

TRUE STORIES

Adventure

The Fight for Capt. Vincent

BY CAPTAIN HENRY MANSFIELD.

It was the first mate of the four-master Osprey, out of New York with kerosene oil for Hong Kong in 1872. There was little of note in the passage to the South Seas. The logbook was a mere record of figures and tiresome computations. Capt. Vincent and I whiled away hours that ran into weeks, playing cribbage in the cabin and talking politics and news that was months old and worn threadbare.

When the water went bad it only multiplied the uncomfortableness of things. We cursed the water, as was proper and natural in the tropics, and took to quenching our thirst with liquor until we should be able to make one of the Kermadec Islands, which we knew to lie a little to the north-west of us in about longitude 167 degrees west and altitude 31 south. To drink the water meant sure sickness and, of course, we could not nor would we, subsist entirely on liquor.

On the second morning of our thirst we sighted a low bank of land in the distance and bore down on one of those little coral paradises which dot the southern Pacific. Boats were lowered and the big water casks were taken ashore.

For perhaps a mile from the water's edge the island was flat and shelved very gradually to the foot of great cliffs that towered like citadel walls high over the ocean. A stream wound through the surface of the plain, the heavy tropic verdure of its banks hiding the water from view except where the sun, filtering through the leaves, flashed back from a ripple.

The water near the mouth of the stream would have been good to drink, but there was a possibility that it would not last as long in the casks as that which we might take from further up, where air and sunlight reached it.

Some hundred yards from the mouth of the creek, which twisted and turned upon itself, in a marvelous manner, the wholeboat grated on the pebble bottom and came to rest. The captain got into the dinghy with me, and four sailors rowed us cautiously up the stream, where the water soon became deeper again.

Palm walls, rearing on either side, gave the effect of winding through a tunnel. The darkness and the odor-laden heat depressed the spirits. There was a heavy sense of being alone in a vast world of silent vegetation. I think there was not a man among us who did not feel the mysterious sense of approaching danger, and yet we determined to push on until we should find water that bubbled over rocks and was made healthful by the action of air and light. Besides, none would have given in to the feeling of strange dread.

Suddenly, rounding a graceful bend in the stream, we came upon a stockade built of great trunks of palms and logs, close to the edge of the water. The men rowing could not see it, but the captain and I in the stern of the boat faced it, squarely on the opposite bank to the one we were skirting.

An unmistakable sign of permanent habitation, looming unexpectedly in that waste of morass, it startled us and our faces must have shown our consternation before we spoke, for the men let their oars rest and turned to stare where we were looking. There was no reason to believe that natives would be anything except friendly. The inhabitants of such islands were usually disposed to be kind and to trade unless they had suffered recent outrage from some unscrupulous crew.

So we argued among ourselves, and then decided to approach the stockade and see if any natives were there. Through his trumpet hands the captain hailed and received no answer. From the dense forest echoes rumbled back at us confusedly. From way, way off in the distance came the sound of a bark.

"Well go ashore," said Capt. Vincent, "and see if we can raise any one."

Not too willingly the men started to paddle to the beach. With a gentle grating, the boat slid onto the bank and the captain rose to step out. The men were in the act of shipping their oars. So quietly was the whole thing done that there was an air almost of mystery about it.

While they were bending over, Rodgers, one of the seamen, just groaned loudly and slid forward on his face. There had not been a sound.

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arrow, still quivering from the force of the impact against his muscles.

In a flash we had shoved the boat into the stream. It was horrible. We knew not even from which direction the bolt had fallen. In blind fury, while we pulled the arrow from poor Rodgers' back, the captain fired point-blank into the barricade.

With that there was a yell and a shower of arrows fell among us. We could see that they were coming from the top of the barricade now, and the captain and I fired at heads when they showed there. One insolent savage climbed to the very top of the wall and, yelling, was fitting the arrow to his bow.

I aimed carefully with my pistol, but almost in the very act of firing, one of the barbed shafts cut into my hand and the pistol, going off in the air, clattered to the bottom of the boat. My wound was in the flesh, the arrow merely having cut me in passing, and I snatched my weapon with the other hand, aiming as best I could.

Rodgers was not dead and he lay, grimly refusing to groan with the pain, in the bottom of the boat. The men churned the water, bending their oars to shoot the boat forward. The captain and I did some execution with our weapons, but it helped little.

Careening over, almost to the point of capsizing, we scuttled around the bend in the stream, out of sight of the stockade, and there, lined across the stream, were four canoes, filled with grotesquely tattooed savages bearing bows and arrows and spears or assegais.

Cries and furious yells of the savages lent terror to their onslaughts as they paddled down on us. Our men were silent. Strength and breath and alertness to the last degree would be needed if any were to come through the approaching clash alive.

The eyes of the painted devils, glaring at us, seemed greedy for life. It was terrifying, but it roused a like spirit in us. The oppressive languor of the jungle had left us. We were animals, hunted, but at bay and ready to fight.

Dim thoughts of safety if we should gain the ship, our real object in breaking through the line of canoes, were lost in the fury of the primal instinct to fight, fight, fight!

As we swept toward the enemy I leaned far over the side and fired at one of the paddlers. He leaped in the air and fell splashing into the water. Capt. Vincent tore the side out of one canoe with a shot from his rifle and it turned over to sink.

The men who were thrown out struggled through the water, which was up to their armpits, brandishing their weapons. In an instant we were upon them. A big black fellow lunged with an assegai, but our man in the bow raised his oar and the heavy stick trudded against the head of the savage. He sank beneath the surface.

Then the crash came. The canoes closed with us, and it was knife and rifle butt against assegai. I dropped one savage with the last shot from my revolver, then used it as a club.

A pair of sinewy arms twisted about the captain's throat, but as I dodged a thrust from a spear I smashed the butt of my pistol onto the crinkly head of the savage, who dropped into the water. One of our men was dragged from the boat and trampled into the stream. Then, as the natives climbed over the sides, the dinghy capsized and we were all thrown, thrashing and kicking, into the creek.

Of how others fared I know nothing. It was each for himself and we were all kept busy. Dodging, struggling, half-drowned, we fought there in the water. When I dodged a blow my head would go under and I would gasp in the water and rise again only to strike out desperately at some head bobbing near me.

There was a shout. In a second of respite I saw the wholeboat rounding the next curve. I learned that the men had got out into the water to push it ahead of them as a protection from the enemy's weapons, and when they found the stream deepening had climbed into the boat again.

In so time, the reinforcements were down upon us, smashing with their oars, slashing with their knives, and firing when they saw the opportunity.

One by one they were fighting us free from the savages and dragging us into the wholeboat. All would have gone well had not another band of natives appeared at the edge of the stream and, producing canoes from somewhere, paddled to assault us. Three of our men were lost and three more were disabled. There were at least fifty of the natives with the reinforcements, and fight was our only hope.

I was cut and wounded in a dozen places and lay half-dazed in the bottom of the boat. The captain was the last man to be pulled over the side. The savages in the canoes from shore

were fast bearing down on us. The men had all they could do to beat off those who clung desperately to the wholeboat, and just as the captain was being dragged over the gunwale a dozen hands clutched him from the water and pulled him back.

We deemed him as good as dead and with the natives swarming around us, splashed away down stream. In canoes they followed us and pushed us hard, but they had not the incentive to speed that was ours, and we were ahead of them when we reached the shoal.

Those of us who were able clambered into the shallow water and pushed the boat before us. I clung to the gunwale and stumbled along some way, though I must have been more hindrance than help. Once in deeper water, rowed as fast as we could and, with the natives yelling behind us, gained the cove in safety.

Eight men from the ship were rowing frantically for the mouth of the stream, but as we met them and looked back a flotilla of canoes issued from the creek and we knew that to fight was useless. A battered, used-up party we went on board and prepared for an attack, but the natives did not care to tackle us on board ship and paddled away upstream.

The men were in no condition for work, and besides there was a lurking wish in my heart to attempt revenge for the captain's death, so we did not put out of the cove.

Late in the afternoon I was pacing the deck rather stiff-jointedly when I noticed a black object in the water slowly approaching the Osprey from shore, disappearing, then coming to the surface still nearer to us.

The men grouped at the rail, and we soon made out that it was the head of a single swimmer. We had no fear of one man and we saw that he could not be armed. When we had made signs to him that we would not harm him he climbed into the chains at the bow and scrambled on deck.

The men regarded him with no unfriendly glances, and no sooner was he on board than he took a small round nut from his mouth and handed it to me as I stood in front of the other men. With a little pressure the two halves of the shell parted and I found a tiny scrap of paper rolled into a pill inside the nut. Tremblingly I unrolled the paper and read, scrawled in pencil:

"Feast to-morrow. Torture. For God's sake, come."

The crumpled paper dropped from my fingers. The men suspected the truth. By means of the sign language which is almost universal throughout the islands, the savage told us that the captain had promised him, by means of the same language, that if he would carry a message to the ship he should have whiskey aplenty, and beads and knives in abundance. We then locked him in the hold lest he should turn traitor to us.

Briefly, I explained the situation to the men, who already were aware of the facts. It seemed the captain, whom we had left for dead, had been dragged ashore alive and was being held for a great religious ceremony to be celebrated the next day.

How we cursed ourselves for what we called cowardice in leaving the captain to such a fate. There was no need for me to work upon the feelings of the men.

"Boys," I said, "the finest skipper that ever paced a deck will be sacrificed to-morrow to a heathen god. Who of you will go with me to rescue him?"

One by one the men stepped to my side, silently, grimly, and shook my hand. It meant that fifteen men would leave their bones to rot in the jungle or Capt. Vincent would not grace the feast to some South Sea idol.

We lost no time in preparing for a night attack on the stockade. From the head of a large cask of kerosene the carpenter cut a circular piece of wood and planed the edges so that it was too loose to be repaired.

This we inserted and made fast with paraffin, which made the cask air-tight again. Several bits of rope about three feet long were soaked in pitch and these were sewed into off-pitch packages, sealing the seams with pitch.

Then we sat down to wait. Toward evening we heard barbaric music and chanting from the island, and knew that the natives were drinking and dancing in preparation for the morrow's orgy. We did not fear for the captain then, for we knew they would keep him until the final moment for the proper death, but it seemed hours that we waited there for silence to tell us the natives had drunk themselves into stupor.

Our precious cask once in the wholeboat, we rowed cautiously to the mouth of the creek. There the last whispered consultation was held. No one was to be left alive in the clutches of the savages. If our scheme failed we were to kill the captain or any



"Aiming as best I could."

others who might be captured, rather than leave them to be tortured.

Halsey, a seaman, who was a bull-dock for strength, and myself slid noiselessly into the black water and began swimming up the creek, pushing the cumbersome cask before us. Every rustle of foliage, every subdued sound of the night made me quake. In each shadow I pictured a lurking savage who would spoil our design. Every splash of water against the wooden barrier sounded to me like the booming of surf and I thought we must be discovered.

One moment we swam, the next we were able to walk, but inch by inch we forged ahead until we rounded the last turn which brought us in sight of the stockade. All was quiet.

The savages were probably sleeping in drunkenness. Close against the side of the stockade we placed the cask, not daring even to breathe. I held my breath until it seemed my lungs would burst, then took another quickly, afraid of waking some one.

Gently, firmly, we pressed against the wooden plug. It had been cut large enough to let the air reach the oil so that there would be no danger of its failing to explode. The rope and matches in the oilskin cases were dry. We placed the fuses. Everything was ready.

Fear gripped me. Suppose the other men were not yet in position, it would spoil all if the savages had time to collect themselves after the explosion. On the other hand, every second of delay held a thousand chances of discovery.

Simultaneously, Halsey and I struck matches and lit the fuses of pitch. They burned fast, sputtering. Almost mad with fear of failure, expectancy and hope, we hurried into the water, and, with only our heads above the surface, watched the fuses burn. Just on the edge of the hole they seemed to hang fire for minutes, then suddenly there was a flare, a dull explosion, great banks of smoke swept upward and outward, flames ran along the ground and some climbed the wooden barriers.

In the jungle down-stream there was a din of yelling. The rush of our men for the barricade sounded like the tramping of a regiment.

Inside the stockade all was confusion. Men and women and children ran from the little doors in the wall. Cries and the reports of rifles and pistols crashed in the darkness.

Halsey and I leaped from the water, skirted the spreading patch of flames and climbed the barricade. From the top I fired at savages who were attacking some of our men who had managed to enter the inclosure. A big black fellow hurled a spear at my head. I dodged, but fell to the ground, striking something soft and stuck fast, being wrenched from my hand.

In one corner of the inclosure the captain lay bound. In a second I had cut his bonds, crushing in a head with the butt of my pistol when a savage interfered.

"To the boat—to the boat!" I yelled. "The captain is free!"

The natives were still struggling in confused masses, terrified by the explosion and the flames which were fast devouring the walls of the stockade and spreading into the forest. Halsey, who had dropped from the wall close behind me, helped me with Capt. Vincent, who was weak and stiff.

Just as we were crawling through one of the low exits a savage dashed out Halsey's brains with a heavy club. I caught up a spear a native had dropped and felled the man with a stab in the side.

I do not know how the others made their way back to the boat. I saw two of our men drag the body of Halsey with them as they fought their way through the forest. Some one helped me with the captain. It was a confused, kaleidoscopic whirl of blows and parries. Fighting for every step, we finally gained the boat. The half-drunken, muddled savages were all about us, but they were obliged to turn to saving themselves and their dwellings from the flames.

Halsey was dead. Two of the other men lay helpless after the fight, but even the one death was counted better than that the captain should have died in torment. We knew that Halsey would have thought it so.

As we rowed out to the ship, the flames swept upward and lapped about the tops of some of the palms. The sky was red and the black smoke swirled in great rolls. The scene was one of beauty, one that would have been admired but for the poor mangled body that had paid for it!

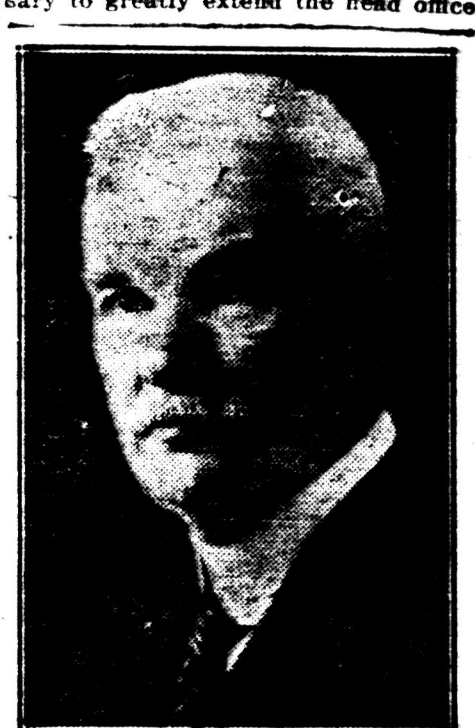
Warm Hands for Baby.

On chilly days when my baby's hands are cold I fill the hot-water bottle with quite warm water and give the bottle to the baby to play with. This amuses him for a long time and his hands are soon warm from handling the bottle.—R. J. A.

BILLION MARK PASSED BY SUN LIFE

It is seldom that a financial institution is able to mark the completion of its year with two such happy announcements as those made at the annual meeting of the Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada. At the meeting in question, President Macanlay was able to announce that the assurance in force of the Sun Life Company is now considerably in excess of one billion dollars—a level never before reached by a Canadian company.

In the same address he stated that, although, owing to the rapid expansion of business, it had been found necessary to greatly extend the head office



Mr. T. B. Macanlay, President, Sun Life of Canada.

building accommodation (the formal opening of which followed the annual meeting itself), it was evident that still further space must at once be provided. This in spite of the fact that the new Sun Life Building is one of the finest and most commodious in Canada, is devoted exclusively to the use of the Company, and houses about eleven hundred of a staff.

The fifty-fifth annual report, which appears in another column, reflects the enterprise which has marked the Company's operations, and the comprehensive way in which it is expanding, not only in Canada but throughout the world. It has become not only one of the outstanding financial institutions of the Dominion, but shares with one or two of the banks and



Mr. Arthur B. Wood, Vice-President and Actuary, Sun Life of Canada.

transportation companies the honor of being one of Canada's best known institutions abroad. Its ramifications now extend to forty-four countries and states, and its branches girdle the globe.

The assurance in force was increased last year by \$149,460,644, bringing the grand total up to \$1,921,097,101. In keeping with this the assets were increased by nearly \$29,000,000, making the total assets now \$303,056,145. Payments to policyholders and beneficiaries of \$35,441,582, brought the total amount so paid since the Company was organized to \$219,239,710. The total net income for the year was nearly \$70,000,000.

Policy holders will share in another increase in profits—the sixth consecutive increase of this kind.

When You Mend Socks.

The men at our house "rag" out the heels of their socks long before the other parts begin to show signs of wear. So in order to mend them I simply cut away the entire heel. This will usually result in a two-and-a-half-inch hole. Then cut a 2½ by 5-inch strip from the double cotton tops of worn-out hose and fold into a 2½-inch square. Stitch one edge of the five-inch length on the machine, gradually curving in to the fold. Turn the sock on the wrong side, slip the heel into place and stitch it carefully to the sock. This method produces heels that resemble the knitted ones of grand-mother's day and that are more comfortable than roughly darned holes. I also mend the children's hose this way, and my own.—O. G.

When Frying Bacon.

When frying bacon in cool weather, haven't we all spent precious time in pulling the slices apart—often with great difficulty and often tearing them? Throw the required quantity en masse into frying pan or baking tin—whichever method of cooking you prefer—and the slices will immediately melt apart and can be spread to fry with no delay or trouble.—F. T. E.

S.S. LESSON

February 25. Jesus. Teachable Respect for Law. Matt. 22: 16-22. Golden Text—Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfill—Matt. 5: 17.

INTRODUCTION.—The enemies of Jesus had been foiled in their attempt to entrap him on the question of his authority, so they now resort to other means to accomplish their criminal designs. As is frequently the case, those who belonged to opposite parties unite. The Pharisees and Herodians represented different interests, but now they agree in order to place Jesus in a dangerous light with the rulers of the land. They fancy they can force him to make a pronouncement which will involve him in ruin. If he sides with the cause of Rome, he will alienate his Galilean supporters, if he takes up the cause of the revolutionary party, he will come into conflict with the mighty power of Rome. Jesus had silenced them with a dilemma; now they attempt to use the same method against him, little knowing the wisdom and resourcefulness of Christ.

THE PHARISEES AND HERODIANS, vs. 15, 16.

The Pharisees sided with the common people and were out of sympathy with Roman rule. The Herodians were loyal to the cause of Herod, belonging to the government side.

V. 16. We know that thou art true. They proceed to flatter him, praising his knowledge, insight and independence. Thus they hope to disarm criticism and blind him to their evil designs. But it is usually the flatterer who is blind.

V. 17. Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar? The word for tribute becomes in English census, and it stood for the poll-tax which had to be paid to the Roman authorities, to be distinguished from the property tax. This poll tax went directly into the coffers of the Emperor, for Judea was an imperial Province. It had to be paid in the coin of the empire, and this caused great resentment to the extreme political party of the Jews called the Zealots, who believed in the use of force in order to drive out the hated Roman. These people looked upon this tax-payment as an evidence of bondage; and if Jesus could be made to express approval of it, he would at once alienate all the sympathy of this class. He would be represented as a renegade to Rome. It is probable that his tempters wished to drive Jesus over into the camp of the Zealots in order that he might become implicated in their plots and thus be treated as a political agitator.

V. 19. Show me the tribute money. Jesus sees through their plans. He would not possess any Roman coin himself, nor would his followers, since they were not commonly employed by the people. Mark expresses it more vividly, suggesting the pause while they went in search of the coin.

V. 19. A penny; rather a shilling, a silver coin called a denarius which had to be used for the payment of this tax. The Jews had coins of their own.

V. 20. Whose image and superscription? Probably the image of Tiberius the Emperor was there in relief with an inscription round the edge.

V. 21. They say . . . Caesar's. They admit it without thinking, and ere they know it, have lost their case. If the coinage is Caesar's, they should render him his due. The Jewish teachers had a law, "He is king whose coin passes current."

Render . . . unto Caesar. Jesus seems to argue that since God had allowed Rome to exercise dominion over Judea, it therefore becomes the duty of the people to acquiesce in this rule and to submit to the laws of the empire. Jesus was no law-breaker, no agitator. He had no sympathy with the extremists like Judas of Galilee who, in A.D. 6, had tried to throw off the yoke of Rome. Jesus maintained the constituted authorities and it is possible that his refusal to sanction the extreme party in Galilee led to the sudden turn of events when the crowd who had called "Hosanna" soon cried out "Crucify" and asked for Barabbas.

And unto God. Jesus does not draw a line between secular and sacred, as if these two things were distinct, for he would have them know that fidelity to the earthly rulers was also a religious duty. But he would remind them that there are higher obligations than those of the state, and no earthly ruler should be allowed to interfere with these. We owe to the state the coin which bears the image of the emperor, we owe to God our very self which was made in the image of God.

An interesting explanation has recently been given by Dr. Hendel Harris who says that the Roman coin would have on its reverse side the emperor's head, and on its obverse that of a heathen god. "Jesus looks at each side in turn and says: 'Whose image is this?' 'Caesar's,' they answer. 'And whose is this?' 'A god,' let them share it between them, for it obviously belongs to them."

Mittens on a String.

In a home where the family is large, it is quite a problem to keep mittens and gloves in a place where they can be readily found. We have tried the following plan and found it successful:

A length of strong cord and about two dozen strong safety pins are needed. The pins are fixed at regular intervals along the cord, which is stretched between two hooks in the hall. It takes only a second to attach a pair of mittens or gloves to a pin and they can be seen at a glance. If the weather is wet the whole cord can be taken and hung behind the stove.

—T. T.

Easy Darning.

You won't have a bit of trouble getting the needle through the material when darning a sweater or other heavy knit article if you use a steel bodkin instead of a sharp-pointed needle.—W. J. F.

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