

In The Nick of Time

By Severiano Lizarraga, Jr., H.S., '33

THE "Hawk" was gliding smoothly along the placid waters of the Pacific. Apparently it had no definite course. But wait—I will bring you on the ship itself.

On deck there was not a soul. But on the bridge were two men. They were speaking in low tones. One was Jim Hawkins, a Yankee of about twenty-seven summers. Though of a jovial character, he seemed to be, at this particular time, disgusted with life. His lieutenant, Thomas Dorf, was a young Pennsylvanian, combining both elegance and strength in his manly frame. For a moment they ceased talking, and silently watched the slowly waning day. The sky showed a variety of blending hues. The western part of the horizon greatly contrasted with the deep blue of the Pacific.

A crashing sound broke in upon the death-like stillness that prevailed. Had the circumstances been different, the noise would not have been noticed. But the Captain, yearning for some distraction, started, went over to the railing, and saw floating on the water and bumping against the sides of that fortress of steel, a huge bottle, carefully corked and sealed, containing within it a white piece of paper. Through curiosity, the Captain ordered one of his sailors to fish it out of the water.

When everybody had gone away, the Captain pulled out, with some difficulty, the cork; and after some time succeeded in getting out the paper. A few lines had been scratched on it with a pen. They ran thus:

Help! White men attack us.

Sure kill us. Come quick.

Ghost Light Island.

"The message, it seems, was one for help. White men? Kill us? Why all this? And where is Ghost Light Islands?" were the questions the Captain put to Thomas Dorf.

"Asking me? I have as much light on the subject as you, Captain. I have only this observation to make. The bottle appears to have

come from the south-west, as the wind blows from that direction. My advice is this: Let us head south-west, and trust to luck."

"But suppose the paper was just put in for fun? We should then be going for nothing," put in the Captain.

"Anyway, we have nothing to do. As a distraction, we can head her south-west and trust to luck," advised the sturdy Pennsylvanian.

At this juncture, an officer came up and asked whether the Captain had decided to what port they were bound. The Captain, upon the advice of the lieutenant, told him to go rather south-west.

They wandered over the cool waters of the broad Pacific. A bright new moon shone high up in the heavens, and illuminated both the ocean and the ship with a whitish sepulchral light which streamed through a window into the Captain's room. He was seated in an easy chair, apparently dozing, but in reality he was summing up the events that had occurred during the day. In front of him was a little table, set against the grey coloured wall, with two or three books on it, a number of scattered papers, and a few pens beside an inkstand.

Suddenly he jumped from his chair, put on his cap, and went towards the bridge. Whether it was presentiment or fate that led the Captain to go the bridge, I leave my readers to decide for themselves. He was joined by Tom, who had been searching for him. It did not occur to Tom to look into the Captain's room first, so that, he had already searched the whole ship, and was now returning to have a peep into the Captain's room. The importance of the news he carried was marked on his face.

"Captain," said Dorf addressing Jim, "we are now in front of Windland Island. But that is not all. I have made a peculiar discovery. Come with me, and you will see."

The Captain followed, and when they reached a point from which they could see the island, the Captain uttered a low whistle to express his astonishment. Indeed he had a right to be astonished, for there, on the peak of a mountain, were three bright lights placed so as to resemble a trio of ghosts. These lights gave the island and the surrounding places an uncanny aspect.

"Indeed, is the name 'Ghost Light Island' suited to this place. Let us however reconnoiter with the searchlight," said the Captain; and after a command had been given, the searchlight flashed forth bright and radiant. As quickly as it had been focussed on the peak, the beacons disappeared, and nothing was seen after that, save the surrounding scene lighted up by the ship's searchlight. As it proved useless to try to find out anything by means of those powerful searching beams, the Captain decided to effect a landing. Slowly the boats were lowered, after twenty men had gone into them. The few left on board noticed the progress of the boats by the gleams of the firearms which sparkled in the pale moonlight.

From the boat the Captain discerned a natural harbor. The island he saw was one plot of wilderness. Instead of risking a landing in the harbor, he landed two or three miles from it. Meanwhile Thomas Dorf was wondering what in the world the Captain's plan might be.

"My plan perhaps will not work, but let us trust to luck. I will make a *détour* around the eastern part of the island with ten men, while you with the rest will go around the western part, and after a while you will try to join me somewhere in the center of the island," came from the Captain.

"The plan I think", said the first officer, "is good, so let us carry it out without delay."

They divided the men into two groups, and started on their different ways. Both parties traversed through unfrequented woods, or rather, a wilderness, lacking all traces of civilization. The captain's party, after walking about three miles, heard a blood-curdling shriek uttered as by one in the agony of death. As it came from a shrub-covered spot, he, with his

band, approached the brushwood, and, to their utter surprise, came up to an old ruined temple of Asiatic style worn by the dilapidations of time. It was in the last stages of decay. The captain feared a trap in case the 'white men' of the place should have seen them. Warning his men to be on their guard, and to make the least possible noise, he led them into the ruined building. An antique arched passage led thru a long set of halls. At every side the eye was struck with some curious colonnade, or some artistically fashioned portico. As they were wonderingly examining the things about them, they suddenly heard a low murmur. The captain but his finger to his lips, and uttered that sibilant sound which in all languages means "Silence."

With agile step, they approached a narrow crack in one of the walls, and looking thru, beheld a spectacle which would have frozen the heart of any mortal.

What extended before the bewildered sailors, looked more like a painting of some Asiatic Murillo or Velásquez. But yet it was true. Surrounding the hall were arranged, in order, stern-looking, rigid men, about a meter apart. In the center was a huddled group of negroes, paralyzed with the fear of death. Beside them was a natural elevation of rock, and standing on it was a man, still holding a vicious-looking knife from which trickled drops of blood. He had a severe contracted face, and a red kerchief was around his throat. He wore a dirty blue woolen shirt, which was besprinkled with blood. His trousers reached a little below his knees, to meet a pair of boots covered with mud.

In front of him was another elevation made of bricks which was daubed with blood. On it were two negroes, their bodies hideously gory. Their throats had been slashed open, and blood still spouted forth. In front of this elevation was a chair rudely scalped from a rock. On it sat a base-looking bearded scoundrel, who held in his right hand a revolver as a sceptre! He appeared to be grave, yet a hypocritical, sarcastic smile played about the corners of his lips.

Having no heart to continue looking on, and excited to a frenzy of passion by the inhuman

spectacle before him, the captain after whisperingly preparing his men for the charge, deafeningly roared out his command, "Fire!". A tremendous noise followed the command, as ten rifles spat lead, and filled the air in the chamber with heavy smoke. For a second were heard a few clicks as the empty cartridges jumped out of their cells. "Fire!" was once more repeated, and after the guns had cracked a second time, the sailors rushed into the chamber, severed the cords that bound the negroes, and rushed upon the "smugglers" who were still too dazed to know what was going on about them. The hubbub was deafening.

But when the robbers realized what was going on about them, they rallied with a furious fusillade of shots. For a moment, the sailors seemed to give way; but at this point, reinforcements arrived, and the smugglers, seeing the futility of further resistance, soon surrendered themselves to the attackers.

The reinforcements were no other than the sailors under the reliable Tom Dorf, who on hearing the first shots, rushed to help his comrades. During Dorf's detour, he had met five men running as fast as their feet could carry them. They put up a defense, but were caught, and made to confess their business on the island. Expecting to be treated with decency if they

confessed, they admitted that a certain William McBillot promised them much gold if they followed him. So making their exit from Hawaii as fast as their boats could carry them, they arrived at Windland Island, where they attacked the negro settlement which was making great strides towards progress. They had ordered the negroes to give up all valuables, otherwise they would kill them. Knowing how superstitious negroes are, they planted every night three enormous lights so arranged as to resemble ghosts. This, they thought would keep the superstitious immigrants from the island. Besides this, they had moved their headquarters to the ruined temples, so as not to be seen by any trading launches which might pass by.

Anyway, it was apparent that the five who were running towards the temple went to warn their comrades. Exulting over their success in freeing the negroes and catching the smugglers, and with only one slightly injured man among their number, the sailors retraced their steps to the ship. After the smugglers had been manacled, the captain climbed the bridge. Upon meeting Thomas Dorf, he said to him: "I marvel at the good we have done to these poor negroes, and all on account of a coincidence, and as for these devilish smugglers, we'll take them home—to JAIL!"

The Bamboo

By Raoul Kahn, H.S. '31.

NATURE, with her fore-sighted wisdom as well as with her love of all that is beautiful, has showered many precious and useful gifts on the Far East. Amongst the first in the rank of natural beauty, and of utility, stands—proudly and justly so—the bamboo.

Though the bamboo is found all over this Gem of the Oriental Seas, it cannot be said to be a peculiarly native tree, as it flourishes just as luxuriantly in Japan, the East Indies, southern Asia, and in parts of Africa and South America. The bamboo combines beauty with

usefulness: its beauty being praised and favorably commented upon by tourists who have seen the loveliest the world has to offer; its numberless uses being vocally vouched for by the natives, and mutely, though none the less forcefully, by the objects of which it is made.

The bamboo . . . The name has a rhythm all its own, a rhythm duplicated by the soft sibilant sighing of the wind among its leaves. The most uneducated person cannot but notice the beauty in the frail slenderness of the bamboo, in its harmonious, yet stately and dignified bow and sway, in its coloring of green,