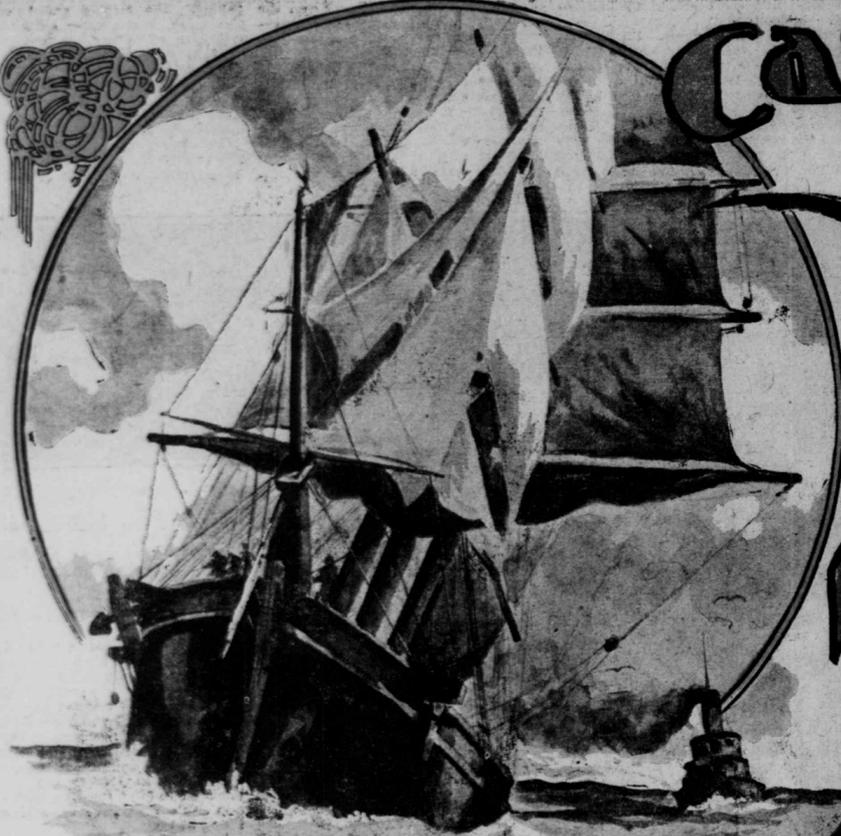


Captain Larsen on the Other Tack

BY ALBERT SONNICHSEN
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DEEP SEA VAGABONDS



THE TUG HAD LEFT HER AND ALONE SHE DUCKED TO THE BIG BLUE INCOMING ROLLERS

The story of how the boarding house crimps of San Francisco attempted to revenge themselves upon the pious captain of the Hawaiian bark Aloha, who had refused to pay blood money—They gathered together a crew of notorious West Coast ruffians and palmed them off on the unsuspecting skipper as Christian sailors—Anticipating a fight aboard as soon as the ship left port, the boarding masters watch her depart from the Cliff House, expecting to see her put back in distress—But the ship sails on and is gone a year—Upon her return seafaring San Franciscans are astounded to find the original ruffian crew aboard, very meek and subdued.

preme contempt. A religious master mariner is never respected, more especially if he belongs to the Salvation Army, as did the good and pious Larsen.

When the Aloha lay loading or discharging in Honolulu Captain Larsen spent his evenings ashore at Salvation Army headquarters, and he even joined the red-shirted soldiers of Christ in their street corner demonstrations. There the seafaring population of Honolulu would often behold the Aloha's skipper, his bare head and broad shoulders towering above his fellow Salvationists.

To the popular disgust he would sometimes step forward to deliver his testimony, bashfully at first, later warming up enthusiastically, exhorting the scandalized seamen to mend their ways and be saved. He invariably began thus:

"Dearly beloved brethren and shipmates: It is almost impossible to express the joy of true salvation. I have never been so happy as since I found Jesus. Vunce I was a bad man, far from de road of righteousness. Vunce I drink visky and use bad lanvidge, and vas not good to my sailors, but now, tank der Lord, I have found salvation, and I don't be so vicked any more."

Naturally, such sentiments could not be well received by West Coast skipper. That a seafarer should declare whisky and swearing wicked was, to their minds, nothing short of treachery to the brotherhood of seamen.

In San Francisco Captain Larsen's piousness proved equally objectionable. He always insisted that the boarding masters send him Christian, God-fearing seamen who never swore, and would not object to prayer meetings in the dog watches. Such men were naturally scarce, but so long as the Aloha's owners stood good for the large shipping fees, they tried to humor the eccentric Norwegian skipper. Those were the days of blood money.

But one day there came a change of management in the office of the Aloha's owners, and, among other things involved, Captain Larsen must henceforth manage the financial part of shipping his crews himself. That was the cause of the trouble. The religious scruples of Captain Larsen and blood money fees wouldn't mix in the same pot.

In those days the boarding masters of Frisco stuck together as thick as thieves, and the shipping commissioners stood in with them. All this was for mutual benefit. Any skipper that refused to put up their price brought upon himself their united displeasure, and that was something no sane skipper ever cared to do. Then it was usually to a skipper's advantage in a financial way to stand in with the boarding masters; it was another case of mutual benefit.

But Captain Larsen conceived the idea that blood money did not chime in with the moral scheme of things, so he gave voice to that opinion just about as he voiced his testimonies on the street corners of Honolulu.

He met Seattle Mike and Al Black, president and shipping master of the Boarding Masters' Association, in their office partitioned off in the Fair Winds saloon.

"Two months' advance for each man," demanded Seattle Mike. "Just \$40—twenty for us and twenty to square up the men's accounts. You've got to

pony up same's the rest of 'em."
"You bet," added Al Black, drinking his beer with a dark frown, "we doesn't stand no foolin'."

Captain Larsen's mild blue eyes wandered wearily about the dingy office.
"Twenty dollars shipping fee is too much," he protested meekly. "I am willing to gif the men a month's advance, but I von't gif you more dan \$2 apiece as shipping fee. Dat is choest vat de law allows."

"Two dollars!" snorted Al Black savagely. "We say \$30, and we mean it. If you don't come up with that price, you get no men."

But they came to no agreement. The Aloha's skipper returned aboard with a war against the Boarding Masters' Association on his hands.

Next day he opened negotiations with Chinese Charley for a crew of Kanakas and Chinamen. The United Boarding Masters smiled—that meant trouble for Captain Larsen with the union. For a while they decided to let it go at that, but Seattle Mike conceived a plan whereby they might have even a more complete revenge. This he at once communicated to his associates and they grinned more broadly than ever. It was a game they had played before, and always successfully. Perhaps you have heard of the mutiny of the Harvester.

Next day they sent a note to Captain Larsen stating that they acceded to his terms—a month's advance for each man. "And a nice Christian crew we'll send you," added the note.
"We'll give him Three-Fingered Jack for bos'n," chuckled Seattle Mike significantly, and the idea sent the beer down Al Black's wrong throat.

"An' Lager Beer Pete," suggested Al Black, when he recovered. "He gets out of choky to-morrow; an' we'll give him six chaps off the Sioux Queen, an' Bill Simmons and Big Steve."

Whereupon the two plotters chuckled

immoderately over their beer and nudged each other in joyful anticipation of what a shore person would consider a ghastly joke.

Next day the new crew of the Aloha went aboard—sixteen notorious ruffians. Trig Olafsen, the Aloha's chief mate, received them at the gangway. Olafsen had been on the coast a long time, and he knew most of the men. Perhaps he even then realized the game that was being played on his commander, but if he did, his stolid, high cheekboned face betrayed no indication of the discovery.

That afternoon the Aloha was towed out to sea. On the glass-covered veranda of the Cliff House, overlooking Seal Rock and the Golden Gate, sat two men, sipping brandy and soda. Taking turns through a brass binocular, they were watching the Aloha set sail.

"They'll never get beyond the Farallones," remarked Seattle Mike, as the big topsails of the Aloha were being sheeted home.

The tug had left her, and alone she ducked to the big blue incoming rollers. One by one her white sails were loosed and bellied out to the northwesterly breeze, driving her through the water at increasing speed. All the square sails were set; then, one by one, arose the topsails. The two boarding masters watched them with keen interest.

"Why t'ell don't those fellers begin the fun?" growled Al Black, irritably. His companion took the binocular.
"They're at it!" exclaimed Seattle Mike suddenly. "The ball is openin' up!"

Aboard the Aloha strange things were happening. Her foreyards, braced up on the starboard tack, swung loose, swaying until the wind had them aback. Through the binocular Seattle Mike made out figures on deck in violent commotion. The poop was clear, but amidsthips some great event was

taking place. A confused mass of men were surging about the deck, but distance made it impossible to distinguish just what was taking place. Suddenly the lee clew of themainsail, which had been raised to the yard, came down on the run, and hid the scene of trouble from view.

"Now, he's getting it," chuckled Seattle Mike.
Al Black seized the glass gleefully.

"They'll be raising police signals presently," he remarked.
"Yes, or squaring in for shore," prophesied Mike.

But none of these things happened. To the amazement of the two boarding masters, the foreyards of the bark were suddenly braced up again and she ploughed on to the southward, sending out long foam whiskers from her cutwater. Smaller and smaller she dwindled, until she was hull down on the horizon, beyond the Farallones. Then Al Black and his companion arose and returned cityward, much perplexed and not well pleased.

The Aloha was gone for almost a year. The usual reports of her safe arrival at Melbourne and Port Adelaide were cabled by the underwriters, but beyond that no news came to Frisco of Captain Larsen and his crew for a long time.

One day the Hawaiian mail steamer came in, and the passengers aboard told that the Aloha had reached Honolulu. But more astonishing was the report that she still retained the same crew shipped in Frisco: By this time the game put up on Captain Larsen was common knowledge among seafaring men all over the coast. But the laugh seemed to be turning on the Al Black gang.

Then one day the signal station at Fort Point reported the Aloha standing in for the Gate. The custom-house officers started out to meet her in their launch, impatiently anxious to learn

the state of affairs aboard. They, too, were on to the game.

They boarded the Aloha a few miles off shore. Captain Larsen received them at the gangway with his habitual Christian smile and mild blue eyes. But when the inspectors beheld Three-Fingered Jack, Lager Beer Pete, Big Steve and their equally notorious shipmates briskly pulling in braces, ye-ho-ing and clewing up sails in as orderly and shipshape a manner as ever obtained aboard a man-of-war, they swore aloud in their amazement. Finally one of the inspectors got Three-Fingered Jack aside for a moment.

"I say, Jack, what happened?" he asked. "Didn't you everlastingly bombast him?"

"You're a child of wrath," retorted Jack, indignantly. "We've learned the ways of the meek and lowly, thanks to our noble captain."

"Oh, come off!" exclaimed the revenue man, impatiently. "Don't come any of that guff on me. What happened?"

"Go soak yer head," responded Jack, with a return of his old-time manner, "with a yer of his old-time janker. 'Ye want to know more than what's good for ye."

And that was all the information that was forthcoming. Big Trig Olafsen smiled significantly as the boarding house runners boarded in the bay, and the crew refused to have anything to do with them. The Aloha dropped anchor off Mission Point, and with seamanlike promptness the men furled sails and cleared up decks.

"The Lord loveth those who are industrious," said the skipper, with pious meekness, to the harbor officials about him on the poop.

That evening Seattle Mike and Al Black sat impatiently smoking big, black cigars in the latter's establishment on Pacific street. They were waiting for the appearance of the

In a recent article about the brilliant career of Albert Sonnichsen, the young author of this series of deep-sea tales, there occurred the sentence, "Puffing away at one of the big cigars that his Filipino wife taught him to love." That was a grievous and to Mr. Sonnichsen a very annoying typographical error, and one which The Sunday Call, for the young man's peace of mind, takes pleasure in correcting. It should have read, "His Filipino life taught him to love," etc. Mr. Sonnichsen is not even married, much less being the husband of a Filipino woman.

Aloha's crew. The mystery must be solved.

At about 10 they showed up—the entire sixteen—all more or less drunk, and with Three-Fingered Jack in the lead. The two boarding masters received them with sinister smiles of welcome, barely concealing the impatience and anger within them. They were of course too tactful to broach the main question at once.

All hands crowded about the long table and Al Black's bartender was kept busy serving, first beer, but later whisky and rum. The men were hilarious, noisy, apparently in excellent humor, but not a word referring to their late voyage came out. The two masters waxed more and more impatient, especially as the drinks were as yet not being paid for. Much against their wills they had been obliged to drink with the crowd. Finally Al Black could no longer contain himself. He determined to demand an explanation.

"Boys," he said, rising and hitting the table with a mug, "I think it's up to you to tell us what the devil all this means. Did you fellers flunk out there?"

There came a pause—all hands turned toward Three-Fingered Jack. He arose, shoving away his drink.

"Well, as ye ask an explanation," he said, "I might as well tell ye we've come up here to have a few words with you."

"That's what—you bet," broke in several of the others.

"Yes," continued Jack, "we have come up here to make you see the sinfulness of yer ways. We've come to offer ye the salvation we got through you. Ye once shipped us on a craft wot ye said would be a home for us. Ye told us the skipper was a kind, fatherly el' man wot would look well arter our welfare. He did, He looked arter us all right."

Here Jack pushed back the long hair from over his forehead, revealing a long white scar.

"But ye sinned against that same kind, fatherly el' skipper, Al," he continued, "an' we want ye to repent. It was a sin, Al, to work off a lot of wicked, worldly men like us on that kind of man. But, thank the Lord, he showed us the sinfulness of our way, just as we're goin' to show you."

"What damed rot is this?" broke in Al Black, purple with rage. "What t'ell d'ye mean, ye drunken swabs?"

"Bear the child of wrath," said Jack, piously. "Boys, the time for the Lord's vengeance has come."

The bos'n kicked back his chair, and as though this were a signal all hands sprang up, and in a moment the room was in a savage turmoil, in the center of which were Seattle Mike and Al Black. Both of the crimps drew revolvers, but their weapons were hurled across the room before they could use them. Down the two went under the feet of the mob, fighting fiercely. The bartender and two runners attempted to help them, but the first went down with a split scalp and the other two were trampled insensible in a second. Next the infuriated sailors dragged the two boarding masters into the kitchen, where they ducked their heads into the dishwasher's tub, full to the brim. Dishes, pots, pans and even the lamps were piled on top of them and scattered over the floor. Shattering glass and trampling feet raised a most unearthly roar.

Ducked into insensibility, the two boarding masters were then dragged into the bathroom, which was wrecked in a similar manner. There would certainly have been murder done had not a squad of police burst in the front door just then and charged the drink-crazed sailors. Most of them were rounded up after a desperate fight and hauled off to the police station, but not until a squad of reserves had reinforced the original patrol. Al Black, Seattle Mike and the bartender were taken to the hospital.

Next day Captain Larsen appeared at the police station and paid the fines. "It grieves me," he said, as the men followed him meekly out into the street, "to find you in dis condition. You haf given away to sinful wrath again. Vat did you do to dem?"

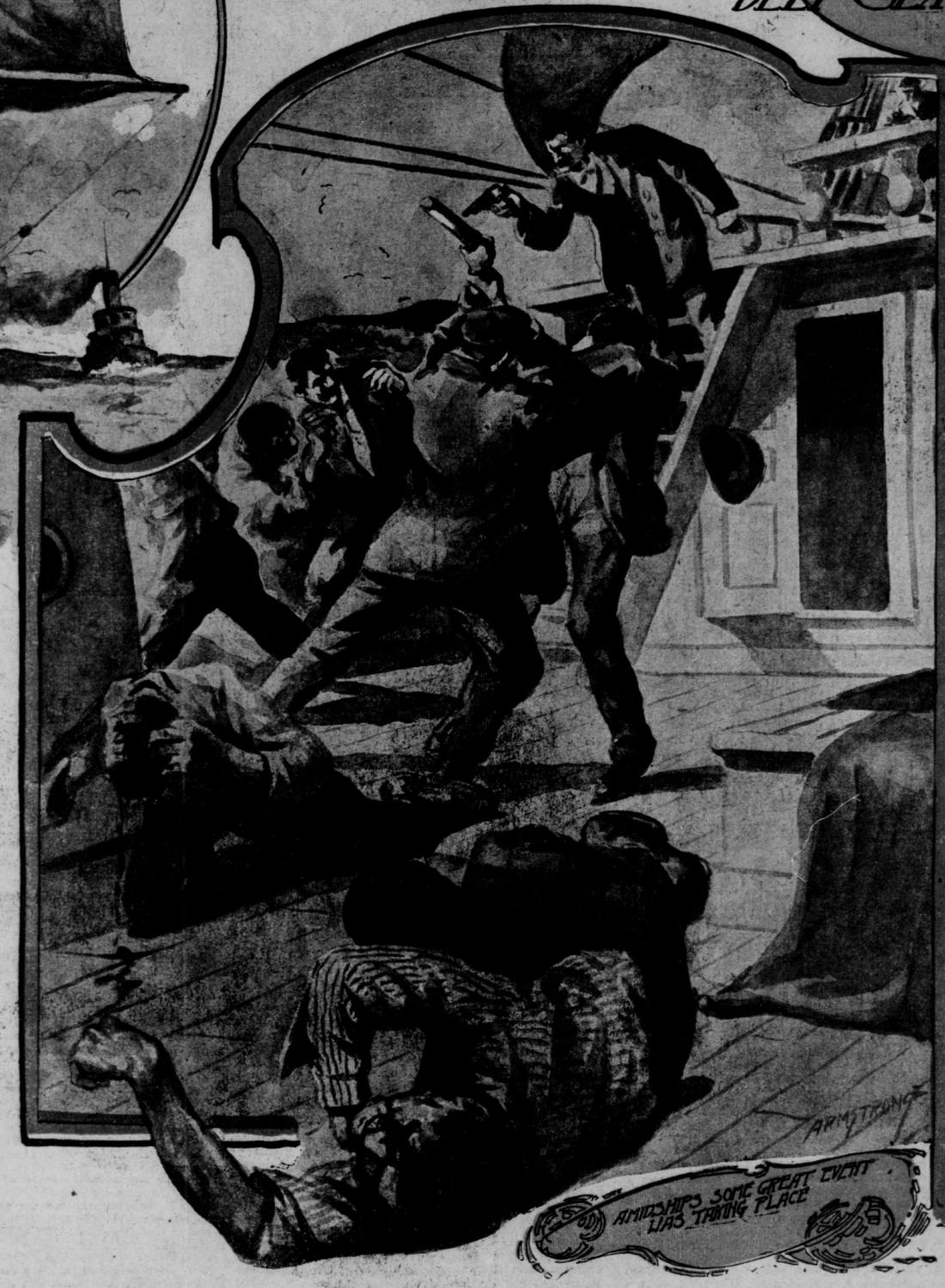
"They're in the hospital," replied Jack, with a sickly smile.

"Vell," continued the skipper, "in dot case, I see de hand of de Lord, who smiteth in His anger. 'Vengeance is mine,' saith the Lord. You haf been His instruments of vengeance, and so shall be forgiven."

"Say, boys, dis afternoon I ship again for de next voyage. You want to sign on again?"

"Aye, aye, sir," they all responded.

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AMIDSHIPS SOME GREAT EVENT WAS TAKING PLACE