

**"BLACKBIRDING" IN THE  
SOUTH PACIFIC:  
OR, THE FIRST WHITE MAN  
ON THE BEACH**

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"Blackbirding" in the South Pacific: Or, the First White Man on the Beach by W. B. Churchward

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**W. B. CHURCHWARD**

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"BLACKBIRDING"  
IN THE  
SOUTH PACIFIC;  
OR,  
The First White Man on the Beach.

*William*  
*W. B. Brown* BY  
W. B. CHURCHWARD,  
*Author of "My Consulate in Samoa."*



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## CHAPTER I.

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Old recollections.—Liverpool again.—Anticipated company.  
—The consul, baker, Jimmy, and the judge.—Lynch  
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—The ancient visitor.—The black white man.—“Much  
married.”—Promising British subjects.—More than al-  
lowance.—British the only white men.—Runaway con-  
victs.—Improved savages.—Murder for fun.—Couch of  
human heads.—The end of a brute.—White men in  
Tahiti.—Square-headed Dutchmen.—A misunderstood  
compliment.—Its result.

“WELL, Mr. John King Bruce, I’m glad to see  
you are out again. Thought I had seen the  
last of you when I was sent for the other day.”

“Yessar, I was main bad then, and thought  
there was another Britisher agoing to be planted  
up there ‘mongst the land crabs in the ceme-  
tery, and that his name was Bruce.

“O Lord, sir! I could think of nothing but  
of those I expected soon to be with; and I  
assure you, sir, old, very old times came before  
me, just as if they were no further off than  
yesterday. -

*G. 7*

B

"I saw old Liverpool again, and many other places where this poor old body has been, for both good and evil.

"All the queer things what happened both before and after I struck 'Samoa' came up again before me. But what came stronger was the remembrance of those whom I soon expected to join.

"Those poor marines who were killed in the fight on Mutineer Point, all bleeding and gasping as they fell, and their funeral up there,—all that came.

"Then there was Mister L., the consul; the baker, whose name I don't now recollect; then poor old 'Jimmy,' and the judge, both of whom were so kind to me.

"Afraid? No, sir! They were all friends. There was one visitor I didn't like though, but I didn't fear him. He was that brute we strung up to the big cocoanut tree outside the saloon where he murdered his mate. I was one on that rope, pulled with a will, and would do so again. But then we had no court like now, and what else could we do?

"Anyway, Jimmy thought it healthy to go to 'Fr'isco' till the thing cooled down a little;

and lucky for him he did, as he was the first man that the judge from Fiji asked for on landing.

"We called it 'Vox Populi,' whatever that means ; but the judge didn't seem to see it in the same way. He didn't bother me, anyway. I suppose I was the wrong colour to be taken notice of.

"All the same, that chap came to my memory, with his face all twisted, and his eyes starting right out of his head, just as he looked as we swung him aloft. But he didn't disturb me much.

"There were others, too, which neither you nor any one else knows anything about. I didn't like them ; but I wasn't afraid. They all deserved what they got.

"Every dead man I knew came to see me in my wanderings ; and I felt so tired and weary that I wanted to join them, for their trouble looked to be all over ; and, sir, so would mine have been if you hadn't come ; and I'm here now to thank you for your kindness. But even now, perhaps, it would have been better to have let me go."

"Not a bit, Bruce. You are worth twenty



dead men yet, and can't be allowed to cost the Government ten dollars cemetery fees for a long time to come. Why, you, 'the first white man on the beach,' have to be introduced to many more visitors yet before you go under. But come in and sit down. We'll have a bottle of beer, and you shall tell me, if you will, something of your history. You must have seen some curious things in your time."

"Ay, that I have, sir. Thank you! I will take a seat, but don't ask me to tell too many things about myself in old times, for I would much rather forget most of them.

"You might regret your kindness to me if I told you what I've been, and all I've done. Yet I swear that I was never willingly wicked, and that the circumstances which forced me are to blame for most bad things this poor old darkie has done."

I was in the verandah of my bungalow at Apia, Samoa, one very hot day, stretched out at full length on a cane chair, enjoying the little breeze that was stirring from off the oily waves, looking as though glazed with the oppressive heat, and too languid to show the smallest sign of breaking on the red-hot coral reef, steaming,

blurred, and indistinct in the distant flickering haze.

It was just the time of day when most people, both native and white, were taking their usual siesta under their mosquito nets, at all events, were resting within doors; and great was my surprise to see, right in the blazing sun, tottering along feebly, supporting himself with a staff, held in trembling hands, John King Bruce, "the first white man on the beach."

On came the old man, painfully making his way through the orange and breadfruit trees, and halting every now and then for breath, until reaching the verandah where I sat, he respectfully saluted, and the foregoing colloquy took place.

I soon had my visitor comfortably seated, with a glass of cool lager at his elbow, to which the poor old fellow had been a stranger for many a long day.

Bruce, in spite of his seven-worded sobriquet, was a negro, and figured in the consular books as having been born at Liverpool some time very little short of a century from the date of this incident.

In his younger days he must have been a

smart, middle-sized man, but old age and long continued sickness had converted him into one of the most miserable looking objects alive.

His face, with the skin hanging all loose and baggy, was twisted and wrinkled beyond description; yet his eyes, though deeply sunk in their orbits, glittered brightly from beneath the shelter of a shaggy pair of ancient, bristly eyebrows.

He was not entirely bald, for there still remained little tufts of snow-white wool, sparsely scattered all over an enormous cranium.

These irregular locks, swaying about in the wind, would ludicrously suggest a bevy of white waterfowl struggling to rise and quit a jet-black, shiny ocean, as represented by the dark scalp, always glistening with cocoanut oil, or some other such unguent.

Bruce had picked up, somehow, an education, such as it was; could both read and write, spoke English without any negro innovations, and was possessed of more than the usual amount of intelligence common to his class; and this, in spite of his great age, he had wonderfully preserved.

His history no one rightly knew, but at times he had given inquisitive people most astound-