

A vintage map of Australia and the surrounding region, including parts of Southeast Asia and the Pacific. The map is color-coded with yellow, orange, and green. A compass is visible in the bottom right corner, showing a scale from 180 to 280 degrees. The text 'LOUIS BECKE' is overlaid in a black box in the top left, and the title 'BY ROCK AND POOL ON AN AUSTRAL SHORE, AND OTHER STORIES' is overlaid in a black box at the bottom.

**LOUIS
BECKE**

**BY ROCK AND POOL
ON AN AUSTRAL
SHORE, AND OTHER
STORIES**

Louis Becke

By Rock and Pool on an Austral Shore, and Other Stories

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The quaint, old-fashioned little town faces eastward to the blue Pacific, whose billows, when the wind blows from any point between north and east, come tumbling in across the shallow bar in ceaseless lines of foaming white, to meet, when the tide is on the ebb, the swift current of a tidal river as broad as the Thames at Westminster Bridge. On the south side of the bar, from the sleepy town itself to the pilot station on the Signal Hill, there rises a series of smooth grassy bluffs, whose seaward bases touch the fringe of many small beaches, or start sheer upward from the water when the tide is high, and the noisy swish and swirl of the eager river current has ceased.

As you stand on the Signal Hill, and look along the coast, you see a long, long monotonous line of beach, trending northward ten miles from end to end, forming a great curve from the sandspit on the north side of the treacherous bar to the blue loom of a headland in shape like the figure of a couchant lion. Back from the shore-line, a narrow littoral of dense scrub, impervious to the rays of the sun, and unbroken in its solitude except by the cries of birds, or the heavy footfall of wild cattle upon the thick carpet of fallen leaves; and then, far to the west, the dimmed, shadowy outline of the main coastal range.

It is a keen, frosty morning in June—the midwinter of Australia—and as the red sun bursts through the sea-rim, a gentle land breeze creeps softly down from the mountain forest of gums and iron-barks, and blows away the mists that, all through a night of cloudless calm, have laid heavily upon the surface of the sleeping ocean. One by one the

doors of the five little white-painted, weather-boarded houses which form the quarters of the pilot-boat's crew open, and five brown, hairy-faced men, each smoking a pipe, issue forth, and, hands in pockets, scan the surface of the sea from north to south, for perchance a schooner, trying to make the port, may have been carried along by the current from the southward, and is within signalling distance to tell her whether the bar is passable or not. For the bar of the Port is as changeable in its moods as the heart of a giddy maid to her lovers—to-day it may invite you to come in and take possession of its placid waters in the harbour beyond; to-morrow it may roar and snarl with boiling surf and savage, eddying currents, and whirlpools slapping fiercely against the grim, black rocks of the southern shore.

Look at the five men as they stand or saunter about on the smooth, frosty grass. They are sailormen— one and all— as you can see by their walk and hear by their talk; rough, ready, and sturdy, though not so sturdy nor so square-built as your solid men of brave old Deal; but a long way better in appearance and character than the sponging, tip-seeking, loafing fraternity of slouching, lazy robbers who on the parades of Brighton, Hastings, and Eastbourne, and other fashionable seaside resorts in this country, lean against lamp-posts with "Licensed Boatman" writ on their hat-bands, and call themselves fishermen, though they seldom handle a herring or cod that does not come from a fishmonger's shop. These Australians of British blood are leaner in face, leaner in limb than the Kentish men, and drink whiskey instead of coffee or tea at early morn. But see them at work in the face of danger and death on that bar,

when the surf is leaping high and a schooner lies broadside on and helpless to the sweeping rollers, and you will say that a more undaunted crew never gripped an oar to rescue a fellow-sailorman from the hungry sea.

One of them, a grey-haired, deeply-bronzed man of sixty, with his neck and hands tatoed in strange markings, imprinted thereon by the hands of the wild natives of Tucopia, in the South Seas, with whom he has lived forty years before as one of themselves, is mine own particular friend and crony, for his two sons have been playmates with my brothers and myself, who were all born in this quaint old-time seaport of the first colony in Australia; this forgotten remnant of the dread days of the awful convict system, when the clank of horrible gyves sounded on the now deserted and grass-grown streets, and the swish of the hateful and ever active "cat" was heard within the walls of the huge red-brick prison on the bluff facing the sea. Oh, the old, old memories of those hideous times! How little they wounded or troubled our boyish minds, as we, bent on some fishing or hunting venture along the coast, walked along a road which had been first soddened by tears and then dried by the panting, anguished breathings of beings fashioned in the image of their Creator, as they toiled and died under the brutal hands of their savage task-masters—the civilian officials of that cruel "System" which, by the irony of fate, the far-seeing, gentle, and tender-hearted Arthur Phillip, the founder of Australia, was first appointed to administer.

But away with such memories for the moment. Over the lee side with them into the Sea of the Past, together with the clank of the fetters and the hum of the cat and the

merciless laws of the time; sink them all together with the names of the military rum-selling traducers of the good Phillip, and of ill-tempered, passionate sailor Bligh of the *Bounty* —honest, brave, irascible, vindictive; destroyer of his ship's company on that fateful adventure to Tahiti, hero of the most famous boat-voyage the world has ever known; sea-bully and petty "hazer" of hapless Fletcher Christian and his comrades, gallant officer in battle and thanked by Nelson at Copenhagen; conscientious governor of a starveling colony gasping under the hands of unscrupulous military money-makers, William Bligh deserves to be remembered by all men of English blood who are proud of the annals of the most glorious navy in the world.

But ere we descend to the beach to wander by rock and pool in this glowing Australian sun, the warm, loving rays of which are fast drying the frost-coated grass, let us look at these square, old-time monuments to the dead, placed on the Barrack Hill, and overlooking the sea. There are four in all, but around them are many low, sunken headstones of lichen-covered slabs, the inscriptions on which, like many of those on the stones in the cemetery by the reedy creek, have long since vanished.

There, indeed, if you care to brave the snake-haunted place you will discover a word, or the part of a word—"Talav ——," "Torre—Vedras," "Vimiera," or "Badaj—," or "Fuentes de On—," and you know that underneath lies the dust of men who served their country well when the Iron Duke was rescuing Europe from the grip of the bloodstained Corsican. On one, which for seventy years has faced the

rising sun and the salty breath of the ocean breeze, there remains but the one glorious word, "Aboukir!" every indented letter thickly filled with grey moss and lichen, though the name of he who fought there has disappeared, and being but that of some humble seaman, is unrecorded and unknown in the annals of his country. How strange it seems! but yet how fitting that this one word alone should be preserved by loving Nature from the decaying touch of Time. Perhaps the very hand of the convict mason who held the chisel to the stone struck deeper as he carved the letters of the name of the glorious victory.

But let us away from here; for in the hot summer months amid these neglected and decaying memorials of the dead, creeping and crawling in and out of the crumbling masonry of the tombs, gliding among the long, reedy grass, or lying basking in the sun upon the fallen headstones, are deadly black and brown snakes. They have made this old, time-forgotten cemetery their own favourite haunting place; for the waters of the creek are near, and on its margin they find their prey. Once, so the shaky old wharfinger will tell you, a naval lieutenant, who had been badly wounded in the first Maori war, died in the commandant's house. He was buried here on the bank of the creek, and one day his young wife who had come from England to nurse him and found him dead, sat down on his grave and went to sleep. When she awoke, a great black snake was lying on her knees. She died that day from the shock.

The largest of these four monuments on the bluff stands nearest to the sea, and the inscription on the heavy flat slab of sandstone which covers it is fairly legible:—

Sacred to the Memory of
JAMES VAUGHAN,
Who was a Private in Captain
Fraser Allan's Company
of the 40th Regiment,
Who died on the 24th November, 1823,
of a Gunshot Wound Received
on the 20th Day of the Month,
when in Pursuit of a
Runaway Convict.
Aged 25 years.

The others record the names of the "infant son and daughters of Mr. G. Smith, Commissariat Storekeeper," and of "Edward Marvin, who died 4th July, 1821, aged 21 years."

Many other sunken headstones denote the last resting-places of soldiers and sailors, and civilian officials, who died between 1821 and 1830, when the little port was a thriving place, and when, as the old gossips will tell you, it made a "rare show, when the Governor came here, and Major Innes—him as brought that cussed lantana plant from the Peninsula—sent ninety mounted men to escort him to Lake Innes."

The tide is low, and the flat *congewoi* -covered ledges of reef on the southern side of the bar lie bare and exposed to the sun. Here and there in the crystal pools among the rocks, fish have been left by the tide, and as you step over the *congewoi* , whose teats spurt out jets of water to the pressure of your foot, large silvery bream and gaily-hued parrot-fish rush off and hide themselves from view. But tear off a piece of *congewoi*, open it, and throw the sanguinary-

coloured delicacy into the water, and presently you will see the parrot-fish dart out eagerly, and begin to tear it asunder with their long, irregular, and needle-like teeth, whilst the more cautious and lordly bream, with wary eye and gentle, undulating tail, watch from underneath a ledge for a favourable moment to dash out and secure a morsel.

In some of the wider and shallower ponds are countless thousands of small mullet, each about three or four inches in length, and swimming closely together in separated but compact battalions. Some, as the sound of a human footstep warns them of danger, rush for safety among the submerged clefts and crevices of their temporary retreat, only to be mercilessly and fatally enveloped by the snaky, viscous tentacles of the ever-lurking octopus, for every hole and pool among the rocks contains one or more of these hideously repulsive creatures.

Sometimes you will see one crawling over the *congwoi*, changing from one pool to another in search of prey; its greeny-grey eyes regard you with defiant malevolence. Strike it heavily with a stick, or thrust it through with a spear, and in an instant its colour, which a moment before was either a dark mottled brown or a mingled reddish-black, changes to a ghastly, horrible, marbled grey; the horrid tentacles writhe and cling to the weapon, or spread out and adhere to the surrounding points of rock, a black, inky fluid is ejected from the soft, pulpy, and slimy body; and then, after raining blow after blow upon it, it lies unable to crawl away, but still twisting and turning, and showing its red and white suckers—a thing of horror indeed, the embodiment of all that is hateful, wicked, and malignant in nature.

Some idea of the numbers of these crafty and savage denizens of the limpid pools may be obtained by dropping a baited fishing line in one of the deeper spots. First you will see one, and then another, thin end of a tentacle come waveringly out from underneath a ledge of rock, and point towards the bait, then the rest of the ugly creature follows, and gathering itself together, darts upon the hook, for the possession of which half a dozen more of its fellows are already advancing, either swimming or by drawing themselves over the sandy bottom of the pool. Deep buried in the sand itself is another, a brute which may weigh ten or fifteen pounds, and which would take all the strength of a strong man to overcome were its loathsome tentacles clasped round his limbs in their horrid embrace. Only part of the head and the half-closed, tigerish eyes are visible, and even these portions are coated over with fine sand so as to render them almost undistinguishable from the bed in which it lies awaiting for some careless crab or fish to come within striking distance. How us boys delighted to destroy these big fellows when we came across one thus hidden in the sand or *débris* on the bottom! A quick thrust of the spear through the tough, elongated head, a vision of whirling, outspread, red and black snaky tentacles, and then the thing is dragged out by main strength and dashed down upon the rocks, to be struck with waddies or stones until the spear can be withdrawn. Everything, it is said, has its use in this world, and the octopus is eminently useful to the Australian line fisherman, for the bream, trevally, flathead, jew-fish, and the noble schnapper dearly love its tough, white flesh, especially after the creature has been held over

a flame for a few minutes, so that the mottled skin may be peeled off.

But treacherous and murderous Thug of the Sea as he is, the octopus has one dreaded foe before whom he flees in terror, and compresses his body into the narrowest and most inaccessible cleft or endeavours to bury himself in the loose, soft sand—and that foe is the orange-coloured or sage-green rock eel. Never do you see one of these eels in the open water; they lie deep under the stones or twine their lithe, slippery bodies among the waving kelp or seaweed. Always hungry, savage-eyed, and vicious, they know no fear of any living thing, and seizing an octopus and biting off tentacle after tentacle with their closely-set, needle-like teeth and swallowing it whole is a matter of no more moment to them than the bolting of a tender young mullet or bream. In vain does the Sea Thug endeavour to enwrap himself round and round the body of one of these sinuous, scaleless sea-snakes and fasten on to it with his terrible cupping apparatus of suckers—the eel slips in and out and "wolfs" and worries his enemy without the slightest harm to itself. Some of them are large—especially the orange-coloured variety—three or four feet in length, and often one will raise his snaky head apparently out of solid rock and regard you steadily for a moment. Then he disappears. You advance cautiously to the spot and find a hole no larger than the circumference of an afternoon tea cup, communicating with the water beneath. Lower a baited hook with a strong wire snooding, and "Yellowskin" will open wide his jaws and swallow it without your feeling the slightest movement of the line. But you must be quick and

strong of hand then, or you will never drag him forth, for slippery as he is he can coil his length around a projecting bit of rock and defy you for perhaps five or ten minutes; and then when you do succeed in tearing him away and pull him out with the hook buried deep in his loose, pendulous, wrinkled and corduroyed throat, he instantly resolves himself into a quivering Gordian knot, winding the line in and about his coils and knotting it into such knots that can never be unravelled.

Here and there you will see lying buried deep in the growing coral, or covered with black masses of *congewoi* such things as iron and copper bolts, or heavy pieces of squared timber, the relics of the many wrecks that have occurred on the bar—some recent, some in years long gone by. Out there, lying wedged in between the weed and kelp-covered boulders, only visible at low water, are two of the guns of the ill-fated *Wanderer*, a ship, like her owner, famous in the history of the colony. She was the property of a Mr. Benjamin Boyd, a man of flocks and herds and wealth, who founded a town and a great whaling station on the shores of Twofold Bay, where he employed some hundreds of men, bond and free. He was of an adventurous and restless disposition, and after making several voyages to the South Seas, was cruelly cut off and murdered by the cannibal natives of Guadalcanar in the Solomon Islands, in the "fifties." The captain, after beating off the savages, who, having killed poor Boyd on shore, made a determined attempt to capture the ship, set sail for Australia, and in endeavouring to cross in over the bar went ashore and became a total wreck. Here is a description written by Judge

McFarland of the *Wanderer* as she was in those days when Boyd dreamed a dream of founding a Republic in the South Sea Islands with his wild crew of Polynesians and a few white fellow adventurers:—

"She was of 240 tons burthen; very fleet, and had a flush deck; and her cabins were fitted up with every possible attention to convenience, and with great elegance; and had she been intended as a war craft, she could scarcely have been more powerfully armed, for she carried four brass deck-guns—two six-pounders and two four-pounders—mounted on carriages resembling dolphins, four two-pounder rail guns—two on each side—and one brass twelve-pounder traversing gun (which had seen service at Waterloo)—in all thirteen serviceable guns. Besides these, there were two small, highly-ornamented guns used for firing signals, which were said to have been obtained from the wreck of the *Royal George* at Spithead. There were also provided ample stores of round shot and grape for the guns, and a due proportion of small arms, boarding pikes, tomahawks, &c."

Half a mile further on, and we are under the Signal Hill, and standing on one side of a wide, flat rock, through which a boat passage has been cut by convict hands, when first the white tents of the soldiers were seen on the Barrack Hill. And here, at this same spot, more than a hundred years ago, and thirty before the sound of the axe was first heard amid the forest or tallow-woods and red gum, there once landed a strange party of sea-worn, haggard-faced beings—six men, one woman, and two infant children. They were the unfortunate Bryant party—whose wonderful and daring

voyage from Sydney to Timor in a wretched, ill-equipped boat, ranks second only to that of Bligh himself. For Will Bryant, an ex-smuggler who was leader, had heard of Bligh's voyage in the boat belonging to the *Bounty* ; and fired with the desire to escape with his wife and children from the famine-stricken community on the shores of Port Jackson, he and his companions in servitude stole a small fishing-boat and boldly put to sea to face a journey of more than three thousand miles over an unknown and dangerous ocean. A few weeks after leaving Sydney they had sighted this little nook when seeking refuge from a fierce north-easterly gale, and here they remained for many days, so that the woman and children might gain strength and the seams of the leaking boat be payed with tallow—their only substitute for oakum. Then onward they sailed or rowed, for long, long weary weeks, landing here and there on the coast to seek for water and shell-fish, harried and chased by cannibal savages, suffering all the agonies that could be suffered on such a wild venture, until they reached Timor, only by a strange and unhappy fate to fall into the hands of the brutal and infamous Edwards of the *Pandora* frigate, who with his wrecked ship's company, and the surviving and manacled mutineers of the *Bounty* , who had surrendered to him, soon afterwards appeared at the Dutch port. Bryant, the daring leader, was so fortunate as to die of fever, and so escaped the fate in store for his comrades. 'Tis a strange story indeed.

At the end of the point of brown, rugged rocks which form a natural breakwater to this tiny boat harbour, the

water is deep, showing a pale transparent green at their base, and deep impenetrable blue ten fathoms beyond. Today, because it is mid-winter, and the wind blows from the west, the sea is clearer than ever, and far down below will be discerned lazily swimming to and fro great reddish-brown or bright blue groper, watching the dripping sides of the rock in hope that some of the active, gaily-hued crabs which scurry downwards as you approach may fall in—for the blue groper is a *gourmet*, disdaining to eat of his own tribe, and caring only for crabs or the larger and more luscious crayfish. Stand here when the tide is high and the surf is sweeping in creamy sheets over the lower ledges of rocks; and as the water pours off torrent-like from the surface and leaves them bare, you may oft behold a huge fish—aye, or two or three—lying kicking on its side with a young crayfish in its thick, fleshy jaws, calmly waiting for the next sea to set him afloat again. Brave fellows are these gropers—forty, fifty, up to seventy pounds sometimes, and dangerous fish to hook in such a place as this, where a false step may send a man headlong into the surf below with his line tangled round his feet or arms. But on such a morning as this one might fall overboard and come to no harm, for the sea is smooth, and the kelp sways but gently to the soft rise and fall of the water, and seldom in these cold days of June does Jack Shark cruise in under the lee of the rocks. It is in November, hot, sweltering November, when the clinking sand of the shining beach is burning to the booted foot, and the countless myriads of terrified sea salmon come swarming in over the bar on their way to spawn in the river beyond, that he and his fellows and the bony-snouted saw-

fish rush to and fro in the shallow waters, driving their prey before them, and gorging as they drive, till the clear waters of the bar are turned into a bloodied froth. At such a time as this it might be bad to fall overboard, though some of the local youths give but little more heed to the tigers of the sea than they do to the accompanying drove of harmless porpoises, which join in the onslaught on the hapless salmon.

A mile eastward from the shore there rises stark and clear a great dome-shaped rock, the haunt and resting-place of thousands of snow-white gulls and brown-plumaged boobies. The breeding-place of the former is within rifle-shot—over there on that long stretch of banked-up sand on the north side of the bar, where, amid the shelter of the coarse, tufted grass the delicate, graceful creatures will sit three months hence on their fragile white and purple-splashed eggs. The boobies are but visitors, for their breeding-places are on the bleak, savage islands far to the south, amid the snows and storms of black Antarctic seas. But here they dwell together, in unison with the gulls, and were the wind not westerly you could hear their shrill cries and hoarse croaking as they wheel and eddy and circle above the lonely rock, on the highest pinnacle of which a great fish-eagle, with neck thrown back upon his shoulders and eyes fixed eastward to the sun, stands oblivious of their clamour, as creatures beneath his notice.

Once round the southern side of the Signal Hill the noise of the bar is lost. Between the hill and the next point—a wild, stern-looking precipice of black-trap rock—there lies a half a mile or more of shingly strand, just such as you would

see at Pevensey Bay or Deal, but backed up at high-water mark with piles of drift timber—great dead trees that have floated from the far northern rivers, their mighty branches and netted roots bleached white by the sun and wind of many years, and smelling sweet of the salty sea air. Mingled with the lighter bits of driftwood and heaps of seaweed are the shells of hundreds of crayfish—some of the largest are newly cast up by the sea, and the carapace is yellow and blue; others are burnt red by exposure to the sun; while almost at every step you crush into the thin backs and armoured tails of young ones about a foot in length, the flesh of which, by some mysterious process of nature, has vanished, leaving the skin, muscles, and beautiful fan-like tail just as fresh as if the crustaceans were alive. Just here, out among those kelp-covered rocks, you may, on a moonlight night, catch as many crayfish as you wish—three of them will be as much as any one would care to carry a mile, for a large, full-grown "lobster," as they are called locally, will weigh a good ten pounds.

Once round the precipice we come to a new phase of coastal scenery. From the high land above us green scrub-covered spur after spur shoots downward to the shore, enclosing numerous little beaches of coarse sand and many coloured spiral shells—"Reddies" we boys called them—with here and there a rare and beautiful cowrie of banded jet black and pearly white. The sea-wall of rock has here but few pools, being split up into long, deep, and narrow chasms, into which the gentle ocean swell comes with strange gurglings and hissings, and groan-like sounds, and tiny jets of spray spout up from hundreds of air-holes

through the hollow crust of rock. Here for the first time since the town was left, are heard the cries of land birds; for in the wild apple and rugged honeysuckle trees which grow on the rich, red soil of the spurs they are there in plenty—crocketts, king parrots, leatherheads, "butcher" and "bell" birds, and the beautiful bronze-wing pigeon—while deep within the silent gullies you constantly hear the little black scrub wallabies leaping through the undergrowth and fallen leaves, to hide in still darker forest recesses above.

There are snakes here, too. Everywhere their sinuous tracks are visible on the sand, criss-crossing with the more defined scratchy markings of those of iguanas. The latter we know come down to carry off any dead fish cast ashore by the waves, or to seize any live ones which may be imprisoned in a shallow pool; but what brings the deadly brown and black snakes down to the edge of *salt* water at night time?

Point after point, tiny bay after bay, and then we come to a wider expanse of clear, stoneless beach, at the farther end of which a huge boulder of jagged, yellow rock, covered on the summit with a thick mantle of a pale green, fleshly-leaved creeper, bearing a pink flower. It stands in a deep pool about a hundred yards in circumference, and as like as not we shall find the surface of the water covered by thousands of green-backed, red-billed garfish and silvery mullet, whose very numbers prevent them from escaping. Scores of them leap out upon the sand, and lie there with panting gill and flapping tail. It is a great place for us boys, for here at low tides in the winter we strip off, and with naked hands catch the mullet and gars and silvery-sided

trumpeters, and throw them out on the beach, to be grilled later on over a fire of glowing honeysuckle cobs, and eaten without salt. What boy does care about such a thing as salt at such times, when his eye is bright and his skin glows with the flush of health, and the soft murmuring of the sea is mingling in his ears with the thrilling call of the birds, and the rustling hum of the bush; and the yellow sun shines down from a glorious sky of cloudless blue, and dries the sand upon his naked feet; and the very joy of being alive, and away from school, is happiness enough in itself!

For here, by rock and pool on this lonely Austral beach, it is good and sweet for man or boy to be, and, if but in utter idleness, to watch and listen—and think.

Solepa

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The last strokes of the bell for evening service had scarce died away when I heard a footstep on the pebbly path, and old Pâkía, staff in hand and pipe dangling from his pendulous ear-lobe, walked quietly up the steps and sat down cross-legged on the verandah. All my own people had gone to church and the house was very quiet.

"Good evening, Pâkía," I said in English, "how are you, old man?"

A smile lit up the brown, old, wrinkled face as he heard my voice—for I was lying down in the sitting-room, smoking my after-supper pipe—as he answered in the island dialect that he was well, but that his house was in darkness and he, being lonely, had come over to sit with me awhile.

"That is well, Pâkía, for I too am lonely, and who so good as thee to talk with when the mind is heavy and the days are long, and no sail cometh up from the sea-rim? Come, sit here within the doorway, for the night wind is chill; and fill thy pipe."

He came inside as I rose and turned up the lamp so that its light shone full on his bald, bronzed head and deeply tattooed arms and shoulders. Laying down his polished staff of *temana* wood, he came over to me, placed his hand on my arm, patted it gently, and then his kindly old eyes sought mine.

"Be not dull of heart, *taka taina* . ^[1] A ship will soon come—it may be to-morrow; it must be soon; for twice have I heard the cocks crow at midnight since I was last here, three days ago. And when the cocks crow at night-time a ship is near."

"May it be so, Pâkía, for I am weary of waiting. Ten months have come and gone since I first put foot on this land of Nukufetau, and a ship was to have come here in four."

He filled his pipe, then drawing a small mat near my lounge, he squatted on the floor, and we smoked in silence, listening to the gentle lapping of the lagoon waters upon the inner beach and the beating, never-ceasing hum of the surf on the reef beyond. Overhead the branches of the palms swayed and rustled to the night-breeze.

Presently, as I turned to look seaward, I caught the old man's dark eyes fixed upon my face, and in them I read a sympathy that at that time and place was grateful to me.

"Six months is long for one who waits, Pâkía," I said. "I came here but to stay four months and trade for copra; then the ship was to call and take me to Ponapé, in the far northwest. And Ponapé is a great land to such a man as me."

" *Etonu! Etonu!* I know it. Thrice have I been there when I sailed in the whaleships. A great land truly, like the island called Juan Fernandez, of which I have told thee, with high mountains green to the summits with trees, and deep, dark valleys wherein the sound of the sea is never heard but when the surf beats hard upon the reef. Ah! a fine land—better than this poor *motu* , which is as but a ring of sand set in the midst of the deep sea. Would that I were young to go there with thee! Tell me, dost know the two small, high islands in the *ava* ^[2] which is called Jakoits? Hast seen the graves of two white men there?"

"I know the islands well; but I have never seen the graves of any white men there. Who were they, and when did they die?"

"Ah, I am a foolish old man. I forget how old I am. Perhaps, when thou wert a child in thy mother's arms, the graves stood up out of the greensward at the foot of the high cliff which faces to the south. Tell me, is there not a high wall of rock a little way back from the landing beach?... Aye!... that is the place ... and the bones of the men are there, though now great trees may grow over the place. They were both good men—good to look at, tall and strong; and they fought and died there just under the cliff. I saw them die, for I was there with the captain of my ship. We, and others with us, saw it all."

"Who were they, Pâkía, and how came they to fight?"