ALEXANDER SELKIRK.

OTHERWISE KNOWN AS ROBINSON CRUSOE.

The True Story of the Real Castaway—A Very Different Thing from De Foe's Tale—Interesting Facts About the Island of Juan Fernandez.

OF all the thousands of boys who have read the enchanting pages of "Robinson Crusoe," there is probably not one who has not asked: Is it true? And it is also probable that not one out of ten thousand who asked that question received an approximately intelligent answer.

To gratify my own curiosity, I have made considerable research among records which relate to Alexander Selkirk, whose solitary sojourn upon the island of Juan Fernandez furnished the nucleus for the most famous tale of adventure which the world has ever read, and can but think that many who have asked themselves the question, how much of Robinson Crusoe is true? will find interest and pleasure in a brief statement of the facts of the strange career of the Scottish sailor who served as Daniel Defoe's "original" Robinson Crusoe.

Selkirk's birthplace was in the little seaport town, Largo, county of Fife, Scotland, and the year of his birth 1676, and here he spent the first thirteen years of his life.

According to an ancient Scottish superstition, a seventh son, born without an intervening daughter, was bound to be a favorite of fate, and would become a great man. As the circumstances of Alexander's birth met all the requirements of the tradition, it is not strange that Mrs. Selkirk secretly nursed large hopes for her seventh lad, notwithstanding the fact that her husband John, a hard, practical, and high-tempered old shoemaker, held such dreams to be nonsense, and determined that Alexander should settle down to the shoemaker's bench, and learn a quiet, honest trade. Thus Alexander and his future became a bone of contention between the hard, unloving, and sometimes cruel, old Scotchman and his gentle, shrinking wife, whose heart was full of dreams for her pet son.

This unfortunate state of family feeling could have but one result: it made Alexander disobedient, headstrong, and discontented with life and all its wholesome restraints and occupations and made him determined to break away and enter upon the great career before him.

By the time Alexander reached the age of nineteen, he had acquired a fair knowledge of reading, writing, arithmetic, and considerable information concerning navigation, together with a well-merited reputation for being a wild boy.

In England and Scotland the records of the churches were carefully kept and preserved, and in the Presbyterian Church, in which John Selkirk was an "elder," is the following entry:

"August 25, 1695. Alexander Selcraig, son of John Selcraig, Elder, cited to appear before the session for indecent conduct in church."

This "indecent conduct" seems to have been laughing aloud. Two days later another entry was made:

"August 27th. Alexander Selcraig called out; did not appear, having gone to sea. Continued until his return."

The citation appears to have been thoroughly outlawed, for, according to an old Scottish narrative, Alexander spent the next six years scouring the southern seas with buccaneers, who were a sort of semi-legalized pirates.

But when he did return Alexander made up in misconduct for all time lost during his absence. He quarreled with a half-witted brother and pounded him with a stick. For this he was sentenced by the sessions of the church to stand up and face the whole Sabbath congregation of the church—as humiliating a punishment as the church dignitaries knew how to inflict upon a young man of spirit.

But young Selkirk took this bitter medicine with brazen stoicism. This was in November, 1701; and the next year found him in England, booked for sea under the standard of Dampier, one of the most celebrated characters in all the annals of buccaneering.

France and Spain were then at war with England and other northern countries, and Dampier secured permission from the crown to prey upon French and Spanish merchantmen and colonies. Wealthy London gentlemen furnished him with two twenty-six gun vessels, Fame and St. George. Dampier had associated with him a man named Pulling, who was to command the former vessel.

Just as they were ready to set out upon their plundering expedition, Pulling and Dampier quarreled, and the former sailed away, to unknown shores, with the Fame, and left Dampier to secure another vessel. This he did. She was called the Cinque Ports, and was officered as follows: "Charles Pickering, Captain; Thomas Stradling, Lieutenant; Alexander Selkirk, Sailing Master."

The treachery of Pulling, and the delay which resulted, caused Dampier to miss the capture of certain Spanish galleons, with their millions of treasures,

ABANDONED.

which he had planned to take at Buenos Ayres. As all concerned in the expedition were to share in the spoils, in accordance with their station, this result of Dampier's quarrel made the crew dissatisfied with his management of the expedition, and at the island of Le Grand, where the vessels put in for repairs and supplies, nine of the men deserted. But this was not the worst misfortune. Pickering, commander of the Cinque Ports, died here, and was succeeded by Lieutenant Stradling, who

A RACE FOR LIFE.

was cordially hated by the entire crew.

To add to the general discontent, Selkirk dreamed that the voyage was to be ill-fated, and in those days dreams counted for much more than they do now.

After some three months of bootless and storm-tossed sailing, the Cinque Ports put into a bay of the island of Juan Fernandez to wood and repair

The discontent among the crews ran high, and would probably have resulted in outright mutiny while on the island, had not a French vessel hove in sight. In the haste and confusion of giving her chase, five or six of the sailors who had strayed into the interior of the island were left behind, but Selkirk was not one of them.

After a severe engagement, the French merchantman managed to escape. They turned about and were going to put into the bay at Juan Fernandez again, when they discovered two immense French vessels, heavily gunned, at anchor there.

The pirate crafts lost no time in put-

CRUSOE AND HIS PETS.

ting leagues between them and the French vessels and the six of their own men whom they had left behind.

After this the Cinque Ports had varying fortunes, until she again dropped anchor at Juan Fernandez, September, 1704, to find that four of the men whom they had left behind six months before had been captured by the French, and the other two had spent six months in the wild pleasures of seal and goat hunting, fishing and indolence, living on the abundant fruits of the island.

While these men had been enjoying innocent ease and a life devoid of care, as their account of their sojourn pictured, Selkirk had been beset by wars "without and within," and when not in the midst of scenes of bloodshed, he had been engaged in a bitter feud with his brutal commander, and surrounded by the strifes and dissensions of the crew.

In a moment of blind and desperate longing to escape from all this strife, Selkirk asked to be left behind, with his scanty effects, upon the island.

But no sooner had his request been granted, and the ship about to hoist anchor, than a full sense of his folly and the maddening realization of his desolation and peril came over him, and he cried and entreated with outstretched hands to be taken aboard. One narative says that he even rushed into the sea as far as he could go, and stood gazing out after the retreating ship until the darkness began to settle down about him; and that as the vessel set sail, the revengeful Stradling stood on deck and laughed at poor Selkirk's calamity.

For many days the half-crazed man staid by his sea chest and bundles on the beach, hoping against hope that the vessel might return, tormented by all the superstitions concerning spirits and specters, with which the sailors are familiar.

Not until his forces were well nigh exhausted would he quit the beach and take food other than sea lion flesh and clams, which he could get on the shore.

The exhaustion which followed this fearful strain seemed to tame and quiet his wild spirit and bring into his whole after-life a gentleness which had been entirely wanting before.

An invoice of his possessions shows him to have taken from the ship "bedding, clothing, a firelock, a pound of gunpowder, bullets, flint and steel, several pounds of tobacco, a hatchet, a knife, a kettle, a flip can, a Bible, some books on devotion and one or two books on navigation, and some mathematical instruments."

He built himself two huts of pimento wood, and one narrative, not authentic, however, gives a description of his cave, which is not mentioned in the most trustworthy account.

Selkirk found an abundance of tropical fruits on his island, and also numerous rats, cats, and goats—but no savages.

For nearly two years Selkirk kept quite closely to the beach and watched for a friendly sail; but gradually he became more and more content with his solitary lot, and found a joy in the quiet round of the days, which he spent in chasing the wild goats and domesticating them, taming cats, adding to his comforts, reading his Bible, and praying aloud.

Although he several times caught sight of a sail upon the distant horizon, only two ships ever dropped anchor in his harbor previous to his deliverance, which occurred at 2 o'clock on the afternoon of January 31, 1709. These ships were both Spanish vessels, and would have carried him into a fearful slavery had he been indiscreet enough to have made known his presence before satisfying himself of their nationality.

But despite his caution, he was, on one of these occasions, discovered and chased, and would probably have been taken had it not been for his superior swiftness of foot.

On the 31st of January, 1709, after Selkirk had been on the island four years and about three months, he watched the ships, the Duke and the Duchess, ride into his little harbor and send boats ashore. He knew the men to be Englishmen, and hastened to welcome them. At first they were shocked by his strange appearance, but soon learned his story and took him aboard the Duke, on which Dampier, whose great expedition had turned out disastrously, was acting as pilot. On Dampier's recommendation Selkirk was appointed mate and gained a fortune from the Spanish vessels which they captured in the next four years.

In 1712 he returned secretly to Largo, and was sitting in the old church when discovered by his aged and devoted mother, whose affection was too strong to be suppressed, even in the gaze of the whole kirkful of neighbors.

Here, in his native town, Selkirk lived for some three years, spending most of his time in solitary rambles about the wildest Scottish glens in his country, or in sailing alone along the rugged shore, shunning human society and sighing for the solitude of his peaceful isle.

Not all of his rambles, however, were entirely solitary. He occasionally fell in with a lass who was tending her mother's cow, and finally fell in love with her, and persuaded her to go with him, secretly, to London, where it is supposed they lived together until her death. In 1724 Frances Candis, a fashionable woman, came to Largo to prove her right to Selkirk's property, under a will, dated Dec. 12, 1720. She also proved her marriage with Selkirk, and his death, in 1723, on board the Weymouth, of which he was Lieutenant. If any reader of this sketch should chance to be in Edinburgh, he may, by going to the "Museum of the Society of Antiquaries," see the chest which contained Alexander Selkirk's sole possessions when he was set on his island, and also the

CRUSOE AT HIS DEVOTIONS.

cocoanut shell which there served as his drinking cup. The island has since been peopled with Spanish colonists, devastated by an earthquake, used by Chili as a convict colony, and is now deserted, but as beautiful as the most charming scenes described in the ideal "Robinson Crusoe."

FORREST CRISSEY.

GENEVA, Ill.

AN Iowa man named his boy Twice, so that lightning wouldn't strike him in the same spot

STOPPED TWO REGIMENTS.

Pat Sweeny, the Veteran Railroader, at Eighty-five.

The only man who didn't strike during the recent trouble among the yardmen and switchmen on the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad was old Patrick Sweeny, who is a watchman up at Stuyvesant.

It would be hard to find in any vocation a quainter character than this old man. Without abusing a much abused word, Sweeny can be described as unique—superlatively unique and superlatively interesting. Think of a man eighty-five years of age, over six feet in height, gnarled and knotted like a forest oak, who has never been sick a day in his life, and who has been in the employ of the railroad company ever since its first rail was laid. Even after he had passed his eightieth year Sweeny was able to endure more hard fatigue than any railroader on the line, without reference to age or physique. Men half a century his junior could not compete with him in feats of strength, and it is one of the stories of the road that at four-score he could wield all day long one of the old-fashioned jacks which younger men refused to handle. Indeed it was because of their extreme weight that these jacks were abandoned years ago.

He is absolutely devoid of fear, and to carry out what he believed to be his duty would defy a regiment of soldiers.

He did this once, with not only a regiment, but two of them, and with bayonets at his throat and loaded guns pointed at his head, refused absolutely to obey an order which he knew must result in disaster to those who sought to force him into obedience.

It was in April, 1862, when Sweeny was approaching the age of sixty, and was in the fullness of his health and vigor—when he was a better man physically than most men at thirty—active, alert, capable of depriving himself of food and sleep, and tireless in the persistency with which he seemingly defied natural laws. He was a switchman then at Stuyvesant. The road was a single track from New York to Stuyvesant, and a double track to Albany. Fifteen carloads of soldiers, on a special train, bound for New York, reached Stuyvesant early one morning, and Sweeny, who was on the lookout, stopped the train, because the train which had immediately preceded it carried no signal to give warning that the special was behind it. It was before the days of block signals, and much depended on a rememberance of orders as to how trains were to be run. The commandant of the troops could not understand why the train had come to a standstill. Leaping from the train, he began making inquiries and found Sweeny standing at the switch which he had locked.

"What does this mean?" thundered the officer. "Don't you know these are Federal troops, under orders from Washington to proceed to New York without delay? What do you mean by stopping this train without orders?"

Sweeny pointed his thumb over his shoulder, in the direction of the single track.

"The train ahead carried no signal for yez," said he, "and there bees an up train on its way."

"Unlock that switch instantly," commanded the officer, drawing his sword. "Not a moment's delay now. Unlock it!"

"I'll not," said Sweeny, and the words were scarcely out of his mouth before a dozen soldiers, in obedience to an order from a superior, hustled the switchman into his shanty. One man thrust his bayonet into the boards alongside of Sweeny's neck. Two others pinned him in a similar manner under the arms. Half a dozen others placed the muzzles of their loaded muskets within three inches of his head.

"Give up that key and let this train proceed," was the command, and while no threat accompanied it, the switchman knew that the next order would be to pull the triggers. He never flinched.

"Not wan step does this train move," he said, without a tremor.

"I will give you one min——"

At that moment a shrill whistle was heard, and before the officer could finish his order the train for Albany came flying along at the rate of forty miles an hour. Sweeny's watchfulness had prevented a terrible disaster. He knew perfectly well that the first train flying no signal flags to indicate that there was anything behind was a mistake. Had he permitted the train carrying the soldiers to proceed there would have been a frightful collision at about Stockport, where a curve through a rocky cut shuts out all view two hundred yards ahead.

It did not take either the officers or the men long to realize what a narrow escape they had made, and to appreciate the bravery of the switchman who was ready to give up his own life rather than permit a thousand men to put theirs in danger.

Famous Sam Sloan was President of the Central in those days, and when he heard of Sweeny's courageous conduct sent him a check for a generous amount and summarily discharged the engineer and crew of the train that had run through without a signal.—*New York World.*

Edison's Marvelous Experiment.

At Ogden, N. J., there is a mass of iron ore a mile long standing perpendicular and extending into the bowels of the earth to great but unknown depths, said to contain several hundred million tons of magnetic material. As the violent storms and uprushes in the sun produce disturbances of the earth's magnetism, which are recorded at various observatories, it has occurred to Mr. Edison that the strength of the solar disturbance, as exerted on our planet, could be increased enormously by using a vein of magnetic iron ore, and running around the body of ore several miles of wire, forming an inductive circuit, into which powerful electric currents would be thrown by any disturbance of the earth's magnetism. "By the use of instruments every change," he says, "could be recorded, and by the use of the telephone all sounds produced on the sun would be heard on our planet." He is, accordingly, erecting telegraph poles on each side of the Ogden ore hill, on which he is coiling an insulated wire many times around the whole area where the earth's magnetic lines leave the iron mountain and extend into space. The two ends of the long wire will be taken into his observation station and connected with the receiving telephone.

From every point of view—poetic, spiritual and scientific—this promises to be one of the most thrilling experiments ever made. Its successful conductor will be able to listen to the awe-inspiring rush and roar of the sun's mountainous billows of fire as they splutter forth in inconceivable fury from his cyclopean furnaces. What a sermon will be preached into the receiving instrument! A voice from the central orb of our planetary system—type answering to anti-type—thundering forth the eternal power and God-head of Him whom the Christian pulpit, often too feebly for our dull ears, proclaims "the Light of this world." From a scientific point of view the value of this experiment may be immense.

The Advantage of the Biggest Promiser in Politics.

"Yes," said Plunkett, "they are pressing me to run for Councilman from the First Ward. But I've been mighty backward in answering the letter, for I wanted to see how the land lay and feel the pulse of the people. I'm still feeling and I've got my eyes skint, and if I see any chance for me to get in I will announce and if not I will decline, with thanks, on account of my other pressing duties."

"You're right," said Brown.

"Me and the old 'oman have talked it over. At first she thought I was er fool and told me so. Says she:

" 'Plunkett, what have you got to recommend you to office; you hain't got no sense?'

" 'No.'

" 'You hain't got no great long string of relations?'

" 'No.'

" 'Then hush up! you've got no chance!'

" 'It don't take these things to get office these days.'

" 'Then, what does it take?' said she, as she leaned back in her chair with the biggest case of disgust on her face I ever seed her have.

" 'Promises! all you've got to do is to beat other fellows promising.'

"She riz from her chair and poked he hand out to me and 'lowed:

" 'You'll get there! Go it, Plunkie! If promises will get there you are as good as elected,' and she was plum carried erway. But directly she settled back in her chair and er shadow settled on her face and she 'lowed:

" 'But what will become of us when the public find out as well what your promises mean as I do?'

" 'No matter, so's I'm the gentleman from the First. They can't take the office from me after I get it, and sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'

"I always silence her when I quote scripture and she went on with her knitting while I set and studied. I studied and I studied. I studied till I went to bed, and then I lay there and studied myself to sleep and got up the next morning studying.

"I couldn't figure it no way but what the biggest promisers would get elected, and, thinks I to myself, it will take er dinged good one to out-promise me."

"'You're right,' said Mrs. Plunkett.

"Or outlie me——"

"'You're right' said Brown.

"But I hain't nowhere!" said the old man, as he settled back in his chair.

"I hain't nowhere on lying nor promising, and that is what has made me backward in answering the letter. I want to feel the public pulse thoroughly. I ran once down in Pike for office and I made er great mistake as to my popularity. I didn't get er vote—not even my own—for the other fellow talked to me erbout the courtesy of me and him swapping votes til I went like er fool and put in one for him, feeling sure that the courtesy he had so much talked erbout would cause him to vote for me. But narry time? He got every vote and mine, too, and I'm going to see that I'm solid this time before I 'announce,' letters or no letters."

"You're right," said Brown.—*Atlanta Constitution.*

Proverbs About Children.

Parents whose boys belong to what the English Bible calls an "Untoward Generation" are encouraged to hope for their growth into good men by a French, a Spanish, and an Italian proverb.

"There! no colt but breaks some halter," says the Italian, and the Spanish adds, "A ragged colt may make a good horse." "Youth comes back from far," is the French way of looking at a galloping youth.

Precocious children often gratify parents who have not heeded the proverb, "A man at five may be a fool at fifteen."

Archbishop Whately says that greyhound fanciers see no promise of a fleet dog in a well-formed, compact-shaped puppy, but gaze with hopeful eyes upon a loose-jointed, awkward, clumsy one. "Even so," he adds, "there is a kind of crudity and unsettledness in the minds of those young persons who turn out ultimately the most eminent."

"Late fruit keeps well," says a German proverb, the counterpart of the English old saw, "Soon ripe soon rotten."

An Unwarranted Intrusion.

Sammy had been told that if he would be good he might go into the next room and take a look at his new baby brother.

Sammy promised and was admitted. He stood for some moments looking in silence at the diminutive morsel of humanity, and then he freed his mind:

"I don't know what they're going to call you, bub," he said, "but I know I had everything fixed for goin' fishin' to-day, bait dug an' everything, and now you've come along and spoiled the whole programme. I call it a dog-on small piece of business. That's what I call it."

AN Irishman was asked why his countrymen were so remarkable for blundering. "Faith," said Pat, "there is something in the air of Ireland, and, I dare say, if an Englishman was born there he would do the same."

Little Freddie's Remarks.

Little Freddie has a way of saying something every once in a while that has a very forceful though unintentional significance. His father is the manager of a burlesque company, which fact may account for his precocious familiarity with certain institutions.

"Papa," he asked, "it's improper to say 'corpse de ballet,' isn't it?"

"Yes; certainly."

"Is it," he resumed, after a pause, "because people in the ballet never die?"—*Washington Post.*

Extra Liability to Malarial Infection.

Persons whose blood is thin, digestion weak and liver sluggish, are extra-liable to the attacks of malarial disease. The most trifling exposure may, under such conditions, infect a system which, if healthy, would resist the miasmatic taint. The only way to secure immunity from malaria in localities where it is prevalent, is to tone and regulate the system by improving weakened digestion, enriching the blood, and giving a wholesome impetus to biliary secretion. These results are accomplished by nothing so effectively as Hostetter's Stomach Bitters, which long experience has proved to be the most reliable safeguard against fever and ague and kindred disorders, as well as the best remedy for them. The Bitters are, moreover, an excellent invigorant of the organs of urination, and an active depurent, eliminating from the blood those acid impurities which originate rheumatic ailments.

Made His Apology Ample.

His emotions got the better of his Boston pride, and he kissed her.

"Fabrious Jones," said the agitated girl, "you surprise me!"

"Ethel," he answered, submissively, "I apologize from my heart."

"But, sir, I would rather have it from your lips."

And, like all Boston girls when they are determined on anything, she got it.—*Philadelphia Press.*

Ask Your Friends About It.

Your distressing cough can be cured. We know it, because Kemp's Balsam within the past few years has cured so many coughs and colds in this community. Its remarkable sale has been won entirely by its genuine merit. Ask some friend who has used it what he thinks of Kemp's Balsam. There is no medicine so pure, none so effective. Large bottles 50c and $1 at all druggists'. Sample bottle free.

A Lover's Description.

Miss Mugg—I don't see how it is your sister failed to find me at the station. You said you would describe me to her.

Infatuated Lover (who sees a good deal more in Miss Mugg than other folks can)—Yes. I told her to look for a beautiful girl, with the face of a Madonna and the form of a sylph. It's queer she missed you.—*New York Weekly.*

HALL'S CATARRH CURE is a liquid and is taken internally, and acts directly on the blood and mucous surfaces of the system. Write for testimonials, free. Manufactured by F. J. CHENEY & CO., Toledo, O.

THE island of Tristan, in the South Atlantic, is inhabited by eighty people, the patriarch of the party, Peter Green, a veritable Robinson Crusoe, having been there for fifty-two years. He has just sent a letter complaining that some of the grown-up children show a desire to leave their lovely island home.

THE *very best way* to know whether or not Dobbins' Electric Soap *is as good as it is* said to be, is to *try it yourself.* It can't deceive *you.* Be sure to get no imitation. There are lots of them. Ask your grocer

A KENTUCKY man recently found a snake in his bed-tick. He must have gone to bed with his boots on.—*Ram's Horn.*

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