

# The CASTAWAYS WHO FOUND A SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON

**TWICE Circumnavigating the Globe, Captain Adams, Aboard a Whaler, Once Was Entertained at a Mutineers' Retreat and Later Fared Royally as Guest of the Sole Owner of an Antipodean Island Upon Which His Bark Was Wrecked**

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**C**APTAIN CHARLES ADAMS, author of the appended story, is a veteran mariner of the days when full rigged ships lured youths to enlist, perhaps as runaways, in pursuit of romance and adventure on the Seven Seas. In 1860, when he was "quite a wild young fellow" (to quote him), he enlisted in the English navy, where he chafed under strict discipline until he shipped as apprentice aboard the Victory for an eighteen month voyage to China. For a time he was aboard the packet Hudson, "one of the worst of the Western ocean fleet." He served, too, in the United States navy and was paid off at the Charlestown Navy Yard from the double ender Oleolia in 1865. Several years following found him engaged in whaling and aboard coasters off New Zealand and Australia. In 1872 he retired to the less hazardous berth of captain of a Delaware River excursion vessel, the Creedmore Cutter, and later he was quartermaster aboard the Hudson and the Knickerbocker, of the old Cromwell line. Captain Adams now makes his home in Plattsmouth, Neb.

BY CAPTAIN CHARLES ADAMS.

It was in the '60's that I shipped in the New Bedford whaling bark Othello, Captain Johnson, for a two years' whaling voyage. She swung five boats and I was boat steerer for the second mate. It was on a Monday morning that we were towed down to the iron pot buoy, at the mouth of the harbor, and, having a good slant of wind, we dropped the tug and made sail.

We were to cruise off the northeast coast of New Zealand, and a few weeks before we arrived all hands were getting things in shape, taking the turns out of the ropes, coiling them in the tubs and getting lances and harpoons sharpened. At last everything was ready and shipshape to lower at the first cry of whales.

Our captain had just taken the sights on a Sunday afternoon and was closing his day's work when the masthead lookout gave us the welcome cry:—

"Ah, blow; there she whitewaters; there goes flukes!"

We boat steerers were the first in the boats and the different crews were soon tumbling in after us. The chatter of the pulleys in the davits told of the lowering of the little fleet of double enders, and we were up stick and started to sail down on him, the other boats doing the same.

The ship keepers had a pointer, a large hoop covered with canvas, with which the lookout kept pointing where the whale was. By watching this pointer it was no trick for us to keep the run of the whale until we were close enough to see him as we rode up on the waves.

As this was our first whale, we were all doing our best to be the first boat to fasten to him. You can bet every man Jack was helping to urge his boat along by all the tricks known to sailors. We had out our paddles as well as the sail, and our mate was dashing water on the canvas to make the sail stiff as a board and not spill out any of the breeze. The crew bent in unison as they drove their paddles into the water to give the boat greater headway. In spite of this one of the other boats drew away from us and I had to call out soon after:—

"The first mate's fast, sir!"

I had seen his boat steerer stand up and dart his iron into the whale's side. I glanced back at the ship as I heard a faint cry that I took for a cheer for the victors, but I saw the pointer was directing us in another quarter.

"There must be more whales than one," I said, as I looked ahead, but could not see what they were pointing at.

Suddenly there was a tremendous rush of water only a few boats' lengths ahead and a monster head of a whale shot up out of the water. Several of our crew yelled at once that he was coming our way. We were all on our feet in a moment and expected to be engulfed in the cavernous mouth.

Just then the boat was swung clear by a mighty sweep of the steer oar, in the hands of our bucko mate. I held my iron poised as the rushing bulk of the whale sheered past and let him have it—bing! bing! bing!—two iron whips struck him fair and square for a good hold. As the line flew out all hands peaked oars and faced the bow as away we flew in the wake of the giant mammal.

"He is a big fellow, no mistake," I said in a low voice to the second mate, Mr. Brown, as we changed ends. Mr. Brown clasped my hand as he passed me, spear in hand, and with a broad, confident smile, answered:—

"Now see what I can do."

We were "carrying the mail," as the saying goes, with the stroke oarsman watching the line, as the whale was running deep. All we could see was the wake as he flew along. It must have been all of an hour, going at the rate of twenty knots an hour, before he let up, threw up his flukes and sounded.

One tub and a half out in a jiffy! Then he slackened up somewhere far beneath the surface, and we commenced to haul line, as it came flaking up on the top of the rolling waves. It was not long before he broke water a ship's length to windward. Mr. Brown called out at the same time:—

"Haul line, boys, haul! Give me a chance to lance him."

I tell you it was tough hauling. By degrees we got within ten feet of him at last, and before he could gather headway again the whiz of the lance went past my ear and struck home. The next minute the whale spouted blood. The mate had reached his life with one thrust.

## Death of the Whale.

With a cheer for our mate we gave the whale plenty of line to go into his death flurries. We were not long in getting a tow line on his flukes, and then we sat down to rest, open the lantern keg and have our supper.

side the ship and we looked around for the other whale, but they had lost him. The line had become fouled and they had to cut it, so we were the "first to grease the decks" and enjoy the honors that went with the victory.

After a cruise of five months we sailed for Norfolk Island, as we needed potatoes, onions and fresh vegetables so we would not get the scurvy from eating too much "salt horse." It was a fine sight to see land again, and one of the toughest of the crew, who was standing beside me looking over the side as the island came in view, remarked what a pretty picture it was. That struck me as strange for a man like that to make a remark about pretty scenery.

Norfolk Island at this time was inhabited by descendants of the mutineers of the ship Bounty, and when I got ashore I stopped at the house of a man named Adams, a great grandson of the boatswain's mate of that ill fated ship. It was very interesting to sit in that comfortable house, my first night ashore, and hear the story as it had been handed down from generation to generation. He told us the story, as you have probably read of elsewhere, how the ship Bounty came out to the South Sea Islands to get the bread fruit trees and bring specimens of them to the West Indies to transplant.

After a stay at Tahiti the crew was so attracted by the hospitality and the beauty of the native women and the ease with which a living could be had by simply taking the bread fruit off the trees that they could not stand the harsh discipline of a British naval ship

of those days, and they mutinied. Placing those of the crew that refused to mutiny in an open boat, they sailed back to their Garden of Eden once more. Realizing they would be caught there, they took native wives and sailed away into the unknown, until they finally landed on their island, where the ship was burned.

It was simply hell till all the white men but Adams were dead, through murder, suicide and drink. Old Jack Adams had seen the light of religion and in some mysterious way the ship's Bible had been saved. He got all hands to read the Bible and the children of the mutineers were brought up in the strictest manner.

It was a great day when, some years after, the world was startled to learn that an American whaling ship, the Topaz, had discovered an island in the Pacific where the natives spoke English. It was laughed at abroad as a Yankee sailor's yarn, but it was true, nevertheless. They had discovered the descendants of the mutineers on that far off island in the Pacific.

That was the substance of the story, but there was a great deal more of it, of course, in the telling, and I had to laugh at old Adams, who was telling us the tale, when he complained that it was a long time to talk and a short one to smoke when you are the talker.

We had a week's run ashore and Bessie, the daughter, took me all over the island, which is very fertile. The young men whale off shore and raise cattle on shore. They come out to the ship and take you ashore, as none can land as they do, through the heavy surf that is always running on the beach.

Before we left we went egg hunting on the small islands which abound there, and obtained nearly a boatful of all kinds of guilts, some Cape pigeon and the king of the sea, the albatross. At last we squared away for the Chatham Islands, where we arrived early one morning. As you come in sight of Pitts Straight there is a large rock, standing well out in the ocean, and if you did not know it was rock you would swear it was a sail.

We caught fine whales on this leg of our cruise, and the old man was well pleased with the voyage so far. As we came abreast of Pitts Island we dipped our flag three times. This was a signal that our captain wished to speak with the sole owner of this island, a Mr. Hunt. We backed our mainyard and hove to. It was not long before a whale boat shot out of the cove where his boat house was.

We could see his home standing well up on the hill. It was a one story house with a thatched roof, and the group of outbuildings made it look like quite a little settlement. He was a short, stout man, about sixty years old, as near as I could judge, when I saw him come alongside in his boat, that was swiftly rowed by two Maoris, as natives there are named.

## The Captain's Friend.

We heaved him a line and they pulled the boat up to our ship. It seemed that our captain was well acquainted with him, as he grasped his hand and said:—

"Well, well, old boy; how are you anyway? How are you getting along and how is the missus?"

His son had also come along in the boat and I struck

up a conversation with him. My, but he was a powerful young man!

I looked ashore and little did I think I would be on that island for nearly two years.

We had gotten our anchor over the bows and the cable rigged for anchoring, and then filled away and stood in behind a point of land, where we would be safe as long as a norther did not come up.

"Stand by your anchor and take in sail," came the order from the mate, and we were soon riding at our anchor with all sails furled. Those were the lads that could handle a ship. The old man and Mr. Hunt went ashore while we got our fishing lines out. I never saw so many fish as were in that bay. We must have caught more than a hundred.

While we were enjoying our supper of fried fish we noticed that the wind was rising, and when the captain came aboard, about midnight, it was hauling around to the most dangerous quarter for us—the north. The glass was going down, so we dropped our port anchor, giving it seventy-five fathoms.

You can imagine the position we were in, with our stern toward the beach and the sea rising fast. In fact, we were on a lee shore. All hands had come up on deck and were standing by, with anxious faces.

them. I saw these waves were carrying tons of sand as they rolled up on the beach, and they broke with a deafening roar.

It was midnight as we sat around the large fire that had been built, when the port cable parted and the ship rose up like a frightened horse broke loose and slowly swung broadside to the beach. There was a tremendous smashing and cracking as the old bark piled up on the beach, and in an hour the high seas made kindling wood of her timbers.

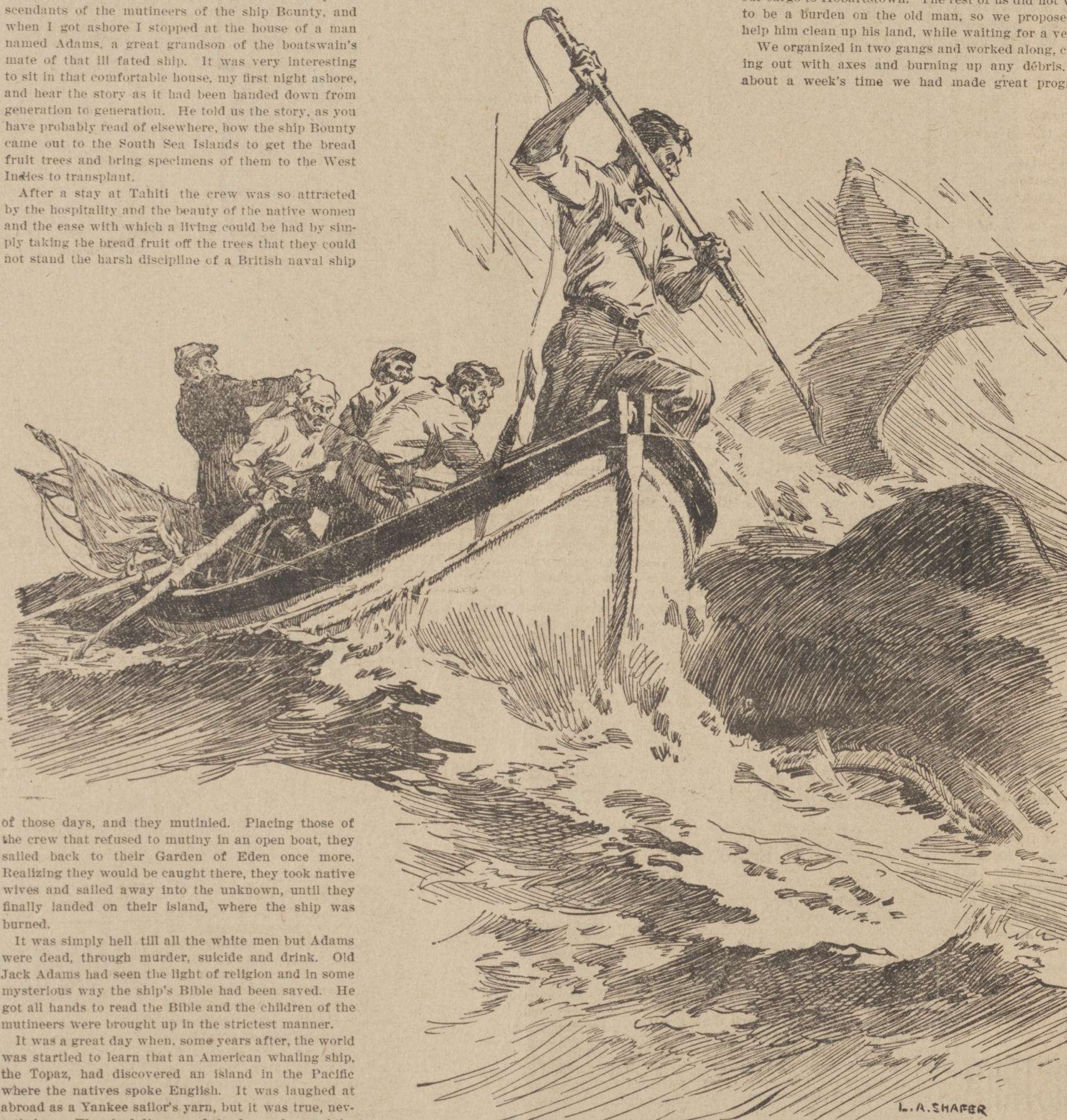
Tired out, we all lay down and slept but the captain. Next morning we were up early and started in to save all we could of our old ship, and hauled the spars and all we could get up on the beach for future use.

Mr. Hunt sent us food and our cook soon had our breakfast ready. It was the finest meal I have tasted—so it seemed to me, after what I had been through.

It was a week before we had all we could save stored, with sails covering it. Most of the oil we were able to handle very easily in the barrels, but the rigging took some time and brains to get on the upper part of the beach.

Then we marched to Mr. Hunt's house and were received with much kindness by his wife. The captain obtained a boat from Mr. Hunt, and the mate with five of the crew started for the main island, fifteen miles away, to try to get another vessel to take us and our cargo to Hobartstown. The rest of us did not want to be a burden on the old man, so we proposed to help him clean up his land, while waiting for a vessel.

We organized in two gangs and worked along, clearing out with axes and burning up any debris. In about a week's time we had made great progress.



"I Held My Iron Poised as the Rushing Bulk of the Whale Sheered Past and Let Him Have It—Bing!"

We watched the old hooker ride out the night in safety. Seven bell breakfast and then we started in to do all we could to save the ship. We backed up the cable to the foremast, as the jumping and rolling of the ship had loosened the windlass.

The royal yards and topgallant masts with yards were sent down, and it commenced to look like the end of things when we started to take green seas over the bows. They must have thought so ashore, as they built a signal fire on the beach, in case of emergency, and we could see Mr. Hunt and his men waiting for the end to come.

Eight bells found us tossing like a cork on the waves. Everything that was loose was washing around the decks. The morning wore away with us all clinging to the shrouds, and at noon we had a bite to eat—cold salt beef and hardtack, as the cook could not get a fire in the galley.

A snap and a surge and our starboard cable had parted. Only the port anchor holding us now off the shore. The captain ordered a ten barrel cask to be brought on deck and a small line fastened to it. Then we heaved it over the side. I knew the end had come now and we were going to be put ashore for safety.

Mr. Hunt and his fellows were waiting for the cask to come ashore, and I tell you they had a hard time to reach it. It would be tossed up on the beach and then the undertow would drag it back again. At last we saw them get it and take the line in. On top of a hill back of them was a huge blue gum tree, and after hauling the small hawser ashore, they made it fast, with a running line, to the tree. All was now ready for the crew to be hauled ashore by the breeches buoy.

It was getting dark when the first man was sent over the watery route to the shore and in half an hour all were on the beach, with the old man coming last. I shall never forget that little ocean trip ashore. There were five calls of breakers, with our feet just above

the mate succeeded in chartering a schooner, and came back to carry us all away. Mr. Hunt offered me and a man named George £3 a month to stay and help him, and we decided to accept it.

After loading the schooner our captain released us and gave us what pay was coming to us. We shook hands all around, and then as the ship went out we watched her until she dropped below the horizon.

## A Swiss Family Robinson.

Mr. Hunt and his family lived the lives of the Swiss Family Robinson. He owned fifty-two thousand acres as the crow flies under a patent from the English government, and surveyed by engineers who had come over from Auckland, and the larger part of it he bought for a good gun and some tobacco, which was the price demanded for it by the native chief who owned it.

He owned at that time more than a hundred thousand sheep, five hundred head of cattle and horses, also a large quantity of pigs. Some of these last got loose when he first brought them to the island and there were lots of wild pigs, also fowls and turkeys, which had wandered from his flocks.

Do not envy him his fortune, for you will understand his sorrow and why he gave us such aid when we were shipwrecked. His son and daughter were lost at sea when he sent them on a journey to Auckland to be educated. I can picture the inside of that old home now. It was so cozy, with the four bedrooms at the rear end, the parlor and the dining room, and then the long living room with no carpet but the floor, white as a bound's tooth.

In this room was a long, plain table, with benches instead of chairs. What cooking! And how hearty were our appetites! I can remember being out in the open all day and then returning to this home to find a huge baron of beef or shoulder of mutton, flanked with large brown potatoes, and then the best roly-poly pudding ever. How my mouth did water!

Then the rainy days. We would grind wheat out

in the wheat house in a large mill that would hold a bushel of wheat. It took two to turn and one to sift, and the big son, my shipmate and myself would put in many days at it, singing while we ground.

The first year was uneventful except for the landing of a negro, who was cook on a New Bedford whaler. He had consumption. The captain offered to pay Mr. Hunt well for the sailor's keep as long as the poor fellow lasted, which would not be long. Mr. Hunt gave him a nice, comfortable room, and he lived there for five months.

It was at Sunday dinner that I was asked to call him, and I went in his room. He had his back turned to me, and I gave him a push to wake him up, when he fell out of the chair. I saw that he had reached his last port. I returned to the dining room, and simply said he did not want anything now. I thought it would be better to tell them after they had their dinner.

A month after his death I learned that my shipmate had asked for the room this man died in, as he was, like all sailors, always wanting to change. He asked me to go in there with him, as it was detached from the house and we could smoke, read and talk as late as we liked without disturbing the old folk.

After a thorough cleaning we moved our things in there and made it quite cozy. We had all the candles we wanted to burn, as we made them out of mutton tallow in the winter evenings.

The first night we slept there a curious thing happened, which to this day I cannot understand. We had stopped reading and blown out the light. Our bunks were opposite each other. I had just fallen asleep when I felt as though there was some third person present. I awoke and listened. There was a sound as though a bird was imprisoned in the room and wanted to get out. I could hear a fluttering, and lay motionless. Then I rose and lit a candle.

I was surprised to find my companion awake, and he told me he had heard the same thing.

"I searched all over the room," he said, "and I could not find anything."

We talked about it for awhile and then blew out the light, and sure enough it started again.

Getting kind of leary over it, we left the light lit and were not disturbed again.

"I think it was the coon's spirit," laughed my bunkie the next day when it was daylight, "and who can find a coon's spirit in the night time?"

The Mary Jane, a fore-and-after, came in with a small cargo and a smaller crew, and the captain made us such a good offer to sail away with him that we bid all hands goodbye and sailed away from what had been the pleasantest home for two years that I had known since boyhood.

Mr. Hunt paid us each £60, and that with the £20 our captain had given us made a tidy sum. It was quite a wrench for the old man to have us go, but he nodded his head when we explained we wanted to see our homes once more.

## In a New Zealand Port.

In six days we had arrived at Christchurch, New Zealand, and went to a sailors' boarding house and put our things in care of the boarding boss. Then we went out for a new outfit of clothes, and for a week we idled about the town, until we got sick of it and decided to take passage home.

We saw a great many ships at anchor, but when we inquired about passage we found they had no crews, as the wages were so high for harvest hands the crews had deserted and gone up country to the farmers.

At supper time, when we heard the boarders talking about which big wages were paid, we finally decided to start inland ourselves. Banking all our money except what we needed for expenses, we joined a gang of five and hired out to a Scotchman to shear, at twenty-one shillings a hundred, five thousand sheep.

We worked all through that season of harvest and shearing until we had forty pounds more added to each of our bank accounts.

"Better get back before the rush," I said to my side-partner, and in a few days we were in Christchurch again.

The men were already filling up the shipping offices and a dozen ships were ready to sail. I found one ship, named the Glenmark, was slated to sail and was short a second mate and four A. B.'s. The captain was in the shipping office when I entered. He looked like a jovial sort of man, a typical Britisher, and I explained I would take the berth of second mate if wages were right.

"We are paying eighty pounds for second mate for the run to London," he explained, "and fifty for A. B.'s."

"All right, when do you sail?"

"Why, as soon as I get my men, which I hope to do to-day. If so, we start in the morning."

I signed as second mate and my friend as A. B. He asked if we wanted any advance on our money and we told him we had plenty.

"Get your dunnage aboard some time to-day."

At last we had signed articles to start back. We got our stuff from the boarding boss and by supper time we were aboard ship.

Twice around the world I never saw a ship that equalled this one. She "smoked" them all. She carried twenty-six able seamen, two boatswains, three mates, carpenter, sail maker and four apprentices. She was a full rigged ship, six topsails, six topgallant and rigged like a man of war, double shrouded and back stayed.

The officers' quarters were in a house on deck and the cabin was fitted out for the passenger trade. Her cargo was wood and cork gum. Her painted ports made her look like a line of battle ship. It was some relief to find the mate a perfect gentleman, and we had quite a long talk, after he showed me my quarters, and put me up to the ways of the captain.

"She is a splendid sea boat," he added, as he walked away to receive some ladies who were coming aboard as passengers.

The prospect of a voyage in such company was a pleasant one after the rough sailing I had been doing for many years.

After early morning breakfast the cry went through the ship, "Ship windlass brakes and heave away!"

With the old chanty song of

"Schwanador, I love you daughter," the crew merrily shook her up and down as they walked the cable in, with a musical clank, clank, clank.

"The chain is up and down, sir!" I sang out.

"Send some men up to loosen topsails, drop your fore-and-aft mainmast; have a man at the wheel, then heave away!" the skipper bawled back at me.

In an hour we were well out, with sails set and a good slant of wind running our course, two points free, and all hands getting anchor on the beams. The captain was watching how I handled the men and seemed satisfied that I knew my business.

"Stow down cable and set everything is fast," he said, "and have the decks cleaned up."

Then he left me in charge of the ship and went below. At eight he is, four A. B.'s, watches were picked, port watch sent to supper and the starboard watch on deck.

I walked over to where my old shipmate was standing, near the break of the poop deck, and put my hand on his shoulder.

"At last we are homeward bound," I said.

"Yes," he answered slowly, "but I have been wondering when we left that dear old island whether we were wise or not. It was a good home to us, every one treated us kindly, but it is so late now, it's gone down back over there." He was pointing to the horizon line.