THE INDIAN OCEAN

STANLEY ROGERS

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THE INDIAN OCEAN

By the Same Author

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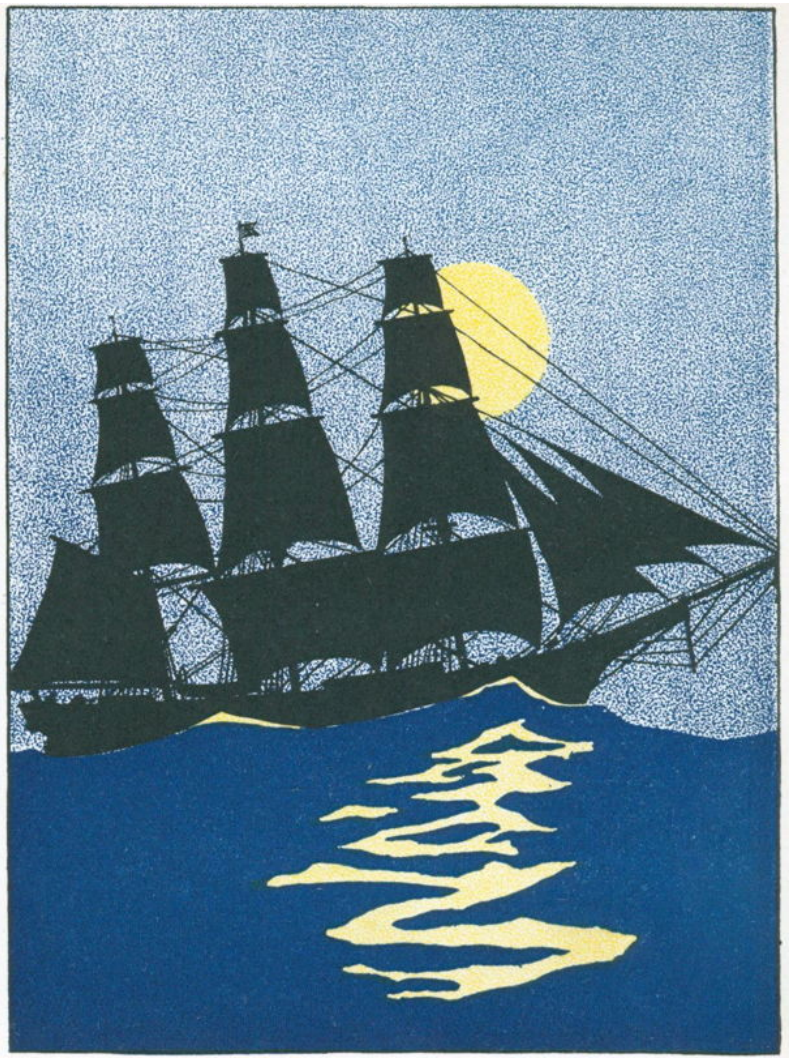

Fr.

A CHINA CLIPPER

THE INDIAN OCEAN

By

STANLEY-ROGERS

Illustrated by the Author

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TO MY FATHER
V. H. R.

FOREWORD

One evening four years ago, while sitting alone in my studio looking over some old sea prints—the crude woodcuts of the 'penny plain and tuppence coloured' variety—the idea came to me of illustrating a collection of old sea stories dressed up in brand-new clothes. The result was *Ships and Sailors*. This book met with such encouraging success that I began and finished another. Later there appeared others, and now I find myself writing a foreword to the sixth of these sea books. This last is the third of a trio dealing with the three great oceans of the world—the Atlantic, the Pacific, and the Indian Oceans. To quote from the preface to *The Atlantic*, "Histories have been written of peoples, of religions, and of countries, so why not the history of an ocean?"

Why not, indeed? It is a noble subject. It is true that it could have been dealt with in a more dignified manner by an abler hand, and illustrated with fine old maps and steel engravings. But that has not been my ambition. I shall be satisfied to achieve a lesser work; something that "he who runs may read." While it may be more of an entertainment than a text-book, authenticity is not sacrificed. I have not written it in the spirit of the man who feels that he is not on his oath in conversation. Great pains have been taken to verify the mass of facts between these covers, for what is the use of inaccurate information? But in searching through hundreds of records, diaries, encyclopædias, logs, and Admiralty charts I have frequently noticed wide discrepancies in the facts recorded by different authorities—even in official histories. In such {8} cases I have taken what has seemed to be the most accurate, and left it at that. Therefore I hope the pedant will bear this in mind if he comes across a date, a measurement of distance, or some statement which does not accord with his own knowledge. Not that the critics have been finding much fault. They have, in fact, been almost too kind. One is apt to grow spoiled under such kindness.

To those who have picked holes in the fabric of my knowledge I am grateful when their criticism has been just. I have the friendliest sentiments to the manly correspondent who wrote to me from Seattle pointing out that the old Cunarders *Etruria* and *Umbria* were single-screw and not twin-screw steamers. I should have known better, and saw to it that in the next printing the error should be rectified.

This, however, is a digression. As an artist I am not greatly enamoured of a mere collection of facts. Information is a dry bone without imagination. And while in a book of this type facts are of first importance, and one does one's best to see that the truth is told, one may be permitted a certain latitude in expression, particularly in the treatment of the drawings. No subject lends itself more to decorative and dramatic fancy than the sea. People are beginning to realize this now that the old square-riggers have gone. The demand for hand-coloured shipping prints, authentic models, and old sea books exceeds the supply. Ancient wooden sextants, telescopes, charts, ships' bells, lanterns, scrimshaw work, and other marine curios have been bought up to decorate the libraries, halls, and studios of discriminating people who have felt the aura of romance about these things. The romance of the sea is robustious and never morbid. It appeals to the simple, enduring virtues in men, and for that reason will probably never grow stale.

S. R. H. R.

St Malo
1932

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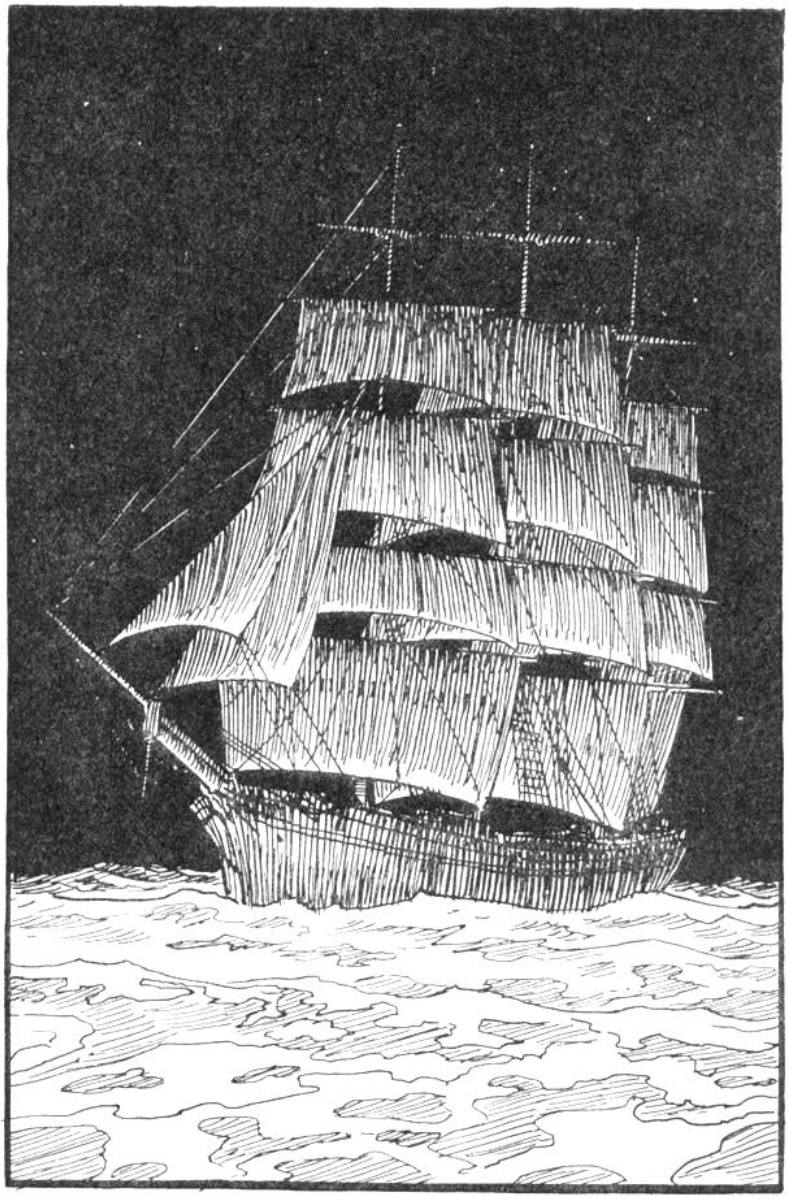
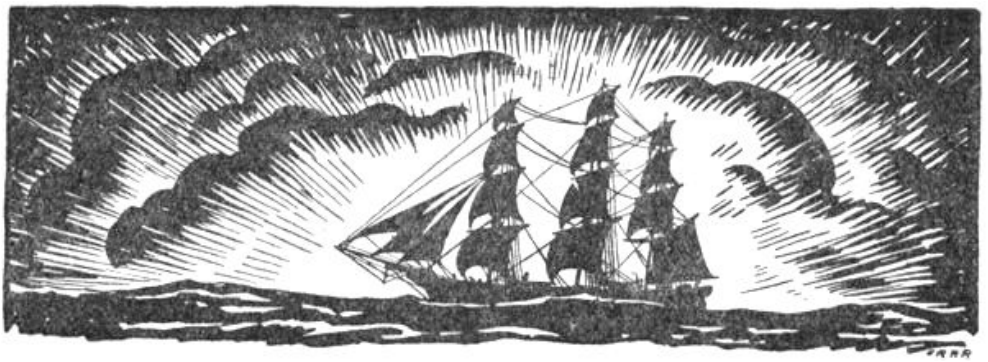


PHOSPHORESCENT SEA

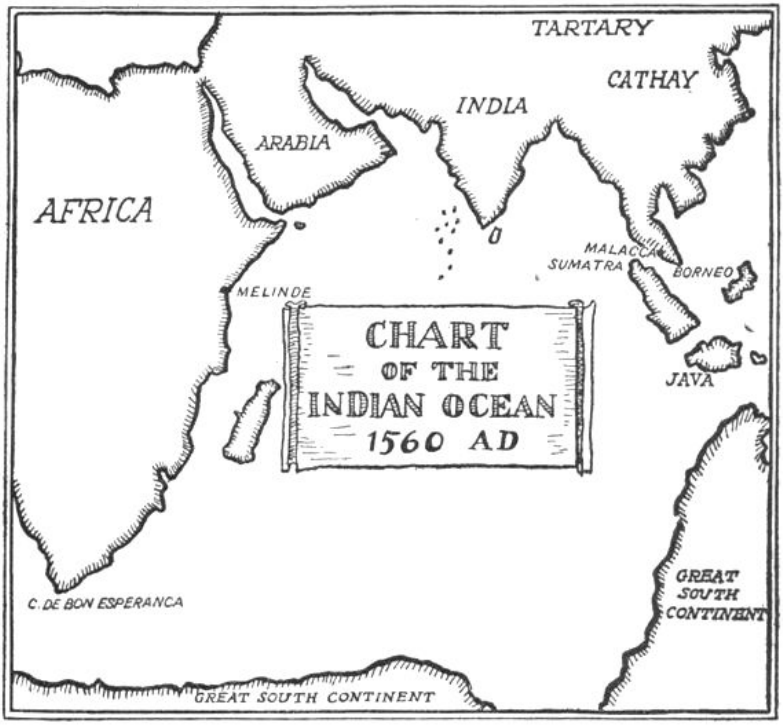


CHAPTER I

The Indian Ocean

The ancients had an expression, “the Seven Seas,” which we use nowadays with but a hazy notion of what it means, for no one can say with certainty which were the Seven Seas. They could scarcely have included the Pacific, the Arctic, or the Antarctic, since none of those areas of water were known until a much later day. Guesses have been made at naming the original Seven Seas, but they remain guesses. In the known world of the ancient Greeks there were the Black, the Caspian, Adriatic, Ægean, Mediterranean, and Red Seas, and probably the Persian Gulf. But there were others—the Sea of Marmora and the Sea of Azof—which upset our neatly rounded seven. But, whatever were the original Seven Seas, the phrase sticks, even though we can call to mind a dozen or more seas. To sail the Seven Seas, if it means anything at all to modern people, means to sail the great oceans of the world. But of these there are no more than five—the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Indian Ocean, and the two Polar oceans. Of the first three the Indian Ocean is the smallest, with an area of something like 28,000,000 English square miles, as compared with the Pacific’s 64,000,000 and the Atlantic’s 31,000,000.[1] In the case of the Indian Ocean this reckoning includes the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, and extends southward to the Antarctic Circle. The latitude of its {14} southern limits is regarded by some geographers as 40° South, but if the great Southern Ocean, which lies between the two meridians passing through South Cape, Tasmania, and Cape Agulhas, be included, then its southern limits extend, as already stated,

to the Antarctic Circle. The same rule applies to the Atlantic and the Pacific. The limit of the northward edge of the drift ice from the Antarctic is about 45° South, but ice has been observed as far to the north as 36°, off Cape Agulhas.



The Indian Ocean's greatest width is at 40° South, between the Cape and the southern extremity of Australia, a distance of 6000 miles. In a northward direction it gradually becomes narrower, until on a parallel seven or eight degrees above the equator it is divided into two enormous gulfs by the triangular mass of India. The western 'gulf' forms the Arabian Sea, and the eastern 'gulf' the {15} Bay of Bengal. Its western boundary is formed by Africa and Arabia.

Its greatest soundings do not attain the magnitude of some of those of the Pacific, though the Recorder Deep, south of the Sunda Islands, has shown a depth of 3393 fathoms. All the depressions below 3000 fathoms are on the Australian side of the Indian Ocean. While the greatest depths are on the eastern side, the majority of islands are in the western half, and are either of coral or volcanic formation. The two largest islands are Ceylon and

Madagascar. Lesser islands are Sokotra, in the north, and Mauritius, in the south.

A unique feature of the Indian Ocean is its monsoons, those periodical, strong winds which blow from certain points of the compass according to the season of the year. During the south-west monsoon in the northern summer[2] the gales blow with a force sufficient to interfere with all navigation save by the most powerful steamships. In the days of sail the monsoon period so seriously interfered with shipping that sailing dates had always to be arranged accordingly. Clippers in the Australian trade avoided the contrary winds by keeping well to the south. Down in the Roaring Forties, in the line of the Antarctic Drift, are found huge areas of that phenomenon known as the Sargasso Sea. In former days this sea was thought to be responsible for the mystery of many lost ships, but this is hardly likely. Though the floating weed certainly gathers over enormous areas of the ocean, it is not dense enough to impede seriously the progress of a sailing-ship. The comparatively feeble caravels of Columbus sailed through the Atlantic Sargasso Sea for two weeks without any difficulty whatever. But until recently old sailors believed that ships got caught in the Sargasso Sea and remained there until their crews died of starvation and their hulls and rigging rotted away.

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There will be frequent references throughout the following pages to events occurring in the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal, the Gulf of Aden, and the Mozambique Channel, but it is scarcely necessary to say that, geographically speaking, these areas of water are part of the Indian Ocean and inseparable from it. The largest of these ‘indentations’ is the Arabian Sea, bounded on its landward sides by Arabia to the west, Persia and Baluchistan to the north, and India to the east. At its widest part it is approximately 1500 miles across, on a line from Cape Comorin in India to Cape Guardafui in Africa. The two important gulfs of Aden in the south and Oman in the north branch from it. Except for the Laccadives, off the Indian coast, and Sokotra, off Cape Guardafui, it is unbroken by islands.

The Gulf of Aden narrows at its western end to the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, at the lower entrance to the Red Sea, and is the funnel-mouth for the concentration of all sea-routes from the East to Europe *via* the Suez Canal. At Aden is a coaling-station which serves both the Navy and the merchant marine. The Gulf of Oman connects the Arabian Sea with the Persian Gulf, and was at one time infested with the Arab pirates who harried East Indiamen for two hundred years.

On the opposite side of India is the Bay of Bengal, which, like the Arabian Sea, is roughly triangular in shape. The Bay of Bengal enjoys the distinction of giving birth, at rare intervals, to volcanic islands. Off the Burmese coast is a curious chain of active volcanoes. The bay is also famous for its cyclones, which have frequently devastated the towns on the Golconda and Coromandel coasts of India.

The phenomenon of the sea known as phosphorescence is nowhere better seen than in the Indian Ocean. Captain Kingman once reported sailing in the ship *Shooting Star* through an area of phosphorescence in the Indian Ocean {17} over twenty miles long, an area so milky white that the very stars were made dim in comparison. The ship's forefoot pushed up a bow wave of white phosphorescence as though she were sailing through a sea of fire. The microscopic creatures which produce this phenomenon are known to science as *Noctilucæ*, a tiny crustacean form which may be excited to activity by the surface movement of the sea or the passing of a ship through it. Along certain coasts bordering the Indian Ocean the phosphorescence in the breakers gives the coast at night the appearance of being surrounded by a rim of pale fire. In bad weather the tops of the seas appear to terminate in tongues of flame—an eerie fire that gives off no light. By the nature of the phenomenon it can only be seen at night, though it must be present at all times. This phosphorescence comes chiefly from the *Noctilucæ*, but it is also produced by molluscs and decomposing animal matter from the bodies of dried fish, which in putrefaction give off a distinct light.

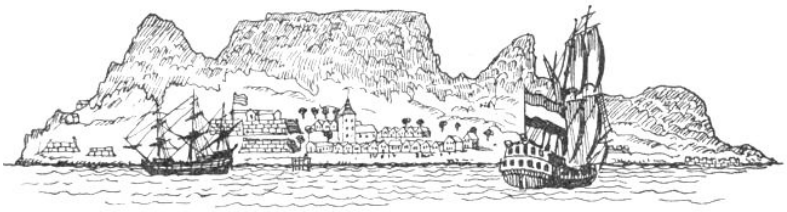
Let the foregoing pages serve as an introduction to the Indian Ocean. Closer acquaintance may be made from the chapters which treat in more or less detail varying phases of this great ocean's history. An ocean without islands would be barren indeed, so a chapter has been devoted to its islands. There is another to storms, and another to the East Indiamen, who so particularly belonged to those waters. I feel that what follows will be far more readable if the maps accompanying the text are frequently referred to. Maps are so often ignored as being something faintly suggestive of a guide-book. But how much easier it is to visualize the scene, the phases of a sea action, the vicissitudes of a wandering ship, or the track of a typhoon if one has charts to consult as one reads! The bare facts which have been compressed into the first few pages of this history only possess life and meaning when seen as a whole and in their proper relation to each other. I see as I write {18} the whole plan of this ocean history which lies ahead of us. There is the uneven blue shape, rather like a dromedary's hump, with the

giant V of India dividing the two smaller humps. Surrounding it on all sides but the south are the ragged, indented, green shapes of the continents of Africa, Asia, and Australia, the long, straggling Malay Peninsula, and the Sunda Islands. Here and there, scattered about the blue, are tiny green splashes, the coral atolls and volcanic rocks, and to the left-hand side is an enormous slipper-shaped piece of green—the island continent of Madagascar. The left-hand hump is the Arabian Sea, the right-hand hump the Bay of Bengal, and the body is the Indian Ocean. With this simple imagery to aid me I can visualize more easily the events which have taken place in the Indian Ocean since the days when the inquisitive Diaz started the ball rolling by being the first European navigator to venture round the Cape of Good Hope.

For centuries this was the shortest continuous sea-route to India. The passage took from three to six months, and was made under conditions that no pampered modern travellers would put up with for a moment. Even up to quite recent times travel to India or Australia was an uncomfortable and extremely monotonous journey. I have before me two diaries kept by two different travellers in the eighteen-eighties—one of a voyage to Australia *via* the Cape and the other *via* the Suez Canal and the Red Sea. Both voyages were made in steamers, though both vessels carried sail to assist the engines when the weather was suitable. It was not until about 1890 that the practice of carrying sail on steamers was dropped. The diaries are enormously interesting as pictures of life on board a liner sailing to Melbourne forty or fifty years ago.

First, the voyage *via* the Cape. Leaving the Thames in the middle of May 1884, Cape Town was reached on June 28. Here two days were spent in coaling, those passengers who could afford to do so going ashore to escape {19} the pervading coal dust which got into every compartment of the ship. They walked about the streets of Cape Town, visiting places of local interest, and noticing the curious combination of Dutch and English in the social and business life of the town. When the coaling was finished the ship steamed out of the roads, slowly dropping the lofty plateau of Table Mountain astern, the last piece of Africa the passengers were to see. Outside the ship ran into dirty weather, and most of the passengers were seasick. The Indian Ocean gave them a poor welcome. The seas were too rough to permit of promenading on deck, so that all but a few were forced to remain in their staterooms, where ventilation was almost non-existent owing to the necessity for closing the ventilators in bad weather. Smokers who were not seasick found in the stormy weather another martyrdom—the rule forbidding smoking below on account of the danger of fire. As no smoking-

room was provided slaves to nicotine had to smoke on the deck or go without.



CAPE TOWN ABOUT 1670, ACCORDING TO A CONTEMPORARY ARTIST

When the weather improved the passengers gratefully came out for air, and most available deck space was crowded with idle people, who formed snobbish cliques, which practice might have been irritating if it had not been funny. Some of the young dandies would appear on a sunny day in silk hats, kid gloves, and carrying walking-sticks while they solemnly promenaded up and down the confined decks as though they were on church parade ashore. Some of the women, too, in all their Victorian primness, would appear with parasols, reticules, muffs, bustles, and what-not. {20} They were always referred to as ‘the ladies,’ and the adjective ‘select’ was common to their vocabulary. The time was passed in crocheting, knitting, genteelly flirting, playing whist in the saloon, reading Ouida, promenading, or watching the sea birds following the wake of the ship, though she was making ten knots. On Sundays there was divine service in the first- and second-class cabins, and at these times snobbery showed at its worst. The first cabin remained aloof, detached; and the second cabin refused the steerage admission to the service. Yet it was the wretched steerage who were most pious, and, having no official service of their own, gathered to sing hymns on deck.

The steamer kept well into the forties of latitude, and made her 300 odd miles of easting every day. A week out from Cape Town it came on to blow again, and within a few hours the ship was rolling her rail under in a first-rate gale. The steerage huddled miserably below in their foul quarters, and the other passengers fared only slightly {21} better. Word was brought down by the more venturesome passengers that a sailing-ship had been passed quite close to. She made a beautiful picture riding the gale under close-reefed topsails, a 'Good voyage' signal fluttering from her peak-halyards. The days below were spent in the berths or in the saloon playing whist or bezique and getting up sweepstakes on the ship's daily run. There was no space to get away alone except by going to bed. The main lounge was merely the dining saloon with the tables cleared. The ladies had a small cabin to themselves where they could modestly retire if unaccompanied by husband or chaperon.

After the storm every one who was not too ill again appeared on deck, and the same round of social life began anew. Whales were seen, and dolphins helped to while away the hours as they gambolled alongside the ship. The birds—albatross, Cape pigeons, and mollyhawks—continued to follow the steamer as though they meant to accompany her to Australia. The sailors caused great excitement by catching an albatross with a wing-spread of twelve feet. Some were superstitious about the catching of these birds, and would have nothing to do with it, but others were glad to have a

souvenir of the occasion. Its two enormous webbed feet, its head and beak, its wing-feathers, and some of its bones were turned to 'ornamental' uses: and one lady coveted the down of its breast for the purpose of filling a satin muff.

As the ship approached the coast of Australia the days began to grow noticeably warmer. Heavy English tweeds were packed away, and every one was on the look out for the first sign of land. What would Australia look like? On the seventeenth day from Cape Town Cape Leeuwin was sighted, a low-lying, treeless strip of land to the east. This first land was shortly afterward lost sight of as the ship steamed across the Great Australian Bight toward Adelaide, the first port of call. Land again appeared. {22} These were islands—first Neptune, then Kangaroo Island, the one-time sealing-station. Many of the passengers joined in a thanksgiving service for a safe voyage, and everybody was busy packing up ready for landing. Toward night more land was seen, and friendly lights twinkled on the shore. Early in the morning while it was still dark the ship dropped anchor in Largs Bay near a tall lighthouse, and the passengers awoke at dawn to find the land close aboard. It was flat, low-lying, sandy, barren, and cheerless-looking. In the distance, at the head of the inlet, were the chimneys and spires of Adelaide, whither some of the passengers were bound. The usual port formalities—the customs and the quarantine regulations—had to be gone through. Those for Adelaide went ashore in a tender with their luggage. The doctor allowed the ship to proceed, the yellow flag was hauled down, the anchor raised, and with warning blasts from her siren the ship got under way for her final destination—Melbourne—where we will leave her.

The second voyage is one made in a P. and O. steamer in 1885 *via* the Mediterranean, Suez Canal, and the Red Sea. The steamer, which was considered a very fine vessel—the last word in luxury—included in her equipment electric lighting and a refrigerating plant which kept fresh 2000 carcasses of mutton. But the electric light frequently broke down, which made the more conservative passengers long for the old-fashioned gas or even oil-lamps. London passengers departed from Fenchurch Street for Gravesend, where the steamer lay in the river. The usual route across the Bay of Biscay and into the Mediterranean was followed. Some of the P. and O. steamers called at Brindisi, where those who preferred to avoid the ordeal of the bay would embark and disembark.

Arriving at Port Said, the northern entrance to the canal, those who wished could go ashore for an hour or two to see the native town and to run the gauntlet of {23} baksheesh-crying beggars. The passage through the canal took thirty-six hours, and numerous stops were made. No traffic was

permitted after dark, and patrol boats saw that the rule was enforced. Here the travellers began to feel the effects of the heat. From now on until they got into the Indian Ocean the heat was, to some, almost unendurable. The passage down the Red Sea took four days, each day seeming more torrid than the last. Everybody suffered from a sense of depression, and three of the passengers were put in the sick bay with what was described as heat apoplexy. The Red Sea, hemmed in by the scorching sands of the deserts of Africa and Arabia, is one of the hottest regions on earth, and it is better to take this route during the cloudy months, even though that may mean running into storms in the Indian Ocean.

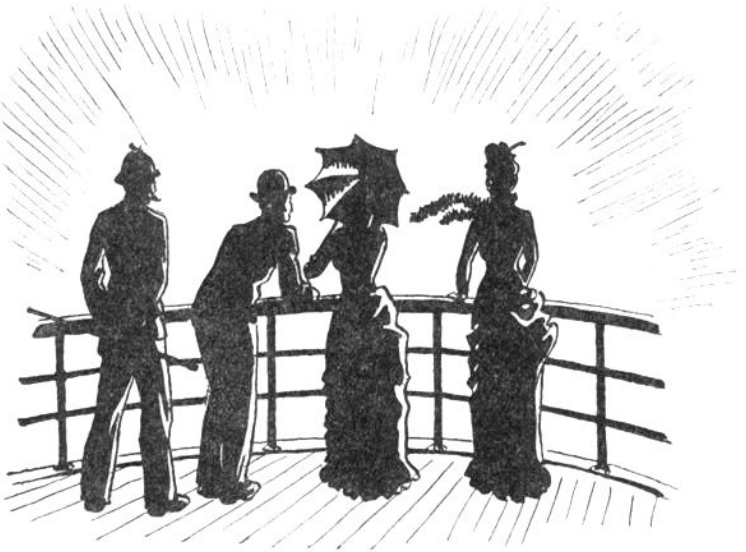
The ship had mechanically operated punkahs (fans), but these merely stirred up the oven-like atmosphere. In the coolest cabins the temperature never fell below 90°, and at night the decks were covered with passengers sprawled about in an effort to sleep. Food was nauseating, and even the smokers found their passion abated in such a temperature. Each day was a full twenty-four hours long, and at the end of four such days, when the ship passed through the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb and the first faint breezes from the Indian Ocean stirred through the decks, her lethargic passengers revived from the wilting heat as though by magic.

The Twelve Apostle rocks had been passed close by, and then the island of Perim, with its revolving light. Bab-el-Mandeb—"the Gate of Tears"—seemed ill-named, for surely it should have been "the Gate of Rejoicing." However, for those coming from the opposite direction it was aptly enough named. Here the coast by moonlight bore an eerie resemblance to the surface of the moon, being broken up and pitted with vast holes filled with moon-shadows. In the Gulf of Aden the travellers got their last {24} sight of Arabia. On a barren peninsula surrounded by hills lay the town of Aden, dazzling white in the sunlight. Used as a coaling-station for the P. and O., this unhealthy place, where it rains once in three years, is the home of a British colony. A few hours later on the starboard side Cape Guardafui, the last headland of Africa, was seen, and when this dropped out of sight astern the majestic mass of the island of Sokotra appeared above the rim of the sea ahead.

In the open water the wilted travellers so far recovered from the ordeal of the Red Sea as to resume an interest in the trifling diversions of the voyage. As the ship was approaching the equator there was much talk and secret preparations for the ceremony of crossing the Line. And on the day when the zero parallel was crossed the fantastic rites were gone through with much horseplay and high spirits. One of the officers, attired in a canvas robe, with a tin crown and a false beard and hair of rope-yarn, and accompanied by his 'wife,' Amphitrite, and his satellites, marched aft in

solemn procession to the part of the deck reserved for the ceremony. The usual buffoonery was gone through; the ancient catechism was put to the tyro; the shaving and ducking horseplay followed; and the victim emerged wet, but a tyro no longer.

At Diego Garcia, in the Chagos Archipelago, a brief stop was made to pick up the mails. This would be the last land the travellers would see for two weeks, as Cape {25} Leeuwin, Australia, would be the next landfall. A few hours out from Diego Garcia heavy, black clouds mounted up from the southern horizon, and the timid passengers nervously discussed the possibility of a typhoon. The thought of typhoons was never long absent from their minds while crossing the Indian Ocean, and they were relieved to be told that the clouds meant nothing but a rain squall, which, as it happened, did not come near the ship. With the cooler weather south of the equator the usual diversions occupied the hours between eating and sleeping. The great pastime seemed to be spelling-bees, a form of indoor sport no longer in fashion. Recitations in the evenings were also a popular diversion. There was always, of course, the weekly divine service, which was well attended, albeit with the inevitable class distinctions.

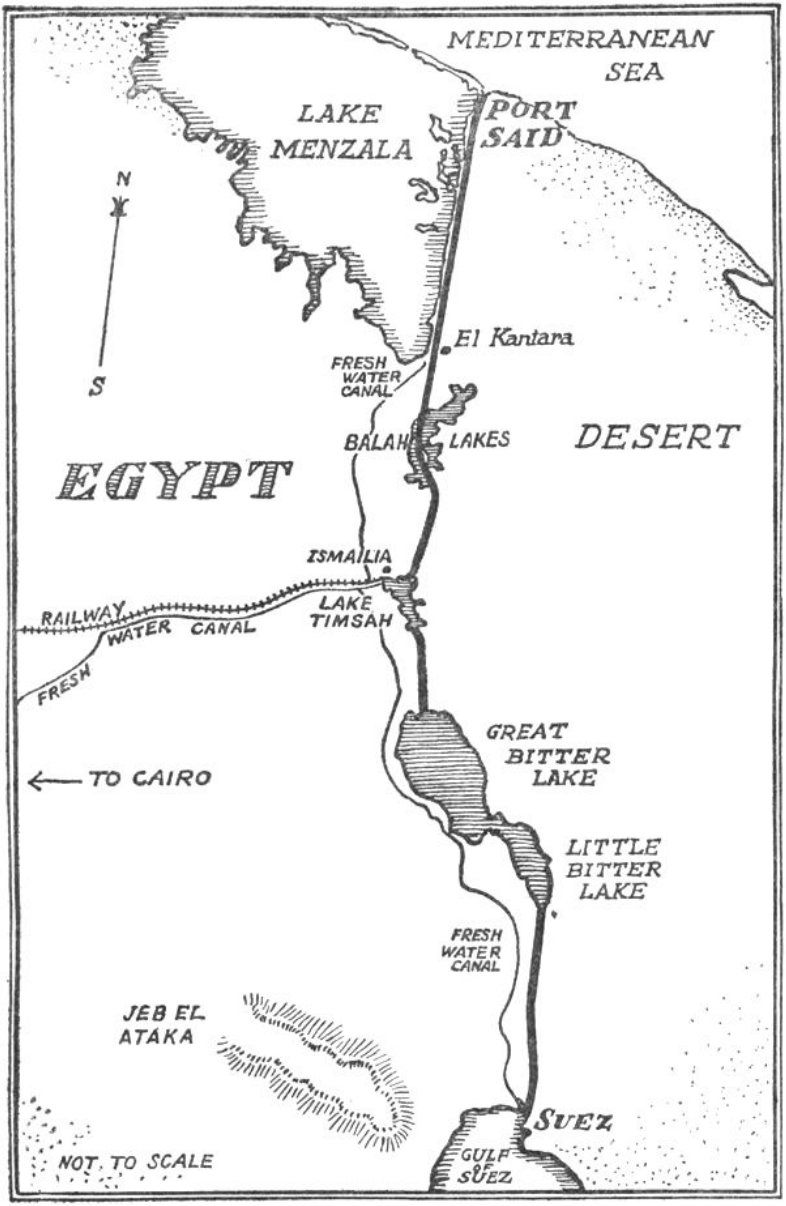


On the twentieth day from Aden the low, sandy shores of Cape Leeuwin were sighted ahead. With the prospect of a speedy release from each other's company the passengers forgot old grievances, and there was a final entertainment {26} given by the amusement committee, followed by sentimental songs and toasting the Captain's health. From Cape Leeuwin, after sailing round the coast, past Albany, and across the Bight, the ship made the customary stop off Adelaide to discharge passengers and mails before proceeding to Melbourne.

The influence of the Suez Canal upon Indian Ocean shipping is so important that I feel a short history of the canal and its building is entirely germane to the subject. Until the canal was opened a voyage to the Far East was considered a major adventure, not to be undertaken by the faint-hearted. The canal drew the East incalculably nearer to Europe; it stimulated trade, increased tonnage, and brought down the cost of Australian and Asiatic imports. It is also of enormous strategical value to the British Navy. In ancient times men had fully understood the value of a waterway across the Isthmus of Suez, and in the temple of Karnak is an inscription referring to a canal between the Nile and the Red Sea during the reign of Seti I, in 1380 B.C. Traces of such a waterway can still be seen. There is a record of another canal (609 B.C.), which Herodotus declared cost the lives of 120,000 men during its construction. These and later canals were cut through the strip of desert between the Nile and the Bitter Lakes at the lower end of the present Suez Canal, and in comparison with the latter were shallow ditches navigable only by light craft. The frequently renovated remains of one of these ancient ditches exist to this day in the freshwater canal between Cairo and Suez. Haroun al Raschid, of 'The Thousand and One Nights' fame, was the first to suggest the construction of a waterway between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, though the work was never begun, the reason being the same as that which prevents the construction of a tunnel under the English Channel—namely, military caution. During the centuries following the invasion of the Indian Ocean by the Portuguese sailing round the Cape of Good {27} Hope many serious projects for cutting a canal across the isthmus were discussed by Portugal's rivals. Of these the French remained the most constant to the idea. It simmered in the minds of successive generations of Frenchmen until at last a French engineer made the dream an accomplished fact. Bonaparte himself sent an engineer, M. Lepère, to survey the country between Port Said and Suez with a view to discovering the most suitable terrain for a canal. Lepère reported that there was a difference of twenty-nine feet between the level of the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, a statement that was found to be erroneous by the survey of 1846-47 undertaken by the Society for the Study of the Suez Canal.

In 1854 there appeared the canal project's greatest champion, Ferdinand de Lesseps, not an engineer, but a man of great vision, with the personality and will to see his ideas carried out. While acting as French vice-consul at Alexandria in 1832 his mind was first stirred by dreams of a canal across the isthmus, but it was not until 1854, while he was on a visit to the Egyptian viceroy, Said Pasha, in Cairo, that the first step toward the realization of the dream was made by the securing of the necessary permission from the viceroy for the digging of the canal. Four and a half years later the first spadeful of sand was dug at Port Said, with great pomp and ceremony, in the presence of a gathering of distinguished people. Like all pioneers, de Lesseps had his opponents. Notable among these was Lord Palmerston, who, apart from his belief that it would be impossible to construct a canal across the desert, considered that the existence of such a gateway to India would imperil British naval supremacy, etc., etc. However, de Lesseps would not be deterred by the pessimists, and opened subscriptions for the Canal Company, which was to have a capital of 200,000,000 francs. Within a month over three-quarters of the 400,000 shares were sold, most of which were subscribed for in France. Turkey took a {28} large block, and the Egyptian viceroy acquired most of the remainder.

The Isthmus of Suez is partly broken by a number of shallow depressions whose presence was taken full advantage of in laying out the canal route, which runs almost exactly north and south. These are known as Lake Menzala, on the Mediterranean coast, the Balah Lakes, Lake Timsah, and the two Bitter Lakes. The agreement with the Egyptian Government included the construction of a freshwater canal between Cairo and Lake Timsah in the middle of the isthmus, with branches to Suez and Port Said running more or less parallel to the ship canal. These would supply the canal-workers and the two terminal ports with fresh water from the Nile. The Company was faced with constant obstruction and petty regulations from the Egyptian Government, but the work went on until 1863, when a deadlock was reached between the Company and the Government. The latter wished to retract some of the concessions given in 1856, including the return of lands granted to the Company. The Egyptians tried by threats and intimidation to enforce their unreasonable demands, but as the Europeans refused to be intimidated the troubles were submitted to arbitration, and an agreement was reached in July 1864 at Paris with Napoleon III as arbitrator.



THE SUEZ CANAL

The actual digging of the canal was not in itself particularly difficult, since the terrain was mostly of mud or sand and easily removed. The exceptions were at Serapeum and Shaluf, where for a short distance rock had to be cut through, and in one or two places high ground necessitated deeper excavation. Here on the isthmus could be seen ancient and modern methods

working side by side. In one place would be land dredgers and other heavy machinery brought from Europe, while a little farther on were thousands of natives scooping out the preliminary channel *with their hands*. After the arbitration of 1864 the {29} {30} {31} work was speeded up by dividing it into four big contracts given to European firms and by supplanting primitive methods with modern machinery. In 1867 financial difficulties forced the Company to raise a loan in order to continue the work. Two years later the excavation was sufficiently advanced to open the canal to limited traffic.

The opening ceremony was performed at Port Said in November 1869, and on the day following a long procession of vessels, led by the *Eagle* carrying the Empress Eugénie, steamed as far as Ismailia, on Lake Timsah. After a stop for the night the procession continued as far as the Bitter Lakes the next day. On the third day the passage was completed at Suez. It was a memorable day—November 20, 1869. By this narrow ditch through the desert the enormous continent of Africa had been cut off by water from the northern continents, and India was brought several weeks' sail nearer to Europe.

The length of the canal is 100 miles, and the width is just sufficient to permit of two ships passing each other, though for many years the canal was so narrow that this was impossible. The widening was carried out in 1885. Until then ships passed each other at specially widened lengths called stations. Before 1887 vessels were forbidden to pass through the canal after dark. Ships now proceed at night with searchlights, and the one-time thirty-six-hour passage has been reduced to eighteen hours. To lessen the tendency of a steamer's wake to wear away the banks a speed limit of ten kilometres an hour is imposed. Even so the banks continually fall in and tend to silt up the canal, so that constant dredging is necessary. So far the enormous cost of lining the canal banks with stone or concrete has prevented the carrying out of this work. Revenue is obtained by levying a toll based on tonnage. This toll has varied from time to time since the canal's inception. In 1875 the British Government, which had hitherto held aloof, became a large shareholder in the {32} Company by purchasing the shares held by the Khedive. It was agreed that politically the canal should be regarded as neutral territory, and in time of war be treated as such by all nations, though this fine ideal has not been found possible to live up to.

At Port Said, near the entrance to the canal, there stands an heroic statue of Ferdinand de Lesseps, his immortal monument. His name will live as long as the world endures as the creator of the Suez Canal, the gateway to the Indian Ocean.

[1] These figures vary with different authorities.

[2] For explanation see Chapter VII.

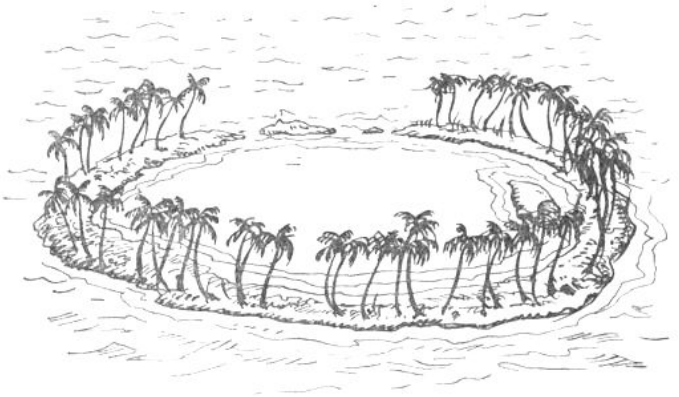
{33}

CHAPTER II

Islands

On looking at a map of the Indian Ocean one notices that it is not so lavishly sprinkled with islands as its sister ocean the Pacific. The Indian Ocean has no equivalent to Polynesia, with its flower-decked natives and ukeleles in the moonlight, to attract artists and authors. But if we were writing a publicity notice for a tourist agency we could offer counter-attractions of every description—the lovely jungles of Ceylon, the coral atolls of the Chagos Archipelago, the towering volcanic peaks on the Comoro group, the pirates' island of Madagascar; or, for the hardier tourist, the lonely rocks of the Crozets or Desolation Island far to the south on the fringe of the Antarctic. Some day, perhaps less than a hundred years hence, tourist agencies will doubtless be advertising the attractions of these islands. Kerguelen, which to us is so remote, may in the future be within week-ending distance by rocket-aeroplane or some still undreamed-of mode of locomotion. But at this date of writing those islands which lie beyond 35° South are remote indeed. Few people have set foot on the Crozets, Amsterdam, St Paul, Kerguelen, Prince Edward, or Heard Islands, and those who have have been mostly unwilling visitors thrown there by an inhospitable sea. The Crozets have especially distinguished themselves in this way. It was from the Crozets that the pathetic message from thirteen castaways came some years ago. {34} Most people know the story of the albatross which was caught on the beach near Fremantle, Australia, with a

tin band around its neck on which were punched in French the words, "Thirteen castaways have taken refuge on the Crozets. Help, for the love of God." And how, after much unnecessary delay, officialdom dispatched a rescue-ship thither, without, however, finding the senders of the message. It was presumed that they had put to sea and been lost, for nothing was ever heard of them again.



These bleak, sea-girt rocks make the perfect scene upon which to stage a shipwreck, which from the security of an armchair before the fire provides a most diverting adventure. But should the adventure happen to oneself in real life it would be wiser to choose a less desolate isle, some such place as Cocos-Keeling, where coconuts are plentiful and clothing not essential. And since we must start somewhere in our 'tour' of the islands of the Indian Ocean, we cannot do better than start with the Cocos-Keeling, that lonely atoll whose name only became familiar to the world after 1914, when the telegraph flashed the news that the German cruiser *Emden* had been destroyed there. On looking at the map one will find Cocos-Keeling (there are really two islands) on a line exactly south-west of the Sunda {35} Straits, which separate Sumatra and Java, and about 650 miles distant. To be still more precise, the two islands, Cocos and North Keeling, are in latitude 11° 50′ South and longitude 96° 51′ East. They were first seen by a white man—Captain William Keeling, of the East India Company, when on a voyage from Batavia to the Cape—in 1608-9. The southern atoll, ten miles distant from its neighbour, North Keeling, is made up of a group of a number of small isles, and was described by Darwin, who stayed eleven days there in 1833 during the *Beagle* expedition, as a perfect specimen of a coral atoll. When the *Beagle* arrived a Mr Liesk, the English resident, came

off in a boat to meet the distinguished visitor. The atoll stirred Darwin's imagination. He wrote in his journal: "I am glad we have visited these islands: such formations surely rank high among the wonderful objects of the world." Admiral Fitzroy, of the *Beagle*, described Cocos-Keeling, in terms less ponderous, as a topsy-turvy place where crabs eat coconuts, fish eat coral, dogs catch fish, men ride turtles, and shells are dangerous man-traps. The latter referred, of course, to the big bivalve, which will close with an iron grip on the foot or hand of anyone who has the misfortune to fall foul of its open valves. The monster land-crabs indigenous to the islands overran the atoll until the first white man settled there.

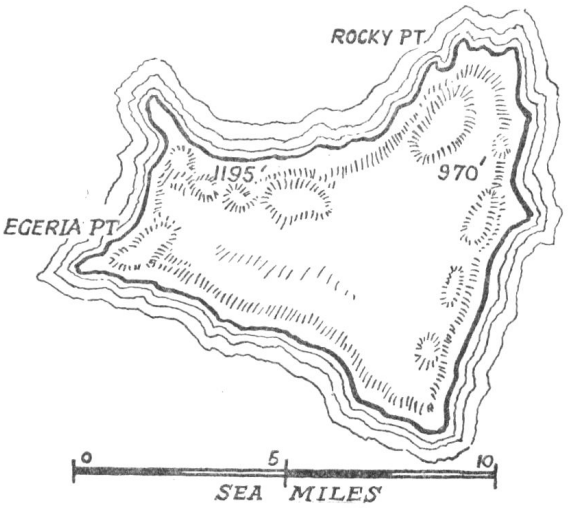
The first notable visitor was Captain Clunie-Ross in the ship *Borneo* in 1814. Being favourably impressed with the place, he returned two years later with his family and eight sailors and took possession, only to find that his island paradise had already been invaded by one Alexander Hare, who was living with a harem of Malay women. Some say that there were forty, some say a hundred; but it does not much matter. The point is that Hare and his seraglio were unpopular neighbours for the Ross family, and Hare decided to move himself and his women to the small island known as Prison Island. Here he is said to have confined {36} his wives in a house and carried on orgies of debauchery that cannot be described in print. But I have noticed that the various versions of Hare's activities differ so greatly in detail that I am inclined to dismiss half the scandalous tales about the man as being untrue. However, history goes on to say that when Hare betook himself and his harem to Prison Island the eight Scotch sailors followed him, declaring that he was greedy and unreasonable, and anyway such a one-sided state of affairs could no longer be tolerated. The channel between the islands, though wide, was shallow, and the sailors had long boots. When they reached Hare's stronghold he met them, and, seeing that the odds were against him, attempted a compromise. Whatever the compromise was the sailors would not accept it, and retired for the time being to discuss matters. But they were saved the trouble of further argument, for shortly afterward the women deserted Hare for the sailors, and he, finding himself no longer a person of importance among them, deserted the island.

The only domestic stock the Ross family brought to the island were pigs, which quickly grew fat on the coconuts that lay everywhere under the tall palm-groves.

The descendants of the Clunie-Ross family are associated with Cocos-Keeling to this day, and it was in a schooner belonging to a Mr Clunie-Ross that the landing-party from the *Emden* escaped in 1914 after their ship had been converted into scrap-iron by the guns of the *Sydney*. The islands came under British protection in 1856, and in 1878 were attached to the

Government of Ceylon. In 1882, however, they were transferred to the Government of the Straits Settlements. There is a good harbour called Port Albion or Port Refuge on Cocos-Keeling, but none at all on North Keeling. The climate is healthy, the sea breezes considerably tempering the power of the tropical sun. On Cocos-Keeling is the cable-station of the Eastern Telegraph Company, which is connected by submarine {37} cable to Perth (Australia), Java Head, and the island of Rodriguez, about 1700 miles away.

To the east of Cocos-Keeling, in latitude 10° 25′ South and longitude 105° 42′ East, lies Christmas Island, an uninhabited coral rock of irregular shape, ten miles across at its widest part. It is partly covered by vegetation, which depends on dew and rain for life, since there is not a drop of water on the island. The landing-party of H.M.S. *Egeria* which spent a few days there in September 1887 reported that it was overrun with land-crabs by day and rats by night. Along the cliffs are caverns occupied by countless bats. The map of the island is taken from the survey made by the *Egeria* expedition, and the figures refer to the elevation of two of the peaks on the island, including the highest.



CHRISTMAS ISLAND
Taken from a survey by H.M.S. *Egeria*

On the high submarine ridge running north and south between the meridians 70 and 75—that is, approximately straight up and down the northern Indian Ocean—are the three archipelagos known as the Laccadive, Maldive, and Chagos groups. The Laccadives, the northernmost group, are situated off the Malabar coast opposite Calicut, and are supposed to get their name from *laksha dwipa*, “the hundred islands,” a romantic exaggeration, since there are but thirteen islands, only eight of which are inhabited. {38} The original *laksha dwipa* were very probably intended to include the Maldive Islands. The inhabitants, of whom there are something like ten thousand, are of mixed Hindu and Arab descent. The language is Malayalam written in Arabic, and among the men reading and writing are surprisingly

common. Of the industrious population the men are chiefly occupied in boat-building, while the women weave and make coir. None of the islands is more than a mile across, and they lie so low that from a short distance the coconut palms appear to be rising straight from the sea. The first mention of them can be traced as far back as 1030. Vasco da Gama discovered them on his voyage to Calicut in 1498, and his countrymen later built forts there. In 1545 the natives brought off a successful rebellion and drove the Portuguese out. The islands were sequestrated by Great Britain in 1877.

South of the Laccadives is the group of seventeen atolls and an enormous number of smaller islands forming together the Maldive group. No less than three hundred of these are inhabited. From 1518 onward for the next hundred years the Portuguese attempted to impose a harsh rule over the natives, which was sullenly endured until they were granted protection by the rulers of Ceylon. This 'protection' has existed at least nominally ever since. The population is over 30,000, all being Mohammedans of mixed Arab, Indian, Cingalese, and Malaysian strain. Like their northern neighbours of the Laccadives, they are intelligent and industrious as farmers, boat-builders, and weavers, and as exporters of coconuts, copra, dried bonito, coir, and tortoise-shell. Many of their men come in touch with the world, for many Maldavians are found among the Lascar crews of the P. and O. and other steamship lines. Minikoi atoll, one of the group, situated as it is in the steamer track between India and Africa, has been the graveyard of many ships. Numerous wrecks lie among the reefs of this atoll as grim reminders of past tragedies. {39}

The last of this string of atolls is the Chagos Archipelago, with a total land area of seventy-six square miles and a population of approximately 1000 people. These are all found on Diego Garcia, the only inhabited island of the group. The German cruiser *Emden* called here while raiding the Indian Ocean during the early months of the War, and her officers were made welcome by the English residents, who did not know that there was a war on—a significant comment on the isolation of this lonely isle. It measures thirteen by six miles, and possesses in its lagoon one of the finest natural harbours in the world. It is under the control of the Governor of Mauritius, and is in regular steamship communication with the latter island.

To the west and south-west of the Chagos Archipelago lie a number of islands whose history is intimately associated with pirates and the wrecks of East Indiamen. There are the Seychelles, the Comoros, Mauritius, Réunion, Rodriguez, and a number of isolated islets and reefs that still can make life wretched for mariners in foggy weather. The Seychelles, which lie almost due west of Chagos and consist of forty-five islands and a large number of scattered rocks, were discovered by the Portuguese as early as 1502. From

remote times they were a rendezvous for pirates, first Arab and later European corsairs. The group is named after Moreau de Séchelles, one-time Finance Minister to Louis XV, for at that time the islands belonged to France. They were ceded to Great Britain in 1814 by the Treaty of Paris, but had actually been taken by British naval forces during the French Revolution some years before. The Seychelles Archipelago includes a large number of outlying islands, the Cosmoledos, Amirante, and Aldabra, which together make a total of something like ninety islands, all under British dominion. Mahé, the largest island, is named after Mahé de la Bourdonnais, the famous governor of the Ile de France (Mauritius), and is {40} seventeen miles long by seven broad. All the rest of the group are considerably smaller. These islands, lying as they do within the tropics, are trebly fortunate, inasmuch as they are of granite and therefore non-volcanic, they have a healthy and equable climate, and, thirdly, they lie just beyond the outermost track of the cyclones which devastate Mauritius and Rodriguez to the south. For islands lying so close to the equator they are remarkably free from fever and tropical complaints. This immunity is largely due to the purifying breezes from the ocean. Like St Helena, they have been the place of exile for deposed monarchs. In 1897 the dusky King Prempeh of Ashanti was transported to the Seychelles, where he would be beyond the power of doing further harm.[3] Other Ethiopian notabilities have also shared this dubious distinction of exile in these islands. Whatever else they might have to complain of, they could not reasonably find fault with the climate, which must be delightful after the tropical heat of Uganda and Ashanti.

The present inhabitants of the archipelago are made up of many races, the French and British representing the white race. Under the original French suzerainty the islands were colonized by creoles, but there has been since a large influx of negroes, Indians, and Chinese. Though a British colony the white population is overwhelmingly French. At the time of the British conquest the local governor was a Frenchman, Monsieur de Quincy. He had become administrator in 1789 under the French monarchy, held his office during the Republic, under Napoleon I, and finally under British rule. A native of Paris, he went out to the islands in early manhood, and governed there for thirty-eight years. He died in 1827, and his ornate tomb stands in the Government House garden at Mahé. Though a British Crown Colony, the {41} common language is not English but a creole patois. English has to be acquired as a foreign language, though there is a Carnegie Library in Mahé, and the officials are English.

Due north of the Seychelles, off Cape Guardafui, at the entrance to the Gulf of Aden, is the large island of Sokotra, belonging to Great Britain. It is seventy-two miles long by about twenty-two miles broad, rising in its centre to mountains 5000 feet high. Its physical character, like that of Arabia, is sandy, dry, hot, and unsuitable for most forms of vegetation. In areas near the coast the date and other palms are cultivated. The climate, which is rainless from October to May, is unhealthy for white men.

{42}

The inhabitants are chiefly Arabs, though many are of mixed negro and Indian blood. In the mountains live a strange, mysterious race of tall, straight-nosed, light-skinned people who are believed to be the original dwellers on the island. Sokotra was known to the Greeks and Romans, and probably to the Egyptians. As explained in the next chapter, the Portuguese seized it as early as 1507, but Great Britain acquired it at the time of the opening of the Suez Canal.

At the northern entrance to the Mozambique Channel, due west of the northern end of Madagascar, lie the Comoro Islands, which so frequently figured in past wars with France, the history of pirates, and tales of shipwreck. Johanna, one of the four largest islands in the group, was in the heyday of piracy the rendezvous of large companies of Indian Ocean freebooters, and it is practically certain that buried under its sands and beneath the palm-groves are many hoards of forgotten treasure.

The four largest islands are Great Comoro, Anjuan, or Johanna, Mayotta, and Moheli, with a total population of approximately 100,000. The native population, ruled by a few hundred French settlers, is of mixed Malagasy, Arab, and negro stock, the greater part of whom are Mohammedan. The islands came under French influence in 1841, when Mayotta was ceded by treaty to France. It was not, however, until 1886 that the other three islands came under French protection. A coaling base for the French Navy has been established there, and a regular service of steamers keeps the islanders in touch with the rest of the world. Unlike the Seychelles, the Comoro group is volcanic. On Great Comoro rises the active volcano Kartola (8500 feet), which at intervals of years erupts to remind the inhabitants that it is still a potential menace. The islands appear to lie beyond the path of the cyclones which devastate the Mauritius group, and the climate resembles that of the Seychelles in being comparatively {43} mild and healthy for white men. The exports are coconut, rice, coffee, sugar, vanilla, maize, sweet potatoes, and tropical fruits.

Madagascar is the largest island in the Indian Ocean, and the third largest island in the world. It has been a colony of France since 1896, previous to which it had been a French protectorate. Its nearest point to the coast of Africa is about 250 miles distant. It is at its greatest length 995 miles long, and has an average width of 250 miles. In shape it has been likened to a slipper or a shoe with its toe pointing to the north. Its eastern coastline is extraordinarily straight and free from indentations, and for about 650 miles it runs like a wall, and is therefore one of the longest stretches of straight coastline in the world. On its north-western side high plateaux top the mountainous coast, which is broken up by a large number of inlets forming natural harbours. The island is mountainous with high plateaux for its entire length, many of its higher peaks being extinct volcanoes. One of these is named by the natives *Tsi-afa-javona*, which means “That which the mists cannot climb.” The highest peak has an elevation of just under 9500 feet. Though there are no longer any active volcanoes on the island, it must have in past ages been made unfit for the abode of any living creatures by the fire-belching cones clustered in certain areas. As a reminder of its

volcanic origin the island is every now and then visited by small earthquakes, and hot springs are found in many regions. {44}

The coast on the northern half of the island is rocky and precipitous, but on the southern half is flat and low, sloping gently to the sea and being drained by a number of large rivers which have their source in the mountains behind. In the highlands the climate is generally temperate, even cold at times, and is therefore suitable for white men; but along the coast it is definitely tropical, and unhealthy for Europeans. Even the natives from the interior fall victims to malaria when coming down to the lowlands, especially those on the western side. There are only two seasons, the hot, rainy period between November and April and the cool, dry period for the rest of the year. On the eastern seaboard, however, rain falls throughout the year. The Indian Ocean cyclones just reach this side of the island, causing great havoc among the palm-groves and coastal towns.

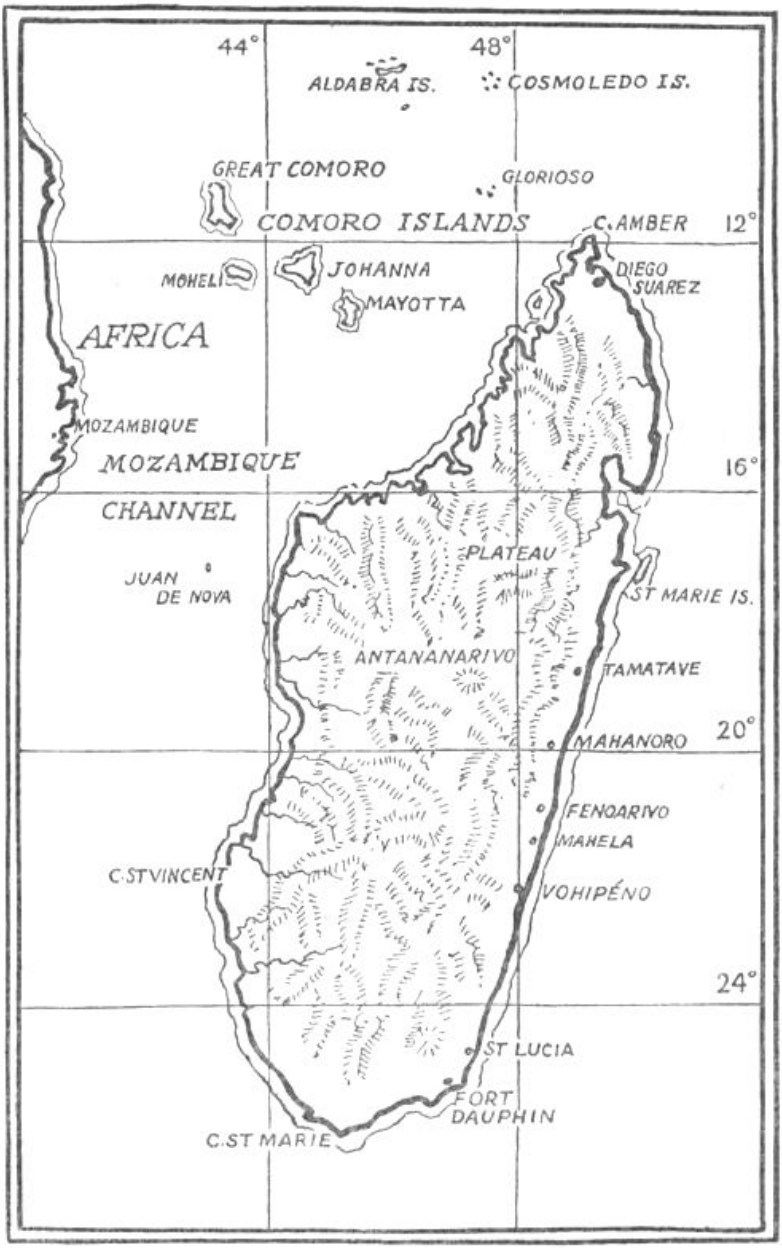
WOMAN OF THE HOVA, MADAGASCAR

A curious feature of Madagascar is that this island-continent possesses no large indigenous animals. On the other hand, it can boast of thirty species of the lemur family, and is also the home of that weird, goggle-eyed little creature the aye-aye—appropriately named, since it has the largest eyes for its size of any

animal known. There are also twenty-five different varieties of bats native to the country. The largest indigenous quadruped is the {45} civet-cat. The large herds of African hump-backed cattle which are found all over the country are not native, but are descended from cattle imported from Africa a couple of hundred years ago. Among other naturalized animals are sheep, goats, and swine. There are no poisonous snakes, but a few species of small boa-constrictor. There are crocodiles, tortoises, and lizards, and a great variety of tropical birds. The country produces rice, yams, maize, arrowroot, bananas, melons, pineapples, mangoes, oranges, vanilla, tobacco, sugar-cane, peaches, grapes, citrons, guavas, loquats, quinces, coffee, ginger, cotton, hemp, indigo, and most kinds of temperate zone fruit.

The natives of Madagascar are known as Malagasy, and are probably a mixture of the Indian negro and Polynesian races. In that part of the island facing the African continent they show strong traces of negro and Arab blood. The ruling chiefs, and, in fact, all the native ruling classes, are more Arab than Ethiopian, being descended probably from ancient Arab invaders who espoused native women.

Some of the tribes, especially those on the eastern side of the island, are comparatively light in colour. The lightest people are the Hova, the dominant tribe, who are both intellectually and socially on a higher level than any of the others. The total native population is probably over 3,000,000, but exact figures are difficult to obtain in a country which is even yet imperfectly explored. There are over 10,000 Europeans in the country. Though the native population is divided into many tribes, each having its own tribal customs, they share a common language. This is a spoken language only, and since there is no written language all tribal history, folk-lore, and legend have been handed down by word of mouth from remote times. The Malagasy tongue closely resembles both the Malay and Polynesian languages, which suggests that before recorded history the three races were one. In their customs and ways of living they also resemble the Malayan-Polynesian {46} races. Their clothing is of a more complex nature than that of the negro; they weave fine cloth, make matting and baskets, and are skilful workers in metal. They are, in this sense, more advanced than the Polynesian, who had no metals, and therefore knew nothing of metalworking. {47} Through his lack of metals the Polynesian had no fireproof pans, and was thus prevented from boiling any of his food.



MADAGASCAR

The Malagasy excel in making native jewellery of gold and silver filigree. They are also skilful at working in copper, brass, and iron, and, being clever imitators, adapt for their own use any European idea which seems to them worth while. In many ways their civilization is comparable to

that of Abyssinia and the Sudan. Until comparatively modern times the native social structure embraced three well-defined classes, something like that of feudal Europe—namely, the nobles, the freemen, and the slaves. Slavery was formally abolished there in 1895, though the British Government had caused those slaves imported from Africa to be set free as early as 1877.

By ancient custom the nobles were regarded by the people as almost sacred, and after death were worshipped as gods. Thus it was that when the shipwrecked crew of the Indiaman *Degrave*, cast ashore on Madagascar, were surrounded and threatened by hostile natives, by capturing and holding as hostages the chief of the district and his son they were able to keep at bay several thousand murderous savages. So long as they held captive the sacred person of the chief and his son they were safe from attack, for on no account would the natives risk injury to their rulers.

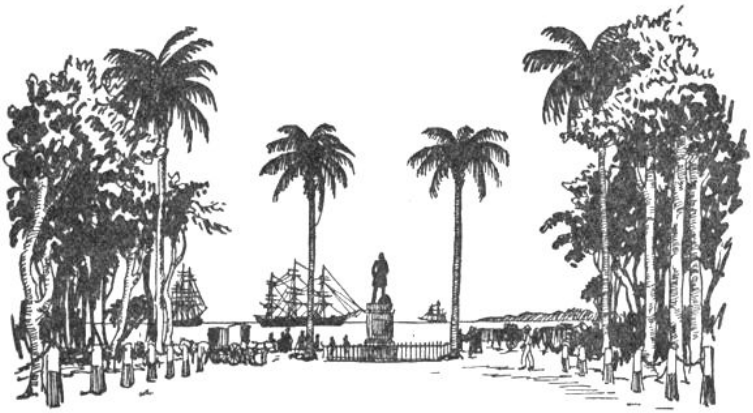
From the beginning of recorded history the Arabs have had considerable influence on the development of the country. For instance, not only are many Arabic words now part of the Malagasy tongue, such as the names for everyday things, but Arabic is used also for the days of the week, the months, and astronomical terms.

Though the country was known to the Arabs from remote times, the first European to describe it in any detail was Marco Polo, who calls it "Madeigascar." The Portuguese captain Diego Diaz accidentally discovered it in the summer {48} of 1500 when he was blown out of his course during a voyage into the Indian Ocean with Cabrat's squadron. This will be referred to again in the chapter on early adventurers. He gave to it the name Isle of St Lawrence, the day of its discovery being the Feast of St Lawrence. He, of course, had no idea of the great size of the land he had seen. Later most of the capes were given Portuguese names, a testimony to the ubiquity of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century. Portuguese names are everywhere on the coasts of Africa, Arabia, India, and Malaysia. The Portuguese, however, did not make any serious attempt to settle there, and for a century or so it remained something of an unknown country, except where Dutch and British explorers, not to mention bands of pirates, had established a *pied-à-terre* on the coast. In the eighteenth century the French attempted to set up military posts on the eastern side of the island, until they were driven out or massacred by the native tribes outraged by abuses and bad government.

In 1811 British forces occupied the town of Tamatave, and at the Treaty of Paris in 1814 French settlements in Madagascar were made over to the British; but as the century grew older the latter slowly relinquished their influence in favour of the French, until in 1890, in return for certain rights in

Zanzibar, the British Government agreed to recognize the island as a French protectorate. The natives did not take kindly to their French governors, and obstructed their policy and openly rebelled until 1896, when the French Government sent a large armed force under General Gallieni, who, after some trouble, suppressed the rebellion. Since then the island has been recognized as a French colony, and under the modern *régime* the natives have gradually settled down to the new conditions.

Five hundred and fifty miles east of Madagascar and 2300 miles from the Cape lies the island of Mauritius, written on old maps as the Ile de France, since it once {49} belonged to that country. Somewhat elliptical in shape, thirty-six miles long by twenty-two wide, it is of volcanic origin, mountainous, and noted for its lovely scenery. The romantic Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, who lived for a time on the island, gives a poetic picture of the country in the classical *Paul et Virginie*. Saint-Pierre lived there during the latter part of the eighteenth century, and were he to visit the island now he would find his romantic, primeval forests gone—razed to make space for sugar plantations. A curious feature of the island is the slow extinction of the indigenous flora before the importation of exotic plants. Only in the interior and less arable parts can the original flora be found. The sugar-cane, coconut, and date-palm are typical of the flora imported into the country. There are, of course, the usual tropical fruits and vegetables—avocado, tamarind, banana, pineapple, fig, guava, custard-apple, and mango—as well as a variety of European fruits and roots. The important wood-producing tree is the ebony. There are also ironwood, olive, and a number of other kinds of commoner varieties.



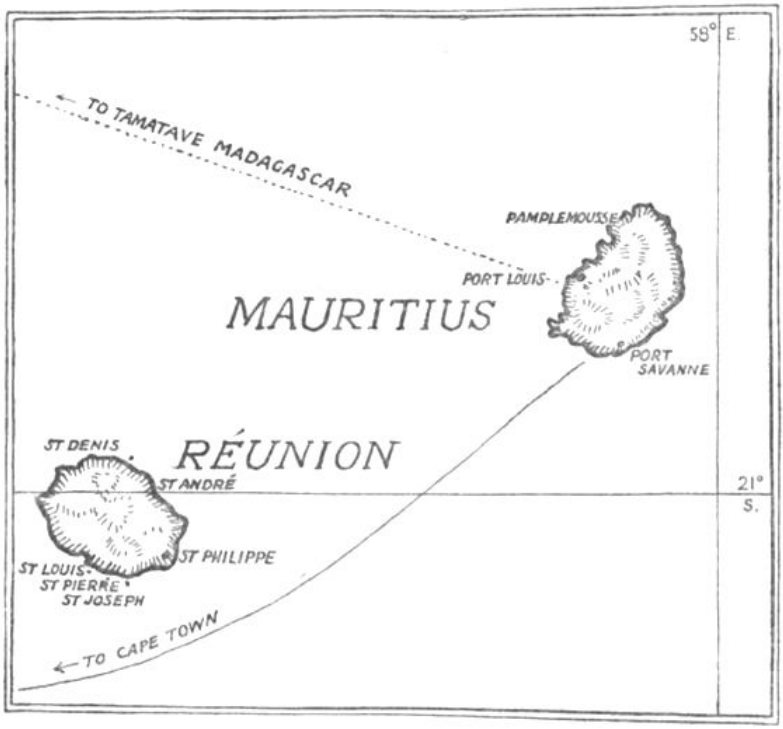
PORT LOUIS HARBOUR, MAURITIUS

It may not be generally known that Mauritius, in common with its neighbouring islands, was the home of {50} that humorous and now extinct bird the dodo. Being poorly equipped by nature with means of defence and unable to fly, it quickly fell a victim to the first settlers on the island.

Mauritius was inhabited when first discovered by the Portuguese navigator Mascarenhas in 1505. As the discoverers made no attempt to colonize the island, the Dutch took possession in 1598, naming it Mauritius after a great stadtholder of that name. The Portuguese had called it Ilha do Cerné, believing it to be the island mentioned by Pliny. The Dutch, after building a fort there, did nothing further to colonize the island, and finally abandoned it in 1710. Five years later the French arrived there, and held the country for fifty-two years, giving it the name Ile de France. The famous Mahé de la Bourdonnais was one of its governors. He was responsible for introducing much of the exotic flora into the country. During the wars between France and England the Honourable East India Company's ships suffered greatly from the French naval forces at Mauritius, until 1810, when the British captured the island. Possession was formally granted to Great Britain by the famous Treaty of Paris, by which France lost so much after the Revolution.

Though now a British Crown Colony, French remains the common language of the island and French customs are still followed by the majority. The population consists of Europeans, creoles, and those of Asiatic and African blood. The greater number of the inhabitants are Indians, who outnumber all the others by a proportion of over two to one. The island has the doubtful distinction of being one of the most densely populated regions in the world. The principal town is Port Louis, on the north-western seaboard.

The island of Rodriguez lies 344 sea miles east of Mauritius, of which it is a dependency. It is considerably smaller than Mauritius, with a length of thirteen miles {51} and an extreme breadth of six miles. Like the larger island, it lies within the area of the southern Indian Ocean cyclones, and frequently suffers from these storms during the north-west monsoon period. [4] In physical character it resembles the other islands of the Mascarene group, in that it is volcanic, hilly, and tropical.



It was first sighted by the Portuguese in 1645, but was not colonized until nearly half a century later, by a small party of French Huguenots, who, after remaining there two years, transferred themselves to Mauritius. As the Dutch Government had taken the Huguenots to Rodriguez the island nominally belonged to Holland, until it passed into the keeping of the French. They, in turn, were ousted by the British in 1810 during the Napoleonic wars. It has remained a British Crown Colony ever since. The {52} people are mainly negroid, descendants of slaves, but there is a small colony of Europeans, including officials and the employees of the Eastern Telegraph Company, which has an important cable-station on the island. French is the common language and Roman Catholicism the principal religion. The capital is Port Mathurin. Here one of the two boats of the *Trevessa* landed after a 1700-mile sea-passage across the Indian Ocean in 1923. The other boat landed at Mauritius.

The third island of the Mascarene group is Réunion, to which we have already referred. It is a French possession, and lies 400 miles directly south-east of Mauritius. It is somewhat larger than the latter isle, as its maximum length is forty-five miles and its breadth thirty-two miles. Opinions differ as to who first sighted it, but in any case it was a Portuguese, either Pereira in

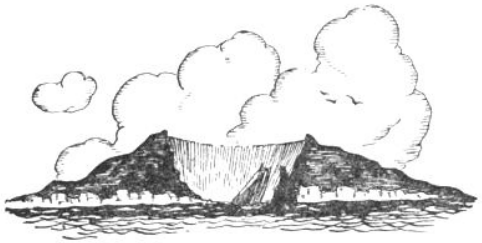
1507 or Mascarenhas in 1513. In 1638 it was claimed for France by one Captain Gaubert, and formally annexed by Louis XIII in 1643. To make doubly sure, it was again formally annexed by another representative of the King in 1649. During its history the island has possessed in turn four different names—first, Mascarenhas, then Bourbon, then, in 1793, Réunion. But on the enthronement of Napoleon I it was renamed Ile Bonaparte. It afterward reverted to Bourbon, and finally, in 1848, to Réunion once more. Some of the old brigade still prefer to call it Bourbon. For five years from 1810 to 1815 the island was in the possession of the British, but after that reverted to France.

Like the other Mascarene islands it suffers considerably from cyclones. In 1879 one of the worst cyclones in its history destroyed the greater part of its plantations, and during the north-west monsoon period the inhabitants may at any time expect a visitation from one of those devastating storms. The cyclones are irregular; several years may pass without one, then several may occur within a comparatively {53} short period. The inhabitants consist of negroes, Indians, other Asiatics, mulattoes, and creoles. The Indians are descended from coolies who were imported there when the negroes refused to work on the sugar plantations. The capital and principal town is St Denis, on the north coast.

On the eastern side of the Indian Ocean, in the Bay of Bengal, is the important Andaman Archipelago, a group of over two hundred islands, 600 miles from Calcutta and 120 miles from the nearest coast of Burma. South of the Andamans, between them and the vast island of Sumatra, lies the smaller group called the Nicobar Islands. It will be convenient to deal with the two groups separately. The entire archipelago strings out in a long chain running almost due north and south. In character the Andamans are hilly and thickly covered with tropical vegetation, and the climate, though tropical, is not unhealthy. It is a curious fact that, though lying within the influence of the dreaded cyclone area, these islands are seldom affected by cyclones. Thus their peculiar immunity is of the greatest value to observers sending out storm warnings to shipping in the Bay of Bengal. Another curious fact is that the natives are of the negroid type—the only negro race to be found in Asia. While around them are Hindus, Mongolians, and Malays, all more or less advanced in civilization, the Andamanese remain in almost as primitive a state as the aborigines of Australia. They have undoubtedly been cannibals in the past, though their modern descendants deny the imputation. There are, however, even in recent times, many authenticated instances of their massacring shipwrecked sailors. That this state of affairs no longer exists is due to the tact and wisdom of the British governors of the islands. While

now comparatively law-abiding in the Western sense of the word, they remain extremely primitive in their mode of life, and will no doubt continue so until the shape of their skulls improves through evolution. {54}

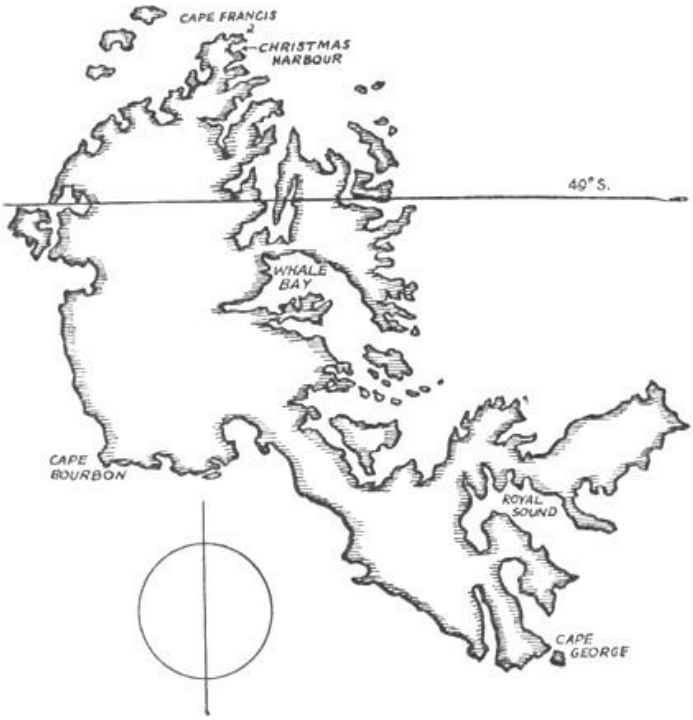
The smaller group, the Nicobar Islands, consists of seven uninhabited and twelve inhabited islands, and like the Andamans belongs to Great Britain. The natives are chiefly Malaysian, but of a low type. They are perforce friendly to their white conquerors, but are known to have been savage pirates and shipwreckers in past times. As the two groups lie well out into the Bay of Bengal, they were frequently the scene of tragic shipwrecks, one of which I refer to in detail in a later chapter.



ST PAUL ISLAND
From an old print.

So far all the islands under review have been more or less tropical, but now we come to those lonely isles which lie below 35° South—namely, Amsterdam, St Paul, Kerguelen, and the Crozets—most of them barren rocks inhabited by countless sea birds. The first-named is situated almost exactly midway between Cape Town and Tasmania, in latitude 37° 47′ South. It is an extinct volcano, nearly 3000 feet in elevation, and thus makes an impressive sight seen from the sea. It was first sighted by Antony van Diemen, the Dutch navigator, in 1633, and was given the name New Amsterdam. Possessing few attractions, it remained for centuries a no-man's land, until 1893, when it was annexed by France. A complete description of the island is given in the memoirs of Captain François Péron, who was marooned there from 1792 to 1795.

Sixty miles south of Amsterdam lies St Paul Island, which is not to be confused with St Paul's Rocks in the Atlantic. Its crater formation is clearly shown in the illustration taken from an old print. This print bears the inscription, "The Island of New Amsterdam," but this {55} appears to be a mistake, for the land-locked bay formed by the crater with its broken-down rim, which forms a natural entrance, answers the description of St Paul Island. I have therefore called the drawing St Paul Island. The crater forms a perfect natural harbour, though, because of its remoteness, few ships ever have need to use it.



KERGUELEN, OR THE ISLE OF DESOLATION

Kerguelen, or Desolation Island, like Amsterdam and St Paul, also belongs to France. Being several hundred miles farther south than the other two, and consequently nearer to the Antarctic Circle, it is a barren and forbidding land, only fit for a home for sea birds and sea elephants, which abound there in great numbers. Kerguelen is the world's most ragged island, as a glance at the map will show. Eighty-five miles long and indented by innumerable deep fiords, it has an unusually irregular coastline, which I believe has not even yet been completely explored. Along its entire length jagged, snow-covered peaks rise to heights up to 6000 feet, which offer from the sea a view {56} of inspiring magnificence. The evidence of fossilized trees shows the island to have been wooded at one time, but the present climate is inimical to vegetation. It is at all seasons rainy and cold, without drying winds. Lying within the line of the Antarctic drift, it attracts countless numbers of seals, sea leopards, sea elephants, penguins, and sea fowl. It was discovered by Yves Joseph de Kerguelen-Trémarec, a Breton noble, in 1772, while sailing in search of the rich southern continent rumoured to be in those latitudes. In his disappointment he called the land the Island of Desolation. Captain Cook visited it in 1776, and a century later the *Challenger*

expedition called there. In 1875 several independent scientific expeditions spent some time on the island to observe the transit of Venus. In 1901 a German expedition set up a meteorological station there, and in March 1908 the ketch *J. B. Charcot* landed a sealing expedition which spent over a year, including a rigorous winter, on the island. The full story of this expedition is given by the leader, Captain Raymond du Baty, in his book *Fifteen Thousand Miles in a Ketch*. South-east by south of Kerguelen and 260 miles distant is Heard Island, a twenty-five-mile long barren rock discovered in 1853 by Captain Heard in the American ship *Oriental*. It rises to 6000 feet, and is capped with eternal ice. In the following year a Captain McDonald discovered a smaller island twenty-six miles distant, which is named after its discoverer.

Lastly there are the famous Crozets, a cluster of islands which have been the graveyard of so many ill-fated ships. Here the cutter *Princess of Wales* went ashore in 1820, the *Adventure* five years later, and the clipper *Strathmore*[5] in 1875, not to mention a number of others. They are mountainous, excessively bleak, and uninhabited except by sea birds. Lying in 46°-47° South and 51° East, they {57} were first seen in 1772 by Marion Dufresne, though they have since been claimed by Great Britain. A better idea of the character of the Crozets can be got from the stories of people who have been cast ashore there than from these bare bones of facts.[6]

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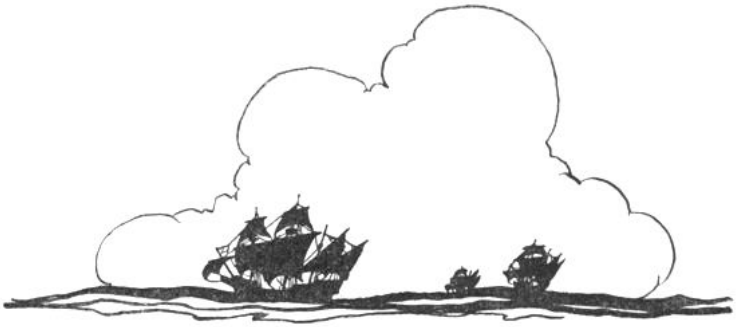
[3] Prempeh was in exile for twenty-seven years. In 1924 he was allowed to return to Africa. He died in May 1931.

[4] November to April.

[5] Story told in *Ships and Sailors*, by the present author.

[6] To the westward of the Crozets lie Prince Edward and Marion Islands, barren volcanic rocks, visited at rare intervals by sealers. H.M.S. *Challenger* called here in 1873, but owing to heavy weather was prevented from making a survey.



CHAPTER III

Early Adventurers

To Portugal must go the credit for being first into the Indian Ocean and for opening up trade with the mysterious Cathay and Cipangu of Marco Polo. Bartholomew Diaz, Vasco da Gama, Affonso d'Albuquerque, Tristan da Cunha, and Francisco d'Almeida led the way, but it was largely through the enthusiasm and industry of Prince Henry the Navigator in the field of scientific navigation that the voyages of these men were made possible.

PORTUGUESE SHIP OF 1530

Prince Henry was one of the sons of King John of Portugal. He was born in 1394, just about the time the mariner's compass was being introduced into Europe. His sole interest in life was to further the science of navigation. A crude form of magnetic compass had long since been known in China, and probably Arabia. Marco Polo had brought back accounts of all sorts of inventions unknown in Europe. In early manhood Henry led the successful crusade against Cueta, and his father rewarded him with the governorship

for life of the province of Algarves, the southernmost department of the kingdom. In this sleepy corner of Portugal Henry now had the leisure to indulge his dream of setting up a scientific college for the advancement of maritime discovery. At Sagres, on the very point of what is now known as Cape St Vincent, he rebuilt an old naval arsenal for his purpose. Here for more than forty years he and his enthusiastic supporters investigated, {59} {60} {61} studied, and improved the then existing knowledge of navigation and discovery. He aimed to increase his country's dominions, to make navigation a more certain science, to free it from the fetters of medieval ignorance and superstition, and to send further crusades to the southern shores of the Mediterranean. But his greatest ambition was to find a route to Marco Polo's land of Kublai Khan and Cipangu. The Italian had done most of his travelling overland, but Prince Henry felt that if India could be reached by sea a much larger expedition would be possible. No one had ever ventured so far on the sea, and Henry found himself up against the superstition of sailors who were afraid of the unknown dangers of distant seas. There were said to be monsters big enough to swallow ships whole—so large that trees grew on their backs, and that unfortunate mariners had landed on them mistaking them for islands, only to find their error when it was too late. But year after year, as Prince Henry's caracks ventured farther and farther down the African coast and returned unharmed, their crews grew bolder. They discovered that the old cartographers lied, that giant hands did not reach from out of the sea to drag down venturesome ships, and that fabulous monsters and seas which boiled did not exist. So they advanced to Cape Bojador, Cape Blanco, Cape Verde, and 'around the corner' to Sierra Leone. Beyond this they durst not venture, until their patron Henry calmed their fears and insisted that they should.

When they returned to Portugal with another degree of latitude added to their rude charts he would send them away again, bidding them travel farther, till half their {62} stores had been consumed. It was in 1420, during one of these voyages, that Zarko, one of his captains, discovered Madeira. Prince Henry died in 1460, before his great dream of a sea-route to the Far East had been realized. But the foundations of his work were well laid, and twenty-six years after his death Bartholomew Diaz, one of his disciples, rounded the Cape of Good Hope.[7] With two little caravels he sailed along the west coast of Africa, past the farthermost point reached by other navigators, by the mouth of the Orange River, continuing south until he came to the end of Africa. Rounding the Cape, he stood to the north past Algoa Bay to the Great Fish River. Here he was forced to turn back, his men refusing to advance farther. Though he did not reach India, his voyage had

proved of inestimable value. It showed the way to those who followed, and added the length of Africa to the scientific knowledge of the world.

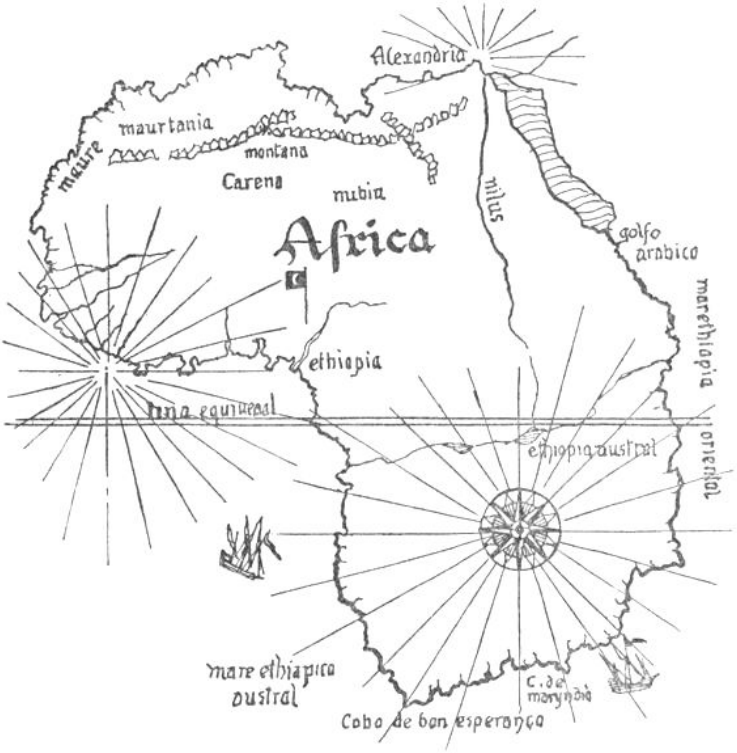
PRINCE HENRY

Meanwhile another Portuguese expedition sent out by the King was making important discoveries in the Indian Ocean by way of Abyssinia. The King had sent an embassy there to discover, if possible, the land of Prester John, that half-mythical country which so long exercised the medieval mind. This mission, under the joint leadership of Pedro de Covilham and Alphonso de Payva, travelled through Egypt to Arabia and down the Red Sea to Aden, where the leaders parted, Payva going to Abyssinia, where he was killed, and Covilham to India in an Arab ship to investigate reports he had heard of that country. He actually visited a number of places on the Malabar coast, including Goa and Calicut, and safely returned to Egypt. Here he heard of the death of Payva, but the news did not deter him from carrying out his original intention of visiting Abyssinia. He remained twenty years in that {63} country, but regularly sent letters to Portugal, and in them told how he had repeatedly heard that there was a route to India round the southern end of Africa. He had not, of course, received news of the voyage of Diaz.

The information given in these letters and the work done by Bartholomew Diaz were to result in the historic voyage of Vasco da Gama, the first man to sail to India from Europe *via* the Cape of Good Hope. Until the coming of the European explorers the Arabs were dominant in the Indian Ocean. The Isthmus of Suez, like the Isthmus of Panama in the west, was the ancient barrier to a quick passage to India by sea. Incidentally it is a curious freak of nature that both the great southern continents, South America and Africa, should have been connected to the northern continents by a narrow strip of land, which has now been divided by two great canals.

On the morning of July 5, 1497, five years after Columbus had discovered the West Indies, Vasco da Gama, his captains, and his men knelt in the great cathedral at Lisbon to hear the King (Manoel the Fortunate) pray for the success of the expedition about to set forth on the longest voyage yet

made. These rugged, illiterate men piously bowed their heads at the special Mass, while the priests chanted unintelligible litanies in Latin and the King prayed for a prosperous voyage and a safe return. A few hours later, with a total complement of sixty men, the expedition sailed in three small, open-decked, lateen-rigged ships on their adventurous voyage. After passing the Cape Verde Islands da Gama boldly sailed due south for three months without seeing land. Early in November they sighted what was probably the island of St Helena. After going ashore there and examining the country da Gama continued to sail south.



A MAP OF AFRICA AT THE TIME OF VASCO DA GAMA
Adapted from the chart made by Juan de la Cosa in 1500.

By November 20 the Cape was rounded and the three battered little caracks entered the Indian Ocean. Keeping within sight of the coast, da Gama sailed cautiously along {64} the eastern seaboard of Africa until he reached the Arab town of Mozambique. He found the harbour full of queer-looking ships and native merchants carrying on a rich trade with India. Jealous of the strangers, these tried, by stratagem, to lure the Portuguese ashore, but the latter were too wily to be caught by such tricks, and left the

inhospitable place, taking with them a native pilot, who, one may be sure, would have received short shrift had he tried any treachery. Wherever da Gama stopped between Mozambique and Mombasa he met with an unfriendly reception. The whole coast seemed to be closed against him, and when at last he came to a place called Melinde he {65} was overjoyed to find himself graciously received by the local ruler. He left here, after many exchanges of courtesies, and with his holds well stocked with provisions and water, for the long passage across the sea to India. At Melinde he had found native Christians, from whom he obtained much valuable information concerning the mysterious land for which he was bound. At the beginning of August he left Melinde with the best pilot in those parts, an Indian, lent him by the native ruler.

On August 29, 1498, after a passage of twenty-three days, da Gama and his sailors reached the shores of India. He made the landfall at Calicut, on the Malabar coast, and his arrival was regarded by the natives as an omen of evil. Soothsayers announced that the time was approaching when the entire land of India would be ruled by a white emperor, who would do great harm to any who were not his friends. This prophecy had the temporary effect of causing the reigning prince of Calicut to receive the strangers with friendly gestures. This friendliness was no doubt prompted partly by the discovery that the foreign ships were loaded with attractive merchandise. At any rate, the prince sent the Portuguese visitors presents of provisions in the shape of coconuts, pigs, and fowls, adding many {66} protestations of friendliness and of willingness to carry on trade with the King of Portugal. Da Gama replied to these amiable overtures by landing with twelve of his most important men and presenting the prince with gifts of cloth, velvet, silk, Flemish knives, metal ewers, plates, and other presents of a sort unknown in India. The Arab merchants, seeing all this and fearing to lose their

DA GAMA

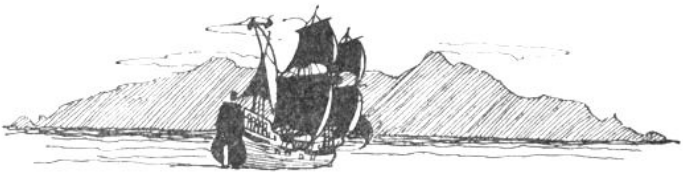
privileges, plotted to poison the prince's mind against the Portuguese. This they did with such success that da Gama had to leave the port with his ships half laden, and his spirit vowing a terrible vengeance on the prince of Calicut.

At Cannanore, a port along the coast farther northward, da Gama was again hospitably received, and after filling his holds with Indian products he departed on the long return journey to Europe. The little ships reached Lisbon after an absence of two years and eight months, and the city at once declared a holiday in honour of their arrival. There followed a period of national festivities, and honours were showered upon the grim and weather-beaten leader. He received titles of nobility, and was appointed, in the quaint phraseology of the time, "Admiral of the Indies."

Unfortunately for Portugal the reigning monarch, Manoel, was not a man distinguished for his virtues. Two and a half years after da Gama's return the King sent a punitive expedition under Admiral Pedro Cabral to chastise the Zamorin[8] of Calicut for his want of hospitality to da Gama. The Zamorin found himself in a dilemma. He was anxious to mollify the Portuguese, but was equally anxious to keep on good terms with the Mecca traders in the harbour. The latter, incensed against the white men, and impatient with the Zamorin's vacillation, took the matter into their own hands by massacring a number of Portuguese who were then ashore. In retaliation Cabral bombarded Calicut and sank the Arab craft in the harbour. {67} He left the town half in ruins, and sailed away to Cochin to open trading-ports there.

To avenge this insult Manoel ordered a second punitive expedition to set out for Calicut. The command was transferred to da Gama, after first being given to Cabral. The fleet comprised ten large armed caravels and five smaller, lateen-rigged craft. When da Gama arrived off Calicut, after first calling to pay his respects to the ruler of Cannanore, he proceeded to redeem, with great barbarism, his terrible oath of vengeance. Those were barbarous times, and da Gama was a hard man. He showed little mercy to the hapless town. While bombarding it there arrived a fleet of native vessels, which he attacked and plundered, after putting many of their crews to death. With his desire for vengeance satisfied, the implacable sailor departed with his squadron for Cochin,[9] where he was received so hospitably that he decided to establish a permanent factory there. In 1503 he returned to Portugal, where fresh honours were heaped upon him. For twenty-one years he remained at home, and then, in 1524, when he was growing old, he was appointed Viceroy of Portuguese India. But the appointment had come too late, for in the following year he died at the trading-station he had set up in Cochin China on his previous voyage.

Vasco da Gama did more for Portugal than all her kings put together. Through his achievements Portugal became the dominant power in the Indian Ocean and one of the richest and most powerful nations in Christendom. The success of his hazardous voyages aroused in the whole civilized world envy of and respect for that small country on the Iberian peninsula. For a hundred years the Portuguese were supreme in Africa, the Indies, and China. They built forts and trading-posts down the west coast of Africa, round the Cape of Good Hope, and up the east coast to Arabia—Ormuz in the Persian Gulf, Goa on the {68} Malabar coast of India, Malacca in Malaysia, and, finally, Cochin China. Fifty years after da Gama had first landed on Indian soil Lisbon, by virtue of her new-found trade with that country, had become the richest city in Europe. Portugal and Spain, through their interests in the East and West respectively, became the two greatest Powers in the world. Until the coming of da Gama the Arabs monopolized the trade of the Indian Ocean. Now the larger part of it was diverted to Europe, where the marvellous commodities of India—silks, ivories, brass work, carved woods, rugs, jewels, and spices—found ready purchasers at satisfactory profits. A shipload of Indian merchandise was worth a large fortune to its owners. Every person of culture in Europe was eager to obtain some of the marvels from the Indies to lighten the sombre surroundings of their monastic homes. I am not suggesting that Europeans knew nothing of Eastern luxuries before the Portuguese had brought their cargoes from India. But the opening up of trade by the Portuguese made these luxuries accessible to the world at large. Hitherto they had only been enjoyed by the privileged few. For centuries Arab trading dhows brought to the head of the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea merchandise from India which they sold to Venetian traders, who brought it to Europe and sold it at fabulous profits to those who could afford to pay their prices.



Da Gama, a sailor and not an empire-builder, had shown the way to India. He died before Portugal's greatness had become an accomplished fact. It remained to those who followed to enlarge and consolidate the discoveries {69} and conquests already made. In the year 1503 the King decided to send his chief equerry, Affonso d'Albuquerque, to investigate the position in

India and to report what he learned. In selecting d'Albuquerque the King had made a wise choice. As subsequent events showed, no one could have been better fitted for the difficult *rôle* he was expected to take—that of conqueror and ambassador.

AFFONSO D'ALBUQUERQUE

D'Albuquerque was perhaps the greatest man that ever came out of Portugal. A born leader and a patriot, he put the welfare of Portugal before all personal considerations, and thereby sacrificed opportunities for personal enrichment that would have been grasped by lesser men. His commission authorized him to take steps to consolidate the Portuguese advantages already gained in the East. With four ships he sailed direct to Cochin, where he erected defensive works and garrisoned the trading-factory established there. He had studied the chart of the Indian Ocean, and realized that before any serious efforts could be made to open up trade with the Indies the implacable Arab interference must be stopped. Arab trade with India must be cut off ruthlessly, since the Arabs, in drawing the sword first, had forfeited their rights to all consideration. With the Arabs removed, the next step would be to take over their trade.

D'Albuquerque finished the fortification of the trading-posts, and with his ships loaded deep with merchandise returned to Lisbon to submit his report to the King. Manoel had already appointed a viceroy of the Indian posts in the person of Francisco d'Almeida, a man who was destined to share the honours with d'Albuquerque in the development of Portuguese dominions in the East. {70} Meanwhile d'Albuquerque arrived in Lisbon, where he submitted his reports to the King and unfolded his plan of Portuguese conquest. Manoel was in complete agreement with the scheme, and lost no time in collecting a fleet of fourteen sail, which he dispatched under the joint command of d'Albuquerque and the admiral, Tristan da Cunha, from the latter of whom the group of islands in the South Atlantic, 1500 miles south of St Helena, get their name. D'Albuquerque had six ships and da Cunha the remaining eight. They left Portugal in 1506 with instructions to proceed up the East African coast, collect tribute from the Arabs, and establish a fort at the best harbour in the island of Sokotra at the mouth of the Gulf of Aden, after which they should separate, da Cunha to

Cochin to collect the annual tribute, and d'Albuquerque to the Persian Gulf to take the town of Ormuz and to levy tribute. What a revenge for the petty crime at Calicut!

It was on this voyage while sailing up the African coast that the enormous island of Madagascar was accidentally discovered by one of the ships getting blown out of her course. Arriving off Sokotra, the invaders found the principal harbour already dominated by a fort, which, however, was taken by assault after a short engagement. Here the two squadrons separated, leaving behind a garrison in the occupied fortress. D'Albuquerque sailed northward to Ormuz, da Cunha to India and Cochin.

The capture of Ormuz reads like a story from Baron Munchausen. D'Albuquerque, with six ships and 450 officers and men, successfully attacked a fleet of 260 Arab vessels. Arriving off Ormuz, he found this huge fleet in the harbour and an army of 15,000 men lining the shores of the town. It seemed madness to attack such a force, and many of d'Albuquerque's officers advised against the attempt. But years of fighting and intercourse with the Arabs had taught him to recognize their racial weakness, the instability of their character, and their superstitious {71} awe of what they could not understand. To attempt a landing, a handful of men against 15,000, would have meant certain defeat for the invaders, and d'Albuquerque had no intention of committing such folly; but he knew that in scientific warfare, as opposed to mere hand-to-hand fighting, the white men had all the advantages. Even so, this magnificent belief in himself hardly justified d'Albuquerque's subsequent tactics. Never in the history of naval warfare has there been a better example of supreme arrogance and daring. D'Albuquerque, cool and audacious, sailed straight into the crowded harbour among the enormous fleet of the foe without a shot being fired. The Arab fleet could have destroyed him, but instead they remained dumb, almost paralysed with astonishment and possibly superstitious awe. And here, under the muzzles of hundreds of Arab guns, d'Albuquerque sent a message ashore demanding tribute from the Sultan. This person, seeing his ships' guns silent, agreed to the audacious invader's demands, but in true Oriental style haggled over the details for three days. Meantime fifty more Arab vessels came into the harbour, increasing this fleet to over 300 sail, and filling the already crowded harbour to such an extent that the six caravels were surrounded by the enemy. Naturally the Portuguese became uneasy at the turn of events, especially as the muzzles of the nearest Arab mortars were trained directly on the caravels. The Sultan still haggled, and d'Albuquerque saw that he must act at once before the Arabs came to their senses. To show any sign of weakness would have been fatal; he would attempt a bluff.

In this forlorn hope d'Albuquerque ordered his gunners to fire at point-blank range into the nearest Arab ships. Had the Arabs replied, the six caravels would have been annihilated, but their guns remained silent, and d'Albuquerque, with incredible audacity, sent men in the few boats he possessed to take the nearest ships by boarding. {72} At the approach of the Portuguese the Arabs went mad with terror, and sprang into the water in an attempt to gain the beach. The attacking Portuguese became drunk with a lust for blood, and went in among the swimmers, killing and killing until the harbour grew red with their blood. After this the six caravels sailed through the Arab fleet, firing on the ships and on the men in the water until it became a hideous massacre of terror-stricken natives. The reaction, after so many anxious days, had changed the Portuguese into devils, and though the battle of Ormuz showed d'Albuquerque as a leader of unexcelled daring, it also cast a stain upon Portuguese civilization.

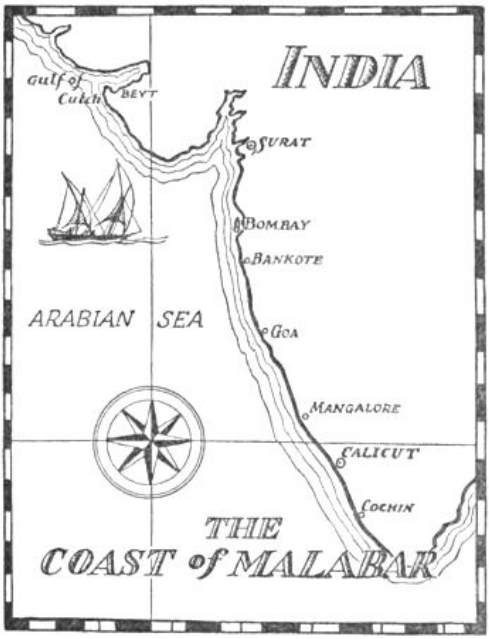
After the battle, or rather massacre, the Sultan sent a message of unconditional surrender, but as three of d'Albuquerque's ships now deserted him to seek treasure in India, and the fifteen thousand men were still waiting to repel any attempt to land, the Sultan's surrender was not of much practical use. Afloat d'Albuquerque was invincible, but it was plain that ashore he would have stood no chance at all. So he departed for Sokotra, only to have a fourth ship desert him. With his remaining two vessels he was joined at Sokotra by three ships newly arrived from Lisbon.

All this while d'Almeida had been having his own adventures. Coming upon an overwhelming number of Egyptian fighting-ships, a battle followed which resulted in the loss of six Portuguese vessels and d'Almeida's own sailor son, who was killed in action. The admiral was forced to retire with the two remaining vessels of his original squadron. He lived, however, to have the satisfaction of meeting the Egyptians again and avenging his former defeat with compound interest. He himself was killed at the Cape of Good Hope during an attempt to rescue some of his own men from the natives when on the voyage home to Portugal. D'Albuquerque and d'Almeida, both strong men of high purpose and great {73} courage, had much in common. But while d'Almeida was dictatorial, impatient, high-handed, and lacking interest in territorial expansion, d'Albuquerque was an idealist, equally brave and audacious, but broader of vision, and more of a diplomat in dealing with men. But both put the welfare of Portugal before their own interests—a not too common virtue in days of wholesale corruption in high places.

After d'Almeida's departure and death his companion in arms continued to make his presence felt along the Indian Ocean seaboards. In 1509 he returned to reduce Ormuz. In the following year he made an unsuccessful

attempt on Calicut. The name Calicut seemed to stick in the royal gizzard, for d'Albuquerque was ordered by a messenger sent out from the King to make an attack on the place by land. It was a stupid blunder on the King's part, and was prompted by no higher motive than lust for revenge. This unjustifiable attack on the city taught the Portuguese that the Oriental was more dangerous on land than on the water, and proved costly to the attackers. It also taught the Oriental that the invader was only invincible on the water, a revelation that considerably heartened him. The reverse was damaging to the Portuguese prestige, and took years of conquest to live down.

The invader withdrew from Calicut, leaving a great number of dead behind, and d'Albuquerque himself was seriously wounded. After refitting, the squadron sailed up the coast to Goa, which it attacked, with the idea of making it the capital of Portuguese India. The first attempt failed, but after withdrawing and reorganizing his forces d'Albuquerque again attacked the town, and was this time successful. The admiral was all the time hampered by the whims of the weak and unstable Manoel far away in Lisbon.



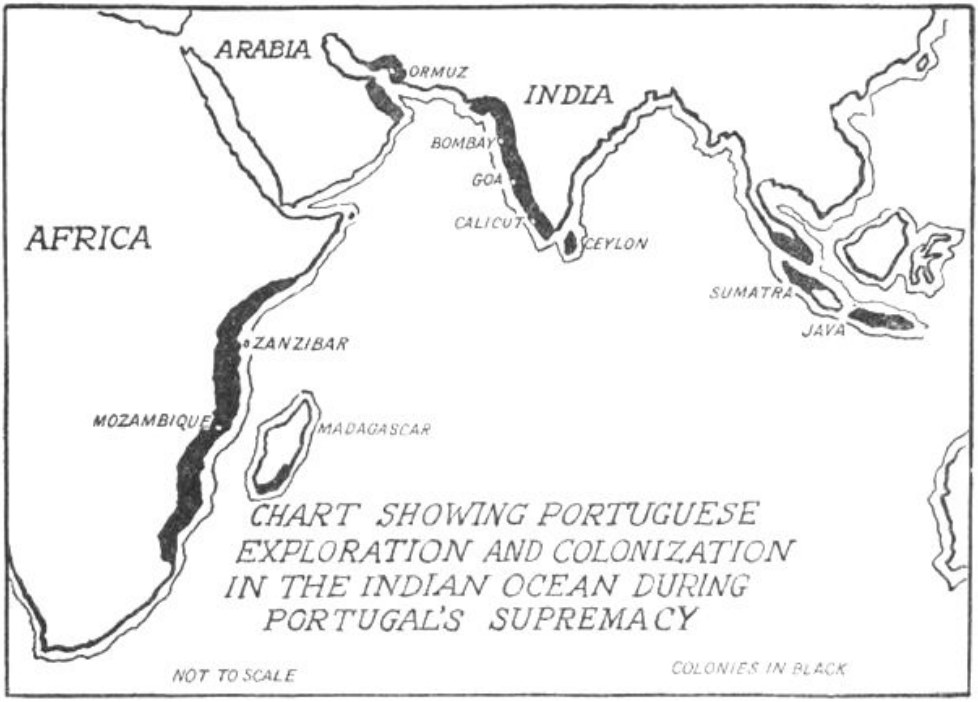
The King about this time took it into his head that he did not want to extend his dominion in the East. This {74} decision was not prompted by consideration for native feeling, but from a growing uneasiness that the expense of administration in the East would outweigh the profits accruing from increased trade. But in this decision he was dissuaded from taking any action, and things went on as before, with the redoubtable old admiral establishing trading-posts and setting up small garrisons all over the Indies. During many maritime expeditions he had some reverses, but for the most part he emerged victorious. One of his major exploits at this time was the capture of Malacca. He had received word that the Sultan of Malacca had caused to be massacred all the Portuguese traders there. When d'Albuquerque arrived off the town he hesitated to bombard such a fine harbour front, wishing, as he said, to keep it intact for commercial

exploitation. Therefore he decided upon the risky plan of taking the town by a land assault, but, profiting by the Calicut failure, he landed his men on the coast beyond the town and delivered a flanking attack. By bombarding it with naval guns on the flank and in the rear he was soon in a position to dictate terms. The Sultan fled to the jungle, and the conquerors marched through the deserted streets of the town. In keeping with his customary policy d'Albuquerque at once consolidated his position by building a citadel and by leaving a garrison. To this day there may be seen {75} hidden in the coastal forests of Malabar and parts of East Africa the crumbling ruins of d'Albuquerque's stone citadels, testifying to the amazing enterprise of a single man. His last great adventure was the assault and capture of an enormous Arab fleet. He was getting an old man, but to the end he went on fighting, establishing trading-posts, and extending Portuguese influence in the Indies.

It was inevitable that d'Albuquerque should have enemies, who from jealousy worked to influence the mind of the weak King against him. The time came when the old admiral, whose name was feared and held in awe wherever he went, received the crushing intelligence that he was to be succeeded by one Lopes Suarez. The King's ingratitude so affected the old sailor that he fell into a state of great depression, and a few days later he died. He was buried at Goa, the town which had been so closely associated with his career in the East. He was mourned, even by the Hindus, as a brave and generous enemy.

The death of Affonso d'Albuquerque brought to an end a definite chapter in the history of European activities in the Indian Ocean. But the great admiral had blazed a trail which others might follow. Monuments to his genius are widely scattered in the East, especially at Goa, which still flies the flag of Portugal. For almost exactly a hundred years after da Gama entered the Indian Ocean his countrymen were the only Europeans to venture into those waters. While Spain was busy making conquests in the West, Portugal had everything her own way in the East. The rest of Europe looked on with a curiously apathetic indifference to the rich Portuguese monopoly in India. A mere handful of ships, each smaller than a Margate steamer and manned by a few hundred men, virtually controlled the vast area of the Indian Ocean. The wonder of it is that the authorities at Lisbon did not make greater use than they did of the hundred years' immunity from European interference. Yet at the end of {76} a century of domination all they had to show were a few islands and ports, most of which they relinquished when the more virile Nordic aggressors arrived in the East. The first to come after the hundred years of unchallenged possession were the

Dutch, followed quickly by the English, who, through the powers of the East India Company, were soon to oust all serious rivals.



Portugal's supremacy began to decline in 1580, when she joined fortunes with Spain and embarked upon a long series of disastrous wars which bled her of man power and money, and diverted her attentions from her young colonies in the East. With her ships and men engaged in Europe, the Portuguese settlements in India were left to the doubtful mercies of native rulers and the Nordic invaders, until little by little the whole fabric built up by d'Albuquerque began to disintegrate. The Portuguese wars had brought to an end the importation of spices and other luxuries to which Europeans had grown accustomed. It had become increasingly difficult to supply European markets with {77} these commodities, with the result that those merchants who had been Portugal's biggest customers decided to send their own ships to obtain the merchandise they could no longer buy in Europe. In the chapter dealing with the East India Company we shall see how the English merchants inaugurated the trade between India and England, and how from a small beginning developed the greatest private company the world has ever known—the Honourable East India Company, which is directly responsible for Britain's present suzerainty in India.

It is interesting to think how far-reaching was the effect of the defeat of the Spanish Armada. It was no mere local victory affecting the fate of England. It was to change the whole course of world events. Until the passing of the Great Armada the Iberian peoples were the masters of the Western, and much of the Eastern, world. They were supreme in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. They controlled the greater part of the Americas, and, above all, the lion's share of the world's gold. With the defeat of the Armada this supremacy quickly declined. Had the Armada of Portugal and Spain triumphed, the United States might now be Spanish and India Portuguese. Some Iberian tongue would have been the world language, with England still a third-rate Power.

This chapter has so far been the history of Portuguese influence in the Indian Ocean. The early history of this ocean *is* Portuguese history. To these olive-skinned people, led by da Gama, d'Almeida, and d'Albuquerque, should go the credit as first-comers, but we have done with them. They had had their day, and their sun was already setting. The romantic, mercurial Latin was supplanted by the stolid Nordic people, and a new era began in the East. Perhaps the newcomers were not so lovable, but, on the other hand, they were not so cruel as the Latin pioneers. Their rule, though not always submitted to docilely, was usually tempered with mercy and justice, {78} and the native quickly learned to recognize a just man. Matters for the newcomers were not, let us say, so simple as taking over the keys of a new house. The Portuguese were still virile and powerful, and many battles took place both at sea and on land between the pioneers and the newcomers. At Malacca the Portuguese successfully fought the Dutch, while at Surat the English repelled a Portuguese attack. Holland sent out the Dutch admiral Coen, one of their most distinguished men, to take charge of their affairs in the East. It was he who founded the colony of Batavia.

Meanwhile the Dutch and the English had come to an amicable trade agreement, whereby the Dutch East India Company and the Honourable East India Company were to refrain from what virtually amounted to trespassing on each other's preserves. Portugal naturally resented these events, with the inevitable result of further clashes between armed squadrons. The Portuguese attacked English shipping in the Persian Gulf, and in retaliation the English captured d'Albuquerque's old fortress at Ormuz. All this time the East India Company was expanding and gaining the favour of the Moguls, the ruling princes of India. The history of the Indian Ocean and European influence in India was rapidly becoming synonymous with the history of the East India Company. Every Indiaman went armed like a man-of-war, for the Eastern seas were seldom free {79} from warring fleets and roving privateers, not to mention pirates. The Dutch and the

A RELIC OF THE PORTUGUESE ADVENTURERS

Portuguese were fighting; then it was Dutch against the English, until one's brain grows tired keeping track of the events. For a time the Dutch were in the ascendant. They took from the Portuguese Ceylon and all the ports and trading-stations on the Malabar coast south of Goa. This series of Portuguese reverses marked the end of their reign in the East Indies.

The story of the early venturers is ending. Their history has become a dreary record of wars, naval actions, strife, jealousy, and the total destruction of political tranquillity in the East. Despite the difficulties the East India Company continued to develop and prosper. It says something for the doggedness and courage of the English race that they carried on through these disastrous years when the Indiamen were harried by pirates and enemy privateers alike. Peace was not restored in the East until the early seventeen hundreds, when Great Britain, Holland, and Portugal (who still had a few holdings) formed a triple alliance for their mutual benefit. But how the spirit of d'Albuquerque must have cursed and sworn deep-sea oaths when it saw all that he had gained for his country gradually allowed to slip away through incompetence and corruption!

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[7] Diaz named it "Cabo dos Tormentos" (Cape of Storms), but King John II, with rosy dreams of Portuguese trade with the Indies, renamed it "Cabo de Bon Espèranca" (Cape of Good Hope).

[8] Sultan.

[9] Cochin China.

{80}

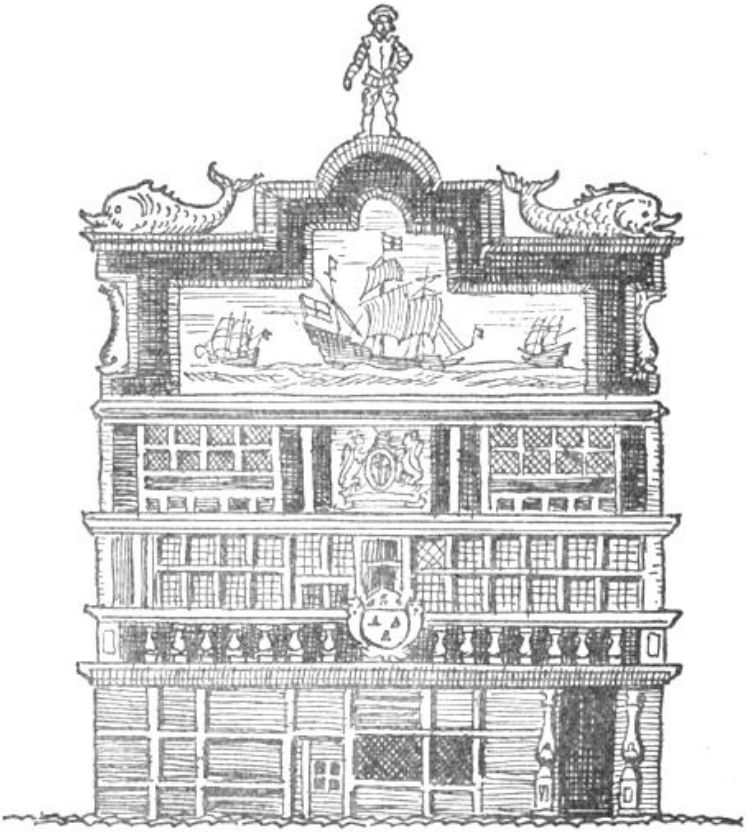
CHAPTER IV

The Honourable John Company

It is said that the first Englishman to set foot in India was one Thomas Stevens, who had sailed there in a Portuguese ship in 1579. But it was not until 1592 that the first English ships manned by English crews appeared off the Malabar coast. These were three small vessels under the command of James Lancaster, a merchant venturer, on a purely private trading voyage. Until then the Portuguese had had everything their own way in the Indian Ocean. Lancaster and his officers had been inspired to try their fortunes in India by the amazing treasure taken from the Portuguese East India caravel *Madre de Dios*, captured by the English the year before. When this vessel was brought into Dartmouth she was emptied of no less than 1600 tons of cargo, and for the first time the English people saw something of the wealth of India. There were silk carpets, precious stones, pearls, ivory, calicoes, silks, spices, and other goods to astonish the eyes of the people. The treasure was taken to London and there displayed. This dazzling exhibition of wealth from a country that was at that time a half-legendary land caused extraordinary excitement, and set every adventurer planning to sail eastward. Up till then no English had sailed farther toward India than the eastern end of the Mediterranean.

There existed a company called the Levant Company trading between English ports and Turkey, and its directors petitioned the Queen to have their charter extended to permit trade with India, the intention being to carry {81} their cargoes overland from Levantine ports. Owing to the difficulties of transport and of danger from wandering robbers, the business turned out to be so unsatisfactory that the scheme was abandoned. Then, in 1599, six

years after the Levant Company had obtained their charter, a group of merchants met in London to petition Elizabeth for permission to send ships to trade at ports in India. These gentlemen "prayed a monopoly" of this trade, but for some reason or other—possibly a caprice of Elizabeth herself—the petition was not at once granted. However, the royal assent was eventually given, the charter stating that the company would be permitted a monopoly of East Indian trade for a period of fifteen years. So began the greatest private monopoly in the history of the world. For that original fifteen years' charter was extended, and again extended, until it finally came to an end in 1834, after a reign of two hundred and thirty-five years. For over two hundred years the East India Company was the only company sending ships to India and carrying on a regular trade with that country. Its history was the history of the British in India. India and the East India Company were almost synonymous terms. During its long tenure it possessed itself of enormous areas of territory, established garrisons, dockyards, palaces, and offices; it maintained armies, and, in short, became a sort of private oligarchy. It had, of course, the direct patronage of the British Government, and when the monopoly was rescinded in 1834 it was but a short step to complete Government control.



OLD EAST INDIA HOUSE
From *Relics of the East India Company*, by William Briggs.

But to return to the beginning of the company. By the terms of the charter it was permitted to send "six good ships and six good pinnaces and five hundred mariners to guide and sail." Actually four vessels sailed, and this tiny fleet was under the command of the same James Lancaster who had already made one voyage to the Far East. With the pretentious title of General of the Fleet, and carrying letters from Queen Elizabeth "to divers Princes {82} of India," he set off in the *Red Dragon*,[10] a vessel of 600 tons. The other three were the *Hector*, 300 tons, the *Ascension*, and the *Susan*, each of 200 tons burden. There was also a store-ship of 130 tons named *Guest*. With a total complement of 480 men they sailed from Woolwich in February 1601, carrying a cargo of trade goods. They arrived at Table Bay in September, with half the crews down with scurvy. In November the ships rounded the Cape in a strong gale, and Madagascar was made by the middle of December. Here they stopped to refit and allow the sick men to rest and

recover. Departing from Madagascar early in March, they reached Sumatra in June. Here they were entertained by the Dutch settlers and merchants who were already established in the East {83} Indies. The Englishmen traded their goods and filled their ships' holds with over 1,000,000 pounds of pepper! As a diversion they followed the custom of that day and did a little profitable privateering. With their holds full they began the perilous return voyage, arriving in the Thames in September 1603. Spices were a luxury in Elizabethan England, and the 1,000,000 pounds of pepper found a ready market at a price which yielded such a satisfactory profit that Captain Lancaster returned to India in the following year. This expedition was equally profitable.

Meanwhile Elizabeth had died, and James I was on the throne. James was quick to see the advantages of opening a regular trade with India, and lent a sympathetic ear to the new merchant venturers. When Captain Keeling (who was to discover the islands which bear his name) equipped a third expedition the King gave him a letter to the Grand Mogul requesting that privileges should be granted the English traders. The Grand Mogul graciously acceded to the King's request, but later, regretting his friendly gesture, revoked all the privileges he had previously granted. But in spite of such obstacles these voyages were so profitable that before the original fifteen-year charter had expired the company petitioned King James for an extension. This extension was granted, and was afterward frequently renewed by the reigning monarch. The appearance of English ships in Indian and Asiatic waters was not a pleasant sight to the Portuguese already there, and the resulting jealousy and rivalry brought about constant feuds and sea actions, until the Portuguese withdrew in favour of the newcomers, the English and the Dutch.

The sixth voyage was made in 1609 by the *Trades Increase*, a new vessel of 1100 tons, the largest of her day. The King himself was present at the launching ceremony. This was at Deptford, the first shipyard of the East India Company. Although the official title of the corporation was "The United Company of Merchant Venturers of {84} England trading to the East Indies," it was generally known as the East India Company. The title "Honourable John Company" originated among those natives of India who, with a smattering of English, dubbed most white men 'John' and prefixed 'Honourable' either out of courtesy or from an undue bump of reverence. The Company,[11] which had so far chartered its ships, now decided to build its own. This move became necessary by the extortionate rates charged by the owners of the ships, who had taken advantage of the Company's prosperity to increase their charter rates. The first two vessels were the

Trades Increase and the *Peppercorn*, the latter being named presumably in gratitude to the plant that had proved so profitable to the traders. By the year 1621 the East India Company owned 10,000 tons of shipping and employed no less than 2500 seamen. The profits at this time were as high as 230 per cent. After a few years the dockyard at Deptford was abandoned in favour of a site on the north bank of the Thames at Blackwall. Ten acres of land was purchased, and in 1614 the first small dock was dug laboriously by pick and shovel and lined with rammed clay. The first ship to be built there was probably the *Dragon*.

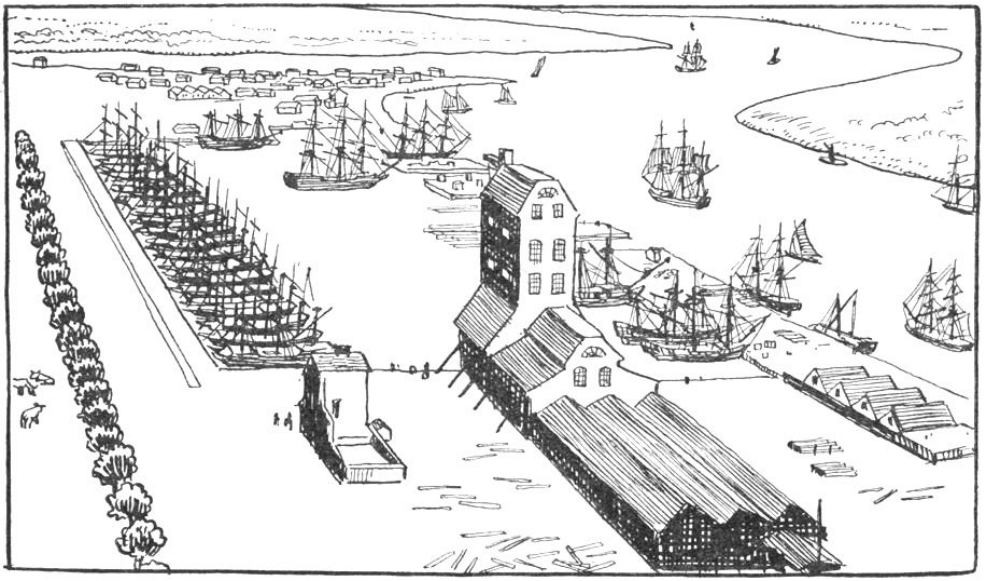
Blackwall is supposed to have received its name from the bank of black earth along that part of the river, and known to sailors as the Black Wall. It lay in a bend of the river between the Isle of Dogs and the river Lea, where the London borough of Poplar now stands. But the yard did not pay. The Civil War brought hard times, and the shipyard was put up for sale in November 1651. Six thousand pounds was asked, but there were no buyers. After a few months part of the yard was rented for twenty-one years at a rental of £200 a year to a Deptford shipwright named Johnson. Three years later Johnson bought the entire yard for £4350. Trade revived after the rebellion, and the new owner made a success of the Blackwall {85} Yard. He was a cousin of Phineas Pett, the famous Restoration shipbuilder. Johnson prospered mightily, and his second wife, Martha, Baroness Wentworth, was a lady of noble birth. His only child, Ann, married Thomas Wentworth, third Earl of Strafford, and took with her a fortune of over sixty thousand pounds. There being no son to carry on the business, it was leased to Philip Perry, Johnson's manager, who built ships under the name of Perry and Company. In 1797 the business became Perry, Sons, and Green, Green having married one of Perry's daughters. In 1819 the partnership changed again, this time to Wigram and Green, who were destined to build many of the famous clipper-ships sailing to Australia, India, and China.

The East Indiamen were built like men-of-war and manned in man-of-war fashion. This had early been found necessary on account of the privateers and pirates infesting the Eastern seas. No merchantman was safe from attack, hence they all went more or less heavily armed. Indiamen were built with rows of gun-ports and carried trained gunners as in a man-of-war. They had ample opportunity of demonstrating their need of armament. A voyage to India was not an experience to be faced by the faint-hearted.

In the yards at Blackwall there was a large arsenal of cannon and small arms, together with an enormous store of gunpowder ready to supply outgoing ships. Such a magazine and arsenal would have been useful to the country in time of war, and it is probable that this fact had some influence on the successive Governments of the country in keeping the Company's

charter alive for over two centuries. For from the very beginning there were murmurings of dissent at such blatant favouritism. There were many private attempts to compete, but the odds were too much against them and they all failed. Meanwhile the East India Company grew rich and powerful. {86}

When the Company ceased building their own ships and reverted to their former practice of chartering vessels from outside owners they employed a sort of negotiant called an 'India husband.' This was an important office, with considerable responsibility attached to it. When the Board of Directors, or the Court, as it was called, met to discuss plans for the yearly voyages to the East the attendance of the ship's husband was necessary in order to learn what tonnage was required for the season. It was his business to charter the ships, securing them at as advantageous a rate as possible. An India husband was generally himself a shareholder in the Company, and as such a wealthy man. This brings us to the generous emoluments known as 'indulgences' which were offered to those so fortunate as to hold a privileged position on board the Company's ships. So attractive were the chances for pecuniary advancement that it was considered a mark of considerable social distinction to hold an officer's berth on an Indiaman. Many aristocratic families sent their younger sons into the Company's service rather than give them over to the ill-paid privilege of service in the Army or the Navy. Yet curiously enough the position of surgeon on board an Indiaman was a comparatively lowly one. The surgeon was also a barber, and as such was expected to cut the hair of the entire crew. A "Chirugion Generall," besides dealing in pills and nostrums and wielding the scalpel, must "cut the hayre of the carpenters, saylors, caulkers, and labourers in a seemly manner."

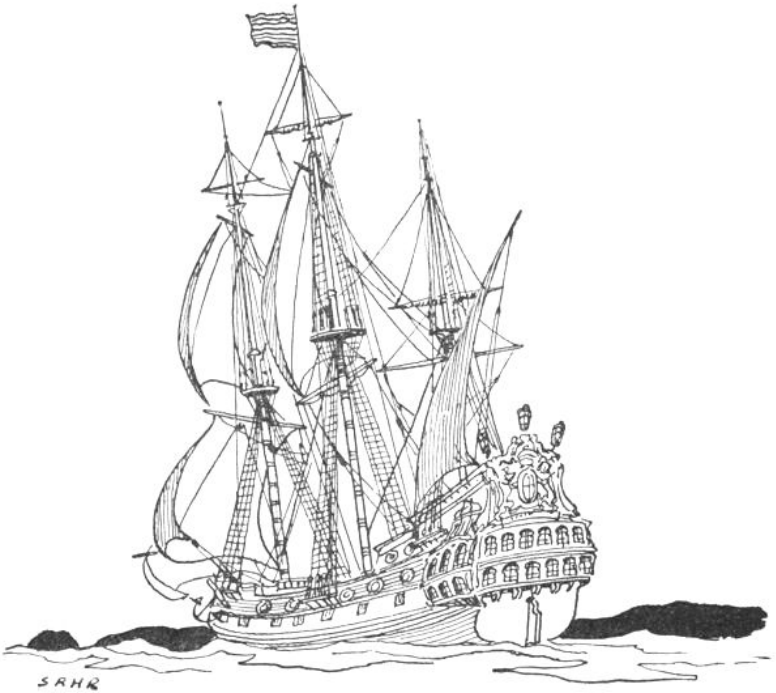


OLD EAST INDIA DOCK AT BLACKWALL
From an old print.

When in 1609 the *Trades Increase* had reached Sumatra and established friendly relations with the King of Achin a trading station was opened. This and all subsequent stations were called factories, and their local managers were known as factors, a name which continued right down to Victorian times. In 1640 the Company built, at Madras, their first fort, and raised the status of the small English settlement there to that of a 'presidency' eighteen years later. {87} {88} In 1645 factories were established in different parts of Bengal, to the great annoyance of the Portuguese, who soon departed. By 1685 the Company had grown so solidly prosperous that £100 shares were selling for £500. Before the century was ended a large number of the Company's forts had been set up in different parts of India, and its fleet had grown to be the largest merchant fleet in the world. It suffered shocking losses by shipwreck and pirates, but these had no serious effect on the Company's trade. Occasionally the Government's protection with men-of-war was requested, but for the most part the Indiamen fought their own battles, and thanks to rigid discipline and ample crews they usually gave more than they received.

In 1698 a new company appeared on the scene, and by lending the Government £2,000,000 at 8 per cent. interest received a charter to trade with India. They called themselves the New East India Company. The inevitable competition with the old company proved to be so harmful that it nearly accomplished the ruin of both. In the end the two companies agreed

to join forces, and in 1708 the amalgamation became an accomplished fact. The new organization was called "The United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies." To show their interest in the venture the Government at once asked the Company for a loan of £1,200,000, which, needless to say, it received—and without interest! Truly the East India Company was a privileged corporation with a most impudent monopoly of lucrative trade, but it was a monopoly dearly bought. Seldom during its long reign in India was it free from some pin-prick or other from the Government. The Government saw its usefulness, but begrudged its privileges.



SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY EAST INDIAMAN

Such a wealthy organization could afford to be generous to its faithful servants. The Honourable Court of Directors promoted the officers by the simple rule of seniority as vacancies occurred. Midshipmen were appointed as in {89} the Navy. Captains were allowed as perquisite the amazing privilege of over fifty tons of cargo space for their own use on the outward journey and twenty tons on the homeward passage. Thus an astute commander, by taking out trade goods and bringing home native products, could make as much as £5000 or more on a voyage.[12] At such a rate

commanders usually retired rich men. Indian products were obtained at low prices in India and sold, thanks to the Company's monopoly, at high prices in London. It is a fact that some East India captains made as much as £10,000 a year from these trade privileges. Besides these privileges, the captain was given two personal servants. With such attractive inducements the Company were never without a waiting list of the sons of gentlemen eager to take service {90} in an Indiaman. The mates and petty officers were allowed a cargo space of forty tons to be shared between them, the amount to each depending on their rank. But the commands were all bought. The officers came from the cultured and privileged classes, and required a private income, as in the Navy, if they were to keep up the dignity of their position. Apparently rank on an Indiaman had few pecuniary attractions until one obtained a command.

In Elizabethan and Restoration times there was no recognized uniform for sailors. It was not until the Georgian navy that any serious attempt was made to establish a uniformity of dress for those who followed the profession of the sea. When uniforms began to be taken to seriously by the powers that were, the East India Company was among the first to adopt the new idea. Its captains were dressed up in a somewhat showy skirted blue coat with black velvet lapels, collar, and cuffs, and plenty of gold braid. The buttons were of gilt embossed with the Company's crest. Breeches and waistcoat were of buff, the stock was black, and the stockings white. A cocked hat, buckled shoes, and a sword completed the external man. The uniforms of his officers became simpler in character as their rank diminished. All were instructed to appear in full dress uniform when attending the Directors' Court.

As I have already pointed out, the East Indiamen were run on semi-man-of-war lines. This similarity extended even to the ships' bunting. The ships were allowed to fly the coach-whip pennant of the Royal Navy, and their ensign bore in its left-hand top corner the blood-red cross of St George. The Jack was a plain white field with four horizontal red stripes placed equidistant. There were also dress flags for the main and mizen. The latter was either divided horizontally into red and white or made up of three red discs on a white or blue field.

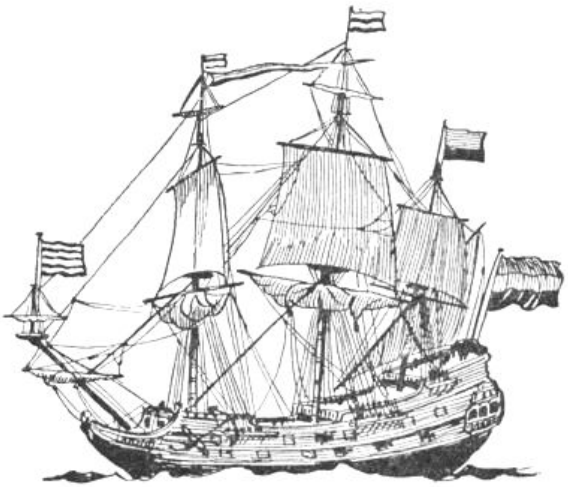
The East Indiamen had their own private signalling {91} code by arrangement with the Admiralty, and in consequence received more respect from the Royal Navy than that usually accorded merchantmen. There was a definite need for this private code in the Indian Ocean, where the necessity of establishing the *bona fides* of a doubtful vessel could only be carried out by means of signals. If a strange vessel could not reply to the private code

flags, then it was reasonably certain that she was an enemy, and was to be treated as such.

THE PRESS-GANG

Though the Indiamen were privileged ships enjoying the patronage of the Government, they were frequently annoyed by the attentions of the Navy's press-gang. During the long wars with France the Navy was constantly short of men. Indiamen were waylaid in the Downs, or even in harbour, and their best men taken by the press-gang. So serious did this sort of tyranny become that the Company's secretary was moved to write a protest to the Admiralty against the practice, though no notice was taken of it. In special instances, where an Indiaman was carrying high officials or setting out on an important mission, the {92} Admiralty agreed to provide the captain with a document giving his ship immunity from impressment for the voyage. This was in the event of his vessel being stopped by a man-of-war, for impressment was frequently carried out on the high seas. Besides this nuisance, there was always the danger of meeting hostile craft. A voyage to India was an experience which was enlivened by a daily feeling of uncertainty as to what would next appear over the horizon—friend or foe. Certainly the life of the captain of an East Indiaman was not free from anxieties.

For a short period in the latter third of the eighteenth century the Company's affairs were not prospering, and it was driven to borrowing

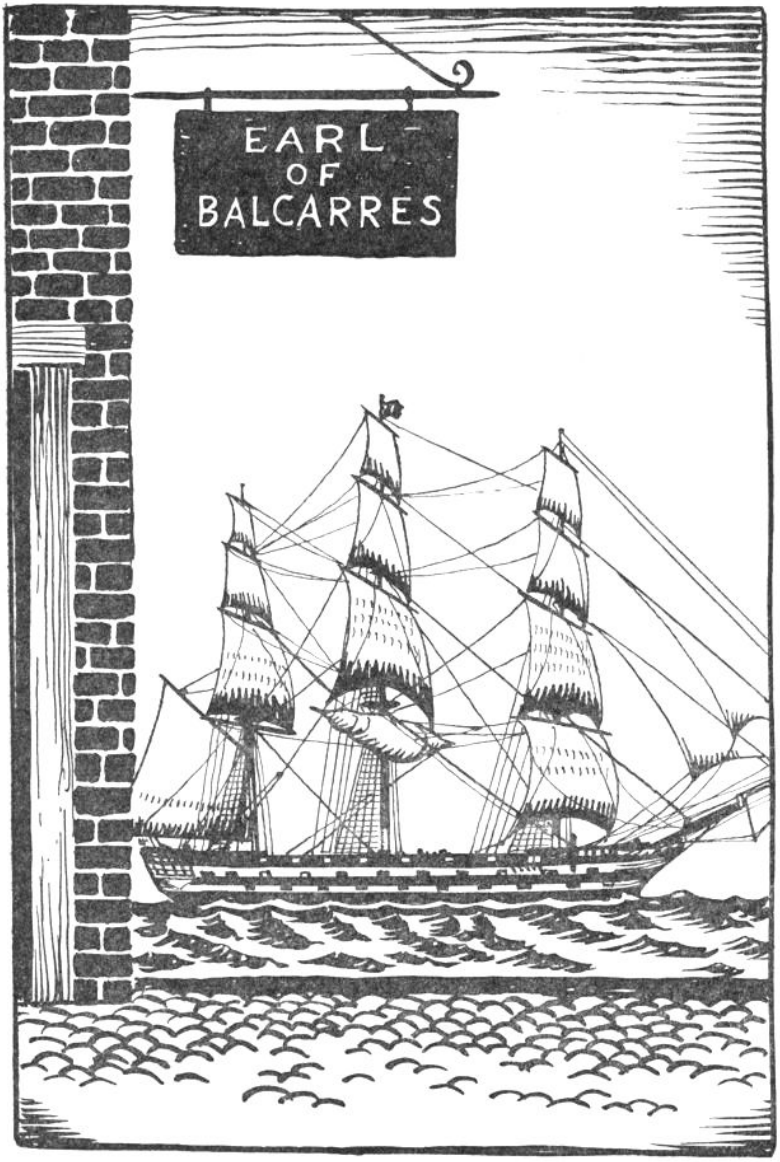


DUTCH EAST INDIAMAN

money from the Government. There were too many high-salaried officials eating up the profits, and retrenchments had to be made in various directions. But the increasing fashion for tea-drinking in Georgian England and the consequent demand for tea reacted to the benefit of the Company, and before the end of the century the period of depression had passed. Nevertheless the days of the East India Company were numbered. Such a gigantic monopoly could not hope to escape constant criticism, and what the Government gave with one hand it tried to take away with the other. Then there was the sword of the press-gang for ever hanging over its head, insulting its officers by dragging the sailors off to serve in men-of-war. I do not wish to create an impression that the East India Company had been a martyr to tyranny {93} and petty annoyance ever since its inception. On the contrary, it had enjoyed for most of those two hundred years an almost impudent prosperity. It had come to own enormous tracts of land in India, and had grown in political importance until it had become more powerful than the native rulers. Such was its resources that during the French wars with England the Company had been able to give the British Government fourteen fully equipped frigates manned by 3000 of its own men.

But in 1814 a law was passed at Westminster which was to mark the beginning of the end of the Company's existence. The monopoly of trade with India was permanently done away with. But so far as the trade with China was concerned the Company was allowed to keep its monopoly. It still controlled the price of tea. The East India Company had had its day—a day two hundred years long!—and the march of civilization could no longer permit such a medieval state of affairs to exist. The monopoly had held back the free development of trade and naval architecture. Being no competition, there was no need for hurry with the East Indiamen. There was no rival to get to market first. Consequently the old bluff bows and lumbering ships had hardly altered in design during two hundred years. With the opening of the

Indian Ocean to every one trade received a great fillip. Cargo and passenger rates were enormously reduced, and faster passages were made. The revoking of the charter was but the beginning—the thin end of the wedge. Public opinion was still unsatisfied. Nothing less than the abolishment of all unfair privileges would do. At last the criticism could no longer be ignored, and the Government yielded to the wish of the people. In 1832 the last of its privileges were abolished by Act of Parliament, and two years later its commercial charter came to an end. In open competition the old-fashioned methods of the Company could not successfully compete, and so the greatest private company the world had ever seen came {94} to an end. It went out of business at once, selling its fleet and closing its magnificent offices in East India House.[13] Some of the ships were broken up for their valuable copper fastenings, while others were sold to private buyers, who employed them in the Indian trade, though no longer under the red and white striped flag. Sixty-two ships in all were sold, sixteen of which were broken up. The winding-up of the affairs of such a vast organization naturally took some time. Many of the ships were at sea when the Company decided to close down, and it was three years before the sale of the fleet was completed. Considering that the ships had to be sold, they fetched very satisfactory prices. For example, the *Bombay*, 1246 tons, brought £11,000, a good price in those days; and she was then over twenty years old. The 1417-ton *Earl of Balcarres*, built at the Company's yards in Bombay nineteen years before, sold for £15,700. This vessel sailed the Indian Ocean for over fifty years, and finally ended up as a receiving hulk on the west coast of Africa. Eight of the Company's ships realized £86,650, or an average of over £10,000 each. The *Earl of Balcarres* was one of the best-known ships of her day. She carried two tiers of guns, and resembled in practically every respect a two-decker man-of-war. Besides her commander, she had six officers, two surgeons, six midshipmen, bos'n, gunner, armourer, carpenter, master-at-arms, and others of lesser ranks, including seventy-eight seamen, making a company of a hundred and thirty men. No merchant ship but an Indiaman could have afforded to carry such a large crew.



THE “EARL OF BALCARRES”

The actual end of the Company’s activities in Indian affairs came in 1857 with the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny. Though the Company’s ships had been sold in {95} {96} {97} 1834 its connexions with India could not be so easily cast off. Thus it continued to govern the territory it had held for so long until 1857, the time of the Mutiny, when the Government took charge. On November 1, 1858, an official proclamation announced that

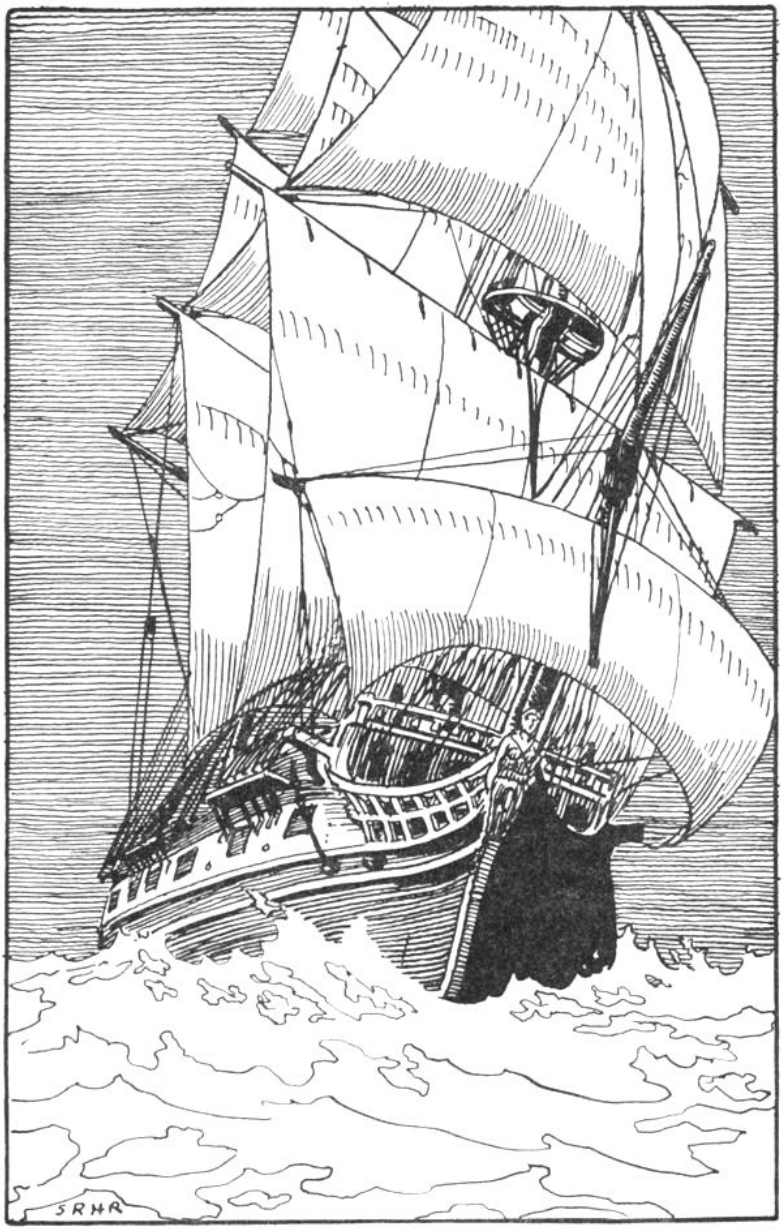
British India had passed from the East India Company to the Crown, and that henceforth India would be governed through a Viceroy. The first to hold that office was Canning, son of the statesman.

Warren Hastings, whose life was so intimately connected with the affairs of India, started his brilliant career as a clerk in the Company's service. At the age of twelve he had been left an orphan, and for the next few years was in the care of an uncle. At eighteen he got the necessary people to endorse his petition for a 'writership'[14] in India. The petition, according to the manner of the time, was couched in the most respectful language and addressed to the Directors. Among a number of fortunate applicants young Hastings was one of those chosen, and was at once assigned to a writership in Bengal. He left London in January 1750, and arrived at Calcutta in the following October. So began his long connexion with the great country of which he was destined to become the first Governor-General.

It will be noticed that the voyage from London to Calcutta in 1750 took something like nine months—an incredibly slow passage. That, however, was typical of the Indiamen—slow and sure. 'Safety first' might have been their motto. It was the rule on every ship to snug down for the night. However fair the weather, the Indiaman stowed all her royals and light sails every night, and sent the royal yards down. Also at the slightest sign of threatening weather most of the sails were taken in and the rest were single-reefed. No attempt was made to beat records. Every thought was for the comfort of the passengers and the safety of the ship. And when one reads of what the {98} passengers paid for cabin fare to India one cannot doubt that they were in complete agreement with this interest in their comfort. These ships usually carried troops going out or returning from India. The passage money for officers ranged from £95 for a subaltern to £234 for a general. There were also civilians of high rank constantly travelling between England and India, many with their families, and after paying £100 and upward for their passage they expected some consideration for their comfort. Yet, curiously enough, these prices did not include linen and cabin furniture. These had to be provided by each passenger, who would thus furnish their tiny cabins as if they were in their own homes. But perhaps after nine months at sea one had begun to feel more at home there than on shore.

An interesting account of a voyage to India is given in the diaries kept by a Mr and Mrs Welland, of Wimpole Street, London, who boarded the East Indiaman *Ceylon* at Portsmouth on March 14, 1810.[15] The *Ceylon* was one of a convoy of sixteen ships under the protection of H.M.S. *Northumberland* against enemy men-of-war and privateers. During the nine weeks' passage to the Cape no enemy was seen, but the journey was not

uneventful. In April smallpox broke out in one of the ships, the *Hugh Inglis*, and two of her crew died of the disease. The commanders of the other ships met on board the *Ceylon* to discuss the wisdom of allowing the *Hugh Inglis* to continue to Cape Town. However, those who were against it were overruled, and presumably the contagion-ridden ship was allowed to put in at Cape Town. The last smallpox epidemic at that place had killed off more than 30,000 people!



AN INDIAMAN

On May 22 the convoy put into St Simon's Bay, where two days later the more fortunate among the passengers were allowed to go ashore. The ships stayed three weeks {99} {100} {101} at Cape Town, during which time Mr and Mrs Welland took lodgings at No. 2 Strand Street for themselves, a niece, and her friend, and also a maid and a manservant. Mr Welland was in

the service of the Company, and was returning to India after leave in England. The diary shows something of their life in Cape Town, what it cost them to live, and how they passed the three weeks there. Their description of the inhabitants is amusing, and not without that touch of priggishness so often found in writings of that date. For instance, in referring to the women the diary says: "The Women have pretty Countenances, and, considering the disadvantages under which they labor, have very good manners." There are other comments of a similar kind.

At the end of three weeks the travellers embarked at Simon's Town, and shortly afterward the convoy stood out to sea. When the ships got into the Indian Ocean and turned their heads north the captains, by a majority vote, decided to take the inner passage—that is, the Mozambique Channel between Madagascar and the mainland of Africa. This was an unfortunate mistake, since it brought them close to the French Comoro Islands. On June 14, while in these waters, they sighted three sail early in the morning, and when the light became better the strange sail were seen to be French men-of-war—two frigates and a corvette. As the ships approached an action began. After about four hours the *Ceylon* struck her colours and was taken prisoner. The Indiaman had seven men killed and twenty-seven, including the captain, wounded. Another Indiaman, the *Wyndham*, had suffered a somewhat smaller loss. At this point the diary becomes somewhat involved, and it is a little difficult to discover how many English ships were in the action. Apparently the convoy had dispersed at the Cape. Two Indiamen were taken, the *Ceylon* and the *Wyndham*, while a third, the *Astell*, had managed to escape. The captured vessels were first taken into Johanna, in the Comoro Isles, where twelve days were spent repairing the {102} damage done, and then to Mauritius, which they seemed to have reached at the end of August, for the diary reads:

> *August 28.* Isle of France on shore. This last week has been such a scene of Agony—Distress and mortification—that it was quite impossible for me to write, or to be employed in any way but in the eventful circumstances of every moment, which have been most fully occupied.

Two days afterward, while captor and captive were lying at anchor, a strange sail was seen, and the prisoners were sent below "to the Bread Room." This strange sail turned out to be a lone British frigate, which came into the harbour and fired on the French ships; but as the English prisoners were below during the action their subsequent account of it is somewhat hazy. The French, on the whole, seemed to have treated the prisoners

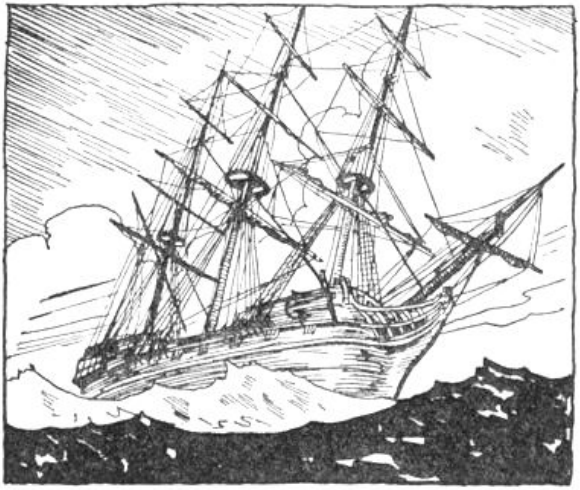
humanely. They were set ashore and confined to barracks to await an exchange with French prisoners taken by the English. The state of affairs in Mauritius was at that time distinctly Gilbertian. Although the British had officially captured the island that same year they had not entirely dispossessed the French of the territory. And French men-of-war still hung about, a menace to East India shipping.

When the women had been sent ashore the French commander had provided them with a passport, which read: "Je recommande à mes amis les Dames Welland. Elles le méritent. MOULAC."

On August 25 four British frigates—*Iphigenia*, *Magician*, *Nereid*, and *Sirius*—sailed into the harbour and attempted to capture the French vessels, but owing to poor judgment they were themselves captured or destroyed, with the exception of the *Iphigenia*, whose fate was not known. On August 26 the ladies were provided with four "Pallenquines" for a twenty-five-mile journey to another part of the island. The men walked. At their destination they were received amiably by the French, who did what they could to lessen the onerousness of captivity. At the end of {103} October definite action was taken for the exchange of prisoners, and the Wellands, along with others, were released and put on an English ship, albeit without their precious household goods; though, touched by the gift of a brooch from Mrs Welland, Monsieur Moulac, the French captain, promised that he would do what he could to let her have her piano back. They parted captors and captives on friendly terms. The Indian Ocean was crossed in a small vessel, and after a tempestuous voyage Calcutta was reached on November 22.

In a volume entitled *Political Pamphlets*, to be found in the North Library of the British Museum, is a narrative of adventure on an East Indiaman by one of her crew, a seaman named John Dean. The narrative, printed in the year 1740, is called "A Genuine Account of the Ship *S——x*, in the Service of the Hon'ble East India Company." In the India Office, where so many relics of the old East India Company now repose, hangs a portrait of this same John Dean. That his picture, painted in oils by a well-known artist of the time, was included among those of Directors and commodores of the Company formed the happy ending of a very diverting and remarkable tale. For John Dean was a sailor, an untutored man, who happened to live in an age when common men had frequently little enough consideration from their superiors.

The portrait of John Dean shows a man 'of honest countenance,' with short black hair, heavy eyebrows, and dark eyes, posed in the stiff and conventional fashion of those days. He wears a grey coat, red neckcloth, corduroy breeches, a blue and white cotton shirt, and a beaver hat. Under his



arm he carries a walking-stick. John Dean was a seaman on the *Sussex*, Indiaman, when she sailed from Canton with a cargo of china, homeward bound, on March 9, 1738. The passage across the Indian Ocean was made in company with the *Winchester*, another {104} Indiaman, for mutual protection. The weeks went by and no untoward incident disturbed the monotony of the passage. Of pirates and privateers they had seen none, and the weather had been kind enough. But as the two little ships approached the latitude of the Cape of Good Hope the weather changed. The barometer started to fall, and the rising wind lashed the seas to such a height that it became more evident every hour that the ships were in for a bad time. By evening a full gale was blowing, and the consequent buffeting by the enormous seas strained the *Sussex*, which was an old vessel, till she leaked like a basket. The *Winchester*, a stronger ship, appeared to be standing the hard knocks of the seas fairly well, but the *Sussex* was suffering so severely that that evening her main- and mizen-masts were cut away to save her. There was ten inches of water in the well, but the cutting away of the two masts so eased her that she was in no immediate peril of foundering, and by morning the gale lessened in its fury. A jury rig[16] was set up to keep her head on to the seas, and the leaks were got under control. It is part of the traditions of the sea not only that a captain leaves his ship last, when there is any leaving to be done, but that he and his officers stick to the ship as long as there is any chance at all of saving her. But Captain Francis Gostlin, of the *Sussex*, must have thought otherwise, for he and his officers decided to abandon the ship and go on {105} board the *Winchester*, which lay close-reefed not far off. This is where John Dean comes into the narrative. So far he had been of too trifling significance to have a place in the account. But he and sixteen more of the men (none of them with any knowledge of navigation) felt that the situation of the ship was not sufficiently desperate to justify her abandonment, and said as much. The next day Captain Gostlin, his officers, and all but Dean

and sixteen of his shipmates abandoned the ship. Before leaving, the captain, in a fury against Dean, smashed the longboat, and remarked that he hoped those who preferred to remain behind would not succeed in their attempt to keep the *Sussex* afloat. Also he refused to give Dean the ship's position before he got into the pinnace which took him aboard the *Winchester*. The latter now bore away, and the men on the *Sussex*, alive to the peril of their position, turned their efforts to doing what they could to save the ship. It was decided to run for Madagascar, and the first thing to be done was to lighten the sluggish vessel by heaving some of the guns overboard. This had the desired effect, for a few days later the coast of Madagascar was sighted, and the *Sussex* was taken into St Augustine's Bay, where her crew hoped to carry out repairs. But the natives became troublesome and threatening when they learned how few men were on board, and it was felt the better part of discretion to weigh anchor and sail away for Mozambique. The men on the *Sussex* were all ordinary seamen, and as they knew nothing of scientific navigation it is not surprising to hear that they presently ran the ship aground on a reef in the channel, and to save their lives had to take to the only boat they had left that was undamaged. In the darkness, with heavy seas all round them, they attempted to launch the pinnace. Nine of the crew, fearing to face the steep seas, remained behind, but Dean and seven others decided to chance it. It was truly the choice between the devil and the deep sea. There was little to choose. Before {106} long the ship broke up, and the men on board her were all lost. The pinnace had capsized as soon as she touched the water, and three of her occupants were drowned. Among the five spared to hang on to the keel of the upturned boat was Dean. Clinging to this crazy perch in the darkness, one of the poor wretches picked up a bottle of arrack, floating near by, and by its potency all were able to stave off the numbing cold. During the night the pinnace drove ashore, and at daylight the half-dead men were able to salve a piece of pork and a butt of fresh water. They had been wrecked on the dreaded Bassas da India shoal. Being sailors, and therefore resourceful, they decided to rig a mast and sail to the pinnace from bits of wreckage washed up and try to reach Madagascar. After seventeen days at sea, suffering incredible privations, they gained the land, and began to march southward to some harbour where they hoped to find a ship. On the long march four of the men died, and the indomitable John Dean was left to carry on alone. He was captured by natives, escaped, and was recaptured, but in the end gained his freedom on the intercession of French traders. In the port which is now known as Manarivo Dean found the East Indiaman *Prince William* {107} about to sail for Bombay. Before he could get on board he narrowly escaped being again captured by natives, but at last, after living for months the life of a hunted animal, he felt the heaving

deck of a ship under his feet. He had left the accursed island for good. The *Prince William* arrived at Bombay in December 1739, and Dean immediately reported to the Governor the loss of the *Sussex* and the circumstances of her loss. In January 1740 he was sent to England to report personally to the Directors of the Company in London.

Meanwhile, what of the *Winchester*? She had reached England in July 1739, and when Captain Gostlin reported the loss of the *Sussex* he was, as the old narrative puts it, "sharply questioned." After searching investigation, examining witnesses, and studying the captain's account, the Directors found the conduct of both captains inexcusable, and dismissed them from the service of the Company. Captain Gostlin was tried at the Guildhall in November 1742, and the Company was awarded £30,202 damages. He appealed against the verdict, with the result that the damages were reduced to £25,000. Whether he was able to pay or not the contemporary accounts do not say.

Dean had, of course, arrived in London before the trial, and his testimony had been taken. The Directors of the Company, in appreciation of Dean's conduct, settled upon him a pension of £100 a year during life, and £50 a year to his wife if she survived him. For his immediate needs they presented him with £50. A famous artist was commissioned to paint three portraits of him, one of which was hung in East India House. Dean was given the position of Elder Porter (a foreman) in the Company's drug warehouse, but he did not live long to enjoy the fruits of his loyalty, for he died in 1747.

[10] Sometimes called simply *Dragon*.

[11] It was usually referred to as “the Company.”

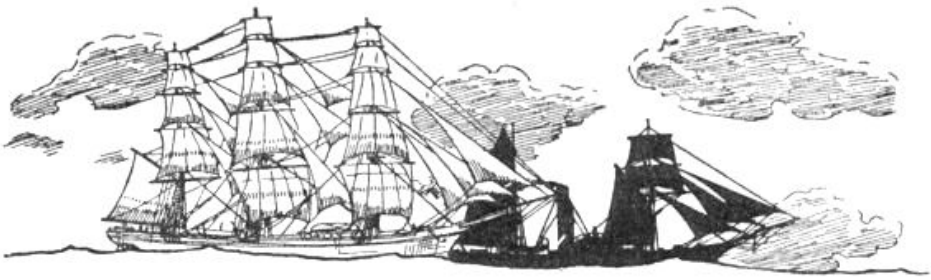
[12] A voyage is usually out and home. A passage is the journey one way.

[13] East India House was built in 1726 and sold with its furnishings in 1861. It was demolished in 1862. A former East India House had stood in Leadenhall Street as early as 1648.

[14] *I.e.*, clerkship.

[15] *The Times*, September 2 and 3, 1930; quoted by permission of J. A. Venn, Esq., of Cambridge.

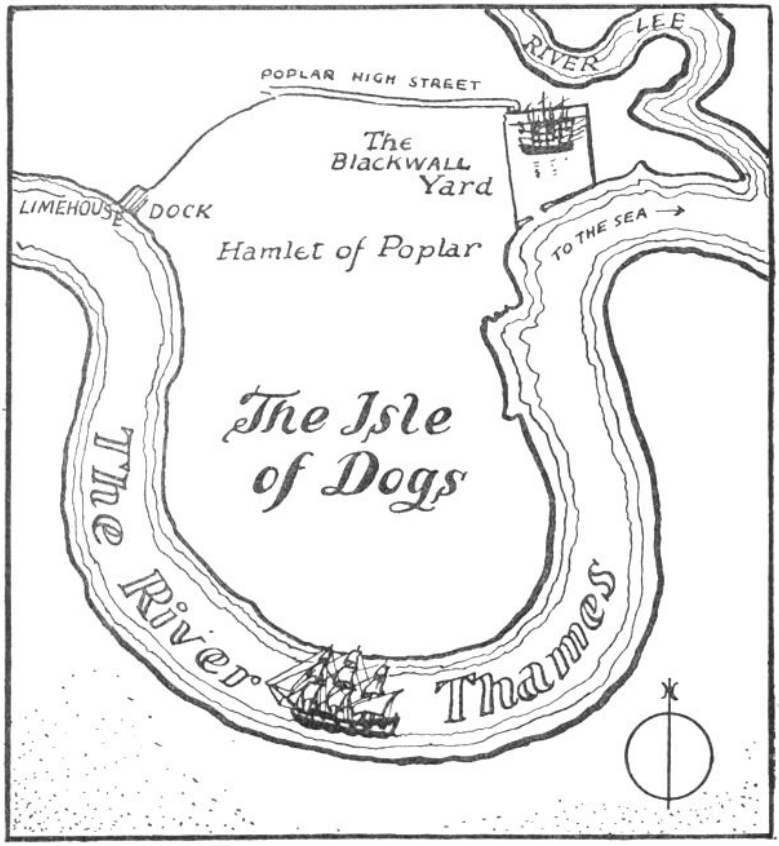
[16] Jury rig—*i.e.*, temporary makeshift rigging and sails.



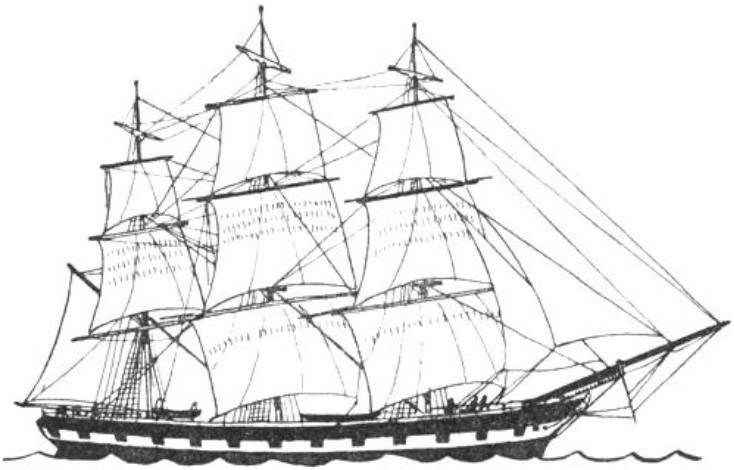
CHAPTER V

In the Wake of the Indiamen

It is interesting to compare the sailing traffic of the three great oceans of the world—the Atlantic, the Pacific, and the Indian Ocean. Each had, and has, its own characteristic trade and traffic which is reflected in the ships themselves. Thus there have been the wool-clippers, the emigrant packets, the China clippers, the California clippers, and the Atlantic ferry packets. The North Atlantic traverse between America and England became known as the "ferry" as the passenger traffic increased and the passage was made shorter. The discovery of gold in the Sacramento Valley in 1849 brought into being the famous California clippers, doing remarkably fast passages round the Horn to the Pacific coast with fortune-hunters mad to reach the goldfields. Passages were bought at fantastic prices, and the shipowners grew rich quicker than the gold prospectors. The faster the passage the sooner the ship might return for another shipload of eager passengers. Speed became a mania, and rivalry between the shipowners resulted in the construction of some of the fastest square-rigged ships in the world, such as the *Flying Cloud*, *Andrew Jackson*, and *Flying Fish*.



Simultaneously the Indian Ocean was also enjoying its ‘Golden Age’ of sail. In the eighteen-forties the process of colonization of Australia had well begun. The discovery of gold there in 1850 started the usual gold stampede, and ships were soon being built specially to deal with this {109} traffic. When the gold fever had abated somewhat and Australia began to produce wool for export the ships in this trade were colloquially known as the wool-clippers. Another class of ship, and incidentally the fastest passage-makers on the Indian Ocean, were the famous tea-clippers, which sailed between London and Chinese tea ports—Shanghai, Foochow, and Canton. Every year the tea fleet raced home with the season’s crop for European markets, and the keen competition to get to London River with the first cargo of the season developed, perhaps more than any {110} other factor, the design of fast, big sailing-ships. These tea races aroused world-wide interest in their day.



A BLACKWALLER

The evolution of ships is, like the evolution of architecture, a logical process, embodying the results of experience. The clipper-ships were the direct descendants of the old East Indiamen. When in 1834 the East India Company sold its ships the Blackwall shipyard, which had built Indiamen for two centuries, turned its resources to the construction of a new type of 'free trading' ships, which came to be known as Blackwallers. This yard was not owned by the East India Company, but by Green and Wigram, who built ships for the Company. Thus when the latter went out of business the shipbuilding firm was unaffected by its demise. The Blackwall frigates made for themselves a name in the history of the Indian Ocean that will never be forgotten. But their type could not last. The fast clippers, with streamlined hulls and lofty masts smothered in a cloud of white canvas, eventually drove the slower sailing-frigates off the seas. The Blackwall frigate,[17] the legitimate offspring of the East Indiaman, carried, as her name implies, a row of guns on either side in man-of-war {111} fashion, and still preserved many of the old customs. Eighteenth-century traditions, with its harsh discipline, floggings, quarter-deck formalities, its faults, and its virtues, had to make way for the new age of sail. A merchant ship was to be no longer a sort of hermaphrodite man-of-war. The abolition of privateering and piracy had much to do with this. Merchantmen need no longer go heavily armed. Probably the last serious pirate assault on an East Indiaman occurred in 1832, when the *Morning Star* was plundered and wrecked by the pirate Benito de Soto in his schooner *Black Joke*.[18]

But the metamorphosis from frigate to merchantman was not the most significant change. More important and far-reaching was the improvement

in the design of ships. The speeding up of what is called civilization demanded the speeding up of ships. “Faster ships!” was the cry. It had originated in the United States, and quickly spread to the Old World. The American clippers had set an example that English shipping companies could not afford to ignore. This craze for speed was to reach its climax, so far as Great Britain was concerned, in those miracles of beauty and swiftness the *Cutty Sark* and the *Thermopylæ*. Of these ships more presently.

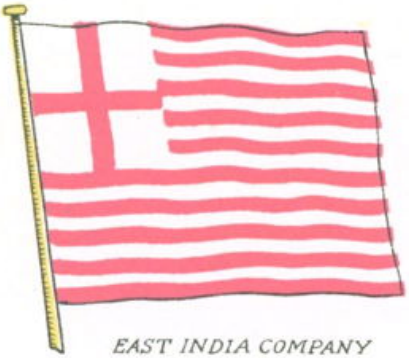
I have emphasized the Blackwall frigates for the reason that they were directly descended from the old East Indiamen, but as soon as the trade monopoly had been taken away from the Company other yards began building ships for the Eastern trade. One of these, the firm of T. and W. Smith, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, built at least two of the finest merchant vessels of their time. These were the *Blenheim* and *Marlborough*—sister-ships, both built, I believe, in 1846. At the Great Exhibition of 1851 they were awarded a set of silk flags and rated the highest class in merchant shipbuilding. Even at that date, however, the frigate tradition persisted. Both ships were {112} pierced with gun-ports, and to outward appearance would have easily passed for men-of-war. Another famous British shipbuilder of this period was Duncan Dunbar, who built many of his ships in India, though he also owned a yard in the North of England. The Indian-built ships were constructed of teak cut from the teak-wood forests, which grew right up to the edge of the river where the yard was situated. These teak ships never wore out; they were wrecked, or they became obsolete and were sold. It was not unusual for ships to be built in India. From the early days of the Company there had been shipyards in India, and later in China. The plan obviously had its advantages, for, apart from the abundance and cheapness of hard woods which formed excellent material for ship construction, native labour was cheap. One is apt to forget that during the two hundred years of the Company’s intercourse and occupation of Indian coastal cities all manner of European trades and customs took root there, and became as natural to the country as they were in the country of their origin. Some splendid ships were built in Indian yards by native shipwrights. At Bombay the Wadias, a Parsee family, {113} built some of the finest vessels in the Indian trade. They had built Indiamen for a hundred years before the East India Company came to an end. They held this honourable position so long because they were conscientious craftsmen who put the best materials into every vessel they launched. With the teak forests close by, teak was used, while European builders had to make do with less durable woods. One of the most famous ships on the Indian Ocean, *The Tweed*, was a creation of one of the Wadias—Curstjee Rustomjee, a master shipbuilder. I shall refer to *The Tweed* again.

During the era of the Blackwall frigates the principal port of call was Calcutta, where they moored off the Esplanade, the rendezvous of the fashionable world of Calcutta, which would parade there and listen to the band in the evenings. The Blackwallers were moored in close ranks, as close up to the promenade as the shelving muddy shore would permit—a contrast to the present-day custom of keeping our ships out of sight, and usually at an inconveniently long distance from the city. How many Londoners have ever seen the majestic P. and O. liners at Tilbury, or the Scandinavian and Finnish barks that still sometimes come into the Surrey Docks?

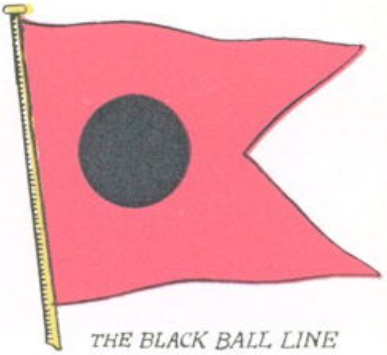
It is interesting to note that the Blackwallers at Calcutta were unloaded by their own crews (often to the sing-song of a pully-hauley chanty or the scrape of a fiddle), but that the loading was entirely done by coolie labour. When the loading was completed the ship was cleaned up and passengers were embarked. They usually went on board by means of boats—rowed out by local boatmen—for floating landing-stages or mile-long concrete piers had not been heard of. It was at these same Esplanade moorings that so many Blackwallers were wrecked when the dreaded cyclones came roaring up the Hoogly. When the cyclones came the safety of the ships depended entirely upon their mooring-lines holding, for there was, of course, no room {114} to manœuvre in the crowded river. At Madras, another Indian port used by the Blackwallers, the ships usually anchored two or three miles off

shore, a position that had its obvious advantages in bad weather. When the barometer and the sky indicated the approach of a cyclone the ships in Madras roads would slip their cables and run out to sea—that is, if they had time.

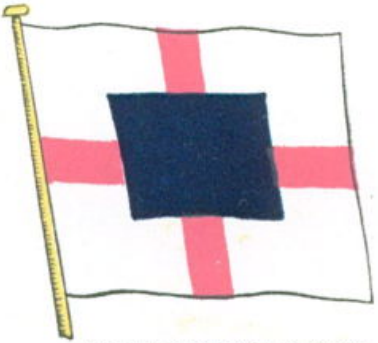
While the Blackwall liners actually got their name from the famous yard at Poplar on the Thames, other merchant ships of the same type were also known by that name. The *Blenheim* and *Marlborough* were Blackwallers, though built on the Tyneside. Intended for the Indian trade, these vessels were not long in that service. With the gold rush to Australia in the early fifties offering enormous profits to shipowners, they were sent out to Melbourne packed with emigrants. The *Marlborough* made the passage from the mouth of the Channel to Hobson's Bay in seventy-eight days—remarkable time for a vessel which was far from being a 'crack' clipper. The homeward passage, with nearly £300,000 in Australian gold on board, was made in eighty-three and a half days. But this was made *via* Cape Horn, a longer run. She was broken up after being afloat for over forty years.



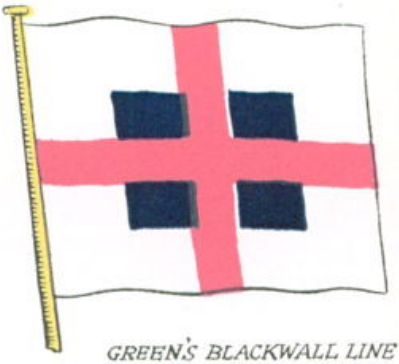
EAST INDIA COMPANY



THE BLACK BALL LINE

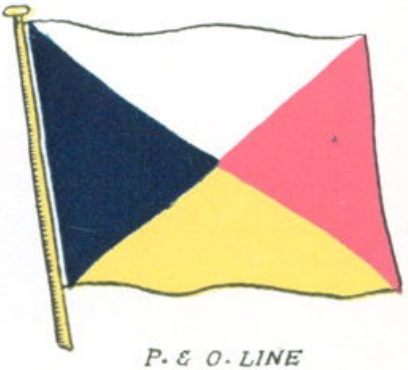


MONEY WIGRAM & SONS



GREEN'S BLACKWALL LINE

JOHN WILLIS & SON



P. & O. LINE

EAST INDIA COMPANY *THE BLACK BALL LINE*
MONEY WIGRAM & SONS *GREEN'S BLACKWALL LINE*
JOHN WILLIS & SON *P. & O. LINE*

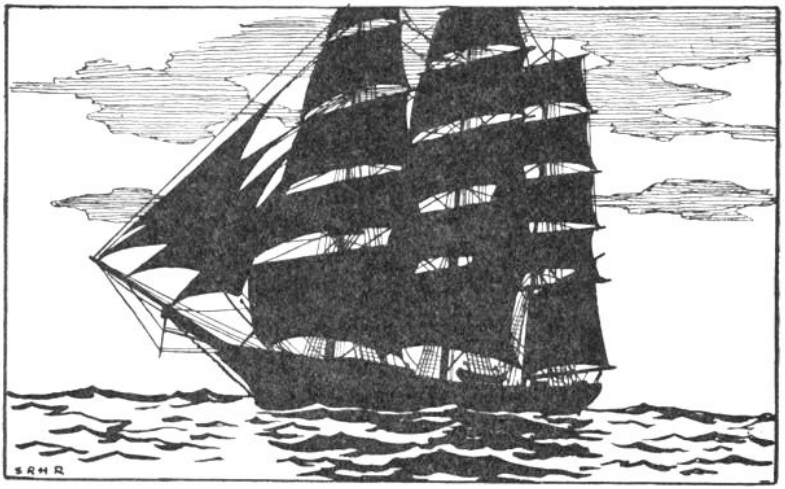
INDIAN OCEAN FLAGS
Note. The reds in these flags are actually scarlet.

The best of all the Blackwallers for speed was the *Kent*, a small ship as size went in those days. She was but 186 feet long, and was described in the advertisements as an "armed clipper-ship." Imagine advertising (in times of peace) the *Berengaria* as an *armed steamer*! Evidently her owners felt it would be more assuring to her passengers if they knew that the *Kent* was armed. She is not to be confused, by the way, with the unfortunate *Kent*, East Indiaman, which caught fire and sank in the Bay of Biscay in February 1825, with the loss of eighty-one lives. The other *Kent* on her record-breaking run made the passage from Melbourne to the Scilly Isles in sixty-three days. {115} This may seem a long time—two months—in these days of fast steamers, but a moment's reflection shows it to be a very remarkable feat. For one thing, there was no Suez Canal; the *Kent* had to make the long detour round the Cape of Good Hope—a formidable distance even in these days. Also there are contrary winds and that *bête noire* of sailors, calms, to account for. Such *contretemps* pull down the average cruelly. A couple of days' Doldrums can ruin a week's good sailing. Another point is that the *Kent* was not what was known as an 'extreme' clipper—that is, a ship with the fine lines, sharp entry, clean run, and narrow beam of the later clipper-ships. She belonged to the older generation, the frigate type, with gun-ports and quarter galleries.[19] But she carried an enormous sail-spread for her size, and also had the remarkable quality of being able to make headway in faint winds. In this she differed from most ships. Needless to say, the credit must go to her captain, for unless he is a 'cracker on' of sail, and possesses an almost uncanny knowledge of the vagaries of the winds, he will not get the best from his ship.

Another famous vessel in the Indo-European trade about this time was *The Tweed*, to which I referred in connexion with the Parsee family of shipbuilders. *The Tweed* began her career as a steam frigate in the old East Indian navy. She was one of two frigates built at Bombay in 1852-54. Both ships were paddle-wheelers, and were named *Assaye* and *Punjab*, and though the latter had a greater length they were in all respects sister-ships. Their engines were the only part of them built in England. Both ships narrowly escaped becoming a total loss in a cyclone which visited Bombay while they were fitting out, and before they had ever felt the lift and surge of

the open sea. The *Punjab* was the ship which years later was to be re-christened *The Tweed*, and it is her fortunes that we will {116} follow rather than those of her sister-ship. As both ships were put into commission during the Crimean War, and troops were badly needed to make good the losses at Sebastopol, the *Punjab* and *Assaye* began their lives as troop-carriers. This was in 1854. The following year both vessels took active combatant part in the Persian war. No sooner was this Persian trouble ended than the two ships were hurried back to India to take part in the Mutiny. Here the *Punjab* won great distinction by her useful service in the unhappy events which followed. In 1862, after the Mutiny, both ships were sent to England, where it was intended to convert them from paddle to screw steamers. On their arrival in England the Government changed its mind, and they were sold out of the service to John Willis, one of the best-known shipowners of his time. He at once sold the *Assaye*, but for the *Punjab* he had reserved a better fate. Willis was one of those men who love sailing-ships, and in the *Punjab* he saw the making of a fine clipper. Her hybrid character—sail-cum-steam (for like all early steamers she carried also sail)—did not appeal to him, so he had her engines removed and her rig improved. With a new figurehead, and named anew as *The Tweed*,[20] after the river of that name, she went to sea once more, this time as a cable ship, laying the first cable in the Persian Gulf. The cable-laying finished, she was converted into a passenger ship. Her remarkable sailing qualities aroused such widespread attention that experts used to copy her sail-plan and other details of her design. *The Tweed's* first and most famous commander was Captain William Stuart, a burly, bearded man, with a reputation for carrying on sail when most commanders would have been running under shortened canvas. To Captain Stuart *The Tweed* owes her immortal fame as a record-breaker. Joseph Conrad, who later served under Captain Stuart in the *Loch Etive*, wrote in his *Mirror of the Sea* that he "seemed {117} constitutionally incapable of ordering his officers to shorten sail." Again he wrote: "*The Tweed's* famous passages were Captain S——'s masterpieces." Her first passage out to Bombay was made in seventy-seven days, but she was to better those figures before long. Her second passage out was to New Zealand with emigrants. This was in 1874, and she took a day longer than the previous run in the same direction. The homeward run in the following year was made in sixty-nine days from Sydney to the Dungeness Light. Captain Stuart left her in 1877 to take command of a new iron clipper, the *Loch Etive*, but, as Joseph Conrad tells, he was never able to make the new ship equal the marvellous speed of the older vessel. Nor were her later captains able to make her equal her performances under Captain Stuart. Her end came in the summer of 1888,

when she was dismasted in a gale off Algoa Bay. Part of her timbers were used in the fabric of a church, which, I believe, is still standing at Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

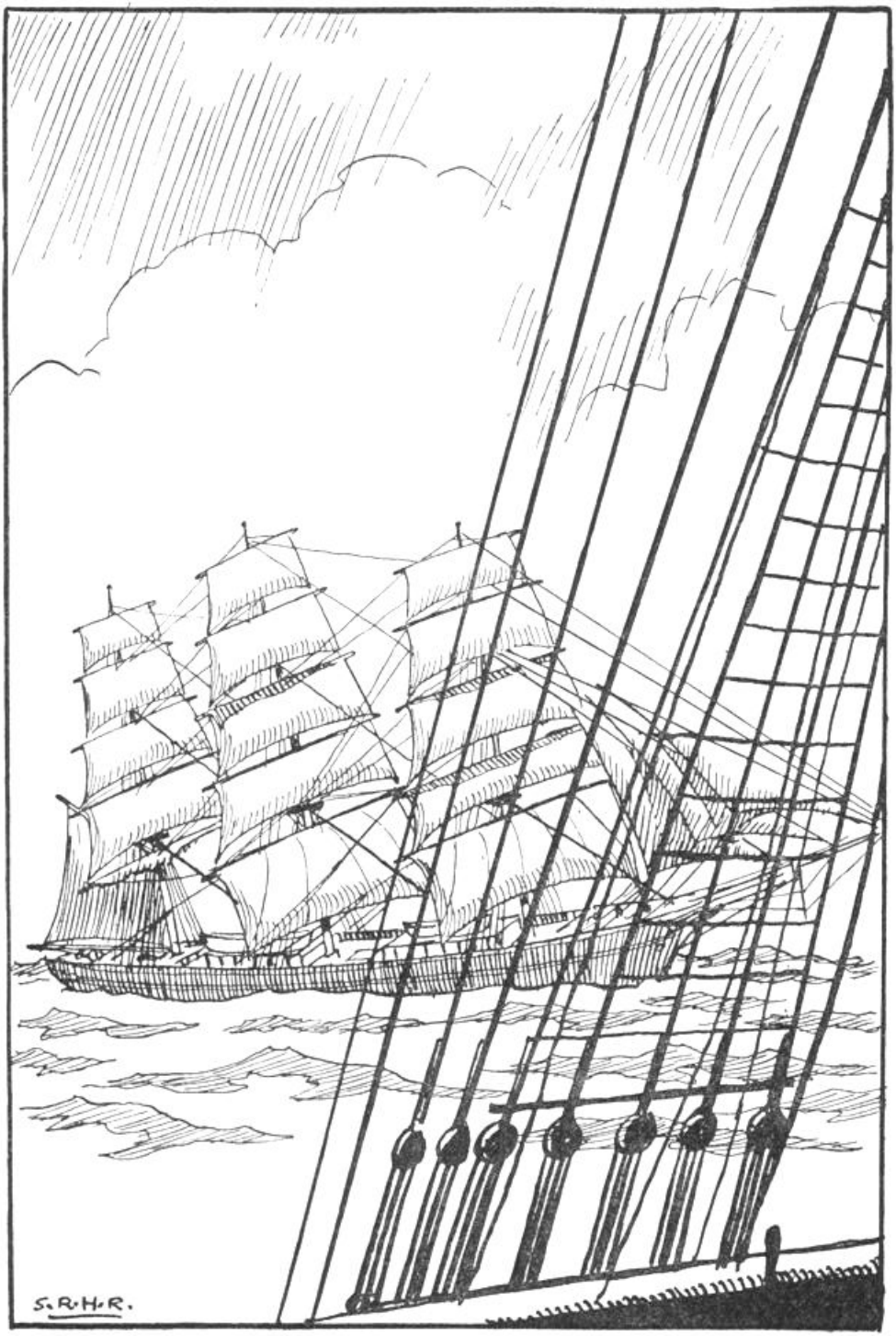


The *Loch Etive*, Captain Stuart's next command, owes her place in the sun more by her association with the name {118} of Joseph Conrad than from any remarkable or peculiar qualities of her own. It was Captain Stuart's everlasting regret that he could not make this handsome clipper attain the paces of the old frigate, though he would clap on sail to the point of foolhardiness. The old captain, who had commanded ships for forty odd years, died at sea, as befitted such a Viking, in September 1894.

The merchant shipping of the Indian Ocean can be divided, for the sake of convenience, into quite definite eras, as suggested at the beginning of this chapter. In the Indian Ocean there were firstly the Indiamen, then the Blackwallers, followed by the tea- and wool-clippers and the emigrant ships, which were slowly pushed off the seas by the invasion of an ever-growing fleet of steamers led by the P. and O. Line.

But it was not until the early seventies, after the Suez Canal opened, that sail was forced to surrender to steam in popularity. And then, as though throwing down a challenge to steam, there appeared those amazing and unforgettable clippers—*Thermopylæ*, *Ariel*, *Cutty Sark*, *Taeping*, and a dozen others—whose annual races home from the East I have already referred to. And though their days were numbered at least they went out in a burst of glory. The *Cutty Sark*, probably the best known of them all, is, through the sentimental attachment of one of her former captains, still afloat

in her old rig and safely moored at Falmouth, where she may one day become as historic as the *Victory*. Some authorities claim that the *Cutty Sark* was the fastest sailing-ship in the world; others consider that the *Thermopylæ* was even speedier. Mr Basil Lubbock, that indefatigable enthusiast and authority on square-rigged ships, holds the opinion that the *Thermopylæ* was best in moderate and light winds and the *Cutty Sark* superior in strong breezes. The *Thermopylæ* made better average passages, but the *Cutty Sark* excelled on a day's run. She {119} {120} {121} holds the record for the Indian Ocean for a day's run with 363 nautical miles. It has never been exceeded by a sailing-ship.


S.R.H.R.

To settle all doubts as to which was the superior vessel from the point of view of speed the two ships were pitted against each other in a race home from Shanghai in 1872. Both starting on the same day, they remained within sight of each other for nearly a week, though the *Cutty Sark* was slightly ahead. After this they separated until the middle of July, when they were again together, the *Thermopylæ* coming up astern. A few days later she had drawn a mile or so ahead of her rival, only to lose her advantage when the two ships ran into a fresh trade wind E.S.E. This suited the *Cutty Sark* perfectly, and she made over 300 miles a day on three successive days, thereby gaining a long lead. On August 15 she ran into heavy seas which carried away her rudder and put her definitely out of the race. For six days she lay hove to, while a jury rudder was constructed and shipped. This, while the ship was rolling all ways in the heavy seas, was, as can be imagined, a feat of extraordinary difficulty, and it was no sooner accomplished than a strong gale blew up, which strained the makeshift rudder severely. But it held, and did service for nearly a month, when it came adrift altogether and had to be refitted, a work that took considerable time, patience, ingenuity, and, above all, skilful seamanship. During these delays the *Thermopylæ* had, of course, gained an enormous lead. With her somewhat shaky steering-gear the *Cutty Sark* was forced to slow down her speed, but in spite of all this delay she reached the English Channel but six days after the *Thermopylæ*. And since she had lost more than six days while replacing her rudder there is no doubt that but for the accident she would have arrived home first. Nevertheless there were years when the *Thermopylæ* made better passages than her rival. So it would seem that, for sailing qualities, there was really very little to {122} choose between them. The honours may well be considered as even.

So much has been written about the great tea race from Foochow to London in 1866 that I am reluctant to drag it in here, yet some reference to it cannot very well be omitted. In that year practically the whole of the tea fleet left Foochow at the same time bound for Europe, each captain straining every rope and sail in his ship to get home first. At the start the ships were together, so that the sea appeared crowded with white-winged ships. But as the days went on they drew apart, stringing out across the Indian Ocean, with the *Taeping*, *Fiery Cross*, *Serica*, *Ariel*, and *Taitsing* leading.[21] When the Cape of Good Hope was rounded the *Fiery Cross* was in the lead, with the *Ariel* close behind. Racing up the Atlantic to the Channel, the order of the ships constantly altered, until the *Ariel* and the *Taeping* gained a permanent lead over the others. These two vessels actually came abreast of

Deal together, and so made a dead heat of it with a passage of ninety-nine days from China. The *Serica* arrived a few hours later, to be followed by the *Fiery Cross* the following day and the *Taitsing* two days later. An amazing race!

These tea races took place for many years, but the contest which I have just outlined was the greatest of them all.

THE TEA RACE

It is difficult to realize the excitement and interest aroused by the annual tea races. During the twenty-five years between 1850 and 1875 the clipper-ship records were matters of as much public interest and importance as those of the Atlantic blue-ribbon holders of the present time. The progress of the

leading ships was telegraphed to London as they were sighted from coastguard stations and points ashore, and prominently featured in the newspapers. The names of the ‘crack’ ships *Cutty Sark*, *Thermopylæ*, *Spindrift*, *Ariel*, *Sir Lancelot*, *Taeping*, *Lahloo*, *Titania*, *Norman Court*, *Fiery Cross*, and *Leander* were as much {123} {124} {125} household names as those of the Cunarders and White Star liners are to the present generation. The *Illustrated London News* used to feature full-page illustrations of the favourite ships in quaint Victorian woodcuts and engravings, as anyone who has looked through back numbers of the sixties and seventies may see for themselves. The age of sail was not as yet dead, and the steamers of that time carried sails. Steamships were still classified according to their rig, schooner or barque-rigged, as the case might be. How curious would appear a shipping notice of a modern liner beginning, “The magnificent barque-rigged turbine steamer *Mauretania*”!

I have not attempted to describe all the famous Indian, China, and Australian clippers, as it is not possible to do so within the space of a chapter. I should like, however, before passing on to the era of steam to refer to some of the more famous of the clippers sailing between Europe and Australia, who went out with emigrants and returned laden principally with gold or wool. I have in mind especially the *Marco Polo*, *Lightning*, *Donald McKay*, *James Baines*, *Loch Torridon*, and *Torrens*. The *Marco Polo*, built in Canada, was bought by James Baines, of Liverpool, who at once put her on the Australian run. This was in 1852. Her captain is said to be the originator of the famous boast, “Hell or Melbourne in sixty days.” However, he reached Melbourne safely, and with a record passage of sixty-eight days. Incidentally the sailing-ship had out-distanced a steamer,[22] arriving in Melbourne a week before her. On her return to England, after a voyage on which she again beat the same steamer by a week, she was advertised as the fastest ship afloat. On this passage she carried £100,000 in alluvial gold, including a nugget weighing over twenty-one pounds. This was presented to Queen Victoria by the Government of Victoria, Australia. The *Marco Polo* {126} was the first important ship of the Black Ball Line which is immortalized in the sea-chanty:

> ’Twas on a Black Baller I first served my time,
> *To my yeo, ho! blow the man down!*
> And on that Black Baller I wasted my prime,
> *Oh, give us some time to blow the man down*.

The *Marco Polo* was an old-fashioned ship in the sense that she was frigate-built, with single topsails, painted ports, and a rather stumpy shape. She was by no means a graceful ship to look at, though of course she had a certain perverse beauty in her stumpiness and old-fashioned rig to those who looked for it. On the other hand, the famous *Lightning*, another American-built ship in the Australian service,[23] was one of the loveliest square-riggers on the Indian Ocean. The *Lightning* was claimed by many to be a faster ship than the *Cutty Sark*. Indeed, there were so many ships which were said to be the fastest afloat that one hesitates to say which was the fastest. Certainly the greatest number of nautical miles ever covered by a sailing-ship in twenty-four hours was the 436 miles made by the *Lightning*. But this was on the Atlantic, and really should not concern us here. Her first passage to Australia was made in seventy-seven days, and the homeward run in sixty-four days. She brought back a million pounds' worth of gold dust. What a prize for a roving freebooter!

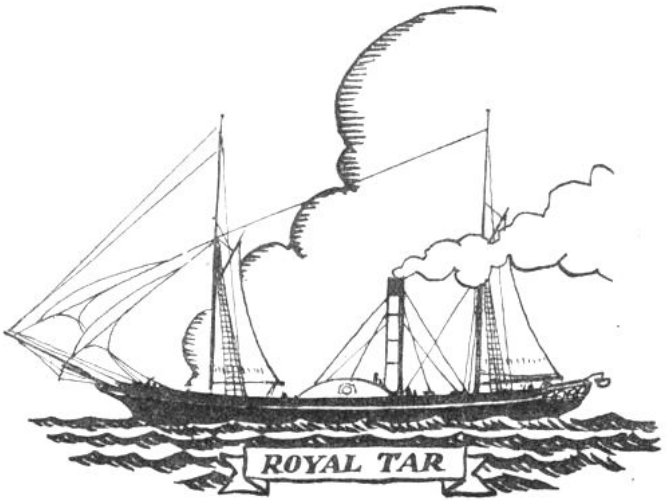
A close rival to the *Lightning* was the *James Baines*, another American-built ship, which in 1854 almost equalled the former vessel's record to Australia with a passage but fifteen hours longer. These clippers bred a new race of captains, men who took risks that the old Indiamen commanders would have been appalled at. The "Hell or Melbourne" boast was contagious. In the craze for faster passages ships were made to carry sail until spars gave way under the strain. It was rarely that a passage was made without a sail or two being blown out and a topgallant mast {127} being split. But every one—owners, captains, and passengers—agreed that the risks were worth it, and remarkably few ships were lost in spite of the dare-devil cracking on. On one occasion the *James Baines* narrowly escaped driving on to a lee-shore on the Irish coast when tacking in a stiff breeze, but the captain, on being criticized, was unrepentant. You couldn't get every ounce of speed out of your ship if you erred on the side of caution.

In 1857, during the Mutiny, the *James Baines* and the *Champion of the Seas* raced out to India with troops, and made fine passages until they reached the Bay of Bengal, where they were delayed by calms. The *James Baines* eventually reached Calcutta 101 days out from Portsmouth, and the *Champion of the Seas* two days later. In the following year the *James Baines*, while unloading a mixed cargo of cow-hides, jute, linseed, and rice at Liverpool, caught fire, and was totally destroyed. Her rival, the *Lightning*, was also destroyed by fire. She was taking on a cargo of wool at Geelong, Australia, in October 1869, when smoke was seen coming from the fore-hold. Though efforts were made to quench the flames by sinking her with gun-fire, they were not successful, and the famous old clipper was lost.

Another fast clipper in the Australian trade was the *Torrens*, which was built at Sunderland in 1875. Her fastest passage from land to land[24] was sixty-one days, and if we compare this with the runs of some previous clippers we begin to feel that the Cape voyage to Australia in sail had been reduced to the irreducible minimum of days. Not the least interesting feature about the *Torrens* was the fact of her having been one of Joseph Conrad's ships. He served as mate on her in 1893. John Galsworthy made a passage in the *Torrens* while Conrad was mate, and the incident was the beginning of a long friendship between the two men of letters.

With the *Torrens* we will leave the clippers and turn back the pages of history thirty years or so to the beginning of the {128} P. and O., the line of steamers that were one day practically to monopolize the Indian Ocean. This line began as the Peninsular Steam Navigation Company, sailing between Great Britain, Portugal, and Spain—hence the Peninsular. The original prospectus, sent out in August 1834, began:

> The very imperfect state of communication between Great Britain, Spain, and Portugal, for Passengers, Mail, and Goods, has led many persons connected with the trade of these countries to contemplate a more efficient and regular establishment of Packets than has yet existed. Political circumstances have hitherto rendered such an attempt hopeless; there is now the strongest probability of the affairs of the Peninsula being permanently settled, and strong prospects are held out of great increase in the trade and intercourse with this country. It is therefore considered that the time is now come when the means of communication must be improved, and rendered more rapid and regular:—this can only be effected by means of Steam Packets, built on a large, commodious, and powerful scale.



AN EARLY P. AND O. STEAMER

The political circumstances referred to were, of course, the overthrow of the Government of the pretender, Dom Miguel, in 1832, and the establishment of the young Queen on the throne of Portugal. A certain Scotchman named Arthur Anderson had taken an active part in securing the throne for the Queen by assisting to raise funds in England for the campaign against the pretender. Anderson's interest in the affairs of Portugal were no doubt greatly influenced by the fact that he was partner in a firm[25] trading between Great Britain and Portugal, but, however that may be, his services to the royal family were not forgotten when shortly afterward he and his partner formed the Peninsular Steam Navigation Company, trading between London, Vigo, Oporto, Lisbon, and Cadiz. In 1837 the young firm secured the mail contract between these ports. During the next three years the line extended its activities to the Mediterranean, calling at Malta for Egypt, with the result that in 1840 it assumed, by charter, the title by {129} which it is known at the present time—the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company. While the Blackwall frigates were making the long voyage to the East *via* the Cape of Good Hope, enterprising merchants and travellers were trying a short cut to India across the Isthmus of Suez. This was known as the Overland Route, and though a quicker way to the East, it was beset by so many disadvantages that it was not popular, and never seriously competed with the Cape route. Passengers and mails left the ship at Alexandria, and thence travelled by the Mahmudiya Canal to Cairo.[26] From there they were taken across the desert to Suez, ninety miles distant, by two-wheeled carts, which carried six persons, and were drawn by horses or mules, which were

changed several times at stations *en route*. The journey, barring mishaps, occupied about eighteen hours, eight hours of which must be deducted for stops. Cargo and mails were transported across the desert by camel-train, and frequently more than 3000 camels were required to transport the cargo of a {130} single ship. What a sight it must have been for the Bedouin! It was an expensive form of transport, and only the more valuable commodities, such as tea, dyes, precious metals, and silks, could be economically dispatched by this route. Heavier general cargo continued to go round the Cape until the Suez Canal was opened. At the Suez end of the route ships were waiting to embark mails and passengers to continue the voyage so inconveniently interrupted by the land. The inconvenience and delays of the 168-mile canal and river transport between Alexandria and Cairo decided the company in 1851 to begin the construction of a railway between these points. This railway, built by Sir Macdonald Stephenson, was completed in 1859, and was an immense improvement upon the old barge method of travel. The company also erected and staffed at its own expense a number of lighthouses on the Red Sea coast. But frequently when the far-sighted directors saw opportunities for improvement they were obstructed by the narrow obstinacy of the politicians. For example, for eighteen years after the opening of the Suez Canal the Post Office officials refused to allow mails to be taken through it, and consequently, while other nations were taking advantage of the new and swift means of getting mails to India, the P. and O. line had to keep up the expensive and highly inefficient overland caravans. It was not until 1888 that the old gentlemen of the Post Office were persuaded to change their minds. The mails were sorted on board ship as they are done on many steamers to-day. Those mails coming from India were put into heavy iron boxes {131} and soldered down as a protection against the great heat in the Indian Ocean and Red Sea. The sorting was done by native and European postal clerks. In an early copy of the *Illustrated London News* is a drawing of the post office on board the P. and O. steamer *Pekin*. While Englishmen are sitting, stripped to the waist, at pigeonholes, sorting mail, Indian clerks are squatting on their haunches on the deck, stamping envelopes spread out before them.

The opening of the Suez Canal marked a period of adversity for the P. and O. The cause of this was twofold. Simultaneously with the opening of the canal the compound engine had been adopted as motive power for merchant ships. It was as if the completion of the great engineering feat had stimulated marine engineering firms to celebrate the event by producing an engine which was a great improvement on every previous type. However that may be, it rendered obsolete the ships of the P. and O. as far as motive power went, and forced the company to scrap many of their old steamers.

REST-HOUSE ON THE OVERLAND ROUTE

The opening of the canal naturally made the elaborate and costly organization of the overland route, with its camels, wagons, coaches, rest-houses, warehouses, staff, and what-not, as out of date as the sedan chair. It meant reorganization or bankruptcy. However, during the eighteen years that the company were forced to keep up the overland route through the blind policy of the Post Office, its affairs had been reorganized, and four steamers of the most modern pattern built. Since {132} 1888, when the overland route was done away with, the company's fortunes have prospered. Smaller lines were absorbed into the bigger company lines to Australia, New Zealand, and China, until the P. and O. has come to rival the East India Company in point of tonnage. It owns shipyards and graving-docks in addition to its enormous fleet of steamers which operate all over the world.

The house flag of the P. and O., divided diagonally from each corner into four triangular sections —reading from the luff, or inner side—blue, white, red, yellow, owes its curious design to the connexion of the founders of the company with the royal houses of Spain and Portugal. The luff and top quarter, blue and white, were the Portuguese colours, while the other two quarters are the red and yellow of Spain.

SORTING MAILS ON A P. AND O. STEAMER

This outline of nineteenth-century Indian Ocean shipping does not profess to be more than a general picture, but enough has been said to show how the history of its shipping is a very living thing which, like architecture, reflects the spirit of the age. The slow, picturesque old Indiaman will never come back; nor do I think that sail can ever return. Steam too may go the way of sail, but mechanical propulsion in some form or other will continue to improve until ships are no longer ships. Funnels

and masts will disappear, until—well, one hesitates to think what monstrosity will shuttle across to India in 2032. Possibly all water transport will be obsolete. We can even now go to India by air.

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[17] Frigate means a flush-decked vessel, and not necessarily a man-of-war.

[18] The account of this incident is given in the author's book *Ships and Sailors*.

[19] Quarter galleries are the windowed 'bays' projecting on either side of the stern of bygone ships. They can be seen at their best on the *Victory* at Portsmouth.

[20] Contrary to custom, the definite article was part of the ship's name.

[21] These are not in the order of their places.

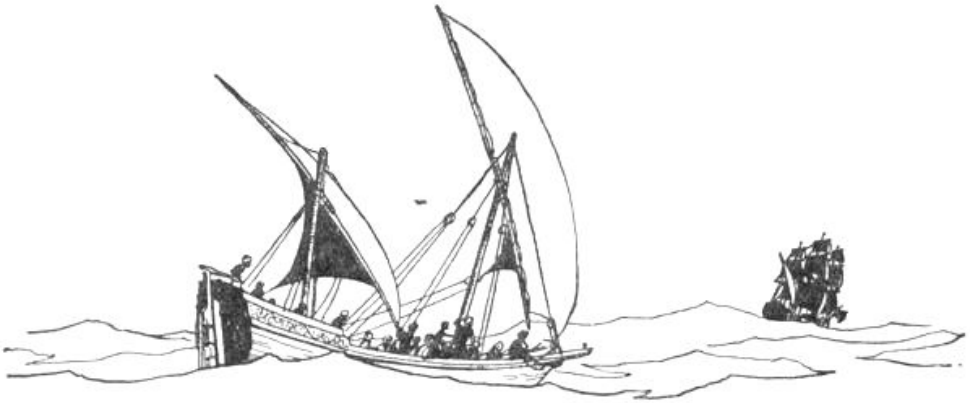
[22] The *Australia*.

[23] Built by Donald McKay in 1854.

[24] From Plymouth to Port Adelaide.

[25] Willcox and Anderson, shipowners.

[26] It is 168 miles from Alexandria to Cairo *via* the canal.



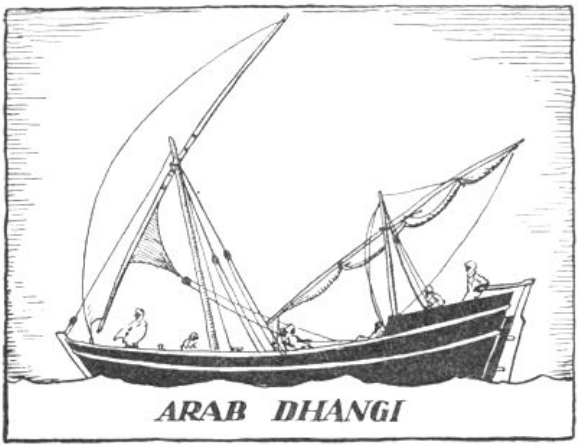
CHAPTER VI

The Sea-rovers

Until one hundred years ago the Indian Ocean was infested with pirates. From Madagascar to Malaysia, from the fortieth parallel to Malabar, they cruised in search of unprotected merchant ships. The origin of their ancient profession is lost in the remoteness of history. The first mention of pirates in Eastern waters occurs in Marco Polo's journal. He refers to the kingdom of Melibar and its corsairs. They sailed in a two-masted craft, resembling the modern dhow, which was called a 'grab,' from *ghorab*, a raven. These craft, being of shallow draught and slight in build, were unsuited to venturing far from land, hence the ancient pirates of Malabar and Arabia kept to the coasts, lying off harbours and rivers in wait for ships entering or departing.

Until the coming of European caravels the Arabian and Indian rovers had preyed on ships of their own nationality, but when British, Dutch, and French East India companies began populating the Indian Ocean with richly laden ships from Europe the pirates found a more exciting and more worthwhile victim, and they pounced like wolves on lone ships loaded so deep with cargo that they usually had small chance of escaping. It was the presence of pirates and their close cousins, privateers, that gradually forced the Indiamen to carry guns, until the time came when there was {134} little difference between an Indiaman and a man-of-war. One must not suppose,

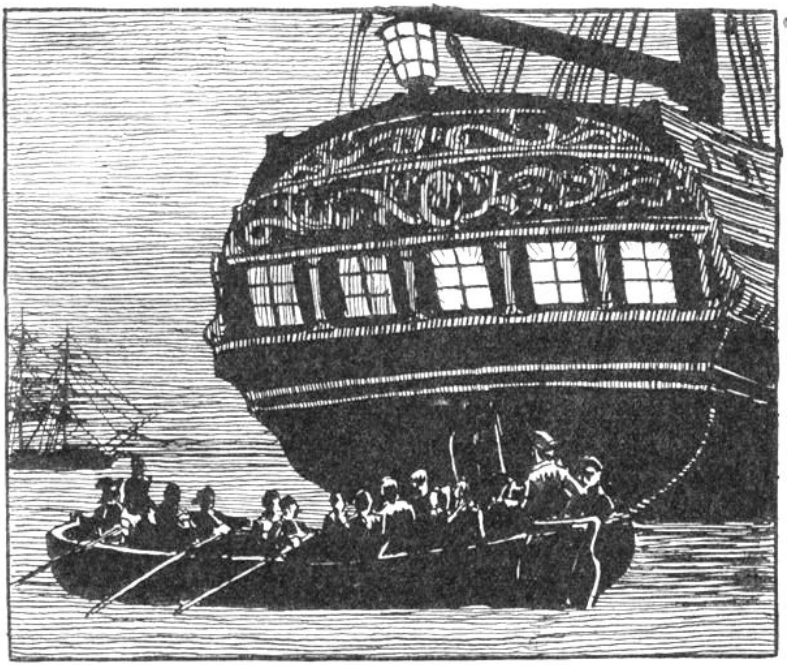
however, that a row of cannon was always a guarantee against attack from the rovers. These gentry had grown bolder, and frequently attacked vessels better armed than themselves. But what they lacked in armament they made up for in ferocity. The very sight of the red flag[27] was enough to chill the blood of every honest seaman. Emboldened by successes against merchantmen, the pirates frequently had the temerity to attack men-of-war.


ARAB DHANGI

In the year 1685 H.M.S. *Phœnix*, forty-two guns, under the command of Captain John Tyrrel, was cruising between Bombay and the Persian Gulf. Her presence in these waters was for the purpose of patrolling the trade routes for the protection of merchantmen against pirates. It was on September 13, during a fresh gale, that the crew of the *Phœnix* saw lying at anchor off Cossar a low-built native vessel with a long beakhead, the typical pirate craft of those seas. She was recognized as a Sanganian pirate of about 150 tons, carrying eight guns and a hundred and twenty men. The *Phœnix* fired a shot, but a column of white water in the sea midway between the two vessels showed the ball to have fallen short. The range was too long, so the *Phœnix* tacked down to her in a fresh gale, firing constantly. The pirates had in the meantime slipped their cable, but they did not run away. As the man-of-war approached nearer the rovers opened fire, killing four men {135} on board her. At half-past one in the afternoon the *Phœnix* had drawn alongside the pirate, and wrought deadly execution on her crowded decks by well-shotted broadsides. In spite of the slaughter the pirate's decks remained swarming with men flourishing scimitars and other affrighting weapons. For this reason Captain Tyrrel decided not to attempt boarding. The pirates, as befitted descendants of the Rajput, were forbidden by tradition to surrender, but the overwhelming rain of shot from the warship caused the pirate to haul

off, and this manœuvre was repeated several times during the afternoon, until the *Phœnix* had reduced her enemy to a floating wreck. At six o'clock she again got close aboard, and poured a terrible broadside of double-headed shot into an adversary now greatly chastened, but still unwilling to surrender. A few moments later the ships touched, and during the brief interval that the strakes of the *Phœnix* and the pirate were rubbing together in the {136} seaway, Lieutenant Byng[28] with nine men sprang on to the pirate's deck with drawn swords. But even as they did so the craft began to drift astern and sink. Almost before the boarding-party had time to get their bearings the pirate craft sank under their feet, and they found themselves ignominiously thrust into the water alongside of their enemy, both now endeavouring to escape a common danger. Though Lieutenant Byng had received two severe wounds in the back, he was able to keep afloat until he was picked up with seven survivors out of the nine Englishmen. Many of the pirates were seen hanging to the lower wales of the *Phœnix*, and as it was now dark they were hauled aboard by the light of lanthorns. Pirates to the number of forty were rescued and taken to Bombay, securely tied together and under strong guard.

It was not the activities of native pirates that caused the greatest stir in Indian seas, but those of renegade white men—one-time honest shipmen become outlaws. They sailed in bigger vessels than the natives usually possessed; hence their field of operation was less circumscribed and their chances of success greater. During the period that might be designated as the heyday of piracy certain gentlemen among the rovers earned a sinister immortality. The Atlantic had its Blackbeard, Rackham, Morgan, Roberts, L'Olonnois, and Brasiliano, while the Indian Ocean, if not so well endowed, could boast of its Captains Avery, England, Kidd, and Lafitte. Captain Avery's greatest exploit was the taking of the Grand Mogul's ship.



SIXTEEN MEN CAME QUIETLY ABOARD AT NIGHT

John Avery, nicknamed Long Ben, was born at Plymouth, Devon, in 1665, and went to sea when still a boy. By 1715 he had become mate of the thirty-gun privateer *Duke*, out of Bristol, commanded by a Captain Gibson, whose weakness for the bottle was to lose him his ship. One night when the *Duke*, in company with another privateer, {137} the *Duchess*, was lying off Corunna Avery and some fellow-conspirators from both vessels made Captain Gibson prisoner, and put to sea in the *Duke*. Sixteen men from the *Duchess* had come quietly aboard the *Duke*, and with a few of Avery's men who were in the secret secured the rest of the crew below while the captain lay in a drunken sleep in his cabin. He was wakened by the motion of the ship and the rattle of blocks. "What's the matter?" he asked. "Does she drive?" Avery, who had entered the cabin, answered, "No, we are at sea, and I am captain now." The captain listened with fear written in his bloodshot eyes as Avery calmly announced his intention of sailing into the Indian Ocean, where there were many rich ships to be taken. But when he ended by saying that the captain could remain on board or go ashore, as he chose, {138} he was greatly relieved, and with a few other men of the same mind was shortly afterward put ashore in a boat. The *Duke* was now set out on the long passage to Madagascar, where it was intended to fraternize with the pirates there and refit the ship. There Avery was joined forces by two sloops

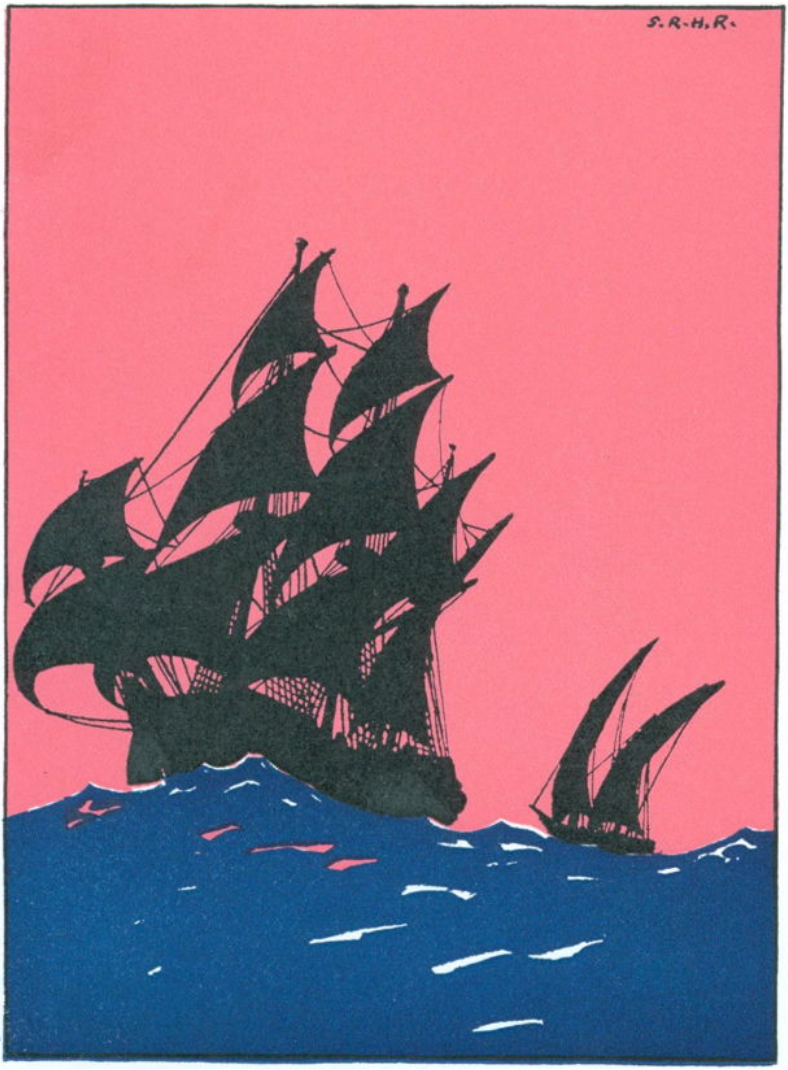
from the West Indies, which had been stolen by their present crews. Though he did not relish the idea of having to divide any spoils they hoped to get with the sloops' men, on the other hand he welcomed their assistance, so in his dark mind he planned a diabolical scheme which was to succeed better than he knew.

The three vessels laid a course to the north, and off the mouth of the Indus sighted a ship. The pirates at once put on all sail and gave chase. As they approached the stranger, who had made no attempt to escape, they saw that they had to deal with a large galleon crowded with people. She appeared to be preparing to resist, and this became more apparent when she ran up her colours. To the great astonishment of the pirates, these were the Mogul's colours. This sacred banner did not, however, have much impression on Avery, for he sent the two sloops to attack on either quarter, much as two wolves might leap on the quarters of a stag. As the sloops came alongside and her men clambered like evil monkeys on to her deck they found that the Mogul's ship had struck her colours. There was no fighting to do. The prize was found to be loaded to the hatches with treasure. She was bound for Mecca with a number of distinguished people from the great Mogul's Court, one of whom was his own daughter. All were travelling with the panoply of riches and magnificence accompanying princes. Later the tale went around in England that Avery had married the Grand Mogul's daughter, and though this is unlikely it made a pretty piece of long-shore gossip in Poplar and Wapping. When the Grand Mogul got news of the capture his fury was terrible; he threatened to massacre every Englishman in {139} {140} {141} India. And had not the East India Company given him their promise to spare no effort to hunt down and punish the rovers, there is no knowing what might have happened.

CAPTAIN AVERY

Meanwhile the pirates had sailed away south to Madagascar, with the loot stowed in the holds of the three vessels, the galleon having been set free after stripping her of everything worth taking. During the passage to Madagascar Avery found an opportunity to carry out his plan to get rid of the two sloops which had been of such assistance in taking the Mogul's ship.

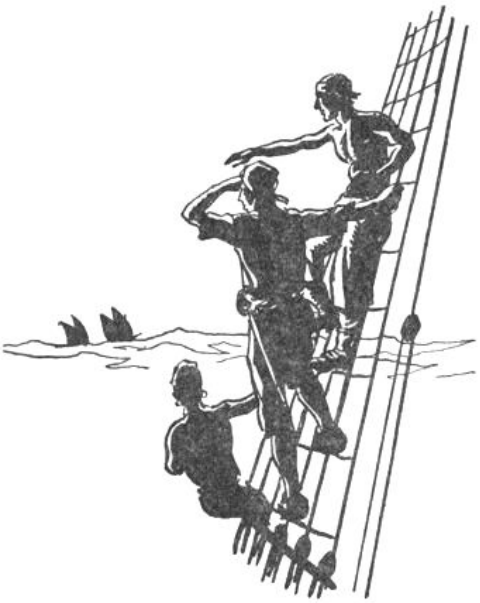
The *Duke* was hove to, and boats were sent to her consorts, inviting the captains to a conference on the flagship. In the cabin of the *Duke* a mock council was held by Avery, who pointed out to the sloops' captains that if a storm should come up and they should become separated a lone sloop would sooner or later be taken, and therefore it would be prudent to transfer the treasure to the *Duke*, where it would be at all times safe. And if by any chance a storm should separate them they would meet at the rendezvous at Madagascar. The two captains fell into the trap, and transferred their part of the treasure to the *Duke*. With this on board Avery began tampering with his own crew, hinting how much richer all would be if they did not have to share the spoil with the sloops' crews. His men fell in with the plan, and under cover of darkness altered their course, and by the next morning the unlucky sloops were nowhere in sight. The *Duke* sailed to the south, round the Cape, and so to North America, where the pirates hoped to live ashore unrecognized. Avery landed at Boston, where the *Duke* was sold. It was quickly realized that it would be dangerous to try to dispose of the precious stones, which made up most part of the treasure, in Puritan New England, so a sloop was bought and sailed to England. The crew were disbanded in an Irish port, where many of them successfully pleaded for a royal pardon and settled down in Ireland; but Avery, with the greater part of the jewels, took passage to Bideford, {142} in Devon, where he invited some Bristol merchants to meet him. When they saw the packets of stones, mostly diamonds, they induced Avery to trust them to sell the jewels for him, giving him in the meantime a little money for his immediate needs. Avery waited in Bideford to hear from the merchants, but in vain. Thus were the crews of the sloops revenged. The arch-pirate died in poverty, after trying without success to get payment from the merchants, who answered his threats and entreaties by threatening to expose him as a pirate.



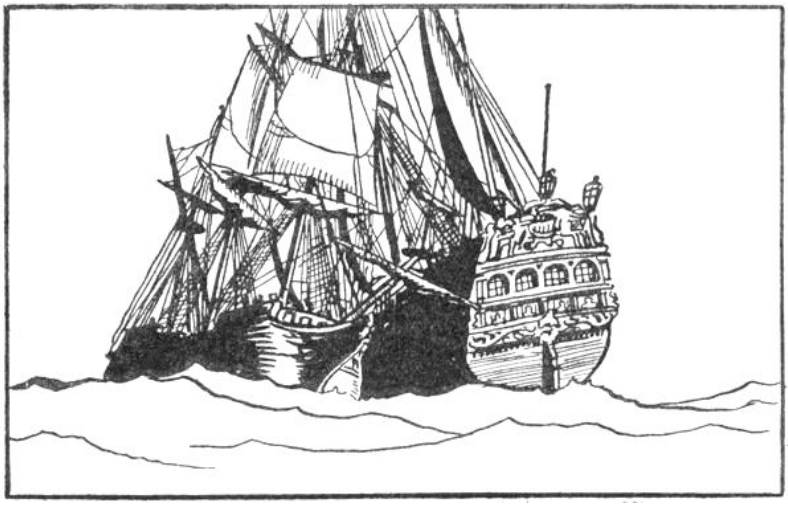
THE CHASE

More has been written about the notorious Captain Kidd than any other rover of the sea, and he has both his champions and his detractors. The present writer was inclined to the view that Captain Kidd was a misunderstood and unfairly treated man[29] until he came across some sound counter-arguments. It is difficult to reach the truth in a matter so remote in time and place, for events which happened in the Indian Ocean nearly two hundred and fifty years ago have become distorted like a mirage in the mirror of time. During the reign of William III Kidd, or Kid, commanded a

privateer in the West Indies, with such success that he was recommended to the British Government by Lord Bellamont as a likely man to drive the pirates out of West Indian waters. The Government, however, showed no interest in the proposal, whereupon Bellamont and some of his highly placed friends decided to fit up a ship and send it out with Kidd in command. It is said that the King himself had an interest in the venture. However that may be, Kidd received a royal commission as a privateer, with orders to proceed against enemy merchantmen and pirates alike. With his dual commission Kidd sailed from Plymouth in May 1696 in the *Adventure Galley* of thirty guns. He at once crossed to New York to recruit more men by promising them a share in the {143} legitimate spoils from any ship taken, after forty shares for the owners and himself had been deducted. With 155 men the *Adventure Galley* sailed *via* the Cape for Madagascar, where the pirates were known to resort. Arriving at that island, they found the pirates had gone, and were, presumably, cruising at sea. For several months Kidd hung about the coast, using up his provisions and getting no farther in his search. Discontent weakened the moral fibre of the crews, and when Kidd, who himself seemed to have been affected, hinted at the chances of obtaining riches by raiding the Mocha fleet off the entrance to the Red Sea he found his crew more than willing to take to piracy. Here historians differ in details, but what is probably the most authentic account tells how Kidd put in at Johanna, in the Comoro Islands, and that while there he attempted to force an East Indiaman—the *Sydney*—to strike her colours. Captain Gyfford, of the *Sydney*, refused to be intimidated, and when two other Indiamen, the *East India Merchant* and *Madras Merchant*, put in at Johanna Kidd departed. Off Perim the *Adventure Galley* dropped her hook and waited for the Mocha fleet. Kidd attacked a lone ship well outside Mocha harbour, but the timely approach of the British frigate *Sceptre* spoiled his game, and he made off. From Perim he sailed across to the Malabar coast, where he took the *Mary*, brigantine, his first capture. Thus



committed, Kidd and his crew became avowed pirates. From the *Mary* he took Thomas Parker, {144} her captain, to act as pilot, and a Portuguese, to be interpreter when one was needed. Kidd naturally began to get a bad reputation, and when the *Adventure Galley* put in at Calicut for provisions and water he was met everywhere with an unfriendly reception. Leaving Calicut, he was chased by Portuguese armed ships, and after a running fight got away. So far Kidd's depredations had been affairs of the meanest description, and he no doubt felt anxious to justify himself in the eyes of his followers. The opportunity to do so was not long in coming. Off the Malabar Islands he came upon a large ship, the *Quedah Merchant*, belonging to some Armenian merchants, which was bound from Bengal to Surat with something like twelve thousand pounds' worth of merchandise on board. Under French colours Kidd made chase and took her without the loss of a man. He set his captives ashore and transferred himself and his men to the *Quedah Merchant*, an altogether better ship than the galley which had served him thus far. The booty was sold at coast towns, and when the money was divided each man had £200 and {145} Kidd something like £8000 as his share. The news of these doings had leaked to England. The Grand Mogul, regarding the British as responsible for the loss of the *Quedah Merchant*, demanded an indemnity of two lakhs of rupees, and political tension grew strained. Bellamont and his friends heard the news of Kidd's defection, and had him declared outlawed—a terrible sentence. The Government at this time had issued a proclamation offering pardon to all pirates in the Indian Ocean who surrendered themselves before the end of April 1699, *with the exception of Captain Kidd and one other*. The notorious pirate had heard that the news of his deeds had reached England, and had decided to return, trusting to his influence with Lord Bellamont to escape the common penalty for piracy. But apparently he had not heard of the terrible proclamation, for he sailed to New York, where, after burying his treasure, he announced his arrival to Bellamont, who was then Governor of New England. Kidd, all unwitting, was lured to Boston, where he was arrested, and was sent to England to be tried for piracy on the high seas, the penalty for which was death. With nine of his men he appeared at the Old Bailey in May 1701, and all but three were found guilty. Kidd was also tried for killing his gunner in a quarrel. He protested his innocence, but without avail, and a week later he and six companions were hanged at Execution Dock, and their corpses were suspended in chains from posts on the river's edge as a warning to all seamen who passed that way.



THE “QUEDAH MERCHANT”

Another English filibuster who wrote his name in the history of the Indian Ocean was Captain Edward England, a man whom Captain Johnson, that enthusiastic pirates’ historian, described as “one of those men who seemed to have had such a share of reason as should have taught him better things.” This “share of reason” was one day to be the cause of his undoing, as we shall presently see. After a {146} sordid career in the West Indies, attacking and pillaging merchantmen, England and his rascals decided to sail for Madagascar, where they arrived in the year 1720. Here their gear was overhauled and the crew allowed to go ashore and amuse themselves with the native women. After a short stay water and stores were taken on board, and the pirates sailed for the coast of Malabar, then renowned for its rich pickings for bold men.

Malabar, on the west coast of India, numbered among its important ports Goa, Surat, Bombay, and Calicut. Between these ports a busy trade was carried on by sea, a trade from which the nimble pirates took a heavy toll. Captain England cruised off this coast for some weeks, capturing several small ships which he plundered and set free. Being unsatisfied with the season’s work, he decided to stand for Madagascar, where he hoped to fall in with an East Indiaman. He had now two vessels[30] under his command, and thus strengthened felt ready to attack anything that might come his way. Now it so happened that two East Indiamen and an Ostender—*i.e.*, a Flemish ship—were watering at the island of Johanna, north of Madagascar, when Captain England arrived there with his two ships. Both parties were surprised, and while the newcomers prepared to attack, the merchantmen

prepared for defence. The two East India captains agreed to support each other, but as the pirates drew nearer one of the Indiamen and the Ostender hauled up their anchors and stood out to sea, leaving the other Indiaman, the *Cassandra*, under Captain Macrae,[31] alone to face the corsairs. The *Cassandra*, being unable to get clear in time, signalled and fired a gun to request the other ships to rally to her assistance, but they ignored the signals and continued on their course seaward. The *Cassandra*, with her guns primed and shotted, awaited the coming of the pirate ships. The {147} attack began as soon as the newcomers were within range, the Indiaman replying gallantly. That the merchantman should dare to resist infuriated the pirates to such a pitch that they vowed to have the life of every man on board her. But to such good purpose did the *Cassandra's* men reply that the action continued throughout the afternoon, and nearly a hundred of the pirates were slain.[32] But in spite of Captain Macrae's courageous resistance the *Cassandra* was in a desperate plight, and those of her crew who were not killed were worn out with fatigue.

Toward nightfall Macrae decided that his only chance was to run the *Cassandra* aground and get his survivors ashore in the longboat. This manœuvre was successfully carried out under cover of the smoke from the pirate's guns, and the men, once ashore, made their way inland as rapidly as possible to the court of the local native ruler to request his protection. Captain Macrae arrived in a state of collapse from the result of a severe head wound, but after a few days' rest was able to resume his place as commander. While a guest of the local ruler Macrae heard the news that the pirates had offered a reward of 10,000 dollars for his capture.

After ten days in hiding, being then sufficiently recovered to travel, and counting on the possibility that the pirates' fury would be somewhat abated, Macrae returned to the coast and actually went on board the pirate ship to ask Captain England to help him and his men to return to India. His courage seemed to excite hatred rather than respect from the pirates, and they were for killing him at once. Macrae, surrounded by men who were already fingering their knives and demanding his death, stood in a position of extreme peril. Captain England, who had been ready to show mercy, was overruled by his men, and Macrae's chances appeared very slim until he was recognized by one of the pirates, who had once served under him, {148} and who, in his perverted way, had a curious respect for his one-time captain. This pirate, a picturesque rascal with some influence over his fellows, took Macrae's part, with the result that his life was spared, albeit reluctantly and with many muttered threats. After much discussion he was allowed to take one of their own damaged sloops that lay near, but his request for clothes for

his semi-naked crew ashore was refused. Instead they threw some bales of cloth into the sloop and bade him be off before they changed their minds.

Captain Macrae had been accompanied by his second mate, Richard Lazenby, and him the pirates refused to release. Lazenby, who was prisoner with the pirates for several months, survived to tell the tale of his experiences. After a few days the pirates departed in the *Cassandra*, which they had refloated and repaired, but before they left Captain Macrae, at great personal risk, went on board and pleaded for the release of Lazenby, though without success. Macrae and his men set about patching up the badly damaged sloop with a jury mast and a few odd sails, with the intention of making for the Indian coast to report the loss of the *Cassandra*. This sloop, which the pirates had been pleased to leave them, was a small Dutch craft of 300 tons named the *Fancy*. In a semi-naked state and half-starved, the survivors brought the sloop to Bombay after a forty-eight days' passage.

Macrae's defence of the *Cassandra*, and the courage and enterprise he had shown afterward, put him in good favour with the Directors of the East India Company. He was given a squadron of ships to hunt Captain England and his men. When the pirates heard the news they were aroused to a terrible fury, called him ungrateful, and vowed to torture him if they ever caught him. No fate, they said, was bad enough for such a man.

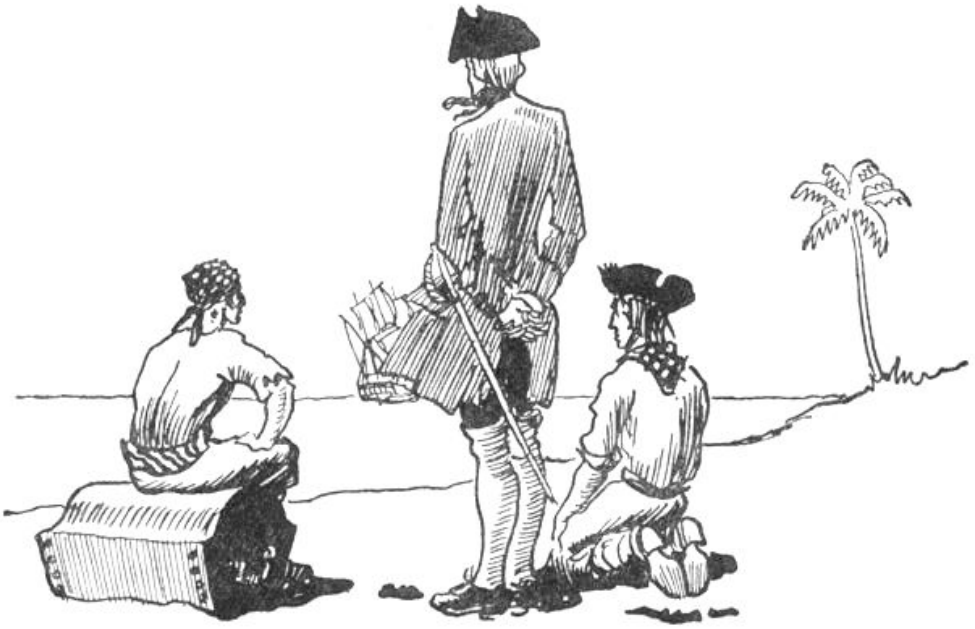
CAPTAIN EDWARD ENGLAND

From Lazenby's report when he returned to India we learn of the movements of the pirates after leaving Johanna. {151} Lazenby during the entire period of his forced captivity with the pirates was treated harshly, and more than once threatened with death. From Johanna they had sailed for the Malabar coast, where they arrived in October 1720. When a day off the land

they sighted two ships which Captain England took to be Indiamen. He demanded of Lazenby that he should tell him the secret signalling code of the Company in order that it might be used to decoy the two vessels, but it happened that Lazenby did not himself know the code, and, being unable to give it—even had he been so disposed—was threatened with torture by his ferocious captors. However, it was soon seen that the distant vessels were two Arab dhows from Muscat, and Lazenby was temporarily left in peace. The dhows were captured without much trouble, a couple of shots from the *Cassandra* being sufficient to make them strike. The captain of one of the dhows and a merchant who was travelling in her were put to torture by the pirates to force them to divulge the treasure thought to be hidden on board. When land was made on the next day the pirates debated among themselves whether to sink the captured vessels, along with a large number of Arab horses they carried, or set them free. Horses were of no use to the pirates. Finally they decided to disable the dhows by throwing their sails overboard and taking their store of water and provisions. After carrying out this amiable plan they perceived a small fleet, which was soon discovered to be East Indiamen, approaching from the coast. Captain England, who had two vessels, the *Cassandra* and his old ship, the *Victory*, felt strong enough to accept the challenge. Hoisting the red flag, which was also the Mohammedan colours, he waited for the Indiamen. But after a whiff or two from their guns and a closer sight of their strength and armament he hauled off and got away from such unfavourable odds. A little later the pirates were able to vent their anger and humiliation on a small native gallivat loaded {152} with cotton. The manner of venting their spleen was to disable the vessel completely, throw the cargo of cotton into the sea, and torture the crew. Having done this, they sailed away, leaving the miserable wretches without food and hardly any water in their disabled vessel to find their way back to land as best they could.

The *Cassandra* and *Victory* now stood south until they came to the Laccadive Islands, where they sent a boat ashore for water. Here the pirates found a native settlement (Amendivi), and, landing in force, indulged in a saturnalia of licence and destruction. They ravished the women and girls, destroyed the coconut-groves, and put the town to the torch. While they were amusing themselves in this fashion a gale arose with such suddenness that the ships had to slip their cables and put out to sea, leaving seventy men and most of their water-casks ashore. Ten days later they were able to put back and pick up the marooned men and the casks of precious water. Sailing away, they fell in with an Indiaman from Calicut, which they took without trouble. The captain was brought on board the *Cassandra* very drunk and loose with his tongue. Happening to recognize Lazenby among the pirates,

he blurted out the disquieting news that Macrae was fitting out a squadron to hunt the *Cassandra*. At this piece of news the pirates became wildly excited, and seemed to want to lay the blame on Lazenby. Many were for hanging him there and then, and though he escaped that fate his life from then onward was made unspeakably wretched. On one occasion the captain, in a fit of temper, thrashed him mercilessly with his cane, an indignity which the knowledge that he might have fared even worse enabled him to suffer philosophically. In spite of their curses and boastful threats of what they would do to Macrae if they caught him, the pirates were greatly dejected by the news of his fitting out a squadron for their pursuit. About this time a fleet of five sail was sighted, and when England saw them {153} bearing down to him he clapped on all sail and made off, fully believing them to be the avenging Macrae's squadron. The *Victory* was becoming unseaworthy, her planking being badly strained, and her bottom foul with weed. In this condition she found it difficult to keep up with her consort, and the pirates decided to make for Mauritius for repairs.



ENGLAND MAROONED

Captain England had for some time been losing his power over the rogues under his command. They had always despised his tendency to show mercy to his prisoners, regarding it as weakness. When the ships came to Madagascar the feeling against him had reached such a pitch of open mutiny

that he and three others were marooned. Here the piratical life of Captain England ends. As far as is known, he never went to sea again, but spent the rest of his days in Madagascar, living on the charity of the rovers calling there.

After marooning Captain England the *Cassandra*, under one Taylor, attacked and captured a rich Portuguese carack, the *Nostra Senhora de Cabo*, a seventy-gun ship, which, having been dismasted and more or less wrecked {154} after a storm, made no resistance, and fell an easy victim to the pirates. There were many important people on board the carack, and something like 3,500,000 dollars in treasure. The prisoners were set free after a ransom had been paid, and, probably because the pirates were in an amiable temper after their success, Lazenby was allowed to depart with the other prisoners. He was later able to get a passage in a French ship to St Helena, where he joined the *Sunderland*, an Indiaman homeward bound.

Of Taylor and his rascals we hear no more. Apparently Macrae never met them again. As we have seen, his boldness in dealing with the pirates earned him the Company's gratitude, which it showed in its customary substantial way. He was appointed to the important post of supervisor on the west coast of Sumatra, with the promise of the Presidency of Madras when that post became vacant. Eighteen months later the post was given to him. Within six years he had wiped out the corruption which had been so rife in Madras prior to his coming, and he became by his steadfast honesty one of the most respected governors the East India Company ever had. Leaving the Madras house in order for his successor, he retired with an ample fortune to an estate near his birthplace in Ayrshire, where he died in 1746.

On the coast from Bahrein to Cape Mussendon, on the Arabian side of the Persian Gulf, live the tribe of Arabs called the Joassamees, who a hundred and more years ago gave a great deal of trouble to merchant shipping by their acts of piracy. In 1797 the East India Company's man-of-war *Viper*, of ten guns, was attacked by Joassamee pirates as she lay at anchor in Bushire roads. While the *Viper's* captain was ashore some of the crews of the Arab dhows at anchor close by applied for powder and shot from the Company's agent on board the *Viper*. Such a request was not unusual, and the agent, without suspicions, {155} gave the Arabs an order for a certain quantity of powder and ball. The next morning, when the crew of the *Viper* were at breakfast, the dhows opened fire on the Indiaman without warning. As the Arabs swooped down on the ship, counting for success on the suddenness of their assault, her officers ordered the cables to be cut, as there was no time to get up the anchor. Before she could get under way the Arabs were alongside preparing to come aboard. There were four

dhows crowded with armed men, but the crew of the *Viper* offered such a desperate resistance that the pirates were again and again beaten back, each time with heavy losses. During the action Lieutenant Carruthers was severely wounded, and the responsibility of command fell to a midshipman, the captain, as already mentioned, being absent ashore. After getting clear of the dhows the *Viper* was able to bring her few guns to bear, which gave the Indiaman such an advantage that the tables {156} were turned against the attackers, and they were chased out to sea. This incident, which happened to be the first attempt on the part of the Joassamee pirates to take a British ship, was the beginning of over twenty years of intimidation and piracy among Indiamen and other ships in those seas.

HAUNTS OF THE JOASSAMEE PIRATES

In 1804 the East Indiaman *Fly* was taken by a French privateer in the Persian Gulf, but before the victors could come on board to take charge of their prize she ran aground off the island of Kenn, and sank with bullion and dispatches. The French humanely carried her passengers and crew to

Bushire, where they were given liberty. Here they purchased a dhow, and after taking on board water and provisions set out on a journey of over a thousand miles to Bombay. Shortly after they had begun the voyage they hove to off Kenn, thinking to attempt to recover the lost dispatches and gold. Near the entrance to the gulf they were surprised by Joassamee pirates, and, being unarmed, had no alternative but to surrender. The pirates carried them to their chief port of Ras-el-Khyma, and there held them for ransom. The destitute captives were meanwhile exhibited like wild beasts to the curious natives—the Joassamee women being particularly embarrassing in their unblushing curiosity concerning the men captives. The English prisoners were held in a vile prison at Ras-el-Khyma for several months while the Arabs waited for the ransom which never came. When at last they gave up hope of getting payment for their captives they decided to slay them as a lesson to the dilatory English in India. The wretched prisoners begged for a longer time of grace, and offered to show their captors where the treasure was sunk in return for their release. This offer the Arabs accepted, and gave their solemn promise that they would give the prisoners their liberty when the wreck of the Indiaman was shown to them. Fortunately for the English, the search was successful. Native divers, who had been taken along with the search party, located the bullion, and {157} so excited did the Arabs become that most of them dived into the water after the treasure. The dhow was at one time left practically unguarded, and the English made hasty plans to take the vessel and escape; but before the plan could be acted upon the guards became suspicious and gave the alarm.

When the bullion was recovered the English reminded their captors of the promise made, and this was reluctantly kept. They were landed on the island of Kenn, but only to find that their late captors were also coming ashore. The pirates, however, took no further notice of them. They had come ashore merely to rob and kill the few natives who eked out a wretched livelihood on the island. Having left a wake of death behind them, they departed, and left the English, who now came out from their hiding among the rocks, in possession of the place. In the abandoned village sufficient wood and cordage were found to construct two rafts. When these were launched in the surf one capsized, and all those on it were drowned; but those on the other raft managed to reach the Persian coast. Here, in the terrible heat, many without hats or boots, they set out on foot along the beach to reach Bushire, ignorant of the language, and in a country likely to be hostile. Add to these difficulties the lack of water and food, and one is not surprised that only two of this company, an officer named Jowl and a seaman named Penmel, ever lived to reach Bushire. During the march to Bushire the first to succumb were, strangely enough, the native servants.

Then the Europeans began to drop by the way, and had to be abandoned. Once the survivors were held prisoners by a wandering tribe, but were shortly afterward released. Finally the two survivors crawled into Bushire. The Joassamee pirates had taken their toll of another British ship.

Encouraged by easy captures, and flushed with pride over any insult they could heap on the hated infidel, the {158} Joassamees, increasing in numbers, grew bolder in their attacks on British vessels. The record of forays and of pirates repulsed or victorious is a terrible one, with incidents so horrible that one hesitates to set them down. This pirate terrorism grew so serious that at last the East India Company decided to send an expedition from Bombay to exterminate the pests. The naval forces consisted of *La Chiffone*, frigate, with Captain Wainwright as commodore, the *Caroline*, of thirty-eight guns, eight armed East Indiamen, four transports, and a bomb ketch. They sailed from Bombay to a rendezvous off Muscat, whence they stood for the Joassamee stronghold at Ras-el-Khyma. Troops were landed there, and after a battle the town was put to the torch. In the roads sixty dhows were destroyed, including an Indiaman captured by the pirates. The 'conquest' was not complete, however, for the troops had to withdraw when the Arabs were reinforced by hordes of native troops from the hinterland. Only by the extermination of the entire race could piracy be put down, and, since this violent remedy was not possible, the expedition had to retire with its objects only half accomplished. But it was noticeable that for several years afterward the Joassamee pirates respected the Union Jack. In 1815 the piratical depredations broke out anew, and four English ships were captured within sight of Mocha and their crews massacred. H.M.S. *Challenger* and three East Indiamen were sent on a punitive expedition to the notorious Ras-el-Khyma, only to find eight thousand of the enemy defending the town. As a landing was impossible against such a force, and as the ships could not get near enough to the shore for their gun-fire to be effective, they withdrew. And that was the end of that.

Three years later, in 1818, the pirates were more audacious than ever, venturing far out into the Indian Ocean in search of victims. In the following year a formidable squadron was sent to take the old stronghold at Ras-el-Khyma. The town fell after a siege of six days, and from {159} that time onward the trade of piracy in the Arabian Sea no longer paid. It was to continue a few years longer in other parts of the Indian Ocean, particularly off the island of Madagascar, which had been for centuries the recognized *pied-à-terre* of the sea-rovers. But with the inauguration of the convoy system for East Indiamen the difficulties of making a capture and the chances of being oneself taken were so considerable that, after such men as Jean Lafitte and Benito de Soto, the last of the Indian Ocean pirates, had

found to their sorrow that piracy no longer paid, the business fell into desuetude, and merchantmen were able to give up carrying guns and go their ways in peace.

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[27] Red was a commoner colour than black for a pirate flag.

[28] Father of the Admiral Byng who was shot, and an ancestor of Viscount Byng of Vimy.

[29] *Ships and Sailors*, by the author.

[30] They were of thirty-four and thirty-six guns respectively.

[31] Captain Johnson spells it “Macra.”

[32] The *Cassandra* had thirteen killed and twenty-four wounded.

{160}

CHAPTER VII

Monsoon and Typhoon

The monsoons, so familiar to travellers in the Indian seas, are the periodical and constantly recurring trade winds which blow for six months from one quarter of the firmament and six months from the opposite quarter. There are four of these quarters thus: the south-west, the north-east, the south-east, and the north-west. The quarter from which they blow depends not only on the season but on the latitude. Thus, from latitude 2° South to as far north as Japan, except in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, the south-west monsoon blows from the middle of April to the middle of October. From the middle of October to the middle of April the wind swings round, in the same track, and blows from the opposite quarter—namely, the north-east. The south-east monsoon and its opposite is confined to the comparatively narrow strip between 2° and 12° South from New Holland in the east to the north end of Madagascar in the west. When the monsoon is blowing either from the north-west or the south-west it brings with it the rainy season with frequent squalls and dirty weather, as those modern navigators the aeroplane pilots have discovered to their sorrow.[33] The change of the north-west and south-west monsoon periods marks the season of those violent storms known locally as ‘tuffoons,’ hence our word ‘typhoon.’ Of these more presently. {161}

Meteorologists have given much time to the serious study of these winds, to the great and lasting benefit of all shipmasters in Eastern waters. The habits of the monsoon are by now so well known that mariners can tell exactly what to expect at any particular season in any area. For example, on

the Coromandel coast in the Bay of Bengal mild weather with serene and cloudless skies may be counted on during February and March, but in the following two months fresh breezes from S.S.E. can be expected. It is seldom calm in April, except when the March moon happens to be late. Farther south, where the Bay of Bengal opens into the Indian Ocean, the months of April and May are treacherous to sailing vessels. Squalls and cyclones may be looked for. Referring to the weather in the lower end of the Bay, William Herbert, hydrographer, wrote in his directions to East Indiamen in the year 1770:

> In the bottom of the Bay of Bengal, the months of April and May are dangerous, for besides the hurricanes which blow violently some years, you generally meet with heavy squalls which last 5 or 6 hours, sometimes longer, and mostly every 2 or 3 days.

June, July, and August is the period of the western monsoon, when the west and south-west winds blow like the hot blast from an oven. Violent dust-storms rise over the parched land, and blow enormous distances out to sea. On this same coast (Coromandel) the eastern monsoon begins in October, and is noted for its inconstancy. The winds alternate, with periods of calms, rains, and fair weather. The following month is definitely a stormy one. It is marked by frequent storms of great violence, when ships riding at anchor slip their cables and run out to sea for safety. In December and January the monsoon settles down to blow steadily from N.N.E. to E.N.E., and the weather begins to improve.

Between cyclone, typhoon, and hurricane there is little or no difference. They are merely different names for the natural phenomenon of a revolving storm. In the West {162} Indies it is usually referred to as a hurricane, in the China Seas and the East Indies as a typhoon, and in the Indian Ocean as a cyclone. William Dampier, in his *Discourse on Winds*, saw no difference between cyclones, hurricanes, tuffoons, and typhoons, and modern meteorologists are in entire agreement with him. Our own word ‘typhoon’ must have come from the Chinese *t’ai fung* (a wind) or the Arabic *tufan*. A typhoon differs greatly in character from an ordinary strong wind. It is a cone of wind of enormous dimensions—often miles across at its narrowest part—and spinning with incredible speed. As it spins it moves forward at a comparatively slow rate. It can be compared to a monstrous funnel, with its lower and narrow end touching the sea and spinning in a more or less circular form round a centre of low pressure.

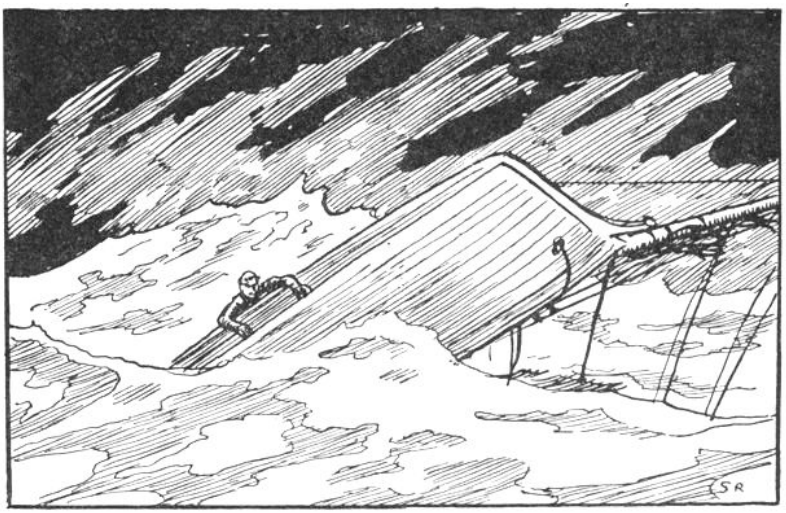
DIAGRAM OF A CYCLONE

ON HER BEAM-ENDS

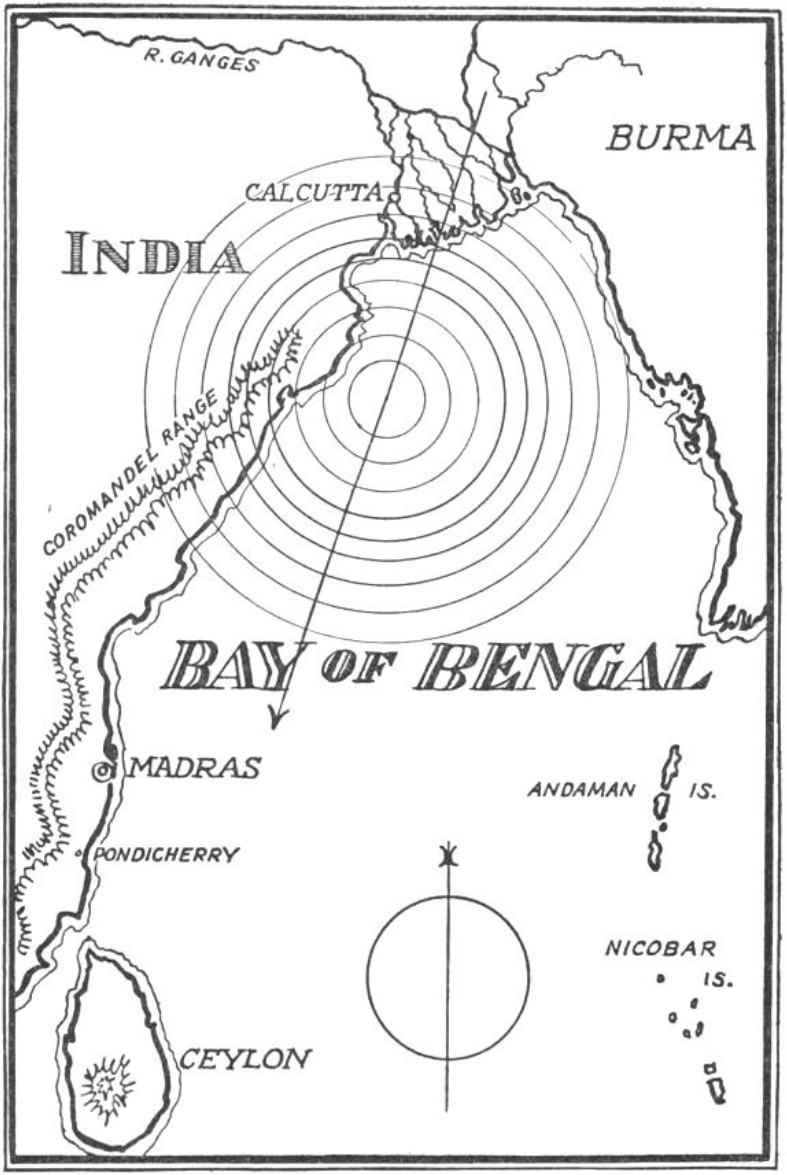
A curious fact about these revolving storms is that south of the equator they usually revolve in the direction of the hands of a clock, but north of the equator they spin anti-clockwise. Another curious thing is that they are seldom encountered within five or six degrees either side of the equator. The season when they are most likely to occur is during the sun's return from the summer solstice—*i.e.*, from July to October north of the equator, and from December to April south of the equator. The indications of an approaching

cyclone are, in the order of their happenings, threatening skies, barometer rapidly falling, {163} {164} {165} seas rising, and clouds changing to unusual forms of strange colours, frequently copper shot with streaks of lurid light. The path of the approaching cyclone is comparatively narrow, and, with ample warning, can often be avoided by a steamer with powerful engines. In the days of sail a ship had to ride it out under bare poles—that was, if she was lucky. The chances were usually against her living through it. According to Dr Doberck, at one time Director of Hong Kong Observatory, and a man who made a life-time study of the law of storms, the commonly held belief that the centre of a cyclone is always calm was erroneous. The centre of a revolving storm is frequently a gigantic cauldron of whipped-up seas, where it is impossible for a ship to live. Against this it is interesting to note the experience of the famous Captain Voss and his two young English companions, who were caught in a typhoon in the twenty-five-foot yawl *Sea Queen* on August 31, 1912.[34] At 9 A.M. it was blowing so hard that the three men had to lie flat in the cockpit lest they should be picked up by the wind and whirled overboard. Two hours later the *Sea Queen* turned turtle, but, by a miracle, a following sea turned her right side up again. Fortunately the cabin door and hatches were fastened, a fact which saved her from filling as she went over. Voss was washed overboard when the yawl capsized, but Stone and Vincent, his two companions, were in the cabin at the time of the disaster, and except for a severe bruising were unhurt. Voss clung to the upturned boat, and managed to scramble on board as she righted herself. It was over quicker than thinking; and now, in the midst of the inferno, the three men set about making their wrecked craft seaworthy. Voss, in his subsequent account of the experience, tells how shortly after the *Sea Queen* had righted they found themselves in an area of dead calm, by which sign he knew that they were {166} in the centre of the typhoon, and must pass through the opposite edge within a short time. He greatly doubted the little yawl's chances of successfully weathering another assault. He tells how he and his companions profited by the lull to get some food, and how there, *in the centre of the typhoon*, they actually got the Primus stove going and made a hot drink, fully expecting that it would be the last meal they would ever have. Less than an hour later the *Sea Queen* had drifted to the opposite edge of the terrible circle, and began a second successful battle with the typhoon. The sole reason for referring to this experience (which occurred in the Pacific, off the coast of Japan) is to give an authentic case of a typhoon whose centre was a dead calm. As reliable accounts go to show, both phenomena have been seen—a centre of turmoil, of which Dr Doberck speaks, and a centre of calm, as Voss and others have

experienced. The Indian Ocean cyclones usually travel considerable distances over the land, doing enormous damage before they finally blow themselves out. Their force has been known to lift up large ships and cast them half a mile or so {167} {168} {169} inland, and to destroy solid buildings as though they were made of paper. They will uproot large coconut-trees and blow them across the atolls like so many feathers, and endanger the lives of the natives with nothing more than a deadly hail of coconuts, a picture not without its humour—the bathos of bombardment by coconuts!



THE “SEA QUEEN” TURNS TURTLE

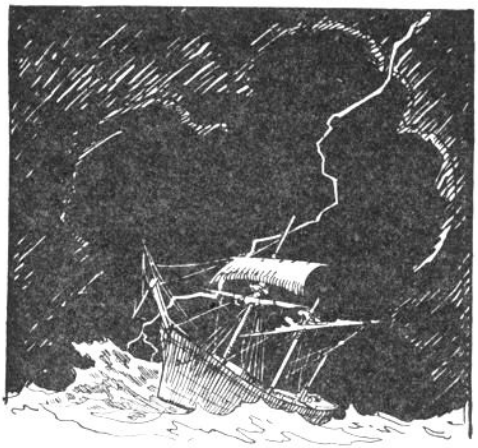


CYCLONE CHART

The word ‘cyclone’ was coined by an English scientist, Henry Piddington, in the nineteenth century, after he had made an intensive study of Indian Ocean storms. In the days of the East Indiamen, when cyclones were a greater menace than in these days of steam, the island of Mauritius was an accepted port of refuge for ships damaged by these storms. During the cyclone season several might be raging at one time in widely separated

parts of the Indian Ocean. Then, for no apparent reason, they suddenly cease, for, unlike the monsoons, they are by no means regular in their habits. Their speed is apt to vary according to the latitude in which they occur. The farther north of the equator they are found the greater the speed of travel. This refers, of course, to their forward movement, and not to their spinning velocity. In latitude 11° North five miles per hour is their average rate of travel, at 13° six to seven m.p.h., at 20° nine m.p.h., and so on. South of 13° the speed remains fairly constant. The size of the area affected by a cyclone is enormous. Its presence can be detected six or seven hundred miles from its centre. At that distance the sky is partly overcast with enormous cumulus clouds, the barometer meanwhile falling ominously. At a distance of three hundred miles the sea rises with all the appearance of a storm without the wind. This is an uncanny feature of an approaching cyclone—the steep and confused seas with huge waves while there is not a breath of wind. They rise before the wind is felt, and last long after the cyclone has passed. At two hundred miles from the centre the temperature drops toward freezing-point, and the sky is ominously dark, but without thunder or {170} lightning. The wind blows in strong gusts, and sailing-ship masters have long since taken in most of their canvas and made their ships as snug as possible. When the cyclone has approached to within one hundred and fifty miles rain begins to fall, and the downpour increases until at fifty or sixty miles from the centre the air has become an almost solid sheet of water, and sailors have frequently reported a difficulty in breathing—as though they were submerged—and a deafening noise, not unlike thunder, assaults the ears. This is caused by the wind, and has often been mistaken for thunder. As the ship approaches the centre of the cyclone the wind increases in violence, and the barometer quickly drops to its lowest point. Some of those who have been through a typhoon have described how within three to fifteen miles of the centre the wind has gone down and the sky has cleared somewhat, even showing patches of blue. At other times it is covered with a faint haze, and the sea has been mountainous and confused like a gigantic cauldron of tormented water. Birds trapped in the centre of the typhoon have come on board the ship for rest, and have been easily caught.

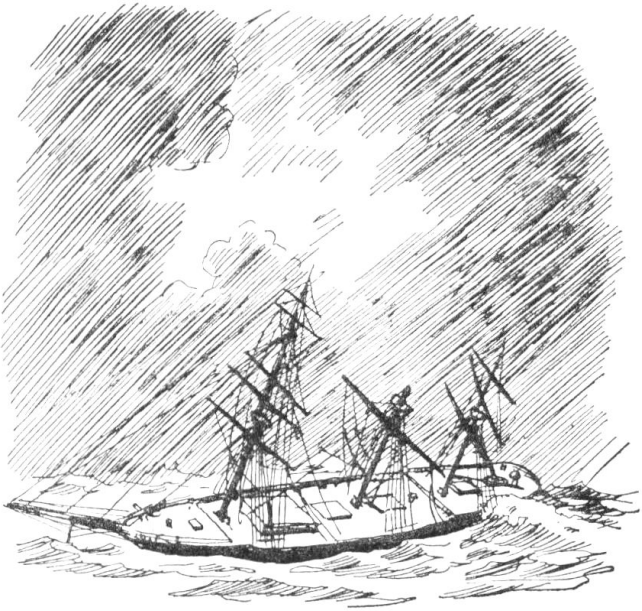
Valuable data on the behaviour of Indian Ocean cyclones have been gathered by an indefatigable observer, Captain Brebner, F.R.G.S., F.R.S.A., and published privately in Mauritius in a small booklet called *South Indian Ocean Cyclones of 1911-12*. Captain Brebner[35] has experienced a {171} number of cyclones of the severest kind, and the resulting notes he made have proved to be of enormous help to such captains who have been willing to profit by his experiences. The severity of the revolving storms in the



South Indian Ocean is shown by the cyclone which wiped out Port Louis, Mauritius, in 1892, destroying not only the town, but shipping in the harbour, sugar factories inland, standing crops, and killing two thousand people. Captain Brebner describes a cyclone he encountered in the steamer *Secunder* in February 1912, and explains how he manœuvred his ship to weather the elements. The *Secunder* left Port Louis on February 16 for Vohemar, which was reached on the 19th. The second day out from Port Louis the sky and barometer had shown signs of an approaching cyclone. At that time Captain Brebner judged it to be six hundred miles away to the north-east. During the short passage to Vohemar the wind had swung round to every point of the compass. The ship put out of Vohemar on the 20th with six hundred cattle on board. The cyclone had approached perceptibly nearer, and Captain Brebner spent the night of the 20th on the bridge. The next day, in a dangerously high sea, the steamer was put at half-speed and then slow speed, at which she was kept until noon on the 22nd. By now the barometer had begun to fall at a significant rate. The cyclone centre was then on a bearing {172} due north. Captain Brebner, with his knowledge of the law of storms, decided to put the ship's head north-west, according to definitely laid down rules learned from previous contact with cyclones. The following day the wind obeyed the 'law' and veered from south to west-north-west, then later to north-west, hitting the *Secunder* with terrific squalls which cruelly punished the wretched cattle below decks. In spite of the enormous seas threatening at every roll to swamp the ship by pouring into the partly opened hatches, Captain Brebner dared not close them for fear of suffocating the animals below. About midday on the 23rd the position of the ship was one of considerable peril, and Captain Brebner decided to run to the north-east. The advantages of steam over sail in a position such as the *Secunder* found herself are obvious. Captain Brebner still had the power to manœuvre. A sailing vessel would have been helpless, caught in the whirling rim of the cyclone, but the steamer, so long as her engines remained at work, could be kept under control.

Apparently Captain Brebner had been unable to or had not chosen to avoid the approaching storm. Nevertheless, by skilful manœuvring he contrived to avoid the worst of its fury, playing hide-and-seek with the cyclone for five anxious days, until he had the satisfaction of seeing it haul off. In his log he describes, with a minuteness of detail only of interest to mariners and meteorologists, how he battled with the cyclone, constantly changing his course, and for the most part keeping the sea astern. On the 25th there was a slight lessening of the wind's fury, and a course was set for Réunion.

The *Secunder* had suffered considerable damage in the way of smashed railings, hatch covers, ventilators, and so on, but those were comparative trifles. The important thing was that the valuable cargo had been saved. The *Secunder* steamed into Mauritius on the 27th, her funnel and upperworks battered and encrusted with salt, but with all except four of her six {173} hundred cattle alive. But for his long experience in the ways of tropical cyclones Captain Brebner would have most likely lost both his cargo and his ship.



In comparison with the above it may be of interest to quote the experience of the square-rigged sailing-ship *Duchess of Edinburgh* when caught in a cyclone in 1884 in the Indian Ocean, on a voyage with a cargo of jute, linseed, and rice from Calcutta to New York. The *Duchess of Edinburgh*[36] left Calcutta in February, and when 6° South of the Line the barometer began to fall rapidly. The ship was rolling in a southerly swell beneath a sky that was clear except for a few fleecy clouds. Soon the wind rapidly freshened, and before night all hands were set to shortening sail. While the men were aloft the cyclone descended on the helpless ship with the swiftness of doom, and stripped her bare of every stitch of canvas she had. In the falling darkness the tortured vessel drove through the wild seas under bare poles, a fact which probably saved her. Picture {174} the scene—the long, narrow steel hull of the ship rolling her rails under, and constantly buried in the white smother which swept her from end to end, while the huge masts swung drunkenly back and forth in dizzy arcs across the sky. The terrible force of the wind whining in the rigging carried men's shouts away as soon as they had left their lips. No orders could be given, for none could be heard. The skies seemed to be filled with water, a deluge beating down on the ship and the sea, as though the whole world had become solid water. The men clung or lashed themselves in the lee of railings, stanchions, and deck-structures, while the captain and mate were lashed to the weather-rail, powerless to do anything. The seas, smashing under the counter,

delivered a blow of such violence to the rudder that the wheel was spun out of the grip of the two men who had been steering, and, being out of control, the ship broached to in the darkness. Her lee lower yardarms dipped in the seas, and all on board thought it was the end. The intense darkness was now and then lit up by vivid flashes of lightning,[37] and in one of these instants of visibility it was seen that the ship's main topmast and mizen topgallant mast had gone, the standard compass had been swept overboard, and a tangle of gear and broken spars lay across the rails. Heavy yards, secured by their rigging, lay alongside, threatening to batter in the ship's hull as she rolled and pitched in the enormous seas.

At one in the morning a slight lull was taken advantage of to attempt a sounding of the well and to get control over the ship. By now the condition of the *Duchess of Edinburgh* was pitiable. The deck, from poop to fo'c'sle, was a mass of wreckage. All the bulwarks were smashed in, allowing the seas to wash across the decks without hindrance. The midship house and boats were crushed like card-boxes, falling spars had burst in the main deck, and the officers' quarters had been swept clean of all they contained. During {175} the night the cyclone renewed its violence, and for several hours did its best to complete the destruction of the ship, while the worn-out officers and men hung on, unable to do anything effective. When daylight came the cyclone gradually lessened in violence, but the heavy seas continued for some days afterward. With the labourings of the hull the task of clearing up the wreckage was difficult and dangerous, but finally loose and broken spars were repaired or heaved overboard, and jury rigging was set up. In this manner the maimed ship was brought to Mauritius, 1700 miles away, making the passage in twelve days, which was excellent time for such a badly crippled vessel. In the same cyclone a large German ship, *Terpsichore*, of 2000 tons, had been severely damaged, and had also put into Mauritius to refit. Both vessels were fortunate to have survived.

The coast of Coromandel on the eastern seaboard of India, facing the notorious Bay of Bengal, is noted for its cyclones. They were the implacable foe of every sailing-ship that went to India, and accounted for the loss of a great number of Indiamen and, at a later date, of many fine clipper-ships. The captains of the early Indiamen, in the days of Queen Elizabeth and James I, brought back tales of such storms the like of which had never been seen in Europe. Many stay-at-homes thought them to be the usual sailors' yarns. A wind so powerful that it could blow stone buildings down and lift up a ship as if it had been no more than a child's toy was plainly a mere fancy of a sailor's brain. He would tell of dust-storms a hundred miles at

sea; of skies that rained blood, frogs, and fishes; of lightning that crackled like flames and shot upward; of balls of fire; of torrential deluges that filled the air with solid water until men nearly died for lack of air; of waves like mountains; of a noise louder than that of ten thousand cannons; and of moving columns of water rising from the sea straight up into the sky and destroying anything that {176} came in their paths. After such tales it was easy to believe in sea-serpents, the kraken, and phantom ships.

Two unforgettable cyclones in the Bay of Bengal were those of 1864 and 1871—the first at Calcutta and the second at Madras. The Calcutta cyclone moved across the harbour and part of the town, literally mowing down whatever it touched. Over ninety stoutly built European buildings were completely destroyed, and over two thousand severely damaged. In the native town the destruction was too vast to compute. Roofs were lifted off and swept across the terrified city like a storm of leaves. Heavy belfries and steeples crashed down into the streets, and hundreds of lives were lost in the collapsing buildings. The path of the cyclone was comparatively narrow, or the city might have been entirely destroyed. On the waterfront affairs were no better than ashore. Over the low-lying Sunderbunds the seas swept sixteen feet deep, and thousands of natives and wild animals were drowned. A few natives had found safety in trees, whither they had fled at the approach of the flood.

The cyclone began about ten in the morning. By two o'clock the wind was blowing with hurricane force, and three-quarters of an hour later the cyclone was at its worst. By six o'clock on the same day (October 5) it was over. Its effect on the crowded shipping in the river was to break them from their moorings, and either to drive them ashore or against each other in violent collision. The huge flood wall of water rushing up the river aided the wind in its destruction. The tidal wave resulting from the cyclone swept up the river, washing scores of small craft into the paddy fields, where it left them stranded after it had receded. According to Basil Lubbock,[38] about two hundred sea-going vessels went adrift, and no more than a dozen of them escaped being blown ashore. The rest suffered this fate, and were more or less wrecked in one storm. There {177} could be no more eloquent testimony to the power and destructiveness of a typhoon. Some of these hundred odd ships sank in midstream, and one, the *Ally*, capsized, taking down with her three hundred coolies who were on board. In the crowded river even the steamers had no chance of saving themselves, and one, the *Thunder*, was lifted up and driven across the wreck of the American barque *North Atlantic*. Many other vessels collided and sank together in the stream. When the cyclone first struck the ships the crews were sent aloft, despite the

fury of the wind, to make fast the clewed-up sails, and many seamen told afterward how they were pinned to the rigging by the wind as if they had been securely lashed there. Moving about aloft was only possible during a momentary lull, and the sailor's boast that his every finger is a fishhook was surely justified on that occasion.

Another storm wave, probably the worst ever recorded,[39] is said to have caused the death of a hundred thousand natives. This was worst in the region of the Sunderbunds at the Ganges delta, lying but a few feet above the level of the sea, and thickly populated by thousands of native fishermen. Yet such is human optimism that when the *débris* is cleared up and the dead buried the living return to the district as though nothing has happened.

By a mischievous freak of fortune the ships which suffered least were the opium steamers, vessels whose loss might have been more of a benefit than a calamity. But these steamers (there were four of them off the Esplanade) owed their escape to the way they were moored—namely, with coir hawsers, which permitted a certain amount of 'give' in the mooring-lines without their breaking. Most of the wrecked ships lay opposite the Customs House and the famous Esplanade, in the heart of Calcutta's waterfront. It was as though a few score of large ships had been wrecked off the Victoria Embankment in London. {178} That it must have been a strange sight after the Calcutta cyclone is shown by the photographs taken after the event. The sky-line resembled a forest of broken trees, with their gaunt and leafless branches sticking out at grotesque angles. Partially dismasted ships lay at crazy angles in lavish profusion along the shore, with the forlorn air of toy boats which some gargantuan child had thrown carelessly aside. There was not a ship with all its spars intact. One result of this disaster was the framing of a rule that all ships moored at Calcutta during the cyclone months must have their topgallant masts struck—*i.e.*, lowered. It is hardly necessary to point out that the less top-hamper a ship carried during a cyclone the better chance she had of surviving.

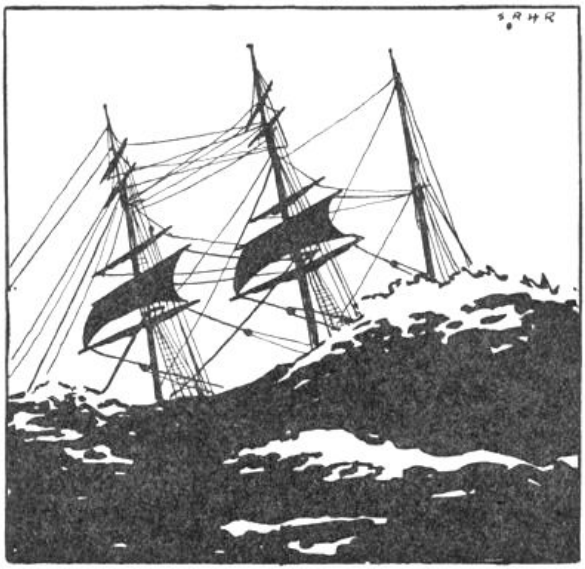
Seven years later Madras was visited by a cyclone of similar violence, when several valuable ships were lost. Then in the following year, May 1872, the same district was swept by a cyclone which wrecked the Blackwall ship *Hotspur*, which had but a few years previously survived the full force of a Calcutta cyclone. On that occasion she and the *Alnwick Castle* had a narrow escape from total destruction off the Sandheads. The *Alnwick Castle* had her topgallant and topmasts snapped off like icicles, after which the jibboom and most of the mizen-mast suffered a similar fate. To add to her captain's troubles she carried troops, who of necessity were battened below decks during the period of the cyclone, and had the ship foundered

they would have perished like rats. The *Hotspur* survived only to be wrecked, as already stated, during the Madras cyclone of 1872. She parted her cables and drove on a lee-shore, and that was the end of her.

The list of ships caught in cyclones is legion. Ever since the Anglo-Indian journal *The South Arcot Gazetteer* described the loss of ships in the cyclone at Porto Novo on November 19, 1681, the number of disasters from this cause have been so numerous that the mere recital of their {179} dates would fill a small volume. Alfred Martineau, the French student of meteorology, in his book *Les Cyclones à la Côte Coromandel* has catalogued the worst of the storms which descended upon the hapless town of Pondicherry during two hundred years. For this town alone the list of disasters is a formidable one. In November 1745 two thousand houses were swept away; trees were uprooted and whisked about like straws; while in the flooded streets floated great numbers of dead animals and drowned people. Less than a year later the squadron of de la Bourdonnais, lying at anchor off Madras, was wrecked. At the same time twenty other ships were thrown ashore. When Bourdonnais' squadron was hit by the cyclone two frigates, *L'Achille* and the *Bourbon*, were instantly dismasted. The rest of the squadron heard the gunners of the doomed ships firing their cannons as an alarm. The *Phœnix* had disappeared, and the *Duc d'Orléans* had likewise perished. One vessel, the *Marie Gertrude*, was thrown ashore, as though the tempest out of deference to her feminine name spared her the tragedy of the violent death dealt out to the others. But no ship afloat has ever been permitted to challenge a cyclone and escape undamaged.

In December 1760, while Sir Eyre Coote was laying siege to Pondicherry on land, a cyclone struck the district, lashing in its fury besieger and besieged impartially, and playing havoc among the fleet in the harbour. Four ships escaped complete destruction by their crews cutting away {180} the masts. This operation does not consist of cutting the masts themselves.

All that is generally necessary is to cut the supporting stays and rigging, and the force of the wind does the rest. In modern ships it would be plainly impossible to cut down the steel masts, but whether steel or wood it makes no difference in a cyclone. Take away the supporting rigging and the masts snap off like clay pipe-stems.



During the cyclone of 1760 which struck Sir Eyre Coote's camp the shipping appeared to have suffered most. Three ships, the *Newcastle*, *Queensborough*, and *Protector*, were driven ashore in the darkness two miles south of Pondicherry. Three other ships sank in the harbour, carrying with them 1100 Europeans, only seven of whom were saved. Yet Monsieur Martineau tells us: "L'Inde n'est pas par excellence le pays des cyclones; les typhons des mers de Chine sont plus fréquents et plus redoutables." But then he goes on to say:

> On ne peut nier cependant que par leur violence, les cyclones de l'Inde ne causent assez souvent de très grands désastres. Ils se forment d'ordinaire au fond du golfe du Bengale, où au temps de la navigation à la voile, ils étaient un danger permanent pour la navigation.

Cyclones, typhoons, and hurricanes share the dreadful sublimity of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. They savour of the supernatural. All observers of these storms {181} have felt the uncanny sense of impending doom, as though the end of the world were at hand. The sky assumes vivid and unnatural colours. The edges of the piled-up cumulus clouds are lit by an unholy rim of red or orange light. In the cyclone sky, with its dreadful purples growing blacker as the centre of the tempest approaches, is frequently seen a mysterious area of light of hazy flame colour, shot through with splitting, heaven-rending flashes of lightning. Not only is there this to chill the heart, but also terrifying sounds impossible to liken to anything.

And some observers have reported that during the height of the cyclone the air has seemed to be full of a curious smell, a chemical odour of phosphorus, of sulphur, and carbonic gas. There is a satanic touch in the phosphorus and sulphur smell.

It is not inappropriate to conclude this chapter with some reference to Joseph Conrad's powerful description of a cyclone in his book *Typhoon*.[40] While ostensibly the story is fiction, it is safe to say that Captain MacWhirr's experience is, in essentials, actual fact. Conrad had sailed the Eastern seas for years, and drew, of course, upon personal experience for such a background. He must have encountered a great number of typhoons during his voyaging in the East, and how uncannily he has preserved the memory of them is proved by the achievement of *Typhoon*.

The tramp steamer *Nan-Shan*, with her holds crowded with coolies, is overtaken by a typhoon. Her captain is an inarticulate creature named MacWhirr. He has noted the typhoon warnings—the steady fall of the barometer and such like signs—but he seems unimpressed. Even the fact that the swells ran "higher and swifter every moment, and the ship lurched heavily in the smooth, deep hollows of the sea," did not appear to rouse his imagination.

Conrad makes one feel the uncanny scene as the typhoon approaches nearer. {182}

> At its setting the sun had a diminished diameter and an expiring brown, rayless glow, as if millions of centuries elapsing since the morning had brought it near its end. A dense bank of cloud became visible to the northward; it had a sinister dark olive tint, and lay low and motionless upon the sea, resembling a solid obstacle in the path of the ship. She went floundering towards it like an exhausted creature driven to its death. The coppery twilight retired slowly, and the darkness brought out overhead a swarm of unsteady big stars, that, as if blown upon, flickered exceedingly and seemed to hang very near the earth.

The captain had at last realized the seriousness of the ship's position, but there was little to be done except to make everything secure on deck and to see that the boilers were kept at full pressure. The typhoon at last descended on the steamer.

> From the first stir of the air felt on his cheek the gale seemed to take upon itself the accumulated impetus of an avalanche.

Heavy sprays enveloped the *Nan-Shan* from stem to stern, and instantly in the midst of her regular rolling she began to jerk and plunge as though she had gone mad with fright. . . .

Nobody—not even Captain MacWhirr, who alone on deck had caught sight of a white line of foam coming on at such a height that he couldn't believe his eyes—nobody was to know the steepness of that sea and the awful depth of the hollow the hurricane had scooped out behind the running wall of water.

It raced to meet the ship, and, with a pause, as of girding the loins, the *Nan-Shan* lifted her bows and leaped. The flames in all the lamps sank, darkening the engine-room. One went out. With a tearing crash and swirling, raving tumult, tons of water fell upon the deck, as though the ship had darted under the foot of a cataract. . . .

She dipped into the hollow straight down, as if going over the edge of the world.

This is a good place to leave the *Nan-Shan*, at the climax of her battle with the typhoon. Hers was typical of the experience of every ship that has caught the full force of a revolving storm.

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[33] The rainy season is from November to April, approximately, in the southern Indian Ocean; June to August in the East Indies; and on the Coromandel coast and Ceylon during November and December.

[34] The account appears in *The Venturesome Voyages of Captain Voss* (first published in Yokohama in 1913).

[35] Captain Brebner was at one time master of the famous tea-clipper *Sir Lancelot*.

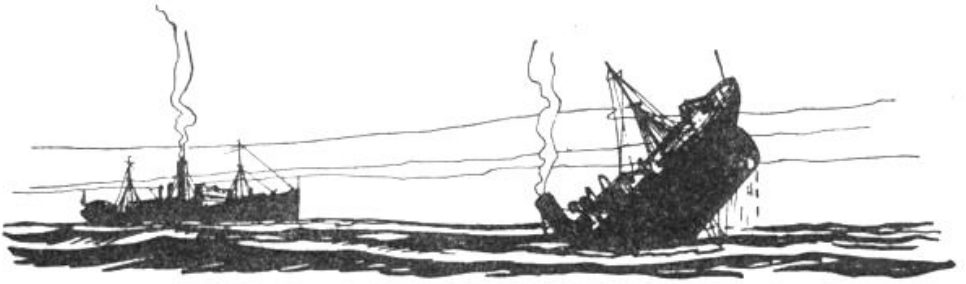
[36] *The Last of the Windjammers*, vol. i, by Basil Lubbock.

[37] Lightning does not always accompany a cyclone.

[38] *Blackwall Frigates*, by Basil Lubbock (Brown, Son, and Ferguson, Glasgow).

[39] November 1, 1876.

[40] By permission of the publishers, Messrs William Heinemann, of London, and Messrs Doubleday, Doran, and Co., of New York.



CHAPTER VIII

War Days

When the Great War broke out in 1914 the Indian Ocean, by virtue of its geographical position, remained immune from major engagements and submarine operations. On the other hand, it was the scene of the daring exploits of the commerce destroyers *Emden* and *Wolf*, which for many months harried shipping and led the Allied cruisers operating in the Indian Ocean a wild chase. The cruiser *Emden* and the merchantman-converted sea-raider *Wolf* were the only German war vessels in the Indian Ocean to put up what naval men would call 'a good show,' and in the light of their performances the brief and inglorious career of the cruiser *Königsberg* is likely to be overlooked.

This cruiser, whose base was at Dar-es-Salaam, German East Africa, left that port fully coaled on July 31, 1914, for a destination unknown, and since Britain and France were not then at war with Germany she was not stopped by French and British men-of-war in those waters. But, with war imminent, the captain of the *Königsberg*, no doubt acting on orders from Berlin, very wisely cleared the port while the chance offered. Once war was declared it would have been too late. Enemy men-of-war would have destroyed him in the harbour, and the German was too intelligent to be caught that way. So it happened that when war was formally declared a potential menace to Allied shipping was at large somewhere off the East African coast, and the wireless hummed with inquiries, orders, and {184} counter-orders from the senior officers of the Allied men-of-war patrolling that part of the Indian Ocean.

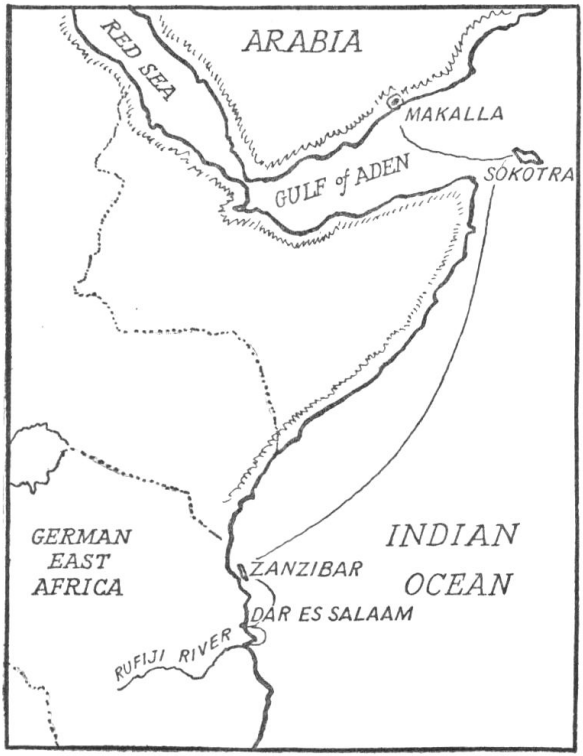
They had not long to wait before word came through that the *Königsberg* had made her first capture, and incidentally the first German naval capture of the War.

It is necessary to go back to July 30, when the Hall Line[41] steamer *City of Winchester* (6600 tons) left Colombo for England with a cargo of tea valued at £250,000. With all lights on the *City of Winchester* steamed across the Arabian Sea. No one on board seriously regarded the possibility of war with Germany, and in any case the Indian Ocean was so far from the war zone that precaution seemed ridiculous and unnecessary. However, when the steamer approached the entrance to the Gulf of Aden her captain heard that war was declared, and that a German cruiser was at large somewhere in the Indian Ocean. This was on August 6. Now it so happened that the *Königsberg* was at that moment lying in the shelter of the island of Sokotra, at the entrance to the Gulf of Aden, waiting for just such unsuspecting merchantmen as the *City of Winchester*. The British steamer walked straight into the trap. Within three hours of receiving the news she was a prisoner of the *Königsberg*. The Germans had done the obvious thing—namely, waited at the funnel-mouth through which east- and west-bound shipping must pass.

The captured liner was forced to follow the warship to Makalla, an out-of-the-way port on the Arabian coast, where a number of German merchant ships were gathered. Here the captain of the *Königsberg* put a prize crew in her, with orders to accompany an armed German merchantman named *Zieten* to the Khorya Morya Islands, where 300 tons of coal were transferred to the German. The *Zieten* was to be used to carry the civil prisoners from the British ship to the nearest neutral port, and the coal was needed for the passage as the German's bunkers were by this time {185} empty. The next day the *Königsberg* appeared, and took a further 250 tons of coal from the liner's bunkers, and also some needed stores. After a number of the crew of the liner who had remained on her had been transferred to the warship, the sea-cocks of the captured vessel were opened, and she was allowed to sink. She settled so slowly that in the end the cruiser had to put three shots in her. Even then she took twenty-two hours to go down. While the *Königsberg* was here the Hansa liner *Goldenfels* arrived, and took off the cruiser's prisoners. The warship, with a big crew of her own and limited space below decks, could not be hampered with a crowd of prisoners.

The captain of the *Königsberg* knew that sooner or later he must meet the enemy. He was in a dangerous position: every Allied warship on the coast was looking for him, and he was cut off from his base. The *Königsberg* now disappeared for some weeks, and was not reported again until

September 20, when she reappeared off Zanzibar, where H.M.S. *Pegasus* had the bad luck to be at anchor making repairs to her boilers. She had not an earthly chance from the start, and was literally smashed to pieces after a brief action at close range. But this was the last casualty inflicted on enemy ships by the *Königsberg*. Her position daily {186} became more precarious. British and French warships in overwhelming numbers were searching for her. She could not escape to sea, as she was commanded to keep in close touch with German East Africa, an order which seriously hampered her movements and opportunities for avoiding capture. After destroying the *Pegasus* she again disappeared for a time. For over a month her whereabouts was a mystery, and every merchant captain doused his lights and kept a sharp look out for the prowling menace believed to be somewhere at large on the western side of the Indian Ocean. Then on October 30 there came news of her. She had been discovered by H.M.S. *Chatham* hiding up a branch of the Rufiji river, screened by the African jungle. Measures were taken to prevent her escaping by blocking up the entrance to the only navigable channel by sinking in it the collier *Newbridge*. The Germans had posted snipers and machine-guns in the jungle commanding the approaches to the hiding-place of the *Königsberg*, which effectually delayed an attack by a shore party until the main objective was reduced by gun-fire. To destroy the *Königsberg* meant shelling, at long range, an unseen objective beyond impenetrable jungle. For this purpose an aeroplane was used for spotting her, and though the plane itself was finally brought down by the Germans it was not before the pilot had found the range and seen the British shells registering hits.

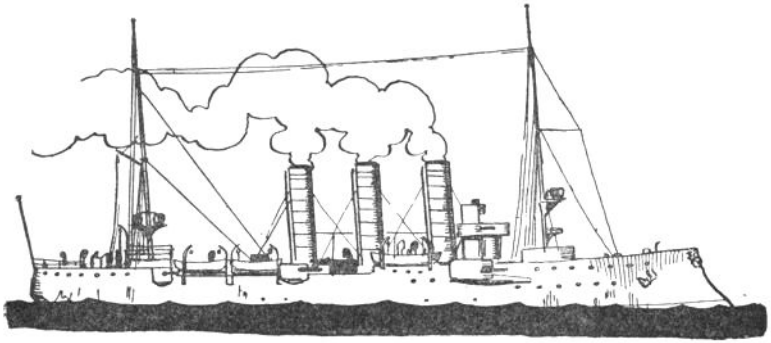


SCENE OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE "KÖNIGSBERG"

With the range found it was only a matter of hours before the *Königsberg* was reduced to a battered wreck, and her guns for ever silenced.

If the *Königsberg's* career was short and inglorious, that of his Imperial Majesty's cruiser *Emden* was certainly not so. No ship brought greater honour to her flag during the War than the *Emden*. Her captain, von Müller, a clean and chivalrous fighter, was respected as much by his enemies as by his own people. As an enemy out to destroy merchant shipping he was bound to do his duty, though he carried {187} out his unpleasant task as humanely as possible, invariably treating his prisoners with courtesy and consideration.

During the summer and autumn of 1914 the *Emden*, working as an independent commerce raider in the Indian Ocean, captured or destroyed twenty merchant ships, and also sank two enemy men-of-war. Her presence in the Indian Ocean seriously paralysed merchant shipping, and until she was hunted down and destroyed ships' captains were reluctant to put to sea.

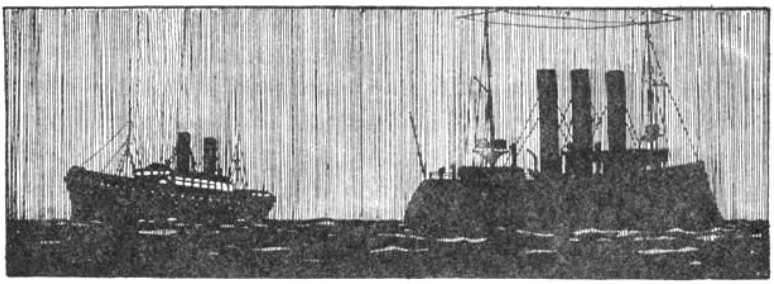


THE "EMDEN"

The *Emden*, classed as a light cruiser of 3593 tons, with a main armament of ten 4·1-inch guns, and a speed of twenty-four knots, was, at the end of July 1914, lying at Tsingtau, the German naval base in China. On July 31 she made a sortie and captured the Russian passenger steamer *Rjasan*, which she took back with her to Tsingtau. England had not yet declared war, but as this event seemed inevitable Captain Müller quickly coaled ship and departed with two auxiliary vessels, the *Prince Eitel Friedrich* and *Markomannia*, to join the squadron of Admiral von Spee in the Pacific. With Japan likely to join the Allies against Germany and the British naval base of Hong Kong so close, von Müller did the only thing possible by escaping before he was trapped. Indeed, immediately after England declared war a British squadron from the Chinese station {188}

steamed for Tsingtau, only to discover that the quarry had fled. The actual taking of the port was left to the Japanese, who came in later. Meanwhile the *Emden* and her consorts arrived at the rendezvous at Pagan Island, in the Pacific. Here the Admiral, in his flagship, the *Scharnhorst*, which was afterward destroyed in the battle of the Falkland Islands, held a conference with his captains, and arranged that the squadron should sail eastward toward the South American coast. But von Müller asked to be allowed to raid alone in the Indian Ocean, pointing out that Germany had no commerce raiders there, and that by taking on this duty he could be of more service than he would be as a single unit with the Pacific squadron. Von Spee listened to his young captain, and, seeing the force of his arguments, readily granted the request. Taking the *Markomannia* as supply-ship, the *Emden* left to begin her amazing career as a raider, while von Spee sailed eastward to the coast of Chile, where at Coronel he was to defeat the inferior forces of Admiral Cradock.

Now let us see what sort of a task von Müller had before him. In the first place he was sailing into enemy waters, where every man's hand would be against him. Furthermore, he had no base to which he could retire to carry out repairs and clean his ship of marine growths. He was an outlaw who would have to depend for his coal, provisions, and water on captured ships. And beyond these immediate exciting prospects he had the knowledge of almost certain capture sooner or later, with perhaps the loss of all hands. He could not expect to escape capture indefinitely. By skilful camouflage, and by use of his wireless receiving set, he might delay the end for many months, but the dice were loaded against him.

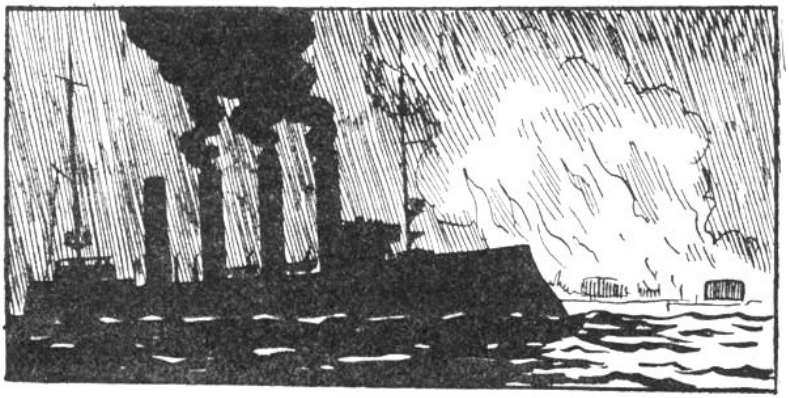


SHE ENCOUNTERED A SHIP FULLY LIGHTED

He entered the Indian Ocean late in August, passed the island of Timor, where over a hundred years before the *Bounty's* crew had landed after their terrible boat journey. As a disguise the *Emden* was rigged with a thirty-foot-high {189} dummy funnel[42] of wood and canvas to give her the appearance

of a British cruiser of the County class. From Timor she steamed up into the Bay of Bengal. Being short of coal, von Müller particularly wished to capture a collier, and, as though in answer to his prayer, the fortunes of war put a collier in his way shortly afterward. On September 8 the smoke of a distant steamer was sighted, and, altering her course, the raider rapidly overtook her. She turned out to be the Greek steamer *Pontoporos*, carrying 6000 tons of coal for the British Government in Bengal. Ordering the *Pontoporos* to follow her, the *Emden* proceeded to cruise in the bay right in the track of shipping. Within a short time she had captured five more steamers, the *Indus*, *Kabinga*, *Lovat*, *Diplomat*, and *Killim*. The *Diplomat* had, besides a cargo of wheat, 30,000 chests of tea. The *Killim* was spared for the time being as she carried coal, and the *Kabinga* was spared to take the prisoners to a neutral port; but the *Indus*, *Lovat*, and *Diplomat* were immediately sunk after their passengers and crews had been taken off. As the coal on the Greek ship was contraband of war von Müller was legally within his rights in transferring this cargo to his own bunkers. An Italian steamer, the *Loredano*, had been stopped,[43] but, this vessel having no contraband, von Müller was forced to release her. He had requested her captain to take his prisoners, but the Italian commander refused on the plea that he had insufficient food. One account says that the Italians were made to promise that they would not disclose the whereabouts of the *Emden*, but, feeling that such a promise was not binding, they broadcast the alarm as soon as they had got below the horizon. The news of the *Emden's* presence in the Bay of Bengal created something like a panic in shipping circles. All sailings were cancelled, and the two British cruisers {190} *Yarmouth* and *Hampshire*, with the Japanese *Chikuma*, at once spread out in search for the raider. Von Müller heard them talking on his wireless, and discreetly left the unhealthy neighbourhood. The *Emden's* next capture was the collier *Trabboch*, bound for Calcutta. Her crew joined the other prisoners on the *Kabinga*, which was now set free to find her way to port. The impossibility of keeping the prisoners with him seriously handicapped von Müller, for on their arrival in port they were able to inform the naval authorities of the raider's latest movements, intelligence which was bound to imperil her safety. But she still remained in the Bay of Bengal, and while cruising in the dark encountered a ship fully lighted—a piece of carelessness which made von Müller speculate on the mentality of the captain who neglected such elementary precautions in time of war. This was the *Clan Matheson*, the *Emden's* ninth victim. The raider next appeared off the port of Rangoon, but departed almost at once, probably warned by her wireless of enemy warships in the neighbourhood. From here she crossed the bay to Madras to

carry out a sudden and spectacular bombardment of the town. Crossing the bay, she narrowly missed the warships who were searching for her. The raid on Madras was a risky and audacious exploit, and required for its successful accomplishment the necessary element of complete surprise—a {191} rapid dash in, the short bombardment, and retreat before the enemy cruisers closed in. The wireless, which was both a blessing and a curse to von Müller, got busy as soon as the cruiser was recognized, and within five minutes every warship within hundreds of miles knew exactly where the *Emden* was. "SOS. Madras speaking. *Emden* here. Shelling the town." Von Müller knew that some such message was being sent by the shore wireless, and he dared not wait long. The raider arrived off Madras on September 22 at 9.30 in the evening, and remained in the roads for less than half an hour. The town was fully lighted, so the enemy had no difficulty in recognizing it from the sea. His objective was the storage tanks of the Burma Oil Company, situated on the edge of the town. About forty shells were sent over, and sixteen people were killed and three wounded. The raid was partially successful, for two out of the four or five large tanks were totally destroyed, with their contents. The blazing oil lit up the countryside for miles around, and caused the enemy to think that he had done even greater damage than he had. The raid created a panic among the native quarter, and thousands fled into the country to escape the deadly lyddite. The shelling over, the *Emden* {192} got away in the darkness, and once more escaped the cordon of warships closing in on her. But she only escaped them by the narrowest margin, for had it been daylight she must have been seen and overtaken, as by this time the cruiser's bottom was foul with marine growths.



THE "EMDEN" SHELLING MADRAS

Steering southward, she captured the steamers *King Lud*, *Gryfevale*, *Buresk*, *Ribera*, *Foyle*, and *Tymeric*, the latter with a £60,000 cargo of sugar

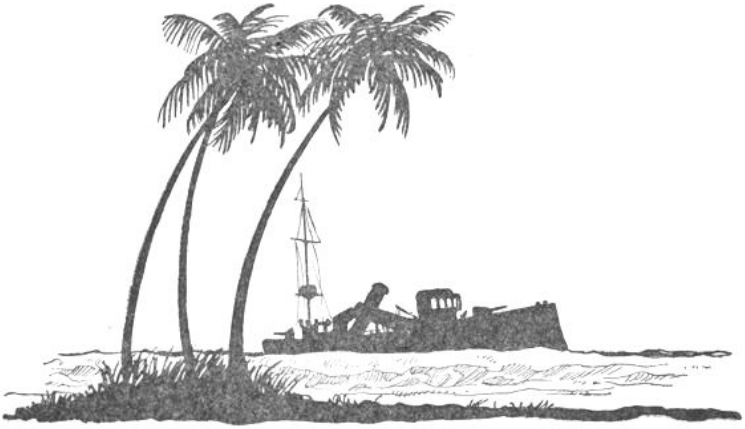
for England. The *Buresk* was carrying 6600 tons of good Welsh coal, and was therefore a welcome prize. The prisoners of the five ships were put on board the sixth, the *Gryfevale*, which was released to sail to a neutral port. The *Emden* now proceeded to one of the Maldive Islands to fill her bunkers from the collier. This accomplished, she steamed to the lonely Diego Garcia Island, in the Chagos group, where the Germans found that the British inhabitants did not know that a war was on. Von Müller explained his presence by saying something vague about being on a foreign mission, and was entertained by the unsuspecting settlers, who wished him Godspeed when he departed. This curious ignorance of the settlers is explained by the fact that Diego Garcia possessed neither wireless nor cable communication with the rest of the world.

Leaving Diego Garcia, von Müller steamed for Penang with the intention of making a quick raid on the shipping there. On the way north he improved his time by capturing the *Clan Grant* with a cargo of tobacco, the large dredger *Ponrabble*, the freighter *Ben Mohr*, the *St Egbert* with sugar, the *Chilkana*, the Blue Funnel liner *Troilus* with an immensely valuable mixed cargo, and finally the *Exford* with 4500 tons of coal, which ship the raider forced to keep her company to the Nicobar Islands to coal. Leaving the Nicobar Islands, he steamed direct to Penang, where he was destined to carry out a raid remarkable both for its audacity and success. Penang was reached before dawn on October 28. In the harbour lay the Russian light {193} cruiser *Zhemchug* (3100 tons) and a French destroyer. The Russian had kept a mere harbour watch on deck, and the destroyer had her boilers down, being under repair. The *Emden* had been seen entering the harbour, but as her dummy funnel was rigged she was taken for a British cruiser and not challenged. The Russian cruiser was torpedoed and sank immediately. The helpless destroyer was shelled at point-blank range and reduced to a wreck. As there was no more game worth shelling von Müller turned to leave, but on the way out met the French destroyer *Mosquet*, returning from patrol duty outside. The Frenchmen were taken by surprise, but instead of trying to escape, as they were justified in doing if they could, they gamely accepted battle. The *Emden's* guns battered the little destroyer to pieces, but when she sank the Germans, at considerable risk of capture, stopped to pick up the survivors. With the wireless buzzing the alarm, the cruisers *Melbourne* and *Sydney*, assisted by French, Russian, and Japanese vessels, closed in to capture the raider, but once more luck was on her side and she got away safely. After this she disappeared for a week. On October 30 she stopped the steamer *Newburn*, and, after getting the French prisoners' parole that they would not serve against Germany, allowed them to go on board the steamer, which was then released.

Then came the fatal move which ended the raider's career. On November 9, early in the morning, she arrived off the landing-place at Cocos-Keeling Island, and sent two boats ashore, towed by a pinnace, with forty-nine men, four machine-guns, and thirty rifles, to destroy the wireless equipment and cables of the Eastern Telegraph Company. The landing-party was under the command of Lieutenant von Mucke. When the cable company's employees recognized the nationality of the warship they began sending out the wireless call, "SOS. *Emden* here." The *Emden's* wireless operator jammed the station's SOS call, but not {194} before it had been picked up by a convoy sixty miles distant. H.M.A.S. *Sydney*,[44] a light cruiser of 5600 tons, with a main armament of eight 6-inch guns and two torpedo tubes, was at once detached from the convoy to go in pursuit.

The members of the landing-party had lost no time in carrying out their orders to smash the telegraph station. With heavy boarding axes they destroyed the sending and receiving apparatus, disabled the electrical machinery, and cut two of the three cables. The other cable was overlooked. They also dynamited the wireless mast, and took possession of official papers and code books. At 9.30 A.M., while the work of destruction was going on, von Müller on the *Emden* sighted the *Sydney*, and signalled the shore party by blasts with his syren that he was leaving at once to meet the enemy. Von Müller thought he had to deal with the light cruiser *Newcastle* of the same armament as his own vessel, and steamed out to meet the enemy with no doubts as to the outcome of the action. The two cruisers approached, made a wide turn, and then steamed on a parallel course exchanging salvos. But the *Sydney's* superior weight of metal and manœuvring powers soon told in her favour, and within a short time the raider had been hit in several places. One of the funnels had gone, her wireless room was demolished, the generators were put out of action, and her steering-gear was disabled, forcing her to steer with her engines. The crew had suffered severe casualties, and the ammunition had begun to run low. The *Sydney* drew off and hammered the raider at her will, the *Emden's* shots mostly falling short and doing no damage. Only one funnel remained; the stricken ship was burning fiercely, and the 'tween decks were a shambles, but still she fought on. Both fire-control stations were gone, and though the *Emden* was now almost unmanageable von Müller endeavoured to manœuvre her into a position from {195} which he could fire his torpedoes. But he was unable to do this, and at 11.20 drove the blazing wreck ashore on North Keeling in such dense clouds of smoke that at times she could not be seen at all by the people on the *Sydney*. Leaving her there for the time being, the victor went in chase of the raider's consort, the *Buresk*, which, with a prize crew, had

been acting as collier. She tried to get away, but as the cruiser rapidly overhauled her she was seen to strike her flag. The Germans, however, had opened her sea-valves, and there was only time to take off the prize crew and British prisoners before she sank.



THE LAST OF THE "EMDEN"

The *Sydney* now returned to North Keeling to the *Emden*, and found the Imperial flag still flying. Captain Glossop, of the *Sydney*, much against his will, was obliged to shell the defenceless ship before she would surrender. After two salvos the flag was hauled down, and the *Sydney* approached to take off the survivors. The victorious captain complimented his adversary on putting up a magnificent resistance, but expressed his regret that he (von Müller) should have allowed the slaughter to go on when the result was obvious. A hundred and eight men and seven officers had been killed, and the *Sydney* took on board two hundred {196} and eleven survivors (including Captain von Müller), of which number fifty-six were wounded, four of whom died later.

The career of the famous raider was finished. During the few months she had cruised the Indian Ocean she had destroyed well over four million pounds' worth of shipping, and diverted from other duties fifty men-of-war who were occupied in searching for her. Von Müller and his surviving company were taken to Australia, where they spent the rest of the period of the War in inglorious detention.

After taking on the survivors of the *Emden* the *Sydney* steamed for Cocos, where she arrived at dusk, intending to capture the landing-party, only to find that the men had escaped in a schooner belonging to the Ross family, who, it will be remembered, owned the island. When von Mucke had

seen the *Emden* destroyed he made up his mind to escape in the three-masted trading schooner which lay in the little harbour at Cocos. This vessel, named *Ayesha*, a comparatively small craft of slightly less than 100 tons, was old and leaky, but it was the only vessel at the island large enough to accommodate von Mucke and his men. The *Sydney* might return at any time, and in great haste the Germans prepared the schooner for sea. With polite apologies they took half the cable employees' four months' stock of provisions, but nothing else beyond a few unimportant trifles. Just at nightfall the *Ayesha* was towed out of the little harbour by the *Emden's* launch, and so got away under cover of darkness.

The story of the *Ayesha's*[45] voyage reads like a piece of fiction, and is surely one of the most diverting romances of the sea. Von Mucke decided to sail to the neutral port of Padang, in Sumatra, and after a wretched passage of sixteen days in a leaking vessel overrun with cockroaches he arrived at the Dutch port. To avoid internment he {197} departed within twenty-four hours, but while there had met and talked to a number of captains of German steamers which lay in the harbour, and from them obtained certain needed provisions. After leaving Padang he set a course across the Indian Ocean for the Gulf of Aden, with the idea of attempting to reach Constantinople overland *via* Arabia, an undertaking beset with almost insuperable obstacles.

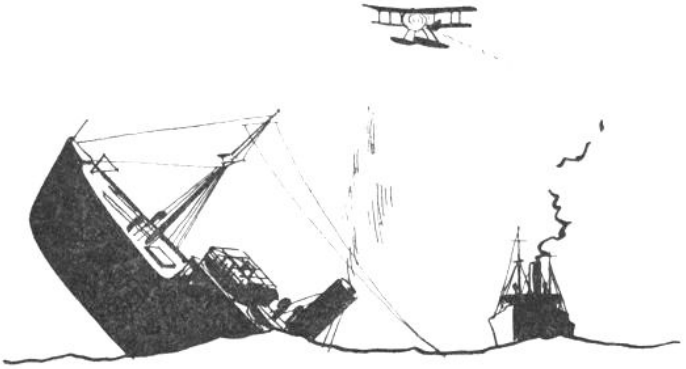
THE "AYESHA"

A few hours out he was overtaken by four Germans who had come from Padang in a motor-boat to join his party in a bid to get back to Germany.

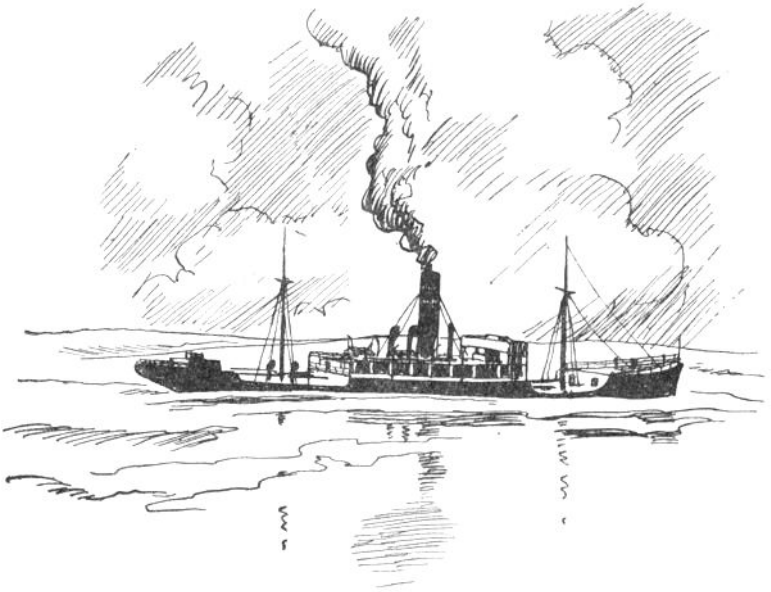
Though he had no room to spare in the schooner—it had accommodation for six men and carried now over fifty—von Mucke was touched by their patriotism and took them with him. Three weeks out from Padang he was overtaken by the German steamer *Choising*, a collier that had been in the Sumatran port since the beginning of the War. The *Choising's* captain had courageously decided to come out and help the crew of the *Ayesha* in any way that von Mucke thought most practical. The first thing he did was to transfer his crew to the more roomy quarters of the collier and sink the *Ayesha*. The {198} *Choising* was next disguised to represent an Italian vessel and given the name *Shenir*, which appeared on Lloyd's list. Early in January she passed through the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb and into the Red Sea without being discovered by an enemy man-of-war. Near Hodeida, on the Arabian coast, the *Emden's* landing-party took their precious machine-guns into the ship's boats and transferred themselves to the shore. Here their real troubles began. They had to march across hundreds of miles of desert with their heavy equipment, through a waterless country inhabited by the treacherous Bedouin, who alternated from friend to enemy in a most disconcerting way. During the march one man died of typhus, and three others were killed in fights with hostile Arabs which frequently occurred, when they were forced to halt and repel with their two machine-guns hordes of Bedouin who sniped at them from the surrounding dunes.

Finally, when they were almost at the end of their food and water and were surrounded by thousands of hostile Arabs, they were relieved by a column sent by the Emir of Mecca. The column arrived only just in time. The rest of their odyssey was comparatively safe. At Constantinople the young Kapitan-Leutnant saluted the German admiral Souchon, and reported the survivors of the landing-party of the *Emden*.

So far the German activities in the Indian Ocean had been confined to the depredations of the *Königsberg* and the *Emden*. Both of these cruisers were now destroyed, and merchant captains began to breathe freely once more. For over two years the waters of the Indian Ocean were untroubled by enemy commerce raiders; then, in January 1917, another enemy raider was discovered to be operating in Eastern seas. Merchant ships sailed from port and failed to turn up at their destination, and later a neutral ship would put in to some harbour loaded with the crews and passengers of the missing vessels. For a while the identity {199} of the raider was unknown, though the Allied intelligence service was not long in finding out.



During the War the German Admiralty sent out four ex-merchant ships for commerce raiding. These were the *Moewe*, which did an enormous amount of damage to shipping in the Atlantic; the *Leopard*, which was captured by a British man-of-war before she could get past Scotland; the square-rigger *Seeadler* under Count von Luckner, who successfully raided the Atlantic and Pacific; and finally the *Wolf*, an old Hansa Line steamer of 3600 tons, which had been converted to a raider and sent to sea under Captain Karl Nerger. The *Wolf*, whose name was originally the *Wachtfels*, left Germany in November 1916, her captain having orders to raid merchantmen wherever he found them, and particularly in the Indian Ocean. The *Wolf* during her conversion had been fitted with two 6-inch and four 4-inch guns.[46] She also carried five hundred mines and a small seaplane stowed amidships. By steaming far to the north of Scotland the British patrols were eluded, and the *Wolf* proceeded unseen down to the Cape. To avoid embarrassing encounters with hostile warships she kept well in the middle of the Atlantic until the latitude of the Cape was reached early in January 1917. Rounding the {200} end of Africa on January 16, she laid a minefield off Dassen Island, near Saldanha Bay. More of these ‘eggs’ were laid in the steamer track off Cape Agulhas.



From here the *Wolf* steamed direct for Colombo, where another group of mines were laid. Others were dropped later off Bombay. The minefield off Colombo was shortly afterward responsible for the loss of the steamer *Worcestershire*. After mining the entrances to Colombo and Aden Captain Nerger took a position between those two ports, where he lay in wait for his first victims. His first capture was the *Turritella*, but instead of sinking her he fitted her out as a minelayer under the command of Lieutenant Brander and a prize crew. On March 1 he captured and sank the s.s. *Jumna* with a cargo of salt. Five days after the *Turritella* had departed to lay her mines she was taken by the British armed ship *Odin*. The *Turritella* was first seen at night, and as her actions were suspicious the commander of the *Odin* decided to hold her in the beam of his {201} searchlight till dawn. At daylight, as he approached, it was noticed that all of the merchantman's boats were in the water and crowded with men. Shortly afterward two explosions were heard, and the steamer began to settle. When the crew were taken prisoner and examined the presence of the raider was definitely established, and the news was broadcast to every station in the Indian Ocean.

The *Wolf* had better luck. She captured the 3500-ton steamer *Wordsworth* and the sailing-ship *Dee* within the next day or two, but, getting short of coal, Captain Nerger was anxious to meet a collier. Accordingly he stood south for Tasmania, where he hoped to find what he wanted. The alarm was

now abroad, and every available warship—over seventy craft—was out looking for the raider. For the time being all troopship sailings between Australia, India, and Africa were stopped. The *Wolf* spent the next few weeks in the Pacific. At Sunday Island she stayed a few days while her engines were overhauled, and advantage was taken of the opportunity to allow the men to go ashore for a change and a rest. Every day while the *Wolf* lay off the island the seaplane, which had been named the "Wolf Cub," was sent up to search for ships. On June 2 a ship was reported, and the raider steamed out to make a capture. She proved to be the freighter *Wairuna* with 1000 tons of coal and fresh provisions. Shortly afterward the American schooner *Winslow* was captured and brought in. On June 22 the raider resumed her cruising. In the last four months she had sunk only four ships, the *Wordsworth*, *Dee*, *Wairuna*, and *Winslow*. Turning again toward the Indian Ocean, she laid three minefields off the New Zealand and Australian coasts, and took the steamer *Matunga*, which was made to accompany the raider to an anchorage among the islands of New Guinea, where her cargo was transferred to her captor. On August 26 the *Wolf* laid the remainder of her mines off the approach to Singapore, and re-entered the Indian Ocean through the Lombok Straits. There {202} happened to be several important people among the prisoners from the *Matunga*, and their absence stirred the British and Colonial authorities to renew their efforts to track down the raider; but though warships were sent scouting in every likely direction the quarry continued to be at large.

On September 26 came the first tragedy in connexion with the cruise. Two days previously the Japanese Nippon-Yusen-Kaisha liner *Hitachi Maru*, 6716 tons, left Colombo for Cape Town with passengers and a valuable cargo of tin, copper, antimony, rubber, hides, silk, and tea. On the afternoon of the 26th, while the passengers were taking their ease and giving no thought to danger, the smoke of another steamer was seen, and though the stranger was observed to be fast converging to the *Hitachi's* course the Japanese officers seemed to have been unsuspicious, for no attempt was made to escape. The position was then 500 miles out from Colombo and nearly 3000 miles from Delagoa Bay. When the stranger had approached to within less than a thousand yards the people on the Japanese liner were astonished to see the German naval flag break out from her masthead. Immediately afterward two shells were sent across the liner's bows with the command to stop immediately. The Japanese captain foolishly refused to do so and attempted to escape. The Germans now began shelling in earnest, and it was not until his ship was badly damaged and a dozen[47] of his men were killed that the Japanese captain hove to and signalled surrender. As so often

happens at such times, when one of the boats was lowered the rotten cordage parted under the strain and tipped its load into the sea, two of the Japanese crew being drowned. Everywhere was confusion: for once the legendary Asiatic calm seems to have deserted the crew, who crowded into the boats without orders. The raider, already crowded with prisoners, picked up the thirty-two passengers {203} and surviving members of the crew of the liner, and put on board her a prize crew with orders to keep the *Wolf* company.

The loss of his men so preyed upon the mind of Captain Tominaga, of the *Hitachi Maru*, that shortly afterward, after writing a letter to Captain Nerger saying that he had sacrificed the lives of his men and therefore was not fit to live, he committed suicide by jumping overboard.

On the day following the capture of the liner the two ships anchored off one of the Maldive atolls, where some of the prisoners were returned to the prize. During several days' stay at the atoll stores and coal were transferred to the *Wolf* from the liner, which was at the same time converted into an auxiliary raider. The *Matunga*, which had been in company with the raider up to now, was sunk, her period of usefulness being over. On August 9 the barque *Beluga* was overtaken and sunk.

On October 20, at Cargados Garayos, the prisoners were inoculated against beriberi, and though there was a fierce opposition to this from some of the prisoners they were forced to submit. On October 28 the Germans prepared to abandon the *Hitachi Maru*. Some more of her coal and a quantity of cargo were transferred to the *Wolf*. She was stripped of her

bedding, table-ware, and linen, and her {204} prisoners transferred to the already overcrowded raider. Before sinking her the Germans, with Teutonic thoroughness and foresight, lashed down everything loose to prevent tell-tale wreckage from floating away. On November 7 a few carefully placed bombs sent the *Hitachi Maru* to the bottom, taking with her the greater part of a cargo estimated to be worth nearly a million pounds.

There were now over four hundred prisoners crowded into the raider, and the conditions between decks in the fearful heat of the tropics were indescribably wretched. Had such a state of affairs continued it is certain that the victims would have revolted and a massacre would have followed. Captain Nerger was a humane man who did what he could to ameliorate the conditions for his unwilling and unwelcome guests, and on November 10, when he captured a Spanish steamer, the *Igotz Mendi*, with a cargo of coal destined for British warships at Ceylon, he transferred all the married couples into the prize. She was taken to an anchorage off the Nazareth Bank, where the raider replenished her bunkers.

The cruise was nearing its end. Captain Nerger resolved to return to Germany with the Spanish prize and his four hundred odd prisoners of war in company. The *Igotz Mendi* was painted war grey to make her less easily visible, and with a small prize crew of nine Germans over her own crew she kept the raider company until the pair became separated in the Atlantic. Before leaving the Indian Ocean the raider destroyed one more ship. This was the American schooner *John H. Kirby*, with several hundred motor-cars destined for South Africa. They were diverted from this destination to Davy Jones's locker. The *Wolf* had evaded capture for fifteen months, had raided the three great oceans, and taken fourteen vessels. After becoming separated from her prize she steamed far to the north of Scotland, and reached home safely without sighting a single enemy man-of-war. {205}

The *Igotz Mendi*, with her prize crew and her prisoners, who were naturally depressed at the thought of detention in Germany, ran into a heavy gale off the Norwegian coast, and for a time was in considerable peril. The gale was followed by a thick fog, during which the prize captain completely lost his bearings. On February 24, 1918, four days after the gale, the prize ran ashore on the Danish coast. The Germans tried, unavailingly, to float her, and finally had to allow the Danes to take the prisoners off. Once on Danish territory they were free. They had been saved almost miraculously at the eleventh hour. The *Igotz Mendi* was returned to Spain by the Danish Government, and the German prize crew were interned in Denmark. Never could it be more aptly said that it's an ill wind that blows no one any good.

[41] A subsidiary company of the Ellerman Line.

[42] The *Emden* had three funnels, with a pronounced rake.

[43] Italy was not then at war with Germany.

[44] Captain Glossop.

[45] *The "Ayesha,"* published by Philip Allan and Co. (London) and Ritter and Co. (Boston).

[46] Another account gives her main armament as six 4·7-inch guns and four torpedo tubes.

[47] Some accounts say twenty.

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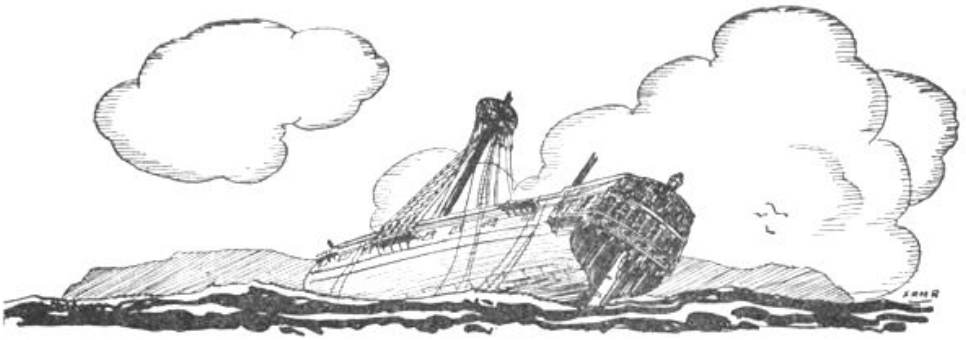


CHAPTER IX

Shipwrecks

The classical shipwreck of the Indian Ocean is undoubtedly the wreck of the treasure ship *Grosvenor* on the rocky coast of Pondoland, South Africa, August 4, 1782, while on a passage from Trincomalee to London. This tale has probably been told more often than any other tragedy in the annals of the sea. The present writer has given the story in detail in a former book,[48] and for that reason, if for no other, it will be omitted here.

In the records of the old John Company at India House, in the British Museum, the Admiralty Library, and the Bibliothèque Nationale, and various old papers, as, for example, the *Illustrated London News* and the *Liverpool Courier*, can be found such a formidable list of shipwrecks that the searcher finds himself embarrassed for choice. If he is lucky he may discover faded diaries written in sepia and stained by the sea—diaries kept by survivors; reports sent to the Admiralty, or to the Court of Directors of the Company by the unfortunate ships' officers; pamphlets printed in quaint old type, and couched in the stilted language of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, recounting the terrible experiences of one John Doe, the only survivor of such and such a vessel on the coast of Madagascar in the year of our Lord 17——. He will read of ships foundering at sea during storms, of ships catching fire, ships blowing {207} up, ships dismasted, plague ships, ships driving on a lee-shore in a gale, or running on to an

uncharted reef in a fog or at night. And we will notice that the loss of the ship is in nine cases out of ten only the beginning of the survivors' adventures. The experience of the passengers and crew of the *Grosvenor* at the hands of hostile blacks during the long trek to Cape Town is one of the most heart-rending stories in the history of the sea. Of the hundred and thirty-four people who got ashore from the wreck only eighteen reached civilization. Most of them died or were killed by natives during the long march, but it is practically certain that the women of the party were spared by the blacks for a worse fate. However, one must admit that the experience of the *Grosvenor's* people was exceptional. The greater part of such narratives concerns vessels wrecked on lonely islands, where the survivors managed to keep alive until they were either rescued by a passing ship or were able to reach the nearest land in a boat, frequently of their own construction. Seldom have shipwrecked people met with the comparatively good fortune of Robinson Crusoe. Erring ships seem to have an affinity for desolate rocks, especially those in the vicinity of the Antarctic Circle, where life for castaways is, to say the least, rigorous. Desolation Island, the Crozets, St Paul, and Amsterdam Islands—these have been the graveyards of more unhappy vessels than the white sandy beaches and palm-fringed coral atolls under the warm sun farther north.

On June 4, 1853, the barque *Meridian*, a new oak-built vessel of 600 tons, departed from London with 84 passengers, including 41 children, who, with the crew, made up 108 persons. The passage down the Atlantic into the Indian Ocean was uneventful, but after rounding the Cape the barque ran into a heavy gale when in latitude 38° 50′ South and longitude 74° 20′ East. Captain Hernaman had set a course for St Paul Island to check {208} his bearing, and though visibility was limited to a few yards on account of thick weather he felt confident that the island was still far to the eastward, and that it would be quite safe to keep the barque on her course. On the evening of August 24, when the children were being put to bed, an enormous sea swept over the rail and down the open hatchways, half filling the ship. Immediately afterward several violent shocks were felt, and another big sea swept the captain and two other men overboard. Tons of water continued to pour down the hatchways, and every one on board believed that their last hour had come. The between decks were rapidly filling with water, and the passengers, roused from their terror by the rising sea, crawled into the cuddy aft, where they huddled in silence, helpless to do anything for themselves. The whole catastrophe had happened so quickly that there had been no time to take stock of the situation. One moment the ship was sound and dry and the children were being tucked up in their berths; a few minutes later the

ship was a wreck, half submerged in the frightful seas. Shortly afterward the *Meridian* broke in two amidships, and in the darkness those on the poop saw the mainmast topple over against the black rocks, which could now be seen almost hanging over the ship. As the terrible night wore on the gale somewhat abated, and at dawn the survivors discovered that the fallen mainmast formed a rough-and-ready means of getting on to the rocks close at hand. The barque had crashed into the black cliffs on the south-west point of Amsterdam Island, one of the most isolated spots on earth, midway between the Cape of Good Hope and Australia.

THE ABANDONED SHIP

When it was full daylight the officers began making preparations for getting the passengers ashore, a task which was made more difficult because so many of them were children. Life-lines were made fast round the more helpless, and in this way every one was transferred safely to the shore. As the captain was dead the mate, as a matter of {209} course, had taken charge of the situation, and now did what he could to relieve any immediate distress. Bales of flannel and serge were secured from the cargo still in the wreck and distributed to those of the company who were insufficiently clothed, and the few provisions found washed up at the foot of the rocks were carefully rationed. Except for a few who were fortunate enough to find room under a piece of sailcloth retrieved from the wreck, most of the castaways spent the first night in the open, suffering cruelly from the rain-laden winds which swept the top of the cliffs. The next day small parties set out exploring the island. A camp was formed on a prominent cliff five hundred yards from the wreck, and a signal on which was secured a red flannel shirt was firmly set up on the highest point overlooking the sea. A mile away a spring of water was discovered, and sufficient food had been collected from among the wreckage washed up to last ten days if sparingly distributed.

On the fourth morning after the loss of the ship a sail was seen approaching, and the castaways saw that their signals of distress had been noticed. But another heavy gale was blowing on a lee-shore, and the ship was seen to beat out to sea until she presently disappeared. The spirits of the shipwrecked people sank, and they gave up hope of her returning. For two days the gale continued, but on the evening of the day when it blew itself out the vessel was seen again, a tiny white sail against the darkening {210} sky. The next morning the vessel, which was made out to be a whaling-barque, had approached to within a mile or two of the shore, and a boat was put out. Owing, however, to the huge breakers the boat was unable to reach the shore, and the whalemen signalled the people on the rocks to cross to the more sheltered side of the island. Thus instructed, they gathered their few possessions together and set out on a journey which, because of the rough nature of the country, occupied three days. They had

been forced to leave behind a boy who had been injured when the *Meridian* was wrecked, but he was left with food and water for a few days, and with the promise that he would be sent for later. When they reached the opposite shore the ship was nowhere to be seen. Further gales had driven her out to sea. When finally she returned the castaways were starving and so weak that they had to be assisted into the whale-boats which came ashore to get them. They were all transferred without mishap to the whaler, which was found to be the *Monmouth*, an American vessel. Four of her seamen went back to fetch the injured boy, and three weeks later the survivors of the wreck were landed at Mauritius, where they were most hospitably taken care of by the local people. Captain Ludlow, of the *Monmouth*, was publicly thanked for his work in effecting a rescue, and a sum of £1200 was raised by subscription for the destitute people. After a short stay at Mauritius they were sent by the Government to their various destinations. Actually, relative to the time spent on the island where they were shipwrecked, these people were fortunate. Castaways have in some cases had to spend several months on desolate rocks. The people of the *Meridian* had been on the island only twelve days. Fortunately those who have been condemned to spend months on similar isles have found sufficient food, either from sea birds and fish or in stores washed up from the wreck, as in the case of the forty-nine passengers and crew of the ship *Strathmore*, {211} who spent eight months on one of the Crozet group in 1875. God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb —sometimes.

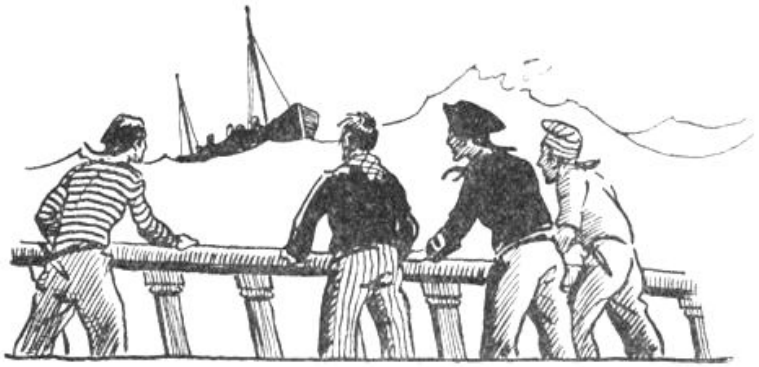
Amsterdam's neighbouring island St Paul—if an isle sixty miles below the horizon can be regarded as neighbouring—was the scene of the wreck of the Government transport *Megæra* in 1871. The *Megæra* had left England in

March of that year with 375 officers and men sent out to relieve troops stationed in Australia. There were also 44 marines and 67 boys, with a crew of 180, making a total of 666 people on board. The ship was overcrowded, and to add to the discomfort of the men the weather was bad during the passage to the Cape, with the result that every one below decks was wet and miserable. The sea and the weather seem to have conspired to destroy the ship, for the gales were almost continuous from the Channel to the Cape. It was hoped that when the ship got into the Indian Ocean better weather would be found, but, if anything, it grew worse after the Cape had been rounded. On the night of June 8, in darkness so deep it could almost be felt, the butcher was lost overboard in a heavy sea, and a few hours later a serious leak was discovered. The *Megæra* was an iron ship, and the leak came from a hole where the rusty plating had worn paper thin. A repair was attempted, but was found to be useless, as the entire hull was eaten with rust. In spite of constant pumping *and bailing with buckets* the leak steadily gained. On June 10, in a violent gale, the rocky island of St Paul was sighted through the flying spume, and the captain decided to heave to till the next morning. At daylight the *Megæra* was manœuvred into the lee of the land, where, in comparatively smooth water, a diver was sent over the side to examine the hull. Though his examination was interrupted by a sudden offshore gale, he had seen enough to report that the ship was falling apart from corrosion. {212} He stated that a knife could be pushed through the rusty plating. By this time it had become obvious to every one on board that the ship was breaking up, and the captain was reluctantly forced to the decision to abandon her. Opposite a small natural harbour the anchors were let go, and most of the stores were landed in the ship's boats. On this part of the coast the volcanic rocks formed cliffs 800 feet in height and inaccessible to anything except birds. As the boats pulled ashore it was found that the island was not uninhabited. Two men were seen on the beach, and these proved to be Frenchmen in charge of tents and stores set ashore for the summer whalers. As soon as most of the men and stores were landed the *Megæra* was driven ashore at full speed. For several days every one that was able was put to work getting coal and stores ashore, until the wreck was stripped of everything that could be of use to the marooned people. When prolonged search failed to discover any freshwater pools or streams on the island the engineers of the *Megæra* built a big condensing apparatus. This, in conjunction with the one pool of rainwater discovered, relieved the company of anxiety about their water-supply. The marooned people did not fare so badly. Tents were set up, huts built, and a regular routine of life began. Some fished with rods made from rocket-sticks, and others successfully hunted wild goats. There were also a few vegetables, planted by

the whalers, {213} which were shared with the shipwrecked people. A tall flag-pole was erected, and from it the reversed ensign was permanently flying. Within two weeks five ships were seen in the distance, but none came near the island. Bottles and lifebuoys, painted vermilion, were set adrift with small flags attached to them, in the hope that at least one of them might be picked up. After a month had gone by and food had been reduced to starvation rations a vessel was signalled, and to the wild joy of every one the signals were answered. The vessel was the Dutch barque *Aurora*, and Lieutenant Jones, one of the shipwrecked men, went aboard to see the captain. While the lieutenant was on board a gale drove the barque out to sea, and she never reappeared off the island. The men daily grew more despondent at this failure, and their spirits were further depressed by another reduction in the food allowance. For the first time the company began to suffer severe privation, though during the whole period they were on the island no one died. In August every one was overjoyed to see a ship approaching the coast. The vessel turned out to be a small Dutch ship bound for Batavia, and she was able to take off all the sick people and leave a little food for those remaining behind. On August 26 a steamer was seen making direct for the little harbour, where, at a safe distance from the shore, she anchored while a boat was lowered. {214} As the boat approached Lieutenant Jones was seen standing in the bows. He had brought relief at last. Three days later H.M.S. *Rinaldo* appeared off the coast, and on August 30 the P. and O. steamer *Malacca* arrived. With such a force at hand the men looked for immediate relief. But the elements had not quite finished tormenting the wretched men, for before they could be taken off the anchorage was made unsafe by another heavy gale, which forced the rescue-ships to put to sea. After some days of a storm of hurricane force the ships returned, and though high seas were still running all the men were safely got on board. They had been marooned for three months on the island.

With several women passengers and a number of soldiers destined for India the East India ship *Winterton* left Gravesend for Calcutta on March 10, 1792, and was lost in the Indian Ocean five months later. After an uneventful passage south the *Winterton* left Cape Town on August 1 on a course south-east. Captain Dundas had intended to take the outer

passage instead of sailing directly north through the Mozambique Channel, but, the direction of the wind changing, he stood for the Channel. On August 19 the captain retired at the usual time, after telling the third mate to keep the ship on a course east-north-east. He had calculated the nearest land to be eighty miles distant, but, being unsatisfied, he came on deck at 2 A.M. and ordered the course to be altered to north-east by east. After spending an hour on the poop he again went below, after telling the helmsman to steer north-east. Captain Dundas had been below but a few minutes when a tremendous shock was felt as the ship struck an unseen reef. Fortunately the sea was calm, and as there were no breakers there was no immediate danger. With a faint hope that the ship could be hauled off whatever was holding her, the jolly-boat and yawl were at once got out to carry a {215} warp astern with a kedge-anchor. One hundred yards astern a sounding gave five fathoms of water, sufficient to float the ship if she could be got off. Every effort was made to get her free; the sails were put aback and the warp was passed round the capstan, but it was all of no avail. At daylight she was found to be on a reef which extended far to the northward, and about six miles from a low-lying island. Through the clear water it could be seen that the rudder had been twisted off, and that all round just under the surface lay the jagged fangs of black rocks. In a last attempt to float the ship the captain ordered the guns to be hove overboard, but, a breeze coming up, this work was stopped. Some hopes had been held out for the ship floating clear at high water, but she refused to lift, and so preparations for abandoning her were at once begun. If a gale were to come up suddenly the ship, in such an exposed position, would almost certainly go to pieces. Stores, barrels of gunpowder, muskets, and miscellaneous gear were got up and stowed in the boats, and, as a precautionary measure, the wine casks were smashed in by order of Captain Dundas—a little precaution that many a ship's captain has regretted not taking.



The position of the wreck was worked out to be sixty-three miles north of the Bay of St Augustine, on the island of Madagascar. The captain, addressing the company, suggested that after getting over to the land they should make their way south to St Augustine, where a ship might be found to return them to civilization. By nightfall three of the boats were loaded and set off for the land, but as by this time a heavy wind had come up and the surf was running high all three boats were smashed in the breakers and seven people were drowned. Those on the wreck spent a bad night, as the deck was constantly swept by heavy seas which tore loose deck-houses, skylights, and stanchions, and filled the hold with hundreds of tons of green water. The poop itself was so loosened by the battering of the {216} seas that in the morning the carpenter had no difficulty in cutting it away and converting it into a serviceable raft. At nine o'clock in the morning the yawl came off from the shore, but owing to the high seas could not come alongside the wreck to take off anyone. Later eighty people were able to get ashore on rafts which had been hastily lashed together from wreckage. That night the ship broke up, taking with her Captain Dundas, forty-eight sailors and soldiers, and three women who, for some reason or other, had not gone ashore on the rafts. Those on shore waited until daylight, when they began a long march to find a settlement. A few days later they reached a place called Tolia, the residence of the native ruler of Baba, who treated them well, giving them food and shelter, while the third mate of the *Winterton*, with the fourth mate, four seamen, and a passenger who spoke Portuguese, set out in a boat for the African coast to seek help from the Europeans at Mozambique. This journey across the Channel to the mainland took several days, and is itself an odyssey of heroism and suffering. Eventually the men landed at Sofala, a Portuguese settlement, but despite their wretched condition they were none too well received by the Portuguese, who put all manner of difficulties in the way of going to succour the people left behind on Madagascar. When finally a ship was obtained to sail over to the island six months had gone by, and the castaways were discovered to be in a desperate plight. Nearly half of {217} them had died of fever and starvation, and of a hundred and thirty left seven died when they were taken on the ship. On the return the vessel was captured by a French privateer, but shortly afterward was taken from the French by a heavily armed Dutch East Indiaman, whose captain released the prisoners and had them safely carried to England.

There is a buccaneering flavour in the story of the wreck of *Cabalva*, East Indiaman, a big vessel of 1200 tons, which went ashore on a reef 250 miles northward of Mauritius in July 1818. The *Cabalva* left Gravesend on

April 4 for China with a miscellaneous cargo of cloth, iron, lead, stationery, beer, watches, perfumery, and specie. On the night of July 7, in the southern Indian Ocean, the second and sixth officers had the deck. The night was mild, a moderate breeze was blowing, and the crew lay asleep about the deck. In the velvety blackness there was no sound save for the creaking of a block and the soft hiss of the sea alongside, until suddenly there came a blood-chilling cry from some one forward, “Breakers ahead!” The sixth officer sprang to the wheel. “Hard aport!” he yelled, but it was too late. The wheel spun round as the keel scraped over the rocks, and the masts shook like saplings in a wind. Everything was in instant confusion on deck. While the captain ordered the boats to be cleared away some of the yards, torn loose by the shaking of the masts, crashed down to the deck, to the deadly peril of the men at the boat-falls. The captain now ordered the masts to be cut away, and when this was done the ship was eased somewhat. As soon as it was light enough to see some of the officers, the surgeon, and the only passenger put off in the cutter with a few things thrown hastily into her. The ship had by this time broken in two, leaving only the poop and fo’c’sle standing out of the sea. A heavy surf breaking over the wreck had washed the captain and most {218} of the crew overboard, but some, including the captain, managed to climb into the longboat, which had meantime been cleared from the wreck; but she was staved in against a rock, and those in her were lost. Mr Francken, the sixth officer, with several others, pushed a raft made of booms to {219} a rock a hundred and fifty yards away, upon which they clung until they were washed off. As the tide began to recede and it was possible to keep a place on the rock others floated or swam to this refuge, until no less than a hundred and twenty-five men,[49] including some officers, had gained temporary safety on the rock. As the tide receded farther the reef was seen to be littered with casks, cases, spirits, bales of cloth, chests, and bits of wreckage. As most of the men were naked the bales were ripped open and the contents divided to cover their bodies from the burning rays of the tropic sun.

"BREAKERS AHEAD!"

It was not long before the thirsty men got at the casks of spirits and proceeded to celebrate their discovery. The result was that some went temporarily mad, and began plundering and destroying insanely whatever they found. While a few made some attempt to repair the damaged boats the majority gave way to a bestial orgy of drunkenness. With the falling of the tide a number of men made their way to a low sandbank they had seen when the tide was in. It stood about five feet above high water and offered a better refuge than the rocks. A young shark which had been caught was eaten without ceremony by the more hungry and less squeamish of the men. The survivors of the wreck were in a curious position. There {220} appeared to

be very little food, but costly wines were to be had in abundance. Also, though most of the men were barefooted, hatless, and without proper clothes, they were carousing, quarrelling, skylarking, and fighting, swathed in gay-coloured chintzes and muslins. Mr Francken, from whose account we get our information, remonstrated with the men, but, seeing that they were too drunk for reason, he gave up the attempt. Later he found that some of them had had the wit to save some salt pork and fresh water from the wreck, a portion of which was shared out to those not too drunk to eat. A great quantity of useless flotsam lay among the rocks—perfumed soap, tooth- and clothes-brushes, lavender-water, and suchlike stuff—but there was also a copper cask containing gunpowder, which provided a heaven-sent means of making a fire.

THE SURVIVORS OF THE "CABALVA"

During the first evening on the sandbank a large tent of sailcloth, spacious enough to hold forty men, was erected; but when the officers wished to enter they were coarsely refused admittance. This decided the minority party of sober men to make a strong effort to establish discipline the next day, but the majority were too drunk and rebellious to be amenable to any form of discipline. Some of the stronger sailors waded to the wreck at low tide and returned with the cutter full of stores. They brought small arms, more wine and brandy, muslin-cloth, beer, cutlery, cheese, one sheep and a dozen fowls (all drowned), and a live pig. With the retrieved cutter another trip was made, and more pigs and live poultry were found. About this time a number of the more selfish of the men were discovered in a plot to steal the cutter and leave the others, but this conspiracy was unanimously condemned by the rest. In this, at least, the officers found themselves with the majority.

When a list of the stores was made the total wealth in potential food was found to be five sheep, six pigs, two dozen dead fowls, fifty slabs of salt pork, a keg of flour, {221} and five cheeses, but no hard-tack or water. But

since there were three casks of beer and plenty of wine and cherry brandy the lack of water did not seem to trouble the majority of the men. The surviving officers rejoiced in the recovery of a sextant, a quadrant, and one of the charts. They also managed to get hold of several muskets, pistols, and cutlasses, which gave them a sense of power that they had previously lacked. Armed with pistols charged with small round pebbles for want of lead balls, they set a watch over the stores.

The marooned men had gradually split up into two groups, those who rallied round their officers and those whom we shall call the mutineers. The latter formed a regular buccaneering settlement on another sandbank, where they lived in picturesque savagery, drinking and fighting over the plunder got from the wreck. They lived like pirates, naked, brown, and dirty, wearing little beyond a loin-cloth girded by a belt, into which was stuck a long knife, and on their heads improvised turbans of gaily coloured muslin. Some carried a pistol or a cutlass slung by a strap from the shoulder. Those who were not too drunk spent much of their time fishing. They named their sandbank Beer Island.

The carpenters and mates got busy with what few tools they had, repairing the cutter and cutting and sewing sails in preparation for an attempt to bring assistance. On the third day after the loss of the ship the captain's gig was recovered, and on this a sailor was found, alive but gloriously drunk. Some kegs of water and one of lime-juice were also found in the wreck, a discovery that greatly heartened the finders.

On Saturday, July 11, sights were taken, and the position of the reef found to be 250 miles north-west by north from Mauritius. The chart showed this to be the Cargados Garayos Reef. By this time sixteen tents of flowered muslin decorated the first sandbank. The company was divided {222} into messes with two rations a day: at seven in the morning and six in the evening. The food allowance was two ounces of meat and one dram of beer. The fourth officer was appointed steward to see that every one got his fair allowance. The live pigs were fed on scented soap, pomatum, and the dregs of beer! They appeared satisfied with this ration. At least, there were no complaints.

The little community was safe enough while the weather held good and the stores lasted, but the dreadful possibility of being swept away in the first gale was never long absent from their thoughts. The highest part of the sandbank was no more than five feet above the sea at high water, and it was certain that big seas swept right across it in bad weather. The carpenter and mates were working hard to make the cutter seaworthy. Scattered over the sandbank were many discarded and useless articles from the wreck—pomatum, fancy brushes, pens, trade goods such as tomahawks and dirks,

and coloured pencils and jars of soap and perfumes. Mr Francken tells how the ‘passenger’ was considered by the others to be lucky because he was the only man who could boast of a pair of shoes, a hat, coat, and trousers, but, it seems, he was not as grateful for these amenities as he should have been.

On the day that the first sights were taken water was found by digging some feet down into the sand. It was brackish but tolerable, and more than welcome. The next day, July 12, a deputation came over from Beer Island. There had been a fight, some one was hurt, and the doctor was requested. The ‘buccaneers’ admitted that they spent their time drinking and fighting, but naïvely added that every night prayers were read by one of the hands, and that on Sunday all hands gathered for worship about the large cutter they had with them. One can picture the scene.

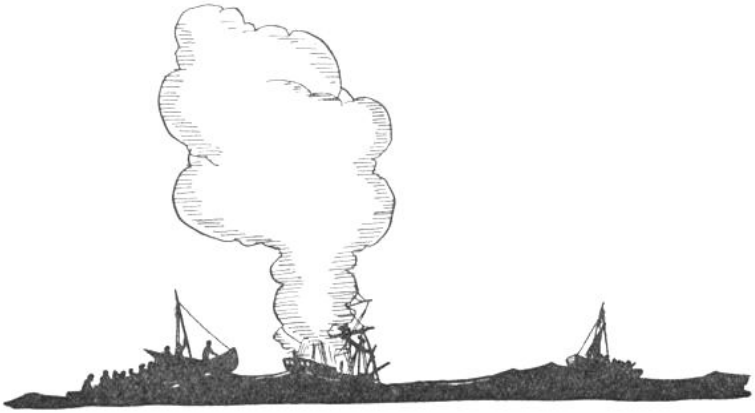
On Tuesday, July 14, the cutter, under Mr Francken with ten men, set out on the long journey of two hundred {223} and fifty miles to land. They had neither compass, chart, nor quadrant; nothing but a log reel and a watch by which to find their way across the trackless sea. The previous night Francken had sat for a long while studying the stars, the Southern Cross, Venus, Mars, and the Scorpion. As the boat left the island she scudded before the wind under a mizen and foresail, and the two low sandbanks with their two rival camps were soon lost to view astern. Francken, steering by the sun, moon, and stars, set a course toward where he judged Mauritius to lie. At first every one was violently sick through the motions of the boat, but this sickness soon wore off, and the voyagers were able to give all their attention to keeping the little cutter on her course, which was guessed at as south-south-west. The log gave an approximate speed of five or six knots. The bearing of the sun and direction of the wind were closely noted and compared. During the first night the wind continued squally, though the sky was clear and the constellations plainly visible. From these the fixed course was maintained.

THE “CABALVA’S” BOAT

At dusk the first rations, two ounces of meat and a dram of beer, were given out. In the morning the weather became worse and the log was carried away, but at noon Mr Francken was able to get an observation. It worked out at 18° 30′ South, 58° 44′ East, which, if we consult the {224} chart, we will find to be nearly midway between Cargados Garayos and Mauritius. At daybreak on July 16 the faint, grey shape of land was seen on the larboard bow, and Francken concluded it to be Round Island, off Mauritius. All day they beat to windward against a high wind and sea, and at nightfall, not having been able to make the land, the anchor was let go in nine feet of water close under the lee of the island. During the night torrential rains drenched the men, and all hands were given a double ration. On the 17th, at 8 A.M., they entered a small harbour, and were helped ashore by a little crowd of islanders, at once sympathetic and curious at the sight of the castaways in gay rags of flowered, striped, and spotted cottons.

Every one was eager to help the men, and within an hour H.M. frigate *Magicienne*, which happened to be lying in the roads, had set sail with Francken and three others as pilots to rescue the marooned men. The *Magicienne* was accompanied by the brig *Challenger*. On the third day the relief ships reached the reef, firing a gun every eight minutes as they approached. In reply the marooned men let off all their gunpowder. They told their rescuers that they were astonished to see the ships, as they had never expected the cutter to live through the recent gales. During Francken's absence many of the men had gone over to the Beer Island gang, attracted, doubtless, by the fact that the 'buccaneers' had the longboat. The East India Company decided to take no action against the mutineers. On their part they greatly lamented having to leave the reef while three barrels of beer still remained! Francken, in recognition of his services, was presented by the Company with a fine sextant and a purse of fifty guineas.

To the south of the Cargados Garayos Reef lay the three islands which so often have played a part in a drama of the sea. These islands—Réunion, Mauritius, and Rodriguez—lying as they did in the track of all East Indiamen taking {225} the outer passage, were the objectives of castaways who had lost their ships and had taken to their boats. Even as recently as 1923 the two boats containing thirty-six men from the steamer *Trevessa*, which had foundered in mid-ocean, landed, one at Mauritius and the other at Rodriguez, after being over three weeks at sea and covering a distance of 1700 miles. During the long journey seven men perished, and later the cook died in the hospital at Mauritius from the privations he had experienced in the boat.



In the month of October 1834 the forty-five survivors of the *Earl of Eldon*, East Indiaman, crawled ashore on Rodriguez Island after thirteen terrible days at sea in two of the ship's boats. The *Earl of Eldon* had left Bombay for London on September 24 with passengers and cargo—chiefly cotton. The cotton when put on board was insufficiently dry, with the result that spontaneous combustion set it on fire three days out from Bombay. Early in the morning a passenger reported that he had seen steam escaping from the fore-hatch. This was soon found to be the smoke of a fire in the cargo. By breakfast-time the smoke was issuing in a dense cloud, and by nine o'clock the fore-deck was too hot to stand on. The crew and passengers set to work heaving the burning cotton bales {226} overboard, but the smoke and heat quickly drove them out of the hold, and as further efforts to overcome the fire were seen to be hopeless the boats were stocked with food and water preparatory to leaving the ship.

In the longboat, which got away at 1.30 P.M. with the three women passengers and a baby, were stored 216 gallons of water, 20 gallons of brandy, and biscuits and preserved meat for a month. Captain Theaker and nineteen men remained as long as possible on board the burning ship in a forlorn effort to stem the march of the flames. At three o'clock these twenty men abandoned the ship in two of the smaller boats. They had remained on board to the very last minute, for as they pulled away the whole vessel became as a blazing torch, and the masts fell with a shower of sparks into the sea. They hauled off for a mile, and watched their late home burning until nine o'clock, when the magazine blew up and the wreck slipped out of sight for ever. That night small lugsails were hoisted, and the boats kept together by following a lantern hung at the masthead of the captain's boat. Captain Theaker had decided to make for Rodriguez, which lay to the

southward. The seas were running high, and the three women, one of whom was ill, suffered cruelly from the wet and cold. A dodger of tarpaulin was rigged, but for three days there was no respite from the acute discomfort of wet misery. One of the small boats was so seriously damaged in the launching that it was found to be no longer safe in the big seas. Accordingly, her ten people were transferred to the longboat, which now floated dangerously low with its burden of thirty-five people. The gunwale stood no more than eight inches above the water, and the smallest wavelets slopped water into the boat. In spite of this, however, the two boats made good progress to the south. With a daily ration of three biscuits, a spoonful of jam, and a pint and a half of water, with brandy for those who desired it, the castaways managed to keep alive and hopeful {227} during the next thirteen days. The women and the child suffered most, but in spite of cramped quarters, exposure, and lack of food every one survived the ordeal. At sunset, thirteen days after abandoning the ship, the silhouette of Rodriguez was sighted low in the sea to the southward. At breakfast-time the next morning the two boats had safely navigated the outlying reefs and run up on to the sandy beach of Rodriguez, where the weary voyagers were received and nursed back to health by the islanders.

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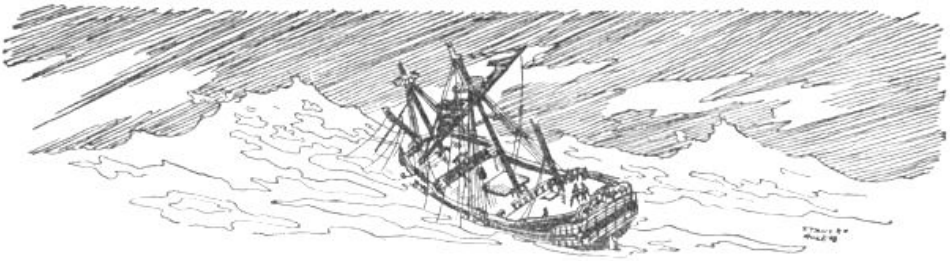
[48] *Ships and Sailors.*

[49] Some accounts state 120 men as the number saved.



CHAPTER X

Shipwrecks—continued

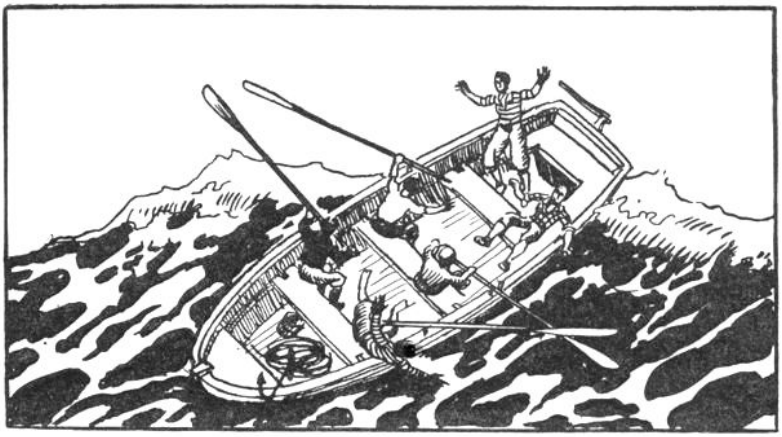
In the old days to be wrecked on an island in the Indian Ocean was to be cast from the frying-pan into the fire. The unfortunate mariner had escaped one peril to be faced with another—that of hostile natives. The negroes, the Arabs, and the Malays were unanimous in their disapproval of these uninvited guests, and usually made their stay as unpleasant as possible. In the case of negroes one can hardly wonder at this enmity, since the whites had earned an evil name for slave-trading. It was the African's opportunity to get his own back. There were, of course, chiefs who had not been embittered against the whites, but it is safe to say that the greater part of Africa was hostile to Europeans.

The tragic consequences of this hostility is eloquently illustrated in the fate of the passengers and crew of the East Indiaman *Degrave*, which went ashore on the south-eastern end of Madagascar in the year 1702. The *Degrave*, 700 tons, with a crew of a hundred and twenty men and several passengers, including two women, left Madras for England in that year. Her commander, Captain Younge, had died in India, and the command was given to his son, who was thus in charge on the fateful voyage. While still in the river the ship ran on to a sandbank, and though she was got off on the next tide she had so strained her timbers that a powerful leak developed, which was only kept down by the constant working of the two chain-pumps. This went on for sixty days during the passage to Mauritius. {229} Here Captain Younge had the cargo taken ashore and stowed under a marquee while the ship was careened to find the leak. In this he was unsuccessful, and after several weeks the ship, with the cargo restowed, put out to sea. Mauritius

was at that time occupied by the Dutch, and was also used as a rendezvous for pirates from Madagascar. A short time before the *Degrave* had put in there a notorious pirate, Captain Boon, had called with fifty Indian prisoners taken from a captured ship. While there his own vessel had driven ashore and become a total wreck. Boon had eventually sailed away in a sloop that his men had built, leaving the Indians behind. When the *Degrave* departed she carried these fifty men with her, Captain Younge considering that they would be useful for relieving the crew at the pumps.

As the ship stood for the Cape the leak slowly gained, until, when 300 miles south of Madagascar, the crew persuaded the Captain to make all sail for that island before the leaking ship foundered beneath their feet. Though Captain Younge was opposed to the idea, he consented to turn northward, and the land was reached just in time after three days' sailing. He had heard rumours of the hostility of the blacks here, and was for that reason very reluctant to allow his men ashore, even though the *Degrave* was settling lower in the water every hour. The condition of the ship had by now become so serious that, although the surf was running high, she was taken close into the land, where the anchor was let go in shallow water. Guns and cargo were jettisoned, and the masts cut away in an attempt to lighten the ship. At nightfall the only boat was rowed ashore with a line fast to a raft which had been hastily constructed on board. The boat capsized in the breakers and smashed, though her crew were dragged out of danger by natives who had been looking on. Most of those left on the ship now crowded on to the raft, and while this met with the same fate as the boat, all, except {230} a woman, who was washed away, safely got ashore. The captain with the one surviving woman passenger and a few others still remained on the wreck, as they had no faith in the natives. But as the ship was rapidly breaking up and at the same time driving on to the sand they were finally forced to take their chances ashore with the others. Of these all except two seamen, who remained behind and perished in the wreck, safely got ashore. The captain brought with him a grisly relic in a bottle—his father's heart, which he had promised to bury in England. The survivors numbered altogether a hundred and sixty people, and for two days they camped on the beach, picking up odd bits of wreckage which from time to time were washed ashore. From the natives they learned that the nearest settlement, Fort Dauphin, was about sixty miles away. While resting here the castaways were amazed to receive a strangely dressed figure who hailed them in English. The voice belonged to an English sailor who called himself "Sam," and who explained that he had been sent to their assistance by the native ruler. Sam, they learned, had been captured by pirates and forced to serve in their ship. He had managed, by a trick, to get ashore during the ship's visit to the Mattanna river. He {231}

informed the castaways that the native king had a number of white prisoners, whom he treated humanely.



The next day the king himself arrived with a large company of armed savages, and ordered the shipwrecked people to follow him to his capital. For three days the wretched, half-clad folk marched through the jungle, many barefooted, and all suffering acutely from the hardships of the trek. Arriving at the town of the chief, they were allowed to rest in huts provided for them. Here they found a number of other prisoners, including a Captain Stewart and a Captain Drummond—the latter a quick-tempered man who could not endure captivity. He suggested to the others that they should overpower the chief and his son and hold them as hostages. The plan was fraught with considerable risk, and would mean torture and death if it failed; but the others agreed to make the attempt, and the next morning it was actually carried out. They contrived to secure powder and shot and arms from the chief's dwelling, and made the chief and his son and wife[50] prisoners. When the alarm was raised the natives made sporadic attempts to recapture the hostages, but the white men's guns easily held them off,[51] and the two prisoners were led to an open veldt, where parleys were held to make terms. Here the whites made their first serious mistake: they released the king in exchange for six guns (these presumably were muskets) and a promise from the blacks that they would return to their village and not follow the party. The latter promised, for their part, to release the king's son as soon as they reached the river. With the king's son the party of whites, with the lascars picked up at Mauritius, marched toward the Mandera river on the border of the hostile king's domains.

The next morning one of the king's important men came forward with the request that the king's son should be {232} released in exchange for three of the leading chiefs in the kingdom. In agreeing to this proposal the white people made their second serious blunder, as we shall presently see. The whites had their arms, but the blacks had the two important hostages back, and now became threatening in their manner. Their numbers miraculously increased until the whole jungle seemed to be swarming with savages on the war-path. The second casualty occurred when a sailor, on account of his wooden leg, fell behind. He was at once killed by the blacks. Then the lion-hearted Captain Drummond became ill with fever and had to be carried. The three native prisoners left were impressed into this service, but one ran away during the night. The captain was carried on an improvised palanquin, and to prevent the leader of the other two carriers from escaping he was led with a halter round his neck.

Harried by the threatening natives, who were beating tomtoms and filling the jungle with the ominous chant of their war songs, the party of castaways reached the banks of the river. They would soon be across into a country whose people were believed to be friendly, and the fatigued marchers were heartened at the thought of relief from the army of blacks who had hung on their heels during the dreadful march.

DRURY WAS FORCED TO MARCH

It is necessary now to bring into this story a young midshipman named Robert Drury, to whom we are indebted for the account of the wreck and the fate of the *Degrave's* people. While the fugitives were resting not far from the river the natives began a massed attack. Some of the company, including the three captains, young Drury, and a Mr Benbow, succeeded in escaping to the river, but the remainder, including the white woman, were massacred by

the blacks, who afterward pursued the fugitives across the river, where they succeeded in slaying four of the sailors by sniping from ambush. The captains rallied their men to make a stand, but the odds were too overwhelmingly {233} against them to allow of any hope. There were less than fifty men against several thousand frenzied blacks. Still the defenders, by digging entrenchments, held the attackers off all day, until they ran out of ammunition. The indomitable sailors attempted to stave off the inevitable by making slugs out of coins and bits of iron. Bitterly they regretted having given up their royal hostages. In the end, after every bit of ammunition had gone, Sam, with his native wife, volunteered to go out with a flag of truce to try to make terms. Though they were helpless, such was the white man's prestige that the savages listened to the emissaries and agreed to withdraw the next day on condition that the arms were given up and the remaining two prisoners released. When the terms were conveyed back to the besieged, opinions were divided, some being for and others against their acceptance. Captain Stewart, Captain Drummond, and a few others vigorously opposed the suggestion to give up anything. Hadn't they already seen the folly of such an action? If the chief and his son had been kept they would not be in their present position. The opposition was overruled, however, and the majority, under Captain Younge, decided to return the two prisoners along with the firearms. Those against the proposal regarded the idea as suicidal, and since they no longer felt under any obligations of loyalty to Captain Younge's supporters they decided to escape under cover of darkness. This plan was carried out during the ensuing night, Captains Stewart and Drummond (who was now able to travel), Mr Benbow, and five others getting clear away. The fate of this party, with the exception of Mr Benbow, who eventually arrived in England, and Captain Drummond, who was killed by natives, is wrapt in mystery. The others were never heard of again. The natives did not keep their promise to spare the lives of those who surrendered. Captain Younge was speared to death by the king's son, and this was a signal for a general massacre. For some {234} reason or other Robert Drury and three other youths were spared by the blacks, who, however, treated them with great harshness. The Englishman Sam, who seemed to be a renegade, followed the natives, and here disappears from the story. Drury now was separated from his three young companions, two of whom he never saw again. With his arms tightly bound he was forced to march, though weak with suffering, for several days to the king's village, fully believing that he was being kept for torture. His subsequent experiences as a slave among the natives make a long story. He was not tortured, as the king desired to keep him for his personal slave. A short while after his capture the chief of the Fort Dauphin territory offered two

guns for young Drury's release, but this was refused, and the prisoner was hurried away into the jungle for fear that an attempt would be made to take him by force. As a slave he lived among the Malagasy[52] for over fifteen years, taking to himself a native wife and living like the natives. He had during that time several masters, and, being clever and resourceful, was treated as a favourite, {235} but never allowed to forget that he was a prisoner. After he had lived among the blacks for some years he met a William Thornbury, a young English sailor who had been stranded on Madagascar nine years previously. The two made a promise that if either one should ever reach England he would give news of the other to his people at home. On one occasion the English slaver *Clapham Galley* put in at that part of the coast where Drury was held captive, and he endeavoured to have himself sold as a slave; but as his black masters refused to allow this he had the mortification of seeing the ship sail away without him.

HE TOOK A NATIVE WIFE

Some years passed, and two more ships arrived on the coast. One of these was the *Drake*, William Macket master. Macket had a letter for Drury from his father, who had learned of his son's fate from William Thornbury, who had succeeded in reaching England and had kept the promise made years before. Captain Macket also had instructions from Drury's father to purchase his son's freedom from the natives. It so happened that Drury, now a man of thirty, had as his master a kindly old chief who had grown very fond of the Englishman. Though he begged Drury to remain with him, he made no active opposition to his departure, and even refused to take a ransom. Captain Macket, however, desired to show his appreciation of such {236} friendliness, and insisted on making the old chief a present of a fine gun, the necessary flints and gunpowder, and a cask of brandy. This last we

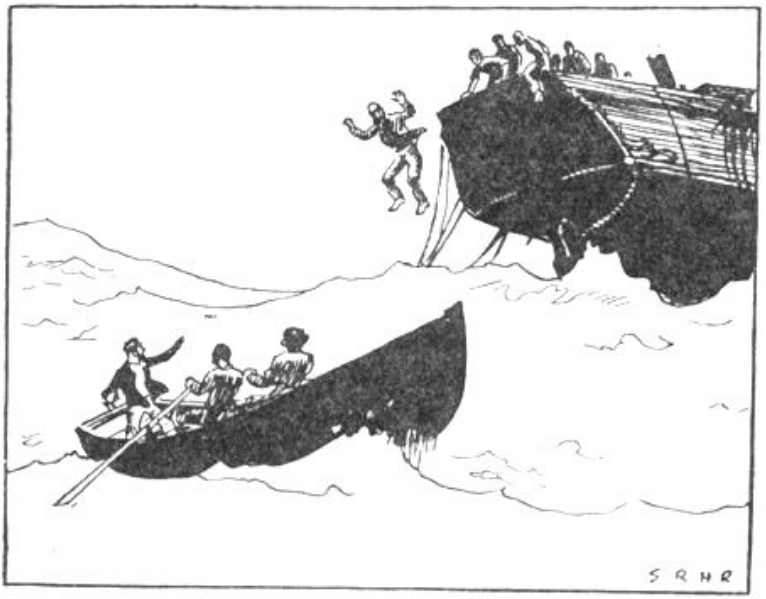
should hardly think a kindly gift, since spirits of this sort drive the native temporarily mad.

After nearly fifteen years of captivity Drury was burnt mahogany by the sun, walked naked, and had forgotten most of his native tongue. His hair grew in tangled locks, and his manner was uncouth, even to the crude sailormen. And now, in spite of the fact that Drury had been a slave and seen something of the miseries of slavery, he assisted Captain Macket in slave-trading along the coast, his knowledge of native tongues being exceedingly valuable for the purpose. While engaged in this business he met Nicholas Dove, one of the four young men whose lives had been spared at the time of the massacre. Dove had escaped in a canoe from his captors and joined a pirate ship.

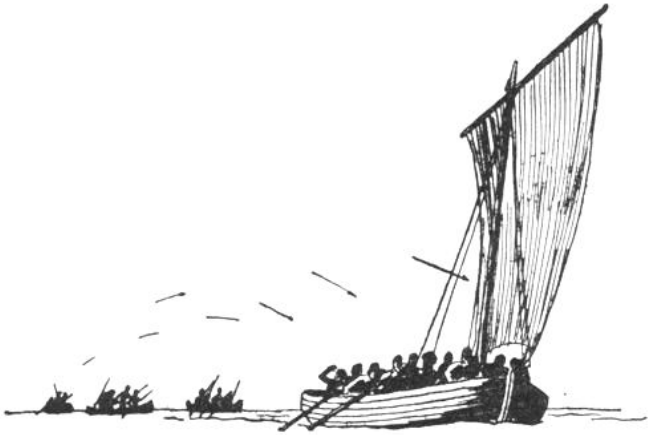
In January 1717 Drury bade farewell to Madagascar and sailed for England to rejoin his people after a separation of over sixteen years. On the way his ship stopped at Barbados to leave her cargo of negro slaves! He arrived in England in December 1717 to find that his parents and nearest relatives were all dead. After a year as a clerk in London he returned once more to the sea. He made one voyage to the Indian Ocean, after which he returned to write the story of his adventures on Madagascar.

On the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal lie the Andaman Islands, inhabited by a fierce and primitive race of negroes, who in the past bore an evil reputation for the ill-treatment of shipwrecked sailors, of which not a few had the misfortune to be cast ashore there. Early travellers stated that the "inhabitants of these islands eat men alive," but the natives strenuously deny that their ancestors ever indulged in cannibalism. It was here that the crew of the {237} 355-ton barque *Elizabeth* were cast ashore in June 1852. The *Elizabeth* was homeward bound from China, when in the Bay of Bengal she encountered a heavy gale which drove her on to the southern end of Andaman reef in Duncan Passage. To ease the ship the masts were cut away, and at great risk a boat was got out. In her the captain and two seamen reached the beach, but as there were no more boats the rest of the crew spent the ensuing night on the wreck. Under the hammering of the terrific seas the wreck began to break up. Between it and the shore lay over a mile of churning seas, and in the darkness and flying spume nothing could be seen of the land. Every one believed that the captain's boat had been lost in the breakers. But at dawn, when they had given up hope of surviving much longer, to their inexpressible joy the boat was seen coming out to the wreck. As she came as close as possible the men on board jumped into the sea and were hauled into the boat by a line. Though the sea was swarming with sharks the risk had to be taken, as it was impossible to bring the boat

alongside the wreck for fear of its being dashed to pieces. Shortly after the boat was pulled away the wreck broke up and sank. From her there floated up {238} a cask of biscuit, a couple of pumpkins, and two drowned ducks, which was all the food the men were able to pick up. The boat was safely beached on a sandy spit and drawn out of reach of the breakers, and the tired men lay down on the beach, too worn out to think of anything but the immediate need of rest and sleep.

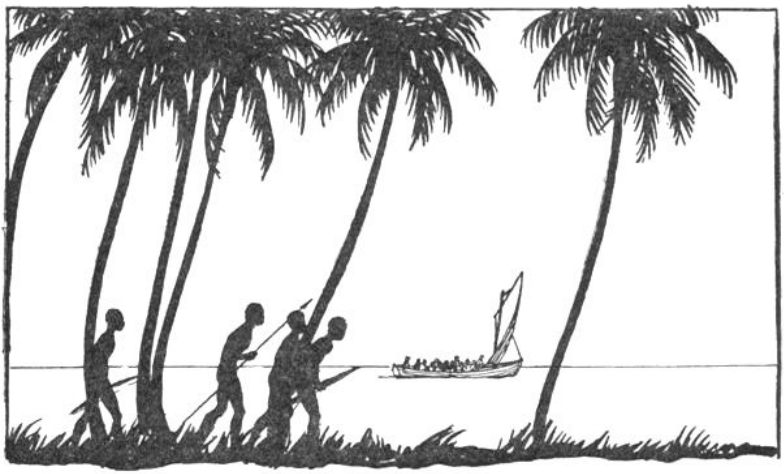


The castaways took stock of the situation. The water-soaked biscuit and two ducks would not last long. They dared not venture inland in search of food for fear of a hostile reception from the natives. As far as they could judge, the nearest settlement, Port Cornwallis, was over a hundred miles along the coast. It was decided to try to reach there in the boat. They had neither compass nor chart, but by following the coastline no difficulty in navigation was anticipated. The great and pressing anxiety was the lack of sufficient food. This was rationed out in spoonfuls. The duck was raw and tough and the bread salty with sea-water, but each tiny ration was made to last as long as possible. The nineteen men put the boat dangerously low in the water, and the smallest seas slopped over the gunwales.



Cramped, starving, and ill, they sailed for three weeks along the coast, sometimes going ashore to sleep, but never feeling safe from discovery by the natives. A constant look out was kept for them, but none had been seen. Then one morning, when they had entered a small stream to search for fruit, they saw an empty native dugout lying on a bank. A little farther up the river more canoes were seen. Presently a crowd of naked savages appeared from among the trees and gesticulated to the white men. The latter became alarmed, and turned their boat down stream. The natives crowded into a number of canoes in pursuit. A shower of arrows fell around the boat, but fortunately no one was hit. The savages were using poles instead of paddles, otherwise they would quickly have overtaken the sailors in their heavier boat. The pursuit was kept up till {239} darkness permitted the fugitives to get out to sea and escape. They were by now in a pitiable state, without food or water, their clothes in rags, and unable to go ashore for fear of the savages, who for some time followed them along the beach. Become desperate from hunger and thirst, they finally ventured ashore in the darkness a night or two later and found fresh water. In the morning they were lying resting on the beach, drying their clothes, when some natives appeared running toward them. They escaped, but had to leave their clothes, and thus found themselves practically naked. The position was now worse than ever. Without food, water, or clothes it seemed not worth while struggling farther. They had been a month in the boat, off a hostile shore, and with but a hazy notion of where they were. Some one proposed that lots should be drawn to see who should be sacrificed to save the rest from starvation. This terrible proposal was agreed upon after some difference of opinion, and sticks were cut, all of equal length but one. The man who drew the short stick was to be sacrificed for the rest. This fate fell to the lot of an

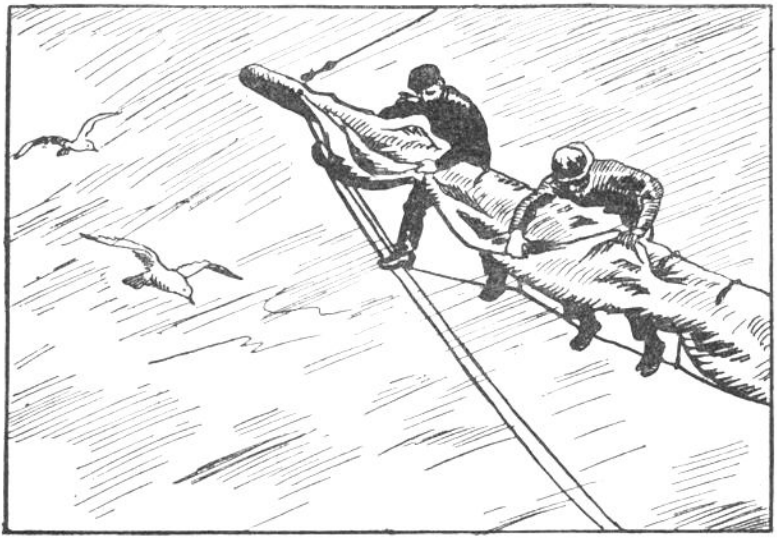
old Lancashire sailor, who broke down when he saw that he had lost. At the sight of his misery the others had no heart to go on with the ghastly business, and his life was spared. {240} The only resort left was to go ashore and risk meeting hostile savages. It was agreed that while some stayed ashore the others would take the boat and endeavour to bring help to those left behind. The craft was stocked with water in bamboo 'tubes' and provisions, mostly snails. Of the seven men who were to go in the boat only two possessed any clothing.



For nine days they sailed, carefully rationing the precious snails and water, until they sighted land. This was the coast of Burma. Approaching the shore, they were met by natives who came out to meet them. To the voyagers' intense relief the natives were friendly, and did all they could to make the starving men comfortable, nursing them with kindly solicitude. From here the natives took them up a river to where a British steamer lay. On hearing the castaways' story the captain at once departed in search of the men left behind on Andaman Island. They were all found alive, but the experience had so wrecked their bodies that all but two of them died shortly afterward.

The following is the true story of another ship named *Elizabeth*, but that is as far as the resemblance goes. {241} Neither ship nor men were lost, and there were no adventures on hostile shores. But no tale of the sea could more aptly demonstrate the extraordinary daring and resolution of the old Jack Tar. The austere discipline of the sea demands more of a man than does the soft and sheltered safety of life ashore. It is not difficult to understand the

old sailor's contempt for landsmen. Sailors were expected to carry out orders that to a landsman would appear impossible. Poor pay, poor and insufficient food (food a dog would refuse), the hardest kind of work (often extremely dangerous), living and sleeping for weeks on end in wet clothes—it is a marvel that men were prepared to man ships when faced with the prospect of living under such harsh conditions. Yet there were always boys ready to run away to sea. Robert Drury, who left behind him the extraordinary record of the wreck of the *Degrave*, was such a boy. His father had tried to make an office-worker of him, but the immortal spirit of adventure sent him to sea in a day when seafaring life was far more rigorous and more {242} hazardous than it is now. To young Drury any other life than that of a sailor was unthinkable.



THE AUSTERE DISCIPLINE OF THE SEA

The *Elizabeth* was a man-of-war launched in 1737, and was therefore an old ship in 1763 when she left Bombay on what was to be her last voyage to England. Before she sailed all her lower-deck guns had been taken out to relieve her old timbers of their weight during the rigours of the long voyage. She put to sea on December 16, and off Calicut joined the ships *Norfolk*, *America*, and *Chatham*. In convoy they sailed for over a month with fair winds, and thus far the *Elizabeth* had showed no signs of her approaching dissolution. At the end of January 1764, when 122 leagues from Mozambique, the weather grew thick, accompanied by hard gales with winds of almost hurricane force. In the mountainous seas the old ship laboured cruelly, her timbers groaning and creaking with shrieks like some

sentient creature being tortured. Through the rain and flying spindrift the hazy outlines of the Mozambique coast were sighted, and the course was altered to give the land a good offing. In the centre of the Channel, where it is some 500 miles broad, the course was resumed. The gale was now blowing harder than ever, and when the sails began to carry away the upper yards and masts were sent down, the ship thus being put under greatly shortened canvas. As the *Elizabeth* was beginning to leak almost faster than the water could be pumped out of her the skipper, Captain Nichelson, ordered some of the guns to be hove overboard. To assist the pumps bucket-bailing was resorted to, a forlorn expedient. On this day the force of the wind increased and the seas piled up higher, until it seemed the ship could no longer swim in such an inferno of wind and water. Still she floated, though almost rolling her sticks out. That night the hammering of the seas broke the tiller off at the rudder-head, but a makeshift tiller was hastily rigged before the ship broached to. Once during these terrible days a glimpse was caught through {243} the mists of one of her consorts, but except for this brief sight the *Elizabeth* was alone in the gales, though had she foundered within hail of her consorts none of her company could have been picked up in such monstrous seas.

On February 3 the tiller worked loose, threatening to smash the timbers of the stern. Captain Nichelson examined the damage and decided to unship the rudder altogether, as its wild swinging must quickly tear out the stern-post. A ship without a rudder in a gale is surely in a dangerous plight, yet the captain of the *Elizabeth* had to unhinge the rudder or face a still more perilous alternative. If the gale had not moderated at this time the ship could not have floated much longer, for she was found to be leaking worse than ever, her planking and frames working like an old rickety box. In sailor language, she was leaking like a basket, and fast gaining on the pumps. To keep her from falling apart Captain Nichelson decided to ‘frap’ the ship as a last resort. ‘Frapping’ means simply tying the ship together as one would bind a bundle of sticks. Some hundreds of fathoms of hemp cable were passed under the keel and across the deck and hauled taut with the capstan. She was now virtually tied together from stem to stern, and so long as the frapping held she was reasonably safe.

As the gales had somewhat abated a jury rudder was rigged over the stern, and a course was set for the Cape. The ship arrived there on March 9, 1764, and lay at anchor for over a month to be refitted and strengthened against the passage up the Atlantic. The old account describes the ship as “so hogged that a man at one end of the deck could not see a man at the other end below his waist.” ‘Hogged,’ of course, means dropped at the ends,

leaving the middle higher than the bows and stern, and is the opposite to being sagged.

Though the *Elizabeth* had been considerably strengthened at the Cape and had a new rudder fitted, she departed with the frappings still around her, as it was not deemed safe to {244} remove them. After a wretched passage, with the men constantly at the pumps, she reached Spithead in the middle of July. Here she was ordered to Chatham, but the captain respectfully informed the naval authorities at Portsmouth that he could not proceed without first docking for repairs, otherwise his ship would probably sink beneath him. Dockyard carpenters sent to inspect the vessel were amazed to see the condition she was in, and agreed that it would be highly unsafe to remove the frappings. They felt her so unsafe, in fact, that they expected her to sink at her moorings, and were not at all anxious to remain on board a moment longer than was necessary. Furthermore, as they reported that she was too far gone for repair, the Admiralty ordered her into Portsmouth to be broken up.

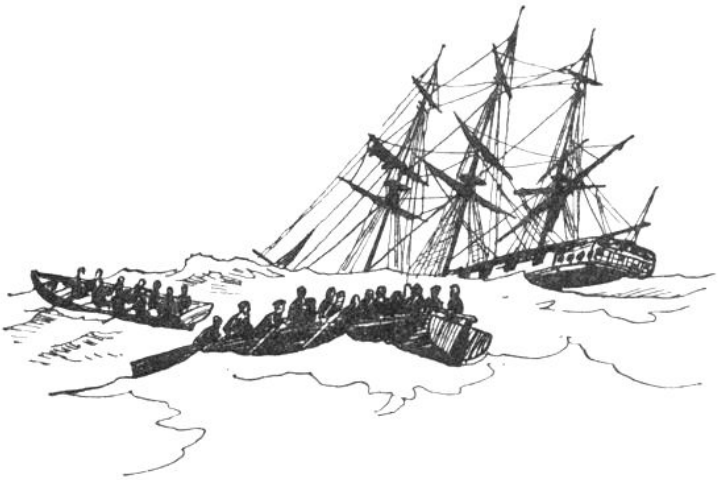
When the East Indiaman *Regular*, a vessel of 550 tons, departed from London River for Bombay and China on February 21, 1843, I don't suppose that a soul on board her had any intuition that that would be the last voyage she would ever make. Down the Atlantic the passage was uneventful, fine weather lasting until the *Regular* was well into the Indian Ocean early in May. But on May 7 it came on to blow, the wind increasing during the day to gale force. As the barometer was still falling Captain Carter ordered all topsails in and extra gaskets put on them. With everything aloft made snug, the men were set to work securing spare yards and anything on deck which threatened to come adrift through the violent rolling of the ship. While this work was being carried out an enormous sea rearing up astern fell on to the poop and swept the ship, though, by some extraordinary freak of fortune, without carrying a man overboard. When the ship had recovered from the shock it was found that she was badly damaged and taking water fast. Although it was dangerous to be on the main deck, the officers and crew set to work at the pumps to check the rising water. {245}

On the following morning an enormous wave completely submerged the ship, and every one on board thought that their last hour had come. For what seemed an eternity the tortured ship staggered under a world of green water, then, with agonizing slowness, rose to the surface as the seas drained off her decks. She had recovered, but this had been a fatal blow. The water in the hold was rapidly gaining, and it became obvious to every one that the ship could not swim much longer. To add to the peril and discomfort a terrible

cross-sea came up, through which the doomed vessel laboured as though every roll would be her last.

Two days later, with the gale blowing as hard as ever, the *Regular* was still afloat, but only because a large part of the heavy cargo of copper and iron had been heaved overboard. This lightening of the ship served simply to delay the end. Though the crew had been at the pumps for days unceasingly, the water continued to rise. Bailing with buckets was now resorted to to assist the pumps, and every one from the captain downward toiled until they were utterly exhausted, only to see the mocking water creeping up the lower steps of the companion-ladders. On Saturday, May 13, more cargo was hoisted out of the main hatch and dropped overboard. This was followed by all heavy deck-hamper, chain-cable, and anchors, in order to keep the ship afloat while the boats were provisioned and launched.

It had come to that—abandoning the ship in mid-ocean, in bad weather, and out of the track of shipping. The position was approximately 37° 23′ South and 38° 13′ East, with the nearest land about nine hundred miles distant. To make matters worse there were two women on board. At four o'clock in the afternoon there was nine and a half feet of water below. The ship was fast settling, and haste was made to get the boats clear before she went down. By the time the boats were ready the *Regular* was {246} so low in the water that they were simply shoved off, the men climbing in as they floated clear. It was eight o'clock before the three boats got away, by which time the ship was awash, poised between the surface and the bottom before taking her last plunge.

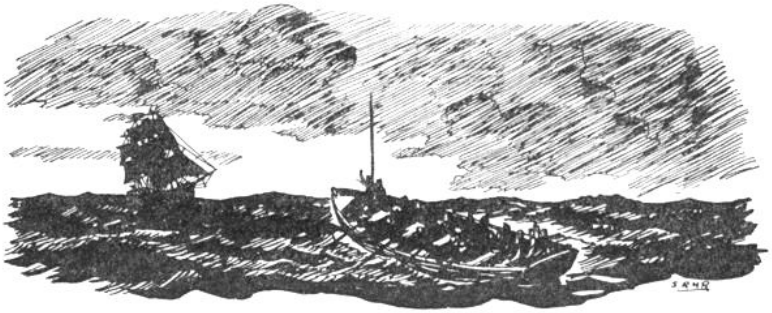


In the launch were eighteen people, including the two women passengers; in the pinnace were ten men; and in the gig four seamen and the captain, who took care to be the last to leave. They had hardly pulled a ship's length away when the *Regular* went down, leaving a few pieces of wreckage on the spot where she had floated a short time before. With the prospect of possible weeks at sea the boats had been well stocked with fresh water, blankets, and provisions, but it was now found that a good deal of the precious stores would have to be jettisoned to keep the boats afloat in the steep seas running. Shortly afterward everything was washed out of the gig, and Captain Carter decided to abandon her, as it was extremely unlikely that such a small craft could survive the night in such a heavy sea. There were now fifteen people in the pinnace and eighteen in the launch.

In numbed misery the castaways spent a terrible night {247} in the open boats, while the strongest among them strained at the oars to keep the small craft from broaching to and capsizing. What little was possible was done to shelter the two women from the driving spray which drenched every one in the boats, though such solicitude seemed to be merely delaying the inevitable end. For what chance was there of rescue? In those unfrequented seas a sail might not be seen in ten years, and they could not hope to cross nine hundred miles of ocean in such weather in overloaded boats.

During the night the two boats became separated, and each party believed that the other had capsized and been lost. But at daybreak each, unknown to the other, was still afloat, and on the edge of a miraculous rescue. As dawn slowly appeared in the east sharp eyes in the launch made out the dark silhouette of a ship against the sky. Frozen fingers bent a shawl to an oar and waved it frantically as a signal of distress, the men nearly capsizing the boat in their excitement. While they were waving their oars and trying to shout with swollen throats another ship was seen a little farther off. In their feverish hallucinations the ocean seemed full of ships. Anxiously they watched to see if they had been sighted, hardly daring to hope that their little craft had been visible in the half-light of early morning against the rolling background of grey water. Suddenly they became almost mad with joy to see the ship change her course and stand down to where they were. With pretty judgment the ship, which turned out to be the French man-of-war *Cléopatre*, fifty-two guns, rounded to and backed her mainsail, close alongside the launch. Some of the castaways were lifted through the ports of the *Cléopatre*, and the rest sitting in the boat were hoisted on board by tackles from the fore and main lee yardarms. Some of the men were unaware of their rescue as they were picked up unconscious. The other vessel was the twenty-gun frigate *Alcmène*, consort of the *Cléopatre*, and {248} was some distance off when she signalled that she had seen another

boat. This was, of course, the lost pinnace. Every one was rescued, though a few were seriously ill as the result of exposure. The French treated them with the utmost kindness, the officers giving up their quarters to the sick, and showing great solicitude for the unfortunate people. Though the warships were bound for the island of Bourbon, Commodore Roy, of the *Cléopatre*, altered his course in order to land the survivors at Mauritius, where they would have a better chance of finding an English ship.



In the chapter on islands of the Indian Ocean I referred to the Crozets as being the graveyard of so many ships. They seem to have a destructive fascination for ships which stray too far south when rounding the Cape. The two wrecks I have in mind were not the most spectacular of episodes connected with the gloomy history of the Crozets, but they are perhaps not so widely known as the wreck of the *Strathmore* or the story of the *treize naufragés* whose message to the outer world arrived too late to be of use to them.

The *Princess of Wales* was a sealing cutter which landed a party of eight men on one of the Crozets in December 1820 to catch seals, with an arrangement that the cutter would return once a week with fresh provisions, and take {249} on board the week's haul of skins. The coast was too exposed for a vessel to remain long at anchor safely, hence the cutter kept out to sea during the intervals between taking on the skins. This went on for three months without misadventure, when, late in March, after a violent gale, the cutter drifted on to the rocks, and the seven men in her had to escape to the island in their only boat. But unfortunately they had not landed on the island the main party were on, and here they were marooned, insufficiently prepared for a long stay. It was their fate to be there nine months before they were found by the main party who had sailed over to the island. The story of the sufferings and extraordinary lives of the fifteen marooned men surpasses that of Robinson Crusoe for sheer adventure. Their

beds were of grass, their blankets of sealskin, and their shelter the upturned boat. After being marooned in those bleak regions for twenty-two months they were found by the crew of the American sealing schooner *Philo*, and thus ended their terrible exile.

In May 1825 the fifty-five-ton schooner *Adventure*, with sixteen men, left Mauritius bound for the Crozets on a sealing voyage. Off the islands the weather was so bad that the schooner was prevented from landing the men until all the fresh water had gone, when the crew were compelled to land. Some of the men were dying of thirst, and an attempt to get ashore had to be made. With the greatest difficulty nine men got ashore, but during the following night a gale blowing on to the land drove the schooner on to the rocks, where she became a total loss. On board were seven men, four of whom were seriously ill from lack of water. However, they all got ashore, where they spent the night round a huge bonfire. Like the *Princess of Wales*, the *Adventure* drove ashore on an island other than that the main party were on, so that the two parties were marooned on separate islands. In 1825 the {250} Crozets were unknown to many sailors rounding the Cape, and the chances of being rescued were not encouraging. The men were cast ashore in June 1825, and were not rescued until December 1826, after existing for eighteen months in a state of barbarism almost incredible for its severity. The rescue-ship was the whaler *Cape Packet*, whose captain stated that he had not known of the existence of the Crozets and it was by the merest chance that he had come within sight of them.

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[50] The wife was shortly afterward released.

[51] One sailor was killed during these attacks.

[52] Natives of Madagascar.

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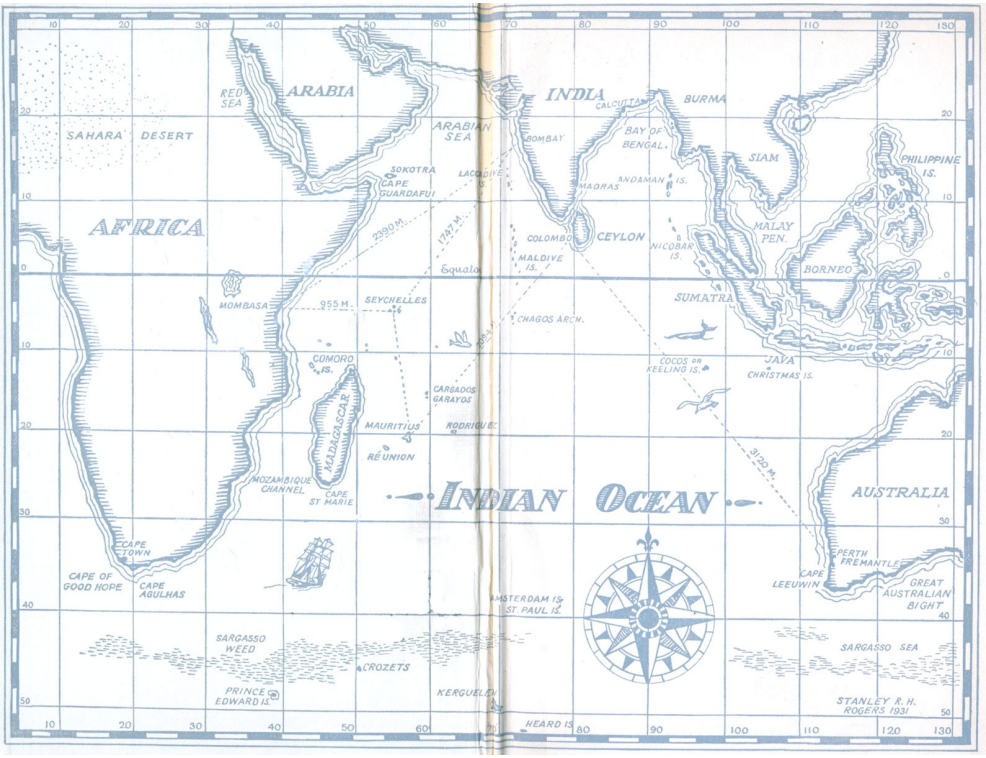
Transcriber’s Notes

Minor changes were made to spelling and hyphenation to achieve consistency.

Page breaks and numbers are indicated by {nnn}, e.g., {123}.

The footnotes have been renumbered sequentially throughout the entire book.

Many images have been moved in order to retain the integrity of paragraphs. Consequently some may not be in their original positions.



[The end of *The Indian Ocean* by Stanley Reginald Harry Rogers]