

A

HISTORY OF SHIPWRECKS,

AND

DISASTERS AT SEA,

FROM THE MOST AUTHENTIC SOURCES.

"The wreck, the shores, the dying, and the drown'd."

FALCONER.

IN FOUR VOLUMES

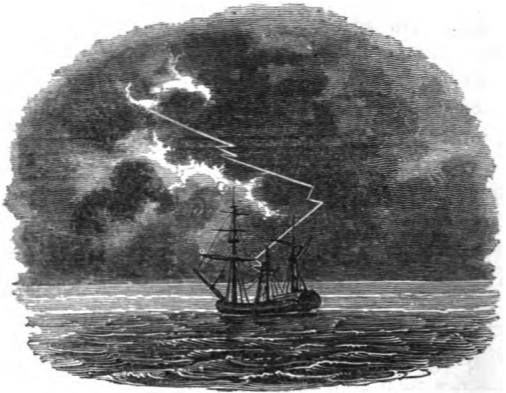
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CHAPTER VII.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

DESTRUCTION OF THE RESISTANCE, 1798.

THE destruction of the *Resistance*, of 44 guns, in the Straits of Banca, is one of the most extraordinary narratives of the kind which is known, not only from the suddenness of the catastrophe, but the remarkable preservation of the seaman Scott, through whom alone the fate of the vessel has been ascertained. It appears, that Major Taylor, who commanded a garrison at

Malacca in 1798, heard that an English vessel of war, supposed to be the Resistance, had been blown up. This news came to the Major through Captain Shepherdson, commanding a trader called the Venus. It was added, that a part of the crew had been taken and carried into slavery at Lingan by pirates.

Major Taylor immediately dispatched a proa to Lingan, together with a sepoy, who spoke the language. He carried a letter to the sultan of that country, requesting him to aid in the recovery and restoration of the unfortunate men. It was on the fifth of December when the proa thus sent returned, bringing with her a seaman named Thomas Scott, who had been one of the unfortunate crew. From him the melancholy details respecting the loss of the Resistance were learned, and they were in substance as follows. It must be observed, that nothing relative to the proceedings of this vessel was before known from the date of the previous January, although it was July when the fatal accident occurred.

There is not the slightest ground for doubting the truth of Scott's narrative. This man was then only twenty-two years of age, and what he has stated was confirmed by the Malays at Rhio to Captain Shepherdson of the Venus, as far as respects the leading particulars, as well as by the other three men who ultimately got to Penang in safety, after being in the hands of the Malays. Scott was a native of Wexford, he once belonged to a South Sea whaler, and had been three years in the Dutch employ at Timor Besar until that place was captured by the British, wh

entered on board the *Resistance*. This ship had encountered a heavy gale of wind, and sprung a leak. Soon afterwards she bore away for the Philippine Islands, where, by hoisting some Spanish colours they had got on board, they secured the deputy-governor of the town, and the captain of a brig lying there; but let them go again, on the promise of their supplying them with provisions, which these honourable personages neglected to do. The boats of the *Resistance* then cut out the brig about Christmas-day, 1797. The ship next sailed for Balambangan, where they arrived in four days. From thence they proceeded to Celebes, and sent the brig to Amboyna, to signify their want of supplies, afterwards repairing thither. There the *Resistance* remained two months, and then sailed to Booroo, and after that to Banda, but springing a leak off Amboyna, the ship was obliged to put back to Booroo.

In July the *Resistance* set sail again, captured a Dutch brig in ballast, which she let go, and then steered for the Straits of Banda, where she fell in with some Malay pirates. She afterwards recaptured a sloop which the pirates had taken, and which was suspected to have Dutch property on board. This, however, did not appear so clearly as to alter the resolution of restoring her the next day. The Malay captain was on board the *Resistance*, which cast anchor to await the coming up of the proa. It was about one o'clock in the morning, when the Malay arrived, and anchored under the stern of the *Resistance*. At this time Lieutenant Cuthbert hailed the

proa, in order that she might take back her commander. His call was not heard, and the Malay captain, assured of his liberty in the morning, was reconciled to remain until then before he returned on board his vessel. That morning's dawn he was destined never to behold!

Soon after this occurred, about two o'clock in the morning, Scott's watch being out, he lay down to sleep between two guns on the larboard side of the ship. The weather was beautiful at the time, so that he did not like going to his berth below. He was awoke by a sudden blaze, which caught his hair and clothes, and was succeeded by a terrible explosion. He thinks he was senseless for a minute or two. This accident, he imagines, occurred about four o'clock, because he thought it was an hour afterwards when the dawn of day appeared.

When Scott came to himself, he found he was half drowned, and struggling with about a dozen other persons on the surface of the water. They were all that remained of the crew of the Resistance!

When daylight came, the people on board the sloop astern were not beyond the reach of the sufferers' voices. They must have seen the people on a piece of the wreck, and heard their shouts for assistance, but they disregarded them, fired a musket, and stood over to the Island of Banca.

The weather was still fine, and the sea calm, which enabled these unfortunate men to get together a few pieces of timber, and form themselves a raft. The mainyard lay alongside the wreck which they were

upon, and they obtained from it the cordage necessary for their purpose. It was about eleven o'clock in the forenoon when they went to work. A piece of the mainsail, and the mast of the jolly-boat, which they discovered, served them for a sail, which they rigged up in the best manner they could, and over their raft they placed what pieces of plank they could gather from the sea around them. They were unable to complete their task in the roughest manner before one o'clock. The whole party were so burned and bruised, that only four or five could give assistance, and their exertions were very inadequate to securing the raft in a proper manner. They were also extremely anxious to reach the land before night approached. The piece of the wreck to which they had clung when the ship blew up was barely able to support the weight of the two who had suffered most in the concussion, whose names were James Sullivan and Robert Pulloyne, their compassionate comrades agreed to mount them upon it in preference, from a consideration of their sufferings. They had but a single pumpkin among them all to serve for food.

They committed themselves to this raft as soon as it was put together, and endeavoured to make the nearest land, which was the Island of Sumatra, about six leagues south of Palambang, a Dutch settlement. Unfortunately, about seven o'clock in the evening, the wind blew fresh, the sea ran high, and the current set against them. They were a good way from the land, when the cords that bound their raft gave way, and it began to separate. The planks which

they had placed upon it were washed off, and at length the mast and sail were carried away. An anchor-stock had formed part of their raft, it had separated, and was floating some distance from them. From its size, it seemed to hold out a greater security than the remnant of the raft, loaded with so many persons.

Scott proposed to swim after it, and encouraged three others to follow his example. Their names were M'Carthy, Hutton, and Scott. They all reached the anchor-stock in safety.



It was about one o'clock in the morning of the twenty-fifth of July that they quitted the raft, leaving eight of their comrades upon it. Pulloyne had died of his injuries. They witnessed the departure of the four hale men of their number with great lamentings.

and bitterly sorrowed at the separation. In about an hour the four on the anchor-stock lost sight of their comrades, and these last were never heard of more. They lashed two spars across the stock, which prevented its rolling over with them, and were carried in this way by the current until nine o'clock in the morning, when, the tide changing, they were then borne fast towards the shore, after being much further out to sea at one time than when they quitted the wreck. They got under the lee of the land, with the help of a paddle, which they picked up about nine o'clock at night. There was a surf, which it cost them nearly all the remnant of their strength to overcome by swimming, but at length they found themselves upon the beach.

Having escaped the dangers of the ocean they had now to encounter the hazards of the land. They were cast upon a shore inhabited by a fierce and savage race of men, whom they had yet to meet and pacify, or at least induce to compassionate them. They first got together some dry leaves and grass on which they might obtain a little repose. Upon this they fell asleep, and remained in that state until they were awakened by the calls of thirst in the morning. They were so fortunate as to find water close by, but they could discover nothing which would satisfy their hunger, not even a single shell-fish. They were nearly naked, having between them all but one jacket, and a couple of shirts.

They remained without food until about four o'clock in the afternoon of the twenty-sixth, comprising a

period of three nights and two days from the time when they were blown up. They were straggling along the shore despairing of succour, when one of them saw a piratical Malay proa lying in a little hollow of the land, and scarcely a quarter of a mile distant. It was then agreed that Scott, being able to speak both the Dutch and Malay tongues, should approach it alone, while his comrades kept in concealment. This judicious plan probably saved the lives of the whole party.

Upon Scott's approach he saw four more proas near the first, some of the crews of which were repairing a boat. On seeing Scott, one of them ran towards him with a Malay sword, and calling aloud, the others followed as if determined to destroy him. Scott fell upon his knees, and supplicating for mercy, the chief forbade any of the people doing him an injury. The Malays then eagerly asked of what nation he was, whence he came, and what he wanted. He answered, that he was an Englishman, one of the few who had survived the destruction of their vessel. They again asked if he was an Englishman, and insisted that if a man of the Dutch nation belonged to those who were saved he should discover him. He told them there was none. The rajah, or chief, then asked if the captain survived, in which case he would himself convey them all safely to Malacca. The chief said that if the party had been Dutch they would not have given quarter to one of them.

Some of the Malays were then directed to where the other three men were concealed, and returned

with them, all fearful lest they should be murdered, as they imagined Scott had been, for they had observed him surrounded by a crowd, evidently threatening him, having seen their comrade's reception undiscovered.

As soon as the four men had arrived they were made to sit down, until they had satisfied every question of the Malays respecting the Resistance, and even themselves. The Malays then divided the seamen, each rajah, or captain, taking two into his boat. M'Carthy and Hutton went into one, and the two Scotts into the other. By this time it was after six o'clock in the evening, and being well nigh starved, the Malays served them up a plentiful repast of fish and rice. When they had eaten it the proas put off for the wreck of the Resistance, but, after a search of two days, returned without being able to pick up any thing. Some of the seamen's chests, containing, except a few dollars, articles of little value, and some of the bodies continued to be washed on shore at intervals for several days afterwards.

These proas formed part of a fleet of eighteen or twenty which haunted the neighbouring shores, cruizing separately up and down the Straits in search of traders from Java and China. The Malays continued to behave kindly towards their prisoners.

On or about the twenty-fifth of August the principal proa fell in with a sloop from Java. The crew had abandoned her during the night in their boats, and escaped to the nearest shore, which was Banca, where they were secure. They carried off what specie

they had with them, wisely judging that from a Malay proa they could expect no mercy. The Malays promised the seamen a share of what cloth or provisions there might be on board, but the prize was only laden with salt, oil, a few fowls, and cocoa-nuts, of which a share was bestowed on the seamen. After this they proceeded to Penobang with their prize, and reached that place, which is in the Isle of Lingan, in about three days. There they sold her for fifteen hundred dollars. The two Scotts were parted at this place, Thomas remaining with the rajah at Penobang, and Joseph being sent in the prize to Lingan. At Penobang the pirates had a small fort, surrounded by water, and mounting a number of guns.

Thomas Scott remained as a slave with the rajah of the proa for four or five weeks, when he heard that M'Carthy and Hutton had arrived at Lingan, having been generously presented to the Sultan there without ransom by the rajah of the other proa. He heard a few days afterwards that Joseph Scott had been ransomed of the purchasers of the prize, to whom he had been sold for fifteen dollars, and that the Sultan, out of regard to the British nation, had provided, with great alacrity, the means of conveying to Penang all the seamen of England of whom he had obtained any account. A contrast to the conduct of the Malays towards the Dutch, who are universally execrated throughout these islands.

Nine days after the departure of his comrades from Penang, Thomas Scott was brought up to Lingan from Penobang by his master, and sold in the market

there. His purchaser was another rajah, who proved a much better master than his first, gave him more food, more liberty, a cloth to cover him, and a handkerchief. Scott lamented the hardship of his lot in being the only one of his countrymen left behind; but his new master had kindly promised him his liberty whenever he could repay him the sum he paid for him. He was, however, agreeably surprised by the intelligence that the Sultan of Lingan had purchased him. On being ushered into the presence of this potentate, he was informed that in consequence of a letter from Major Taylor, commanding at Malacca, requesting his influence to obtain the liberty of any Englishmen who were slaves in the island, he had been ransomed to be sent to Malacca, where the news of the loss of the Resistance had reached. The Sultan then used many kind expressions to Scott, and dismissed him.

In about nine days a proa was sent by Major Taylor to Lingan, in which Scott embarked, with the Sultan's permission, for Malacca, which he reached, after a tedious passage of fourteen days, on the fifth of December. He then delivered the foregoing statement to the commanding officer, offering to attest the same when called upon for that purpose.

Those of the ship's company, whose names Scott recollects as on board the Resistance, and who perished, were Captain Edward Pakenham, the first, second and third lieutenants, Haughton, Cuthbert, and Mackay, Mr. Powis, surgeon, Mr. Hutton, master, Lieut. Rosenhagen, of the marines, Mr. Brown, master-at-

arms, Mr. Dawson, gunner, Mr. Pike, boatswain, Mr. Mercer, purser, the carpenter, Mr. Hargood, master's mate, Messrs. Walsh, Denham, Courtenay, Woolfe, and two others, midshipmen, three masters, and one surgeon's mate, Evans, coxswain, Serjeant Stevens, one of the marines, five quarter-masters, (the sixth, M'Carthy, being saved) four boatswain's mates, about thirty marines, and two hundred and fifty seamen, three English women, one Malay woman, the Malay captain of the proa, and fourteen Spanish prisoners.

The following is an account given by Scott of the foregoing accident, more than thirty years afterwards, when a pensioner in Greenwich Hospital. The difference from the foregoing account is no greater than might have been expected in a man speaking from memory so long afterwards.

“ On the fourteenth of July, to the best of my recollection, I was blowed up by a flash of lightning in the Resistance of forty-four guns, commanded by Captain Edward Pakenham, in the Straits of Banca, bound to Malacca, and from thence to Bombay to join the admiral.

“ I belonged to the maintop at the time ; my watch being out at two o'clock, I came down on the quarter-deck, and I laid myself down between the two foremast guns on the larboard side, when I saw the lightning go down the fore-hatchway, and in about a minute she went up with all hands. I found myself nearly about the same spot ; I just had time

for to say, 'The Lord have mercy on my soul,' when she burst, and down she went.

"I do ever lament the loss of our much beloved captain, who was asleep in his cabin. In about half an hour more we should have turned the hands up to get the ship under weigh. The ship came to anchor that night late, about half-past ten o'clock.

"The truck of the foremast carriage gun caught my frock as she heeled over to starboard, and the gun was bruising my body, when she took a heel to port, and the gun run out to its place, and up I came. I was burnt on my left hand, left foot, and left cheek. By this time there was nothing left of the ship except the fore part of the quarter-deck, washing above water. I made directly to it, after I had washed the powder out of my eyes, and there I hung on till daylight. There were thirteen souls left alive among the fragments of the ship; some of them were so greatly mangled that they died and went down.

"When the ship burst, a spare anchor-stock came out of her larboard sling; I owe my life to it, being the largest piece which was left of the ship. I was three days and three nights on it, when, by the mercy of God, the tide drifted us on shore on the coast of Sumatra, about four leagues to the eastward of Banca town, about a mile distant from a point of land where there were three Malay proas lying. We had nothing of any kind of refreshment all that time. I made the other three men stay behind the point, to see what would become of me, and then to shift for themselves, as I could speak the language. As soon as the Ma-

lays saw me, one man gave a loud shriek, and ran at me with a Malay sword, and took hold of me by the back of the neck to cut off my head. I kneeled down and asked for mercy, whereupon they all assembled on shore, and another ran up and asked the chief if he should cut off my head, to which he replied, no. I then sent for the other three men, and I stood in the middle, pacifying them, and pleading for our lives. They asked me if we were Dutch or English sailors. I answered, the latter, which they appeared glad to hear.

“ We had a Malay prize astern of the frigate, but unfortunately we took our men out of her, and she went about her business, or else all who were left alive might have been saved. I was relieved by Major Taylor, the governor of Malacca, who heard by accident that there were four English seamen on the island of Lingan, where I was taken and sold at a Malay cock fight for thirty-one dollars. My second master bought me on purpose to kill me, but I pleased him so much, that he took a great liking to me. The *Carisford* arrived at Malacca, and in her I sailed for Portsmouth; from thence I was sent to London, and was shoved into the newspapers, and had to attend the Board, to give an account of the ship's loss, as far as I could recollect, to the best of my knowledge.”