

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

THE STRANGER AGAIN ARRIVES IN THE VALLEY--SINGULAR INTERVIEW WITH HIM--ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE--FAILURE--MELANCHOLY SITUATION--SYMPATHY OF MARHEYO

'MARNOO, Marnoo pemi!' Such were the welcome sounds which fell upon my ear some ten days after the events related in the preceding chapter.

Once more the approach of the stranger was heralded, and the intelligence operated upon me like magic. Again I should be able to converse with him in my own language; and I resolve at all hazards to concert with him some scheme, however desperate, to rescue me from a condition that had now become insupportable.

As he drew near, I remembered with many misgivings the inauspicious termination of our former interview, and when he entered the house, I watched with intense anxiety the reception he met with from its inmates. To my joy, his appearance was hailed with the liveliest pleasure; and accosting me kindly, he seated himself by my side, and entered into conversation with the natives around him. It soon appeared however, that on this occasion he had not any intelligence of importance to communicate. I inquired of him from whence he had just come? He replied from Pueearka, his native valley, and that he intended to return to it the same day.

At once it struck me that, could I but reach that valley under his protection, I might easily from thence reach Nukuheva by water; and

animated by the prospect which this plan held, out I disclosed it in a few brief words to the stranger, and asked him how it could be best accomplished. My heart sunk within me, when in his broken English he answered me that it could never be effected. 'Kanaka no let you go nowhere,' he said; 'you taboo. Why you no like to stay? Plenty moee-moee (sleep)--plenty ki-ki (eat)--plenty wahenee (young girls)--Oh, very good place Typee! Suppose you no like this bay, why you come? You no hear about Typee? All white men afraid Typee, so no white men come.'

These words distressed me beyond belief; and when I had again related to him the circumstances under which I had descended into the valley, and sought to enlist his sympathies in my behalf by appealing to the bodily misery I had endure, he listened with impatience, and cut me short by exclaiming passionately, 'Me no hear you talk any more; by by Kanaka get mad, kill you and me too. No you see he no want you to speak at all?--you see--ah! by by you no mind--you get well, he kill you, eat you, hang you head up there, like Happar Kanaka.--Now you listen--but no talk any more. By by I go;--you see way I go--Ah! then some night Kanaka all moee-moee (sleep)--you run away, you come Pueearka. I speak Pueearka Kanaka--he no harm you--ah! then I take you my canoe Nukuheva--and you run away ship no more.' With these words, enforced by a vehemence of gesture I cannot describe, Marnoo started from my side, and immediately engaged in conversation with some of the chiefs who had entered the house.

It would have been idle for me to have attempted resuming the interview

so peremptorily terminated by Marnoo, who was evidently little disposed to compromise his own safety by any rash endeavour to ensure mine. But the plan he had suggested struck me as one which might possibly be accomplished, and I resolved to act upon it as speedily as possible.

Accordingly, when he arose to depart, I accompanied him with the natives outside of the house, with a view of carefully noting the path he would take in leaving the valley. Just before leaping from the pi-pi he clasped my hand, and looking significantly at me, exclaimed, 'Now you see--you do what I tell you--ah! then you do good;--you no do so--ah! then you die.' The next moment he waved his spear to the islanders, and following the route that conducted to a defile in the mountains lying opposite the Happar side, was soon out of sight.

A mode of escape was now presented to me, but how was I to avail myself of it? I was continually surrounded by the savages; I could not stir from one house to another without being attended by some of them; and even during the hours devoted to slumber, the slightest movement which I made seemed to attract the notice of those who shared the mats with me. In spite of these obstacles, however, I determined forthwith to make the attempt. To do so with any prospect of success, it was necessary that I should have at least two hours start before the islanders should discover my absence; for with such facility was any alarm spread through the valley, and so familiar, of course, were the inhabitants with the intricacies of the groves, that I could not hope, lame and feeble as I was, and ignorant of the route, to secure my escape unless I had this

advantage. It was also by night alone that I could hope to accomplish my object, and then only by adopting the utmost precaution.

The entrance to Marheyo's habitation was through a low narrow opening in its wicker-work front. This passage, for no conceivable reason that I could devise, was always closed after the household had retired to rest, by drawing a heavy slide across it, composed of a dozen or more bits of wood, ingeniously fastened together by seizings of sinnate. When any of the inmates chose to go outside, the noise occasioned by the removing of this rude door awakened every body else; and on more than one occasion I had remarked that the islanders were nearly as irritable as more civilized beings under similar circumstances.

The difficulty thus placed in my way I, determined to obviate in the following manner. I would get up boldly in the course of the night, and drawing the slide, issue from the house, and pretend that my object was merely to procure a drink from the calabash, which always stood without the dwelling on the corner of the pi-pi. On re-entering I would purposely omit closing the passage after me, and trusting that the indolence of the savages would prevent them from repairing my neglect, would return to my mat, and waiting patiently until all were again asleep, I would then steal forth, and at once take the route to Pueearka.

The very night which followed Marnoo's departure, I proceeded to put this project into execution. About midnight, as I imagined, I arose and

drew the slide. The natives, just as I had expected, started up, while some of them asked, 'Arware poo awa, Tommo?' (where are you going, Tommo?) 'Wai' (water) I laconically answered, grasping the calabash. On hearing my reply they sank back again, and in a minute or two I returned to my mat, anxiously awaiting the result of the experiment.

One after another the savages, turning restlessly, appeared to resume their slumbers, and rejoicing at the stillness which prevailed, I was about to rise again from my couch, when I heard a slight rustling--a dark form was intercepted between me and the doorway--the slide was drawn across it, and the individual, whoever he was, returned to his mat. This was a sad blow to me; but as it might have aroused the suspicions of the islanders to have made another attempt that night, I was reluctantly obliged to defer it until the next. Several times after I repeated the same manoeuvre, but with as little success as before. As my pretence for withdrawing from the house was to allay my thirst, Kory-Kory either suspecting some design on my part, or else prompted by a desire to please me, regularly every evening placed a calabash of water by my side.

Even, under these inauspicious circumstances I again and again renewed the attempt, but when I did so, my valet always rose with me, as if determined I should not remove myself from his observation. For the present, therefore, I was obliged to abandon the attempt; but I endeavoured to console myself with the idea that by this mode I might yet effect my escape.

Shortly after Marnoo's visit I was reduced to such a state that it was with extreme difficulty I could walk, even with the assistance of a spear, and Kory-Kory, as formerly, was obliged to carry me daily to the stream.

For hours and hours during the warmest part of the day I lay upon my mat, and while those around me were nearly all dozing away in careless ease, I remained awake, gloomily pondering over the fate which it appeared now idle for me to resist, when I thought of the loved friends who were thousands and thousands of miles from the savage island in which I was held a captive, when I reflected that my dreadful fate would for ever be concealed from them, and that with hope deferred they might continue to await my return long after my inanimate form had blended with the dust of the valley--I could not repress a shudder of anguish.

How vividly is impressed upon my mind every minute feature of the scene which met my view during those long days of suffering and sorrow. At my request my mats were always spread directly facing the door, opposite which, and at a little distance, was the hut of boughs that Marheyo was building.

Whenever my gentle Fayaway and Kory-Kory, laying themselves down beside me, would leave me awhile to uninterrupted repose, I took a strange interest in the slightest movements of the eccentric old warrior. All alone during the stillness of the tropical mid-day, he would pursue his

quiet work, sitting in the shade and weaving together the leaflets of his cocoanut branches, or rolling upon his knee the twisted fibres of bark to form the cords with which he tied together the thatching of his tiny house. Frequently suspending his employment, and noticing my melancholy eye fixed upon him, he would raise his hand with a gesture expressive of deep commiseration, and then moving towards me slowly, would enter on tip-toes, fearful of disturbing the slumbering natives, and, taking the fan from my hand, would sit before me, swaying it gently to and fro, and gazing earnestly into my face.

Just beyond the pi-pi, and disposed in a triangle before the entrance of the house, were three magnificent bread-fruit trees. At this moment I can recap to my mind their slender shafts, and the graceful inequalities of their bark, on which my eye was accustomed to dwell day after day in the midst of my solitary musings. It is strange how inanimate objects will twine themselves into our affections, especially in the hour of affliction. Even now, amidst all the bustle and stir of the proud and busy city in which I am dwelling, the image of those three trees seems to come as vividly before my eyes as if they were actually present, and I still feel the soothing quiet pleasure which I then had in watching hour after hour their topmost boughs waving gracefully in the breeze.