

we have comparatively little to fear. The natives do not gather around a missionary vessel as in former years, but we must go to them, and it is sometimes difficult to open friendly intercourse with them. The plan which we usually pursue is as follows: The vessel anchors, or more commonly heaves to, near the island to be visited. A boat is lowered, and usually manned by one white man and a native crew. The shore is now approached at some eligible landing place. When the boat is within gunshot of the land, the boat's crew rest on their oars till the natives begin to make their appearance. All the dialects that we can command are now called into requisition, and it usually happens that some one of our number is understood, and failing this, recourse must be had to the language of signs, in which natives excel. The natives are always armed with their clubs or spears, or bows and arrows, and this, being their custom, is no evidence of hostile intentions. The presence of women and children is a good sign, for when evil is intended they are usually sent out of the way. If the natives wish intercourse, they make signals for us to land, and wave green branches as emblems of peace. If signs are favourable, the boat pulls in without much delay till the water shoals to three or four feet, and then I leave her to be pulled out again to a safe distance, before the natives can crowd round her. I always consult the natives who accompany me on the propriety of landing, and, without strong reason, would not act against their opinion, which is usually the correct one."