

A RESCUE FROM CANNIBALS.

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MUCH interest just now attaches to New Guinea, which our fellow countrymen, the colonists of Queensland and of Australia generally, seem determined to acquire for the British Crown, or at least to proclaim a protectorate over and the adjacent islands. At the present time this vast island, second in size only to Australia, and, with the neighbouring groups of islets, of greater extent than Borneo, is regarded as a *Terra incognita*, with its interior marked on our maps as a mere blank; but so much interest has been aroused as to its capabilities, and its importance both geographically and politically is so considerable, that not many years will, in all likelihood, elapse, before it is traversed from north to south and east to west, and its inmost recesses are penetrated and explored.

I will now tell of a dreadful shipwreck that took place nearly 50 years ago on one of the small Islands in Torres Straits, off the coast of New Guinea; and of the fate and sufferings of the crew and passengers, of whom all were killed except two boys, who were rescued by a vessel sent from Sydney by the Colonial Government. I came to know of this interesting narrative through the circumstance that, when writing the "History of the Indian Navy," I found that one of the ships of war of that service was sent from Bombay to discover the fate of the crew and passengers (among

whom were an Indian officer and his family) and, should they be living, if possible to effect their release from the savages into whose hands they had fallen. The Indian Navy 16-gun brig-of-war *Tigris* left Bombay for the scene of the shipwreck in Torres Straits on the 6th March, 1836. Her orders were to proceed to Sydney, which at that time was the capital and seat of government of the whole of that portion of Australia now subdivided into New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland; and thence, under instructions from the colonial government, to proceed to Torres Straits.

Owing to stress of weather when nearing Bass's Straits, the *Tigris* bore up for Hobart Town, in Tasmania, where she arrived on the 27th May, and whence she sailed on the 7th June. As this was the depth of the winter the brig experienced very bad weather, and was so knocked about that a stay of four weeks was necessary in Sydney to repair damages. Here they heard that the government had despatched the colonial armed schooner *Isabella*, commanded by Mr. Lewis, to the scene of the wreck, to make the necessary search for the missing crew and passengers of the ill-fated barque *Charles Eaton*. We will now trace the proceedings of the barque, and give the narrative of one of the survivors whom she rescued.

The *Isabella* sailed from Sydney on the 3rd of June 1836, and anchored off Murray Island on the 19th. As soon as the vessel was secured, the attention of the crew was directed to the shore, on the beach of which a group of natives were collected, showing signals of peace by extending their arms, and making gestures, and among them was plainly distinguishable a white boy. The natives were preparing to launch their canoes; and as there existed some doubts

as to the real disposition of these islanders, every preparation for defence was made on board the schooner; but, that they might not be deterred from visiting the vessel, the loaded guns were run in, and one half the crew were concealed below, in readiness to repel an attack. To the westward a canoe was observed under sail.

It was not long before four canoes came off, each of which contained sixteen men. On their approach they began to make signs of friendship, by rubbing their hands over the abdomen, and calling out in loud voices, "*pond, pond,*" "*peace, peace.*" Their object was to trade; and for that purpose they had brought tortoise-shell, cocoa-nuts and other trifles, which, as they approached the ship, they held up, calling out, "*tooree*" and "*toolick,*" meaning iron tools, such as knives and axes. The crew, however, pretended by signs that they were not understood, in the hope that they would bring off the white boy to interpret for them; at the same time some axes were displayed, the sight of which made the natives very envious, but yet they showed great reluctance in producing the white boy. And it was not until they found that trade would not be allowed, and they began to be impatient to possess the valuable articles which they had seen, that they sent a canoe to the shore which returned in an hour with him; but he was not permitted to come on board until some axes were given in exchange. Upon interrogating him Mr. Lewis was very much gratified to find that he was one of the unfortunate crew of the *Charles Eaton*, an apprentice of the name of John Ireland.

Deferring any further inquiries for the present, Mr. Lewis gave the crew permission to trade with the natives; upon which an active barter commenced, and was carried on with great briskness, and in the most friendly manner. The first presents which were given them were some empty glass-bottles, which they called "*tarpoor,*" on which a few lines, explaining the particulars and intention of the schooner's visit, had been scratched, in order that should any white people be on the island they might

be informed of the means of escape which were now open to them. Ireland informed Mr. Lewis that he had been treated with great kindness by the natives generally; and pointed out one in particular, whose name was Duppar, to whom he was indebted for his life and protection, and from whom he had received even parental kindness. A favourable opportunity was therefore afforded of rewarding him for his humanity. He was invited on board, presented with some clothes, and loaded with presents, which put the old man in high spirits.

Ireland now informed Mr. Lewis that the youngest son of Captain D'Oyly, of the Bengal Artillery, who, with his wife and two children, was one of the passengers of the *Charles Eaton*, was on shore. Upon applying to the natives to go for him, they said he was on the other side of the island, and could not be produced that night, but promised that they would bring him on board in the morning. Fearing, however, that their reluctance to part with the child might induce them to conceal him, all bartering was ordered to be suspended until he was given up; soon after which the canoes left the vessel and returned to the shore.

Mr. Lewis had now an opportunity of obtaining from Ireland an account of the loss of the *Charles Eaton*, but found great difficulty in understanding him; for the boy had forgotten his native tongue, and mixed the Murray Island language so much with his own, that he was, at first, scarcely intelligible; nor, indeed, was it until several days afterwards that the events which compose the following melancholy tale could be collected:—

The *Charles Eaton* left Sydney on the 29th July, 1834, bound to Canton, by way of Torres Straits, and experienced fine weather and favourable winds until she approached the Barrier Reef off the Australian coast, when the weather became thick and rainy.

About ten o'clock in the morning the reefs were suddenly perceived close at hand, upon which the ship was hove up to the wind, and both anchors let go, and the

cables paid out to the end ; but, nevertheless, she drifted on the reef, and fell over on her beam ends. The chief mate then cut her masts away ; but the bottom was soon bilged, and everything destroyed by the water, which broke over the decks, and the ship became a perfect wreck. However, the upper part of the vessel kept together, on which the crew and passengers collected. Soon after she struck, a vessel was observed three or four miles to windward, high and dry upon the reefs, with her masts standing, and royal-yards across, and sails set, in which position she must have been left by her crew.

During the confusion that ensued, one of the quarter-boats was lowered, but immediately swamped ; by which one man was drowned. Soon afterwards three of the crew, the third mate, carpenter, and one of the seamen, put sails, provisions, water, and arms, and all the carpenter's tools, into the other quarter-boat, and lowered her down, and kept near the wreck during the day and following night. The next day two seamen joined them, after which they refused to receive any more, although six of the crew made their way over the reef the next morning, and wished to be taken on board. The boat, however, bore away, and was seen no more. The master then, assisted by those that remained, attempted to make a raft, which was not completed before the expiration of seven days. During this interval they had managed to distil the contents of a cask and some bottles of water from the sea, by the aid of the ship's coppers and a leaden pipe from the quarter-gallery cistern, the whole of which they placed on a raft with a basket containing beer and a cask of pork. Whilst they were on the wreck they were upon a daily allowance of two wine-glasses of distilled water, and a few pieces of damaged biscuit.

As soon as the raft was completed they got upon it ; but, finding that it was not buoyant enough to hold them, they threw over the water, the pork, and beer. Still it did not support their weight, so the greater number returned on board,

leaving on the raft Mr. Moore, the master ; Mr. Grant, the surgeon ; Captain and Mrs. D'Oyley, and their two children, their nurse, a native of India, and Mr. Armstrong, passengers ; and two seamen, who determined to remain upon it all night. In the morning, however, it was found that the rope by which the raft had been made fast to the stern of the wreck had been cut, and nothing was seen of their companions. It is probable that the uncomfortable situation in which they found themselves, up to their waists in water, and the sea constantly breaking over them, induced the master to cut the rope, and trust to Providence to guide himself and the passengers to some place of safety.

Those that remained in the barque, including the boy Ireland, then made another raft of the vessel's topmasts, lashed together with coir rope, and made a sail out of some cloth which formed a part of her cargo. It took seven days before it was completed, when they, including the boy Ireland, bade adieu to the ill-fated vessel, which probably soon broke up.

Upon casting off they set their sail and steered before the wind ; but the raft was so heavy and deep that very little progress was made. She drifted rather than sailed, and probably did not go more than a mile or a mile-and-a-half an hour. After some time they came to a reef, upon which they remained for the night, and the next morning proceeded before the wind, but saw no more reefs.

After being two days and nights upon the raft, up to their waists in water, and having partaken of very little food, they passed an island, and then saw several more ahead.

Soon afterwards a canoe was perceived paddling towards them, containing ten or twelve natives, who, as they approached, stood up and extended their arms—to show they had no weapons, and were inclined to be friendly. On reaching the raft the natives got upon it, and conducted themselves very peaceably ; and, after a short time, proposed that they should leave the raft and go into the canoe, which they at

first hesitated to do, until Thomas Ching, a midshipman, said he would go, as he should then have a better chance of getting to England; upon which they all consented, and embarked in the canoe. Before they left, the natives searched the raft very narrowly for iron implements, but only found a few hoops, which they collected and took with them. They left the raft about four o'clock in the afternoon, and in less than an hour were landed on an island which they subsequently found was called Boydan.

Upon disembarking, the natives accompanied them round the island in search of food and water, but they were so exhausted by fatigue and hunger that they could scarcely crawl. Upon their return to the place where they landed they threw themselves on the ground in despair; as it was evident, from the ferocious bearing and conduct of the savages, who stood around the party grinning and laughing in the most hideous manner, that they were exulting in the anticipation of their murderous intentions. In this dreadful state of suspense, Mr. Claer, the first officer, addressing his companions, recommended them to be resigned to their fate, and read to them several prayers from a book which he had brought with him from the wreck; after which, commending themselves to the protection of the Almighty, they lay down, and, worn out by severe exhaustion, were soon asleep. But it was to them the sleep of death, for no sooner had they composed themselves, than, as Ireland describes, he was roused by a shout and noise, and upon looking up saw the natives murdering his companions by dashing their brains out with clubs. The first that was killed was poor Ching, and after him his companion Perry, and then Mr. Mayer, the second officer; after which the confusion became so great that Ireland could not distinguish what passed. The last, however, that met his fate was Mr. Claer, who, in his attempt to make his escape to the canoe, was overtaken by his pursuers, and immediately despatched by a blow on the head.

Ireland and another boy, named Sexton, were now left awaiting their fate: the former, the narrator of this melancholy tale, thus describes his deliverance:—

"A native came to me with a carving knife to cut my throat, but as he was about to do it, having seized hold of me, I grasped the blade of the knife in my right hand, and held it fast, struggling for my life. The native then threw me down, and, placing his knee on my breast, tried to wrench the knife out of my hand; but I still retained it, although one of my fingers was cut through to the bone. At last I succeeded in getting up—permost, when I let him go and ran into the sea, and swam out; but being much exhausted, and as the only chance for my life was to return to the shore, I landed again fully expecting to be knocked on the head. The same native then came up with an infuriated gesture, and shot me in the right breast with an arrow; and then, in a most unaccountable manner, suddenly became calm, and led, or dragged, me a little distance, and offered me some fish and water which I was unable to partake of.

"Whilst struggling with the native, I observed Sexton, who was held by another, bite a piece of his arm out; but after that knew nothing of him, until I found his life had been spared in a manner similar to my own.

"At a short distance off, making the most hideous yells, the other savages were dancing round a large fire, before which were placed in a row the heads of their victims; whilst their decapitated bodies were washing in the surf on the beach, from which they soon disappeared, having been probably washed away by the tide. Sexton and I were then placed in charge of two natives, who covered us with the sail of the canoe,—a sort of mat,—but paid no attention to my wound, which had been bleeding profusely."

The next day the natives collected all the heads; and, embarking, removed to another island where the women lived, which they called Pullan. On landing there, Ireland saw two of Captain D'Oyly's children, and

the ship's dog, called Portland ; the elder, George D'Oyly, told him that the first raft had landed on the island, and that all the passengers, excepting himself and his brother, had been instantly murdered ; that his mother was killed by a blow with a club, and that his little brother was in her arms at the time, but was saved by one of the women, who afterwards took care of him. The child was seen by Ireland, when they landed, in the woman's arms, crying very much. He also saw some pieces of the ship's cabin-doors, attached as ornaments to the heads of their canoes, which they appeared to prize very much ; and other relics, among which were the skulls of the passengers and crew of the first raft, those of Mrs. D'Oyly and Captain Moore being plainly distinguishable ; the former by the hair, the latter by the features. The heads were suspended by a rope to a pole that was stuck up near the huts of the women ; round which they danced every night and morning, accompanying their infuriated gestures with the most horrid yells.

The number of natives collected amounted to about sixty ; they were merely residing on the island during the fishing season, for their home, as it afterwards turned out, was at a considerable distance off. Their principal subsistence was turtle and small fish, which they caught with hook and line ; and shell fish, which abound on the reefs. The fish is broiled over the ashes of the fire, or boiled in the basin of a large shell.

The island of Pullan is covered with low trees and underwood, and the soil is sandy. In the centre of it is a spring which supplied the whole party with sufficient water for their consumption.

After remaining here two months the natives separated. One party, taking Ireland and the infant D'Oyly with them, embarked in a canoe, and after half a day's sail reached another islet to the northward, where they remained a day and a night on the sandy beach ; and the next morning proceeded and reached another island similar to Pullan, low and bushy, where they remained a fortnight. They then proceeded

to the northward, calling on their way at different islands, and remaining as long as they could procure food, until they reached one where they remained a month ; and then went on a visit to Darnley's Island, which they called Aroob, where, for the first time, Ireland says, he met with kind treatment.

After a fortnight they again embarked, and returning by the same way, came to an island where their voyage ended. Here they remained until purchased by Duppar, the Murray Islander, who, it appears, upon hearing that there were two white boys in captivity, embarked in a canoe with his wife, and went for the express object of obtaining them, taking for the purpose of barter, some fruit. The price of their purchase was a branch of bananas for each. They returned by way of Darnley's Island, where they stopped a few days, and then reached Murray's Island, where they remained and were most kindly treated. Duppar gave little D'Oyly to a native named Oby, to take care of ; a charge of which he faithfully acquitted himself, and both Oby and his adopted child soon became very fond of each other, for as the child was a mere infant he soon forgot his mother, and naturally attached himself to his nurse.

Ireland lived in the same hut with Duppar and his family. His employment was to cultivate a plantation of yams, and during the season to assist in taking turtle and shell-fish. On one occasion he accompanied them on an excursion towards New Guinea, where they went for the purpose of barter and trade ; which they frequently did to obtain bows and arrows, canoes and feathers, for which they gave in return shells, which, from their scarcity, the New Guinea people prized very much. As Duppar was fearful that the New Guinea people would steal or murder the European boy, he was left at Darnley's Island, in charge of a native until their return. Duppar and his friend, however, were not long away ; for having stopped at an island to pass the night, one of the islanders attempted to steal from one of the visitors, upon which a quarrel ensued, in which the Murray

Islanders used their bows and arrows, and wounded several, one being shot through the body. The other people then retreated to their huts, and Ireland's friends embarked; but instead of going to New Guinea, they returned to Darnley's Island, where, in a few days, they received a message offering peace; which, however, they would not accept, nor did they afterwards make friends.

About this time a European trading vessel arrived, but left without removing Ireland, though he was near enough to ask one of the people on the poop to throw him a rope, which was done. Owing to the sea running high he was obliged to let it go; upon which he asked for a boat to be lowered for him to get on board, which was also done. He said he would have made his escape had not a seaman stood up in the bow with a naked cutlass, and the others flourished their weapons over their heads, which frightened the natives so much that they pulled away on shore, followed by the boat for a little distance, and there concealed him.

When under the stern one of the crew offered him some tobacco which he declined, but had the captain offered an axe for his ransom, he would have been given up immediately, as well as little D'Oyly, who was on the beach in the arms of one of the natives. The natives knew that Ireland was anxious to be taken away, and were averse to his going off to the vessel, saying, "You shall not go there to be killed;" but as he hoped to make his escape he persisted, and the result was a bitter disappointment to him.

The next morning, five canoes came off to the *Isabella* to trade; but as they had not kept their promise of bringing off the child, no communication was allowed to be held with them. Mr. Lewis had now the advantage of Ireland's interpreting his wishes, and no mistake or misunderstanding could occur in his communication with the savages; but it was evident they were very reluctant to give the child up, and yet they coveted the *toolick* and *tooree* so much that he had great hope of effecting his

object without resorting to force. After waiting, however, for some time without any appearance of their sending for the child, Mr. Lewis began to employ threatening language; and, opening the ports, ran the guns out, and made demonstration of using force. This had the desired effect. They saw he was determined to gain his point, and sent a canoe ashore to bring the child off. It returned in a short time with a message that he was on the other side of the island, but should be given up if *tooree* were given for him. As it was evident that the natives had no intention of completing their part of the bargain, but merely wanted to obtain the articles, Mr. Lewis refused to comply with their proposal, and repeated his orders to stop trade.

Shortly after this, upon looking towards the shore, a group of about one hundred natives, evidently in deep consultation, were seen seated on a hill; and among them a little white child, perfectly naked, playing with others of the same size. After two or three hours, the group began to move down to the shore, and at four o'clock the child, surrounded by the islanders, was brought to the beach in the arms of a young native, who seemed by his kissing him to be very sorrowful at the idea of giving him up. The man, however, embarked in a canoe, and brought him alongside. The child was frightened, and cried very much at the idea of leaving his sable friend, whose neck he clung round, and pointed to the shore. Oby, however, brought his little charge on board, and descended into the cabin, where Mr. Lewis satisfied him with presents, and dressed him in clothes, at which he evinced no small delight. The bargain having now been completed, the canoes were permitted alongside, and the people began to trade. They had not, however, much to dispose of: a few yams and cocoa-nuts, a small quantity of tortoise-shell, bows, arrows, and shells of little value, were all they possessed.

Towards evening the canoes returned to the shore, but left Oby and Duppar on board; both of whom, particularly the former, who sobbed very much, were dis-

consolate at the idea of parting. Before leaving the vessel's side, the natives pressed Mr. Lewis to visit them on shore next day, which he promised to do.

Accordingly, he landed the following morning, and was immediately surrounded by upwards of one hundred natives, who expressed their great delight at the meeting, by hugging and caressing him, and shaking hands; but in order to prevent surprise, two boats were ordered to lie off on their oars, and be prepared with their arms should any hostility be shown. This movement appeared to frighten the women and children so much that they ran away to their huts; and it was some time before they mustered courage to approach. At last they were persuaded by the men, who were evidently amused by their timidity; and an old fat lady gradually drew near and took Mr. Lewis's hand and held it in one of hers, scratching the palm with the fingers of the other. Confidence being thus restored, the women and children were presented with handkerchiefs and toys, which seemed to delight them very much.

After remaining two hours with these friendly natives, Mr. Lewis embarked, with a view of examining the depth of water between Murray's Island and the smaller ones close to it. The northernmost of the two is called Dowar, and the southernmost Wyer. On Dowar, which is high and rocky, many cocoa-nut trees and several huts were noticed; but as it was not the fruit season they were not inhabited. Near the huts were observed several skulls strung up among the bushes, which Ireland described to be the memorials of departed friends.

Wyer was found to be very barren, and from its rugged and precipitous chasms bore a resemblance to a ruined fortress. In the sheltered parts, however, a few huts were seen, and near them some cocoa-nut trees. *Beche le mer* abounded on the beach, some being procured weighing three pounds. *Beche le mer*, or *Trepang*, is an animal which is frequently called the "sea slug." It is of cucumber shape, about ten or twelve inches long, and two inches in diameter. Some

are black, and other species of a grey colour. It is an object of considerable value to the Malays, who annually visit the north coast of Australia to procure the slug to sell to the Chinese, who use it as an article of food, principally on account of the highly stimulating effect it produces. When taken it is parboiled and dried in the smoke of a fire, and in that state is sold to the Chinese merchant at a great price. The north coast of Australia, and the shores of the gulf of Carpentaria abound with it; and it is also found plentifully on the coral reefs of Torres Strait.

The *beche le mer*, found upon the coast of Australia, is called by the Malays, *trepang marega*—marega being their name for the northern coast—and is of inferior quality to what is found in the eastern archipelago. The better quality, the *batu*, is of a black colour, and is found in deep water; the other is of a grey or sandy hue, and is called *passir* (sandy). The price varies according to the quality, but at this time the *trepang marega* was valued at about fifty rupees, or five pounds sterling for the *pekul* of one hundred and thirty-three pounds.

The *beche le mer* that are found on the reefs, left dry by the tide, or in shoal water, whether of grey or black colour, are of very inferior quality to those that are fished for in five or six fathoms. A large number of proas from Celebes annually visit the coast for this object. They are about twenty to twenty-five tons burden, and are so lightly constructed that it seems extraordinary that the crews of twenty or thirty men trust their lives in such frail machines, many having no timbers, and the sides being only kept apart by cross-beams, and the planks dowed together with wooden pegs. They carry provisions for six months, and the water is stored in joints of bamboo.

The next morning (June 22nd), five canoes came off to the *Isabella* to trade, but they brought little on board of any worth. Understanding that there was a water-hole near the west end of the island, eight casks were sent on shore to be filled. The well was about one

hundred yards from the beach, but it only contained enough water to fill one cask, and that was so muddy as to be unfit for use. It appears that the island is very deficient in water, and what they used was collected in the wet season in holes, and the valves of the *chama gigas** under the trees. They also drink the milk of the young cocoa-nut. Whilst filling a cask with water, one of the natives took the opportunity of stealing a cask, and concealing it in the scrub at some distance. It was, however, discovered, upon which the thief and his companions scampered off, for fear of punishment, as the party was well armed.

To return to the proceedings of the *Tigris*. The brig-of-war sailed from Sydney on the 10th July, and arrived at Murray Island on the 28th of the same month. The late Captain Kempthorne, then second lieutenant of the *Tigris*, (a friend of the writer of this paper), giving an account of the cruise of this ship, says that the savages, who boarded her in considerable numbers on her casting anchor off the island, brought a letter from Mr. Lewis, dated 26th June, stating that he had purchased from the islanders the boy Ireland and Captain D' Oyly's child.

The *Tigris* sailed from Murray Island on the 29th July, and anchored at Half-way Island about fifty miles distant, where a party of officers discovered, carved on a tree,

* The *chama gigas* is an enormous bivalved shell, the fish of which alone has frequently been found to weigh upwards of three hundred-weight, so that it would take the united strength of three or four men to move the shell when it contains its inhabitant. The valves may probably contain as much as three or four gallons of water.

the words "Dig under." In doing so they found a bottle containing a letter from Captain Lewis, dated the 28th of July, detailing his proceedings. On the following day they sighted the *Isabella* near the York Islands, and, after visiting her, landed at Double Island. The two vessels proceeded in company, and Commander Igglesden of the *Tigris* named a small islet, Grant Island, after the Governor of Bombay. Some officers landed at Wednesday Island, where the natives appeared very hostile, and at Booby Island, where records of passing ships were found in a bottle. On the 6th August the *Tigris* struck on a patch of coral rock, about one mile to the north of Cape Croker (not laid down in the charts), and was only saved from going to pieces by the strength of her teak timbers. The surf broke clean over the gunwale, and she lost her rudder, fore-foot, the whole of her false keel, and twenty feet of her main keel. On the following day the *Tigris* was steered into Raffles' Bay by her head and after-sails. In 1824 a settlement had been formed here (and also at Port Cockburn, in Melville Island) by Sir Gordon Bremer, of H.M.S. *Tamar*, which was abandoned in March, 1829, owing to the unhealthiness of the climate and the hostility of the natives. The only remains of the settlement were the débris of the fort and some railings. The *Tigris*, after having fitted a temporary rudder, and repaired other damages, proceeded, on the 17th of August, to Coupang, on the island of Timor, and thence to Batavia and Bombay, where she cast anchor on the 7th of November.

