

FICTION

Louis Becke

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# Old Mary

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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FICTION

**"OLD MARY"**

*By Louis Becke*

*T. Fisher Unwin, 1901*



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### **I**

*Early one morning, just as the trade wind began to lift the mist which enveloped the dark valleys and mountain slopes Denison, the supercargo of the trading schooner Palestine, from her side and was pulled ashore to the house of the owner. The man's name was Handle, and as he heard the supercargo came to the door and bade him good morning.*

"How are you, Randle?" said the young man, shaking hands with the quiet-voiced, white-haired old trader, and following him in going for a day's shooting while I have the chance. Can you

Randle shook his head. "Would like to, but can't spare the time, but Harry and the girls will be delighted to go with you. Let me go and have a cup of coffee first. They'll be here presently."

Denison put down his gun and took a seat in the cool, comfortable sitting-room, and in a few minutes Hester and Kate Randle and their brother came in. The two girls were both over twenty years of age; the elder, was remarkably handsome, and much resembled her father in build and manner. Kate was of much smaller build, full of vivacity, and her merry brown eyes matched the dimples on her soft, sun-tanned cheeks. Harry, who was Randle's youngest child, was a heavily-built, sullen-faced youth of eighteen, and the native blood in his veins showed much more strongly than it did with his sisters. They were all busy to see the supercargo, and at once set about making preparations for getting their guns ready and the two girls packing a basket with provisions and food.

"You'll get any amount of pigeons about two miles from here, and a trader, "and very likely a pig or two. The girls know the way, and if you take the right branch of the river and two the left you'll get some fine sport."

"Father," said the elder girl, in her pretty, halting English, "I've just picked up her gun, "don' you think Mr. Denison would like to go with us? We hav' been tell him so much about her. Don' you think we should go there and let Mr. Denison have some talk with her?"

"Ay, ay, my girl. Yes; go and see the poor old thing. I'm delighted. You'll like her, Mr. Denison. She's as fine an ever breathed. But don't take that basket of food with you feel awfully insulted if you did not eat in her house."

The girls obeyed, much to their brother's satisfaction, in basket was rather heavy, and also awkward to carry through forest. In a few minutes the four started, and Hester, as beside Denison, said that she was glad he was visiting old see," she said, "she hav' not good eyesight now, and so sh come an' see us as she do plenty times before."

"I'm glad I shall see her," said the young man; "she must soul."

"Oh, yes," broke in Kate, "she is good and brave, an' we a her. Every one mus' love her. She hav' known us since we v and when our mother died in Samoa ten years ago old Mary v second mother to us. An' my father tried so hard to get he live with us; but no, she would not, not even fo' us. So s her house in the mountain, because she says she wants to c you will like her... and she will tell you how she saved a husband was killed, and about many, many things."

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Two hours later Denison and his friends emerged out upon a at the foot of the mountain, on which stood three or four all neatly enclosed by low stone walls formed of coral sla the village a crystal stream poured swiftly and noisily o on its way seaward, and on each thickly wooded bank the s some scores of graceful coco-palms rose high above the su foliage. Except for the hum of the brawling stream and the the silence was unbroken, and only two or three small chil playing under the shade of a breadfruit-tree, were visible they heard the sound of the visitors' voices, came towards out to their elders within the huts that "four white peopl come. In a moment some grown people of both sexes came out

with the party.

"This is Mary's house," said Hester to Denison, pointing to the door and saying, "let us go there at once. Ah, see, there she is at the door with us."

"Come, come inside," cried the old woman in a firm yet pleasant tone. Denison, looking to the right, saw that "Mary," in spite of her blindness, was still robust and active-looking. She was dressed in a dark print gown and blouse, and her grey hair was neatly dressed in the latest fashion. In her smooth, brown right hand she grasped the handle of a polished walking-stick, her left arm she held across her back, as her left hand was missing from the wrist.

"How do you do, sir?" she said in clear English, as, giving her hand to Kate Randle, she held out her hand to the supercargo. "I am glad you have come to see me. You are Mr. Denison, I know. Is your health quite well? Come, Kitty, see to your friend. There, that is the most comfortable. Harry, please shoot a couple of chickens and then tell my people to get some taro, and make an oven for me."

"Oh, that is just like you, Mary," said Kate, laughing, "I have only spoken three words to you and you begin cooking things for us."

The old woman turned her sunburnt face towards the girl and said, "Stick warningly, and said in the native tongue"

"Leave me to rule in mine own house, saucy," and then Denison made an effort to restrain his gravity as Mary, unaware that he had no knowledge of the dialect in which she spoke, asked the two girls if either of them had thought of him as a husband. Kate put her hand to her mouth and whispered to her to cease. She drew the girl to

her.

Whilst the meal was being prepared Denison was studying the contents. Exteriorly the place bore no difference to the house, but within it was plainly but yet comfortably furnished in the fashion of a ship's cabin fittings. From the sitting-room of which was covered by white China matting he could see a bed with snowy white mosquito curtains, and two chairs draped with old-fashioned antimacassars. The sight of these furnishings first made him smile, then sigh he had not seen such things since he had left his own home nearly six years before. The walls of the sitting-room were half a dozen old and faded, and on a side-table were a sextant and chronometer case, the instruments so clumsy and obsolete that a modern seaman would regard them as veritable curiosities.

From the surroundings within the room Denison's eyes wandered to the placid beauty of the scene without, where the plumes of the palm overhanging the swift waters of the tiny stream scarce stirred the light air that blew softly up the valley from the sea, and the move narrow shafts of light from the now high-mounted sun shone through upon the pale green foliage of the scrub beneath. Again his attention was directed to their hostess, who was quietly to the two Randle girls, her calm, peaceful features gave him to derive an added but yet consistent dignity from the Nature around her.

What was the story of her infancy? he wondered. That she had told herself he had been told by old Randle, who yet knew more of her and the tragedy of her later life than any one else. Both the supercargo of five-and-twenty, and Randle, the grizzled veteran of sixty-five, had known many tragedies during the Pacific; but the story of this half-blind, crippled old woman he had learnt it in full, appealed strongly to the younger man, and was not forgotten in his after life.

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They had had a merry midday meal, during which Mary Eury had promised Denison that she would tell him all about herself after he and the Randles came back from shooting, and she added, with her soft, tremulous laugh, "only on one condition. You must bring Captain Packenham to see me. I am an old woman now, and would like to see him. It was twenty years ago when he was a lad of nineteen. Ah, it is so long since I saw him in Samoa. Has he never spoken of me?"

"Often, Mrs. Eury"

"Don't call me Mrs. Eury, Mr. Denison. Call me 'Mary,' as my friends of mine call me. 'Mary' 'old' Mary if you like. Every one used to call me and my dear husband in those far, far back days used to call me and my husband 'Bob Eury' instead of 'Mrs. Eury' and 'Captain Packenham' now, so many, many years have gone... and now I am 'Old Mary' and I think I like it better than Mrs. Eury. And so Captain Packenham has forgotten me?"

Denison hastened to explain. "Indeed he has not. He remembers me very well, and would have come with me, but he is putting the boat on the beach to-day to clean her. And I am sure he will be delighted to see you to-morrow."

"Of course he must. Surely every English and American in the island should come and see me; for my husband was ever a good friend of the sailors that ever sailed in the island trade from Fiji to the coast of America. There now, I won't chatter any more, or else you will be tired. I shall come back to such a garrulous old creature. Ah, if God had given me my eyesight I should come with you into the mountains. I love the solitude, and the sweet call of the pigeons, and the sound of the waterfall at the side of Taomaunga. And I know every inch of the island and blind as I am, I could yet find my way along the mountains. So do not let me and you, Harry, do not keep Mr. Denison out too late."

*By sunset the shooting party had returned, and after a banquet on the waters of the mountain stream Denison returned to the house. His wife and her sister, assisted by some native women, were plucking fowls for the evening meal. Harry was lying down on the broad of his back on a grassy sward with closed eyes, smoking, and their hostess sat on a wide cane bench outside the house. She heard the young man cough, and beckoned him to seat himself beside her. And then she told*

## **II**

*"I don't know where I was born, as I daresay Randle has told you, I was only five years of age when I was picked up at sea. The only other occupant of which was a Swedish seaman. The vessel that rescued us was one of the transports used for conveying convicts to South Wales, and was named the Britannia, but when she sailed from the boat she was on a voyage to Tahiti in the Society Islands. The voyage was sometime about 1805, so I must now be about seventy years of age."*

*"The Swedish sailor told the captain of the Britannia that he and I were the only survivors of a party of six among whom were my father and mother belonging to a small London barque named the Wilkes. She was employed in the trade between China and Valparaiso, and my father was owner as well as captain. On the voyage from Canton, she was wrecked fifty miles off Tahiti, and in sight of land, she took fire. My father and I saved, seized the longboat, which had been prepared, and were provisioned, and made off, although the cowardly creatures who were in the second boat was barely seaworthy. My father whose name the*

not know implored them to return, and at least take my mother myself and an officer to navigate their boat to land. But listen to his pleadings, and rowed off. The second boat was provisioned by my father and his officers, and they, with myself and the Swede all the Europeans on board left the burning ship at sundown. A course was steered for the east Tahiti, which, although the wind was right ahead, we hoped evening of the following day. But within a few hours after barque the trade wind died away, and fierce, heavy squalls westward upon the boat, which was only kept afloat by constant effort. About dawn the sea had become so dangerous, and the wind increased in violence, that an attempt was made to put out a sea-anchor. As this was being done a heavy sea struck the boat and capsized her. It was pitchy dark, and when the Swede who was a good swimmer came to the surface he could neither see nor hear any of the others. He shouted loudly. But at the same moment, as his foot touched the sea anchor which the sea anchor was bent, he heard the mate's voice calling for assistance.

"'I have the child,' he cried. 'Be quick, for I'm done.'

"In another minute the brave fellow had taken me from him, and the mate sank, never to rise again. Whether I was alive or dead I could not tell, but being a man of great physical strength he kept me above water with one hand, but succeeded in reaching the sea anchor—four oars lashed together and then the boat, which had been righted by another sea.

"How this brave man kept me alive in such a terrible situation I do not know. By sunrise the wind had died away, the sea had gone calm, and I was able to free the boat of water. In the stern-sheet locker I found a single tin of preserved potatoes, which had been jammed in the boat capsized all the rest of the provisions, with the water-breakers as well, were lost. On this tin of potatoes I lived for five days, constant in sight of the land around which we were drifting, sometimes within a distance of thirty miles of it. All this time, by the providence, we had frequent heavy rain squalls, and the potatoes were about eighteen inches square, and was perfectly water-tight. Our salvation, for the potatoes were so very salt that we would have perished of thirst had we been unable to save water. Oh! I saw the mate of his high sea-boots, and into this he would put two hands

dried potatoes, and then fill it up with water. It made a food after it had been softened by the water and kneaded :

"An hour before dawn, on the sixth day, Ohlsen, who was lying on the bottom boards of the boat, was awakened by hearing me cry out for my mother. The poor fellow, who had stripped off his woollen clothing, my little body from the cold, at once sat up and tried to get up. The sea was as smooth as glass, and only a light air was blowing. I lay to his bare chest for I was chilled with the keen morning air. I was about to lie down again, when he heard the creaking of the bottom boards. A voice said, 'Ay, ay, sir!' and there, quite near us, was a boat. At that moment he sprang to his feet, and hailed with all his strength. At once answered, the ship was brought to the wind, a boat was sent on board. In less than a quarter of an hour we were on board the Britannia.

"On that dear old ship I remained for five years or more, and had his wife on board, and although she had two young children, she cared for and loved me as if I had been her own daughter. A great time was spent among the Pacific Islands, and then there occurred another tragedy, of one of which I have a most vivid remembrance. I was quite eleven years old at the time.

"The Britannia, like many South Seamen of those times, was of the privateer type, and carried nine guns, for although we were, I think, at peace with Spain, we were at war with France, and there were plenty of privateers cruising on the South American coast, with whom we were frequently engaged. But none had ever been seen so far east as the Galapagos Islands, and so we one day sailed without fear towards the north-west side of Charles Island to wood and water.

"On the following morning the captain, whose name was Ross, and my old friend Ohlsen, who was now gunner on the Britannia, took me by the four hands and endeavour to capture some of the huge land tortoises that abound on the islands of the group. I was allowed to go with them. I did I think I should never again see his kindly face when he was in the boat and was rowed ashore. Besides Ohlsen and myself, there were two English seamen, a negro named King and a Tahitian native. One of the English sailors was named Robert Eury; he was about thirty years of age, and a great favourite of the captain who knew

Dorset, England.

"We hauled the boat up on a small sandy beach, and then saw the country, and by noon we had caught three large tortoises found feeding on cactus plants. Then, as we were resting and suddenly heard the report of a heavy gun, and then another clambered up the side of a rugged hill, from the summit of we saw the harbour, a mile distant, and there was the Britannia at anchor, and being attacked by two vessels! As we watched we saw one of the strange ships, which were both under sail, approach our vessel, and the second, putting about, did the same. Broadside by broadside, we afterwards heard, were terribly disastrous, and three men were killed, and nine wounded. The crew, however, still continued to work her guns with the utmost bravery to surrender. Then a lucky shot from one of her 9-pounders struck the rudder of the largest Frenchman, which, fearing to anchor against a determined enemy, at once lowered her boats and began to retreat, followed by her consort. At the entrance to the bay, however, one of the two again brought-to and began firing at our poor ship with a 24-pounder, or other long-range gun, and every shot struck. Finding that the mate and his crew, enraged at the death of the captain, were finding that the ship was likely to be pounded to pieces, they got under weigh and came to close quarters with the enemy, who was a wonderfully fast ship, and carried a crew of fifty-sail. The first of all he sent ashore Mrs. Rossiter, her two children, a steward, and all the money and other valuables in case he should be worsted. His name was Skinner, and he was a man of the most heroic resolution, and had at one time commanded a London privateer which had made so many captures that Skinner was quite a hero; but his intemperate habits caused him to lose his command, and he came on ship on the Britannia as chief mate. He was, however, a great favourite with the men, who now urged him to lead them on in the loss of the captain; so the moment the boat returned from the shore, Rossiter he slipped his cable, and stood out to meet the enemy.

"We, from the hill, watched all this with the greatest interest and excitement, and then Ohlsen turned to the others and said, 'Come back to the boat at once. The captain has got under weigh with his fellows, and we should be with him.'

"So we descended to the beach, where we met the poor lady and her children, and heard that her husband was dead. She begged

leave her, but he said his duty lay with his shipmates; then he begged of him to at least leave Robert Eury with her, as she was terrified at the idea of having to spend the night on such a wild island without a man. He gave the coloured steward to protect her and her children. At last we could not see them we knew the ships were heavily engaged and the roar of the cannon was continuous. So, much to his annoyance, he was bidden to remain with the captain's wife, her son aged seven, and daughter Ann, who was three years younger, the coloured steward, and myself. Then, bidding us goodbye, Ohlsen and his three men went to their boat, and were soon out of sight.

"Young as he was, Robert Eury had good sense and judgment. He thought of Mr. Skinner venturing out to attack such well-armed vessels with only 9-pounders, and although he had been most anxious to join him, he was, he afterwards told me, pretty sure that the British ships would have to strike or be sunk. The first thing he did, however, was to get all of our party comfortable. At the head of the bay there was a small house, which had been built by the crews of the whaleships as a sort of rest-house for the men sent to catch seals. At this place he took us, and set the steward to work to get us to eat, for Mr. Skinner had sent provisions and wine ashore. He also gave the ship's money, which amounted to about thirteen hundred pounds, to be put in a little distance away from the house. I helped him, and when we were safely covered up he turned to me with a smile lightening his face.

"'There, Molly. That's done, and if Mr. Skinner has to strike the Frenchmen come here, they'll get nothing but ourselves.'

"By this time it was well on towards the afternoon, and we were still in the cannon shot now and then. Then the sound of the firing ceased. We got back to the house and waited we knew not for what. At last Mrs. Rossiter, who was a very big, stout woman, had sobbed herself into a state of exhaustion, but she tried to brace herself up when she saw Robert Eury. When Robert Eury told her that he had buried the money, she thanked him.

"'Try and save it for my children, Robert I fear I shall not see them. And if I am taken away suddenly I want you to bear in mind that it was my husband's wish, and is mine now, that Mary here is

with my son Fred and my daughter Ann. Would to God I had  
write.'

"Robert tried to comfort her with the assurance that all  
when as he spoke we saw a sight at which I, girl of twelve  
struck with terror the two French ships appeared round the  
with the Britannia following with French colours at her pe  
three came in together very slowly, and then dropped ancho  
cable's length of the beach. The captain's wife looked at  
a moment, and then fell forward on her face. She died th

"The two French captains treated us very kindly, and they  
spoke French well, that Mr. Skinner had made a most deter  
board the larger of the two vessels, but was killed by a r  
that only after thirty of the Britannia's crew had been k:  
wounded, and the ship herself was but little more than a v  
Ohlsen, who was himself terribly wounded by a splinter in  
down his flag. Then the elder of the two Frenchmen asked  
the child named 'Marie.'

"'This is the child, sir,' said Eury, pointing to me.

"'Then let her come with me and see the gunner of our pri:  
is dying, and has asked to see her.'

"I was taken on board the Britannia, over her bloodstained  
the main cabin, where poor Ohlsen was lying breathing his  
lit up when he saw me, and he drew me to his bosom just as  
years before in the open boat off Tahiti. I stayed with h:  
then one of the French privateer officers led me away.

"In the morning Mrs. Rossiter was buried; the French capt

some of the surviving members of the crew of the Britannia her body to her grave. There was a young Spanish woman the older captain on board the larger of the privateers, and took care of us three children. I cannot remember her name remember that she was a very beautiful woman and very kind us through an interpreter that we should be well cared for go home to England; and when she learned my own particulars me in her arms, kissed, and made much of me.

"About noon the crew of the Britannia were ranged on deck, elder of the two French captains called on Robert Eury to

"'This man here,' he said in English, indicating the colour tells me that you have buried some money belonging to the it?'

"'I cannot tell you,' replied Robert; 'the captain's wife belonged to her children and to the little girl Mary.'

"The Frenchman laughed. 'It belongs to us now; it is prize boy.'

"Eury looked at him steadily, but made no answer.

"'Come,' said the captain impatiently, 'where is it?'

"'I cannot tell you.'

*"The younger of the captains laughed savagely, and stepped  
pistol in hand.*

*"'I give you ten seconds to tell.'*

*"'Five will do, monsieur,' replied Robert, in French, 'and  
be losing five seconds of your time. I shall not tell you  
like to say goodbye to my dead captain's children.'*

*"'The young Frenchmen's face purpled with fury. 'Very well,  
fool!' and he raised his pistol to murder the young man, w  
captain seized his arm.*

*"'Shame, Pellatier, shame! Would you kill such a brave man  
Let us be satisfied with getting such a good ship. Surely  
shoot him for the sake of a few hundred dollars?'*

*"'There may be thousands. How can we tell?' replied Pellat*

*"Robert laughed, and then raised his hand in salute to the*

*"'Captain Pellatier is right, sir. Madame Melville told me  
thirteen hundred pounds in the bags which I have buried. I  
conditions I will tell you where to find it.'*

*"Name them."*

*"The money is fair prize money. That I admit. But you will unless you agree to my conditions, and pledge me your word to observe them honourably. I am not afraid to die, gentlemen."*

*"You are a bold fellow, and ought to have been a Frenchman quick, name the conditions."*

*"Half of the money to be given to these orphan children, condition should appeal to you. And promise me on your honour you will land them at Valparaiso, or some other civilised place where they may reach England. If you will not make this promise, shoot me now."*

*"And what of yourself?" said Pellatier, who was a little very ugly monkey-like features; 'you would be the guardian no doubt, my clever fellow.'*

*"The insulting manner in which he spoke exasperated Eury and he made as if he would strike the man; but he stopped looking contemptuously at the Frenchman uttered the one word*

*"Babouin!"*

"It nearly cost him his life, for Pellatier, stung to fury by the laughter of his fellow-captain, again levelled his pistol at the man, and again the older captain seized his arm.

"'By Heaven, you shall not harm him!' he cried, amid a murmur from the crew. Then addressing Eury he said. I give you my word that your children and yourself are under my protection, and when we reach Valparaiso I will put you all on shore.' Then he ordered his officers to escort Robert ashore and get the money.

"Eury thanked him quietly, and then he turned to Pellatier and said he was sorry he used an offensive word to him; but Pellatier made no apology with a scowl, and turned away. In half an hour Eury was with the officer, carrying the money. It was counted and divided, and it was easy to see that Dupuis, the elder captain, was very pleased. The young man asked him to take charge of the half of the money for the Rossiter children and myself.

"The three ships sailed in company for South America a week or more, and remained on board the Britannia together with Robert Eury and the others of her original crew, the Rossiter children being a Spanish lady on board the larger of the privateers, the smaller of which, with about twenty men, were drafted to the prize. In close company for four or five days we lost sight of the coast so much to the annoyance of our captain, who was a very indifferent navigator, as he soon showed by altering his course to E. We were to pick up the coast of South America as soon as possible. This was a fortunate thing for us, for at daylight on the following morning the ships were seen, not five miles distant, and to our intense delight they bore English letters of marque the barque Centurion of Bristol and the barque Gratitude of London. They at once closed in upon us, and engaged us, and although the Frenchmen made a good fight, they were at last struck after a quarter of an hour's engagement, for the Centurion was a very heavily armed ship.

"Her captain was a very old man named Richard Glass. He came on board the Britannia and spoke very good-humouredly to the French lieutenant, for on neither side had any one been killed, and he saw that the Centurion was a fine ship. He told the Frenchmen to take the longboat

provisions and water as they liked, and make for the coast than seventy miles distant. This was soon done, and our friends parted from us very good friends, every one of them coming on hands with Robert Eury and calling him bon camarade.

"Captain Glass put his own chief officer in charge of the (with Robert as his mate) and ordered him to proceed to Pa await the arrival there of the Centurion and her consort. arrived at our destination safely, and as soon as my story kind people wanted to adopt me; but the agent of the Brita me to his own home, where I lived for many happy years as family. Robert Eury was then appointed mate of a vessel in trade, but I saw him every year. Then when I was seventeen asked me to marry him, and I did so gladly, for he was alw my thoughts when he was away, and I knew he loved me."

### **III**

"My husband invested his savings in a small schooner, whic Taunton and within a month of our marriage we were at sea, a trading voyage to Tahiti and the Paumotus. This first ve very successful, so did the two following voyages; and the determined to found a business of his own in the South Sea large piece of land on this island from the natives, with very friendly terms. His reasons for choosing this particu firstly, because of its excellent situation midway between Jackson and the Spanish settlements on the South American were good markets; secondly, because great numbers of the ships would make it a place of call to refresh if there wa

white man living on the island; and thirdly, because he is  
into sperm whaling himself, for it was an immensely profit  
and he could, if he wished, sell the oil to the Americans  
taking it to Port Jackson. The natives here in those days  
set, but they really had a great friendship and respect fo  
and when they learnt that he intended to settle among them  
they were delighted beyond measure. They at once set to wo  
a house, and the chief and my husband exchanged names in a

"My first child was born on the island whilst my husband w  
voyage to Port Jackson, and, indeed, of my four children  
here. When Robert returned in the Taunton he brought with  
cargo of European stores and comforts for our new home, an  
months we were fairly settled down. From the first America  
that visited us he bought two fine whaleboats and all the  
and then later on engaged one of the best whalers in the  
superintend the business. In the first season we killed no  
sperm whales, and could have taken more, but were short o  
whaling station was at the end of the south point of the I  
a whale was towed in to be cut in and tried out the place  
scene of great activity and bustle, for we had quite two I  
to help. Alas, there is scarcely a trace of it left now! !  
try-pots, built up in furnaces of coral lime, were overgro  
jungle thirty years ago, and it would be difficult even to

"The natives, as I have said, were very wild, savage, and  
time went on their friendship for my husband and myself an  
deepened, and so when Robert made a voyage to Port Jackson  
the surrounding islands I never felt in the least alarmed.  
that wemy husband and myself were actually the first white  
people that had landed to live on the island since the tin  
mutiny, when Fletcher Christian and his fellow mutineers  
here. They brought the Bounty in, and anchored her just wh  
own schooner is now lying opposite Randle's house. But the  
attacked Christian and his men so fiercely, and so repeate  
terrible loss to themselves, that at last Christian and Ec  
abandoned the attempt to found a settlement, and the Boun  
back to Tahiti, and finally to Afita, as the people here c  
Islands.

"Four years passed by. My husband was making money fast, a  
trader among the Paumotus and the Society Islands, where I

vessels constantly employed, but from his whale fishery. A of sorrow and misfortune. A South Seaman, named the Stirling, touched here for provisions, and introduced small-pox, and poor children contracted the disease and died; many hundred natives perished as well. My husband at this time was away vessels at Fakarava Lagoon in the Paumotu Group, and I spent and unhappy seven months before he returned. Almost every accompanied by one or two of my native women servants, I went to a rugged peak about two miles from here, from where we had a view of the horizon all round the island, and watch for a sail. I was gladdened, only to be disappointed again, for the ships that came were Nantucket whalers. And then, as the months went by, I can imagine that something dreadful had happened to my husband among the wild people of the Paumotus, for when he sailed I expect to be away more than three months.

"At last, however, when I was quite worn out and ill with grief, he returned. I was asleep when he arrived, for it was late at night and the vessel had not entered the harbour, though he had come ashore. He awakened me very gently, and then, before I could speak, he told me of our loss, he said

"'Don't tell me, Molly. I have heard it all just now. But, don't grieve again, dear; and I shall never stay away so long again, no more. My children have been taken and you and I are alone.'

"After another year had passed, and when I was well and sailing in the whaleship Chalice of Sag Harbour, Captain Freeman, touched at the island and the master came on shore. He was an old acquaintance of mine and told us that he had come ashore purposely to warn us of a vessel which had made her appearance in these seas a few days before and had seized two or three English and American ships, and taken the living soul of their crews. She hailed from Coquimbo, and was said to be a Frenchman, whilst her crew was composed of thirty men, to be found on the coast of South Americamen whose presence on shore would not be tolerated even by the authorities at any of our settlements from Panama to Valdivia. Sailing under French colours, professing to be a privateer, she had actually attacked a Spanish brig within fifty miles of Coquimbo Roads, the captain and crew which were slaughtered and the vessel plundered and then she had been seen by several vessels in the Paumoto archipelago, and her crew had been guilty of the most fearful crimes, perpetrated

natives.

"My husband thanked Freeman for his information; but said if a pirate vessel came into Tubuai Lagoon she would never get in except under British colours. This was no idle boast, for his husband's two vessels which were then both at anchor in the lagoon were armed, but they were manned by English or English-blooded seamen, who would have only been too delighted to fight a Spaniard, or a Dutchman.

"Ah, 'tis so long ago, but what brave, rough fellows they were. They, we well knew, had been transported as convicts, and when an opportunity offered, drunken and dissolute, but to my husband they were good and loyal men. Two of them had seen Trafalgar on the Sovereign under Collingwood when that ship had closed with the French frigate Anna and made her strike. Their names as given to us were James Watts and Thomas Godwin. After the fleet returned to England they got into mischief, and were transported for being concerned in a transaction at Deal, in Kent, in which a preventive officer was killed or seriously wounded I forget which. Their exemplary conduct, however, had gained them a remission of their sentences, and they were sent to New South Wales, who was most anxious to open up the Southern trade, had recommended them to my husband as good men, Godwin was brought up to the boatbuilding trade at Lowestoft in England, and Watts a gunsmith.

"About ten days after the visit of the Chalice my husband sent one of his vessels for Vavita only a day's sail from here. He wanted me to go with him, but I was too much interested in the English seeds, and some young fruit trees which the Government of New South Wales had sent to us, and so I said I would stay and watch the garden which I took a great pride in. He laughed and said that I must look out for 'Freeman's pirate' as well as for my garden. At that moment I imagined that the French vessel would turn up at Tubuai.

"He took with him Thomas Godwin and William Myson, leaving the other vessel, with me, to attend to the whaling.

"A week after he had sailed I set out to walk to the north island, where my children were buried. I had with me an ac named Tatiwho was carrying some plants and seeds which I : planting on and about the children's graves and two young v started early in the morning, for I intended staying at th late in the afternoon, whilst the two girls went crayfish:

"About noon I had finished my labours, and then, as it was bright day, I climbed a hill near by, called 'The White Ma which commanded a clear view of the sea all round the isla given this name by the natives, who said that Fletcher Chi fellow-mutineer, Edward Young, had often ascended the hill upon the ocean, for they were fearful that at any moment a might appear in pursuit of their comrades and themselves.

"I was again feeling somewhat anxious on account of my hus have returned a week before, for there had been no bad wea that his business at Vavitao should have kept him there or most. But the moment I gained the summit of the hill my he joy, for there were two vessels in sight, one of which I a recognised as my husband's. They were about a mile distant running before the wind for the harbour. The strange vesse brigantine, was following close astern of our own schooner I thought, my husband is showing her the way into the lago

"Just as I was preparing to descend the hill my little cor native boy, Tati, drew my attention to four canoes which, a boat from Captain Watts' schooner, were approaching the

"'Ah,' I thought, 'Watts has seen the vessels from the wha and is going out to meet them.'

"But presently something occurred which filled me with terror. The boat and canoes were quite close to the vessels, they both fired broadsides into them; the boat and two canoes were destroyed, and the two remaining canoes at once turned round for the shore, the brigantine firing at them with guns which long twenty-fours by the sharp sound they made. In a moment had happened my husband's ship had been captured by the French privateer of which Captain Freeman had told us, and the French coming to seize our other selves lying anchored in the lagoon.

"Tati looked at me inquiringly.

"'Run,' I said, 'run and tell Uasi (for so the natives call Watts) that the master and his ship have been captured by the French; he will be upon him very quickly, for the boat and two of the canoes sent out have been destroyed, and every one in them killed. The French are coming.'

"The boy darted away in a moment, and I followed him as quickly as I could; but Tati reached the harbour and was on board Watts half an hour before me, and when I went on board I found her prepared to defend the entrance to the harbour. Captain Watts had her broadside on to the entrance, boarding nettings were down from stem to stern, and on the schooner's decks were fifty natives, in addition to the usual crew of twenty men, all armed with muskets and cutlasses. The four 6-pounders which she carried on her starboard side, were now all on the port side, loaded with grape-shot. Every preparation had been made to fight the ship to the death. As soon as I stepped on board, and told me that before Tati had arrived to warn him he had heard the sound of the guns, and at once surmised that something was wrong.

"'Soon after you left the house, Mrs. Eury, some natives sent their vessels to the north-east and I sent the boatswain and four of the whale-boats, little thinking that I was sending them to the death. Four canoes went with the boat. Just now two of the canoes came back with half of their number dead or wounded, and the schooner that as soon as they were within musket-shot both the ship and the French, sunk the boat and two of the canoes with grape-shot,

a heavy musketry fire. I fear, madam, that Captain Eury and

"Your fears are mine, Watts," I said, "but whether my husband is dead, let us at least try and save this vessel."

"Ay, ay, madam. And if we have to give up the ship, we can go on shore. There are a hundred or more natives lying hidden in the oil shed, and if the Frenchmen capture this vessel they will retreat ashore. They are all armed with muskets."

"We waited anxiously for the two ships to appear; but the wind gradually died away until it fell a dead calm. Then a native came from the shore, and said that both vessels had anchored and were manning their boats.

"All the better for us," said Watts grimly; "we'll smash them enough if they try boarding. If they had sailed in, the French guns would have sunk us easily, and our wretched guns could have done him much harm." Then he went round the decks, and saw that their native allies were all at their proper stations.

"Presently he saw the boats five of them come round the point. Two of them we recognised as belonging to my husband's vessel, were, of course, manned by Frenchmen. They rowed leisurely towards the entrance till they were within musket-shot, and then they ceased rowing, and hoisted a white flag.

"They want us to surrender without a fight," said Watts, "meditating some treachery," and taking a musket from one of the boats he levelled it and fired in defiance. The bullet struck the water a few feet from the foot of the boat. The white flag, however, was held up high by an officer in the stern. Watts seized a second musket, and then

bullet went plump into the crowded boat, and either killed one, for there was a momentary confusion. Then the white and with loud cheers the five boats made a dash towards us, and the gunners to reserve their fire of grape until he gave the word. Then the natives now began a heavy musketry fire on the advance, although they suffered heavily the Frenchmen came on most bravely. When the first two boats, which were pulling abreast, were within a few yards' distance, Watts and a white seaman sprang to two of the boats, and themselves trained them, just as I heard a native near me shout. At the bows of each boat he could see a manmy husband and his mate, who were both bound. Before I could utter a warning the boats both of the guns belched out their volleys of grape, and with great effect. The boats were literally torn to pieces, and their occupants sank under the smooth waters of the lagoon; only one seemed to have escaped unwounded, and as they clung to pieces of our savage allies, with yells of fury, picked them off with their bows for the same native who had seen my husband bound in the last boat sink.

"'No quarter to any one of them!' roared Watts when he heard the boats towards lashed Captain Eury and poor Mr. Myson to the bows, and our own fire has killed them.'

"He sprang to the third gun, the white seaman to the fourth, and the other three boats, which, undaunted by the dreadful fire, were dashing on bravely. Again the guns were fired, and a yell of delight broke from our crew when one of the boats was struck from stern to stern with the deadly grape and filled and sank. The other two, however, escaped, and in another moment were alongside, and on the command, followed by his men, sprang at the boarding netting, hacking and slashing at them with their cutlasses, only to be killed, dead or dying, by our valiant crew, and the now blood-maddened natives. Nine or ten of them did succeed in gaining a foothold on the deck, clambering up the bobstay on to the bowsprit, and led by a native of sixteen, made a determined charge; a native armed with a cutlass killed the youth and dashed out his brains, though at the same moment another native thrust him through the body with his cutlass. But the boats were simply overwhelmed by numbers, and in less than five minutes all those who had reached the deck were slaughtered with but a few men on our side. Those still remaining in the boats alongside were ordered to draw off, but Watts, who was now more like a mad animal than a man, calling to some of the crew to help him, himself cut through the boarding netting, and lifting one of the 6-pounders, hurled it into one of the boats, smashing a large hole through it. Then the natives leapt into the remaining one, and cut and stabbed

not a living soul remained. Some indeed had tried to swim a few minutes earlier, but these poor wretches were met by our men, their brains beaten out with clubs. The memory of that awful day will be with me if I live to be a hundred.

"As soon as possible Watts and the carpenter restored some of our native allies, who, according to their custom, were beheaded, otherwise mutilating the bodies of the enemy. We found that four were killed and had about thirteen wounded. Of those killed were five men.

"Then taking with me half a dozen natives, I went off in our boats to the spot where our grape-shot had sunk the boat. A native had said he had seen my husband. The water was only five fathoms deep, and we could clearly see numbers of bodies on the white sandy bottom. One by one they were raised to the surface, examined, and the fifth one raised was that of my poor husband. He was bound behind his back, and his chest and face were shot through by grape-shot.

"A wild fury took possession of me, but I could not speak. I pointed to the ship. We went back on board, and my husband's body was laid on deck for the crew to see.

"I hardly know what I did or said, but I do remember that I felt that I should be revenged, and in a few minutes I was in one of our own boats with a pistol in my hand, and we, with thirty or forty canoes, were on our way to the ships anchored.

"What followed I cannot remember, but Watts told me that I was to spring up the side of the French brigantine, and that I fired my pistol at him, struck off my hand with his sword, and himself cut down by the carpenter. There were but nine men on board, these were soon disposed of by our men, who gave no quarter. The vessel was in charge of but three of the enemy, and from that

surrendered, we heard that every one of her crew, except I and my husband, had been cruelly slaughtered at Vavitaio a previously. Watts tried to save the lives of these three I the natives killed them, in spite of all his efforts. They enough, poor wretches.

"Watts and the carpenter succeeded in saving my life, and arm healed up very quickly, for I was always a strong and When they came to search the cabin of the French brigantine that her captain the man who had cut off my hand was Louis Pellatier, the very same man who, years before, had attempted poor husband at the Galapagos Islands.

"I sailed with Watts to Port Jackson a few months later in brigantine, which was sold as a prize, and remained there years. Then the loneliness of my life began to affect my I returned here to live and die. And here on this island have nearly fifty years in peace and happiness, for since Randall came here I have been very happy, and now I only await the all that call which will summon me to stand before the throne by side with my dear husband."