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978-1-108-05754-7 - An Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands in the South Pacific Ocean: Volume 1

William Mariner Edited by John Martin

Excerpt

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CHAPTER I.

The Port au Prince sails from Gravesend—Arrives in the River of Plate—Touches at the Falkland Islands—Doubles Cape Horn—Falls in with the Earl St. Vincent, South whaler—Attempts to cut two whalers (that had been taken by the Spaniards) out of the Bay of Conception—Accident to Thomas Turner—Arrives in Coquimbo Roads—Desertion of eleven men—Captures three Spanish brigs—Attacks the town of Arica—Captures the town of Hilo, and burns it to the ground—Loss of the Begonio brig by fire—Captures a small Spanish brig—Picks up a boat with six hands on board, belonging to the Minerva, South whaler, whose crew had mutinied—Falls in with the Lucy privateer—In company with the Lucy, engages the Spanish frigate Astræa—Makes Chatham Island, and parts company with the Lucy—Arrives on the whaling ground—Makes the Isle of Plate—Captures three Spanish vessels—Anchors in Tacames Roads—Sails and anchors in Tola Roads—Friendly reception from the governor of Tola—Anecdote of the governor's daughter.

ON Tuesday, February 12, 1805, at eleven o'clock A. M. the Port au Prince weighed anchor at Gravesend, made sail, and worked down the river. At twelve P. M. she came to an anchor at the Warp. The following day she weighed anchor again, passed through the Downs with a fair wind, and, sailing down the Channel, proceeded on her intended voyage.

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No circumstances, worth mentioning, occurred during several weeks. The wind continued fair, but variable. On the 20th of March, in the afternoon, the mizen mast gave way by the jerk of a swell, and was found much decayed under the copper, in the way of the mizen gaff: this damage, however, by the next day, was completely repaired. On her arrival (April 9) in lat. 21. 55. S. long. 38. 38. W. a very heavy gale came on. The foretopsail yard, being now discovered to be rotten in the slings, was sent down and replaced by a new one. The gale continued to increase, and from three to five in the morning, continual flashes of lightning came on from different quarters, with loud and repeated claps of thunder, succeeded by very heavy rains.

From this period till the time of her arrival off the river of Plate, the weather was changeable, and for the most part stormy. On the 6th of May she commenced her cruize in this river; nothing particular, however, occurred for several days, except the loss of a boy, who accidentally fell overboard, and was drowned, in spite of every exertion made to save him. On the 13th, being off the island of Lobos, a boat was sent on shore to reconnoitre. In the evening she returned, without having discovered any inhabitants; a number of seals, however, were seen, and proper apparatus for skinning them,

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which in all probability had been used by persons from the main land, in the habit of resorting to this island for the express purpose of procuring seal skins.

On Tuesday, the 14th, two boats were sent on shore to the high land above Maldonado, to reconnoitre and kill wild cattle, which were seen in abundance; the vessel in the mean time plied in a bay under the high land. The boats returned next morning at eight o'clock, with one bull, not having been able to kill more, on account of the storminess of the weather, which rendered them too wild. The crew were detained on shore much longer than they otherwise would have been, in consequence of the desertion of two men, who had been left to take care of the boats; and after a search of several hours, without effect, they were under the necessity of returning without them. About three hours after their arrival on board, the two men in question were seen on the beach, making signals to be brought off, which being done, they were seized up and received a dozen lashes each. Their object was to have gone over to Maldonado, but a river lying in the way, one of them not being a swimmer, and the other unwilling to proceed by himself, they thought proper to return.

On the 18th, finding it impossible to remain in the river, owing partly to the strong flood

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and partly to contrary winds, she stood out of the river and bore away on her voyage. The next day very heavy gales coming on, she was found to make much water from a leak supposed to be on the larboard bow, near the surface of the water, which was afterwards found to be the case. The Falkland Islands appeared within sight on Friday, the 31st, a few days after which, the weather becoming calm, with a smooth sea, the carpenter was let down over the larboard bow, to nail lead and canvass over a cracked plank, now discovered to be the source of the leak.

Monday, the 17th of June, Cape Horn bore W. by S four leagues. The weather was very snowy. The leak still continued. On Wednesday, the 26th, Gilbert's Island bore N. five leagues. From this place she took a fresh departure.

On Wednesday, the 3d of July, having doubled the cape, she fell in with the Earl St. Vincent, Captain Pinkum, a South whaler, homeward bound, by whom she dispatched letters for England. She received, at the same time, from on board this vessel, Thomas Turner, harpooner, concerning whom it may be interesting to state a few particulars. He went out at first on board a South whaler, whose name is not now recollected: she made a very successful voyage, and,

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on her return home, fell in with the Earl St. Vincent, outward bound. Turner, being encouraged by his late good success, got permission to go on board the Earl St. Vincent, and went accordingly, with the view of doubling his good fortune. This vessel was also very successful. On his return home a second time he fell in with the Port au Prince, and went on board of her, as just related, with the same views of enjoying a continuation of the good success hitherto attending him ; but the favours of fortune were now at an end ; by grasping at more, he soon lost all ; meeting with a most severe fate, as will be hereafter related.

The Port au Prince having received information from the Earl St. Vincent, that two South whalers were detained at Conception, it was resolved that she should proceed, as it lay in her voyage, to endeavour to cut them out. Accordingly, on the 12th, she passed the island of Mocha with a fair wind, and steered along the coast for Conception. When she was off the island of St. Mary's, two boats were sent on shore for vegetables : a few men sick of the scurvy were also sent on shore to refresh. On the 20th of July she arrived off Quiriquina, an island near the bay of Conception. Here four boats, well armed and manned, were sent on shore to procure stock. They were commanded

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by Mr. J. Parker, first lieutenant; Mr. Russel, second lieutenant; Mr. Brown, whaling-master; and Mr. Williams, officer of marines. The boats represented to the inhabitants that the Port au Prince was an American, whilst they received information in return, that there were two English whalers in the bay, exactly as was stated by the Earl St. Vincent. The boats waited till dusk, and then proceeded from the island to Conception, being well assured by Thomas Turner that there were no guns mounted there, nor any batteries; and of this he was fully convinced, he said, having formerly been on shore there. The weather, unfortunately, was now calm, which circumstance prevented the Port au Prince from getting into the bay to assist the boats. They, however, very well succeeded, the night being dark, in boarding one of the whalers (the Albion), and having secured the Spaniards and cut the cables, towed her about a quarter of a mile, the calm rendering her sails quite useless: and no doubt they would have succeeded in towing her quite clear of the forts, for such there were, notwithstanding Turner's account, had it not been for an accident, occasioned by this unfortunate man. He was employed steering one of the boats, when happening to look to the priming of his pistols, one of them unluckily went off: this alarming the sentinels on shore,

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two batteries were immediately opened upon them; keeping up a smart fire, with well directed shot, which hulled the ship several times. It was here that Turner met his fate: to avoid the fire he stooped his body, bringing his chin near his knees, when a shot took away his lower jaw, his left arm as far as the elbow, and his right hand, grazing at the same time his left side, and carrying off the upper fleshy part of his right thigh: it did not, however, immediately kill him. The boat was much shattered, and one lad was slightly wounded by a splinter. The calm still continuing, and the enemy keeping up a constant fire, they were obliged to relinquish the prize, and pull on board as fast as they were able, leaving the shattered boat behind them. About six hours afterwards Turner died of his wounds.

On Monday, the 22d, the wind coming in light breezes, the Port au Prince endeavoured to get into the Bay of Conception. After coming within range of a seven gun battery, she hove in stays, and gave them a shot, which they immediately returned, striking the covering-board abaft the gangway, and slightly wounding a boy. They afterwards fired seven shot more, well directed, but without effect. Finding it impracticable to do any thing with the fort, and both

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the whalers being now hauled close under it, she stood out to sea.

On Monday, the 29th, at ten o'clock P. M. two boats were sent into the bay to reconnoitre. They found the town in a state of alarm, drums beating, and lights moving about in all directions: but discovering that the ships were still close to the fort, they soon returned. The following day was employed in disguising the ship like an American, in order to go into Coquimbo Roads to refresh. On Wednesday, at five P. M. she anchored in these roads, and hoisted American colours. At eight o'clock three Spanish gentlemen, mistaking her for a smuggler, came on board with the expectation of finding contraband goods. A stratagem was used to confirm their opinion till they should bring money on board to trade with. Samples of cloth, cut from the inside of the officers' coats, were accordingly shewn to them as fair specimens of the quality of the goods: on which they promised to bring the next day 4000 dollars to make purchases. In the mean while a letter was sent to the governor requesting leave to purchase stock, to which he returned for answer, that he had received orders from the viceroy of Lima not to supply American ships. At ten the following night, the three Spanish gentlemen just men-

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tioned returned, accompanied by three others. They brought specie to the amount of 4000 dollars. After having been entertained in the cabin till two or three in the morning, they became anxious to see the goods. They were accordingly conducted below, but soon informed of the disagreeable necessity of detaining them as prisoners of war. At first they took it for a joke, and laughed heartily, but soon became serious enough on being convinced of the truth. One of them was so much affected that he actually swooned away. As soon as the first shock arising from this unpleasant information was over, they began to be a little more reconciled; but expressed their expectations, that although they were prisoners of war, their 4000 dollars would be returned: they were told in answer, that the Port au Prince being a *private* ship of war, and the men consequently having no wages but what consisted in the booty they might obtain, the money must undoubtedly be retained. Don Felix, who was one of them, and who well deserved his name, did not make himself at all unhappy on the occasion, but ate, drank, and cheered up the rest as well as he could. On finding, at dinner, that his companions had lost their stomachs, he very jocosely desired them to stand upon no compliments, but to fall to and

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eat heartily, the whole being well paid for, and that consequently they were under no obligations to the captain for his entertainment.

The following day, August 2, a letter was sent to the governor of the town, to inform him that the Port au Prince was an enemy; and that, if he did not capitulate, the place would be taken by force. In the mean time, two more Spaniards came on board with 400 dollars, expecting to purchase smuggled goods, but of course met the fate of their six countrymen. In the evening four boats, well manned and armed, were sent on shore to break open and plunder certain warehouses opposite the vessel, and about a mile and a half distant from the town, which was situated on the other side of the bay. They succeeded in bringing off 52 packed hides of tallow, 800 gallons of wine in jars, four pigs of copper, and a number of dried hides. The first six prisoners were now liberated and sent on shore, though contrary to the inclination of a majority of the ship's company, who wished them to be detained, with a view of getting a ransom: Captain Duck, however, thought they had already paid dearly enough, and sent them away accordingly. About the same time a bullock and several goats were procured from the Indians, for which, not being