

MLMSS 7144

Hudson family – papers concerning the wreck of the Duncan Dunbar, 1865.

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Saturday Night

5 minutes after 8 our poor Ship struck on a Coral Reef, in Latitude 2 [?] coast of South America.

I was in my Cabin arranging things for the Sabath when I felt the shock, 5 Minutes after dear Eliza

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came to confirm my fears, but told me not to be alarmed. Poor child she had little emotion pictured in her face. I left the cabin to see for myself. I found more of the Ladies assembled around the companion Ladder, they seemed in a great measure compo[sed]

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[comp]osed, & waiting for the worst. I believe the Captain at first thought to get her off, but every effort to do so only increased the danger. She got jammed in the forward part, the vertical [bow?] [rising ?] at the stern upset the [?] of [things ?].

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was fearful for many hours we expected every minute she go to pieces. We were obliged to hold on to keep our place fearing to be dashed to any thing in our way. When the Captain gave up hope of getting here off, he lowered

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a boat at great risk (as it was dark) to see for a place of safety for the people. You may imagine our delight on his return [to] hear if the ship kept together until day light, we'd all be on land. From 12 until 6 am our sufferings were dreadful, but

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God spared us for further trials, on Sunday at 6 [° we were all called on Deck. The Ladies were obliged to take off their Crinolines, as we had to be lowered in a chair over the Stern not an easy matter and one of considerable danger, as the Vessel rocked fearfully] we landed – and felt so thankful, although the place we are on is of a most miserable kind, a narrow strip of sand & coral covered with birds we cannot walk without putting our foot on their

[Note : text in brackets is from page 36 and was intended by the author to be inserted at this point]

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young ones, and the heat is most intense. On Sunday we sat all day exposed to a tropical sun without covering of any kind, or a drop of Water. The Captain & men busy in getting provisions ashore & others in getting up a tent for the Women & poor children. We got a little wine to wet our lips & some poor biscuits.

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we had with us was all the Food we got for the day. Monday up at daylight after a very sleepless night, the Tent was crowded & hot and to make things worse, the Crabs came crawling over, & biting us in numbers. Still we have much to be thankful for being alive & were comfortable. We had a bathe & felt a little better. Our fare for Monday was not enough to keep life together. Tuesday & Wednesday suffer [ing]

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[suffer] ing Hunger & thirst. The Captain & Men making every effort for our safety, but expecting every hour the ship would break up, & no more Water nor provisions be got out of her. We were obliged to be content with a small allowance about one [?] of a biscuit & a piece of burnt mutton, on such fare for 3 days our strength was much reduced. Eliza & I were scarcely able after bathing to crawl

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back to the Tent after sleeping in our Clothes for the night, a thing we could not help as men & women occupied the same Tent, you may see how requisite bathing was for us – if our friends could have looked on us of a morning how shocked & amused they would have felt. The tent was one scene of excitement on Tuesday, people rushing to Boats & claiming

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things brought ashore for them & trying to get a little water, it is indeed a dreadful day of heat & starvation. The Captain is preparing to leave in an open boat for Pernambuco 260 miles off to seek for help. It has been a busy day work for him. They tell me he has never closed an eye since we struck, remaining on board day & night working

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for our comfort. He is now sitting on a log with the Doctor not far from us – I mean Eliza. We keep out in the night time as long as we are allowed, the rule is to be in by 10 – by the light of the fire I can see the poor Captain with his head on his hands – are those tears – oh yes - the handkerchief is required. Dr. [Dawson ?] places his hand on the Captains. I fancy

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he says to him all will yet be well. Poor Captain Thornton requires comfort now, 120 Souls looking to him for help – he is about to risk his life for our safety. Wednesday morning at 10 we go to the Boat to see the Captain off. After a prayer for our Safety and deliverance, the Captain & Mr. Gallery bids us good bye, they take a man with them & some

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provisions. They are now in the Boat, all hands are called to take her off as the tide is coming in and a beach for a quarter of a mile is to be got over. 3 Cheers are given by the Men, the boat is off on her Mission of Mercy with a fair wind & tide [?] We got a tumbler of Ale & cheese. We all feel wonderfully cheered – on Sunday

[Note: mark after 'tide' indicates a passage to be inserted from elsewhere – not found in collection]

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please God, we will be looking out for the Captains return. How we manage to get through the day I cannot tell. Every one is for themselves, the strong ones trampling down the Weaker. Selfishness showing its self in many disgusting ways. Some patiently bearing the Will of God – others scrambling for what they can get. Sailors and Men going on Board

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and Breaking open peoples boxes and taking the most valuable things & throwing the rest away. We had nothing to expect, our cabin was swept away after the first day and not having anyone to see to get any things for us we lost everything we had. The night on

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which we struck few of us had nerve to think of saving things – Worthless in our eye at that time with death staring us in the face.

Thursday 12 Same scene as before, hotter & more humid if possible. Every day Eliza must sit out of the tent the dust is so great it makes her cough so I must go with

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her. This morning she could not eat [?] I was obliged to get her some water at 8 in the morning. God only knows what I have suffered on her account, and it made me feel more wretched to think we had such an unfeeling Set of Fellow Passengers, those who have husbands got on very well, but the

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Gentlemen of our party never offered the least kindness to Ladies without a protector. Finding several of the Men & Sailors refused to work they feel themselves the strongest side and are laying down laws for us to abide by. One is: we must be all on a qualeity – every Lady must go for her help of meat

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and buiscuit, on a saucer. They must get the same as we get and yet their Husbands bring spoil from the Wreck. Oh What a State of things. We fear blood shed and have a guard of 2 with fire arms relieved every 4 hours. We

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could only trust the Gentlemen of our Party, therefore after working all day it was hard work for them. What a dreadful place this Isle land is, it is alive with animal life, Birds, Crabs, Earwigs, Insects of all sorts. Ours is not the first wreck, there is close to

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the tent 2 Graves and pieces of wreck, if we must remain 3 weeks here as some say, there will be some of us left here for ever. We try to be as brave as possible, with sad hearts and sometimes must smile to see

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Sailors coming ashore with gay bonnets & feathers on their Heads, to them it is a fine holiday and the Ladies themselves look so strange without Crinoline. We all wear our mean skirts. What a punishment we are having

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I only trust in God it will be a blessing to our Souls – I am afraid my Soul revolts at Gods chastisement, I cannot feel any resignation, I have suffered much.
Friday & Saturday our Food was increased , the Ale at one Strength more for a time

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Oh what long days – looking for night and then our Weary bodies are not allowed to rest from those horrid Crabs. How jealous I feel seeing others getting some of their things Ashore. We are almost naked. 6 yards of Calico are

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given me by Mrs. Mort, impossible to sow from the heat. I have got one of our mattresses for Eliza. I feel so thankful, I sleep on a rug. The heat is intense
Sunday We have prayers at 7 by

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Dr. Dn. – how solemn he reads, many are affected. Dr. Dn. I thought was not a religious man, but to look on a large number of delicate women and children kneeling on the sand, many of them weak and ill, few of us but must acknowledge we deserve our punishment, it is now our true charac [ter]

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[charac]ter appears.

Monday. The Men are beginning to grumble about work, one can scarcely blame them, at low tide they have to drag the supplies over a coral beach cutting their feet severely.
The officers I am sorry to see have no control, one Lad was Flogged

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for stealing Water through the night, this made the Men more discontented and we have reason to fear blood shed. We cannot tell how long we may be here. Some say a month, it is quite out of the way of ships. Five passed in sight of us. We made signals by day and kept up

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[written upside down on back cover]

Wrecked Saturday after 8pm at long. 28° at night & [?] after so [?] to be lost & waiting for daylight; land reported in sight & [fortunate?] to arrive at five we leave and landed on a desolate island inhabited by millions of birds. All [?] remain on board – no shelter from sun

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and in low spirits.

Monday – Most wretched Crabs prevented our sleeping during the night. Now that they have found us out I am afraid they will drive us altogether from the Tent, they come in such numbers. What a hot Weary day this has been, no appearance of the Captain. The Boats go to & fro to the vessel as possible and the excitement is great, many are making canvas

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bags to put their clothes in, so as to be ready to go at a minutes notice when help comes to us. I don't like to see them preparing another Boat to send off on Sunday next – it makes us down hearted. Such was the order left by the Captain should help not come 12 days after his departure. Sunday the Dr. is watching since day

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light. At 12 he rushes into the Tent to say there is a steamer in sight and evidently bearing down upon us

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Our ordeal was finished and we were glad to have a place on which to lay our Weary heads though hungry & thirsty. Sleep was a welcome pastime, it made us forget our Trials for... [last 2 words unreadable]

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Memo – for my part my heart is full, and overflowing with gratitude to Him Who has preserved us and & sustained us, in our various trials, & Who saved us doubtless, in order to return us to our Family, & to the happiness of embracing those who are so dear to us.

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[interpolation intended to be inserted on page 6]

we were all called on Deck. The Ladies were obliged to take off their Crinolines, as we had to be lowered in a chair over the Stern not an easy matter and one of considerable danger, as the Vessel rocked fearfully