

**A Narrative of the Shipwreck, Captivity and Sufferings of Horace Holden and Benj. H. Nute, Who Were Cast Away in the American Ship Mentor, on the Pelew Islands, in the Year 1832; and For Two Years Afterwards were Subjected to Unheard of Sufferings Among the Barbarous Inhabitants of Lord North's Island. Fourth Edition. Boston: Russell Shattuck, and Co., 1836.**

## NARRATIVE, &c.

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### CHAPTER I.

Equipment and departure of the ship *Mentor* from the port of New Bedford, Massachusetts.—The ship's company.—Arrival at Fayal.—Passage down the Cape de Verd islands, and round the cape of Good Hope, to the Indian ocean.—Cruising among the islands, and arrival at the port of Coupang, in Timor.—A violent storm.—The ship strikes on a coral reef off the Pelew islands.—Alarm and distressing situation of the ship's company, and sudden loss of eleven of their number.—The survivors preserved upon a dry part of the reef.

I was born in the town of Hillsborough, in the state of New Hampshire, on the 21st of July, 1810. My father's name was Phineas Holden. My parents were in moderate circumstances, and derived their chief support from a small farm. From the time to which my earliest recollections extend, until I was about ten years of age, our little

circle, consisting of our parents, their three sons and two daughters, enjoyed a large share of the pleasures of a New England home. We were all accustomed to labor, but our exertions to secure a respectable maintenance were richly rewarded by each other's approving smiles, and by that contentment, without which blessings, however great or numerous, are bestowed upon us in vain.

But, in early life, and in the midst of our enjoyments, we were called upon to experience a loss which nothing on earth can supply. My father, after a painful sickness of long continuance, died, and left us with no other earthly protector than our affectionate mother; who, had her ability and means been adequate to our support, or equal to her maternal fondness and anxiety, would have saved us from every hardship, and supplied all our reasonable desires. But, having no means of support except our own industry, we were at that tender age thrown upon the world, and compelled to provide for ourselves as Providence might best ena-

ble us. I labored at different occupations until the age of twenty-one; when, finding myself unable, by reason of an impaired constitution, to do more than provide for myself, and feeling desirous to contribute my share towards the maintenance of our surviving parent, I resolved upon making the experiment of a voyage at sea.

I accordingly left the place of my nativity, sundered the many ties that bound me to home and friends, and, in July, 1831, entered on board the ship *Mentor*, at the port of New Bedford, Massachusetts, for a whaling voyage to the Indian ocean. The ship was owned by William R. Rodman, Esquire, an eminent merchant of that place, to whose benevolence, since my return home, I acknowledge myself to be deeply indebted. We sailed on the day of my enlistment; and I soon found myself upon the bosom of the great deep, and at the mercy of an element to which I had been but little accustomed.

The whole ship's company of the *Mentor* consisted of twenty-two; namely, Edward

C. Barnard, captain; Thomas M. Colesworthy, first mate; Peter O'Connor, second mate; Benjamin F. Haskell, David Jenkins, and Jacob Fisher, boat-steerers; Peter Andrews, steward; John Mayo, cook; and Horatio Davis, Bartlet Rollins, William Jones, Thomas Taylor, Lewis Bergoin, Charles C. Bouket, Calvin Alden, Milton Hulet, William Sedon, James Meder, James Blackmore, John Baily, Benjamin H. Nute, (my companion, in suffering,) and myself, seamen.

After leaving port, nothing remarkable occurred during the first part of our voyage. Having succeeded in obtaining a small quantity of oil, we touched at Fayal, one of the Azores, or Western islands, to leave the oil and replenish our stores. We left Fayal on the following day. Our course was down the Cape de Verd islands; and, without any accident worth relating, we passed round the cape of Good Hope, through the straits of Madagascar, and found ourselves in the Indian ocean.

We continued to cruise among the small

islands for some time ; but being unsuccessful in the object of our voyage, it was deemed advisable to make for Java. We ran the whole length of the island of Java, passing through the straits of Sandal-Wood Island, to the island of Timor, and touched at the port of Coupang, where we remained about five days, took in wood and water, and replenished our small stores. After leaving that place we attempted to pass through the straits of Timor, with a view of gaining the Pacific ocean ; but owing to adverse winds, and the strong currents setting against us, we were compelled to abandon the undertaking ; and accordingly altered our course. We intended to have touched at Ternate, the principal of the Moluccas or Spice islands ; but we passed it, running down the island of Morty, (or Mortay) to its furthest point. Seeing no port at which we could stop, we altered our course, intending to make for some of the Ladrone islands, which we knew to be in possession of the Spanish.

I must here observe, that soon after leav-

ing the island of Mortay, there came on a violent storm, which lasted the whole of three days and nights. During all this time we were unable to take an observation. This led to the melancholy disaster, which was the commencement of misfortunes and sufferings, too great to be adequately conceived of by any but those who experienced them. The violence of the storm compelled us to take in all the sails except the top-sail, (which was close reefed,) fore-sail, and foretop-mast stay-sail.

We were sailing in this manner, not apprehending danger, when, about eleven o'clock at night, on the 21st of May, 1832, just at the time of relieving the watch, the ship struck with great violence upon what we afterwards found to be the coral reef extending to the northward and eastward of the Pelew islands. The ship ran directly upon the rocks, and struck three times in quick succession, the waves dashing over and around us with tremendous violence.

At this awful moment I was in my berth, in the steerage. When the ship struck the

third time, so great was the shock that I was thrown from my berth against the opposite side of the steerage; but, soon recovering myself, I rushed upon deck. There all was confusion, horror and dismay. The ship, immediately after striking the third time, swung round so as to bring her starboard side to the windward, and was in a moment thrown upon her beam ends. While in this awful condition, with the waves continually breaking over us, threatening to overwhelm us in a watery grave, or dash us in pieces against the rocks, the captain came upon deck, and inquired of the second mate, "Where are we?" The reply was, "I don't know, but I think there is land to leeward." There was no time for deliberation; it seemed that the immediate destruction of the ship was inevitable.

In the midst of this confusion I heard the mate give orders for lowering the larboard quarter boat. His directions were immediately complied with, and ten of the crew threw themselves into it, thinking it more safe thus to commit themselves to the

mercy of the waves, than to remain on board with the prospect of a certain and speedy termination of their existence. But there are reasons which force upon the mind the painful conviction, that their departure from the ship at that time proved fatal to them all. As the oars were fastened to the sides of the boat, some one asked for a knife or hatchet, with which to cut them loose. The request was complied with; and, quitting their hold upon the ship, they parted from us, and we never saw them more!

As some doubts have existed in the minds of those interested in the fate of our shipmates who took to the boat in the manner just described, it is deemed advisable here to state my reasons for entertaining the opinion above expressed. Far would it be from me to desire to extinguish any well-founded hopes of their having survived; but a knowledge of the following facts renders it too certain, that they must all have perished, soon after their departure from the ship. The next morning the remains of a boat in every respect similar to that in which they



embarked, were distinctly seen on the rocks, at the distance of about fifty yards from the ship, bottom up, and with her sides stove in. The water being clear and shallow, we could see that she was held there by a harpoon and lance, which constituted a part of the fishing implements, or crafts, in the boat when she left. These were apparently stuck into the crevices of the coral rock (of which the whole reef is composed) either by accident or design; and the presumption is, that she became fast in that place, and that the waves swept that portion of our companions in suffering into a watery grave. But this, though a melancholy subject of reflection, is not without some circumstances of consolation; for, admitting that they thus met their fate, they were saved from that extremity of suffering which some of the ship's crew were destined to experience. Were such a death, or the pains of captivity endured by my associates and myself, to be the only alternatives, I have doubted whether I should not prefer the former. To be far from kindred and friends, among a peo-

ple but one grade above the most ferocious beasts, sick at heart, and deprived of necessary food, stripped of our clothing, and subjected to unheard-of severities,—to endure all this, was to purchase a continuance of life at a dear rate.

Soon after the departure of the first boat, the captain, thinking it impossible for the ship to hold together till morning, ordered his own boat to be let down. This could be effected only by the united exertions of the whole of the remaining part of the crew. Some of the men, and myself among the rest, had resolved upon remaining on the ship to the last; and, considering it impossible for a boat to live, we earnestly expostulated with the captain, for the purpose of persuading him not to hazard the experiment. But he seemed to think it best to make it, and with great earnestness entreated the men to assist him in lowering his boat. As this was a time when but little attention could be paid to the distinctions usually kept up on board, I suggested that it might be well to cut away the masts, believing

that this would relieve the ship, and cause her to lie easier upon the rock. This was the more necessary on account of her position being such as to render it next to impossible to let down the boat. The proposal was acceded to; and, seizing an axe, I assisted in cutting away the masts and rigging. This, to some extent, had the desired effect; and we were enabled, at length, by great exertion, to lower the boat. The captain, Charles C. Bouket, William Sedon, and William Jones, immediately placed themselves in it, and commenced preparing to leave us. In compliance with his request, a rope was fastened round the waist of the captain, so that should the boat be destroyed, as there was reason to apprehend she would be, there might be some chance of rescuing him from the waves. They were furnished with the necessary nautical instruments, log-book, a bag of clothing, a small quantity of bread in a tin tureen, and a keg of water. The boat was at this time suspended by her falls, and, with a view of letting themselves down, the captain stood

in the stern, and Bouket in the forward part of the boat, both having hold of the falls. Sedon still 'held on by the boat's lashing. Jones had nothing in his hands. At this conjuncture, a tremendous sea broke into the boat, and dashed it in pieces;—so entire was the destruction, that not a fragment was afterwards seen. Jones was soon after seen floating in the water apparently dead. Sedon, in consequence of having hold of the boat's fastenings, saved himself by climbing into the ship. Bouket, being an expert swimmer, on finding himself in the sea, swam round to the leeward side of the ship, caught hold of some part of the rigging, and thus escaped. The captain was drifted away to the distance of nearly one hundred and fifty yards. It was with the utmost difficulty that we retained our hold on the rope which had been fastened to him; but at length we succeeded in drawing him in. On hearing his cries for assistance, forgetting our own danger, we redoubled our exertions, and soon drew him on board. He was much exhausted, but fortunately had received no fatal injury.

After the failure of this attempt, and having in so short a time lost one half our number, it was agreed upon, after due consultation to remain upon the wreck till daylight should reveal to us more fully our situation. In this state of suspense and suffering, we clung to the rigging, and with much difficulty kept ourselves from being washed away. Our situation and prospects during that awful night were such, that no ray of hope was permitted to penetrate the dreary prospect around us; our thoughts and feelings, wrought up to the highest degree of excitement by the horrors of our situation, continually visited the homes we had quitted,—probably forever,—and offered up prayers for the dear friends we had left behind. Every succeeding wave that dashed over us threatened to sweep us into an untried eternity; and while we impatiently awaited approaching day, we committed our spirits to Him who alone could control the raging elements.

At daybreak, we discovered that a part of the reef, apparently about three miles off

to the leeward, was dry; and this, though but of small consequence, afforded us some comfort. In a short time we discovered land at the distance of twenty or thirty miles, in an eastwardly direction. This, though we were ignorant of the character of the inhabitants—if indeed it should turn out to be the residence of human beings—presented to our minds the possibility of escape; and without any delay we prepared, as well as we could, to abandon the vessel. There remained but one boat, and that was in a poor condition for conveying us, eleven in number, so great a distance. But, as no choice was left us, the boat was soon prepared; and when the sun was about two hours high, we had completed our arrangements. We took into the boat one small chest of bread, some water, a quantity of wearing apparel, a canister of gunpowder, one musket, a brace of pistols, three cutlasses, and a tinder-box. In this frail bark, and with these poor means of subsistence and defence, with little to rely upon but the mercy of Providence, we took leave of the

ship; not without feelings of deep sorrow, and with small hopes of improving our forlorn condition.

On leaving the ship we steered directly for the reef above mentioned, and without much difficulty landed and drew up our boat. This proved to be, as we had previously conjectured, a part of the reef upon which we had been wrecked; and we soon ascertained that the portion of the rock above water was but about sixteen rods long, and quite narrow, but sufficiently large to afford us a secure footing for the little time we had to stay upon it. It was our first, and almost our only object, to remain here until we could render our arrangements more perfect, and either put to sea with less hazard, or make our passage to the land, which was still distinctly visible. As yet but little time had been afforded us for calm reflection; and it was now a question of serious importance, whether it would be most prudent to encounter the billows in the crazy boat which was our chief dependence, upon the open sea, with our scanty means of subsis-

tence, or to throw ourselves into the hands, and upon the mercy of whatever race of beings might chance to inhabit the island. In favor of the former plan it was suggested that we might be seen, and taken up by some vessel cruising in those seas, and thus saved from captivity or death among a barbarous people; and, on the other hand, it was maintained, that a chance among the savages of those islands would be preferable to the risk of going to sea in a boat which was in all respects unseaworthy, and with only a few pounds of bread, and but little water, for our subsistence.