

**BY REEF AND SHOAL: BEING  
AN ACCOUNT OF A VOYAGE  
AMONGST THE ISLANDS IN  
THE SOUTHWESTERN PACIFIC**

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By Reef and Shoal: Being an Account of a Voyage Amongst the Islands in the Southwestern Pacific by William Sinker

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**WILLIAM SINKER**

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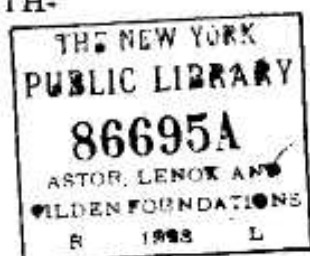


**S.S. "Southern Cross."**

Launched Feb. 11, 1903.  
Dedicated by the Archbishop of Canterbury, May 23, 1903.  
Sailed May 25, 1903.

# BY REEF AND SHOAL

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF A VOYAGE AMONGST  
THE ISLANDS IN THE SOUTH-  
WESTERN PACIFIC



BY

WILLIAM SINKER, R.N.R.

*Commander of the Melanesian Mission's steamer "Southern Cross"*

PUBLISHED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE TRACT COMMITTEE  
FOR THE MELANESIAN MISSION

THIRD EDITION

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1905

## PREFACE

THE letter printed in the following pages was written by the commander of the Melanesian Mission's steamer, the "Southern Cross." This ship was built in 1903 by Messrs. Sir W. Armstrong, Whitworth & Co. at Newcastle-on-Tyne. She was launched on the 11th of February in that year; solemnly dedicated by the Archbishop of Canterbury at the East India Dock in the Thames on the 23rd of May, and left England on the 25th. Her commander, Captain W. Sinker, R.N.R., promised to send the writer of these lines an account of the maiden trip to the islands in the S.W. Pacific, amongst which this Mission is working, namely, the New Hebrides, Banks, Torres, Santa Cruz, and Solomon groups.

The letter was not written for publication; but it is so interesting an account of missionary work, so freely written, so full of humour and also of enthusiasm, that I have no hesitation in accepting the kind offer of the S.P.C.K. (who contributed £1000 towards the building of the "Southern

Cross") to publish it. For I am certain that the writer will be only too glad if his description of what he saw contributes in any way to the help of the cause of Foreign Missions.

I must express most gratefully our indebtedness to Mr. H. J. Ford for his illustrations.

L. P. ROBIN,

Org. Sec. for the Melanesian Mission.

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**The Bishop of St. Albans says:**—"I specially desire to commend the letter which was written by Captain Sinker, the commander of the vessel, which seems to me one of the very best testimonies to Foreign Missionary work that I have ever read in my life. Coming from a sailor, the plain simple narrative of a sailor on his first voyage to this Mission, I am certain it will rank with the very best records of Missionary work which are to be found throughout the world."

**The Bishop of Stepney says:**—"Will you please, all of you, obtain, in some form or another, that letter of Captain Sinker's, on his voyage among the islands; and will you see that all boys of your acquaintance have it to read? I think they will agree with what was said to me by a young Layman who had just left Oxford, and who had never taken any interest whatever in Missions, 'Well,' he said, after reading this book, 'all I can say is, if all Missionary reports were like that it would be a different thing. I wish to goodness I had seen anything of that sort when I was a kid.' I do ask all persons here present to give their boys this account of Captain Sinker's Island Voyage. It will do more for the cause of Missions than anything else I know."



## BY REEF AND SHOAL

MY DEAR ROBIN,

I promised to write you an account of our maiden trip round the islands, so here goes; though, mind you, it is a great business, and whether I shall ever get to the end of it we shall see.

On September 17th we left Norfolk Island at 4 p.m. for the islands. Our first place to call at was Vila (Sandwich Island, New Hebrides). I went there to get a little more coal, and also to arrange about having some ready for us on our return south. I hope next year to be able to carry enough coal to last the round trip, but this time, owing to being so full up with stores, cases, etc., I really had no room for any more coal. The coaling arrangements at Vila are primitive to a degree. They only have a small punt, holding 18 tons, and, when we were there, very few natives to work, so it took us nearly three days to get 46 tons. They had to tow the punt out to us some way; we had

most of our native boys working, but my slight experience of Melanesian boys is that they don't care for too much hard labour, although awfully willing to bear a hand when called upon *in the right way*; I find you can get them to do anything if you handle them rightly.

About noon on September 24th we left for Raga (New Hebrides), where we started paying teachers. This paying teachers is rather a big business; much easier and simpler if they could be paid in money, but in most of the islands that would be impossible, since they would be unable to use it, as there are not any traders from whom they could buy. You will know all about making up the pay—the usual growls when things can't be found; that tired feeling; and so on *ad infinitum*.

Well, we started from the south end of Raga, and worked up the coast. I'll try and give you the names of the places as we came along; I can't vouch for them, however, as of course the charts don't mention many of them. Who invented the names I don't know, but he deserves——. Mr. Edgell was away on sick leave, so Mr. Godden paid his teachers, assisted by J. Palmer, while Mr. O'Ferrall bought yams for the ship. The second place was Ranwadi, where we found a Plymouth Brother had established himself, and one or two of our teachers had left their posts and gone over to him, so we brought their pay back. Then we

came to Varewewev. (Have you ever heard of these places before? Awful names, aren't they?) There is a small church at this place, built by a labourer returned from Queensland.

Steep Cliff Bay was our next place, and here I went ashore, and Mr. Davies came too. Somehow we landed at the wrong place, so Godden took the boat round to the right landing, whilst Davies and I walked over through the bush, escorted by a few dozen natives. It was very hot, and we had a steep cliff to climb. I did not feel quite easy in my own mind whether the natives wanted to eat me or not; you see, it was my first time ashore. As far as possible I drew their attention to Davies, especially when we halted, rather blown with our exertions over the hill. Of course the natives waited for us, and I then drew their attention to Davies, pinching his arm, and saying "Nice, nice," thereby taking their attention off my own plump body. However, I found afterwards it was a needless precaution as they were all Christians.

Of course you have to shake hands with all the natives, and it's very comforting their not understanding English, because you can say exactly what you like; *e.g.* I shook hands with one man like this, "Hallo! Well, you're the ugliest old man I've ever seen!" to which he smiles, but luckily hasn't the faintest idea what you're talking about. Still, it hits both ways, for they talk