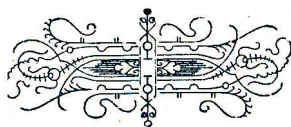


Capt. Brown's
Experience

ON BOARD THE BARQUE

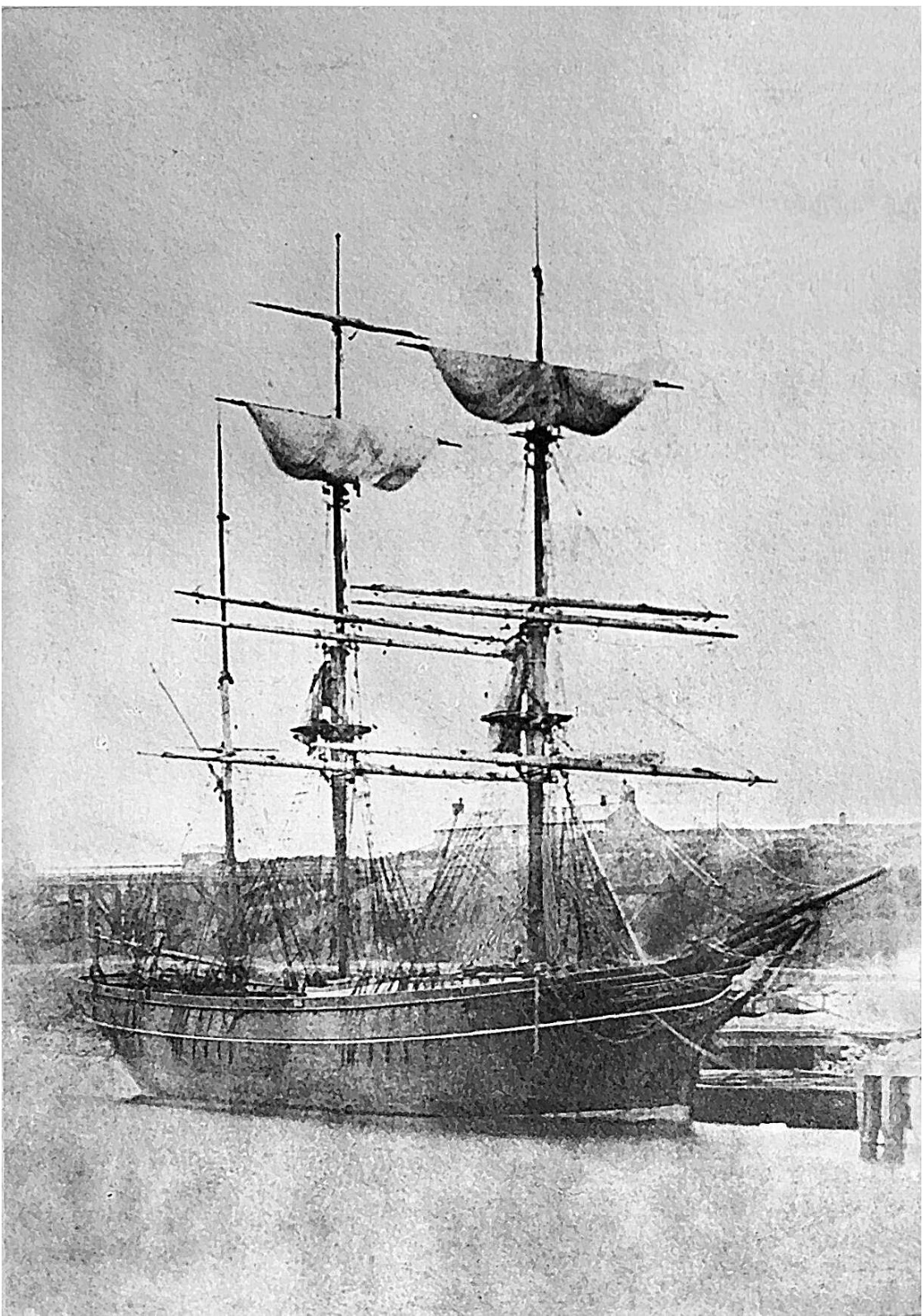
"Robert Hine."

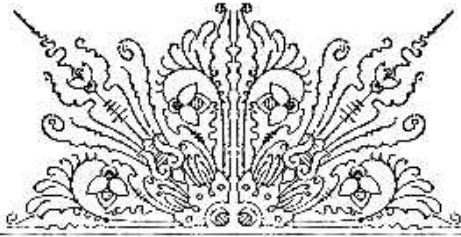


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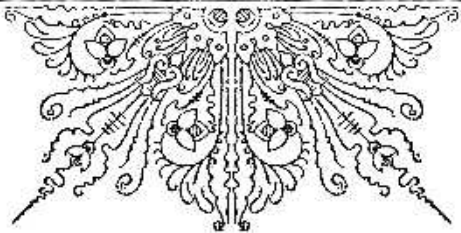
JAS. STARR, PRINTER AND BOOKBINDER.

1899.





Captain Brown's
EXPERIENCE
ON BOARD THE BARQUE,
"ROBERT HINE."





Captain Brown's Experience

ON BOARD THE BARQUE,

"Robert Hine."



IT was in fine, clear weather that we left Liverpool in the year 1873, bound for Arica and Mollendo with a general cargo. All went well until we got within 100 miles of the Straits of Le Maire, when we encountered a heavy gale of wind from the south-east. The sea was running very high and we shipped heavy water on deck. We were on the port-tack with two lower topsails and foretop-mast staysail set. At the commencement of the gale we should be about 70 miles from any land.

We headed for the land, and when it was about ten miles distant were obliged to wear ship and put her on the starboard tack, for fear of being driven on shore. No sooner had we gone on the starboard tack than a heavy sea struck the vessel, carrying away nearly all our bulwarks, rails, and stanchions on the starboard side, also starting decks and waterways, damaging the crew's houses, and flooding the cabin. This would be about midnight. At daybreak we found that our fore rigging had been carried away and the vessel leaking. I decided to run for Stanley Harbour, in the Falkland Islands,

to get my vessel repaired, as she was not in a fit state to proceed on her voyage round Cape Horn. In due time we arrived in Stanley Harbour - one of the best I have ever visited. We found the inhabitants to be mostly Scotch carpenters; there would be from 100 to 150 men in the place, but very few ladies, I should say not more than six. Several of the men asked me, should I visit their island again, if I would kindly bring them some wives.

We were six weeks in repairing the ship, and then we sailed again, enjoying fine weather and favourable wind until we reached Cape Horn, where we encountered another south-east gale. I decided to run under the land for shelter and go through Nassau Straits, which we entered about 6 p.m., in daylight. Having heard and read so much about the Patagonian Savages, I did not anchor but kept under weigh until the gale moderated.

Before entering Nassau Straits I gave orders for all guns, cannon, and revolvers to be got ready for action, as a precaution, in case the natives attempted to board our ship. We had also a plentiful supply of hot water ready, and the carpenter sharpened all his axes, adzes, and other cutting instruments. When all this had been done, I told Mrs. Brown she had better retire to rest. Sleep was out of the question for myself, as I was bound to be on deck until the weather moderated and we were safely through the Straits. But Mrs. Brown answered "No; I am afraid of the savages; but if you will make further preparation for keeping them from boarding the ship I will go to my room." Then she told me that in the storeroom there were a large number of pickle and preserve bottles, which she suggested should be broken and spread upon the deck, in case the natives attacked us. This I thought was an excellent plan and was not long in getting the bottles broken, as suggested.

We were two nights and days in this place before the gale moderated sufficiently to allow us to go through into open water. Several times when we

were passing the small islands we heard the natives shouting and screeching, but no boats came off to us, for which we were very thankful. An American vessel four years before this was not so fortunate, as she lost half her crew fighting these men, who had boarded her, In the fight twenty natives were killed and the remainder jumped overboard and were drowned.

We had a nice passage from False Cape Horn to Arica and Mollendo. After discharging the cargo and loading nitre for Hamburg, we set out for Valparaiso. We had a pleasant and quick passage to within fifty miles of Cape Horn. Then the barometer commenced to fall very rapidly, and the weather to the southward looked bad. I decided to run for Good Success Bay. This would be about two o'clock in the afternoon, and at six o'clock in the evening we anchored.

Just before anchoring we noticed a small fore and aft schooner lying at anchor, flying the English ensign. Thinking this craft might possibly be a pirate schooner, I gave orders for all guns to be loaded and made ready for action; at the same time I did not forget to muster all the broken bottles ready for spreading on the deck. When we had been to anchor about two hours, a small boat with four men came alongside from the schooner. The men looked rather like foreigners, and seeing this I shouted for them to keep away; they answered backed that they were Missionaries. Seeing that there were only four in number, I asked them to come on board, which they did. It turned out in conversation that they were from Stanley Harbour, Falkland Islands, and bound for Beagle Channel Missionary Station, and that their schooner's name was "Allan Gardner, No. 3," so called after the first Missionary to the Patagonians. The schooner was loaded with beef, potatoes, geese, and rabbits. We were kindly asked if we would like some fresh meat and potatoes. I answered "Yes," but asked them not to bring too much, as I had very little money on board. They at

once very generously replied that the provisions should be a free gift.

Before dark our visitors left the ship and returned to their own schooner, promising to come again the next morning. This they did, bringing with them three quarters of fresh meat, six bags of potatoes, twenty geese, and about the same number of rabbits, altogether sufficient to last us a month. As they had been so kind I offered to let them have whatever clothing they required for themselves, their wives and families, at cost price. I had invested in this clothing as a speculation when in Hamburg. They were very pleased to accept my offer, and bought of my stock to the extent of £65. Like myself they had no money, but they gave me a letter addressed to a gentleman in Liverpool, of whom I was to receive payment.

I was then asked to accompany them on shore, as they were anxious to learn for themselves what the natives were like. The information that had reached them was to the effect that the people were very wild and treacherous - indeed, perfect savages. I, however, declined the invitation, as the manner in which I had seen the people dancing and jumping like madmen around their fires all night convinced me that it was wiser to remain aboard my ship. I also suggested that the best plan for us would be to heave up anchor and clear out. But they were very anxious to land, as they desired to learn whether they knew the language of the natives or not. If they were ignorant of it, they agreed not to land, With this I promised to accompany them, providing they did not object to me taking two "bulldogs" with me. They looked round, and asked where I kept the bulldogs? I produced two revolvers, which they said I could take on condition they were only used in self-defence. We then went within a hundred yards of the shore in the schooner's boat; from that distance the Missionaries hailed the natives in the language they knew, and received from one of the

tribe a response in the same tongue The knowledge that at least one man could understand them was very pleasing to the Missionaries.

After a lot of talk the native was asked if it was safe to land? Certainly the prospect was not very inviting, as the people all appeared to be painted ready for war. Not one of them had any clothing on whatever. Men, women, and children were all quite naked, although it was freezing hard and exceedingly cold. The man answered back, that under the circumstances it was perfectly safe to land, but that it would not have been so had he not been able to act as interpreter.

We then landed, and immediately the natives came crowding around us; they commenced taking hold of our clothes, shaking them vigorously - first our coats, and then every article we had on. I asked the Missionary the meaning of this, and he said it was the way they had of expressing their desire to become possessed of our clothing. As we were shivering with cold, of course this was out of the question. After this they sat around their fires, first one and then another going close up to the burning sticks to get warm.

I may say these people have no places of shelter whatever, neither houses nor huts; their only comfort is a wood fire, and, what appeared very strange to me, they always sat on that side of the fire where the wind was blowing towards them. I asked the reason of this, and was told, if they were sheltered by the land it would be draughty and they would be more liable to take cold.

During the whole of our visit I hardly took my eyes off the natives, as I feared they might treacherously attack us. Once I struck a match to light my pipe, and in an instant they were all round me, amazed at the sight; they had never seen a match before, and when I gave them one or two their delight was very great I thought what a good plan it would be to bring all the matches we could spare on shore and barter them for the bows and

spears they had, for whilst they carried these I was very uneasy. This was done. For a box of matches they gave me a bow and arrow, and in a short time I had secured all their weapons, which we placed on board so as to be out of their reach.

The Missionaries gave to the natives some meat and a quantity of geese and rabbits; at the same time I also gave them some salt meat and bread. These people possessed a large oval pan which they had found on an old wreck lying on the beach. Up to the time of our visit they had been unable to find a use for it. One of the Missionaries now told them to till it with water, and promised to show them how to cook the meat, &c. First he placed all the geese and rabbits, the salt meat and the bread, upon the beach, and then told the natives to arrange themselves in families around the provisions. He then proceeded to divide the meat and other things, according to the number in each family, cutting the meat up into portions and giving to each a share. I asked him why he did this, and he replied that if it was left with the natives to distribute they would arrange themselves for war, and the strongest side would take the whole lot. After he had apportioned the meat out, he put some in the pan to cook, but it had not been there long before the people were pulling it out and eating it. So delighted were they with the meat that more was placed in the pan, together with a goose, two rabbits, and a quantity of shell fish; these latter were put in just as they had been killed - skins, feathers, and all - and in the same state they were eaten, for all that was thrown away after the meal were a few shells.

After this we took three of the natives on board the "Robert Hine," for the purpose of showing them over the ship. I went down into the cabin first, our visitors following. The first, who was some distance from the other two, on reaching the room, almost the first thing he saw was a picture of himself in the mirror upon the stern-post casing. The shock to him was tremendous; he made a

terrific leap, nearly through the skylight, and dropping down upon the floor fainted right away. His friends would not venture any further, the reason of their brothers' fright being quite incomprehensible to them, and they stood bewildered. After we had brought the fellow round, they became somewhat reassured, and then the fun commenced. First one and then another would peep at the mirror and then give a big jump backwards. This was repeated for at least a dozen times. At length the Missionary succeeded in explaining the mystery to the man who acted as interpreter, and was at last able to satisfy them that the persons whom they saw were themselves and none others. Then the sailors let them see through their quarters, and when they came again on deck they were dressed in some of the old clothes belonging to the crew. They were all highly delighted with their costumes, and their exhibitions of joy were amusing to watch. But the greatest fun was after they had returned ashore, indeed, it was a real "Jubilee" occasion amongst them. The next day three or the ladies were dressed in the sailors' clothes, and day by day they were passed on to three fresh persons until all had enjoyed the new sensation.

One day, about noon, we set off to climb the mountains, so that we might see the view on the other side. We had great difficulty in persuading one of the natives to accompany us, as the people suspected that we intended to kill our guide. The ascent of the mountains was accomplished after a deal of hard work, as the sides were very steep and covered with small trees and shrubs. It was rather late and getting quite dark when we came down, and aboard the ship they were beginning to get uneasy on our account; to warn us of the oncoming night they had commenced to pull the flags up and down. We were a ragged-looking lot, our clothes being almost torn off our backs; but although I took particular notice of our native guide, I could not see that he had a single scratch

about him, notwithstanding he had gone through the bushes like a rabbit.

The next day we had moderate weather, and both vessels sailed together, keeping in company for about eight hours, after which we parted, the Missionary schooner making for Beagle Channel and the "Robert Hine" for Nassau Straits once again.

When we got as far as False Cape Horn it commenced to blow, and we had to run back and anchor in Orange Bay, where we laid three days and nights. During our first day there we saw several natives walking about, but none afterwards. We landed on the second day and cut about twenty fine spars, of which there were a large quantity. Orange Bay afforded us splendid anchorage; it was well sheltered from all winds. When the gale abated we started again and passed safely through the Straits. We made a splendid voyage from thence to Valparaiso, the time being only fourteen days, whereas I have been as much as six weeks doing the same passage.

After our ship had been reported to the Customs, almost all the Captains and officers of the vessels in Port came on board, to enquire what kind of places Good Success and Orange Bays were; they were also anxious to know what we thought of the natives - whether in case of a wreck near their shores they would kill and eat the unfortunate sailors? I replied, that although I should not care to be cast amongst them, yet at the same time I would prefer landing before keeping to sea in an open boat. One man especially, who, as Mate of the "Peckforton Castle," came to me many times to enquire my opinion of the natives, my reply to him being the same as above. This poor fellow (Capt. McAdams) got command of the "San Rafael," of Liverpool, on his return home with the "Peckforton." He sailed in October, 1874, carrying a cargo of coal for Valparaiso, and with a crew of twenty-two hands. His wife also accompanied him.

On New Year's Day, 1875, after rounding Cape Horn, they found the vessel on fire. They were compelled to take to the three boats; the Captain, his wife, and part of the crew were in the largest boat, the officers and the remainder or the crew being in the other two. During a fog the officers lost sight of the Captain's boat and never saw it again.

It transpired subsequently, however, that the Captain and his companions landed on a small island a few miles from the mainland, hoping there to attract the notice of some passing ship. But no ship came, and after enduring dreadful hardships all perished of starvation. During the time their little stock of food lasted, cooking operations were conducted at night for fear of drawing the attention of the natives on the mainland. It appears the natives did see the blaze of their fire, but were too afraid to venture a visit whilst the fires lasted. When these had ceased they went to the island and found the dead bodies of Captain and Mrs. McAdams and crew of the boat. They returned and told the sad story to the Missionaries, walking for that purpose a distance of about 100 miles. The Missionaries at once proceeded to the island in the "Allen Gardner" and reverently buried the dead bodies.

The diary of Captain McAdams, which he had kept until he could see to write no longer, was also found, and from its pages the dreadful fate of himself and his companions was learned.

The officers kept to sea in their boats, and after tossing about for twenty-seven days were picked up by a passenger ship from Melbourne, bound for London.*

With reference to the Missionary schooner frequently referred to in the above narrative, it should be stated that she was called "Allen Gardner" after two previous Missionary ships of the

* For an account of their dreadful privations during the twenty-seven days they were in the open boats, see *The Wide, Wide World Magazine* for August and September, 1899.

same name, the former of which was so-called in memory of the first Missionary to the Patagonians. When this devoted man, in company with several others, left England for South America, only sufficient water and stores were taken out to last one or two months beyond the time time occupied in the passage out. It was arranged before sailing that a large brig-rigged vessel should carry out to them an adequate stock of provisions, but, unfortunately, this ship became disabled and was compelled to return to England for repairs. When at length she did arrive in South America, they found all the Missionaries were dead, having been literally starved.

A short time after this another ship, the "2nd Allen Gardner," went out with another band of Christian Pioneers, but she too met with disaster. When passing through Beagle Channel she ran aground, and all her passengers and crew, with the exception of one man, were cruelly killed by the savage natives. The one man who escaped was picked up by a passing vessel and lauded on the Falkland Islands. The natives also tried to set fire to the ship, but failed to do so because of the copper that was in her bottom. Some time afterwards a gunboat towed her off and took her to the Falkland Islands, where I saw her.

The "3rd Allen Gardner" was the one I met in Good Success Bay, loaded with provisions and bound for Beagle Channel Missionary Station, as mentioned earlier.

