

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

### CHAPTER III.

**A canoe, with two natives, approaches the island.—Communication opened with them.—A great number of canoes, filled with armed natives, suddenly arrive; rough treatment of the captain by one of the chiefs.—They all arrive at the harbor of the island, which proved to be one of the Pelew islands.—Description of the island and its inhabitants.—Consultation of the chiefs respecting the ship's company.—Result of the consultation.**

HAVING satisfied our most pressing wants, we next set ourselves at work to obtain food. We had with us a part of the bread brought from the wreck, and the preparation given us by the natives composed of the cocoa-nut pulverized and mixed with the sweet liquor extracted from the tree. Putting these together into a bucket-full of water, we made out the materials for a supper, which, though not of a kind to suit the delicate palate, was devoured with thankfulness and a good relish. Feeling refreshed and invigorated by our meal, we gathered ourselves into a group on the beach, and passed our mo-

ments of relaxation in conversing upon the melancholy vicissitudes through which we had passed, and the gloomy prospect which was at that unpromising moment spread out before us. Should we find it possible to procure the means of subsistence, it was thought best to remain where we were for a day or two, not knowing what reception we should meet with, were we to throw ourselves into the hands of the inhabitants of the main island, and feeling an unconquerable reluctance to come in contact with beings scarce less ferocious than beasts of prey. But fortune having commenced making us the sport of painful incidents, soon subjected us to another annoyance.

A canoe containing two living beings, in the form of men, in a state of nakedness, was seen, from where we sat, putting off from a point of land which projected into the sea a small distance below us. They had evidently discovered us, and were approaching the spot where we were, for the purpose of making themselves acquainted with us and our condition. When within hailing dis-

tance they stopped, and seemed afraid to come nearer. Thinking it best to be on friendly terms with them, we beckoned to have them approach. This seemed to please them; and, to manifest a friendly disposition, they held up a fish. To show them that we were inclined to reciprocate any acts of kindness, to the extent of our ability, we held up a crab which we had caught. Upon this they immediately came near to where we stood. We presented to each one a jack-knife, and indicated by signs, that they were at liberty to take any thing we had. They appeared highly gratified, and their conduct was inoffensive. In a short time they returned to their canoe, and made signs to us to follow them; we thought best to do so, and accordingly soon placed our effects in the boat, and followed them towards a sort of harbor at no great distance. In consequence of the lightness of their canoe and their dexterity in managing it, they were soon ahead of us, and, turning round a point of land, they were speedily withdrawn from our view.

In a few minutes they returned, accompanied by a large number of canoes—the water seemed to be literally covered by this miniature fleet. The natives were all armed, much like those with whom we first became acquainted.

This instantaneous movement was occasioned, as we afterwards learned, by an alarm given by the two natives who had visited us on the small island. Intelligence of the fact, that a boat's crew of strange looking beings, as we doubtless appeared to them, had landed upon their territory, was given by sounding a shell. This aroused the multitude, and caused them to come out, to satisfy their curiosity, and assist in conducting us safely and speedily to a place of security. A large war canoe made directly towards us; and, on coming alongside, the head chief sprung into our boat, seized the captain by the shoulder, and struck him several times with a war-club; in the mean while giving him to understand, that it was his will and pleasure to have us row, with all convenient despatch, to the place whence

they had issued. He then commenced swinging his club over our heads with great apparent ferocity, for the purpose, as it seemed, of awing us into submission; occasionally striking some of our number. After pretty thoroughly convincing us that in this case our only course was submission, he began to strip us of our clothing. While this was going on, his associates in arms and mischief kept their canoe close alongside, and, standing up, held their spears in a position to enable them to pierce us through in an instant, if there had been any occasion for so doing.

We were soon in their miserable harbor; and, it being low water, we were compelled to leave our boat, and wade to the tableland through the mud. Our appearance, as the reader will naturally conclude, was not very creditable to the land which gave us birth; but since our destitute and miserable condition was not our choice, we could do no less than be thankful that it was no worse; and, making the best of it, we suffered ourselves to be ushered into the presence of the dignitaries of the island, in the

way they thought most proper. We were conducted to a platform, on a rise of land at a little distance from the harbor, on which were seated those who had power to dispose of us as they pleased. This platform was twelve or fifteen feet square, and was situated between two long buildings, called "*pyes.*" These, as we afterwards learned, were used by the chiefs as places of carousal, and as a sort of harem for their women. They were constructed in a rude manner, of bamboo sticks, and covered with leaves. They were sixty or seventy feet in length, and about twenty-four in width.

That something like a correct conception of this scene may be formed by the reader, it may be well to give, in this place, a brief account of the appearance, manners, and customs of the natives of this island. This was the island known to navigators as *Bau-bethouap*, the largest of the group of the *Pelew* islands. It lies not far from the eighth degree of north latitude, is about one hundred and twenty miles in length, and contains

probably not far from two thousand inhabitants.\*

The men were entirely naked. They always go armed, in the way before described, and carry with them a small basket, containing generally the whole amount of their movable property. The women wear no other clothing than a sort of apron (fastened to the waist by a curiously wrought girdle) extending nearly to the knees, and left open at the sides. The material of these garments (if such they can be called) is the bark of a tree called by them "*karamal*." This tree grows from thirty to forty feet high, and is two or three feet in circumference. The hair of both males and females is worn long; it is coarse and stiff, and of a color resembling that of the natives of North

\* This island is not always laid down by name on our common maps, nor mentioned in geographical works. In the best charts it is called *Baubelthouap*. In the chart prefixed to the fifth volume of *Burney's Chronological History of the Voyages and Discoveries in the South Sea*, it is called "Panloq or Babelthoup." In the map accompanying the late edition of *Malte Brun's Geography*, (in 4to) it is carelessly printed *Bambelthonap*.—*Edit.*

America. They make free use of the oil extracted from the cocoa-nut; with this they anoint their bodies, considering it the extreme of gentility to have the skin entirely saturated with it. Their arms, and sometimes the lower parts of the body and legs, are ingeniously tattooed. Their complexion is a light copper. Their eyes have a very singular appearance, being of a reddish color. Their noses were somewhat flat, but not so flat as those of the Africans; nor are their lips so thick. They are excessively fond of trinkets. It would cause a fashionable lady of America to smile, to observe the pains taken by those simple daughters of nature to set off their persons. In their ears they wear a sort of ornament made of a peculiar kind of grass, which they work into a tassel; this is painted and richly perfumed. In their noses they wear a stem of the *kabooa* leaf, which answers the double purpose of an ornament and a smelling bottle; and their arms, in addition to being tattooed in the manner above mentioned, are adorned with a profusion of shells. Our



fair readers may judge how much we were amused, on finding that the copper-colored females of the island cut up our old shoes into substitutes for jewelry, and seemed highly delighted with wearing the shreds suspended from their ears.

Our further acquaintance with this extraordinary people confirmed us in the opinion, that the ceremony of marriage is unpractised and unknown among them. The chiefs appropriate to themselves as many females as they please, and in the selection they exercise this despotism over the affections without regard to any other laws than those of caprice. Reserving a more particular account of their manners, customs and mode of living for another place, I content myself with observing at this time, that the people of these islands, generally speaking, are in the rudest state imaginable. It is true that some sense of propriety, and some regard to the decencies of life, were observable; nor did they appear entirely destitute of those feelings which do honor to our na-

ture, and which we should hardly expect to find in a people so rude and barbarous.

Such were the beings among whom Providence had cast our lot; and to think of remaining with them to the end of life, or for any great length of time, was like the contemplation of imprisonment for life in the gloomy cells of a dungeon.

From the rudely constructed wharf near the spot where we left our boat, we were conducted into the presence of a number of the chiefs, who were seated upon the platform above mentioned. The natives eagerly pressed forward to obtain a sight of us. That curiosity peculiar to the better portion of our race was, on this occasion, manifested by the females of the island. They clustered around us, and, placing their hands upon our flesh, seemed greatly to wonder that it should differ so much from their own. The fashion of wearing a skin so white as ours, seemed to them, no doubt, to be an offence against the taste and refinement of their portion of the world. To go at large without being tattooed, was to carry with

us the palpable proofs of our vulgarity ; and, to our sorrow, we were afterwards compelled to conform to the custom of the barbarians in this respect, and shall carry with us to the grave the marks of their well-meant, though cruel operation upon our bodies.

Judging from appearances, our case had become a concern of great importance. The chiefs seemed to have had under discussion the question, whether we were to be treated as enemies, and subjected to the process of beheading upon the block of the executioner, (which was there in readiness before our eyes) or regarded as friends, and welcomed to their rude hospitalities. Unable as we were to understand a word of their language, or to say any thing by way of explanation or defence, the reader will conceive, better than we could describe, our painful situation. For a time we considered our case as hopeless. The women, who seemed to have taken an interest in our welfare, after observing, for a time, what was going on among the chiefs, began to utter their cries and lamentations, as if greatly distressed on

our account. Their grief had the appearance of being sincere; they wept, and in a variety of ways expressed emotions of deep and heart-felt solicitude. Whether this was their manner of interceding in our behalf, to avert some impending calamity, or was expressive of their regret on account of our doom having been already sealed, it was impossible for us to determine. Nor did we ever know the amount of our obligations to those female strangers for the interest taken in our welfare. A termination was put to our suspense, however, in the course of an hour.

At the close of the consultation, a large bowl was brought to us, filled with sweetened water, and richly ornamented with shells, so arranged as to form a sort of hieroglyphical characters. We drank of the contents of the bowl, in compliance with their request, from a richly wrought cup made of a cocoa-nut shell. This act of hospitality was regarded as a favorable indication of a friendly disposition on their part towards us; and our hopes were afterwards

confirmed; for no sooner had we finished drinking, than the natives prepared to conduct us away. We afterwards learned, that a messenger had been despatched to a neighboring town, or settlement, to consult their prophetess in regard to the proper manner of disposing of us; and that she had directed them to send us to her. Of this important personage a more particular account will be given hereafter; suffice it, for the present, to say, that the respect paid to her by the natives of the island was of the most profound character, and her authority over them was almost unlimited.

We were conducted, through an inconsiderable place, to the town where the prophetess resided. In this place there were several dwelling-houses, scattered about without regard to order; and, besides the dwelling of the prophetess, two of their long buildings, or "pyes," gave it not a little importance in the estimation of these rude and uncultivated beings. We were halted in front of one of the "pyes," and directly opposite the house of the prophetess. Here,

again, we were reminded of the fact, that we were in the presence of our superiors, as to power, by the platform on which were placed our judges, the chiefs, and the block standing near them, for the purpose of execution.

We were soon surrounded by a vast crowd of the natives, eager to see us, and to learn something of the nature of beings so different from themselves.

A short time after our arrival, a quantity of food was brought from the house of the prophetess, and placed in the centre of the platform. This consisted of a hog's head, boiled in sea-water, highly seasoned with cayenne and aromatic herbs, a plentiful supply of yams, and a large bowl of sweetened water. This meal was abundant and delicious; and we partook of it with an excellent relish.