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John Liddiard Nicholas

Excerpt

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NARRATIVE
OF A
VOYAGE TO NEW ZEALAND.

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CHAP. I.

Visit made to the chief of Bream Head—Friendly behaviour of the natives there—The Author and Mr. Marsden introduced by Moyhanger to the superior chief—Their friendly reception—Kookoopa, an inferior chief—His military fame—Further particulars of Moyhanger—Curiosity excited among the natives—Provisions supplied by the chief—Departure from Bream Head—Danger while leaving the harbour—Return to the vessel—Arrival of canoes from the shore—Curious rock near Cape Brett—Return to Rangehoo—Visit to the Missionaries—Progress made at the settlement—Divine service performed on shore—Absence of Duaterra with most of the natives on this occasion, and the reason of it—Formidable demonstrations of approaching hostility between two parties of the natives—Conference between Duaterra and another chief, and the subject of it—Hostile appearances removed—The parties in amity with each other—Excursion to procure fish—Parro, the residence of Korra-korra, visited—His head wife—Character of his people—A fishing party, and their proceedings—The Author and Mr. Marsden sleep at Parro—Alarmed suddenly in the night—The cause of it groundless—Tui disgusted with the state of New Zealand.

HAD the wind continued fair, it was our intention to have proceeded directly to the

Bay of Islands, without depending upon any casual supply of provisions that we might meet with along the coast; but as it blew against us the whole way, and had settled in a contrary direction for some days, while our warriors complained that their stock of fern-root could not possibly last much longer, Mr. Marsden and myself got into the boat about six o'clock in the evening; and though the ship was lying seven or eight miles from the shore, we were determined to land, and get from Moyhanger and his friends whatever could be obtained. The New Zealanders are a people who of all others are the least capable of bearing hunger with patience; and though they will readily submit to other privations, the denial of food, even in a partial degree, discomposes them so much, that they can do nothing until their cravings are satisfied; and should this be rendered impracticable at the time, they never cease to murmur with turbulent impatience. We took a party of them with us in the boat, headed by Korra-korra, who assumed on the occasion a great share of importance, displaying with various ludicrous airs, his characteristic vanity; and after paddling with much exertion, reached the shore about half-past seven.

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On our way, we passed some curious-shaped rocks that projected some distance from the land, and had a very singular appearance. The natives perceiving our approach, came out in two canoes to meet us; and Moyhanger, who was in one of them, seemed highly pleased that we had come according to promise; and as there was a heavy surf beating upon the shore, he directed us with much solicitous attention to the part where we could best effect a landing. Here we had scarcely left the boat, when the friendly people of the district came down in crowds to welcome us; and thronging round us with kind but officious civility, were anxious to shew us, by all the manifestations they could display; that we had made them happy by our visit. Moyhanger, putting our arms under his, which he said was “*Europee* fashion,” and others linking theirs in the same manner, we proceeded in a line from the beach; and both my friend and myself were highly gratified at the social good-humour and jovial vivacity of our new companions. We had about a mile to walk before we could get to the residence of the chief; and this, though an inconsiderable distance, was rendered both tedious and disagreeable, from

the continued obstructions it offered: being obliged to climb over rocks that were almost impervious, and in one place, to cross a small channel that nearly encompassed the spot where the village was built. When we had crossed this channel, and were entering the little capital, the ladies, always attentive to the friendly signal, held up their *kackahows*, and waving them in the air, shouted forth their salutation according to custom.

Moyhanger now introduced us to the superior chief Kiwacha, who was sitting on the ground as we approached him; and receiving us with a peculiar degree of amenity and composure, he ordered a clean mat to be spread for us, and desired us to sit down; which we did, with Moyhanger beside us, who acted as interpreter. As soon as we were seated, Mr. Marsden explained our wants to the chief, making him, at the same time, a present of three tokees, which he accepted with the same pleasure as the rest of his countrymen; and looking at them for some moments with heartfelt satisfaction, he seemed impressed with a sense of obligation for a favour so unexpected. He informed us that he had plenty of pigs, but that they were running wild in the woods; that, however, he

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would send his people the following day to catch as many as would supply the vessel, if she remained off the coast; and that we might take any other provisions his district afforded. Of this offer, which was both generous and friendly, we resolved to avail ourselves, if circumstances should permit; and told him, that if the wind did not prove favourable to our getting round to the Bay of Islands, we would hoist our colours and stand in for the shore. This chief was a man very far advanced in years; and the strong lines of his countenance, which bespoke both reflection and gravity, no less than his venerable age, secured to him the reverence of his people, who paid the most submissive regard to his commands, and from strangers claimed the tribute of attention and respect.

Besides the superior chief, we saw a subordinate one, the man whom Moyhanger had accompanied on board in the morning; and whom he described as the commander-in-chief, or fighting man, as he expressed it, of *Kiwacha*. The name of this chief was *Koo-koopa*, so called from a bird of that name which is very common in New Zealand, and somewhat larger than our pigeon, but of the same species. This man, according to the

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accounts of our warriors, had repeatedly signalized himself in several desperate actions with the surrounding tribes, and was considered one of the bravest combatants in the island; so that Kiwacha had made a judicious choice of a military commander, his prowess having spread terror through all the parts adjacent, while it secured the district of his superior chief from predatory incursions. Poor Moyhanger was extremely loquacious the whole time, talking with an astonishing volubility, and wishing to engross the whole conversation to himself; but he had nearly forgotten his English, though he did not relax in his attempts to express himself in that language; and jabbering away at random, it was with much difficulty we could comprehend any part of what he said. He attached himself a good deal to me, but in many instances I could have well dispensed with this predilection, for he annoyed me exceedingly with his continual importunities; asking me for every thing he saw in my possession, though I had nothing about me that I could part with but a few nails, which far from satisfying, only served to increase his cupidity. Having changed his mind since he was on board in the morning, he now expressed a de-

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sire to go to England again; but I did not encourage this inclination, well knowing that he would be happier in his own country than in any other part of the world, and that he would very soon wish to return to it. He asked after Governor Bligh and General Foveaux, and remembered the Duke of York and Lord Fitzwilliam. We desired him to collect all the flax he could procure, and take it to the Bay of Islands, where the missionaries would always purchase it of him; and this he promised to do, appearing well pleased with the proposal. I again mentioned the name of Mr. Savage to him, but he evinced the same indifference as before; and I knew not whether to ascribe it to insensibility or ingratitude, but the former I should think the most likely.

When we had been here about an hour, we heard the report of the ship's guns, which we had requested the master to fire, the moment a fair breeze should spring up; and we now became very anxious to return on board. But in this desire we could not be speedily indulged; for our party having brought the boat up the channel, there was not sufficient water to float her until the return of the tide, for which we were obliged to wait upwards

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of three hours. When this time had elapsed it was quite dark ; and the natives being dispersed in groups, sitting round their fires, I was invited by one, and then by another to take my seat among them ; and each group wished to get me within their own circle, while they all appeared very social, though detached from each other. In order to divide my company among them while I remained, I visited them all round alternately ; and derived no small share of amusement from the curiosity which my presence excited through the whole assemblage. As I went up to each separate party, they would instantly place me in the middle of the circle, and examine with minute attention my great coat, my hat, my boots, and, in short, every article of raiment about me ; and the indications of their surprise were as diverting as they were singular. One old man brought me for a wife a girl about twelve years of age, and whom I supposed to be his daughter : presenting her to me with many commendations, and urging the alliance in a copious strain of native oratory. But I, however, thought proper to decline it, notwithstanding all the advantages so eloquently promised, telling him as an excuse that I was *tabooed*, while he replied,

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in a tone of disappointment, *ittee ittee taboo taboo*;^{*} but upon my gravely assuring him that I was *nuee nuee taboo taboo*,[†] he desisted from pressing me any further. Wherever I mixed among them, I always found the strongest proofs of their friendliness and hospitality; they all presented me with something to eat, and no where did I meet with any thing like selfishness in this respect. Kiwacha himself offered us some pork, which we did not hesitate to accept; and our party had five baskets of dried fish, together with a quantity of fern-root given to them: so that we were secure against their impatient growlings, till we reached the Bay of Islands.

The tide at length affording us sufficient depth of water, we took our leave of Kiwacha and his friendly people; resolving to stand out on our course on getting to the vessel, without waiting for the pigs which were promised to us the ensuing day: as the supply we had received was quite enough to last us till we returned to Rangehoo. Getting, therefore, into the boat, we were proceeding to the ship with all the expedition we could

* Very little tabooed.

† Very much tabooed.

make, when we found the opening of this channel into the sea so very dangerous, that had we been previously aware of it, we would by no means have suffered the boat to have been brought into it; but would have gone to some other part of the coast, where we might have put off with safety, and not been subject to the alarming apprehensions we now experienced. The channel, which was very narrow, was formed by two ledges of sharp-pointed rocks, which confined it on each side; and between which the surf rushed with incredible violence, while the danger was still more imminent, from some rocks that were concealed: and had not the natives come down to shew us where these lay scattered about in different parts, the boat must inevitably have been swamped. But it was the admirable coolness and address of Korra-korra in avoiding these rocks when they were pointed out, and in directing his men when to exert all their strength, and when to proceed at a slow rate, that served particularly to rescue us from our critical situation; and he it was to whom the safety of the boat, and very probably of our lives, might be mainly attributed. Before we had been yet relieved from our fears, Mr. Marsden and