

Spencer, Thomas      Narrative of the events attending the massacre of part of  
the crew belonging to the whaleship Triton, of New-Bedford,  
by the natives of Sydenham's Island.      Honolulu. E. A.  
Rockwell.      Sandwich Islands News Press. 1848. pp. 1-17

(foreword) Messrs Isaac Howland, Jr. and Co.      Gent:- I have the honor of dedicating to you the few following pages giving an account of the misfortune and tragical disaster (the recollection of which at this late period chills my blood) that befel your ship Triton, under my command, while cruising in the vicinity of the Islands known by the name of King's Mill Group.

Deprived by uncontrollable circumstances from regaining the ship and completing her voyage and believing it to be my conscientious and imperative duty to await her return from her cruise, I have thought proper, in order that you and the public might trace my course and intentions throughout the melancholy affair, to embody the facts in the following statement, trusting that some interest would be afforded in the perusal.

It gives me much pleasure, I assure you, to have the public opportunity of expressing the sentiments of regard, esteem and respect entertained for you by  
Your Obedient Servant

THOMAS SPENCER

#### CAPTAIN SPENCER'S NARRATIVE

In the month of July, 1846, the American whaleship Triton, of three hundred tons burthen, sailed from the port of New Bedford under my command on a sperm whale cruise, in the Pacific Ocean and elsewhere. Rounding the Cape of Good Hope and successfully encountering the dangers and difficulties which threatens the adventurous keel that ploughs the seas, smoothly and safely avoiding the low reefs which fill that portion of the Pacific Ocean through which our course lay. In the month of November 1847, we arrived at Maui, and after a stay of two or three weeks at Lahaina, the principal port of the Island, we again made sail, touching at the port of Honolulu, and the Island of Kauai for a day or two to procure additional supplies of refreshments. After leaving Kauai we steered for the Southward, keeping the ship a "good clear full" and struck the equatorial line in about the meridian of Honolulu, when we commenced working to the Westward, crossing and re-crossing the line so as to make a zig zag course in search of whales. On the 8th of January 1848, about 6 o'clock in the morning, the weather being pleasant, the wind moderate and all hands in good health and spirits, and employed in trying out a whale caught the day previous, raised Sydenham Island, distant about fifteen miles, bearing N. E. This Island is one of the King's Mill Group, in Lat. 40 miles South, Long. 174° East, when first seen seemed like a forest of cocconut trees adrift upon the ocean. Shortly after making the Islands two canoes under sail were discovered steering for the ship and 9 o'clock they came allngside, bringing for sale cocconuts and various articles which the natives informed us formerly belonged to the American whaleship Columbia, wrecked upon this Island about two years since. The canoes were about thirty feet in length, made of a soft kind of wood found upon the Island, first worked into planks of about one inch in thickness by means of pieces of stone and bits of iron hoop, which along are the rude implements used by these savage people in performing such mechanical labor as their wants require. The keel and timbers are made of a harder kind of wood, also found upon the Island, to which the planking is secured by means of seizings made from the cocconut husks. When completed they resemble in their sectional view a sharp wedge, and to increase their stability an outrigger is attached, being about three-fourths the length of the boat. The mast is stepped in a saucer, the sails made of native mats, resembling in shape the leg of mutton sails. In working to windward the

direction of the boat is not changed, the sail being merely shifted over and the steering oar from one end to the other, both of which are alike. After making suitable arrangements to receive them, in case they were disposed to play false with us, by having the spades taken down and placed within reach, I gave permission for two to come on deck at a time, cautioning the men to be at hand in case they should be needed. In taking these precautions I wished to [p. 2:] impress upon my officers and crew the necessity for vigilance and caution in their intercourse with a people proverbial for their treachery and dissimulation, this was the more necessary as most of my ship's company were young and inexperienced and had never cruised among the South Sea Islands, consequently had no knowledge of their nature and disposition.

After making such purchases from the natives (who were about twenty in number) as I required I took the two canoes in tow, braced forward the yards and stood along on my course. A little after nine one of the canoes ran under and filled; four of the natives belonging to her I took on board, the other canoes taking three, that number being as many as they could carry. In order to land the natives I commenced working in for the land in hopes more canoes would come alongside, when I agreed with them to take the natives on shore by giving them some tobacco as a compensation. In one of these canoes I found a Portuguese by the name of Manuel, whom I allowed to come on board, who spoke very good English. In conversation with him he stated that he had been discharged at the Islands, about 10 or 11 months since, from a French whaler, and that he had also sailed in the American ship Nantucket of Nantucket. In stature, he was about 5 feet 10, well and strongly made, with a countenance purely Portuguese, and with the restless roving eye peculiar to his countrymen. He also informed me that he had on shore a first rate Northwest fluke-chain for sale, and not having one in the ship large enough to hold a heavy whale, I bargained for it, and also some spare spars. At 4, P.M., the ship being close in with the land, lowered the starboard boat and pulled for the shore, having Manuel in company. Before leaving the ship, however, I informed Mr Wells, the first officer, that I should come off that night, if I lived, and requested him to keep the ship as near the land as would be safe, and in case he did not see me before dark, to keep a bright light set. I also took with me a boat lantern, in case I should be belated. After a pull of 50 minutes I landed, secured the boat and oars, and went immediately, in company with Manuel, to look at the articles he had for sale, and purchased two top-mast studdingsail booms, one top-gallant mast, one first rate fluke-chain, and one whaleboat. By this time it was sundown. We put the chain in the boat and got all ready to go off and asked the natives to bring the oars down, but as they showed no readiness to comply with my wishes, I left two men by the boat, and the rest of us started for them. I could not find the oars or Manuel for 15 minutes. When I succeeded in finding him he was surrounded by about 200 of the most ferocious and savage looking beings, who were almost entirely naked, I ever saw, with whom he was busily engaged, talking, as I presume, about myself. I went up to him and asked him for my oars and sail. He said that one of the natives, pointing to him, would get them for me. The native immediately left the crowd, followed by myself and crew from house to house, until I became out of patience and returned to Manuel again, asking him what he meant by keeping my oars? He replied that the Chiefs wished me to remain on shore during the night. I informed him it was impossible, and that I should go on board that night, if I lived, and requested him to give me my oars immediately if he did not wish for trouble. He then said that the Chiefs wanted to see us, and would not give them to me until morning. Upon receiving this reply, we started for some oars that belonged to him, which I had discovered while looking for my own. They were suspended to some coconut trees, which I climbed, and handed down the oars, one at a time, to the

crew. The natives attempted to wrest them from us, but, by fighting our way, we reached the boat and succeeded in getting her afloat. By this time it was quite dark, and the tide had fallen so much that we did not dare to venture over the reef, which surrounded the Island, there being a very heavy surf on, which left the rocks entirely bare at times, and fearing that all would be lost in making the attempt, we reluctantly steered for the shore again, the only alternative left us to adopt. Upon landing, we secured the boat and unloaded the chain, after which, we repaired to Manuel's house and inquired for him; being told that he was in a large house some distance off, we repaired thither, and not finding him returned again to his house, accompanied by hundreds of natives, where we met with no better success in our search. Leaving the men in the house, I walked along the beach until I came to some ship's timbers, and seating myself on one of them, I began to reflect upon my highly embarrassing and disagreeable situation, and to consider the best method of extricating myself from it. While thus engaged I discovered, though the night was very dark, some natives running through the cocoa-nut grove with oars on their backs. As soon as I made this discovery I called for the men and gave chase to the natives, following them alone until I came to the boat, which had been taken from where I landed and carried about a quarter of a mile along shore, where I found Manuel with about one hundred of the wildest looking natives armed with muskets, pistols, cutlasses, lances, harpoons, and spades. I immediately jumped into the boat and asked Manuel what he was doing with her. He replied that he was going to carry her up to the point for fear the natives would stave her. I told him to return her immediately to where I left her and that I would be responsible for any damage they might do her, which he declined doing, stating that he, and he alone would be censured, should she become injured in any way. I then called to him by name and asked him what he intended to do. He replied, I am going on board to take your ship. Judge what a thrill of horror this determination pronounced in the most deliberate manner by this arch villain, sent to my heart. I saw at once how hopeless our situation was, how completely we were caught in the snare spread for us, and how utterly vain all chances of relief were, still that motive to action, never dormant in the human heart until it ceases to beat, influenced me, and I determined at once to assume a bold attitude and refrain from evincing, as far as possible, any apprehension or inclination to succumb. I therefore replied to him that he could not take her with all the natives on the Island, that my men were trusty, tried, and true, and if he made the attempt he would lose his life, to which he replied that he could take her, that the men were all green and he knew it, and that as for losing his life he was not afraid to die, and that he would make the attempt at all events. As soon as this cold blooded determination was made known, my first impulse was to put him to death, but while I was looking for some weapon to attack him with the natives gathered around and seized upon me, securing me in such a manner as to render all attempts at further resistance foolish. They then passed me out of the boat and seated me upon the shore, a large number of natives running off with the boat. As soon as I was seated I again addressed Manuel, requesting an interview with him at his house, where I hoped to find some weapon with which I could slay him. On entering the door of his house I discovered a sword, but no sooner had my eye rested upon it, than Manuel, who divined my intention, rushed and secured it, thus thwarting my determination. Failing in this I adopted a milder course and endeavored to negotiate with him for the safety of myself, ship's company, and ship, asking him what his motive was in wishing to take the ship. He stated in reply that the James Stewart, of St. Johns, New Brunswick, had been there about 3 weeks since, and had purchased

articles to the amount of about \$300; that upon his going on board to receive the money they refused to pay him and drove him overboard without giving him a farthing, and now he intended to have his pay. I told him that I would pay him in dollars or anything in the ship, to that amount, and take his receipt to that effect. No, he replied, I have the bird in my hands, and I will pick him at my leisure. I then asked him what he wanted that was on board. His reply was all the good things. I then inquired what they were. He enumerated tobacco, pipes, ammunition, money, arms, instruments, etc. I told him I would give him all these articles if he would let my men go on board and get them for him, intending to deceive him, in order to put the mate on his guard, but he was entirely too cunning, and could not be deceived, but agreed that I might write a note to that effect to the mate. To this I would not consent, and he threatened, in case I did not comply with his suggestion, to take my life. I wished to know what he would gain by it, that I was entirely in his power, and could do him no harm, whereas, by letting me live, he might find me of some service to him. After consulting with the natives for some time, he informed me that he would not kill me at present, and then rose to take his departure. Upon my persisting in following him the natives instantly secured me and quietly set me down, with their arms, of various kinds and description, suspended over my head, and, with gestures and motions, then bade me to be quiet and remain where I was. For the space of two hours I was thus guarded; at the end of this time they allowed me my freedom, when I went to look for the crew, surrounded by about one hundred natives. After a long ramble, I found William Feets, boat-steerer, and John Gomes, Carpenter, who returned to the house with me and remained. We armed ourselves with copper bolts, etc. and took possession of a small room, with the determination of defending it while we lived. We passed the night among ourselves, in comparing notes, and in reflecting upon our situation, and what was to be done. What a change the passing away of a few hours had made in our situation; but yesterday we were free rovers upon the free sea - happy, contented cheerful - our hearts animated with hope - our hands free and unshackled as our thoughts; now, the criminal in his cell, condemned to death, was happier than we, who know not what our fate was to be, or that of our comrades - no shackles weighed upon our hands, but the load upon our spirits was dreary and dark indeed. Thus passed away the night until the night became day, and the light of morn gradually dawned upon land and sea, upon the free man and the captive, the savage and the christian. Shortly after we all met on the shore side and discovered the good old Triton standing in for the land with all sail set. She continued approaching the shore until it seemed as though they could hear our hail on board, and not more than a mile off. The beach was thronged with natives, and upon our attempting to signalize with the ship we were compelled, by superior numbers, and after some resistnace, to retire from the shore with the sad conviction that there was no earthly means left in our power of making known to our friends the imminent danger they were in.

About 7 o'clock my boat, in charge of Manuel, having with him eight or ten natives armed to the teeth, left the shore and pulled for the ship. As they bounded along over the waves on their errand of merciless destruction and death we watched them with the most intense anxiety, and preyed in our hearts that some unforeseen event might occur to save our companions from the hunters of blood and the agents of destruction. The wind, which blows alike for the evil and the good, wafted them upon their way, and about nine o'clock we saw the boat go alongside the ship by this time about a mile distant, and near enough for me to discover the second mate at the top-mast-cross-trees on the look-out. With clenched hands and strained eyes I watched them on board to discover if they had taken cognizance of aught to excite their suspicions and alarm; but there was nothing upon which to hang a hope that the evil designs of the new comers

were suspected. One by one the boat's crew ascended the side without molestation, and soon after the boat was hoisted- flying-jib and main-top-gallant sail furled. "The conspirators were in Rome!" and like one laboring under the nightmare- soul and body convulsed- a prey to the most torturing anxiety and the most horrible of fears, I wandered about, watching the fated ship, as she worked off and on the shore. I did not know what to make of her manœuvres; that she had fallen a prey to Maneul and his associates I could hardly doubt;- but if so, why did not they run her <sup>on</sup> ashore? what could they be waiting for? I asked myself if there was any chance that she would escape from the toils of the snarer- but my heart told me none; and finally I came to the conclusion that they were only waiting for high water to beach her, and end her career with our own.

At about 6 p.m. she stood very close into the land, much closer than she had ever been before, and I, with my companions in misfortune were of the opinion that she was on her last tack, and that the dread state of suspense we had endured for so many weary hours was about to be terminated by the realization of our worst fears. No one but God will ever know my feelings. I felt confident that all my ship's company had been cruelly murdered- which fate would also be ours as soon as the ship was beached, and not a soul would be left from the unfortunate Triton to tell of her sad, eventful history and fate. As these gloomy thoughts passed through my mind, my heart sank within me:- my fate was sealed!- the last page in the volume of life had been written, and I was to die!- Die away from friends, from family, from home and all the idols of my heart! I was to die ignominiously by the hand of savages- butchered in cold blood- cut off in the bloom of manhood, with no kind voice to sooth my spirit in its parting flight, but in its stead the shriek of the savage- the yell of triumph- the exulting shout of murderers and of foes!- not the voice of ministering angels, but the malignant howl of fiends crying for my blood! Thousands of such thoughts rushed through my mind as I stood viewing the ship as she still neared the shore; but at length she gracefully would round off shore, with ~~he~~ <sup>her</sup> yards to the mast, and all seemed quiet and regular. Once more I breathed again, and heard the voice of the Syren bidding me hope; once more visions of escape haunted my mind, and all thought of present danger vanished. I knew not, however, how to account for the proceedings on board of the ship, but it was very evident to my mind that she was still in the hands of her legitimate masters. I did not think my mate would allow the Islanders to be on board without confining them; but if he had done so, why had he not sent a boat on shore for me? The whole affair was a mystery and inexplicable; I knew not what to think. Once more I endeavored to bribe the natives to put me on board of the ship; offering everything which I had on board as a recompense, but my offer was rudely repulsed by a shove among the rocks, or a demonstration of their part to cut my throat if I was not quiet. As well might I have asked aid from the beasts of the field as from them. At length night, dark, sable and gloomy, with her garments span-gled with silvery stars, closed upon the scene, shutting from our view the doomed ship as she stood to the northward by the wind. We watched the poor old vessel, which had been so often to us an ark of refuge and a home of safety, until she faded away and was lost in the darkness; then slowly walked away from the beach to the house we occupied the night previous, surrounded by a number of ferocious savages, armed in various ways, ready at a moment's warning, to take our lives.

Momentarily expecting an attack on the part of the natives, we passed a sleepless night, each busy with his own train of reflections and desponding

thoughts. Infancy, in its innocence, was not more helpless than we. What mattered strength where strength was but weakness? or the ability to conceive where the means to execute were wanting? What deeds of violence might now be enacting on board of our ship? What shrieks of agony rending the heavens and piercing the depths of the deep ocean, startle<sup>ing</sup> the sea-monster from his prey? Night, gloomy night, thou wert not made for laughter, but for thoughts solemn and gloomy as thyself! for hearts heavy with woe-for the revels of fiends- for the mad orgies of the mad- for deeds of violence- for murder and for vice! Slowly and wearily the hours of darkness swept by, and a faint streak of light, resting almost upon the eastern horizon, proclaimed the coming of the day. At daylight, all of our little band again re-assembled upon the beach, and with full hearts watched for the Triton. At last, when we thought never to see her again, we discovered her a long way off, slowly drifting away. I knew at once that another act in this melancholy and mournful tragedy was finished- that Manuel's diabolical schemes were accomplished- all was lost; and satisfied that in a short time we too would share the fate of our companions, on board, we armed ourselves with clubs, with the determination to sell our lives as dearly as possible, and fight to the last.

At about four in the afternoon, we discovered 3 boats and 3 canoes coming on shore, the ship being by this time out of sight- when last seen- standing to the northward. All was now confusion and excitement on shore; the natives running to and fro like madmen, evidently greatly disturbed. About 6 o'clock, the excitement reached its height, when we were forced by about 150 natives to go with them some distance from the house we had occupied. After walking for sometime, we refused to go any further, and attempted to return. Then it was they informed us that the ship was taken, and that all on board had been killed- Manuel and some of the natives being among the number- and that they were now going to kill us. As soon as this intelligence was made known to us, four of the stoutest natives picked me up, and others ~~seized upon~~ seizing upon the crew, we were forced apart, as we supposed, never to meet again. I was carried to an island, distant about 900 feet from the main island, and placed in a large house. As soon as I was seated, the natives brought in all their arms and was implements, and arranged them on one side of the house. At length, one of the most desperate looking among them sprang for a spade and advanced towards me, chanting a war song, and going through his manouvres of cutting my head off. In an instant, an old chief woman sprang towards me and taboed me, patting me first rapidly on the breast and then on the back, repeating at the same time some words, as fast as possible. The natives attempted to take her from me, roaring with rage for their prey; but her husband immediately interfered, and gave me his name- that of Cogio- by which I was, during my stay on the island, always called.

Thus I was saved from a certain and speedy death by the moral heroism of a poor, benighted native woman, who risked her own life and reputation, and all, to save from perishing one of a race she had been taught to regard as an enemy. Without education- without christianity, and with rude and imperfect notions of moral right and wrong- listening alone to the soft pleadings of a woman's gentle heart, she threw herself between me and those who sought my life; and by this single act of mercy, has won for herself- I hope and believe- "a place eternal in the heavens." The widespread reputation of her who saved from destruction the hardy Virginia pioneer, be hers! Such deeds of heroism, courage and mercy sleep not with the dead, but shine out like stars through the night of time, finding worshippers, in heaven and on earth. Foiled in his designs by the courage of this brave-hearted woman, the native who sought my life, for a moment seemed bewildered and amazed; but gradually, as the truth flashed upon him, that his prey was about to escape, his eye blazed with terrible indignation,

and foaming at the mouth with rage, he yelled forth his imprecations and threats in a voice that sounded like the mad roar of the tortured bull, and the earth fairly trembled- as though shook by an earthquake- under his infuriated tread.

In a short time, about 40 warriors and chiefs assembled and held a council over me; during which their debates ran very high, and much excitement prevailed; several times some of the natives rushed furiously toward me, as though determined to have my life, but were restrained by others, who were more inclined to spare it. Throughout the whole of the meeting, the old lady kept by my side, and every opportunity she had, she would add her voice to the deliberations, apparently with great effect, in my behalf. The meeting lasted about two hours, when all quieted down about me. But a short distance off, the natives from all parts of the island had collected to get their share of the property that belonged to Manuel, which the chiefs were about distributing. At first, everything went on quietly and orderly, but at last, not being so well satisfied, a general rush was made upon the property, and the wildest scene of confusion, turmoil and strife ensued. Many a black eye could be seen after the affray, though I believe no lives were lost.

About 10 P.M. William, a native of the Sandwich Islands, came to me and reported that he had jumped overboard after the affray had commenced, and swam on shore from the ship; and from him I learned that, about 9 o'clock in the morning Manuel came alongside, with a number of natives, in the boat, and was immediately questioned by the mate in relation to myself, and the reasons that had detained me on shore. Manuel replied, that on landing on the evening previously, my boat had been capsized in the breakers, and that I had been so badly injured as to be unable to come off at present. The mate then asked, where are the men? when M. stated that they were not at hand when he left, and he did not think it worth while to wait for them. The mate observing pistols, cutlasses, etc., in the boat, enquired what they meant? To which Manuel replied he was obliged to take them with him to defend himself from some of the natives who were hostile to him. He farther stated, that I had sent him off to tell the mate to send on shore 10 empty casks, well becketed, to make a raft for the purpose of bringing off the chains and anchors that had been purchased on shore, and wished for him to remain on board until there was a suitable time to land, which, in his opinion would not occur before the next morning; all of which being satisfactory to the mate, he allowed Manuel and his crew of savages to come on board.

During the day, the mate inquired several times of Manuel if the islanders could be trusted, and if they were peaceably inclined. To which he replied, yes, and did all in his power to quiet any suspicions, in relation to them, which may have been excited in the minds of the mate or any of the ship's company. The mate, feeling some suspicion that all was not right, and thinking it advisable to make the necessary preparations to assist them if attacked, loaded his firearms and placed them where they could be at hand in case they were needed. Manuel also loaded his firearms for the same purpose, as he averred, and the nipples of one of his pistols being out of repair, the mate assisted him to put it in order. Previous to this, the cooper of the vessel, not liking the appearance of things, and having some knowledge of the treacherous nature of the South Sea Islanders, expressed his fears to the mate that all was not as it should be, and advised him to turn the natives out of the ship or secure them. To which he replied that their numbers were too small to do any harm, and that he did not like to use them harshly while the captain was in the power of their friends on shore. After the pistols were loaded, the mate allowed the Portuguese to remain in the cabin, and placing his own pistols upon the table, he seated himself in a large China chair with the intention of keeping awake in case any disturbance should occur, in which event he had directed the second mate to call

him; but being fatigued and exhausted for the want of rest the night previous, fell asleep. When Manuel had satisfied himself that the mate was lost to all consciousness, he quietly secured the pistols, went on deck with them, and commences arming the natives with spades; the second mate observing which, walked up to him, and inquired what he intended to do, when Manuel presented a pistol to his head and ordered him below or he would blow his brains out; whereupon, the second mate quietly withdrew to the cabin, and informed Mr. Wells, the mate, of what was occurring on deck. Mr. W. immediately rushed on deck with his sword. By the time he reached the deck, Manuel had shot the man at the helm and the cooper, and stood ready to receive him. A scuffle ensued, in which Mr. Wells lost his sword, and Manuel having succeeded in getting possession of it, made an attack upon him and drove him, after inflicting several severewounds, into the fore hold. The cooper, though severely wounded, came to the assistance of the mate, and succeeded in killing two of the natives, but was finally overpowered, and cut up in the most shocking manner by Manuel and his crew. While Manuel was thus engaged, Mr. Brighton, the third mate, who had been sleeping in one of the boats, upon the cranes and was aroused from his slumbers by the noise of the affray, jumped on deck, and seizing a lance, which was at hand, killed Manuel and a native. Two of the natives, who were secreted under a bench on deck, then made an attack upon him, and after wounding him severely, drove him overboard, when he swam around and joined the second mate and 5 of the men, who, when the fight first commenced, jumped for one of the waist boats, cut her adrift from the falls and fled, leaving their comrades and ship to their fate. When the fight ended, there was but one native left unhurt and two wounded. These men held possession of the ship until the next morning, (the 19th of January,) when about 25 fresh natives came off from shore and commenced plundering the ship of everything, commencing at the cabin. After plundering her of all that they could lay their hands on, they loaded their canoes and two of the ship's boats, and got all ready to leave the ship. About this time, a young man by the name of Wm. Pursler, of New Bedford, a very promising youth, and to whom I was much attached, came on deck, when these savages walked deliberately up to him and cut him to pieces in the most horrible manner. As soon as the natives got possession of the ship, they espied, at the mast-head, a native of one of the adjacent islands, belonging to the ship, who had fled there for safety. Promising not to hurt him, they called him down and placed him at the helm, directing him to run the vessel on shore. Up to the present time, he had succeeded in keeping the ship some distance from land; but finding that they were bent upon beaching her, he watched for the first favorable moment, and sprang again into the rigging. As soon as he got aloft, he looked around, and spying the boat in which the second and third mates were, sang out sail ho! and thus, by his presence of mind, saved the ship and the lives of the remainder of her crew. As soon as the natives heard the cry, all was panic and confusion among them; and without waiting to discover the truth of the report, they fled for shore, taking with them all that they could carry of their plunder; when the native boy referred to came on deck- ran the ship down for the boat and her crew, and picked them up.

Before leaving the vessel, the savages had informed my native boy that they had murdered myself and the men with me. This information he gave to the mate as soon as he came on board, which decided him to fill away, and shape his course for Oahu. Two days after this unfortunate affair, the Triton was spoken by Capt. Riddell, of the ship Japan, and was supplied by him with a sextant and watch, and advised to continue on her course. To Capt. Riddell I am indebted for many of the particulars heretofore related.



At daylight, on the 11th of January, all of us met once more, when each had his own separate tale of adventure to relate. When we were separated, the night previous, I never expected to meet again, on earth, any of my unfortunate comrades; but the eye of an over-ruling Providence had been upon us, averting danger and shielding us from all harm. After escaping so many perils, we were indeed happy to meet once more; and though there was still sufficient grounds for apprehension and anxiety- not only for our own fates but for those of our comrades- the pleasure of meeting again merged all other feelings.

About 10 o'clock in the morning, Dick Ocean, a native of Ocean Island, one of the King Mills' Group, whom I had shipped the year previous, came to me and reported that he had left the ship after the commencement of the affray and swam ashore. He corroborated the statement I have herein made as far as he was an eye-witness; speaking the language of the natives, I was enabled to communicate through him with them, and found him in this respect of invaluable aid and assistance- nor in this only. A more faithful, generous, self-denying creature I never saw; often, and often, when he was almost dying of hunger, he has spent hours in going from house to house in search of food for me, which when found, he would never taste nor touch, until I compelled him to do so through fear of giving me offence.

While in this narrative there is much of a revolting and horrible nature, it is indeed pleasant to record such instances of noble heartedness and worth- such evidences of the better part of Man's nature, and the more pleasing traits of humanity. It is one of my most earnest wishes that I shall yet have it in my power to reward, in a suitable manner, the faithful and noble hearted conduct of this poor native, for services which need only be known to be admired. Thro' him I communicated to the natives that the Triton had gone for a man-of-war, which would soon be here, and would destroy all upon the Islands if we were maltreated or abused in any way; and on the other hand, if we were treated well we would intercede for them. We farther promised that if we succeeded in getting on board of any vessel we would recompense their kindness by presents of tobacco, etc.

While Dick was making known this intelligence to the natives a sail hove in sight, which we supposed at once was the Triton, as she made her appearance at about the same point where she was last seen. By means of threats and promises our faithful native succeeded in getting a canoe to go on board, and by the time we got it afloat the ship was not more than eight miles off, steering by the wind. With hearts buoyant with hope we gave chase and opened upon the ship very rapidly; with a favorable wind and under a press of sail we bounded along, the canoe fairly flying over the crested waves which rolled along her course. At 2 p.m. we lost sight of the land, the ship then being about 4 miles distant, staggering under all sail, apparently with the wish to avoid us; but onward our good boat flew, like a staunch hound, at every bound lessening the distance between us and the chase, until 7 o'clock we were so near her as to discover, without difficulty, the seams in her deck, but as yet there was no evidence of an intention on the part of those who controlled her to communicate with us, on the contrary everything indicated a settled disposition on the part of those on board to avoid us. At last the most hopeful began to despond, and as night gathered full upon the waters, we began to realize the imminent dangers which encompassed and surrounded us on every side. Forty miles from the land which was dead to windward, with a powerful current against us, without compass, food or water, no sign or star to steer our course by, we were indeed in a frightful and most terrible situation! To add to our distress and anxiety, as night came on the heavens were o'erspread with flying clouds, heavy with darkness, pregnant with storm, wind and lightning; all nature betokened the coming

strife- in the distance was heard the rumbling of the heavy thunder, and more near the wild shriek of the sea-bird careering joyously in its flight- then came the sharp, keen flash of lightning upon the heaving ocean, displaying the pallid faces of hopeless, desponding men! Nearer and more near came the peelings of the thunder- faster and fiercer gleamed the forked lightning- then came the deceptive calm- and the wild tempest, in all its fury, was upon us!- Almost within hail lay the ship, under close-reefed main-top-sail- and there were we under her lee, left to perish! Can it be wondered that, under such mingled emotions of despair, rage and grief, we gave expression to our feelings in heaping deprecations, heavy and bitter, upon the heads of those who had left us thus to die! The only hope we had of outliving the tempest was in keeping our frail bark before the wind and sea, which had risen very rapidly and was exceedingly rough. This I succeeded in doing by working constantly at the steering oar for four hours; had the boat broached to during any portion of this time, we must have all perished. Shortly after the storm burst upon us, the frail canoe began to leak so badly as to excite consternation and terror among her crew, and several times the cry was raised among them that the boat was sinking; but by constant bailing we succeeded in keeping her afloat until the storm abated and the sea became more moderate, when we attempted again to make sail, but in so doing we carried away the mast. After fishing it up we made another attempt to get the sail hoisted, when a similar misfortune befel us. The third time, by reducing it ~~in~~ one-half, we were more fortunate, and again our frail vessel commenced moving on through the gloom of night and waste of waters.- The heavens were still o'erspread with blackness, and the only guide we had to steer our trackless way by was Orion's belt, which we caught sight of only once during this horrible and memorable and horrible night.

At sunrise the weather cleared up, and the sun shone out clear and brightly. Shortly after sunrise we discovered the ship we had been in chase of the day before, bearing N. W. from us. At this time we were heading E. by N.; we immediately tacked for him and succeeded in getting within a half a mile of the vessel, and near enough to see that our appearance was exciting considerable sensation on board. Every means of making our situation known to them, that we could think of, was then adopted. In the first place the sail was lowered and our shirts taken off and hoisted upon the mast, then half-masted, then hauled up and down, during all of which time our hands were raised imploringly, beseeching them in the name of God, of Mercy, and of Humanity, to succor and relieve us from our trials and tribulations; but all to no purpose. Deaf to all our intercessions and our prayers- heedless of our fate- they sailed on and left us to perish! After waiting some time, drifting about upon the ocean, we again made sail in pursuit, with the vain hope of convincing our tormentor, by our pertinacity in attempting to communicate with him, that our case was one of life and death, with the hope, ~~that he would~~ equally groundless, that he would relent and allow us to speak ~~to~~ him. But no; as soon as we tacked and he perceived that we were gaining upon him, down went his helm, round flew his yards, and under all sail he pressed on as though fleeing from a pestilence. Then, when there was no hope of succor left, the strong man yielded, and cheeks never before moistened with tears, were deluged by these tokens of grief- lips which had never learned to pray, then parted in prayer; and the desolate hearts of those desolate men found vent to their feelings in tears of grief and cries of anguish, and in imploring Heaven for aid and relief. For twenty hours we had been out of sight of land, during which time we had had nothing to eat or drink; for my part I was thoroughly exhausted, having been constantly at work, without rest or nourishment, the whole time. I determined, if I only succeeded in getting

on shore again, never to quit it until I was satisfied that a ship had come expressly for us.

At about 2 p.m., we raised the Island, right ahead, and at four, landed. In going through the surf, which was very high, we swamped the canoe; and weak for want of nourishment, and completely prostrated by illness and mental suffering, I was unable to breast the rollers which were boiling and raging around me, and made up my mind to die. Some of the friendly natives dragged me on shore in a state of insensibility, and through their efforts I was restored to the consciousness of an existence which had almost become a burden. After eating sparingly of some cocoa-nuts and fish, (which is the only food used by the natives,) I retired to rest upon my rude pallet of straw, with only a mat for a covering, and a block of wood for a pillow, but too excited and ill to sleep.- I passed the night, which wore slowly and wearily away in dwelling upon what had already occurred, and in endeavoring to conjecture what the future had in store for us.

As soon as day dawned I walked down to the beach and scanned the horizon far and near for a friendly sail, but no object met my view, save here and there a native canoe. I turned from them with disgust; and heart-sick, weary and ill, retraced my steps to the house. Shortly after my return from my fruitless search, some of the natives came to me and signified their wish to have me accompany them, which invitation I readily accepted, supposing they were going to some of the tribe to get something to eat, which I stood much in want of, as I had eaten little or nothing for some days. After walking some distance I sat down and asked them where they were going;- they pointed in answer to a large house, where, they said, there was plenty to eat, and I concluded to go on. About 11 o'clock we passed the Triton's waist-boat, which I wished to look at, but I was not allowed to stop; a short time afterwards we came across the larboard boat, and after walking on some distance further we reached a very large house filled with natives, many of whom were standing outside, some of them dressed in garments made of the palm-leaf, ornamented with shells and human teeth, having their faces painted. The young unmarried women paint themselves around their waist and neck, and wear a string of shells, their legs, from the knee downwards, wound round with coral beads, which comprises their entire dress; the married ladies wear, in addition, a tapa suspended from their loins, in length about eighteen inches. Thus dressed, they range themselves in a circle, to the number of about four hundred at a time; the single women first, next the young men, then the chiefs and warriors, then the slaves or inferior natives, and lastly, the married women. Thus formed, they all commence singing, with all manner of gestures, striking their hands together on their breasts- keeping perfect time with their hands and feet, and performing the most strange and singular evolutions with ease and regularity. After the dance is concluded the orators of the tribe regale the audience with a few flights of fancy and eloquence; then comes the feast, after which all retire to sleep, without regard to sex or age. From the natives I learned that this was one of their festival days, which occur about six times a year, when all the Islanders meet at this place and the same scenes are gone through with.

About four o'clock in the afternoon of the day after we arrived at the place of feasting, two sails were discovered, one to windward and the other to leeward of the Island, which caused quite an alarm and excitement among the natives, who wished to know what punishment was to be inflicted upon them, and begged us to intercede for them. I told them as long as they used us well they should not be molested, but that they must give us a boat immediately to go on board. After consulting together for some time they concluded to let us have the waist-boat, which was most remote, and about four miles off, for a box of tobacco and pipes, and two hatchets. I could not prevail upon them to let us have the larboard boat, which was much nearer. Finding all our efforts, to prevail upon them to change their decision, useless, we started for the waist-boat, but by the time we

Spencer, Thomas                      Narrative of the events...Triton

reached her we could not get out over the reef on account of the tide.- We took the boat on our backs and, with the assistance of some of the natives, carried her about four miles, in the expectation of finding sufficient water to cross the reef; but in this we were disappointed, and were forced to abandon the idea of embarking until the next morning.

When daylight broke we all mustered on the beach and gazed long and despairingly upon the ocean for the sail we had seen the previous evening, but nothing was in sight save the native craft of the Island, engaged in fishing. After consulting with my fellow-sufferers we came to the conclusion to embark once and cruise around the Island, with the bare hope of discovering some friendly sail, and in the event of our not doing so it was thought advisable to bear away for Woodell's Island, one of the same group, but where the natives, from their intercourse with foreigners, were of a less sanguinary and more trustworthy character. Accordingly, at six o'clock in the morning of the 15th, we again launched our little boat upon the treacherous ocean and coasted along the Island, keeping it barely in sight. At sundown the Island bore S. S. E., distant about 15 miles, and as no sail had been discovered I came to the conclusion to carry out our determination, and bore away for Woodell's Island. Shortly after, however, the bow-thwart of our boat parted and split one of the planks in the boat. While I was repairing damages the idea occurred to me that one of the two sails we had discovered the day before might be the Triton. I therefore determined to return and wait a proper time, among murderers, for the sake of regaining my ship.

At 4 p.m. of the 16th, landed again on Sydenham's Island. After eating some cocoa-nuts and fish, which the natives had supplied us with, we retired to rest upon our rude pallet of stones, and slept a little for the first time since leaving the ship.

The morning of the 17th broke clear and pleasantly, and the exhilarating influence of the early dawn, with the addition of a good night's rest, contributed to an elevation of spirits and a comparative feeling of happiness. The natives, too, we perceived, had altered their bearing towards us, and our prospects seemed more encouraging than they had ever yet appeared. At 4 p.m. we discovered a sail off the South Point, which we immediately gave chase to, and continued to do so until eight in the evening, when, as we had not seen her for an hour and a half, we concluded to return to our place of refuge, where we landed at three in the morning of the 18th.

These frequent disappointments and severe trials were most trying to our feelings, but we determined to make the attempt, at least, to speak any sail that might appear off the Island, so long as the natives would allow us the means of doing so. On the 19th I took a tour to the eastern part of the Island, and succeeded in getting the ship's chronometer, spy-glass, and some other articles, and also some tobacco and pipes which we gave to such of the natives as had evinced kindness. About sundown we returned to our place of lodging, and shortly after retired- weary and fatigued by our jaunt- to rest. Long before day-break I walked down to the beach, my mind occupied with rambling and confused thoughts of home and friends. As the day began to break I discovered something black upon the ocean, apparently but a short distance off; I ran immediately into the house for the spy-glass, and soon made out the object to be a full rigged ship. As soon as the crew could be mustered we made preparations for embarking, and in a few moments were in chase, with three sails set and five oars strongly manned. As soon as we were discovered by the ship all sail was made on board of her to escape us, but, though staggering under the influence of the morning breeze, we continued to gain upon her. Our tiny boat, propelled by the strong arms of desperate men, fairly outvalled the wind in its fleetness, and the knowledge that we were gaining upon the chase, added new vigor to our strength-

each sweep of the long, bending oar told of success, and the muscular forms of these iron men bent untiringly to their task. At sunrise, we discovered another sail, but as the one we were in chase of was the nearest, we continued still in pursuit of her-both ships steering a course that would soon bring them together. About 9 o'clock, the two vessels were not more than three cables length apart, still by the wind. We could not have been more, at this time, than half a mile from them, and our minds were made up to chase them as long as they continued in sight, and to speak them at all hazards. The land was out of sight, and our only hope was in getting on board. Our situation once known to those on board, however cruel and savage their nature, would excite their sympathy and lead them to commiserate our miserable condition. This reflection bade us not despair, and we pulled on with renewed vigor. When we were not more than half a mile distant from the two ships, and expected in a short time to be within hail, both vessels bore away before the wind, as though influenced by one will. Our course was changed accordingly, and no strength or exertions were spared to overtake them. For five hours had my poor men's strength been exerted to the utmost, but steady and strong and sturdy as at first were the strokes that sent the boat forward in her career, it was a race of life and death, and nobly were their lives redeemed. After chasing for six hours, with nothing to eat or drink, and taking no rest, about 10 o'clock, on the morning of the 20th of January, we had the satisfaction of seeing one of the ships come to the wind, with her maintopsail to the mast; and shortly after, we were welcomed on board the ship Alabama, of Nantucket, commanded by Capt. Coggeshall, by whom I was received with every mark of consideration and esteem. Immediately, he ordered his colors to be set for the other ship, and in 15 minutes, Capt. Worth, (sic) of the ship United States, came on board, when a consultation was held as to what course to pursue, when it was resolved to work up for the island, in order to get one of the men who was still on shore, and at the same time to procure what property we could- belonging to the Triton- for tobacco, etc.

At sundown, the island bore E. N. E., distant about 10 miles; but as there was little or no wind during the night, and a strong current against us, we drifted again to leeward; and on the morning of the 21st, no land was to be seen. About noon, a fine breeze sprang up, and by 9 o'clock, in the evening, we were close in with the land. At daylight of the 22nd, we found ourselves not more than 5 miles distant.

After breakfast, Capt. Worth came on board, with 2 boats and crews, well armed. Capt. Coggeshall took a boat's crew, also well provided with firearms; and my own boat and crew made up the storming party. At 10 o'clock, we shoved off, and pulled in for the land. While doing so, we discovered a signal flying in one of the canoes, and, supposing that the missing man was on board of her, Capt. Worth despatched his second mate to take him on board; but not liking the appearance of things, we all started after him. When we overtook him, he was surrounded by five or six canoes- the natives on board of them demanding tobacco for the release of the man, who was on board of one of them. One of the natives had on a jacket, which we recognized as belonging to some of the Triton's crew. We fired a shot at him, when all the natives jumped overboard. The first one that broke water, called out my name, and held up both hands imploringly. In a moment, half a dozen muskets were leveled at his head, but I recognized in him a native who had given me a fish when hungry, and this act of kindness, though light in itself, saved his life and the lives of 12 others who were with him. We could not distinguish the guilty, and we would not punish the innocent with ~~him~~ them. We took the man on board whom we were in search of, and steered for the land again; but on approaching the shore, we found the tide so low that we could not land as we designed, and were obliged to lay outside of the reef for four hours. At the end of that time, I pulled in shore-having seven chiefs in the boats outside as hostages- for the purpose of procuring some of our things; but not meeting with much success, we pulled outside again. The natives informed me that all our things were on board the Triton's whaler boat, and

about 4 miles off, and all that we should have to do would be to go and get them. As it was now late, we let the chiefs go on shore, and started ourselves for the whaleboat and things on board of her. We soon discovered her, with her sails set, endeavoring, apparently, to get into a lagoon, which was quite near. We immediately gave chase and came up with her. As soon as the natives discovered our intention, they flocked by hundreds towards her, and sang out to those on board to come to them and not let us have the boat, etc. We ordered them to stop, but finding that they intended to run away with her, we were forced to fire upon those in the boat, and in doing so, killed 3 or 4. Alarmed by the firing and the fall of their friends, the remainder of them stopped pulling, when we came up with the boat, took her in tow, and pulled for the ship. We found nothing in the boat but the oars and only a few articles on shore, which we gave to the most friendly of the natives, not forgetting, in my donations, the old woman who had saved my life, and who seemed delighted with the presents. To such as we gave anything, we stated that it was in consequence of their good treatment of us, and endeavored to impress them with the idea that their good deeds would always be rewarded, and that in the event of any accident occurring to vessels cruising in the neighborhood, they must befriend and assist them.

That other ships have been cut off at this island, I have not the least doubt. I saw a number of articles, and quite a number of large guns and firearms while on the island, and the beach to leeward is strewn with half burnt timbers.

The whale fishery, so important and valuable to the people of the United States, requires- what it seldom receives- the fostering and supervising care of the government; and justice demands, as well as their interest, that a man-of-war should visit this group and inflict chastisement where it is so richly merited, with as little delay as possible.

In the evening, all the boats returned to the ships-Capt. Worth going with us on board the Alabama. 't was Capt. Coggeshall's intention to cruise for 6 weeks before going into port, and as Capt. Worth kindly volunteered a passage, for myself and crew, to Guam, I concluded to accept his offer; and, accordingly, on the morning of the 23rd of January, I bade Capt. C. farewell, and took up my quarters on board the United States.

I take advantage of this opportunity, to make my acknowledgments to Capts. Coggeshall, Worth, Potter, Turner and Cox- gentlemen who would reflect credit upon any profession- for the many kind services rendered to myself and crew.

Shortly after I arrived on board the United States, the two ships parted company, and made sail upon their different courses- we standing to the northward, in hopes of getting some information from the Triton, at some of the other islands. We accordingly touched at Hendeville's and Woodell's Islands, but only learned, from the natives, that a ship had spoken the Triton; but they did not know whither she had gone.

On the 28th, after supplying him with clothing and making him many presents, we landed my faithful native boy on Ocean Island, and afterwards continued our course to the northward. On the 20th, we spoke the ship Japan, Capt. Riddell, bound to Oahu; and from him I learned what I have mostly written in relation to the Triton. He also stated to me that he had advised the mate of my ship to go to the southward and work to the eastward, in latitude from 7 to 10, until he could reach the Sandwich Islands. Under these circumstances, I concluded it was my duty to go on board of the Japan and get to the island as soon as possible. Accordingly, I offered Capt. Riddell \$600 for a passage there, which he consented to receive; and on the 30th of January, I took leave of my estimable friend, Capt. Worth, whose unremitting kindness and generosity I shall never forget, and went on board the Japan.

After a pleasant passage of six weeks, I arrived, on the 15th of March, at Honolulu, on the Island of Oahu, where I have found kind friends to sympathize with me; and, while I live, the emotions of my heart will, I trust, testify to it. I could write volumes of gratitude to the foreign residents of this place for they have been kind and humane to me, in every respect; and I trust that God will place me in a situation to be allowed to express to them my feelings.

As soon as I arrived, I wrote to the U. S. Consuls at all the different ports that the Triton would be likely to touch at, and was daily expected here.- About the 25th of March I received news of her being at Tahiti, and intending to come to these islands for men, boats, etc., every vessel that hove in sight I anxiously watched, but no Triton arrived. At length, on the 10th of June, I heard she had procured an outfit, and had left Tahiti bound to the coast of Kamschatka, under the command of the mate. Since that time, I have not heard from her. I am still here, waiting for her arrival at this port. I have notified all ships that I have seen, that I should remain here, and wished them to inform my mate of the same. I suppose that ere this, he is aware that I am here. I trust that, after the season is up, he will bring the ship into this port.

Honolulu, August 28, 1848.