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Compared with the adventures of Captain William Bligh of HMS Bounty, the voyage of HMS Pandora commanded by Captain Edward Edwards is not well known. Well-armed and equipped for retribution against Fletcher Christian and the other mutineers, Edwards sailed from Portsmouth in November 1790 with orders to track down the Bounty.

Arriving at Tahiti in March 1791, Edwards received or captured fourteen of Bounty's men and confined them in a temporary prison cage on Pandora's main deck that the seamen called Pandora's Box. After a fruitless search of the South Pacific for nine mutineers who with some Tahitian women had found refuge at distant Pitcairn Island, Edward set a course for the Torres Strait. Calamity struck when Pandora ran onto the Great Barrier Reef and sank with the loss of thirty-five seamen and four mutineers. The survivors included eighty-nine officers and men from the Pandora and ten of the Bounty prisoners. Following Bligh's recent example, Edwards commanded an arduous voyage of 1770 kilometers in the ship's four boats to the Dutch East Indies post at Coupang on the Island of Timor.

George Hamilton, surgeon aboard Pandora, published his account of the voyage in 1793 during a time when there was considerable interest in the trials of the Bounty mutineers. A perceptive observer influenced by contemporary thinking about shipboard health, Hamilton made certain on the outward voyage around Cape Horn that Pandora took on fresh water at Tenerife and Rio de Janeiro and stocked lemons, oranges, pomegranates, bananas, and other fruit. He opposed salt meat, promoted the consumption of balanced diets, and he praised a new experimental ventilation system designed to force fresh air into the lower decks. Hamilton kept a barrel of sauerkraut – described as 'this grand antiscorbutic' – open for the crew, who consumed it as a salad with vinegar. Although this was not the best approach to avoid scurvy, Hamilton also advocated beer brewed aboard from malt and hops, cocoa that he believed kept the men fat and strong, rough ground wheat that served as a nutritious porridge with brown sugar, and soft bread baked from wheat flour.

In the introduction, Peter Gesner, an archaeologist, expressed special interest in Native material culture objects recently recovered from the submerged wreck of Pandora. Hamilton's account is a rich source on early contact between Islanders and Europeans. Like some other ships' surgeons, Hamilton had much to say about relationships between native men and women and members of the crew. He observed that the Tahitians suffered from venereal diseases and a consumptive illness they called the 'British disease.' After a short stay at Tahiti, Hamilton noted that the ladies 'had left us many warm tokens of their affection.' To protect women of other islands from venereal diseases contracted by the British seamen at Tahiti, Captain Edwards ordered that none were permitted to go below decks. Nevertheless, such was the desire for broad axes, razors, scissors, or even large nails that mothers prostituted their beautiful daughters. Hamilton described the quarter-deck of the ship as the scene 'of the most indelicate familiarities.' Some of the stories of lustful encounters – including Hamilton's own with an older chief's wife that he reported as duty – might have been added to sell his book. He recorded incidents of violence directed against Native thieves and disputes over sovereignty concerning the ownership

of fresh water and grass. Hamilton accorded the imprisoned Bounty mutineers little in the way of sympathy except to note that their Tahitian women, children, and relatives lamented their poor treatment and the fact that they were to be returned to England. Even after over two hundred years, Hamilton's description of the wreck of the Pandora on the Great Barrier Reef is both dramatic and awe-inspiring. Despite precautions to sound a safe passage, the ship struck a submerged reef that ripped open the hull. Edwards freed some of the Bounty prisoners to assist at the pumps and to bale at the hatchways, but a nighttime windstorm drove Pandora over the reef and into the broken surf. With heroic effort the crew attempted to throw the heavy guns overboard and to haul a sail under the mangled bottom to fother the listing ship. A loose cannon crushed one man to death and a spare topmast fell and killed another. Just before daybreak it was obvious that Pandora could not be salvaged. At the last minute as water cascaded into the hull through the open gun ports, Edwards released the remaining mutineers from their prison box and removed their shackles. Pandora heeled over suddenly, lay on its side, and then sank 'in an instant.' Hamilton described the shout of the crew as they were cast into the water and the pitiful cries of the drowning men who could not be rescued by the ship's boats. The voyage of the four boats to Timor was a spectacular odyssey in the annals of small boat navigation. Hamilton noted that those men who succumbed to temptation and drank salt water or their own urine inevitably perished. Although thirst and hunger were constant companions, the survivors managed to obtain fresh water on the Australian coast. Reaching safety at Timor and visiting the mortifying climate of Batavia – 'this golgotha of Europe' – the survivors and their prisoners returned to Europe by way of the Cape of Good Hope.