

CHAPTER XVIII

Rounding the "Cape of Storms" in olden time--A rough Christmas--The *Spray* ties up for a three months' rest at Cape Town--A railway trip to the Transvaal--President Kruger's odd definition of the *Spray*'s voyage--His terse sayings--Distinguished guests on the *Spray* --Cocoanut fiber as a padlock--Courtesies from the admiral of the Queen's navy--Off for St. Helena--Land in sight.

The Cape of Good Hope was now the most prominent point to pass. From Table Bay I could count on the aid of brisk trades, and then the *Spray* would soon be at home. On the first day out from Durban it fell calm, and I sat thinking about these things and the end of the voyage. The distance to Table Bay, where I intended to call, was about eight hundred miles over what might prove a rough sea. The early Portuguese navigators, endowed with patience, were more than sixty-nine years struggling to round this cape before they got as far as Algoa Bay, and there the crew mutinied. They landed on a small island, now called Santa Cruz, where they devoutly set up the cross, and swore they would cut the captain's throat if he attempted to sail farther. Beyond this they thought was the edge of the world, which they too believed was flat; and fearing that their ship would sail over the brink of it, they compelled Captain Diaz, their commander, to retrace his course, all being only too glad to get home. A year later, we are told, Vasco da Gama sailed successfully round the "Cape of Storms," as the Cape of Good Hope was then called, and discovered Natal on Christmas or Natal day; hence the name. From this point the way to India was easy.

Gales of wind sweeping round the cape even now were frequent enough, one occurring, on an average, every thirty-six hours; but one gale was much the same as another, with no more serious result than to blow the *Spray* along on her course when it was fair, or to blow her back somewhat when it was ahead. On Christmas, 1897, I came to the pitch of the cape. On this day the *Spray* was trying to stand on her head, and she gave me every reason to believe that she would accomplish the feat before night. She began very early in the morning to pitch and toss about in a most unusual manner, and I have to record that, while I was at the end of the bowsprit reefing the jib, she ducked me under water three times for a Christmas box. I got wet and did not like it a bit: never in any other sea was I put under more than once in the same short space of time, say three minutes. A large English steamer passing ran up the signal, "Wishing you a Merry Christmas." I think the captain was a humorist; his own ship was throwing her propeller out of water.

Two days later, the *Spray*, having recovered the distance lost in the gale, passed Cape Agulhas in company with the steamship *Scotsman*, now with a fair wind. The keeper of the light on Agulhas exchanged signals with the *Spray* as she passed, and afterward wrote me at New York congratulations on the completion of the voyage. He seemed to

think the incident of two ships of so widely different types passing his cape together worthy of a place on canvas, and he went about having the picture made. So I gathered from his letter. At lonely stations like this hearts grow responsive and sympathetic, and even poetic. This feeling was shown toward the *Spray* along many a rugged coast, and reading many a kind signal thrown out to her gave one a grateful feeling for all the world.

One more gale of wind came down upon the *Spray* from the west after she passed Cape Agulhas, but that one she dodged by getting into Simons Bay. When it moderated she beat around the Cape of Good Hope, where they say the *Flying Dutchman* is still sailing. The voyage then seemed as good as finished; from this time on I knew that all, or nearly all, would be plain sailing.

Here I crossed the dividing-line of weather. To the north it was clear and settled, while south it was humid and squally, with, often enough, as I have said, a treacherous gale. From the recent hard weather the *Spray* ran into a calm under Table Mountain, where she lay quietly till the generous sun rose over the land and drew a breeze in from the sea.

The steam-tug *Alert*, then out looking for ships, came to the *Spray* off the Lion's Rump, and in lieu of a larger ship towed her into port. The sea being smooth, she came to anchor in the bay off the city of Cape Town, where she remained a day, simply to rest clear of the bustle of commerce. The good harbor-master sent his steam-launch to bring the sloop to a berth in dock at once, but I preferred to remain for one day alone, in the quiet of a smooth sea, enjoying the retrospect of the passage of the two great capes. On the following morning the *Spray* sailed into the Alfred Dry-docks, where she remained for about three months in the care of the port authorities, while I traveled the country over from Simons Town to Pretoria, being accorded by the colonial government a free railroad pass over all the land.

The trip to Kimberley, Johannesburg, and Pretoria was a pleasant one. At the last-named place I met Mr. Kruger, the Transvaal president. His Excellency received me cordially enough; but my friend Judge Beyers, the gentleman who presented me, by mentioning that I was on a voyage around the world, unwittingly gave great offense to the venerable statesman, which we both regretted deeply. Mr. Kruger corrected the judge rather sharply, reminding him that the world is flat. "You don't mean round the world," said the president; "it is impossible! You mean in the world. Impossible!" he said, "impossible!" and not another word did he utter either to the judge or to me. The judge looked at me and I looked at the judge, who should have known his ground, so to speak, and Mr. Kruger glowered at us both. My friend the judge seemed embarrassed, but I was delighted; the incident pleased me more than anything else that could have happened. It was a nugget of information quarried out of Oom Paul, some of whose sayings are famous. Of the English he said, "They took first my coat and then my

trousers." He also said, "Dynamite is the corner-stone of the South African Republic." Only unthinking people call President Kruger dull.

Soon after my arrival at the cape, Mr. Kruger's friend Colonel Saunderson, [Footnote: Colonel Saunderson was Mr. Kruger's very best friend, inasmuch as he advised the president to avast mounting guns.] who had arrived from Durban some time before, invited me to Newlands Vineyard, where I met many agreeable people. His Excellency Sir Alfred Milner, the governor, found time to come aboard with a party. The governor, after making a survey of the deck, found a seat on a box in my cabin; Lady Muriel sat on a keg, and Lady Saunderson sat by the skipper at the wheel, while the colonel, with his kodak, away in the dinghy, took snap shots of the sloop and her distinguished visitors. Dr. David Gill, astronomer royal, who was of the party, invited me the next day to the famous Cape Observatory. An hour with Dr. Gill was an hour among the stars. His discoveries in stellar photography are well known. He showed me the great astronomical clock of the observatory, and I showed him the tin clock on the *Spray*, and we went over the subject of standard time at sea, and how it was found from the deck of the little sloop without the aid of a clock of any kind. Later it was advertised that Dr. Gill would preside at a talk about the voyage of the *Spray*: that alone secured for me a full house. The hall was packed, and many were not able to get in. This success brought me sufficient money for all my needs in port and for the homeward voyage.

After visiting Kimberley and Pretoria, and finding the *Spray* all right in the docks, I returned to Worcester and Wellington, towns famous for colleges and seminaries, passed coming in, still traveling as the guest of the colony. The ladies of all these institutions of learning wished to know how one might sail round the world alone, which I thought augured of sailing-mistresses in the future instead of sailing-masters. It will come to that yet if we men-folk keep on saying we "can't."

On the plains of Africa I passed through hundreds of miles of rich but still barren land, save for scrub-bushes, on which herds of sheep were browsing. The bushes grew about the length of a sheep apart, and they, I thought, were rather long of body; but there was still room for all. My longing for a foothold on land seized upon me here, where so much of it lay waste; but instead of remaining to plant forests and reclaim vegetation, I returned again to the *Spray* at the Alfred Docks, where I found her waiting for me, with everything in order, exactly as I had left her.

I have often been asked how it was that my vessel and all appurtenances were not stolen in the various ports where I left her for days together without a watchman in charge. This is just how it was: The *Spray* seldom fell among thieves. At the Keeling Islands, at Rodriguez, and at many such places, a wisp of cocoanut fiber in the door-latch, to indicate that the owner was away, secured the goods against even a longing glance. But when I came to a great island nearer home, stout locks were needed; the first night in port things

which I had always left uncovered disappeared, as if the deck on which they were stowed had been swept by a sea.

A pleasant visit from Admiral Sir Harry Rawson of the Royal Navy and his family brought to an end the *Spray's* social relations with the Cape of Good Hope. The admiral, then commanding the South African Squadron, and now in command of the great Channel fleet, evinced the greatest interest in the diminutive *Spray* and her behavior off Cape Horn, where he was not an entire stranger. I have to admit that I was delighted with the trend of Admiral Rawson's questions, and that I profited by some of his suggestions, notwithstanding the wide difference in our respective commands.

On March 26, 1898, the *Spray* sailed from South Africa, the land of distances and pure air, where she had spent a pleasant and profitable time. The steam-tug *Tigre* towed her to sea from her wonted berth at the Alfred Docks, giving her a good offing. The light morning breeze, which scantily filled her sails when the tug let go the tow-line, soon died away altogether, and left her riding over a heavy swell, in full view of Table Mountain and the high peaks of the Cape of Good Hope. For a while the grand scenery served to relieve the monotony. One of the old circumnavigators (Sir Francis Drake, I think), when he first saw this magnificent pile, sang, "'T is the fairest thing and the grandest cape I've seen in the whole circumference of the earth."

The view was certainly fine, but one has no wish to linger long to look in a calm at anything, and I was glad to note, finally, the short heaving sea, precursor of the wind which followed on the second day. Seals playing about the *Spray* all day, before the breeze came, looked with large eyes when, at evening, she sat no longer like a lazy bird with folded wings. They parted company now, and the *Spray* soon sailed the highest peaks of the mountains out of sight, and the world changed from a mere panoramic view to the light of a homeward-bound voyage. Porpoises and dolphins, and such other fishes as did not mind making a hundred and fifty miles a day, were her companions now for several days. The wind was from the southeast; this suited the *Spray* well, and she ran along steadily at her best speed, while I dipped into the new books given me at the cape, reading day and night. March 30 was for me a fast-day in honor of them. I read on, oblivious of hunger or wind or sea, thinking that all was going well, when suddenly a comber rolled over the stern and slopped saucily into the cabin, wetting the very book I was reading. Evidently it was time to put in a reef, that she might not wallow on her course.

March 31 the fresh southeast wind had come to stay. The *Spray* was running under a single-reefed mainsail, a whole jib, and a flying-jib besides, set on the *Vailima* bamboo, while I was reading Stevenson's delightful "Inland Voyage." The sloop was again doing her work smoothly, hardly rolling at all, but just leaping along among the white horses, a thousand gamboling porpoises keeping her company on all sides. She was again among her old friends the flying-fish, interesting denizens of the sea. Shooting out of the waves like

arrows, and with outstretched wings, they sailed on the wind in graceful curves; then falling till again they touched the crest of the waves to wet their delicate wings and renew the flight. They made merry the livelong day. One of the joyful sights on the ocean of a bright day is the continual flight of these interesting fish.

One could not be lonely in a sea like this. Moreover, the reading of delightful adventures enhanced the scene. I was now in the *Spray* and on the *Oise* in the *Arethusa* at one and the same time. And so the *Spray* reeled off the miles, showing a good ran every day till April 11, which came almost before I knew it. Very early that morning I was awakened by that rare bird, the booby, with its harsh quack, which I recognized at once as a call to go on deck; it was as much as to say, "Skipper, there's land in sight." I tumbled out quickly, and sure enough, away ahead in the dim twilight, about twenty miles off, was St. Helena.

My first impulse was to call out, "Oh, what a speck in the sea!" It is in reality nine miles in length and two thousand eight hundred and twenty-three feet in height. I reached for a bottle of port-wine out of the locker, and took a long pull from it to the health of my invisible helmsman--the pilot of the *Pinta* .