

7. Pitcairn Island

23 Apr to 3 May 1856

23rd April

At 10PM we sighted Pitcairn Island. It looked like a large rock at a distance. I held up a barley corn to the horizon and it looked much larger than the Island. When we came within 2 or 3 miles of Bounty Bay, we saw a little canoe paddled along by 2 men, they came alongside and jumped on board and shook hands with us just as if we were old friends. We passed a rope end down and one man hauled the canoe on board. I cant image how they could come through that serf (ed. Surf) with that little things, they told me these could come through this serf with that when they dare not with a whale boat. We stood in, The Cap^t and Mr Gregorice when ashore in the Whale boat. We stood off during the night and next day

24th

.... we could not get up to the Island again. About 11am the Whale boat came off under sail, about 1pm the chief sent me ashore in the Whale boat. The Life boat went ashore to. We both left the ship together. I told the Islanders to give away and beat the Life boat and they pulled her out of sight before we got ashore.

The serf is not so bad as I expected it. It was not higher than Polzeath in fine weather. (ed. A bay 6 miles from where George was born) The beach where we landed is only about 100 feet long, very different from Polzeath in that respect (ed. 1000 ft). As soon as I landed 2 or 3 of the Islanders and myself went up to the town as they call it. On my way up I (ed. George was 18) saw Mr Gregorice and Ellen Quintal (ed. 19) laying on the grass, Mr Gregorice with Ellens bonnet on and Ellen with Mr Gregorice Gold lace cap on which she seems to be very fond of. He got up and we walked a little way farther when we met Anne Nobbs (ed. 18) and Lydia McCoy(ed. 24 nee Young). They all shake hands as if they were old friends.

They wear no shoes or stockings and only a loose kind of Night shirt, all white and nothing on their heads but beautiful long black hair. The sun is rather warm and I have white trousers on and how beautiful it is walking under the Groves of Cocoa Nuts Trees. Mr Gregorice walking arm and arm with Ellen and me following with Anne and Lydia. At last we arrive at the Town as they call it. The houses or rather huts are built of a beautiful wood called MerO (ed. No info) and thatched with the leaves of the Palm trees. The floor is raised a little above the ground and divide into compartments or rooms. The door is generally in the center and enters into the room they eat in. They sleep in bunks made in the side of the house with sliding panels to them so in the day time they close these panels and you cant see when they sleep.

The first house we entered was Jemima Youngs (ed. 28), she was ironing and getting ready to pack up. Simon Young (ed. 33) lives there too. Matthew Quintal (ed. 42) came in afterwards, they had two beautiful bunches of Bananas hanging up to the roof, he got up and pulled off half a dozen and I had a blow out.

Then came the Cap^t, Mr Robinson. He (ed. Mr R) and I went off together for a walk, after we had gone a little way we met the Cap^t again. Mr Robinson went with him and I had to go and explore the little Island by myself. So I wound my way up the hill or rather up the valleys. I came up to 3 or 4 women in a brook washing, they did not see me until I was close to them. I suppose they thought they could wash better with the night shirts half off but that has nothing to do with anyone so I spoke to them and walked on. There is a very large tree here called the Banyan tree, their branches grow downwards and when they touch the ground, they take root and very curiously, they are the same size all the way down and as taught as a bow.

I cut 3 or 4 branches just for the pleasure of doing it. There was another tree I like cutting that was the Mountain Plantain (ed. similar to banana), it was like a large siek from twelve feet high and upwards, a kick would knock them down.

I was sauntering along this valley thinking how I should like for this to be part of our wood at home and other things when I recovered from my service.

I found it was nearly dark so I turned tail and walked back again. I found them very busy engaged getting the supper ready. It was comprised of Pork boiled in lumps, sweet potato, Yams and cooked Plantains and Tea sweetened with molasses. I pertook of a Pigs tongue and the taste of all other dishes on the table which I enjoyed very much.

After tea I entertained them with four tunes on the accordion which they enjoyed very much, there are about half a dozen accordions on the Island.

I heard a bell going, I asked them what it was for, they told me it was for the singing room. They congregated there in the evenings and sang Hymns and Glees.

We were preparing to go when the , Cap^t Mr Robinson & Mr Gregorice came for me to go to the singing room, so we all went off together. At one end of the room on a little table and leaning against the wall was a large blackboard with chalk marks on it which was used to teach music. We sat some time before all congregated they sang two or three hymns and glees and one called Schooldays which was beautiful. I must say they sing very well in deed.

After we came out, we went down to see them make Japa. (ed. Hibiscus, Chinese Rose) There were two old women and all the rest were children beating the bark of the Japa shrub into long flat pieces and then they were beating and making as long as they wished by joining the strips together.

After that we strode about under the trees and went home. It was very pretty to see the girls in their long night shirts as I call them, walking about in the moonlight under the trees, they looked like Ghosts. Mr Gregorice and several of the Girls and myself went back to the singing room again. I took the Accordion and Mr Gregorice made two or three of them dance Waltzs and Polkas, after that we walked home and went to bed. I turned into beautiful White sheets and slept until past 6 next morning.

25th

When I got up and washed myself and went out and met with John Evans (ed. 27), he took me for a walk to have some coca nuts. He walked up one tree and gathered about a dozen, I drank the whole of one which was about a pint and was very refreshing and very nice. Then went to see John Adams grave. Then came home to breakfast.

When I was going to leave, I was loaded with presents, Cocoa Nuts, Pine Apples, a straw hat with two wreaths on it one of which was made for me by Jemima Young. The other I wore all the evening around my cap, the Cap^t had one too, Bananas, Oranges & (ed. Etc) which 2 men and myself carried down to the boat.

When we arrived there I said I should like to see someone use the serf boats, so the two men that were with us John Evans (ed. 27) and Johnny Quintal (ed. 18) was soon in the water. I was sitting on the Bounty's Gun underneath the shade of a Palm Tree looking at these two coming in on the serf. Afterwards two or three boys went in. It is a splendid sight to see them coming in on the serf. I can scarcely describe it but they go out some distance where there is a rock that the water is not very deep, they stop there until they see a large wave coming, they turn their backs to it and come in on it on their serf boats. They stayed in for more than half an hour when I saw the old Morayshire peeping around the corner. So I chipped some pieces off the old gun and got the boat ready to shove off.

We went through the serf very well, did not get a drop of water on board.

Sunday 27th

As this is Saturday at Pitcairn, we were obliged to make it Saturday also and have Sunday on Monday.

We knocked about off and on until the 3rd when they all came on board.