

THE COASTS OF ULTIMA THULE

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§ 1.

FOR the best part of his life Grizzlebeard has made his home beside the sea. From his window he can look upon the harbour and watch the great ships come and go. When thick mist covers the face of the waters, he can hear the warning groan of the fog-horn at the harbour mouth, and even catch the melancholy clang of the bell-buoy rocked slowly by the swell above the shoal. He loves the sea and all craft that float thereon. Too few have been his voyages, and too many the years dividing them. Wherefore, when his chance came to make one of a crew of three to sail the pleasure yacht *Swan* home from Dolcefear, he embraced his madness, and shipped before the mast.

§ 2.

Many were the stores to be ferried over from the sun-warmed wharf to the womb of the White Ship tethered unhappily to the spar-buoy. After two busy hours, the final case was safely stowed below deck; the big, triangular mainsail reefed for cruising hung ready, the jib was hoisted, the moorings were cast off, and at once the *Swan* sprang forward under the impulse of the strong north wind, impatient for the harbour mouth. One short stretch eastward, a long one to the west, and the open sea has taken the White Ship to its broad bosom.

All departures are the same. There is the definite severance from the land and all its affairs. A sense of isolation is closely joined to a sense of freedom. The vessel's motion seems exultant. She is speeding from the known to the unknown, from confinement within the limits of a port to the great spaces of blue water, from tame safety into glorious peril, and she goes gladly:

The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared.
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

Coleridge generalized well. His joyous quatrain fits a thousand departures from a hundred ports. It fitted the flitting of the

Swan that memorable September noon in the strong sun and the strong wind. She turned her back on the city with its star-shaped fort upon the central hill and tall church spires; to port she left the lighthouse which was once a martello tower, and turned her prow to the far sea-rim and a hazard of new fortunes.

§ 3.

The walls are down. The city is built of walls. There are walls on both sides of the street. Walls close every vista. Walls rise up before your face and oppress you, in the dwelling, in the shop, in the church. Always and everywhere within the city there are walls. Here on the ocean there are none, except the translucent four winds of heaven. North, south, east and west the eye is free to range unchecked the vast emptiness lit by the flaming sun and domed with the blue. The spirit bursts its bars. Surely it was sea and sky together which first gave man the idea of the infinite.

Who can reckon up the joys of the vessel under sail? There is the passive delight of watching the subtle curves of the white canvas against the sky; there is the exhilarating sense of rapid movement intensified by the illusion of swiftly processional waves; the ear is fed by the concert of lapping water against the planks, and the song the wind sings in the cordage. Just to abandon oneself to the motion of the vessel, the lift and roll and heave and swing and dip of her, as she triumphs like a living creature over the obstructing billows, is a good joy. But what pleasure can earth afford like the joy of steering an able little ship in a singing breeze? The sea is large and our boat is small, but she is new and staunch. Only a few hours' experience of her behaviour in a sea-way sufficed to beget utter confidence in the little box of mould planks beneath our feet, and confidence beget affection. The cunning fabric of mere wood becomes something to praise, to caress, to invent endearing names for, like a woman. To take the responsibility of the tiller, to direct the vessel in her course, eyeing wind and water, mark and compass with unceasing vigilance, to feel your will met instantly, with almost living responsiveness, at the movement of your arm, comes very near the crowning joy of life. The horseman knows something of this delight, but what carries the sailor never feels weariness.

"The way of a ship in the midst of the sea" was one of the four things which were "too wonderful" for wise Agur, the son of Jakeh. It is indeed a marvel. The compact, strong, fish-shaped

coffer moves by the will of the wind upon her broad white pinions, a sea-creature, to swim, and yet partaking of the bird nature, to fly, a being of the water and the air. A creature of the element through which it takes its motion, it is fitted, embedded, cradled in ocean like a jewel in its chasing. The work of man's hand, fashioned first in man's brain, the will of man guides the ship on man's errands, triumphing over wind and wave. The ship partakes of the life of man until it acquires an illusory life of its own, through sacred obedience to its master. Its existence is always at the touch of hazard, one continual adventure. Even in the land-locked harbour, the ship is not safe. Caressed by the perilous caresses of the sea, which may pass with tigerish swiftness to deadly blows, the ship has become the symbol and embodiment of all romance. It is also the most beautiful thing the hands of man fashioned for his mere uses.

Past Devil's Island with its twin lighthouses the *Swan* sped eastward, far out from shore, and aiming at a dim, distant headland. To starboard there is nothing but ocean to the coast of France about Bordeaux. Late in the afternoon the wind fell; the vessel rolled and pitched, and made no progress; the jib-block clanged incessantly on the traveller, and the trailing mainsheet switched water in the faces of the crew. Grizzlebeard took his watch below, and at once fell into a peaceful slumber. When he awoke, it was dark night. Slowly up an unseen channel in smooth water the *Swan* was making her way, under a light, warm rain. The ear was filled with the thunderous roar of the tide on the shingle all round. On either hand was a line of fading, changing white. Overhead great shafts of light from the pharos on Egg Island pierced the darkness intermittently. Far up Jeddore we anchored. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

§ 4.

Sabbath peace filled the morning air and lay like a benediction on the still waters of the long, narrow inlet. A summer sun warmed the world, and showed white houses on the shore with blue smoke rising from the chimneys. Haste there was none, nor need of of haste. So warm, so still was the morning that it seemed as if the *Swan* might remain a not unwilling prisoner in that sunlit mirrow of a stream for many hours. A soft breeze ruffled the surface of the water; but when the *Swan* spread her wings and began to move, it fell calm. No sooner was the anchor down, than the wayward wind filled the sails again, and the white hull

began to slip swiftly through the water, as if eager to feel once more the long heave of the Atlantic swell. All day the good breeze held, and on strolled the little ship from point to point of her predestined course. Every sight was new, and ample time was given to view it from the sunny deck.

And there was much to see. The river St. Lawrence boasts of its Thousand Islands in one long expansion of its course; but the perilous coast of Ultima Thule is strewn with ten thousand. They are of all sizes and shapes, close at hand, far out to sea, lofty redoubts, bastions to withstand the assaults of storm and surge, or low roosts for the flocking, wheeling, screaming gulls, green vested with the unchanging spruce, or savagely naked, with sharp outlines as if cut with a chisel, or mere rocks awash showing their place by everlasting breakers white against the blue and flinging to the sky snowy, sunshot fountains of spray. Every bight and indentation is an archipelago, stretching out for miles to seaward. Through, and among, and around them lies our road. No easy road it is. There are three paths offered to our choice, the inner, the middle, and the outer way. The outer is plain ocean sailing; the middle has special difficulties for small craft overtaken in it by bad weather; the inside course, though the most intricate, offers handy anchorages at night, and therefore the inside was chosen. It is no road for a timid or clumsy navigator, nor was it made simpler for the *Swan* by the fact that the falling glass portended storm, and the many tins of food stowed beneath the deck put the compass out by a whole point. If fog should come and blind the little ship among these ledges.....

§ 5.

But the wit of man has devised sure guides among such perils. The cabin table is cunningly built as a deep wooden pocket, the captain's own invention, which holds—flat and uncurled—portfolio after portfolio of the indispensable charts. In the mariner's rude orisons the names of Des Barres and Bayfield, surveyors, should always be remembered with the deepest gratitude. Never to be forgotten are the hydrographers who took the soundings, and counted the reefs and shot the angles and noted the sea-marks, and, best of all, made such records of their priceless labours that the seafaring man need not err in his voyage amid perils of waters. The master of the *Swan* is practically inerrant. At the tiller with his short pipe between his teeth, silent, absorbed, vigilant, he sits with the magic, truth-telling paper on his knee, and watches

sail and water and sky. Infallibly he guides his craft. Our voyage is only some two hundred miles, but a ship in motion is a ship in danger, and any sort of accident may happen within the length of a single mile. Vigilance must not cease for a moment. Before the voyage ended, his admiring crew saw the captain extricate his vessel from dangers not a few, once at least by main strength. Daring, skilful, ever ready in resource was our master mariner, and at our journey's end it were hard to say whether admiration or affection dominated in the mind of the ship's company. Fuller's eulogy on Drake portrays the captain nature once for all. "In matters especially of moment, he was never wont to rely on other men's care, how trusty or skilful soever they might seem to be, but always contemning danger, and refusing no toyl; he was wont himself to be one (who ever was a second) at every turn where courage, skill or industry was to be employed." One unfading memory of this golden voyage is of the captain at the tiller, rather like a blonde, blue-eyed bear in oil-skins, against a background of white-patterned lacy wake and luminous sky.

§ 6. I

Guided by the chart and the will of the master mariner, the *Swan* threaded the inside course amid a labyrinth of islands. The south wind blew softly, and, under its gentle impulse, the White Ship sauntered along her course. One promontory is called Owl's Head, which the Haliburton map names Knowle's Head. Somewhere in the forest behind it, the fishermen Connor and Grace killed and scalped the six Indians who had taken them prisoner, and they brought the scalps to Governor Cornwallis. It was a deed of blood and treachery. At the hour of noon when, all over Ultima Thule, congregations of faithful men were at their prayer, we encountered a series of shoals. Forward the Green Hand watched for green water, and from time to time his warning cry admonished the captain how to steer away from sunken rocks. All about was the haunt of the seal. Before the gliding prow, sleek black heads shot noiselessly out of the water, to stare at the intruder on their domain; then as the vessel neared, they plunged beneath the surface, noiselessly, without a ripple, to emerge astern and resume their curious observation. What conclusion they came to, who can say? Only that the low white cloud floating over the floor of the water should not be studied too closely. They seemed to be not unfriendly watchers of our progress, and the game lasted more than an hour. Pleasant Harbour where they played it is well named.

On such a cruise, eating and sleeping are quite secondary considerations. There are so many more interesting things to do,—work the ship, watch the unfolding panorama, landscape and seascape, discourse at large on all manner of themes. A minimum of food is necessary; bread and jam, tomato ketchup and the contents of various tins are the chief of our diet; the small handy, non-explosive, hard-boiled egg is an excellent ration. Meals are served entirely without ceremony, linen or silver on the cabin table, when the *Swan* is at anchor, or they are passed up at odd times, by the temporary sea-cook to the watch on deck, when she is under way. Indispensable is the rich brown, sustaining, refreshing coffee brewed on the well-named "Shipmate" stove over a brisk fire of small coals. Grizzlebeard professes himself a good, plain cook, and served in that capacity during the voyage, winning, be it modestly recorded, golden opinions from captain and crew which were duly logged and included in his discharge. It was the triumph of the trained intellect, and the justification of three university degrees. Properly considered, the ship's galley is a life-saving station where food and drink are made ready for those in extremity, for it needs no demonstration that without food and drink men must inevitably perish. In the *Swan*, the galley was the warm cheerful heart of the little ship. No snobbish partition divided it from the saloon, nor was the cook excluded from the officers' mess. The *Swan* was a happy ship.

We few, we happy few, are viewing the ancient province in a most uncommon way. Not from the deck of a steamer, which must keep far away from these alluring dangers, not in a motor-car which must follow the sinuosities of the coast along roads often far from the water, but like the first voyagers and adventurers we discover the unknown shore. Grizzlebeard's favourite stance was the companion-way with head and shoulders outside the cabin. With eyes only a foot or two above the level of the turbulent water, he sees the shore as a series of pictures sliding past. There at any given moment is a long, shifting section of the deeply indented, serrated coast-line, generally bald, and forbidding. Deep fiords run far up into the land beckoning the White Ship in. Ship Harbour, Spry Bay, Mushaboom, Sheet Harbour, are not mere names on the chart, but sunlit vistas of blue water, defended by islands, with white lighthouses for sentinels, and white-walled hamlets in the distance. And behind that picturesque coast-line is all Ultima Thule, bathed in warm sunshine, its hills and valleys, its tidal rivers and green-diked meadows, its orchards and farms, its stony barrens haunted by moose and red deer, its

pleasant fields and towns and hamlets, and all the men, women and children. We are apart from it all, and watch with unsated eyes the rich and ever changing panorama.

§ 7.

The second day was a fair copy of the first. About three o'clock, off Pope Head, the breeze died away, and then picked up off shore. Far ahead stood up the next long promontory bounding a broad deep bay. For that the *Swan* steered, moving briskly amid the turmoil of a rising sea. Past Taylor Head, she sailed to the mouth of Sheet Harbour, and then beat in against the wind up to a lighthouse on a high bare rock. On the port hand were many islands,—Psyche, Guildford, Salisbury, Carroll, Roach, Malagash, Western,—to name only a few laid down in the chart. The sky was covered with grey cloud, night was coming fast, the wind blew cold. No one but the captain knew the secret of our destination. The harbour stretched inland for miles, with the dreary prospect of tacking, tacking, endlessly tacking to an anchorage in the dark. Ahead we saw a small schooner check on a shoal and hang there for several minutes. And then, turning an unexpected corner, we opened a narrow channel, the piers of a broken bridge dividing it, and a motor-boat approaching loaded to the gunwale with friendly natives. In answer to the captain's hail, a man in the boat cried where the best water was; the *Swan* swept majestically between the midmost piers, and came to anchor in a narrow, calm and land-locked bay. Houses on shore and wharves at the water's edge look strange and unfamiliar. The place is Sober Island. Can the title be honorific, or invidious, or ironical? Visitors came on board interested in the tall spar, the Marconi rig and the rounded deck of the White Ship. The crew, in turn, went ashore and felt the novelty of solid earth under their feet again. All was made snug; the crew turned in; the still moonlight shone down the open companion; and the sunny morning and the tranquil evening were the second day.

§ 8.

Ship-life means early hours and conversing with the forehead of the morning. The *Swan* roused at dawn to find the north wind blowing strong down the narrow channel, crisping the slate-blue water into tiny whitecaps. To beat out would be a wearisome and profitless task, sailing over much water and making little progress. There was nothing for it but to remain at anchor.

Indeed, the wind blew so strong that the single anchor could not hold. Dragging an anchor means danger to vessels large or small; and all on board breathed easier, when the second anchor found good holding-ground. The *Swan* ceased to drift, and remained wind-bound.

In the old days of sail, a vessel might remain wind-bound for days or weeks. Harry Fielding, on his last sad voyage in search of health, knew that form of tedium. On board the *Swan*, in Grizzlebeard's kit-bag was found the infallible counter-charm for boredom, the balm of idleness, the unfailing recourse for empty hours, the magic board of four-and-sixty squares with all its chivalry of kings and queens, bishops and knights and castles. The wind might blow as it liked, and as long as it liked. No matter. The captain and the sea-cook sat absorbed on opposite sides of the cabin-table, and pondered, and smoked, and shifted the red and white pegmen from one hole to another. The world with its importunate cares and responsibilities faded into remotest distance, and only the marchings, attacks and defence of the mimic war had any real existence. As Lady Venus once said:

A summer's day will seem an hour but short,
Being wasted in this time-beguiling sport.

Did not Charles the Twelfth besieged by the Turks at Bender forget his deadly peril in the game and play of chess?

Once the mid-day meal despatched, the captain seemed to smell a change in the weather. Putting his head out of the companion-way, he announced that the wind had shifted to E. S. E., and called all hands on deck. Soon the *Swan* was walking swiftly down the channel which had been barred so long. Once more she followed the inside course, threading a maze of islands across Beaver Harbour and White Island Bay.

It was mid-afternoon when she bade farewell to Sober Island. Only four hours of daylight remained, and the sky was overcast. Once with the dropping light she lost her way amidst the labyrinth. There was nothing for it but heave to and try to recover the trail.

"All we know" said the captain calmly, "is that there's good water between this island and the next."

Some anxious minutes passed while the *Swan* hung in the wind, and all three men scanned the dim low horizon. It was Grizzlebeard's old eyes that found the shadowy, slanting spar which was our guide-post in the bewildering road.

"That's where it ought to be," said the captain, referring to the chart, and put the hesitating *Swan* on her course once more.

At seven, the White Ship came to anchor inside Little Goose Island, a most lonely and desolate spot. The anchorage indicated in the chart did not prove good holding-ground. Once more she dragged; and it was necessary to get all three anchors down, a long and difficult task. The *Swan* then lay practically unsheltered in an open roadstead with numberless islands on either hand. If the wind should rise in the night, there would be danger. When in Liscomb, on her way up the coast, with all anchors down, did not the gales tear them loose, so that all night the yacht pounded on a shoal? Here on the nearest island, a cable length away, stood a deserted, grey-weathered, two-storey, frame house. All the windows were gone, there was no door. The five square openings stared black and silent, with the effect of an eyeless skull. The fixed stare of the desolate habitation was uncanny. That night the crew of the *Swan* slept in their clothes, and their slumbers were neither easy nor deep. And the wind-bound morning and the anxious evening were the third day.

§ 9.

September thirteenth is a famous date, memorable for the Battle of the Plains and the Storm of Delhi. For the *Swan*, the day broke ominously with low-hanging cloud and flying showers. The "scowl of heaven" is no empty phrase. The wind was rising, the glass was low, and in the dull light the whole scene about the anchorage was sadder, wilder, more desolate than in the mournful shades of evening. For miles to seaward, tossing breakers showed the sunken ledges. Once more the *Swan* hurried into a network of islands, shoals and dangers. The navigation was intricate, demanding the whole attention of the sailing-master. Across *Ecum Secum* inlet before a rising westerly wind fled the *Swan*, past *Epee Point*, past *Hawbolt Island*, past *Barren Island*, past *Liscombe* of evil memory. The White Ship sailed as she had never sailed before, tearing through the roughened water, as if racing for her life. Astern the towing dinghy leapt from the top of one bilow to the next, with ear-filling swashing and turmoil. Ahead, the outlook was upon a circle of low-lying islands indistinguishable from solid land. Through them led our path, but no opening was to be descried. Two hours' trial convinced the master that he was standing into danger. The compass was untrustworthy. A slight deviation to the one hand or the other would mean a mile out of our course farther on. So the *Swan* turned in her tracks. "Coming about" was a ticklish business. The two splices in our tall spar showed what had happened on the way up. A trifle of

bad luck, a little clumsy handling, and the mast with its spread of canvas might go over the side a second time and leave the *Swan* a sheer hulk. Such thoughts passed through the brain of Grizzlebeard as he struggled with the main-sheet. With feet braced against the six-inch side of the cock-pit, he hauled the long boom nearer and nearer inboard, and watched the grey clean water swirling under the counter. He thought, "If it should all end here and now—" And he felt no fear. The water death is speedy and clean; four minutes' fight with suffocation; far better than being tied to a chair or nailed to a bed, decaying by degrees. The water was never unfriendly. A swift *coup-de-grace* might be the final kindness of the ancient comrade. But the *Swan* came about handsomely, to the crash of breaking crockery, and clattering pans in the galley, behaving like the lady that she is, and started on a return trip—whither? Every minute the weather was growing worse. Shelter must be founded in some near port or bay. The problem was—Which one?—Where? Halfway out of the companion-way Grizzlebeard read aloud from the pilot book issued by a paternal government for the safeguarding of mariners. There was choice of Wine Harbour, St. Mary's River, Gegogan, Liscombe; but, according to the book, each was beset by formidable difficulties, especially with the wind in this quarter. No master, ran the warning, should attempt to enter, without a pilot, etc., etc.

"They try to scare you to death", was the captain's smiling comment, "so that, in case of accident, they won't be blamed."

One harbour refuge after another was rejected as too perilous; and at last the *Swan* was headed straight for the high, bleak, rain-swept coast, where chart alleged that Gegogan lay. To the eye there was no opening in the forbidding barrier of ancient stone. On sped the White Ship in the rain between Redman and Barrachois, and still no opening appeared in the rocky wall.

"Here", said the captain, quoting from the pilot-book with his confident smile, "is where we take on the pilot."

Faster flew the *Swan*, and higher loomed the shore. The dinghy towing astern must have fancied herself a seaplane as she swished over the surface of the waves. Then within the last mile the entrance to Gegogan Harbour was discernible. The chart had not deceived us. There lay our port. A few minutes more, and the *Swan* had found the gateway, had glided into the smooth water of a land-locked bay, and drew up beside an anchored schooner. A local poet has sung "Chegoggin's fields of waving grain", but if any grain had grown, it was now in the garner. Only one forlorn-looking frame house stood on a rise beside the snug harbour.

Once more there was leisure to eat, to rest, to play at chess. A night in one's clothes does not conduce to comfort or self-respect. They come, in the Biblical phrase, to "abhor you." But a dip overside in the clean salt water thrilling with the peculiar September tang cooled the fevered skin and calmed the strained nerves. After supper came yarns in the cabin spun from berth to berth; and the captain told of his first voyage out of Saint John, when the whole firm-stowed deckload of lumber went over the side the very night his ship left port. And the stormy morning and the peaceful evening were the fourth day.

§ 10.

According to some ancient writers, the Fates are the daughters of the Sea. Perhaps that is why the Sisters Three arranged this cruise of the *Swan* as drama, each day being a separate Act filled with varied scenes, and each Act differing in character from all the rest, giving to them relief, opposition, contrast and support. Light and shade were artfully distributed by these experienced play-wrights; suspense was well maintained, and there was a happy ending. September the fourteenth was the richest of the Six Golden Days. It was the Day of the Long Jump, and it began *andante*.

Having in mind the weather of the previous day, the captain roused the crew at the earliest light, and got the *Swan* under way. Grizzlebeard will never forget the glories of that dawn. It was as if the lowering skies and screaming wind of yesterday had never been, as if the angry weather were but the memory of an evil dream swiftly fading in a heavenly peace. The air was pure crystal. The dark, rough, stormy road we travelled yesterday was now, as we retraced our steps, a level shining floor, like transparent glass, only blurred here and there by touches of the dawn wind. Over it the *Swan* moved as softly as a shadow. Besides the White Ship with white sails, the only other tenant of the universe was the single white star hanging low in the eastern sky. There is magic in the morning hour; its hands are filled with gold. To the Greeks, Eos was a goddess opening the portals of the East with rosy fingers. To young John Milton, she was the mother of that Joy he dreamed might companion him through life. Our own Canadian singer, her sweet voice stilled untimely, made her prayer,

Oh, keep the world for ever at the dawn.

At such an hour as this, these matters are easy to understand. All round is the comment writ large. Poetry is good to read, a solace

for the chimney-corner, when the winds whistle shrill, but here and now the soul attuned is living poetry.

Through the ineffable freshness and quiet, the *Swan* moves slowly, towards the well-named Wedge Island, a hard, lonely rock, carrying a needful lighthouse. All at once, a narrow, intenser illumination shows at one point on the sea-rim. It blazes up swiftly and a surprising fiery globe rises out of the ocean. It was as if it shone for the first time upon the new created world.

Nor dim, nor red, like God's own head
The glorious sun uprist.

Over the ocean streams the glad light flowed; the breeze freshened at once; the little ship quickened her pace; the water roughened; and soon over the southern horizon faint white clouds began to climb the sky. The enchanted hour of dawn was over; the day had begun, the day most crowded with adventure for the *Swan*.

Under the sway of the ever freshening breeze, the White Ship showed what she could do. Sweetly she sailed, and gaily, as if she too enjoyed the fresh air, the clear light, and her own fleet-foot progress through the blue water. Past Cape St. Mary, past Indian Harbour, she sped to Mocodome. High on its rocky promontory stood white Port Bickerton, and far out to sea the ledges Castor and Pollux showed their place by tossing sheets and fountains of sun-shot spray. Into Country Harbour the *Swan* turned and ran by the end of a low, treeless island, where the pirates of the *Saladin* piled up their bloodstained barque, with all sails set, even to the royals. On and on, with dipping wing flew the *Swan*, by Coddle Island, by New Harbour Cove to Berry Head, into Tor Bay and through a maze of islands to White Head. Hereabout on September 13th, 1809, Captain John Stairs sprang over the taffrail of the *Three Sisters* to escape from murderous Ned Jordan. Through these islands, Ensign Prenties of the 84th Royal Emigrants made his way with his Indian guides, his despatches and survivors of the *St. Lawrence* in April, 1781, and saw more American picaroons hovering off shore. All the *Swan* encountered was a solitary little schooner sword-fishing, strolling along under mainsail and jib. One man steered, one man was perched on each mast, and the fourth stood in the pulpit at the bow, harpoon in hand.

Once round Dover Head, the *Swan* scurried to Dover Island, swept through Dover Run and into Dover Bay. By this time the wind was blowing fiercely, and the little white clouds were mounting the sky in long parallel lines. At the shoreward end of Dover

Bay lies Little Dover Run, a narrow, deep channel between White Island and the mainland. Through this strait the *Swan* raced dead before the wind, the end of the boom almost brushing the trees on one side, and the shadow of her tall mast measuring the shore on the other. It was a nerve-stirring passage, over too soon and never to be forgotten. But the wind was too strong for safety. The silent captain must have had fears for his wounded spar, and he resolved to anchor in a small round bay the at end of the Run. Accordingly the *Swan* swerved sharply to port, lowered sail, nosed into the end of the bight and dropped anchor. But the wind blew too strong against the mass of the hull, the anchor would not hold, and the yacht drifted helplessly towards the rocky shore. There followed some anxious minutes during which it seemed highly probable that the cruise would end there and then. But the captain was equal to the emergency. Leaving the tiller, he cut the spanker-boom free from its lashings, and by main strength fended the vessel off the rocks. Having succeeded in getting the vessel under control again, he sailed over his anchors, and put out perforce into the broad, wind-whipped expanse of St. Andrew's Passage. Now there was no possible shelter or anchorage for the *Swan* nearer than the ancient fishing station of Canso. To reach that port was imperative. Getting the weed-hung anchors inboard, securing them, and putting the anchor-warps in order kept the crew busy below. The master had his own unspoken anxieties for the safety of the ship. When all was snug below, the Green Hand went forward to look out for shoal water, Grizzlebeard "made up the back-stay", as occasion demanded, and the captain steered. A long hour dragged out its anxious minutes. Through St. Andrew's Passage the *Swan* sped into Glasgow Bay and on to Glasgow Head. The tall mast of the Marconi station beckoned us from its height. Under the bank was a party of bathers. Knowing what he knew, the captain prophesied a "dusting" when we rounded Glasgow Head, and ordered the crew into oilskins.

As the *Swan* rounded the point, Cranberry Light came into view, a white tower banded with red, far to seaward. Now the wind blew fiercely, dead in our teeth. We opened a broad stretch of tormented blue water covered with white-caps. Up this channel we must tack and tack again, to and fro, making scanty gains until we reached safety. The *Swan* heeled over to the limit allowed by her leaden fin-keel. It was the utmost she could do. We were soon drenched; we were dazzled by the sun in our faces, as we watched the banks and the buoys marking the channel, and noted our slow progress. "Making up the back-stay" when the mast

swayed like a whip was swiftly imperative, for the wind was screaming now. Far ahead we could descry a dozen wind-bound schooners anchored side by side. Slowly, painfully but gallantly the *Swan* fought her way towards her desired haven. Stretch followed stretch, and then the captain swung his vessel just under the stern of three grimy colliers. Blackened faces grinned at us over the bulwarks, as we flew past, and then we were inside the narrow slit of a harbour called the Tickle, with wharves and vessels on both sides. Now the danger threatened was collision. With her way checked, the *Swan* made for the right hand wharf,—the wind carried her away before a line could be got ashore,—the yacht began to drift. Seeing our plight, two men, with the sailor's natural impulse to aid a vessel in distress, put off in a boat from the sky-blue sword-fisher *True Love*. But before they could reach us, the *Swan* swung to the opposite shore,—this time the line was flung with better luck,—a man on the wharf seized it.

“A sailor's benison! Don't let her rub!”

shouted the captain—the crew fended off from the wharf-side with their bare hands—and the next moment the *Swan* was at rest, lying strangely quiet beside the quay. The most exciting part of the cruise was over, fifty miles had been covered in eleven hours; the hour was four precisely. The tension was ended, and quite permissibly, Nereus crowned our cups. *Cras ingens iterabimus aequor.*

The next stage of the cruise means crossing over a broad stretch of sea to the island which was once called Royal. Its capital bore the name of a long line of kings. Once it was a city of ten thousand inhabitants. Once it was the outlying bastion of a European power in the New World. It sustained two world-famous sieges. To-day this city of kings is a fenceless desolation like Nineveh and Tyre. To reach this island, the *Swan* must traverse twenty-five miles of open water, where, on her way down, she was dismasted, and saved only by the captain's consummate seamanship. If the wind should blow to-morrow as it did to-day, and assail the *Swan* in the open.....

That night, after a good supper, there was a council of war in the cabin. With the falling glass and the prospect of a heavy gale, was it best to remain in the Tickle, or to proceed on our voyage as far as St. Peter's? The wind had moderated, the moon turned darkness into day; running by night would be another experience; and twenty-five sea-miles left behind would be so much clear gain. On the other hand, there was no passing through the canal

by night. Waiting at St. Peter's was almost the same as waiting in the Tickle. The decision was to remain at our moorings; it turned out to be wise. And the tranquil morning and the secure, tame evening were the fifth day.

§ 11.

That was a short night, not much longer than the middle watch. It was mere glimmering dark, not dawn, when the *Swan* cast off from the wharf at Canso and glided softly through the anchored colliers out on the dim, uncertain sea. An entering steam-trawler was keenly interested in the White Ship's towering spar and strange rig. Then the sun rose once more "like God's own head", and the dawn-wind blew prosperously for us across the ruffling blue. Here the *Swan* proved herself. Making merry speed, she walked along in her appointed course, in perfect trim, the steersman hardly needing to lay his finger on the tiller. Thus we crossed the expanse of Chedabucto Bay in the cheerful morning, as Saint Luc de La Corne crossed it in the dead of night in 1761. The wind blew strong, but did not yet even threaten the violence of the day before. Midway we spoke a trader, which is at once a ship, a shop, and a home. The skipper, his wife and two children well wrapped against the cold came on deck to watch the passing of the *Swan* and to comment on her tall mast. Isle Madame from being a dark blur on the far northern horizon changed to red shores and cultivated fields and comfortable houses set close together. Beside the larger island to seaward lies Petit de Grat, where Tonge in the *Little Jack* beat the two Marblehead privateers. By nine, the *Swan* was in the wide and lovely bay of St. Peter's where a new experience awaited her, to wit, a canal.

The island once called Royal is split lengthwise by the two long lakes of the Golden Arm. All that prevents it being two islands is a strip of land measuring but a bare half-mile across. In older days, this isthmus was aptly christened Haulover, because small craft could be dragged by ox-team from one water to the other. Then the canal was dug to follow the natural contours, as planned by Francis Hall, surveyor, in 1823. A single lock suffices to lift or lower the passing vessel, according to its need.

Why have poets never sung the strange beauty of canals? Goldsmith indeed calls the Dutch canal "slow", and with justice; the canal is a synonym for "tardiness of locomotion." The Grand Canal of Venice, a water street of palaces, stands alone in its excelling beauty. But such a creation of human hands was possible once

only in the history of the world. Our Canadian poets might well find inspiring themes in our "common Canadian" canals. To contrive that vessels shall climb over twenty-seven miles of land, go up hill and then down hill as at Welland, is a triumph of man's intellect and will. Masts against the sky-line of vessels to all seeming hopelessly aground in green fields, and other masts mounting up to them step by step, is a sight to evoke a song. The dreaming, heron-haunted Rideau forgotten by the world might point the moral of a poem on the futility of warlike scheming. In itself a canallock is a picturesque object. The massive masonry, the slow-swinging gates, the mechanic water welling in or flooding out lend themselves to painting; and the dams, backwaters, feeding-ponds are often full of charm. A canal is not a ditch; it is a series of marine adventures.

So at St. Peter's the *Swan* lay for an hour with lowered sails in the single lock, while the crew stretched their legs on shore. Here the captain was once more in his own country. Every man knew him and greeted him as a friend in the courteous low-toned speech of the Gael. The ground was well worth exploring. Here stood the very fort which Nicholas Denys built in the days of *le Roi Soleil*. To this seventeenth century fish merchant, interested chiefly in the taking and curing of cod, the world owes the tragic tale of Fort St. John, glorified by the heroism of Marie de la Tour and darkened by the shame of Charnisay. The outline of his fort may still be traced. On the other side of the bay, on a hill overgrown by spruce trees within the memory of living men, is the old redoubt of Fort Somerset. It was built to command the bay, but no gun was ever mounted in any one of these mouldering embrasures. A hole in the ground showed where the natives had been digging for hidden treasure. Night is the only prosperous time for such a search. Tales were told by the guides of French gold found, of coin unearthed and lost again. After an invigorating scramble through the undergrowth down the hill to the yacht, there followed a "gam" in the cabin. Once more Nereus crowned the cups—it was hard to find enough of them—of captain, crew and captain's friends, the lock-tender, the village blacksmith, the fisher of sword-fish, the lighthouse keeper, *et al.*

Too soon the good hour in the canal ended. The high banks on both sides sheltered from the fresh wind, and let the sun have his will. Sped by good wishes and a favourable breeze, the *Swan* passed from the northern end of the canal into the last of the archipelagos she was to traverse in this cruise. Spar-buoys, "cans", and other marks became once more matters of absorbing

interest as the White Ship threaded a fairy-land of green islands, a summer pleasance, waiting only for the summer dwellers to enter in and take possession. Thenceforward her path lay due north, aligned for the Polar Star. The island-sprinkled channel broadened out into the great twin lakes of the Golden Arm lit by the sun, swept by the wind, and watched all round by the high unchanging hills. The expected and dreaded gale never came. On that last day of all, wind and weather showed themselves in their friendliest mood. The so-called lakes are really an inland sea, but without the restless roll and heave of the Atlantic. Now, with the wind fair, the dangers all past, the skipper took his watch below and the Green Hand steered. Basking at length on the sunny fore-deck, and sunk in a pleasant silence, Grizzlebeard watched the changing scene. High overhead an eagle sailed the air, as the *Swan* sailed the water, keeping equal pace and direction with the vessel. It was a lucky omen.

Before the unswerving bow, the blue empty water was peaceful as a dream. Merely to pore on the sun-shot world was a good joy. Continually new phases of the scene appeared, melted into other phases, and fell behind. Sunlight and cloud-shadow brightened and gloomed along the high green wood shore. As the sea-miles slipped into the *Swan's* wake, the cobweb barrier of the long railway bridge at Grand Narrows became plainer and more plain. But the massive steel structure was no obstacle to the *Swan*. At her unhesitating approach, a section of the bridge swung round and made a gap, through which she swept with regal gait. The second lake was a repetition of the first. Sun and wind continued their friendship to the *Swan*. In the distance a green point rose up from the shore-line and grew taller and more clearly defined. Then, on the summit of "Fair Mountain" a skeleton tower of steel could be made out. Halfway up the cliff hung the white lodge of Old Merlin the wonder-worker, whose name is known all the world over. In another hour he will greet the captain and the crew.

The end comes all too soon. Unerringly, the *Swan* makes for her familiar moorings in front of the shops, where Merlin worked his wonders. She folds her wings, comes to a halt, and is once more servilely tethered by a length of rope to a floating spar. Boats put off from the shore. The skipper's children from the bungalow clamber over the side to embrace him. A brother mariner from another yacht reports his capture of a swordfish the day before. The sails are furled and gasketed, the boom is crotched, the decks are swept for the last time. The cruise is over.

* * * * *

A happy ending. Six days of hard work, scanty fare, broken sleep, and not infrequent peril have passed all too soon. As they sped, they were filled to the brim with living; and they will remain in the memory one entire and perfect sestet of days and nights, such as are rarely granted to mortal man. The only drop of bitter in the cup is the thought that the golden time is past. It brought many gifts, that brief time of free living between ocean and sky. The four walls of any dwelling will seem a prison, in which the lungs can hardly draw the air. The brain is swept clean of cobwebs; the nerves have learned their place. Muscles have toughened and palms have grown hard. On the retina of the inward eye will remain ineffaceable aquarelles of the wildly beautiful coast of Ultima Thule. Perhaps the greatest gain is the treasure of a new friendship created by the rude life and perils shared in common.