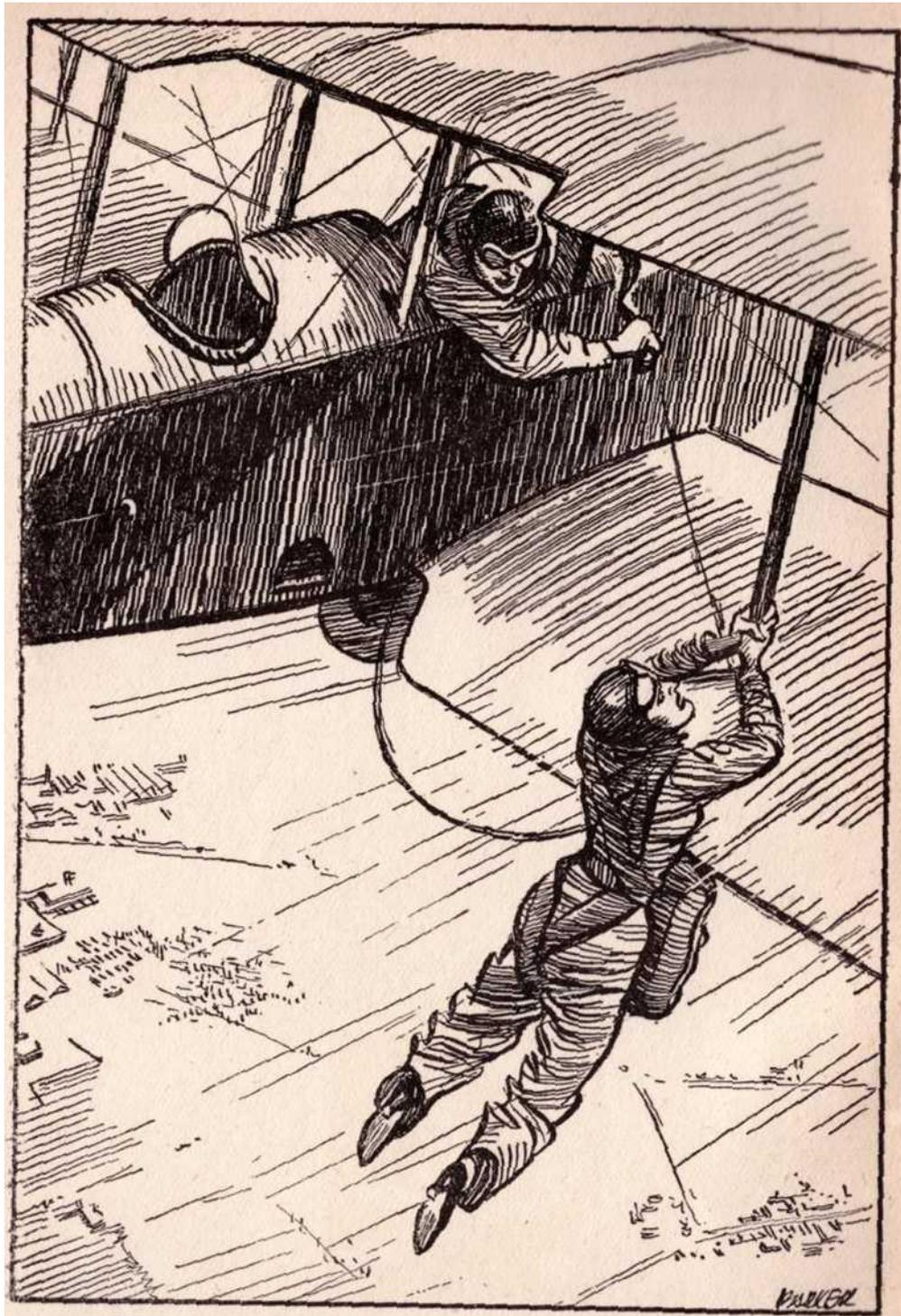


THE WINDJAMMER FILM



She was seized with frightful panic. Like a drowning cat she clutched at the wing.

Frontispiece

See p. 257

ALAN J. VILLIERS

FIFTY AMAZING HAIRBREADTH ESCAPES



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THE WINDJAMMER FILM

By

ALAN J. VILLIERS

RONALD GREGORY WALKER was a newspaper reporter on the staff of *The Mercury*, Hobart. As such, part of his duties consisted in writing up what news there was in the port in a column called, exactly why is not dear, "Shipping Intelligence." He often used to say that he did not know that shipping had any intelligence; and in any case no intelligence was necessary in chronicling whatever news there was about it.

But that is by the way.

Ronald Walker was deeply interested in the ships and in all concerning them. He loved the newspaper work too, and knew that city life held no more interesting job. All his young life he had been strongly interested in the sea. Ships and travel, sea and aeroplanes, strange lands—these things moved him. He had a little yacht he called the *Murmur*, and in her many a happy week-end was spent. He wrote about yachting matters for his newspaper and pottered about the ships that came to port, and his days were pleasant.

Hobart, small though it was, had a lovely harbour to which strange ships sometimes came—great steamers, with greenheart bows and slipways cut into their sterns, which were bound upon Antarctic whaling voyages; big steamers in distress from the storms of the roaring 'forties; game little crayfishing schooners and, now and again, big sailing ships with timber from the Baltic.

He did not care about the big Orient and P. & O. steamers, carrying to England squatters' daughters whose money might have been better spent in their own Australia. The spectacle of the big cargo steamers he found interesting but not stirring.

But the sight of a great Cape Horn sailing ship deeply moved him. They did not come often to Hobart; when one did, it was with difficulty that he could be prevailed upon to go home. He loved to go across the broad Derwent in his yacht and to lie in the sun on the cliffs at Bellerive, looking at the

loveliness of Hobart at the foot of its mountain, and at the shipping round its wharves, and to dream. He had ideas; he thought deeply. He was not content to find his ideas and to shape his actions from what he read in newspapers, heard other people say, or saw upon the screens of motion-picture theatres.

He was very restless. He loved Hobart and was profoundly moved by the grandeur of its surrounding scenery. But he wanted to see the great world outside.

One day he conceived the idea of making a film of the voyage of a Cape Horn sailing ship. He told me about it—for I was a reporter on that newspaper too—and I said it couldn't be done. How could we make a film? I asked. We had no money. We were not camera-men. We knew nothing about the production side of the film industry, and had no chance to learn. I agreed that the subject was a stirring one and that the film should be made, but I did not see how we could do it.

He said we could. He said there was a moving-picture camera on the market that was almost fool-proof. We agreed, then, that we should get one of these and practice with it the following year—which would have been 1930—shipping together in a Cape Horn sailing ship to make the picture.

Before we had a chance to buy the camera, we read a letter in the London *Daily Mail*, written by a Mr. C. J. Greene, imploring somebody to make a real sailing-ship film while the chance remained. The letter was a serious thing to us.

It meant, although probably no one would take notice of its sound sense, the idea was broadcast. We thought that we should have to set out immediately if we were not to be forestalled. We decided immediately to go.

There were many difficulties. We had only a few days to get to Wallaroo, in South Australia, to join the Finnish ship *Grace Harwah* there, loading wheat for England.

We were still without cameras, without money, without any one to back us—we knew it was hopeless to look for any—and without the slightest experience of motion-picture art.

We hurriedly gave notice to our news editor. Walker raised half the money (about fifteen hundred dollars) on an insurance policy, and I sold my home to get the other half. We ordered cameras and film to be sent to us from Sydney and picked them up in Melbourne.

Six days after we had read that letter in the London *Daily Mail*, we shipped as sailors in the *Grace Harwar* at Wallaroo.

We went aboard late at night with our cameras and film in our sea-bags. We said nothing to anybody of our intentions; we signed as sailors, to do the ship's work. We considered then that it was not the ship's business what else we might have done. We knew about sailing-ship masters and feared that if we opened our mouths about this him, other able seamen might be found and we should lose our jobs. There was also the possibility of the captain cabling to his owner and raising the question of film rights and such things, (t is the film producers' own fault that there exists a worldwide impression that the outpouring of gold unlimited is a necessity and even a pastime to any one concerned with the making of pictures ; but we were not ordinary film producers, and we had no gold.

So we joined the ship and did our work with the others, and said nothing. In the course of time the *Grace Harwar* sailed. She was a lovely full-rigged ship of 1749 tons, and ideal for our purpose. She was Clyde built, over forty years old; *she* had an open wheel, and none of those labour-saving devices of later days. She was a genuine sister of the Horn of forty years ago—one of the last full-rigged ships, if not the very last, to go round the Horn.

In Wallaroo we discharged the *Grace Harwar's* ballast that she had brought down from Wilmington, North Carolina, after discharging a cargo of Peruvian guano there towards the end of 1928. The ballast out, we took the wheat in. Half the crew ran away and others were shipped in their place. We took aboard, from the police, a curious Swedish speaking negro from the West Indies, who had deserted the Erikson bark *Penang* not long before. He was a prohibited immigrant in Australia, being black, and to avoid a five- hundred-dollar fine we had to take him with us out of the country. He had been cook on the *Penang*; we had our cook, so the negro was to be merely a passenger.

The grain loaded, the hatches battened down and breakwaters built up on them, the sails bent and the gear all clear, the water-tanks full, and the negro aboard, the food all stored, the lifeboats lashed down, the wheel gear oiled, we dropped our moorings and put out to sea. That was on 17th April 1929. It was not until 3rd September, 138 days later, that we arrived at our destination. In the interval one of us was killed; a second

went out of his mind; a third went overboard. We were short of food and the boat leaked. We tried to make Cape Town in distress, but could not. We saw black albatrosses and suffered terribly off the Horn in the dead of winter. . . .

We might have known these things would happen. We had thirteen in our crew—thirteen hands before the mast. I don't remember that we noticed it in Wallaroo before we left. We remembered about it well enough after.

We had a Frenchman, a Londoner, four Australians, and the rest were Finns—Swedish-speaking Finns, mostly from the Aland Islands, where the ship belonged. Only two of the crew had been round the Horn before—the Londoner and I. The Londoner and I had been in more ships under the Finn flag than any of the Finns aboard. He had sailed in the *Olivebank*, I in *Lawhill* and *Herzogin Cecilie*. The Finns were all first-voyage boys, some deserters from other ships, two or three members of the original crew who had joined the *Grace Harwar* in Swansea nearly two years before. The average age of our crew was about nineteen. Three had never been to sea before. But they were all fine boys.

They settled down manfully. They were strong and willing, which is a lot; there was an entire absence of that old bickering spirit which was so evident in sail's heyday, when every fo'c'sle had its boss, its bloodshed, and its undercurrent of cliques and jealousies. We had no fight the whole voyage. I have never seen a fight in a Finnish ship.

We began the voyage well. We knew that winter was coming on, so we prayed for a quick return and run round the Horn. The Horn is bad enough in summer, and we did not want to prolong our passage of the west winds getting there. In six days we had passed to the south of Tasmania. That was good. We had a strong west wind the whole time and a big sea. It was piercingly cold and the little *Grace Harwar* was inclined to throw the sea about her decks a lot. We blew out a sail or two. The first night out the mizen t'gall'nt sail blew out of its bolt-ropes, and we set no sail upon that yard thereafter because the ship had none. There were no spare t'gall'nt sails fit to stand down there. The mizen t'gall'nt yard had to go bare until a new sail was cut and sewn. That was some time.

We did not mind the cold. We did not mind the ceaseless wet at the cold wheel, the seas that slopped over us, the teeth-chattering peril of the work aloft. We laughed at the big

seas and thought it a joke when a larger one than usual fell aboard with a shock that made the whole ship tremble and threatened to do her serious damage. What did we care while the wind was fair and we came quickly towards the Horn?

From Wallaroo to Cape Horn is, roughly speaking, about six thousand miles. If we ran nine knots before the strong west winds we should make it in thirty days—say thirty-five or thirty-eight, allowing for some spells of lesser winds and maybe some days hove to when there was too much wind to use. We went that way as all sailing ships do, in the hope of getting strong west winds, in order that if we had to suffer acute discomfort, and cold and wet, and ceaseless work, at least it would not last long, and we would be quickly round. The sailing ship does not mind strong wind, as long as it is fair. We had nothing to fear from westerly gales, which would help us on ; it was the wind from the east we feared.

The wind came from the east. It hauled round to southeast and hurled itself on us with all the sting of the Antarctic ice in its frigid and unwelcome blast. We could do nothing with the strong east wind. We shortened down and hove to. This was in the southern waters of the Tasman Sea, between Tasmania and New Zealand, across which we had been making to pass to the south of New Zealand on our way to the Horn. The Tasman Sea is storm-lashed and furious in winter-time; we knew that, but we expected at least that we would have west wind.

The wind refused flatly to go back towards any point west. We held on, giving the ship the full mainsail in the hope that it would hold her head up a little, decrease her leeway, and give us some longitude towards Cape Horn. The newcomers to the sea were sick and utterly fed up with it. They wondered why, if once one ship had sailed that road and met with hell, any others were foolhardy enough to try it after.

The sea froze where it touched the steel of the bulwarks ; one of our pigs was drowned ; the rain and the sleet froze into the serving of the foot-ropes, and aloft was hell. “ It takes guts, this game, my God it does!” wrote Ronald Walker. He had guts, but he was killed afterwards. . . .

We tried our best to beat those easterly winds, hoping always that they would stop, believing that the Wind God would take pity on us, and at least let us come to the Horn, no matter what torment he wreaked on the way. But it was not fair to delay us so, with that accursed wind. The east wind

continued, with no slightest sign of ever giving up. Gale succeeded gale; constantly the open decks of the old full-rigger were awash; one had to look lively to the lifelines going to the wheel. At night the look-out men could not go to the fo'c'sle head. The seas came over there green, and if they had gone there they would have been drowned. We began to notice how short-handed we were, with six in one watch and seven in the other. . . .

In the end Captain Svensson got fed up with the east wind, and put up the helm to run for Cook Straits, which separate the two islands of New Zealand, intending to pass through that way into the South Pacific beyond if the east wind would not allow us to pass south of that Dominion. We reached Cook Straits after three weeks at sea; and then it fell calm and we couldn't get through. Four days we lay there, wallowing, stagnantly, with Mount Egmont on one hand and the rocky northern shores of the south island on the other. We were about to up helm and stand on northwards to pass right round the northern extremity of New Zealand, when a west wind came at last and saw us through.

We saw the lights of Wellington, capital of New Zealand, and reported the ship all well. The west wind kept with us for a day or two, and saw us clear of the Chatham Islands. We began to think it meant to stay, and that we could come to the Horn without further undue misery.

But then the wind faltered, and stopped again. When it returned it was from the east, with fog and rain and gale in miserable succession. Day succeeded day in sodden misery and cold gale. We went out to so many alternate watches on deck, hoping that while we slept the wind had changed, and were disappointed. We gave up hoping any more. We accepted what was in store for us with sullen indifference. Oilskins were long since useless; there was no dry spot on the ship, or dry rag. The fo'c'sle was washed out time and time again by great seas that swept joyously through the inefficient doors. When the doors were shut the atmosphere was stifling. When they were open the sea swept in. We kept them shut, preferring to die of suffocation rather than of exposure. We hardly ever had warm food. The seas put the galley fire out; and, because the water swept so incessantly across the main deck where the fresh-water pump was, we could not work the inefficient pump for fear of mingling salt water with the fresh, and went thirsty. We were cold, wet through, and hungry. There is no heating

system on a full-rigged ship; the very cockroaches and bugs in the bunks retired from active service and might have all died for all we saw of them.

I give an extract or two from poor Walker's diary scrupulously kept until the day he died, the better to describe this section of the voyage. He brought new eyes to it, and a new mind. I had been that way before, and described it before, but had not seen it as he had.

“ May 16, 29 days out [he wrote]. Looking back, those twenty-nine days seem an indeterminable age. Many strange things have happened in them. . . . Frenchman and I were sent aloft this morning, in a hard squall, which showed every sign of developing into a real Cape Horn snorter. We climbed into the shrouds at 6 a.m. in pitch darkness. It was raining steadily and big seas were coming aboard. The wind had a cold sting which gradually froze us to the marrow in spite of our heavy clothing, oilskins, and sea-boots. We were up there for nearly two hours while a cold and cheerless dawn broke over the wind-torn sea ; and we fought with the sodden sails until the work exhausted us and pained. The rain persistently drove at us, soaking our caps and oilskins ; the cold water trickled down through crevices which only water could find. Our fingers were stiff and blue with the cold, and red with blood from tears with the jagged wire gear. . . .

“At first we shivered when an icy finger of water found its way down our backs or up our sleeves, but soon we were so wet and cold that we ceased to care. Get wet and stay wet is the best policy for sailing ships. The greatest agony of mind comes when you change into comparatively dry, only to know with horrible certainty that as soon as you go on deck again everything will be sodden through once more. . . .

“ May 19, 32 days out. You stand a miserable lookout on the fo'c'sle head for hours with plenty of time for thought, but the antidote for depression lies just behind you, towering into the darkness, sweeping on and on along the rolling road, heaving and stumbling as she meets a sea, rushing on again

and on; indomitable, insuperable as fate. Great seas come up to meet the ship, thrusting at her, shouldering one another to get at her like footballers in a mad 'scrimmage.' Up and up they heave gathering for the blow. You turn to watch them.

The wind howls in your face and the sea spits at you spitefully, driving its spray above and around. A great sea, a liquid mountain of menace, hangs poised above the ship. Up, up it leaps, shouldering its smaller children aside, the splendid crest whitening where it breaks, lending a touch of colour as the plume of a warrior's helmet. Down, down, sinks the ship, shuddering already at the impending blow.

"A hundred lesser blows she has already avoided; this mighty one she cannot beat. She writhes like a living thing, in fear and trembling. She heels over heavily. She hovers frighteningly. . . . The stars shoot suddenly past the spars—not so bad, with them out!—careering madly across the sky. The ship receives the blow full, staggering at the impact. A tremor runs through the labouring hull. . . . But the shattered sea-crest has met its match. The warrior's plume has dropped; the ship rises again, tumbling hundreds of tons of roaring, fighting water from her gushing washports.

The sea sweeps her furiously end to end, murderously intent upon human prey. Baulked of that, it shifts whatever is movable, and snarls and hisses at the hatch breakwaters maddeningly intent upon breaking them down. . . .

But the ship wins. Under her load of hundreds of tons of seething water she rolls on, recovering her poise, steadying herself to meet the next onslaught, and the next, and the next after that. For forty years and more now she has been doing that. Beautiful and game old ship!

On the thirty-eighth day Walker was killed at his work in the rigging.

It was very simple. Just one of those ordinary everyday

accidents that nine hundred times kill nobody, and on the nine hundred and first wreak vengeance for their previous failings on some innocent.

We were setting the fore upper t'gall'nts'l, which had not been loosened since its getting in described in his diary. The wind, which for so long had been from something east, had at last something of west in it, and we were giving the ship a little more sail to help her on—not that the fore upper t'gall'nts'l would make much difference really, but the psychological effect was not to be scorned.

Walker went up to loose the sail with a small boy named Finila. It was a little after four o'clock in the morning, the worst time of the day. We had so few in a watch that it was bad to send two men into the rigging, but there were reasons for that. We had coffee at half-past five, and the tradition of the sea is that, if there is any work afoot and it is not finished before the coffee bells, then whatever time is taken up with finishing the work is lost. The coffee hour is not extended merely because some of it has been given up to the ship's work. A good mate will see that his watch receive their coffee-time unbroken.

That was why our second mate sent both Walker and young Finila to loose the fore upper t'gall'nt that fateful morning. It was very securely made fast, with many gaskets to stand against the Cape Horn gale; since it had been made fast it had become sodden with rain, and the canvas had swollen. Ice had formed in the gaskets, and any sailor knows that it may take an hour to get a sail loose in those conditions. With the two of them at it they managed in half an hour, and then we on deck—five of us, with the second mate—began the painful process of heaving the yard *aloft* by the capstan.

When it was half-way up, the second mate saw that a gasket was foul on the weather clew. The sail would not hoist properly. He yelled aloft to Walker, through the rain, to go out on the lower t'gall'nt yard to clear the gasket. Walker went, and cleared it. He called down to us that • everything was clear. We began to heave again ; the halliards carried away and the yard came tumbling down.

It fell on Walker beneath it, and killed him there.

We did not know that he was dead when we rushed up the mast and found him unconscious between the yards. We thought that he was merely senseless. There was no sign of

wound, save for some blood oozing slowly from his mouth. It never occurred to us that he was dead; we were too much concerned with bringing him to, and getting him to the deck that we might see the extent of his injuries, and what we could do about them. I tried to bring him to with cold water that had been brought up from the deck. I didn't know how hopeless it was; we wanted to restore him to his senses in order that he might help us with the difficult task of getting him, from high on that swinging mast, to the deck.

It was not easy to bring a senseless body down that slippery and pitching rigging.

But he did not come to. We rigged a gantline and lowered him down, gently, carefully.

When we got to the bottom Captain Svensson took one look.

He is dead," he said.

Dead! The shock was stunning. We did not—could not—believe it. Nowhere is the awfulness of death more painfully apparent than at sea. Ashore there are diversions, one forgets. There are other people to see, other people to talk to, newspapers to read, traffic to dodge. One is not missed so much. But at sea in a full-rigged ship there is only the one little band, and always the wind moans in the rigging and the sea rolls on. When one is gone no one comes to take his place; there are no diversions; nothing happens to deaden sorrow and make up for the loss of the one who is gone. . . .

We buried him from the poop next day, with the Finnish ensign at half-mast and the crew white-faced and deeply moved. I do not know anything more moving than sea-burial; not the committal of some poor corpse of a steerage passenger, from high on the steamship's promenade deck in the dead of night, lest the saloon passengers be put off their dancing for a moment, but the last sad rites over a shipmate's bier in a Cape Horn windjammer. We had all known him so well! At sea like that you see the utmost innards of a man, what he is made of. No pretence of city life, no masking of real intents and real character, will pass here—you see all. We knew poor Walker and we liked him well, and this was his end. . . .

The captain read some prayers; we sang Swedish and English hymns. There was a short address. The ship was hove to, sadly wallowing, with the moan of the wind in her rigging

now quietened by her deadened way, the surly wash of the sea about her decks now softened. . . . We carried him to the rail, tilted the hatch ; there was a dull plop and it was all over. . . .

We put the ship before the wind again and sailed on.

It was the fifty-seventh day before we got to the Horn. It was June then, and the Horn is hell in June, as Masefield says. But for us it was not so bad. We had a gale from the west, and though the sea ran huge and the cold was almost overpowering, the old ship ran on and we were glad.

We wanted to come round the Horn now more quickly than ever, that we might forget something of the tragedy of the other side of it. Death is a worrying thing at sea, especially when its cause is bad gear that might have killed another of us. At the wheel, on the lonely look-out, aloft on the yards, sleeping in the wet, cold fo'c'sle—we remembered the one who had died, turned the details of the tragedy over and over in *our* minds, until it was not good for us longer to remain in that saddening belt of the wild ocean. A boy screamed in his sleep; he had dreamed he saw Walker's wraith, coming in the fo'c'sle to call us.

The ship began to leak in the height of a gale; the pumps jammed; the water seeped in, and we could do nothing about it. Through a night of storm and snow-squall fury we were huddled on the poop, not certain that the ship would live to see the morning. When the morning came one of the boys was swept overboard by a big sea. What could we do ? Many had gone like that, and the wind ships could only run on. . . .

But the wind was a little quieter then. We did not run on, though it seemed futile to try to save him. We jammed the wheel hard down and brought her shivering and groaning into the wind. We rove off new ropes into the lifeboat tackle blocks with mad speed ; one of us was aloft in the mizen-top, seeing where the floating figure had gone. It was coming on nightfall then, with rain-squalls and gale in the offing. We saw he had grasped a lifebuoy flung to him, and still lived. But for how long?

We got the boat over and six volunteers quickly leaped into it, the mate in charge. Nobody was asked to go, nobody hung back.

We dropped astern and the boat seemed a futile thing, rising and falling in those big seas. It was queer to see the green

bottom of the old ship, when we rose on a crest, lifted almost bodily from the swirling water. When we dropped in a trough her royal yards swept wild areas through the grey sky, and we saw little else. Soon we could not see her at all, when the boat sank deep in the valleys between the huge seas. We had no idea where the boy was now. We could not see him. How could we? We could see nothing there, not even the ship. Maybe it was madness to look.

We pulled this way and that hopelessly; yet we could not go back. It began to rain heavily. None of us had oilskins. Frenchman was in his underpants, just as he had come from his bunk. (It was our watch below.) Sjoberg, from Helsingfors, had been laid up with neuralgia. But now he pulled at his oar, coatless, wet through, hungry, and tired, yet not noticing any of these things and intent only on the saving of this second life. We did not want to lose one more. One was enough to give to Cape Horn—more than enough.

The mate, at the steering oar in the stern, swept the sea with his sharp eyes this way and that. There was a chance that we could not find the ship again if the squall came down heavily and shut her out. That had happened with the Swedish bark *Staut*, in much the same circumstances. She put out a boat to save a man fallen from the mainyard, and a squall came down and she lost everybody—man overboard, those who went to rescue him, boat and everything. We remembered that. There was nothing in the boat to sustain life. We had thrown the water-casks and bread-barrel out to make room and to decrease the weight of the boat.

Then in the last moment of light we saw him! It was a sea-miracle, if ever there was one. He was only three crests away from us! We had been on the point of giving up. . . . We lay to heartily and soon had the boy back on board. We pulled him over the stern and went back to the ship, which had been watching us and now ran slowly down-wind towards us. The boy was unconscious and nearly frozen to death, but he lived. He was amongst the lucky ones. . . .

A few days afterwards we were round the Horn, and immediately the temperature rose about twenty degrees and our spirits rose with it. In reality we ran into a nasty snowstorm off the Falkland Islands which was every bit as bad as anything the Pacific side of the Horn had given us. But we were in the Atlantic then and did not mind. Blow on, old gale! We did not

mind. We knew then that we should quickly come to warmer latitudes, and south-east trades, and so to the northeast trades, the Azores, and then home. . . . But we did not count upon home too much just then. . . .

We took advantage of the Cape Horn currents to pass between the Falklands and the mainland of South America, which is an unusual way for sailing ships to take. Once past the Horn we made good progress ; it seemed that the Pacific had wreaked the ocean's wrath on us and delivered us to the Atlantic with the gruff greeting : "Here, these dogs have had enough. Treat them well."

We were glad, and as the days and the weeks slipped by, came to forget a little what had happened earlier in the voyage. But the sea was not done with us yet.

The second mate went mad with awful suddenness. We had no warning of it. We did not expect anything like that.

We knew that he had worried much over Walker's death, since he was officer of the watch. But it was not his fault. It was not any one's fault. It was just one of those terrible inexplicable things that are always happening, yet never seem to remove from this earth persons that might well be done without. In the fo'c'sle we worried much, too, but we had each other for company. There is no one more lonely than an officer of a sailing ship. We carried only two, first mate and second. They were rarely company for each other, for when one had the deck the other slept. The captain, as in the sailor's style, kept to himself, and spoke to the sailmaker for company. The mates led lonely lives, finding what companionship they could in their own minds. The result was that when something came to unhinge the mind of our second mate, there was none to see how perilously near he was to breaking down. Nobody noticed until it was too late. . . .

We had an awful time with him. About that I would have little to say. It was not his fault, poor devil. We were all very sorry for him. We had to keep constant watch on him for the rest of the voyage, lest he do himself harm. He tried to kill himself three times. It was very worrying. We tried to make for Cape Town to put him aboard some steamer we should see there in the shipping lanes, but the wind changed and we could not make Cape Town. We saw no other ships. We were 104 days at sea before we saw the sign of a steamer, and then it was only a smudge of smoke on the horizon. The sailing ship goes

her own way about the world, far from the shipping lanes and away from the busy routes of steamers. She may see other sailing ships, but rarely, until she reaches the shipping lanes of the North Atlantic, anything of steamers.

We found the south-east trades and went up the line. Now the days were pleasant and the sun shone, and flying-fish leapt in fear from the bone of foam under our forefoot. We saw some whales; one of them stayed with us three days. He was not frightened. We had no propeller nor honking engines to frighten him away. He played about us merrily, and when I tried to photograph him, blew spray on the lens.

On the hundredth day we came to the line. Here it fell calm, and we made little progress. We were lucky though; once I spent three weeks in the Atlantic doldrums, in a big four-master bound from Melbourne to St. Nazaire. In the *Grace Harwar* we were becalmed only four days, which was nothing. Then the wind came again and we sneaked slowly on.

By then the ship was very foul ; her top speed, with a strong wind, was a little more than seven knots, and more in favourable conditions. But she had not been in a dry dock for over two years, and her bottom was very foul. She had lain long months at anchorage on west coast ports, and in Luderitz Bay in south-west Africa. There are no places worse for fouling ships and fouled ships cannot sail.

Another worry now beset us. We were short of food. We had never had too much. Now as the days passed each took with it the last of some item or other of our small sea-stock—now it was the last rice, the last margarine, the last sugar, the last smoked beef, the last peas. We soon had little but some rather bad potatoes, black sugarless and milkless coffee, and a little bread. There was a small pig which we had been keeping to kill in the last emergency. Here it was. We killed it, only to find that it was diseased and could not be eaten. Maddening discovery! We ate a little, risking it, and soon became violently ill. Still we would not throw the bad carcass into the sea. We put it in a cask beneath the fo'c'sle head, fearful to throw it overboard lest we were left with nothing at all.

It was now imperative that we should see a steamer quickly and get some food. We saw no steamers for a week, though we were creeping steadily into the North Atlantic, which was their stronghold. Then we saw a few; a big passenger ship going

down to Buenos Aires in the early morning mist. I do not believe a soul on that ship saw us. She was a long way away, and she did not come closer. We saw others later and ran up signal flags asking them to stop. They took no notice. They could not see our signal flags, lying stagnant in the calm. We had no other means of attracting their attention.

It was not until four months had passed from the beginning of our voyage that we received some food. It was on the night of the 123rd day at sea when the Scots steamer *Orange Leaf*, bound to Trinidad, came into sight. We signalled her with a flash-lamp the captain had, and she stopped, telling us to put out a boat and come across. We put out the boat and pulled over about half a mile of greasily heaving sea to where she was hove to.

Being a Scotsman, she gave all she had.

The name of the *Orange Leaf* was indeed blessed amongst us.

She gave us cases of smoked beef, half a cow from her refrigerator, a case of milk, flour, and fresh vegetables, together with a sack of sugar and some other things. She gave us tobacco, but it was real strong sea-stuff—plugs—and our young boys could not smoke it because it was too strong.

A day or so after meeting the *Orange Leaf* we came past the Azores, still with winds that were sometimes good and sometimes baffling. Fifteen days after that meeting we lay at anchor in Queenstown Harbour, Ireland. I was never more pleased to come to a voyage end.

At last I could send a cable to poor Walker's parents and let them know their son was dead. He had been dead three months and more then—a hundred days—and they did not know anything about it. But the newspapers got the story home to Australia quicker than I could, and the first his parents knew of it was a grim paragraph in a paper.

From Queenstown we towed round to Glasgow, and there I left. No one in the ship went back to her. Another crew of young boys came across from Finland, sent by the owner there, and with them a young man as master who had been with me in the *Lawhill* as able seaman eight years before.

The grain was discharged, the ship went down to the Bristol Channel, and loaded coal for La Guaira, in British Guiana. She had reached that port after a wild passage of some forty-five days, intending then to go on through Panama to

Peru for guano, or across the South Atlantic and so to Australia for grain. But world freight markets collapsed, and all that she could do was to return again to Mariehamn, Finland, in ballast, there to lie in wait at anchorage, with only a watchman aboard, for the upward trend in Australian grain freights or a good offer from the break-up yards—and the end.

The real sea film was made. That part of the adventure was satisfactory. The 6000 feet of negative developed with 98 per cent, perfection, which was an act of God in no way due to me, except that my ignorance—not always a bad thing, at least in comparison with a little knowledge—helped me. When Ronald died we had exposed some 6000 feet of film. I was half inclined to throw cameras and film over the side there and then. What did I know about them? How could I carry on? I didn't even know how to load the cameras.

But I went on, not with hope, but because it seemed the only thing to do. There was no sense in giving in without a trial. I taught myself to load the magazines, using for the first few a red light (which would have spoiled panchromatic film) made up from folds of red bunting lashed round a hurricane lamp. I had an idea of the different exposures necessary in the various lights, from watching Walker at work. I could guess what would make a good picture. The ship helped me in that respect ; wherever I pointed the camera I could not help but have perfect composition. All her angles were lovely ; every scene she showed was beautiful. The sea helped me with the light. It was generally good.

So I went on with the job for a hundred days, not knowing even whether the cameras were working properly, half afraid that they were not, afraid the film wasn't keeping (much of it was panchromatic and not guaranteed), not a laboratory or dark room did we have, no cool film tanks for the tropics.

When at last I reached Glasgow I had half a mind to throw the film off the dock. We went ashore the first night and found that the talkies had come. The days of silent film, which were standard when the *Grace Harwar* sailed, were dead. The negative I had was silent. I didn't know then how much of sound could be faked. I had spent all I had and all that I could borrow; Walker had risked everything and lost his life. I had no idea what the film would be like and had pretty well given it up for a total loss when Walker had died. I had never counted on its being good.

I knew that I had 250 dollars to collect from a publisher in London: this amount would just pay for the development of the negative. But if I had the negative developed I would be broke. I had no job. The film was probably no good. What then? There was nowhere else to get any money.

I risked it. I spent the 250 dollars, and had the negative developed. It would cost, I was told, another 500 dollars for a print. I did not have the 500 dollars and I never saw the print. The negative, however, was good ; I set about the forlorn task of trying to interest some one in it, of getting some producing firm to make, from that basis, the final picture—the picture that Ronald Walker and I had set out to make. It was to be a simple real picture of sailing ships and the sea, without story, without sex, without fake ; we had always thought the subject lovely and stirring enough without false additions. There are enough pictures faked.

That picture was never made! I hawked the film about in London for months, up and down Wardour Street, in Soho, the heart of London's executive filmland.

There was, I found, no machinery for the marketing of such a film as I had brought. Film-producing concerns did not want outsiders—and amateurs at that—to *bring them in* completed negatives, no matter how good they might be. They wanted to make them for themselves, no matter how bad they might be.

I tramped up and down in Wardour Street in dejection. I thought of going to America, but did not have the funds. There was a lot of gush in the British newspapers about the excellence, the world-dominating chance, of British films. I learnt nothing to impress me with the truth of these optimistic statements. I learnt only how the producing companies feared the unusual and what had not been tried before; how deep-rooted was their terror of anything that did not happen to be the fashion of the moment. Crime films? If one company made a crime film that succeeded, then they all rushed to make similar "masterpieces" that differed so little that the public soon tired of them. Historical plots? Newspaper heroes? We have seen them all. ... I suppose that American producers aren't much better, but, from a showman's point of view, they turn out a better job. . . .

My adventures in trying to dispose of the film were more harrowing than those of the *Grace Harzvar* in getting it.

I got into the hands of some promoters who talked a lot, said little, had a huge office, and never did anything. They said they were going to exploit the film. They made a print ; at last I saw what Walker and I had done. Here was the raw material for a real film! But no one could see it. By the grace of God we had fluked a grand sea picture; by the stupidity of man the public never saw it.

After a while my promoters had a film trade row. They split. My film went with half of them. I lost track of them for a while. It didn't matter much ; I was pretty well fed up by then. I had no capital for producing the film by myself, and had no way of getting any. I knew nobody in the film world. . . .

The film was aground in Wardour Street, and it didn't look as if it would ever be floated again.

But at last a British firm did become interested in it. They liked the negative and appreciated the beauty of the sea part. They acquired it, and set about the discovery of some way of making it into what they considered to be a box-office picture. They brought England's poet laureate, John Masefield, to their studio to see the film, and he was much impressed. It would have fitted splendidly into a film version of his famous "Dauber."

After a long time they hit upon a story. They made interior sets of fo'c'sle and cabin in their studios. Here the dialogue sequences were made. They did not do so bad a job. They called the resultant film—one-third real and two-thirds fake—*Windjammer*. The director, who had never heard of the film until it was brought to him, put his name in letters a yard high on a title-sheet to himself ; Walker's name, incorrectly initialled, was grouped with mine, in very small letters, together with the men who had done the studio photography, as the "photographers" on a title-sheet along with all those other persons who, for some mysterious reason, had to be given "credits" Well, the director could have his glory. . . .

Afterwards the film was sent out to the movie houses, many of whose managers were afraid to book it because it had no theme song, and there was no woman in the story.

