



*His despairing shout was un-  
heeded*

## Whaling Blood

*Whales are dangerous playfellows, but human sharks can be even more deadly,  
Wesley Watson learns when he is shanghaied aboard his own whaling ship*

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### LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

**W**ESLEY WATSON, twenty-three-year-old heir of the whaling ships under the blue house flag of the Watson line, had never given more than idle thought to the square-riggers which supported him, until failing profits and the fearful hints of a faithful old clerk, Charles, led him to demand an accounting from his agent, Amos Tumbrill, and his trustee, Abner Miller.

They promise him an accounting next day—and that night he is knocked out while he is waiting in the dark to elope with Prudence Hathaway (whose father had demanded that Wesley should first prove he could work).

Wesley comes to, shanghaied aboard his own ship, the Anne Elizabeth. Ragged and disheveled, his claim to being Wesley Watson is laughed at by

**This story began in the Argosy for September 5.**

Captain Talbot (Tumbrill's cousin) and the first mate, Silva, who Wesley suspects was one of his kidnapers. They swear he signed on as William Williams.

Forced to work, Wesley toughens under the discipline of the whaler. Ben Earle, an old salt, helps him. They plan to escape; but no opportunity offers. Wesley is aloft when he sights the first school of sperm whales. In Silva's boat, he is one of the first to reach the school—but their harpooner misses his cast, and the enraged whale's flukes lash out and knock mast and sail overboard.

## CHAPTER V.

### MYSTERIOUS ACTIONS.

WESLEY never knew how he did it. Without thinking, he jumped up, grabbed the second harpoon, lifted it high above his head and drove it with all his might into the black carcass of the whale, right behind the fin.

The mate, Silva, was yelling: "Oars! Oars! Starna, starna, all for your life!"

Somehow, some way, the excited crew got the oars shipped and backed off. The whale was threshing wildly around, smashing the sea with his flukes, diving and reappearing in frantic lunges.

The mate nodded his head toward Wesley. "Gooda work," he said, pointing in front.

Wesley looked. Up from the spout hole of the whale a tuft of vapor arose, blood red, a crimson mist followed by a blob of gore. With a few last struggles, the big body quieted, rolled over on its side, and lay fin out and dead. By a lucky stroke, Wesley had

driven the harpoon into a vital spot, and killed his first whale.

The harpooner came to. One of his arms hung limp and dangling. He'd been struck a hard smash, and Wesley saw from the way the man slowly and painfully raised himself up on one elbow that he was hurt internally. There was no time then to take care of him.

At the end of five fathom of whale line, led on by a plunging, maddened beast, Captain Talbot's boat skittered across the sea in a wide sweep as the whale he was fastened to began to run. It was coming straight for the boat that Wesley was in. Blindly, the whale forged along, his big shovel-nose head, as wide as a barn door, raised well out of the water, his threshing flukes behind churning the sea like a half-submerged propeller. The whale line that stretched between him and the boat was as taut as a fiddle string. With the speed of an express train he approached, blind to everything but the harpoon that was sticking its shaft up out of his side.

Captain Talbot stood up in the boat, waving his arms, yelling. Fifty yards away, the flash of the sun on a brass bomb gun showed in the captain's hand. There was a bang! A loud crash sounded. The line that stretched taut flew up in the air in twists and coils, snake like. The captain had shot off his own line.

Without waiting for orders, Wesley picked up the hatchet lying beside him, cut his line, threw a square knot in it onto the piece of rope that was hitched onto the spare harpoon. Not five feet in front of him, Captain Talbot's whale was passing. Wesley threw the iron. It struck, and a second later the boat was jerked around and started forward. The mate took a couple of turns around the loggerhead. With a

square of canvas on his hand, he nipped the whale line and kept a strain on it as it flaked out of the tub. The line smoked around the locust post. One of the men bailed water onto it from his hat to keep it from igniting. It ran fast around the loggerhead, stretched hard and taut, spun forward between the rowers, and whizzed out through the notch in the bow of the boat.

There was nothing to be seen, for the boat was enveloped in a blinding spray of salt water from its own rapid progress. For five minutes the whale ran, then even his terrific strength began to feel the strain. He slowed down.

"Haula, haula line!" the mate yelled.

The men grasped the water soaked whale line. Foot by foot they pulled up on the whale.

The mate called to Wesley: "Taka da oar!" and he went forward to lance.

Wesley went back to the steering oar, his breath coming fast with excitement, and watched the mate. When the crew had hauled the boat up to within twenty feet of the whale, Silva pitched the lance. He hauled it back with the short line attached to it.

"Put a me closer," he ordered.

THE second cast found the mark.

The sea reddened as the mate threw his lance again and again. When the iron shaft became bent, he straightened it against the gunwale with blows from a mallet kept there for that purpose. The whale was tiring fast now from his exertions and loss of blood. He forged slowly along, leaving a crimson streak in the sea behind him. They hauled the boat close alongside. The mate drove his lance into the black body beside them,

churned it up and down, searching for the "life." A red mist welled out from the spout hole.

The crew backed the boat off, and the leviathan of the deep went into his flurry. Round and round he went in a narrowing circle, threshing the water into foam. Slower and slower he moved, till finally with a last gigantic struggle he seemed to stand on his head. His big flukes waved futilely back and forth in the air. He toppled over dead, struck the water with a loud splash.

Wesley had time to look around him now. One of the other boats had fastened to a whale. Captain Talbot's boat was far out in front, chasing the frightened school that was going fast to windward. In the flash of the sun on the oars when the men caught and recovered, the boat looked like some many-legged water beetle, crawling across the face of the sea.

The mate planted a blue flag fastened on a bamboo pole into the whale's body. They rowed a short distance to the other floating carcass and wadded it, too; then they headed toward the ship that was approaching them under short sail. Not till then did the groaning boatsteerer on the floor boards receive any attention. The crew rowed to the ship, the boatsteerer was put aboard, and the mate's boat returned to where the blue flags fluttered in the breeze.

Captain Talbot soon gave up the futile chase. The whales, now thoroughly galled, were forging along half submerged, "shoveling junk" at a pace far faster than any boat's crew could hope to equal.

Tired from their long row, the captain's crew pulled back to where the whales' big black bodies heaved up and down like half tide rocks, floating

fin out on the surface of the sea. The carpenter and sailmaker, the cook and his helper, left aboard the ship, had taken in most of the canvas, and the Anne Elizabeth was hove to under backed topsails a mile away. Captain Talbot ordered one of the mate's boats to fasten on ahead of him. Another towed before the second mate's boat. A line was hitched to the whales and the five boats began their slow haul back to the ship.

The boat that Wesley was in was towing single. All efforts of the officers and the captain were directed toward getting the whales alongside the ship. That seemed to Wesley the longest mile he had ever traveled. Pull and recover—the long blades seemed to puddle the same hole they had made last stroke. The dead inert sixty-foot carcass of the whale behind moved sluggishly. They were an hour and a half getting it up alongside the ship. Wesley's hands blistered. The blisters broke, and his raw palms burned like fire.

**W**HEN they got to the vessel, Wesley breathed a great sigh of relief, thinking that now he would have a chance to rest his sore hands and tired back. But there was no rest for any one then. The other four boats already had their whales fastened alongside. The boats had to be hoisted to their davits, the tubs of line set out. Then a big block was hauled aloft to the main top, a heavy hawser rove through it with a hook on the lower block.

The whales were alongside, each held by a chain around its flukes, leading forward through the hawsepipes. The cutting in started. A section of the bulwarks was removed, and the cutting stage rigged. This consisted of

two boards fastened to the rail, sticking out from the ship's side about ten feet. Another board was lashed lengthwise across these, and the whole held up by lines rove through blocks and hooked one end to the fore and main shrouds, the other to the outside plank.

Out on the platform, with only a single pole braced waist high upright to steady them, three of the mates wielded their long-handled cutting spades which looked like big chisels set in the ten-foot ash handles. A hole was chopped in the whale's carcass near the eye. After many attempts the big blubber hook was set in it, and the tired men at the forward windlass took up on the fall lines. The blanket pieces, big strips of blubber eight inches thick and five or six feet wide, were stripped off in long spirals as the whale was rolled over in the water.

When they had hauled up a strip ten or twelve feet long, it was cut off and a new hold was taken with another line. The falls were slacked down and, heave and pull, the work went on. After the carcass had been stripped, the head of the whale was cut off. It was upended, a hole chopped in the gory mass, and buckets on long poles shoved down into the head were hauled out full of a white, greasy, fibrous substance, the spermaceti. This was known as the case oil, and the cavity in the whale's head from which it was extracted was called the case.

It was noon that day before the first whale had been cut in, and the blanket pieces piled up on the deck. A man got down into the head alongside and finished baling the case. He was oil soaked from head to foot when he finally drained it to Captain Talbot's satisfaction.

The carcass was cast adrift. A swirl

of sharks below bit and tore at it; above, a cloud of sea birds wheeled and screamed over the stripped body as it drifted slowly astern. The crew were a greasy looking lot when they knocked off for dinner. Sitting with his back against the bulwarks, his tin plate of salt horse in his lap, nibbling on a wormy sea biscuit, Wesley thought he would never be able to last out the day. Several times that afternoon he was on the point of quitting from sheer weariness. He but shared the feeling of the whole foremast crew.

AS they worked on the second whale, stripping off the blubber, one of the men stepped back from the winch, sat down on the heel of the bowsprit, muttering as he breathed heavily: "I'm done for, I gotta rest."

He soon changed his mind when the fourth mate noticed him, and laid a rope's end vigorously across his back. The weary crew hauled and slacked; the cutting spades chopped at the carcass below them. The water around reddened with blood, its surface dotted with white pieces of floating fat. The sharks appeared in ever increasing numbers, drawn to the feast by the smell of blood. These ravenous wolves of the sea dashed in and out, grabbing big chunks of blubber from the carcass of the whale at every rush. The blanket pieces began to come up well bitten.

Wesley was relieved to get away from the windlass when one of the mates ordered him out on the cutting stage with a spade to try and keep the sharks off. He took a savage exultation in wielding that sharp-edged blade down at the pack that swirled through the water below, attracted by the streak of froth and blood that

trailed behind across the ocean. This was much easier than pumping at the windlass, yet he welcomed the coming of darkness and the sight of the mess boy going forward with the two wooden kits that held the crew's supper.

But even nightfall did not stop the work. Big wire baskets were hung in the rigging, and to the ends of the yardarms. These baskets were filled with pieces of blubber. They were lighted, and by their flickering, wind-swept flare the work went on.

Wesley was thrusting his spade at the phosphorescent streaks below, half asleep from fatigue, when he was startled out of his lethargy by a sudden sharp ejaculation. Mr. Silva stood looking down at the body of the whale below, mouth agape, eyes wide in amazement.

He turned to Wesley. "Go call cap'n, quick!" he ordered.

Wesley made his way to the rail, wondering what was up. When he battered on the captain's door, and informed him that he was wanted by the first mate at once, he was surprised at the alacrity with which his request was answered. Without waiting to put on his hat or shoes, Captain Talbot brushed past him and went up the stairs in his stocking feet, two steps at a jump.

Wesley followed, wondering at the hurry. The captain went out on the cutting stage. After a few minutes of low talk between him and the mates, the welcome order rang out: "All hands go below!"

The men were not long in obeying, and stretched out on their bunks they made the most of their resting period. Sitting on the edge of his berth, Wesley wondered dully why the crew had so abruptly been relieved of duty. What had caused this sudden halt in



the cutting in? But he was too tired to care much. He stretched himself out on his berth. His leaden eyelids closed, and he was asleep in a few minutes.

An hour later, the sleeping men below were roused out, and the interrupted job was again started. When Wesley got out on the platform he noticed that the carcass of the whale had been split open. The case was baled on the second whale, and cutting in started on the last one as eight bells struck. It was midnight, and eight bells had struck again when the job was completed, and a weary crew tumbled into their bunks. None made any effort to remove their grease-soaked clothing. Almost as soon as they struck their straw-filled mattresses they fell asleep.

**I**T seemed to Wesley that he had hardly closed his eyes when he was wakened by a loud thumping on the hatch above.

As though from a far distance, he heard: "Hey, you, dere, Williams! Come up. Cap'n wanta you."

Sleepily he rolled out of the bunk, crawled up the fore-castle stairs and blinked in the glare of the morning sunlight. He made out the captain's figure, standing aft under the gallows frame beside the cook house, a small black book in his hand.

Wesley climbed over the slippery, greasy pile of blubber that slithered back and forth on the deck with every roll of the ship.

"Yes, sir," he addressed the captain. "You wanted me?"

The captain surveyed him for a few minutes, and then said coldly: "That clumsy fool of a boatheader who got himself hurt yesterday, he's—" He did not finish the sentence. "You take his place."

Wesley stood, hardly knowing what to say.

"Move lively now," the captain ordered. "Get your things and come aft."

It seemed to Wesley that the captain's tone was ironical as he informed him of his promotion. Wesley looked hard at the man. The corners of Captain Talbot's mouth were puckered up as though he secretly were enjoying some grim joke.

He turned his back on Wesley and spoke: "Mr. Silva, muster up the crew."

With muttered curses the crew responded and, standing on the blubber that filled the waist of the ship, each man looked his sullen wonder at the summons. A hush of expectancy hung over them. They knew the blubber was all to handle, to cut up and stow below, yet there was no move made toward starting work on it.

**T**HEY were not kept long in doubt. The third and fourth mates came up from below, carrying a long canvas-covered bundle between them. Wesley shuddered at the sight of it. He knew what it was. The injured boat-steerer had died during the night. There was little ceremony in disposing of the body. A couple of boards were laid across the rail; the canvas bundle was placed on them. The captain mumbled a few words of the burial service from the black book.

His voice raised: "And now we consign his body to the deep."

The planks were tilted. The canvas-covered bundle slid into the sea with a splash. Just as the gruesome-looking roll of soiled and dirty canvas started to slide overboard, the cook, standing near by, picked up a bucket half full of slops and slushed it over the corpse.

Wesley gasped, horrified at this insult to the dead, but Ben, beside him, said:

"It did not hurt yon poor soul, who is plunging down now to his last rest, and it eases the mind of the crew."

"How?" Wesley stammered.

Ben smiled grimly. "His ghost will never come back to haunt the ship now, fearing, they think, another dose from the slop bucket."

At that time Wesley had no chance for further words.

Captain Talbot turned on his heel, called over his shoulder as he went below:

"Get some sail on her, Mr. Silva, and put the men to work."

The mates barked out their orders, and the Anne Elizabeth, that had been hove to while the brief ceremony took place, again spread her canvas and dipped and rolled across the quiet sea.

Wesley was depressed and aghast at the callousness of the whole affair. Human life was cheap aboard the Anne Elizabeth—cheap, and due but scant respect.

Ben voiced the same thoughts that Wesley was milling over in his mind: "Aye, lad, the captain is not a bit put out when a man goes over the side. That's one less share for him to have to calculate against."

Ben's expression became serious. "Lad, if what ye've told me is true about who ye are, and how ye came aboard, I've a notion there's something in the wind that concerns ye. Keep yer wits about ye, or mayhap ye'll be the next one to go over the rail wi' a rock at yer feet to help ye down. We've got ile aboard, not overly much, but a good start and a promise o' more. The more we get, the less the afterguard will worry when they lose one o' the ship's company."

His face grew thoughtful. "I have no doubt but what before this cruise is ended, Cap'n Talbot will pass the orders to serve us belayin'-pin hash and knuckle-duster soup. Aye, and make life so miserable for us all that not a man in the fo'c's'le but what will jump ship when the chance offers."

Ben laughed ironically. "Aye, and when they get us all worked up, they'll give us that chance. When the Anne Elizabeth returns home, if they have their way, there'll be none to tell o' how William Williams came aboard, nor the manner o' his leavin'."

## CHAPTER VI.

### SEA TREASURE.

ALL hands were kept busy now with the blubber from three whales aboard. The big blanket pieces that covered the main deck were chopped into smaller chunks, the "horse pieces," and slid below into the hold. A dangerous job this, chopping the tough hide of the whales, the men barefooted, the deck slithery as new ice with the gurry of water and grease that covered it six inches deep. For the scuppers had been plugged to prevent any of the oil from draining overboard.

At noon the tryworks were started. The covers were taken off the big iron kettles that set in their brick framework aft of the foremast. A fire was lit. Some of the scrap, fritters of parched blubber, the residue that had been saved after trying out from the last voyage, was fed to the fires. A slicing knife was rigged, and the horse pieces were sliced as a strip of bacon is cut. These were called "Bibles." With the "leaves" notched into them, held together by the skin, they were

forked into the kettles, and trying out began.

Dense clouds of black smoke rolled up from the tryworks. The soot rained in big flakes over everything aboard as the work of trying out got to going in earnest. When the crisp pieces of blubber turned brown and floated to the surface after the greater part of the oil had been abstracted from them, this scrap was skimmed off the top and used to feed the fire below. The whales furnished the fuel for their own rendering.

All that day the crew sliced horse pieces, passed up chunks of blubber from the hold, drew off the oil, and ran it into the casks below. When night fell the Anne Elizabeth was a weird and unearthly sight, with the red flames shooting up from the tryworks, the huge baskets of oil-soaked scrap hung above. The flickering light danced over the men working below, bobbing around, sliding and falling on the slippery decks.

The ship was in the middle of the South Atlantic now, out of the traffic lanes. Ben, speaking to Wesley during a breathing spell while they worked at the slicing knife, remarked, "'Tis well that we are far from the usual track of vessels, or in all likelihood there'd be more than one that would crowd on sail and come down to rescue us, thinking we were a ship on fire." He chuckled. "And cussing us for a filthy, floating butcher shop when they discovered their mistake."

When morning came half of the crew were sent below to rest, and the other half continued on duty. So, turn and turn about, four hours on and four hours off, the watches were kept till the last greasy chunk came up from below, was sliced and pitched into the boiling pots. The ship itself was a gory

mess, from the bowsprit to the boat that hung over the stern aft, greasy with oil, sticky with smudge of lamp-black from the soot of the tryworks. When the last drop of oil had been drained into the barrels below, the orders came to clean ship.

For three days the crew, with broom and mop, scraper and scrubbing brush, worked to rid the vessel of its encrustation of filth and gurry. That done, discipline was relaxed. A different spirit seemed to hang over the Anne Elizabeth. A more genial air of tolerance was evident now than had been since the first day she sailed from port. Captain Talbot once even broke into a snatch of song, and Wesley, during his steering trick, often heard him humming cheerily in his cabin below through the open skylight that lay in front of the wheel.

THEY had been profitable, these last few days, as Wesley learned from the dinner table conversation of the mates. Over a hundred and sixty barrels of oil had been taken. But Wesley found it hard to believe that this would account in whole for Captain Talbot's change of manner.

On the first Sunday after they had finished cleaning the vessel, the mess boy brought in plum duff for the after-guard. It was hailed with loud acclaim, a welcome change from the salt meat and sea biscuits. Wesley, who had been used to fine fare ashore, saw little to become enthusiastic over in a sticky mass of flour, seasoned with cinnamon and interspersed with chunks of dried apple. The fare on the mates' table was a little better than that served in the forecabin.

Now, instead of having to sweeten his coffee with molasses, there was a bowl of brown sugar on the table each



meal. Instead of having to fish out his meat from the wooden mess kit, the cook's assistant brought it in and served it in a more civilized fashion.

He had more leisure now, for the boat-steerers were spared the task of tarring down rigging, holystoning decks and working up old rope. During their spare time, they could amuse themselves as they saw fit.

Wesley and the boat-steerer in the second mate's boat soon became friends. Cortez Allen was a young man who had been brought up on Cuttyhunk, accustomed to the sea. He had handled a tiller when most boys were playing with rocking horses. He was ambitious and he confided to Wesley that he was studying navigation, and in time hoped to become an officer—"an officer with a rating and a ticket, for any ship of any tonnage in any ocean."

From Cortez Allen, Wesley learned the knack of scrimshawing. When once they had put their boats in order, seen that the lances and harpoons were in good shape, and the sails and rigging all ready for a quick setting up, the boat-steerers had little to do. They took the wheel and steered the vessel turn and turn about. They were the first up the rigging, and handled the clews far out on the ends of the yard-arms in reefing. But in the calm, fine weather that the Anne Elizabeth now enjoyed, steering was a light job and it was seldom necessary to go aloft to shorten sail.

Before the last whale's head had been cast adrift, the mates had cut off the lower jaw. It had been towing from a rope alongside since then. It was hauled aboard now, and the teeth extracted. During their spare time the officers sat in the shade on the deck, scrimshawing. The solid chunks of

ivory from these sperm whale tushes were a couple of inches in diameter and about six inches long. Their smooth polished surface made a good background. Whaling scenes, "The Sailor's Return," "Full and By," "The Chase," and "Trying Out," were drawn on the teeth, and the outlines of these favorite pictures carved out. A little oil and lampblack were rubbed into the tush and, with cameo-like sharpness, the scenes stood out clearly.

CORTEZ and Wesley sat together one day, a week after Wesley had come aft. It was a quiet afternoon. The sails were sleeping lazily, and the Anne Elizabeth was barely under steerage way. Captain Talbot came up from below, beckoned to the four mates. They followed him down into his cabin. Wesley looked questioningly at Cortez, who grinned knowingly.

"You wonder what they do? Remember that night when all foremast hands were sent below? Do you recall how you killed that whale with the first stroke of your harpoon?"

Wesley nodded.

"Well," the other went on, "'tis no secret now what they are conferring over. That was a sick whale. It came over me at the time that he was easily killed. Not five minutes passed after you struck him with the iron before he went into his flurry and rolled over, fin out and dead. He had a big chunk of ambergris in him, and ambergris is worth lots of money. I've heard it said that now it brings all of a hundred dollars an ounce. And I have no doubt but what there were many pounds in that chunk."

Cortez winked slyly. "Slip quietly to the skylight," he said, "and look

below. Mayhap you'll hear or see something to satisfy your curiosity. I'll keep watch above here, and if any one starts out, I'll warn you in time so they will not be able to catch you eaves-dropping."

Wesley laid down a whale's tooth on which he had been carving, tiptoed across the deck. The skylight over Captain Talbot's room was open.

From below, he heard the captain's voice in a cautious tone: "Aye, a small fortune there. Look, it moves the bar at forty pounds."

Cautiously Wesley moved over, looked down through the crack at the end of the skylight. Below, he saw Captain Talbot and Mr. Silva standing beside a steelyard hung from the car-line above them. On one end of the arm was a square of canvas tied by the corners. In it, Wesley could see a muddy gray substance which looked like a piece of greasy clinker. Captain Talbot held a length of wire over the open flame of a sperm oil lamp. He thrust the hot wire into the lump of ambergris, held it to his nostrils.

"**W**HOOEE!" he whistled. "Prime stuff, this! A fair fortune it will bring when once the perfumers of Paris bid against each other for it."

Wesley had seen all he wanted to. He went back to where young Allen was seated, told him what he'd seen.

"Aye," the other remarked complacently. "What you heard was true. It's a very scarce thing, ambergris. They pay high prices for it. I've heard it said that its sole use is to fix the scent in perfume."

Cortez's face became thoughtful when Wesley asked, "But why are they so secretive about it? Why did the captain order all hands out of sight

when they removed it from the whale?"

"That I cannot say," his companion answered. "It might be that the captain was afraid to excite the cupidity of the crew. There are a score of men forward, some of whom would go to any lengths, even murder and mutiny, to get their hands on a thing of that value. They outnumber the afterguard two to one, and it is well for the officers to watch that they do nothing which might cause trouble."

This explanation hardly satisfied Wesley, however, and in the days that followed he watched every move the captain and mates made in the hope that he would get further light on the suspicion that had entered his mind. But nothing untoward occurred. The ship was heading southwesterly across the middle passage, the slave route from the Ivory Coast of Africa to South America.

She worked across the doldrums, that belt of calms and baffling variable winds that extends from the coast of Africa eastward to South America. For a week the crew were kept busy pulling and hauling, canting the yards first one way, then the other, to catch ever vagrant breath of wind. Black squalls would make up suddenly, sweep down toward them, and when sail was shortened to meet them they would veer off to one side or the other, leaving the ship becalmed, slowly rocking up and down in the ground swell.

Ben was working up old rope into spun yarn with the rest of the crew on the deck one day, and Wesley got into conversation with him. It was the old sailor's opinion that the captain was heading for the Plate grounds, and from there, in all probability, he would set his course for Cape Horn and the Pacific.

Next day they got to the edge of the southeast trade winds. The canvas that had been flapping impotently aloft, steadied, bulged out, and by noon the old craft forged with a free wind to the southwestward.

Up forward, the crew were chanting: "'Oh, ho! oh, ho! We're bound for the Rio Grande!'" But if they were expecting shore liberty, they were to be disappointed. The course was changed to due south. Day by day the latitude increased, till the mouth of the Rio de la Plata lay to the north. Wesley had been buoying up his hopes with the idea that once the ship made port he would be the first to desert. He realized now that he was due for a long delay before that day arrived. This thought filled him with gloom, yet he did his work, never betraying his disappointment.

## CHAPTER VII.

### MAROONED.

**T**HEY had not sighted whales for a week. Then, one morning, from aloft came the awakening cry of "Bl-o-o-ws! Ah, bl-o-o-ws!"

Again the boats swung out on the davits, hit the water and raced toward a big school of sperm whales that tufted the skyline with their puffs of vapor. That was a lucky day. Each boat fastened to a whale, made its kill. Wesley got on his first whale, pitched the harpoon, and changed places with the mate, who lanced the beast with little trouble. Inside ten minutes their second whale was harpooned, and before an hour had passed, Mr. Silva's boat had two whales to its credit.

Contrary to the way they usually acted, the whales did not become galled and run to windward, but milled

around in confusion, and the five boats each killed two. When night fell there were ten big bull sperm whales tied up alongside the *Anne Elizabeth*. The captain and the mates were jubilant over their success, but the crew viewed those inert carcasses alongside with disapproving eyes. They meant but hard work and short rests. Cutting in did not start till next morning, and the fore-castle hands went at their heavy task gloomily, even after Captain Talbot had given each man a good tot of rum.

Pull and haul, the chop of the cutting spades, the singsong cries of "Slack!" and "Hold!" rang out for the rest of the week. That done, the tryworks were started and the ship by night was a lurid glow that lit up the ocean for miles around. By day, a pillar of sooty smoke drifted before the wind and spread fanwise across the clean horizon to leeward.

There were five hundred fresh barrels of oil in the casks below when the job was done, and the crew, who had eagerly looked forward to a period of rest, came in for another disappointment. The ship was made ready for the hard thresh against the prevailing westerlies around Cape Horn. All the spare gear on deck was stowed below. The royal yards and spars were struck. The boats were taken down from their davits and lashed securely to the top of the gallows frame. Heavy canvas was bent on, and everything movable on deck was fastened securely down.

As the days passed, the weather that had been clear and warm gradually changed. The southeast trades were left behind. One morning when Wesley came on deck he was surprised to see some of the crew sweeping off a light fall of snow that had descended during the night. The ocean was a

moldy green. There was a shaking of heads when, one day, an albatross drifted over the ship.

A few days later all hands lined the rail to catch a glimpse of Staten Island, a gloomy, barren sight, snow and ice covered, that appeared and disappeared through the swirl of wind-blown snow which hung over it. The men began drawing on the slop chest. Woolen underwear and sea boots, mittens and jackets were in demand. Captain Talbot checked each article drawn against the man's lay.

**W**EARILY the Anne Elizabeth passed between Staten Island and the mainland of Tierra del Fuego, stood on a long leg to the south'ard, came about and edged across the wind to the northward.

Make westing—that was the sole thought in every one's mind now, make westing and clear this inhospitable region of white squalls that tore across the face of the water, shrieking like demons, of heavy gales and black skies, streaked with scudding storm wrack. Back and forth the Anne Elizabeth slugged, her progress punctuated by the *thump!* of floating pieces of ice as she shouldered them aside, and the mournful whine and groan of cold winds whistling through her rigging.

There was no fire on the ship save small ones in the captain's cabin and the cook shanty. The men went about their work, cold and soaking wet. The whaler rolled and pitched in the heavy seas. Time after time her decks were swept by big combers. Tons of water slushed across them, emptied out through the freeing ports, and she would roll down again, only to take another wave, solid green, four feet deep, that filled the waist bulwark high.

Life lines were rigged up so as to keep the men from being washed overboard. It seemed to some of them as though it would be a welcome relief to sweep off on the breast of a rolling grayback, and soon be beyond wet and cold, cracked and bleeding hands, and the misery of sodden bunks and icy wet garments. The cook's galley, lashed to the decks by chain and ring-bolt, was swept crashing from its moorings one day. Even the small comfort of a hot meal was denied all hands now. Wesley, when he went below, was often tantalized by the odor of boiling coffee that came out of the captain's quarters. The master of the ship, warm and dry, cared little for the sufferings of his men.

For ten days they stood first on one tack, then on another. At every opportunity Captain Talbot took snapshots at the sun when it appeared momentarily through a break in the clouds. No one on board knew what progress they were making, except the captain, and he kept that information to himself. The thought struck Wesley that if anything should happen to the captain, the crew of the Anne Elizabeth would be in a desperate situation, since no one else aboard could take a sight and work out their position.

This was brought home forcibly to him one day when the captain was standing near the rail, squinting through the eyepiece of his sextant for a shot at the sickly yellow-looking globe of the sun, half obscured by the clouds. The first mate had just given the order to tack ship. The Anne Elizabeth eased her blunt nose around on the opposite tack, the spanker boom swung across with a clatter of blocks. A bight of the sheet caught the captain around the leg, and he fell heavily.

Wesley, at the wheel, jumped to his assistance, threw the turn of rope off as it was tightening to the pull of the boom.

The captain got up slowly, and limped toward the companionway that led to his cabin, muttering as he gazed at the instrument in his hand: "Lucky I kept this out of harm."

THAT afternoon, Wesley went into Cortez's stateroom, a narrow cabin like his own on the port side of the vessel. There was but space in it for a berth, a chair and a small table. This was the first time Wesley had entered Cortez's quarters, and he looked around him with a good deal of interest. Everything was neat and clean.

There was a gayly colored patchwork quilt on the berth, pictures on the walls, a couple of shelves full of books against the end of the bulkhead over the berth. Cortez's shore clothes were carefully hung up. His shoes, well polished, stuck out from under his bed. The thought came over Wesley as he looked around the room that going to sea need not be the grim, disagreeable business which it was, that things might be as Cortez had them, and some of the comforts and niceties of home could be carried aboard. He glanced at the books, saw a volume on navigation.

To his question, could he borrow it, Cortez answered, "Certainly. But if you have an idea to study that, let's study it together." He winked. "I've a secret to tell you."

Reaching under his berth, he pulled out a mahogany sea chest, brass bound, opened the lid, turned back some clothes and drew out a wooden quadrant.

"No one but yourself knows I have

this on board. Captain Talbot is jealous of his knowledge, and never tells even the first mate our position. But I have caught a sight often unbeknownst to him."

He nodded toward the porthole. "Whenever the ship is heading so that I can see the sun through the port at noon, I bring it down to calculate our latitude. The longitude I cannot get for two reasons. First, I have no chronometer, and cannot get the Greenwich time; and second," he admitted, "I have not yet acquired the knack of taking out the tangents and cotangents, secants and cosecants from the tables."

Wesley was glancing through the volume. He looked up. "Luckily," he said, "I was apt at mathematics when I went to school. Together we can work out these tables."

The two sat down on the edge of the berth, and in low tones went over the science of navigation as practiced and exemplified by Norie. By the time it was Wesley's turn to take his trick at the wheel, three hours later, he had an insight into the theory of celestial observations.

During the next week he devoted all his spare time to study, and before the Anne Elizabeth had worked her way, aided by a favorable slant of the wind, around Diego Ramirez Island, he had begun to get an inkling of what the practice of navigation at sea meant. They cleared the tip of Cape Horn one morning and stood off up the Pacific. All hands were delighted when that inhospitable region was put astern.

ONE noon, a week later, Captain Talbot came up on deck, took his sight, and went below. Wesley glanced around. Cortez had the deck watch. Ben was at the wheel. Here



was a fine opportunity for him to try his newly acquired knowledge with a practical test. None of the mates were on deck. He hurried below, came out with the quadrant, and pointed the instrument at the sun.

It was a simple matter to slip the arm over the arc, bring the reflected image of that yellow globe down till its lower edge kissed the horizon. He bent over, studying the figures on the bone arc where the arm of the quadrant had stopped. Reading the altitude, he made his calculations with a bit of pencil on the deck.

"Forty-eight, fifty-six south latitude," he muttered.

He felt a heavy hand on his shoulder, a rough voice grated in his ear: "What's this? What are you up to?"

He jumped up to face the captain, who was studying his figures through narrowed eyes.

Captain Talbot reached for the quadrant, his face twisted in anger. "Give me that thing and I'll heave it overboard!"

Wesley held it behind him. "And why?" he asked. "What harm is there in it?"

"Harm! You ask me why?" Captain Talbot bellowed. "Obey my commands, or"—he grated his teeth together—"or we'll see how you like the taste o' bread and water!"

Wesley hesitated. He looked at the captain's threatening face, and then said quietly: "Captain Talbot, you have no right to destroy this instrument. I have done no harm in using it. I have as much right to know the position of this ship as you have."

"You! You talk about rights! You claim rights aboard!" the captain roared.

"Yes," Wesley replied, "I do. You know very well who I am. Of that I

am certain. And I'm just as certain that you're implicated in the plot that put me aboard this vessel. There will be a reckoning some day, and when that day comes it might be well if at least I could state that you treated me with a decent consideration."

The two men stood facing each other, Wesley holding the quadrant in one hand. Unconsciously his other fist was clenched, his arm doubled up. His expression was fixed and determined. A half a head taller than Captain Talbot, Wesley was broad across the shoulders, deep-chested, and the muscles on his bare right arm rippled and played under his sun-varnished skin.

The Wesley Watson who had come aboard the Anne Elizabeth a half year before was no more. The puffiness in his cheeks had vanished. His face was tanned; his gray eyes were hard and steady; his jaw firm. When he moved, it was with a lithe, springing step. His endurance, strengthened by months of hard work, regular hours and simple fare, was amazing. He alone of all the men on board could climb a rope hand over hand, from the deck clear up to the topgallant yard. And he alone of all the crew of the Anne Elizabeth could lift the anvil that stood behind the mainmast by its horn and set it on the carpenter's bench.

For a half minute they faced each other, then Captain Talbot's eyes shifted. His menacing attitude changed. He looked around him nervously, licked his lips; then, muttering, "We'll see about this, we'll see about this," he turned and went below.

**B**UT Wesley, watchful and wary for the rest of the day, saw nothing untoward. He knew, however, that Captain Talbot was not the man to back water on board the ship he

was master of. With as much power as any despot who ever lived, the captain was the supreme ruler once the ship had left the land. This affront to his authority would be reckoned with, but how or where Wesley could not foresee.

Day after day passed, and the ship worked to the northward. Wesley, at every opportunity, got an observation through the portholes, and checked her progress. With free sheets, she sailed bravely before the southeast trades until, two weeks after his argument with Captain Talbot, Wesley shot the sun and found they were on the line.

Even without this knowledge, there was evidence enough that the bark was near the equator. The blazing sun poured down from a brassy sky. Often, for days, the Anne Elizabeth would be becalmed, her bowsprit slowly revolving around to all the points in the compass, the sails hanging limp, the pitch boiling out of the deck seams in the heat.

Once whales were sighted, but the boats' crews had nothing but a wearying pull for their efforts, for there was no breeze, and the whales heard the sound of oars, and scattered long before there was any chance to plant an iron.

The men wore scant attire; an old pair of trousers was all the clothing necessary or wanted now. Some merely dressed in a breech clout like savages. The sun turned their tan to brown, and under its fierce glare every man aboard took on the color of old mahogany.

Gradually, as time passed, Wesley relaxed his vigilance. The ship was now headed to the eastward, and Cortez Allen voiced his opinion that they were making for the Galapagos. Two days later they raised the islands. The

Anne Elizabeth stood off and on a few miles from shore. The word went around that they were going ashore for terrapin. Wesley had heard tales of the giant tortoises that were found on these islands. They were considered quite a delicacy, and he hoped that he would have a chance to go with the hunting party.

At mid afternoon Mr. Silva called his boat's crew. They rowed ashore, landed through the surf on a pebble beach. The mate ordered them all to scatter and hunt for turtles. Wesley followed a little trail that led over the sharp volcanic rocks, and after an hour's walk, a movement ahead in the brittle bushes attracted his attention.

He ran up to the place, and caught his first sight of one of the giant land tortoises. The creature was as big as a washtub, and he had to exert all his strength to turn it over on its back.

He hurried down toward where the boat had been landed to get help to bring in his prize. When he got down to the little beach, around a jutting promontory of rocks that cut out the sight of the sea in front, he gasped in astonishment. The boat was gone!

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A DESPERATE CHANCE.

WESLEY ran to the edge of the beach, shaded his eyes from the glare of the sun that hung low in the west, looked for the boat. He saw it halfway between the shore and the ship. He raised his voice in a loud shout that echoed and reëchoed in the silence of the place. There was no sign that he had been heard. The regular beat of the oars glistened in the sunlight as they dipped and recovered.

He sat down on a lump of rock,

watched the boat come up alongside the ship, saw it hoisted up in the davits. He saw the yardarms cant around, the sails one after another drop from their buntlines, tauten in the light breeze that was blowing, and the Anne Elizabeth slowly get under way. He had been tricked.

Impotently, helplessly, he saw the ship slowly gliding to the westward. What a fool he had been to get so far away from the boat! He knew now that the whole thing was but a well-laid scheme to get rid of him. Perhaps, from the very start, this had been contemplated and planned. Of all the places on the earth, this was the place where there was but one chance in a thousand of a marooned man ever getting off again. Save for the terrapin, there was nothing here to bring vessels to these barren, sun-drenched rocks. Not only that—most ships gave the Galapagos a wide berth. They lay right on the equator, in a region of calms and light winds where the tidal currents swept heavily back and forth. A becalmed ship was in a dangerous situation, for these volcanic islets which formed the group rose steeply out of the sea. A ship might be on the rocks, and be beaten to pieces by the heavy ground swell, before her anchor, hanging to the end of five hundred fathom of chain, would reach the bottom.

A sickening, dull sense of defeat and disappointment overpowered Wesley. Never again to see New Bedford, never again to see Prudence. To eke out a miserable existence on this barren, volcanic pile, to live on this ash heap for a month, two months, with the seals and the sea birds for company, and then to die alone under a blazing tropic sun. A year, five years, maybe longer, and some ship's crew

would perhaps gaze on his bleached bones and wonder who they had belonged to.

But hope dies hard. Somewhere to the south'ard on one of this group of islands there was a miserable little settlement. Somewhere to the south'ard there were human beings, a chance for existence. But how to get there. This small island was but one of at least a dozen.

There were long stretches of water between them, water alive with sharks, boiling with swift tidal currents. There was no wood of which a man could build a raft, or any sort of a craft in which to make the journey.

Wesley felt in his pockets. He had a small ball of marline that he had been using the day before and his sheath knife—those and his bare hands. What use were they? He looked out to sea. The ship was almost becalmed now. The wind was dying. Perhaps this was just an accident. Perhaps they would send a boat for him. But he knew there was no use trying to bolster up his courage with those thoughts. This thing was deliberate and planned.

This afternoon, when they had come ashore, it was for the sole purpose of marooning him. He knew that they could easily account, if accounting were needed, for his absence. William Williams would go down in the log as having deserted the ship. That was all there would be to it.

THE more he thought of it, the more the certainty grew on him.

Amos Tumbrell and Abner Miller, months ago back home, had thought out this scheme. They had picked this very place as the one to hold his bones. Captain Talbot was but a willing tool to carry out their wishes.

They'd taken a sure way of silencing him, for the captain was now as guilty as they. He would cover up all evidence. Wesley Watson could tell his tale of trickery and deception to the screaming sea birds; he could shout his futile curses at the heaving ocean, for there would be no one else to listen.

Sitting on the rock, Wesley looked out across the calm water to where the Anne Elizabeth stood etched against the blue of the ocean, her sails hanging idle, rising and falling slowly. The afternoon dragged past. Toward night, Wesley noticed with a reviving of his flagging hopes that the ship seemed to be nearer the land now. Perhaps a current was setting it in. There might be a chance. He was a good swimmer. Under cover of the darkness he might be able to stroke his slow way out to her and get aboard.

With the suddenness of the tropics, the sun went down. Darkness descended, and the velvet sky was studded with stars. Off to the westward a little yellow glow rose and fell as though that light on the Anne Elizabeth had been put there to tempt him. An hour passed. It seemed to Wesley that the light was moving nearer. It was not over two miles away, he judged, although he knew that distances were very deceptive. It was a desperate chance at any rate, but he resolved that he would rather have a quick death by drowning than a slow, pitiful tapering off of his existence on this desolate isle.

Unmindful of the phosphorescent streaks where sharks cut the water outside the first line of breakers, Wesley pulled off his shoes, walked out breast deep, dived under a crashing comber and started to swim out to where that tantalizing yellow blob of light lured him forward. Slowly, to conserve his strength, he stroked along through the warm water, heaving up and down on the swell, occasionally raising his head, looking toward that beckoning glow that seemed so far away.

For the first half hour he swam with a tingling chill running up and down his spine, expecting each minute to feel the sharp teeth of a shark slicing his flesh. But as time passed, that fear left him. The light was closer now. He was drawing nearer to it with each stroke, when a new fear came over him.

The water that had been as smooth as glass, heaving slowly up and down in an oily swell, began to ripple about his face. The night breeze was starting. He became frantic. Once the breeze sprang up, the ship would get way on her, and leave.

He could see the black bulk of her outlined in the starlight ahead of him. He was so close he could hear the rattle of blocks, the dull *plop!* of canvas as her jibs filled. He stifled his impulse to cry out. If they intended to leave him, that would do no good. He would not give them the satisfaction of hearing his last despairing wail.

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.

"EVERY issue is an all-star issue," an ARGOSY reader recently wrote us; "how do you do it for ten cents?" The answer is—such a big circulation that we can give you a dollar's worth for a dime, and keep our high standards of quality and variety.



*The old man tried to scream in terror*

## Iron Hell

*Young Tommy Hodges did not flinch from the leering red-hot eyes of the iron mill furnaces; for he had a far greater hell within*

**By EDMUND M. LITTELL**

**H**ELL? There's no place this side of the other world more like it than the fire-broken gloom that drips constantly down from the brooding, soot-coated roof of Great Lakes Iron.

Devils? No man born of woman looks any more nearly the cloven-hoofed minion of Satan than the bare-torsoed giants, dripping with sweat, who work in the light of those fires.

Young Tommy Hodges proved it; Andy McCord, the grizzled old man who superintends the place, will tell you so with a chuckle. A great lad, Tommy; he gave the men something

to think about besides the drudgery of the job. Though when he came in that day Andy didn't suspect that he ever would.

"It's hell, workin' here," Andy had said, with a wave of the hand which meant, "There it is; take it or leave it."

The youngster, looking around, had snorted:

"Hell? Ha!" with a curl of his young lips. "Put me to work!"

Andy McCord was delighted. It was the first time in more than a year that the sight of his place and his men had done anything but send a would-