

Noah's Ark

Louis Arthur
Cunningham

Illustrated by

R. M. Brinkerhoff

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NOAH'S ARK

A rollicking tale of a strange cargo, a stranger wooing, and a skipper who mistook his lion

By LOUIS ARTHUR CUNNINGHAM

Illustrated by

R. M. BRINCKERHOFF

“No,” said Captain Jonas Hallan “Stoneheart” Hallan, the Bucko Mate of notorious memory in the days of the Bluenose clippers “no, I never did have no luck in love. And now that I’m on me last v’yage, so t’ speak, everything recalls the past to me. That there circus parade now . . .”

Something, maybe a tear, maybe a twinkle, showed in Cap’n Jonas’ watery blue eyes and he settled his green derby hat farther down on his white locks and took a fresh grip on the whalebone handle of the gamp he carried, fair weather or foul. With an absent expression he leaned forward in his armchair and watched the circus parade go by the corner at the head of the Hill at the Three Lamps.

Calliopes blared in frantic diapason, an elephant trumpeted, and bestial growls could be heard as the contre-brass is heard in a symphony, making a background to the whole. Equestriennes, as lovely as paint and powder could make them, rode pomponned steeds and gave the *hoi polloi* lining the sidewalks a cold and fishlike stare; clowns pranced and gambolled and were accorded god-worship by the gamins of the town: lions, jaguars, bears, hippos, moved uneasily in the huge red and gold juggernauts that rumbled thunderously over the hard paving of Prince William Street on their way to the Barracks Green where the fair ground was. Musicians atop the great wagons held a free-for-all of groaning trombones, shrill clarionets and rattling drums. Blue, red and orange balloons floated by in clouds, boys with baskets on the arm peddled the perennial popcorn, peanuts and ice cream. Here was all the magic of Circus Day. Saint John stood on the curbing, hung out the windows, and was thrilled: but in the heart of Captain Jonas Hallan, some sad and poignant memory brooded.

The pilot rooms were deserted save for the ancient mariner and myself. Such moments were propitious. He took a deep breath.

“That there parade,” he said, when the last wagon had gone by, “reminds me of the time I commanded Noah’s Ark.”

“Beg pardon, captain?” He was well on to ninety now, and old men do get queer. But Cap’n Jonas was unusually spry. Surely he couldn’t be . . .

“Aye,” he said, “Noah’s Ark. Oh, it weren’t the real Noah’s Ark, o’ course, but it was most as good, an’ if Noah had one-half the trouble I had, then the Bible’s done him an injustice in makin’ Job a symbol o’ patience. Trouble . . .”

Look here, mister . . . fifty year ago come August a big circus arrived in town. You think that was a pretty good circus as just went down to the Barracks Greens, eh? It’s nothin’, nothin’ a-tall, in comparison with the Mortimer Majestic Menageries, the circus I’m speakin’ of. They had all the animiles Noah took in his vessel and a lot o’ new specimens evolved since. Did Noah have moose an’ reindeers, seals an’ polar bears? I guess not. Well, Mortimer Majestic Menageries had ’em and all the other kinds besides.

At that time, I was in command o’ the ship *Patrick Mulligan*, a big timber drogher as would make Noah’s Ark look like a catboat. Cargoes was scarce just then, due to a slump in the timber trade, an’ we was lyin’ at Hilyard’s Blocks gettin’ a bit of overhaulin’ an’ waitin’ for something to turn up. Well, my boy, somethin’ did turn up the Mortimer Majestic Menageries, no less.

Old George Murdock, who owned the *Patrick Mulligan*, calls me to his office one day an’ looks at me with admiration an’ appreciation that was in itself suspicious, for George never admired anyone but himself and would murder his best friend for a smooth sixpence.

“Cap’n Hallan,” says George. “You’re a good seaman an’ a trustworthy man, a man capable of takin’ on great responsibilities.”

“Yes, Mr. Murdock,” says I, wonderin’ what was comin’. Maybe he wanted me to scuttle the ship an’ beat the insurance people out o’ some money. But no.

“The Lord loves a man as is kind to animiles,” he goes on. “Noah was beloved in the buzzum o’ the Lord. An’ Noah was a great mariner, ranking with Drake an’ Frobisher, Magellan an’ Columbus—a great mariner.”

“Yes, sir,” says I, though what he was sayin’ didn’t appear to lead nowhere.

“The long an’ short of it is, cap’n,” he says after a pause, “that the *Patrick Mulligan* has been chartered by Mr. Mortimer, of the Mortimer Majestic Menageries, to take his circus from Saint John to Boston, and, as I said to Mr. Mortimer, if Noah hisself was here to take command I’d choose Cap’n Hallan in his stead, for he’s an abler seaman, taken by an’ large.”

For a moment I was struck dumb. I liked animiles well enough—horses, dogs an’ so on. But the prospect of taking a ship out o’ port loaded to the gunnels with girafths, elephants, lions, boa constructors an’ huppopotimuses, filled me with uneasiness. I didn’t like it . . . I were never the man to sing dumb when somethin’ goes agin’ me principles.

“Mr. Murdock,” I says firmly. “Man an’ boy, I’ve sailed in your vessels this twenty years an’ more, an’ we’ve carried cargoes from dinnamite to guano, but never was he called upon to be a Noah’s Ark an’ play nursemaids to a lot o’ ruddy apes an’ ostriches. It ain’t in my line at all . . .”

“Now, now, Cap’n Hallan,” he says gently, spreading his hands in a way we had that made you think o’ pourin’ oil on troubled waters. “Now, now! I expected some objection at the start. It’s something new for you, but it’s nothin’ at all for a seaman of your ability an’ experience to balk at. You’ll have smooth sailin’ this time o’ year, an’ you’ll be in Boston town afore ye know it.”

That didn’t help none, an’ he were keen enough to see it. But, as I said, he were the slyest old rogue the Lord ever put breath in an’ I suspected he had a few extra cards up his sleeve. Sure enough, he had.

“Well, if you won’t go, cap’n,” says he, “I’ll have to put Bob Heeney in command.”

“A good man. Bob Heeney, sir,” I agrees. “He’s been my first mate three years now an’ I got no fault to find with him. Ye could not do better.”

“I’d sooner have you, cap’n,” says George. “You got more sense. An’, I neglected to mention it before—sort o’ slipped me mind—Miss Katie Lanergan, me little niece, ye might know her, is goin’ up to Boston on this v’yage.”

“What!” says I. “Miss Katie’s goin’ along with this circus! Why, it might be dangerous . . .!”

“It well might, cap’n,” says he. “But if you know Katie, you’ll understand. Once she gets her mind sot on anything, there’s no dissuadin’ her. She wants to be in Boston on the twentieth o’ the month an’ the *Patrick*

Mulligan is the only vessel Boston bound. I'll ask Bob Heeney to keep an eye on her."

"Bob's a fool," I says, spirited-like. "He'll doubtless wreck the ship an' drown all hands. He's not the man to take her to Boston."

"Then you might change yer mind?" asks the old fox.

"I'll take the vessel safe to Boston, sir," I says. "An' all the animiles from here to Hades won't prevent me."

"Fine, cap'n," says he. "Good day."

Well, ye may have guessed the secret—I were in love with Katie Lanergan—an' Bob Heeney was me hated rival, an' to leave him in command on that v'yage was to give him a clear field an' no opposition, an' the result would be that he'd win her, they'd get married in Boston an' I'd be left like Lord Ullin, "lamentin'." I loved Katie Lanergan with a deep an' abidin' love. She were a black-eyed little thing with the shiniest hair an' a most beautiful figger. Half the town was in love with her, but it had sort of narrered down at the time to a race, with all canvas spread, betwixt me an' Bob Heeney, though, to be sure, she never paid much attention to either of us, even when we was fightin' for the privilege o' bein' trampled on by her dainty little feet.

Anyways, I was to play Noah, and immediately I became the subject of all manner o' jests an' insults. Admirers sent brooms an' slush buckets over to the dock: everyone called me Noah an' the *Patrick Mulligan*, forthwith, Noah's Ark. I didn't mind—didn't mind anything they said. Katie Lanergan's dark eyes an' sweet, smilin' face made up for everything. It's wonderful for a seaman to have the woman he loves aboard his vessel. Ashore, a real sailor is a bit orkard an' helpless-like. He can't ever be at his best among shorefolk, an' the girl he worships sees him at a disadvantage. But when she's walkin' the quarterdeck by his side an' observin', as women will, how he handles hisself an' handles his crew an' his vessel, she can't help but be impressed.

An' that's what Katie Lanergan was goin' to be—impressed. Bob Heeney, when he heard she was goin' along, was as glad as I was, an' you may be sure he prepared to set hisself out to impress her, too. Barrin' meself, Bob wasn't so handsome. He'd a bit of a skelly in one eye, an' his nose had suffered once when he fell down a hatchway. But he had a good an' honest heart, had Bob, an' if he were a bit inclined to show off afore a woman, that's nothin' remarkable agin' him—for who isn't?—especially when it's a

girl like Katie Lanergan, that small an' sweet that a rough seafarin' man felt all feet an' ears when standin' afore her, an' was afeard to move lest he tread on her.

Well, sir, Mortimer Majestic Menageries finished their performance in town after a turrible scare when one of the man-eatin' lions escaped an' caused a panic among the crowd. He'd killed a lot o' people in other towns, I forget exactly how many, but the sum total was appallin', an' the prospect of takin' a voyage to Boston with such a cannibal beast would have been enough to send a ordinary shipmaster's heart right down into the soles of his seaboots. But not me! I argued that Katie would know about this turrible lion bein' on board an' would be afeard an' cling clost to a big, strong, brave man fer protection. The fact that I was as skeered of this here lion as she was, didn't matter. She wouldn't know that, for we seamen learn to hide our real emotions from dealin' with owners an' customs inspectors.

The whole town, from Lower Cove to Drury Lane where the bedbugs ate the man, turned out to see the animiles enter the ark. An' that was a job! Such bellowin' an' trumpetin', screamin' an' scratchin' as never was heard since Noah took on his cargo. Some had to be pushed aboard, some was led an' the younger elephants was slung aboard with derricks an' six donkeys haulin' on the windlass. Added to this, there was an aquarium, no less, an' a big canvas tank was built in the waist an' pumped full o' sea water to make a home fer the crabs, lampreys, sea-serpents an' the like that belonged to the menagerie. Big as the *Patrick Mulligan* was, she was crowded fore an' aft an' loaded to the gunnels with all these beasts an' the nagurs, magicians an' acrobats that belonged to the show.

I knew how old Noah felt—just like a man sittin' on top of a volcano that's due to go off any minute. To help things along in true Biblical style, it began to pour down with rain. It rained cats an' dogs an' never was such a sodden, unhappy lookin' outfit as the *Patrick Mulligan*, crew, cargo an' captain when she was towed out past the island an' spread her sails for Boston with the greatest collection of animals, beasts, birds an' reptiles, an' the most beautiful woman in the world on board.

She'd come aboard at the last minute—Little Katie Lanergan lookin' a bit pale an' wan an' frightened, as if she had some secret fear preyin' upon her. Me heart warmed to her at once an' so did Bob Heeney's, for we nearly knocked each other down seein' who would reach her first and show her to her cabin.



I held the pretty blue umbrella over her to keep the rain from spilin' her bonnet, an' when she put her little hand on me arm I was the happiest man in the world.

I won, an' Bob, lookin' bitter an' venomous, followed in the rear. I held the pretty blue umbrella over her to keep the rain from spilin' her bonnet,

an' when she put her little hand on me arm I was the happiest man in the world, an' the howlin' of the beasts sounded like the strains o' heavenly music.

"I'm glad it's your vessel I'm sailing on, Captain Hallan," says she. "You and Bob Heeney are two of the finest and most reliable men I know. It's a momentous voyage for me—I can't tell you the reason why right now, but before we reach Boston I am going to make a decision which means my life happiness and the happiness of another."

I was walkin' on air. I knowed what she meant, an' I thanked me stars that I hadn't refused to come on this v'yage. It was just as I'd foreseen—if I hadn't come, she'd have decided in Bob Heeney's favor. I shot a glance over me shoulder at him to see if he'd heard. I guess he had, for his ears was like a jackass's in size an' they was stickin' straight up now, while his face had a most grim an' determined look on it.

Just then a lion gives a most horrific roar an' Katie, all a-tremble, cowers close agin me.

"What's that?" says she. "Oh, isn't it awful blood-curdlin'!"

"It's only a lion," says I, "the man-eater. There's three on board, but only one is dangerous. That's him. Don't be afeard. I can handle him an' a dozen like him."

Bob, in the rear, gives a audible sneer, but no one pays him any attention. I was pattin' Katie's hand to encourage her, an' presently she was in her cabin an' Bob an' me faced each other, lookin' daggers.

"So it's betwixt you an' me, is it!" he sneers. "Well, if blowin' will get a man anywhere, you should be a blinking nabob with all the lies you tell. Fancy boastin' you could handle that there lion! Why, he'd chaw you up before ye got courage enough to dive overboard."

"Yes?" answers I, calm, an' refusin' to get angry. "That's all you know. A man will do wonders for the woman who's goin' to be his wife."

"What!" he yells. "Why, you blinkin', frog-faced old—"

"You forget," I says, "that I'm your superior officer an' in command o' this vessel and, as such, will not tolerate any profane or unseemly talk from a dirty so-and-so like you. Now get t' hell out o' my sight afore I forget I'm a gentleman."

He went, mutterin' under his breath the things he'd like to do to me, none of which bothered me a-tall, for I was sittin' on top o' the world. As I

said, I weren't no kid brother to Venus, but I was a heap better to look at than Bob Heenev, and it was unthinkable that a fine sensible girl like Katie could hesitate over choosin' me. I had nothin' to fear from Bob, I decided, and just to show him there was no hard feelin's I'd offer to let him be best man at the weddin', which I thought we'd have in Boston if Katie was willin'.

I was thinkin' that over as we sailed down the Bay, an' picturin' me future happiness with this lovely little woman when I hears a scream that I knew at once came from her beautiful lips. I dashed around the corner—her cabin was on the port side—and I see somethin' that made me pretty mad. Her door was open an' she was standin' in it, not mindin' the rain, an' facin' her was a young feller I'd never seen afore.

“What's this mean?” I says very stern. “Did this man insult you, Miss Lanegan?”

“Oh, no, no!” she says most vehement. “I just happened to open my door and I ran into him. I got startled, that's all, Captain Hallan.”

“All right,” says I. “But what are you doin' aft, me bucko? An' who are ye anyway?”

“My name is John Cottrell, sir. I'm with the circus people. I thought it was all right to come here—wanted to watch the wake of the vessel.”

“*Hmm*,” says I. “Well, it's not all right. You stay where you belong, m' lad. Get forrat now, an' stick.”

He went, after tellin' Katie how sorry he was he'd frightened her. A remarkable good-lookin' younker he were, black curly hair and smooth face; but very immatchoor beside an upstandin' man like I was then.

“Don't be afeard,” I says to Katie, “I'll keep an eye on ye. You have to be careful o' these circus fellers. A bad lot.”

“Indeed they are,” she said. “Thanks ever so much, Captain Hallan . . .”

“Call me Jonas,” I says very timid.

She looked at me queerly, then she laughed an' squeezed my hand.

“You're a darlin',” she says, an' went inside. I guess I stood there for ten minutes, an' there was a steady spout o' water from the cabin roof pourin' square down me neck. I never even felt it.

“She's mine,” I decided.

It sure did rain that night, an' the next mornin' there was no signs of a let-up. I see Bob Heeney standin' by the taffrail on the starboard side, a-gapin' up at heaven, an' I say to meself he's gone crazy.

"What ails ye, Bob?" I asks, goin' over to him.

He grunts an' turns on me. "This is a perishin' Noah's Ark, and this is the Deluge, ain't it?"

"Maybe it is," I agrees. "It sure looks thataway."

"Well," says he, "I thought I see the dove with the olive branch comin' to announce fair weather, but 'twere only a seagull with a dead herrin' in his beak."

"Smart, ain't ye!" says I.

"Smarter 'n you," he says, an' gives me a wicked grin. "That ain't hard."

I decided then I'd never have such a pup for best man at the weddin'. I shut me lips tight an' strolled away.

But, by gad, he were smarter 'n me, as I soon found out. I happened to take a stroll forrat to see that all was well with the animiles, an' I was just returnin' from this tower of inspection an' had reached the chicken coop in the waist, which was now bein' used by some o' the circus, cabin accommodation bein' all crowded, when I hears Bob Heeney's voice.

"The old man's a fool, Hassan," says he. "Don't be skeered o' him. You take this ten dollars an' do as I say. Let Bombo loose this evenin' when Miss Lanegan's on deck an' I'll chase him back an' be a hero."

Hassan—he were a little A-rab as looked after the lions—giggled an' said yes he would. I strolled aft, ponderin' deeply. I knew I could outthink Bob Heeney any day in the week an' I weren't goin' to let him pose as a hero in Katie's eyes. Wimmen's funny an' they sure like brave men. So, I thought, why shouldn't I be the hero.

I see Bob go to his cabin with a smirk o' satisfaction on his mug, an' after a decent interval, I goes forrat agin' an' finds Hassan.

"See here, my man," I says stern-like. "What's this you're up to with Mr. Heeney . . . fixin' to let a lion loose, eh?"

He got mighty skeered an' began to chatter like a monkey, swearin' he wouldn't do it.

“How was Bob goin’ to stop that lion?” I asks.

“Turkees Dee-light,” says he.

“What?” I says.



“Turkees Dee-light, captain. Hold in hand. Bombo purr like ket.”

“Turkees Dee-light, captain. Hold in hand. Bombo purr like ket.”

“So!” I mutters. “And suppose it wasn’t Bombo—suppose it was another lion?”

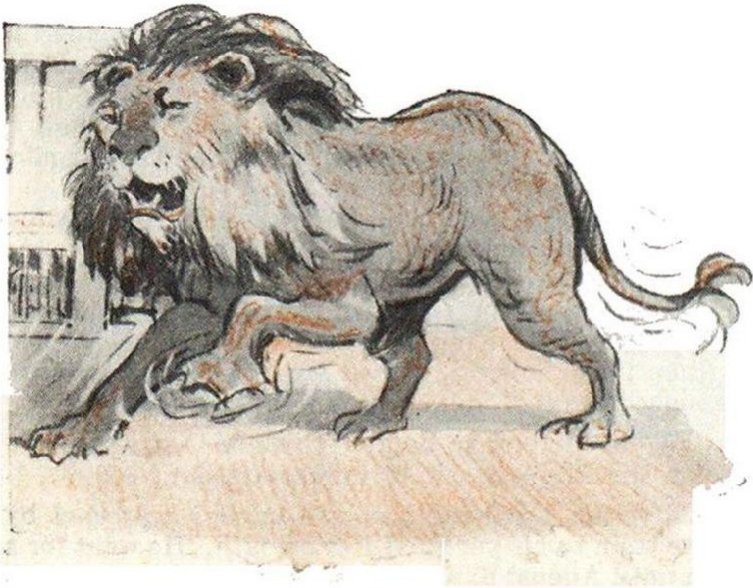
“Ah,” he grins. “Srindi, he hate Turkees Dee-light. You hold piece of meat in hand, he roll over; Nero, he hate Turkees Dee-light, hate piece of meat; no like anything when loose except blood.”

“Keep Nero in,” says I. “An’ keep Bombo in, but let Srindi out. An’ here’s a little *baksheesh* . . .”

Hassan understood. I had outsmarted Bob Heeney, you’ll agree; my idea bein’ to steal his laurels. When he’d go an’ scratch Srindi’s ear, thinkin’ it

was Bombo, I'd have the proper charm ready, I'd rescue Bob, an' lead Srindi back where he belonged. I went back to the quarterdeck feelin' pretty good. There was nothin' to managing those there lions; I'd seen Hassan perform with 'em several times. But the effect on Katie would be very tellin'—a woman, as I've said afore, loves a brave man.

No dove bearin' its olive branch appeared that afternoon, but toward five o'clock it began to clear nicely, and the sun goin' down looked like a big red ruby hangin' on an opal-tinted curtain. Everybody began to feel better now, seein' the rain had stopped, an' even the pent-up animiles in their stalls an' cages seemed to growl and yelp a whole lot cheerier, but there wasn't many o' the circus folk on deck: fer some reason they'd most all stayed in their bunks since we left port, an' they weren't eatin' anything.



The young feller-me-lad who'd given Miss Katie the scare the precedin' evenin' was sittin' on a hatch-coamin', his face cupped in his hands, a-readin' of a letter spread out on his knees. There was somethin' funny about him, I decided, an' also somethin' darned familiar. I racked me brains to find out where I'd seen or heard o' him but it just wouldn't come, an' my thinkin' about him was interrupted by the connin' of Jenny, who was the baboon attached to Mortimer Majestic. It must 'a' been dinner-time fer Jenny; she had a big cocoanut in each paw an' she paraded down the deck

fer all the world like one o' them bowlers preparin' to cause big havoc among the ten-pins. Howsumever, the deck didn't seem to suit her—she clutched her cocoanuts in the crook o' one big arm and clumb the shrouds to the mizzen truck, where she squatted in perfect comfort. It were a joy to watch her—entertainin' things, baboons.

Presently, Miss Katie, lookin' still pale an' sad, came out o' her cabin an' scarce had her door shut-to, when who pops out o' his burrow but Mister Bob Heeney. “Ha, m' lad,” thinks I, “ye had a pretty scheme, but it takes a brighter man than you to rob Captain Jonas Hallan o' the girl he loves.” An' when little Katie came an' stood beside me, I looked on Bob Heeney with a air of triumph and scorn that fair wilted him, though I knowed he was thinkin' that soon the tables would be turned an' Katie would be rollin' those pretty black eyes at him.

Bob strolls down into the waist an' pretends to be very much interested in the antics of the fish an' sea-serpents in the big canvas tank. His hands was in his pockets an' I knowed he was clutchin' grim-death to Bombo's weakness. Any time now, the savage pride o' the Nubian desert would come boundin' forth, swishin' his tail an' roarin' turrible, an' Mister Heeney would but stretch out a hand, say “Peace be still,” an' Bombo would grovel at his feet. That was the way he figgered it, but I knowed different. I had a chunk of beef in the pocket o' me coat, an' when Srindi started to chaw Bob up, I'd step down—I'd take me time, I thought—an' rescue the contrivin' scoundrel from his clutches. And a girl can't help but love the man who's big-hearted enough to save his rival.

Well, sir, Miss Katie was standin' there with me; Bob was still talkin' to the fishes, an' young John Cottrell was still readin' his letter an' occasionally glancin' up at the quarterdeck where Katie an' me was standin', an' all was peaceful an' quiet, when suddenly comes this awful roar. Honest to John, m' lad, it made me blood curdle an' me skin prickle an' go cold; an' Katy screamed an' flung out her hands.

“Bombo!” shouts Bob Heeney, squarin' his shoulders an' advancin' to do his little turn as this big lion comes boundin' an' beatin' his tail on to the deck. Mister, he was a bad-lookin' lion, but I had Hassan's word for it that he was quiet as a mouse in the presence o' fresh beef.



Bob, the fool, was holdin' out his hand, an' that there lion was gettin' madder an' madder. "I'm comin'," I shouts. "I'll save ye, Bob."

"It's Srindi," says I. "Don't be afraid, Miss Katie. I'll fix him." Whereat I dashes down the steps into the waist to rescue Bob Heeny afore the lion made puddin' of him. Bob, the fool, was holdin' out his hand, an' that there lion was gettin' madder an' madder.

"I'm comin'!" I shouts. "I'll save ye, Bob."

Then I hears a loud howl from the fo'c's'le—Hassan's voice—"Nero! Nero!" he says, an' the icy sweat breaks out all over me as I realize what's happened . . . the only savage lion o' the three has got loose an' neither me nor Bob nor maybe Hassan hisself can do a thing with him.

"Run fer yer lives!" I yells at Bob an' young Cottrell who's standin' by, sort o' petrified. "He's a killer."



The cocoanut gives him such a crack on the skull that he loses his holt an' falls plump into the aquarium.

Bob, he leaps into the mizzen riggin' an' climbs out o' Nero's reach an' I shin up a rope: Cottrell, he dashes into the galley an' before he can bang the door, in goes Nero arter him. There's screamin' an' yellin' an' general bedlam an' the blasted ape on the mizzen truck shies one o' her cocoanuts down at Bob Heeney, givin' him such a crack on the skull that he loses his holt an' falls plump into the aquarium. I swing over on the rope, drops to the deck an' peer into the galley. Cottrell's follerin' the "doctor" through the window, so I slams the door to, an' all's serene in Denmark.

Then I hears Katie Lanergan's voice an' I see her flyin' to Cottrell's side where he's fallen on the deck.

"John! Darling John," she says. "Are you hurt? Did he get you? These idiots ain't fit to captain a woodboat—lettin' such beasts run at large. I've made up my mind, John—I'll marry you as soon as we reach Boston." And there an' then she kissed him.

Bob Heeney had clumb out o' the fish-pond an' was standin' beside me, sayin' never a word.

"It's the young feller-me-lad as worked in George Murdock's office. They're elopin' or somethin'," I says. "That's the big decision she were goin' to make. Well, I guess it's all over with us, Bob. You get that lion outen the galley afore he eats our dinner."

"Get him out yerself," said Bob. "You an' yer Noah's Ark can go to blazes."

"No," I says, "you're wrong. This ain't no Noah's Ark, for every animile in the Ark had a mate an' there ain't a jackass in creation that could mate with you."

But Bob wasn't such a bad sort o' fellow, didn't hold no spite. He offered me his hand an' I took it.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *Noah's Ark* by Louis Arthur Cunningham]