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**A visit to the South Seas, in the United States' ship Vincennes, during
the years 1829 and 1830**

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Letter XXIV.

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produced on me its almost irresistible effect: and had not the lad, it proved to be a boy of fifteen or sixteen, been speedily picked up by a boat, I should have been obliged to charge myself with a want of sensibility, notwithstanding the many gushes of feeling through which I had just gone. The agitation I experienced, however, may have been quite as great as that suffered by the boy himself, for on scrambling over the ship's sides and stepping on the deck again, his only exclamation as he looked at his feet, and that too with an air of no little nonchalance, was, "*I'll be hanged if one of my shoes an't gone!*"

LETTER XXIV.

VOYAGE TO THE WASHINGTON ISLANDS.

Discovery and State of the Washington Islands.—General Order of Captain Finch.—The Vincennes, a Tabu Ship.

U. S. Ship Vincennes, at sea,
July 26th, 1829.

THE first destination of the Vincennes is to the Washington Islands, a groupe in the vicinity of the Marques de Mendocá's, and frequently included with them under the general appellation of the "Marquesas." They bear a relation to these last both in position and proximity, similar to that which the Society Islands do to the Georgian group, a few degrees farther west.

Though the Marquesas were discovered by a Spanish voyager so early as the year 1595, the Wash-

ington groupe, scarce a degree distant to the north-west from them, remained unknown to the world till 1791, when they were first seen by Captain Ingraham of Boston, and in the succeeding year visited by Captain Roberts of the same place, who gave them the name by which they are now generally designated, and to which by established usage in such cases they are justly entitled.

They are three in number, Huahuka, Nukuhiva, or Nuuhiva, and Uapou, forming a triangle by their relative position to each other, the points of which are included within the parallels of $8^{\circ} 38'$ and $9^{\circ} 32'$ S. latitude, and $139^{\circ} 20'$ and $140^{\circ} 10'$ W. longitude from Greenwich. Huahuka is the most eastern of the three: Nukuhiva lies about twenty miles directly west of it, and Uapou thirty miles south of the central parts of Nukuhiva. Nukuhiva, twenty miles in length and of nearly the same breadth, and having three or four good harbours on its coast, is much the largest and most important of the three, and that alone which ships have frequented. It is the island, you will recollect, at which Commodore Porter refitted his squadron in the Pacific during the late war between the United States and Great Britain, and is the principal scene of the journal which he subsequently placed before the world.

The inhabitants are now as they then were, in an entire state of nature, and their primeval condition is in every respect unchanged, except it may be in an addition of corruption among those in the immediate vicinity of the harbour occasionally visited by ships, from a licentious intercourse with unprin-

cipled white men from civilized and Christian countries. It will add much to the interest of our cruise among the different islands we expect to visit in the course of our voyage, thus to commence our observations on those which are still in the original heathenish state of the whole of Polynesia, not only from the greater degree of novelty to be anticipated in the scenes we may witness, but also from the advantage it will afford of enabling us to make a just comparison between the condition and prospects of immortal beings still in all the darkness of paganism, and others most emphatically and truly "bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh," upon whose characters and condition the enlightening and regenerating influences of Christianity have been made, in a greater or less degree, to bear.

The inhabitants of the Marquesas, radically the same people, are both physically and morally in circumstances precisely similar; and although it is not the intention of Captain Finch to touch at that groupe, the account I shall give and every observation we shall make on the Nukuhivans will apply essentially to them.

We are now sixteen days from Callao without any incident worthy of notice. Having run the whole distance in the full strength of the south-east trade winds, and directly in their course, we have had a breeze unceasingly fresh and fair, with all the inconvenience of rolling so heavily before it, as to have been denied, to a great degree, every profitable occupation of time, even that of reading with comfort. Yesterday was our sabbath. The only differ-

ence in the mode of performing religious service here and on board the *Guerriere*, is in the signal used in assembling the crew. Instead of the boatswain's pipe, followed by the hoarse call around the decks, "*All hands to prayers, ahoy!*" as the bell strikes the time, the "*Portuguese Hymn*," from the band, breathes to every heart in sweet and solemnizing strains the welcome invitation,

"O come and let us worship,"—

while from all parts of the ship we silently obey its impressive call. My desk is the capstan, spread with the American ensign: beside which, I stand mounted on a *shot box*, to secure the elevation of a foot or two above my audience.

At the close of the sermon yesterday, Mr. Stribling, the first lieutenant, took my station, and read to the ship's company the following general order:

"As it is possible that we may be in port at the Washington or Northern Marquesas Islands before the next sabbath, I consider the present a proper occasion to say to the crew, that the natives of Nukuhiva, the island at which we shall anchor, have been so variously described by different persons who have at long intervals been amongst them, and their treatment of strangers represented as so fickle and uncertain, that I feel it a difficult task to determine in what light safely to regard them: and I therefore design to be cautious in the intercourse which I may permit to exist between them and us, that we may ourselves judge the more justly of them.

"The object of our visit is of a diversified nature,

but is directed especially with the view to secure harmonious intercourse between them and those of our defenceless seafaring countrymen whose pursuits are lawful, and whose necessities compel them to resort to harbour for refreshment and supplies; to reclaim those who from thoughtlessness or improper motives may have remained amongst them; to exhibit our own moral advancement, to elevate our national character in their estimation, and by the contrast thus presented to induce a praiseworthy imitation on their part.

“To effect these desirable results, it is incumbent on us to be circumspect in every part of our conduct; to impose, if necessary, unusual restraints upon ourselves; to display without arrogance the superior advantages of our condition; to deal with frankness and honesty; to check in ourselves undue curiosity; to abstain from sensual indulgences and gross familiarities; and to treat them as a sovereign people.

“These remarks are preliminary to, and I hope will explain the propriety of my interdicting all officers and other persons going from the ship without appropriate uniform and suitable protection of arms, &c., and the further inhibiting natives, men or women, from coming on board, unless under peculiar or such other circumstances as have heretofore been the usage of the ship in other ports.

“If, after such interviews as may ensue between the chiefs and myself, I can be satisfied that we may safely trust ourselves on shore, then it will be a pleasure to grant such liberty to the crew to visit the island as may be consistent with the stay of the ship

and indispensable duty on board, expecting, as I shall, punctuality of return, correctness of deportment, and a disposition to aid the intentions already expressed.

“ W. C. B. FINCH.”

“ July 19th, 1829.”

From this official document, contrasting so strongly as it does with addresses that are known to have been made by commanders of vessels to their crews in approaching the South Sea Islands, you will perceive, my dear H——, that the Vincennes is a “*tabu ship*,” a characteristic of no little importance and of no small value among the islands of the Pacific.

To one ignorant of the gross licentiousness to which too many of the ships from Christian lands are here voluntarily surrendered by their commanders, the propriety of such an inhibition might seem singular; but to you, who from your own observation know too well how readily men, in this dark part of our world, not only abandon the principles and the practices of sound morality, but boldly cast off the most salutary restraints of decency and civilization, there is no need of saying that every counteracting and reproofing example is most desirable and most praiseworthy.

While visiting Captain Finch in his cabin last evening, he apprised me of his intention, and submitted the order to my inspection. His views and feelings, in reference to the whole voyage, and of the importance of an exemplary deportment from all attached to the ship, are most decided; and he ap-

pears determined to make the cruize of the Vincennes among the islands, as far as in his power, productive, in every respect, of the highest possible good to the different governments and people we may visit.

LETTER XXV.

ARRIVAL AT NUKUHIVA.

Huahuka.—First Sight of the Natives.—Effect of Music from the Band.—Bays and Valleys of Oomi and Hapa.—Entrance to the Bay and Valley of Taiohae.—Natives swim on board.—Visit from the Chiefs.—Piaroro, Chief of the Hapas.—Use of the White Flag.—Enforcement of the Tabu on board ship.

U. S. Ship Vincennes, Bay of Taiohae,
July 27th, 1829.

WE are once more at anchor. Yesterday at twelve o'clock, just after worship, Huahuka, the most eastern island of the Washington groupe was descried on our lee bow, thirty miles distant. We at once bore down for it, and weathering the south-east point, coasted for a distance of fifteen miles closely along its southern shore. On this side it seemed lofty, precipitous, and barren, too much so we judged to be inhabited: its greatest height was estimated at fifteen hundred or two thousand feet.

Like most other high tropical islands that I have seen, it is deeply furrowed with narrow glens, separated from each other by sharp spurs of mountain, running from the high land in the centre to the shore. Here and there a small plain or table land, and occasionally a short sand beach appears, but no alluvial