

A PERSON OF SOME IMPORTANCE

By LLOYD OSBOURNE

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"Here's some more," said Coleman cheerfully, indicating Matt. "He's going with you, and when may be he coming aboard? He's a south sea captain like yourself and has lost his ship."

"Ship? Vat ship?" inquired Schwartz, awakening to interest.

"The topsail schooner North Star," said Matt in a shiver of expectation and hope.

"He's stuck here without a cent," put in Coleman, "and it don't matter to him much where you land him as long as it is something dry, with a palm tree on it and cold missionary on the seaboard."

"They all laughed at this, and then Schwartz said, 'I wasn't meaning to stop anywhere this side of the Solomons, but he can come; he can come.' Laying his hand on Matt's shoulder, he added: 'Old south sea captains should stand together. You'd have done the same for me, and dat is all there is to it.'"

"His wife's along," interjected Coleman, winking at Matt. "and a corking young woman she is too. Sings splendid and plays the mandolin, and it will be dandy of a moonlight night to sit on the poop and hear her."

"You got a wife?" asked the captain, apparently much pleased. "Yes, but dat will be fine! Four, she is!"

"Twenty-three," replied Matt. Schwartz looked happier than ever.

"You come on to Malaita," he said. "Me, I am married, too, and got two little babies, so high—everything fine, fine, but my wife she is very lonesome for white society. I think she jump for joy to see another young white lady. And I'll get you a good possession on the plantation or in the company's store."

Then nothing would satisfy Schwartz but that he should return with Matt and be present when the great news was broken to Chris. Saying goodby to Coleman, they started walking arm in arm, like a pair of cronies; for the Esmeralda was to sail the next day, and Schwartz had promised him the owner's cabin, as well as inviting him and Chris to dine on board that very night.

By way of celebration Matt bought a bunch of roses and a box of candy, and it was in this gala fashion and with overflowing spirits that he mounted the stairs of No. 7 and knocked at Chris' door.

"Shake hands with the best and kindest fellow in the world," he exclaimed as she shrank at the sight of a stranger. "Chris, this is Captain Schwartz of the schooner Esmeralda, who has dropped from heaven to rescue us."

"Dis is the first time I was ever reported from heaven," said Schwartz, laughing exultantly. "Delighted to meet you, Mrs. Broughton. No, thank you, I will not sit down. I weaved merely to give my invitation in person and extend the courtesies of my ship to so charming a lady."

"The captain wants us to dine on board tonight," Matt explained, "and tomorrow we sail with him to the islands! Just think of it, Chris—we're sailing tomorrow, actually sailing tomorrow!"

"Anywhere you like, old chap," put in Schwartz royally, "though if you will listen to me, Mrs. Broughton, you will go on to Malaita, where my wife is, and the captain can get a good possession."

"And we're to have the owner's cabin, Chris," cried Matt. "Did you ever hear the like of that! Isn't that kind, though? Isn't that wonderful! Isn't that dropping from heaven!"

Chris, now excited too, admitted that it was, and with shining eyes regarded the man to whom they owed so much. They took a street car to the waterfront, where they walked along on foot until they reached the wharf where the Esmeralda was lying. In contrast with the towering clipper ships all about her the Esmeralda appeared to be a toy, and so diminutive that they had to descend to her deck by a ladder. She was a typical south sea schooner, built on sharp and yacht-like lines and heavily sparred for her size.

In the little main cabin they were made acquainted with Mr. Brandels, the mate, who was making up his accounts at the table, with small piles of gold and silver coins stacked on the various bills. Mr. Brandels was a very fair, irritable looking man of fifty or so, with a long moustache, who spoke no English, and shook hands solemnly at his superior's bidding.

"A good chap," said Captain Schwartz, smiling, laying his hand on the mate's shoulder. "Reads books—all the time he reads books—and never talks except to contradict you, and say you are a liar on page 73, or a fool on page 203. Some day I'll throw him overboard and shoot his books after him and say: 'Go and prove it to the fiend!'"

Beyond the captain's, and reached by a narrow passageway, was the "owner's cabin"—another cubical with barely room for a couple of bunks, superimposed.

"This is where you will live," said the captain to Chris, who was regarding everything with much curiosity. "And if you wish to do any shopping, I hope you will not forget our old establishment, peevishness!" As he spoke he opened the door opposite and ushered her into the trade room, a veritable floating shop, with a counter and shelves, scales and primitive show-cases. It contained everything under the sun, from brass wedding rings, cheap watches, tools of all kinds, jewelry and dials for firelock muskets, to boat anchors, kegs of dynamite, barrels of beef and pork, and innumerable bolts of gaily printed cottons.

"But what do you want with all those things?" asked Chris, to whom a sea shop was a novelty.

"Sell them to the noble savage at 300 per cent profit," returned Schwartz, laughing.

"But what are those guns over there for in the rack?"

"To shoot him if he ain't satisfied. They are a tricky lot, Mrs. Broughton, and, like all customers, are ready to beat you down, only they do it with a club."

Chris shrank a little closer to Matt, who reassured her by reminding that their islands would not be like that.

"You're never told me where you want to go," put in Schwartz. "Vare is that delightful place so different from the Solomons?"

"Really, captain, I don't want to take you out of your course," returned Matt seriously. "The Gilbert Islands are in your way. Drop us there anywhere. The Tokelaus would suit me best."

"The Tokelaus? Vare is dem?"

"Well, the Union Islands—to call them the name they have on most charts."

"The Union Islands! Vare, I know the Union Islands. A little south, but what's that? Old south sea captains should stand together—that's what I say!"

"Oh, captain, I'll never be able to thank you enough!"

"Dat's all foolishness, Broughton. You would do the same for me."

CHAPTER XIV. A Startling Discovery. LITTLE days had passed since the Golden Gate and with three toots of farewell left them to shift for themselves—ten days of heavenly peace, with the sails scarcely touched and rustling softly before an unfurling breeze. In all there were seven men forward, who might have been seven authors, from the assiduous way they read—grave, oldish men for the most part, always glued to books under that tarpaulin in the waist. Herman was the only youth among them—tall, white-blond Herman, who tried to make friends with the passengers till he was squelched by the mate.

Schwartz, though less of a reader than Brandels or the others, very soon ran dry as a conversationalist. He became bottled up and uncommunicative, spending hours at a time in his cabin or walking up and down the poop in a brown, study none dared to disturb. This was the only prerogative of a captain that he treated himself to, beyond taking his place at the head of the table. Mr. Brandels took all the observations, gave all the orders, shortened sail or ran up kites without even going through the form of consulting his superior. He was the virtual commander of the ship and made very little pretense that he was not. Matt noted that Schwartz stood no watch, but allowed his to be taken by the second mate, a ponderous individual of sixty, with white side whiskers, who was called Krantz and berthed forward with the men.

This familiarity between officers and men was new to Matt. Mr. Brandels was not above mixing with them under the tarpaulin and adding his cigar and book to that, sprawling circle. Matt had to admit that the mate did not appear to lose caste in consequence. On the contrary, he was treated with great respect, and Herman in particular never failed to spring up at his approach.

The two Japanese, Yonida, the steward, and Fusi, the cook, were not behindhand, either, as readers.

An indefinable suspicion was beginning to creep into Matt's mind that there was something wrong with the ship. The transformation of Schwartz from an amiable, talkative, friendly little man into the taciturn creature who paced the poop or wrote for hours in his cabin struck oddly on Matt's attention.

The gruff mate was gruffer than ever and showed an increasing disinclination to let Matt see the chart as the vessel's course was plotted from day to day. And these white and whiskered patriarchs? Was it a foating old men's bazaar at what?

The humorous view with which these things were at first regarded changed imperceptibly as time wore on. What was this strange Schwartz and this strange Brandels, and what had been the secret of the former's impulsive good will in San Francisco? Nothing new was heard of old south sea captains standing together. The amazing fact dawned on Matt that Schwartz was no seaman at all, but a landman masquerading as the master of the vessel. Was it possible that they were prisoners on this singular ship—comfortable, well fed, politely treated prisoners?

To increase Matt's misgivings, Chris, who was a lighter sleeper than himself, had been hearing "noises" in the middle of the night. She described them as "funny, snapping sounds" that commenced after Schwartz had passed their door and looked in, as though to assure himself that they were asleep. She was so positive of this that Matt determined to stay awake one night and see and hear for himself. If it were fancy on Chris' part the sooner she was undeceived the better, for she was nervous and frightened, and had moments of passionately wishing they had never set foot on the Esmeralda.

Midnight struck—eight bells. Half after midnight—one bell. One o'clock—two bells. Half after 1—three bells. He grew drowsier and drowsier. Suddenly Chris clutched him.

"He's coming," she whispered. "Matt, he's coming through the door!"

Matt held his breath. Schwartz was tiptoeing past their door. No, not past it, for the man stopped on his way and cast a quick glance within. He was in his pajamas. His face was a study of furtiveness and caution. Then he tiptoed on and was seen no more.

"Didn't I tell you?" murmured Chris. "In a moment the noises will begin."

"Sh-h-h!" returned Matt. "Sh-h-h!" It was more than a moment, however, before the quiet was disturbed.

"There, there!" exclaimed Chris. A peculiar jarring sound came

CHAPTER XV. Danger Above and Below. IT was difficult, once the Esmeralda had been revealed in her true character, to maintain the fiction of unconcern. But it was policy to do so, lest—something worse might befall Matt and Chris were generously friendly to the careworn captain, and to the sulky, sardonic mate. They judged it wise to talk a great deal of the Tokelaus, and of their plan afterward to reach Samoa and start a little cacao plantation.

Matt's cry, wrung from his desperation, that he would sink the schooner had given him the germ of an idea. Yes, why not sink her—not from any notion of wild revenge, but as a well calculated solution of the perils surrounding them? To wait, in fact, until they knew there were islands near them and then, sinking the vessel, compel Schwartz to take to the surf boat. This was a fine, big, carved hull boat, twenty-six feet long, and Matt tested it with his penknife to make sure it was sound. It would easily hold six hands, with ample provisions and water, and a trip of sixty or eighty miles in it would be no terrible hardship. Compared to the unknown dangers that grew daily nearer, the hazard of such an escape seemed small indeed. And once ashore, anywhere ashore—they would be safe, for, however primitive and loose the little native governments are, they are strong enough to protect the lives and persons of those within their rule.

But to sink the Esmeralda! That was so easy to say! Of course a stick of dynamite would send her to the bottom in short order, and there was plenty of the deadly stuff in the trade room, together with caps and fuses. But that was suicide. That was to open a barn door to the Pacific ocean. The alternative was to chisel a good sized hole in her garboard streak and give it about twice the bore of a bilge pump.

The Esmeralda had an unusually good pump, worked by a couple of hand spikes, and throwing a five inch stream. Matt squared the circle industriously and then doubled the result, going over these calculations again and again to make sure of no mistake. What he aimed to accomplish was a leak that would force Schwartz to lay the vessel toward the nearest land, and perhaps bring it into view before there would be any need to take refuge in the whaler. On a two to one ratio of leak against pump, he hoped the Esmeralda might stay afloat for ten or twelve hours after he had achieved his purpose.

They were twenty-four days out of San Francisco when the first land would receive. Zi, zi, zi-zi-zi-zi—this time Herman repeating, word by word, the message thus mysteriously caught from space, while Schwartz listened darkly, with preoccupation, seeing the message, watching and understanding what was being told him.

Matt returned as he had come, more concerned than ever not to betray himself. The discovery had daunted him; he was in the grip of terror. He was so agitated that he could scarcely speak, as Chris, on guard at the door, shut it behind him and earnestly asked what he had seen.

"They're working a wireless apparatus," he answered.

"Wireless, Matt! You don't mean a wireless telegraph?"

"Yes, Herman's operating it, and Schwartz is sending messages."

"You actually saw them?"

"Yes, inside a lot of mattresses in the foremast to deaden the sound, of course, and keep us from hearing. We're prisoners on this ship, Chris, they've kidnaped us."

"But isn't that a terrible thing to do?"

"For us—yes."

"But couldn't they all be punished and sent to prison?"

"Possibly, if the Oregon ranged alongside. But where is your Oregon, Chris, this whole ship and the whole crew must have been waiting for us in San Francisco, like a lot of spiders for two little flies. Tokelaus! We'll never see any Tokelaus. That was all part of the scheme to hood-wink us—to get us away."

"But what could they want with us?"

"Want with us! Why, they want John Mort!"

"Oh, Matt!"

"Yes. The same people who are running this ship are the same that drove me out of Massachusetts. Nothing me failed, force failed, but they were cunning enough to know that rather than starve I'd double back to the islands. So there was Schwartz all ready, with his ship and his blarney and his spider's web across the road I was bound to take."

"Why hasn't the captain tried to make you tell—tried to force you to tell?"

"That's coming. As sure as I am alive that's coming when we reach the people who are answering our wireless. There's trouble ahead, Chris."

"Well, in that case, you'll simply have to take the only way out."

"I'll never do that—never."

"But, Matt, they might—rather than have you hurt I'll tell everything myself."

"You shan't!"

"I will, Matt, I will!"

"You don't know where this island is. You don't know the bearings. What could you tell them that they don't know?"

She whispered something back that blanched his face.

For a moment he was silent. It had never come to him that their devilry might be turned against Chris.

"I'll sink the ship first!" he cried.

slight of the island was like a signal; it made him acutely restless and uncomfortable; he was possessed with the suffocating sense of almost terror that precedes all desperate deeds. Taking advantage of the commotion on deck, he ran below, watched his opportunity, and entered the trade room. No cracksmen, on his knees before a safe, and thrillingly conscious that at any moment he might be interrupted, could have experienced more trepidation than did Matt as he sought out a case of axes and pried open the lid. He seized one, he went down on his knees before the hatch and fumbled with the ring countersunk in the planking.

The hold was about nine or ten feet deep; he peered in again, gaging it. Ropes? There was rope every-where, compactly coiled and bantailed. It would be quite a bother, though, to cut the fastenings; new rope also was sure to kink—to tangle and twist itself into snarls. Why not a bolt of that stout red cotton. It would be just as efficacious—more efficacious—lumber. He made the loose end fast to a keg of nails and tossed the bolt itself down the hatchway; lowered the ax after it on a piece of twine; also a key saw and a pair of chisels on another piece of twine.

Crushing the cotton in his hands, he swung over the opening, and let himself go. His feet touched the iron bars; all about him it was as black as pitch except under the twilight of the hatch. The air was stale and stifling and reeking of bilge water.

Getting his tools together, he got vigorously to work, ripping off a big patch of the inner skin and laying open beyond the real object of attack. The next step required more delicate methods—more care and skill. One fissure, however small, in the outer planking might admit so fierce a gush of water that the task would have to be rehearsed elsewhere with all its attendant delay. But there was no time for delay—not an instant. Above him was the unlocked door—the open hatch, urging him to feverish haste.

He marked a good sized square on the planking, mindful that the copper outside would help to check the inflow, and set to paring the wood away—so evenly as he could with the chisel. It was Oregon pine and came off in bright, clean shavings, sticky with gum. He dug deeper and deeper; the square sank into the yellow timber; he was as assiduous as ever, though the effort became harder to keep the surface flat and uniform. He was dripping with sweat; the ax was heavy and extremely awkward to hold, cramping his right hand and annoying him with its cumbersome handle.

Dropping the chisel, he ran his hand down the ax handle, gripped and aiming the blunt end of the ax at the aperture, let fly with all his strength.

There was a flash of greenish water, a stupefying roar, a blow in his chest that hurled him sprawling backward, drenched, confused, almost senseless. Even at that depth the water was under a colossal pressure; it was as though a geyser had opened in the ship's side; the stream ran solid for six or seven feet, curved and burst. Matt staggered up and regarded it with awe, dizzily trying to collect his bewildered senses. Good God, how would the pumps ever cope with it! The whole ocean was pouring in; it did not seem she could last an hour.

By degrees he recovered some composure, collected the tools and flung them into the blackest recesses of the hold so that they might not rise in judgment against him, for he knew the short shrift he would get were the act brought home to him. He drew himself up the hatch, caught the coaming, and with a sailor's alertness sprang out on the trade room floor, where, trailing water like a spaniel, he hurriedly closed the cover, stamping it into place with his feet. Then with unspeakable relief he went to the door, listened, opened it a few inches and peeped cautiously into the passageway.

He looked straight into Chris' eyes. She signaled him to hurry across. He over there, not fifteen miles away, was the end of all their troubles—white beaches, palms, people, law, security. Yet they must stick like flies on a sieve at the behest of that infernal Brandels.

But no one paid any attention to him, though if he had fallen behind or

life party like a whirlwind. The uproar that ensued was as welcome to him as it was dismaying to the galvanized mate and to the pallid, stuttering Schwartz. Brandels was on deck in a moment, bawling orders in a voice like a bull; Schwartz behind him, as white as a corpse; Krantz next, his whiskers flying and his heavy tread resounding as he stumbled forward to call all hands.

Naked to the waist, a couple of men were working the handpikes of the pump, which was hoarsely flooding the scuppers. The canvas covers had been cut from the whale boat, and beside it, in a little heap, the Japs, Yonida and Fusi, were stacking provisions and with a tin saucepan were filling a pair of breakers from the water butt. The main hatch was open, gaping to the sky, and within its depths could be heard a wicked, gurgling sound, swirling to and fro with the roll of the ship. At the break of the poop, and showing that Brandels had at last discovered the source of danger, was the mate himself, vociferously directing the efforts to draw a trysail over the leak and up to the opposite side.

A bellowing command brought Matt to the task, and a second later he was striving with the rest and as energetically busy to accomplish the impossible, for he knew the hole was too near the keelson to be likely to suck—had cut it there for that very reason—but he worked with a will nevertheless, glad to elude suspicion by an appearance of zeal and gladness, even at the moment about him, which, although to German, plainly implied hopelessness and failure.

Brandels' repeated examinations of the hold, from which he emerged like a drowned rat, appeared to show that the water was gaining on them, though Matt was not half as sure that the confounded trysail was not checking the leak to some degree.

Matt snatched an opportunity to tell Chris to keep a sharp watch on the binnacle compass. The Esmeralda's course was W. S. W., and he asked her to warn him in case it were altered by even a point. To have it altered was his one consuming desire, for it meant the culmination of his plan and the shortening of those dreaded hours in the whaler. Were the schooner laid for the nearest land she might be kept afloat to reach it, sparing them an ordeal Matt had experienced before.

Half sinking as the boat was, Brandels kept her at it, with so weakening of his resolve to drown her under rather than turn aside.

At midnight, after another stormy altercation between the two, Schwartz seemed to win a grudging consent to get the wireless into operation. A slender pointed steel pole was run aloft. Herman installed his apparatus at the foot of the foremast and, with no pretensions of secrecy and an obliviousness of Matt as he was of the rest of the crew, calmly harassed himself to the wire.

CHAPTER XVI. John Mort. HE was apparently coming up at great speed; the smoke swelled in volume; two smoke stacks became discernible; no, there were three! By George, there were four, in a towering, stupendous, black vomiting line—giant of a vessel, with lightning tops to her great masts and turrets, spomons and guns showing above the glistening white of her bow. A man-of-war, a colossus of twelve or fourteen thousand tons, able at reduced speed to encircle the globe and return whence she had started with coal still to spare in her Brodignagian bunkers.

Matt watched her with parted lips and straining, fascinated eyes. Was it she, then, who had called up the Esmeralda's night after night? It was no chance meeting, assuredly, but a pre-arranged tryst in the waste of the limitless sea. Many a government of importance had not the peer of this magnificent vessel that was racing toward them under forced draught and with all the power of her mighty engines.

As she drew nearer, sparkling with white and steel, she offered a spectacle that stirred the heart. The water flashed at her stem as she cut it astunder and tossed it aside in a rainbow spray; her decks rose, tier upon tier, alive with men; her long, slender guns protruding from the ports were backed with human faces; on the lofty bridge were two officers in uniform, the one standing motionless beside the steersman, the other pacing two and four, occasionally stopping to use his glass.

Suddenly the throbb of her engines ceased and she was gliding toward the whalerboat under no other impetus but her vast bulk. Shrill whistles sounded, white clothed sailors were seen running, and as if by magic the starboard gangway was lowered, its base churning the water or rising high above it as the ship rolled in the sea. At the head of the gangway, as the boat was cast off and all the survivors of the schooner crowded up, Brandels, Krantz, Schwartz and Chris were met by a burly officer, who gripped affably and shook each one of them by the hand. As Matt and Chris passed to the quarter-deck beyond the former raised his cap to a group of officers, who returned the salute with naval stiffness. It was a moment of some embarrassment to stand there with no home under the sun save that strange deck and to know they were dependent on the charity of those disdainful observers, who gave no sign of welcoming them.

But an instant later they were accosted by a young man, also in uniform, who, advancing hurriedly, bowed and in broken English said, "Beg pardon, instructed by captain, follow me, please be so kind."

Guiding them down the stairway to the deck beneath, he led them along a passageway to a cabin, into which he ushered them with this concluding statement: "Instructed by captain, you are here to remain, please be so kind." With that he saluted, clicked his heels with feutonic formality and departed—presumably "instructed by captain" to report their incarceration.

It was without doubt an officer's cabin and was prettily decorated with photographs, fans, shells, cottonion favors and other trifling mementoes. The pair, thus oddly imprisoned in it, felt a lessening of their tremors and laughter at the sight of themselves in the glass.

"They ought to be afraid of us," exclaimed Chris with saucy confidence, twining her arms about Matt's neck and studying the effect. "I look like the widow of an organ grinder on the broad line, and by the time I've completed your hair a bit you might pass as a Siberian exile who had escaped in a sarabge can."

The young officer returned and stood blinking at them ceremoniously in the doorway.

"Instructed by captain, your presence is requested, please be so kind," he said, addressing Matt. As Chris rose also she was told to stay behind.

"Instructed by captain; no, no; please be so kind," exclaimed the young officer, barring her away. "Instructed by captain. The gentleman only will follow me. Please be so kind."

To be Continued.



It Was an Astonishing Sight That Met His Gaze.

faintly audible, as though some machinery had been set in motion. But it was too irregular for machinery and had an indescribable thrilling quality that Matt was at a loss to account for. The cabin shivered with it. It was as fine as the lash of a whip and as vicious, as it seemed to sting the air. Matt leaped from the bunk, despite Chris' entreaties. By George, he was going to see what it was. Follow Schwartz and find out.

It was an astonishing sight that met his gaze. Forward of the foremast was a sort of hut constructed of mattresses, forming a windbreak or shield, opened only to the fore-castle. Within it, seated on a box, was Herman, bent over an apparatus and causing it by means of a small brass handle to emit that astounding buzzing as well as an incessant sputter of sparks and flashes. There was no listlessness now in that gawky youth. His expression was keen; his hand moved the key with lightning precision; he had an unmistakable air of mastery and skill as of a man engaged in something he excelled in.

Wireless! Of course it was the wireless. Matt had read of it, but had never seen it before in action. Zi-zi-sizizi-zi-zi-zi-zi! The brass lever darted up and down, lingered and snapped amid a sputter of sparks and flashes; the captain, holding a sheet of papers with his thumb, read off sentence after sentence in a low, vibrant voice; the lantern light flickered over the yellow sheets, over Herman's bent head encased in a curious harness, over the gleaming apparatus. Occasionally Schwartz was warned to stop. The machine no longer transmitting, would receive. Zi, zi, zi-zi-zi-zi—this time Herman repeating, word by



There Was a Flash of Greenish Water, a Stupefying Roar.

judgment against him, for he knew the short shrift he would get were the act brought home to him. He drew himself up the hatch, caught the coaming, and with a sailor's alertness sprang out on the trade room floor, where, trailing water like a spaniel, he hurriedly closed the cover, stamping it into place with his feet. Then with unspeakable relief he went to the door, listened, opened it a few inches and peeped cautiously into the passageway.

He looked straight into Chris' eyes. She signaled him to hurry across. He over there, not fifteen miles away, was the end of all their troubles—white beaches, palms, people, law, security. Yet they must stick like flies on a sieve at the behest of that infernal Brandels.

But no one paid any attention to him, though if he had fallen behind or



She Offered a Spectacle That Stirred the Heart.

There was no change in the Esmeralda's course. Thus the night passed, and by morning it was plain the ship was doomed. She was submerged to the chemoela, and had a sickening, undecided movement as she sank in the trough of the sea. The men looked at one another, wondering each time if she would ever rise again, or simply founder then and there and go down like a stone.

The acquiescence of the crew filled Matt with amazement and a bitter, mounting anger. He tried to instill into them something of his own fury; pointed and made signs at the boat; urged them to mutiny, to get away; urged the ship sank under them. But they listened unmoved, though not without a strained, hungry expression. Life is sweet, and there it was towing a hundred feet behind them, while Brandels with no weapon but his strident voice held them to a coffin.

By 9 o'clock land was sighted on the port bow, but it caused no relaxation of the killing routine, nor any change in the ship's course. Matt watched it with an exasperation not to be described. Over there was safety; over there, not fifteen miles away, was the end of all their troubles—white beaches, palms, people, law, security. Yet they must stick like flies on a sieve at the behest of that infernal Brandels.

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