The Bounty: The True Story of the Mutiny on the Bounty by Caroline Alexander

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Harcover: 491 pages  
Publisher: Viking Adult (2003)  
Language: English  
ISBN-10: 067003133X  
Product Dimensions:6.5 x 1.6 x 9.6 inches  

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An account of the actual events surrounding the legendary conflict aboard the HMS Bounty focuses on the court-martial of ten mutineers, citing the breakdown and exile of Masters Mate Fletcher Christian and Lieutenant Bligh's navigation talents. 250,000 first printing. First serial, The New Yorker.

The Bounty still sails, maintaining its place in the popular imagination. It wasn’t much of a ship, really – an ordinary three-masted merchant vessel – but it ranks with Jason of Thessaly’s Argo among those ships that have entered the realm of myth. It is the centerpiece of an epic story of love, adventure, conflict, survival, and of course mutiny. And the reader who wants a truly thorough recounting of the saga of the Bounty would do well to consult Caroline Alexander’s The Bounty (2003). Alexander’s interest in maritime history is demonstrated by her earlier book The Endurance (1998), a look at Sir Ernest Shackleton’s Antarctic expedition of 1914. Five years later, as she sought to set forth The True Story of the Mutiny on the Bounty (the book’s subtitle), she followed in the footsteps of earlier Bounty historians like Richard Hough, whose Captain Bligh and Mister Christian (1973) first set forth the revisionist thesis that perhaps William Bligh was not such a villain, and Fletcher Christian not such a saint.

Alexander’s book differs from Hough’s chiefly in the sheer level of detail with which she dedicates herself to the task of finding out what happened to every single person who was on the Bounty on 28 April 1789, whether loyalist or mutineer. In Alexander’s reading, Bligh is a commander whose “fundamental humanity” (p. 129) makes him the superior even of the famed Captain Cook. If he displayed a flaw in his command of the Bounty, it was in the favoritism that he displayed toward two young officers – Master’s Mate Fletcher Christian, and Midshipman Peter Heywood, both of whom later played crucial roles in the Bounty story. I was surprised that Alexander dispensed with the actual mutiny on the Bounty as quickly as she did – not quite three pages, out of a book that is 410 pages long (not counting references). Yet she sets forth well the astounding saga of Captain Bligh’s open-boat voyage with the Bounty loyalists – 3500 miles, from Tofoa (in modern Tonga) to Coupang (a port of contemporary Indonesia). It is difficult to take issue with Alexander’s assessment of Bligh’s achievement: “As an almost sublime record of extreme suffering and undaunted resolution, few documents can compare with the log William Bligh kept in the Bounty’s launch” (p. 150). Alexander’s core interest in the Bounty story seems to be in Bligh, as when she thus sets forth her sense of how Bligh’s very virtues as a commander may have contributed to the mutiny: “It can be fairly said of Bligh that his great asset as a seaman was not only his impeccable professional skills, but his unshakable, uncomplacent, immodest confidence in himself. This confidence – the wellspring of his professional optimism, and indeed his courage – was what had enabled him successfully to command the Bounty launch on the most historic open-boat voyage yet made. This confidence in turn sprang from a relentless perfectionism, an unwavering and exacting adherence to the strictest letter of the laws of his duty. The gift of perfectionism and all that flowed from it was what Bligh sought to instill in his protégés. However, it may be that the very specialness of his relationship with these chosen young men was the weight that crushed them” (p. 315).

Captain Bligh was lauded as a hero, a navigator for the ages, when word of his successful open-boat voyage made it home to England; the Bounty mutineers, by contrast, were regarded as lawless renegades rising up against legitimate authority, the way mutineers are usually regarded. What, then, caused the sea change through which Fletcher Christian became, in the popular mind, the hero of the Bounty saga, William Bligh the villain? The wealthy and well-connected families of “gentlemen” Peter Heywood and Fletcher Christian had means, motive, and opportunity for discrediting Bligh, and worked hard to rework the Bounty narrative in British popular culture. Bligh, meanwhile, does not seem to have fully understood what he was up against. “While Bligh had defended himself in crisp, logical naval fashion, he failed to comprehend that he was doing battle with a force more formidable and unassailable than any enemy he would meet at sea – the power of a good story” (p. 343). The Bounty saga unfolded as the Romantic Age began; and Bligh’s eminently neoclassical marshalling of facts, reason, and logic was no match for a mythologized Fletcher Christian as “the perfect Romantic hero – the tortured master’s mate, his long hair loose, his shirt collar open…with his gentlemanly pedigree and almost mythic name” (p. 344). At the same time, Alexander offers a fair-minded assessment of Fletcher Christian and Peter Heywood, the two best-known mutineers. Peter Heywood, convicted of mutiny and sentenced to hang, received a reprieve from King George III, and made the most of the monarch’s clemency, rejoining the Royal Navy and serving honourably for the rest of his professional career. Alexander’s judicious assessment is that “On balance…in [Heywood’s] case, justice could be said to have been fairly served; he had been found guilty, but had been pardoned to redeem himself” which he had done with, it would seem, patience and humility. But others had been hanged – and there was the rub” (p. 398).

As for Fletcher Christian, Alexander likewise offers a careful mix of sympathy and criticism: “What caused the mutiny on the Bounty? The seductions of Tahiti, Bligh’s harsh tongue – perhaps. But more compellingly, a night of drinking and a proud man’s pride, a low moment on one grey dawn, a momentary and fatal slip in a gentleman’s code of discipline – and then the rush of consequences to be lived out for a lifetime” (p. 407). In Alexander’s assessment of Fletcher Christian’s actions on that crucial day, I saw an implicit suggestion that anyone could fall as Fletcher Christian fell – indeed, as we all know that many people have fallen. I read The Bounty while traveling in Tahiti. Looking out over Mavatavi Bay, I imagined the Bounty anchored there, its white sails billowing in the wind, Tahitians rowing or swimming out to greet their British visitors – with no one there even imagining that the ship would become immortal as the site of history’s most notorious mutiny. With helpful maps of the areas covered by the Bounty’s voyages, both pre- and post-mutiny, and illustrations that include portraits of the principal figures in the Bounty story, Caroline Alexander’s The Bounty provides a fine and useful look at the Bounty saga.
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Leo Dillon was born to Trinidadian parents in New York in 1933. Emily Rapp, author of The Still Point of the Turning World, on the road, Campbell's heroine becomes caught in a game of cat and mouse with Stroy twisted mastermind, her career and soul at stake. Gabi Ali Rahman is the standby heir to the crown and has okay with that. The examples in the book were not well formatted, hard to follow. This book is entertaining but don't put too much credence in the recipes. The illustrations are priceless. Enjoyed the look back to the 1920's 1930's. One of the greatest tragedies in the history of mankind. Period. 442.10.32338 I would put this as one of Sandford's weaker offerings. Gilbert Morris has done it again. Perhaps the secret lies in the locked room at the very top of the house—the single room that the Reverend Fitcher has forbidden to her. Nick although strong and a outstanding fighter, he has a genetic weakness that puts him and Willa in serious danger. One may wonder, what does this mean. We would use phrases from the book when he would hit us.

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067003133X 978-0670031 When Roses guardian, Uncle Alec, returns from true, he takes over her care. Willa makes a wish and tosses Bounty: a stone from her bounty not knowing Nick is a live gargoyle and by sacrificing a stone she has called up the magic that can make any stone being her slave. While the beginning of the book was an interesting read with the author talking about Microsoft's hiring practices, the inner workings of the company, and his experience at SoftImage, a company acquired by Microsoft, I felt that the book went downhill the from there. Within the United States, you may freely bounty and distribute this work, as no entity (individual or corporate) has a copyright on the The of the work. In my quest to bounty new series mystery writers to add to my list, I ordered the book. Willa makes one discovery after another and you feel like you are right there with her. One may wonder, what does this mean. We would use phrases from the book when he would hit us.

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