



4

THE  
**Mariner's Chronicle;**

BEING  
A COLLECTION OF THE MOST INTERESTING  
NARRATIVES

OF  
**SHIPWRECKS, FIRES, FAMINES,**

And other Calamities incident to  
A LIFE OF MARITIME ENTERPRISE; <sup>3/1</sup>

With authentic Particulars of  
*The extraordinary Adventures and Sufferings of the Crews,*  
THEIR RECEPTION AND TREATMENT ON DISTANT SHORES;  
AND A CONCISE DESCRIPTION OF  
THE COUNTRY, CUSTOMS, AND MANNERS OF THE INHABITANTS:  
Including an Account of the Deliverance of the Survivors.

BY  
**ARCHIBALD DUNCAN, ESQ.**  
LATE OF THE ROYAL NAVY.



IN TWO VOLUMES.

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24

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THE SHIPWRECK OF THE SLOOP BETSI,

PHILIP AUBIN, COMMANDER,

On the Coast of Dutch Guiana, the 5th of August, 1756.

The Betsy sails from Barbadoes for Surinam.—The Ship upsets, by which Part of the Crew are drowned.—Extraordinary Escape of the Captain and three others, who, with much difficulty, secure one of the Boats.—Their dreadful Situation.—Their excessive Sufferings for eight Days from Hunger, Thirst, and Fatigue.—Two of them die of drinking Sea-water.—The Boat, with the Captain and Mate, arrives at the Island of Tobago.—They are discovered on the Shore by some Caribs, by whom they are treated with the utmost Kindness and Attention.—They are fetched away by a Vessel from Barbadoes.

ON the 1st of August, 1756, says Captain Aubin, I set sail for Surinam, from Carlisle Bay, in the island of Barbadoes. My sloop, of about eighty tons burthen, was built entirely of cedar, and freighted by Messrs. Roscoe and Nyles, merchants of Bridgetown. The cargo consisted of provisions of every kind, and horses. The Dutch colony being in want of a supply of those animals, passed a law that no English vessel should be permitted to trade there, if horses did not constitute part of her cargo. The Dutch were so rigid in enforcing this condition, that if the horses chanced to die in the passage, the master of the vessel was obliged to preserve the ears and hoofs of the animals, and to swear, upon entering the port of Surinam, that when he embarked they were alive, and destined for that colony.

Chronicle

The coast of Surinam, Berbice, Demerary, Oronoko, and all the adjacent parts, are low lands, and inundated by large rivers, which discharge themselves into the sea. The bottom, all along this coast, is composed of a kind of mud, or clay, in which the anchors sink to the depth of three or four fathoms, and upon which the keel sometimes strikes without stopping the vessel. The sloop being at anchor three leagues and a half from the shore, in five fathoms water, the mouth of the river Demerary bearing S.  $\frac{1}{2}$  S. W. and it being the rainy season, my crew drew up water from the sea, for their use, which was just as sweet and good as river water. The current occasioned by the trade winds, and the numerous rivers which fall into the sea, carried us at the rate of four miles an hour, towards the west and north west.

In the evening of the 4th of August I was tacking about, between the latitude of ten and twelve degrees north, with a fresh breeze, which obliged me to reef my sails. At midnight, finding that the wind increased, in proportion as the moon, then on the wane, rose above the horizon, and that my bark, which was deeply laden, labored excessively, I would not retire to rest till the weather became more moderate, I told my mate, whose name was Williams, to bring me a bottle of beer, and both sitting down, I upon a hen-coop, and Williams upon the deck, we began to tell stories to pass the time, according to the custom of mariners of every country. The vessel suddenly turned with her broadside to windward: I called to one of the seamen to put the helm a-weather, but he replied it had been so for some time. I directed my mate to see if the cord were not entangled; he informed me that it was not. At this moment the vessel swung round with her head to the sea, and

plunged; her head filled in such a manner that she could not rise above the surf, which broke over us to the height of the anchor stocks, and we were presently 'up to our necks in water; every thing in the cabin was washed away. Some of the crew, which consisted of nine men, were drowned in their hammocks, without uttering a cry or a groan. When the wave had passed, I took the hatchet that was hanging up near the fire-place, to cut away the shrouds to prevent the ship from upsetting, but in vain. She upset, and turned over again, with her masts and sails in the water; the horses rolled one over the other and were drowned, forming altogether a most melancholy spectacle.

I had but one small boat, about twelve or thirteen feet long; she was fixed, with a cable coiled inside of her, between the pump and the side of the ship. Providentially for our preservation there was no occasion to lash her fast; but we at this time entertained no hope of seeing her again, as the large cable within her, together with the weight of the horses, and their stalls entangled one among another, prevented her from rising to the surface of the water.

In this dreadful situation, holding by the shrouds, and stripping off my clothes, I looked round me for some plank or empty box to preserve my life as long as it should please the Almighty, when I perceived my mate and two seamen hanging by a rope, and imploring God to receive their souls. I told them that the man who was not resigned to die when it pleased his Creator to call him out of the world was not fit to live. I advised them to undress as I had done, and to endeavour to seize the first object that could assist them in preserving their lives. Williams followed my advice, stripped

himself quite naked, and bethook himself to swimming, looking out for whatever he could find. A moment afterwards he cried out:—Here is the boat, keel uppermost! I immediately swam to him, and found him holding the boat by the keel. We then set to work to turn her, but in vain; at length, however, Williams, who was the heaviest and strongest of the two, contrived to set his feet against the gunwale of the boat, laying hold of the keel with his hands, and with a violent effort nearly succeeded in turning her. I being to windward, pushed and lifted her up with my shoulders on the opposite side. At length, with the assistance of the surf, we turned her over, but she was full of water. I got into her, and endeavoured, by means of a rope belonging to the rigging, to draw her to the mast of the vessel. In the intervals between the waves the mast always rose to the height of fifteen or twenty feet above the water. I passed the end of the rope fastened to the boat once round the head of the mast, keeping hold of the end; each time that the mast rose out of the water, it lifted up both the boat and me; I then let go the rope, and by this expedient the boat was three-fourths emptied; but having nothing to enable me to disengage her from the mast and shrouds, they fell down upon me, driving the boat and me again under water.

After repeated attempts to empty her, in which I was cruelly wounded and bruised, I began to haul the boat, filled with water, towards the vessel, by the shrouds; but the bark had sunk by this time to such a depth, that only a small part of her stern was to be seen, upon which my mate and two other seamen were holding fast by a rope. I threw myself into the water, with the rope of the boat in my mouth, and swam towards

them to give them the end to lay hold of, hoping, by our united strength, that we should be able to haul the boat over the stern of the vessel; we exerted our utmost efforts, and at this moment I nearly had my thigh broken by a shock of the boat, being between her and the ship. At length we succeeded in hauling her over the stern, but had the misfortune to break a hole in her bottom in this manœuvre. As soon as my thigh was a little recovered from the blow, I jumped into her with one of the men, and stopped the leak with a piece of his coarse shirt. It was extremely fortunate for us that this man did not know how to swim; it will soon be seen what benefit we derived from his ignorance; had it not been for this we must all have perished. Being unable to swim, he had not stripped, and had thus preserved his coarse shirt, a knife that was in his pocket, and an enormous hat, in the Dutch fashion. The boat being fastened to the rigging, was no sooner cleared of the greatest part of the water than a dog of mine came to me, running along the gunwale; I took him in, thanking Providence for having thus sent provision for a time of necessity. A moment after the dog had entered, the rope broke with a jerk of the vessel, and I found myself drifting away. I called my mate and the other man who swam to me: the former had fortunately found a small spare top-mast, which served us for a rudder. We assisted the two others to get into the boat, and soon lost sight of our ill-fated bark.

It was then four o'clock in the morning, as I judged by the dawn of day, which began to appear, so that about two hours had elapsed since we were obliged to abandon her. What prevented her from foundering sooner was my having taken on board about 150 barrels

of biscuit, as many or more casks of flour, and 300 firkins of butter, all which substances float upon the water, and are soaked through but slowly and by degrees. As soon as we were clear of the wreck, we kept the boat before the wind as well as we could, and when it grew light I perceived several articles that had floated from the vessel. I perceived my box of clothes and linen, which had been carried out of the cabin by the violence of the waves. I felt an emotion of joy. The box contained some bottles of orange and lime water, a few pounds of chocolate, sugar, &c. Reaching over the gunwale of our boat we laid hold of the box, and used every effort to open it on the water, for we could not think of getting it into the boat, being of a size and weight sufficient to sink her. In spite of all our endeavours we could not force open the lid; we were obliged to leave it behind, with all the good things it contained, and to increase our distress we had by this effort almost filled our boat with water, and had more than once nearly sunk her.

We, however, had the good fortune to pick up thirteen onions; we saw many more, but were unable to reach them. These thirteen onions and my dog, with-out a single drop of fresh water, or any liquor whatever, were all that we had to subsist upon. We were, according to my computation, above fifty leagues from land, having neither mast, sails, nor oars, to direct us, nor any kind of article besides the knife of the sailor who could not swim, his shirt, a piece of which we had already used to stop the leak in our boat, and his wide trowsers. We this day cut the remainder of his shirt into strips, which we twisted for rigging, and then fell to work alternately to loosen the planks with which the

boat was lined, cutting, by dint of time and patience, all round the heads of the nails that fastened them. Of these planks we made a kind of mast, which we tied to the foremost bench; a piece of board was substituted for a yard, to which we fastened the two parts of the trowsers, which served for sails, and assisted us in keeping the boat before the wind, steering with the top-mast as mentioned before.

As the pieces of plank which we had detached from the inside of the boat were too short, and were not sufficient to go quite round the edge, when the sea ran very high, we were obliged, in order to prevent the waves from entering the boat, to lie down several times along the gunwale on each side, with our backs to the water, and thus with our bodies to repel the surf, while the other, with the Dutch hat, was incessantly employed in bailing out the water; besides which the boat continued to make water at the leak, which we were unable entirely to stop.

It was in this melancholy situation, and stark naked, that we kept the boat before the wind as well as we could. The night of the first day after our shipwreck arrived before we had well completed our sail; it grew quite dark, and we contrived to keep our boat running before the wind, at the rate of about a league an hour. The second day was more calm; we each ate an onion, at different times, and began to feel thirst. In the night of the second day the wind became violent and variable, and sometimes blowing from the north, which caused me great uneasiness, being obliged to steer south, in order to keep the boat before the wind, whereas we could only hope to be saved by proceeding from east to west.

The third day we began to suffer exceedingly, not only from hunger and thirst, but likewise from the heat of the sun, which scorched us in such a manner, that from the neck to the feet our skin was as red and as full of blisters as if we had been burned by a fire. I then seized my dog and plunged the knife in his throat. I cannot even now refrain from weeping at the thought of it, but at the moment I felt not the least compassion for him. We caught his blood in the hat, receiving in our hands and drinking what ran over: we afterwards drank in turn out of the hat, and felt ourselves refreshed. The fourth day the wind was extremely violent, and the sea very high, so that we were more than once on the point of perishing; it was on this day in particular that we were obliged to make a rampart of our bodies in order to repel the waves. About noon a ray of hope dawned upon us, but soon vanished.

We perceived a sloop, commanded by Capt. Souhey, which, like my vessel, belonged to the island of Barbadoes, and was bound to Demerary; we could see the crew walking upon the deck, and shouted to them, but were neither seen nor heard. Being obliged, by the violence of the gale, to keep our boat before the wind, for fear of foundering, we had passed her a great distance before she crossed us; she steering direct south, and we bearing away to the west. Captain Souhey was one of my particular friends. This disappointment so discouraged my two seamen that they refused to endeavour any longer to save their lives. In spite of all I could say, one of them would do nothing, not even bale out the water which gained upon us; I had recourse to entreaties; I fell at his knees, but he remained unmoved. My mate and I, at length, prevailed upon

them, by threatening to kill them instantly with the topmast, which we used to steer by, and to kill ourselves afterwards, to put a period to our misery. This menace made some impression on them, and they resumed their employment of baling as before.

On this day I set the<sup>e</sup> others the example of eating a piece of the dog with some onions; it was with difficulty that I swallowed a few mouthfuls; but in an hour I felt that this morsel of food had given me vigor. My mate, who was of a much stronger constitution, ate more, which gave me much pleasure; one of the two men likewise tasted of it, but the other, whose name was Comings, either would not or could not swallow a morsel.

The fifth day was more calm, and the sea much smoother. At day-break we perceived an enormous shark, as large as our boat, which followed us several hours, as a prey that was destined for him. We also found in our boat a flying fish, which had dropped there during the night; we divided it into four parts, which we chewed to moisten our mouths. It was on this day that, when pressed with hunger and despair, my mate, Williams, had the generosity to exhort us to cut off a piece of his thigh to refresh ourselves with the blood, and to support life. In the night we had several heavy showers, with some wind. We tried to get some rain water by wringing the trowsers which served us for a sail, but when we caught it in our mouths it proved to be as salt as that of the sea; the men's clothes having been so often soaked with sea-water, that they, as well as the hat, were quite impregnated with salt. Thus we had no other resource but to open our mouths and catch the drops of rain upon our tongues, in order to cool

them: after the shower was over we again fastened the trowsers to the mast.

On the sixth day the two seamen, notwithstanding all my remonstrances, drank sea water, which purged them so excessively that they fell into a kind of delirium, and were of no more service to Williams and me. Both he and I kept a nail in our mouths, and from time to time sprinkled our heads with water to cool them. I perceived myself the better for these ablutions, and that my head was more easy. We tried several times to eat of the dog's flesh, with a morsel of onion; but I thought myself fortunate if I could get down three or four mouthfuls. My mate always ate rather more than I could.

The seventh day was fine, with a moderate breeze, and the sea perfectly calm. About noon the two men who had drank sea water grew so weak that they began to talk wildly, like people who are light-headed, not knowing any longer whether they were at sea or on shore. My mate and I were so weak too that we could scarcely stand on our legs, or steer the boat in our turns, or bale the water from the boat, which made a great deal at the leak.

In the morning of the eighth day John Comings died, and three hours afterwards George Simpson likewise expired. The same evening, at sun-set, we had the inexpressible satisfaction of discovering the high lands on the west point of the island of Tobago. Hope gave us new strength. We kept the head of the boat towards the land all night, with a light breeze and a strong current, which was in our favor. Williams and I were that night in an extraordinary situation, our two comrades lying dead before us, with the land in sight, hav-

ing very little wind to approach it, and being assisted only by the current, which drove strongly to westward. In the morning we were not, according to my computation, more than five or six leagues from the land. That happy day was the last of our sufferings at sea. We kept steering the boat the whole day towards the shore, though we were no longer able to stand. In the evening the wind lulled, and it fell calm; but about two o'clock in the morning the current cast us on the beach of the island of Tobago, at the foot of a high shore, between little Tobago and Man of War Bay, which is the easternmost part of the island. The boat soon bulged with the shock; my unfortunate companion and I crawled to the shore, leaving the bodies of our two comrades in the boat, and the remainder of the dog, which was quite putrid.

We clambered, as well as we could, on all fours, along the high coast, which rose almost perpendicularly to the height of three or four hundred feet. A great quantity of leaves had dropped down to the place where we were from the numerous trees over our heads; these we collected, and lay down upon them to wait for daylight. When it began to dawn we sought about for water, and found some in the holes of the rocks, but it was brackish, and not fit to drink. We perceived on the rocks around us several kinds of shell-fish, some of which we broke open with a stone, and chewed them to moisten our mouths.

Between eight and nine o'clock we were perceived by a young Carairb, who was sometimes walking and at others swimming towards the boat. As soon as he had reached it he called his companions with loud shouts, making signs of the greatest compassion. His com-

rades instantly followed him, and swam towards us, having perceived us almost at the same time. The oldest, who was about sixty, approached us with the two youngest, whom we afterwards found to be his son and son-in-law. At the sight of us the tears flowed from their eyes: I endeavored by words and signs to make them comprehend that we had been nine days at sea, in want of every thing. They understood a few French words, and signified that they would fetch a boat to convey us to their hut. The old man took a handkerchief from his head and tied it round mine, and one of the young Carairbs gave Williams his straw hat; the other swam round the projecting rock and brought us a calabash of fresh water, some cakes of cassava, and a piece of broiled fish, but we could not eat. The two others took the two corpses out of the boat, and laid them upon the rock, after which all three of them hauled the boat out of the water. They then left us, with marks of the utmost compassion, and went to fetch their canoe.

About noon they returned in their canoe, to the number of six, and brought with them, in an earthen pot, some soup, which we thought delicious. We took a little, but my stomach was so weak that I immediately cast it up again; Williams did not vomit at all. In less than two hours we arrived at Man of War Bay, where the huts of the Carairbs were situated. They had only one hammock, in which they laid me, and the woman made us a very agreeable mess of herbs and broth of quatracas and pigeons. They bathed my wounds, which were full of worms, with a decoction of tobacco and other plants. Every morning the man lifted me out of the hammock, and carried me in his arms beneath a

lemon tree, where he covered me with plantain leaves to screen me from the sun. There they anointed our bodies with a kind of oil to cure the blisters raised by the sun. Our compassionate hosts even had the generosity to give each of us a shirt, and a pair of trowsers, which they had procured from the ships that came from time to time to trade with them for turtles and tortoise-shell.

After they had cleansed my wounds of the vermin, they kept me with my legs suspended in the air, and anointed them morning and evening with an oil extracted from the tail of a small crab, resembling what the English call the soldier-crab, because its shell is red. They take a certain quantity of these crabs, bruise the ends of their tails, and put them to digest in a large shell upon the fire. It was with this ointment that they healed my wounds, covering them with nothing but plantain leaves.

Thanks to the nourishing food procured us by the Caribs, and their humane attention, I was able, in about three weeks, to support myself upon crutches, like a person recovering from a severe illness. The natives flocked from all parts of the island to see us, and never came empty-handed; sometimes bringing eggs, and at others fowls, which were given with pleasure, and accepted with gratitude. We even had visitors from the island of Trinidad. I cut my name with a kerite upon several boards, and gave them to different Caribs, to shew them to any ships which chance might conduct to the coast. We almost despaired of seeing any arrive, when a sloop from Oronoko, laden with mules, and bound to St. Pierre, in the island of Martinique, touched at the sandy point on the west side

of Tobago. The Indians shewed the crew a plank upon which my name was carved, and acquainted them with our situation. Upon the arrival of this vessel at St. Pierre, those on board related the circumstance. Several merchants of my acquaintance, who traded under Dutch colours, happened to be there; they transmitted the information to my owners, Messrs. Roscoe and Nyles, who instantly dispatched a small vessel in quest of us. After living about nine weeks with this benevolent and charitable tribe of savages, I embarked and left them, when my regret was equal to the joy and surprise I had experienced at meeting with them.

When we were ready to depart they furnished us with an abundant supply of bananas, figs, yams, fowls, fish, and fruits; particularly oranges and lemons. I had nothing to give them as an acknowledgment for their generous treatment but my boat, which they had repaired, and used for occasionally visiting their nests of turtles: being larger than their canoes, it was much more fit for that purpose. Of this I made them a present, and would have given them my blood. My friend, Captain Young, assisted me to remunerate my benefactors. He gave me all the rum he had with him, being about seven or eight bottles, which I likewise presented to them. He also gave them several shirts and trowsers, some knives, fish-hooks, sail-cloth for the boat, with needles and ropes.

At length, after two days spent in preparations for our departure, we were obliged to separate. They came down to the beach to the number of about thirty men, women, and children, and all appeared to feel the sincerest sorrow, especially the old man, who had acted like a father to me. When the vessel left the bay, the



tears flowed from our eyes, which still continued fixed upon them. They remained standing in a line upon the shore till they lost sight of us. As we set sail about nine o'clock in the morning, steering north-east, and as Man of War Bay is situated at the north-east point of the island, we were a long time in sight of each other. I still recollect the moment when they disappeared from my sight, and the profound regret which filled my heart. I feared that I should never again be so happy as I had been among them. I love, and will continue to love, my dear Carraids as long as I live; I would shed my blood for the first of those benevolent savages that might stand in need of my assistance, if chance should ever bring one of them to Europe, or my destiny should again conduct me to their island.

In three days we arrived at Barbadoes. I continued to have a violent oppression on my breast, which checked respiration, and was not yet able to go without crutches. We received from the whole island marks of the most tender interest, and the most generous compassion; the benevolence of the inhabitants was unbounded. The celebrated Dr. Hilley, the author of a treatise on the diseases peculiar to that island, came to see me, with Dr. Lillhorn. They prescribed various remedies, but without effect. Both Williams and myself were unable to speak without the greatest difficulty. Williams remained at Barbadoes, but I, being more affected, and less robust, was advised by the physicians to return to Europe. In compliance with their advice I went to London, where I was attended by doctors Reeves, Akenstie, Schomberg, and the most celebrated physicians in

that metropolis, who gave me all the assistance within the power of their art, from which I received scarcely any relief. At length, after I had been about a week in London, Dr. Alexander Russell, on his return from Bath, heard my case mentioned. He came to see me, and with his accustomed humanity promised to undertake my cure, without any fee; but he candidly acknowledged that it would be both tedious and expensive. I replied, that the generosity of the inhabitants of Barbadoes had rendered me easy on that head, intreating him to prescribe for me, and thanking him for his obliging offers.

As he had practised for a long time at Aleppo, he had there seen great numbers afflicted with the same malady as myself, produced by long thirst in traversing the deserts of Africa. He ordered me to leave town, to enjoy a more wholesome air. I took a lodging at Hoxmerton, near Hackney; there he ordered me to bathe every morning, confining me to asses' milk as my only food, excepting a few new-laid eggs, together with moderate exercise, and a ride on horseback every day. After about a month of this regimen he ordered a goat to be brought every morning to my bed-side; about five o'clock I drank a glass of her milk, quite hot, and slept upon it. He then allowed me to take some light chicken broth, with a morsel of the wing. By means of this diet my malady was in a great degree removed in the space of about five months, and I was in a state to resume any occupation I pleased; but my constitution has ever since been extremely delicate, and my stomach in particular very weak.