

***LOUIS  
BECKE***



***A MEMORY  
OF THE SOUTHERN  
SEAS***

**Louis Becke**

# **A Memory of the Southern Seas**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CAPTAIN "BULLY" HAYES

THE "WHALE CURE"

THE SEA "SALMON" SEASON IN AUSTRALIA

"JACK SHARK"

SOME PACIFIC ISLANDS FISHES

"LUCK"

CHAPTER I

CHAPTER II

CHAPTER III

CHAPTER IV

BULL-DOGS OF THE SEA

"REVENGE"

SAUNDERSON AND THE DYNAMITE

THE STEALING OF SA LUIA

# CAPTAIN “BULLY” HAYES

## Table of Contents

In other works by the present writer frequent allusion has been made, either by the author or by other persons, to Captain Hayes. Perhaps the continuous appearance of his name may have been irritating to many of my readers; if so I can only plead that it is almost impossible when writing of wild life in the Southern Seas to avoid mentioning him. Every one who sailed the Austral seas between the “fifties” and “seventies,” and thousands who had not, knew of him and had heard tales of him. In some cases these tales were to his credit; mostly they were not. However, the writer makes no further apology for reproducing the following sketch of the great “Bully” which he contributed to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and which, by the courtesy of the editor of that journal, he is able to include in this volume.

In a most interesting, though all too brief, sketch of the life of the late Rev. James Chalmers, the famous New Guinea missionary, which appeared in the January number of a popular religious magazine, the author, the Rev. Richard Lovett, gives us a brief glance of the notorious Captain “Bully” Hayes. Mr. Chalmers, in 1866, sailed for the South Seas with his wife in the missionary ship *John Williams*—the second vessel of that name, the present beautiful steamer being the fourth *John Williams*.

The second *John Williams* had but a brief existence, for on her first voyage she was wrecked on Nine Island (the “Savage” Island of Captain Cook). Hayes happened to be there with his vessel, and agreed to convey the shipwrecked

missionaries to Samoa. No doubt he charged them a pretty stiff price, for he always said that missionaries “were teaching Kanakas the degrading doctrine that even if a man killed his enemy and cut out and ate his heart in public, and otherwise misconducted himself, he could yet secure a front seat in the Kingdom of Heaven if he said he was sorry and was then baptized as Aperamo (Abraham) or Lakopo (Jacob).”

“It is characteristic of Chalmers,” writes Mr. Lovett, “that he was able to exert considerable influence over this ruffian, and even saw good points in him, not easily evident to others.”

The present writer sailed with Hayes on four voyages as supercargo, and was with the big-bearded, heavy-handed, and alleged “terror of the South Seas” when his famous brig *Leonora* was wrecked on Strong's Island, one wild night in March, 1875. And he has nothing but kindly memories of a much-maligned man, who, with all his faults, was never the cold-blooded murderer whose fictitious atrocities once formed the theme of a highly blood-curdling melodrama staged in the old Victoria Theatre, in Pitt Street, Sydney, under the title of “The Pirate of the Pacific.” In this lively production of dramatic genius Hayes was portrayed as something worse than Blackboard or Llonois, and committed more murders and abductions of beautiful women in two hours than ever fell to the luck in real life of the most gorgeous pirate on record. No one of the audience was more interested or applauded more vigorously the villain's downfall than “Bully” Hayes himself, who was seated in a private box with a lady. He had come to Sydney by steamer

from Melbourne, where he had left his ship in the hands of brokers for sale, and almost the first thing he saw on arrival were the theatrical posters concerning himself and his career of crime.

“I would have gone for the theatre people,” he told the writer, “if they had had any money, but the man who 'played' me was the lessee of the theatre and was hard up. I think his name was Hoskins. He was a big fat fellow, with a soapy, slithery kind of a voice, and I lent him ten pounds, which he spent on a dinner to myself and some of his company. I guess we had a real good time.”

But let us hear what poor ill-fated Missionary Chalmers has to say about the alleged pirate:—

“Hayes seemed to take to me during the frequent meetings we had on shore” (this was when the shipwrecked missionaries and their wives were living on Savage Island), “and before going on board for good I met him one afternoon and said to him, 'Captain Hayes, I hope you will have no objection to our having morning and evening service on board, and twice on Sabbaths. All short, and only those who like need attend.' Certainly not. My ship is a missionary ship now' (humorous dog), 'and I hope you will feel it so. All on board will attend these services.' I replied, 'Only if they are inclined.'” (If they had shirked it, the redoubtable “Bully” would have made attendance compulsory with a belaying pin.)

“Hayes was a perfect host and a thorough gentleman. His wife and children were on board. We had fearful weather all the time, yet I must say we enjoyed ourselves.... We had gone so far south that we could easily fetch Tahiti, and so

we stood for it, causing us to be much longer on board. Hayes several times lost his temper and did very queer things, acting now and then more like a madman than a sane man. Much of his past life he related to us at table, especially of things (he did) to cheat Governments."

Poor "Bully!" He certainly did like to "cheat Governments," although he despised cheating private individuals—unless it was for a large amount. And he frequently "lost his temper" also; and when that occurred things were very uncomfortable for the man or men who caused it. On one occasion, during an electrical storm off New Guinea, a number of corposants appeared on the yards of his vessel, which was manned by Polynesians and some Portuguese. One of the latter was so terrified at the ghastly *corpo santo* that he fell on his knees and held a small leaden crucifix, which he wore on his neck, to his lips. His example was quickly followed by the rest of his countrymen; which so enraged Hayes that, seizing the first offender, he tore the crucifix from his hand, and, rolling it into a lump, thrust it into his month *and made him swallow it*.

"You'll kill the man, sir," cried Hussey, his American mate, who, being a good Catholic, was horrified.

Hayes laughed savagely: "If that bit of lead is good externally it ought to be a darned sight better when taken internally."

He was a humorous man at times, even when he was cross. And he was one of the best sailor-men that ever trod a deck. A chronometer watch, which was committed to the care of the writer by Hayes, bore this inscription:—

*“From Isaac Steuart, of New York, to Captain William Henry Hayes, of Cleveland, Ohio. A gift of esteem and respect for his bravery in saving the lives of seventeen persons at the risk of his own. Honor to the brave.”*

Hayes told me that story—modestly and simply as brave men only tell a tale of their own dauntless daring. And he told me other stories as well of his strange, wild career; of Gordon of Khartoum, whom he had known, and of Ward and Burgevine and the Taeping leaders; and how Burgevine and he quarrelled over a love affair and stood face to face, pistols in hand, when Ward sprang in between them and said that the woman was his, and that they were fools to fight over what belonged to neither of them and what he would gladly be rid of himself.

Peace to his *manes!* He died—in his sea-boots—from a blow on his big, bald head, superinduced by his attention to a lady who was “no better than she ought to have been,” even for the islands of the North Pacific.

## **THE “WHALE CURE”**

### [Table of Contents](#)

I once heard a man who for nearly six years had been a martyr to rheumatism say he would give a thousand pounds to have a cure effected.

“I wish, then, that we were in Australia or New Zealand during the shore whaling season,” remarked a friend of the



writer; "I should feel pretty certain of annexing that thousand pounds." And then he described the whale cure.

The "cure" is not fiction. It is a fact, so the whalers assert, and there are many people at the township of Eden, Twofold Bay, New South Wales, who, it is vouched, can tell of several cases of chronic rheumatism that have been absolutely perfectly cured by the treatment herewith briefly described. How it came to be discovered I do not know, but it has been known to American whalers for years.

When a whale is killed and towed ashore (it does not matter whether it is a "right," humpback, finback, or sperm whale) and while the interior of the carcass still retains a little warmth, a hole is cut through one side of the body sufficiently large to admit the patient, the lower part of whose body from the feet to the waist should sink in the whale's intestines, leaving the head, of course, outside the aperture. The latter is closed up as closely as possible, otherwise the patient would not be able to breathe through the volume of ammoniacal gases which would escape from every opening left uncovered. It is these gases, which are of an overpowering and atrocious odour, that bring about the cure, so the whalers say. Sometimes the patient cannot stand this horrible bath for more than an hour, and has to be lifted out in a fainting condition, to undergo a second, third, or perhaps fourth course on that or the following day. Twenty or thirty hours, it is said, will effect a radical cure in the most severe cases, provided there is no malformation or distortion of the joints, and even in such cases the treatment causes very great relief. One man who was put in up to his neck in the carcass of a small "humpback" stood it

for sixteen hours, being taken out at two-hour intervals. He went off declaring himself to be cured. A year later he had a return of the complaint and underwent the treatment a second time.

All the “shore” whalers whom the writer has met thoroughly believe in the efficacy of the remedy, and by way of practical proof assert that no man who works at cutting-in and trying out a whale ever suffers from rheumatism. Furthermore, however, some of them maintain that the “deader” the whale is, the better the remedy. “More gas in him,” they say. And any one who has been within a mile of a week-dead whale will believe *that*.

Anyway, if there is any person, rheumatic or otherwise, who wants to emulate Jonah's adventure in a safe manner (with a dead whale), let him write to the Davidson Brothers, Ben Boyd Point, Twofold Bay, N.S.W., or to the Messrs. Christian, Norfolk Island, and I am sure those valorous whalers would help him to achieve his desire.

## **THE SEA “SALMON” SEASON IN AUSTRALIA**

### [Table of Contents](#)

The sea salmon make their appearance on the southern half of the eastern seaboard of Australia with undeviating regularity in the last week of October, and, entering the rivers and inlets, remain on the coast till the first week of