

## CHAPTER XLI

The days have passed and I have broken my resolve; for here I am again writing while the Elsinore surges along across a magnificent, smoky, dusty sea. But I have two reasons for breaking my word. First, and minor, we had a real dawn this morning. The gray of the sea showed a streaky blue, and the cloud-masses were actually pink-tipped by a really and truly sun.

Second, and major, we are around the Horn! We are north of 50 in the Pacific, in Longitude 80.49, with Cape Pillar and the Straits of Magellan already south of east from us, and we are heading north-north-west. We are around the Horn! The profound significance of this can be appreciated only by one who has wind-jammed around from east to west. Blow high, blow low, nothing can happen to thwart us. No ship north of 50 was ever blown back. From now on it is plain sailing, and Seattle suddenly seems quite near.

All the ship's company, with the exception of Margaret, is better spirited. She is quiet, and a little down, though she is anything but prone to the wastage of grief. In her robust, vital philosophy God's always in heaven. I may describe her as being merely subdued, and gentle, and tender. And she is very wistful to receive gentle consideration and tenderness from me. She is, after all, the genuine woman. She wants the strength that man has to give, and I flatter myself

that I am ten times a stronger man than I was when the voyage began, because I am a thousand times a more human man since I told the books to go hang and began to revel in the human maleness of the man that loves a woman and is loved.

Returning to the ship's company. The rounding of the Horn, the better weather that is continually growing better, the easement of hardship and toil and danger, with the promise of the tropics and of the balmy south-east trades before them--all these factors contribute to pick up our men again. The temperature has already so moderated that the men are beginning to shed their surplusage of clothing, and they no longer wrap sacking about their sea-boots. Last evening, in the second dog-watch, I heard a man actually singing.

The steward has discarded the huge, hacking knife and relaxed to the extent of engaging in an occasional sober romp with Possum. Wada's face is no longer solemnly long, and Louis' Oxford accent is more mellifluous than ever. Mulligan Jacobs and Andy Fay are the same venomous scorpions they have always been. The three gangsters, with the clique they lead, have again asserted their tyranny and thrashed all the weaklings and feeblings in the forecastle. Charles Davis resolutely refuses to die, though how he survived that wet and freezing room of iron through all the weeks off the Horn has elicited wonder even from Mr. Pike, who has a most accurate knowledge of what men can stand and what they cannot stand.

How Nietzsche, with his eternal slogan of "Be hard! Be hard!" would have

delighted in Mr. Pike!

And--oh!--Larry has had a tooth removed. For some days distressed with a jumping toothache, he came aft to the mate for relief. Mr. Pike refused to "monkey" with the "fangled" forceps in the medicine-chest. He used a tenpenny nail and a hammer in the good old way to which he was brought up. I vouch for this. I saw it done. One blow of the hammer and the tooth was out, while Larry was jumping around holding his jaw. It is a wonder it wasn't fractured. But Mr. Pike avers he has removed hundreds of teeth by this method and never known a fractured jaw. Also, he avers he once sailed with a skipper who shaved every Sunday morning and never touched a razor, nor any cutting-edge, to his face. What he used, according to Mr. Pike, was a lighted candle and a damp towel. Another candidate for Nietzsche's immortals who are hard!

As for Mr. Pike himself, he is the highest-spirited, best-conditioned man on board. The driving to which he subjected the *Elsinore* was meat and drink. He still rubs his hands and chuckles over the memory of it.

"Huh!" he said to me, in reference to the crew; "I gave 'em a taste of real old-fashioned sailing. They'll never forget this hooker--at least them that don't take a sack of coal overside before we reach port."

"You mean you think we'll have more sea-burials?" I inquired.

He turned squarely upon me, and squarely looked me in the eyes for the

matter of five long seconds.

"Huh!" he replied, as he turned on his heel. "Hell ain't begun to pop on this hooker."

He still stands his mate's watch, alternating with Mr. Mellaire, for he is firm in his conviction that there is no man for'ard fit to stand a second mate's watch. Also, he has kept his old quarters. Perhaps it is out of delicacy for Margaret; for I have learned that it is the invariable custom for the mate to occupy the captain's quarters when the latter dies. So Mr. Mellaire still eats by himself in the big after-room, as he has done since the loss of the carpenter, and bunks as before in the 'midship-house with Nancy.