

to San Francisco. He smiled as he reread a letter written in the crabbed fist of that zealous agriculturist, Johnny Kent, who had this to say:

DEAR CAPTAIN MIKE:

The Lord only knows what trouble you'll be in when this gets to China. My advice is to quit it and come home. I'm worried about you. Bill Maguire has rounded to, understand? His busted main hatch sort of mended itself by degrees. He had symptoms before you left, and you ought to have waited, but I suppose you can't help being young and Irish.

He was terrible melancholy at first, and he ain't real spry yet. I found his wife and little girl for him in Baltimore, and made them come on here. You guessed right about the wax doll. I bought the darndest, biggest one I could find. Bill feels that the family is living on my charity, and being morbid and down-hearted, he frets a whole lot about being broke and stranded. He'll be no good to go to sea again. It gives him the shivers to talk about it. I don't need him as a farm-hand in the winter, and as for having his wife as a steady house-keeper, I'm fussy and set in my ways.

Bill got up against an awful bad combination in China. I won't tell you where it was, for I don't want you to find it. Maybe you'll run across a man named McDougal out there. He was with Bill when they got in trouble. Bill saw a chance to get away in the night, but he stood the crowd off somehow to give McDougal leeway to join him. And this McDougal lit out with never a thought for Bill. There was something wrong with McDougal, as I figure it out. Maybe he was a good man, but here was one time when he fell down on his job. None of us say much about it, Captain Mike, but we all pray we won't get caught that way. You know what I mean. We're afraid there may be a weak spot in us that we don't know is there until we have to face the music. Anyhow, as I gather from Bill, McDougal was a quitter.