

CHAPTER XXX

On Board Steamer City of Sydney. Honolulu

I left San Francisco for Australia on the second day of September, on the magnificent steamer, City of Sydney. That ship is one of the giants of the sea by her size and strength, measuring 334 feet, with engines of 3,000 horse power. She was commanded by Captain Dearborn, one of the most polished gentlemen and brave sailors who ever manned a ship. We were about three hundred fifty passengers on board, one hundred fifty of them on the first-class list.

I have never seen anything more solemn and sad than the few moments which preceded our departure. When the first signal was given to those who had followed their friends or relatives to leave and clear the deck, an indescribable scene of desolation took place which would have melted the hardest heart. There were not less than one thousand people on board then, in the midst of whom I was an absolute stranger. As I was perfectly alone, and free to hear and see everything, I chose a commanding place from which, as much as possible, nothing could escape my eyes and my ears. Who can depict the sudden rush of that crowd into the arms of each other, when the whistle had given the orders to leave? Who can tell the tears and sobs, the convulsive embraces and the desolating separations of that hour?

Here, a tall lady, surrounded by half a dozen children, was bathing with tears the face of her husband as if she had no hope to see him again. There, sisters and brothers were pressing each other to their bosoms, unable to speak except with their sobs and their cries. A little further on, a young married lady had her face almost buried on the breast of her desolated husband. She could not utter a single word; but

the rivers of tears which were trickling down her cheeks told me more eloquently than any words that she would have preferred death to such a long separation. Very near to me a beautiful little girl about eight or nine years old was hanging convulsively to the neck of her pale and sickly mother, crying: "Dear mother! Dear mother! Oh, do not leave me alone here! I will be dead when you come back! Take me with you, dear mamma! I cannot let you go alone! I will never see you any more! What have I done that you forsake me to-day? You have always been so kind to me!" And the tears of the poor mother were mixed with the tears of her darling child when she was pressing her, evidently for the last time, on her heart. An elder brother, himself bathed in tears, had to take by force his little sister out of his fainting mother's grasp. Dear little girl! Unfortunate young man! You may weep and cry, it is more than probable that you will never see, any more, your loving mother on this side of the grave; for merciless death has already put on her face the signs of an incurable consumption. Old and young were parting from friends dearer to them than life. No! Never a more touching spectacle can be put before the eyes of a man; and when that man himself has to leave, far away, behind, his own beloved children, his home, his friends, his country, that he fears lest, perhaps, he will never see them again, you may believe me, a very dark cloud comes over that man's soul. Happy is he, then, if, putting his trust in God his Father, he throws himself into His arms, and goes to shed his silent tears at the feet of the One who has said to the distressed children of Adam, "Come unto Me, all ye who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The distance we had to run from San Francisco to Australia was more than seven thousand miles, over a sea where myriads of men have already found a watery grave through shoals, rocks, waves and storms, by which thousands of noble ships have been wrecked. In vain the traveler who starts on such a voyage arms himself with a strong courage. In vain

he hopes for the best. A sudden, a terrible vision of wrecks, storms and horrible deaths flashes through his mind in that touching hour.

Slowly the giant steamer left her moorings, and with majesty she crossed the waters, which bathes the feet of the proud Queen of the Pacific, to turn her bow towards the ocean. In less than half an hour we had passed the Golden Gates of the magnificent port of San Francisco. It was there that, three weeks before, when going to the Cowlitz prairies of Washington Territory, on the steamer Idaho, I was the witness of one of the most sublime and heroic deeds. The sixth of August, we were just entering the Pacific Ocean, when every one on board was struck, as by a thunder-bolt, by the cry: "A man overboard!" And, indeed, there, in the midst of the furious waves, we saw the distressing spectacle of a man struggling to save his life, and calling for help. The rapid steamer was going at full speed, and in a few minutes she had made a serious distance between us and that unfortunate man. The order was immediately given by the captain to stop the engines and launch the life-boat to the sea. But before this could be done, what was our surprise and admiration to see a young man, apparently feeble and powerless, throw down his overcoat, and jump from the upper deck into the foam ing sea to save his perishing fellow-man. Oh! what a spectacle of unsurpassed grandeur and sublimity to see him fighting the furious waves, and swimming with superhuman efforts after the perishing one. The wind was very stormy and those who have passed the Golden Gates know how terrible and irresistible are the waves of the Pacific on that very spot. Again and again we were terror-struck as we saw, from the deck, those furious waves thundering and rolling like mountains over the young hero. Sometimes he disappeared from sight, and we thought he was drowned and forever buried under the roaring billows. It was not surprising to see tears coming down the cheeks of the hardest men, nor to hear the heartfelt cries that came from all

both men and women. But suddenly, the hero's head was seen again over the furious waves; he was swimming with all his might to save the drowning stranger. He, really, like a giant, when raising his noble head above the white crests of the furious waves, was fearlessly struggling against the bottomless and raging Pacific Ocean to wrench a victim from its fury. But how our sentiment and admiration increased when we learned that that young man was newly married in England and immensely rich. He had then forgotten his fortune, his wife, his friends, his country; he had forgotten himself to save a stranger. But that stranger was a fellow-man—a brother—to him.

In vain we cried to him that the unfortunate man whom he was trying to save had sunk down and disappeared forever. The noise of the wind and the waves prevented him from hearing anything. He continued to struggle for half an hour till exhausted and out of breath, nearly perishing himself, he was rescued by the life-boat and brought on board. The name of that young English man was Thumburg Cropper.

So long as noble England will train her sons to such heroic deeds, she will be worthy to march at the head of the civilized world, and God will make her glorious flag respected and feared on every land and sea.

Honolulu, where we landed on the ninth, and stopped ten hours, means, "The Paradise of the Pacific," and it deserves its name. After seven days of seeing nothing but the blue sea and the skies, the traveler feels inexpressible sentiments of pleasure in going around the grand and majestic promontory of Diamond Head, and passing at the foot of the volcanic mountains, which border the ocean, to reach the "Earthly Paradise," which the mighty and merciful God has made there in the very midst of the ocean. Our steamer had to pass very near the coral reef, against which the ocean breaks her mighty waves with a thundering noise from one end of the year to the other, before we entered the narrow passage which

leads us into the port. I confess, here, my perfect inability to do justice to the subject on which I have to write. One of the first things which struck us was a multitude of objects, which we took at first for the heads of big fishes swimming around the ship. They moved with such rapidity, plunging and coming to the surface with such amazing ease, that it took some time before I could persuade myself that those were not fishes, but young boys from twelve to eighteen years old. More than fifty twenty-five cent pieces were thrown by ladies and gentlemen from the deck into the deep waters, and not a single one of them was lost. They had hardly touched the surface of the sea when, as quick as lightning, every swimmer plunged and disappeared, making the waters boil over them as if a thousand big stones had been thrown into them. But, within one minute, we were amazed by the sight of the swimmers coming up to the surface with the twenty-five cent pieces between their teeth. At last I took two ten-cent pieces, and threw them over their heads as far as I could, thinking that the smallness of those pieces of money would make it impossible to see and grasp them below the big waves. But in less than half a minute two of the swimmers were laughing on the surface with my ten-cent pieces between their white teeth.

“You told me,” I said to a gentleman of Honolulu who was among the passengers, “that there are at least 15,000 people in your city; but where are the houses to lodge so many people? With the exception of the steeples of two churches we see almost nothing but trees.” He answered me with a smile. “It is just so. Our houses are invisible. They are so well covered with flowers, and surrounded by shade-trees and fruit, that you cannot see them. But come on shore and you will find them.” And it was so; those houses were like the humming-bird’s nests, concealed behind a real forest of passion flowers, roses, orange, banana and cocoanut trees; aloraba, hibiscus, breadfruit, mango, umrola trees, and other trees and flowers the names of which are unknown to me. Fair

city of the most happy homes! Bright and fragrant blossoms of every clime unite to add charm to this gem of the Pacific.

Every one you meet in that city has a smile on his lips, and kind words on his tongue, and a friendly wish in his heart for you. I never saw such cheerful faces, never heard such joyous laughter, never felt my hand pressed with such warm-hearted feeling as in Honolulu. It seems there is a smile on every flower you touch, on every fruit you taste, and in every tree you see. Nay; you see or feel a smile in every breath of air you breathe in Honolulu. The atmosphere is very pure; the air from the sea and the mountains is very fragrant and perfumed. When one is in Honolulu with its heaps of oranges, bananas, watermelons, muskmelons, strawberries, apples, plums, pineapples and cocoanuts, with its air perfumed by flowers of every hue and color—rose, orange, carmine, and primroses blue as the sea, or white as snow,—he is tempted to say with Peter: "Lord, it is good for us to be here; let us build here a tabernacle."

It is said that these islands were discovered by Captain Cook on the 19th of January, 1778, but it is well proved that the intrepid Spanish sailors, Quiros and Manita, had visited them in 1696. Nevertheless, it is well authenticated that the celebrated Captain Cook was killed on one of these islands, called Hawaii, on the 14th of February, 1779, a few days after having consented to be worshiped as a god by the heathen inhabitants in one of their temples. But if these islands are remarkable for their incomparable beauty, salubrity of climate, the incredible fertility of their soil, the almost infinite variety of their fruits, and the unsurpassed grandeur and magnificence of their sceneries, and the terrible and almost daily eruptions of volcanoes of their mountains, they are still more remarkable for the marvelous evangelical work which has made them Christian, to-day, when they were all plunged into the darkest night of idolatry only seventy years ago. The history of the conversion of that nation is one of the most admirable pages of the history of the Church

of Christ. It has been my privilege to be the guest of one of the apostles of that nation, the venerable Mr. S. C. Damon, and I have heard from the very lips of that apostle of the islands the following thrilling facts. I am sorry that I cannot enter into the details of that marvelous transformation. I must content myself to give a few extracts of the memoirs of one of the gospel ministers whom God had chosen for the instruments of His mercies towards that nation.

The islanders cast off their idolatry in 1819, but it was not till 1835 that Mr. and Mrs. Coan arrived in Hilo, where Mr. and Mrs. Lyman had been working day and night for some time, and had produced a marked change in the social and religious condition of the people. Mr. Coan was a fervid speaker and a strong man morally and physically. There were 15,000 natives, then, in the district of Hilo, and its extremities were one hundred miles apart. As there were no horses, the whole distance had to be traveled on foot or in canoes, which could not be done without perils of every kind to limbs and life. He had sometimes to climb with his hands and feet, or to be let down by ropes from tree to tree and from crag to crag in the mountainous district. Many times he swam across the rivers with a rope to prevent him from being carried away. His smaller weekly number of sermons was six or seven, and the larger from twenty-five to forty. Before the end of the year Mr. and Mrs. Coan had made the circuit of Hawaii, a foot and canoe trip of 300 miles, in which he nearly suffered canoe wreck twice. In all, he had admitted into the Christian Church, by baptism, 12,000, besides 4,000 infants.

But let us hear him speaking, himself, of the first communion he administered to his dear converts: "The old and decrepit, the lame, the blind, the maimed, the paralytic, and those afflicted with diverse diseases and torments, those with eyes, noses, lips and limbs consumed, with features distorted and figures deformed and loathsome, came hobbling upon their staves, or led and borne by others, to the table of the

Lord. Among the strong, you might have seen the hoary priest of idolatry, with hands but recently washed from the blood of human victims, together with thieves, adulterers, highway robbers, murderers and mothers whose hands reeked with the blood of their own children. It seemed like one of the crowds the Saviour gathered, and on which He pronounced the words of healing."

Now, let me give the history of the conversion of one of the most celebrated and blood-thirsty priests of the idols, in the simple but so interesting language of Mr. Coan: "That priest was six feet five inches in height, and his sister, who was co-ordinate with him in authority, had a scarcely inferior altitude. His chief business was to keep Pele appeased—Pele being the goddess of the Volcanoes, the most merciless and revengeful goddess of the world. He lived on the shore, but went often to the top of the volcano Kilanea with sacrifices. If a human victim were needed, he had only to point to a native, and the unfortunate wretch was at once strangled. He was not only the embodiment of heathen piety, but of heathen crimes; robbery was his pastime. His temper was so fierce and so marked that no native dared to tread in his shadow; for treading on his shadow was immediate death to the guilty one. More than once he had killed a man for the sake of food and clothes not worth fifty cents. He was a thoroughly wicked savage. Curiosity attracted him into one of our Christian meetings, and the giant fell under the resistless, mysterious influence which was metamorphosing thousands of Hawaiians. 'I have been deceived,' he said, 'and I have deceived others; I have lived in darkness, and did not know the true God. I worshiped what was not God. I renounce it all. The true God has come. He speaks. I bow down to Him. I wish to be His son.'

"The priestess, his sister, came soon afterwards, and they remained here several months, for their instruction. They were then about seventy years old, but they imbibed the spirit of the New Testament so thoroughly that they became

as gentle, loving and quiet as little children. After a long probationary period, they were baptized, and after several years of pious and lovely living, they passed gently and lovingly away.

“In 1867, the old church at Hilo was divided into seven congregations, six of them with native pastors. To meet the wants of the widely scattered people, fifteen churches have been built, holding from 500 to 1000 people. The present Hilo church, a very pretty wooden one, has cost about \$14,000. All these have been erected mainly by native money and labour.”

Now, let me give you a most touching fact which was told by the Rev. Mr. Lyman, and published in the interesting series of letters of Miss Isabella Bird: “In 1825, five years after the first missionary had landed, Kapiolani, a female of high rank, while living at Kaiwaalea, where Captain Cook was murdered, became a Christian. Grieving for her people, most of whom still feared to anger Pele (the merciless goddess of the volcano Kilanea), she announced that it was her intention to visit Kilanea, and dare the fearful goddess to do her worst. Her husband and many others tried to dissuade her, but she was resolute, and taking with her a large retinue, she made the journey of one hundred miles, mostly on foot, over the rugged lava, till she arrived near the crater. There a priestess of Pele met her, threatened her with the displeasure of the goddess if she persisted in her hostile errand, and prophesied that she and her followers would soon perish miserably. Then, as now, ohelo berries grew profusely around the terminal wall of Kilanea, and there, as everywhere, were consecrated to Pele; none being allowed to eat any of them, till he had at first offered some of them to divinity. It was usual, on arriving at the crater, to break a branch covered with the berries, and turning the face to the pit of fire, to throw half the branch over the precipice, saying: “Pele, here are your aheolos; I offer some to you, some I also eat.” After this, only the natives had permission to eat that fruit.

Kapiolani gathered and ate the berries without this formula, after which she and her company of eighty persons descended to the black edge of the volcano, called: 'Hail, man, man!' There in full view of the fiery pit, she thus addressed her followers: 'Jehovah is my God. He kindled those fires. I fear not Pele. If I perish by the anger of Pele, then you may fear the anger of Pele; but if I trust in Jehovah, and He should save me from the wrath of Pele, when I break and despise her tabus (laws), then you must fear and serve the Lord Jehovah. All the gods of Hawaii are vain. Great is Jehovah's goodness in sending teachers to turn us from these vanities to the living God and the way of righteousness!'

"Then they sang a hymn and you can fancy the strange procession winding its way backward over the cracked, hot lava sea, the robust belief of the princess hardly sustaining the limping faith of her followers, whose fears were not laid to rest until they reached the crater rim, without any signs of the pursuit of the avenging deity."

Is not this more sublime than Elijah's appeal on the soft, green slopes of Carmel?

Not only have these islanders become Christians, but they have become the instruments of the mercies of God towards the heathen of the numberless Polynesian islands. Many of them have become ministers of the Gospel, and have gone through many perils to preach Christ to the people of, at least, fifty islands, with the most admirable success.

Though my stay in Honolulu was very short, I consider it a great privilege to have been allowed, by the good providence of God, to make the acquaintance of several of those modern apostles whose labours have been so abundantly blessed.

There is a college in Honolulu where many natives have been trained to the holy ministry, and who have become as remarkable by their eloquence and talents as by their sincere piety.