

been twenty minutes before we again trod the deck, and then the anchor was secured and sails set.

In the sky there was no moon, but the pole stars shone brightly, and showed me the seven muskets deposited amidships, with sundry bags of caps and ammunition. We were underway, the canoe being towed a little astern, steered by one of the chief's followers.

"Ah, I go ashore now, friends," cried the deceitful savage who had sold his fellow-brethren, and calling to his subordinate in his native dialect, began to gather together his property, verily the price of blood. The canoe hauled up, and the worthy chief was about to lift up part of his burthen, when a shrill whistle from the deck broke the silence of the night, and in another ten seconds the coloured scoundrel found himself overboard in the deep water, and soon swimming towards the canoe, whose painter had been cut.

"Set foresail—two points to sou'-sou'-west," sounded the captain's sonorous voice, and in a few minutes we were outside in the broad Pacific.

I was amazed, never thinking such would have been the denouement.

An hour afterwards, while I was musing over the occurrence, the skipper accosted me.

"That's the way to treat villains like them," he said abruptly. "Do you know what that fellow has done?"

"I have not the least idea."

"Well, I'll tell you. He has been in Queensland some years and knows what the trade is. Being a chief, he was there made a sort of overseer, and, believe me, he has known how to work the oracle since he returned. When I was here last he put a very good thing into my hands, and got honestly paid for it, but he has since then split on me, and the story that a few men had been taken away from here by stratagem has got abroad, and no one but he knew the real particulars. What more reasonable, then, than that I should like to pay him out for his treachery, and I have done it. Yesterday morning he confided to me a scheme which was carried out last night. He would, he said, send seven of his young men and women over to his enemies with a proposal to settle certain disputes about land, these seven to remain there till a conclusion was arrived at, on condition that seven young men should at once be sent to him as corresponding hostages. The proposal was fair enough, in fact, partial, since my friend sent three women also, and it was consequently eagerly accepted. By what specious influence he persuaded his followers that they had been betrayed, and thus were enabled to secure the men as prisoners, I can't say, but sure at the appointed time they were delivered

to me as you saw, being then slaves taken from hostile tribes. Now, had that fellow been faithful about the last affair, I would very likely have given him three, perhaps four muskets, and some powder, but he is a deceitful knave, who would entice his own brother into trouble for the sake of gain, and so I determined he should have nothing for this, at all events, and, as you observed, he dropped overboard as rich as when he came. Don't you think it serves such rascals right?"

"And what will become of the hostages left in the enemy's camp?" I asked.

"How do I know? I have two witnesses to prove that he, the chief, for a certain consideration, agreed to deliver on board my vessel a given number of men, on the usual conditions, and he received in advance three pounds of tobacco."

I had no more to say. Three pounds of tobacco for seven unoffending people's servitude during three, or more years, severed from their home and families, among strangers, who understand them not, who know not their longing after their home. Who cannot fancy a blackfellow having a heart bleeding when torn away from all that even these untutored savages hold dear in the world! What comments could a man make upon this? I refrained, and went to bed, but not to sleep before the morning rays broke through the pale glass of the skylight.

To at once conclude this part of my narrative, I may add that I subsequently learnt that the captain's account of the capture of our first "labour" was substantially correct. The still more remarkable occurrences connected with the remainder of the voyage, would occupy too much additional space, so I will postpone their recital until my next chapter.

Although our readers, with few exceptions, have already and decidedly made up their minds respecting the real character of these voyages to the New Hebrides and other groups, to procure a supply for the labour markets at Fiji and Queensland; yet as there are a few who regard or affect to regard the views of the Missionaries as one-sided and extreme, and who hint that their representations should be received with some abatement, we have judged it wise, by the publication of this narrative, to give the testimony of quite an independent witness, who has no special prejudices in favour of "anstere" Missionaries, but who nevertheless proved himself to have an eye to see the real character of the traffic, and a heart to feel for the wrong done to these untutored, unoffending Islanders.