

Bully Chapman's Turning

A Stirring Story of the Southern Seas

By FRANK H. SHAW



THE Reverend Henry Challoner shook his head slowly from side to side. "We are handicapped, Compton," he said. "Down here we are hopelessly handicapped; and there are times when I feel that the work is useless. If only the traders would countenance our working—but they won't. Their one object in life seems to be to set the natives against us by telling them scandalous tales of our ambitions. I heard only the other day that we were credited with the desire to get the native children to our school simply that we might dine off the poor little chaps."

"And the man who does most to set the natives against us is Chapman," pronounced Mr. Compton, with a trifle of what was perhaps natural bitterness. When you see your work recoil upon itself, when you see converts lured back into a state of barbarism, when you toil never so hard with no result whatsoever, you may be forgiven a little bitterness maybe. "That man sticks at nothing whatsoever; I don't believe he possesses a single human feeling."

"They say he is passionately attached to his child, though I cannot understand why any woman ever married him. It pleases him to speak of the Islanders as men speak of cattle; he is noted for his heartlessness, and no one can ever remember his doing a single decent thing in his life." Dr. Challoner allowed himself to grow a trifle heated. He had cause. A little while before, Captain Chapman, of the *Flower of Home*, had enticed a full score of his converts aboard his schooner on pretence of bearing a message from the missionary, and had then clapped hatches upon them, and sailed away with them to Malaita, to practically sell them to a plantation owner there. The score rankled sharply in Dr. Challoner's soul.

"If we had him on our side the work would be easy. He practically rules all the other traders, because he is supposed to be a powerful fighter. And if he were for us, no man dare stand against us. But—" Mr. Compton shook his head. "Well, I shall not give up hope," was Dr. Challoner's sturdy rejoinder. "If we have a powerful enemy, we have also a more powerful friend, and I think that some time, sooner or later, that hard man's heart will be melted. Only God knows when."

He looked out of the rattling windows of the little mission station, and watched the crested waves fling themselves in a mad riot of elemental anger on the coral sand of the beach. It was blowing a furious gale, and the thunder of the surf was wellnigh deafening. And as he looked his whole form seemed to stiffen somewhat; he narrowed his gaze for a moment, and then ran out of the house towards the beach, with a shout over his shoulder to his companion.

Driving madly through the surf, now swept high aloft on the crest of a monstrous wave, now sunk deeply in the roaring troughs, was a small boat, heading for the beautiful little bay on the shores of which the station stood. It was handled well, but it seemed a miracle that it survived. Indeed, as Dr. Challoner reached the beach the boat capsized completely, and the two men who formed its crew were pitched unceremoniously into the surf. They swam ashore with difficulty, and were drawn up to safety by the missionary at the moment Mr. Compton arrived on the scene.

They were two civilized natives, fine fellows, tall and strong, but their teeth chattered, their bodies shivered, and they presented such a forlorn aspect that, in spite of their evident dislike for the procedure, they were hurried to the station and so dried and comforted that their rough experience promised at once to fade from their minds. Dr. Challoner remained with them, and in another ten minutes he presented himself before his companion. "Those natives came with a purpose," he said. "It seems that Mrs. Chapman's child is dangerously ill—very dangerously ill. And Seymour, the only other medical man in the islands, was drowned yesterday. These men say that unless something is done immediately the child cannot live."

"And what do you think of it all?" "I think the only thing. Thank God, I am a qualified doctor, and I can handle the case. I must go at once."

Mr. Compton drew his attention to the roaring gale and the tempestuous seas. "Not in this weather," he remarked. "You run a very grave risk, and Chapman is our bitterest enemy."

Dr. Challoner drew himself up.

"And because of that it is all the more necessary that I should go," he said. "If the man were our friend there would be no sacrifice in doing this work."

"There has not been a storm like this for five years," said Mr. Compton. "You take your life in your hands if you go afloat."

"I have carried my life in my hands for many a year," retorted Dr. Challoner. "And once more does not make much difference. We are in good hands, my friend."

It was in vain that Mr. Compton protested; his companion had made up his mind, and nothing would deter him from performing what he considered to be his duty. There was suffering that he might ease, and his work, as a man of God, was to put a period to that suffering, no matter what the cost might be to himself. There are many men like him in the world to-day.

He packed a bag with a few necessities, and fought his way back to the beach. The natives were not over-willing to fare back to the place they came from, but by dint of mild persuasions at first, and dire threats when persuasions failed, Challoner contrived to force them to take their places in the boat, which he thought to manage himself. He was a consummate sailor, as was necessary in a man who spent much of his life afloat; but even he felt somewhat daunted by the monstrous immensity of the storm-lashed sea.

It was a terrible journey. For three-quarters of the time the long whale-boat was half under water, and Challoner, at the helm, was compelled to bail resolutely, dear life depending on it. Once clear of the bay, sail was set, and with her lee gunwale under water the boat fetched away on the first of the many tacks that lay before her; the force of the wind was so terrific that it seemed a score of times as though the canvas must be split to ribbons, and the planking stove in.

It was close on seven hours later that they landed. Challoner was exhausted;

he could barely stand, for the constant drenchings he had received had cramped his every muscle; but he made shift to stumble out of the boat and up towards the long, low house where Bully Chapman, the Terror of the Islands, made his home at such time as he was not at sea.

The child was ill, so ill that the missionary knew that an hour's hesitation had spelt its death. It was diphtheria in a bad form; and the only chance was to perform tracheotomy. With the half-distracted mother to help him he did the delicate work, and then, as the sufferer's agonies seemed to be in some measure relieved, ordered Mrs. Chapman to lie down in a neighboring room while he kept watch.

It was very quiet in the sick-room, for the first flush of the storm had passed, and the muffled thunder of the breakers came more as a sedative than an actual sound. Long hours of battling and stress, and lack of sleep on the previous night—a convert had been taken ill and had died—had sapped away Challoner's vitality. He rose softly and bent over the child—Dorothy Chapman, and perhaps the one thing in all the world that Bully Chapman loved better than his own large selfish self. The child breathed evenly, her temperature was reduced. Challoner re-seated himself, and resolved to watch throughout the night. The chair was very comfortable, the room was warm, and—

He awakened with a start, to see the moonlight beating into the room, to hear a choking strangled cry, to feel the floor shake to the rush of a panic-stricken woman.

"My God! Doctor, she's dying—dying!" sobbed Mrs. Chapman. She lifted her child's head from the pillow, but the fight for breath was dreadful.

"Quick—a feather or something! Quick, woman! There's not a moment to be lost."

She fled away as he took the girl in his arms, but he knew from the tetanic rigidity of the little form that unless she fled as on wings it must be too late. He remembered then to have heard of a similar case to this; and—he did what was given to him to do. It was a deadly risk, and he had one moment for clear thought. He knew that he was necessary to the work down there; he knew that this was but the child of the man he had most cause in life to hate; and then—he placed his lips to the tube and sucked the venom clear.

In the doorway, her approach unnoticed in the stress of that tense moment, Mrs. Chapman halted, empty-handed. And, standing there, she saw the great heroism accomplished; she knew that this man had risked his own life that her child might live.

"She will sleep now," said Challoner, turning to the faint rustle of skirts. "I

think she will recover; I hope she will recover. Give me some water, please." A weeping woman, incoherent, almost beside herself, fell at his knees and grasped them hysterically, sobbing out mingled thanks and self-reproaches.

"No; it is nothing, nothing," said the missionary. And he refused to listen to her expressions of gratitude.

Three days later, Dorothy Chapman being out of danger and on the high road to recovery, Dr. Challoner betook himself back to the mission station, before a fair wind, and counted the episode finished. But Compton had an opinion, and he expressed it.

"You were a fool, Challoner," he said, "to risk your life like that. And Chapman will not show the slightest token of gratitude. You may rest assured of that fact—you have wasted your trouble."

"No; the child's life was saved," said the medical man softly. "And a child's life can never be wasted. And now we can proceed with our original scheme. Compton, I think it is urgently necessary for me to go to Vella Tagula, and do something for the unfortunate natives there."

It had long been a cherished project with Dr. Challoner. The island in question stood for all that was black and darkness in the history of the Pacific; the inhabitants were notoriously savage and inhospitable; it was known that they were still cannibals, devil-worshippers, and a dozen other things that may not be mentioned here. And it seemed to the missionary that his work demanded that he should go to this black spot on a fair earth, and there do such work as his Master put into his hands to do.

"You are too zealous, Challoner, too zealous," said Compton. "Far better to stay here and work with me. There is much to be done here."

"But I must have a vineyard of my own," said Challoner. "No, it is no earthly use to try and dissuade me—I must go." And next day he went into the darkness of the Unknown.

II.

"S'pose he thought it a sort of game of heaping coals of fire on my head," said Bully Chapman, pacing the deck of his schooner, as she drew in towards the lovely shore. "Well, he's made a mistake; I don't stand for any of that sort of work. I'm dead against these missionaries—and I stay dead against 'em."

His mate, Paul Ford, expressed a profane opinion of the devoted men who toiled and died to spread the light of a greater Love than ever grew in the heart of man amongst the benighted heathen. "Checks us wherever we goes," he said, expectorating over the side. "Puts the niggers on their guard against us, an' 'stead o' simple faith an' lovin' trust, we get stones an' arrows at 'em."

Suddenly Captain Chapman began to laugh, exposing white firm teeth.

"Seem to be tickled," said his mate with some resentment. "What's the joke?"

"I'm thinking that we deserve a mighty lot of simple faith and loving trust, we folks. We've pretty nigh put the fear of death into the hearts of our black brethren hereabouts, haven't we?" They laughed in concert over some item in their history which would not, perhaps, bear the light of day.

"Well, if that missionary's thinking he's got me on his side he's made the biggest mistake of his life," said Chapman, returning to the old subject. "I got home, my wife met me with a long-winded yarn about Dot being ill, and about a missionary—that Challoner chap—coming through the teeth of a living hurricane to attend her. Said something about diphtheria, too, and sucking venom out of the kid's throat. I told her she was hysterical, and had better lie down for a while. Women sometimes exaggerate a bit."

"They told me something about it, too," said Ford. "Right enough, the sky-pilot came through that big blow at the beginning of last months in a whale-boat."

"Covering at the bottom, I expect, and weeping at every drop of spray. I know 'em—white-livered enough they are."

Ford ceased the discussion, which did not interest him much, but Chapman wrinkled his brows together thoughtfully.

"It would have been mighty hard to have lost Dot," he said. "She's a cunning little kid; but I don't expect he did much. And it's not my plan to go hand in hand with the missionaries; it means cutting my own throat. No, it was his job to attend the sick and suffering, just as it's my job to make money the best way I can. Well, it's over and done with, and the sooner we forget all about it the better."

But he was conscious of a peculiar unrest. It seemed to him as if he were standing on the edge of great events; he would not have been surprised of a sudden hurricane had swept out of the clear sky, or if a tidal wave had roared madly towards the lovely shore towards which the *Flower of Home* was smoothly drifting.

"Funny," he said, rubbing his eyes. "And the barometer's high, too; there can't be a storm on. Blessed if I know what's wrong."

He looked to sea, he looked towards the shore, and saw nothing to give him satisfaction. He thought of his project, and somehow, for no accountable reason, it seemed not half so promising as it had seemed at its inception. He had planned to make a descent upon this land, to at-



A member of the British bulldog breed, "Elsmore Mally" a well-known prizewinner at the recent dog show in London.

—Sport and General, photo.