said I. "There's none here but ourselves."

"Aye, he's gone," said he, in a weak, shaky voice. "Ye've scared him off."

"He's never been here," said I. "It's naught but your fancy. I'll show ye."

I tried to get up, but he held me fast and wouldn't let go.

"Don't leave me, Alex! Stay close here!"

I got him up on the bench again, but he kept tight hold of my arm. I'd seen a man or two with the horrors before. McCoy's was just coming on and I knew what I was in for.

I coaxed him to loose me, after a bit, and I got a carrying pole was standing in a corner, and laid it on the table.

"I'll let no one touch ye, Will; ye can lay to that!" said I. "I'll knock 'em silly with this afore they know where they are."

That quieted him some, but try as I would I couldn't get him to bed. He was afeared to lie down. There was eight empty bottles scattered about the room. One I'd about finished the last night we was together. The rest McCoy had emptied alone, and I wouldn't have believed it unless I'd seen it.

He got worse as the night went on. He babbled wild and I couldn't make sense of it; but what he'd see was Minarii, with the heads of the murdered white men, and he was possessed with the notion that he'd come for ours. Time and again he'd be certain Minarii had opened the door, and I'd grab up the carrying pole and rush at naught, making out I'd drove him off. McCoy would think I had, and rest quiet for half an hour, maybe; then it would be the same thing over again.

So it went till long past midnight. I kept a light going until I'd burned all the tapers we had in the house. It had been bad enough before; ye can fancy what it was when the light was gone. I was twice McCoy's heft, and three times as strong, or so I'd believed; but it was all I could do to hold him when the terror was on him, and the screams he let out was like nothing human. Once he got loose and dashed his head so hard against the wall that it knocked him out for a bit. That gave me a chance to get him on to the bed and there I held him to daylight. He was in convulsions at the last, and if ever ye've held a man in that state, ye'll know what I went through.

It was just beginning to get light in the room when his body went limp under me and I saw he'd dozed off. I was done up and no mistake. It was as much as I could do to walk to the table and set down. Every muscle of me was tired and I was famished for sleep. I put my head on my arms and knew no more till I was roused by another yell, and before I

could get my wits together McCoy was out of the door and running down the path toward Mr. Christian's house.

I followed, but the path's no easy one to race over, especially after such rains as we'd had. I slid and fell and got up again, and stumbled over the roots of trees, and by the time I got to Mr. Christian's house McCoy was making straight for the bluffs above the sea. I yelled, "Will! Come back!" But he never turned his head, and down he went out of sight.

The sea was higher if anything than it had been the day before. When I reached the edge of the bluffs where I could look over, McCoy was halfway down. Whether he jumped or fell I don't know, but all at once he made a fearsome drop and struck amongst the rocks far below, just as a great sea came roaring in and took him, throwing up spray as high as where I stood. Another came directly after, and I caught a glimpse of his body being washed down and under it. I stood there for a half an hour, but I saw him no more.

CHAPTER XX

I FOUND his body the next afternoon. It had been washed to the mouth of the little valley west of Mr. Christian's house, and it was so battered and crushed 'twixt the rocks and the sea, ye'd scarce have thought it was anything human. Ye'll know how I felt when I had to take it up, but take it up I did, and buried it.

Then, sir, I went straight to the place where we'd hid our store of spirits. It was in a hole amongst the rocks on the seaward side of McCoy's old house. And I bashed in the two small cags and emptied 'em, and I took the rest, bottle by bottle, and broke every one into a thousand pieces against the rocks. Then I went to the place where we'd hid the still, and I took the copper coil and ran back to the bluffs, and I threw

it as far as ever I could; and when I saw it splash in the sea I said, "God be thanked, there's an end of it!"

What with watching over McCoy and searching for his body all the next day, I was knocked up. I felt I could sleep for a week, but I couldn't bring myself, then, to go back to Mr. Christian's house, or to any of ours. I went to the place where the Indians had lived. It was in a pretty glade not far from where the path goes down to the cove. Many an evening I'd spent in that house afore there was any trouble amongst us. I'd a great liking for the Indians, and for Minarii and Tetahiti in particular. You'd go far to find two better men, brown or white. I'd been with 'em, day after day, and to say the truth, I'd found more pleasure with them than with my own mates. I'd puzzled now and again to think why they'd wanted to kill the lot of us. I knew they hated some, but I wouldn't have believed they'd have wanted all of us dead. But when ye come to think of it, they wouldn't dare leave any of us alive, once they'd started killing. There could be no friendship after that. It would have been us or them till one side or the other was wiped out.

I'd not been near their house in months, and it was a sorry-looking place now. The trail was grown over with bushes and the house going to rack and ruin. It gave me a lonesome feeling to see it, but I went in, and laid me down, and was asleep in five minutes.

I slept till daylight, and the first thing I thought about when I woke up was how bad I wanted a good stiff tot o' grog. I tried hard to put the notion out o' my head, but the more I tried the worse it got, and the end of it was I hurried along to the place where we'd kept the spirits to see if I mightn't have missed a bottle the day before. I found I hadn't, and I rested there, looking down at all them bits of broken glass shining on the rocks below, and cursing myself for the fool I'd been. There was no shame in me for being such a weak thing. I could think of naught but that I must get me a drink, somehow. Then I was minded of the bottles

McCoy had emptied, and I thought I might find a drop left in one of 'em. A drop was all there was. I suppose I drained out a couple of spoonfuls from the lot, and then I washed out each bottle with a sup o' water so's to have it all. But that was only a torment, and I didn't rest till I'd searched all the houses in hopes of finding a bottle put by somewhere. I found one that had about a half-pint in it, in the tool-shed, and went near daft with joy at the sight of it.

Ye'll understand, sir, if ye've been a toper and left off sudden, the state I was in. There'd not been a day in four years I hadn't had my two or three tots o' grog, and most days there'd been a sight more taken. I'd got so as I needed spirits more than food or sleep or anything else, and if there was ever a sorry man it was me, that day, thinking how I'd thrown the copper coil into the sea. We'd nothing else would serve to distill spirits with. Then I minded how McCoy had made some beer, once, with ti roots. He'd made a mash and let it ferment. It was bitter stuff, and fair gagged ye to get it down, but it was strong.

I'd no sooner thought of it than I set off with a mattock over my shoulders for McCoy's ti plantation. I wanted to get a mess of roots to baking straight off; but before I got to the place I stopped. I could take ye to the very spot, sir, and show ye the rock I set on whilst I fought the thing out with myself. I thought of all the misery we'd brought on the womenfolk and ourselves those last years. I thought of the children. I knew that if I digged up them ti roots I was lost; I'd finish the way McCoy had. "Never!" said I. "Back with ye, Alex Smith, and make an end, once and for all!"

And so I did, though I went through torments for a fortnight. I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat, and I wasn't sure but I'd have the horrors myself afore I was done. But I held fast.

Little by little things got easier for me. I could have my rest at night; there was no more walking up and down till I was so beat I could scarce stand. At times when it was hardest, I set my mind on Mr. Christian, and it would strengthen me to

think how pleased and comforted he'd be if he could know the fight I was makin'. I'd never forgot the hopeless look on his face the day he died. It was when his lad, Thursday October, had walked into the room. I remembered him saying, "Take the child out," to Mrs. Christian. There's no father could have loved children more. He couldn't bear to see the lad, that was it, thinking what might happen once he was gone. A blessing it was he couldn't see what did happen.

It was a rare thing to get back my self-respect. I'd wake of a morning with a feeling of peace in my heart, and there wasn't a day long enough for the work I had in hand. I cut off the beard I'd let grow, and shaved regular, like I used to, and kept myself clean and tidy. I moved back into my old house where I'd lived with Mr. Young, and made everything shipshape there; then I went through the other houses and set them to rights as well as I could, working alone, though why I did it I couldn't say. I might have had the notion in the back of my head that the women would want to come back some day.

I was bound not to go too near 'em, for I had my pride. If they wanted to keep clear, they could for all of me, and Mr. Young with 'em. I'd not be the one to make the first move.

I had work and to spare, days, but night was a lonesome time. There was little I could do after dark but set and think. When I was redding up the houses, I found the *Bounty's* old Bible and Prayer Book. They'd been Mr. Christian's, before. After his death Mr. Young took charge of 'em, and I'd often see him reading in one or the other, though he wasn't what ye'd call a religious man. But these was all we had in the way of books, and I reckon they helped him pass the time. I found a couple of the *Bounty's* spare logbooks that he'd filled with writin', but what it was I couldn't make out. Little schooling I'd ever had in my young days. It was as much as I could do to write my name, but I'd got far enough along to spell out words of print. I thought, maybe, with the Bible to help,

I could bring back what I'd been taught as a lad, but I had to give up. It was all gone clean out o' my head.

One day—it was around a month after I'd buried McCoy—I was weeding a bit of garden I'd made near the house. I'd set me down to rest when I heard a rustlin' in the bushes behind me. I looked round, and there was my old woman.

Not a word was spoke. In three steps she was down on her knees beside me. She put her arms around me and her head on my shoulder, and began to weep in the soft quiet way the Indian women do. I was touched deep, but I sat lookin' straight in front of me. After a bit, when I was sure I had myself in hand, I said: "Where's your musket, Balhadi? Ain't ye afeared to go roamin' without it? I might do ye a mischief."

She said naught, but only held on to me the tighter. I reached up and took hold of her hand, and we rested so for a good ten minutes. I'll not go into all that was said. It was like the old days afore any trouble was started. I told her about McCoy and she had her cry over that, not being a woman to nurse hard feelings towards anyone, and Will was a good man, well liked by all when he'd been sober. She cried more, for joy, when I told her I'd destroyed the still and the spirits. I felt paid a hundred times over for the misery I'd suffered in getting myself in hand. I'd been hurt that Mr. Young hadn't come near me, but Balhadi said it was because he was too sick to come. He'd been in his bed all this while.

"I'd like well to see him," said I.

"Then come, Alex," said she, taking hold of my hand. "There's not been a day but he's spoke of ye, and what ye've told me will do him more good than any of us women can. Ye'll be welcomed hearty, that I promise, and there'll be none gladder to see ye than Maimiti."

So I started along with her, but afore we'd gone a dozen yards I stopped.

"No, Balhadi," said I. "I'll rest here in the settlement. Ye can tell Maimiti and the others how it is with me now. If

they want to see me, they know where they can find me, and they can do as they've a mind about coming back. I'll not be the one to coax 'em."

So off she went, alone. That was the middle of the morning, and three hours later here they came, all the womenfolk, some carrying children or leading 'em, some with baskets and bundles—all they could manage at one time—Maimiti in the lead, and Moetua with Ned Young pickaback, as though he'd been a child. Some of the young ones I'd never seen; others I'd hardly laid eyes on for three years. Thursday October was a fine lad, now, past eight years, and his brother Charles was six, and little Mary Christian five, who was born the very day the killing began. There was eighteen children, all told, two of 'em mine, and it shames me to say that neither of these was Balhadi's. When I saw that little flock, as pretty, healthy children as a man could wish to look on, I was grieved past words, thinking of the fathers of so many dead and buried, never to have the joy of their own. It was hard to believe that the four of us that was left after the massacre had been such crazed brutes when we'd all these little ones to cherish and care for. Whatever had come over us? There's no way to explain or reason it out. We was stark, staring mad, that's all there is to say.

The women came along one by one to greet me kindly. Not a word was said of what was past. I could see Mrs. Christian's hand there. Better women never breathed than herself and Taurua, Mr. Young's girl. Both had courage would have done credit to any man, but they'd no malice in their hearts. I began to see from that morning the change that had come over all the women. The time that had gone by had something to do with it, but what they'd been through was the main reason. It aged their hearts and sobered 'em beyond their years. Prudence and Hutia, in particular, had been wild young things when the *Bounty* came to the island, up to any kind of mischief, and enough they'd made, one way and an-

other. But they'd grown to be fine women, and good steady mothers to their children.

We divided ourselves up into households like we had before. Mrs. Christian with her children, and Sarah and Mary with theirs, moved into the house where Mr. Young and me had lived before. Moetua, Nanai, Susannah, and Jenny went to the Christians' house; Mr. Young, with Taurua and Prudence and their children, lived where Mills and Martin had; Balhadi, Hutia, and me took ours to the Indians' old place.

In a few days all their things was moved down from the Auté Valley. It did my heart good to see the houses that had stood empty so long filled with women and children, and the paths and doorways cleared, and the gardens new made. Mr. Young was like a different man. I never heard him laugh or joke the way he had in the days afore trouble came, but he'd found peace again. The old hopeless look was gone out of his face. His strength was slow in coming back, and he'd set in his dooryard, watching the children come and go, and taking deep comfort, as I did, in the sight of 'em.

Thursday October was a son any father might have been proud to own—as handy a lad as I've ever seen, and bright and active beyond his years. He'd a deal of his father's nature in him and his mother's as well. There couldn't have been a finer cross in blood than theirs. Next to him was Sarah McCoy, only a few months younger; then came her brother, Dan, who was seven, and after him a pair of stout lads, young Matt Quintal and Mr. Christian's second boy, Charles. These five followed me about as close as my shadow, and words couldn't tell how I joyed to have 'em with me. None of the children knew what had happened here in the past, whilst they was little, and we was all of a mind they should never know.

One morning I set off with the five I've spoke of for a day of roaming on the west side of the island. That part, as you've seen, sir, is all steep gullies and ravines, with bits of open

land between, good for nothing in the way of gardens. Even if it had been good land we'd not have bothered with it, having enough and to spare in the Main Valley. I hadn't been down there in months, nor any of the womenfolk, and the children had never set foot in it.

It was a bright cool morning, quiet and peaceful; we could hear the cocks crowing far and wide through the forests. I mind how it came to me, as we was climbing the western ridge, that this place was home to me at last. Ye may wonder I'd not thought of it so long since, seeing we'd no means of leaving it. I liked the island fine in the beginning, but after a year or so I always had the notion in the back of my head that some day a ship would come—not an English ship, in search of us, but a Spanish one, likely, or a ship from the American Colonies. It was in my mind to change my name and go off in her, and make my way back to England in the end. But now I was thinking of Pitcairn's Island as home. There's no better way to show, ye the change that come over me, and it was the children that brought it to pass.

When we got on the ridge to the south of the Goat-House Mountain, I set me down to rest, and little Sarah McCoy with me. The lads was eager to go on, and down they ran into the western valleys, as sure of foot as the goats that roamed wild there. I let 'em go, knowing they couldn't lose themselves. Sarah and I followed, after a bit. She was a quiet little mite, as pretty as a picture, with dark curly hair like her mother's. It made my heart sore to think her father couldn't have lived to see her as she was then.

There had been a path down to the western shore, but it was all grown over now, it had been so long since any of us had gone that way. We came out on an open spot overlooking the sea and waited there. The lads had gone roaming off in every direction, into the little valleys and down the rocks to the bit of beach on that side. I'd no mind to follow, knowing they was well able to take care of themselves. The fowls had increased wonderful the years we'd been on the island; hun-

dreds ran wild through the bush. The boys loved to hunt for their eggs; they'd find enough in half an hour for all the settlement, and there was even more to be had in this wild part of the island. We'd not waited long before Thursday October and the two youngest lads came back with a basket full of 'em, and some fine shellfish they'd found amongst the rocks. Little Matt Quintal had gone off by himself, and, after waiting half an hour or thereabouts, I went in search.

I'd not gone a quarter of a mile when I spied him below me, scrambling through the thickets as fast as he could go. I thought he was chasing one of the wild roosters, but when I called out he came runnin' towards me, so terrified he couldn't speak. I grabbed him up and he held fast around my neck with his face pressed tight against my shoulder.

I set him down on my knee. "What's this, Matty?" said I. "Was ye tryin' to run away from yer shadow?"

He held on to me like he'd never let go. I talked quiet and easy to him, and finally he got so's he could speak. He told me he'd seen a *varua ino*. That's what the Indians call an evil spirit. There's not one of the women but believes to this day in ghosts and spirits of all kinds, good and bad. Many's the time they claim to see or hear 'em. It's always tried my patience the way they talk o' such things at night, and tell the young 'uns tales about 'em. I've wished often enough to put a stop to such foolishness, but ye might as well try to change the colour o' their skins. I wouldn't mind if it was only to do with the mothers, but the children listen with all their ears and believe every word they're told.

The lad was half crazed with fear, and shivering all over, but at last I got him to say what he thought he'd seen. It was a huge great man, he said, a-settin' on a rock.

"Did he see ye?" I asked.

"No; he had his back towards me," said he.

"I'll tell ye what ye saw, lad," said I. "There's some old stone images yonder where ye've been. They was made by folk that lived here long ago. They're ugly things, bigger'n

a man and made to look like men, but they're naught but stone, and there's no more harm in 'em than there is in this rock we're a-settin' on."

"I saw it move," said he.

"Ye saw naught o' the sort, Matt," said I. "Ye fancied ye did, I don't doubt . . ."

"No, no! I did! I saw it move!" said he, and he stuck to that. I couldn't coax him out o' the notion, so I took him on my shoulder and carried him back to where the other children was.

Brought up as they'd been, they was all sure that little Matt must have seen an evil spirit. But they wasn't afeared of it with me there. So I told 'em to wait where they was while I chased that ghost clean off the island. "If there is one yonder," said I, "as soon as he sees me he'll go flyin' off beyond the cliffs, and that'll be the last o' *him*. He'll never come back again."

They set there as quiet as mice and made no fuss whatever. They all believed Father Alex could do anything he was a mind to and that even *varua inos* was afeared o' him.

What I reckoned to do was go off a piece, out of sight of the children, and then come back and tell 'em the spirit was gone, for good and all. But when I'd gone about as far as I thought was needed, I spied something that gave me a shock. In a bit of soft ground I saw the tracks of bare feet, half again as big as my own.

I'd seen them tracks before, many's the time, but I couldn't believe these was real, even as I looked at 'em. I crossed over the place and went along a dry gully for about fifty yards, makin' no noise, till I came to a wall of rock that slanted under, where I'd sheltered from the rain more than once in the old days. The Indians had used it for a camp when they fished on that side of the island; half a dozen could sleep dry there, and well sheltered from the wind. I pushed by the bushes and peered through. There set Matt Quintal with his back to me, just as his own lad had seen him.

He'd nothing on save what was left of a pair of seaman's trousers; it was the same pair he'd worn the day the women burned us out of the house. Under the rock was a bed he'd made of fern and dry grass, and he was squatting in the Indian fashion, close by, cracking fowl's eggs and drinking 'em down. There was the carcass of a wild pig to one side, all torn apart, and the bones of others was scattered around where he'd thrown 'em. The smell of the place was enough to sicken a dog.

If I'd had my wits about me, I'd have backed off without a word, but I called out, "Matt!" afore I could stop myself. He turned his head slow, looking this way and that, and then he spied me. When I saw his face I felt the chills go up and down my back. Ye never saw such a pair of eyes outside of a madhouse; and he'd a great beard, now, that reached to his waist, and bushed out the width of his chest.

I tried to be easy and natural. "Matt, ye rogue," said I. "Where have ye hid yourself this long while? God's truth! We thought ye was dead!"

I'd no more than got this out when he grabbed up a club thick as my arm and made a rush at me with a bellow that was like nothing in nature, brute or human. I ran for my life, jumping over rocks and dodging amongst the trees; then I caught my foot in some vines and pitched for'ard. I turned my head as I fell, thinkin' he was right at my heels, but he'd stopped thirty or forty yards back; and there he stood, with his great club in one hand, looking around in a puzzled way, like as if he wasn't sure I'd been there. I lay flat amongst the bushes, and I didn't move till he'd gone back the way he'd come.

When I'd shook myself together I hurried along to the children, and glad they was to see me again. They'd heard the roar Quintal let out, but they'd not seen us, and I thought best to say it was me that made the noise to scare off the evil spirit.

"Did ye see it, Alex?" Dan'l McCoy asked.

"Nay, lads," said I; "but if there was one, I reckon I scared him so he'll bother us no more. But I want none of ye to come down to this side of the island till I've had a good hunt through it, for I saw a great wild boar in the gully yonder. He might do one of ye a mischief."

We went home, then, and Sarah McCoy and little Matt kept tight hold of my hands all the way.

I told Mr. Young what I'd found. The only way we could reason it out was that Quintal had got so crazed he'd clean forgot there was anyone on the island save himself. He couldn't have been roaming the Main Valley or he'd have been seen.

"It's not likely he's ever been across the island since he went down there," said Mr. Young; "but now that he's seen ye, Alex, there's no telling what he may do." He shook his head in a mournful way. "I thought we'd got to the end of our troubles at last," said he, "and here's another sprung up. We must be under a curse."

I was anxious enough, myself, and it was hard to say what was best to be done. One thing was certain: the women would have to be told; so we called 'em together, and I gave 'em the full truth of what I'd seen. They was horror-struck, especially Sarah, who'd been Quintal's woman. For all that, she wouldn't hear to a hand being lifted against him. Jenny wanted us to shoot him and be done with it, and Prudence and Hutia backed her up, but Mrs. Christian and the rest was against this.

"Haven't we had trouble enough here, Jenny," said I, "without hunting down a poor crazed man to shoot him in cold blood?"

"Better that," said she, "than leave him free to harm us and the children. And that he'll do, sooner or later. The time will come, Alex, when ye'll wish ye'd done as I say."

It came sooner than we feared it would. Two days later I was giving some of the women a hand at mending fence at

Mr. Christian's house. There was Jenny and Susannah and Moetua, and, natural enough, we had Quintal on our minds. I'd seen to the loading of all the muskets, and there was two or three in every house, ready for use in case of need. Jenny had a sharp, bitter tongue when she'd a mind to use it, and she was trying to make out to the others I was afeared of Quintal. I let her run on, paying no heed to her woman's talk, and whilst she was in the midst of it we heard screams from the direction of the Christians' house. Directly after there was shots fired. I ran there as fast as I could and found the women in a terrible state. Little Sarah McCoy had gone to Brown's Well for water, and whilst she was dipping it up she saw Quintal coming down the path from the ridge. The minute he spied her he chased after her. Mrs. Christian heard the screams and rushed out with a musket. Quintal had all but caught the lass when Mrs. Christian fired over his head. At the sound of the shot he stopped short and ran off into the bush.

Sarah was old enough to remember Quintal, but she thought it was his ghost she saw. It made my heart sick to see her shivering and shaking in her mother's arms. She didn't get over the shock for days after.

We didn't dare rest, any longer, scattered as we'd been. Half of the women and children moved into Mr. Young's house, and the rest came with me. Mr. Young was too poorly to leave the village, but that same afternoon I took a musket to protect myself and went into the valley to spy out Quintal, if I could, but not a sign of him did I see. Then I climbed the mountain, where I could overlook the island. I had the *Bounty's* spyglass with me and I searched the western valleys bit by bit. There was little ye could see, below, because of the trees and thickets, but at last I spied him as he was climbing down amongst the rocks to go to the beach. I felt easier after that, and ye can imagine the relief it was to the women-folk to know that he'd gone to his old place. They scarce left

the houses after that, not knowing how soon he might take it into his head to come back.

Every day I'd go to the ridge with a musket and the spyglass to keep watch, and most times I'd have a glimpse of him. Once I saw him with the carcass of a wild pig acrost his shoulder, and it sickened me to think of him eating the raw flesh. He'd no way of making fire, but he seemed to care naught about that. Another time I'd a good view of him for near a half-hour. He was stark naked, settin' on a rock. The spyglass brought him as close as though he was within speakin' distance. He was talkin' to himself, and going through queer motions as a crazed man will.

One afternoon I'd no sight of him. It was getting on towards sundown and I was ready to come away when I spied Hutia and Prudence running along the ridge towards where I was. When they saw me they beckoned in a desperate way, but they didn't call out. It didn't take me long to reach 'em.

Quintal was in the Main Valley, but that wasn't the worst of it. He'd come all the way round, by the Auté Valley, more than likely, and he'd rushed out of the forest on Sarah, his own woman, and Mary McCoy. They was not over a hundred yards from the house. Mary told what happened. Quintal had passed her by and chased after Sarah. The poor woman was so terrified she'd run away from the house instead of towards it. Then she saw she was trapped, and the only way she could go was towards the crag we call Ship-Landing Point, that shuts in the east side of the cove. Quintal was close behind. Sarah went on to the very top of the crag and when she could go no further she threw herself off, sooner than let him catch her.

Mr. Young had gathered all the women and children at my house by the time I got there. Three had gone down to the cove to search for Sarah's body. No one knew where Quintal had got to. Mary was the only one had spied him and she'd run to the house without waiting to see what he'd do next. I was on my way to the landing place when I met

the women coming up. Moetua had Sarah in her arms. She was still breathing, but she died within the half-hour.

It was dark by that time. The women laid Sarah's body out and covered it with a cloth, and some of 'em was crouched down beside it, wailing and crying as the Indians do when there's death in the house. Mr. Young and me tried to quiet 'em, but they was past listening to reason. The children took fright from the mothers, and most of them was crying as well. Mrs. Christian and Taurua was the only ones kept themselves in hand. Mr. Young stood guard on one side of the house and me on the other, and it was as much as we could do to stop there with the women carrying on as they did.

About an hour after Sarah's body was brought up, Susannah was found missing. There was only one candlenut taper burning in the house, and with the light so dim, and so many there, none had noticed that Susannah wasn't amongst 'em. I couldn't believe, at first, that anything had happened to her, for I'd seen her with the others just before I'd gone down to the cove to help bring Sarah's body up. We knew she'd not go roaming off alone, after what had happened. Then one of the children said he'd seen someone going to the out-kitchen, which was about twenty yards from the house. It was getting dark and he couldn't be sure who it was. We'd no doubt, then, that Quintal had been hiding near by, waiting for such a chance, and that he'd grabbed Susannah.

Some thought he might have carried her to one of the other houses; so, dark as it was, I made a search, and glad I was when I'd finished. Wherever Quintal had gone, there was nothing more we could do till daylight. Ye can fancy the night we put in; never was there a longer one. Jenny came out to where I stood guard to tell me it was my fault Sarah was lying dead. "And Susannah will be dead by this time," said she. "If ye'd been half a man, Alex Smith, ye'd have killed the brute the day ye found him." The poor woman was

half crazed herself, after all that had happened. I couldn't blame her for letting out at me.

Mr. Young and me set out in search at the crack o' dawn. He was in no fit state to come, but he was bound to do it. We each had a musket and I carried a hand axe in my belt in case of need. We knew we'd got to kill Quintal, and ye can fancy how we felt. We took the path through the settlement and past Brown's Well, and when we got up on the ridge Mr. Young was so tired he had to rest. I've never felt more sorry for anyone than I did for him that morning. It was only his spirit gave him the strength to go on.

We both thought Quintal would go back to his old place in the gully, and it was there we meant to look first. "Alex," said he, "if we see him alone, no matter if his back is turned, we must both shoot, and shoot to kill." That was all the speech we had.

I led the way when we got down into the western valley. We went slow, stopping every few yards to listen. When we got close I whispered to Mr. Young to watch that side whilst I went forward to look.

I crawled through the bushes without making the least noise; then I came to the place. Susannah was lying on her back, without a rag to her body, with her feet tied together and her arms bound to her side with long strips of bark that went round and round her. Quintal was nowhere in sight. I made sure of that, then came out quick as ever I could, and I had her free in five seconds. She was in a terrible state, all covered with scratches and bruises, and one of her ears had been bit clean through, but I thanked God she was alive. She made no sound as I cut her loose. I whispered, "Get ye back yonder, Susannah. Ned's there. Where's he gone?" She motioned that he was somewhere on the far side of the place. I lifted her up; she was scarce able to stand, but she managed to do as I told her.

I looked to the priming of my musket and went for'ard. Quintal was asleep behind some bushes not a dozen steps far-

ther on. As soon as I saw him I backed off to the far side of the gully and raised my piece; but I couldn't pull the trigger. I've never felt worse in my life than I did that minute. I stood lookin' at him, thinking of the Matt Quintal I'd known on the *Bounty*. Then I minded me of the women and children and of Sarah lying dead, and I knew I had to go through with it.

I picked up a handful of pebbles and tossed it on him. He was lying on his back and saw me the minute he raised his head. His club was there beside him. He grabbed it and up he sprang, and as he came for me I pulled the trigger, but the musket missed fire. I'd only time to dodge to one side and grab my hand-axe. He made such a rush that he went past me. I ducked under the blow he aimed at me and threw out my leg, and he went sprawling his full length. Then, sir, as he got to his knees, I brought the axe down on his head with all my strength.

CHAPTER XXI

It was a merciful quick death, sir. He was killed on the instant, without a cry from his lips. I set me down for a bit, shook to the heart; then I put by the axe and went back to where Mr. Young was waiting. Maimiti had give us a tapa mantle to fetch for Susannah, fearin' the state she might be in, dead or alive. She'd put this over her and was crouched there beside him.

"Go ye back with her, Ned," said I. "The women will be half crazed till they know she's safe. Ye can tell 'em it's done. He'll trouble us no more."

I didn't know my own voice as I spoke, and Mr. Young said never a word. He was not a man of strong nature, even in health, and there's none hated strife and bloodshed more than

him who'd had to share in so much. I knew the horror he'd have of seein' Quintal's body. I was bound to spare him that.

Bruised and hurt as she'd been, Susannah had more strength left than him, and it was her took his arm and helped him up the steep rocky way. Slow they went, and I watched till they was out of sight amongst the trees and appeared again, high above, and crossed over the ridge to the Main Valley. Then I went back to where Quintal lay, and digged his grave with the axe I'd killed him with. It was hard, slow work, but I did it, and laid him in the place and smoothed over the ground, and covered it with leaves and moss so that none could tell where it was. Then I went down to the sea and threw the axe far out, and washed myself, and walked back across the island.

We buried Sarah the same day. She'd no kin amongst the women, and three was chosen to act as such and mourn her in their fashion, weeping and wailing, gashing their faces and breasts cruel with little sticks they called *paohinos*, set with sharks' teeth. Ye wouldn't have known 'em in that state; it was like as if they was out of their senses. Such things brought home to me how little we understood our women-folk for all the years we'd lived with 'em. Sometimes they'd seem no different from women at home; then of a sudden ye'd see the gap there was between our ways and theirs. As I've said, they had a mortal terror of the new dead, especially them they'd been afear'd of in life. For a week they was all huddled into my house at night, women and children together, with tapers burnin' from sundown to sunup. Not even Moetua would set foot outside the door after dark. But that passed. In the end Mr. Young and me coaxed 'em back to their own houses, and we lived as we had before.

And now, at last, sir, I've reached the end of the evil times. From that day we've had peace here, and, with God's help, so it shall be through all the years to come. Quintal had to be put to death—that I believe. The lives of none would have been safe with him roamin' the island, crazed brute he'd be-

come, ready to spring out on women and children. But it was little comfort I took from thinkin' so as I stood, that day, over his grave. Ye'll know how I felt, after all the blood had been spilt here. I wished I was dead and buried with him.

Aye, peace followed, but there was none in my heart for many a long day.

Mr. Young had used up what little strength he had and was in his bed for a fortnight. Then he began to mend, and I thought he was on the way to full health again. He saw how it was with me, though I never spoke Quintal's name, and made out as well as I could to seem easy in mind. But he knew, and it was thanks to him and the children that I got through the worst of that time.

No words could tell the blessing the children was to all. They made a new life for us, as different from the old as day from night. There was twenty-one at this time, all the way from nine years to a pair of newborn babes. Three was Christians, seven Youngs, three McCoy's, two Mills, four Quintals, and there was two of my own. None, so far as I know, belonged to the Indian men; they was all ours of the *Bounty*. So the women said, but the truth is we didn't know for certain who was the fathers of some. There was no doubt about Mrs. Christian's, but the others of one name was not always by the same mothers. Ye'll bear in mind the rough, wild way we lived; and the past six years there'd been more than twice the number of women there was men. Some without men of their own wanted children as bad as the rest. Aye, for all their hate of us at that time, they still had the great wish for children. It gave 'em something to live for. If they'd not cleared out of the settlement, sickened of our drunken ways, I'll warrant there'd have been half again as many. Ye may think it strange, but, now that all was peace, it was the wish of Bahati and Taurua, our own two girls, that Mr. Young and me should be fathers of babes to any that wanted 'em. And when I recollect the need there was for children, and the blessings they've brought, and the way we've lived these last years, like

one big family of kind and loving hearts, I can't feel it was a wrong way of life. It seems to me it was the right way, and the only way for that time.

None of the children, God be thanked, was old enough to recollect the time of the murders. Four or five remembered McCoy and Quintal, but they soon forgot, as children do, and we never spoke the names of any that was dead. We was bound that no memory of that time should be carried on to them.

And they healed our hearts, sir, and in the end made this small island like a heaven on earth. That's a strong way to put it, but so it was. There was scarce an acre of ground but had some sad or shameful thing joined with it, and at first they'd come to mind as I'd go from place to place. I'd have a horror of walking-about. But the children mended that. They made the earth sweet and clean once more. Before another year was gone they overlaid the whole island with so many new and happy memories that had to do with them alone, the old ones all but faded out beneath 'em.

They took after the Indian ways and spoke their mothers' tongue, as it was natural they should. A happier set of children never grew up together. There was no strife amongst 'em, and that seemed strange to me when I'd recollect the fightin', wranglin' 'uns I'd been brought up with in London, and the bloody noses I got and give from the time I was five years old. I thought it must be so with all children, but amongst these there was never a blow struck or a harsh word spoke. Aye, it was a joy to see 'em.

Ye'll know the comfort Mr. Young and me took to be with 'em from day to day, watchin' 'em grow and blossom out in new ways. If I was partial towards any of the lads, it was to Thursday October and little Matt Quintal, but the truth is I loved every one as though they was my own flesh and blood. I'd take a walk of an evening, after supper, which we always had afore sundown. The mothers would be in the dooryards with the little ones on their laps and the older lads and lasses

playin' their games close by; and I'd be struck to the heart with pity that Mr. Christian couldn't have lived to see 'em as they was then.

Now I must tell ye of a thing happened close after Quintal's death, for it's the greatest blessing has come to me all the years of my life, though I didn't know it at the time. As a usual thing I'd go along to Mr. Young's house of an evening, for I couldn't abide to be alone with my thoughts. One evening I'd gone late. The women and children was already abed, and Mr. Young was at his table, writin' in one of the old *Bounty's* logbooks. I'd often seen him at that. He gave me a nod and went on with it, and I set me down to wait till he was through.

"What is it ye write there so often, Ned?" I asked him. "Is it a journal ye're keepin'?"

"Aye," said he. "I've a record here of births and the like, but that's not the whole of it." Then he told me he'd write down whatever he could recollect out of books he'd read in past years. It was Mr. Christian had first put him in the way of it. About a year after we'd come here they begun doing it in their spare time, and they'd filled pages and pages. After Mr. Christian's death, Mr. Young had left off, but now he'd took it up again in earnest. He'd been a great reader from the time he was a lad, and there could have been little he hadn't mastered and kept in mind.

He read me a bit from a story called *The Pilgrim's Progress*, as he'd recollected and set it down. I was taken clean out of myself and begged him to go on, which he did, from one piece to another he had there. Mind ye, sir, I was naught but an ignorant seaman, with no more knowledge of the joy to be had from books than the pigs that run wild here. I didn't even know the names of our English writers, not a blessed one! Mr. Young told me about 'em. I could have listened the night through.

"Was ye never teached to read and write, Alex?" said he.

"A little, when I was a mite of a lad," said I, "but it's all gone from me now."

"How would ye like to take it up again?" said he. "I'll help. Ye've a taste for it, that's plain."

"I'd like it well enough," said I, "but ye'd soon sicken of the bargain, Ned, for I'm dismal ignorant. Hard work ye'd have tryin' to pound learnin' into my head."

"I'll chance that," said he, "and if ye're willin' we'll begin afore we're a day older."

Little I thought anything would come of it, but I was only too pleased to say aye to that. I was in desperate need of something to keep my mind off Quintal. Whether I could be teached or not didn't matter so much. I could try, anyway, and pass the evenings, which was the worst time of day for me then.

That was the start of it. The next day Mr. Young took me in hand, and slow work he had at first. But he was that patient he could have teached a stone image, and I'll say this for myself: I was bound to learn. And once I had a thing, it was mine. I never forgot.

He began to read to me out of the Bible. In the foundling home where I was raised, I'd heard bits from the Bible, but I was a wild young lad and gave no heed. It was different, now. I listened with all my ears, careful and patient, and Mr. Young was a master reader. We started with the Book of Genesis. Every evening when my lesson was over he'd go through half a dozen chapters, and I'd have that to think over till the next evening.

Our life went on as peaceful as heart could wish. Mornings, as a usual thing, we was all at work in the gardens. Two or three times a week, afternoons, the women would be at their tape-making below the rock cistern. There was a pretty sight to see, sir. Many's the time I'd go up to look on. There'd be four or five beatin' out the bark at once—they took turns at it—whilst the others looked after the babes and the little ones. They'd be scattered amongst the rocks with the sunlight flick-

erin' down on 'em through the trees, the mothers combing the children's hair after their baths, and makin' wreaths of ferns for their heads and garlands of flowers to hang around their necks. They could do wonders with blossoms; they'd spend hours stringin' 'em together in different ways, and whilst they was at it they'd sing their Indian songs. There'd been no laughter or singin' for years till after Quintal's death, and it warmed my heart to see such a blessed change in the women-folk. Their homesickness for Tahiti was gone at last. They'd talk of it, of course, but not in the old heartsick way, with tears in their eyes. Pitcairn's Island was home, now, to all.

Midday, after we'd had our dinners, was a time of rest, the Indian fashion. For two hours, or thereabouts, ye'd hear no sound; then all would be astir again to do as they'd a mind to. That was the time I'd take the older lads and lasses to roam the hills and valleys; or we'd go offshore, when the season was right, in the canoes, to fish. The Indians had showed me how and when to fish in these waters. There's a skill to it I wouldn't have believed in the old days; and some of the *Bounty* men was that stubborn they'd never acknowledge that the Indians knew better about such matters than themselves. But I learned by goin' out with 'em, and I've passed on all I've learned to the children. But it's little they've got from me compared to what their mothers has taught 'em, or what they've picked up, natural. They know the use of every plant and tree and flower on the island. They know the winds and the seasons and the nesting times of the birds. If there's anything they don't know about this island I'd be pleased to hear what it is. They learned to swim near as soon as they learned to walk. I used to be afeared to let the little ones go into the water, but bless ye, I soon got over that! Birds ain't more at home in the air than these lads and lasses are in the sea. In these days the older ones swim all the way around the island for the fun of it. To see 'em sport in the breakers ye'd think they was born amongst 'em.

But there's no need to tell ye all this, sir, for ye can see for

yourself how it is with us. It's the same now as it was then, save that the little tots has grown up more. But I like to mind me of the days when it was all new and we could scarce believe in the peace that had come at last.

I had my lessons with Mr. Young late of an afternoon, and evenings as well. Some of the children took to comin' in to watch, and it wasn't long till I found they was gettin' the hang o' things just from listenin' to what Mr. Young would tell me. Not their letters, of course, but the way of speakin' English. They'd carry away any amount of it in their heads. One day I spoke to Mr. Young about this.

"They're as bright as new buttons, Ned," said I. "If ye was to teach them along with me I'll warrant they'd soon catch the meaning and go on full sail, leagues ahead of the place I've reached."

"Aye," said he, "I've thought o' that." He got out of his chair and walked up and down the room for a bit, turning the thing over in his mind.

"But where'd be the good of it, Alex? We want to do what's best for them. I've come to think Mr. Christian was right. It was his wish they should have their mothers' ways and their mothers' beliefs. No, let's keep 'em as they are. If I was to teach 'em to read, they'd have naught but the Bible for their lesson book, and what they'd find there would only puzzle and upset their minds."

I believed then he had the right of it, and no more was said. Mr. Young had brought me along as far as the Book of Leviticus, and I didn't know what to make of a good part of what I'd listened to, myself. I could fancy how it would have puzzled the children. There was the story of the children of Israel, and God favouring them and hardening Pharaoh's heart so Moses could bring plagues on the Egyptians: rivers of blood, and swarms of vermin and frogs, and diseases for their cattle, and the like. If it was God had hardened Pharaoh's heart, I couldn't see that Pharaoh was to blame; and I wondered about the innocent people amongst the Egyptians, for

there's always good as well as bad in any land. Why should they be made to suffer for the evil ones amongst 'em? Mr. Young told me it was a story the Israelites had wrote for themselves, to show their side of things. That's how it looked to me, but I took a powerful interest in the Bible for all that. Many's the night we sat over it till the small hours, for Mr. Young was as pleased to read as I was to listen.

We went on so for nine months, and slow but sure I learned to read. I couldn't well say how pleased and proud I was when I found I'd got the way of it; and I worked at writin' as well. What I'd lost as a lad came back, but it was hard work that brought it. Not a day passed without my lesson, and I'd study by myself for hours together.

Then Mr. Young's health give way again. He'd never got back his strength, and the old asthma trouble came on worse than ever. We had a long spell of cold rainy weather, and that may have brought it. The women tried all their Indian medicines of herbs and poultices and the like, but this was a thing they'd never seen before, and they couldn't find a cure for it. If ye've ever watched a man drown, sir, powerless to help him, ye'll know how it was with us. He'd be took bad four or five days together and fight for his breath in a way was pitiful to see. And all that time he was getting weaker. So it went for three long months, but we never give up hope.

We tried all ways we could think of to give him a little ease. One afternoon we had him propped up with pillows in a chair I'd made for him. He'd been better that day, but I saw a look in his face that told me he knew he was dying. He didn't talk much—just sat with his hands in his lap, lookin' through the trees to seaward. We was alone in the room.

Presently he turned his head.

"Alex," said he, "there's a thing or two I want to speak of, while I can."

My heart smote me, the way he said it. He wanted so bad to live. There was a time, after Mr. Christian's death, when he'd no wish to go on, but the children had changed that. He

wanted to grow old amongst 'em, along with me, and see 'em reared to manhood and womanhood.

"If ever a ship should come," said he, "and it's likely there will, soon or late, ye'd best tell who ye are. If there's a good man aboard of her—one ye can trust—I'd make a clean breast to him, Alex, of what's happened here. Let him know the truth."

"I will so, Ned," said I.

"It's yourself has been spared of all of us to bring up the children. It's a great trust and a sacred one. Guard it well. Be faithful to it. I know ye will."

He took my hand and held it. "That's all," said he. "I'd have liked well to stay on with ye, lad. But it's not to be."

I couldn't speak, sir. All I could do was to hold his hand in both of mine, with the tears streamin' down my face. Then Mrs. Christian and Taurua came in. I couldn't bear to set with him longer. I had to leave the room.

He died that same night, the three of us by him, and we laid him to rest the following day. Words can't say how we missed him. For all he was so far above me in blood and rearing, I loved him as if he'd been my own brother. He had the most kind and gentle nature. If ever ye could have laid eyes on him, ye'd have known at first sight he was a good man, one ye could love and trust. When we lost him we was that stunned and grief-stricken there was naught we could take up with the least relish or pleasure. It seemed as if we couldn't go on without Mr. Young.

Aye, it was a dark, lonesome time that followed. But lonesome's not the word. It was worse than that for me. It was as if I'd been told that of all the *Bounty* men that sailed from England together there was none left save myself. I walked the island with a heart heavy as lead. I thought of the mutiny and the part I'd played in it, and how I'd helped to set Captain Bligh and eighteen innocent men adrift in a little boat, in the middle of the ocean. As I lay in bed at night I'd see the launch riding the waves, and them in it dead of thirst or star-

vation; or a picture would come to mind of the lot of 'em bein' murdered by savages on some island where they'd landed. I'd think of the blood spilt here, and Quintal's face would come before me; night and day I'd see it, until I was near desperate, not knowing how I was to live with such memories behind me.

The children was no help to me, then. I was struck with fear at the very sight of 'em, thinking of what might happen when they was grown men and women. I minded what Mr. Young had read to me once: that the sins of the fathers would be visited on the children for generations. I'd come to believe that. I believed it was God's law them innocent babes should be punished for our sins, and us through them. I tried to pray to Him, but I didn't know how, and ye'll mind I thought of Him, then, as a God of wrath and vengeance. I'd heard naught and read naught of a God of forgiveness and love. But that was to come. I was to be led into the way of peace at last; but it was a long way, sir, and I can't tell ye the torment I suffered through afore I found it.

Aye, if ever a man felt lost and desperate, it was Alex Smith, sir. I couldn't believe there was any hope for me. It may have been because I was alone, with no other man I could open my heart to. However it was, I believed the blood of all the innocent men that had died since the mutiny was on my head. I believed it was meant I should be made the scapegoat for the guilty ones and be punished for 'em. By thinkin' so much over the past, I'd come to believe it was God's will I should be destroyed, by my own hand. One day—it was around two months after Mr. Young's death—I went to the great cliff on the south side of the island with the intent to throw myself off. I was out of my mind, sir—that's the truth of it.

Ye've been to the top of the Rope. Ye know what a fearsome place it is, with a straight drop to the sea, hundreds of feet below. It was there Quintal and Minarii had battled with their bare hands, when Minarii was pushed to his death over

the cliff. I reached the place not knowing how I got there, stumbling along like a blind man, with my heart bitter as gall. It was midday when I crossed the island. I thought all the women and children was in the settlement having their usual rest, but I wasn't more than half a dozen steps from the brink of the cliff when I spied three of the children curled up there, asleep, like kittens in the sunshine. There was little Matt Quintal, and Eliza Mills, and Mary, Mrs. Christian's youngest, who was seven years old at that time. Matt had a little pole beside him he'd cut from the bush, with a basket of yams on one end and a small bunch of plantains on the other. The lasses had their eggin' baskets filled and put away in the shade close by; and afore they'd gone to sleep they'd made garlands of blossoms to hang around their necks.

I stepped back and stared at 'em like a man has been waked out of a horrible dream, and all at once there flowed into my heart a flood of hope and joy and love I could never explain. It must have been God's mercy that showed me that pretty innocent sight, for as sure as ye hear me, sir, if they hadn't been there I'd have flung myself off the cliff. I sank down on my knees beside 'em. The tears ran down my cheeks, and a voice inside me spoke as plain as words, tellin' me I was to live for them children, and love and cherish 'em, and think no more of evil times past and done with.

Ye'd have said Mary heard that voice. She opened her eyes and looked at me in a puzzled way. The next minute she jumped up and had her little arms around my neck.

"Alex! What is it?" says she, but my heart was so full I couldn't speak. All I could do was hold her close. Presently I said, "Never mind, darlin'. I'm weepin' for joy, if ye wish to know, and the love I have for ye lads and lasses."

Our voices roused up the other two, and they didn't know what to make of seein' me in such a state. Eliza came on the other side and I gathered her in with Mary and held the two of 'em so; and Matty stood on his knees in front of me with a look of wonder on his face. He hadn't a trace of his father

in him. He'd gone all to the mother's side, as handsome a lad as ye could hope to see, with dark curly hair and great brown eyes, true and trustful like them of a dog.

"Alex, are ye hurted?" says he.

"Nay, lad," says I, "but ye've give me a turn, the three of ye, lyin' asleep so close to the edge of the cliff. You might have rolled off it."

Then Eliza's face brightened up and she laughed at me, and the others with her. "Was ye weepin' for *that*, Alex?" says she. "Why, we've climbed down there many's the time."

"What!" says I. "Not over the Rope?"

"Aye," says she; and afore I could think, the lad jumped to his feet. "I'll show ye, Alex," said he, and over he went. I was scared out of my wits. The cliff is all but sheer, and a missed handhold or foothold would send ye to your death, hundreds of feet below; and there went Matt, like a crab down a wall of reef! I called and begged him to come back, scarce darin' to breathe, and when he'd gone down, twenty-five feet or so, to show how easy he could do it, up he climbed again, as cool as ye please. In my heart I was proud of his pluck, but I didn't let on. Many a fright the children has give me since, the lot of 'em, the way they clamber down cliffs and along ridges that would scare a goat, but they never come to grief, and I've got used to seein' 'em now, in a way. They're as much at home on the rocks and ledges as they are in the sea.

I like to mind me of that day. I wasn't a Christian man, Mr. Webber, I don't know if I'll ever merit to be called one, but if it wasn't God's love that saved me, what could it have been? It must have been that! He must have seen and took pity on me for the children's sakes. He had work for me to do. There's no explainin' it, else. And somehow the load of misery was lifted from my heart so that I never felt it again so sore and heavy as at that time.

I'd left off my study at readin' and writin' when Mr. Young was took sick. Now I went at it again, though why I did I

couldn't have said for certain. I think I had the notion to go on so as I could read the bits Mr. Christian and Mr. Young had wrote down in the old *Bounty's* logbooks. I took more interest in them than I did in the Bible, and I got to the place where I could read and understand the most part. But all this while, sir, I was bein' led. I know that, now. God was bringin' me to a knowledge of His love in His own way.

I went back to the Bible, takin' it up where Mr. Young had left off readin' to me. If I'd known what I know now, I'd have gone straight to the New Testament, but like enough it was best I should have burrowed along, slow and patient, like a mole in the dark. I did that for three years. I didn't read all. There was parts too knotty for me and I'd have to pass them by; but others, like the Psalms and the Proverbs, I'd come back to again and again till I got so I knew most of 'em by heart.

I've heard tell of men bein' led all of a sudden, in a day or a week, to the knowledge of God. It wasn't so with me. I was brought to it little by little, but when I came to the Life of Jesus, my heart began to open like doors swingin' apart. Once I was sure God was a loving and merciful Father to them that repent, it seemed to me I could feel His very presence, sir, and I grew more sure every day of His guiding hand. And I knew, in the end, that I'd come to the way of Life—the only way. I'll say no more of this, for it's a sacred, holy thing, but I was certain I'd found it because of the peace that came to me and has never left me since.

But I was troubled about the children. Not as they was then, but over what might happen when they was grown men and women. They had their fathers' blood in their veins. How could I know something wouldn't happen to lead 'em into our old ways? For all Mr. Young had said, I couldn't believe it was God's wish they should be kept in ignorance of His Holy Word. The more I thought about it, the more strong it came in to me that I'd been led so as I could lead them. It seemed to me I could hear the very voice of Jesus: "Suffer little chil-

dren to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." And I did, sir. I brought 'em to Him, and their mothers with 'em.

Ye'll wonder an ignorant seaman could have done it. I couldn't have alone. It was God showed me the way. I began with the mothers. I'd gather them together of an evening and tell them the story of the Bible. Not the whole of it, of course. There was a deal I didn't know, but I had the main parts well in mind. It was a joy to see the interest they took. It was the story they fancied in the beginning, but they soon got to see there was more to it than that. What made it easier for me was that they was all young women at the time we left Tahiti and their minds was not hardened into the Indian beliefs; and I taught 'em in a way that surprised me. I'd never have thought I could do it so well. It seemed as if I was told what to say, and I'd have an answer ready for every question they'd ask. It was God's doing, the whole of it.

If it was a joy to teach the mothers, ye'll know what it was when I started with the children. Their little hearts was so eager and open and ready to receive there was times I was afeared to speak, lest I'd have God's teaching wrong. They'd believe without the least question of doubt. That made me slow and careful. I said naught about sin, for they didn't know what it was, and I saw no need to put any idea of it into their hearts. I taught 'em what I believed Jesus would wish 'em to be taught: to love one another, to speak truth and act it, to honour their mothers and do as they'd be done by.

All this was in the Indian language, which I'd learned to speak near as well as themselves. But as I went on I saw I'd got to do more. I looked to the years to come, when I'd be gone and they left without the skill to read God's Word for themselves. They might forget what they'd heard from me and drift into evil ways as we had. I saw I had to teach 'em their letters. Aye, it was a sacred duty. Once I was sure of that, I didn't rest till I'd started a school for the older ones.

As ye know, likely, the Indians has no letters of their own. Theirs is naught but a spoken tongue, and it would have puzzled a better head than mine to know how to go about such a task. Mr. Young would have known, and sorry I was I hadn't pleaded with him till he'd agreed to teach the children along with me. There was times I thought I'd have to give up. It wasn't the children's fault. They was bright and quick. Often they'd see what I was drivin' at afore I was sure of it myself. All I had on my side was the deep wish to teach 'em and a stubborn streak in me that wouldn't let me give in till I'd showed 'em what letters meant, and how they was put together to make words. Their knowin' bits of English was a great help, but if ever a man sweat blood over a thing was past his skill, that man was myself.

But they got the notion of it at last, and, once they had, it would have amazed ye to see how fast they went on. Thursday and Charles Christian and Mary McCoy was the best, but there was little to choose amongst the five I took into the first school. I'll not forget how proud they was when they got so as they could read a few lines and write little messages to one another. Their mothers thought it was the wonder of the world, and when ye come to look at it, there's few things to equal the wonder of writin'. I'm blessed if I can see how men ever came to the knowledge of it in the first place.

There was a writin' chest had belonged to Captain Bligh, with a good store of paper in it, and ink, and pens. I cherished them sheets of paper as if every one was beat out of gold. When the ink was gone I made some that did famous out of candlenut ash, and pens we had a-plenty, with all the fowls there is on the island. When the last of the paper was gone, I made slates for the children out of slabs o' rock. There's a kind of rock here ye can chip off in thin layers. They's what we used for slates, and we still do; but it's hard to grind it down and make it smooth.

The school was a pride to the children as much as it was to me. I didn't have to coax 'em into it. Bless ye, no! They all

wanted to learn their letters. I took the young ones in as fast as they came to an age, and the older ones was a great help with them. And the questions they'd ask, once they learned to read a bit! They'd make my old head swim! I didn't let 'em read the Bible for themselves. There was parts would only have puzzled 'em, as Mr. Young said. I picked out the chapters, and the most of it was Christ's teaching to His disciples. And they'd take it to their hearts, sir, and keep it there—aye, and live by it.

And now I'm near to the end of the story. I might go on for another night, or a week of nights, for the matter of that, tellin' ye what's happened these past five years; but I've no wish to try ye past the limit of patience. Ye can see how it's been. Our life has gone by as quiet as a summer's day. There's never been the least strife amongst us since the day Quintal was killed. We've lived for the children. Their mothers and me has never had a thought save how we can make their lives as happy as ours was miserable in the old days. They're good mothers, for all they was heathens before, and still are, in some of their ways. But there's heathen ways, sir, us white men could study to our profit. I have. There's been time for it here. I've learned more from these Indian women than ever I've been able to teach them.

Aye, it's a quiet life and a good life we've had here these nine years. I doubt if ye could find anywhere a family of human beings that lives together with more kindness and good will. We're at peace, in our lives and in our hearts. There's the sum of it, in few words.

Now and again, when I go out to fish, I pass over the place where the hulk of the *Bounty* lies. I look down at her and mind me of the times I trod her decks. I mind me of the day we put out from Portsmouth, all of us so eager for the voyage ahead, and thinkin' what we'd see amongst the islands we was bound for. Little we knew what was to come! Little we guessed how soon we was to be scattered far and wide, and the ends some of us was to meet!

We did a cruel wrong when we set Captain Bligh adrift with all them innocent men. He was a hard man and an unjust man. But, no matter how sore we was tried, we should never have seized the ship, and none knew it better than Mr. Christian when it was too late. Ye'll know from what I said that he never had a moment's pleasure or peace of heart from that time to the day of his death. Aye, it was a cruel, lawless deed, and all that can be said for us is that the mutiny wasn't a cold-blooded, planned-out thing. It was the matter of half an hour and was over with afore it came in to us what we'd done. Then it was past mending. We was punished for it as we deserved, but I'll say no more o' this, for it's over and ended.

Ye'll never know the joy it's give me to hear that Captain Bligh and his men won through to safety. I can be truly at peace from this time on. That knowledge was the one thing needful, and I never thought to have it.

Now I've done what Mr. Young wished I should do: told ye the story from start to finish, and kept nothing back. I'd have told ye, regardless, Mr. Webber, for it's been a burden on my heart all these years. I thank ye kindly that ye've let me ease the weight of it.

It's a late hour. Ye'll be ready for bed, and we'll go along to the house.

The last of the casks is filled, Thursday says, and ready to be towed out. It's been a rare treat to the children to be of service to ye. They've a sea stock on the beach will last ye halfway home, I shouldn't wonder—pigs and fowls and fruits and vegetables. We've food and to spare here. Bless ye! We could fill a score of ships like the *Topaz* and never miss it in the least.

There's one thing more I'd like to speak of. It's about the children. If only I could keep 'em as they are, Mr. Webber—ignorant of the world, and the world ignorant of them! That would be my heart's wish! Maybe ye'll say it's a foolish wish; but if ye could be in my place, see and be with 'em from day

to day, ye'd feel as I do. Aye, ye would so—I'm certain of it. They've missed so much that children outside is laid open to, almost from babyhood. I'd not have ye think they're perfect, without flaw or blemish. They're human. But I do believe ye might search the world around without finding children more truly innocent and pure-minded than these.

When I think they was sprung from rough, hard seamen, for the most part, mutineers and pirates, I can scarce believe they're our own flesh and blood! It's a miracle! There's no other name for such a thing! Never a night passes that I don't thank God that He's let these Indian mothers and me live to see it.

Aye, if only we could keep 'em so! I'll not forget the morning the *Topaz* was sighted. It was Robert Young spied ye first. We was in the school when he came runnin' up from the bluffs. "Alex," said he, "there's a great canoe comin' over the sea!"

There was an end of lessons. The lads had never seen a ship, though I'd told 'em there was such things. I had to, for they'd seen what's left of the old *Bounty*. We rushed to the bluffs, and when I saw the vessel, Mr. Webber, my heart sank. Shall I tell ye what I wished to do? Ye was still miles off and couldn't have seen the smoke of our fires. I wanted to put 'em out, gather the womenfolk and the lads and lasses—every chick and child—and hide with 'em in the forest, in the deepest part of the valley. It wasn't that I was afeared for myself. I was thinkin' of the children. I wanted to keep 'em clear of all knowledge of the world their fathers was raised in. I wished sore to do it! But they was so stirred up and eager, it would have broke their hearts if I'd not let 'em go off to ye and ask ye ashore.

And now ye've found us, it'll soon be known we're here. I've no doubt it'll cause a bit of a stir, outside, when Captain Folger tells that he's found the hiding-place of the old *Bounty's* men. I wouldn't try to coax him or yerself to keep silent about us, Mr. Webber. It's your duty to report us—that I

know. And other ships will come, once it's known that Pitcairn's Island is summat more than a lonely rock for sea birds. . . . Aye. Soon or late they'll come, as Mr. Young said. . . . Well . . .

But God bless me! I mustn't keep ye up longer. Ye'll be perished for sleep. I'll warrant I could talk the night through, it's been so long since I've had a seaman to yarn with. Good night, sir, and rest well. I'll be astir bright and early to meet Captain Folger.

EPILOGUE

AT SUNSET on the following day, Alexander Smith was seated with half a dozen of the children on the highest pinnacle of the crag, Ship-Landing Point, overlooking Bounty Bay. Below them, at various places along the seaward cliffs, were the other members of the Pitcairn colony, all steadfastly gazing eastward. The *Topaz*, with all sail set, under a fresh westerly breeze, had drawn rapidly away from the land and was now far out, looking smaller than a child's toy vessel against the lonely expanse of blue water.

The hush of early evening was over land and sea. The ravines and valleys were filled with purple shadow, deepening momentarily, and, in the last level rays of the sun, crags, ridges, mountain peaks, and the lofty cliffs that bounded the island on the west stood out in clear relief, bathed in mellow golden light.

The old seaman turned to a little girl at his side, who was weeping softly, her head in her arms.

"There, lass! Comfort ye now. Bless me! Ye'll have the lot of us weepin' with ye directly."

The girl raised her head, making an attempt to smile through her tears.

"It's sad to have them go so soon," she replied. "Will they never come back?"

"That I couldn't tell ye, darlin'. But who knows? They might."

"But where is it they're going, Alex?" one of the boys asked.

"Home . . . a long way . . . thousands of leagues from where we are."

"What is a league?"

"A league? Well, let me think. . . . If the land here was half again as big as it is, ye'd have just about a league from one end to the other."

"And they have thousands of leagues to sail before they reach their home?"

"Aye—thousands, the way they'll go."

"Then we'll never see them again!"

"Now, Mary, lass! Don't ye start weepin' along of Rachel! Wouldn't ye have Captain Folger see his dear ones? And there's Mr. Webber with three children, the oldest the age of yourself, waitin' for him in his own land. Think of the joy there'll be the day he comes home!"

"I want them to go home; it isn't that. But I want them to come back. And if it's so far . . . they do hope to come again, don't they?"

"Aye; and mebbe they will. But ye can't never tell about ships—where they'll be off to next."

"Where is their home?"

"Off yonder."

"Is it like ours?"

"Aye, in a way, but in some ways it's nothing like. It's a great country they live in. Ye could put together hundreds of lands the size of ours—thousands of 'em—and it wouldn't make one as big as theirs. And it's cold in the winters. It's that cold the water freezes in the brooks and streams."

"What does that mean—freezes?"

"Well, I don't know as I can tell ye, exactly. It gets colder and colder, and the end of it is the water in all the streams is froze till it's hard like rock, and ye can walk on it."

"Alex! It couldn't be so! You can walk on the water as Jesus did?"

"Nay, Robbie, it's not the same. Jesus walked on water like we have here. But in them perishin' cold places . . . well, it freezes and gets hard, like I said. Anybody can walk on the froze water. I've done it myself."

Another of the lads turned to him eagerly.

"I'd like to see it! Alex, if they came again, couldn't I go with them to their land?"

"Would ye wish to go?"

"Aye."

A girl of twelve years seized the boy's arm.

"You wouldn't go, Dan! We'd never let you go!"

"I'd come back."

"I've no doubt ye'd wish to come back," said Smith; "but ye might be away years and years. Ye might never have the chance to come home again. Think how lonesome ye'd be, Dan, and all of us, without ye. Nay, lad, bide here, whatever comes. Never any of ye leave home. Ye don't know how it is out yonder."

"But we want to know! All of us do! Why have you never told us of the other lands?"

"It's been so long since I've seen 'em I'd most forgot there was such places."

"But you'll tell us about them now?"

"Alex, Alex, do!"

"Will you tell us to-night?"

Taking their eyes, for a moment, from the distant ship, all turned to him eagerly.

"There, now. We'll see. . . ."

"No, Alex! Promise you will!"

"Not to-night, children. But like enough I will, one of these days, if ye've still the wish to hear. There's Thursday and Matt comin' in. Run down and help 'em up with the canoe, Daff—ye and John and Robbie. . . . Rachel, ye lasses had best go home, now, afore it's dark. Tell Mother I'll be along directly."

The sun had set and the last light faded swiftly from the

sky. In the east the first stars appeared. The ship was now but a mere speck almost on the verge of the horizon. Motionless, his chin in his hands, elbows on his knees, the old seaman gazed after her till she was lost to view in the gathering darkness. At length he rose and turned away, slowly descending the steep northern slope of the crag to the path which led to the settlement.

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The motion picture *Mutiny on the Bounty* is an Aaron Rosenberg Production. Screenplay by Charles Lederer. Directed by Lewis Milestone.

PUBLISHED BY
POCKET BOOKS, INC.

PRINTED
IN
U.S.A.

