

THAMES OFFICE.

Extraordinary Adventures.

A sailor, named William Rinkle, applied to the magistrates for their advice and assistance under the following remarkable circumstances:—Rinkle stated that in the month of March, 1832, he sailed from the port of London in a South Sea whaler, belonging to a very respectable firm in Rotherhithe. The ship had been at sea about fourteen months, when the crew were fortunate enough to meet with two whales. After the whales had been killed, all hands were busily employed in securing the blubber, when an accident happened to him of a very serious nature. The spade he was using slipped, and cut one of his feet very severely. One main artery was severed, and he bled so profusely that he was obliged to leave off work. He was conveyed below, and the captain and mate soon afterwards came to him, and accused him of cutting himself to escape his share of the labour. He indignantly repelled the accusation, and displayed his foot, which was in such a state that he could not stand. Some words arose, and the mate gave him a severe blow on the head, which stunned him. On recovering his senses, he was conveyed to the after hatchway, where he was confined as a close prisoner for two months, and was fed on a scanty allowance of bread and water. During this period he suffered the most dreadful torture from the wound in his foot, owing to improper treatment and neglect. A lock jaw ensued, and it was necessary to force open his mouth with an iron spoon to enable him to swallow food sufficient to sustain life; indeed, on one occasion it was requisite to cut the lower lip to accomplish this object. (The man exhibited his lip, on which a large scar was distinctly visible.) After he had in some degree recovered, the captain directed that he should beg his pardon before all the ship's company. He declined doing so, and the captain immediately gave orders for him to be put on shore on an island near the Japanese dominions, from which they were not far distant. Accordingly signs were made to the natives, who were watching the vessel from the shore, and a great number of them speedily came alongside in canoes, but they all refused to have anything to do with putting him on shore, and threats and persuasions were alike ineffectual. At length the captain gave directions to the cooper to knock off the iron hoops from some casks, and bribed the natives of the island, called St. Andrew's, forming one of a numerous group, to receive him. In addition to the iron, spirits were liberally supplied to the natives, and while they were rolling about in a state of intoxication, the captain contrived to smuggle two of the poor wretches on board the vessel, with whom he sailed. When complainant was put on shore the natives all surrounded him, and seemed lost in wonder as they examined his dress and the colour of his skin, as they had never seen a white man on the island before. He was stripped of his clothes, which the natives tore into numberless pieces, and divided amongst themselves, and afterwards exercised their agility by dancing in a very grotesque manner around him. Rinkle remained on this island nine months, and, upon the whole, lived pretty well among the savages. Their principal food was cocoa-nuts and

fish. On two or three occasions the natives suffered much from a scarcity of food. They were not cannibals, but, thinking he might have a taste for human flesh, they once offered him a portion of the bodies of a woman and child who had died suddenly. He refused the proffered food with disgust, and made the natives to understand that white men never ate human flesh. They appeared much surprised at this, and asked why the captain of the big canoe should take away two of their countrymen. He had been on this island about nine months or moons, when he one day perceived a ship in the offing, and made signals of distress, which to his great joy were perceived, and the ship hove to. A boat was sent ashore to receive him, but the savages endeavoured to prevent him leaving the island. He, however, managed to swim to the boat, amidst a shower of arrows, and was safely taken up. The ship turned out to be the *Clementina*, a schooner, bound to Batavia. The captain was a Frenchman, but the rest of the crew were Malays. During the voyage the Malay crew murdered the captain and mate, and seemed inclined to murder him, but they changed their minds, and put him ashore on Ascension Island, where he found five Europeans. Shortly afterwards a launch or boat which had been dropped from an American ship drifted on shore. In this frail barque they went out to sea, and after suffering very great privations, and being buffeted about for four months, they reached the Sandwich Islands. They were taken on board the *Mable* schooner, and afterwards transferred on board her Majesty's sloop of war *Imogene*, in which they reached this country. He had been away for seven years, and had endured very great privations and sufferings. His friends had long since thought him dead, and great was their surprise and joy when he presented himself amongst them. A respectable man, who accompanied Rinkle, said he knew he went out in the vessel referred to, and he had confirmation of the truth of his story and his strange adventures. Mr. Ballantyne said if what the man had related was correct he had suffered a good deal, and that it was decidedly illegal for any master of a ship to force a man to leave a ship against his will, and cast him on an island amongst savages, but the only way he could assist him was by granting a summons against the captain. The officers said the captain was at sea with another ship, and the witnesses to the transaction were all dispersed. The vessel was one in which there had been a serious disturbance on board, owing to the captain stabbing a man with a sword. This was the ground of a long investigation at that office when the vessel arrived here, and subsequent proceedings against the captain in one of the Law Courts, which they understood were still pending. Rinkle said the greatest tyranny had been practised towards him, as he was prepared to prove, and seven years of his life had been passed in hardships. He only owed his life to the forbearance of the savages, who, however, tattooed him all over, and subjected him to great pain and torture. Mr. Ballantyne said that, according to the 40th section of the Merchant Seamen's Act, any master of a ship wilfully leaving behind any person belonging to his crew should be deemed guilty of a misdemeanour, and might be prosecuted at the suit of the Attorney-General, or by indictment, or by other proceedings in any Court. The captain was at present out of the kingdom, and he could do no more in the case than direct an officer to make inquiries into this very strange affair. Rinkle thanked the magistrate, and left the office.