

the decision which was to exile him from his friends in Europe and America, and to sever him from the "cold old huddle of grey hills" which was the land of his birth.

Stevenson arrived in San Francisco on the 7th of June. An interview with Dr. Merrit convinced the latter that the author was an entirely sensible person, into whose care he might safely trust the "Casco." Final arrangements were therefore concluded, and a charter-party drawn up, whereby the yacht was secured to Stevenson for a net rental of five hundred dollars per month; captain, crew and all equipment to be provided by the lessee, who assumed full responsibility for the vessel, which thus became—legally—his own property. Fortunately the owner secured the service of Captain Albert H. Otis, well known in San Francisco, into whose capable hands he was well content to trust the vessel. Captain Otis had placed the "Casco" in commission, and sailed her on her trial trips; he knew her capabilities well, and her hair-breadth escapes from terrible danger during the cruise which followed were due in no small measure to his bold and clever navigation.

The "Casco" was a fore-and-aft schooner, ninety-five feet long, intended for cruising on the Californian coast. Stevenson waxed enthusiastic about her "fine lines, tall spars and snowy decks, the crimson fittings of the saloon, the white, the gilt and the repeating mirrors of the tiny cabins." She was constructed throughout of the most costly material; her hull was coppered; she was altogether a staunch and most sea-worthy craft. Mr. Graham Balfour, in his "Life" of Stevenson, has spoken very positively of her as a much over-rigged and rather ill-constructed vessel; but his statements have been as emphatically denied by Captain Otis and Mr. Arthur Johnstone; and the testimony of those who have sailed the "Casco" on her sealing expeditions is that she behaved splendidly in the worst seas. It must be kept in mind that she was sailed boldly into some of the worst parts of the "Pacific, aw haw haw, *Pacific Ocean*," as Stevenson called it; and she emerged triumphant largely as a result of her seaworthiness and generous sail plan.

I have said that Stevenson was not yet wealthy; his prolonged stay at Saranac had greatly strained his resources, for there, he

said, "it costs a pound to sneeze, and fifty to blow your nose!" Thus, when the sum necessary to secure and equip the "Casco" (about ten thousand dollars) had been expended, he felt that, if health was not regained, and the ability to write passed from him, all would indeed be lost. It proved, however, that from the standpoint of health the cruise was successful beyond his most sanguine hopes; with the return of health his flagging powers awakened, and his best work was done in his new island home.

Immediately upon the satisfactory settlement of the terms under which the "Casco" was chartered, preparations were put in hand for the long voyage; the captain made the changes necessary in the vessel's rigging, on account of the rough seas she was likely to encounter; an insufficient crew of four ("three Swedes, and the inevitable Finn, 'sea-lawyers' all") was requisitioned; an indispensable cook, who said he was a Japanese, but was later found to be a Chinaman, Ah Fu by name, was engaged; with some difficulty a passage was refused to an enterprising newspaper reporter, trying to ship as a deckhand; and finally on June 26 the party, consisting of Stevenson, his wife, his mother and his step-son (Lloyd Osbourne, his well-known collaborator) took up their quarters on the vessel; and at dawn on the 28th the "Casco" was towed through the Golden Gate, and Stevenson unwittingly turned his face from Europe and America forever.

The first portion of the voyage proved almost uneventful, with the exception of some ugly squalls which thoroughly initiated the nervous passengers into the tricky ways of the Pacific. Shortly before the yacht sighted the Marquesas she was struck by a "freak squall" which laid her over until the edge of the deckhouse was under water, and the unfortunate inmates of the saloon received a thorough drenching from two streams of water which spouted vigorously through forgotten open deadlights. It was a new experience for the novelist, experienced yachtsman though he was, to weather this first wicked squall upon a sensitive American yacht, with low rails and towering masts; but Captain Otis has left it on record that Stevenson did not wince; his great eyes glowed with the thrill of intense excitement, and he contented himself with asking the skipper if such