

## CHAPTER V--THE FIRST LANDFALL

"It will not be so monotonous at sea," I promised my fellow-voyagers on the Snark. "The sea is filled with life. It is so populous that every day something new is happening. Almost as soon as we pass through the Golden Gate and head south we'll pick up with the flying fish. We'll be having them fried for breakfast. We'll be catching bonita and dolphin, and spearing porpoises from the bowsprit. And then there are the sharks--sharks without end."

We passed through the Golden Gate and headed south. We dropped the mountains of California beneath the horizon, and daily the surf grew warmer. But there were no flying fish, no bonita and dolphin. The ocean was bereft of life. Never had I sailed on so forsaken a sea. Always, before, in the same latitudes, had I encountered flying fish.

"Never mind," I said. "Wait till we get off the coast of Southern California. Then we'll pick up the flying fish."

We came abreast of Southern California, abreast of the Peninsula of Lower California, abreast of the coast of Mexico; and there were no flying fish. Nor was there anything else. No life moved. As the days went by the absence of life became almost uncanny.

"Never mind," I said. "When we do pick up with the flying fish we'll pick up with everything else. The flying fish is the staff of life for all the other breeds. Everything will come in a bunch when we find the flying fish."

When I should have headed the Snark south-west for Hawaii, I still held her south. I was going to find those flying fish. Finally the time came when, if I wanted to go to Honolulu, I should have headed the Snark due west, instead of which I kept her south. Not until latitude 19 degrees did we encounter the first flying fish. He was very much alone. I saw him. Five other pairs of eager eyes scanned the sea all day, but never saw another. So sparse were the flying fish that nearly a week more elapsed before the last one on board saw his first flying fish. As for the dolphin, bonita, porpoise, and all the other hordes of life--there weren't any.

Not even a shark broke surface with his ominous dorsal fin. Bert took a dip daily under the bowsprit, hanging on to the stays and dragging his body through the water. And daily he canvassed the project of letting go and having a decent swim. I did my best to dissuade him. But with him I had lost all standing as an authority on sea life.

"If there are sharks," he demanded, "why don't they show up?"

I assured him that if he really did let go and have a swim the sharks would promptly appear. This was a bluff on my part. I

didn't believe it. It lasted as a deterrent for two days. The third day the wind fell calm, and it was pretty hot. The Snark was moving a knot an hour. Bert dropped down under the bowsprit and let go. And now behold the perversity of things. We had sailed across two thousand miles and more of ocean and had met with no sharks. Within five minutes after Bert finished his swim, the fin of a shark was cutting the surface in circles around the Snark.

There was something wrong about that shark. It bothered me. It had no right to be there in that deserted ocean. The more I thought about it, the more incomprehensible it became. But two hours later we sighted land and the mystery was cleared up. He had come to us from the land, and not from the uninhabited deep. He had presaged the landfall. He was the messenger of the land.

Twenty-seven days out from San Francisco we arrived at the island of Oahu, Territory of Hawaii. In the early morning we drifted around Diamond Head into full view of Honolulu; and then the ocean burst suddenly into life. Flying fish cleaved the air in glittering squadrons. In five minutes we saw more of them than during the whole voyage. Other fish, large ones, of various sorts, leaped into the air. There was life everywhere, on sea and shore. We could see the masts and funnels of the shipping in the harbour, the hotels and bathers along the beach at Waikiki, the smoke rising from the dwelling-houses high up on the volcanic slopes of the Punch Bowl and Tantalus. The custom-house tug was racing toward us and a big school of porpoises got under our bow and began cutting the most

ridiculous capers. The port doctor's launch came charging out at us, and a big sea turtle broke the surface with his back and took a look at us. Never was there such a burgeoning of life. Strange faces were on our decks, strange voices were speaking, and copies of that very morning's newspaper, with cable reports from all the world, were thrust before our eyes. Incidentally, we read that the Snark and all hands had been lost at sea, and that she had been a very unseaworthy craft anyway. And while we read this information a wireless message was being received by the congressional party on the summit of Haleakala announcing the safe arrival of the Snark.

It was the Snark's first landfall--and such a landfall! For twenty-seven days we had been on the deserted deep, and it was pretty hard to realize that there was so much life in the world. We were made dizzy by it. We could not take it all in at once. We were like awakened Rip Van Winkles, and it seemed to us that we were dreaming. On one side the azure sea lapped across the horizon into the azure sky; on the other side the sea lifted itself into great breakers of emerald that fell in a snowy smother upon a white coral beach. Beyond the beach, green plantations of sugar-cane undulated gently upward to steeper slopes, which, in turn, became jagged volcanic crests, drenched with tropic showers and capped by stupendous masses of trade-wind clouds. At any rate, it was a most beautiful dream. The Snark turned and headed directly in toward the emerald surf, till it lifted and thundered on either hand; and on either hand, scarce a biscuit-toss away, the reef showed its long teeth, pale green and menacing.

Abruptly the land itself, in a riot of olive-greens of a thousand hues, reached out its arms and folded the Snark in. There was no perilous passage through the reef, no emerald surf and azure sea-- nothing but a warm soft land, a motionless lagoon, and tiny beaches on which swam dark-skinned tropic children. The sea had disappeared. The Snark's anchor rumbled the chain through the hawse-pipe, and we lay without movement on a "lineless, level floor." It was all so beautiful and strange that we could not accept it as real. On the chart this place was called Pearl Harbour, but we called it Dream Harbour.

A launch came off to us; in it were members of the Hawaiian Yacht Club, come to greet us and make us welcome, with true Hawaiian hospitality, to all they had. They were ordinary men, flesh and blood and all the rest; but they did not tend to break our dreaming. Our last memories of men were of United States marshals and of panicky little merchants with rusty dollars for souls, who, in a reeking atmosphere of soot and coal-dust, laid grimy hands upon the Snark and held her back from her world adventure. But these men who came to meet us were clean men. A healthy tan was on their cheeks, and their eyes were not dazzled and bespectacled from gazing overmuch at glittering dollar-heaps. No, they merely verified the dream. They clinched it with their unsmirched souls.

So we went ashore with them across a level flashing sea to the wonderful green land. We landed on a tiny wharf, and the dream

became more insistent; for know that for twenty-seven days we had been rocking across the ocean on the tiny Snark. Not once in all those twenty-seven days had we known a moment's rest, a moment's cessation from movement. This ceaseless movement had become ingrained. Body and brain we had rocked and rolled so long that when we climbed out on the tiny wharf kept on rocking and rolling. This, naturally, we attributed to the wharf. It was projected psychology. I spraddled along the wharf and nearly fell into the water. I glanced at Charmian, and the way she walked made me sad. The wharf had all the seeming of a ship's deck. It lifted, tilted, heaved and sank; and since there were no handrails on it, it kept Charmian and me busy avoiding falling in. I never saw such a preposterous little wharf. Whenever I watched it closely, it refused to roll; but as soon as I took my attention off from it, away it went, just like the Snark. Once, I caught it in the act, just as it upended, and I looked down the length of it for two hundred feet, and for all the world it was like the deck of a ship ducking into a huge head-sea.

At last, however, supported by our hosts, we negotiated the wharf and gained the land. But the land was no better. The very first thing it did was to tilt up on one side, and far as the eye could see I watched it tilt, clear to its jagged, volcanic backbone, and I saw the clouds above tilt, too. This was no stable, firm-founded land, else it would not cut such capers. It was like all the rest of our landfall, unreal. It was a dream. At any moment, like shifting vapour, it might dissolve away. The thought entered my

head that perhaps it was my fault, that my head was swimming or that something I had eaten had disagreed with me. But I glanced at Charmian and her sad walk, and even as I glanced I saw her stagger and bump into the yachtsman by whose side she walked. I spoke to her, and she complained about the antic behaviour of the land.

We walked across a spacious, wonderful lawn and down an avenue of royal palms, and across more wonderful lawn in the gracious shade of stately trees. The air was filled with the songs of birds and was heavy with rich warm fragrances--wafture from great lilies, and blazing blossoms of hibiscus, and other strange gorgeous tropic flowers. The dream was becoming almost impossibly beautiful to us who for so long had seen naught but the restless, salty sea.

Charmian reached out her hand and clung to me--for support against the ineffable beauty of it, thought I. But no. As I supported her I braced my legs, while the flowers and lawns reeled and swung around me. It was like an earthquake, only it quickly passed without doing any harm. It was fairly difficult to catch the land playing these tricks. As long as I kept my mind on it, nothing happened. But as soon as my attention was distracted, away it went, the whole panorama, swinging and heaving and tilting at all sorts of angles. Once, however, I turned my head suddenly and caught that stately line of royal palms swinging in a great arc across the sky. But it stopped, just as soon as I caught it, and became a placid dream again.

Next we came to a house of coolness, with great sweeping veranda,

where lotus-eaters might dwell. Windows and doors were wide open to the breeze, and the songs and fragrances blew lazily in and out. The walls were hung with tapa-cloths. Couches with grass-woven covers invited everywhere, and there was a grand piano, that played, I was sure, nothing more exciting than lullabies. Servants-- Japanese maids in native costume--drifted around and about, noiselessly, like butterflies. Everything was preternaturally cool. Here was no blazing down of a tropic sun upon an unshrinking sea. It was too good to be true. But it was not real. It was a dream-dwelling. I knew, for I turned suddenly and caught the grand piano cavorting in a spacious corner of the room. I did not say anything, for just then we were being received by a gracious woman, a beautiful Madonna, clad in flowing white and shod with sandals, who greeted us as though she had known us always.

We sat at table on the lotus-eating veranda, served by the butterfly maids, and ate strange foods and partook of a nectar called poi. But the dream threatened to dissolve. It shimmered and trembled like an iridescent bubble about to break. I was just glancing out at the green grass and stately trees and blossoms of hibiscus, when suddenly I felt the table move. The table, and the Madonna across from me, and the veranda of the lotus-eaters, the scarlet hibiscus, the greensward and the trees--all lifted and tilted before my eyes, and heaved and sank down into the trough of a monstrous sea. I gripped my chair convulsively and held on. I had a feeling that I was holding on to the dream as well as the chair. I should not have been surprised had the sea rushed in and drowned all that fairyland



and had I found myself at the wheel of the Snark just looking up casually from the study of logarithms. But the dream persisted. I looked covertly at the Madonna and her husband. They evidenced no perturbation. The dishes had not moved upon the table. The hibiscus and trees and grass were still there. Nothing had changed. I partook of more nectar, and the dream was more real than ever.

"Will you have some iced tea?" asked the Madonna; and then her side of the table sank down gently and I said yes to her at an angle of forty-five degrees.

"Speaking of sharks," said her husband, "up at Niihau there was a man--" And at that moment the table lifted and heaved, and I gazed upward at him at an angle of forty-five degrees.

So the luncheon went on, and I was glad that I did not have to bear the affliction of watching Charmian walk. Suddenly, however, a mysterious word of fear broke from the lips of the lotus-eaters. "Ah, ah," thought I, "now the dream goes glimmering." I clutched the chair desperately, resolved to drag back to the reality of the Snark some tangible vestige of this lotus land. I felt the whole dream lurching and pulling to be gone. Just then the mysterious word of fear was repeated. It sounded like REPORTERS. I looked and saw three of them coming across the lawn. Oh, blessed reporters! Then the dream was indisputably real after all. I glanced out across the shining water and saw the Snark at anchor, and I remembered that I had sailed in her from San Francisco to Hawaii,

and that this was Pearl Harbour, and that even then I was acknowledging introductions and saying, in reply to the first question, "Yes, we had delightful weather all the way down."