

NEBRASKA CITY TO MANILA AND RETURN.

[CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK]

I don't know how long the gale was in passing; perhaps twenty minutes; the port and starboard ropes had broken loose and were trailing in the sea, while the ends of tattered canvas cracked loudly. A great wave had just broken high over the fore-castle when I saw the mate come slipping and sliding down the quarter deck, his oil skins and sou'-wester dripping from the spray. Bracing himself against the pilot house, he made a funnel of his hands through which he shouted: "Cut loose the mainsails." We all climbed out on the yard arms and began slashing away. In a few moments what was left of those splendid sheets fell overboard. Again the sea struck us amidships, smashing the gangway into pieces. The rope I was clinging to came loose from her fastenings and as the ship righted herself I was carried out over the water. Again and again I swung clear of the ship. It was not until the fourth time that I managed to let go, and fell exhausted upon the deck.

In a few minutes more the typhoon passed, and the mass of black clouds disappeared behind the sea, looking for other prey. We all went into the fore-castle, thankful that we could once more gather around the little pine table and drink our bootleg coffee.

Death at Sea.

Shortly after this one of the crew went down with a fever. We did all we could for him, but the days went by, and he still lay up in the miserable hard berth, his eyes bright with fever, and no one wondered, when, one morning after a hard gale, we found him on the fore-castle, dead. That afternoon we wrapped him up in some old canvas, around which we fastened a chain. Then, on a Sunday, we carried our friend of yesterday to the vessel's side. A great calm had settled down, the ship scarcely moved, at times seeming to drift backward. The skipper took a worn Morocco book from his pocket, and after we had removed our caps, he began to read something which I have now forgotten. I could not take my eyes from the white canvas and its coil of rusty chain. Then the captain closed the book and said: "Men! heave the body overboard." I watched it strike the water. It turned from white to yellow, from yellow to brown and then to misty grey, as it passed from sight forever.

Far out across the plain of liquid green the sun was slowly sinking; then its flash died in the sea, and the day was dead. We turned to go below. The captain still remained with his hands upon the bulwarks. He seemed to be looking at something beyond the

horizon, and I heard him say, as if speaking to himself: "They tell us that the sea will give up her dead; maybe I will meet her again." That is all I found out of his secret, but now I understand why he treated us all so well.

Madagascar.

On February 10th we passed Madagascar, where the hulls and spars of vessels lay scattered along the shore. One morning as the sun came up the breeze died down, not a cloud floated across the heavens and the southern sun beat down upon the deck with such fury as to make the pitch melt from between the planks and stick to our bare feet as we walked about. I was scraping the rust from the anchor chains when I heard the skipper sing out: "Bring aft the large hook!" The carpenter soon went running along the main deck with a great fish hook in one hand, and in the other a piece of salt meat. The hook was baited and made fast to an inch Manila rope and thrown out. Scarcely ten minutes elapsed before there came a tremendous jerk, and then the fight commenced. An eight foot man-eating shark is not the easiest thing in the world to land, and it took seven of us to get that fellow on deck, where he was given the finishing touch with a butcher knife in the shoulder.

The weather continued calm. One day a school of porpoise went by, with their backs above the water like a fleet of torpedo boats. The sailors all declared it was a certain sign of fair wind, but the breeze never came and for two weeks more the ship lay motionless upon a glassy sea.

Fair Wind at Last.

The long-looked for trade winds came at last, the ropes twanged merrily in the rigging, and we squared the yards around, no more to hear the flapping of the canvas against the main mast, no more to talk of signs and indications, as now those sheets of broad canvas were living things. And then we reached South Africa at the Cape of Good Hope. The sea was very heavy; from fair winds there sprang a gale, and it seemed as if we had sailed into mountains of water which rose and fell every minute. Great flocks of sea birds followed in our wake, while large flocks of Cape pigeons hovered about.

Cape of Good Hope.

For seven days we tried to drop anchor off the African coast but could not make port. In the meantime old Neptune gathered his forces for a grand jubilee. When I shut my eyes I can see it all again. That night we went around the cape. How the vessel groaned; the fore-castle sliding across the main deck, the pounding of the waves upon the ship's side; the skipper standing by the wheel house holding a small lantern, now and then glancing at the compass, while the shadow of a smile played upon

his red face. He was then at home, in the atmosphere he loved. But rounding the Cape of Good Hope that February night, through a mad, mad sea, at fifteen knots an hour is an experience that thrills me yet, and one I know shall never grow dim.

Off the African coast we saw many British transports and battleships. They were coming in from all directions. Tommy Atkins seemed to be enjoying himself, lounging about, reading or smoking, but one out of every four was to be the price of the gold mines among the yellow hills.

St. Helena.

Late in the evening of March 5th we anchored at St. Helena. I had often read of the place where the great Napoleon Bonaparte spent his last hours in miserable captivity, where the man of such mighty ambitions was hemmed in by four narrow walls of stone. There is the grave where once he lay. You may see the place where he once looked between steel bars. I almost imagine I see him standing there, with his hands upon the bars, his head sunk low between his shoulders, looking longingly northward where was his native land, where so often his countrymen had shouted: "Vive l'Empereur." Someone has chisled in the rock where once he lay: "Let me kneel at her shrine rather than have no ambition." But, thanks to the nation that called him king, he now lays in the most beautiful palace on earth, beneath the golden dome of the Hotel des Invalides, at Paris.

We left St. Helena on the tenth of the month. I remember the day before we sailed an army transport full of Boer prisoners arrived. They were immediately sent ashore under a heavy guard. They were a ragged, dirty set, without uniforms and beards uncut; exiled upon a lonely island from which a bird only can leave.

The Equator.

We crossed the equator on March 25th. The rain fell continually, the breeze freshening up and then dying down. It took one hundred hours to cross the line of no degree. I shall never forget how all the crew declared that a fellow who crosses the equator for the first time must have his head and face shaved clean because, they said, that Neptune, god of the sea, came aboard to inspect all newcomers. The cook had a small pig he had been fattening up for some special occasion. One morning I saw the little fellow come squealing down the deck carefully shaved from head to tail. I confess I was somewhat worried lest they would carry out their heathenish idea upon me, and for several days I carried around an iron belaying pin. About three degrees north longitude a good south breeze came up that morning. We were all painting the ship. The skipper, with his usual stride, was pacing the quarter deck with his nose