

The SEA BRIDE

By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

CHAPTER XXX.

The whale surged past, and turned to charge again. This time, as it passed, Noll touched the creature with his lance, but the prick of it was no more than a dart in the neck of a fighting bull. It goaded the whale, and nothing more. He charged with fury; his very fury was their safety.

Noll struck the whale at a little after nine o'clock in the morning. At noon the vast beast was still fighting, with no sign of weariness. It charged back and forth, back and forth; and the men swung the boat out of its way; and their muscles strained, their teeth ground together, the sweat poured from them with their efforts. They were intoxicated with the battle.

Noll, in the bow, bellowed and shouted his defiance; the men yelled at every stroke; they shook their fists at the whale as he raged past them. And Silva, astern, snatching them again and again from the jaws of destruction, grinned between tight lips, and held his oar.

A little after noon the whale swung past Noll with such momentum that he was carried out to the rim of the circle in which the fight was staged, and saw Tichel's boat there. Any boat was fair game to the monster; and Tichel had grown careless with watching the breathtaking struggle. He had forgotten his own peril; he expected the whale to turn back on Noll again.

It did not; it went for him, and its jaws sheared through the very waist of his boat so that the two halves fell away on either side of the vast head. The men had time to jump clear; there was no man hurt—save for the strangling of the salt water—and the whale seemed to feel himself victor, for he lay still, as if to rest upon his laurels.

Willis Cox was nearest; he drove his boat that way, and stood in the bow with lance in hand to strike. But Noll, hauling up desperately on the line, bellowed to him: "Let be, Willis! He's mine!" And Willis sheered off.

Then the whale felt the tug of the line and whirled once more to the battle. Willis picked up Tichel and his men, and towed the halves of the boat away back to the ship. The Sally was standing by, a mile from the battle. Such whales as this could sink the Sally herself with a battering blow in the flank. It was dangerous to come too near. Willis put Tichel and his men aboard, and went back to wait and be ready to answer any command from Noll.

The fifth hour of the battle was beginning. The whale was tireless. Noll, in the bow of his boat, seemed as untired as the beast he fought; but his men, even Silva, were wearying behind him.

It was this weariness that presently gave the whale his chance. He charged, and Silva's thrust on the long oar was a shade too late. The boat slipped out of reach of the crashing jaws; but the driving flukes caught it and it was overturned. The gear flew out.

Noll, in the bow, clung to the gunwale for an instant as the boat was overthrown—long enough to wrench out the pin that held the line in the crotch in the boat's bow. Silva, astern, would have cut; his hatchet was ready, but Noll shouted:

"No, by God; let be!"

Then they were all in the water, tumbled in the surges thrown back by the passage of the monster. And the whale drove by, turned, saw no boat upon the water, thought victory was come.

Brander, at this time, was a quarter-mile away. When the boat went over he yelled to his men:

"Pull! Oh, pull!"

They bent their stout oars with the first hot tug; fresh men, untired, hungry these hours past for a chance at the battle. Brander started toward where lay the capsize boat, the swimming men. Noll Wing lifted a commanding arm and beckoned him to make all speed.

A whale-boat is as speedy as any oared craft short of a racing-shell; and Brander's men when their

we. They cut across the vision of the looting whale; and the beast turned upon this new attacked with undiminished vigor.

Brander's eyes narrowed as he judged the distance from the drifting boat; he swerved a little to meet the coming whale head-on. The whale plowed at him. They met fifty yards to one side of the spot where the boat was floating; and as they met, Brander dodged past the monster's very jaw and aild astern of him. Before the whale could turn he was alongside the capsize boat, dragging Noll over his own gunwale.

He dragged Noll in; and he saw then that the captain held in his hand a loop of the line that was fast to the whale. Brander grinned with delighted appreciation. Noll straightened, brushed Brander back without regarding him, and passed the line to the men in Brander's boat.

"Haul in!" he roared. "Get that stowed aboard here. By God we'll get that whale!"

They worked like mad, coiling the slack line in the waist, while Noll fitted it into the crotch and pinned it there. The whale was back at them by then; they dodged again. And this time, as the creature swung past, Loum—Brander's boat-steerer—brought them in close against the monster's flank before dodging out to evade the smashing flukes. In that instant Noll saw his chance, and drove home his lance to half its length.

It was the first wound the whale had taken—a wound not fatal, not even serious. Nevertheless, it seemed to take the fight out of the beast. He sulked for a moment, then began for the first time in more than five hours' fighting—to run.

The line whipped out through the crotch in the bow; the men tailed on to it, and let it go as slowly as might be, while Loum swung the steering-oar, to keep them in the creature's track.

Noll, in the bow, was like a man glorified. His cap was pulled tight about his head; he had flung away his coat, and his shirt was open halfway to the waist. The spray lashed him; his wet garments clung to his great torso. His right hand held the lance, point upward, but in the bottom of the boat, his left rested on the line that quivered to the tugging of the whale. His knee was braced on the bow. A heroic figure, a figure of strength magnificent, he was like a statue as the whaleboat sliced the waves, and his lips smiled and his eyes were keen and grim.

The line slipped out through the burning fingers of the men; the whale raced on. Abruptly Noll snapped over his shoulder:

"Haul in, Mr. Brander!"

Brander, at Noll's back, gave the word to the men, and they began to take back the line they had given the whale in the beginning. It came in slowly, stubbornly; but it came.

They drew up on the whale that fled before them. They drew up till the smashing strokes of the flukes, as the creature swam, no more than cleared their bow. They drew up there, and sheered out under the thrust of Loum's long oar, and still drew on. They were abreast of the flukes; they swung in ahead of them; they slid, suddenly, against the whale's very side.

The end came with curious abruptness. The whale, at the touch of the boat against his side, rolled a little away from them so that his belly was half exposed. The "life" of a whale, that mass of centering blood-vessels which the lance must find, lies low. Noll knew where it lay; and as the whale thus rolled he saw his mark. He drove the lance hard—drove it so hard there was no time to pull it out for a second thrust—nor any need. It was snatched from his hands as the whale rolled toward them.

Loum's oar swung; they loosed the line and shot away at a tangent to the whale's course.

"Let be, let be, men! He's done!" Noll cried exultantly, his hands flung high.

They saw within a matter of

seconds, that he was right. The whale stopped; he slowly turned; he lay quiet for an instant as if counting his hurts. The misty white of his spout was reddened by a crimson tint; it became a crimson flood. It roared out of the spout-hole driven by the monster's panting breath. The whale turned slowly on his side a little, began to swim.

A trout, hooked through the head and thrown back into the pool, will sometimes race in desperate circles, battering helplessly against the bank, the bottom of the pool, the sunken logs. Thus this monstrous creature now swam in a circle that centered about the boat where Noll and the others watched; that tore the water and flung it in on them. Faster and faster, until it seemed his great heart must burst with his own labors. And at the end flung half clear of the water, thrust his vast bulk forward, surged idly ahead, slowed and was still.

"Pin out, by God! He's dead!" Noll cried.

A big whale, as big as most whalesmen ever saw, the biggest Noll himself had ever slain. A fitting thing for old Noll Wing had driven his last lance. He was tired; he showed it when Brander gave the whale to Willis for towing back to the ship, and raced for the Sally, with Noll panting in the bow.

The fire was dying in the captain's eyes; he pulled Brander's coat about his great shoulders and huddled into it. He scarcely moved when they reached the Sally. Brander helped him aboard.

"A great fight, sir," cried Dan'l Tobey. "Six hours and two stove boats. But you killed."

Noll wagged his old head, looked around for Faith and leaned heavily upon her arm.

"Take me down, Faith," he said. "Take me down. I am very tired."

One-Eyed Mauger sought out Brander three days later. That is to say, the little man made occasion during the work of scrubbing up after Noll's last whale, to come to Brander's feet, and while he rolled at the planking of the deck there, he looked up at the fourth mate and nodded significantly.

(To Be Continued Monday)

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EX-ROSEBURGER DIES

Wellington Waddle, at one time in the saloon business in Roseburg with his brother, J. A. (Al) Waddle, died in Portland, Ore., last Thursday at the age of 70. Besides Al, Waddle, who resides in Portland, the deceased leaves a brother in Illinois, also a daughter in Klamath Falls, Ore. The funeral was held in Portland today under the auspices of the Knights of Pythias lodge.

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STRIBLING EAGER TO TAKE ON EITHER SHARKEY, CARNERA

By EDWARD J. NEIL
Associated Press Sport Writer.

NEW YORK, Aug. 16.—Young Bill Stribling is back from Europe with Phil Scott's scalp dangling from his belt and a gleam in his eyes that bodes no good for the rest of the heavyweights who think they can fight some.

Traveling alone, a young man of 25 who has suddenly developed a punch and a desire to use it on all the heavyweights he can reach, the curly-headed Macon boy came in on the liner Aquitania yesterday with an English brindle bull pup, "Scraps," and a bad-left hand as mementoes of his conquest of the British champion.

The bad hand, broken in three places five months ago in a match with Pietro Corri in Tampa, Fla., will keep young Stribling out of the heavyweight picture he dominates for the next six weeks at least. Although the breaks have healed, the hand is so tender that injections of Novocaine were necessary in both his one-round knockout in Chicago of Otto Von Porat and his two-round victory over Scott. Once the hand is right again, Stribling is ready to fight any man in the world.

"I knew I was going to knock Scott out in two rounds just like I told you before I left," he said. "I'm punching harder than ever before in my life. I'm heavier. I'm old enough now so I feel that I can slug it out with any heavyweight in the game. That goes for Jack Sharkey, Primo Carnera and Max Schmeling. I've been boxing 9½ years and now I'm going to do some fighting."

"Boy," he added with a grin as he started a general rough house, "you may not realize it but you're looking at a tiger."

"First, I want to fight Sharkey," he said. "I'll knock him out the next time we meet even though he did send me a nice cable of congratulations after my match with Scott. Carnera is tougher than most of you think and I'd like another shot at him. Both Sharkey and Carnera I believe are better heavyweights than Max Schmeling, the champion."

John R. Kelly

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