

**BEN NEBO: A PILGRIMAGE
IN THE SOUTH SEAS: IN
THREE CANTOS**

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Ben Nebo: A Pilgrimage in the South Seas: In Three Cantos by H. A. Stuart

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BEN NEBO;

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IN THREE CANTOS.



By H. A. STUART.

[CALIFORNIA.]



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NOTES.

"THE THREE KINGS THERE! INTXED AMID THE FLOOD."

Page 7; verse 1.

A few leagues beyond the coast of the northern island of New Zealand, are three stupendous rocks, rising like turrets, from the sea. They are visible at a vast distance; and, seen under a tempestuous gusset, present a spectacle of singular magnificence.

"TWAU DAILING TASMAN AND HIS ROVING CREW
WHO FIRST THESE ISLANDS IN TUKKI WANDERINGS FOUND."

Page 12; verse 3.

New Zealand was first discovered by Tasman in 1642, but he did not land. The natives, however, came on board, and some intercourse took place, during which seven of the Dutch who had gone ashore were cruelly slaughtered. The great navigator Cook explored these regions in 1770, and discovered a strait which divides the country into two large islands. The southern was called by the natives Tavis Pœnamoo, and the northern Ekedanowmawe, names which equal the Russian in length, and which might well be contracted. The first is not less than 600 E. miles in length, by 150 in medial breadth; and the second is little inferior in size.

"THESE ISLES
ARE BY DOON NATURE WITH RICH GIFTS ENDOWED."

Page 12; verse 4.

The islands of New Zealand enjoy a temperate climate, similar to that of France. The soil is exceedingly fertile, and is found to contain minerals, of which gold is the most abundant. The natives were—and in some parts are still—cannibals. They are of a brown complexion, little deeper than the Spanish, and many are even fair. They equal the tallest Europeans in stature; and their features are commonly regular and pleasing. It is singular to observe such a diversity between them and the natives of Australia, when theory would expect to find them the same race of men. So far as present discoveries extend, the natives of Australia and Papua seem to display an African origin; while most of the other islands in the Pacific appear to have been peopled from Asia.

"THIS MAORI DREAD WHERE MANY CHIEFS HAD DIED."

Page 13; verse 2.

A misprint: it should be *Morai*. The *MORAI* are places of worship where the aged are frequently left to perish. They are usually lawns shaded by trees esteemed sacred. Among these the *cratæva* or *purataruru*, the *terminalis glabra* or *tara iri*, and the *dracena terminalis*, are the principal. Caves are occasionally used.

"IN OLLAMING JAD AND MARO WHITE ARRAY'D."

Page 13; verse 3.

Jad—a green stone wrought by the natives into ornaments and rude tools, with the latter of which they are ingenious mechanics. *Maro*—a narrow piece of coarse cloth formed of flax, in the same manner as at *Otaheite*. It is passed between the legs and fastened round the loins. In battle the men throw a kind of mats over their shoulders; and this armor is neatly manufactured. On solemn occasions the chiefs wear dresses ingeniously composed of feathers. The women have only a slight wrapper; and the hair is cut short behind but turned up from their forehead. The ears are ornamented with bits of jad or beads, the face being often besmeared with a red paint, seemingly from ochre mingled with grease. The heroic actions of their sires are perpetuated in legend; the voice being accompanied by a rude instrument, shapen like a lyre.

"AND FIXED FOR SEA THEIR LENGTHY BARGES LAY."

Page 16; verse 2.

The canoes of the New Zealanders are well built of planks, raised upon each other, and fastened with strong withes. Some are fifty feet long, and so broad as to be able to sail without an out-rigger, but the smaller sort commonly have one, and they often fasten two together by rafters. The large canoes will carry thirty men or more; and have often a head ingeniously carved.

"THUS, WHEN IN DEATH A MAORI LIETH STARK."

Page 19; verse 1.

The New Zealanders inter their dead; they also believe that three days after the interment the heart separates itself from the corpse, and, concealed in a shell of bark, is carried to the clouds by an attendant spirit. A queer belief, truly, yet not more preposterous than some of our more civilized imaginings.

"AND SUICIDE, THAT RATHER DOWNTON ACT."

Page 19; verse 3.

Suicide is very common among the Maoris, and this they often commit by hanging themselves on the slightest occasions. A woman who has been punished by her husband, will very likely put an end to further chastisements by the aid of a halter.

"HE ATE A WHOLE BOAT'S CREW AND MADE A DEATHLESS FAME."

Page 21; verse 3.

The New Zealanders, as before remarked, are cannibals, unless where christianity has exerted its civilizing influence. The bodies of their enemies, while yet warm, are cut in pieces, broiled and devoured with peculiar satisfaction. I know a chief in Auckland, who vowed that he had assisted in devouring a party of Cook's men, who were surprised near Adventure Bay. He dwelt on that feast with profound interest; for it seems "tarpanlins" are not bad eating; and a cabin-boy is said to taste like young opossum.

"PRIME OVER ALL THE ARTOCARPUS REGIONS—
MAJESTIC MONARCH OF THE TORRID ZONE."

Page 30; verse 3.

Of the plants peculiar to the tropical islands, the chief is the Artocarpus, or bread fruit. This valuable tree rises to the height of more than forty feet, with a trunk the thickness of a man's body. Its fruit, which is about the size of a twenty-four pound shot, when roasted is a most wholesome nourishment, and in taste resembles new wheaten bread. For eight successive months every year does this tree continue to furnish fruit in such abundance that three of them are sufficient for the support of one man; nor is this the whole of its value; the inner bark is manufactured into cloth, the wood is excellent for the construction of huts and canoes, the leaves serve instead of dishes, and of its milky glutinous juice a tenacious cement and bird-lime is prepared.

ERRATUM. Page 34, verse 3. For "enclave" read "enclave."

"Allah il Allah."

INTRODUCTION.

PEOPLE in these times are not supposed to rank poetry too highly; yet there are some who are not above verse, and to these BEN NEBO is directed. Of the Poem itself I shall say nothing: its conduct lies among the South Seas; and so far as the description of the natives, islands, adventures, etc. are concerned, is strictly correct—all being drawn from personal experience.

Ben Nebo is an imaginary name compounded for the occasion. Nebo, as the intelligent reader is aware, is the name of one of the summits of the mountains of Abarim, whence the great Hebrew legislator was permitted to behold the Land of Promise, before yielding up his spirit. I chose the name because it struck me as unique and euphonious: the prefix "Ben" is simply an abbreviation of Benjamin—a style I have also adopted from mere novelty, and which is seen in other names in the poem, thus: Ned Bastion, Dave Vangs, etc. I trust no harm will come of this innovation, though perhaps more toploftical titles might have a better effect in a rhyming production; but if the characters are proper, who will quarrel with patronymics?

Ben Nebo, himself, is a fanciful character, created for the purpose of effect, and is supposed to be the super-cargo of the trader. He may be a rather cynical and unamiable personage; but for this I am not accountable; no author is responsible for the vagaries of his creations.

This volume contains but a fragment of his adventures; should it meet with favorable consideration I may follow it with another. Its reception will decide whether I may venture to remove the hero from the Pirate Isle, and, conducting him through a series of events, restore him to his native land: these three cantos are merely experimental.

As regards the manner of the verse, I have chosen that of Spenser; because, of all other styles that I know of, it admits of the greatest variation; and is, therefore, eminently adapted to a subject like this, which is somewhat changeable and excursive. Should failure ensue, it must lie rather in the execution than in the design, which has been sanctioned by many of our greatest poets, among them Ariosto, Thomson, Beattie, and the mightier endorsement of Byron.

The illustrations are photographed by Messrs. Flaglor and Perkins from original designs made by the leading artists of San Francisco: Fortunato Arriola, G. J. Denny, R. G. Holdredge, Ed. Richardson, L. F. Ireland, Frederick Whymper, John M. Tracy, Charles Rodgers, Eugene A. Poole and Pascal Loomis, are represented by characteristic drawings.

I have now done with Ben Nebo; and, while I feel a pang at parting with so familiar an associate, I trust he may be able to outlive the storms which frequently beset a new navigator in the seas of literature. Allah il Allah.

S.