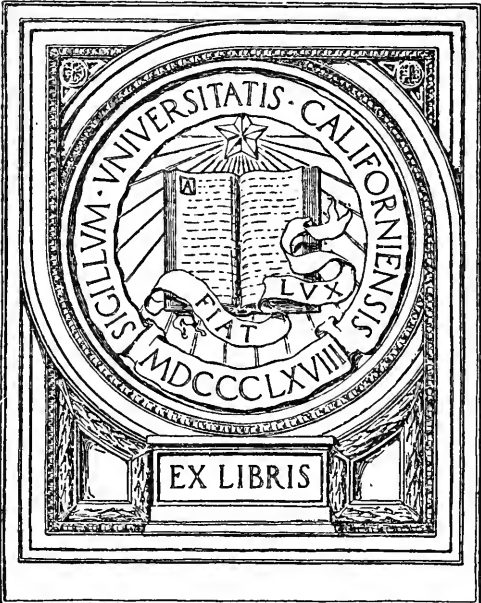
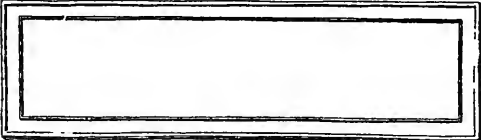


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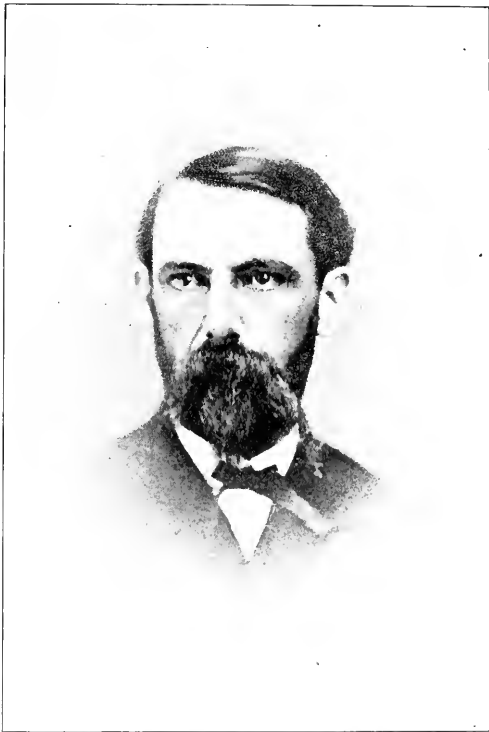
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**THE LAST CRUISE OF  
THE SAGINAW**







LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER MONTGOMERY SICARD



# THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

BY

GEORGE H. READ

PAY INSPECTOR, U. S. N. (RETIRED)

*With Illustrations from Sketches by Lieutenant  
Commander (afterwards Rear-Admiral)  
Sicard and from Contemporary  
Photographs*



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SIR

**THIS BOOK**  
**IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THE NOBLE**  
**MEN WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN THE**  
**EFFORT TO OBTAIN RELIEF FOR**  
**THEIR SHIPWRECKED**  
**COMRADES**

186478



## PREFACE

DEAR MR. READ:—

I am greatly obliged to you for letting me read your deeply interesting account of the wreck of the poor Saginaw and the loss of Lieutenant Talbot. With General Cutter's approval I shall take the manuscript with me to Boston, but I will return it carefully.

I leave the two photographs, but I have the curious drawing and newspaper scraps, which I will safely return.

Very truly yours,

EDWARD E. HALE.

Dec. 21, 1880.

WASHINGTON.

A recent re-reading of the above old letter from a friend who in his lifetime stood so high

( vii )

## PREFACE

in the literary world, has, together with the suggestions of other friends and shipmates, decided me to launch my narrative of the cruise and wreck of the Saginaw on the sea of publicity.

The story itself may be lost in the immense current of literature constantly pouring forth, but some good friends advise me to the contrary.

The fact that stories of sea life and adventure have ever possessed the power to attract the interest and stir the imagination, adds to the courage given me to set forth my plain unadorned story without any pretensions to literary excellence.

Some of the first instructions given to a newly fledged naval officer enjoin upon him the necessity for brevity and directness in his official communications, both oral and written, and eventually he becomes addicted to formal expressions that pervade his entire cor-

## PREFACE

respondence. Eloquence or sentiment would probably be crushed with a reprimand. I trust, therefore, that the reader will consider the above conditions as they have surrounded me throughout my service, should he or she find a lack of decorative language in my narrative.

To my mind, as a participant in the related events, there is material in the story to rival the fictions of Fenimore Cooper or Marryat, and I think that the heroes who gave up their lives in the effort to save their shipmates should stand as high on the roll of fame as do those lost amid battle smoke and carnage.

G. H. R.

August 16, 1911.





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# THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

## I

### THE BEGINNING OF THE CRUISE

DURING the winter of 1869-70 the United States Steamer Saginaw was being repaired at the Mare Island Navy Yard, and her officers and crew were recuperating after a cruise on the west coast of Mexico, — a trying one for all hands on board as well as for the vessel itself.

The “Alta-Californian” of San Francisco published the following soon after our return from the Mexican coast. It is all that need be said of the cruise. We were all very glad to have it behind us and forget it.

The Saginaw, lately returned from the Mexican coast, had a pretty severe experience during her

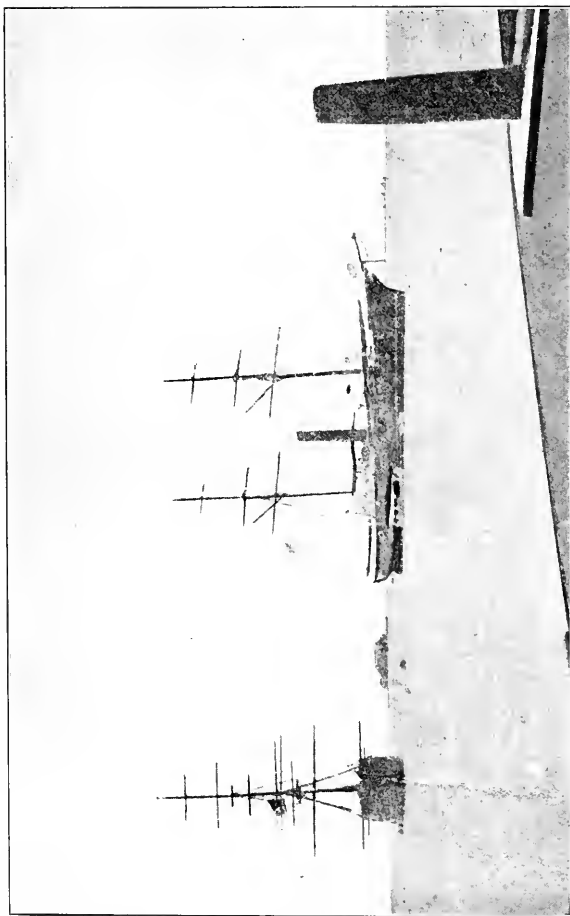
## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

short cruise. At Manzanillo she contracted the coast fever, a form of remittent, and at one time had twenty-five cases, but a single death, however, occurring.

On the way up, most of the time under sail, the machinery being disabled, the voyage was so prolonged that when she arrived at San Francisco there was not a half-day's allowance of provisions on board and for many days the officers had been on "ship's grub."

Our repairs and refitting were but preliminary to another (and the last) departure of the Saginaw from her native land. Our captain, Lieutenant-Commander Montgomery Sicard, had received orders to proceed to the Midway Islands, *via* Honolulu, and to comply with instructions that will appear later in these pages. (I should explain here that the commanding officer of a single vessel is usually addressed as "Captain," whatever his real rank may be, and I shall use that term throughout my narrative.)





**U. S. STEAMER SAGINAW — FOURTH-RATE**

Built at the Navy Yard, Mare Island, California, in 1859



## THE BEGINNING OF THE CRUISE

In a northwesterly direction from the Sandwich Islands there stretches for over a thousand miles a succession of coral reefs and shoals, with here and there a sandy islet thrown up by the winds and waves. They are mostly bare of vegetation beyond a stunted growth of bushes. These islets are called "atolls" by geographers, and their foundations are created by the mysterious "polyyps" or coral insects.

These atolls abound in the Pacific Ocean, and rising but a few feet above the surface, surrounded by uncertain and uncharted currents, are the dread of navigators.

Near the centre of the North Pacific and near the western end of the chain of atolls above mentioned, are two small sand islands in the usual lagoon, with a coral reef enclosing both. They were discovered by an American captain, N. C. Brooks, of the Hawaiian bark *Gambia*, and by him reported; were sub-

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

sequently visited by the United States Steamer Lackawanna and surveyed for charting.

No importance other than the danger to navigation was at that time attached to these mere sandbanks. Now, however, the trans-Pacific railroads, girdling the continent and making valuable so many hitherto insignificant places, have cast their influence three thousand miles across the waters to these obscure islets. The expected increase of commerce between the United States and the Orient has induced the Pacific Mail Steamship Company to look for a halfway station as a coaling-depot, and these, the Midway Islands, are expected to answer the purpose when the proposed improvements are made. To do the work of deepening a now shallow channel through the reef, a contract has been awarded to an experienced submarine engineer and the Saginaw has been brought into service to transport men and material. Our captain is

## THE BEGINNING OF THE CRUISE

to superintend and to report monthly on the progress made. Thus, with the voyages out and return, coupled with the several trips between the Midways and Honolulu, we have the prospect of a year's deep-water cruising to our credit.

*February 22, 1870.* Once more separated from home and friends, with the Golden Gate dissolving astern in a California fog (than which none can be more dense). Old Neptune gives us a boisterous welcome to his dominions, and the howling of wind through the rigging, with the rolling and pitching of the ship as we steam out to sea, where we meet the full force of a stiff "southeaster," remind us that we are once more his subjects.

On the fourteenth day out we heard the welcome cry of "Land ho!" at sunrise from the masthead. It proved to be the island of Molokai, and the next day, March 9, we

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

passed into the harbor of Honolulu on the island of Oahu. We found that our arrival was expected, and the ship was soon surrounded by canoes of natives, while crowds of people were on the wharves.

After six days spent in refitting and obtaining fresh food and ship-stores, we took up our westward course with memories of pleasant and hospitable treatment, both officially and socially, from the native and foreign people. Nothing happened outside of the usual routine of sea life until March 24, when we sighted the Midway Islands, and at 8 P.M. were anchored in Welles's Harbor, so called, although there is barely room in it to swing the ship. The island is a desolate-looking place — the eastern end of it covered with brown albatross and a few seal apparently asleep on the beach. We can see the white sand drifting about with the wind like snow. The next day a schooner arrived with the con-

## THE BEGINNING OF THE CRUISE

tractor's supplies and lumber for a dwelling and a scow, the latter to be used by the divers in their outside work. There also arrived, towards night, a strong gale. It blew so hard that with both anchors down the engines had to be worked constantly to prevent drifting either on the island or the reef.

During the month of April work both afloat and ashore was steadily pushed. The contractor's house was set up and the divers' scow completed and launched. In addition, a thorough survey of the entire reef and bar was completed.

Our several trips between the Midways and Honolulu need but brief mention. They were slow and monotonous, being made mostly under sail. The Saginaw was not built for that purpose. On one occasion, on account of head winds, we made but twenty miles on our course in two days.

The last return to the Midways came on

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

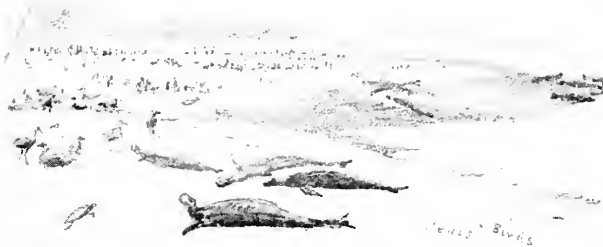
October 12, and the appropriation of \$50,000 having been expended, our captain proceeded to carry out his orders directing him to take on board the contractor's workmen with their tools and stores and transport them to San Francisco.

We found the shore party all well and looking forward with pleasure to the closing day of their contract. They certainly have had the monotonous and irksome end of the business, although we have not been able to derive much pleasure from our sailings to and fro.

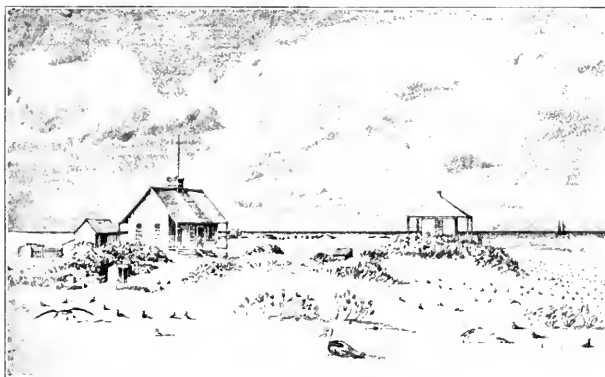
A brief résumé of the work performed during their seven months' imprisonment I have compiled from the journal of Passed Assistant Engineer Blye, who remained upon the island during our absences.

Their first attempt at dislodging the coral rock on the bar was made by the diver with two canisters of powder, and about five tons





THE LANDING AT MIDWAY ISLANDS



THE MIDWAY ISLANDS AS WE LEFT THEM



## THE BEGINNING OF THE CRUISE

of rock were dislodged and well broken up. Thereafter the work was intermittently carried on, as weather permitted. During September and October there were frequent strong gales from the west, and on such occasions the mouth of the harbor, being on that side, was dangerous to approach.

After toiling laboriously and constantly for six months, using large quantities of powder and fuse, the result now is a passage through the bar fifteen feet in width and four hundred feet in length, whereas one hundred and seventy feet in width is estimated as essential. A proper completion would call for a much larger appropriation.

During the month of April the thermometer ranged from 68 degrees at sunrise to 86 degrees at noon and 80 degrees at sundown. The prevailing winds during the summer months were the northeast trades, varying from northeast to east southeast.

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

A cause of much annoyance has been the drifting of sand during high winds, when it flies like driven snow, cutting the face and hands. (This was so great an annoyance that on our first trip to Honolulu I purchased for each person a pair of goggles to protect the eyes.)

Taking into consideration the dangers of navigation in a neighborhood abounding with these coral reefs, the fact that they are visible but a short distance only in clear weather, and that an entrance to the lagoon could only be made in a smooth sea, it really seems a questionable undertaking to attempt the formation of an anchorage here for the large steamers of the Pacific Mail Company.

When the westerly gales blow, the mouth of the lagoon being, as in most coral islands, on that side, the sea breaks heavily all over the lagoon and no work can be done. On one occasion the workmen were returning to the

## THE BEGINNING OF THE CRUISE

island from the entrance to the channel when one of these gales came on and, as one of them told me, "It was a mighty big conundrum at one time whether we would ever reach the shore."

## II

### THE WRECK

WITH the homeward-bound pennant flying from the mainmast head and with the contractor's working party on board, we sailed from the Midway Islands on Friday, October 29, at 4 P.M. for San Francisco. We had dragged high up on the beach the scow from which the divers had worked, secured the house doors, and taken a last look at the blinding sand with thankful hearts for leaving it.

As Doctor Frank, our surgeon, and myself were walking down the beach to the last boat off to the ship, there occurred an incident which I will relate here for psychological students.

He remarked, as we loitered around the landing, that he felt greatly depressed with-

## THE WRECK

out being able to define any cause for it and that he could not rid himself of the impression that some misfortune was impending. I tried to cheer him up; told him that the "blues" were on him, when he ought to be rejoicing instead; that we had a fair wind and a smooth sea to start us on a speedy return to the old friends in San Francisco. It was in vain, however; he expressed a firm belief that we should meet with some disaster on our voyage and I dropped the subject with a "pooh pooh."

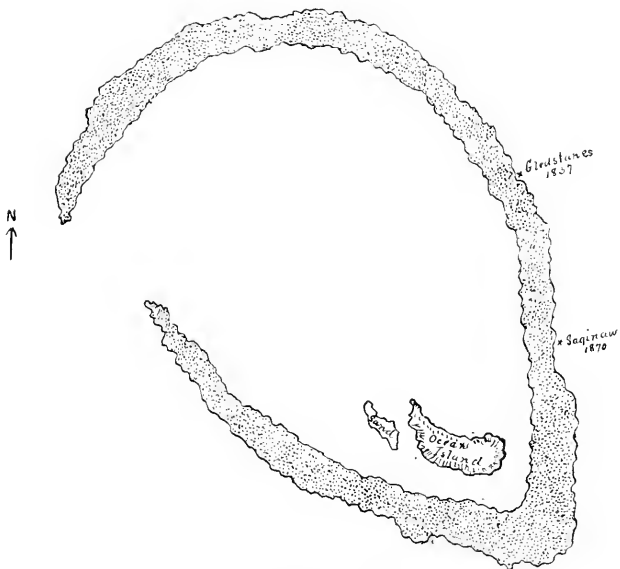
As soon as we reached the open sea, the captain ordered the ship headed to the westward and the pressure of steam to be reduced, as with topsails set we sailed along to a light easterly breeze. It was his intention, he stated, to come within sight of Ocean Island about daylight and to verify its location by steaming around it before heading away for San Francisco.

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

It should be noted that it is in the direct line of a naval commander's duty, when he is in the neighborhood of such dangers to navigation, to confirm by observation their position on the charts as well as to rescue any unfortunate persons that fate may have cast away upon them. Our own subsequent situation gives proof of the wisdom of such a regulation.

Ocean Island is about fifty miles to the westward of the Midway Islands, is of similar formation, and is the last one (so far as our chart shows) in the chain of ocean dangers that I have referred to as extending more than a thousand miles to the westward from the Sandwich Islands. It was on this reef that the British ship *Gledstanes* was wrecked in 1837, and the American ship *Parker* in September, 1842, the crew of the latter vessel remaining there until May, 1843, when they were taken off.





OCEAN ISLAND AND REEF



## THE WRECK

The "Hawaiian Spectator" for July, 1838, gives the following account of the loss of the *Gledstanes*, captain, J. R. Brown:—

The vessel was wrecked July 9, 1837, at midnight. One of the crew only was lost, he having jumped overboard in a state of intoxication. Captain Brown remained on the island over five months, when, with his chief mate and eight seamen, he embarked for these islands in a schooner which had been constructed from the fragments of the wreck. The other officers and men, who remained on the island several months longer, endured great suffering and were finally brought off in a vessel sent for them by H.B.M. Consul. Captain Brown gave the following description of the island. "The island is in latitude  $28^{\circ} 22'$  North, and longitude  $178^{\circ} 30'$  West, and is about three miles in circumference. It is composed of broken coral and shells and is covered near the shore by low bushes. In the season it abounds with sea birds and at times there are considerable numbers of hair seals. The highest part of the island is not more than ten feet above sea level and the only fresh water

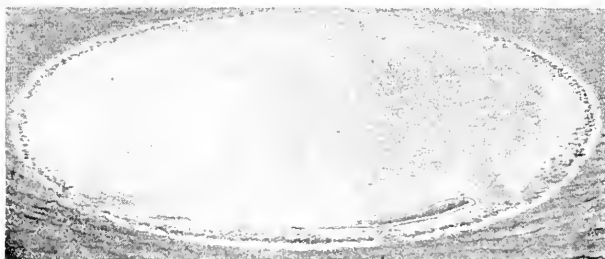
## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

is what drains through the sand after the heavy rains.”

Charles Darwin<sup>1</sup> has the following to say concerning Ocean Island, which he characterizes as a true “atoll,” as distinguished from “barrier” and “fringing” reefs, which are generally formed near the shores of higher land:

I have in vain consulted the works of Cook, Vancouver, La Peyrouse, and Lisiansky for any satisfactory account of the small islands and reefs which lie scattered in a northwest line prolonged from the Sandwich group and hence have left them uncolored, with one exception, for I am indebted to Mr. F. D. Bennett for informing me of an atoll-formed reef in latitude  $28^{\circ} 22'$ , longitude  $178^{\circ} 30'$  West, on which the Gledstanes was wrecked in 1837. It is apparently of large size and extends in a northwest and southeast line; very few inlets have been formed on it. The lagoon

<sup>1</sup> *The Structure and Distribution of Coral Reefs*, by Charles Darwin. Walter Scott: 24 Warwick Lane, London, 1842. If Mr. Darwin had known of the proximity of the Midway and Pearl and Hermes reefs he would probably have doubts as to the true character of our atoll.



**VIEW OF OCEAN ISLAND, REEF, AND LAGOON, AS SEEN  
FROM THE SOUTH**

(The Island is at the lower edge of the circle.)



**OCEAN ISLAND AS VIEWED FROM THE NORTH**

(The arrow shows where the Saginaw struck.)



## THE WRECK

seems to be shallow; at least the deepest part which was surveyed was only three fathoms.

Mr. Couthony describes this island under the name of Ocean Island. Considerable doubts should be entertained regarding the nature of a reef of this kind with a very shallow lagoon, and standing far from any other atoll, on account of the possibility of a crater or flat bank of rock lying at the proper depth beneath the surface of the sea, thus affording a foundation for a ring-formed coral reef.

The evening following the departure passed quietly in our wardroom quarters and in fact all over the ship. Officers and men were more than usually fatigued after the preparations for sea both on shore and on board. There was none of the general hilarity accompanying a homeward cruise. There was also a prevailing dread of a long and tedious journey of over three thousand miles, mostly to be made under sail, and we all knew the tendency of the old Saginaw in a head wind to make "eight points to leeward," or, as a landlubber

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

would say, to go sideways. We occupied ourselves in stowing and securing our movables, and after the bugle sounded "Out lights" at 9 P.M. the steady tramp of the lookouts and their half-hour hail of "All's well" were all that disturbed the quiet of the night.

The night was dark, but a few stars were occasionally visible between the passing clouds. The sea continued smooth and the ship on an even keel. When I turned in at ten o'clock I had the comforting thought that by the same time to-morrow night we should be heading for San Francisco. We were making about three knots an hour, which would bring Ocean Island in sight about early dawn, so that there would be plenty of time to circumnavigate the reef and get a good offing on our course before dark.

How sadly, alas! our intentions were frustrated and how fully our surgeon's premonitions were fulfilled! My pen falters at the



## THE WRECK

attempt to describe the events of the next few hours. I was suddenly awakened about three o'clock in the morning by an unusual commotion on deck; the hurried tramping of feet and confusion of sounds. In the midst of it I distinguished the captain's voice sounding in sharp contrast to his usual moderate tone, ordering the taking in of the topsails and immediately after the cutting away of the top-sail halliards. Until the latter order was given I imagined the approach of a rain squall, a frequent occurrence formerly, but I knew now that some greater emergency existed, and so I hastily and partly dressed myself sufficiently to go on deck.

Just before I reached the top of the ward-room ladder I felt the ship strike something and supposed we were in collision with another vessel. The shock was an easy one at first, but was followed immediately by others of increasing force, and, as my feet touched

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

the deck, by two severe shocks that caused the ship to tremble in every timber. The long easy swell that had been lifting us gently along in the open sea was now transformed into heavy breakers as it reached and swept over the coral reef, each wave lifting and dropping with a frightful thud the quaking ship. It seemed at each fall as though her masts and smokestack would jump from their holdings and go by the board. To a landsman or even a professional seaman who has never experienced the sensation it would be impossible to convey a realizing sense of the feelings aroused by our sudden misfortune. There is a something even in the air akin to the terror of an earthquake shock—a condition unnatural and uncanny. The good ship that for years has safely sailed the seas or anchored in ports with a free keel, fulfilling in all respects the destiny marked out for her at her birth, suddenly and without warning

## THE WRECK

enters upon her death-struggle with the rocks and appeals for help. There is no wonder that brave men — men having withstood the shock of battle and endured the hardships of the fiercest storms — should feel their nerves shaken from their first glance at the situation.

The captain had immediately followed his orders, to take in the sails that were forging us on towards the reef, by an order to back engines. Alas! the steam was too low to give more than a few turns to the wheels, and they could not overcome the momentum of the ship. In less than an hour of the fierce pounding the jagged rock broke through the hull and tore up the engine and fire room floor; the water rushed in and reached the fires; the doom of our good ship was now apparent and sealed.

I hastily returned to my stateroom, secured more clothing, together with some of the ship's papers, then ascended to the hurricane deck to await developments or to stand by

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

to do rescue work as ordered. I had participated in the past in drills that are called in Navy Regulations "abandoned ship." In these drills every one on board is supposed to leave the vessel and take station as assigned in one of the ship's boats. I had only taken part in these drills during calm weather at sea, and thought it a pretty sight to see all the boats completely equipped and lying off in view of the deserted vessel. Here, however, no programme could help us. Our captain's judgment and quickness of decision must control events as they develop.

The night was clear and starlit, but we could see nothing of any land. Perhaps we had struck on some uncharted reef, and while strenuously employed in getting the boats over the side opposite the sea we waited anxiously for daylight. The scene was one for a lifelong remembrance and is beyond my power adequately and calmly to describe.

## THE WRECK

There was at first some confusion, but the stern and composed attitude of the captain and his sharp, clear orders soon brought every one to his senses, and order was restored.

One of the most reassuring things to me at this time was the sight of our colored ward-room steward in double irons for some offense, sitting on a hatch of the hurricane deck, whistling "Way down upon the Suwanee River." He seemed to me far from realizing the gravity of the situation, or else to possess great courage. At any rate, it diverted my thoughts of danger into other channels. He said the key to the irons could not be found. The irons were soon severed, however, with a chisel and hammer, and he went below to aid the men with his knowledge of the stowage of the officers' provender. His confinement was never renewed, for he did good work in the rescue of food.

A few of the more frightened ones had at

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

first, either through a misunderstanding or otherwise, rushed to our largest boat — the launch — hanging at the starboard quarter and partly lowered it before the act was noticed. A large combing sea came along and tore it from their hold, smashing it against the side of the ship and then carrying its remnants away with its tackles and all its fittings. This was a great loss, we felt, if we should have to take to the boats, for we did not know at that time where we were. The same wave also carried off one of the crew, a member of the Marine Guard, who had been on the bulwarks; and whisking him seaward, returned him miraculously around the stern of the ship to the reef, where his struggles and cries attracted the notice of others. He was hauled over the lee side, somewhat bruised and water-soaked, but, judging from his remarks, apparently not realizing his wonderful escape from death.



THE SAGINAW IN THE GRIP OF THE BREAKERS





## THE WRECK

As the night wore on, the wind increased and also the size of the breakers. The ship, which had first struck the reef "bows on," was gradually swung around until she was at first broadside to the reef, and then further until the after part, to which we were clinging, was lifted over the jagged edge of the perpendicular wall of rock. She was finally twisted around until the bow hung directly to seaward, with the middle of the hull at the edge. Thus the ship "seesawed" from stem to stern with each coming wave for an hour or more and until the forward part broke away with a loud crash and disappeared in the deep water outside. Our anchors, that had been "let go," apparently never touched bottom until the bow went with them.

All that was left of our good ship now heeled over towards the inner side of the reef, the smokestack soon went by the board and the mainmast was made to follow it by sim-

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

ply cutting away the starboard or seaward shrouds. Over this mast we could pass to the reef, however, and there was comparative quiet in the waters under our lee. This helped us in passing across whatever we could save from the wreck, and in this manner went three of our boats, the captain's gig, one of the cutters, and the dinghy, without much damage to them. We also secured in this way an iron lifeboat belonging to the contractor.

As the first gray streaks of dawn showed us a small strip of terra firma in the smooth water of the lagoon and not far from the reef, many a sigh of relief was heard, and our efforts were redoubled to provide some means of prolonging existence there. At any rate, we knew now where we were and could at least imagine a possible relief and plan measures to secure it.

Although the sea had robbed us of the larger part of our provisions, in the forward

## THE WRECK

hold there were still some of the most important stowed within the fragment we were clinging to, which contained the bread and clothing storerooms. With daylight our task was made easier.

A line was formed across the reef and everything rescued was passed over the side and from hand to hand to the boats in the lagoon, for transfer to the island. Thus we stood waist-deep in the water, feet and ankles lacerated and bleeding, stumbling about the sharp and uneven coral rock, until five in the afternoon, and yet our spirits, which had been low in the dark, were so encouraged by a sight of a small portion of dry land and at least a temporary escape from a watery grave that now and then a jest or a laugh would pass along the line with some article that suggested a future meal.

At five o'clock in the afternoon the order was given to abandon the wreck (which was

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

done while hoping that it would hold together until to-morrow), and as the sun went down on the "lone barren isle," all hands were "piped" by the boatswain's whistle to supper.

A half-teacup of water, half a cake of hard-tack, and a small piece of boiled pork constituted our evening meal, to which was added a piece of boiled mutton that had been intended for the wardroom table.

After this frugal meal all hands were mustered upon the beach to listen to a prayer of thankfulness for our deliverance and then to a few sensible and well-timed remarks from the captain enjoining discipline, good nature, and economy of food under our trying circumstances. He told us that by the Navy Regulations he was instructed, as our commanding officer, to keep up, in such sad conditions as we were thrown into, the organization and discipline of the Service so far as applicable; that he would in the event of our rescue

## THE WRECK

(which we should all hope for and look forward to) be held responsible for the proper administration of law and order; that officers and crew should fare alike on our scanty store of food, and that with care we should probably make out, with the help of seal meat and birds, a reduced ration for some little time. He would detail our several duties to-morrow. Then we were dismissed to seek "tired nature's sweet restorer" as best we could.

With fourteen hours of severe labor, tired, wet, and hungry, we were yet glad enough to sink to rest amid the bushes with but the sky for a canopy and a hummock of sand for a pillow. In my own case sleep was hard to win. For a long time I lay watching the stars and speculating upon the prospects of release from our island prison. Life seemed to reach dimly uncertain into the future, with shadow pictures intervening of famished men and bereaved families.

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

I could hear the waves within a few rods of our resting-places — there was no music in them now — lapping the beach in their restlessness, and now and then an angry roar from the outside reef, as though the sea was in rage over its failure to reach us. I realized that for more than a thousand miles the sea stretched away in every direction before meeting inhabited shores and for treble that distance to our native land; that our island was but a small dot in the vast Pacific — a dot so small that few maps give it recognition. Truly it was a dismal outlook that “tired nature” finally dispelled and that sleep transformed into oblivion; for I went to sleep finally while recalling old stories of family gatherings where was always placed a vacant chair for the loved absent one should he ever return.

### III

#### ON THE ISLAND

SUNDAY, *October 30*. No pretensions to the official observance of the Sabbath were made to-day. We always had religious services on board the ship when the weather permitted on Sunday, but to-day every effort has been made to further the safety of our condition.

The captain, executive officer, and many of the crew went off early to the wreck in order to make further search for supplies and equipment. The wreck appears from the island to be about as we left it, for the wind has been light and the sea calm during the night.

I remained on shore with a few men to assist in sorting out and making a list of the articles rescued yesterday and to assemble them in the best place suitable for their pre-

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

ervation. We spread out in the sun the bread, bags of flour, and other dry foodstuffs, even to the smallest fragments, and it was early apparent that unless much more food is secured we shall be compelled to live upon a greatly reduced ration and that our main source of food will be the seal and brown albatross (or "goonies," as they are commonly called). Both of these seem plentiful and are easily captured.

The seal succumb quickly to a blow upon the head, a fact we discovered early in our first visit to the Midway Islands. One of the boat's crew, when pushing off from the beach, carelessly and without intent to kill, struck a near-by seal on the head with an oar, and the next morning it was found dead, apparently not having moved from the spot. Its mate had found it and was nosing it about, while moaning in a most humanlike voice.

These seal are quite different from the



## ON THE ISLAND

Alaska fur seal, of such great value for their fur. These have a short lustreless hair, and their principal value is in the oil that is extracted by the few seal hunters who seek them. They frequently exceed two hundred pounds in weight, and are savage fighters if one can judge by the many scars found upon them. We never thought, when, a few months ago, we amused ourselves on the verandas of the Cliff House at San Francisco in watching their disporting about Seal Rock, that we should make such a close acquaintance with them.

The "goonies" also are easy to capture, although they are large and strong and a blow from the wing would break a man's limb. I measured one of them from tip to tip of wing, and it was over seven feet. They are, however, very awkward on their feet, and, having a double-jointed wing (that is, a joint in it like an elbow) can only rise from the ground

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

when the wind is in their faces. Owing to this fact one only needs to get to the windward of them with a club and look out for the wings. We should like to add some of their eggs to our bill of fare, but dare not for fear of driving the birds away. I imagine it would take but a few of the eggs, if eatable, to go around, for I saw one at the Midways that was as large as those of the ostrich.

Fresh water will, however, apparently be our greatest cause for anxiety; for we have secured but a small supply, considering our number — ninety-three. A few breakers or kegs only, that were stowed in the boats, were secured. Rain, of course, we count upon; but to conserve our scanty supply until it comes is most necessary. To-day several wells have been dug in various parts of the island, but the water found in them is near the surface and is too brackish for any use.

The old timbers of a former wreck, prob-

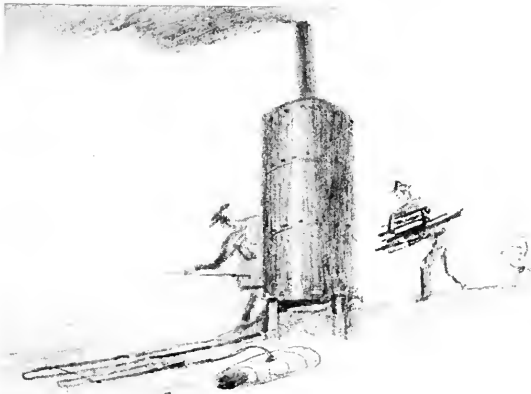
## ON THE ISLAND

ably of the "Gledstones," — the "bones" as sailors call them, — lie near on the beach and look as though they would yield us fuel for a long time. Our fire, which was started last evening by a match that Mr. Bailey, the chief diver, had fortunately kept dry, has been constantly going for lack of more lighting material.

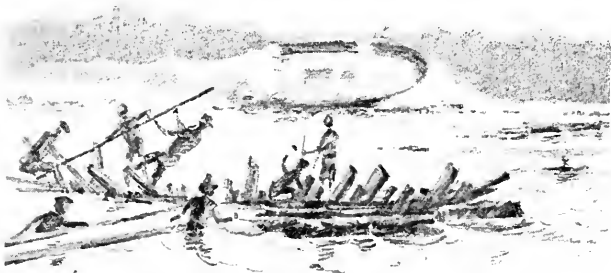
*Evening.* The reef party returned at sundown, reporting a strenuous day on the wreck. We all had a supper of "scouse" (a dish of pork, potato, and hard tack), and before sleeping the camp site was laid out, the sails and awnings which had come on shore temporarily set up, to our greater comfort. Besides the sails and awnings, more food supplies were captured from the after storeroom and a particularly fortunate prize secured in a small portable boiler that had been lashed to the after deck. This had been used by the contractor's party in hoisting to the scow the

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

blasted coral from the reef, at Midway Islands. There were also in one of the wheel-houses of the wreck some distilling-coils, which the engineer's force with our chief engineer successfully rescued after hard labor, for the sea was washing through the wheelhouse with terrible force. The boiler, suspended between two boats, was successfully landed on the beach, and we are greatly encouraged at the promise of fresh water to-morrow. We secured a barrel, also, partly filled with sperm oil, and a lantern in good condition. These two articles insure us a supply of lighting material for the cooking-fire, which can now be put out at night and much fuel saved. Considerable clothing was secured from the officers' staterooms, and I was fortunate enough to find some of mine rolled up in one of the large wet bundles; and a few soaked mattresses and blankets were also brought in. The carpenter's chest, too,



THE CONDENSER — MADE FROM A SMALL BOILER AND  
SPEAKING-TUBES



GATHERING TIMBERS FROM THE WRECK



## ON THE ISLAND

came ashore intact, and altogether we feel our situation greatly improved.

Mr. Talbot tells me that they are literally "stripping" the wreck, and nothing movable will be left on it if the weather will but hold good long enough. No one stops to question the utility of an article found adrift; it is seized hastily and thrown out on the reef to be transported later to the island. Pieces of rigging, boxes of tinned coffee, canned goods, tools, crockery, sails, awnings, etc., all come to the beach in a promiscuous mass to be sorted out later.

*Monday, October 31.* Still at work on the wreck. Boiler set up on the beach and connected with the distilling-coils by a piece of canvas hose. The inner end of the coils was joined to a length of our pilot-house speaking-tube as a return to the beach. By this arrangement the steam passed under the cooler water of the lagoon and was condensed as it

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## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

returned to a bucket on the beach. Great joy was expressed at the first sight of the little stream and a great fear was lifted from our thoughts. At supper we had a cup of coffee to finish the quarter-ration of food, which was made into a scouse as before. The hard tack needed in making the scouse, however, will soon be exhausted, for, excepting a small quantity saved in tins, it is spoiling rapidly. So to-day I opened a bag of flour to ascertain if we were to have any breadstuff. I found to my glad surprise that, with the exception of about an inch on the outside, it was sweet and sound. The sea water had protected it with a crust. A barrel of beans was also found to be in good condition; so that our pile of foodstuff under the sentry's charge begins to loom high for our safety for some time to come.

*Tuesday, November 1.* The crew was formed into several messes to-day, and also into



## ON THE ISLAND

watches. Each mess was provided with a tent, that for our mess (the wardroom) being made from the Saginaw's quarter-deck awning. Such of our dry goods and bedding as had been rescued were removed to them, and our little camp begins to take on the appearance of comfort.

The duties of every member of the ship's company have been so arranged that it is hoped and expected that no one will have much time to brood over our situation or the future.

*Wednesday, November 2.* The bad weather we have feared has arrived. It came on suddenly this morning from the southeast with a high wind and a heavy rainfall, and before we had been able firmly to secure the tents. After strenuous exertion, however, we saved them from being blown over, but were wet to the skin when they were finally safe in place.

Fortunately the wreck on the reef has been

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

thoroughly explored and there is very little material there now that could be of use to us, unless it may be the timbers themselves, to help us in building a seaworthy boat should it be necessary to do so in a final effort to get away. The idea of sending a boat to the Sandwich Islands for relief has been already revolving in our minds, and to-day was revealed by an order from the captain to the senior officers. After a consultation singly with us, he has directed each one to file with him an opinion on the feasibility and necessity of doing so — each written opinion to be without knowledge of the others.

It is probable that the hulk will be considerably broken up before the wind and sea go down, for one can see it rise and fall with the breakers, and occasionally a piece is detached and floated across the reef into the lagoon. As soon as it is safe to launch the boats, the work of securing these pieces will be started.

## ON THE ISLAND

The boats are now resting at the highest part of the island in the centre of the camp, for even with the protecting reef the sea in the lagoon has been so rough that combers have reached within a few feet of our tents. As I write my journal we are a wet and sad party of unfortunates.

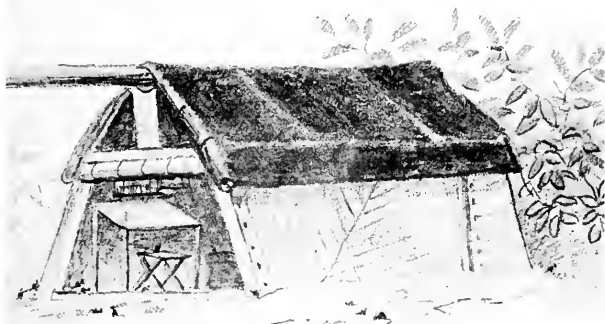
Our captain and his boat's crew must be having an experience worse than ours, however. They left this morning in the cutter for the sand spit near and to the west of us, to collect driftwood, and are "marooned" there in the storm. They can be seen, with the glasses, huddled together beneath the up-turned boat. They do not, however, seem to be in imminent danger, and have made no signals of distress; so we expect them to return as soon as the sea abates.

*Thursday, November 3.* It has been still too rough to-day to launch the boats for work in the lagoon. We have, however,

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

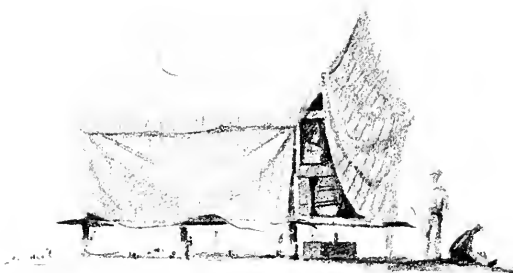
busied ourselves in erecting a storehouse for the better preservation of our food supplies, and to-night have them safely under cover. Last night the rats robbed us of a box of macaroni, and, therefore, we have put our storehouse on posts and two feet above the ground with inverted pans upon the posts.

We made the acquaintance of the rats last night in our tent when a noisy fight over a piece of candle disturbed our sleep. We had seen a few of them before, but did not suppose them to be so very numerous — as on first thought there seemed to be so very little for them to eat. We now found them to have good lungs and appetites, however, and a good deal of thrashing around with boots, etc., was necessary to expel them. We discussed them before we went to sleep again in the light of a future food supply, — an addition to our one-quarter ration, — and the opinion was general



*Captain's Tent*

**THE CAPTAIN'S TENT**



*Storehouse*

**THE STOREHOUSE, ELEVATED TO AVOID RATS**



## ON THE ISLAND

that should the seal and gooney desert us the rats would become more valuable. At any rate, they would thrive on the refuse of the food we had now.

The captain returned this morning from his expedition and gives a sad story of their luck. They had to literally bury themselves to the neck in the sand and lie under the boat to prevent being drenched by the rain. During the height of the storm they had one streak of good luck. They found some companions that the rough sea had induced to seek the shelter of the lagoon and beach. They were large sea turtles, and he and his crew turned them on their backs to prevent their escape. To-day we have them added to our food-supply and they are very welcome, notwithstanding the sad plight of their captors when they returned.

We have also added to our fresh water a supply of about fifty gallons caught in the

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

rainstorm of yesterday, and doled out an extra cupful to each person.

*Friday, November 4.* The sea is rolling in huge breakers on the reef to-day, enveloping the wreck in spray, and we are constantly expecting to see the last of the Saginaw as a hulk. Several pieces can be seen adrift in the lagoon, and the hurricane deck is probably among them. The boats were launched and the mainmast towed to the landing, where it was anchored. It is the intention to have it set up near our camp and to use it for a look-out station as well as a means of flying a distress signal in case a passing vessel should be sighted. However, we do not pin much faith to the idea of rescue from passing ships, for the presence of these coral reefs constitutes such a menace to navigation that they are avoided. Vessels generally pass far to the north or south of them.

*Saturday, November 5.* The gig was carried



## ON THE ISLAND

well up on the beach to-day and set in a cradle, to be prepared for a voyage to the Sandwich Islands. It is the intention to raise her sides a few inches, to construct a light deck over all, and to fit her with two masts and sails. (Part of the sails were saved with the boat.) In the deck there are to be four square small hatches (with covers in case of bad weather), in which the men can sit and row when the wind is too light or contrary for sailing. From this it may be seen that the perilous trip has been decided upon by the captain. I have no doubt he feels the responsibility which he assumes, and I have great faith in his judgment. Our opinions were handed in to him yesterday, but of course we do not know what their influence has been, but it must be evident to him that all hands — officers and men alike — are loyally cooperating with him in our trying situation.

\ We learn that Lieutenant Talbot volun-

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

teered the day after the wreck to make the attempt and that several of the crew have also asked to go with him. In fact, so many of the men have volunteered that it will be necessary to take the pick of those most likely to stand the exposure, for although we have seen that such a trip was made in the case of the "Gledstones," it must be remembered that they took five months to build a seaworthy vessel, while our brave boys will go in a practically open boat.

*Sunday, November 6.* We were mustered for divine service to-day, and it being the first Sunday of the month the roll was called and each man answered "Here" as his name was called. After that prayers were read by the captain and an extra cup of water served out from the quantity caught during the recent gale. Work was suspended so far as possible, but the lagoon being so quiet it was thought necessary to launch two of the boats



LIEUTENANT JOHN G. TALBOT



## ON THE ISLAND

and tow in some of the floating timbers. We were overjoyed thus to receive and haul up free of the water a large fragment of the old hurricane deck. We can imagine some value in almost any piece of timber, but in this particular we are confident of securing much material for the building of our future boat, it being of three inch thick narrow planking. We believe we can make one and a half inch stuff from it by rigging up a staging and converting our one bucksaw into a jigsaw with a man above and one below. The blacksmith believes that he can extract a good supply of nails, and in many ways it is evident that we are not going to wait supinely for the relief we hope for from our brave comrades' voyage.

To-day we killed our first goonies and had some for supper. They were very tough and "fishy," and Solomon Graves, once the Saginaw's cabin cook, but now "King of the

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

Galley" on Ocean Island, says that he cooked them all day. Only a portion of the bird could be masticated. However, it was voted superior to seal, the latter being so tough that Graves has to parboil it overnight and fry it in the morning. The hard tack is exhausted, but so much of the flour has been found good that we are to have a tablespoonful every other day and the same quantity of beans on the alternate days as substitutes for the hard tack. A cup of coffee or tea every day for the morning meal. Supper we have at five.

We had a luxury after supper. There are nine of us in the wardroom mess who smoke, and each of us was generously supplied with a cigar by Passed Assistant Engineer Blye, whose chest was rescued the second day; it contained a box of five hundred Manila cigars.

*Monday, November 7.* The mainmast is

## ON THE ISLAND

ready to raise to-morrow. An excavation has been made at the highest point of the island, near the captain's tent, and the mast rolled up to it with the rope guys ready to hold it upright. The carpenter's gang have been busy all day in sorting out material for the gig's deck and for raising her sides eight inches.

While the weather is fine, there seems to be a considerable swell at sea from the late storm, and the wreck is gradually, as it were, melting away. To-day a piece of the hull floated towards us and a boat was sent after it. When it reached the beach I recognized the remains of my stateroom, with twisted bolts protruding from the edge where it had been wrenched away from the rest of the hull. I viewed mournfully the remnant of my long-time home and reflected how it had once been my protection and that now fate had turned me out of its shelter. Many of the hopes that

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

were bred within its wooden walls have been shattered by its destruction, and I thought it would be appropriate to bury it on the beach with an epitaph above it showing the simple words "Lights out" which I had so often heard at its door when the ship's corporal made his nightly rounds at the "turning-in" hour. However, it was valuable even in its ruin for building and burning material. Besides, we are not ready yet to think of anything like a funeral.

*Tuesday, November 8.* I am writing my journal this evening with feelings of cheer and strengthened hopes, for although the fore part of the day was full of gloomy forebodings it has ended eventfully and happily. Our task to-day, as I have said, was to set up the mainmast, and the work was begun immediately after our breakfast. All hands were strenuously employed until noon. First, the mast was rolled into position so that the



## ON THE ISLAND

foot would be exactly over the centre of the hole dug yesterday. Then a small derrick was made to support the mast nearly in balance. With tackles and ropes then adjusted, as all good sailors know how to do, the heel was lowered slowly and the top elevated by the guys, until the mast stood on its foot and was secured upright. It was dinner-time when we considered it safe to leave, and we were glad when it was finally in place, for the work took about all the strength we had.

What was our dismay while we were at dinner to hear the snap of rope and the crash of the falling mast. Everybody rushed to the spot, and it was discovered that one of the guys had parted and that the sand had not been firm enough to hold the mast erect. Luckily the mast was not injured, and the captain said calmly, as though it was an everyday occurrence, "Well, men, we must do it again."

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

While we were standing about the hole and the captain was directing preparations for another effort, one of the men, noticing the water at the bottom, scooped some of it up in a shovel and raised it to his lips. I shall never forget his expression as he swallowed it. His eyes snapped, his face went white, and broadened almost into a grin, and he seemed for an instant to hold his breath. Then his color came back, and with a wild shout of gladness he exclaimed so that all could hear, "Boys — fresh water, by G—" And so it proved, — soft and pure, — although within twenty feet of the salt water at the beach. Examination showed that there was quite a "pocket" of this filtered rainwater, and that the point where we had excavated was evidently where the island had originally commenced to form on solid ground. We noticed, too, during the afternoon that the water in it rises and falls with the tide of the ocean in the

## ON THE ISLAND

lagoon without mixing. This was explained by one of the officers, who had before seen such conditions, as due to the difference in density of the two waters, and the fact that the small rise and fall of the tide, which is only about twelve inches here, does not create an inrush and outgo sufficiently strong to force a mixture. However, we are greatly rejoiced over the "blessing in disguise" our falling mast has proved to be, and although the supply is probably moderate and dependent on the rains, we shall be able to dispense with the boiler, which has begun to give trouble from rust and leakage.

*Wednesday.* Blye and I went inland among the bushes and killed twelve boobies for supper to-morrow. Breakfast, pork scouse and cup of water. Provisions got wet from leak in storehouse last night; took tea, coffee, and wet bread out to dry. Several showers during the day. Mr. Talbot went over to the sand

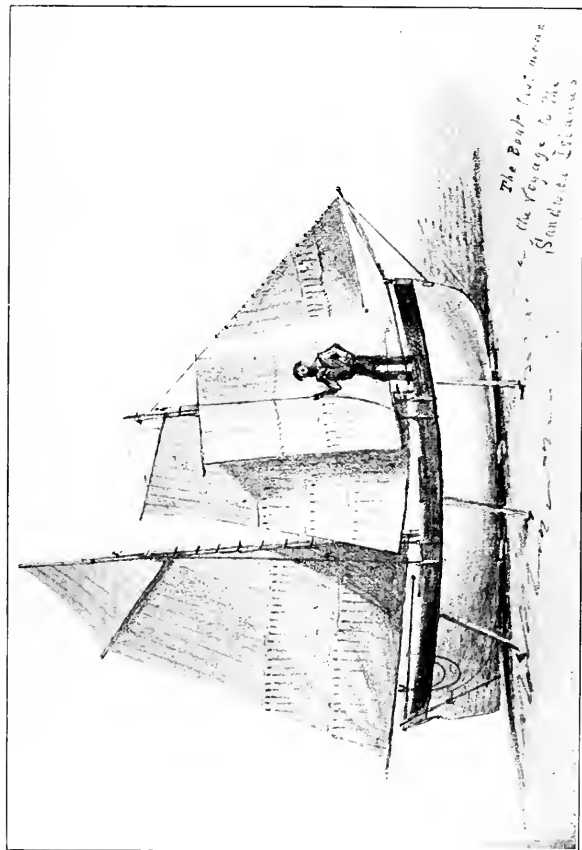
## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

spit and brought back driftwood and four large turtles. Supper, salt beef and two dough-balls from mouldy flour.

*Thursday, 10th.* Breakfast, salt beef and flour-balls. Getting up ship's mainmast for flagstaff and lookout. One boat off to the wreck. Several rain squalls during day, and unable to dry out stores. Supper on boobies and flour-balls.

*Friday, 11th.* Breakfast, turtle steak and a tablespoonful of mashed potatoes. The mast was again raised to-day and care taken to prevent a repetition of Tuesday's accident. Stronger guys were led to heavy, deep-driven stakes. A topmast was added and a rope ladder to the crosstrees. Work on the gig progressing fast — nearly decked over. Supper, turtle, eight goonies, potatoes, and cup of tea.

*Saturday, 12th.* Breakfast on fish, turtle soup, and mashed potatoes. Supper, seal



THE GIG — BEFORE LAUNCHING — WITH SAILS MADE ON THE ISLAND



## ON THE ISLAND

meat and tablespoonful of mashed beans. The fish from the reef are voted no good. They are brilliantly colored but strong in taste, and are said by the captain to be similar to the "parrot fish" that is found among our West India coral reefs. Solomon Graves says that the parrot fish is poisonous, so it is decided to leave them out of our bill of fare. Should it become necessary to augment our ration it will, no doubt, be done by adding the *rats*, and for myself I believe they will improve it.

*Sunday, November 13.* Ship breaking up rapidly and boats out to pick up driftwood, Had prayers (read by Captain S.) at 3 P.M., and he addressed us with remarks as to necessity in our situation of working on Sabbath. Thousands of rats about. Put extra night watch on storehouse, for fear of further deprecations.

*Monday, 14th.* Same diet as yesterday.

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

Aired all clothing. Work on gig pushing, and we expect to get her off this week. Every one writing letters to send in her.

*Tuesday, 15th.* Diet, goonies and turtle, with last of potatoes. The gig was launched and provisions sent down from storehouse. Had a long talk with Talbot. He realizes danger of trip, but is brave and confident; gave him my revolver.

*Wednesday, 16th.* Cup of tea, 7 A.M. and breakfast as usual at 10; turtle and gooney; Heavy sea on reef, and ship fast disappearing, boats out picking up driftwood. Had to take the condenser and all wood high up on the beach. Wind shifted suddenly from north to southeast. Gave Talbot two hundred dollars in gold coin for possible expenses.

*Thursday, November 17.* Blowing hard from north. Tea at 7 A.M. The gig anchored off shore. Mr. Bailey and I fixed up the well



## ON THE ISLAND

where fresh water was found when mast fell;  
good-by to the old condenser. "The little  
cherub that sits up aloft" doing good work  
for us all.

## IV

### THE SAILING OF THE GIG

FRIDAY, *November* 18. The weather has been fine since the breaking up of the storm of the second.

As to work, every one has had his duties portioned out to him, and there is no doubt of the captain's wisdom in providing thus an antidote to homesickness or brooding. Faces are — some of them — getting "peaked," and quite a number of the party have been ill from lack of power to digest the seal meat; but there are no complaints, we all fare alike. Medicines are not to hand, but a day or two of abstinence and quiet generally brings one around again. In the evenings, when we gather around the smoking lamp after supper, there are frequent discussions over our situa-

## THE SAILING OF THE GIG

tion and prospects. They are, however, mostly sanguine in tone, and it is not uncommon to hear the expression "when we get home." No one *seems* to have given up his hope of eventual relief. It has been very noticeable, too, at such times that no matter where the conversation begins it invariably swings around, before the word is passed to "douse the glim," to those things of which we are so completely deprived — to narratives of pleasant gatherings — stories of banquets and festival occasions where toothsome delicacies were provided. It would seem as though these reminiscences were given us as a foil to melancholy, and they travel along with us into our dreams.

Upon one point we are all agreed, that we are very fortunate in being wrecked in so agreeable a climate, where heavy clothing is unnecessary. The temperature has been, aside from the storm we had soon after the

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

landing, between seventy and seventy-five degrees during the day and around fifty degrees at night. We are very sensible of the discomforts that would be ours if tumbled upon some of the islands of the northern ocean in winter.

The moonlit nights have been grand, and calculated to foster romance in a sailor's thoughts were the surroundings appropriate. As it is, the little cheer we extract from them is in the fact that we see the same shining face that is illuminating the home of our loved ones.

Often in my corner of the tent, Mr. Foss and I pass what would be a weary hour otherwise, over a game of chess, the pieces for which he has fashioned from gooney bones and blocks of wood.

Mr. Main has made a wonderful nautical instrument — a sextant — from the face of the Saginaw's steam gauge, together with

## THE SAILING OF THE GIG

some broken bits of a stateroom mirror and scraps of zinc. Its minute and finely drawn scale was made upon the zinc with a cambric needle, and the completed instrument is the result of great skill and patience. Mr. Talbot has tested it and pronounces it sufficiently accurate for navigating purposes.

Another officer has made a duplicate of the official chart of this part of the Pacific, and still another has copied all the Nautical Almanac tables necessary for navigation.

I have been directed by the captain to make a selection from the best-preserved supplies in the storehouse most suitable for boat service, and calculate that Talbot will have the equivalent of thirty-five days' provender at one-half rations, although many of the articles are not in the regular ration tables.

This morning the boat was surrounded by many men and carried bodily into water that was deep enough to float her. There she was

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

anchored and the stores carried out to her. Mr. Butterworth, standing waist deep in the water, put on the last finishing touches while she was afloat by screwing to the gunwales the rowlocks for use in calm weather.

There was expended from store-book the following articles: ten breakers (a small keg) of water, five days' rations of hard tack sealed in tin, ten days of the same in canvas bags, two dozen small tins of preserved meat, five tins (five pounds each) of dessicated potato, two tins of cooked beans, three tins of boiled wheaten grits, one ham, six tins of preserved oysters, ten pounds of dried beef, twelve tins of lima beans, about five pounds of butter, one gallon of molasses, twelve pounds of white sugar, four pounds of tea and five pounds of coffee. A small tin cooking apparatus for burning oil was also improvised and furnished.

I had intended putting on board twenty-



**JAMES BUTTERWORTH**  
Passed Assistant Engineer





## THE SAILING OF THE GIG

five pounds of boiled rice in sealed tins, but discovered one of the tins to be swollen just before the provisions were started off. Hastily the tins were opened and the rice found unfit for use. The dessicated potatoes were at once served out in place of the rice, the cans scalded and again sealed.

With the navigating instruments and the clothing of the voyagers on board, the boat was pronounced ready and we went to dinner. There was little conversation during the meal. The impending departure of our shipmates hung like a pall of gloom over us at the last and was too thought-absorbing for speech. Talbot seemed to be the most unconcerned of all, but as I watched him I felt that the brave fellow was assuming it to encourage the rest of us. I had a long friendly talk with him, last evening, during which he seemed thoroughly to estimate the risk he was to take, and entrusted to me his will to be forwarded

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

to his parents in Kentucky in case he should not survive the journey.

All hands have been given permission to send letters by the boat, so all papers, together with a bill of exchange for two hundred pounds sterling, which by order of the captain I have given to Talbot, have been sealed air tight in a tin case. I sent the following letter to my home in Philadelphia, which I will insert here, as it partially represents the state of affairs: —

You will of course be surprised to receive a letter from this desert island, but it now has a population of ninety-three men, the Saginaw's crew. In short, we were wrecked on the coral reef surrounding it, and the Saginaw is no more. We left Midway Islands on the evening of Friday, October 28, and the next morning at three o'clock found ourselves thumping on the reef. We stayed by the ship until daylight, when we got out three boats and all the provisions we possibly could. We also saved the safe, part of the ship's books, about one

## THE SAILING OF THE GIG

fourth of my clothing, and my watch. If you could see me now you would hardly recognize me: a pair of boots almost large enough for two feet in one, ragged trousers, an old felt hat, and no coat — I keep that for evenings when it is cool. I have my best uniform saved, having rescued it to come ashore in. We had to wade about two hundred feet on the reef, and I stood in water about one half of the day helping to pass provisions to the boats; then went ashore and spread them on the beach to dry.

We have been living on very short allowance, being thankful for a spoonful of beans, a small piece of meat twice a day, with a cup of tea or coffee in the morning. I am indeed thankful that no lives were lost, and hope to see you all in three months' time. The gig has been decked over and is to start for Honolulu, to-morrow or next day, for relief.

Ocean Island is similar in formation to Midway, but is larger and the coral reef is farther from the land.

We had for breakfast this morning some of the brown albatross or "goonies," as they call them.

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

We shall not want for meat for some time, as there is an abundance of fish seal and turtle, but the flour, rice, and hard bread will not last more than two and one half months.

I hope this will reach you before you get anxious about us, for if the gig should not be successful we may have to stay here until the middle of March. I shall send this in her to be mailed from Honolulu. Our executive officer and four men go in her, and a perilous trip it will be, for she is only twenty feet long and the distance is over a thousand miles. Look us up on the map.

Most of our sails were saved and we are comparatively comfortable in good tents. I am well but hungry. We have dug wells, but found no fresh water. However, we are getting some from a condenser fitted by our chief engineer. Altogether we have more conveniences than might be expected and are in good health generally. I should like to write to friends, but space in the boat is scarce and everybody is writing.

The hour set for the boat's departure (four o'clock) arrived and we were all mustered

## THE SAILING OF THE GIG

upon the beach. Prayers were read by the captain, after which final farewells were said and the brave men who were to peril their lives for us waded off to the gig and climbed on board. They quickly stepped the little masts, spread the miniature sails, raised their anchor, and slowly gaining headway stood off for the western channel through the reef. With full hearts and with many in tears, we gave them three rousing cheers and a tiger, which were responded to with spirit, and we watched them until the boat faded from sight on the horizon to the northward.

As I write this by the dim light of a candle the mental excitement due from the parting with our shipmates seems still to pervade the tent and no one is thinking of turning in.

Mr. Bailey, the foreman of the contractor's party, came into the tent soon after we had gathered for the evening. He had in his hand a small book and on his face a smile as he

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

passed it around, showing each one an open page of the book; when he reached me I saw it was a pocket Bible opened at the fifty-first chapter of Isaiah, where Mr. B.'s finger rested under the words, "The isles shall wait upon me and on my arm shall they trust." He did not speak until I had read, and then said he had opened the Bible by chance, as was his habit every evening. Poor Bailey! We all feel very sorry for him. He is a fine character, well advanced in years; and having by economy accumulated considerable money, had bought himself a home, before coming out, to which he was intending to retire when this contract was completed.

By invitation from the captain I accompanied him in walking around the entire island, avoiding, however, the extreme point to the westward, where albatross were nesting. He talked but little, and I saw that his eyes often turned to the spot where the gig had

## THE SAILING OF THE GIG

disappeared from view. As we separated in front of his little tent he said with a voice full of pathos to me, "Good-night, Paymaster; God grant that we see them again."

I find that I have so far omitted to give the personnel of Talbot's crew. As stated before there were many volunteers, but the surgeon was ordered to select from a list given him four of the most vigorous and sturdy of the applicants and report their names to the captain. There was considerable rivalry among them. In fact I was accidentally a witness to a hard-fought wrestling-match between two of the crew who sought the honor of going and risking their lives. The defeated one, I was told, was to waive his claim in favor of the victor.

The following letter, which has gone in the boat from our captain to the Admiral of the Pacific fleet, gives the personnel of the boat's crew and other information.

# THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

OCEAN ISLAND, PACIFIC OCEAN,  
November 16, 1870.

Rear Admiral John A. Winslow,  
Commanding Pacific Fleet.

SIR: — I have the honor to recommend that the attention of the Department be particularly called to the fine conduct of Lieutenant J. G. Talbot. The day after the wreck of the Saginaw, Lieutenant Talbot came to me and volunteered to take one of the ship's boats to Honolulu in order to bring back relief for the officers and crew of the vessel. He has been most zealous and spirited through this whole affair and of the greatest assistance to me.

His boat (by the usual route at this season) will probably have to sail and pull some fifteen hundred miles, and I think some recognition of his handsome conduct would be proper.

The names of the crew are as follows: — Lieutenant J. G. Talbot; Coxswain William Halford; Quartermaster Peter Francis; Seaman John Andrews; Seaman James Muir. The last two are contractor's men and were specially enlisted by me from Mr. Townsend's party for one month. They



## THE SAILING OF THE GIG

were men of such fine qualities and endurance that I thought it proper to let them go.

The enlistment was made with the express understanding between myself and them that it did not interfere with their previous contract with Mr. Townsend.

I am very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

MONTGOMERY SICARD,

Lieut.-Comd'r-commanding.

## V

### WAITING

THURSDAY, *November 24.* Thanksgiving Day — at home; the noble bird, roast turkey, has not graced our tarpaulin-covered table. He has been replaced by a tough section of albatross. Nor was there any expression of thanks at the mess table until one of the officers, having finished the extra cup of coffee served in honor of the day, said, "Say, fellows, let's be thankful that we are alive, well and still with hope."

Last evening about nine o'clock we were given another flurry of excitement over expected relief. The storehouse sentry reported a light to the eastward and in a "jiffy" our tent was empty. Sure enough, there was a bright light close to the horizon which, as

## WAITING

we watched, appeared to grow larger and nearer. The captain was called, and I joined him with Mr. Cogswell (our new executive officer since Talbot left) in front of his tent. After watching the light for a few minutes, the captain turned to us and said, "Gentlemen, it is only a star rising and the atmosphere is very clear. Better turn in again"; and he entered the tent.

*Sunday, November 27.* Last Sunday and today we have had divine service led by the captain reading the prayers of the Episcopal ritual.

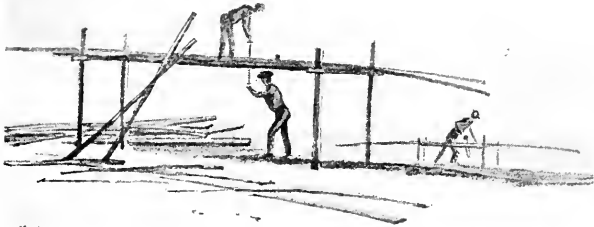
(*Note.* — I find nothing but the Thanksgiving note in my journal after the departure of the gig until November 27, other than official entries of receipts and expenditures of food, — the receipt of seals and albatross killed by Mr. Blye and his detail of men; the expenditure being the same with the daily allowance of flour or beans and the coffee for the noon meal.)

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

Work has been steadily pushed on the schooner. The keel has been hewed out of the Saginaw's late topmast and is blocked up on the beach. We are ripping the old deck planks in two with our old bucksaw and one handsaw, and while it is slow work we can see our boat planking ahead of us when the frame is ready. The schooner is to be forty feet long, of centre-board, flat-bottomed type, and the captain has settled upon her shape and dimensions after experimenting with a small model in company with the contractor's carpenter, who has had experience in boat-building.

This morning about sunrise the camp was roused to excitement by the loud cry of "Sail ho!" I found on joining the crowd at the landing that the captain had ordered a boat launched and her crew were already pulling away in a northerly direction.

I could see nothing from the crow's nest at the masthead, but the statement of one of the



*Ripping deck etc*

**RIPPING TIMBERS FOR THE SCHOONER**



*Discovery of the "Kilanea"*

**THE FRAME OF THE SCHOONER AS WE LEFT IT**



## WAITING

crew that he had seen a sail was positive; and the camp was full of a nervous expectancy until nine o'clock, when the boat returned with the disappointing news that the alleged sail was only a large white rock on the north end of the reef that had reflected the sun's rays. As the sun rose to a greater angle the reflection disappeared. An order was at once given out that no one should again alarm the camp before permission from the captain was obtained.

*Sunday, December 25.* Christmas Day!! Merry Christmas at home, but dreary enough here! Still the salutation was passed around in a half-hearted manner. It is the first day since the wreck that depression of spirit has been so contagious and camp-wide. The religious services, as we stood in the sand bareheaded (some barefooted also), hardly seemed to fit our situation, and the voice of the captain was subdued and occasionally

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

tremulous. I had donned my best uniform coat, which had come ashore when the wreck was stripped, and tried also to put on a cheerful face. No use; I could not keep up the deceit, and I slipped out of line before the service was ended, to change back to the blue sailor shirt and working clothes. I felt that I had been "putting on airs." It has been my first really blue day, for the pictures in my mind of the Christmas festivities at home but emphasized the desolation of the life here.

Strangely enough, Dr. Frank has seemed to a certain extent to be more cheerful than usual. It seems queer that he, pessimist as he appeared to me when he predicted disaster before we sailed from the Midway Islands, should now be the optimist and attempt to dispel our gloom. Some expert in psychical research may be able to discern, as I cannot, why the doctor's belief in Talbot's success



## WAITING

should now have influence enough to change my melancholy into a firmer hope than ever.

We borrowed the chart from the captain and followed in pure imagination the course of the gig; and when we folded it, the doctor said that he believed Talbot had arrived at the end of his journey and we should be relieved. Talbot has now been away thirty-seven days, and our several estimates of the time he would consume have been between thirty and forty.

Every afternoon, when work is suspended for the day and we have repaired to the tent, the expression of Talbot's whereabouts is the first note of discussion; as though it had not been in our minds all the long weary day of work.

As the possible failure of Talbot's brave effort begins to enter our calculations, the greater is the exertion to provide in the near future another avenue of escape. So, with

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

gradually weakened strength, owing to lack of sustaining food, the labor we find arduous and exhausting; I, being included in the carpenter's gang on the schooner, realize that fact thoroughly. Yesterday the captain and myself made another circuit of the island, and both were glad to rest on the return to the camp.

The captain has ordered the cutter to be also fitted for a voyage to the Midway Islands. There he intends to have a sign erected stating, briefly, our situation; to serve in case the Navy Department should send (as we expect it will) a searching vessel for us. Twice every day I have climbed the rope ladder on the mast and searched with anxious eyes through my rescued opera glasses the shipless horizon; sometimes with such a strain of nerves and hope that phantom vessels plague my vision. The loneliness and solitude of the vast expanse of water surrounding us is beyond

## WAITING

expression. Truly, it is the desert of the Pacific Ocean, and more dangerous than that upon the land, for there are no trails or guideposts for the weary traveler when the sky is obscured. One might easily fancy that beyond the line of the horizon there exists only infinite space. As the Prince of the Happy Valley observes in "Rasselas," after an ocean voyage, "There is no variety but the difference between rest and motion."

I do not remember the cry of "Sail ho!" during all of our cruising between the Hawaiian and Midway Islands save in the vicinity of the former.

The rats are more in evidence of late. At first small and timid, they are now growing larger and bolder; running about and over us in the tents during the night. We are getting quite accustomed to their visits, however, and, rolling ourselves in blankets or whatever covering we have, pay small attention to them.

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

If we stay here, though, our attention will become more acute; for they begin to loom up in importance as a food supply.

The seal, on the contrary, are growing less in numbers, although great care has been taken not to frighten them away. Also, we have not lately attempted fishing on the reef, for fear of reducing their food. We have been prevented from trying the eggs of the albatross, that their nesting may continue without interruption. They will probably leave, too, when the hatching season is over and the young have been taught to fly.

So far as our present ration is concerned, with the exception of beans, flour, and coffee from which our small daily issue is made, we are situated as though no provisions had been rescued from the wreck; for the captain has wisely ordered that all the rest must be held intact to provision the schooner. So, with all the nerve we can muster, the work on the

## WAITING

schooner is being pushed. To-day the frame stands ready for the planking, and the captain thinks that in another week her mast can be ready for stepping.

Last Thursday we had our second most violent wind and rainstorm. It came with hurricane force from the eastward, and the tremendous sea crossed the reef and reached our beach with considerable energy left in it. Our schooner that is to be, with her frame almost completed, was perilously near the waves, and all hands were called. We turned out in the storm and carried her bodily higher up on the beach and breathed more at ease when we saw the seas diminish with the dying wind.

Mr. Blye has been, to-day, our Santa Claus, and with several others I have received a Christmas present of great value. As before noted, there came on shore from the wreck when it was being stripped a box of Manila

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

cigars, and it has been supposed that they were all distributed by the generous owner and had been smoked. To-day, however, Mr. Blye discovered that three of them lay in the bottom of his chest, and to be impartial he divided them into three parts each and doled them out. My present was thankfully and cheerfully accepted, and while I am writing my journal, is passing off in wreaths of hope above my head.

Mr. Bailey and myself have for several days been having the joint use of an old clay pipe he had saved, and we have been trying to smoke the dried leaves and bark of the bushes around us. It is a failure with me. Now much has been said by learned men *for* as well as *against* the use of tobacco, but I do not hesitate to testify to its great value in conditions such as ours. It has been a cheering companion to our thoughts in solitude, and a comfort in depression of spirits. I have

## WAITING

even seen one man offer his only coat for a piece of plug about the size of a silver dollar.

*Sunday, January 1, 1871.* New Year's Day — "Happy New Year"! I think no one but the marine sentry at the storehouse saw the birth of the new year or cared to see the new year come in. For myself I hope there will be no more holidays to chronicle here except it may be the one that liberates us from these surroundings. They have — the three we have had here — aroused too many sombre reflections in contrasting those of the past with the present.

Talbot has now been away forty-three days and it seems almost beyond probability that he should have reached the Sandwich Islands before the food was exhausted. There is a lingering hope, however, that some delay in starting relief for us may have occurred or that he may have reached some island other than Oahu, where Honolulu is situated, and

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

that communication with Oahu may be limited. We are "threshing out" the whole situation to-night in earnest discussion between the sanguine and non-sanguine members of the mess.



## VI

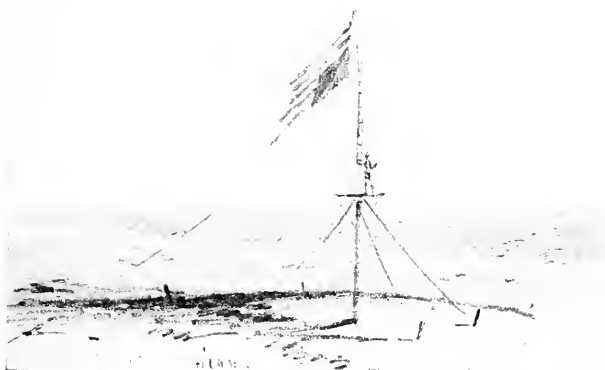
### RESCUED

TUESDAY, *January 3*. At midnight. It is near an impossibility sanely and calmly to write up my journal to-night — my nerves are shaken and my pencil falters. I have climbed into the storehouse to get away from the commotion in the tent and all over the camp. No one can possibly sleep, for I can see through a rent in the canvas men dancing around a huge fire on the highest point of the island, and hear them cheering and singing while feeding the fire with timbers that we have been regarding as worth their weight in coin. To a looker-on the entire camp would seem to have gone crazy. I will tell what I can now and the rest some other time.

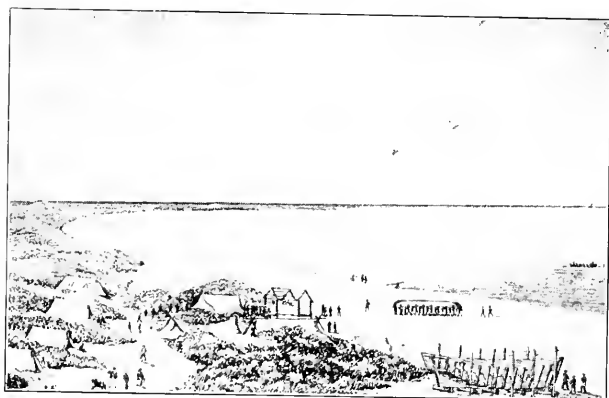
At half-past three this afternoon I was

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

working on the schooner near Mr. Mitchell, one of the carpenters of the contractor's party. I was handing him a nail when I noticed his eyes steadily fixed on some point seaward. He paid no attention to me, and his continued gaze induced me to turn my eyes in the same direction to find what was so attractive as to cause his ignoring me. I saw then, too, something that held my gaze. Far off to the northeast and close to the horizon there was something like a shadow that had not been there when I had last visited the lookout. It appeared as a faintly outlined cloud, and as we both watched with idle tools in our hands it seemed to grow in size and density. Very soon he spoke in a low voice, as though not wishing to give a false alarm: "Paymaster, I believe that is the smoke of a steamer," and after another look, "I am sure of it"; and then arose a shout that all could hear, "Sail ho!"



THE FLAGSTAFF FROM WHICH THE KILAUEA WAS  
SIGHTED



CAMP SAGINAW ON THE DAY OF RESCUE



## RESCUED

The order concerning alarms was forgotten in his excitement, but as the captain stood near and his face beamed with his own joy, no notice was taken of the violation. He directed me at once to visit the lookout, and I did so, rapidly securing my glasses. By the time I reached the top of the mast I could see that the shadow we had watched was developing into a long and well-marked line of smoke and that a steamer was headed to the westward in front of it. I notified the eager, inquiring crowd at the foot of the mast and still kept my glasses trained on the steamer until her smokestack came into view. She was not heading directly for us, and I cannot describe the anxiety with which I watched to see if she was going to pass by, — my heart was thumping so that one could hear it. I could not believe she would fail to see our signal of distress that waved above me, and pass on to leave us stricken with despair.

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

When she arrived at a point nearly to the north of us, I saw her change her course until her masts were in line, and then I shouted the fact to those below, for it was evident she was bound for Ocean Island.

The long dreary suspense was over; our relief was near, and I slid down the Jacob's ladder, pale and speechless. The few moments of tense watchfulness had seemed to me like hours of suspense, and it is slight wonder that it took some time to recover my speech. When I did so I acquainted the captain with all I had seen. By the time I had completed my statement the steamer was in view from the ground, and then I witnessed such a scene as will never be forgotten.

Rough-looking men — many of them having faced the shocks of storm and battle — all of them having passed through our recent misfortunes without a murmur of complaint — were embracing each other with tears of

## RESCUED

joy running down their cheeks, while laughing, singing, and dancing.

I was at once ordered to break into our supplies and issue the best meal to all hands that I could concoct. This I certainly did with haste, and after our supper of boiled salt pork, flour, and beans, finished off with a cup of coffee, I felt as I might after a Delmonico dinner. It was a much-interrupted meal, however, for some one or more were continually rushing out of the tent and returning to report to the rest the movements of the steamer. By the time we had finished supper she was very near and was recognized as the Kilauea, a vessel belonging to the King of the Sandwich Islands. She came within half a mile of the reef where the Saginaw was wrecked and dipped her flag and then slowly steamed away in a southerly direction. This manœuvre we understood, for, as it was getting late in the day, our rescuers were evi-

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

dently intending to return to-morrow and avoid the danger of a night near the reef. Our captain has ordered a fire to be kept in good blazing order throughout the night as a beacon.

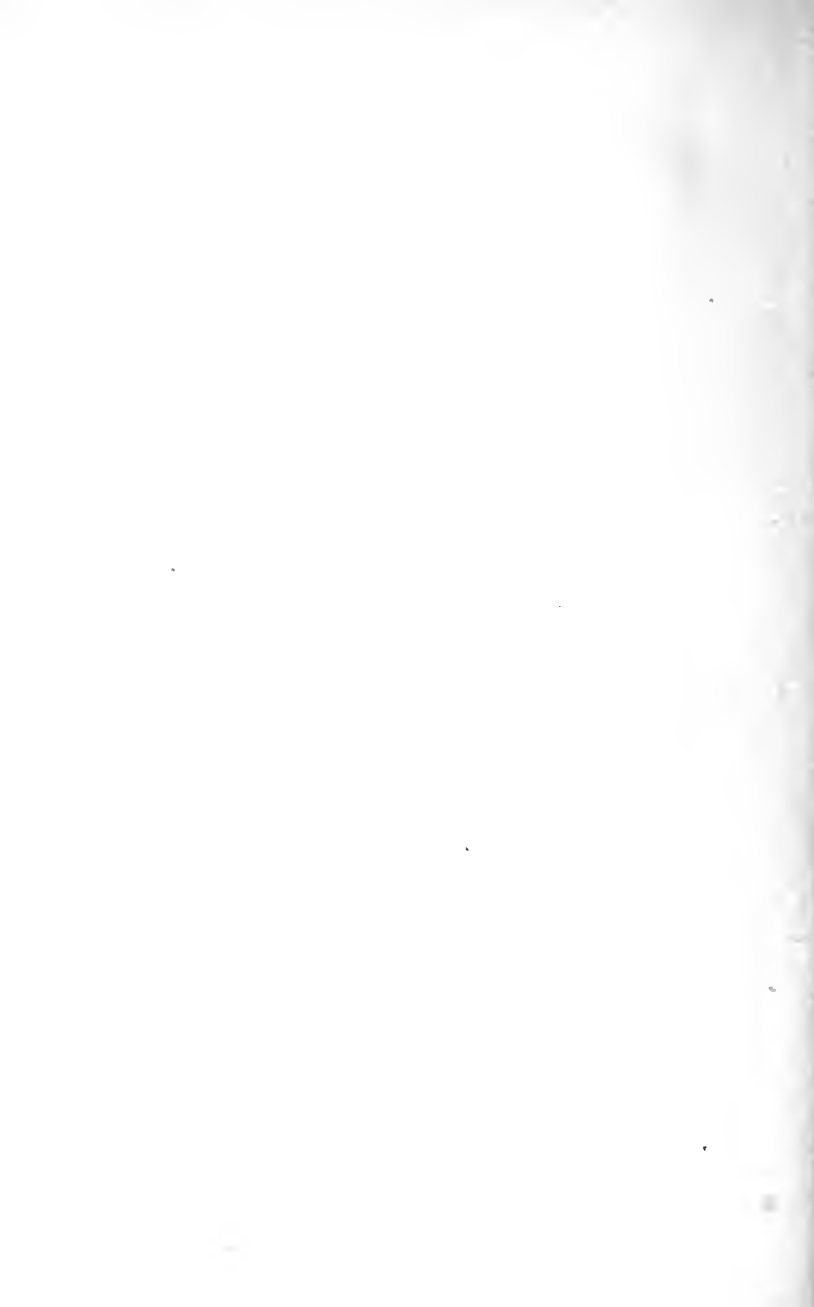
*Thursday, January 5.* On board the Kilauea (pronounced Kilaway) at sea. It was next to impossible yesterday to make any entries in my journal, and even this evening I have been compelled to ask Captain Long for the temporary use of his stateroom, owing to the tumult in the cabin and on deck; because I wish to record events while they are fresh in my memory. So much excitement and so many incidents were crowded in during the time we were rapidly collecting our effects and embarking on the Kilauea that it is difficult to note them in order.

The Kilauea appeared at daybreak and anchored near the west entrance of the lagoon, and very soon after her captain came





**CAPTAIN LONG**  
Commander of the Kilauea



## RESCUED

to our landing-place in a whaleboat. I recognized in him an old Honolulu friend, — Captain Thomas Long, a retired whaling captain, and as he stepped from his boat, we gave him three rousing cheers while we stood at attention near the fringe of bushes around the camp. Captain Sicard went down the beach alone to receive him, and after a cordial greeting, they conferred together for a few minutes. Together they came towards us apparently in sober thought, and Captain Sicard held up his hand as a signal for silence. He uncovered his head and said, in a tremulous voice, “Men, I have the great sorrow to announce to you that we have been saved at a great sacrifice. Lieutenant Talbot and three of the gig’s crew are dead. The particulars you will learn later; at present, Captain Long is anxious for us to remove to the Kilauea as quickly as possible.” He bowed his head and a low murmur of grief passed along our line.

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

From a cheering, happy crowd we were as in an instant changed to one of mourning. All the dreary waiting days we have passed seemed to fade into insignificance in the face of this great sorrow.

Captain Long inquired if anything was needed immediately, stating that a generous supply of food and clothing had been rushed on board the *Kilauea* in Honolulu, and that she had started to sea eight hours after he had been notified of her mission. One of the officers told him that the thing that would best supply a long-felt want was tobacco; so the *Kilauea's* boat was at once dispatched to the steamer for a box of it, which when opened on the beach was greedily appropriated.

I went off to the *Kilauea* in the first of the embarking boats, taking the ship's safe and papers that had been stored at the head of my mattress in the tent; therefore did not see the

## RESCUED

final disposition of articles left on the island; but they suddenly lost all interest to me and, beyond the fact that our water supply was labeled with a sign for future unfortunates, I know but little. The captain tells me that Captain Long demurred at the length of time it would take to bring off most of the government property, saying that his duty to us and to his vessel made it necessary to get away from this dangerous neighborhood at the earliest possible moment; the rescue of life and not property was his object in coming to us. So our food supply and many articles of equipment were collected and stored at the highest point of the island.

When I reached the Kilauea I was served with a good meal, of which I ate sparingly; and, having deposited the safe in a near corner of the cabin, "turned in" on a near berth, boots and all, sleeping through all the turmoil made when the others came off. And so

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

we sailed away at dusk to the eastward, turning our backs on the desolate home where we had suffered for sixty-seven days.

I have learned that a fast-sailing schooner, *Kona*, was dispatched on Saturday evening under charter by the American Minister, eight hours after the arrival of Halford. Our consul and vice-consul, with other friends, however, prevailed upon the United States Minister, Mr. Pierce, to accept the offer of the *Kilauea* by the King; urging as a reason that there was no certainty of our being in a condition to await the slow progress of a sailing-vessel; that there might be sickness and even starvation in our party. The *Kilauea* was hastily coaled and sailed on Monday.

(*Note.* The *Kona* was sighted in the offing as we were leaving Ocean Island, and running down to her Captain Long ordered her back to Honolulu.)

## RESCUED

On the way to Honolulu, while sitting in the pilot house of the Kilauea, I overheard a conversation on deck between two of the Saginaw's men concerning the superstition connected with sailing on Friday. "What better proof," said one of them, "would you have of its being an unlucky day than in the case of the Saginaw? She sailed from the Midway Islands on a Friday, and two days afterward she lay a total wreck among the breakers of Ocean Island. The gig that went for help also started on Friday, and what was the result? Four out of the five brave boys who manned her came to an untimely end — how Halford escaped is a mystery to me; but I guess he'll think twice before venturing on another voyage on that day of the week." I said to myself that I would think twice, too, unless I was starting under orders.

## VII

### THE FATE OF THE GIG

HONOLULU, *January 28, 1871.* Perhaps some reader may deem the story of the Saginaw's last cruise complete. I cannot, however, consider it so while lacking the sorrowful story of our comrades' voyage in the gig, with its fatal ending as told by Halford, the sole survivor. Nor would it be less than ingratitude to pass unnoticed the fact of our hearty reception when we arrived here on the fourteenth, well fed and well clothed through the generous exertions of our friends. The King, his Cabinet, and most of the population were on the wharves as the Kilauea steamed into the harbor. The cheers and hat-waving were but the prelude to a most cordial and affectionate greeting when we landed in the



## THE FATE OF THE GIG

midst of the throng. Several of the officers were at once seized upon and taken to the homes of their old-time friends. When I could elude the crowd I was whisked away in a carriage to the Nuuanu Valley home of Mr. John Paty, and there rested in luxury and comfort until to-day, when we are to sail on the steamer Moses Taylor. In recognition of his great kindness as well as to illustrate the comfortable style of the island homes, I insert a picture of Mr. Paty's bungalow.

On Thursday our captain and several officers were received in audience by the King, and in acknowledgment of the great kindness shown us, the following address was presented.

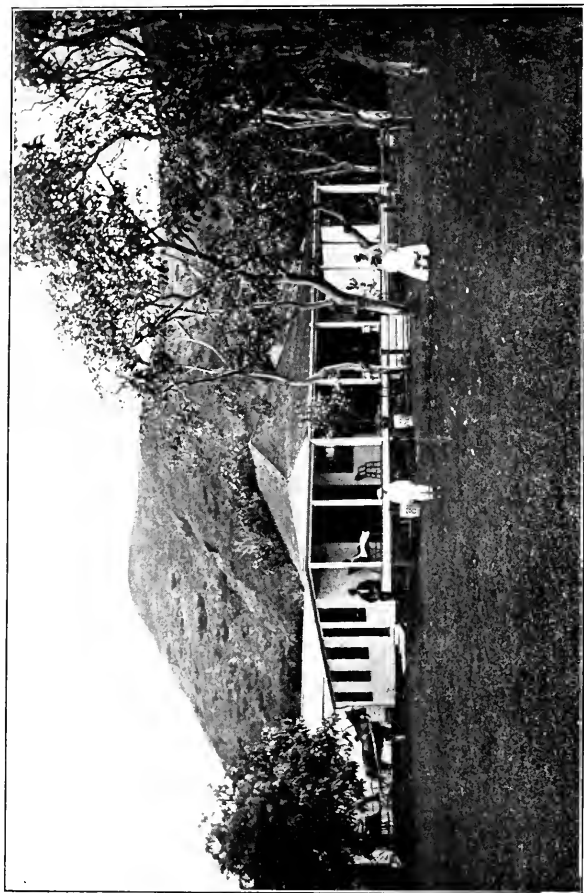
Our captain said: —

In behalf of the rear admiral commanding the Pacific fleet, I desire to thank your Majesty for the most courteous offer of the steamer Kilauea to go to the assistance of the shipwrecked crew of

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

the United States Ship Saginaw on Ocean Island. It was a most welcome and opportune relief to the company of United States officers and seamen there in distress; a proof of your Majesty's friendly feeling toward our Navy. I am sure your Majesty's kind and humane intentions were most efficiently carried out by the very capable and intelligent officer with his officers and crew sent in command of the Kilauea. I must ask your Majesty, also, to accept my thanks and those of my officers and men for the sympathy shown us in our probable distress; for the personal interest taken by you in the speedy dispatch of the Kilauea. Your Majesty's Minister of the Interior, also, manifested the strongest interest in our relief; to his energetic and efficient efforts was it due that your intentions were so promptly carried into effect.

At Ocean Island we recognized your Majesty's ship as soon as she appeared on the horizon. Our feelings of gratitude may perhaps be imagined, but can only be thoroughly appreciated by those who have been placed in a similar situation. On our arrival in port we were welcomed with the most warm-hearted cordiality, and since have



MR. JOHN PATY'S BUNGALOW AT HONOLULU



## THE FATE OF THE GIG

received abundant proofs of the kind feelings of the Hawaiian people.

One officer and four men belonging to my vessel bravely and generously volunteered on a long sea voyage in a small boat for the relief of their ship-mates. These finally, with one exception, made sacrifice of their lives upon the shores of the island of Kauai. Your Majesty's subjects on that island received the survivor of the boat's crew with great kindness and hospitality. They were most solicitous to recover the remains of my officer and his men, and to inter them in a suitable and Christian manner. I desire again to return thanks for all that has been done for the Saginaw's officers and crew.

His Majesty replied to the captain as follows: —

Captain — I am pleased to see you here to-day and congratulate you and the officers and crew of the late United States Ship Saginaw upon the delivery from their unpleasant position upon a desolate island. I am glad that my Government has been enabled to render you assistance. The officers of your Service in this ocean have always

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

shown themselves prompt to go to the assistance of distressed men of all nations, and I have lately had a proof of their prompt humanity in the offer of Captain Truxton, of the ship Jamestown, to assist some of my subjects in the Micronesian Islands, and in the efficient aid which he rendered them. Such interchanges tend to promote personal and national friendship.

I sympathize with you, Captain, for the loss of your ship — a misfortune always keenly felt by a sensitive officer, however unavoidable it may have been. I sympathize with you for the loss of the gallant officer and men who, after a long voyage in an open boat, met their death on the shores of Kauai. Such examples of devotion to duty are a rich legacy to all men. Permit me, Captain, to express a hope that you and your officers who have shared with you your service in this ocean for some time past and your peril in the late shipwreck may live to attain the highest honors in your profession.

On Saturday last there was held a sale by a local auctioneer of such articles belonging to

## THE FATE OF THE GIG

the Navy Department as we were able to bring away from Ocean Island. Among them was included the gig which Halford brought from the island of Kauai. We were surprised to learn later that the boat had been bid in by a syndicate of our friends for presentation to us as a souvenir. It has been accepted and we are considering plans for its future preservation. I went down to the dock yesterday to see it prepared for shipment, and its sad story was almost told in the scars upon it. Its bow was bound with iron straps and a large gap in the starboard side was covered with canvas. Its wounds seemed almost as making a mute appeal for sympathy, and expressed the struggle it had gone through.

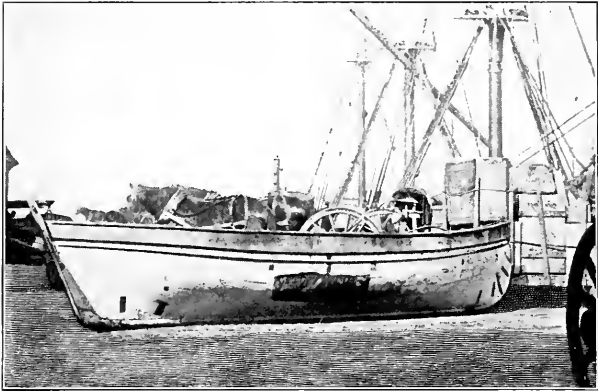
### *Halford's Story*

When we left Ocean Island, November 18th, we ran to the north to latitude 32°, there took the westerly winds and ran east to, as Mr.

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

Talbot supposed, the longitude of Kauai (Kowee), but it proved ultimately that we were not within a degree of that longitude. We then stood south. Five days out we lost all light and fire and had no means of making either — no dry tinder or wood, although we had flint and steel. About five or six days before making Kauai we succeeded in getting a light with a glass taken from an opera glass. We suffered much from wet, cold, and want of food. The ten days' ration of bread in a canvas bag was mostly spoiled; the two tins of cooked beans could not be eaten, causing dysentery, as did also the boiled wheat; the gallon of molasses leaked out, and the sugar, tea, and coffee were spoiled by wetting. To the dessicated potato, five five-pound tins of which were given us at the last moment before sailing, we attributed the preservation of our lives from starvation. For the last week it was all we had, mixed with a little fresh water.





STARBOARD SIDE OF THE GIG AFTER HER EVENTFUL JOURNEY



DECK VIEW OF THE GIG AFTER HER EVENTFUL JOURNEY



## THE FATE OF THE GIG

We had heavy weather while running to the eastward; hove to with the sea anchor twice, the last time lost it. We then made another drag from three oars, which was also lost. Then we made still another from two oars and a square of sail by crossing them. That lasted for three turns of bad weather; but the third time it broke adrift and all was lost.

Mr. Talbot was ill with diarrhœa for seven or eight days, but got better, although he continued to suffer much from fatigue and hardship. He was somewhat cheerful the whole passage. Muir and Andrews were sick for two or three weeks. Francis was always well.

We did not make land within a week of what we expected. The first land we saw was Kawaihua Rock, at the southern end of Niihau (Neehow) Island, on Friday morning, December 16th. We stood north by east, with the

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

island in sight all day. During that night and Saturday stood northeast by north, and on Saturday night headed east and south southeast.

Sunday morning the wind allowed us to head southeast with the island of Kauai in sight, and Sunday night we were off the Bay of Halalea on the north coast. We then hove to with head to the northwest, the wind having hauled to the westward. We laid thus until eleven P.M. It being my watch on deck, I called Mr. Talbot and told him that the night was clear and I could see the entrance to Halalea Harbor. He ordered the boat to be kept away and steered for the entrance. As we came near the entrance it clouded up and became dark, so we hove to again with head to the northwest. At one A.M. I called my relief. Andrews and Francis came on deck, as did also Mr. Talbot. After I went below the boat was again kept away toward the

## THE FATE OF THE GIG

land for a short time and again hove to. At a little past two A.M. Sunday morning she was kept away again for the third time. I remained below until I felt from the boat's motion that she was getting into shoal water. Then I awoke Muir and told him it was time we went on deck. He did not go, but I did. Just as I got to the cockpit a sea broke aboard abaft. Mr. Talbot ordered to bring the boat by the wind. I hauled aft the main sheet with Francis at the helm and the boat came up into wind. Just then another breaker broke on board and capsized the boat. Andrews and Francis were washed away and were never afterwards seen. Muir was still below, and did not get clear until the boat was righted, when he gave symptoms of insanity. Before the boat was righted by the sea Mr. Talbot was clinging to the bilge of the boat and I called him to go to the stern and there get up on the bottom. While he

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

was attempting to do so he was washed off and sank. He was heavily clothed and much exhausted. He made no cry. I succeeded in getting on to the bottom and stripped myself of my clothes. Just then the sea came and righted the boat. It was then that Muir put his head up the cockpit, when I assisted him on deck. Soon afterward another breaker came and again upset the boat; she going over twice, the last time coming upright and headed on to the breakers. We then found her to be inside of the large breakers, and we drifted toward the shore at a place called Kalihi Kai, about five miles from Hanalei. I landed with the water breast-high and took with me a tin case of dispatches and letters. On board there was a tin box with its cover broken containing navigation books, charts, etc., also Captain Sicard's instructions to Lieutenant Talbot, with others, among which were Muir's and Andrews's discharge papers;

## THE FATE OF THE GIG

they having been shipped November 15th for one month. (They belong to the contractors, in whose employ they were previous to that time.) This box also contained Francis's and my transfer papers and accounts destined for the Mare Island Navy Yard. This box with everything not lashed fell into the water when we were first upset.

I landed about three A.M., but saw no one until daybreak, when, seeing some huts, I went to them and got assistance to get the boat onto the beach. I had previously, by making five trips to the boat, succeeded in bringing ashore the long tin case first mentioned, the chronometer, opera glasses, barometer, one ship's compass, boat's binnacle compass, and had also assisted Muir to the shore. He was still insane, saying but little and that incoherently. He groaned a great deal.

I was now much exhausted and laid myself down to rest until sunrise, when I looked for

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

Muir and found him gone from the place I left him. Soon after I found him surrounded by several natives, but he was dead and very black in the face.

During the day I got some food and clothing from the natives — one of them called Peter. After resting myself Peter and I went on horseback over to Hanalei to Sheriff Wilcox and Mr. Burt. Then we returned with the sheriff and coroner to Kalihi Kai, where an inquest was held over the bodies of Lieutenant Talbot and Muir, the former having drifted ashore just before I left Kalihi Kai for Hanalei. Mr. Talbot's forehead was bruised and blackened, apparently from having struck the boat or wreckage.

After the inquest the two bodies were taken to Hanalei, put into coffins and buried the next day in one grave at a place where a seaman belonging to the U.S.S. Lackawanna was buried in 1867. Funeral services were



## THE FATE OF THE GIG

performed by Mr. Kenny by reading the Episcopal burial service, and the two Misses Johnson (daughters of an American missionary) singing.

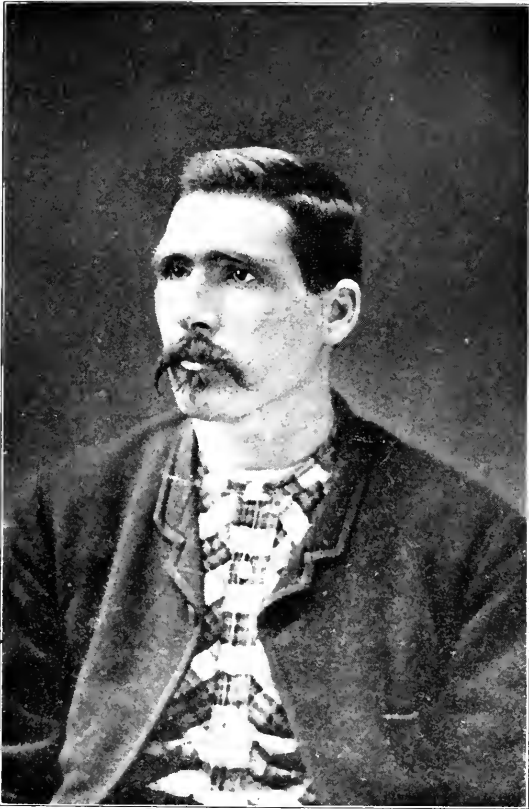
Before I left Hanalei for Honolulu it was reported by a half-white who had been left to watch the shore at Kalihi Kai that Andrews's body had come ashore and had been taken care of.

Captain Dudoit, the schooner Wainona, offered to bring me direct to Honolulu, leaving his return freight at Wainiea for another trip. I accepted the same through Mr. Bent, and we sailed for Honolulu on the evening of Tuesday, December 20, and arrived at Honolulu at eleven A.M., December 24, bringing with me the effects saved as aforementioned. I went, on landing, immediately to the United States Consul's office, where I saw him and the Minister President and told to them my story.

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

(*Note.* The reader may remember the incident I related as occurring at the time we were provisioning the gig; the discovery that the boiled rice had fermented and the hasty substitution of the dessicated potatoes. Halford was emphatic to me in the assertion that the potato was the preserver of their lives and that mixed with water it constituted their only food during the last week of their sufferings. The dessicated potato was at that time a part of the Navy ration. It was also called "evaporated," and was prepared by thoroughly drying the potato and coarsely grinding it. In appearance it resembles a very coarse meal.)

Halford has told me of several remarkable incidents which happened during the voyage of the gig and which, although not considered essential in his official statement, would be lifelong memories to him.



**WILLIAM HALFORD**

The only survivor of the gig's crew. (Now a retired chief gunner in the Navy.)



## THE FATE OF THE GIG

Of one of these he says — and I give his own words: “We were scudding before a gale of wind under a reefed square sail. A nasty sea was running at the time. I was standing in the after hatch steering; had the reeving string of the cover that was nailed around the combings drawn tight under my armpits to keep out the sea as it washed over the boat, when I felt a shock. The boat almost capsized, but the next sea lifted her over. I looked astern and saw a great log forty or fifty feet long and four or five feet in diameter, water-logged and just awash. We had jumped clean over it. It was a case of touch and go with us.”

Of another incident he says: “One night I had relieved Peter Francis at the tiller and he had crawled forward on deck. Somehow or other he got overboard; luckily we had a strong fishing-line trailing astern all the voyage, but never got as much as a bite until

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

it caught Francis and we got him on board again. It was a bright moonlight night."

Of another happening he says: "Then, when our provisions had run out entirely, a large bird came and landed on the boat and looked at me as I stood at the tiller. The other four at this time were very weak from want of food and from dysentery; they were more dead than alive. I caught the bird, tore off the feathers, cut it up in five pieces, and we all had a good meal. It was raw, but it tasted good. About thirty-six hours after this, just at break of day, as I was sitting at the tiller, I felt something strike my cheek. It was a little flying-fish. I caught it, and soon a school of them came skipping along, several dropping on deck. I captured five or six of them and they gave us the last meal we had on the gig: for at daylight I saw land — Tahoora or Kaula Rock."

## THE FATE OF THE GIG

Our captain has made the following report to the Secretary of the Navy, which adds to and confirms the story of the lone survivor of the gig: —

HONOLULU, HAWAIIAN ISLANDS,  
*January 18, 1871.*

SIR: — I forward herewith the brief report called for by regulation of the death of Lieutenant J. G. Talbot (and also three of the crew of the United States Steamer Saginaw) at the island of Kauai (Hawaiian Group).

I feel that something more is due to these devoted and gallant friends, who so nobly risked their lives to save those of their shipmates, and I beg leave to report the following facts regarding their voyage from Ocean Island and its melancholy conclusion.

The boat (which had been the Saginaw's gig and was a whaleboat of very fine model) was prepared for the voyage with the greatest care. She was raised on the gunwale eight inches, decked over, and had new sails, etc.

The boat left Ocean Island November 18, 1870.

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

The route indicated by me to Lieutenant Talbot was to steer to the northward "by the wind" until he got to the latitude of about 32 degrees north, and then to make his way to the eastward until he could "lay" the Hawaiian Islands with the northeast trade winds. He seems to have followed about that route. The boat lost her sea anchor and oars in a gale of wind and a good deal of her provision was spoiled by salt water. The navigation instruments, too, were of but little use, on account of the lively motions of the boat. When she was supposed to be in the longitude of Kauai she was really about one and one half degrees to the westward; thus, instead of the island of Kauai she finally sighted the rock Kauhulaua (the southwestern point of land in the group) and beat up from thence to the island of Kauai. She was hove off the entrance of Hanalei Bay during part of the night of Monday, December 19th, and in attempting to run into the Bay about 2.30 A.M. she got suddenly into the breakers (which here made a considerable distance from the shore) and capsized.

I enclose herewith a copy of the deposition of



## THE FATE OF THE GIG

William Halford, coxswain, the only survivor of this gallant crew; his narrative being the one from which all accounts are taken. I have not seen him, personally, as he left here before my arrival.

Peter Francis, quartermaster, and John Andrews, coxswain, were washed overboard at once and disappeared. Lieutenant Talbot was washed off the boat, and when she capsized he clung to the bottom and tried to climb up on it, going to the stern for that purpose; the boat gave a plunge and Halford thinks that the boat's gunwale or stern must have struck Mr. Talbot in the forehead as he let go his hold and went down.

James Muir was below when the boat struck the breakers, and does not appear to have come out of her until she had rolled over once. He must have suffered some injury in the boat, as he appears to have been out of his mind and his face turned black immediately after his death. As will be seen by Halford's statement, Muir reached shore, but died of exhaustion on the way to the native huts.

The body of John Andrews did not come on shore until about December 20th. All clothes had

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

been stripped from it. The body of Peter Francis has never been recovered.

The bodies are buried side by side at Hanalei (Kauai). The service was read over them in a proper manner. Suitable gravestones will be erected over them by subscription of the officers and crew of the Saginaw.

As soon as we had gotten on Ocean Island after the Saginaw's wreck, Lieutenant Talbot volunteered to take this boat to Honolulu, and the rest volunteered as soon as it was known that men might perhaps be wanted for such service.

Mr. Talbot was a very zealous and spirited officer. I had observed his excellent qualities from the time of his joining the Saginaw (September 23, 1870) in Honolulu. During the wreck and afterwards he rendered me the greatest assistance and service by his fine bearing, his cheerfulness, and devotion to duty. His boat was evidently commanded with the greatest intelligence, fortitude, and gallantry and with the most admirable devotion. May the Service always be able to find such men in the time of need.

The men were fine specimens of seamen — cool

## THE FATE OF THE GIG

and brave, with great endurance and excellent physical strength. They were, undoubtedly, those best qualified in the whole party on Ocean Island to perform such a service. Both Lieutenant Talbot and his men had very firm confidence in their boat and looked forward with cheerfulness to the voyage. Such men should be the pride of the Navy, and the news of their death cast a deep gloom over the otherwise cheerful feelings with which the Kilauea was welcomed at Ocean Island.

I do not know that I sufficiently express my deep sense of their devotion and gallantry; words seem to fail me in that respect.

Previous to the sailing of the boat from Ocean Island I had enlisted John Andrews and James Muir as seamen for one month. Since I have ascertained their fate I have ordered them to be rated as petty officers (in ratings allowed to most of the "fourth rates"), as I have thought that all the crew of that boat should have stood on equal footing as regards the amount they might be entitled to in case of disaster, as they all incurred the same risk.

Andrews and Muir belonged to the party of

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE SAGINAW

Mr. G. W. Townsend (the contractor at Midway Islands), and it was made a condition, by them, of their enlistment that it should not interfere with their contract with Mr. Townsend. It was intended as the security of their families against the risk incurred while performing the great service for the shipwrecked party. I have forwarded their enlistment papers to the Bureau of Equipment and Recruiting.

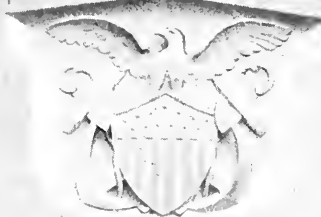
I am very respectfully,  
Your obedient Servant,  
MONTGOMERY SICARD,  
Lieut. Comdr. U.S.N. Comd'g.

HON. GEORGE M. ROBESON,  
Secretary of the Navy.

### *In God's Country again*

*San Francisco, February 8, 1871.* After a pleasant voyage in the *Moses Taylor* we are again, all hands, — minus our gallant comrades, — on American soil, and the cruise of the *Saginaw* is officially closed. The officers have taken up quarters on shore, and the crew





IN MEMORY OF  
**LIEUTENANT JOHN C. TALBOT, U.S.N.**  
**PETER FRANCIS, QUAR.MASTER.**  
**JOHN ANDREWS, COXSWAIN.**  
**JAMES MUIR, CAPT. OF HOLD.**  
**ALL OF THE U.S.S. SACINAW..**

WHO WERE DROWNED  
DEC. 19, 1870. WHILE ATTEMPTING TO LAND  
ON THE ISLAND OF KAUAI, IN THE NORTH PACIFIC  
OCEAN, AFTER A BOAT VOYAGE OF FIFTEEN HUNDRED  
MILES, VOLUNTARILY UNDERTAKEN IN SEARCH OF  
AID FOR THEIR WRECKED SHIPMATES ON OCEAN ISLAND

TO COMMEMORATE THEIR ADVENTUROUS VOYAGE,  
IN ADMIRATION OF THEIR HEROISM,  
AND TO KEEP ALIVE THE REMEMBRANCE  
OF THEIR NOBLE AND GENEROUS DEVOTION,  
THIS TABLET IS ENRECTED BY THEIR SHIPMATES  
AND BY OFFICERS OF THE U.S. NAVY.

"GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS,  
THAT A MAN LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS"

THE TABLET

Now on the walls of the chapel at the United States Naval Academy

## THE FATE OF THE GIG

temporarily transferred to the U.S. Steamer Saranac for discharge or detail as their period of enlistment may require. The gig came with us and will be temporarily stored until it is decided as to her future. We have started a subscription for a suitable memorial to the gig's heroes, and the other ships of the squadron have generously offered their help. The most approved plan seems to be a marble tablet on the walls of the chapel at the Naval Academy, and the captain has made a sketch of one as it would appear there.

(*Note. November 1, 1871.* The tablet as designed has been completed and delivered at the Naval Academy. The following picture shows its appropriate character, and I deem it a fitting conclusion to my story. The gig is also to go to the Naval Academy to be deposited in the Museum.)

THE END





## APPENDIX

### I

I HAVE been asked several times how it came about that our good ship could have met her sad fate when so recently out of port, her officers knowing the existence of the dangers so near. I have confined my narrative to personal experiences and to incidents of the life under the conditions surrounding us. However, as such questions may arise in the mind of some readers and in order to enlighten them, I set down below some copies of the results from official investigations by those higher in authority.

First: There is the report of the Court of Inquiry held upon our arrival in San Francisco, which reads thus:—

The Court is of the opinion that the wrecking of the Saginaw was caused by a current, as the evidence shows care in running the vessel at a safe rate of speed and the log-line was found to be correct two days before and

## APPENDIX

had been used only ten hours at sea afterward, and that Lieutenant Commander Montgomery Sicard used due vigilance and care in the navigation of his vessel, and after striking upon the reef that he exercised sound judgment and exhibited great skill and prudence.

This was followed later by the Secretary of the Navy's annual report to the President, from which the following is an extract: —

Leaving Midway Islands on the 28th of October, Commander Sicard, of the Saginaw, determined to run to Ocean Island, a small island lying about one hundred miles to the westward of Midway, to rescue any sailors who might have been wrecked there and who, being out of the ordinary track of vessels in that part of the Pacific Ocean, would have little chance of relief from any other source. This expedition, though in the direct line of his duty as the commander of a naval vessel, was fraught with the usual perils of navigation in unknown and dangerous waters, and about three o'clock on the morning of the 29th of October, the Saginaw, running slowly in the darkness, was wrecked on a reef outlying the island for which she was bound. With much exertion and the exercise of much energy and skill, all on board, including the officers and men of the ship and

## APPENDIX

the working party from Midway Islands, were safely landed, with a small allowance of provisions and materials rescued from the wreck. Cast upon the shores of an uninhabited island with scanty means of subsistence, out of the line of travel, and more than one thousand miles from the nearest port of refuge or relief, then it was that the commanding officer of the Saginaw illustrated the benefits of the comprehensive education and strict training which he had received at the hands of the Government and exhibited the high personal qualities which characterize him as an officer. Aably seconded by his subordinate officers of every grade, Commander Sicard took immediately every possible means for the health, safety, and final relief of those who were committed to his command. Whatever could be saved from the wreck was at once secured; measures were immediately taken to keep up the health, spirits, and discipline of the men: fresh water was distilled by means of an old boiler, and everything was organized so that there was no waste of either provisions, material, or labor.

The boat fittest for the service was promptly repaired, provisioned, and equipped, as far as might be, for the perilous voyage. Manned by one officer and four men, all of whom volunteered for the service, it was dispatched to Honolulu, the nearest port from which

## APPENDIX

relief could be expected. After her departure work was vigorously pushed on the island; and when finally rescued, the shipwrecked marines with well-directed labor had almost completed, from the material of their old ship, a new schooner perfectly seaworthy and sufficient, under favorable circumstances, to carry the whole shipwrecked party to a port of safety. I have thus collated some of the facts of this case to illustrate my high opinion of the energy and ability displayed by Commander Sicard and his comrades on this occasion and to show how well such conduct repays the favor of the Government.

After relating the history of the boat's voyage which we have already read, the Secretary concludes as follows: —

The death of Lieutenant Talbot closed a career of unusual promise, and in it the Navy lost a brilliant and beloved member. A skillful sailor, an accomplished officer, and a Christian gentleman, his self-sacrifice has arrested the attention of his comrades and will remain an example to the Service which in life his virtues adorned and whose highest qualities were illustrated in the crowning heroism of his death. His comrades of humbler rank will not be forgotten; with him they faced the dangers of the lonely ocean and offered their

## APPENDIX

lives with his to save their shipwrecked messmates, and no one can estimate how much of danger and suffering, perhaps death, was saved through the courage and endurance of the sole survivor of that gallant boat's crew.

## II

THE following is a list of the officers and crew of the Saginaw as it appeared on the pay-roll at the time she was wrecked; I feel that I should name them all in recognition of a comradeship in suffering never to be forgotten where each one performed his duty unflinchingly: —

### *Officers*

Montgomery Sicard, lieutenant commander.

John G. Talbot, lieutenant.

J. K. Cogswell, Perry Garst, and A. H. Parsons, ensigns.

George H. Read, passed assistant paymaster.

James Butterworth, passed assistant engineer.

H. C. Blye, passed assistant engineer (in charge of contractor's party).

John J. Ryan, C. D. Foss, Herschel Main, and Jones Godfrey, second assistant engineers.

George H. Robinson, master's mate.

### *Petty Officers*

Peter Francis, quartermaster.

Nicholas Barton, quartermaster.

## APPENDIX

Thomas Hayes, sailmaker's mate.  
John Lane, boatswain's mate.  
James Foschack, gunner's mate.  
J. M. Logan, yeoman.  
William Halford, coxswain.  
Samuel A. Thompson, master at arms.  
Charles Hale, paymaster's yeoman.  
A. E. Myfinger, cabin steward.  
Solomon Graves, cabin cook.  
Joseph Ross, wardroom steward.  
George D. Wauchoss, wardroom cook.  
Henry B. Clark, third-class apothecary.  
William Edman, ship's cook.  
Henry Wallace, steerage steward.  
L. McCabe, steerage cook.

*First-class firemen*, Francis Scott, Lorenzo Co-  
burg, George White.

*Second-class fireman*, George Hubert.

*Seamen*, William Cairns, Michael Lynch, Henry  
D. Vivian, Daniel Collins.

*Ordinary seamen*, Joseph A. Bailey, John H.  
Wallace, Dennis A. Fitzgerald, John Daley,

## APPENDIX

Charles Brown, Dennis M. Hayes, Michael Jordan, Edward James.

*Landsmen*, James Nichols, W. J. Evans, Edward O'Brien, Thomas Kearney, J. R. Miller, Martin Doran, William Fallon, Thomas Larkin, Joseph McLaughlin, George Saunders, William Combs, Joseph A. Agarrie, Michael Garvey, John Murphy, John Downs, James McNamara, John Riley, Thomas Melody, James M. Nolan.

*Marine guard*, Charles A. Martin, orderly sergeant; John G. Moore, corporal; Phillip Morris, corporal.

*Privates*, D. G. Brennan, Thomas Wiseman, David Muir, James Sarsfield, Thomas Jones, John McGrath, Lewis Peck.





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