

**THE
HOLY BIBLE
BEACON LIGHT.**

BY M.T. CALDOR.
INTERNATIONAL PRESS ASSOCIATION.

CHAPTER II.—(CONTINUED.)

"Yes, sir, that are bread-fruit tree is good for more'n the fruit. The fibers inside the bark, ye see, can be wet and pounded, and then dried. I know jest how to do it. Now I guess we'll have to try some palm matting. I'll show you how to braid and splice it together, and we'll have a dress fixed for all of us. We must make a tent-top too, for the night-dews in these forrin places are a powerful sight like rain, and masterly unhealthy, too. I don't see as my old bones can rest yet, there's so much to be done afore night."

"You shall not work alone, my noble fellow," said Mr. Vernon, energetically. "Between your experience and my scientific knowledge it's a pity if we cannot go to housekeeping in tolerable style, since nature has spread everything around us in raw material."

Tom opened his eyes and a look of deference mingled with his expression of good fellowship.

"And don't you think," asked he, "we had better keep pretty close to this spot for tonight anyhow? When we've turned in and had a watch below, we shall feel more like finding out what kind of a home the old caboose brought us to."

"I shall always abide by your judgment, and I agree with this. Now, then, Tom, for the palms; you shall teach me to plait a native garment for Walter and myself, and after we have obtained dry clothes we will think about a bunch of bread-fruit, sauced with banana and seasoned with cocoanut."

Tom's oriental experience was of invaluable benefit. He knew precisely how to work, and in far less time than would be imagined by a novice, the broad palm-leaves were woven into an Eastern suit neither unpleasing nor despicable, and their own drenched garments spread out to dry in the warm sunshine. Returning to their charges, they found both patient and nurse fast asleep. Tom soon improvised a bamboo couch, over which he spread a matting of palm, and the exhausted children were laid carefully upon it, and their wet clothing removed without disturbing their slumber in the least.

"We're lucky not to have landed alongside of the icebergs," said Tom, dryly, as he bent the boughs of a Hibiscus tree to shade the sleepers more effectually. "We needn't fear freezing nor starving."

"Nor could we have selected a fairer spot," replied Mr. Vernon, looking around admiringly upon the closely-wooded heights, rising in a succession of hills from the shore, and showing in profuse luxuriance the most valuable woods and fruits, as well as the gorgeousness of tropic blossoming; "and we have not yet seen signs of ferocious beasts or unfriendly inhabitants."

"I calculate we're safe from both them 'ere. I kept one eye pretty sharp around, and all I've seen is an abattoir, a petrel, and two or three heron. I remember hearing old Pete Jones, a gone-by shipmate of mine, who was in these parts a good while, say that no beast of prey was ever seen around in these islands, which, as near as I can reckon, are in the part of the chart they call Polynesia. We'll be careful till we're sure."

"Now suppose we go down to the caboose and set it up for a bedroom for the children—what do you say, Tom?"

"We'd best save it, anyhow, if only to remember the old 'Petrel' by."

So they went down to the beach, and with their united effort turned over the shattered shell. Mr. Vernon began to think Tom was growing insane as he saw him dart inside and seize something with the most frantic expression of joy.

"Tom, Tom, my good fellow, what ails you?"

"Good heart, sir, I can't half tell you, I'm so pleased. Only see what I've found! It's worth more to us than a heap of gold and diamonds."

Mr. Vernon bent forward and beheld a small hatchet, which, fastened by a stout cor. to a nail, had resisted the effort of wind and wave, only twisting itself more securely around the brass head of the nail.

"It is indeed an invaluable treasure," said he, with emotion. "Tom, Tom, who knows but this frail ark has brought us to an Eden we shall be sorry to exchange for the hollow frivolities and sordid selfishness of the world?"

CHAPTER III.

Tom was detaching the hatchet from the nail; he paused a moment, and his clear gray eye wandered over wave and sky to the verdant heights behind them; a sober, tranquil, melancholy, entirely undefinable look swept over his face.

"I don't know, sir," said he, slowly, "I can't say, but something seems to tell me I shall have my grave here on the island." He waited a moment, overpowered by a nameless presentiment, and then added cheerfully: "But if it is to be so, sir, no man living now will have a pleasanter one than can be scooped out a little beyond the spring there, under the Hibiscus tree. Ye mind it, sir, if anything happens, there's where I'd like to be laid."

The time came when, with overflowing eyes and outgushing heart, Paul Vernon recalled these words and dwelt fondly upon the memory of the picture them before him. That stout, athletic form, that plain, homely face, but most of all that cheery, hopeful, resigned expression that lent such a vivid charm to the otherwise unprepossessing countenance of Tom Harris.

After a night's rest and a bountiful breakfast from that most skillful of all culinary artists, Dame Nature herself—albeit the butler who collected and set out the savory dishes was none other than honest Tom—our little company began to feel less like benighted outcasts, and to look upon the beautiful little island as a home establishment.

The little girl wept bitterly when her childish mind was made to comprehend the sorrowful fate of her nurse and protector, yet with the versatility of infancy entered also into the keen delight of Walter Vernon, who capered around his father and Tom as they were busily felling the trees needed for their permanent habitation, loudly rejoicing at the beautiful sights around them.

On the third day they commenced an exploring expedition along the shore and some distance back into the interior. They found they were upon a small isolated island, yet evidently one of a group, since from the top of a tall coconut tree on the summit of the highest hill Tom declared he could see a dim line beyond the water that marked the land, probably of a similar island. He made another discovery at the same time which he believed more important to them, which was that the wreck of their ship had not sunk, but was lying evidently caught between the jagged points of a reef underneath the water.

Boundless sources of wealth were disclosed to them, but no sign of human habitation. The bread-fruit, cocoa, cocoanut, yams, banana, plantain and sugar-cane grew in spontaneous abundance, while Tom pointed out to them the Abia-tree, bearing its delicious pulpy fruit, and won Walter's heart completely when he handed him a handful of the sweet native chestnut, Kata. Upon the elevated land they found forests of stately trees, whose names were mostly familiar to Tom's experience or Mr. Vernon's botanical knowledge.

"Ah," said the former joyfully, pausing beneath a group of apapa and faifal trees, "here is the stuff, Mr. Vernon, for our canoe. We will visit the old ship soon, and find out what's left for us."

While they were examining the generous supply of valuable timber the children were gathering flowers. Suddenly came a scream from the little girl, and a loud shout for help from Walter. Both Mr. Vernon and Tom turned in alarm. A trampling, rushing noise came from a thicket of tangled vines and underbrush, and darted a strange-looking animal, upsetting the courageous boy, who had flung himself in front of his weaker companion.

While little Eleanor—she had given so much of her name to Tom before the shipwreck, but could not now be made to recall the rest—clung frantically to Tom's neck, Mr. Vernon in much alarm assisted his son to rise.

"Oh, father, father, what was it—a bear or a lion?" gasped Walter. Tom's cheery laugh rang out boisterously.

"It was better than that, my boy—it was our pork-barrel still on its legs. Bye-and-bye the old fellow will give you a sausage to pay for this fight."

"What, a pig?" ejaculated Mr. Vernon, much relieved.

"Nothing else, sir. Wild hogs find good living here, and so shall we. Indeed, sir, all the wants of a decent human creature are supplied here. See there, behind the sandal, is a candle-tree. We needn't stay long in the dark."

Mr. Vernon sighed.

"Ah, Tom, show me a tree where my books, my precious books, grow, ranged ready in a row for a hungry mind."

Tom scratched his head.

"You've got me there; but if we can't find any left in the old bulk, I hope it ain't bold in me to say I mistrust you can write some for yourself."

"You are an admirable fellow, Tom, for expedients. I think I'll try. Of course you'll provide plenty of paper and ink!"

"Jest as much as you want," answered the old sailor triumphantly, delighted to see his random suggestion was likely to work profitably in averting the melancholy he dreaded so much. "I'll show you some beans bye-and-bye that will give better ink than any you can buy in London, I'll be bound, for sun and water can't fade it out; and as for paper, bleach out some of my native cloth for the strong, or make some of the tender, like Chinese rice-paper—it's just what you want."

"Well said. When we build the house I'll have a study to write in. Come, children, you have an interest in our plan; there must be a school-room and a parlor on purpose for little Ellie."

But several days of hard work were required before the timber was brought to the site near the shore, selected for various reasons, and then the house was only partially finished, as Tom was anxious to build a raft and visit the ship before another storm could complete her destruction.

The raft looked like a frail, unseaworthy thing when it was done, without a nail to secure it, only bound together with great thongs of bark; but Tom was quite satisfied, and had no fear, and early one fine morning, as they sat round their palm-leaf breakfast cloth, announced his intention of starting immediately.

Mr. Vernon wished to accompany him, but to this Tom would not consent.

"No, no," said he. "Wait till I find out what is the risk. Suppose we both go, and are lost—what's that to the children? Tom's the one to go."

"Tom is a hero," replied Mr. Vernon, with emotion. "I wish you would let the children call you Mr. Harris. It pains me to hear them so familiar with you, who are in reality our leader and king."

Tom laughed.

"Lord bless you, sir, I shouldn't know how to act with a handle to my name. I've allers been Tom from the time I went to school to learn my letters, and faith I've senamost forgot 'em it's so long ago, and Tom I shall keep on. You can't teach an old dog new tricks, and I should feel as silly as a land-lubber in the shrouds during a blow if anybody called me Mr. Harris. Now, then, I'm off."

CHAPTER IV.

GNXIOUSLY and eagerly the little party watched Tom's raft paddled slowly around the reef, disappearing behind the cliff, and with feverish impatience Mr. Vernon paced to and fro the interminable four hours of his absence. The learned, refined, fastidious man of the world—the deep thinker and laborious student—marveled at the utter dependence he had come to rest upon that simple, unlearned, unpolished nature.

"There is but one thing genuine," he muttered, as he saw the children forsaking their play and fruit to watch anxiously in the direction the raft should return. "Tom's good heart is more than all my scientific knowledge, my laboriously acquired heritage. Even here, on this deserted island, am I taught my own worthlessness. Oh, the past, the past—if it were in the power of mortal man to undo it!"

A black cloud settled on his face. His thoughts were evidently with some painful scene in his past life, for his teeth gnawed impatiently at his pallid lip, his eyes flashed, and on his high forehead the veins knotted themselves like cords.

A cheery hallo, answered by glad shouts of the children aroused him from the painful reverie. He hurried down to the beach, thankful to see Tom paddling back to the shore.

"Here I am," shouted Tom, "safe and sound, you see, and bringing you good news. Oh, but, sir, I couldn't help thinking if our folks had only trusted the old hulk, and not tried the boats, how many it would have saved. But what does a poor weak creature know about it?—the Lord's the best judge."

As he drew the raft on shore he went on in a livelier tone, while he unloaded its contents.

"There, sir—there's a keg of spirits of some kind. It may come handy when the rainy season sets in. Here's a chest of clothes, and this 'ere, I think, is mighty fortunate, for I know all about it. I brought this trunk out of the cabin myself and put it in the hold, and I heard the maid say it belonged to Lady Eleanor's mother, that she was going to meet. You know they was mighty particular to call the little thing Lady Eleanor, so I s'pose she is one of the nobility. Here, little Ellie, it's yours; and when're older maybe you won't be sorry to have some pretty clothes to wear—better than Tom can manufacture. Ye must be nice with 'em, though, for maybe they'll prove some time who you be."

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He turned then to hand Mr. Vernon a small clasp Bible—the Beacon Light of their deliverance.

"Here, sir, I thought you'd be thankful enough to see this. I calculate you'll comfort us all out of it when the blue days come."

He was stooping down, ready to lift out another chest, and astonished that the book was not taken as joyfully as he expected; he raised himself and looked at his companion keenly.

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