The Castaways

“AN OPEN SEA STORY”

[ILLUSTRATED]

By

MAYNE REID



Illustrated by: Lolbran Pearse

ILLUSTRATED &

PUBLISHED BY

E-KİTAP PROJESİ & CHEAPEST BOOKS



www.cheapestboooks.com

Copyright, 2015 by e-Kitap Projesi

Istanbul

ISBN:

978-625-6310-48-3

Copyright© Printing and publication rights belong to the author's & Publisher's own restriction, using and working. According to the law of intellectual and artistic works, without permission in part or in whole not re-produced or re-published. Welding can be done by showing short excerpts..

Table of Contents

The Castaways 1

Table of Contents 4

Chapter One 9

A Castaway Crew. *9*

Chapter Two. 15

The Hammer-Head. *15*

Chapter Three 21

The Albatross. *21*

Chapter Four. 30

The Cry of the Dugong. *30*

Chapter Five. 37

Running the Breakers. *37*

Chapter Six. 41

A Gigantic Oyster. *41*

Chapter Seven. 49

A Dangerous Locality. *49*

Chapter Eight. 56

Shooting at Fruit. 56

Chapter Nine. 64

Gagging a Gavial. 64

Chapter Ten. 71

Burrowing Birds. 71

Chapter Eleven. 83

The Lanoons. 83

Chapter Twelve. 91

Krissing a Constrictor. 91

Chapter Thirteen. 97

Chicks quick to take Wing. 97

Chapter Fourteen. 103

A Grand Tree-climber. 103

Chapter Fifteen. 111

Something Sharp. 111

Chapter Sixteen. 116

An Enemy in the Air. 116

Chapter Seventeen. 122

Sitting by the Spit. 122

Chapter Eighteen. 129

Sick after Supper. 129

Chapter Nineteen. 133

An uneasy Night. 133

Chapter Twenty. 139

The Deadly Upas. 139

Chapter Twenty One. 144

Starting for the Interior. 144

Chapter Twenty Two. 152

Across Country. 152

Chapter Twenty Three. 160

Tough Travelling. 160

Chapter Twenty Four. 166

A Red Satyr. 166

Chapter Twenty Five. 170

Silence Restored. 170

Chapter Twenty Six. 173

In Fear and Trembling. *173*

Chapter Twenty Seven. **179**

A Spectacle rarely seen. *179*

Chapter Twenty Eight. **186**

Still Trusting in God. *186*

Chapter Twenty Nine. **191**

A Captive carried aloft. *191*

Chapter Thirty. **197**

What will become of her? *197*

Chapter Thirty One. **202**

The Pursuit Arrested. *202*

Chapter Thirty Two. **206**

Listening In Despair. *206*

Chapter Thirty Three. **211**

Striking Out. *211*

Chapter Thirty Four. **215**

Swimming in Shadow. **215**

Chapter Thirty Five. **219**

The Family at Home.....219

Chapter Thirty Six..... 224

An Improvised Palanquin.....224

Chapter Thirty Seven. 228

The Journey Continued.....228

Chapter Thirty Eight..... 232

The Friendly Flag. 232



Captain Mayne Reid

"The Castaways"

Chapter One.

A Castaway Crew.



Frontispiece UNEXPECTED SUCCOUR *See p. 237*

A boat upon the open sea—no land in sight!

It is an open boat, the size and form showing it to be the pinnace of a merchant-ship.

It is a tropical sea, with a fiery sun overhead, slowly coursing through a sky of brilliant azure.

The boat has neither sail nor mast. There are oars, but no one is using them. They lie athwart the tholes, their blades dipping in the water, with no hand upon the grasp.

And yet the boat is not empty. Seven human forms are seen within it,—six of them living, and one dead.

Of the living, four are full-grown men; three of them white, the fourth of an umber-brown, or bistre colour. One of the white men is tall, dark and bearded, with features bespeaking him either a European or an American, though their somewhat elongated shape and classic regularity would lead to a belief that he is the latter, and in all probability a native of New York. And so he is.

The features of the white man sitting nearest to him are in strange contrast to his, as is also the colour of his hair and skin. The hair is of a carroty shade, while his complexion, originally reddish, through long exposure to a tropical sun exhibits a yellowish, freckled appearance. The countenance so marked is unmistakably of Milesian type. So it should be, as its owner is an Irishman.

The third white man, of thin, lank frame, with face almost beardless, pale cadaverous cheeks, and eyes sunken in their

sockets, and there rolling wildly, is one of those nondescripts who may be English, Irish, Scotch, or American. His dress betokens him to be a seaman, a common sailor.

He of the brown complexion, with flat spreading nose, high cheek-bones, oblique eyes, and straight, raven black hair, is evidently a native of the East, a Malay.

The two other living figures in the boat are those of a boy and girl. They are white. They differ but little in size, and but a year or two in age, the girl being fourteen and the boy about sixteen. There is also a resemblance in their features. They are brother and sister.

The fourth white, who lies dead in the bottom of the boat, is also dressed in seaman's clothes, and has evidently in his lifetime been a common sailor.

It is but a short time since the breath departed from his body; and judging by the appearance of the others, it may not be long before they will all follow him into another world. How weak and emaciated they appear, as if in the last stage of starvation! The boy and girl lie along the stern-sheets, with wasted arms, embracing each other. The tall man sits on one of the benches, gazing mechanically upon the corpse at his feet; while the other three also have their eyes upon it, though with very different expressions. That upon the face of the Irishman is of sadness, as if for the loss of an old shipmate; the Malay looks on with the impassive tranquillity peculiar to his race; while in the sunken orbs of the nondescript can be

detected a look that speaks of a horrible craving—the craving of cannibalism.

The scene described, and the circumstances which have led to it, call for explanation. It is easily given. The tall dark-bearded man is Captain Robert Redwood, the skipper of an American merchant-vessel, for some time trading among the islands of the Indian Archipelago. The Irishman is his ship-carpenter, the Malay his pilot, while the others are two common sailors of his crew. The boy and girl are his children, who, having no mother or near relatives at home, have been brought along with him on his trading voyage to the Eastern Isles. The vessel passing from Manilla, in the Philippines, to the Dutch settlement of Macassar, in the island of Celebes, has been caught in a typhoon and swamped near the middle of the Celebes Sea; her crew have escaped in a boat—the pinnace—but saved from death by drowning only to find, most of them, the same watery grave after long-procrastinated suffering from thirst, from hunger, from all the agonies of starvation.

One after another have they succumbed, and been thrown overboard, until the survivors are only six in number. And these are but skeletons, each looking as if another day, or even another hour, might terminate his wretched existence.

It may seem strange that the youthful pair in the stern-sheets, still but tender children, and the girl more especially, should have withstood the terrible suffering beyond a period possible to many strong men, tough sailors every one of

them. But it is not so strange after all, or rather after knowing that, in the struggle with starvation, youth always proves itself superior to age, and tender childhood will live on where manhood gives way to the weakness of inanition.

That Captain Redwood is himself one of the strongest of the survivors may be due partly to the fact of his having a higher organism than that of his ship-comrades. But, no doubt, he is also sustained by the presence of the two children, his affection for them and fear for their fate warding off despair, and so strengthening within him the principle of vitality.

If affection has aught to do with preserving life, it is strong enough in the Irishman to account also for the preservation of his; for although but the carpenter in Captain Redwood's ship, he regards the captain with a feeling almost fraternal. He had been one of his oldest and steadiest hands, and long service has led to a fast friendship between him and his old skipper.

On the part of the Irishman, this feeling is extended to the youthful couple who recline, with clasped hands, along the sternmost seat of the pinnace.

As for the Malay, thirst and hunger have also made their marks upon him; but not as with those of Occidental race. It may be that his bronze skin does not show so plainly the pallor of suffering; but, at all events, he still looks lithe and life-like, supple and sinewy, as if he could yet take a spell at

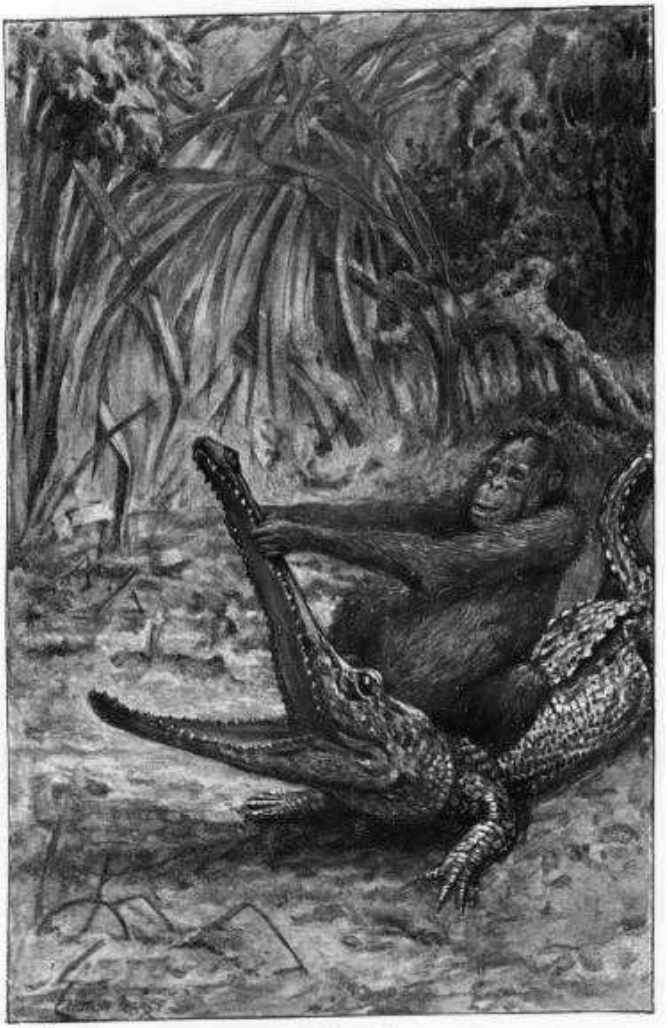
the oar, and keep alive as long as skin and bone held together. If all are destined to die in that open boat, he will certainly be the last. He with the hollow eyes looks as if he would be the first.

Down upon this wretched group, a picture of misery itself, shines the hot sun of the tropics; around it, far as eye could reach, extends the calm sea, glassed, and glancing back his lays, as though they were reflected from a sheet of liquid fire; beneath them gleams a second firmament through the pellucid water, a sky peopled with strange forms that are not birds: more like are they to dragons; for among them can be seen the horrid form of the devil-fish, and the still more hideous figure of the hammer-headed shark. And alone is that boat above them, seemingly suspended in the air, and only separated from these dreadful monsters by a few feet of clear water, through which they can dart with the speed of electricity. Alone, with no land in sight, no ship or sail, no other boat—nothing that can give them a hope.

All bright above, around, and beneath; but within their hearts only darkness and the dread of death!

Chapter Two.

The Hammer-Head.



A terrible conflict.

For some time the castaways had been seated in moody silence, now and then glancing at the corpse in the bottom of the boat, some of them no doubt thinking how long it might be before they themselves would occupy the same situation.

But now and then, also, their looks were turned upon one another, not hopefully, but with a mechanical effort of despair.

In one of these occasional glances, Captain Redwood noticed the unnatural glare in the eyes of the surviving sailor, as also did the Irishman. Simultaneously were both struck with it, and a significant look was exchanged between them.

For a period of over twenty hours this man had been behaving oddly; and they had conceived something more than a suspicion of his insanity. The death of the sailor lying at the bottom of the boat, now the ninth, had rendered him for a time more tranquil, and he sat quiet on his seat, with elbows resting on his knees, his cheeks held between the palms of his hands. But the wild stare in his eyes seemed to have become only more intensified as he kept them fixed upon the corpse of his comrade. It was a look worse than wild; it had in it the expression of craving.

On perceiving it, and after a moment spent in reflection, the captain made a sign to the ship-carpenter, at the same time saying,—

"Murtagh, it's no use our keeping the body any longer in the boat. Let us give it such burial as the sea vouchsafes to a sailor,—and a true one he was."

He spoke these words quietly, and in a low tone, as if not intending them to be heard by the suspected maniac.

"A thrue sailor!" rejoined the Irishman. "Truth ye're roight there, captin. Och, now! to think he's the ninth of them we've throwed overboard, all the crew of the owld ship, exceptin' our three selves, widout countin' the Malay an' the childer. If it wasn't that yer honour's still left, I'd say the best goes first; for the nigger there looks as if he'd last out the whole lot of—"

The captain, to whom this imprudent speech was torture, with a gesture brought it to an abrupt termination. He was in fear of its effect not on the Malay, but on the insane sailor. The latter, however, showed no sign of having heard or understood it; and in a whisper Murtagh received instructions how to act.

"You lay hold of him by the shoulders," were the words spoken, "while I take the feet. Let us slip him quietly over without making any stir. Saloo, remain you where you are; we won't need your help."

This last speech was addressed to the Malay, and in his own language, which would not be understood by any other than himself. The reason for laying the injunction upon him

was, that he sat in the boat beyond the man deemed mad, and his coming across to the others might excite the latter, and bring about some vaguely dreaded crisis.

The silent Malay simply nodded an assent, showing no sign that he comprehended why his assistance was not desired. For all that, he understood it, he too having observed the mental condition of the sailor. Rising silently from their seats, and advancing toward the dead body, the captain and carpenter, as agreed upon, laid hold of and raised it up in their arms. Even weak as both were, it was not much of a lift to them. It was not a corpse, only a skeleton, with the skin still adhering, and drawn tightly over the bones.

Resting it upon the gunwale of the boat, they made a moment's pause, their eyes turned heavenward, as if mentally repeating a prayer.

The Irishman, a devout believer in the efficacy of outward observances, with one hand detached from the corpse, made the sign of the cross.

Then was the body again raised between them, held at arm's length outward, and tenderly lowered down upon the water.

There was no plunge, only a tiny plashing, as if a chair, or some other piece of light wood-work, had been dropped gently upon the surface of the sea. But slight as was the sound, it produced an effect, startling as instantaneous. The

sailor, whose dead comrade was thus being consigned to the deep, as it were, surreptitiously, all at once sprang to his feet, sending forth a shriek that rang far over the tranquil water. With one bound, causing the pinnace to heel fearfully over, he placed himself by the side over which the corpse had been lowered, and stood with arms upraised, as if intending to plunge after it.

The sight underneath should have awed him. The dead body was slowly, gradually sinking, its garb of dark blue Guernsey shirt becoming lighter blue as it went deeper down in the cerulean water; while fast advancing to meet it, as if coming up from the darkest depths of the ocean, was a creature of monstrous shape, the very type of a monster. It was the hideous hammer-headed shark, the dreaded zygaena of the Celebes Sea.

With a pair of enormous eyes glaring sullenly out from two immense cheek-like protuberances, giving to its head that singular sledge-hammer appearance whence it has its name, it advanced directly toward the slow-descending corpse, itself, however, moving so rapidly that the spectators above had scarce taken in the outlines of its horrid form, when this was no longer visible. It was hidden in what appeared a shower of bluish pearls suddenly projected underneath the water, and enveloping both the dead body of the sailor and the living form of the shark. Through the dimness could be distinguished gleams of a pale phosphoric sheen like lightning flashes through a sky cloud; and soon

after froth and bubbles rose effervescing upon the surface of the sea.

It was a terrible spectacle, though only of an instants duration. When the subaqueous cloud cleared away, and they again looked with peering eyes down into the pellucid depths, there was nothing there, neither dead body of man, nor living form of monster. The zygaena had secured its prey, and carried the skeleton corpse to some dark cavern of the deep! (Note 1.)

Note 1. The hammer-headed shark, in common language, is rightly designated one of the most hideous of marine animals. We mean hideous in outward appearance, for, of course, there is much both wonderful and beautiful in its internal organisation, and in the exquisite fitness of its structure for its peculiar part in the economy of nature. In the general outline of its body, which is something like that of a cylinder, it resembles the ordinary sharks; and its distinctive feature is its head, which, on either side, expands like a double-headed hammer. The eyes are very large, and placed at each extremity. It is found in the Mediterranean Sea, as well as in the Indian Ocean, and is noted for its fierceness and voracity.

Chapter Three.

The Albatross.



A Wild Turkey Hunt.

Captain Redwood and the Irishman were horrified at the sight that had passed under their eyes. So, too, were the children, who had both started up from their reclining attitude, and looked over the side of the boat. Even the impassive Malay, all his life used to stirring scenes, in which blood was often shed, could not look down into those depths, disturbed by such a tragical occurrence, without having aroused within him a sensation of horror.

All of them recoiled back into the boat, staggering down upon their seats. One alone remained standing, and with an expression upon his face as if he was desirous of again beholding the sight. It was not a look that betrayed pleasure, but one grim and ghastly, yet strong and steady, as if it penetrated the profoundest depths of the ocean. It was the look of the insane sailor.



Before a finger could touch him he had made the fatal spring.

If his companions had still held any lingering doubts about his insanity, it was sufficient to dispel them. It was the true stare of the maniac.

It was not long continued. Scarce had they resumed their seats when the man, once more elevating his arms in the air, uttered another startling shriek, if possible louder and wilder than before. He had stepped upon one of the boat seats, and stood with body bent, half leaning over the gunwale, in the attitude of a diver about to make his headlong plunge.

There could be no mistaking his intention to leap overboard, for his comrades could see that his muscles were strained to the effort.

All three—the captain, Murtagh, and the Malay—suddenly rose again, and leant forward to lay hold on him. They were too late. Before a finger could touch him he had made the fatal spring; and the next moment he was beneath the surface of the sea!

None of them felt strong enough to leap after and try to save him. In all probability, the effort would have been idle, and worse; for the mad fancy that seemed urging him to self-destruction might still influence his mind, and carry another victim into the same vortex with himself. Restrained by this thought, they stood up in the boat, and watched for his coming up again.