
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

<https://books.google.com>



NARRATIVE

OF THE

DREADFUL SUFFERINGS.

Six Artillery Men,

Who left the Island of St. Helena in a Whale Boat, and, putting to Sea, were tossed about for twenty-nine days, in which time they were so hard put to for provisions, that they cast Lots who should Die for the Subsistence of the rest, when the Lot fell on one McKinnon, who Bled himself to Death, on which the rest subsisted for several days, when three of the six arrived at a Portuguese Settlement in South America. The whole delivered up^d Oath, by JOHN BROWN, one of the Survivors.



Edinburgh: Printed by R. Menzies, Lawn-market.

Reprinted by J. Marshall, Newcastle.

(Price One Penny)

THE
SUFFERINGS
OF
SOME DESERTERS.

LETTERS lately received from St. Helena, give a most singular and affecting narrative respecting six deserters from the artillery of that Island. Their extraordinary adventures produced a court of inquiry on the 12th of December last; when John Brown, one of the survivors, delivered the following account upon oath, before Captain Desbountain, President; Lieutenant B. Hodson, and Ensign Young.

“In June 1799, I belonged to the first company of artillery in the service of this garrison; and, on the 10th of that month, about half an hour before parade time, M’Kinnon, gunner, and orderly of the second company, asked me if I was willing to go with him on board of an American ship then in the roads.

After some conversation, I agreed, and met him about seven o’clock at the play-house, where I found one M’Quin, of Major Scale’s company; another man called Brighthouse; another called Parr; and the sixth Matthew Conway.

"Parr. was a good seaman, and said he would take us to the Island of Ascension, or lie off the harbour till the Columbia could weigh anchor and come out. We went down about eight o'clock to the West Rocks, where the American boat was waiting for us, manned with three of the American seamen, who took us along-side of the Columbia. We went on board. Parr went down into the cabin; and we changed our clothes, after having been on board half an hour.

"Brighthouse and Conway proposed to cut a whale-boat from out the harbour, to prevent Columbia from being detected, which they effected, having therewith a coil of rope and five oars, with a large stone she was moored by. This happened about eleven at night.

"We observed lanthorns passing by the line towards the sea gate, and hearing a noise, thought we were missed and searched for.— We immediately embarked in the whale-boat, with about twenty-five pounds of bread, and a keg of water, supposed to contain about thirteen gallons, one compass, and one quadrant, given to us by the Commanding Officer of the Columbia; but in the hurry the quadrant was left behind or dropped over-board.

"We then left the ship, pulling with two oars only, to get a-head of her. The boat

was half full of water, and nothing to bale out. In this condition we rowed to sea, and lay off the Island, expecting the ship hourly.

"About twelve the second day, no ship appearing, we bore away, steering for the Island of Ascension, using our handkerchiefs for sails. M'Kennon kept a reckoning with pen, ink, and paper, supplied by the Columbai, as also charts and maps.

"About twelve on the 18th Parr said he was sure we must be past the Island, accounting it to be 800 miles from St Helena. We then took our shirts and made a small sprit-sail, and laced our jackets and trowsers together at the waistband to keep us warm, and then altered our course, thinking to make Rio de Janeiro on the American coast. Provisions running short, we allowed ourselves only an ounce of bread for twenty-four hours, and two mouthfuls of water.

"We continued until the 20th, when all our provisions were expended. On the 27th M'Quin took a piece of bamboo to chew, and we all followed his example. On that night it being my turn to steer, and having read of persons in our situation eating their shoes, I cut a piece off mine; but it being soaked with salt water, I was obliged to spit it out, and take the inside soal, which I ate part of, and

distributed to the rest, but found no benefit.

“On the 1st of July, Mr. Parr caught a dolphin, with a gaff that had been left in the boat. We all fell on our knees, and thanked God for his goodness to us. We tore up the fish, and hung it to dry. About four we ate part of it, which agreed with us pretty well. On this fish we subsisted till the 4th, about eleven o'clock, when, finding the whole expended, bones and all, Parr, myself, Conway and Brighthouse, proposed to scuttle the boat, and let her go down, to put us out of misery; the other two objected, ~~and~~ saying, that God, who made man, always provided for him.

“On the 5th, about eleven, M'Kinnon proposed that it would be better for one to die, in order to save the rest, we agreed. The lots were made. Parr being sick two days with the spotted fever, was excluded. He wrote the numbers, and we drew them out of his hat blindfolded, and put them in our pockets, after determining that No. 5 should die, and the lots been unfolded, M'Kinnon's was No. 5.

“We agreed that whole lot it was should bleed himself to death with sharpened nails, which we got from the boat. M. Kinton with one cut himself in the foot, hand, and wrist, and praying God to forgive him, died in about a quarter of an hour.

“ Before he was quite cold, Brighthouse cut a piece of flesh off his thigh, and hung it up. About three hours after, we all ate a small bit of it. We dipt the body every two hours into the sea to preserve it. Parr having found a piece of slate in the boat, sharpened it on a stone, and cut another piece off the thigh, which lasted us until the 8th. when it being my watch, and observing the water, about break of day to change colour, I called the rest, thinking we were near shore, but saw no light, it not being yet day light.

“ As soon as day appeared, we discovered land and steered towards it. There being a heavy surf, we endeavoured to turn the boat's head to it; but, being very weak, we were unable. Soon after, the boat upset. Myself, Conway, and Parr, got on shore. M'Quin and Brighthouse were drowned.

“ We discovered a small hut on the beach, in which were an Indian and his mother, who spoke Portuguese, and I understanding that language, learnt there was a village, about three miles distant, called Belmont. This Indian went to the village, and gave information that the French had landed; and in about two hours the governor of the village, a clergyman, with several armed men, took Conway and Parr prisoners, tying them by their hands

and feet, and flinging them on a bamboo stick, and in this manner took them to the village. I being very weak, remained in the hut, but was afterwards taken.

“On our telling them that we were English, we were immediately released, and three hammocks provided. We were taken in them to the governor’s house, who let us lie on his own bed, and gave us milk and rice to eat; but not having eaten any thing for a considerable time, we were lock-jawed, and continued so till the 22d, during which time the governor wrote to the governor of St. Salvador, who sent a small schooner to a place called Porto Sejuro, to take us to St. Salvador.

We were conducted to Porto Sejuro on horseback, passing through Santa Croix, where we remained about ten days. Afterwards we embarked, and, on our arrival at St. Salvador, Parr, on being questioned by the governor, answered, that our ship had foundered, and we had saved our selves in the boat: that the ship’s name was the Sally of Liverpool, and belonged to his father, and was last from Cape Corfe Castle, on the coast of Africa, to touch at Ascension for turtle, and then bound for Jamaica. Parr said he was the Captain.

“We continued at St. Salvador about thirteen days, during which time the inhabitants

made up a subscription of £200 each man. We then embarked in the *Maria*, a Portuguese ship, for Lisbon: Parr as mate; Conway boat-swain's mate; myself, being sickly, as passenger. In thirteen days we arrived at Rio de Janeiro. Parr and Conway sailed for Lisbon, and I was left in the Hospital. In about three months, Captain Elphinstone, of the *Diomede*, pressed me into his Majesty's service, giving me the choice of remaining on that station, or to proceed to the admiral at the Cape. I chose the latter, and was put, with seven suspected deserters, on board the *Ann*, a Botany Bay ship, in irons, with convicts. When I arrived at the Cape, I was put on board the *Lancaster*, of 64 guns. I never entered. I at length received my discharge; since which I engaged in the *Duke of Clarence* as a seaman. I was determined to give myself up the first opportunity, in order to relate my sufferings to the men of this garrison, to deter them from attempting so mad a scheme again."

FINIS.

Marshall, Printer, Newcastle.