

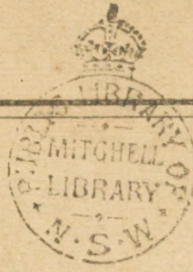
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J. R.



THE WRECK

OF THE

MISSION BAUQUE

“JOHN WILLIAMS,”

WITH REMINISCENCES OF

DANGER ISLAND;

BY

REV. HENRY ROYLE,

AND THE LATE

REV. AARON BUZACOTT.

Price Sixpence.

SYDNEY:

PRINTED BY READING AND WELLBANK, BRIDGE STREET.

1865.

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The Wreck of the Mission Barque

“THE JOHN WILLIAMS,”

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THE history of the successful war-ship is the record of blood-shed and destruction. The history of the successful trading-ship is the record of enterprize and gain. The history of the successful mission-ship is the record of messages of mercy sent to perishing men, and blest to their salvation from idolatry, cannibalism, and eternal death. The mission-ship is one of the noblest embodiments of the idea of human brotherhood, and one of the most effective means of fulfilling the great commission, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.” Almost every great Missionary Society has its mission-ship. While these sentences are being penned, two of these messengers of mercy, the “John Wesley” and the “Day Spring,” have just returned from visiting various groups of islands in the Pacific; and, having done noble

services, are lying in our harbour. But one of our most widely-known and useful mission-ships has finished her service; and, in the midst of her work, has gone down into the depths of the sea. The mission barque "John Williams" perished off Danger Island on her way from Tahiti to Sydney, on the 17th of May last. All hands on board, however, were mercifully saved from the wreck. Before the late beloved and devoted Missionary, the Rev. A. Buzacott, was suddenly called to endless rest, he wrote the following account of the introduction of the Gospel to Danger Island. He intended it to form part of the material of an appeal to the young to aid in launching a successor to the lamented barque "John Williams." For this purpose he put it into my hand for publication, so soon as we should know the decision of the Directors of the London Missionary Society to have a new vessel for the service of missions in the Pacific.

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PUKAPUKA OR DANGER ISLAND.

As the small group of Islands of which Pukapuka is the principal has become notorious as the place where the "John Williams" has been wrecked, a short account of the introduction and success of the Gospel there may at this time be acceptable.

In November, 1858, owing to a return of my old complaint, I had finally to leave Rarotonga, the scene of more than thirty years labour, and where God had eminently blessed us, for Sydney. In our way thither we had to call at several of the Islands where our native brethren were labouring, such as Mangarongaro (Penrhyn), Manihihi (Humphrey's Island), and Rakaanga. We found that in each of these places heathenism had completely disappeared, the people all under Christian instruction, Churches formed and the Bible read by most of the people, Chapels and School-houses erected, the people happy and contented, and generally in a state of prosperity.

We had long heard of Pukapuka, but could not ascertain its exact locality until now; Captain Williams had obtained its latitude and longitude from some one who had fallen in with it. As it was not out of our way we determined to call, and took with us Luka and his wife, Native Teachers, from the training Institution at Rarotonga, to locate there if we found the door open.

On December 5th, Pukapuka was in sight, and by the aid of our glasses we could see many of the inhabitants. As we approached the shore several canoes were seen to come through the surf and paddle towards our ship. It was some time however ere they ventured to come near enough to have any communication. At last one of the largest, containing about a dozen men, all standing up and talking at the top of their voices, approached and threw some small pieces of matting over the stern of the vessel—we also threw a number of fish-hooks into their canoe. But it was sometime ere any of them would venture very near. At last the people in one of the canoes accepted a ropesend with which to fasten their canoe, and we drew it alongside, but none of them could be persuaded

to come on board. Luka asked to be allowed to go down among them to shew them that he was not afraid, but no sooner had he got there than he was hugged by two powerful men before and behind as almost to deprive him of breath. They now began to untie the rope which held their canoe, but Luka by a desperate effort managed to disengage himself and seized the rope; they now attempted to cut it, but by our loud and continued remonstrance they were induced to let him go, and he escaped again on board, to the great disappointment of those in the canoe, and notes of disapprobation from the others that they had allowed their man to escape. One of them was induced to climb up the side of the ship and look in over but not until we had all moved to the other side. While his attention was engaged in viewing the ship, I quietly went over to him, and ere he was aware had put my hand upon his, he immediately descended greatly frightened at his narrow escape. Night was now drawing on and we had to stand off, but before parting I enquired for the chief and told them we should come again in the morning—that then they must bring off their chief, as I wanted to see him: this they appeared to understand, and we parted for the night.

In the evening earnest prayers were put up to our Heavenly Father that He would grant success to our endeavours to benefit these benighted people. Luka's wife appeared quite terrified at their wild and savage appearance, and told her husband that she could not think of landing among them. We had Ngutimoare with us, a young man from the Training Institution, whom we thought would be serviceable to us in Sydney, while his studies could be attended to, as he had no idea of giving up the mission work to which he had consecrated his life.

On seeing these people, and being a single man, he begged to be allowed to remain among them. Luka also expressed his willingness to accompany him, if we would take care of his wife, and bring her back again in the vessel.

December 6th, this was the Sabbath, and early we were close in shore. All on board agreed to leave me and the native Teacher alone to talk with the strangers. Twenty-two canoes, averaging twelve men in a canoe, were soon alongside. The foremost approached us boldly, and, when near enough, one of the men threw on board the top part of a cocoanut leaf, saying as he did it: Tera te naukuru o te Kainga,—that the cession of our country to you. Ei an to tatou,—let there be peace between us: which was joyfully responded to by us. We now enquired, where is your chief? He was pointed out to us and was invited on board. He quickly jumped over the side, and, ere I was aware, I was locked in his arms, and received a very warm but rather greasy rubbing of noses. I was quite willing however to submit to this for the sake of our enterprise. He now turned round to the ladies, to salute them in like manner, and succeeded in laying hold of one of them, but ere he had done, all the others had disappeared. No sooner had the chief got on deck than he was followed by so many, that our decks became crowded, and the alarm was soon given that every thing they could find loose on the decks was walking overboard. The cook was calling out for his pots and kettles, the iron belaying pins, the buckets, and a live pig went over the side in quick time. Mrs. Wyat Gills' children were also in danger of being kidnapped, and she had to lay hold of them and keep them near to protect them.

The mate on seeing one of the buckets passed overboard, laid hold of the telescope and pointed it to the

canoe where the bucket was deposited, they thought this to be a fearful instrument of destruction, and all in the canoe immediately leaped overboard; a rope was thrown to them and the bucket was returned. This stopped the pilfering, and a note of wailing was heard from all sides that they should have been so wicked; those who had been most active wailed the loudest. I followed the Chief to every part of the vessel, but he was in such a state of excitement, attempting to barter his strips of matting and bits of sinnet, that he could not, or would not give heed to anything I had to say until late in the day. I now took him by the hand and led him to a chair and obliged him to sit still till I had called Luka and Ngutimoare to come before him. I then asked him if he would allow these two men to go ashore with him, and would he treat them kindly, and take care of them till the vessel returned? What! said he, will they go ashore with me? He then hugged and rubbed noses with both, and said they should be his fathers. In a moment he called out to those in his own canoe to come near, and at a word of command all the others were manned and waiting around. Luka and Ngutimoare were again asked if they would trust themselves among these wild people? They answered they were quite willing, if we would stand off for the night and come in next morning to see how they did. They now prepared to go, and were soon ready, taking nothing with them but the clothes they had on. They came round to give us all a hearty shake by the hand—the captain, officers, and crew all standing by, wondering at their courage. The old chief was already in his canoe waiting to receive them, and they cheerfully passed over the side of the vessel and were soon seated by his side. During this there was such a drumming with paddles from all the surrounding canoes

as almost to put one in mind of an Exeter Hall approbation; while from more than one of the sailors we heard the expression, noble fellows, noble fellows; and such, they certainly were. It was one of the most interesting sights I ever witnessed, to see these two courageous young men venture themselves among such a host of savages. The chief's canoe leading the way, and the rest following, they were soon off with their prize; and we stood off again for the night. A mixed prayer-meeting was that evening held on the deck of the "John Williams," and earnest supplications were presented both in English and Rarotongan for the safety of our beloved brethren, and the success of our enterprize.

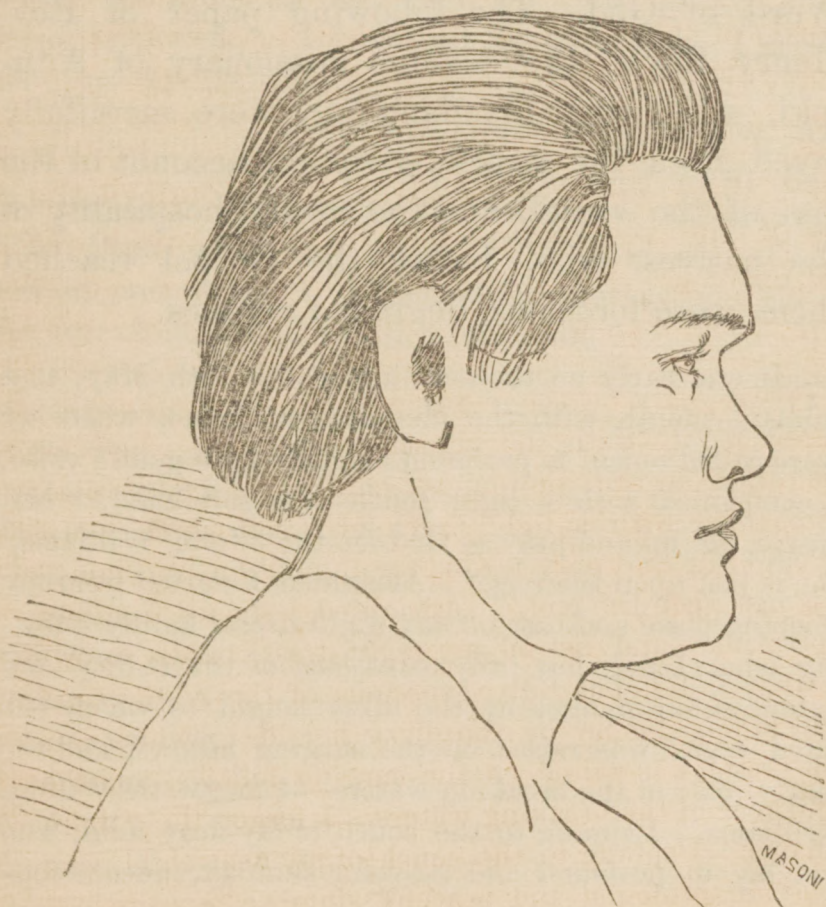
7th.—Having spent an anxious night, early this morning we were standing in toward the shore, watching anxiously for a canoe from the island. After a time, one was seen coming over the reef; but, instead of approaching us, it seemed to avoid coming too near. We made towards it, and when within hail, inquired where are the teachers? They answered, ashore: we have been feeding them until they are quite big—accompanying the words with their folded hands before their stomachs, to intimate the size to which they had grown. Another canoe came with the same story. At last, the chief's canoe was seen approaching, but without the teachers. Our anxiety had now reached its highest pitch, and we thought our worst fears were to be realized. The canoe, however, drew near; and in answer to the question, where are the teachers? the same answer was returned. The old chief now said he was come to fetch me and Mrs. Buzacott, the Captain, and any others who may like to accompany us. This we thought to be a mere decoy to draw us also into their net: and looking angry at the chief, and striking my hand on the side of the bulwarks,

I commanded him to go immediately and fetch the teachers. The old chief now appeared frightened, but recollecting he had something given him by the teachers, which he was ordered to present to me, he held up some cocoanut leaves carefully folded and tied, inside of which was a leaf which had scratched on it the following joyful news:—(Translation)—“This is a very good land; the people will not allow us to go on board again; send all our goods ashore. Send also Luka Vaine. Blessings on you, (or good bye,) pray for us.” This was all we wanted; and the chief being invited on board, came up, bringing with him some of the native pudding with which, he said, they had been feeding the teachers. The effect produced on us by the letter was witnessed by these poor, ignorant people with the greatest surprise; and I was both amused and interested to hear the chief describe the change produced to those who came afterwards on deck. He said, “when I came first, they looked so angry, and stormed at me, saying, where are the teachers? where are the teachers? but they had no sooner looked at that bit of cocoanut leaf than they began to laugh, and invited me on deck, and have been very kind.” He appeared quite as much astonished as the Rarotongan chief, who exclaimed, under similar circumstances, when he carried a chip to Mrs. Williams for some tool, “these are the wonderful people—they can make chips speak.” Luka Vaine was now quite willing to join her husband, and having dressed the chief in a black alpacca coat of my own, accompanied with several other (to him) valuable presents, he left us for the shore, light-hearted and joyful, with Luka Vaine and the teachers’ goods; and we set sail for Samoa, thankful to God for the success He had vouchsafed to grant us.

From time to time we had the pleasure of hearing of

the success of the teachers—that idolatry was abandoned, a church and school erected, and the people all attentively learning the great truths of Christianity.

The Peruvian slavers found their way there, and succeeded in decoying away some 140 of these poor people, with one of their teachers, Ngutimoare. Luka and wife have returned home, and they have now Ohotai and wife, both excellent and intelligent persons, as their teachers. The last news we have of Ngutimoare is that he is some 300 miles inland in South America, worked as a slave. The likeness of him, accompanying this, was



NGUTIMOARE, Native Teacher at Pukapuka.

taken by my daughter, by the aid of the Camera Obscura ; the outlines are, therefore, correct.

I leave my brother Missionary, the Rev. Henry Royle, who was on board the "John Williams" when wrecked at this place, to give an account of their present condition, and the kindness they all received from these once wild savages.

Such was Pukapuka when first the native christian teachers landed to disseminate the Word of God. The following paper of Rev. Henry Royle, the devoted missionary of Aitutaki, who, with his daughter, were mercifully saved from the wreck, gives an account of the loss of the vessel, and the cordial hospitality of the natives, who, before the Gospel reached them, were ferocious, degraded savages.

It was early on the morning of the 17th May, that jubilant month with the churches at home, when we were called out of a profound slumber by a gentle voice, accompanied with a light touch of a soft hand, "Mr. Royle, get up and pray to God for the 'John Williams,' she is just upon the reef." Affrighted I started from my sleeping place and cast off my night dress, hardly knowing what I did, but fully conscious of the reality and extent of our danger by the dizzy height to which our fated vessel was raised on the surging billows, and the fearful roar of the breaking waters. I forgot the "John Williams." I sprang to the couch of my dear child, who yet lay in profound and peaceful slumber, unconscious

of the anguish of her father and her own proximity to a watery grave. I looked for a moment on her placid and innocent features, and spell-bound I could not awake her to the anguish I was then enduring; it came over me too like a flash of lightning, that the dear mother's life was bound up in that of this dear child. All my agonized feelings were compressed in one intense prayer, I fell on my knees and exclaimed, “Oh God! save my child.” Again at this moment the same soft plaintive but unexcited voice of the amiable wife of our Captain, called “Mr. Royle, bring dear Harriet up on deck immediately; throw something warm round the dear child, but come quickly, the vessel has struck.” I heard not the awful crash, I knelt paralyzed by my child.

Now however roused to action, I gently awoke my child—“Harriet, my dear, come quickly, the vessel is lost.” She started towards me greatly affrighted, exclaiming, “Oh! Papa, where shall we go?” “To God, my child,” was my prompt reply. I dragged from her sleeping place the dear child, almost naked, to the deck.

The rudder and the stern had given way. Oh! deeply affecting was the scene. On the deck stood three aged saints, from seventy to eighty years of age, four young children trembling and naked by our sides. Our Aitutakian young men came near to us, drew off their upper garments and took possession of my child.

Somewhat relieved by their devotion, and satisfied that they were contemplating the means of rescue, I threw myself with prayerful confidence in the arms of a covenant-keeping God, and awaited the result.

Orders were given to get out the boats, which, after great labour, devotion, and many chivalrous traits of character displayed, they succeeded, (the vessel meantime

filling with water); at length success attended their efforts, and a call was made for the ladies and children to be put into the boats. Aiding my venerable friend, the Rev. C. Barff to follow, I beheld with grateful emotion their rescue from an impending death, my own child being one of the number.

Seated on the deck of the ill-fated vessel, breathing a prayer for the noble-minded men who composed the crew of our barque, I saw Mrs. Williams, whom I supposed to be in the boat, approaching the spot I occupied; she said, "Mr. Royle, I give you my place in the boat—go, take care of dear Harriet, I remain to share the fate of my husband, I cannot leave him." My reply was, "Mrs. Williams, I cannot leave the ship without orders from the Captain." She disappeared, and in a few minutes the Captain came and requested me to enter the boat, and to keep her out of the reach of falling spars, but within hailing distance for any contingency. Gladly did I obey the welcome order,—now out of the reach of immediate danger I looked around upon the affecting scene. We a naked throng, our pleasant home a wreck, the tremendous crashes echoed mournfully upon the silence of the night; every blow the ill-fated vessel received sent a vibratory stroke to the ship's bell, and a pang of sorrow to our hearts.

At five o'clock a.m., while yet dark, orders were given for all to enter the boats, and to seek a new home among a so recently savage people.

Forty-two in number occupied three boats. We proceeded along at safe distance from the barrier reef to seek an opening, whereby we could communicate with the natives of Danger Island.

We could not help sorrowfully contrasting our present

condition with that of yesterday, then rejoicingly we approached these Isles with wealth to distribute among them, the gift of other churches more favoured than they. Now we approached them destitute of all things, and suppliants at their shores to seek a temporary home among them, and beg their hospitalities—uncertain withal as to how our application would be met.

As the day dawned it opened to the Islanders our loss and our dependance upon their sympathies.

As soon as they saw us, crowds of them hastened to our relief, embraced us in their generous pity, and carried us to their homes.

Clothing they had none to offer us, for they themselves were naked, but the best of their food they reserved for us and brought it daily to our table, denying themselves of the only food that we could eat. A sacrifice the more admired by us, as they could plainly see we had been deprived of the ability to reward them for such kindness; their exertions to save from the sinking ship some provisions, although unsuccessful, yet brought out a noble trait in their Christian character. But while we were destitute of earthly goods with which to repay their kindness, we had still a heavenly treasure of which the sea could not deprive. God had prepared them in a wonderful manner by the efforts of our Native Teachers to be more fully instructed in the faith of Jesus. Day by day they fed us (42 in number) with their best but still perishable food, while we preached to them the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Day and night too would they have sat listening to the wonderful story of the Cross, and oftentimes, after we had been obliged from exhaustion and that from inadequate nourishment, they would steal at the dead hour of

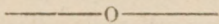
night around our home, rapping at each window until they had found mine, when on inquiry of their nocturnal visit, they would reply timidly "Tell us more of the death of Jesus. Oh! tell us again the word about Calvary."

And when we spoke to them of the dying love of Jesus to sinners, and of His command to His disciples that that love should be celebrated in the instituted supper of Our Lord, they asked in the utmost simplicity with the Eunuch of old, "What doth hinder us?" &c., and thus had we the happiness after careful selection and due examination, to form a Church of Christ in this place; forty-two individuals made a public profession of their faith in a Crucified Redeemer. These avowals were made in the presence of five hundred spectators, who were appealed to as to the blameless deportment of their brethren, and no exception being taken to any, we accepted them as brethren in Christ, to whom we gave the right hand of fellowship in His name, as the Church in "Danger Island." We need not say that in our intercourse with these Islanders we found their conduct strictly honest, not one article rescued from the wreck or any that floated to shore was detained from us, but every one restored to its owner. A few years only have elapsed since the introduction among them of the Word of God. Then they were notorious thieves and savages—but they have now the Bible and have been taught by its pure and holy teachings to steal no more, but rather to desire to labour with their own hands in the thing that is good and honourable.

The British Consul, T. C. Williams, Esq., so struck with this wonderful change in their character, and appreciating their kindness and hospitality to the ship-wrecked

ones, that he sent a present of cotton goods, valued at £50 sterling, to be distributed among the natives in the name of Queen Victoria and the British Government.

When we were relieved by the prompt and energetic action of the British Consul—and we were enabled to leave them, they followed us to the ship, and with tears and lamentations sorrowfully bade us “Farewell.” Never will the impression made upon our hearts by the kindness of these people be erased from our memory. And while we see in their case the holiness of the Gospel vindicated, we give God the glory of His own Divine workmanship.



It was, indeed, a sorrowful sight to the rescued crew and passengers, to see the noble barque settle and sink for ever from view. Had she had half an hour’s action of an auxiliary steam screw, she would have successfully beat against the current, and avoided the fate which so often similarly threatened her before. But in vain the brave sailors, under the orders of their officers, pulled in the boats, till they repeatedly wrung out the perspiration from their saturated shirts. The force of the current overpowered their strength, and she sank, as above narrated, in more than ninety fathoms of water. Several of the sailors, as well as the captain, could not repress the tear of sorrow as their loved barque disappeared under the remorseless waves. To them she was more than a ship: she was their

home, and the messenger of mercy to tens of thousands of christian natives, who often hailed her as if a messenger from Heaven. She had nobly served the cause of Christ among the isles of the sea for more than *twenty years*. While other vessels were carrying rum to madden the natives and counteract all agencies for their good; while the sailors of many ships carried demoralization and disease among these islands; the "John Williams" distributed Bibles in the mother tongue of hundreds of islands and brought them Missionaries; and her captain and crew had the confidence and blessing of all islands where she touched.

The friends of missions must thank God that she was protected in such a long, perilous, beneficent course. Blessing on the memory of the children's ship, the barque of peace, the good "JOHN WILLIAMS."

But now the question arises, are we to have another Mission Ship for the isles of the great Pacific? and of what kind shall she be?

It is determined that, by God's help, a ship we shall have. All our missionaries in all the christianized groups implore the continuance of our aid, without which their work must flag and decrease. The christianized natives are coming nobly forward with liberal subscriptions for

another “John Williams,” whose welcome advent may gladden their eyes and fan the flame of missionary zeal in their hearts. Distance as yet prevents our knowing what the children of England are doing; but we feel assured they are collecting for another ship. In several of the Colonies noble efforts are being made; and we trust soon to learn that the authorities at home are procuring a ship *with auxiliary Steam power* to escape the peril of winds and currents, that often endanger and wreck sailing vessels among the southern coral reefs. New Guinea, an island as large as England, with many, many more in the Western Pacific are *still sunk* in savage degradation and abominable idolatry. None but a vessel with auxiliary steam power can pervade all the groups between New Guinea and Tahiti so as to sustain successful missions. Granted, that the building and maintaining of such a vessel would entail additional expense; yet is it *too much* to ask from opulent British Christians, and from these flourishing colonies to maintain one such messenger of mercy for Christ to the islands of the sea!

Shall commerce grudge to God one such vessel, while hundreds of such are employed for her own aggrandizement?

Let merchants remember “who it is that

giveth them power to get wealth," and let them deal liberally with the Giver of all good. Let the young exert self-denial and activity; and they will rejoice in the services of a more powerful mission ship than their first "John Williams." These colonies profit commercially by the christian civilization of the South Sea Islands. They are honoured to be the nearest points of approach for aggression on their fearful paganism. May these colonies be faithful to that light and liberty that make them prosperous and happy! They have now an opportunity of proving their loyalty to Christ and His Kingdom. Reader, God expects *every man* to do his duty, and therefore expects *you* to do yours in helping the new mission ship. You can give; you can collect for the object. "Whatever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

JOHN GRAHAM.

January, 1865.



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The wreck of the mission
barque "John Williams" :
with reminiscences of Danger
Island

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