

CHAPTER XV

Had the trade wind not failed on the second day after laying the course for the Marquesas; had Captain Doane, at the mid-day meal, not grumbled once again at being equipped with only one chronometer; had Simon Nishikanta not become viciously angry thereat and gone on deck with his rifle to find some sea-denizen to kill; and had the sea-denizen that appeared close alongside been a bonita, a dolphin, a porpoise, an albacore, or anything else than a great, eighty-foot cow whale accompanied by her nursing calf--had any link been missing from this chain of events, the Mary Turner would have undoubtedly reached the Marquesas, filled her water-barrels, and returned to the treasure-hunting; and the destinies of Michael, Daughtry, Kwaque, and Cocky would have been quite different and possibly less terrible.

But every link was present for the occasion. The schooner, in a dead calm, was rolling over the huge, smooth seas, her boom sheets and tackles crashing to the hollow thunder of her great sails, when Simon Nishikanta put a bullet into the body of the little whale calf. By an almost miracle of chance, the shot killed the calf. It was equivalent to killing an elephant with a pea-rifle. Not at once did the calf die. It merely immediately ceased its gambols and for a while lay quivering on the surface of the ocean. The mother was beside it the moment after it was struck, and to those on board, looking almost directly down upon her, her dismay and alarm were very patent. She would nudge the calf with her

huge shoulder, circle around and around it, then range up alongside and repeat her nudgings and shoulderings.

All on the Mary Turner, fore and aft, lined the rail and stared down apprehensively at the leviathan that was as long as the schooner.

"If she should do to us, sir, what that other one did to the Essex," Dag Daughtry observed to the Ancient Mariner.

"It would be no more than we deserve," was the response. "It was uncalled-for--a wanton, cruel act."

Michael, aware of the excitement overside but unable to see because of the rail, leaped on top of the cabin and at sight of the monster barked defiantly. Every eye turned on him in startlement and fear, and Steward hushed him with a whispered command.

"This is the last time," Grimshaw muttered in a low voice, tense with anger, to Nishikanta. "If ever again, on this voyage, you take a shot at a whale, I'll wring your dirty neck for you. Get me. I mean it. I'll choke your eye-balls out of you."

The Jew smiled in a sickly way and whined, "There ain't nothing going to happen. I don't believe that Essex ever was sunk by a whale."

Urged on by its mother, the dying calf made spasmodic efforts to swim

that were futile and caused it to veer and wallow from side to side.

In the course of circling about it, the mother accidentally brushed her shoulder under the port quarter of the Mary Turner, and the Mary Turner listed to starboard as her stern was lifted a yard or more. Nor was this unintentional, gentle impact all. The instant after her shoulder had touched, startled by the contact, she flailed out with her tail. The blow smote the rail just for'ard of the fore-shrouds, splintering a gap through it as if it were no more than a cigar-box and cracking the covering board.

That was all, and an entire ship's company stared down in silence and fear at a sea-monster grief-stricken over its dying progeny.

Several times, in the course of an hour, during which the schooner and the two whales drifted farther and farther apart, the calf strove vainly to swim. Then it set up a great quivering, which culminated in a wild wallowing and lashing about of its tail.

"It is the death-flurry," said the Ancient Mariner softly.

"By damn, it's dead," was Captain Doane's comment five minutes later.

"Who'd believe it? A rifle bullet! I wish to heaven we could get half an hour's breeze of wind to get us out of this neighbourhood."

"A close squeak," said Grimshaw,

Captain Doane shook his head, as his anxious eyes cast aloft to the empty canvas and quested on over the sea in the hope of wind-ruffles on the water. But all was glassy calm, each great sea, of all the orderly procession of great seas, heaving up, round-topped and mountainous, like so much quicksilver.

"It's all right," Grimshaw encouraged. "There she goes now, beating it away from us."

"Of course it's all right, always was all right," Nishikanta bragged, as he wiped the sweat from his face and neck and looked with the others after the departing whale. "You're a fine brave lot, you are, losing your goat to a fish."

"I noticed your face was less yellow than usual," Grimshaw sneered. "It must have gone to your heart."

Captain Doane breathed a great sigh. His relief was too strong to permit him to join in the squabbling.

"You're yellow," Grimshaw went on, "yellow clean through." He nodded his head toward the Ancient Mariner. "Now there's the real thing as a man. No yellow in him. He never batted an eye, and I reckon he knew more about the danger than you did. If I was to choose being wrecked on a desert island with him or you, I'd take him a thousand times first. If--"

But a cry from the sailors interrupted him.

"Merciful God!" Captain Doane breathed aloud.

The great cow whale had turned about, and, on the surface, was charging straight back at them. Such was her speed that a bore was raised by her nose like that which a Dreadnought or an Atlantic liner raises on the sea.

"Hold fast, all!" Captain Doane roared.

Every man braced himself for the shock. Henrik Gjertsen, the sailor at the wheel, spread his legs, crouched down, and stiffened his shoulders and arms to hand-grips on opposite spokes of the wheel. Several of the crew fled from the waist to the poop, and others of them sprang into the main-rigging. Daughtry, one hand on the rail, with his free arm clasped the Ancient Mariner around the waist.

All held. The whale struck the Mary Turner just aft of the fore-shroud. A score of things, which no eye could take in simultaneously, happened. A sailor, in the main rigging, carried away a ratline in both hands, fell head-downward, and was clutched by an ankle and saved head-downward by a comrade, as the schooner cracked and shuddered, uplifted on the port side, and was flung down on her starboard side till the ocean poured level over her rail. Michael, on the smooth

roof of the cabin, slithered down the steep slope to starboard and disappeared, clawing and snarling, into the runway. The port shrouds of the foremast carried away at the chain-plates, and the fore-topmast leaned over drunkenly to starboard.

"My word," quoth the Ancient Mariner. "We certainly felt that."

"Mr. Jackson," Captain Doane commanded the mate, "will you sound the well."

The mate obeyed, although he kept an anxious eye on the whale, which had gone off at a tangent and was smoking away to the eastward.

"You see, that's what you get," Grimshaw snarled at Nishikanta.

Nishikanta nodded, as he wiped the sweat away, and muttered, "And I'm satisfied. I got all I want. I didn't think a whale had it in it. I'll never do it again."

"Maybe you'll never have the chance," the captain retorted. "We're not done with this one yet. The one that charged the Essex made charge after charge, and I guess whale nature hasn't changed any in the last few years."

"Dry as a bone, sir," Mr. Jackson reported the result of his sounding.

"There she turns," Daughtry called out.

Half a mile away, the whale circled about sharply and charged back.

"Stand from under for'ard there!" Captain Doane shouted to one of the sailors who had just emerged from the forecastle scuttle, sea-bag in hand, and over whom the fore-topmast was swaying giddily.

"He's packed for the get-away," Daughtry murmured to the Ancient Mariner.
"Like a rat leaving a ship."

"We're all rats," was the reply. "I learned just that when I was a rat among the mangy rats of the poor-farm."

By this time, all men on board had communicated to Michael their contagion of excitement and fear. Back on top of the cabin so that he might see, he snarled at the cow whale when the men seized fresh grips against the impending shock and when he saw her close at hand and oncoming.

The Mary Turner was struck aft of the mizzen shrouds. As she was hurled down to starboard, whither Michael was ignominiously flung, the crack of shattered timbers was plainly heard. Henrik Gjertsen, at the wheel, clutching the wheel with all his strength, was spun through the air as the wheel was spun by the fling of the rudder. He fetched up against Captain Doane, whose grip had been torn loose from the rail. Both

men crumpled down on deck with the wind knocked out of them. Nishikanta leaned cursing against the side of the cabin, the nails of both hands torn off at the quick by the breaking of his grip on the rail.

While Daughtry was passing a turn of rope around the Ancient Mariner and the mizzen rigging and giving the turn to him to hold, Captain Doane crawled gasping to the rail and dragged himself erect.

"That fetched her," he whispered huskily to the mate, hand pressed to his side to control his pain. "Sound the well again, and keep on sounding."

More of the sailors took advantage of the interval to rush for'ard under the toppling fore-topmast, dive into the forecastle, and hastily pack their sea-bags. As Ah Moy emerged from the steerage with his own rotund sea-bag, Daughtry dispatched Kwaque to pack the belongings of both of them.

"Dry as a bone, sir," came the mate's report.

"Keep on sounding, Mr. Jackson," the captain ordered, his voice already stronger as he recovered from the shock of his collision with the helmsman. "Keep right on sounding. Here she comes again, and the schooner ain't built that'd stand such hammering."

By this time Daughtry had Michael tucked under one arm, his free arm ready to anticipate the next crash by swinging on to the rigging.

In making its circle to come back, the cow lost her bearings sufficiently to miss the stern of the Mary Turner by twenty feet. Nevertheless, the bore of her displacement lifted the schooner's stern gently and made her dip her bow to the sea in a stately curtsey.

"If she'd a-hit . . ." Captain Doane murmured and ceased.

"It'd a-ben good night," Daughtry concluded for him. "She's a-knocked our stern clean off of us, sir."

Again wheeling, this time at no more than two hundred yards, the whale charged back, not completing her semi-circle sufficiently, so that she bore down upon the schooner's bow from starboard. Her back hit the stem and seemed just barely to scrape the martingale, yet the Mary Turner sat down till the sea washed level with her stern-rail. Nor was this all. Martingale, bob-stays and all parted, as well as all starboard stays to the bowsprit, so that the bowsprit swung out to port at right angles and uplifted to the drag of the remaining topmast stays. The topmast anticked high in the air for a space, then crashed down to deck, permitting the bowsprit to dip into the sea, go clear with the butt of it of the forecastle head, and drag alongside.

"Shut up that dog!" Nishikanta ordered Daughtry savagery. "If you don't . . ."

Michael, in Steward's arms, was snarling and growling intimidatingly, not merely at the cow whale but at all the hostile and menacing universe that had thrown panic into the two-legged gods of his floating world.

"Just for that," Daughtry snarled back, "I'll let 'm sing. You made this mess, and if you lift a hand to my dog you'll miss seeing the end of the mess you started, you dirty pawnbroker, you."

"Perfectly right, perfectly right," the Ancient Mariner nodded approbation. "Do you think, steward, you could get a width of canvas, or a blanket, or something soft and broad with which to replace this rope? It cuts me too sharply in the spot where my three ribs are missing."

Daughtry thrust Michael into the old man's arm.

"Hold him, sir," the steward said. "If that pawnbroker makes a move against Killeny Boy, spit in his face, bite him, anything. I'll be back in a jiffy, sir, before he can hurt you and before the whale can hit us again. And let Killeny Boy make all the noise he wants. One hair of him's worth more than a world-full of skunks of money-lenders."

Daughtry dashed into the cabin, came back with a pillow and three sheets, and, using the first as a pad and knotting the last together in swift weaver's knots, he left the Ancient Mariner safe and soft and took Michael back into his own arms.

"She's making water, sir," the mate called. "Six inches--no, seven inches, sir."

There was a rush of sailors across the wreckage of the fore-topmast to the forecastle to pack their bags.

"Swing out that starboard boat, Mr. Jackson," the captain commanded, staring after the foaming course of the cow as she surged away for a fresh onslaught. "But don't lower it. Hold it overside in the falls, or that damned fish'll smash it. Just swing it out, ready and waiting, let the men get their bags, then stow food and water aboard of her."

Lashings were cast off the boat and the falls attached, when the men fled to holding-vantage just ere the whale arrived. She struck the Mary Turner squarely amidships on the port beam, so that, from the poop, one saw, as well as heard, her long side bend and spring back like a limber fabric. The starboard rail buried under the sea as the schooner heeled to the blow, and, as she righted with a violent lurch, the water swashed across the deck to the knees of the sailors about the boat and spouted out of the port scuppers.

"Heave away!" Captain Doane ordered from the poop. "Up with her! Swing her out! Hold your turns! Make fast!"

The boat was outboard, its gunwale resting against the Mary Turner's rail.

"Ten inches, sir, and making fast," was the mate's information, as he gauged the sounding-rod.

"I'm going after my tools," Captain Doane announced, as he started for the cabin. Half into the scuttle, he paused to add with a sneer for Nishikanta's benefit, "And for my one chronometer."

"A foot and a half, and making," the mate shouted aft to him.

"We'd better do some packing ourselves," Grimshaw, following on the captain, said to Nishikanta.

"Steward," Nishikanta said, "go below and pack my bedding. I'll take care of the rest."

"Mr. Nishikanta, you can go to hell, sir, and all the rest as well," was Daughtry's quiet response, although in the same breath he was saying, respectfully and assuringly, to the Ancient Mariner: "You hold Killeny, sir. I'll take care of your dunnage. Is there anything special you want to save, sir?"

Jackson joined the four men below, and as the five of them, in haste and trepidation, packed articles of worth and comfort, the Mary Turner was struck again. Caught below without warning, all were flung fiercely to port and from Simon Nishikanta's room came wailing curses of announcement

of the hurt to his ribs against his bunk-rail. But this was drowned by a prodigious smashing and crashing on deck.

"Kindling wood--there won't be anything else left of her," Captain Doane commented in the ensuing calm, as he crept gingerly up the companionway with his chronometer cuddled on an even keel to his breast.

Placing it in the custody of a sailor, he returned below and was helped up with his sea-chest by the steward. In turn, he helped the steward up with the Ancient Mariner's sea-chest. Next, aided by anxious sailors, he and Daughtry dropped into the lazarette through the cabin floor, and began breaking out and passing up a stream of supplies--cases of salmon and beef, of marmalade and biscuit, of butter and preserved milk, and of all sorts of the tinned, desiccated, evaporated, and condensed stuff that of modern times goes down to the sea in ships for the nourishment of men.

Daughtry and the captain emerged last from the cabin, and both stared upward for a moment at the gaps in the slender, sky-scraping top-hamper, where, only minutes before, the main- and mizzen-topmasts had been. A second moment they devoted to the wreckage of the same on deck--the mizzen-topmast, thrust through the spanker and supported vertically by the stout canvas, thrashing back and forth with each thrash of the sail, the main-topmast squarely across the ruined companionway to the steerage.

While the mother-whale expressing her bereavement in terms of violence and destruction, was withdrawing the necessary distance for another

charge, all hands of the Mary Turner gathered about the starboard boat swung outboard ready for lowering. A respectable hill of case goods, water-kegs, and personal dunnage was piled on the deck alongside. A glance at this, and at the many men of fore and aft, demonstrated that it was to be a perilously overloaded boat.

"We want the sailors with us, at any rate--they can row," said Simon Nishikanta.

"But do we want you?" Grimshaw queried gloomily. "You take up too much room, for your size, and you're a beast anyway."

"I guess I'll be wanted," the pawnbroker observed, as he jerked open his shirt, tearing out the four buttons in his impetuosity and showing a Colt's .44 automatic, strapped in its holster against the bare skin of his side under his left arm, the butt of the weapon most readily accessible to any hasty dip of his right hand. "I guess I'll be wanted. But just the same we can dispense with the undesirables."

"If you will have your will," the wheat-farmer conceded sardonically, although his big hand clenched involuntarily as if throttling a throat. "Besides, if we should run short of food you will prove desirable--for the quantity of you, I mean, and not otherwise. Now just who would you consider undesirable?--the black nigger? He ain't got a gun."

But his pleasantries were cut short by the whale's next attack--another

smash at the stern that carried away the rudder and destroyed the steering gear.

"How much water?" Captain Doane queried of the mate.

"Three feet, sir--I just sounded," came the answer. "I think, sir, it would be advisable to part-load the boat; then, right after the next time the whale hits us, lower away on the run, chuck the rest of the dunnage in, and ourselves, and get clear."

Captain Doane nodded.

"It will be lively work," he said. "Stand ready, all of you. Steward, you jump aboard first and I'll pass the chronometer to you."

Nishikanta bellicosely shouldered his vast bulk up to the captain, opened his shirt, and exposed his revolver.

"There's too many for the boat," he said, "and the steward's one of 'em that don't go along. Get that. Hold it in your head. The steward's one of 'em that don't go along."

Captain Doane coolly surveyed the big automatic, while at the fore of his consciousness burned a vision of his flat buildings in San Francisco.

He shrugged his shoulders. "The boat would be overloaded, with all this

truck, anyway. Go ahead, if you want to make it your party, but just bear in mind that I'm the navigator, and that, if you ever want to lay eyes on your string of pawnshops, you'd better see that gentle care is taken of me.--Steward!"

Daughtry stepped close.

"There won't be room for you . . . and for one or two others, I'm sorry to say."

"Glory be!" said Daughtry. "I was just fearin' you'd be wantin' me along, sir.--Kwaque, you take 'm my fella dunnage belong me, put 'm in other fella boat along other side."

While Kwaque obeyed, the mate sounded the well for the last time, reporting three feet and a half, and the lighter freightage of the starboard boat was tossed in by the sailors.

A rangy, gangly, Scandinavian youth of a sailor, droop-shouldered, six feet six and slender as a lath, with pallid eyes of palest blue and skin and hair attuned to the same colour scheme, joined Kwaque in his work.

"Here, you Big John," the mate interfered. "This is your boat. You work here."

The lanky one smiled in embarrassment as he haltingly explained: "I tank

I lak go along cooky."

"Sure, let him go, the more the easier," Nishikanta took charge of the situation. "Anybody else?"

"Sure," Dag Daughtry sneered to his face. "I reckon what's left of the beer goes with my boat . . . unless you want to argue the matter."

"For two cents--" Nishikanta spluttered in affected rage.

"Not for two billion cents would you risk a scrap with me, you money-sweater, you," was Daughtry's retort. "You've got their goats, but I've got your number. Not for two billion billion cents would you excite me into callin' it right now.--Big John! Just carry that case of beer across, an' that half case, and store in my boat.--Nishikanta, just start something, if you've got the nerve."

Simon Nishikanta did not dare, nor did he know what to do; but he was saved from his perplexity by the shout:

"Here she comes!"

All rushed to holding-ground, and held, while the whale broke more timbers and the Mary Turner rolled sluggishly down and back again.

"Lower away! On the run! Lively!"

Captain Doane's orders were swiftly obeyed. The starboard boat, fended off by sailors, rose and fell in the water alongside while the remainder of the dunnage and provisions showered into her.

"Might as well lend a hand, sir, seein' you're bent on leaving in such a hurry," said Daughtry, taking the chronometer from Captain Doane's hand and standing ready to pass it down to him as soon as he was in the boat.

"Come on, Greenleaf," Grimshaw called up to the Ancient Mariner.

"No, thanking you very kindly, sir," came the reply. "I think there'll be more room in the other boat."

"We want the cook!" Nishikanta cried out from the stern sheets. "Come on, you yellow monkey! Jump in!"

Little old shrivelled Ah Moy debated. He visibly thought, although none knew the intrinsicness of his thinking as he stared at the gun of the fat pawnbroker and at the leprosy of Kwaque and Daughtry, and weighed the one against the other and tossed the light and heavy loads of the two boats into the balance.

"Me go other boat," said Ah Moy, starting to drag his bag away across the deck.

"Cast off," Captain Doane commanded.

Scraps, the big Newfoundland puppy, who had played and pranced about through all the excitement, seeing so many of the Mary Turner's humans in the boat alongside, sprang over the rail, low and close to the water, and landed sprawling on the mass of sea-bags and goods cases.

The boat rocked, and Nishikanta, his automatic in his hand, cried out:

"Back with him! Throw him on board!"

The sailors obeyed, and the astounded Scraps, after a brief flight through the air, found himself arriving on his back on the Mary Turner's deck. At any rate, he took it for no more than a rough joke, and rolled about ecstatically, squirming vermicularly, in anticipation of what new delights of play were to be visited upon him. He reached out, with an enticing growl of good fellowship, for Michael, who was now free on deck, and received in return a forbidding and crusty snarl.

"Guess we'll have to add him to our collection, eh, sir?" Daughtry observed, sparing a moment to pat reassurance on the big puppy's head and being rewarded with a caressing lick on his hand from the puppy's blissful tongue.

No first-class ship's steward can exist without possessing a more than average measure of executive ability. Dag Daughtry was a first-class

ship's steward. Placing the Ancient Mariner in a nook of safety, and setting Big John to unlashing the remaining boat and hooking on the falls, he sent Kwaque into the hold to fill kegs of water from the scant remnant of supply, and Ah Moy to clear out the food in the galley.

The starboard boat, cluttered with men, provisions, and property and being rapidly rowed away from the danger centre, which was the Mary Turner, was scarcely a hundred yards away, when the whale, missing the schooner clean, turned at full speed and close range, churning the water, and all but collided with the boat. So near did she come that the rowers on the side next to her pulled in their oars. The surge she raised, heeled the loaded boat gunwale under, so that a degree of water was shipped ere it righted. Nishikanta, automatic still in hand, standing up in the sternsheets by the comfortable seat he had selected for himself, was staggered by the lurch of the boat. In his instinctive, spasmodic effort to maintain balance, he relaxed his clutch on the pistol, which fell into the sea.

"Ha-ah!" Daughtry girded. "What price Nishikanta? I got his number, and he's lost you fellows' goats. He's your meat now. Easy meat? I should say! And when it comes to the eating, eat him first. Sure, he's a skunk, and will taste like one, but many's the honest man that's eaten skunk and pulled through a tight place. But you'd better soak 'im all night in salt water, first."

Grimshaw, whose seat in the sternsheets was none of the best, grasped the

situation simultaneously with Daughtry, and, with a quick upstanding, and hooking out-reach of hand, caught the fat pawnbroker around the back of the neck, and with anything but gentle suasion jerked him half into the air and flung him face downward on the bottom boards.

"Ha-ah!" said Daughtry across the hundred yards of ocean.

Next, and without hurry, Grimshaw took the more comfortable seat for himself.

"Want to come along?" he called to Daughtry.

"No, thank you, sir," was the latter's reply. "There's too many of us, an' we'll make out better in the other boat."

With some bailing, and with others bending to the oars, the boat rowed frantically away, while Daughtry took Ah Moy with him down into the lazarette beneath the cabin floor and broke out and passed up more provisions.

It was when he was thus below that the cow grazed the schooner just for'ard of amidships on the port side, lashed out with her mighty tail as she sounded, and ripped clean away the chain plates and rail of the mizzen-shrouds. In the next roll of the huge, glassy sea, the mizzen-mast fell overside.

"My word, some whale," Daughtry said to Ah Moy, as they emerged from the cabin companionway and gazed at this latest wreckage.

Ah Moy found need to get more food from the galley, when Daughtry, Kwaque, and Big John swung their weight on the falls, one at a time, and hoisted the port boat, one end at a time, over the rail and swung her out.

"We'll wait till the next smash, then lower away, throw everything in, an' get outa this," the steward told the Ancient Mariner. "Lots of time. The schooner'll sink no faster when she's awash than she's sinkin' now."

Even as he spoke, the scuppers were nearly level with the ocean, and her rolling in the big sea was sluggish.

"Hey!" he called with sudden forethought across the widening stretch of sea to Captain Doane. "What's the course to the Marquesas? Right now? And how far away, sir?"

"Nor'-nor'-east-quarter-east!" came the faint reply. "Will fetch Nuka-Hiva! About two hundred miles! Haul on the south-east trade with a good full and you'll make it!"

"Thank you, sir," was the steward's acknowledgment, ere he ran aft, disrupted the binnacle, and carried the steering compass back to the boat.

Almost, from the whale's delay in renewing her charging, did they think she had given over. And while they waited and watched her rolling on the sea an eighth of a mile away, the Mary Turner steadily sank.

"We might almost chance it," Daughtry was debating aloud to Big John, when a new voice entered the discussion.

"Cocky!--Cocky!" came plaintive tones from below out of the steerage companion.

"Devil be damned!" was the next, uttered in irritation and anger. "Devil be damned! Devil be damned!"

"Of course not," was Daughtry's judgment, as he dashed across the deck, crawled through the confusion of the main-topmast and its many stays that blocked the way, and found the tiny, white morsel of life perched on a bunk-edge, ruffling its feathers, erecting and flattening its rosy crest, and cursing in honest human speech the waywardness of the world and of ships and humans upon the sea.

The cockatoo stepped upon Daughtry's inviting index finger, swiftly ascended his shirt sleeve, and, on his shoulder, claws sunk into the flimsy shirt fabric till they hurt the flesh beneath, leaned head to ear and uttered in gratitude and relief, and in self-identification: "Cocky. Cocky."

"You son of a gun," Daughtry crooned.

"Glory be!" Cooky replied, in tones so like Daughtry's as to startle him.

"You son of a gun," Daughtry repeated, cuddling his cheek and ear against the cockatoo's feathered and crested head. "And some folks thinks it's only folks that count in this world."

Still the whale delayed, and, with the ocean washing their toes on the level deck, Daughtry ordered the boat lowered away. Ah Moy was eager in his haste to leap into the bow. Nor was Daughtry's judgment correct that the little Chinaman's haste was due to fear of the sinking ship. What Ah Moy sought was the place in the boat remotest from Kwaque and the steward.

Shoving clear, they roughly stored the supplies and dunnage out of the way of the thwarts and took their places, Ah Moy pulling bow-oar, next in order Big John and Kwaque, with Daughtry (Cooky still perched on his shoulder) at stroke. On top of the dunnage, in the sternsheets, Michael gazed wistfully at the Mary Turner and continued to snarl crustily at Scraps who idiotically wanted to start a romp. The Ancient Mariner stood up at the steering sweep and gave the order, when all was ready, for the first dip of the oars.

A growl and a bristle from Michael warned them that the whale was not

only coming but was close upon them. But it was not charging. Instead, it circled slowly about the schooner as if examining its antagonist.

"I'll bet it's head's sore from all that banging, an' it's beginnin' to feel it," Daughtry grinned, chiefly for the purpose of keeping his comrades unafraid.

Barely had they rowed a dozen strokes, when an exclamation from Big John led them to follow his gaze to the schooner's fore-castle-head, where the fore-castle cat flashed across in pursuit of a big rat. Other rats they saw, evidently driven out of their lairs by the rising water.

"We just can't leave that cat behind," Daughtry soliloquized in suggestive tones.

"Certainly not," the Ancient Mariner responded swinging his weight on the steering-sweep and heading the boat back.

Twice the whale gently rolled them in the course of its leisurely circling, ere they bent to their oars again and pulled away. Of them the whale seemed to take no notice. It was from the huge thing, the schooner, that death had been wreaked upon her calf; and it was upon the schooner that she vented the wrath of her grief.

Even as they pulled away, the whale turned and headed across the ocean. At a half-mile distance she curved about and charged back.

"With all that water in her, the schooner'll have a real kick-back in her when she's hit," Daughtry said. "Lordy me, rest on your oars an' watch."

Delivered squarely amidships, it was the hardest blow the Mary Turner had received. Stays and splinters of rail flew in the air as she rolled so far over as to expose half her copper wet-glistening in the sun. As she righted sluggishly, the mainmast swayed drunkenly in the air but did not fall.

"A knock-out!" Daughtry cried, at sight of the whale flurrying the water with aimless, gigantic splashings. "It must a-smashed both of 'em."

"Schooner he finish close up altogether," Kwaque observed, as the Mary Turner's rail disappeared.

Swiftly she sank, and no more than a matter of moments was it when the stump of her mainmast was gone. Remained only the whale, floating and floundering, on the surface of the sea.

"It's nothing to brag about," Daughtry delivered himself of the Mary Turner's epitaph. "Nobody'd believe us. A stout little craft like that sunk, deliberately sunk, by an old cow-whale! No, sir. I never believed that old moss-back in Honolulu, when he claimed he was a survivor of the sinkin' of the Essex, an' no more will anybody believe me."

"The pretty schooner, the pretty clever craft," mourned the Ancient Mariner. "Never were there more dainty and lovable topmasts on a three-masted schooner, and never was there a three-masted schooner that worked like the witch she was to windward."

Dag Daughtry, who had kept always footloose and never married, surveyed the boat-load of his responsibilities to which he was anchored--Kwaque, the Black Papuan monstrosity whom he had saved from the bellies of his fellows; Ah Moy, the little old sea-cook whose age was problematical only by decades; the Ancient Mariner, the dignified, the beloved, and the respected; gangly Big John, the youthful Scandinavian with the inches of a giant and the mind of a child; Killeny Boy, the wonder of dogs; Scraps, the outrageously silly and fat-rolling puppy; Cocky, the white-feathered mite of life, imperious as a steel-blade and wheedlingly seductive as a charming child; and even the forecastle cat, the lithe and tawny slayer of rats, sheltering between the legs of Ah Moy. And the Marquesas were two hundred miles distant full-hauled on the tradewind which had ceased but which was as sure to live again as the morning sun in the sky.

The steward heaved a sigh, and whimsically shot into his mind the memory-picture in his nursery-book of the old woman who lived in a shoe. He wiped the sweat from his forehead with the back of his hand, and was dimly aware of the area of the numbness that bordered the centre that was sensationless between his eyebrows, as he said:

"Well, children, rowing won't fetch us to the Marquesas. We'll need a

stretch of wind for that. But it's up to us, right now, to put a mile or so between us an' that peevish old cow. Maybe she'll revive, and maybe she won't, but just the same I can't help feelin' leary about her."