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Shadow of War Reaches Even to Pitcairn Island

Radio Contacts Lessened, Rat Hunts Curtailed as Ship Visits Are Limited

By Capt. Irving Johnson

Master of the American schooner
Yankee, on a world cruise out of
Gloucester, Mass.

PITCAIRN ISLAND (radioed by Schooner Yankee), Feb. 9 (P).—The residents of this lonely South Pacific island, descendants of the mutineers of the Bounty, have been even further isolated from civilization than usual as a result of the European war, and they have been handicapped in their rat hunting.

There are many rats here, and they eat up the islanders' food. But the people are not starving, and the arrival of the schooner Yankee has replenished supplies.

"Stories that the Pitcairn people are living under starving conditions are entirely false," said Edgar Christian, Chief Magistrate. "We never eat rats, although the island is overrun with them and they damage much of our food."

"The scarcity of ships visiting here since the war had stopped our supply of .22 ammunition for hunting them, but the Yankee has left us several thousand rounds of ammunition now and we will be able to resume our rat hunting."

These islanders, whose forefathers came here in 1790 from Tahiti with a dozen Polynesian women after deserting in the mutiny on the Bounty, have seen the first motion pictures ever shown on the island as a result of the Yankee's present trip.

The films, in color, provided a two-hour show of the Yankee's second world cruise to strange parts of the world. The present trip, which began at Gloucester, Mass., last Oct. 30, is the Yankee's third world voyage.

Speaking for this dispatch, one of the rare radio messages from Pitcairn to the outside world, Chief Magistrate Christian related some of the new difficulties caused here as a result of the war.

"Our radio, brought by the Yankee three years ago, is in working order," he said, "but because of war conditions we cannot contact amateurs or transmit to them except for emergency purposes. A constant lookout is kept from the highest part of the island, about 2,000 feet above sea level, but as yet no raiders have been sighted."

"We are gradually eliminating the use of flour, sugar, kerosene and other staples which we ordinarily traded for fruit with passing sailing ships and steamers."

"This visit of the Yankee was of timely help, because the schooner took forty-seven islanders on a five-day trip to Henderson Island, collecting thousands of much-needed coconuts and tons of miro wood."

The Yankee's crew members were treated hospitably, and the ship now, after a stay of more than a week, is loaded down with tons of fruits and vegetables and curios of the island.

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