

HISTORY SHAPERS

THE STORY OF CHALMERS OF NEW GUINEA

JANET HARVEY KELMAN



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PLEASE NOTE

In this series, you will read about historical figures who displayed courage, bravery, self-sacrifice, and many other admirable traits. Their stories remind us that many people in history took bold actions and made tough choices. Yet, even those who achieved great things sometimes held ideas or pursued goals that were not beneficial to everyone. History is full of complex individuals—parts of their lives inspire us to be brave and stand up for what is right, while other parts remind us to consider the unintended consequences of our actions.

As you explore these biographies, we invite you to reflect on the qualities that enabled these figures to achieve greatness and the lessons we can learn from their mistakes. Maybe you too can become a History Shaper—someone who learns from the past and helps to make our world a better place for everyone.

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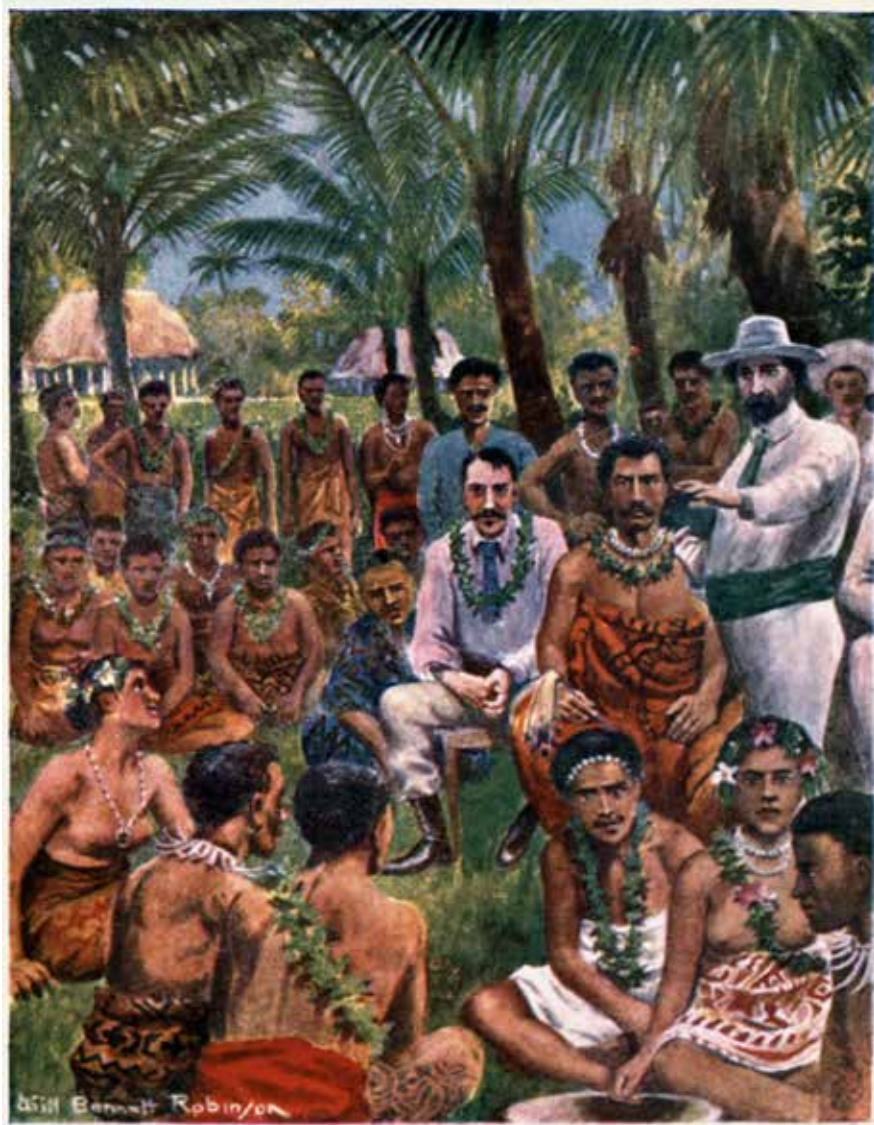
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THE STORY OF CHALMERS OF NEW GUINEA

by

JANET HARVEY KELMAN





TAMATE AND ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON IN SAMOA

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WHY THESE STORIES ARE TOLD

SEVENTY years ago a group of children gathered round a wise and kindly Scotchwoman, and ever, as one tale ended, they shouted, "Tell on, Bell, tell on."

Some of the stories she told are forgotten, and it is many days since the fortunes she read were proved true or false, but other little children re-echo the old request, and James Chalmers knew well how to answer it when he wrote for us of Kone and of Aveo, of the wild waves of the Pacific, and of the wilder men on its islands.

His life's adventure here is over. He will not come back to us nor tell us one tale more. But who shall say that we may not reach him one day, greet him with the old words, "Tell on, tell on," and listen, rapt and eager, to stories of brave deeds and strange voyages in that new world in which he lives?

BOYHOOD IN ARGYLL

JAMES CHALMERS was born sixty-five years ago at a little town in the West Highlands of Scotland. He was the son of a stonemason, but his home was close to the sea, and he was more eager to sail than to build.

One kind of building he did try. That was boat-building. But he and his little friends did not find it as easy as it looked, so they gave it up and tarred a herring-box instead. When it was ready James jumped into it for "first sail." His playmates on the beach towed him along by a rope. They were all enjoying the fun when the rope snapped, and the herring-box, with James in it, danced away out to sea. A cry was raised and a rush made for the shore. The fishermen were fond of the daring little fellow who was always in mischief. Soon they caught him and brought him safe to land. But they shook their heads when they saw how fearless he was. They knew he would soon be in some other danger.

When James was seven years old he left his first home and went to live in Glenarary, near Inveraray. Still the mountains of Argyll rose round his home. They were dim misty blue in summer, but in autumn and spring they were strong deep blue like the robes in stained-glass windows.

But the new home was not on the sea-shore. James could not tumble about in boats and herring-boxes all day long as he had done before.

Soon he found another kind of daring to fill his thoughts. From his home in Glenaray he and his sisters had three miles to walk to school. Other boys and girls crossed the moors from scattered farm-houses and crofts. A large number of children came from the town of Inveraray, and they gathered to them others whose homes lay between the town and the school. Here were two parties of young warriors ready to fight. James and the moorland groups were the glen party. The others were the town party. Some trifle started warfare. First there was a teasing word, then a divot of turf, and then before any one knew what had happened, stones were flying and fists pounding, and the clans were at war once more on the shores of Argyll.

The spirit of battle ran so high that on fighting days James and his sisters did not go straight home. They joined the larger number of the glen party and went round by the homes of the others, so that they had only the last little bit to go alone. There they were safe from the foe. But on days of truce they went with the town party to the bridges over the Aray. The Aray is a wild mountain stream, and when rain falls in the hills, it rushes wildly down and carries all before it.

One afternoon, when the sunshine had burst out after heavy rain, the children were going home together. As

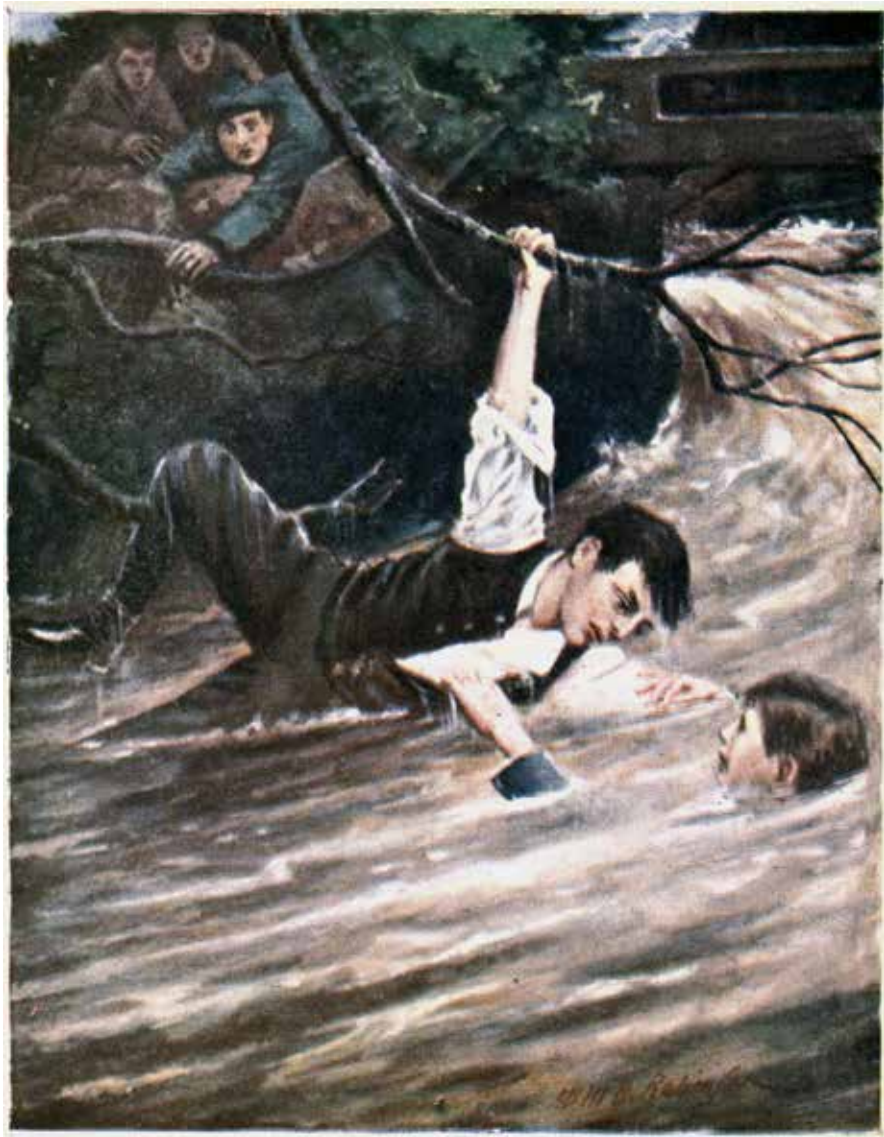
they came near the bridges the rush of the water and its noise drew them close to the banks of the stream.

James was there. He heard a cry: "Johnnie Minto has fallen in!"

He threw off his coat and gave a quick glance up the stream. There he saw Johnnie's head appear and disappear in the rush of the water. Without a moment's thought he slid down to the lower side of the bridge and caught his arm round one of its posts. Just above him Johnnie was tumbling down in the wild water. One quick clutch and James held him firmly. The water was so fierce and rapid that it seemed he must let go. He did let go, but it was the bridge that he lost hold of, not the boy! He let the current carry them both down till he could catch a branch that overhung the water. By it he pulled himself and his little foe (for Johnnie was of the town party) towards the edge of the stream till the other boys could reach them and drag them on to the bank.

Once James heard a letter read that had come from an island on the other side of the world. It told of the sorrows and cruelties that savages have to bear. He was touched. The stories of hardship made him wish to do and dare all that the writer of the letter had dared. The stories of sorrow made him long to help. He said to himself that he too would go when he became a man.

But soon he forgot all about that, and thought only of how much fun he could get as the days passed.



A BRANCH THAT OVERHUNG THE WATER

As he grew older he became very wild. He could not bear to meet any one who might urge him to live a better life.

He entered a lawyer's office, but the work did not interest him, and he filled his free time with all kinds of pranks, so that soon he was blamed for any mischief that was on foot in the town.

He was the leader of the wildest boys in Inveraray, but he himself was led only by his whims and the fancy of the moment. Until one day he found his own leader, who made work and play more interesting and delightful than they had ever been before.

James found that his life was not aimless any longer. It was full of one great wish—the wish to serve his hero, Jesus Christ.

Then he thought of his old longing to go and help those who were in pain and sorrow far away from Scotland.

It was not only because he was sorry for them, and because he wished to do the brave and daring things that others had done. These thoughts still drew him on. But far more than these, the love he had for his newly found Master made him wish to go.

He felt that it was a grand thing to be alive and young, and able to do something to bring to other lives the joy and strength that had come into his own.

Before he could go, however, he had to learn many things.

He went to stay at Cheshunt College, near London. The head of the college was a great man. It made it easier to

be good to live beside him. Often afterwards, amongst hardships and dangers, his students thought of him, and of what he had said to them at Cheshunt, and were braver and stronger because of him.

While James Chalmers was at college, part of his work was to preach at a village eight miles away, and to go to see the people who were in trouble there. He was a big strong man, and enjoyed his walk of sixteen miles. Perhaps that was why this village, the farthest from the college, was placed under his care. The people there loved him, and to-day they still are glad to think that the "Apostle of New Guinea," as he was afterwards called, once preached and worked amongst them.

Mr. Chalmers could be solemn when he spoke of God and of life and death, and when he was with the villagers in times of sorrow and pain. But he still enjoyed all the glad things of life that he had loved in his boyhood, boating and swimming and fun of all kinds.

If he was in a restless mood when the others wished to study, the only way they could make him quiet was to give him charge of his part of the house. Then woe betide the man who made a noise. If some one else tried to keep order and he wished to romp, nothing would silence him.

One evening at supper time, as the students sat talking round the table, they heard a slow lumbering step in the passage. "Pad-sh, pad-sh," it came, nearer and nearer, till the door burst open, and a great grisly bear walked in on his hind legs. The men started up. The bear shuffled

in amongst them. He grabbed a quiet timid student. Then the lights went out!

There was a great scrimmage. No one knew where the bear was, and no one could find matches. Even brave men did not wish to be caught in the dark by a runaway bear!

When at last the lights were lit, and they saw a man's face looking out from under the great head of the bear, they did not know whether to laugh more at him or at themselves.

They had been jumping here and there and dodging about, to get out of the way of James Chalmers in a bearskin!

The students were not the only people who were alarmed at the made-up bear. There was an Irishman who came to the college to sell fruit. One day, as he found his way along the halls, he met the bear. It was at the end of a passage, and they met so suddenly that the poor Irishman could save neither himself nor his basket from the paws of the great grisly creature.



THE GREAT GRISLY CREATURE

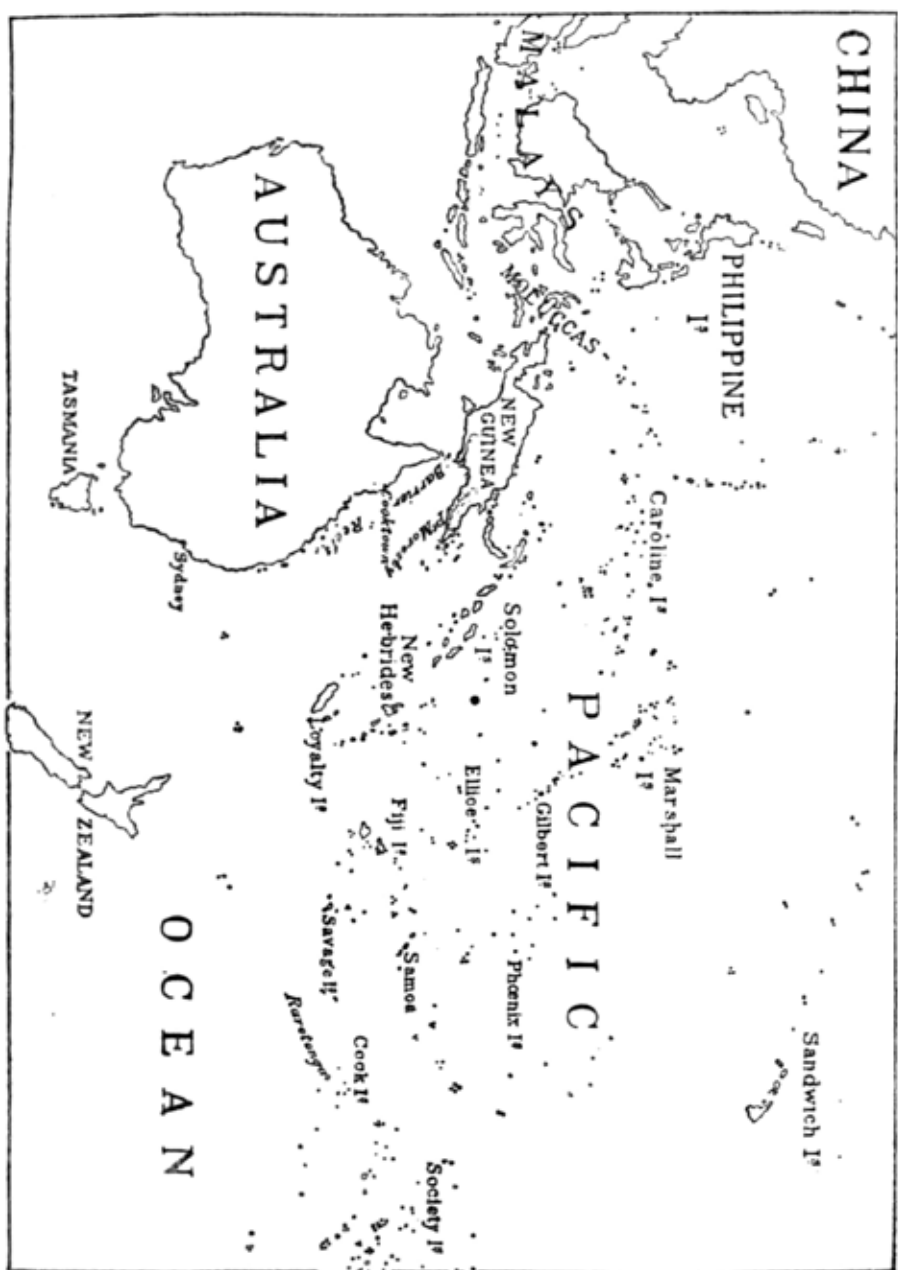
THE "JOHN WILLIAMS"

WHEN James Chalmers was twenty-four years of age, he and his wife left England for Australia in the *John Williams*. The lady he had married was eager to help in the great work that he had undertaken, so they were both very happy when they knew that they had really started on their long voyage. They enjoyed life on board ship and won many friends amongst the passengers and amongst the sailors.

The ship in which they sailed was new, and was one of the swiftest on the sea. She had been built with money given by hundreds of children, that she might take Mr. and Mrs. Chalmers and others who went to live as they did, from island to island on the Pacific sea.

They arrived safely at Sydney, in Australia, and from that town they sailed for the second part of their voyage.

The name of the island on which their first home was to be was Rarotonga. They could not go straight to it because others were on board, and the *John Williams* had to sail here and there amongst many islands. At one, two of her passengers must be left behind; at another, new voyagers must come on board; while here, there, and everywhere great bales of cargo must be landed. In these bales there



were beads and knives, tomahawks and tobacco, and iron in bars, and rolls of cloth.

All these things were the money the white people used when they wished to buy food, or land, or boats, or houses from the people who lived in the islands.

It was very awkward to have to carry yards and yards of cloth instead of silver coins or bank notes! But bank notes and coins would have been of no use to the islanders; so the only way to do was to take to them what they wished, and the things the *John Williams* carried in her hold were the things they liked best.

Round many of the islands in the Pacific lie reefs. The reefs are built of coral by tiny insects, and they rise from a great depth almost to the surface of the water. The mingling colours of the coral are very wonderful when they are seen through the liquid blue and green of the waves.

But although these reefs are beautiful, they are very dangerous. If a ship runs upon one, the great waves quickly dash her to pieces as they break over her.

There are openings where the reef is broken for a short distance, or where its crest lies so far under the surface of the water that boats may safely enter the calm bays that lie within.

Very few ships had sailed in those seas fifty years ago. The captains had to guess where the reefs lay. Sometimes they sailed slowly, dropping a long line with a weight at the end of it, to find out if the ship had entered more shallow water. This is called "heaving the lead."

As the *John Williams* sailed near the first island at which she was to anchor, her passengers were watching the shore; they were delighted with the beauty of the island. It was a clear afternoon, and the rich land and trees offered a kind welcome to those who were to work there. Those who meant to go farther on to other islands, thought that if this first stopping-place were like the others, there would, for them too, be much to enjoy.

The reefs amongst which their vessel was sailing were beautiful, and their eyes were dazzled by the glister and glimmer of colour under the water at the ship's side.

All at once those who were not standing very firmly on the deck were thrown down, and every one was trying not to believe the truth. But very soon no one could doubt it. Their beautiful ship had run on an unseen rock. She had all sail set and was going fast, so it was with a great crash that she struck.

Every one thought of what must be done to save the ship and her cargo. If they had had time to look round they would have seen hundreds of dark men running about the shore and hauling canoes to the water's edge. In a very short time the canoes were all round the ship, and the men were clambering up on deck.

Though they knew very little English, they all spoke at once, and they shook hands with every one. Then they began to help to work. It was a strange sight. Dark men and white all together hauled down the sails and launched the boats. Close to the reef, dark men dived into the water

with blankets soaked in tar. They hoped to stop the holes the reef had made in the ship. White men gathered clothes and books and cargo together, and saw them put into the boats to be sent on shore. Through all the noise of boxes hauled along the decks and thrown out of the way, and high voices shouting questions and orders, came the steady thud of the pumps and the swish of the water as it poured back to the sea from the hold.

At high water the ship looked shattered, it is true, but when low tide came she looked ridiculous. Her stern went down as the tide fell, but her bows stuck fast high up on the reef. She looked like a great rocking-horse whose head has got so high that it cannot get down again.

So she rocked up and down twice a day with the tide, till at last, after all her cargo had been taken on shore, she was heaved off the reef into deep water. A great shout of joy rose as she slipped free.

But though she was free, she was greatly damaged, and had to go back to Sydney for repairs. She returned to the island nearly ten weeks later, as strong and seaworthy as ever.

Then they sailed away again, first to the Loyalty Islands and then to Savage Island.

Mr. and Mrs. Chalmers saw how glad many of the natives were to welcome back their white friends. They saw, too, that the lives of men and women who had been savages had become noble and brave because white men who loved Jesus Christ had gone to live amongst them.

This made them long greatly to reach their own home and begin work there.

The ship was ready to sail from Savage Island. All the bales of cloth and the bars of iron that were to be left there had been put on shore. The cocoanuts and other gifts that the natives had brought had been taken to the ship. Every one hoped to sail for Samoa next morning. Mr. and Mrs. Chalmers went on board, while some of those who were to sail with them stayed on land for one night longer.

At night the wind fell and a great calm lay on everything. The *John Williams* lay out to sea, far beyond the reef, with her bow heading away from the island. The air was warm and the southern night seemed full of peace to all except the captain.

Though the ship had been lying waiting to set sail, she was not at anchor. No anchor could find holding-ground in the great depth of water.

The captain saw that his ship had been caught in a current, and that she was being carried steadily backwards to the island. Between the ship and the island lay the reef!

The *John Williams* had three boats. One after another they were launched and filled with rowers. Each boat carried a strong line with her. By these three lines the captain hoped the boats might hold the vessel against the current. The men were strong and eager to save their ship. They rowed to the seaward side of her and pulled hard at the oars. They toiled on and on till they were tired

and aching, but still they lost way. Faster and faster the ship drifted towards the reef, dragging her boats after her.

Again they tried to anchor, but still no bottom could be found. Darkness fell deeper around them. Every sail was set in the hope that some breeze off the land might come in time. Blue lights were burnt on deck, that their friends on shore might know of their danger.

Thunder muttered. Flashes of lightning gleamed across the darkened sky. The white surf loomed nearer and nearer; the ship rose and fell on the backwash of the waves that broke on the reef.

Nothing could save her, but lives must be saved if possible. Seventy-two people were packed into the three boats, and very soon after the last one had left her side, the *John Williams* struck the reef.

Rain poured down on the open boats as they rowed sadly from the wreck. The landing-place was some miles away, and the surf was foaming wildly.

Earlier in the evening those on shore had caught sight of the blue lights. Some had run along the rocks to a point near the wreck. As they ran, the natives kept up a hooting cry that roused every one by the way. It was eerie to hear their call through the darkness and storm.

By the time the boats were trying to reach the shore, fires and torches burned brightly all round the bay to guide their rowers.

But no boat could reach the shore that night. The poor drenched voyagers had to leave their boats and get into

canoes, then to leave the canoes and be carried by natives through the surf! In spite of all, they reached land safely.

But it was with sad hearts that they looked out across the bay at the wreck of their ship during the days that followed.

At last, in spite of many other delays, more than sixteen months after they had sailed from England, Mr. and Mrs. Chalmers reached the island of Rarotonga, where their home was now to be. The natives there knew a little English. As one of them carried Mr. Chalmers ashore he turned to him and asked:

“What fellow name belong you?”

“Chalmers.”

Natives were crowding on the shore to see the stranger and to hear who he was. The man who carried him wished to be the first to find out and to tell the others. But the “Ch” and the “s” were too harsh for him to say, so instead of “Chalmers,” he shouted, “Tamate!” And Mr. Chalmers was called “Tamate” to the end of his life. Mrs. Chalmers was called “Tamate Vaine,” which was the native way of saying “the wife of Chalmers.”

RAROTONGA

RAROTONGA is one of the fairest islands in the world. It has a white sandy beach; within that lies a belt of rich land. On this land, and even on the lower slopes of the mountains that tower one above the other in the centre of the island, banana trees, chestnuts, and cocoanut palms grow in clumps.

Tamate and Tamate Vaine quickly settled down to their work in Rarotonga. The life there was very quiet after the constant change and danger of the voyage.

The people who lived in Rarotonga called themselves Christians. They had given up fighting and the worship of the strange wild spirits whom their fathers had thought to be full of power. But though they had done this, many of them were still selfish and lazy.

Tamate would have liked to go at once amongst men who were much wilder, and who had never heard of the God who is love.

When he saw what his work in Rarotonga would be, he wrote to England to those who had sent him. He asked them to send some one else to Rarotonga, some one who would like to work quietly and to teach; and to let him go to a more dangerous place, where he could make it

easier for others to follow him. But no one else could be sent then, and he could not leave his post.

When he found that he must stay in Rarotonga, he made up his mind that since he could not get the work he wished, he would throw all his strength into the work he had to do.

Part of it was to train native lads so that they might become teachers and go to other islands. Though they were men, he had to teach them a great many things that boys and girls learn at home when they are very little. He had to train them to be thrifty, and tidy too, because, when they went away to teach they would have to till their own gardens, and to grow their own crops, and to be at the head of a school without any one to guide them.

As Tamate spoke to the people in church Sunday after Sunday he wondered where all the young men were. There were old men and women, and young women and children, and there were his students, but he scarcely ever saw any other young men.

Where could they be?

He found that they spent their days, and often their nights too, in the thick tanglewood that is called "the bush," and that they drank orange beer there, and sometimes foreign drinks too. These revels made them useless for anything else.

The natives who knew Mr. Chalmers, and were beginning to love him, begged him not to go near the young

men when they were drinking, because they were wild and fierce, and might kill him.

But Tamate never was afraid of any one. He went away alone, and plunged here and there through the bush, until he came upon a band of young men. Then he sat down and chatted with them. Very soon they liked him so much that though they would not give up drinking, yet they could forgive him when he knocked the bungs out of the beer barrels and let the beer run away. He was so brave and fearless that he could do this when the men were standing watching him.

Sometimes one or two of the young men gave up drinking, but Tamate wished to get hold of them all, not of one or two only, so he kept on winning their friendship, and waited.

His chance came. He heard that the young men were meeting to drill for war, and that they called themselves volunteers. This was startling. War had ceased on the island. No one was likely to attack them from over the sea. Why should they drill?

Tamate thought of the battles of Glenaroy. He knew it would be useless to talk to these wild lads about peace and kindness, but he thought of another plan. He said to them:

“Why do you drill out of sight like this? Why not let every one see that you are ‘Volunteers.’ You must come to church, and sit together in the gallery.”

The first Sunday after that a few of them came to church. The next week many more came, and from that