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Affecting Narrative
OF THE
SUFFERINGS
OF
SIX SOLDIERS,

Who Deserted from the Garrison of

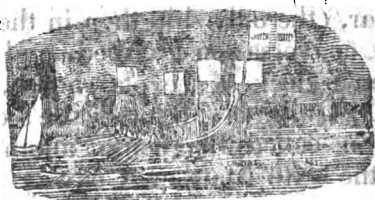
St. Helena,

In an open Boat, with only a small quantity of
bread and Water;

After being driven about at sea for near a month,
they were forced, by dreadful Sufferings and
Hunger to draw lots which of them should kill

himself to preserve the rest from Starving.

And they were necessitated
To Eat Human Flesh.



Sweet, Printers, Strand, Kent

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AFFECTING NARRATIVE,

&c. &c.

LETTERS lately arrived from St. Helena, give a most singular and affecting narrative, respecting six deserters from the artillery of that island. The extraordinary adventures produced a Court of Enquiry, on the twelfth of December last, when John Brown, one of the survivors, delivered the following account, upon oath, before Captain Disfountain, President, Lieut. B. Ensign Young, &c.

" In June last I belonged to the first company of artillery, in the service of this garrison, and on the tenth of that month, about half an hour before trade time, M'Kinnock, gunner and orderly of the second company, asked me if I was willing to go with him on board of an American ship, called the Columbia, Captain Henry Lelar, (the only 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 Searle'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 lay 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, which took us alongside 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.

“Brighouse and Conway proposed to cut a whale boat out of the harbour to prevent the Columbus from being suspected, which they effected, having therein a coil of rope and five oars, with a large stone she was moored by—this happened about eleven o'clock at night.

“We observed lanterns passing on the line towards the Sea Gate, and hearing a great noise, thought we were missed and searched for. We immediately embarked in the whale boat, with about twenty-five pounds of bread in a bag, and a small 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 our hurry the quadrant was either left behind or dropped overboard.

“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 her out—in this condition we rowed out to sea, and lay off the Island a great distance, expecting the American ship hourly.

About twelve o'clock the second day, no ship appearing, by Parr's advice we bore away, steering N. by W. and then N. N. W. for the Island of Ascension, using our handkerchiefs as a substitute for sails. We met with a gale of wind which continued two days; the weather then became very fine, and we supposed we had run about ten miles an hour. M'Kinnon kept a reckoning with pen, ink and paper, supplied by the Columbia, as also charts and maps.

We continued our course till about the eighteenth, in the morning, when we saw a number of birds but no land. About twelve that day Parr said he was sure we must be past the Island, accounting it to be eight hundred miles from St. Helena. We then each of us took our shirts, and with them made a spritsail, and tied our jackets and trousers together at the waistband to keep our civvies, and then altered our course to W. by N. thinking to make Rio de Janeiro, on the American coast. Provisions running very short, we allowed ourselves but only one ounce of bread for twenty-four hours, and two mouthfuls of water.

We continued until the twenty-sixth, when all our provisions were expended. On the following day M'Quin took a piece of bamboo in his mouth to chew, and we all followed his example. On that night, it being my turn to steer the boat, and remembering to have heard of persons in our situations eating their shoes, I cut a piece of one of mine; but it being soaked with

salt water, I was obliged to spit it out, and take the inside sole, which I eat part of and distributed to the rest, but found no benefit from it.

On the first 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 eat part of it, which agreed with us pretty well. On this fish we subsisted till the fourth, about eleven o'clock, when finding the whole expended, bones and all, Parr myself, Brighthouse, and Conway, proposed to scuttle the boat, and let her go down, to put us out of our misery; the other two rejected, observing that God, who had made man, always found him something to eat.

“ On the 5th, about eleven, M’Kinnon proposed that it would be better to cast lots for one of us to die in order to save the rest; to which we consented. The lots were made. William Parr being sick two days before with the spotted fever, was excluded. He wrote the numbers out and put them in a hat, which we drew out blindfolded, and put them in our pocket—each one praying to God that it might be his lot. It was agreed that No. 5 should die; and the lots being unfolded, M’Kinnon’s name was No. 5.

We had agreed that he, whose lot it was should bleed himself to death; for which purpose we had provided ourselves with nails sharpened, which we got from the boat. M’Kinnon,

with one of them, cut himself in three places, in his foot, hand, and wrists; and praying God to forgive him, died in about a quarter of an hour.

" Before he was quite cold, Brighthouse with one of those nails cut a piece of flesh off his thigh, and hung it up, leaving his body in the boat. About three hours after we all eat of it, only a very small bit. This piece lasted us until the 7th, we dipped the body every two hours into the sea to preserve it. Parr having found a piece of slate in the bottom of the boat, he sharpened it on the other large stone, and with it 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 land, it not being quite light.

" As soon as day appeared, we discovered land right a-head, and steered towards it. About eight in the morning we were close to the shore; there being a very 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^r Quin and Brighthouse were drowned!

" We discovered a small boat on the beach, in which were an Indian and his mother, who spoke Portuguese, and I understanding that language, learnt that 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, with several armed men, took Conway and Parr prisoners, tying them by their hands and feet, and slinging them on a bamboo stick, and in this manner took them to the village. I being very weak, remained in the hut some time, but was afterwards taken.

“ On our telling them we were English, we were immediately released, and three hammocks provided—we were taken in them to the Governor's house, who let us lay 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-jaw'd, and continued so till the 23d during which time the Governor wrote to the Governor of St. Salvador, who sent a small schooner to a place called Porto Seguro, to take us to St. Salvador.

“ We were conducted to Porto Seguro 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 at sea, and we had saved ourselves 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 200l. each man. We then embarked in the Maria, a Portuguese ship, for Lisbon: Parr as mate, Conway boatswain's mate, myself being sickly as passenger. In 13 days we arrived in Rio de Janeiro. Parr and Conway sailed for Lisbon, and I was left in the hospital; in about 3 months, Capt. Elphinstone, of the Diomedé, 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 7 suspected deserters on board the Ann, a Botany Bay ship, with the convicts. When I arrived at the Cape, I was put on board the Lancaster, of 64 guns. I 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 from attempting so mad a scheme again.

In attending to the above narrative, as simple as it is affecting, we cannot help noticing the justice of Providence so strikingly exemplified in the melancholy fate of M'Kinnon, the deluder of these unhappy men, and the victim of his own illegal and disgraceful scheme. May his fate prove a memento to Soldiers and Sailors, and a useful though awful lesson to the encouragers and abettors of Desertion.

FINIS.

Sweet, Printers, Strood, Kent.



